



СТАНОВЛЕНИЕ ОСНОВ РОССИЙСКОЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОСТИ: ПОЛИТИКО-УПРАВЛЕНЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE RUSSIAN STATEHOOD: POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL ANALYSIS

DOI: 10.22363/2312-8313-2023-10-1-7-17

EDN: CYFLZW

Research article / Научная статья

The Turmoil in the Moscow State at the Beginning of the XVII Century and Its Influence on the Transformation of the Foundations and Principles of Russian Statehood (Political Science Aspect)

Nikolay A. Omelchenko

State University of Management,
99 Ryazansky Prospekt, Moscow, Russian Federation, 109542

✉ nik_omelchenko@mail.ru

Abstract. The article gives the author's interpretation of the nature and degree of influence of the events of the Time of Turmoil at the beginning of the XVII century in Russia on the evolution of the foundations and principles of Russian statehood. The author of the article notes that this problem, which is important for understanding the history of Russian statehood, has not yet received proper coverage and the necessary scientific study. Agreeing with the opinion of researchers who assess the events of the Turmoil as the first deep state crisis in the development of the country, the author of the article draws attention to the fact that modern publications do not take into account the fact that in many respects it was the tragedy of the Turmoil that predetermined many new phenomena in the state and public life of Russia, which ensured the country's exit from the Turmoil and the restoration of state order. On the one hand, the masses, under the influence of the events of the Turmoil, began to assimilate new ideas about the relationship between the government and society that were not peculiar to them before, linking the concept of the state with the "land", with the concept of "common benefit". On the other hand, the Russian political elite was also forced to revise the previous methods of government and build their relations with citizens on the basis of taking into account public interests, common "zemstvo" benefits. The article substantiates the methodologically important position that it is from the events of the Turmoil that it is possible to start the formation of a new

© Omelchenko N.A., 2023



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

understanding of the state and state power in Russian society in their modern meaning. The author of the article leads to the idea that it was these changes in the consciousness of the masses and the behavior of the elite that became decisive for the country's exit from the Turmoil, at the same time drawing a parallel with the Byzantine model of power, the stability of which in times of crisis was also explained by the presence of a unique state structure that connected the rigid monarchical vertical and the horizontal of developed self-government.

Keywords: Time of the Turmoil, Russian statehood, state crisis, boyar aristocracy, service state, zemstvo self-government, Byzantine system of power

Conflicts of interest: The author declared no conflicts of interest.

Article history:

The article was submitted on 20.12.2022. The article was accepted on 15.01.2023.

For citation:

Omelchenko N.A. The Turmoil in the Moscow State at the Beginning of the XVII Century and Its Influence on the Transformation of the Foundations and Principles of Russian Statehood (Political Science Aspect). *RUDN Journal of Public Administration*. 2023;10(1):7–17. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2023-10-1-7-17>

Introduction

By the Time of Troubles in the political history of Russia, it is customary to understand the deep crisis of Russian statehood that befell the country at the beginning of the XVII century, affecting all spheres of life of the young Russian state without exception. By most contemporaries, the Time of Troubles was characterized as the “great Moscow ruin”, as the years of hard times. Many modern researchers consider the Time of Troubles to be the first experience of the civil war in Russia, which brought untold disasters to the population of the country and plunged the country into chaos of struggle and destruction. According to N.A. Berdyaev, who was acutely experiencing the facts of moral and moral decline among the Russian aristocracy during the Time of Troubles, as well as numerous cases of betrayal by representatives of the political elite who publicly swore allegiance to impostors and their “toy” governments, the turmoil was nothing more than a confirmation of the failure of the official ideology of the Moscow Kingdom as “holy Russia”, “the last Orthodox kingdoms”.

Formally, the beginning of the Troubles was laid by the dynastic crisis in the Moscow state, caused by the suppression of the former Rurik dynasty after the death of the last representative of the dynasty of Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich, who had no direct heir. From this moment begins a long and complex era of reignlessness (“anarchy”), which did not fail to take advantage of the warring boyar groups, who stood close to the breadwinner of power and fought for the preservation of their traditional privileges and political influence. The claims of the boyar nobility, which did not cease, often escalated into direct opposition of the boyars to the government authorities, facilitated

the interference of foreign states in the internal affairs of Russia and direct external intervention, jeopardizing the very existence of the Russian state, its national independence. In any case, we should agree with the opinion that the events of the Troubles left an indelible mark on the minds of Russian people, becoming, according to researchers, the most important milestone of historical memory [1. P. 36].

