



UDC 340.15 (477)

CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL AND LEGAL VIEWS OF THE NATIONAL ELITE AFTER THE HETMANATE ACCESSION TO THE RUSSIAN STATE (LATE XVII-XVIII CENTURY)

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Abstract. *Following the incorporation of the Hetmanate into the Moscow Kingdom in 1654 (an event that was facilitated by the Pereyaslav Treaty), there was a considerable shift in the political and legal culture of the Cossack officers. This was due to the gradual convergence of the Ukrainian elite with the Moscow administration, which resulted in the establishment of novel legal and political traditions. Concurrently, the Cossack officers endeavored to maintain the autonomy of the Hetmanate and their class privileges, a course of action that gave rise to complex interactions with the imperial authorities. The political and legal culture of the Cossack officers of the Hetmanate within the Russian state was shaped by several factors, including:*

- *the remnants of the traditional autonomous Cossack state established by Bohdan Khmelnytsky;*
- *the influence of the Moscow legal system, which was increasingly integrated into the Hetmanate;*
- *socio-economic changes that led to the growth of the influence of the elders as a land-political elite.*

The author observes that, despite the pressure from the imperial authorities, the Cossack officers continued to consider themselves the bearers of the traditional political culture of the Hetmanate and insisted on observing the traditional Cossack rights and freedoms enshrined in the articles of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and subsequent Hetman's universals. The legal culture of the Ukrainian elite was also influenced by political and cultural norms, which were widely recognized as requirements for the behavior of political actors. However, it should also be noted that many representatives of the officers (e.g., K. Razumovsky, D. Apostol) received high positions in the empire, which formed a culture of compromise and loyalty to the Russian government among the officers.

Keywords: *Zaporozhian Army, political elite, Cossack officers, legal culture, political subject.*

Introduction.

In the context of Ukraine's ongoing struggle for independence, it is imperative to delve into the historical underpinnings of our statehood, which unveils the chronology of state-building in Ukraine and thereby establishes the theoretical foundation for the conceptions of its national renaissance. This analysis underscores the necessity to comprehend the historical experience of Cossack statehood in the latter half of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with a particular focus on the challenges faced in the formation of the national elite and the evolution of its political and legal culture, particularly in the aftermath of the Hetmanate's accession to the Russian Empire in the



late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The issue of the political and legal culture of the Cossack officers following the incorporation of the Hetmanate into the Russian Empire in the latter half of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been examined by the following historians: O. Ogloblyn in his works analyzed the social status and activities of the Cossack officers, emphasizing their role in the social processes of the Left Bank of Ukraine; L. Okynshevych, P. Sas, and O. Subtelnyi studied the social structure and political activities of the Cossack officer. The process of formation and functioning of the Cossack elite between 1648 and 1782 was the subject of study by V. Smolii, V. Stepankov, and O. Strukevych.

The author of the article sets out to ascertain the significant changes that the political and legal culture of the Cossack officers underwent following the Hetmanate's accession to Russia. The study aims to determine how the gradual integration into imperial structures, the restriction of autonomous rights, and socio-economic transformations led to a change in the identity of the officers and the loss of traditional Cossack values.

The methodology of the article is based on general scientific principles and methods of cognition with the aim of objective and comprehensive coverage of facts, events, and phenomena. It is based on the principles of historicism and objectivity of scientific research, which give preference to factual material and avoid subjective assessments. The topic was approached using general scientific and specific historical research methods. A comprehensive analysis of the extant sources and literature was conducted. The study was meticulously structured according to a systematic periodization, and material was presented using the problem-oriented historical method. Furthermore, the comparative historical method was employed to compare similar indicators and facts within the same historical conditions.

Main text.

Cossack officers regarded themselves as the custodians of the traditional political culture of the Hetmanate, which was founded on the following principles:

- The Hetmanate's autonomy: starshyna sought to preserve broad autonomy



within the Moscow Kingdom, favoring the preservation of the traditional Cossack system, which guaranteed it access to power and resources.

