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# A characterization of symplectic groups related to Fermat primes

BEHNAM EBRAHIMZADEH, ALIREZA K. ASBOEI

*Abstract.* We proved that the symplectic groups  $\mathrm{PSp}(4, 2^n)$ , where  $2^{2n} + 1$  is a Fermat prime number is uniquely determined by its order, the first largest element orders and the second largest element orders.

*Keywords:* element order; the largest element order; prime graph; symplectic group

*Classification:* 20D06, 20D60

## 1. Introduction

Throughout this paper, all groups considered are finite and  $p$  is a Fermat prime number. The set of prime divisors of  $|G|$  is denoted by  $\pi(G)$ , the set of orders of elements of  $G$  is denoted by  $\pi_e(G)$ , the largest element orders and the second largest element orders of  $\pi_e(G)$  are denoted by  $k_1(G)$  and  $k_2(G)$ , respectively. Also, a Sylow  $p$ -subgroup of  $G$  is denoted by  $G_p$ . The prime graph  $\Gamma(G)$  of group  $G$  is a graph whose vertex set is  $\pi(G)$ , and two vertices  $u$  and  $v$  are adjacent if and only if  $uv \in \pi_e(G)$ . Furthermore, assume that  $\Gamma(G)$  has  $t(G)$  connected components  $\pi_i$  for  $i = 1, 2, \dots, t(G)$ . In the case where  $|G|$  is of even order, let  $\pi_1$  be the connected component containing 2.

In the past 30 years, there has been a lot of attention to the problem, whether a finite simple group  $G$  is fully determined by  $|G|$  and  $\pi_e(G)$ . The problem was completely solved by V. D. Mazurov et al. in [9]. After that, several researchers tried to characterize some finite simple groups with less information. It turns out that the largest element orders can be used to characterize  $L_3(q)$  ( $q \leq 8$ ) and  $U_3(q)$  ( $q \leq 11$ ),  $L_2(q)$  where  $q < 125$ , the sporadic simple groups,  $K_4$ -group of type  $L_2(p)$ ,  $\mathrm{PGL}(2, q)$ , the Suzuki group  $\mathrm{Sz}(q)$ , where  $q - 1$  or  $q \pm \sqrt{2q} + 1$  is a prime number by using the largest orders, see [6], [3], [5], [1], [4], [8].

In this paper, we show that the simple symplectic groups  $\mathrm{PSp}(4, 2^n)$ , where  $2^{2n} + 1$  is a Fermat prime number, is uniquely determined by its order, the first

largest element orders and the second largest element orders. The main theorem is as follows.

**Main theorem.** *Let  $G$  be a group such that  $|G| = |\text{PSp}(4, 2^n)|$ ,  $k_1(G) = k_1(\text{PSp}(4, 2^n)) = 2^{2n} + 1$  and  $k_2(G) = k_2(\text{PSp}(4, 2^n)) = 2^{2n} - 1$ , where  $(2^{2n} + 1) > 5$  is a Fermat prime number. Then  $G \cong \text{PSp}(4, 2^n)$ .*

## 2. Preliminaries

**Lemma 2.1** ([2]). *Let  $G$  be a Frobenius group of even order with kernel  $K$  and complement  $H$ . Then*

- (1)  $t(G) = 2$ ,  $\pi(H)$  and  $\pi(K)$  are vertex sets of the connected components of  $\Gamma(G)$ ;
- (2)  $|H|$  divides  $|K| - 1$ ;
- (3) kernel  $K$  is nilpotent.

**Definition 2.2.** A group  $G$  is called a 2-Frobenius group if there is a normal series  $1 \trianglelefteq H \trianglelefteq K \trianglelefteq G$  such that  $G/H$  and  $K$  are Frobenius groups with kernels  $K/H$  and  $H$ , respectively.

**Lemma 2.3** ([9]). *Let  $G$  be a 2-Frobenius group of even order. Then*

- (1)  $t(G) = 2$ ,  $\pi(H) \cup \pi(G/K) = \pi_1$  and  $\pi(K/H) = \pi_2$ ;
- (2)  $G/K$  and  $K/H$  are cyclic groups satisfying  $|G/K|$  divides  $|\text{Aut}(K/H)|$ .