Methods

In the preparation of the article, along with comparative-historical and logical-analytical methods, general scientific methods were used: analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, generalization and abstraction, as well as special historical: synchronistic, chronological, actualization, allowing to identify common features and features of the processes that took place; hypothetical method involving the formulation and substantiation of a scientific hypothesis (assumptions) as a basis for scientific conclusions; the method of determinism, which allows us to consider the phenomena under study from the point of view of a universal cause-effect relationship in all material and spiritual processes; a paradigmatic approach aimed at analyzing the causes, goals, directions, ways of improving the Russian model of state and national construction in the context of historical and modern experience.

Discussion

There is no general point of view in the historical literature about the true causes of the Turmoil. There is no agreement, first of all, on the question of what to consider as the underlying factor of the outbreak of the Troubles: whether it was a natural phenomenon generated by the internal contradictions of the development of Moscow Russia in the previous period, or whether a number of accidents and extraneous influences played a major role in its development. So, according to the famous Russian historian S.M. Solovyov, the basis of the crisis phenomena that gave rise to the Turmoil was the long struggle of social and anti-social elements in the bowels of the Moscow state, within which the state order came into sharp contradiction with the old military orders and anti-social sentiments of the populous Cossacks. Russian writer Alexander Klyuchevsky reduced the main causes of the Time of Troubles to the patrimonial-dynastic view that prevailed in the Moscow Kingdom on the essence of the Moscow autocratic monarchy, on the one hand, to the burdensome nature of the Russian state, which enslaved all classes in Russian society and turned into a service state in its classical form by the beginning of the Troubles, on the other.

Without a doubt, the Turmoil represented the greatest test for the young Russian statehood. We agree with those authors who see in the events of the Troubles the first state crisis in the political development of the country with all the consequences that followed from it.

However, this was not the only significance of the Time of Troubles in the socio-political development of Russia. According to historical research, the period of the Troubles was marked by the active penetration of Western ideas and values into Moscow Rus, which were becoming increasingly widespread among the Russian educated society. A number of scientific works draw attention to the significant strengthening of this process, including during the short reign (1605–1606) of False Dmitry I, who encouraged Western innovations in various spheres of Moscow life. The impostor defiantly ignored the protests of the Russian clergy, who condemned the Westernist policy of the new ruler. Positioning himself as an active supporter of sending Russian people to study in Europe, False Dmitry tried decisively, according to modern researchers, to change the previous policy towards serving foreigners conducted by Boris Godunov before him, “he began to break down the barriers that Boris, like the former rulers of Russia, calling “Germans” to his service, diligently he built between them and the Russians” [2. P. 25]. Among the Western innovations was not only the impostor’s introduction into Moscow life of a new, not typical for Moscow Russia, the wedding ceremony of False Dmitry I to the kingdom and his proclamation as “emperor”. According to academician A.M. Panchenko, “False Dmitry tried to embody not the domestic, but the Western, Renaissance and Mannerist ideal of the demiurge sovereign, who is destined to turn the “hinge of time”. It was believed that he should combine the qualities of a warrior and a writer” [3. P. 28]. Modern authors make a far-reaching conclusion that despite the significant increase in anti-Western sentiments in Russian society under the influence of increased foreign interference during the Time of Troubles (Russian society was outraged along with the flooding of the Russian capital by Polish gentry, the promise of the impostor to promote the spread of the Catholic faith in the Russian state), “it was the Turmoil that largely determined one of the main trends in subsequent Russian history is the tendency to strengthen Western socio-cultural influence” [2. P. 19].

However, in the given research, we will be more interested in the question of what consequences the events of the Time of Troubles entailed and, most importantly, what impact did the Turmoil have on the evolution of Russian statehood, what historical alternatives were opened by the tragedy of the Troubles experienced by the country?

