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HISTORICAL STAGES IN THE FORMATION OF THE UKRAINIAN NATION

Vitalii Holets,

PhD in History, Associate Professor, Director,

North Ukrainian Institute named after Heroes of Kruty of the Private Joint-Stock Company

“Higher Educational Institution “Interregional Academy of Personnel Management”

(Chernihiv, Ukraine)

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9308-1361

v.goletc@gmail.com

Abstract. The article examines the historical stages of the formation of the Ukrainian nation as a complex and multidimensional process covering the early medieval (Kyivan Rus’), Cossack-Hetman, and modern periods. The key factors of nation-building are analyzed, including culture, language, religion, political institutions, and historical memory. Special attention is paid to the influence of socio-political transformations, external factors, and European ideas on the development of Ukrainian national identity. It is demonstrated that the Ukrainian nation emerged as a result of a long historical evolution, transitioning from an ethno-cultural community to a modern political nation. Each historical stage is characterized by its own specific features while ensuring continuity in national development. The study emphasizes the importance of historical memory and cultural heritage in strengthening national unity under contemporary challenges.

Key words: Ukrainian nation, nation-building, national identity, Kyivan Rus’, Cossacks, Hetmanate, national revival, historical memory, statehood.

Introduction. The formation of the Ukrainian nation is a complex and protracted historical process encompassing various stages of social, political, cultural and legal development. A nation, as a socio-political community, does not emerge instantly, but is shaped by a combination of factors, among which historical memory, language, culture, statehood and a shared experience of the struggle for independence are of key importance. In this context, the Ukrainian nation has a unique trajectory of development, determined by both internal processes and external influences.

The relevance of this study stems from the need for a thorough understanding of the historical stages of nation-building in Ukraine amidst contemporary political and social transformations. This issue takes on particular significance in the context of war, globalisation processes and the state’s European integration course, which significantly influence the formation of national identity and the consolidation of society. Drawing on historical experience allows us not only to understand the patterns of the Ukrainian nation’s development, but also to identify prospects for its further strengthening.

The state of academic research on this issue is characterised by a significant body of work in both domestic and international academic literature. In particular, the issues of national identity and nation-building have been explored by international scholars such as A. Smith (1986), B. Anderson (2006) and E. Hobsbawm (1992), who viewed the nation as an imagined community shaped by cultural and political processes. Ukrainian researchers focus on the specific nature of Ukraine’s historical development, the role of the Cossacks, cultural revival and the struggle for statehood in the formation of national consciousness (Hrytsak, 1996; Kasyanov, 1999).

The theoretical significance of the study lies in deepening scientific understanding of the nature of the nation and the mechanisms of its formation, particularly in the context of a prolonged absence of statehood. The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of using the findings to improve state policy in the areas of national identity, education and cultural development.

The methodological basis of the study is a combination of historical-legal, sociological, cultural and systemic approaches, which allows for a comprehensive examination of the process of the for-

mation of the Ukrainian nation. Such an interdisciplinary approach provides a deeper understanding of the interaction of various factors influencing nation-building.

The structure of the study is organised in accordance with the logic of analysing the historical stages of the formation of the Ukrainian nation. The work systematically examines the early historical, Cossack-Hetman and modern periods, enabling the evolution of national identity to be traced and the key patterns of its development to be identified.

The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical stages of the formation of the Ukrainian nation and to identify the key patterns of its development in the context of political, social, cultural and legal transformations. Particular attention is paid to identifying the factors that influenced the formation of national identity and its evolution across different historical periods.

The study aims to understand the process of nation-building as a multi-level phenomenon combining ethnic, political and civic components, as well as to determine the role of historical continuity in the formation of the modern Ukrainian nation.

The main objectives of the study are:

- to analyse the historical stages in the formation of the Ukrainian nation;
- to identify the key factors in nation-building during different historical periods;
- to examine the role of culture, language and religion in the formation of identity;
- to analyse the influence of political institutions on the process of nation-building;
- to assess the significance of legal mechanisms in the development of the nation;
- to investigate the influence of external factors and the international environment;
- to identify contemporary trends in the development of the Ukrainian nation in the context of globalisation and European integration.

