

DOI <https://doi.org/10.61345/2734-8873.2024.1.15>

VIEWS OF THE NATIONAL ELITE OF THE COSSACK ERA ON THE MONARCHICAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Nadiia Stengach¹

Annotation. At the present time, when the Ukrainian state is going through a difficult process of defending its independence, it is important to study the historical origins of our statehood, which shows the process of state formation in Ukraine. Specifically, it is important to understand the historical experience of the Cossack statehood during the latter half of the seventeenth century, including the challenges it faced in terms of foreign policy and international relations.

In the mid-17th century, Europe underwent a period of social and political development marked by the formation of national states and the establishment of bourgeois relations. Ukraine was not exempt from these pan-European processes. The Ukrainian liberation struggle aimed to create an independent Ukrainian state and introduce new social and economic relations based on small-scale (in fact, farmer-type) Cossack ownership of land. During the latter half of the 17th century, the Cossack state was divided between two forms of government due to the hetmans' desire to establish a monarchy. However, the Cossacks' senior officers (starshyna) firmly adhered to republican principles, primarily defending their own class interests. This article aims to elucidate the unique characteristics of the political culture of the Cossack officers and their inclination towards establishing a monarchical form of government.

The article's methodology is grounded in general scientific principles and methods of cognition, with the aim of providing an objective and comprehensive coverage of facts, events, and phenomena. It is based on the principles of historicism and objectivism in scientific research, which prioritize factual material and avoid subjective evaluations. The topic was approached using general scientific and specific-historical research methods. Sources and literature were analyzed and synthesized, research was structured using periodization, historical material was presented using problem-historical method, and similar indicators and facts were compared using comparative-historical method in the same historical conditions.

¹ PhD in History, Associate professor of Theory and History of State and Law Department of Khmelnytsky University of Management and Law Named after Leonid Yuzkov, Khmelnytsky, Ukraine, e-mail: nadiya.stengach@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-7011-4263.

Result: Yet even the monarchical tendencies were essentially democratic: the legitimacy of power, the public-law rights of Cossack officers, the preservation of local self-government bodies and legal procedures give all the reasons to assert that there were prospects for the development of the European-like monarchical form of government in the Ukrainian Cossack state of the second half of the XVII century.

Conclusions: The knowledge gained from studying this topic can be used to prevent, forestall, or overcome various crises that inevitably arise during the determination of public policy in various areas of public life.

Key words: form of government, monarchism, hetman, Cossack officers, starshyna, tsarist autocracy, Ukrainian model of monarchism.

Introduction. The political elite's ideas about a particular socio-political system were manifested in their desire for a specific form of government. In contemporary historical periodicals, the emphasis is on the republican and democratic trends of the Ukrainian Cossack state, influenced by democratization and the third wave of the revival of Ukrainian statehood. But we'll follow the conclusions of G. Mosca and V. Lypynsky, based on their analysis of the historical experience of mankind and the processes of the first and second waves of the revival of statehood in Ukraine. The founder of modern political science and his Ukrainian counterpart, the founder of the statehood trend in Ukrainian historiography, believed that a newly established state could not be based solely on democratic or republican principles, pointing out that no nation or state has ever begun its existence from democracy, nor can it do so.

Analysis of scientific publications. The works of V. Smolii and V. Stepankov study the formation of the political program of the national elite of Cossack Ukraine in the second half of the 17th century, which aimed to create an independent state. The authors emphasize the Cossack starshyna absolute commitment to fiercely defending state sovereignty. O. Strukevych, V. Horobets, V. Lypynskyi, and P. Sas studied the evolution of the transition of views of the Cossack elders from the republic to the monarchy. The research also used data from the studies of Ukrainian scientists: D. Doroshenko, O. Ogloblin, L. Okynshevych, and Z. Kogut, who highlighted certain problems of the legal status of the Cossack state at the time and the peculiarities of its political elite and studied the evolution of views on the monarchical form of government. The article is based on the Hetman Universals and other legislative acts published in the Acts related to the history of Yuzhnoy i Zapadnoy Rossii, which were collected and published by the Archeographic Commission in St. Petersburg in the 19th century. Additionally, the Universals of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, published in Kyiv in 1998, were also used as a source.

