A Faction Which Could not Lose

Jan Zamoyski, the only person who in the late sixteenth century was both Grand Chancellor of the Crown and Commander-in-Chief (hetman wielki) created a political faction unique for its size and importance, and also relatively well documented by the letters exchanged between Zamoyski and his men.

In simple terms, the life and career of Zamoyski may be described in several stages. Born in 1542 into a rich gentry family, he was educated both at home in Cracow and abroad in Paris, Strasbourg and Padua. After his return to Poland he became a royal secretary, a position which not only gave him a direct approach to the ruler but also enabled him to learn the essential mechanisms of power in the political centre of the state. After the death of his first royal protector, Zamoyski returned to Ruthenia, becoming politically active in his native Belz region and achieving prestige among the local gentry. Already during the first free election of the king (1573) the political ideas formulated by him were eagerly listened to by the gentry community. However, it was the second interregnum – after the hasty departure of Henry of Valois and the defeat of the Habsburg candidate – that resulted in the election of the Transylvanian Prince Stefan Batory to the Polish throne and opened prospects of a brilliant career for Zamoyski. The new king, untutored in the language and local realities, chose him as his closest and most confidential adviser. Further promotions followed quickly. In 1576 Zamoyski became the Vice Chancellor of the Crown, two years later the Grand Chancellor, and after another three years Hetman (Commander-in-Chief of armed Forces of the Crown). As the prime minister and closest collaborator of the King he achieved the ultimate goal: a direct influence on the appointments policy of the ruler.

Such a brilliant career brought him the ill-will and envy of potential rivals, headed by the mighty Zborowski family. To maintain his monopoly of power the Chancellor, in agreement with the King, decided to take radical steps. His leading opponent, Samuel Zborowski, was apprehended, imprisoned in Cracow Castle, charged with high treason and hastily decapitated. A year later his brother Krzysztof, impeached at a Diet...

1 "Crown", i.e., Poland; Lithuania had her own chancellors and army commanders.
2 See Kazimierz Łętży, Wroć Habsburgów - Jan Zamoyski (Z problematyki monografii o kanclerzu), in: Roczniki Historyczne 18 (1949) 118–134; Stanisław Lempicki, Mecenat Wielkiego Kanclerza. Studia o Janie Zamoyskim (Warszawa 1980); Waclaw Sobieski, Trybun ludu szlacheckiego. Pisma historyczne (Warszawa 1978); Artur Sliwinski, Jan Zamoyski, kanclerz i hetman wielki koronny (Warszawa 1947); Aleksander Tarnawski, Działalność gospodarcza Jana Zamoyskiego kanclerza i hetmana w. kor. (Lwów 1935).
Court for the same offence was sentenced by default to banishment\(^3\). A brutal suppression of the opposition evoked a wave of protest and accusations against Zamoyski and his numerous followers. With the sudden death of their royal protector (1586) the existing conflict erupted into an electoral battle\(^4\). The adversaries of the Chancellor, mostly aligned in a pro-Habsburg camp, anticipated a chance of revenge.

Nevertheless it became apparent that the defeat of the Chancellor and his supporters was not possible. Despite a double election, which almost simultaneously gave the Polish throne to a Swedish prince Sigismund Vasa and an Austrian archduke Maximilian, the latter’s road to the crown was effectively blocked by the armed forces under Zamoyski’s command, which relieved the besieged Cracow and later defeated Maximilian’s army at Byczyna (January 1588), capturing the archduke himself.

However, Zamoyski’s power in Poland was called into question from a totally different direction. It became obvious that the young King, although owing the crown to Zamoyski, did not intend to tolerate the omnipotent influence of his minister. The resulting conflict, caused by differences over appointments policy, gained momentum to the point of the Chancellor’s leaving the Court, while the influence of his followers there was drastically limited by the growing power of new royal favourites. The political atmosphere of the last decade of the 16th century depended to a large degree on the mutual relations between the King and the Chancellor, who not only exercised for life two of the most important state offices but also had a host of supporters at his disposal.

It soon became evident that in the long run the king could not act effectively without a *modus vivendi* with Zamoyski and his political allies and subordinates. A compromise was reached: the King got the Chancellor’s support for his Swedish policy, and Zamoyski achieved a partial restoration of influence on a nominating policy and full freedom in his Moldavian and Walachian operations. Diverse centres of opposition, naturally inclined to accept Zamoyski as their leader, must have felt disappointed. The most serious and open anti-royal manifestation came only after Zamoyski’s death in 1605\(^5\).

Zamoyski’s extraordinary and seldom paralleled career developed into one of the most significant moments of Polish history. This was the early period of elective monarchy which for the power elite was to bring major changes caused by the creation of immense estates at the South-East (Wolhynia, Podole, Ukraine) joined to the Polish Crown after the Union of Lublin in 1569. It can therefore be assumed that Zamoyski’s career was a harbinger of a different stage of socio-political development.

The formation of the new elite at the turn of the 17th century, as well as the individual careers accelerating the creation of the new aristocratic class (*magnateria*) at-

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\(^3\) See Josef Tichý, Zápas Jana Zamojského ze Zborowskými v letech 1582–1585 (Praha 1937); Julían Sutowicz, Sprawa Zborowskich na sejmie 1585, in: Przegląd Polski 10/2 (1875).

\(^4\) See Johannes Caro, Das Interregnum Polens im Jahre 1587 und die Parteikämpfe der Häuser Zborowski und Zamojski (Gotha 1861).

\(^5\) See Kazimierz Lepszy, Walka stronictw w pierwszych latach panowania Zygmunta III (Kraków 1929); idem, Rzeczpospolita Polska w dobie sejmu inkwizycyjnego 1589–1592 (Kraków 1939); August Sokolowski, Przed rokoszem (Kraków 1882).
tracts the constant attention of Polish historians⁶. The possession of landed wealth and office holding are the two well known and obvious factors. Instead, I have decided to concentrate on the third element which made a magnate’s career possible, the element which was much less concrete yet equally important, namely the social background of political activities, the factors binding members of various social groups to a political leader which made possible the growth of a faction and which, in turn, significantly influenced the fate of the nation. I was interested both in the mechanism of generating the diverse social and political ties which bound an individual to the Chancellor and also in the internal structure and functions of this faction viewed in the changing political conditions.

The research on the life and fate of Zamoyski’s extraordinary personality has led to an essential question: in what way did a Chancellor, who owed his career to royal protection, manage to keep power and influence in the new political conditions of the state despite a fundamental conflict with the new ruler? What gave his position such strength that it withstood the gravest crisis in the 1590s?

