



# TRANSFER OF POWER, THE “DELAYED SUCCESSION,” AND POLITICAL CRISIS IN COSSACK UKRAINE (1657)

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DESPITE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM talking about the “Age of Absolutism” in the Early Modern era, implying a Europe run by all-powerful and ever-lasting royal dynasties, the continent witnessed numerous attempts to establish new dynasties, whose claims to (quasi-) monarchical power were tenuous and contested. In some cases, their pretensions were called into question because the new ruler of an established state was only remotely related to the previous dynasty, of which England may be a good example, with the ascent of the Tudors in 1485, the Stuarts in 1603, or the Hanoverians in 1714 (even if in all those cases the challenge was subdued). A similarly good example might be the succession to the French throne of the Calvinist Henri IV (1553–1610) in 1589, who was strongly opposed by Catholic foes. In other cases, opposition arose because rulers tried to establish their family as hereditary sovereigns of a new polity (monarchs in all but name), as Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) did when he bequeathed his title of Lord Protector to his son Richard (1629–1712) in 1658. In the United Provinces, Stadtholder Prince William (I) of Orange (1533–84) may have been on the verge of being invested with ducal power in Holland and Zeeland at the time of his murder in 1584, but throughout the subsequent existence of the Dutch Republic his descendants were never offered a similar title by the wary Dutch.

In Eastern Europe, too, hereditary succession, or the unproblematic survival of dynasties upon the passing of the incumbent, was by no means the norm at the death of monarchs (or rulers invested with similar power), as is shown by the failure of the Godunov and Shuiskii families during the 1600s in Russia, the

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highly contested Polish successions after the resignation of John Casimir (Jan Kazimierz, 1609–72) in 1668, or, indeed, the efforts of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi (c. 1595–1657) in founding a dynasty to rule as hetmans in Ukraine.

In this essay, I will focus on the ultimate failure of the Khmelnytskyis' effort to become hereditary rulers of Ukraine. This failure to establish a durable ruling dynasty resulted from a complex set of circumstances: The uncertain status of the Ukrainian state as a wholly independent, or sovereign, polity (surrounded by hostile Powers that wanted to grant Ukraine at best the status of a client or vassal state); the warfare that engulfed 1650s and 1660s Ukraine; crippling infighting between various Cossack clans; and the misfortune of the Khmelnytskyi family, whose claimant to the position of Ukrainian chief was a teenager upon the untimely death of his father Bohdan in 1657. The downfall of the Khmelnytskyis may have cost Ukraine one of its rare chances at becoming a viable, or durable, independent country before 1991.

Studying and understanding seventeenth-century Ukraine's political culture and its concept of authority and power transfer is impossible without analyzing its particular political tradition and political process, as well as the groups wielding power there and their ideology, programs, and actions. The botched first-ever transfer of power in the Early Modern Ukrainian Cossack polity (the so-called Hetmanate) in 1657 was a principal cause of the political crisis that followed, which only ended through the initial division of Ukraine into two halves (agreed to in the Andrusovo truce of 1667 between Poland and Russia, which was confirmed in 1686) and their eventual absorption into tsarist Russia. The change of leadership that was prompted by the death of this polity's founder, Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi (r. 1648–1657), happened at a very difficult time, when the Hetmanate's society and political culture were in flux, with old and new ways colliding, challenging and undoing some of his craftiest political plans and calculations in a search for a stable government for a new and beleaguered state. For, soon after in 1654 Ukraine's independence from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*) was affirmed (at least in the eyes of the Ukrainian Cossacks headed by Khmelnytskyi), strong disagreement arose among the Cossacks about the sort of government most suitable for their new state. This dispute was precipitated by Khmelnytskyi when he proposed, for the first time in Cossack history, and contrary to the "old" Cossack tradition, that his successor would not be elected at the Cossack general council, but rather chosen by the hetman himself and then confirmed by his closest collaborators. Only then would a formal approval from the entire Cossack Host, the traditional electors, follow. This new model of power transfer, which represented a transition from the military

democratic model of authority to a hereditary, monarchical type of rule, was untested, controversial, and ultimately rejected.

Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi passed away on 27 July 1657 (OS),<sup>1</sup> after having pre-arranged—or so he thought—a hereditary succession of the hetman's office by his lone surviving son, Yurii Khmelnytskyi (1641–85), then a lad of sixteen years of age. Due to a number of circumstances, which this study reconstructs and analyzes, this transfer of power did not occur the way the late hetman had devised it, which resulted in a severe political crisis, known as “The Ruin,” in Cossack *Ukraine*. This essay, then, supports the case for considering this transfer of power in the Hetmanate and subsequent disputes as the “opening accord,” or “opening salvo,” of “The Ruin.”<sup>2</sup> But before proceeding with an examination of the political developments in 1657, two issues must be addressed: The impact of a regime's founder's death on government and society; and the state of international and domestic affairs of the Cossack polity at the time of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's passing.

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Many newly created polities or regimes did not survive their founders' death, or saw their development significantly, and adversely, affected by their demise. Early Modern European history, in particular, shows how hereditary succession was normally perceived as the best way to ensure the stability and survivability of a ruling regime and as a safeguard against the danger of disputes over power.<sup>3</sup> According to Richard Mackenney,

For those who governed the interests of the family were all important. . . . The word “dynasty,” which denotes a succession of rulers of the same family, could in itself mean “sovereignty” or “power.” [The dynasty's survival represented] the difference between peace and war, and the accidents of inheritance shaped the power blocs of Europe as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

1. All dates in this paper are given according to the Julian or Old-Style (OS) calendar.
2. The term “opening accord of the civil war” was originally used by Ukrainian historian Natalia Iakovenko in relation to the anti-hetman uprising following the 1657 hetman's election (see Natalia Iakovenko, *Narys istorii seredniovichnoi ta ranniomodernoï Ukrainy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Kyiv: Krytyka, 2005, 371).
3. David Thomson, “*The Institutions of Monarchy*”: *Europe since Napoleon*, New York: Knopf, 1961), 79 and passim.
4. Richard Mackenney, *Sixteenth-Century Europe: Expansion and Conflict*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993, 219.

Thus, there is a pronounced tendency in historical scholarship to associate dynasty and hereditary succession with “sovereignty,” and “power,” as well as with “stability” and even the “survival” of certain regimes and polities.<sup>5</sup> In this respect, the contemporary military and political leaders, Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell, may serve as illuminating examples of thwarted founders of dynasties, whose failure had momentous consequences.

Without overemphasizing the similarities between the personalities, careers, and political legacies of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and Oliver Cromwell (and for this matter, their chosen successors in Yurii Khmelnytskyi and Richard Cromwell), an undeniable parallel between them regarding the issue of their hereditary succession may be discerned. I suggest that the key point here is that both leaders headed new political regimes and were dealing with the first ever transfers of power within their fledgling polities.

In April 1657, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi summoned his chief commanders and administrators to his capital city of Chyhyryn, where he persuaded them to elect his only surviving son, Yurii, upon his death. When Yurii Khmelnytskyi was to become hetman in August 1657, his place was taken by a different person, which delayed Yurii’s ascension to his father’s office for almost two years. The ensuing power struggle resulted in the subsequent division and the loss of much of the Hetmanate’s sovereignty.