The study is based on the comprehensive use of historical, legal, sociological and interdisciplinary approaches, which enables a comprehensive analysis of the process of Ukrainian nation-building. The source base consists of academic works by Ukrainian and foreign authors, historical documents, analytical studies and contemporary concepts of nation-building.

The historical-legal method is used to analyse the evolution of state institutions, legal systems and forms of political organisation within Ukrainian society across different historical periods. It enables us to trace the development of legal norms from customary forms to codified legal systems.

The comparative-historical method is used to compare the Ukrainian experience of nation-building with the processes of nation-formation in European countries. This makes it possible to identify common patterns and specific features of Ukrainian historical development.

The cultural approach is used to analyse the role of culture, language, traditions and symbols in the formation of national identity. Particular attention is paid to the influence of cultural heritage on the processes of social consolidation.

The sociological method is used to study social processes, the structure of society, the transformation of values and the formation of civic identity across different historical periods.

The systemic approach allows us to view the nation as a holistic social system comprising inter-related elements: culture, law, politics, the economy and historical memory. This approach ensures a comprehensive analysis and takes into account the multidimensional nature of the nation-building process.

Main text. The study of the historical stages in the formation of the Ukrainian nation is important not only from an academic but also from a practical perspective, as it enables us to understand contemporary nation-building processes and identify strategic directions for the development of Ukrainian society.

The Old Rus' and Early Historical Period

The initial stage of the formation of the Ukrainian nation is linked to the long-term processes of ethnogenesis among the East Slavic tribes that inhabited the territory of modern-day Ukraine as

early as the early Middle Ages. During this period, there was a gradual unification of various tribal confederations (the Polans, Drevlians, Severians, Ulichs, Tiverians and others), accompanied by the formation of shared economic ties and the development of agriculture, crafts and trade. It was precisely these economic and social factors that formed the basis for the emergence of the first elements of ethno-cultural unity, which later transformed into a more complex form – proto-national identity (Subtelny, 2009).

An important aspect of this process was the formation of customary law, which regulated social relations and facilitated the consolidation of tribal communities. Customary norms defined the rules of coexistence, property, liability and social hierarchy, which created the preconditions for the further development of legal institutions. Thus, even at an early stage of the formation of the Ukrainian nation, a close link between social organisation and legal culture can be observed.

A key stage in the formation of the Ukrainian nation was the establishment of the state of *Kievan Rus'*, which emerged as the first large-scale form of political organisation among the East Slavic peoples. Its emergence facilitated territorial consolidation, the strengthening of political power and the formation of a centralised system of governance. *Kievan Rus'* became not only a political but also a cultural centre, where the foundations of statehood, diplomacy and law were laid.

Within this state, administrative institutions underwent active development, in particular princely authority, the *druzhina* organisation and the system of territorial administration. At the same time, the formation of written law played an important role, an example of which is the '*Ruska Pravda*', which became one of the first codified legal acts in the region. It codified social relations, defined the legal status of various population groups and contributed to the strengthening of the legal order (Kappeler, 2001).

The adoption of Christianity at the end of the 10th century was of particular significance for the formation of identity. This event marked a turning point that shaped the region's subsequent cultural and civilisational development. Christianity contributed to the spread of literacy, the development of education, literature and the arts, as well as the integration of *Kievan Rus'* into the European cultural sphere.

The religious factor also played a unifying role, as it shaped a shared system of values, moral norms and worldviews. This helped to strengthen the spiritual unity of the population and foster a collective identity that extended beyond clan and tribal ties.

The socio-political preconditions for the formation of the Ukrainian nation during this period included the development of feudal relations, the growing role of local elites and the gradual formation of social stratification. At the same time, traditional clan structures retained significant influence, shaping the specific nature of social organisation and relations between different groups.