Letters and their authors: presentation of research method

In the search for an answer, one turns to the abundant correspondence of the Chancellor which survives in the Central State Archives in Warsaw. This material allows us not only to study the multifarious activities of Zamoyski in the field of literature, art, education, economy, architecture, medicine and, last but not least, politics, but also to grasp their social context through the analysis of the group of Zamoyski’s correspondents. Because of the limitations of the material it was not possible to reconstruct their biographies, apart from several of the most distinguished persons. However, neither individual lives nor separate matters as such form the subject of this study, but rather their reflection in the letters. Nevertheless, I think that this limitation does not exclude a prosopographic approach such as that adopted by Lawrence Stone⁷. This study therefore will be based not on the sum of biographies of people included in the group researched and the results of such a procedure, but primarily on the analysis of model situations, mechanisms and general patterns of change within the group of the Chancellor’s correspondents, as well as on the texts themselves and the principal motives behind their content.

The starting-point of this study are the letters, mainly those written and received by Zamoyski. Although I am not going to speak in detail of this material, it is worth emphasizing both the merits and the shortcomings of this source.

In the period I am discussing, correspondence became a common form of communication among the gentry. A letter was not only a much used means of private con-

tact, but was also an instrument of political propaganda and a channel for transacting various matters. Space does not permit me to analyze the origins of this phenomenon; but it was certainly introduced by a new generation of politicians largely educated at foreign universities.

The letters which focus on such a remarkable personality as Zamoyski are a stylistically varied, colourful and fascinating source collection. This material, despite its interest and wealth of detail, remains extremely difficult to interpret. In spite of the fact that in the case of Jan Zamoyski the letters are undoubtedly a massive source (c. 9,000 letters) it is hard to apply standard statistical rules of analysis in order to find a pattern of frequency of writing by the most active correspondents. Similarly, it was not possible to divide the letters according to their contents. Almost each one of them is an entity in itself, informed by many different motives. Because of this wealth, it was also difficult to select and define the types of letters relating to the social positions of their authors and addressees. There are Zamoyski's letters to his protectors in the early period of his career, to the people of his own kin, to those sharing his political ideas, as well as laudatory letters to the Chancellor written on occasion of his political triumphs or marriages, letters coming from his dependents, officials, followers and political friends as well as those exchanged with the senators who were launching his projects or influencing political opinions in various parts of the country. The letters themselves contain pleas for protection, but also instructions and orders as well as economic and political reports. The letter was a medium of official, familial, social, commercial and political contact. In the mass, letters illustrate an intricate system of social relationships based on patterns of mutual services. Pages of most of them are packed with rhetoric which renders difficult any interpretation. Finally, the letter is a form of communicating at a distance, and thus if the people in question were staying at the same place, it is doubtful whether any written sign of their contact could be traced. A fruitful critique of the epistolary series would also require the knowledge of Zamoyski's itineraries and those of each of his correspondents. This alone could explain the lack of letters, or their abundance at different periods. It would also effectively supplement the overall distribution of letters in time. Such a model research situation does not exist. What does exist is the awareness that the lack of letters in certain periods may be a result (apart from losses in the source material) of various causes - from a low intensity of correspondence and dissolution of the relationship between a given person and Zamoyski, to everyday contacts involving the closest cooperation. However, it can be taken for granted that the exchange ordinarily demonstrates the existence of good relations between the sender and the recipient.

Correspondence as a form of contact required the maintenance of a system of delivering letters, fixed places of their distribution and reliable messengers. Although the analysed material permits us to name at least several specialized letter-couriers, messengers usually belonged to the group of trusted confidants, already travelling for some reason and entrusted with the letters along with their main tasks.

8 This, i.e., causes the intensity of Zamoyski's correspondence during the wars with Muscovy 1579–1582.
Contemporaries viewed the technical conditions of delivery as extremely unsatisfactory. Letters contain innumerable complaints about the unstable, belated and unsure postage. The lack of eagerly expected information hindered many political actions. Sometimes the recipient received several letters from one sender at the same time. The messengers were a constant object of complaints and accusations while the difficulties of their recruitment were lamented about just as often. Such a situation forced the correspondents to eliminate from the letters the most secret details which were to be delivered orally by a confidential courier bearing additional credentials. Unfortunately for the historian no trace of such messages remains, and this deficiency in the basic source material must be taken into consideration.

The knowledge that some essential and secret news were never written down is balanced by several formulas which emphasize the confidential nature of the information, together with a suggestion of the immediate “erasing” of it or destroying the letters after reading. It is some consolation to notice that some matters are reflected in the correspondence as a reminder, although actually they had been transacted through the direct contact of both parties.

Thus the letters of Zamoyski, though burdened with numerous limitations and unknown in their original quantity, certainly reflect a substantial amount of political and personal decisions. For most of the problems analyzed below they remain the sole source of knowledge.

It is not easy to give a definite answer to the question of how representative the material actually is. Attempts to approximate the possible gaps – based on the knowledge of the history of the family archives, disproportions in the number of letters received and written by Zamoyski and the differences in the number of letters from particular

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9 “For a letter written to me, Sir, I could not give an answer before it had been delivered” (“Na list W.M. do mnie pisany, nie mogłem pierwej respondu dać, nim mi go oddano”) – philosophically remarked Krzysztof Radziwill, Deputy Commander of Lithuania, in a letter to Jan Chodkiewicz, Castellan of Wilno, written in Wilno, April 2, 1578 – Ignacy Polkowski, Sprawy wojenne króla Stefana Batorego. Diariusze, relacje, listy i akta z lat 1576–1586, in: Acta historica 11 (Kraków 1887) 100; hereafter: Polkowski, Sprawy.

10 “... it is dangerous to entrust a letter with too much” (“... a lystowy tak wylewe zwierzycz nyebeszpyeczna”) – wrote Zygmunt Czyżowski, Castellan of Belz, to the Chancellor from Wojstylwice, July 9, 1578 – Archiwum Jana Zamoyskiego I, No. 224; hereafter: AJZ, I, 224; “Not all can be entrusted to the paper” (“Wszystko nie może być papierowi powierzono”) – continued, July 8, 1588 from Venice, the Polish diplomat, Stanisław Reszka – AJZ, IV, 1306; “… one should not always put everything in a letter” (“… gdyz nie zawsze się zeydzie wszytkiego przez list oznajmić”) – concluded Zamoyski himself in a letter to Jan Chodkiewicz, Great Marshal of Lithuania, written in Ciechanów, July 31, 1576 – AJZ, I, 87.