The aim of the work. The aim of this article is to analyze the transition of the national elite of the Cossack state from a republican to a monarchical form of government, taking into account the impact of both domestic and international factors.

Review and discussion. As Machiavelli explained to the ruler of Florence, Lorenzo de' Medici, 'One must bear in mind that people are fickle. While it may be easy to persuade them to their faith, it is difficult to keep them in it.

Therefore, one must be prepared to use force to make people believe when their faith is exhausted' [8, p. 21-22].

In his work 'Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius', N. Machiavelli developed his doctrine of the forms of government and their historical functions in the process of state formation. He came to the categorical conclusion that 'any republic or kingdom' has almost never been well-organized unless its founder was one person. According to the scientist, a 'wise founder of a republic should be motivated by a desire to serve the public good rather than personal gain. They should prioritize the common fatherland over their descendants and strive to achieve unity of power' [8, p. 23].

V. Lypynsky also noted the failure of democracy in state-building, as it 'destroyed the Ukrainian state-building aristocracy and, with it, the Ukrainian state... Ukrainian democracy has been unable to create something new in its place' [8, p. 27]. These conclusions are supported by the historical records of the Ukrainian Cossack state.

The circumstances surrounding the struggle for Ukrainian independence from Poland contributed to the formation of monarchist orientations. The need for a robust and powerful government, initially conceived as the authority of an «autocratic» king «unshackled» from oligarchic influence, in a complete break with the political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, led to the maturation of monarchist orientations among the starshyna, which were subsequently transferred to the institutions of the Hetmanate.

We contend that the foundation of the Ukrainian Hetmanate's monarchical tradition was the absolute authority of the hetman during military operations. The necessity of combating Poland bestowed upon B. Khmelnytsky unquestionable authority as a military commander. The desire for this level of power among the hetman and the willingness of the starshyna to recognize it originated from the Sich tradition. In this context, it is possible to comment on B. Khmelnytsky's address at a military meeting near Zamost: «Honored colonels! Here in the war, my voice is the only one that gives orders to everyone! Obey everything and wait for my orders!» [30, c. 179]. The establishment of a de facto independent state necessitated the resolution of a multitude of legal, judicial, and administrative matters at both the local and central levels. Moreover, the issues pertaining to foreign policy guarantees for Ukrainian interests also demanded immediate attention.

It is evident that the hetman extended his authority as a military leader to new domains of Ukrainian social and political life. However, he encountered resistance, primarily from the social lower classes, who, in their radical fervor, could have jeopardized the success of the National Revolution at its inception. Bohdan Khmelnytsky could have relied on the officers to exclude the ordinary Cossacks from participating in state affairs. As evidenced by events in July and August 1648, when the hetman declined to convene the General Council and instead addressed matters of social and political life in meetings with the officers, the hetman was able to rely on the natural inclination of the elite to monopolize governance of society. Although neither the hetman nor the starshyna were able to abolish the tradition, they were nonetheless able to

remove the broader society from the process of generating political decisions. This resulted in their role being reduced to that of expressing consent to the decisions already made at the Council of the Starshyna.

Nevertheless, the very same starshyna that represent the elite as a whole or individual groups of it, who build their relationships on the principle that an equal has no power over an equal, could not help but resist the consolidation of power in the hands of the hetman. Let us recall M. Kryvonos' assertion: «You are not our sworn hetman, and I can be one, just like you.» Typologically similar to this is the discussion of the relationship between the hetman and the foreman in the petition against I. Samoilovych, who was accused of being no higher than the rest of the foremen («he was born in a small town, like other people»), and «thinks highly of himself» and «does not consider anyone to be his equal by birth and intelligence» [13, p. 134-135].