**Lemma 2.4** ([10]). *Let  $G$  be a finite group with  $t(G) \geq 2$ . Then one of the following statements holds:*

- (1) group  $G$  is a Frobenius group;
- (2) group  $G$  is a 2-Frobenius group;
- (3) group  $G$  has a normal series  $1 \trianglelefteq H \trianglelefteq K \trianglelefteq G$  such that  $H$  and  $G/K$  are  $\pi_1$ -groups,  $K/H$  is a non-abelian simple group.

## 3. Proof of the main theorem

We denote the simple symplectic groups  $\text{PSp}(4, 2^n)$  by  $C$  and prime number  $2^{2n} + 1 = q^2 + 1$  by  $p$ . Recall that  $G$  is a group such that  $|G| = |C| = q^4 \times (q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1)$ ,  $k_1(G) = k_1(C) = q^2 + 1$  and  $k_2(G) = k_2(C) = q^2 - 1$ .

**Lemma 3.1.** *Vertex  $p$  is an isolated vertex of  $\Gamma(G)$ .*

PROOF: Let there is  $t \in \pi(G) - \{p\}$  such that  $tp \in \pi_e(G)$ . So,  $tp \geq 2p = 2(q^2 + 1) > q^2 + 1$  and so  $k_1(G) = q^2 + 1 < tp$ , which is a contradiction.  $\square$

By the above lemma, we have  $t(G) \geq 2$ . By Lemma 2.4,  $G$  is a Frobenius group, or a 2-Frobenius group, or  $G$  has a normal series  $1 \trianglelefteq H \trianglelefteq K \trianglelefteq G$  such that  $H$  and  $G/K$  are  $\pi_1$ -groups, and  $K/H$  is a non-abelian simple group. In the following two lemmas, we show that  $G$  is neither a Frobenius group nor a 2-Frobenius group.

**Lemma 3.2.** *Group  $G$  is not a Frobenius group.*

PROOF: Let  $G$  be a Frobenius group with kernel  $K$  and complement  $H$ . By Lemma 3.2,  $t(G) = 2$ ,  $\pi(H)$  and  $\pi(K)$  are vertex sets of the connected components of  $\Gamma(G)$  and also  $|H|$  divides  $|K| - 1$ . Now, by Lemma 3.1,  $p$  is an isolated vertex of  $\Gamma(G)$ . Thus, we deduce that (i)  $|H| = p$  and  $|K| = |G|/p$  or (ii)  $|H| = |G|/p$  and  $|K| = p$ . Since  $|H|$  divides  $|K| - 1$ , the last case cannot occur. So,  $|H| = p$  and  $|K| = |G|/p$ , and hence  $q^2 + 1 \mid q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1)/(q^2 + 1) - 1$ . Therefore,  $(q^2 + 1)$  divides  $(q^2 + 1)(q^6 - 3q^4 + 4q^2 - 4) + 4$ . It follows that  $p \mid 4$ , which is a contradiction.  $\square$

**Lemma 3.3.** *Group  $G$  is not a 2-Frobenius group.*

PROOF: Let  $G$  be a 2-Frobenius group. Then  $G$  has a normal series  $1 \trianglelefteq H \trianglelefteq K \trianglelefteq G$  such that  $G/H$  and  $K$  are Frobenius groups by kernels  $K/H$  and  $H$ , respectively. Set  $|G/K| = x$ . Since  $p$  is an isolated vertex of  $\Gamma(G)$ , we have  $|K/H| = p$  and  $|H| = |G|/(xp)$ . By Lemma 3.3,  $|G/K|$  divides  $|\text{Aut}(K/H)|$ . Thus,  $x \mid p - 1$ . On the other hand,  $(q^2, q - 1) = 1$ . So,  $|G/K| \mid (p - 1)$ , we deduce that  $(q - 1) \mid |H|$ . Since  $H$  is nilpotent,  $H_t \times K/H$  is a Frobenius group with kernel  $H_t$  and complement  $K/H$ , where  $t$  is a prime divisor of  $q - 1$ . So,  $|K/H|$  divides  $|H_t| - 1$ . That implies that  $q^2 + 1 \leq q - 2 \leq q$ , which is a contradiction.  $\square$