In the existing literature, one can find completely different, sometimes polar answers to the question we have posed: from the assessment of the Troubles as a severe test that ended with the victory of state principles over the ancestral principle that prevailed in the XVI century (S.M. Solovyov), to the point of view, whose supporters considered the strengthening of the union of “lands” traditional for Russian statehood and “states” (Slavophiles) [4. P. 106]. According to the authoritative opinion of the famous Russian historian S.F. Platonov, the Troubles “made almost all of our history in the XVII century” [4. P. 108]. On the other hand, there were many who were convinced that the events of the Time of Troubles had not changed anything

in the state mechanism of Russia, nor had they introduced anything new into the prevailing ideas of a proper state in Russian society.

The latter statement seems to us rather controversial. From our point of view, although the Turmoil could not end with the establishment of a new social order in the Russian state, and it was more natural in those conditions, as in any turmoil, to overcome the developed disease of the social and state organism, however, its influence on all further socio-political development of Moscow Russia was obvious and significant. Of course, in the “post-revolution” time, the new sovereigns from the Romanov dynasty tried to rely on the state and public institutions of the past era, which clearly testified to the deep and original roots of Russian statehood. It is also clear that the new government could not ignore the centuries-old Russian and Orthodox traditions without the risk of losing support among the broad conservative-minded masses. But the serious changes that were observed at that time, first of all, in the relations between the government and society, were also obvious. Moreover, it was the events of the Time of Troubles that largely caused many new phenomena in the state and public life of Russia, which were developed later in the XVII century.

The most detailed justification of this position was received in the writings of S.F. Platonov, who devoted a number of original pages about the Time of Troubles in his famous work “Lectures on Russian History”. According to this academician, one of the main consequences of the Troubles should be sought in the observed important changes in Russian society itself, which acquired a fundamentally new qualitative state under the influence of the events of the Troubles. In this case, we are talking not only about changes in the social structure of Russian society and, in particular, serious changes in the position of the nobility, which had strengthened by that time, which now received more opportunities for “participation in public administration”. It wasn’t even about economic decline and a significant undermining of moral prestige (“moral credit”) the Moscow boyar aristocracy, for which the time of Troubles, according to the subtle observation of S.F. Platonov, quite comparable to the famous dynastic war of the Roses of Scarlet and White (1455–1485) in England, which led to great destruction and disasters and was accompanied by the death of a significant number of representatives of the English nobility [4. P. 108]. Of exceptional importance, according to the venerable historian, was the fact that under the influence of the events of the Time of Troubles, both in the broad masses of the people and in the ruling stratum, the very ideas about what criteria the power of the state should meet and on what grounds the state should build its relations with society changed. The tragedy of the Troubles, the frequent change of governments in the Moscow Kingdom through the efforts of boyar clans and through foreign intervention had a profound impact on the self-consciousness of the Russian people, who gradually began to assimilate, in the words of S.F. Platonov, “new feelings and concepts”, coupled with a clearer understanding of the place and

role of the state in the life of society. If in the era preceding the Troubles, Russian people habitually saw in the state a sovereign patrimony headed by its sovereign master, the Moscow sovereign, now the masses are getting used to associating the concept of the state with the “land”, the basis of which is the concept of “common benefit”. Such an understanding of the state, according to S.F. Platonov, was not characteristic of the preceding XVth century [4. P. 108–109], his statement in the minds of the Russian people was largely due to the very conditions of the Turmoil, which destroyed the rigid monarchical vertical and put the local worlds and the entire zemstvo before the need to independently arrange their way of life and their lives.

On the other hand, in the new conditions of coming out of the Turmoil, the political elite itself was forced to build its relations with society, with local worlds, in a new way. It can be said that it is from the events of the Troubles that the beginning of the formation of a new understanding of the state and state power in their modern meaning in the ruling circles of the Moscow Kingdom should be counted. For two centuries, in the minds and behavior of the Moscow princes, who declared their goal to unite the Russian lands, continued, in the words of V.O. Klyuchevsky, “to fight the patrimony and the sovereign, the autocratic master and the bearer of supreme state power” [5. P. 195]. The devastating consequences of the Troubles pushed the Moscow sovereigns to realize the disastrous nature of the previous policy, which led the state “to deep upheavals, and the dynasty of collectors to destruction” [5. P. 195]. And it is this fundamentally important change in the character of Russian power, which occurred under the influence of the Troubles, was very accurately noticed by S.F. Platonov in the historical work we have indicated.