Cultural and linguistic factors played no less important a role. The formation of the Old Russian language as a common means of communication contributed to the consolidation of the population, whilst the development of chronicle-writing ensured the recording of historical events and the transmission of collective memory. Chronicles became an important source for the formation of historical consciousness and national identity.

External factors also had a significant influence on the processes of nation-building. *Kievan Rus'* actively interacted with the Byzantine Empire, the Scandinavian countries, the nomadic peoples of the steppe, and other states. These contacts fostered cultural exchange, the development of trade and diplomatic relations, which in turn influenced the formation of the political culture and worldview of the population (Plokhyy, 2006).

At the same time, external threats, particularly raids by nomadic tribes, contributed to the consolidation of society and the strengthening of military organisation. This fostered a sense of shared interests among the population and a sense of the need to defend their own territory, which is an important element of national identity.

Following the decline of Kievan Rus' and the Mongol invasion, a certain fragmentation of the political landscape occurred, yet cultural and ethnic ties among the population remained intact. It is precisely these ties that ensured the continuity of traditions and laid the foundation for the further development of the Ukrainian nation in subsequent historical periods.

Thus, the Old Rus' and early historical period is fundamental to understanding the process of the formation of the Ukrainian nation. It was during this period that the basic elements of ethno-cultural, religious and political identity were established, which subsequently developed and transformed under the influence of new historical conditions. It is this historical foundation that ensures the continuity of national development and creates the preconditions for the emergence of the modern Ukrainian nation.

The Cossack-Hetman Period

The Cossack-Hetman Period is one of the defining periods in the formation of the Ukrainian nation, as it was during this time that the transition took place from a predominantly ethno-cultural community to a conscious political nation. Chronologically, this period spans the 16th to 18th centuries and is characterised by the emergence of the Cossacks, the development of the Zaporizhian Sich, the formation of the Hetmanate, and the emergence of the first institutions of Ukrainian statehood (Hrytsak, 1996).

The emergence of the Cossacks was driven by a combination of socio-economic, political and military factors. The intensification of serfdom, the restriction of the rights of the Orthodox population within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the constant threat from nomadic peoples contributed to the formation of a new social class – the Cossacks. They acted as free men who united to defend their rights, manage their estates, and participate in military campaigns. The Cossacks became a unique phenomenon, combining the features of a military organisation, a social community and a political institution (Hroch, 1985).

The social structure of the Cossacks was relatively democratic, which distinguished them from the feudal societies of the time. Key principles included equality, collective decision-making and the election of leaders. This fostered the development of a political culture based on citizens' participation in resolving social issues, which became a vital element of national consciousness.

The Zaporizhzhia Sich served as the centre of Cossack life and a unique form of political organisation. It had its own system of governance, administrative structure, military organisation and legal norms. The key governing body was the Cossack Council, which made the most important decisions, including the election of the hetman and the senior officers. This system of governance fostered the development of democratic traditions and the formation of a sense of collective responsibility.

An important aspect of the Sich's functioning was Cossack law, which was based on customary norms and military traditions. It regulated internal relations, determined the procedure for resolving conflicts and ensured discipline. This law had a significant influence on the formation of the legal culture of Ukrainian society.

The Cossacks gained particular significance during the National Liberation War of the mid-17th century. This period became a turning point in the nation-building process, as for the first time there was a broad unification of various social strata of the population around the idea of creating their own state. Under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, a political programme was formulated aimed at achieving autonomy and protecting national interests.

The liberation struggle gave rise to the Hetmanate – a Ukrainian Cossack state that marked a significant stage in the development of national statehood. It possessed a well-developed administrative system comprising the hetman, the general officers, and regimental and company-level administrations. This structure ensured the effective governance of the territory and contributed to the strengthening of state institutions (Tilly, 1990).

The Hetmanate's financial system was also quite developed: there were taxes, customs duties, and its own economic system. This attests to a high level of organisation of state life and economic independence.