- The supremacy of the Hetmanate: starshyna maintained a strong hetman's authority as the basis for the autonomy of the Hetmanate. However, it is noted that internal conflicts were sometimes entered into due to the struggle for influence over the hetman.

- In terms of legal traditions, the Ukrainian government placed a strong emphasis on the observance of traditional Cossack rights and freedoms, as codified in the articles of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and subsequent Hetman's universals. Cossack officers also utilized universals, articles, and other legal instruments as instruments for the regulation of social relations, thereby contributing to the development of a distinct political culture.

However, the defeat of Hetman Ivan Mazepa in his attempt to restore independence led to a radical restriction of autonomy, with the officers gradually integrating into the imperial administration, retaining their privileges but relinquishing control over the Hetmanate. Consequently, starshyna increasingly adopted elements of imperial culture, including nobleman's customs, which ran counter to the traditional Cossack ideals of freedom and equality.

However, it should be noted that the Cossack starshyna attempted to safeguard their dignity and demanded that the representative of the Zaporozhian Army, as a state in its entirety or its political institutions, be accorded respect. There is abundant evidence of the desire for parity with the Russian authorities and representatives, as well as the prevention of subjugation to the elite of the Russian political class. [1, p.6-9]

On January 6, 1734, Y. Markovich documented in his diary On 6 January 1734, Y. Markovich documented in his diary “that the wagon general from the campaign (to Poland - N.S.) dispatched his bunchukovyy tovarysh Shirai to St. Petersburg to the residence of Her Majesty, imploring for mercy on the grounds that the charge d'affaires Zagryazky, by issuing the sovereign's salary, had demoted both his wagon general, whom he had placed against the colonel and his bunchukovyy tovaryshi against the



Wachtmeister." [2, p.416]

How the subject of relations between starshyna and Russian officers was perceived by Ukrainians through the lens of etiquette is evident in “Conversation between Great Russia and Little Russia”, which contains a satirical discourse on the conduct of Russians who transgressed the norms of noble, military, and religious etiquette. [3, p.396]

At the outset of interstate relations, members of the Ukrainian elite attached great importance to the attitude of the Russian court towards them as representatives of the Ukrainian state, society, and a military and political force. The documents contain an account of an incident involving the Ambassador of the Zaporozhian Army, S. Muzhylovsky, who was in Moscow. He expressed his outright indignation to Boyar Y. Likharev that he, the ambassador, was sent fish instead of meat on Saturday: “We are not low-class people, the Poles have only ever been successful in military affairs thanks to us, Zaporizhzhia Cherkasy” [4, p.231].

In later relations with the highest Russian officials and the tsar, similar orientations were actualized, though not at the level of demands but rather statements of fact. Starshyna accentuated manifestations of respect for them, for the Hetmanate ambassadors, and for the hetman himself. An exemplification of this is the detailed descriptions of the honors bestowed upon hetmans and ambassadors during their stay in the northern capitals.

From an etiquette perspective, hetmans regarded insufficient attention from their sovereigns as a lack of respect for the Hetmanate. A notable example of this occurred when P. Teteri—a low-ranking Polish messenger—brought the kleynodes from Jan Kazimierz to the royal chamberlain I. Mazepa, which in turn sent him back to Warsaw. Furthermore, the hetman alluded to the army's discontent with this disrespect on a broader scale. [4, p. 240]

The highest Ukrainian officials perceived interference with their sovereign prerogatives as a personal insult. For instance, in January 1691, hetman Mazepa considered the fact that the Kyiv voivode M. Romodanovsky addressed the Kyiv centurion I. Butryma in an orderly manner to be a great dishonor. This action was



perceived as a blatant disregard for the established chain of command, which included both the hetman and the Kyiv colonel. [2, p.410]