In May 1657, on the other side of Europe, Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell was forced to reject the idea of becoming a king, even if a civilian constitution, *The Humble Petition and Advice*, granted him the right to name a successor. Cromwell’s oldest surviving son, Richard, took his late father’s office the very next day after Oliver Cromwell died (3 September 1658). Yet, the tension between the army and Richard’s allies led to his deposition from the office in May 1659. It was orchestrated by the same officers, who, only a few months ago, took part in Oliver

5. “Sovereignty of a state” is a complex notion, which refers to several characteristics. For example, it refers to a particular territorial unit, which is characterized by: 1) internal hierarchy; and 2) external autonomy (see Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1994), 129, 149, 154 *passim*). Likewise, “sovereignty” is associated with “particular boundaries, competencies and legitimacies available to it,” and is a fluid concept, which is characterized by a struggle, repeated in various forms at “numerous spatial and temporal locals” (see Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State, and Symbolic Exchange*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995, 3). See as well Daniel H. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2009. All in all, when the issue of “sovereignty” is discussed, factors such as the role of conflict (both internal and external), underdeveloped state, political, or social structures, and the concomitant precedence of “individual” over “institutional” must be taken into account.

Cromwell's funeral procession. Those officers were led by none other than Charles Fleetwood (c. 1618–92), the chief mourner, and Oliver Cromwell's son-in-law.<sup>6</sup>

Both these cases demonstrate that the legitimacy of “dynasty” or “hereditary succession” by itself might guarantee the preservation of a political regime and even a state's sovereignty. Studies of Early Modern European politics show that “the complexity and ambiguity of succession arrangements and inheritance customs” possessed a significant potential for political disruption.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in the seventeenth century very few states and dynasties had a formal or codified law of succession, and the newly established Ukrainian Cossack Hetmanate was certainly not one of those states. More to the point:

... the assumption that primogeniture and the selection of the nearest male blood relative in some sense constituted an “unwritten rule” for the operation of an order of succession, looks decidedly unconvincing in the light of early modern practices. At the root of this lack of rules governing succession lay a deeper ambiguity about the nature of sovereignty. Rulers who could claim to possess absolute and undivided sovereign power were rare in early modern Europe. The majority of states existed within complex structure of multiple or divided sovereignties. Where sovereignty itself was in question, the notion that the ruler had an undisputed right to allocate his territorial inheritance to a chosen heir without regard to counter-claims was correspondingly insecure.<sup>8</sup>

Parrott shows the overall precariousness of the first-ever transfer of power in Early Modern Europe. This is an important point mainly because it both demonstrates the glaring need for, and leads to a detailed reconstruction of, this power transfer's model, process, its major players, and the influence of various external and

6. See *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Wilbur Cortez Abbott, ed., vol. 4, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1947, 331, 335, 399–463; Patrick Little, “John Turloe and the Offer of the Crown to Oliver Cromwell,” in *Oliver Cromwell: New Perspectives*, Patrick Little, ed., New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 216–40; and Jason Peacey, “Fit for Public Services: The Upbringing of Richard Cromwell,” in *Oliver Cromwell*, Patrick Little, ed., 241–64. As for the “consolidation of power” tendencies, evident in the policies of both Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and Oliver Cromwell, see Valerii Stepankov, “Ukrainska revoliutsiia i evropeyskyi revoliutsiinyi rukh XVI-XVII st.: spil'ne i vidminne (do problem typolohii),” *Naukovi pratsi Kamianets-Podilskoho derzhavnogo pedahohichnoho universytetu. Series Istorychni nauky* 3, 1997, 46.

7. David Parrott, “The Mantuan Succession, 1627–31: A Sovereignty Dispute in Early Modern Europe,” *English Historical Review* 445, 1997, 20–65: 24.

8. Parrott, “Mantuan Succession,” 25–6.

internal factors. This altogether provides a better understanding of a polity and a society on the brink of an important change.

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The anti-government uprising in the Ukrainian lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth began in early 1648.<sup>9</sup> Led by Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, a Cossack middle-rank officer elected military leader (*hetman*), the Cossacks' armed struggle against the magnates and their military forces was legitimized by the Cossacks' claims of the Polish king's "sympathy" and assistance to their cause. Its original purpose was to bring down the earlier ordinances (such as the ordinance of 1638), which had severely limited Ukrainian Cossack rights.

The mostly Cossack uprising soon turned into a general one with members of various strata of Ukrainian society fighting against serfdom and manorial rules, attacks on the Eastern Orthodox Christian faith, as well as against other alleged injustices.<sup>10</sup> Initially, there were no plans among the rebels to secede from the Commonwealth. However, the uprising reached a new level after Ukrainian military victories at Zhovti Vody and Korsun (1648), the mobilization of the Commonwealth's forces against them, and the Zboriv Agreement of 1649 between the rebels and King Jan Kazimierz, which established Cossack control over the parts of Ukrainian lands. By 1649, a new political entity, the Hetmanate, led by the Cossack hetman, emerged in what is now central Ukraine. In January 1654, Cossack Ukraine severed its remaining political ties with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, instead, in exchange for military support, accepting the patronage of the Muscovite tsar, Aleksei Mikhailovich Romanov (1629–76). However, the Ukrainian side soon became disenchanted with this political arrangement. In the face of the Muscovite court's efforts to assert a greater control over the Hetmanate, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi continued exercising his rule over this polity until his death.<sup>11</sup>

9. See for example Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus*, vol. 8, Edmonton and Toronto: CIUS P, 2002, 394–5; Frank E. Sysyn, "Khmelnytsky Uprising," in *Europe 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*, ed. Jonathan Dewald, vol. 3, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons and Thompson Learning, 2004, 403.

10. On the support for the revolt by various Ukrainian (Ruthenian) social strata, see Serhii Plokhyy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006, 237–8.

11. Hrushevsky, *History*, vol. 8, 575–654; Frank E. Sysyn, "Ukrainian-Polish Relations in the Seventeenth Century: The Role of National Consciousness and National Conflict in the Khmelnytsky Movement," in *Poland and Ukraine: Past and Present*, Peter J. Potychnyj, ed., Edmonton; Toronto: CIUS P, 1980, 58–82; and Frank E. Sysyn, "The Khmelnytsky Uprising and Ukrainian Nation-Building," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 1–2, 1992, 141–70.

At the time of Hetman Khmelnytskyi's passing one can recognize the contours of a Ukrainian Cossack state with its own elite, political system, administration, ideology, military, and other essential attributes for any state. But it was very much the hetman's personal abilities and his great political power that were key for the Cossack polity's political and military successes. That is why, in order to understand the later events related to the transfer of power after his death, it is crucial to understand the rise of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi to power.

Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, often referred to as *generalissimus* (supreme military commander of a state) and *dux* (duke) in the diplomatic documents of his time, made a swift transition from rebel chief to successful military commander, ruler of occupied territories and ultimately, ruler of a new state. This polity was created mainly through Khmelnytskyi's vision and efforts. During his lifetime, the hetman's military and political successes, his rise to power and his charismatic authority were often attributed to the "Divine Providence": to his contemporaries Khmelnytskyi's significance reached Biblical proportions with the hetman being called "Moses," and "a preserver, savior and liberator of [his people] from the Polish yoke," whose name "so properly meant 'Given-by-God'" (*Bohdan-Theodatus*).<sup>12</sup> There is an argument to be made here that the evolution of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's personal power resembled the genesis of royal authority in other places.<sup>13</sup>

The "messianic" status of hetman assisted him well in converting this popularity into concrete, real power, effectively challenging the existing military-democratic tradition of the Zaporozhian Cossack Host, according to which hetmans were elected, controlled, and deposed by a "general Cossack council" (*zahalna rada*)—an assembly of all serving Cossacks of all ranks. According to Serhii Plokhyy, the main administrative institutions of the Zaporozhian Cossack Host, which underscored the hetman's power under Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, were formed in his struggle against the influence of a "general council" and its replacement by the smaller in size and more "elitist officers' council" (*starshyynska*

12. "Moysen, servatorem, salvatorem et liberatorem populi de servitute Lechiaca et bono omine Bohdan de Boh dany nazwany" (see *Pamiatniki, izdannye vremennoi kommissiei dlia razbora drevnikh aktov, vysochaishe uchrezhdennoi pri kievskom voennom, podolskom i volynskom general-gubernatore* [from here: PVK] vol. 1, Kiev: V lito-tipograficheskome zavedenii I.K. Valnera, 1848, 337); Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History*, vol. 8, 517.

13. Taras Chukhlib, *Hetmany i monarchy: ukrainska derzhava v mizhnarodnykh vidnosynakh 1648–1714 rr.*, Kyiv; New York: NTSh v SShA and NAN Ukrainy, 2003, 50–1; Serhii Plokhyy, *Nalyvaikova vira: kozatstvo ta relihiia v ranniomodernii Ukraini*, Kyiv: Krytyka, 2006, 268–9, 273.

*rada*).<sup>14</sup> During Hetman Khmelnytskyi's tenure (1648–1657), the prerogatives of the general council were significantly limited both because of the impracticality and impossibility of assembling tens of thousands of Cossacks from a vast territory, and the desire of Cossack officers (*starshyna*) to limit the influence of rank-and-file Cossacks and allied non-Cossacks (*chern*).<sup>15</sup> Thus, the summoning of general councils during Khmelnytskyi's time as hetman soon became an infrequent practice, to which he resorted only when in need of approval of certain policies or after facing military defeats. The last time the general council was called during Khmelnytskyi's lifetime was in 1651 (after the defeat at the battle of Berestechko), though in 1653 the low rank Cossacks and sympathizers assembled a "black council" (*chorna rada*), without hetman or officers present. They were trying to return to an earlier tradition, when the general council, and not the hetman, had dictated the policy of the Cossack Host.<sup>16</sup>

In response, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi promoted the role of a much smaller, more manageable and agreeable officers' council. Yet, as early as 1651, the hetman seemed not only to abandon the practice of calling general councils, but also limited the frequency with which he summoned and consulted his highest officers. Instead, to the Cossack officers' chagrin, the hetman made all important decisions together with his trusted aide—the Scribe General (or Chancellor) Ivan Vyhovskyi (d. 1664), who was dealing with both the domestic and foreign affairs, and whose position as the hetman's favorite had already been solidified by the end of 1649.<sup>17</sup> Altogether, the hetman's power had been consolidated to the point when its holder almost single-handedly exercised the complete authority over the Hetmanate.<sup>18</sup> This model provided numerous benefits to the holder of such power, but also contained inherent dangers in the case of this person's disappearance.

This is not to say that Khmelnytskyi's "messianic" status saved him from being challenged on occasion by those opposing his overall strategy, or his own, his

14. Ploky, *Nalyvaikova vira*, 273; Ivan Krypiakievych, "Studii nad derzhavoiu Bohdana Khmelnytskoho," *Zapysky Naukovoho Tovarystva Shevchenka*, vols. 139–40, Lviv, 1926–7, 68.

15. Ploky, *Nalyvaikova vira*, 273.

16. Ploky, *Nalyvaikova vira*, 274–6.

17. Fr. Yurii Mytsyk, *Hetman Ivan Vyhovskyi*, Kyiv: KM Akademiia, 2004), 13–15; Ploky, *Nalyvaikova vira*, 277, 279.

18. Ploky, *Nalyvaikova vira*, 279–80.



family's, or his entourage's particular decisions and actions. For instance, in early 1650, the Zaporozhian Sich Cossacks, led by Iatsko Khudolii, openly opposed the hetman's authority. The Sich stronghold had served as a power base for Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's successful uprising in 1648, but the hetman's new policies and especially his perceived focus on Ukrainian "towns" rather than the Sich provoked the latter's dissatisfaction with the hetman. Though crushed by Khmelnytskyi's troops in 1650, this opposition would reemerge in 1657 and on numerous occasions afterwards.

Opposition to the hetman among the "town" Cossacks was largely fueled by Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's diplomatic treaties with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Zboriv, 1649; Bila Tserkva, 1651), which many perceived as a betrayal of their cause of national and religious liberation. In the spring of 1650, a group of Cossack officers, led by Colonel Matvii Hladkyi, questioned the authority of the hetman, but was dealt with harshly: Hladkyi, Lukyian Mozyria, Semen Herasymowych, and some other culprits were executed on the hetman's order in 1652.<sup>19</sup> As a final example of disgruntlement with Bohdan Khmelnytskyi may serve an incident in June 1653, when a mob of Cossacks, angry with the military defeat suffered by the hetman's elder son (and then heir-apparent), Tymofii (Tymish) Khmelnytskyi (d. 1653), and being destitute from a lengthy campaign in Moldova, came to the hetman saying:

We witness our ultimate peril because you are running away from [your] death and give [much] power to your son, Tymofii. Your son went to defend his father-in-law and lost up to five thousand men due to his drunkenness and stupidity . . . [more insults followed and, according to the Muscovite envoy's report,] had the hetman rendered even a slightly harsh response then worse things would have happened [to him].<sup>20</sup>

During the last two years of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's life, the status of Cossack Ukraine in European politics remained far from secure. For one thing, the Muscovite-Commonwealth reconciliation in Vilno (1656) made the hetman extremely angry; he likely realized that his choice of the Muscovite tsar as protector

19. Volodymyr Kryvosheia, *Kozatska elita Hetmanshchyny*, Kyiv: IPIEND im. I.F. Kurasa, 2008, 74; Plokhy, *Nalyvaikova vira*, 281.

20. *Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei. Dokumenty i materialy v trekh tomakh* [from here: VUR], vol. 3, Moscow: AN USSR, 1954, 300–1.

(1654) did not benefit the Cossack side as much as he originally expected.<sup>21</sup> Khmelnytskyi tried to counterbalance this by entering into negotiations and treaties with Sweden and Transylvania, but those political maneuvers further aggravated his relationship with his Russian patron, and resulted in Muscovite accusations against the Cossacks regarding their “vacillation” and “disloyalty.” Meanwhile, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth remained keen on bringing the Cossacks back to its fold by any means possible, while the Ottoman Porte and the Khanate of Crimea constituted an incessant threat to the Hetmanate, even when it was not engaged in an overt war with those states.<sup>22</sup>

The issues of the sustainability of the Hetmanate’s independence and the sovereignty of Ukraine as a state were never resolved during Bohdan Khmelnytskyi’s lifetime. Two further related questions remained pertinent: Who would succeed as hetman when Khmelnytskyi died and would this successor be able to navigate the Cossack polity through the rapids of domestic and foreign policy?

