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## **TOTAL DEFENCE AS THE PRIMARY METHOD OF ORGANIZING RESISTANCE DURING THE NATIONAL LIBERATION WAR OF 1648–1657**

**Summary.** *The aim of the study is to identify the key aspects of implementing the concept of total defence, successfully employed by Bohdan Khmelnytsky in his struggle against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. An analysis of historical sources and the course of the National Liberation War of the Ukrainian people in 1648–1657 allows the authors to conclude that the Hetman's strategic intent consisted precisely in operationalizing this concept, mobilizing all available resources – political, military, economic, social, informational, and others.*

**The research methodology** is based on the application of historical-genetic, comparative-historical, typological, and systems-historical methods. The main findings confirm the uniqueness and effectiveness of the Hetman's strategy, which combined military and political efforts, mobilized all social strata, and established a resource and information base for conducting a protracted war. In particular, the study demonstrates that diplomacy, partisan tactics, peasant uprisings, propaganda, the engagement of the clergy, and economic self-organization were integral elements of the defensive strategy. **Scientific novelty.** The study integrates the modern defence paradigm the concept of comprehensive defence into the analysis of 17th-century historical events, specifically the National Liberation War led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky. For the first time, an attempt is made to interpret the actions of the Hetman and his associates as elements of a multidimensional defensive strategy, which included not only military, but also political, informational, diplomatic, social, and economic components. The study emphasizes that the flexible combination of regular and irregular warfare, the mass involvement of the population in defensive measures, and the mobilization of internal resources became a precursor to the modern concept of comprehensive defence, which is particularly relevant in the context of 21st-century hybrid warfare. **Conclusions.** The research demonstrates that Bohdan Khmelnytsky's strategic thinking was far ahead of its time. His ability to integrate all available resources and instruments within the struggle for independence created the conditions for prolonged resistance against a powerful adversary. In the absence of a standing army and with limited armaments, the Hetman managed to establish an effective model of national mobilization and defence, combining both military and non-military means of influence. The application of the principles of total defence allowed the transformation of the Cossack-peasant movement into a full-scale national revolution capable of altering the geopolitical situation in Eastern Europe. The findings confirm that the historical experience of the Khmelnytsky era is extremely valuable for developing contemporary models of Ukraine's national security and defence strategy.

**Key words:** National Liberation War of the Ukrainian People, Bohdan Khmelnytsky, Zaporozhian Host, total defence, diplomacy, alliances, mobilization, resources, information warfare, Cossacks.

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## ТОТАЛЬНА ОБОРОНА ЯК ОСНОВНИЙ СПОСІБ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ БОРОТЬБИ У НАЦІОНАЛЬНО-ВИЗВОЛЬНІЙ ВІЙНІ 1648–1657 РОКІВ