Now, we show that  $G$  is isomorphic to  $C$ . Since  $G$  is neither a Frobenius group nor a 2-Frobenius group, by Lemma 2.4,  $G$  has a normal series  $1 \trianglelefteq H \trianglelefteq K \trianglelefteq G$  such that  $H$  and  $G/K$  are  $\pi_1$ -groups and also  $K/H$  is a non-abelian simple group. Since  $|G| = |G/K| \times |K/H| \times |H|$  and  $H$  and  $G/K$  are  $\pi_1$ -groups, each odd order component of  $G$  is an odd order component of  $K/H$ . Since  $p \mid |K/H|$ ,  $t(k/H) \geq 2$ . According to the classification of finite simple groups, we know that the possibilities for  $K/H$  are the alternating group  $\text{Alt}_m$ ,  $m \geq 5$ , one of the 26 sporadic simple groups, and the simple groups of Lie types.

In the rest of the proof, we shall consider all these possibilities one after another.

*Step 1.* Let  $K/H \cong \text{Alt}_m$ , where there is a prime  $p'$  such that  $m \in \{p', p' + 1, p' + 2\}$ . By [10]  $k_2(\text{Alt}_m) = p'$ , or  $p' - 2$ . If  $q^2 - 1 = p'$ , then  $q^2 - 2 = p' - 1$ . On the other hand,

$$|\text{Alt}_m| \mid |\text{PSp}(4, q)| = q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1).$$

Hence,  $q^2 - 2 = p' - 1$  divides the order of  $\text{Alt}_m$ , and that divides the order of  $\text{PSp}(4, q)$ , which is equal to  $q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1)$ . The latter integer is not divisible by  $q^2 - 2$ , and that is a contradiction.

Similarly, if  $q^2 - 1 = p' - 2$ , then  $q^2 - 2 = p' - 3$ . So,  $q^2 - 2 = p' - 3$  divides the order of  $\text{Alt}_m$ , and that divides the order of  $\text{PSp}(4, q)$ , which is a contradiction.

*Step 2.* If  $K/H$  is isomorphic to one of the sporadic simple groups, then by [7],  $k_2(S) = \{5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 31, 37, 59\}$ . So,  $q^2 - 1 = 5, 7, 11, 17, 19, 23, 31, 37, 59$ . Let  $q^2 - 1 = 5$ . Then  $q^2 = 6$ . Now, we can see easily this equation is impossible. Similarly, we can rule out the other cases.

*Step 3.* Let  $K/H$  be isomorphic to a simple group of Lie-type.

**3.1.** Then  $K/H \not\cong B_m(\bar{q})$ , where  $m > 2$ ,  $\bar{q}$  is a prime power. By [7],  $k_2(B_m(\bar{q})) = \bar{q}^m - \bar{q}$ . Also,

$$|B_m(\bar{q})| = \frac{1}{(2, \bar{q} - 1)} \bar{q}^{m^2} \prod_{i=1}^m (\bar{q}^{2i} - 1).$$

Since  $|B_m(\bar{q})| \mid |G|$ ,

$$\frac{1}{(2, \bar{q} - 1)} \bar{q}^{m^2} \prod_{i=1}^m (\bar{q}^{2i} - 1) \mid q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1).$$

On the other hand,  $q^2 - 1 = \bar{q}^m - \bar{q}$ . So,  $(q - 1)(q + 1) = \bar{q}(\bar{q}^{m-1} - 1)$ . Since  $(q - 1, q + 1) = 1$ , so we have  $q - 1 = \bar{q}$  and  $q + 1 = \bar{q}^{m-1} - 1$ . As a result,  $q = \bar{q} + 1$  and  $q = \bar{q}^{m-1} - 2$  and so  $|B_m(\bar{q})| \nmid |G|$ , which is a contradiction.