The legal system of the Hetmanate combined elements of customary, Lithuanian and Magdeburg law. This contributed to the formation of a multi-tiered legal system that regulated various aspects of social life. Importantly, the law served not only as an instrument of regulation but also of legitimisation of state power.

National consciousness during this period was shaped by several key factors. Firstly, there was the idea of freedom, which was central to Cossack identity. Secondly, there was the struggle for independence, which united different sections of the population. Thirdly, there was the religious factor – Orthodox Christianity, which served as a symbol of the cultural and spiritual unity of the Ukrainian people.

Religion played not only a spiritual but also a political role. The defence of the Orthodox faith was often used as an argument in political struggles, which helped to consolidate the population. The Church served as an important institution that ensured the preservation of cultural traditions and the formation of national identity (Plokyh, 2006).

An important aspect of this stage is the development of education and culture. In the 17th–18th centuries, educational institutions were active, with the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy occupying a special place among them. It became a centre of science, education and spiritual life, contributing to the formation of an intellectual elite that played an important role in nation-building.

Literature, art and folklore also contributed to the formation of national consciousness. Cossack ballads, historical songs and chronicles reflected the struggle for freedom and preserved the memory of important historical events.

Foreign policy factors had a significant impact on the development of the Ukrainian nation. Ukrainian lands lay within the spheres of influence of various states – the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Tsardom of Moscow, and the Ottoman Empire. This created difficult conditions for state-building, but at the same time fostered the development of political consciousness and the aspiration for independence (Subtelny, 1986).

The gradual curtailment of the Hetmanate's autonomy by the Russian Empire and its dissolution in the 18th century led to the loss of political independence. Hetman rule was abolished, the Zaporizhian Sich was dissolved, and Ukrainian lands were integrated into the imperial administrative system (Kohut, 1988).

However, even under these conditions, the Cossack tradition did not disappear. It was preserved in cultural memory, folk art, historical works and the consciousness of the population. It was this tradition that became a key factor in the national revival of the 19th century.

Thus, the Cossack-Hetman period is pivotal in the formation of the Ukrainian nation, as it was during this period that political consciousness took shape, state institutions developed, and the idea of independence took root. This period laid the foundations for the key elements of national identity, which became the bedrock for the further development of the Ukrainian nation in subsequent historical periods.

The Modern Period (19th – early 20th centuries)

The modern period of the formation of the Ukrainian nation, spanning the 19th to the early 20th centuries, is a defining phase in the transition from a traditional ethno-cultural community to a modern nation of the European type. It was during this time that the national idea took shape, political consciousness developed, and institutions were established, laying the foundations for future statehood.

This period was characterised by complex historical conditions, as Ukrainian lands were divided between two empires – the Russian and Austro-Hungarian. This division significantly influenced the development of the Ukrainian national movement, leading to its heterogeneity, but at the same time contributed to the formation of various models of nation-building.

One of the key factors of the modern stage was the national revival, which began in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It was linked to the activities of the intelligentsia, which played a leading role in the formation of national consciousness. Representatives of the Ukrainian cultural elite

contributed to the development of literature, science, education and the arts, which became the foundation for the consolidation of the nation (Hrytsak, 1996). The development of the Ukrainian language played a key role in this process. It became not only a means of communication but also an important symbol of national identity. Despite restrictions and bans, particularly from the Russian authorities, the Ukrainian language was actively used in literature, folklore and public life, which contributed to its spread and consolidation.

An important aspect of the modern period is the development of education and science. The establishment of educational institutions, scientific societies and cultural organisations contributed to the formation of an intellectual milieu, which became the foundation for the development of the national movement. Education played a key role in shaping a new generation of Ukrainians with a clear national identity.

During this period, social and political movements developed actively. The first Ukrainian political organisations emerged, advocating ideas of autonomy, federalism, and later full independence. Political activity contributed to the formation of civil society and the development of political culture (Hrytsak, 1996).