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With the hetman’s health rapidly deteriorating throughout 1656–early 1657, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi was forced to think both of who would succeed him in the office and the future fate of the Hetmanate. The hetman considered scenarios of the transfer of power, made his own plans protecting his and his family’s interests, and endeavored to ensure the preservation of his political accomplishments. Due to its unpredictability, Khmelnytskyi was determined not to allow the “old Cossack tradition” to have a new hetman elected by the general Cossack council. This led him to what seemed the only logical option, that of a dynastic (hereditary) succession.

21. European diplomatic papers of that period occasionally mentioned rumors about the strained relations between Aleksei Mikhailovich and Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, formally the tsar’s subject after the Treaty of Pereiaslav of 1654. One such reported rumor dates from even before the Vilno Treaty, which maintained that the hetman, being reproached on one occasion by the Muscovite monarch and called a “peasant,” retorted by calling the monarch “a Jew” (a grave insult in the Eastern Slavonic cultures of that time) and threatened coming to Moscow with a 100,000-strong army to avenge the insult (see “Snosheniia tsaria i velikogo kniazia Alekseia Mikhailovicha s Leopoldom I, 1658 i 1659,” *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii drevnei Rossii s derzhavami inostrannymi*, vol. 20, St. Petersburg: Tipografia vtoroia otdeleniia Sobstvennoi E.I.V. kantselarii, 1854, 671). Further examples of such strained relations will be provided during a discussion of Ivan Vyhovskiy’s bid for the hetman’s office.
22. For the political context of this period, see Iaroslav Fedoruk, *Vilenskyi dohovir 1656 roku: Skhidnoevropeiska kryza i Ukraina u seredyni XVII stolittia*, Kyiv: KMA, 2011.

Not only the hetman in Chyhyryn, but other European rulers pondered the establishment of the “Khmelnyskyi dynasty” as sovereign rulers of the Hetmanate, as incontrovertibly shown by instructions from King Charles X Gustav (1622–60) of Sweden to his ambassador, Gotthard Velling, of 26 September 1656.<sup>23</sup> The king instructed the ambassador to find out whether Bohdan Khmelnytskyi would accept the offer of hereditary power in exchange for allying himself with the king.<sup>24</sup> Velling was instructed to make similar inquiries about Ivan Vyhovskiy (*sic!*), whom many considered the hetman’s “political shadow” and a possible successor. In his instructions, Charles X Gustav commanded his envoy to offer the Cossack leader a choice between keeping a free state in Ukraine consisting of three palatinates (Kyiv, Chernihiv and Bratslav) and remaining in the Polish state (much of it under the Swedish control) under the provision that all Cossack demands would be met and their rights and liberties protected.

In the spring of 1657, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi fell very ill and his deteriorating health inspired frequent rumors about his death.<sup>25</sup> The ailing hetman himself was busy orchestrating the first-ever transition of power in the recently founded Cossack polity. Sometime between 15 and 21 April 1657, Khmelnytskyi summoned colonels and other ranking Cossack officers and officials for an “officers’ council” to Chyhyryn.<sup>26</sup> Here, in the course of a week-long discussion, he convinced them to elect his son Yurii as the next hetman. Yurii, who was present, was then “elected and proclaimed” (*qui postquam electus et publicatus fuisset*) as his father’s successor.<sup>27</sup> This staged election was yet to be approved by the entire Cossack Host, though, and it must be considered not a true election, but a *selection*, that is, in modern terms, a nomination or an appointment. Yurii’s

23. For the term and concept of “Khmelnyskyi dynasty,” see Iaroslav Dashkevych, “Klan Khmelnytskykh—lehenda chy diisnist?,” *Ukraina v mynulomu*, vol. 2, Kyiv and Lviv: n.p., 1992, 82–4. In this study, Dashkevych traced the descendants of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, their matrimonial links and place within Cossack political establishment. His arguably most important conclusion was that Bohdan Khmelnytskyi did not have much luck with male descendants in his elder son, Tymofii (Tymish), who died in 1653, making the adolescent Yurii the only male offspring to take the place of the celebrated hetman.

24. *Arkhiv Iugo-Zapadnoi Rossii, izdavaemyi kommissiei dlia razbgora drevnikh aktov* [from here: *AluZR*], pt. 3, vol. 6, Kiev: V Tip. Korchak-Novitskago, 1908, 157, 166.

25. For the first (false) rumor about the hetman’s death in May 1657 see Iurii Mytsyk, *Zapiski inostrantsev kak istochnik po istorii Ukrainy (vtoraia polovina XVI-seredina XVII v.)*, pt. 1: *Nemetskie i avstriiskie istochniki*, Dnepropetrovsk: DGU, 1981, 57.

26. Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus*, vol. 9, book 2, pt. 2, 288, 291.

27. *Ibid.*

[s]election was followed by a three-day lavish feast with music and celebratory cannon- and gunfire.<sup>28</sup> It is also worth mentioning that the same report describing these events shows how the invited Cossack officers were somewhat astonished by this turn of events (and, possibly, by its implications), though none were in a position to question, much less to oppose, their hetman's will.

The fact of Yurii's [s]election and the nature of this arrangement are documented and explained by other sources as well. These sources also point at various caveats in this arrangement, which could potentially overturn the April decision made in Chyhyryn. For example, in a June 1657 letter to the tsar from the high-ranking noble (*okol'nichii*) Fedor V. Buturlin (d. 1673), the Muscovite envoy to Chyhyryn, we find the following clarification of Yurii's status:

... Once the hetman passes away, they [Cossacks], remembering his [Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's] military deeds and accomplishments, after his death would elect his son Yurii as hetman. . . . And colonels said that they . . . would elect [Yurii Khmelnytskyi] after his [Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's] death. And after the hetman's death this promise can be overturned if this happens to be the will of Your Majesty. . . . *As of now, his son is not called [future] hetman in any of the documents.*<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Yurii's [s]election did not carry legal power prior to the general Cossack election council. Somewhat like the status of *tsarevich* in neighboring Russia or the *dauphin* in France at this time, Yurii Khmelnytskyi was the living successor to his bedridden father's office as hetman; Yurii's position, however, would need to be confirmed through a formal election (to be staged after Bohdan's death) and, ultimately, sealed by the tsar's approval. At the same time, Buturlin's testimony points at the process of creation of a new political tradition in Cossack Ukraine, which occurred as the merging of elements of two distinct traditions: a "dynastic succession," which was characterized by a [s]election of an heir, and his subsequent formal confirmation at the council, the latter element being a formality, a nod to the previous Cossack tradition of electing hetmans.

28. See secretary Christophor Marianovich's report in Julian Grafen Pejacevich, *Peter Freiherr von Parchevich, Erzbischof von Martianopel, Apostolischer Vicar und Administrator der Moldau, Bulgarischer Internuntius am Kaiserlichen Hofe und Kaiserlicher Gesandter bei idem Kosaken-Hetman Bogdan Chmielnicki (1612–1674). Nach Archivalischen Quellen Geschildert*, Wien: In Commission bei Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1880, 209 [545].

29. My italics. See *Akty, otmosiashchiesia k istorii Iuzhnoi i Zapadnoi Rossii. Sobranye i izdannye arkhieograficheskoi kommissiei* [from here: *Akty IuZR*], vol. 11, St. Petersburg: Tipografia M. Ettingera, 1879, 685–6.