**Анотація.** *Мета дослідження* – полягає у виявленні ключових аспектів реалізації концепції тотальної оборони, яку успішно застосував Богдан Хмельницький у боротьбі проти Речі Посполитої. Аналіз історичних джерел та перебігу Національно-визвольної війни українського народу 1648–1657 років дав підстави авторам дійти висновку, що стратегічним задумом гетьмана була саме реалізація цієї концепції, для чого він зумів мобілізувати всі наявні ресурси – політичні, військові, економічні, суспільні, інформаційні та інші. **Методологія дослідження** – ґрунтується на застосуванні історико-генетичного, історико-порівняльного, історико-типологічного та історико-системного методів. Основні результати роботи підтверджують унікальність та ефективність гетьманської стратегії, яка полягала в поєднанні військових і політичних зусиль, мобілізації всіх верств населення та створенні ресурсної й інформаційної бази для ведення тривалої війни. Зокрема, продемонстровано, що дипломатія, партизанська тактика, селянські повстання, пропаганда, участь духовенства та економічна самоорганізація стали невід’ємними елементами оборонної стратегії. **Наукова новизна** – дослідження полягає в інтеграції сучасної оборонної парадигми – концепції всеохоплюючої оборони – в аналіз історичних подій XVII століття, зокрема Національно-визвольної війни під проводом Богдана Хмельницького. Уперше здійснено спробу інтерпретувати дії гетьмана та його соратників як елементи багатовимірної стратегії оборони, що передбачала використання не лише військової, а й політичної, інформаційної, дипломатичної, соціальної та економічної складових. У роботі підкреслено, що гнучке поєднання регулярної та нерегулярної боротьби, масове залучення населення до оборонних заходів, а також мобілізація внутрішніх ресурсів стали прообразом сучасної концепції всеохоплюючої оборони, що є актуальною в умовах гібридної війни XXI століття. **Висновки.** Проведене дослідження засвідчило, що стратегічне мислення Богдана Хмельницького значно випереджало свій час. Його здатність до інтеграції всіх наявних ресурсів та інструментів у рамках боротьби за незалежність створила передумови для тривалого опору сильному противнику. В умовах відсутності кадрової армії та нестачі озброєння гетьман зміг сформувати ефективну модель національної мобілізації та оборони, яка поєднувала як військові, так і невійськові засоби впливу. Застосування принципів тотальної оборони дозволило перетворити козацько-селянський рух на повноцінну національну революцію, здатну змінити геополітичну ситуацію у Східній Європі. Результати дослідження підтверджують, що історичний досвід Хмельниччини є надзвичайно цінним для розробки сучасних моделей стратегії національної безпеки та оборони України.

**Ключові слова:** Національно-визвольна війна українського народу, Богдан Хмельницький, Військо Запорізьке, тотальна оборона, дипломатія, союзи, мобілізація, ресурси, інформаційна війна, козаки.

**Statement of the Problem.** Ukrainian national history demonstrates that the concept of total or comprehensive defence, which involves mobilizing the entire society to protect the country in the event of a military threat, is by no means new for Ukrainians. One of the most vivid historical examples of warfare conducted in this format is the National Liberation War of the Ukrainian people under Bohdan Khmelnytsky (1648–1657). “Everything rose up, everything moved, and took

up arms: the old, the young, women, and even children – there was no Ukrainian who did not carry a sword in his soul” (Крип’якевич, 2022, p. 32).

This period of our history is both heroic and tragic. It is no coincidence that Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s name is associated with it, as his political talent and military leadership were pivotal in mobilizing the nation for struggle, achieving a series of significant victories, and ultimately attaining the long-sought goal – statehood. Khmelnytsky transformed a spontaneous Cossack uprising into a national war with a clearly defined political objective: the creation of an independent state.

Achieving this was extremely difficult, as by 1648 Ukrainians had been completely subjugated and constrained by the strict regulations of the Registered Zaporozhian Host under the service of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Only after the signing of the Zboriv Treaty in August 1649 did legal opportunities arise to form certain political and administrative structures. The notion of a Ukrainian army did not exist at all – the registered Cossacks, court and urban Cossacks served the state, magnates, or city elders of the Commonwealth, while the lower-tier Cossacks were outside the law (Ера Богдана Хмельницького, n.d.). Even after the Zboriv agreement, almost all property remained in the hands of Polish and Lithuanian feudal lords. The registered army was effectively an instrument for controlling the Cossack masses, while all military initiative was concentrated in the hands of the Polish nobility (Гужій, Чухліб, 2020, p. 118).

Thus, Ukrainians had extremely limited or almost no resources for conducting war, yet they sought to ensure effective defence against the aggressor, organize resistance, and prepare their own offensive measures.

How did Bohdan Khmelnytsky manage to organize a successful struggle in such a seemingly hopeless situation? It is difficult for us today to imagine, but an analysis of his actions allows for an unambiguous conclusion: the Hetman implemented a total defence strategy, which ensured that, despite severely limited military and economic resources, effective protection against the enemy was provided, aggression was halted (battles of 1648), and ultimately decisive victories were achieved. Khmelnytsky’s tactical mastery was revealed in his ability to utilize not only the Cossack army but also the masses of the population, who provided both rear and front support for the uprising (Крип’якевич, 1990).