During the Northern War, I. Mazepa perceived his subordination not to the tsar himself, but to his subordinate, O. Menshikov, as a manifestation of “his humiliation”. He considered it a dishonor that “in his old age, he was rewarded for many faithful services (by his words) to be given under the command of the tsar's batman”. The fact that Menshikov did not come from a noble family was also offensive to the hetman, who was a nobleman by birth: “Finally, he said that it would not be so offensive to him if he were given under the command of Sheremet, or some other man with highly honored ancestors.” O. Menshikov's attempts to give orders over the hetman's head were also considered a manifestation of humiliation. In this regard, Mazepa emphasized: “Can there be more dishonor, disgrace, and humiliation to my person than this!” [1, p.74]

One of the mechanisms of subjugation of Ukrainian society was the fostering of an atmosphere of denunciation among the populace by the authorities. However, among starshyna, this manifestation never became a norm of political culture and was never regarded as ethically acceptable. In P. Orlyk's description of the attitude of the Ukrainian starshyna towards K. Mokriyevych, there is a condemnation of the very fact of denunciation of the hetman without any analysis of the possible motives for such an act: “What honor did I receive for that? I was deprived of the clerk's government by Samoilovych, and was driven from Ukraine, and in every place throughout my life I was betrayed and disgraced by both lay and clergy...” [1, p.75]

However, the constant pressure exerted by the Russian side resulted in a deterioration of self-esteem, manifesting in changes to etiquette and behavioral reactions. There are documented instances where petty officers disclosed information regarding informers and apologized for their actions, acknowledging the necessity to be vigilant. We contend that these expressions of “solidarity” are more indicative of a diminution of this sentiment among the officers. In a challenging situation, the suspected officers and their families were deprived of the prospect of effective support, as evidenced by the treatment of the Markovychs, among others. Yakiv Markovych



was permitted to visit his arrested comrades but was not able to use the Ukrainian legal provision of the time, which allowed for the arrest of a foreman without a court order, to secure their release. [5, p.132] In 1767, he extradited the military chancellor P. Shchyglovsky, an exponent of the idea of political separateness of the Hetmanate, who, having escaped from the guard, sought refuge in one of the estates of Y. Markevich. [6, p. 145]

In their interpersonal relationships, starshyna meticulously observed the substance and form of these relationships, taking into account the occupied levels of the service hierarchy. For instance, in April 1760, a Lokhvytsia centurion lodged a complaint with the General Military Chancellery against his military comrade M. Yanovsky, who, occupying a senior position in the centurion board, sought the foremost place “in meetings and in signatures.” The centurion was compelled to acquiesce, and the chancellery's response asserted that, according to the 1756 information on Little Russian ranks, the military comrade held superior status, and thus, in this particular instance, he was entitled to precedence. [7, p.92]

In January 1758, Colonel S. Sulyma of the Pereyaslav Regimental Chancellery and the regimental court submitted a formal complaint to the General Military Chancellery. The complaint alleged that the bunchukovyy tovarysh H. Ivanenko had been filing lawsuits, applications, and reports with these institutions, even though, as a “particular person” and a subordinate to the colonel (the head of the institutions), he should have been filing “requests.” The office instructed the bunchukovyy tovarysh to address the regimental institutions “properly, with reports.” However, H. Ivanenko remained unsatisfied and appealed to the General Court, stating that “the Regimental Pereyaslav Chancellery, to his sole insult and dishonor... addresses him with a 'decree', not by its authority, because decrees are to be written only to its subordinates.” The General Court acknowledged that, given the unambiguous status of the bunchukovyy tovarysh as direct subordinates of His Excellency the Hetman and the General Court, rather than the Regimental Office, it was improper for the Regimental Office to extend decrees to individuals not within its purview. [8, p.44]

It is evident that the Ukrainian starshyna did not condone the use of vulgar



language in communication, as evidenced by the chronicle of S. Velychko, who characterized Prince S. Pozharsky's use of vulgar language as a “Moscow custom”. This was particularly regarded as a humiliation, particularly in interethnic relations. In a letter dated 9th July 1666, addressed to Hetman I. Bryukhovetskyi by Poltava starshyna and Cossacks, complaints were made about the voivode Y. Khytrovo, with particular reference to the “intolerable insults” caused by the vulgar cursing of the colonel and starshyna. The following expletives were used: “He is your colonel, motherfucker...; I am sent here from the sovereign above all, and you are all scum.” [9, p.18]