At the same time, numerous factors within the society of the Hetmanate of Ukraine at the time influenced the elite's inclination to choose a monarchical form of government. The recognition by the starshyna of their subordination to the Hetman was primarily facilitated by the aggravation of socio-economic contradictions between the «officers» and the people. The starshyna were acutely aware that they would be unable to consolidate their socio-political position in the socio-economic sphere until a robust hetmanate was established. The Hetman himself demonstrated that this could be achieved by issuing protection universals to monasteries and the nobility for their possessions, encouraging the embassy to obey them. Bohdan's name eventually became a symbol of national liberation, a slogan for continuing the struggle against Poland. For the overwhelming majority of the starshyna, the success of this struggle represented the sole assurance against ruin and extermination at the hands of the Polish authorities.

A multitude of factors motivated the starshyna to embrace the tenets of monarchism and transfer it to the person of B. Khmelnytsky. The words of a member of the Ukrainian embassy, Chyhyryn khorunzha Vasyl, as relayed to M. Potocki in October 1650, provide insight into this phenomenon: «It is true that it happened that the hetman elected by the army had to be overthrown... However, this hetman was given by God and was put by Him in charge of the army; unless God himself overthrew him, the appointment could not be revoked.» As S. Plohyi discovered in his research, a considerable number of starshyna employed the hetman's title in conjunction with the phrase «by God's grace» — to a greater extent than the hetman himself. This suggests that the starshyna held a monarchical orientation towards B. Khmelnytsky [19, p. 62-63].

Nevertheless, subsequent developments suggest that the orientations of individual representatives of the starshyna did not extend beyond B. Khmelnytsky's personal charisma and did not evolve into a political and cultural position regarding the position of hetman, regardless of the individual in question. Having consented to the transfer of the mace from father to son, they did not oppose the machinations of either I. Vyhovsky or his successors in undermining the monarchical foundations of the hetman's authority.

A more detailed examination of the Ukrainian political elite's contributions to the field of monarchism reveals that the socio-economic processes that unfolded in Ukraine shaped the institution of the Ukrainian monarch to resemble that of Western European monarchies, but not Eastern despotic monarchies.

Foremost, this was due, as V. Lypynsky argued, to the nature of Cossack and starshyna' land tenure: «The moment the land was seized by the knightly right of the sword, the process of Europeanization of the Cossacks was completed.» (As the poet Mazepa wrote: «May glory be eternal, but we have rights to the saber!») The historian Lipinsky posited that in Cossack Ukraine, as in Western Europe, the knightly family right to land resulted in the duties of the knightly family to the land and to the state. In Moscow, the right of the nobility to the land was contingent upon the duty of noble service to the tsar and the state [12, p. 71].

The Excerpt authored by F. Chuykevych serves to corroborate the theoretical conclusions previously established by V. Lypynsky. In his analysis of the «Saxon» and «Lithuanian Statute,» the leading lawyer of the Ukrainian Hetmanate in the mid-eighteenth century wrote: «It is evident from these rights that the first right and the first fortification («fortress») without letters and without privileges in Little Russia are ancient and long-standing occupations, because when, with the help of God, the Little Russians with Hetman Bohdan Zinoviiv Khmelnytsky, liberated Little Russia with their blood from the yoke of the Poles and from the power of the Polish kings, and came into the allegiance of the All-Russian Monarch, the Grand Duke Tsar and Grand Duke Alexei Mikhailovich: At that time, on both sides of the Dnipro, all the land was common and shared by the Little Russians, as long as they first divided it into regiments, and in the regiments into hundreds, and in the hundreds into cities, towns, and villages, and in the cities, towns, and villages into their own dwellings, yards, buildings, and farms, and borrowed and borrowed, and so all the good things of the Little Russians came to be their own and private through loans...» As we can see, the central idea of the passage is the statement that the starshyna and all representatives of Ukrainian society in general came to serve the tsar with their land liberated by «their blood» [19, p. 65].