11 See, i.a.: AJZ, I, 148, 212, 246; III, 899; Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Zamoyskich (hereafter: AZ) 183 Hieronim Godzitkowski to Zamoyski, Ujazdów, June 27, 1600; Biblioteka Kórnicka MS. 1708 f.67; Archiwum Domu Radziwiłłów, in; Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum VIII (hereafter: SRP VIII) p. 39; Jan Piotrowski, Dziennik wyprawy Stefana Batorego pod Psków (Kraków 1894) 208.

12 An equally high evaluation of an analogous source material used for investigating the 15th-century Florentine political structures was expressed recently by Dale Kent, The Rise of the Medici Faction in Florence, 1426–1434 (Oxford 1978) 33; hereafter: Kent, The Rise.
Diagram I: Zamoyski's correspondence, a) relations between subperiods, b) relation between letters sent and received

The mean no. of letters per year

- letters sent and received
- letters written by Zamoyski

1672-76 1577-81 1582-86 1587-91 1592-96 1597-01 1602-05
years – could give only imperfect results. Conclusions, apart from establishing that in certain years (1593–1603) the degrees of the preservation seems high, cannot be expressed quantitatively.

The main positive indicator of the representativeness of the source material is the imposing volume of this legacy. In the Zamoyski Archive, close to 12,000 rough copies and documents are connected with the person of the Chancellor. The number of letters – mostly originals – is estimated at about 9,000.\(^{13}\)

I have limited the group of Zamoyski’s correspondents to those living in Poland or temporarily staying abroad. For the requirements of analysis five-year periods have been introduced, relating to the most important political events in the country and referring to the stages of Zamoyski’s own career. The results of such chronological distribution can be expressed both in graphic and tabular form (Diagram I and Table I), containing 4,569 letters and 861 correspondents.

\(^{13}\) Such a number, even by European standards, seems very high – see: Antony Molho, Cosimo de’ Medici: “Pater Patriae” or “Padrino”, in: Stanford Italian Review (Spring 1979) 28; hereafter: Molho, Cosimo; Kent, The Rise, 33.
Table II: Zamoyski's Correspondents According to the Number of Letters Exchanged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of letters</th>
<th>Number of persons</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–3</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–5</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fundamental purpose of this study is the correct presentation of the social and functional structure of the group of Zamoyski’s correspondents\(^\text{14}\). I have assumed, therefore, that the temporal evolution in the composition of this group expresses synthetically the essence and forms of his political influence, and will bring at least a particular answer to the question set above.

The intended grouping – while attempting to connect positions held in the society with functions performed for Zamoyski – proved extremely tedious\(^\text{15}\) and required many simplifications. Finally, I have selected the following categories:

I. 1 royal entourage  
2 royal secretaries  
3 diplomats  
II. 1 high officers of the State (ministers, Crown and Lithuanian dignitaries)  
2 secular Senators  
3 bishops (Catholic and Orthodox)  
III. 1 lower officers of the State  
IV. 1 the remaining gentry  
V. 1 soldiers  
VI. 1 Zamoyski’s retainers  
VII. 1 townsmen  
2 lower clergymen  
VIII. 1 scholars (humanists)  
2 physicians  
3 foreigners\(^\text{16}\)

The disproportion in the number of letters in particular periods required the use of

\(^{14}\) See Juliusz Bardach, O ujęciu socjologicznym struktury społecznej i ideologii szlachty polskiej, in: Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne 15/2 (1963) 159–178.  
\(^{15}\) Lack of biographical data, life promotions of the individual persons during the investigated period, a possibility of simultaneous classification of the same person to several categories.  
\(^{16}\) A marginal group of peasants as well as persons socially unidentified have been omitted.
relative figures. Percentages of participation in correspondence for each of the selected groups are expressed both in graphic (Diagram II) and tabular (Table III) forms.

Diagram II: The relative participation of various social groups in correspondence with Jan Zamoyski (acc. to the number of persons)

The unequal distribution of letters in particular years and the requirements of analysis indicate the necessity of a special method of investigation. The idea introduced in the text refers to the position of being in contact through correspondence with Zamoyski. The chronological framework of this relationship is established by the first and the last letter exchanged between the Chancellor and the person in question. I have assumed that throughout the period defined by these dates there existed some contact through letters independently of the distribution of letters over time (or their lack). This assumption seems to fit the social reality closer than to take only the dates of surviving letters under consideration. However, in order not to identify the frequent correspondents with those who wrote very seldom, an index of intensity of correspondence has been introduced, serving as a statistical balance in differentiating important correspondents from the marginal ones.

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The first group, composed of lower but influential officials of the central government, corresponded with Zamoyski most intensively in the period 1577–1591; this reached its highest frequency in the second half of King Stefan's reign. This supports the opinion that Zamoyski was active at the Court only for the first five years of Sigismund III’s rule.

Senators played a gradually diminishing role among the correspondents although they always remained most important. This most interesting and significant tendency of the ousting of Senators from their leading position by other social groups illustrates indirectly the nature of the Chancellor's own social and political backing. Achieving the top position in the State, Zamoyski became increasingly less occupied with writing letters to his equals while at the same time he tightened contacts with his subordinates and other lesser people. In the first five-year period the senatorial group dominated the letter-exchange pattern. Its members saw young Zamoyski as an attractive and promising politician, and in the same period he used them as his basic support for a possible career. During Batory's reign the importance of this group was gradually reduced. Zamoyski acquired political independence and coordinated his activities only with a part of the Senate, which deeply offended its other members. This tendency continued gradually but consistently in the reign of Sigismund III. A system of patronage displaced to a large degree cooperation with political allies from the Senate.

This phenomenon is corroborated by a steady increase in the frequency of correspondence on the part of the lower state officials. It continues for the first 25 years, while in the period 1597–1605 even lower officials were displaced by more subordinate groups. It implies the loss of political influence by the Chancellor.

The group of gentry correspondents, anonymous in its mass, also shows the increasing, although unstable, tendency of development. The index for the period 1572–1576 seems artificially high. During the reign of Batory and in the stormy period after the third royal election, the gentry’s share in the Chancellor’s correspondence was marginal. In the vortex of his political activities there remained no place for them. Their participation suddenly increased in the period 1592–1601. At that time numerous lesser nobles seemed to have leaned toward the Chancellor, looking for life support and wider perspectives. This should be treated as an important indication of what Zamoyski had to offer politically. In the last years of the Chancellor’s life the participation of lesser nobles in Zamoyski’s correspondence (letters received by him) was only slightly lower.
A Faction Which Could not Lose

The share of soldiers in Zamoyski's correspondence is exceptionally stable, particularly since he was given the office of Hetman.