In the months between the April officers' council and his father's death, Yurii was being tutored as his father's successor in diplomatic affairs and military leadership. Yurii accompanied Ivan Vyhovskiy—who at that time was speaking for the hetman and signing state documents—to many significant diplomatic meetings with the Muscovite envoys. However, the hetman's son was expected, apart from greeting dignitaries on behalf of hetman, to mainly look, listen, and learn.<sup>30</sup>

As for Yurii's apprenticeship as a military commander, the first taste proved to be rather sour. In May 1657, Yurii Khmelnytskyi as acting hetman took charge of several regiments deployed to secure the southern border at the Tashlyk Rivers against the Tatar raids. Unsure how to carry out their assignment, Yurii Khmelnytskyi and his advisers kept their Cossack detachment largely idle. Meanwhile, the Cossack colonels constantly quarreled among themselves, with Yurii, whose authority was based solely on the reputation of his father, unable to establish order.<sup>31</sup> When stationed on the southern borders of the Hetmanate in the summer of 1657, Yurii and his officers were challenged by a mob of angry Cossacks, in an echo of the 1653 incident featuring his father and his late elder brother Tymish. This time Cossacks, who were destitute after a lengthy stay in the open steppe, were stirred by the news of their troops moving to Poland to secure its throne for György II Rákóczi (1621–1660), Prince of Transylvania. The rebels reportedly insulted their commanders and accused them of “seeking themselves a king” instead of serving loyally His Majesty the Tsar.<sup>32</sup>

One must not assume that Bohdan Khmelnytskyi was oblivious to the shortcomings of his heir apparent, such as his youth, lack of experience, and absent charisma. Initially, Yurii's success or failure would depend largely on following the advice of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's trusted and experienced associates, who were presumed one day to become Yurii's own advisers. In reality, however, those very associates harbored their own plans and expectations regarding the hetman's office.

30. *Akty IuZR*, vol. 3, St. Petersburg: V Tip. P.A. Kulisha, 1861, 559, 564, 568; Fr. Yurii Mytskyk, *Hetman Ivan Vyhovskiy*, 20–1.

31. *Arkhiv Iugo-Zapadnoi Rossii, izdavaemyi kommissiei dlia razbgora drevnikh aktov* [from here: *AiuZR*, pt. 3, vol. 6, Kiev: V Tip. Korchak-Novitskago, 1908, 313; *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka, izdavaemaia Arkeheograficheskoiu kommissieiu*, vol. 8, St. Petersburg: Tipografia F.G. Eleonskago i Ko., 1884, 1290–1.

32. *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka*, vol. 8, 1289–91.

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While Yurii Khmelnytskyi was learning how to rule and already played the role of acting hetman as early as the spring of 1657, his father's, and now Yurii's own, councilor Ivan Vyhovskyi exerted real power, always remaining close to the heir designate. Some Polish contemporaries of those events (who may have had a "soft spot" for Vyhovskyi in the light of his alliance with the Commonwealth) stated that the late Bohdan Khmelnytskyi had recommended Ivan Vyhovskyi as his successor, going as far as maintaining that the old hetman viewed the scribe general "as his true [natural] son" and "listened to his counsels in every single instance."<sup>33</sup>

Although Bohdan Khmelnytskyi attempted to secure Yurii Khmelnytskyi's position as future hetman by all means available in his political arsenal, Vyhovskyi's own closeness to Khmelnytskyi's family and his role in the Cossack government placed him indeed in the epicenter of power and provided him with certain advantages in the power struggle that followed Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's death. However, while the hetman was still alive, Ivan Vyhovskyi had to suppress his ambition of becoming hetman himself, and had to appear content serving as an aide and a guardian to Yurii. There is reason to argue that were Vyhovskyi, though trusted by ailing hetman with the affairs of the Cossack state, to seek the hetman's office himself prematurely, he would be dealt with harshly. In Mykhailo Hrushevskyi's words:

. . . the hetman championed to the end the dynastic combination that he had adopted—the transfer of the hetman's mace to his son. . . . The hetman did not hesitate to behead officers for attempts to undermine that fact. . . . Vyhovskyi himself was threatened with death on a number of occasions because of this.<sup>34</sup>

All in all, it is important to emphasize that, in Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's opinion, Vyhovskyi had to be content with his role as the caretaker and a guardian to his

33. See the account by Krzysztof Peretiatkowicz regarding his services rendered to the Polish Crown by participating in the Polish-Cossack negotiations of 1657 to 1659, in *Pamiętniki, wydane kiewskoiu kommissieiu dlia razbora drevnikh aktov* [from here: PKK], vol. 3, second edition, Kiev: Tipografia Imperatorskago Universiteta Sv. Vladimira, 1898, 344; see as well *Pamiętnik Mikołaja Jemiołowskiego, towarzysza lekkiej chorągwi, ziemianina województwa Bełzkiego, obejmujący dzieje polski od roku 1648 do 1679 spółcześnie, porządkiem lat opowiedziane*, Lwów: W Drukarni Zakładu Narodowego Ossolińskich, 1850, 10.

34. Hrushevskyi, *History of Ukraine-Rus*, vol. 9, book 2, pt. 2, 401; Fr. Yurii Mytsyk, *Hetman Ivan Vyhovskyi*, 21, 37.

adolescent son, who without help could not possibly navigate the Hetmanate through the political rapids of deteriorating Cossack-Muscovite relations, the Commonwealth's and the Tatar's military threat, as well as growing domestic discord among the Sich and low-rank Hetmanate's Cossacks. In this role Vyhovskiy was expected to continue Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's political course by carrying out his domestic and foreign policies, while not to covet the hetman's office himself. Instead, he was to be one of the main pillars on which the authority of Khmelnytskyi's heir, Yurii, would be rested. While the hetman's expectations of Vyhovskiy to continue with his policies were realistic, his expectations of Vyhovskiy to be content with the ascribed role of a mere aide to his son were not.

For Ivan Vyhovskiy, the death of his patron, Hetman Khmelnytskyi, endangered his own life. Vyhovskiy's "non-Cossack" roots and his exceptional political weight within the hetman's administration made him many enemies among the topmost Cossack officers and throughout the Cossack Host. Their threat might only be alleviated if Vyhovskiy occupied the chief position of hetman. In addition, Vyhovskiy must have convinced himself of his ability to run the state as hetman after he had been running it as the ailing hetman's aide and scribe general, a position of an importance second only to the hetman's. Moreover, although related to the "Khmelnytskyi clan" through the marriage of his brother Danylo (Colonel of Bykhiv) to Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's daughter, Kateryna, Vyhovskiy had his own clan with its own interests. The network he headed was comprised of his family members and sympathizers from among several Cossack families: Vyhovskiy's father (Ostafii), brothers (Danylo, Kostiantyn, Fedir, and Vasyi), members of Cossack families of noble origin (*shliakhta*) (the Skuratisvskiy, Iablonskiy, Statkevych, Olshanskyy, and several other families of note), or members of senior and middle-level Cossack administration (such as the Judge General, Tymish Nosach, the Colonel of Pereiaslav, Fedir Loboda, and the alderman of Chyhyryn, Herman Haponovych). All of them depended upon the status of their powerful relative and patron, and all of them were likely to benefit from Ivan Vyhovskiy's ascension to power.<sup>35</sup> Because Vyhovskiy's relatives and supporters were highly interested in his ascension to the highest office, when the occasion presented itself they were quick to accuse Bohdan Khmelnytskyi of disloyalty to the tsar and, conversely, to emphasize the loyalty of Ivan Vyhovskiy to the Muscovite monarch.