Although the starshyna recognized the charisma of the tsar, they sought documents signed by the royal hand to assert their ownership of the estates. This did not imply, however, that they recognized the fact that they had received the land from the hands and by the grace of the tsar. He, with his face and hand anointed to reign, was only supposed to legitimize the existing state of affairs once again. Such a perception of the tsar's role is clearly documented in the articles of the agreement between 10 right-bank regiments and the Moscow monarch of March 17, 1674. The agreement states, «They, the charioteer and all the starshyna and Cossacks, asked the great sovereign for the Cossack estates, as well as their eternal father's and grandfather's purchased fields, forests, hayfields, ponds, mills, and all kinds of possessions, and that the great sovereign grant them all as before.» [22, p. 98]

In order to legitimate the acquired estates through a royal decree, the starshyna were unable to conceive of a scenario in which the tsar could revoke

these same estates at his discretion. The same I. Vyhovskyi, who had petitioned the tsar for estates in recognition of his and his relatives' service, subsequently expressed his opposition to the tsar's attempts to dispose of women's land property: «Although the tsar's majesty, by his sovereign will, ordered to distribute those estates of my wife to the Polacks... but I will not let the Polacks have those estates of my wife as long as I am alive.» When Ambassador V. Kikin observed that «one should serve the tsar... and not say such indecent words,» I. Vyhovskyi, believing that he had been misunderstood, justified his position by the fact that he had been serving for a long time and would continue to do so [4, p. 163-164]. However, his willingness to continue serving the king, as demonstrated by his testimony, did not prevent the hetman from defending his property before the monarch, even if the latter had previously sanctioned this course of action.

It can therefore be concluded that the orientation towards subordination to a legitimate and charismatic political leader in the Hetmanate of Ukraine was similar to that in Western Europe. Consequently, the use of power in relation to the objects of the Hetman's jurisdiction could in no way be arbitrary; the Hetman had to give his actions, even punitive ones, legitimacy. It is important to note that the Hetman was not dealing with slaves or serfs, but rather with subjects of political life. As Y. Khmelnytsky put it, «these subjects were engaged in the care of their health, women and children, and the integrity of their estates and freedoms, which were acquired through the sacrifices of blood» [4, p. 168].

A compelling illustration of the European essence of the Ukrainian model of monarchism is the guarantee issued on June 28, 1657, by Bohdan Khmelnytsky to the nobility of the Pinsk district, who pledged their allegiance to him. In turn, the hetman also took an oath: «Furthermore, we pledge to confirm all the conditions necessary for the union by oath, through extraordinary ambassadors, binding ourselves and our descendants and the entire Zaporozhian Army...» [20, p. 344].

The absence of a robust political and cultural orientation toward monarchism among the elite, the natural historical conflict between local and central authorities, and the pervasive involvement of foreign political actors in this conflict (without such interference, as evidenced by European historical experience, such struggles were more likely to result in the triumph of central institutions) did not permit the values of monarchism to take hold in the minds of the Ukrainian elite. Nevertheless, the logic of the internal political development of the newly created state prompted hetmans, as representatives of the central government, to address the topic of monarchism from time to time. In the spring of 1659, I. Vyhovskyi instructed the Ukrainian embassy to seek from the Sejm that upon his death, his brother Danylo «inherited the Great Hetmanate and the Kyivan Voivodeship,» and his brother Kostiantyn «would inherit the pilne hetmanate.» The intention was that this succession would occur «without any elections» and in such a way that «Ukraine would not come to an outbreak of unrest.» Doroshenko sought to achieve «monarchical power independent of anyone,» «eternal

hetmanship,» and the transfer of the hetman's mace «after him to his son and grandson without fail.» Monarchical plans were hatched by D. Mnohohohrshnyi, I. Samoilovych, and I. Mazepa. As N. Polonska-Vasylenko stated: «The majority of researchers concur that over time in the Ukrainian state, the inclination towards dynasticism and the hereditary transmission of the hetman's power became increasingly pronounced.» [22, p. 111]