**Analysis of Research.** To date, a substantial number of studies have been published that examine various aspects of the National Liberation War of the Ukrainian people in the mid-17th century, in particular the strategy of total defence employed by Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky in opposition to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (Стороженко, 1996). Both fundamental Ukrainian works and studies by foreign historians are available in the academic discourse, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the political, military, and ideological dimensions of this war.

Among Ukrainian scholars, particular attention should be given to the works of Ivan Krypyakevych, who in his monographs *Bohdan Khmelnytsky* and *The Ukrainian Cossack State and Its Founder Bohdan Khmelnytsky* (Крип’якевич, 2021, Krypiakevych, 1990) highlights the Hetman as a statesman and military leader, emphasizing his strategic thinking and diplomatic skills. This line of research is complemented by the works of Valerii Smolii and Valerii Stepankov (Смолій Степанков, 2009), in particular *The Ukrainian National Revolution of the 17th Century (1648–1676)* (Смолій, Степанков, 2009), where the authors reveal the multidirectional nature of the Ukrainian struggle for independence and analyze the political-military dynamics of the conflict.

Also noteworthy is the contribution of Oleksii Hurzhii and Taras Chukhlib to the study of the institutional evolution of the Hetmanate, particularly in *Cossack Ukraine* (Гужій, Чухліб, 2020), and *Hetmanate Ukraine* (Гужій, Чухліб, 2020), which provide insight into the formation of defensive and state policies during the Khmelnytsky era. *The collection Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s Universals 1648–1657* (1998) (Смолій, Степанков, 2009), serves as a primary source for the study of legal foundations and administrative mechanisms of that period.

Among foreign scholars, important contributions include John Kalik’s *Stories of Khmelnytsky* (Kalik, 2018), and Andrea Glaser’s *Stories of Khmelnytsky: Competing Literary Legacies of*

*the 1648 Ukrainian Cossack Uprising* (Glaser, 2015), which analyze the interpretation of the Khmelnytsky period in Western historiography and literature. Frank Edward Sysyn's study *The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Birth of Modern Ukraine* (Sysyn, 2024), deserves special attention for its attempt to reinterpret the events of 1648–1657 in the context of the formation of a modern Ukrainian nation.

Equally significant is Serhii Plokhii's *The Frontline: Essays on Ukraine's Past and Present*, in which 17th-century events are interpreted through the prism of contemporary state-building challenges. In the context of imperial narratives, Andreas Kappeler's *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (Kappeler, 2001), is useful for examining the influence of Muscovy and the subsequent incorporation of Ukraine into external geopolitical spheres.

Thus, the body of scholarly works by both Ukrainian and foreign researchers provides the basis for a thorough analysis of the multifaceted strategic activity of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, particularly his ability to synthesize military strategy, diplomacy, and internal mobilization of resources to safeguard the interests of the Ukrainian people.

**Aim of the Article.** The aim of the article is to identify the key aspects of implementing the concept of total defence, successfully applied by Bohdan Khmelnytsky in the struggle against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Analysis of historical sources and the course of the National Liberation War of the Ukrainian people in 1648–1657 allows the authors to conclude that the Hetman's strategic intent consisted precisely in operationalizing this concept, mobilizing all available resources – political, military, economic, social, informational, and others (Bila, 2021).

#### **Presentation of the Main Material**

**Diplomacy and Alliances.** At the outset of his struggle, Bohdan Khmelnytsky undertook a series of diplomatic initiatives that helped him restrain the opponent and inflict significant defeats. These included alliances with the Crimean Khanate, the Ottoman Empire, and the Tsardom of Moscow.