An important milestone was the establishment of the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood, which became one of the first organised centres of the Ukrainian national movement. Its activities were aimed at spreading the ideas of national revival, education and social justice (Pinchuk, 2007).

Cultural processes played a significant role in the formation of national consciousness. Literature, theatre, music and the visual arts became important instruments for spreading the national idea. The works of Ukrainian writers and artists shaped perceptions of the nation's shared past, cultural heritage and future.

Of particular importance is historical memory, which is shaped through research into the past, the writing of historical works and the popularisation of national history. This contributed to Ukrainians' awareness of their distinctiveness and historical continuity.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the national movement entered a new phase – the political one. The events of the 1905 and 1917 revolutions created the conditions for the realisation of the idea of Ukrainian statehood. During this period, the Ukrainian People's Republic, the West Ukrainian People's Republic and other state formations emerged, which became important steps on the path to independence (Magocsi, 2010).

Although these state entities were unable to survive for long, their significance for the formation of the Ukrainian nation is immense. They cemented the idea of statehood, shaped the political elite and laid the foundations for further liberation struggles.

Socio-economic changes also played an important role in the nation-building process. Industrialisation, urbanisation and the development of capitalist relations contributed to the formation of new social groups, which became active participants in the national movement.

External factors, in particular the influence of European ideas of nationalism, democracy and the self-determination of peoples, also contributed to the development of the Ukrainian nation. The Ukrainian national movement was part of pan-European processes that shaped the continent's political development.

Thus, the modern period is decisive in the formation of the Ukrainian nation, as it is during this period that it emerges as a political community with a distinct national identity. The development of culture, education, politics and ideology created the preconditions for the emergence of an independent Ukrainian state and determined the further direction of national development.

The analysis demonstrates that the genesis of the Ukrainian nation is a holistic and continuous process that underwent a transformation from early historical proto-national structures to a modern political community. It has been demonstrated that each stage of nation-building was driven by the synergy of political institutions, legal norms, cultural heritage and socio-economic factors. It was pre-

cisely this multi-layered interaction that ensured the continuity of the formation of national identity, even in the face of a prolonged absence of statehood.

One of the key theoretical approaches to understanding the nation is the concept whereby the nation is viewed as an imagined political community shaped by a shared history, culture and symbols. This approach helps to explain why the nation is not exclusively an ethnic phenomenon, but rather the result of historical development and social interaction.

Nation-building in Ukraine has its own specific characteristics, stemming from a prolonged absence of statehood and its history as part of various empires. This led to the fragmentation of the political landscape, yet simultaneously contributed to the formation of a resilient cultural identity, preserved through language, traditions and historical memory.

Culture is a key factor in nation-building, serving as a vehicle for values, norms and traditions. Ukrainian culture – in particular folklore, literature, art and religion – has played a decisive role in preserving national identity in the face of external pressure.

The political factor is also of significant importance. The formation of a political nation occurs through the development of state institutions, citizens' participation in political life and an awareness of shared interests. In this context, the Cossack state, liberation movements and modern state-building processes have played a special role.

The legal aspect of nation-building lies in the formation of a system of norms and institutions that regulate social relations and ensure the functioning of the state. The development of the law contributes to the strengthening of statehood, the formation of civic identity, and the safeguarding of human rights and freedoms.

Socio-economic factors also influence the process of nation-building. Economic development, urbanisation, the emergence of a middle class and the social structure of society contribute to the integration of the population and the strengthening of national unity.

Historical memory plays a special role, ensuring continuity between generations and shaping perceptions of a shared past. It is an important element of national identity, as it unites society around shared values and symbols.

External factors, in particular the influence of other states, international relations and globalisation processes, also have a significant impact on nation-building. They can both contribute to the development of the nation and pose challenges to the preservation of its identity.

The current stage of the Ukrainian nation's development is characterised by an active process of social consolidation amidst war, European integration and globalisation. These factors contribute to the strengthening of national identity, the formation of a civic nation and the development of democratic institutions.