Furthermore, the use of profanity was regarded as a manifestation of contempt in the communication patterns of the Ukrainian elite. This is evidenced by V. Kochubey's note complaint against P. Orlyk, wherein he denounced the actions of the newly appointed clerk, H. Hertsyk, who, in collaboration with Orlyk, had “condemned, slandered, cursed at the mother and in every way blasphemed and humiliated Mr. Iskra and me, the Judge”. [2, p.149]

The concept of “personal dignity” among representatives of the politically leading stratum of the Hetmanate encompassed a profound respect for their ancestors and the material wealth they had acquired for the benefit of their families. The notion of “dignity” was interpreted as a form of social capital, stemming from birth in a particular family, and was intricately intertwined with the individual's place in the family genealogy and hierarchy, as well as the amount of property inherited. These factors were seen as pivotal determinants of a person's personality, value, and perceived nobility. [10, p.2-23]

It is against this backdrop of these seven concepts that we can provide a rationale for the centurions of Ichnia, Hryhorii Storozhenko, and Ivan Storozhenko, who petitioned the Apostle for “holy justice for such unbearable dishonor and beatings.” During the Christmas regimental officers' congress, the centurions accused the then Pryluky colonel H. Halahan of violating the “clauses” that stipulated the non-retraction of what was rewarded. The Storozhenky, in particular, spoke of the colonel's taking away their “Stupakivsky mills,” which were owned “not only by my father but also by



my grandfather, who served as a colonel.” G. Halagan, in turn, informed the Storozhenko brothers that he would be expelled from the room and beaten with kuntshes for uttering the word. Finally, the centurions were incensed by the fact that the Pryluky colonel had insulted the memory of their ancestor, “saying: at that time there was no one to be a colonel.” [11, p.203]

In consideration of the prevailing norms of etiquette, the insult was perceived as quadruple, encompassing the removal of an “earned” segment of the family estate, the disregard of subordinates' legal entitlement to recrimination, the dishonoring of ancestral memory, particularly that of the grandfather-colonel, and, ultimately, the infliction of physical abuse. It is evident that the behavior of H. Halahan and his servants towards the Storozhenko starshyna was perceived as “unbearable dishonor.” [12, p.78]

In analyzing the peculiarities of the political culture of the elite of the Ukrainian Cossack state, we took into account the orientations and manifestations of behavior that provided for and reflected the satisfaction of needs and interests within the framework of social interaction. However, socio-political actors often find themselves in a situation where such interaction is absent due to antagonistic opposition of interests, dehumanization of the opponent, etc.

It is imperative to acknowledge that, after its disassociation from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Cossack elite as a socio-political entity was characterized in the political and legal aspects not by integrity but by internal contradictions and ruptures. Furthermore, the nature of this rift was not so much quantitative as qualitative, manifesting not between diverse groups of officers but between individuals: either a Cossack officer hailing from a non-gentry background or a Cossack nobleman. The fundamental nature of this disparity was that, concerning the values and normative expressions of political culture, the vast majority of the future elite of the Zaporozhian Army was firmly integrated into the political culture of the Rzeczpospolita elite, but was pushed out or ignored by the Polish officials in terms of involvement in the regulatory and communication mechanisms of organizing socio-political life. [13, p.87-90]