According to S.F. Platonov, after overcoming the Troubles, the new power in the person of the new Romanov dynasty established by the “zemlya” (read the Zemsky Sobor), begins to assimilate the concept of “zemstvo” benefits, turning into a power of “quite a state character”. The power was trying to build its policy on the basis of taking into account public interests, common “zemstvo” benefits. In the difficult conditions of getting out of the Turmoil, the new government is forced and seeks to consult with society (with the “land”) when solving important state issues and “tells foreigners” that from now on it cannot solve a single case “without the advice of the whole state”. She must now appeal to public opinion, see in all state affairs not only the “sovereign’s affairs” as it was before, but also the “zemstvo” affairs. Although, according to S.F. Platonov, these “new concepts of the state and nationality acquired in the troubles did not immediately and prominently change the political life of our ancestors”, they “echoed throughout the structure of life of the XVII century and gave it a very different flavor from the old order” [4. P. 109]

In direct connection with the above, there was an activation during the first Romanovs of the activities of the Zemstvo Councils, which, in the fair opinion

of several authors, played an exceptional role in the salvation and revival of Russian statehood during the years of Turmoil and immediately after its overcoming. The new rulers actively involved the Zemstvo Councils in almost all the most important state acts, the Councils took a direct part in the election of all Russian autocrats of the late XVII — early XVIII centuries. In the new conditions, to restore the state institutions of power destroyed during the years of Turmoil, it was necessary to use other than before, unconventional methods of governing the country, appealing to the broad strata of Russian society.

In connection with the above, it seems important to draw some parallels between what was happening in the Moscow state at the beginning of the XVII century and the Byzantine system of power, the stability of which in times of crisis, if we proceed from modern research, was explained largely by the same factors that ensured the overcoming of the state crisis during the period of Turmoil in Russia.

According to Byzantine historians, Byzantium inherited from the Roman Empire a model of public administration, the viability of which was ensured by the presence of deep traditions of self-government. Externally, the state in Byzantium, as before in the Roman Empire, was a huge political union that united heterogeneous political organisms and was supported by the power of the Roman army and the Roman legislative mechanism headed by the emperor. At the same time, at the local level in urban communities, as well as long before the Roman conquests, self-government continued to play a huge role. This feature of development acquired special significance at the stage of the transformation of the Roman Empire in the late period from an urban predominantly state to a peasant country, which gave an additional impetus to the intensive development of self-government of Byzantine communities at the peasant, rural level. And it is precisely in the creation of such a state structure that combined a rigid monarchical vertical and a horizontal self-government, according to researchers, that one should look for the main factor ensuring the survival of the state in the most difficult conditions.

It is impossible not to see that something like this, as shown above, was largely characteristic of Russia at the beginning of the XVII century, when the fate of the state was in the hands of local worlds, peasant communities with their inherent traditions of self-government. Russian Slavophilism founders and theorists pointed out this feature of the Russian paradigm of state development quite definitely at the time, who believed that it was thanks to the “land”, a strong zemstvo structure that managed to preserve itself during the years of the “great Moscow ruin” that Russia managed to get out of the deepest state crisis and raise the crumbling state.

As it is noted in modern studies, it was the zemstvo self-government that played a decisive role in preserving the foundations of Russian statehood, when the whole “Land” (i.e., the people) in an environment of complete destruction of the state during the years of Troubles “under the leadership of the Church itself stood up for the protection of the Russian state” [6. P. 487–488]. According

to the Russian traditions of democracy, the zemstvo self-government bodies assumed the exercise of authority, including the creation of their own armed forces, the leadership of which was delegated to specially created collective bodies. Exclusively to folk art belonged the merit in the formation of both the First and Second national militia.