Thus, the formation of the Ukrainian nation is a complex and multifaceted process influenced by various factors and historical conditions. An analysis of these processes allows for a deeper understanding of the current state of Ukrainian society and helps to identify the prospects for its future development.

The study has established that the formation of the Ukrainian nation is a protracted, multi-level and non-linear process that has undergone a series of historical transformations. Its development has not been continuous; however, each historical stage has created new preconditions for the further strengthening of national identity.

It was found that the early historical and Old Rus' periods laid the foundations for the ethno-cultural community upon which the Ukrainian nation was formed. It was during this time that the basic elements of identity took shape: language, traditions, religious beliefs and the first forms of political organisation.

The study has shown that Kievan Rus' played the role of a civilisational centre, ensuring the integration of the East Slavic lands into the European cultural space. This contributed to the formation of a shared historical memory, which became one of the key factors in nation-building.

It has been established that the Cossack-Hetman period proved decisive in the transition from ethnic community to political nation. It was during this period that the idea of statehood took shape, institutions of self-government developed, and traditions of political participation among the population became established.

It is particularly significant that the Cossack model of society contributed to the development of democratic elements within political culture, notably the election of officials and collective decision-making. This was a unique phenomenon in Eastern Europe at the time.

It has been demonstrated that the modern period (19th – early 20th centuries) marked the formation of the Ukrainian nation as a European-style political community. During this time, there was active development of the national movement, the emergence of the intelligentsia, and the spread of ideas of state independence.

A significant outcome is that culture, education and language became the primary instruments of nation-building. Literature, the press and civil society organisations played a key role in shaping national consciousness and consolidating society.

Furthermore, the study revealed that nation-building processes in Ukraine have always been influenced by external factors – imperial systems, geopolitical conflicts and European ideas of nationalism. This shaped a specific model of Ukrainian development, combining elements of the struggle for independence and cultural self-preservation.

In the current climate, the outcomes of historical development are reflected in the strengthening of national identity, the growth of civic consciousness, and the consolidation of society in the face of external threats and globalisation.

Thus, the findings of the study confirm that the Ukrainian nation has emerged as a complex historical phenomenon, having undergone a long evolutionary journey from an ethnic community to a modern political nation.

Conclusion. The present study leads to the conclusion that the formation of the Ukrainian nation is a protracted and complex historical process encompassing several key stages: the early historical (Old Rus'), the Cossack-Hetman, and the modern (19th – early 20th centuries). Each of these stages had its own specific characteristics, but together they formed a coherent trajectory of the development of Ukrainian national identity.

It has been established that the initial stages of development were linked to the formation of the ethno-cultural foundations of the Ukrainian people, the development of language, traditions, religion and the first political institutions. Kievan Rus' became an important civilisational foundation, laying the groundwork for further national evolution.

The Cossack-Hetman period played a decisive role in the formation of Ukrainians' political consciousness, the development of ideas of statehood, and the emergence of elements of self-government. It was during this period that traditions of political participation took shape, becoming an important component of national identity.

The modern phase facilitated the transition to a contemporary European-style nation-state model. The development of education, culture, literature and political movements contributed to the formation of national consciousness and the idea of independence, which was subsequently realised in the nation-building processes of the early 20th century.

The study also showed that nation-building in Ukraine has always been influenced by external factors, in particular imperial systems, geopolitical challenges and European intellectual currents. At the same time, internal factors – culture, language, historical memory and religion – remained decisive in preserving national identity.

The current stage in the development of the Ukrainian nation is characterised by greater social cohesion, a rise in civic consciousness and an active process of European integration. This confirms that the historical experience of nation-building continues to play a significant role in shaping modern Ukrainian statehood.

Thus, the Ukrainian nation is the result of centuries of historical development, underpinned by a combination of cultural continuity, political struggle and social transformation. The nation's further development depends on society's ability to preserve its own identity whilst integrating into the European and global spheres.

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