**3.2.** If  $K/H \cong {}^3D_4(\bar{q})$ , then by [7],  $k_2({}^3D_4(\bar{q})) = \bar{q}^4 - \bar{q}^2 + 1$ . Also, we have

$$|{}^3D_4(\bar{q})| = \bar{q}^{12}(\bar{q}^8 + \bar{q}^4 + 1)(\bar{q}^6 - 1)(\bar{q}^2 - 1).$$

Since  $|{}^3D_4(\bar{q})| \mid |G|$ ,

$$\bar{q}^{12}(\bar{q}^8 + \bar{q}^4 + 1)(\bar{q}^6 - 1)(\bar{q}^2 - 1) \mid q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1).$$

On the other hand,  $q^2 - 1 = \bar{q}^4 - \bar{q}^2 + 1$ . It follows that

$$q^2 - 2 = \bar{q}^2(\bar{q}^2 - 1).$$

Thus,

$$2(2^{2n-1} - 1) = \bar{q}^2(\bar{q}^2 - 1)$$

and so  $\bar{q}^2 = 2$ , or 3. In both cases, we get a contradiction.

**3.3.** Let  $K/H \cong E_6(\bar{q}), E_7(\bar{q}), E_8(\bar{q}), F_4(\bar{q})$ . For example, if  $K/H \cong F_4(\bar{q})$ , then by [7],  $k_2(F_4(\bar{q})) = \bar{q}^4 + 1$ . Also,

$$|F_4(\bar{q})| = \bar{q}^{24}(\bar{q}^2 - 1)(\bar{q}^6 - 1)(\bar{q}^8 - 1)(\bar{q}^{12} - 1).$$

Since  $|F_4(\bar{q})| \mid |G|$ ,

$$\bar{q}^{24}(\bar{q}^2 - 1)(\bar{q}^6 - 1)(\bar{q}^8 - 1)(\bar{q}^{12} - 1) \mid q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1).$$

Therefore,  $q^2 - 1 = \bar{q}^4 + 1$  and then  $q^2 = \bar{q}^4 + 2$ , which is a contradiction by  $|F_4(\bar{q})| \mid |G|$ .

Similarly, when  $K/H \cong E_6(\bar{q})$ ,  $E_7(\bar{q})$ , or  $E_8(\bar{q})$ , we get a contradiction.

**3.4.** If  $K/H \cong {}^2E_6(\bar{q})$ , then by [7]  $k_2({}^2E_6(\bar{q})) = (\bar{q}^6 - 1)/(3, \bar{q} + 1)$ . Also,

$$|^2E_6(\bar{q})| = \frac{\bar{q}^{36}(\bar{q}^{12} - 1)(\bar{q}^9 + 1)(\bar{q}^8 - 1)(\bar{q}^6 - 1)(\bar{q}^5 + 1)(\bar{q}^2 - 1)}{(3, \bar{q} + 1)}.$$

So,  $q^2 - 1 = (\bar{q}^6 - 1)/(3, \bar{q} + 1)$ . First, if  $(3, \bar{q} + 1) = 1$ , then  $q^2 - 1 = \bar{q}^6 - 1$  and so  $q^2 = \bar{q}^6$ . It follows that  $|{}^2E_6(\bar{q})| \nmid |G|$ , which is a contradiction.

Similarly, when  $(3, \bar{q} + 1) = 3$ , we get a contradiction.

**3.5.** If  $K/H \cong {}^2G_2(3^{2m+1})$  where  $m \geq 1$ , then by [7],  $k({}^2G_2(3^{2m+1})) = 3^{2m+1} - 3^{m+1} + 1$ . Also, if  $\bar{q} = 3^{2m+1}$ , then

$$|^2G_2(3^{2m+1})| = \bar{q}^3(\bar{q}^3 + 1)(\bar{q} - 1).$$

Since  $|{}^2G_2(3^{2m+1})| \mid |G|$ , we have

$$\bar{q}^3(\bar{q}^3 + 1)(\bar{q} - 1) \mid q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1).$$

So,  $3^{2m+1} - 3^{m+1} + 1 = q^2 - 1$  and so  $q^2 - 2 = 3^{2m+1} - 3^{m+1}$ . Hence,

$$2(2^{2n-1} - 1) = 3^{m+1}(3^m - 1).$$

Then  $3^m - 1 = 2$  and  $3^{m+1} = 2^{2n-1} - 1$ , which implies that  $m = 1$  and  $n = 2$ .