A steady and distinct increase in the volume of correspondence from retainers (group VI) shows Zamoyski's success in building up his own clientage (the figure for 1572–1576 – eleven – seems improbably high). There is also an increase in the participation of townsmen and the lower clergy. However, for the whole period 1577–1601 it remained unchanged as a result of the wide diversity of contacts between members of this group and Zamoyski, from the full subordination of the town of Zamość or the priests performing their duties in the Chancellor's estates, to ties based solely on mutual economic relations. Much more obvious is the increase of contacts with the scholars and foreigners who swarmed around, benefitting from the Chancellor's patronage, especially during the reign of Sigismund III.

One may therefore assume that the basis of the social system built up by Zamoyski was composed mainly of retainers, townsmen and the lower clergy as well as by intellectuals and foreigners, while the basis of his private political backing was composed of the lower office-holders, gentry and soldiers. This permits a kind of quantitative presentation of his socio-political system on the basis of figures from Table III and Table IV.

The results obtained point at the years 1587–91 and the neighbouring periods 1582–86 and 1592–96 as the most important for that building-up of the Chancellor's social backing.

Table IV: Quantitative Index of Build-up of Zamoyski's Social Backing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>I + II</th>
<th>Index 69 = 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1572–76</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So far, the analysis has covered nearly the entire body of the Chancellor's correspondents. Although I continue to maintain that the exchange of letters was generally a sign of good mutual relations, it is also quite evident that the whole group cannot be understood as a faction, or in a wider sense as a social basis of Zamoyski's activities, determining his leading role in public life.\(^{18}\)

\(^{18}\) The Chancellor's man ("zamoyszczyk") is understood to be an individual who acts on his behalf or in his name. One either was a Chancellor's man regularly or from time to time. Also it is very probable that a person supported by the Chancellor was a "zamoyszczyk". However, the fol-
The analysis of functional terminology supplied by the letters has demonstrated its incoherence and lack of consistency. I was forced to develop a distinct classification to describe the degree and nature of connection between Zamoyski and each particular person, taking into account the approximate social position of each individual corresponding with the Chancellor. A systematic study of this variable statistical population was difficult for several reasons. For some there was uncertainty as to their noble condition. The general obstacle however stemmed from the fact that the political and functional stratification within the country as a whole does not fit with the divisions within the group of Zamoyski’s adherents (the social structure vs. services performed for Zamoyski). It was also extremely hard to find a common denominator for diverse functions or services performed for Zamoyski. Can a manager of the Chancellor’s estates be put on one and the same scale with his political ally belonging to the senatorial-magnate group?

Despite numerous problems of classification one may still characterise the population of Zamoyski’s correspondents according to their relation to him. I enumerate them in the descending order of their dependence.

1. Zamoyski’s officials (totally at his disposal) employed in the Royal Chancery and the Chancellor’s household, commanders of his private troops, attorneys, lieutenants, messengers, priests at the Chancellor’s own estates and leaseholds, scholars (including professors of Zamosc Academy) etc.

2. Economic officials (totally at his disposal) – estate stewards, comptrollers, receivers, clerks, petty leaseholders.

Following exceptions must be stated: a) when the Chancellor’s support was enlisted under pressure from a third party, b) when there exist other traces of patronage apart from the request in the letter, c) when the supplicant was equal in social status with Zamoyski.

The propositions of other authors investigating analogous trends for different European countries could not be utilized, mostly due to the terminological ambiguity. Among the 15th-century followers of the Medici, Dale Kent distinguished only the “clients” and “partisans” (Kent, The Rise, 35), the latter understood in a strictly political sense. For modern France, Roland Mousnier established only two basic types of patron-client relationship: “maitre-fidèle”, which according to him implied an element of sentiment, and “protecteur-créature” having political meaning (Roland Mousnier, Les Institutions de la France sous la Monarchie Absolue, vol. 1 (Paris 1974) 86–92).

This group includes both strictly political officials – Zamoyski’s representatives at the royal household, some county and district officials, totally depending on him since acting in the sphere of his direct power, as well as private functionaries, i.e., professional lawyers.

It does not seem necessary to give a raison d’être for the imperative need to maintain an efficient administrative system of the landed estate. It may be added that a degree of political involvement prevented Zamoyski for considerable periods from supervising personally the economic output of his lands. His expanding estate required experienced administrators while the large scale investments called for the best workers and organisers. Although preserved unsatisfactorily, letters of the estate officials indicate that this group maintained close internal relations, providing the Chancellor with the basis for political activity.
3. Political followers (totally at his political disposal) – the middle gentry: subordinated county (Polish: województwo) and district officials, politically active military commanders, leaders of district diets (assemblies of the nobility), couriers entrusted with political missions, informants, residents at the royal household, diplomats.  
4. Political friends (at limited disposal) – senatorial level – lower seats in the Senate and royal household dignitaries. Careers they owed to Zamoyski created in them a sense of loyalty to the Chancellor. Their political alliances were of long duration.  
5. Political allies (no dependence) – the key State ministers and chief Senators, equal political partners of Zamoyski. Their careers were not based on his patronage; their offices, family ties and wealth guaranteed their independence.

I have omitted the small, although crucial category of Zamoyski’s entourage, the factoti – his closest associates performing a variety of tasks who were usually recruited from among the county officials. Another category of the Chancellor’s entourage, important yet difficult to determine, which included his secretaries, physicians, chaplains, household residents and neighbours, was likewise not taken into account.

The method of analysis is the same as the one applied to the whole group of correspondents. I shall try to illustrate the intensity of letter writing for each of the described socio-political groups. The criterion of classification as a particular group was based on the contents of the letters which reflected the type of the existing bond. Biographical data derived from other sources were used only as a supplement. Relative changes in the correspondence frequency of particular groups is shown in Graph III.

The fundamental tendency of the whole statistical population was a gradual decrease of the relative share of senatorial political allies (corroborated by the same tendency of this group among all correspondents). The rate of this decrease was at its highest in the first 15 years. Later it significantly slowed down. The place of senatorial allies was gradually taken over by groups of greater degrees of dependence.

The role of political friends – nonexistant in the first five years for obvious reasons – markedly increased during the reign of Batory and later retained nearly the same level.

22 The followers, particularly those of high social status, took part in managing the private affairs of the Chancellor. The involvement of Drohojowski brothers in his matrimonial strategy is worth mentioning. Jan Krzysztof, Royal Secretary, negotiated on Zamoyski’s behalf with the Radziwills for the hand of Krystyna, daughter of Mikołaj “the Black”, Palatine of Wilno and Chancellor of Lithuania, while Jan Tomasz, Royal Referendary and capitaneus of Przemysł, served in 1583 as maître d’hôtel to Gryzelda Batory who, arriving from Transylvania, was escorted by him from the country’s frontier to Cracow, entertained on the way at his Wojutycze estate and saw him participate at her wedding with Zamoyski.