During the Time of Troubles took place creation of Cathedral governing bodies of various militia detachments, which soon received the name “Councils of the Whole Earth”. They were created on the basis of the actively developing Zemstvo liberation movement. Later, the central Zemstvo government was formed in the First Militia, consisting of orders created in it (Zemstvo, Local, Discharge, etc.), which were led by authoritative boyars or clerks, which contributed in many ways to the revival of the central administrative apparatus [6. P. 489–491].

An important role belonged to the numerous general theological city councils that arose during the years of the Troubles, which included in their composition, in addition to representatives of urban social groups, local church hierarchs, who in some cases led the established councils. It is significant that the resolutions adopted by the city councils (“sentences”) had to be carried out by all citizens, including local voivodes acting under the strict control of the councils [6. P. 488].

Conclusion

The above estimates of the Time of Troubles and the process of getting out of it are of fundamental importance, since they point to a number of fundamental foundations and principles on which the restoration of the Russian state destroyed by the Troubles took place under the first Romanovs. As can be seen from the examples given, a special role in preserving the foundations of Russian statehood during the years of Turmoil belonged to local worlds, zemstvo self-government, which in itself refutes persistent stereotypes about the alleged historical unsuitability of the Russian people to civil self-organization.

At the same time, emphasizing the importance of local worlds, “land” in overcoming the state crisis in the Moscow state at the beginning of the XVII century, it is very important not to fall into the other extreme — underestimating the importance of the state in the political history of Russia, its role in ensuring the stable development of society. The reality of this danger is very great, given that distrust of the state, anti-statistic sentiments find fertile ground in modern Russian society. It is important not to forget that in the political culture of Russia and public consciousness, unlike the Western European political tradition, the concept of the state has never been reduced only to the formal side of political life, it has always acted as a kind of bond of the entire social organism, and society itself has not been separated from the state for a long time, being its integral part, “personal patrimony”

of Russian sovereigns. That is why all the socio-political crises and troubles known in the history of Russia, accompanied by the destruction of state institutions and the weakening of the central government, as a rule, led either to anarchy, or to the establishment (which happened more often) of the power of temporary workers, the domination of the oligarchy. And it was precisely this situation that N.M. Karamzin had in mind when he pointed out in a small but epoch-making work “A Note on Ancient and New Russia”, published at the beginning of the XIX century and addressed to Emperor Alexander I, to the danger of any weakening of government power in Russia. Disagreeing in principle with the radical, in his opinion, program of state transformation of M.M. Speransky, the future author of the multi-volume “History of the Russian State” warned that in the history of Russia, radical restrictions on the power of the monarch, leading to the weakening of state power as a whole, have always brought great disasters to Russia, led to “anarchy” and “beginninglessness”, which is actually “more terrible than the worst ruler, endangering all citizens” [7. P. 46].

It is significant that the danger of the destruction of the state during the period of Troubles was spontaneously realized by the majority of the Russian people. As N.N. Alekseev noted in his essay “The Russian People and the State”, the majority of the Russian people, in full accordance with the pagan models of autocratic monarchism, shared for centuries “the belief about the similarity of the heavenly order and the earthly order” (as evidenced by most Russian proverbs: “God is in heaven, the tsar is on earth”, “A terrible tsar is better than a seven-boyar state”, “A terrible kingdom is better than an interregnum”, “Without God the light does not stand, without a king the earth is not built”). And that is why, without hesitation, he supported the program of the revival of historical statehood [8].

REFERENCES

1. Shalakh M.E. Smutnoe vremya v ocenkah russkikh sovremennikov i istoricheskoe soznanie rossijskogo obshhestva XVII veka [The Time of Turmoil in the Assessments of Russian Contemporaries and the Historical Consciousness of Russian Society of the XVII Century]. *News of Higher Educational Institutions. The North Caucasus Region. Social Sciences*. 2004;1:36–40 (In Russ.).
2. Chernikova T.M. Moskovskoe carstvo i evropejskie «novshestva» v nachale Smutnogo vremeni [The Moscow Kingdom and European “Innovations” at the Beginning of the Time of Turmoil]. *Bulletin of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations*. 2016;1:18–28 (In Russ.).
3. Panchenko A.M. *Russkaja istorija i kul'tura: raboty raznyh let* [Russian History and Culture: Works of Different Years]. St. Petersburg: Yuna; 1999. 512 p. (In Russ.).
4. Platonov S.F. *Lekcii po russkoj istorii. Vyp. 2* [Lectures on Russian History. Issue 2]. St. Petersburg; 1899. URL: <https://runivers.ru/lib/book3131/474005/> (accessed: 06.12.2022) (In Russ.).
5. Klyuchevsky V.O. O russkoj istorii [On Russian History [Collection]. Comp., author’s preface and note by V.V. Artemov; ed. by V.I. Buganov]. Moscow: Enlightenment, 1993. 576 p. (In Russ.).