The alliance with Crimean Khan Islam III Giray (1644–1654), concluded in 1648 and maintained until early 1654, strengthened the army, primarily with cavalry, and enabled the achievement of a series of important victories (Степанчук). This alliance was a strategic necessity for Khmelnytsky, compensating for the lack of native cavalry, providing mobility to his forces, and creating diplomatic pressure on the Commonwealth.

Negotiations with Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV (1648–1687) secured guarantees for the protection of Ukraine from the Commonwealth and strengthened Khmelnytsky's position in dealings with other states (Чухліб, 2021).

Already in 1648, Khmelnytsky began correspondence with Tsar Alexis of Russia (1645–1676). Initially, these relations provided only limited economic support, but from 1653, when the Zemsky Sobor decided to accept the Zaporozhian Host “under the supreme authority of the Tsar”, a military-political alliance was established, which facilitated new victories and played a significant role in consolidating and developing statehood. However, the duplicitous nature of Moscow rulers remained constant, and in October 1656 they betrayed the Ukrainians by signing the Treaty of Vilnius with the Commonwealth.

In August 1649, the Zaporozhian Host became a subject of international politics. The marriage of Tymish Khmelnytsky to Rozanda, the daughter of Moldavian ruler Vasile Lupu (1634–1653), was not merely a family alliance; it enabled Bohdan Khmelnytsky to expand diplomatic contacts with Moldavia, Transylvania, Wallachia, Sweden, and other states, securing political and military support (Крип'якевич, 1990).

Thus, the diplomacy and political alliances of Bohdan Khmelnytsky were aimed at creating a system of comprehensive defence during the National Liberation War of 1648–1657 (Пестрикова, 2017). Through these measures, the Hetman secured the support of foreign states, weakened the Commonwealth, strengthened his own economic and military capacities, and ensured the independence of the Zaporozhian Host.

**Military Power.** The next crucial step in building a strategy of total defence was the formation of military forces. Bohdan Khmelnytsky successfully addressed this task by uniting various strata of Ukrainian society in the common struggle for freedom.

The first to support Khmelnytsky were the Sich Cossacks. Active mobilization across Ukraine during spring–summer 1648 brought virtually all Cossacks under his banners, forming the core of the Ukrainian army. However, this was insufficient; the main body of the army, especially in major battles, consisted of units formed from peasants and townspeople.

The combination of Cossacks, peasants, and townspeople in the military forces provided several advantages – flexibility, mobility, and the use of guerrilla tactics. Cossack detachments, particularly cavalry units, conducted ambushes, sudden attacks, and partisan warfare in the enemy's rear. This irregular warfare tactic allowed the Cossacks to successfully combat numerically superior forces. Units formed from peasants and townspeople instigated spontaneous uprisings across Ukraine, organized local self-defence detachments, and provided reconnaissance information (Смолій, Степахнков, 2009).

The formation of an army composed of the most professional and numerous social strata enabled the creation of a mass army capable of employing both conventional and irregular warfare tactics. The war became a nationwide undertaking, allowing the Ukrainian forces to confront a significantly stronger enemy.

The nationwide character of the National Liberation War under Bohdan Khmelnytsky is noted in multiple sources. For example, the Military Wiki article “Khmelnytsky Uprising” (Military Wiki, 2025), states that while the uprising initially had a Cossack character, it later attracted other strata of the Orthodox population of the Ukrainian voivodeships – peasants, townspeople, and petty nobility. As a result, the war gained broad social support, with its ultimate goal being the creation of an autonomous Ukrainian state.

Thus, the formation of the army, integrating the most professional and populous social strata, enabled the creation of a mass force capable of employing both classical and irregular warfare tactics. This transformation turned the war into a nationwide endeavor, allowing the Ukrainian army to resist a significantly stronger adversary.

**Mobilization of All Social Strata.** The National Liberation War of the mid-17th century became truly a nationwide movement, in which Bohdan Khmelnytsky successfully united various strata of Ukrainian society in a common struggle for independence. Each social group, seeking liberation from national oppression, religious and cultural restrictions, serfdom, and foreign domination, contributed its unique input to this large-scale conflict.