23 The representatives of this group displayed full loyalty during the conflict with the Zborowski family, did not desert the Chancellor in the difficult 1590s (a known protest by a group of senators against the anti-Zamoyski declarations of Kolo in 1590) and maintained a long lasting contact through correspondence. Their independent and high social position did not weaken the relationship with the Chancellor, although it changed its nature.

24 Briefly, such a relation of political alliance can be illustrated by the words of the Primate, Stanisław Karnkowski, directed to Zamoyski in 1583. The Archbishop declared that he wanted to have an agreement with the Chancellor “although we do not always go the same way” (“choć nie zawsze jedna droga chodzim”) – AJZ, IV, 1083.
A different picture emerges in respect of the political followers. The general tendency is also that of a rise. However, the apogee of this group’s importance falls in the years of political crisis of 1587–1596. At that time all the forces at the Chancellor’s disposal were mobilised in order to withstand the dangers created by his conflict with the new ruler. A slight relative decrease of his political followers in the later period may indicate that, for Zamoyski at least, the main conflict had been overcome. In the last years of the Chancellor’s life, the followers were superseded by officials and, to a small degree, by political friends. This, in turn, may mean the closing up of the Zamoyski faction at its basic core as well as the lack of expansive political tendencies on the part of the Minister himself.
This overall view is significantly supplemented by a constant increase of the relative number of letters exchanged by the patron with his private officials (his noble servants), men whose activities were centred directly on the person of the Chancellor. In agreement with this tendency, the share of his estate-servants shows, characteristically, a minimum in 1577–1582, which again supports the observation that Zamoyski – busy making his ministerial career – simply had no time for economic matters. Participation of the Chancellor’s other servants slowly but constantly increases, generally unaffected by political events. This illustrates the consistent tendency towards involvement and employment among gradually more numerous and varied groups of dependents.

Using analogous computing techniques, and assuming that the core of the faction was composed of Zamoyski’s officials as well as of his followers and political friends, one can obtain the means of constructing a political system developed by the Chancellor by summing up the data describing relative shares of each group in particular periods (Table V).

Table V: Quantitative Index of Build-up of Zamoyski’s Faction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>I – according to the number of persons</th>
<th>II – according to the number of letters</th>
<th>III – the average</th>
<th>Index 84 = 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1572–76</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1577–81</td>
<td>54 [+ 23]</td>
<td>37 [+ 18]</td>
<td>45,5</td>
<td>54 [+ 24] (the highest)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results obtained indicate that Zamoyski’s faction was built most intensively in the reign of Batory. However, the index based on the number of letter writers favours the period of 1577–1581, while that based on the number of letters points to the second half of this reign. The rate of growth became distinctly slower under Sigismund III although the tendency was maintained. The arithmetical mean of both indices balances the indicated difference. Accepting the final level of the average index (for 1602–05) as 100 the ultimate result indicates again that the reign of Batory was the decisive period of constructing this political organisation.

“... fortunately there is God, fortune and a friend ...” – Andrzej Taranowski on margin of his letter from Adrianople, 1579²⁵.

“... not for money do I wish to serve you, Sir” – Jan Piotrowski, a royal secretary, to Andrzej Opaliński, Crown Marshall, 1578²⁶.
Letters addressed to Zamoyski since his first ministerial nomination show the tendency of a geometric progression. This indicates how quickly people were aware of his potential in influencing royal decisions. An interesting situation can be observed: the favour of the new minister is equally sought by the members of the senatorial group, anxious for his support, and by a growing number of gentry. Their correspondence in turn expresses their political attitude and their wish to find a connection with Zamoyski.

In their letters one finds declarations of “service” and hope of “remuneration through service”, first confidential political information, first references to common ancestral background, and first affirmations of joy because of Zamoyski’s successes. Zamoyski’s followers are to be found among former secretaries of Sigismund Augustus, among the electors in Belz district, who promoted his initial political steps during the first interregnum, and among persons connected with him by blood (the Herburts through his mother, Orzechowskis through his step mother, Ossolińskis through his first wife). He also inherited a group of the closest retainers and advisers of his father, Stanislaw, the Castellan of Belz. In the later stages of his career other groups joined the circle of his supporters: leaseholders, county officials and servants both from the leased royal domains and from his own household, a numerous but diffuse group of men owning their office or a royal grant to Zamoyski, an important group of his former or actual subordinates and finally those who enjoyed his cultural patronage. Zamoyski’s potential for patronage was the main force drawing these men to him.

Although it was the King who exclusively distributed grants, the actual mechanisms of politics were more complicated. What really mattered was an opportunity of reaching the contact with the Court and obtaining the royal favour. Such a goal could be achieved only through a proper recommendation, with the support of a person having direct access to the king. This became a main driving force of the patronage system. In many countries in early modern Europe, the structure and actual mechanisms of patronage depended on the situation which existed in each particular household as well as on the personality of the ruler and on his style of government.

A contemporary of Zamoyski, queen Elizabeth of England, unlike her predecessors – mainly Henry VIII and Edward VI – radically curbed royal grants and tried to take the helm of the patronage policy herself, in grants of offices, titles and lands. At the same period, king Stefan Batory, elected to the throne of a country of which he had no previous political experience, seems to have concentrated his attention on foreign policy. His tendency to treat the state as one unit automatically created great opportunities for his entourage, experienced in local politics. The chief result was the creation of a viceroy, a royal deputy for internal affairs. Such was a lot of Zamoyski who, accord-

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ing to the unusually unanimous opinion of contemporary observers, served the king as his chief adviser on promotions policy during most of Batory's reign. Proof of the supreme patronage powers of the Chancellor in this period comes also, indirectly, from the correspondence which constantly touched on this subject.