As has been previously outlined, the integration of the Zaporozhian Cossacks into the political culture of the Rzeczpospolita's elite has been primarily linked to the Ukrainian nobility, a component of the elite that would become influential in the future Ukrainian Cossack state. The non-gentry part of the Cossack officers of the Zaporozhian Army was also integrated into the legal culture of the politically leading layer of the Commonwealth, as P. Sas states: “Within the political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Zaporozhian Cossacks were compelled to observe the established political 'rules of the game' and to be guided by the model of the political culture of the dominant social stratum — the gentry”. This, in particular, is clearly indicated by the fact that “the Zaporozhian Army initiated itself as a full-fledged institution of the political system of the Commonwealth, putting forward its demands for access to the election of the king in 1632 and proposing a specific candidate”. [8, p.121] This demonstrates the willingness of the Zaporozhian Army elite to join the political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the matter could not be limited to external acceptance, learning certain “rules of the game”. The democratic foundations of Cossack political life and the democratic foundations of the Polish principle of aristocracy, as ideal principles, could not but find many common points of contact, and as a result, Cossack leaders could not help but integrate into the political culture of the Rzeczpospolita's elite.

However, the duality of their socio-political situation gave rise to different orientations toward the state system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. On the one hand, this was manifested in the desire to integrate into it through investment behavior. The officers realized that the Republic needed their military service and tried to serve as diligently as possible to achieve their socio-economic and socio-political goals. The political course of P. Konashevych-Sahaidachny can be regarded as an illustration of such orientations realized in legal behavior. Conversely, the manifest disregard by the Polish political elite for the specific efforts and role of the Cossacks resulted in deviant (destructive) and more frequently semi-deviant orientations towards the state system of the Republic. In response, the Cossack elite either initiated their own anti-systemic protests or joined the struggle of the Cossack grassroots, seeking



inclusion in the regulatory and communication mechanisms with the Cossack saber. It is evident that in this instance, their objective was not the destruction of the prevailing political system, but rather the assertion of their position within it through armed conflict. This approach was adopted in an attempt to undermine the dominant actors within the political system and to establish relations based on the principle of “as equals with equals and free with free.” [14, p.146-148]

The ruling Polish elite's dismissal of these claims resulted in the establishment of attitudes toward political behavior, encapsulated by the slogan “Let racket be racket”. This attitude should be contextualized within the framework of the legitimate right to resist the enemy's attempts to destroy the elite, and consequently Ukrainian society and its ethos.

However, the establishment of its own political system was accompanied by characteristics that rendered it virtually impossible for individual groups of starshyna to interact and comprehend each other, thus giving rise to several destructive manifestations, including denunciation and conspiracy.

On 26 May 1693, in a letter addressed to Ivan and Petro Oleksiyovych regarding another denunciation against him, Mazepa elucidated the underlying cause of this lamentable phenomenon in the realm of politics as the inherent fallibility of human nature: “As the sun is accompanied by a shadow, so every man who faithfully serves his sovereigns, in glory and honor, is relentlessly pursued by envy... “ [15, p.34] Whilst not disputing the hetman's erudition in the complexities of the human psyche, it is asserted that there were also justifications for the dissemination of information in Ukraine-Hetmanate related to the idiosyncrasies of its state system.

Firstly, we refer to the observation made by V. Antonovych: “Each new hetman sought to replace as many colonels as possible who had served under his predecessor with individuals whose loyalty he could rely on.” [9, p.48] The complete mastery of the Hetmanate's state system by the Hetman's clientele deprived the opposition of any opportunity to represent and defend its interests and be represented in the highest echelons of power.

The crisis experienced by D. Mnohohohrshnyi exemplifies such assertions,



wherein he, rather than proposing a concrete mechanism for reconciling divergent interests, merely asserted his own invulnerability to the opposition starshyna. According to the Moscow ambassador's account, during the Easter congress of starshyna on April 17, 1670, the hetman stated: “He has heard, and many reports have come to him, that the Cossacks of all cities do not like him as Hetman much; and if indeed they do not like him as Hetman much, and they would beat their foreheads to the great sovereign about the election of another Hetman, he will relinquish his military titles to whomever they choose as Hetman; and as long as he remains in his position as hetman, and he would pacify the arbitrariness, as he swore to the great sovereign... In the meantime, those arbitrariness have nowhere to go but to the great sovereign.” [16, p.52]