The Cossacks, possessing military experience, organizational discipline, and an unwavering desire for freedom, served as the primary driving force of the uprising, forming the core of the insurgent army, which provided not only combat power but also leadership for the rebel movement. Their military experience, acquired in numerous clashes, along with their ability to conduct rapid maneuvers and employ guerrilla tactics, laid the foundation for effective resistance against numerically superior enemy forces.

Peasants, rising en masse in rebellion, destroyed Polish noble estates, actively joined the formation of military units, and supplied the army with food and forage, a critical component for sustaining a prolonged conflict. Their participation gave the uprising a mass character, transforming it into a social revolution.

Townspeople supported the uprising by actively engaging in armed resistance and defending their cities. They provided the insurgents with provisions, weapons, ammunition, and crucial intelligence, contributing to the resilience of urban fortifications (Kappeler, 2001).

The clergy, especially the Orthodox Church, played a significant role in the moral support of the insurgents, calling on the population to defend their faith and homeland. Monasteries became centers of resistance, offering shelter and assistance to insurgent detachments. The Church's role in mobilizing the population was fundamental for consolidating efforts in the struggle (Пестрикова, 2017).

The nobility, mainly small and medium-scale Orthodox landowners, joined in organizing and managing the rebel army, participating in diplomatic negotiations with foreign states to secure support for the Cossack state. Their contribution to the creation of administrative structures for the new state and the internal coordination of the struggle was a key factor. At the same time, internal divisions among the nobility weakened the Commonwealth's positions and complicated its efforts against the insurgents (Sysyn, 2024).

Thus, the comprehensive mobilization of all social strata and their combined efforts became a key factor in Bohdan Khmelnytsky's success against the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, transforming the National Liberation movement into a broad social and political revolution.

**Resource Provision for the Army.** A crucial aspect of the National Liberation War was the creation of an economic base. Under Bohdan Khmelnytsky's leadership, it was formed from several key sources:

*Military trophies:* The capture of Polish estates, towns, and fortresses supplied the insurgents with weapons, provisions, and other necessary resources, enabling the army to maintain combat readiness and meet its needs (Гуржій, Чухліб, 2020).

*Taxes and obligations:* In controlled territories, a system of taxation and compulsory services was established, providing regular revenue to support the army and sustain the functioning of the insurgent state.

*Support from the population:* Peasants, townspeople, Cossack households, clergy, and nobility provided material assistance to the insurgents, supplying finances, weapons, provisions, clothing, and other essentials, as well as offering shelter. This support was a crucial factor for the success of the struggle (Біла, 2021).

*Allied assistance:* Establishing diplomatic and allied relations brought not only political benefits but also certain economic advantages.

**Customs control:** With the formation of a nascent state, a service for controlling trade routes was established. Customs oversight became an important source of revenue for the state treasury, and thus a means to support the country's total defense.

An important aspect of building this economic base was that the war was conducted on Ukrainian territory, allowing the use of local resources (Біла, 2021).

Despite these challenges, the Cossack state was able to establish autonomous economic functioning, which allowed it to restrain the enemy, sustain a prolonged war, and conduct successful military campaigns.

**Information Warfare and Spiritual Resistance.** Bohdan Khmelnytsky, understanding that true warfare is conducted not only with weapons but also through influence on public thought and beliefs, actively employed various instruments of information warfare and ideological resistance (Чава, 2020). This enabled him not only to mobilize the population but also to shape a unified worldview of the struggle for freedom and faith. Let us examine in detail how Khmelnytsky implemented these strategies during the National Liberation War of 1648–1657.

#### **Propaganda as an Ideological Foundation**

**Appeals to the People.** In the first weeks of the uprising (January–February 1648), the Hetman issued one of the first *Universals* addressed to various social groups: Cossacks, peasants, townspeople, and even part of the minor nobility. This document called for the unification of all forces “for freedom and the Orthodox faith” and for the elimination of “political and religious oppression” by the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (Смолій, Степанков, 2009).