35. Dashkevych, *Klan Khmelnytskykh*, 80–2; *Kryvosheia, Kozatska elita Hetmanshchyny*, 125–30.

In April and May 1657, the Muscovite diplomat Buturlin visited the ailing Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi. Buturlin was entrusted by the tsar with finding out about the hetman's alliance with the Swedish king and the Transylvanian prince as well as about the reason for Cossacks campaigning against the Commonwealth, Russia's formal vassals thereby violating the Muscovite-Polish armistice of Vilno (1656). On one occasion during Buturlin's sojourn in Chyhyryn, Ivan Vyhovskyi's father, Ostafii, had a confident conversation (Ostafii Vyhovskyi "sending away all servants") with the Muscovite diplomat. Vyhovskyi conveyed to him that, after the signing of the agreement in Vilno, the Cossack envoys who had attended the meeting told Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, Ivan Vyhovskyi, and Cossack colonels how the tsar had "betrayed" the Cossacks and surrendered them to "the Poles."<sup>36</sup>

Once the envoys' report had been presented before the assembly, the Cossack leader's reaction quickly turned from disbelief to fury:

. . . Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi yelled, as if he had lost his mind, saying: take no worries, my children! I know what should be done now: We have to reject the authority of His Majesty the Tsar and go where the Lord in the Highest commands us to go: either to surrender to the Christian or the Muslim [ruler].<sup>37</sup>

Ostafii Vyhovs'kyi did not stop there:

. . . Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi is greatly enraged and, in his sickness, is angry at everyone: It is better either to die or to run away than to see [the hetman] like this. My son, the Scribe [General] Ivan Vyhovskyi, told me that no measures are enough to stop the hetman's treason and injustice: [in his own words] "if not for you and for mother, I, because of my anguish, would have long ago run away to His Majesty the Tsar or to other countries."<sup>38</sup>

Ivan Vyhovskyi was playing a dangerous game indeed. There is evidence that, sometime in the summer of 1657, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi ordered him chained to the ground in a prostrated position, presumably prior to being executed. This was purportedly caused by the news that his associate coveted the hetman's office

36. *Akty IuZR*, vol. 3, St. Petersburg: V Tip. P.A. Kulisha, 1861, 555–6.

37. *AIuZR*, vol. 3, 555–6.

38. *AIuZR*, vol. 3, 557.



himself. After almost a day of Vyhovskiy's lamentations and refutations of those charges, the hetman forgave him.<sup>39</sup>

The death of the old hetman left Ivan Vyhovskiy without political protection, but at the same time it offered him a chance to win the hetman's office. In mid-August 1657, that is at the midpoint between the death of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and the scheduled election of a new hetman, the Muscovite envoy Ivan A. Zheliabuzhskii (1638–1709) had a conversation with "Ivashka Prokofiev and associates," Cossacks of the Kyiv regiment, who had just returned from Chyhyryn. According to these Cossacks, colonels and other officers would assemble in Chyhyryn on 21 August to lay their hetman to rest, and after the burial they would be electing a new hetman.<sup>40</sup> In response to Zheliabuzhskii's pinpointed questions (who do they think would be elected hetman? would all Cossacks from all regiments participate in the election? how would the election be held? what do people say about [the chances] of the [late] hetman's son?), the Cossacks responded as follows:

Ivan Vyhovskiy, the scribe, wants to be called hetman and [he,] through [dispensing] favors[,] seeks that colonels elect him as such. But the [Cossack] Host doesn't want him [Vyhovskiy] [as hetman], [though] nobody from the Host is summoned for the hetman's election [except for the aforementioned colonels and people of authority]. And the [entire] Host will not be electing a hetman, because they will be waiting [for news] from the great monarch [the tsar] [regarding] whom the great monarch will order to rule over us. . . . As of now there is no news regarding the election of the hetman and the troops are not thinking about electing a hetman. Had the troops wanted [the election of the] hetman to take place, there would already be carnage among colonels for the hetman's office.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting part of this discussion concerns Yurii Khmelnytskyi's chances to occupy the office of his late father. According to Prokofiev and his associates, "[people] talk about the [late] hetman's son not being able to hold the hetman's office."<sup>42</sup>

39. *Akty IuZR*, vol. 7, St. Petersburg: Tipografia V.V. Prats, 1872, 189.

40. *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka*, vol. 8, 1267. This information about the impending election of a new hetman by "colonels and [other] people of authority" meets the description of an "officers' council," a narrower and a more-controlled group, from which fewer "surprises" were expected (see above).

41. *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka*, vol. 8, 1267–8.

42. *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka*, vol. 8, 1268.

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In his "The Circulation of Information about Ivan Vyhovs'kyj," David A. Frick points to two key points about Vyhovskiy's succession to the hetman's office in August 1657.<sup>43</sup> First, "[Vyhovskiy] took over hetmancy under disputed circumstances: *he* claimed that [Khmelnyskiy], on his deathbed, had begged the secretary, unwilling though he was, to take control of the Cossack Host until [Yurii Khmelnyskiy] would mature into the job," while, second, "his opponents claimed he [Vyhovskiy] had manipulated his way into a position of power that did not belong to him, and which he had no thought of relinquishing to anyone."<sup>44</sup> In this way, the scholar summed up the then existing state of knowledge and understanding of events related to the transition of power in the Cossack polity. Since then next to nothing has been done to further study or re-evaluate this important transition of power, and thereby better understand not only the event itself, but its meaning and consequences for the political system and Ukraine at large.

As I have shown above, Ivan Vyhovskiy was indeed given the role of a senior aide and guardian to the late Bohdan Khmelnyskiy's son. This arrangement amounted to giving Vyhovskiy the hetman's power without the actual title. Vyhovskiy must have chafed at this limitation, for being a mere "aide" or "guardian" to the hetman was fraught with risk; for over a year before Hetman Khmelnyskiy's death, he had therefore been working on securing his future position of power. As the earlier description of Vyhovskiy's punishment for allegedly seeking power shows, seeking this office was considered a grave and punishable offense. Frick's argument that Vyhovskiy manipulated his way "into a position of power that did not belong to him, and which he had no thought of relinquishing" is largely based upon the testimonies of the Ukrainian-Cossack *Eyewitness Chronicle*. This, however, needs to be re-examined and re-evaluated.

In the *Eyewitness Chronicle*, written soon after the events occurred, the crisis following the death of Bohdan Khmelnyskiy is attributed to the problem of "succession" (transition of power) and the ensuing power struggle over the hetman's office among Ukrainian-Cossack officers. This is the single most

43. David A. Frick, "The Circulation of Information about Ivan Vyhovs'kyj," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 3-4, 1993), 251-78.

44. Frick, "Circulation," 254.

important Ukrainian source, which, despite criticism from scholars, holds the key to a better understanding of contemporaneous events.<sup>45</sup>

The *Chronicle's* author was clearly well-informed about the current political events and most likely witnessed many of them himself. In relation to the Cossack council held on 23 August 1657 and its aftermath, the writer presented a rather detailed sequence of events accompanied by his observations and conclusions, which betray specific biases. It is useful to revisit some of the *Chronicle's* evidence and reinterpret it on the basis of the previously discussed information in this essay.