On the other hand,  $|{}^2G_2(27)| \nmid |\text{PSp}(4, 4)|$ , which is a contradiction.

**3.6.** If  $K/H \cong {}^2B_2(\bar{q})$ , where  $\bar{q} = 2^{2m+1} \geq 8$ , then by [7],  $k_2({}^2B_2(\bar{q})) = \bar{q} - 1$ .

We have

$$|^2B_2(\bar{q})| = \bar{q}^2(\bar{q}^2 + 1)(\bar{q} - 1).$$

Since  $|{}^2B_2(\bar{q})| \mid |G|$ , we have

$$\bar{q}^2(\bar{q}^2 + 1)(\bar{q} - 1) \mid q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1).$$

On the other hand,  $\bar{q} - 1 = q^2 - 1$ . So,  $\bar{q} = q^2$ . Hence,

$$q^4(q^4 + 1)(q^2 - 1) \mid q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1),$$

which is a contradiction.

**3.7.** If  $K/H \cong G_2(\bar{q})$ , then by [7],  $k_2(G_2(\bar{q})) = \bar{q}'^2 - \bar{q} + 1$  and also

$$|G_2(\bar{q})| = \bar{q}^6(\bar{q}^6 - 1)(\bar{q}^2 - 1).$$

Since  $|G_2(\bar{q})| \mid |G|$ ,

$$\bar{q}^6(\bar{q}^6 - 1)(\bar{q}^2 - 1) \mid q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1).$$

On the other hand,  $q^2 - 1 = \bar{q}^2 - \bar{q} + 1$ . So,  $2(2^{2n-1} - 1) = \bar{q}(\bar{q} - 1)$  and then  $\bar{q} = 2$ . As a result,  $2 = 2^{2n-1}$ , which is a contradiction.

**3.8.** Let  $K/H \cong {}^2A_m(\bar{q})$ , where  $m \geq 2$ . If  $m = 2$ , then by [7],  $k_2({}^2A_2(\bar{q})) = (\bar{q}^2 - \bar{q} + 1)/(3, \bar{q} + 1)$ . Also,

$$|{}^2A_2(\bar{q})| = \frac{1}{(3, \bar{q} + 1)} \bar{q}^3 \prod_{i=1}^m (\bar{q}^{i+1} - (-1)^{i+1}).$$

Since  $|{}^2A_2(\bar{q})| \mid |G|$ , we have  $(\bar{q}^2 - \bar{q} + 1)/(3, \bar{q} + 1) = q^2 - 1$ . If  $(3, \bar{q} + 1) = 1$ , then  $\bar{q}^2 - \bar{q} + 1 = q^2 - 1$ . Thus,

$$2(2^{2n-1} - 1) = \bar{q}(\bar{q} - 1).$$

So,  $\bar{q} = 2$ , which is a contradiction.

If  $m > 2$ , then

$$k_2({}^2A_m(\bar{q})) = \frac{\bar{q}^{2m} - 1}{(2n' + 1, \bar{q} + 1)}.$$

Now,  $q^2 - 1 = (\bar{q}^{2m} - 1)/(2n' + 1, \bar{q} + 1)$ . So,

$$q^4 = \left( \frac{\bar{q}^{2m} - 1}{(2m + 1, \bar{q} + 1)} + 1 \right)^2 \leq \bar{q}^{4m}.$$

Also,

$$\frac{\bar{q}^{m(m+1)/2} \prod_{i=1}^m (\bar{q}^{i+1} - (-1)^{i+1})}{(m + 1, \bar{q} + 1)} \mid |G|.$$

Thus,

$$\bar{q}^{m(m+1)/2} < \frac{\bar{q}^{m(m+1)/2} \prod_{i=1}^m (\bar{q}^{i+1} - (-1)^{i+1})}{(m + 1, \bar{q} + 1)} \leq q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1) \leq q^4$$

and so  $\bar{q}^{m(m+1)/2} \leq \bar{q}^{4m}$ . As a result,  $m \leq 7$ , which is a contradiction.