“...so that the Cossacks and all our Ruthenian kin, gathered at assemblies, would resolve to serve the People, and no longer serve that criminal Poland...” (Military Wiki, 2025).

In the *Universals*, Khmelnytsky appealed to two primary motives: religious (the defense of the Orthodox faith against Catholic oppression) and social (liberation from serfdom and restoration of Cossack freedoms). This political rhetoric created a stable ideological base on which the subsequent mobilization of the population was built (Стороженко, 1996).

**Anti-Government Rhetoric Among the Nobility.** In addition to the *Universals* directed at peasants and townspeople, Khmelnytsky sent letters through his envoys to Polish and Ruthenian

nobles (mostly Orthodox) and clergy, urging them to seize the favorable moment to pressure the Commonwealth government and join the Cossack council. For example, a letter from the clergyman Ivan Svarnyk to Bishop Pavlo Teteria in May 1648 argued for "...the necessity of joint protection of Orthodoxy, for without it the Church will perish." (Чава, 2020).

**External Propaganda.** To garner support from foreign powers, Khmelnytsky deliberately conveyed the message that the struggle was "not against Catholic Poland, but for an independent Orthodox Ruthenia". This was one of the tasks of the Political Chancellery: through correspondence with the Ottoman Empire, Muscovy, Moldova, and Transylvania, to communicate the idea of "free development of Ruthenian lands" (Kubala, 1910).

### **Universals, Correspondence, and Literature as Tools for Shaping Public Opinion.**

#### *Universals as Primary Documents.*

*Universal to the Peasants* (February 1648): addressed to the peasants of Podillia, calling them to destroy noble estates and join the Cossack council (Крип'якевич, Бутих, Смолій, 1998).

*Universal to the Nobility* (March 1648): appealed to Orthodox nobles with the promise of preserving their rights if they supported the Cossack government against the Polish "Lipka king" (Крип'якевич, Бутих, Смолій, 1998).

*Universal to the Townspeople* (April 1648): offered city communities the maintenance of elected magistrates and guarantees of free trade if they became "fortresses" of the Cossack army in towns (Крип'якевич, Бутих, Смолій, 1998).

Each *Universal* brought social groups closer to the idea of "total defense", demonstrating that Khmelnytsky not only recognized the role and status of each group but also provided them with specific political guarantees (Крип'якевич, Бутих, Смолій, 1998).

**Diplomatic Letters to Allies and Opponents.** Correspondence with the Crimean Khans Īslām III and Mehmed IV (1654–1666), the envoys of the Ottoman Empire, as well as with Muscovite Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich, was not only a means of obtaining military and material support but also a way to convey information about the "just intentions" of the Cossack government (Чухліб, 2021).

"Orthodox Ruthenia has been oppressed since time immemorial; we have justice, yet justice is unseen; therefore we demand that you, Muslim Īslām, confirm our righteous struggle" (Khmelnytsky's letter to Īslām III, March 1648) (Чухліб, 2021).

**Samiylo Velychko's Chronicle.** Samiylo Velychko, a scribe in the Hetman's Chancellery, began his chronicle with the start of the 1648 uprising. This work combined factual reporting with literary elements and often addressed readers as "brothers in Christ", creating the notion of a "righteous war" against "Polish depravity" (Чава, 2020). The Chronicle extensively employed metaphors and rhetoric emphasizing the superiority of Orthodoxy and "divine providence" in Cossack victories, thereby enhancing the moral spirit of the insurgents.

### **Church Propaganda as a "Soft" Factor in Mobilization**

**Active Role of the Orthodox Clergy.** Orthodox metropolitans and bishops (Sylvester Kosov, Lazar Baranovich, Innokentiy Gizel) not only blessed the war but also organized collections of donations for the Cossack army. In their sermons, they often compared the "Orthodox brethren" to "Ruthenians of Simon" (the Apostle Simon), who fought against paganism, stating that "now we fight against Catholic oppression" (Чава, 2020).