Political situations that arose in the upper echelon of starshyna's elite contributed to the strengthening of the power of the incumbent hetman and his creativity. Conversely, these situations rendered the owner of the kleynodes as a victim, a hostage to the imperfections of the existing undemocratic form of government. The loss of power by the elected ruler, as per the Cossack starshyna councils, could only be achieved through a censure of the utmost severity, compromising material evidence, active opposition, or outright destruction. The violation of the democratic system by establishing “the hetman's dependence on the tsarist government” resulted in the conclusion that “the only way to strengthen the hetman or at least influence him was to denounce him”, and this method was widely used by starshyna. It should be noted that, in the words of D. Mnohohohrshnyi, which have previously been cited, the latter boasted of his invulnerability and indicated to the beleaguered oppositionists the only way out of their situation: to appeal to the tsar. However, this was not done openly but secretly, to avoid any potential consequences for the oppositionists. Furthermore, they were at liberty to choose any means to achieve success. Indeed, the only means available to them was the denunciation of the tsar. The most potent argument that could sway the tsar was to accuse the Hetman of treason. For the opposition, this was the sole means of extricating themselves from the prevailing adversity and safeguarding their careers, ensuring their survival under constant threat, or averting the fresh slanders of



treason that would undoubtedly emerge from a new wave of oppositionists. [16, p.78-80]

Furthermore, the practice of denunciation as a political action evolved within the context of the prevailing political and cultural orientations of the foreman. Specifically, the algorithm of denunciation exhibited a clear orientation towards the decision-making scheme that was familiar to starshyna, a scheme that was legitimized by the protector-serenissimo. Starshyna united against a specific hetman and submitted a petition. The tsar “confirmed” it by a decree on the arrest of the hetman, and the officers were able to elect a new leader [16, p.82].

The fabrication of accusations and documents to discredit political opponents and rivals was inextricably linked to denunciation. Typical examples of this phenomenon include the aforementioned “Petition of Foreman Starshyna against Samoilovych”, as well as documents brought into scientific circulation by O. Ogloblyn to illustrate the manifestations of the political struggle between starshyna's groups of I. Mazepa and V. Kochubey. These included the fabrication of letters on behalf of the opponents, the deployment of agents to provoke suspicious conversations, and the detailed recording of answers in case of arrest and interrogation. Additionally, certain behaviors of opponents were presented in an unfavorable context. For instance, I. Mazepa utilized the content of private economic correspondence between the Starodubsk colonel M. Miklashevsky and the Lithuanian nobleman M. Kotsel to accuse the high-ranking officer of maintaining clandestine political relations with Lithuania [14, p.122].

In addition to denunciation, a more complex form of overcoming a political opponent, known as conspiracy, can be observed. This involved a wider range of participants and the use of violent means of political struggle against the opponent. Foreman starshyna was ready to resort to a conspiracy when they tried to escape from, in their opinion, the leader's disastrous political course. The conspiracy was aimed at extraditing the hetman and thus demonstrating their political loyalty to the winner, or, more generally, to a stronger political entity. Consequently, towards the conclusion of 1675, I. Samoilovych informed the Moscow envoy, “When Gamaleyia approached him from the opposing side, he stated: Doroshenko's officers and colonels, who had now



crossed to the opposing side, convened a clandestine council and resolved that they would capture Doroshenko by any means necessary to bring the hetman to this side. The hetman, it was said, anticipated that this would be accomplished shortly, as all the officers there were keen to become subjects of the tsar's majesty". This phenomenon exemplifies the historical shift in the Zaporozhian okhlos, signifying a betrayal of their leader in times of adversity. [14, p.145]