Under the year 1657, the *Chronicle's* author wrote:

Upon the interment of old Khmelnytskyi's body, though the latter had earlier appointed his son Yurii hetman [successor], unfortunate jealousy or covetousness came to light on the part of a handful of senior [Cossack] officers, who wished this position for themselves. Unable to make their desire public and to announce their intentions they devised [the following plan] and convinced [Yurii] Khmelnytskyi to give up the office due to his young age . . .<sup>46</sup>

After Yuri Khmelnytskyi was supposedly convinced by these "covetous people" to refuse to take the hetman's insignia, some of the Cossacks gathered in the courtyard of the Khmelnytskyis' household. According to the *Chronicle's* author, the majority of those were the supporters of "people, who coveted the hetman's office" (foremost among whom was Ivan Vyhovskiy). Then, as dictated by both the Cossack election's ritual and the occasion, Yuri Khmelnytskyi emerged from his house and came to the council, and expressed gratitude in the name of his late father for the Cossacks selecting him in his father's stead; then, he *laid down the insignia* (the ceremonial mace or *bulava* and banner or *bunchuk*), bowed before the gathering, and returned to the house. After that the Scribe General, Ivan Vyhovskiy, and the Quartermaster General, Tymofii Nosach, laid down their insignia and thanked the council for trusting them with their offices.<sup>47</sup>

45. The issues of the *Eyewitness Chronicle's* authorship and its author's competence were actively debated throughout the nineteenth century and up to the 1920s. Most scholars believed the author to have belonged to the petty Ukrainian nobility (*shliakhta*), who joined the Cossacks and held high offices within the Cossack administration. Chief Cossack Host Treasurer Roman Rakushka-Romanovskiy (ca 1622–1703) was suggested as the likeliest candidate (see *Letopis Samovidtsa o voynakh Bogdana Khmelnytskago i mezhdousobiakh, byvshykh v Maloi Rossii po ego smerti*, O. Bodianskii, ed., Moscow: V Universitetskoi tipografii, 1846, 27).

46. *Letopis Samovidtsa*, 27.

47. *Ibid.*

The description reflects the Cossack custom of previous government members vacating their offices before a new election of all officials takes place.<sup>48</sup> What is important in this description is that Yurii Khmelnytskyi “surrendered” the hetman’s office before the council. Therefore, he was indeed the holder of the hetman’s office for almost a month after his father’s passing. It also confirms the fact that the arrangement made by Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and Cossack officers in Chyhyryn in April 1657 had been followed through until that point.

According to the Cossack author of the *Chronicle*, “[the] *bulava* was laying for a long time in that council [for, while] everyone would like to claim that office . . . the [Cossack] Host refused to allow that to happen,” while those who attended the council loudly expressed their consent that “Khmelnytskyi’s son *remained* [my emphasis].”<sup>49</sup> The rank-and-file Cossacks, “as one,” begged Yurii to succeed his late father, which pleas Yurii rejected, explaining his refusal by his own youth and mourning over the death of his father.<sup>50</sup> He added that his lack of experience forbade him to take on such a high office, and he would not be able to properly govern over the Cossack Host and bring peace to Ukraine. In response, the Cossacks pleaded with Yurii to take the office and rule with the aid of the collaborators of the late Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, Vyhovskyi, Nosach, and the Judge General, Hryhorii Lesnytskyi; before his death, the late hetman had entrusted them with assisting young Yurii as the hetman-appointee.<sup>51</sup> In fact, the council’s participants were repeating the late Bohdan Khmelnytskyi’s arguments presented in April 1657, when he persuaded his officers to choose his son as successor. Once again, at that point in the election process, the late hetman’s “election script” was being followed closely.

According to the *Chronicle*, Vyhovskyi, Nosach, and Lesnytskyi all coveted the hetman’s office; therefore, they proceeded to advise Yurii Khmelnytskyi to decline this office once again, but the Cossacks attending the meeting, fond of the late Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, refused to accept Yurii’s resignation.<sup>52</sup> They convinced Yurii that he should be the keeper of his father’s insignia, and only when necessary hand them to Ivan Vyhovskyi if the latter was taking care of daily Cossack

48. At the Cossack general election council of Korsun (October 1657), then Hetman Vyhovskyi similarly laid down his insignia and rode off to the field before being stopped by Cossack officers who acclaimed him as their elected hetman (see *Akty IuZR*, vol. 4, 43).

49. *Letopis Samovidtsa*, 27.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Letopis Samovidtsa*, 27–8.

affairs.<sup>53</sup> Once again, this arrangement agreed with Vyhovskyi's designated role as guardian and a caretaker at the side of a young hetman.

At this point, the *Chronicle's* author resorts to speculations regarding Vyhovskyi's motivation and his attempts to win the hetman's office for himself. According to the author, Vyhovskyi publicly agreed to this decision, but, "inside his heart" [*sic!*] was searching for the way to secure the hetmancy altogether for himself. This explains why he requested the council to postpone the final decision for three days. However, once it reconvened, the council had not changed its views. Vyhovskyi, however, "through the trickery worthy of a Pole" [*sic!*] and conveying his apparent acquiescence with the council's original decision, inquired what his own title would look like on official papers. He clarified that he might need to sign and seal them substituting for Yurii. Vyhovskyi's supporters immediately proposed to the assembly that Vyhovskyi was to be called: "Ivan Vyhovskyi, as of this time hetman of the Zaporozhian [Cossack Host]." This idea was approved by everybody present.<sup>54</sup>

This is the crucial moment when Ivan Vyhovskyi, instead of remaining a guardian to (or regent for) Yurii Khmelnytskyi as hetman, became an interim hetman himself, a post he was to occupy until Yurii's coming of age. By forcing the question about his title and legal authority, the former scribe general solved the problem of overall vagueness of the election protocol and the process of transition of power to his own advantage, solidifying and increasing his own political clout.

In hindsight, the Cossack author of the *Chronicle* notes that,

this arrangement between [Ivan] Vyhovskyi and [Yurii] Khmelnytskyi did not last long, [for] Vyhovskyi forgot how he had been ransomed by the old Khmelnytskyi from the Tatars, [and] began conducting himself as a great lord, securing wealth for his [own] relatives; once he had taken the insignia from young Khmelnytskyi, . . . , he did not return them and kept them by himself [only], and began to gather dragoons [mercenary troops] and hiring the Polish cohorts.<sup>55</sup>

This description seems to ignore one important nuance, though: Vyhovskyi, who at the time of election wielded more power than any other contender, managed

53. *Letopis Samovidtsa*, 28.

54. *Ibid.*, 28.

55. *Ibid.*, 28.

to claim the office largely because Yurii Khmelnytskyi did not want to bear the burden associated with the hetmancy in the first place. In fact, Yurii Khmelnytskyi's refusal to take his father's office as a sixteen-year-old in 1657 was not the only time the younger Khmelnytskyi was to refer to his youth and inexperience stopping him from taking the reins. More than three years later, now as a nineteen-year-old and after spending over a year in the hetman's office, Yurii once again tried to leave this office citing his "youth and inexperience."<sup>56</sup> Finally, in October 1662, Yurii Khmelnytskyi left the hetman's office for good and was tonsured a monk, thus conclusively proving that he was hardly "hetman material."