In addition to the hetmans, who were, in a sense, the natural and historical carriers of the monarchist orientation, this idea was presented and explained the actions of the starshyna. Accordingly, I. Samoilovych's haughty demeanor, the retention of Yuri Khmelnytsky's seal (as opposed to its immediate transfer to Moscow), and particularly the marriage of his daughter to a representative of the family of the Fourth Dukes, in particular Yuri Fourth Duke, were perceived by the starshyna as monarchial intentions. «What is the advantage of having access, whenever possible, to the fief in Little Russia?» [23, p. 120].

However, the monarchial principle of its own, not due to political and cultural, but solely to foreign policy circumstances, had no real chance of establishing itself in the Hetmanate. «It was not only competing with it, but was simply being supplanted by a monarchial principle of a despotic nature. The monarchy became a symbol of unlimited tsarist power in Ukraine. And here Moscow crossed its own Ukrainian tendencies» [5, p. 27].

Conclusions. The history of the formation and functioning of the Ukrainian Cossack state demonstrates that the tendency to establish a monarchial form of government throughout the history of the Ukrainian Hetmanate has consistently existed, and that there have been sufficient grounds and factors for its realization. However, this tendency, existing at the level of real possibility, has never been able to materialize. This was prevented, firstly, by the initial lack of strong political and cultural positions in the minds of the political elite regarding the establishment of a monarchy on the basis of the office of the hetman, regardless of specific individuals—more or less successful carriers. The struggle between the hetman and local authorities, represented by groups of officers representing particular interests, and the central government, represented by the hetman as an exponent of public interests, was a significant factor. The latter factor cannot be considered in isolation from foreign policy circumstances. As evidenced by the historical experience of European independent states, the struggle between central and local authorities within the framework of the internal political process inevitably resulted in the triumph of monarchism. However, the intervention of the foreign policy factor of Russian monarchism in this struggle deprived the Ukrainian monarchist trend of opportunities for practical implementation.

It is important to note that the perception of the elite of the Ukrainian land in general and their estates in particular as liberated, won by the knightly law of the sword, rather than begged for and granted by the royal favor, became the basis for the formation of a monarchial form of government in Ukraine based on the European model. This is confirmed by both historical facts and political and cultural orientations recorded in documents.

References:

1. Apanovich, Elena. "Government officials of Hetmanshchyna: Ukrainian intellectuals of the XVIII century", *Ukrainian Historical Journal*, no. 2. Kyiv, 1997, p. 92–97. [in Ukrainian]
2. Giddens, Anthony. *Sociology*, Kyiv: Science, 1999, 292 p. [in Ukrainian]
3. Gorobets, Victor. *Elite of Cossack Ukraine in search of political legitimization: relations with Moscow and Warsaw, 1654-1665*. Kyiv: 2001, 533 p. [in Ukrainian]
4. Gorobets, Victor, and Alex Strukevich. "Russian-Ukrainian Political Relations in the Second Half of the 17th-18th Centuries: Trends, Characterization, Stages", *Ukrainian Historical Journal*, no. 1. Kyiv, 1996, p.26-31. [in Ukrainian]
5. Kogut, Zenon. *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy. Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s–1830s*, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 293. [in English]
6. Kogut, Zenon. "Russia and Ukraine in the 18th century: the state and prospects of the study of political relations history", *Second International Congress of Ukrainianists*, Kyiv, 1994, p. 124–131. [in Ukrainian]
7. Krivosheya, Volodymyr. *Ukrainian Cossacks' Starshyna*, part 1, Kyiv: Stylus. 1997, 103 p. [in Ukrainian]
8. Lipinsky, Vyacheslav. *Ukraine at the turn of 1657-1659. Notes on the history of Ukrainian state construction in the XVII century*. Vienna-Kyiv: Ed. Dnipro Union of Consumers Unions of Ukraine («Dniprosoyuz»). 1920, 110 p. [in Ukrainian]
9. Matyah, Valentine. "Value orientations of the Ukrainian society in the conditions of the Russian protectorate (the basic directions of scientific research)", *Ukraine in the Central-Eastern Europe. Studies on the history of 11th-18th centuries*, Kyiv : Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2000, p. 419–434. [in Ukrainian]
10. Mitsik, Yuri. "Political concepts of Bogdan Khmelnytsky: some aspects of implementation", *Time of Bogdan Khmelnytsky (to the 400th anniversary of the birth of the great hetman)*, Kyiv, 1995., p. 32–36. [in Ukrainian]
11. Mitsik, Yuri. "Political culture of the Ukrainian society (end of the 16th—first half of the 17th century)", *Ukrainian Historical Journal*, no. 5. Kyiv, 1998, p. 120–127. [in Ukrainian]
12. Mosca, Gaetano. "The ruling class", *Sociological studies*, no. 10. Moscow, 1994, p. 179–187. [in Russian]
13. Nagorna, Larissa. *Political culture of the Ukrainian people: historical retrospective and modern realities*. Kyiv: IPIEND named after IF Kuras of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 1998, 278 p. [in Ukrainian].
14. Okinshevich, Leo. "Generalna Starshyna on the Left Bank Ukraine in the 17th-18th centuries", *Works of the Commission of learning the history of Western Russian and Ukrainian law*, no. 2. Kyiv, 1926. 167 p. [in Ukrainian].
15. Okinshevich, Leo. *Significance of military society in Ukraine Hetmanshchina in 17th-18th centuries*, 120. Munich, 1948. [in Germany].

16. Potulnitsky, Volodymyr. *History of Ukrainian political science (Concepts of statehood in Ukrainian foreign historical and political science)*. Kyiv : Science, 1992. 249 p. [in Ukrainian].
17. Smoliy, Valery. *Ukrainian society at the turn of the Middle Ages and the new time: essays on the history of mentality and national consciousness*. Kyiv: Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2001. 421 p/ [in Ukrainian].
18. Smoliy, Valery, and Valery Stepankov. *Idea of Ukrainian State in 17th-18th centuries: Problems of Formation, Evolution and Implementation*, Kyiv: Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine 1997. 368 p. [in Ukrainian].
19. Stepankov, Valery. "Formation of the Ukrainian state elite and peculiarities of its mentality in the middle of the XVII century (1648–1657). Formulation of the problem", *Ukrainian Cossack state: origins and ways of historical development (Materials of the third All-Ukrainian historical readings)*. Cherkassy, 1993. P. 28–35. [in Ukrainian].
20. Strukevich, Alex. "'March Articles' as a source of political autonomy of Ukraine Hetmanshchyna in the middle of the 18th century", *Russian-Ukrainian Treaty of 1654: new approaches "to the history of interstate relations" (Materials of scientific-theoretical seminar)*. Kyiv, 1995. P. 44–62. [in Ukrainian].
21. Strukevich, Alex. "Political and Cultural Orientations of the Cossacks' Starshyna in the middle of the 18th century in the pan-European context", *Ukrainian Cossack state: origins and ways of historical development /Materials of the sixth All-Ukrainian historical readings*. Cherkassy, 1997. 134–146 p.p. [in Ukrainian]
22. Cimbaly, Bogdan. "Political Culture of Ukraine", *Modernity*, no. 3 Kyiv, 1994. P. 94–105 p.p. [in Ukrainian].
23. Yakovenko, Natalya. *Parallel world. Researches on the history of representations and ideas in Ukraine in the 16th-17th centuries*, 263. Kyiv: Science, 2002. 263 p. [in Ukrainian].