A notable motivation among the conspirators was the pursuit of private interests rather than public ones. R. Dmytrashko-Raich, a participant in the conspiracy against D. Mnohohryshny, underscored the paramount significance of these interests: "starshyna and the populace of the Commonwealth, knowing of such a nefarious act, are, naturally, reduced to an inconsolable weeping, refusing to relinquish the lofty hand of the supreme sovereign, for they had become accustomed to a state of affluence, tranquility, and serenity, and had been endowed with ample residences and various assets. Now, they were on the brink of ruin and the destruction of innocent lives" [11, p.116]. The quotation under scrutiny here demonstrates that the propensity of the Ukrainian political elite to engage in conspiratorial activities during periods of crisis was chiefly dictated by the prevailing socio-economic circumstances. Encouraged by their material possessions and governmental positions, these individuals were only able to articulate their concerns after meticulous preparation, protracted deliberation, and a state of internal hesitation.

The focus on conspiracy manifested itself not only in the domestic sphere but also in foreign policy, with conspiracies already emerging as a means of national liberation. In the context of social, intra-, and inter-state confrontation, military weakness in the face of a usurper sovereign only made it possible to avoid detection by using surprise as an advantage and allowed the postponement or even refusal to act in the event of changes in foreign or domestic political circumstances. From a social egoist perspective, conspiracy was regarded as the most effective means of achieving objectives without compromising socio-economic relations, which formed the foundation for their social and political dominance. This perspective is further reinforced by the vivid memories of the National Revolution and the actions of the



Cossacks and commoners, which demonstrate to starshyna the potential for the subordinate classes to utilize military and political unrest as a catalyst for social action. This motivation is undoubtedly a salient factor for Mazepa and his entourage, who regarded it as “the most rational method of resistance”. [11, p.89]

The conspiracy emerged as a consequence of the inability to articulate their dissent regarding the violation of the treaty in a public forum. This assertion is corroborated by P. Orlyk, who, in a letter to P. Yavorsky, stated that, with the approval of the Hetman, a decision was made to dispatch a delegation to Peter I with a petition concerning the infringement of rights. However, over time, the officers concurred with Mazepa's perspective that this course of action would lead to “disaster and destruction for all.” [14, p.163]

The conspiracy allowed for maneuvering. Thus, when P. Orlyk learned of Mazepa's intention to change his patronage and was horrified at the possible consequences if the Swedes were defeated, the hetman replied: “...I am not a fool to act prematurely until I see the extreme necessity when the royal majesty will not be able to defend not only Ukraine but also his state against the Swedish power”. A little later, Mazepa added that if the Swedes did not make such “progress” in Moscovia, “and if our power is not enough to defend Ukraine and ourselves, then why should we go at our own peril and destroy our homeland?” [14, p.89]

Another feature of the conspiracy — dependence on foreign aid — became a priority in the plot of the members of the Novgorod-Siverskyi circle. The gentry, constituting a relatively small percentage of the total population, could not rely on the Cossacks, who were politically inert at the time, and even more so on the bourgeoisie and peasantry. Moreover, the majority of the nobility had already adopted a stance in favor of integration into the Russian political system, and the remainder, while perhaps sympathetic to the conspirators' views, had long since lost the political will to provide effective support. Consequently, the members of the group perceived no alternative but to secretly seek support from Russia's political opponents in the European arena. [1, p.167]

In the course of analyzing the political and cultural complex of starshyna's elite,



the so-called “problem of Ukrainian tendency to betrayal” is not taken into consideration, since this problem is not, in actuality, extant. It is merely a vestige of the imperial vision of Ukraine's history and perception of Ukrainians.

Nevertheless, it remains challenging to circumvent the interrogation surrounding the purported proclivity of the Ukrainian political elite of that era towards deceit and treachery. To illustrate this point, we may consider the opposition of the ailing D. Apostol and the foreman starshyna to the endeavors of O. Shakhovsky and P. Naryshkin to centralize the administration of the Hetmanate in the hands of the latter. When Prince O. Shakhovsky inquired of the incapacitated Hetman as to why he had not instructed the general clerk to report all affairs to General Naryshkin during his period of absence, D. Apostol responded instead. Rather than articulating a forthright response within the context of the legitimacy of the authority of the College of Foreman Starshyna (during the hetman's illness or absence), D. Apostol initiated a series of justifications, asserting that “he had purportedly instructed the clerk to report to him, General Naryshkin, and made additional remarks, though due to his physical fragility, the nuances of these instructions remained ambiguous.” When the Russian emissaries prepared a draft of the relevant document and presented it to the general clerk, he declared that “the Hetman did not order this to be written.” [11, p.48-51]