In the later years the Chancellor visibly tried to uphold the image of the indispensability of his personal intervention for key nominations. One can observe the interesting mechanism of the prevalence of his influence in various spheres of public life. Longlasting patronage possibilities had created an unwritten rule that some types of grants belonged to him by custom. Until his death one unquestioned zone of his influences, fully established after the war with Muscovy (1579-1582), were the grants in Livonia. Special agreements with his closest and already influential political associates guaranteed Zamoyski the influence on office nominations in the counties as well as in the Church. The territorial growth of his inherited and leased possessions provided the Chancellor with direct political control over large areas where possible rivals had no chances against his men. Even in the case of designation for key offices Zamoyski's loss of influence was only temporary. After the particularly unfavourable first half of the 1590's, the Chancellor succeeded in creating a system of strong pressures on the king through his supporters residing permanently at the Court. To transmit Zamoyski's point of view he used Piotr Tylicki (Crown Secretary and later Deputy-Chancellor) and Mikolaj Zebrzydowski (a new Crown Marshal). The group of the Chancellor's spokesmen at Court, owing to the great number of matters for consideration, must have been much larger. Under Batory this function was performed by successive deputy-chancellors, Jan Borukowski and Wojciech Baranowski, totally at Zamoyski's disposal, as well as by clerks of the lower grade working in the Royal Chancery: Maciej Kłodziński, Tomasz Okuń, Jan Piotrowski and Jan Krzysztof Drohojowski. Later this group was joined by the Castellan of Podlasie Marcin Leśniowski, a Crown Secretary Wawrzyncz Gembicki, a land official from Płock Andrzej Lipski and others.

This way of conducting matters, and the degree of freedom and flexibility left to his agents, are shown in three notes added by Zamoyski to a letter sent to Tylicki from Osieck on April 18, 1598: "I am writing to you about the matters of many, and it cannot be otherwise. Do not importune His Majesty; having delivered the case, take the answer and do not molest him again. Which of the matters is more crucial to me you can distinguish yourself easily". Thus detailed tactical dispositions were to guarantee the effect and partially substitute for a direct, personal influence over the king.

From the point of view of the Chancellor, promotion of patronage was the key element in constructing a supportive system of dependence which, in turn, served as a basis for further political activities. Theoretically one might imagine that such actions of the Chancellor were of two types: he could either promote certain men for posts and offices, or canvass those already in such positions. I suppose that the second method had been used in the earlier stage of his political career, while the first was ap-

plied later, and with great consistency. In any case, in his activities Zamoyski took advantage of the existing functional structure of the State, attempting only to change its personnel. The exceptions were these charges which he exercised himself. In this case, especially as commander-in-chief (hetman wielki), he tried to enlarge their prerogatives to the utmost.

Searching for European parallels of the phenomena observed in Poland, one may turn to Elizabethan England, as well as to the political structures organized in the fifteenth century by the Medici in Florence. Despite the differences in legal, social and economic conditions, the English situation, as known from recent research, might be considered analogous. The monopoly of patronage during the reign of Elizabeth was exercised by Lord Burghley, since 1561 Master of the Court of Wards and since 1572 Lord Treasurer. The Queen and her Minister resemble the pair Batory-Zamoyski, even taking into consideration various differences in character and competence between both pairs. The fundamental difference however rested on the fact that Elizabeth – according to A.G.R. Smith – attempted to retain in her entourage several influential men, none of whom ever controlled the entire patronage system while each became a leader of a political faction. Burghley’s elevated position only supports such a thesis. Moreover, after his death in 1598 one can observe a growing struggle for influence over patronage between his son Robert Cecil and the Earl of Essex. This meant the existence of several parallel networks of patronage29.

In fact, in Poland under Batory the situation was for some years unique: a total domination of one person over patronage policy. It is difficult to find any politicians contemporary to Zamoyski having power similar to his. In the reign of Sigismund III, however, it is possible to indicate several networks existing simultaneously. One can name a Palatine of Poznań, Hieronim Gostomski, and also some bishops, Stanisław Karnkowski, Hieronim Rozrażewski, who acted as an independent and effective lobby, and apparently members of Ostrogski family from Wołyń, particularly since Duke Janusz became Castellan of Cracow (the principal lay seat in the Senate), thus drawing the whole family more actively into politics. Other influential men included new royal favourites – Vice Chancellor Jan Tarnowski and later Crown Marshal Zygmunt Myszkowski. The Deputy Commander of Crown Forces, Stanisław Żółkiewski, was to a certain degree independent. Thus in the reign of King Sigismund the structure of patronage policies returned to a model already known from England. The times of Batory remain in this respect an intriguing exception.

Still another difference in the systems of exercising patronage is worth pointing out. In England one can describe numerous steps leading towards the patronage centre. Burghley’s example, cited above, is sufficiently illuminating, but his own private secre-

29 Commodities at the disposal of the English ruler displayed a uniform, clear and organized pattern and hierarchy of values, unlike in Poland, where it would be difficult to systematize goods used by the king to reward those who deserved it. This does not mean, however, that the actual possibilities in Poland were markedly smaller. See A. G. R. Smith, The Government of Elizabethan England (London 1967) 58–61, 64ff.; hereafter: Smith, The Government; Cecil Read, Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth (New York 1961).
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...tary, Michael Hickes, holding this post for 18 years (1580–1598), also had – due to this office – a numerous group of clients who wished to find access and get Burghley's support. According to A.G.R. Smith, such multilevel patterns of dependence were typical for Elizabethan society. The system existing in Poland seemed to have been less developed. Its aim was to reach directly the chief patron, and if additional support was sought, it was from other influential persons and not from private servants of the potential benefactor. Such an impression may obviously arise from letters addressed particularly to Zamoyski and this dangerous bias should not be overlooked. The above conclusion, however, may be the right one, since the scanty number of attempts known from the letters to reach the Chancellor through his private officials refer only to pleas and problems dealing with his household and private estate. To reach even such an important person directly was under Polish conditions not an unsurmountable problem, although some people who at times made such contact easier may be mentioned: Jerzy Zamoyski, Bishop of Chelm; Stanisław Zółkiewski, Vice Crown Commander; Jan Tomasz Drohojowski, a starosta (Latin: capitaneus) of Przemysł; Szymon Szymonowicz, a poet.

Similar results can be drawn from a comparison with Florence. Dale Kent, in her study of the 15th-century political structures created by the Medici likewise emphasized the parallel existence of several dispensers of patronage subjected to the Medicis, although the relatively small territory of this urban republic stimulated greater frequency of political contacts between the ruled and the rulers which diminished the role of the intermediaries.

Of letters addressed to Zamoyski throughout all the period under review, a majority carried supplications. Except for some strictly economic reports the search for patronage was the key motive of the letters. The requests are found at nearly every page both in letters written by people who had justified reasons to expect the Chancellor's favour as well as by men totally unknown, for whom the request was an opening move in their relationship with Zamoyski. Finally, among the supplicants one finds people who could not count on any support, being the enemies of Zamoyski or allies of his adversaries. Supplicating was not therefore, as one would expect, just an expression of some familiarity and thus justifiable, but rather a kind of a compliment for its recipient, a sign of the author's respect for his position.