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Despite undeniable administrative ability, Hetman Ivan Vyhovskyi's policies and personality were extremely divisive, and his tenure, while not alone responsible for precipitating a disaster for the Hetmanate, certainly contributed to it. Vyhovskyi's election was met by a strong opposition in the Cossack polity. First of all, as an offspring of a noble family, to many Cossacks he was "a Pole" rather than "a true Cossack." Secondly, Vyhovskyi was believed to have used "trickery" to become indispensable to the late Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, while removing some of the "true Cossacks" from the late hetman's "inner circle." Thirdly, Vyhovskyi was seen to have influenced Yurii's refusal to take his rightful place as his father's immediate successor, and to have "tricked" the Host in taking the hetman's office himself. Fourthly, he approached the Poles and the Tatars for alliances, enriched his relatives, and hired mercenary troops to secure his power. Finally, he was presumably plotting treason against his formal patron, the Muscovite tsar.<sup>57</sup>

Even those Cossacks who accepted the results of the 1657 Chyhyryn election were only willing to bear with the new hetman for a short time. In November 1657, among the Chyhyryn-based Cossacks voices of Cossack colonels, company commanders, and well-to-do Cossacks were heard to say that Hetman Vyhovskyi should only stay in office for three or so years and then be replaced in an election

56. See the report from the Palatine of Chernihiv and the Polish envoy to Ukraine, Stanisław K. Bieniewski, from 7 to 23 November 1660, in *Pamiętniki, wydane wremeniou kommissieiu dlia razbora drevnikh aktov* [from here: PVK], vol. 4 Kiev: V Universitetskoi Tipografii, 1859, 32–3.

57. These accusations were for example summarized by representatives of the Zaporozhian Sich during a visit to Moscow on 23 November 1657 (see *Akty IuZR*, vol. 7, St. Petersburg: Tipografia V.V. Prats, 1872, 186–90).

by Yurii Khmelnytskyi, whom they liked much better.<sup>58</sup> Some of the Cossacks must have gone further than just expressing their dislike of their new hetman: In the memoirs of the Polish king's secretary, Stefan Franciszek Medeksza, we find a reference (written on 5 November 1657) that Ivan Vyhovskyi had to place four malcontent Cossack colonels in chains.<sup>59</sup>

The vanguard of this active opposition to a new hetman consisted largely of the Sich Cossacks of Zaporizhia region. As an affront to Vyhovskyi, they elected not just a chieftain, but the "Sich hetman" (*koshovyi hetman*) in Ivan Barabash—a fact of considerable significance, often overlooked by scholars.<sup>60</sup> This was likely to symbolize that the Sich—the cradle of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's uprising in 1648—was becoming an alternative center of power to Chyhyryn. On 21 November 1657, Cossacks headed by the Sich chieftain Mykhailo Ivanov brought a petition to Moscow, in which they described a history of the Sich's on-going disagreement with the policies of Chyhyryn dating back to Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's time:

. . . even during the life of now departed [Bohdan Khmelnytskyi], the [then] hetman of the Zaporozhian Host, all senior officers, the [current] hetman and all colonels for an unknown [to us] reason [and] secretly from the commoners (*chern*) concluded a pact with the Transylvanian prince, [György II] Rákóczi, with the Swedish king, and with both the warlords of Walachia and Moldavia, and [they, i.e., Vyhovskyi and company] are [now] sending letters to the Crimean ruler; all this, the commanders are doing for the purpose of betraying Your Majesty the Tsar and are convincing the entire Zaporozhian Host to do likewise . . .<sup>61</sup>

After Bohdan Khmelnytskyi crushed the coup d'état at the Sich in 1650, the Sich Cossacks and their leaders seemed for a few years peaceful, but they were never content with their diminished influence over the affairs of the Cossack polity. The election of Vyhovskyi as hetman, which happened without the Sich Cossacks' participation and consent, offered them an opportune chance to re-establish their influence by opposing the new hetman. The Sich's opposition to the new authority in Chyhyryn resonated well with some of the "town" Cossacks, whose leaders

58. *Akty IuZR*, vol. 4, 69.

59. *Stefana Franciszka z Prószyca Medekszy Księga Pamiętnicza wydarzeń zaszłych na Litwie 1654–1668*, wydał Dr. Władysław Seredyński, Kraków: W Drukarni C.K. Uniwersytetu Jagiel, 1875, 106, 110.

60. *Akty IuZR*, vol. 7, St. Petersburg: Tipografia V.V. Prats, 1872, 180.

61. *Ibid.*, 184.

were also seeking the hetman's office and were interested in toppling Vyhovskiy. That is why an alliance between Barabash and the ambitious Colonel of Poltava, Martyn Pushkar, was concluded and resulted an anti-hetman rebellion in 1658.<sup>62</sup>

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Yurii Khmelnytskyi, the only living male heir to the "founding father" of the Early Modern Ukrainian state Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, had been chosen to succeed his father in the office even before his father's passing. This arrangement was made to ensure that the new "Khmelnytskyi dynasty" would bring stability to the life of the Hetmanate and Ukrainian society. However, this arrangement had many flaws, among them the unpreparedness and reluctance of Yurii Khmelnytskyi to assume this position. This is clear from Yurii's difficulties as a budding leader between April and August of 1657, his refusal to take the hetman's office in August of 1657, his wavering in October of 1660, and his ultimate resignation in October 1662.

However, in August 1657 many Cossacks hoped that Yurii Khmelnytskyi would mature and be ready to take his father's place in Chyhyryn. Ivan Vyhovskiy's selection as interim hetman thwarted this hope. It destroyed the April 1657 political arrangements, defeated the nascent idea of dynastic rule, and served as the prologue for the severe political crisis and the civil war in Cossack Ukraine.

There are reasons to believe that the unconditional and immediate election of Yurii Khmelnytskyi as new hetman in 1657 would have made the mutineers' task arguably more difficult. For instance, the "town" Cossacks, particularly the Poltava regiment of Martyn Pushkar, would not have been so hasty to join their Sich counterparts. In this case, they would not muster much support for their opposition to the hetman in Chyhyryn. The election of Vyhovskiy gave them exactly the pretext and the support they needed.

Yurii's Khmelnytskyi's election as hetman did not happen until October 1659, after two years of devastating conflict, which lasted throughout Ivan Vyhovskiy's "interim" rule. The "delayed succession," which broke the immediate succession from father to son, effectively destroyed the very idea of a direct "dynastic succession" in the Hetmanate, which had been promoted by the late Bohdan Khmelnytskyi. With the "dynastic succession" as a model of power transfer defeated, the previous tradition of a competitive election of hetman was *de facto* reinstated. This model contained significant potential for conflict among

62. Viktor Horobets, "Volimo tsaria skhidnobo . . ." *Ukrainskyi Hetmanat ta rosiiska dynastiia do i pislia Pereiaslava*, Kyiv: Krytyka, 2007, 128.



numerous contenders for the hetman's office, not unlike what prevailed in Poland after Jan Kazimierz resigned in 1668, thereby ending the Wasa dynasty.

Furthermore, the "delayed succession" sent a clear signal to all existing and future contenders that the hetman's office could be won. This became apparent soon after Yurii Khmelnytskyi became hetman. When he entered an alliance with the Polish king in October 1660, his uncle, Iakym Somko, broke away at the head of some of the Left-Bank Cossacks, honoring the allegiance to the Muscovite tsar agreed to in 1654 and calling himself "hetman." This challenge to the hetman's authority, which by far surpassed the earlier *démarche* by the Sich Cossacks, marked the beginning of the division of the Cossack polity and set the stage for other numerous contenders for the hetman's office, who during the next two decades would turn most of the Cossack-controlled territories into a ravaged battlefield.