The foreman starshyna exhibited a similar pattern of behavior. In an attempt to lull Shakhovsky into a state of complacency, they informed him that they had abandoned their intentions to assume control of the government. In fact, according to the prince, they had even “demanded advice from me on how to write to the Foreign Affairs Board and request the transfer of the government to Naryshkin” in the form of a royal decree, as they allegedly could not be aware of this fact. In a display of humility, starshyna clandestinely orchestrated the formulation of a request for the collegial execution of Hetman's responsibilities in the event of D. Apostol's demise. This request was made to maintain Mr. Naryshkin in his current capacity as minister to the hetman until the selection of a new hetman. [11, p.96]

Consequently, rather than adopting a definitive stance on their own position, there is an observable tendency towards political maneuvering. The question, therefore,



arises as to why the 'principle of deception', as defined by G. Spencer and W. Lester in the late nineteenth century, played a pivotal role among the various means that representatives of the Ukrainian elite could utilize in the situation previously described.

In pursuit of the underlying factors that precipitated this behavior, we concur with the founder of political sociology, Lester Ward, who asserts: “There is no doubt that freedom produces truthfulness, as well as many other good qualities, while slavery and tyranny, on the whole, have a demoralizing effect.” [17, p.124]

Moreover, as evidenced by contemporary historians, “to some extent, clandestine agreements, strategic maneuvering, and political hypocrisy corresponded to the theoretical and ideological guidelines and political practice of that era”. In this regard, it is pertinent to recall the teachings of N. Machiavelli, who, in the pursuit of “conquest”, that is, the unification of Italy under the rule of the Florentine ruler L. de Medici, and “liberation of Italy from the hands of barbarians”, espoused the principle of employing means “consistent with the peculiarities of the time” and instilled in him the belief that this “weapon is sacred, on which the last hope rests”. Finally, Machiavelli's views were in alignment with the conclusions of H. Spencer and W. Lester regarding the “principle of deception”: “People act either out of necessity or by free choice, and the freer they are in their actions, the more their dignity is revealed.” [18, p. 14-20]

Summary and conclusions. The period saw a weakening of the nation's identity as a consequence of several factors, namely the demoralization that accompanied the Ruin era, the subdued and controlled status of Ukrainian citizenship under the rule of the Mazepa Oathbreaker, and the Peter the Great pogrom. The rotation of seniority in governments based on the criterion of full loyalty to Moscow's policy, and the weakening of the political subjectivity of the Ukrainian elite, reduced the struggle for political separateness to the level of autonomy. However, even this period of autonomy cannot be considered in any way typical. Indeed, at this historical juncture, the Ukrainian elite once again acknowledged the sovereignty of a single Russian monarch and sought to safeguard the inviolability of its own political and legal identity. In this quest, they endeavored to reinstate the tradition of electing a hetman by the populace,



inaugurating a sejm, its legislative framework, and insisting on an autonomous judicial system, crowned by a tribunal.

Despite the erosion of Ukrainian sovereignty under Russia's escalating military and political pressure, certain components of the nation's political culture persisted. These components, including the emphasis on territorial inviolability and the right to exercise sovereignty over individuals, groups, and the entire population within its own territory, continued to be significant elements of the political culture until the establishment of the Little Russian governorship in Ukraine-Hetmanate. Despite the endeavors of the Cossack officers to defend the rights of the Hetmanate, its integration into the imperial system resulted in the loss of autonomy and the transformation of its identity. Nevertheless, elements of this culture continued to exert influence on the formation of the national idea and legal tradition in Ukraine.

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