**Church Universals and Spiritual Directives.** In June 1648, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Parthenios II, issued a message calling on "Orthodox brethren" to support the "Ruthenian kin" in the struggle against "Latin apostates" (Encyclopedia of the Orthodox Church). This message was quickly disseminated across dioceses through sermons and directives, which was especially important for the Ukrainian peasantry, where literacy was limited.

### **Military Slogans, Symbolism, and Their Influence on Morale**

**Formulation of Slogans.** The most famous slogan of Khmelnytsky – "*For the Orthodox Faith, for Cossack Liberty!*" – was first recorded in Samiylo Velychko's chronicle during the siege of Zamość (July 1648). It quickly became the emblem of the uprising, motivating not only Cossacks but also peasants and nobles who had previously hesitated to join the army (Яковенко, 1995).

**Flags and Iconography.** Each Cossack banner featured the image of Archangel Michael or John the Baptist (symbols of Orthodox defenders). Alongside religious icons, the figure of Khmelnytsky himself sometimes appeared, creating a cult of leadership. According to Polish historian and publicist Ludwik Kubala, each banner carried not only military arms but also a protective icon (Kubala, 1881). Cossack banners were accompanied by priests who provided blessings before battle.

**Partisan Rituals.** According to tradition, before spending the night in the steppe, Cossacks would light an “eternal flame” over the camp, burning Polish heraldic leaflets and other noble symbols as a ritual of “cleansing” from “Latin impurity” (Kalik, 2018). Modern scholars note that this ritual aimed at psychological mobilization, reminding each warrior that he fought not only for material gain but also for “spiritual purification”.

Thus, ideological warfare and spiritual resistance in Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s military strategy became an integral component of total defense. Through propaganda, *Universals*, correspondence, folklore, church support, and symbolism, Khmelnytsky created a strong ideological framework that united various social strata (Cossacks, peasants, townspeople, nobles, and clergy) in a common struggle for faith, freedom, and independence (Glaser, 2015). This comprehensive set of measures not only boosted morale but also prevented demoralization among the population, which became one of the key reasons for the success of the National Liberation War of 1648–1657.

**Conclusions.** The results of this study demonstrate that Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s strategic vision during the National Liberation War of the Ukrainian people in 1648–1657 fully corresponds to the contemporary paradigm of comprehensive (total) defense. Under extremely adverse conditions, he succeeded in mobilizing all available forces and resources military, political, economic, social, diplomatic, informational, and spiritual to implement a major state-building project.

The analysis confirms that the Hetman’s strategy was based on a comprehensive approach, combining regular and irregular (guerrilla) warfare, broad social mobilization, the formation of military-political alliances, establishment of administrative institutions, and the maintenance of an informational and ideological front (Sysyn, 2024). All these elements formed an organic model of national defense, within which a spontaneous insurgent movement transformed into a national revolution with a clear political objective the establishment of Ukrainian statehood.

This study interprets Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s actions as an early form of integrated defense strategy, which entailed not only military confrontation but also the creation of a sustainable social rear, informational influence, diplomatic maneuvering, and economic autonomy. Such an approach allows for the contextualization of historical experience in relation to contemporary security challenges, particularly the Russian-Ukrainian war, in which the Ukrainian people continue to fight for their independence.

Consequently, the practical significance of this research lies in the potential application of its findings in shaping Ukraine’s modern national security and defense strategy. The historical precedent of Khmelnytsky’s era provides a source of ideological and organizational continuity for state-building under wartime conditions.

Thus, the military-strategic legacy of Bohdan (Zinoviy) Khmelnytsky, grounded in the principles of total defense, acquires renewed relevance in light of contemporary defense concepts. It not only deepens our understanding of the events of the 17th-century National Revolution but also contributes to the consolidation of historical memory as a factor of national identity and societal cohesion in the face of existential threats.

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