6. *Istorija Rossii: v 4 t. T. 1. Genezis i jevoljucija russskoj gosudarstvennosti (do konca XVII veka): kollektivnaja monografija* [History of Russia: in 4 Vols. Vol. 1. [Genesis and Evolution of Russian Statehood (Until the End of the XVII Century): collective monograph. Ed. by N.A. Omelchenko; preface by N.A. Omelchenko; ed. by S.V. Perevezentsev]. Moscow: INFRA-M, 2018. 679 p. (In Russ.).
7. Karamzin N.M. *Zapiska o drevnej i novoj Rossii v ee politicheskom i grazhdanskom otnoshenijah* [A Note on Ancient and New Russia in Its Political and Civil Relations]. Moscow; Nauka; 1991. 125 p. (In Russ.).
8. Alekseev N.N. *Russkij narod i gosudarstvo* [The Russian People and the State]. Moscow: Agraf; 1998. 635 p. (In Russ.).

Information about the author:

Nikolay A. Omelchenko — Doctor of Historical Sciences, Full Professor, Head of the Department of Public Administration and Political Technologies, State University of Management (Russian Federation) (ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5872-1567) (e-mail: nik_omelchgenko@mail.ru).

Смута в Московском государстве в начале XVII в. и ее влияние на трансформацию основ и принципов российской государственности (политологический аспект)

Н.А. Омельченко 

Государственный университет управления,
109542, Россия, Москва, Рязанский проспект, 99

✉ nik_omelchgenko@mail.ru

Аннотация. В статье дана авторская трактовка характера и степени влияния событий Смутного времени начала XVII в. в России на эволюцию основ и принципов российской государственности. Автор статьи отмечает, что эта важная для осмысления истории российской государственности проблема пока не получила должного освещения и необходимой научной проработки. Соглашаясь с мнением исследователей, оценивающих события Смуты как первый в развитии страны глубокий государственный кризис, автор статьи обращает внимание на то, что в современных публикациях не учитывается то обстоятельство, что во многом именно трагедия Смуты предопределила многие новые явления в государственной и общественной жизни России, которые обеспечили выход страны из Смуты и восстановление государственного порядка. С одной стороны, народные массы под влиянием событий Смуты стали усваивать новые, не свойственные им раньше представления об отношениях между властью и обществом, связывая понятие государства с «землей», с понятием «общая польза». С другой стороны, российская политическая элита также вынуждена была пересматривать прежние методы управления государством и строить свои отношения с гражданами на основе учета общественных интересов, общей «земской» пользы. В статье обосновано методологически важное положение о том, что именно с событий Смуты можно вести начало формирования в российском обществе нового понимания государства и государственной власти в современном их значении. Автор статьи подводит к мысли о том, что именно указанные перемены в сознании народных масс и поведении элиты стали определяющими для выхода страны из Смуты, одновременно проводя параллель с византийской моделью власти, устойчивостью которой в периоды кризисов также объяснялась наличием уникальной государственной структуры, соединившей жесткую монархическую вертикаль и горизонталь развитого самоуправления.

Ключевые слова: Смутное время, российская государственность, государственный кризис, боярская аристократия, служилое государство, земское самоуправление, византийская система власти

Заявление о конфликте интересов: Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

История статьи:

Статья поступила в редакцию: 20.12.2022. Статья принята к публикации: 15.01.2023.

Для цитирования:

Омельченко Н.А. Смута в Московском государстве в начале XVII в. и ее влияние на трансформацию основ и принципов российской государственности (политологический аспект) // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Государственное и муниципальное управление. 2023. Т. 10. № 1. С. 7–17. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2023-10-1-7-17>