Such attempts, coloured with unique and abundant stylistics, referred to various subjects. Requests for small loans or a permit for founding a village at the frontier appear side by side with supplications for the highest senatorial and ministerial dignities and profitable land grants. A request for ennoblement neighbours another for support at a law suit, a demand for remuneration of losses suffered from soldiers stands together with claims for soldiers' pay. Requests for support from the king appear to-

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31 Kent, The Rise, 92; see also Molho, Cosimo, 7 ff.
together with those for the command of a troop, for money assigned to hire soldiers and
with pleas for news or for an official transaction of some current matter. Requests of
familial, personal and social nature are intermixed with those for instruction and or-
ders, excuses go together with demands, pleas for concrete goods together with suppli-
cations for abstract ones – such as reward, advice, remembrance, favour and protection
or reminding the king of the supplicant’s previous merits.

In a majority of cases the final effects of these attempts are hard to evaluate. The
supplicants’ thanks appear extremely rarely in comparison with the requests. Most
grants and appointments cannot be corroborated by other sources. Moreover, the
number of the Chancellor’s letters is too limited to illustrate his reaction to a particular
request and to confirm its further transmission to the king. Similarly, the comparison
of requests in letters with other sources of information about the actual appointments
does not lead to a complete evaluation. Nevertheless, in accord with numerous con-
temporary opinions, and drawing on libels against the Chancellor and other political
writings, one can establish that in Batory’s times the principal minister usually ob-
tained what he wanted. In consequence, in this period there occurred over fifty senato-
rial and ministerial appointments which can be assigned to the Chancellor’s interven-
tion, approval or at least neutrality.

Owing to the lack of comparable credible external sources, it is more difficult to
judge the efficacy of Zamoyski’s patronage in the reign of Sigismund III. The conclu-
sion, that the Chancellor’s possibilities in this field were neither permanently nor
deeply limited, is founded on the massive number of requests for patronage still con-
tained in letters addressed to him. The statistical analysis of requests for the whole pe-
riod discussed (1,950 requests in 3,514 letters) requires many classifying techniques
and application of relative figures. The results presented in a graphic form (Diagram
IV) are grouped according to three basic types of requests:

a) offensive support – requests for aid in order to guarantee the life appointment of
the supplicant (material, official etc.);

b) defensive support – requests for protection and defence in case of a menace;

c) private patronage – requests for help and aid, referring to the private sphere of
Zamoyski’s life, his household and estate as well as artistic pa-
tronage.

The offensive support was expected from Zamoyski mostly in the reign of Batory.
In the following ten years there was a sharp decline in the relative share of requests of
this kind. This may be explained by a conflict with the new ruler which radically limit-
ed chances and effects of the Chancellor’s influence on the King. This trend was
checked and gradually reversed in the period 1597-1605. In place of offensive sup-
port, letters were supplcating mainly for private patronage. The address to the direct
spheres of Zamoyski’s power illustrates the structure of his social backing. This kind of
request reached the greatest relative intensity in 1587–1596: exactly at the moment
when the Chancellor’s possibilities for personal support were at the low ebb and his
relations with the king were passing through a critical phase.

The requests for Zamoyski’s defensive support – for his aid and help were increas-
ing slightly yet consistently in comparison with the whole corpus of supplications.
Diagram IV: A relative share of basic kinds of requests found in the letters to Zamoyski, 1572-1605

This category was likewise directly involved in the development of the private system of dependence through the appeals to fixed spheres of the Chancellor's power.

In the last, clearly distinct, period of 1597-1605, requests for private patronage diminish in relation to those for defensive support as well as to offensive possibilities caused by his better relations with the Royal Court. Taking under consideration the defensive support and the private patronage viewed against the three distinct time periods, another index can be established. It reveals the degree of Chancellor's concentration on constructing his private social backing and the intensity of this process:
Years | % of requests for defensive support and private patronage
---|---
1577-1586 | 51
1587-1596 | 72
1597-1605 | 67

The decisive period was the years 1587-1596, the bad times of the Chancellor’s public activity. To state this issue fully: I believe that the increase in subordinating and attaching of as many clients as possible was the substitution and compensation for the loss of political power at the Royal Court and in the Realm. This fact was due to the earlier, diffuse and strictly political influence, and the success in the formation of the private social backing became an element in the pressure used to regain the importance in the later years.

*“Children of different mothers do have different opinions”* – let those words of Zamoyski describing and evaluating a rather mild course taken by district Diets of 1600 serve as a motto for an attempt to appraise his political activities. What term can be used for the internal political organization centred around the person of the Grand Chancellor? According to modern standards it cannot be called a party, as the basic criteria of common concurrence by the members to a stable political programme were not observed. Nevertheless, a notion that there was a programme, or programmes, cannot be rejected. Zamoyski had his own political plans both toward Poland’s neighbours (The Habsburgs, Russia, Turkey, Moldavia and Walachia, and probably Sweden) and his compatriots (propositions for electoral reform, projects for a change in modes of holding Diets, provisions for a religious peace, erection of the Crown Tribunal, reforms in the armed forces). In contrast to the slightly earlier gentry movement for the reform of the State (*Executio iurium*), supporters of Zamoyski had no common programme. This became apparent in their diverse individual activities after the Chancellor’s death, while the essential proof was offered by the so-called Zebrzydowski’s rebellion. Their programme was the person of their leader and his particular political decisions. To join the ranks of the Chancellor’s followers was a grave choice which, however, did not require mutual agreement on political views but rather implied a certain type of activity. Its effects were to guarantee life benefits. Loyalty to the leader substituted for individual opinions. The success of the patron became one of his servants as well.

It would be fruitless to evaluate the moral side of Zamoyski’s actions. Their object was to achieve and hold the supreme position in the State. According to the moral standards of his times, he used every accessible method including the greedy accumulation of land, use of Crown troops in internal political conflicts and a highly devel-

32 SRP VIII, 155-156 Zamoyski to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Zamość January 24, 1600.
oped system of patronage. On the other hand the negative consequences of the Chancellor's activities for the evolution of the political system in Poland should be considered. The faction created by him, which played a leading part in Polish politics for over 20 years, served as a model for the later aristocratic coteries. The only aim of their existence was the struggle for power and influence, with the gradual elimination of slogans and programmes to be implemented after the political victory34.

Zamoyski's career throws a new light on the political scene of late 16th-century Poland. The instability of her power élite was the result of constant personal changes and shocks caused by the succession of rulers. The actual number of the élite has not been established. In her study of the élite of power under Sigismund Augustus, Anna Sucheni-Grabowska reserved this term for an extremely small group of those who worked directly with the King35. It seems, however, that ministers, front benchers of Senate, more distinguished and active deputies as well as several courtiers are not the only choices. Unlike the observer of Elizabethan scene36, a student of modern Polish history cannot even approximately establish the number of active protagonists of political life. There, the function of patronage and social range of individual influence seem much broader as well as addressed to representatives of groups both more numerous and socially complex.