**3.9.** Let  $K/H \cong D_m(\bar{q})$ , where  $m \geq 4$ . Similar to Case 3.8, we get a contradiction.

**3.10.** If  $K/H \cong {}^2F_4(\bar{q})$ , where  $\bar{q} = 2^{2m+1} \geq 8$ , then by [7],

$$k_2({}^2F_4(\bar{q})) = \bar{q}^2 - \sqrt{2\bar{q}^3} + \bar{q} - \sqrt{2\bar{q}} + 1.$$

So,  $\bar{q}^2 - \sqrt{2\bar{q}^3} + \bar{q} - \sqrt{2\bar{q}} + 1 = q^2 - 1$ . As a result,

$$2(2^{2n-1} - 1) = 2^{m+1}(2^{3m+1} - 2^{2m+1} + 2^m - 1).$$

Hence,  $2^{m+1} = 2$  and  $2^{3m+1} - 2^{2m+1} + 2^m = 2^{2n-1}$ .

If  $2^{m+1} = 2$ , then  $m = 0$ , which is a contradiction.

If  $2^{3m+1} - 2^{2m+1} + 2^m = 2^{2n-1}$ , then

$$2^m(2^{2m+1} - 2^{m+1} + 1) = 2^{2n-1}.$$

So,  $2^m = 2$  and  $2^{2m+1} - 2^{m+1} + 1 = 2^{2n-2}$ . Then  $m = 1$  and so  $5 = 2^{2n-2}$ , which is a contradiction.

**3.11.** If  $K/H \cong L_{m+1}(\bar{q})$ , where  $m \geq 1$ , then by [7]

$$k_2(L_{m+1}(\bar{q})) = \frac{(\bar{q}^{m+1} - 1)(\bar{q}^m - 1)}{(\bar{q} - 1)(\bar{q} - 1, m + 1)}.$$

Also,

$$|L_{m+1}(\bar{q})| = \frac{1}{(m + 1, \bar{q} - 1)} \bar{q}^{m(m+1)/2} (\bar{q}^m - 1) \prod_{i=1}^m (\bar{q}^{i+1} - 1).$$

We have

$$\frac{1}{(m + 1, \bar{q} - 1)} \bar{q}^{m(m+1)/2} (\bar{q}^m - 1) \prod_{i=1}^m (\bar{q}^{i+1} - 1) \mid q^4(q^4 - 1)(q^2 - 1)$$

so,

$$\frac{(\bar{q}^{m+1} - 1)(\bar{q}^m - 1)}{(\bar{q} - 1)(\bar{q} - 1, m + 1)} = q^2 - 1$$

and so

$$q^4 = \left( \frac{(\bar{q}^{m+1} - 1)(\bar{q}^m - 1)}{(\bar{q} - 1)(\bar{q} - 1, m + 1)} + 1 \right)^2.$$

Since  $|L_{m+1}(\bar{q})| \nmid |G|$ , we get a contradiction.

**3.12.** Let  $K/H \cong \text{PSp}(m, \bar{q})$ , where  $m \geq 4$ . First, if  $m > 4$ , then by [7],

$$k_2(\text{PSp}(m, \bar{q})) = \bar{q}^m - \bar{q}.$$

So,  $q^2 - 1 = \bar{q}^m - \bar{q}$  and then  $(q - 1)(q + 1) = \bar{q}(\bar{q}^{m-1} - 1)$ . Since  $(q - 1, q + 1) = 1$ ,  $q - 1 = \bar{q}$  and  $q + 1 = \bar{q}^{m-1} - 1$ ,  $q = \bar{q} + 1$  and  $q = \bar{q}^{m-1} - 2$ . Therefore,  $|\text{PSp}(m, \bar{q})| \nmid |G|$ , which is a contradiction.

If  $m = 4$ , then  $k_2(\text{PSp}(m, \bar{q})) = \bar{q}^2 - 1 = q^2 - 1$ . Thus,  $q = \bar{q}$  and so  $K/H \cong C$ . It follows that  $H = 1$  and  $G = K \cong C$ . The proof of the main theorem is completed.

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