Thus we arrive at another basic question: was the life career based on one of the patronage systems and exemplified by a group portrait drawn above, the only one possible? Did the late 16th-century political system ignore the chances of enterprising individuals, unconnected with a particular patron? Finally, had the prestige and parliamentary skills gained by gentry leaders in the third quarter of that century already become useless in the new situation determined by the patron-client relationships?

It seems that during the period in question, the gradual elimination of the gentlefolk from active, conscious politics was already in progress37. The development of a system of dependence and subordination to Zamoyski definitely accelerated this tendency. Power centres grouped around individual magnates grew in strength and expanded, pervading, from the late 16th century, the political scene of the whole State. Independent areas were radically shrinking. 17th-century political geography was determined by regional power centres, seats of influential families. Concentric spheres indicating the area of their territorial domination began to meet, covering the whole country and definitely substituting the new pattern of power for the internal demo-

36 Wallace T. MacCaffrey approximates the number of active participants in public political life in Elizabethan England at 2,500, adding: “This was a political society of which most of the members knew one other directly or indirectly and were almost all personally known to the leading ministers” – MacCaffrey, Place, 99. It seems that such a remark is unadaptable for the Polish situation.
37 “To escape the might of a magnate, one had to choose the protection of another. The number of politically ambitious and economically independent gentry was presumably very small” – suggestively stated Antoni Maczak in the paper read in the Instytut Badań Literackich in Warsaw in October 1982.
ocratic structure of the nobility. Only a few gentry families remained independent and influential. This dangerous tendency only began in Zamoyski's lifetime, and I believe that the political structure created by him served as its essential catalyst.

The power of the Chancellor, continually confirmed by requests for his favour, met two major challenges: the struggle with the Zborowski family and even a longer contest during the reign of Sigismund III. Both tests were passed satisfactorily. In the first case Zamoyski won, being the King's friend. In the second, despite royal hostility, he proved indispensable and could not be set aside. His power, at that time less spectacular and ostentatious, was founded on a different, apparently more stable core. The comparison of these two phases may reveal the secret of the Chancellor's political system. In the first period, it was easy to find friends, attracted not so much by his person as by the royal favour he was enjoying. In the later years his power thrived on the pattern of alliances and groups having been bound to him firmly. His numerous followers chose to connect their careers with that of the leader, which in effect created a real and conspicuous political force evoking rivals' respect and more conciliatory attitudes. These in turn provided Zamoyski with the actual influence which upheld and fortified the confidence of his men. Although Zamoyski owed his career to the king, his power - ably strengthened and established by patronage - developed later independently of royal interventions and even withstood the ill-will of the monarch, remaining unassailable at the beginning of the 17th century.

Royal favour gave immense possibilities. Stability of power together with the possession of landed estates collected by royal grants and skilful market operations in the stage of political ascent could only be safeguarded by the appropriately constructed milieu of men — indebted grateful, expectant and determined to obtain life support from a chosen patron. Grants and appointments for important offices served as a point of departure in the development of such a system. Its political effectiveness in the case of Zamoyski was proved in the 1590s. An important factor of this test, although much more ambiguous, was fame, reputation and popularity. Royal favour had a complex influence: on the one hand, it gave popularity, on the other it created jealousy and ill-will which combined private rivalries with differences of political opinion. In this period many men gathered around the leader, while equally many were deeply discouraged and offended.

Having a prominent position had its lustre but also a more obscure side. Taking advantage of the state apparatus of power for private ends apart from political and material gains, was certainly one of the assets. Leaving what is obvious aside, it is more interesting to examine the disadvantages. One was the excess of expectations over actual possibilities of a patron. Even the closest allies could have been a nuisance, not to mention the petty satellites ceaselessly supplicating for any benefit. The alliance with the great families and the development of one's own social backing created an incessant stream of requests. As a public official the Chancellor must have reacted to numerous complaints. He was implored with increasing frequency to arrive in person and give judgement in neighbours' quarrels. This was not always technically possible and forced the Chancellor to look for authorised lieutenants or to find a different solution.
Generally speaking, a prominent office, apart from obvious assets, meant a host of problems. To exercise—both in reality and in the eyes of public opinion—a dispensing power for offices and grants or, in other words, to be in a position to direct royal favour, created a double peril. If the number of supplicants was greater than that of chances for reward, someone was always left empty-handed and either kept on expecting a better opportunity or went away with ill-will toward the provider of gifts, and thus became a potential adversary or, equally dangerous, began to doubt the patron’s influence. In the first case Zamoyski was losing a man, in the second his image was suffering. Another difficulty stemmed from the seemingly constant burden imposed on the patron by his men. Their growing increased the amount of matters to be discussed. It absorbed the patron’s time considerably, to mention only the arbitrations referred to above. Each small stumble or mishap threatened with grave complications. To overcome them, it was necessary to search for support of others and become indebted for their help in turn.

Naturally, I do not wish to suggest that the brilliant career of Zamoyski led only to cares and sorrows on his part. One fact remains clear: his long lasting ability to maintain a multitude of dependent men. This success, apart from the advantageous internal situation and his talents for leadership, was also caused by the lack of an alternative for the masses of gentry with political ambitions.

In conclusion, it is reasonable to inquire into the balance-sheet of political decisions made in favour of choosing Zamoyski’s patronage. Again, a distortion of the perspective is nearly inevitable. If the group of Zamoyski’s most prominent followers, highly placed in the social hierarchy, were a fair sample, the picture would appear idyllic. However, those who did not try or did not succeed in making a career under Zamoyski, quite possibly more numerous, will always remain anonymous. Nevertheless, the question whether the connection with the Chancellor—understood as an episode of the individual political biography—was a hindrance and a disadvantage in the situation altered by his death, must find a mainly negative answer. A significant group of politicians who gained experience at Zamoyski’s side managed to establish a position strong and independent enough to thrive after the death of the patron. His former men of the lower level apparently encountered greater obstacles. Noticeable symptoms of the faction’s crisis in the last years of Zamoyski—deficiency in discipline and inadequate functional efficacy—lead to the hypothesis that the political organism created by the Chancellor did not survive its maker. In the later period only the most distinguished of his followers achieved political success. However, the social system directly connected with the family and the household of Zamoyski displayed much greater durability; its backbone survived till the maturity of the Chancellor’s son, Tomasz, who could effectively reconstruct it and reorganize anew.