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RENAMING KYIV'S STREETS AMID THE RUSSIAN WAR OF INVASION: THE POLITICS OF HISTORY BETWEEN "DECOMMUNIZATION" AND "DERUSSIFICATION"

The article undertakes a comparative thematic and narrative analysis of the trends in place name change in Kyiv (as published by the Kyiv City State Administration) during two periods: (1) between 2014 and the start of Russia's full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022 and (2) between 24 February 2022 and the first anniversary of the Russian invasion in 2023. From 2014 to early 2023, 517 (about 17 percent) of Kyiv's urbanonyms were changed. It is found that 58 percent of names changed during this entire time span belonged to the "Soviet nostalgic" narrative and 41 percent — to the narrative of the "Russian world", while 1 percent were non-political. Before 24 February 2022, the "Soviet nostalgic" narrative was affected

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the most (88 percent of renamings), which reflects the phenomenon of “decommunization”; however, during the full-scale Russian invasion its share fell to 30 percent. In the period after 24 February 2022, the theme of “derussification” clearly dominated, with the share of removed names that represented the “Russian world” narrative increasing from 11 percent (before the full-scale invasion) to 69 percent. The largest proportion of newly minted toponyms in the period from 2014 to 2023 embody the “national Ukrainian” narrative (59 percent), while 35 percent invoke a “non-political” context and 6 percent are internationally-themed. The ongoing urbanonymic change, as analyzed in the article using Kyiv as a case study, has led to a radical transformation of the urban symbolic order in Ukraine. Ukraine is appropriating these spaces, displacing the Russian imperial legacy. The radicalization of this policy is a result of the Russian aggression; however, it reinforces an already existing trend. It is also an act of defiance, doing the opposite of what the aggressor may have planned or would have done, had Kyiv been captured. Thus the sad but stubborn irony is that the attempt to reintegrate Ukraine into the Russian imperial order has produced the exact opposite outcome — a fundamental rejection of the symbols of the “Russian world”.

Keywords: **decommunization, derussification, Kyiv, renaming, politics of history, thematic categories (narratives), urbanonyms.**

On 24 February 2022, exactly half a year after the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence, the world witnessed in horror the brutal invasion of Ukrainian territories by Russia. The world has changed.

In defiance of Russia's aggression, the country remained true to orientation towards its European future. The path led from the Membership Action Plan (2008) to the Association Agreement with the European Union (2014), which was enforced not least in the “Revolution of Dignity” of 2013/14 (Plokhyy 2015), and finally to the confirmation of the country as an official EU accession candidate in June 2022. The Ukrainian people defend their most important achievements since 1991: the establishment of democratic political institutions and the emergence of an active civil society, the free development of culture and art, economy and science, legislature, judiciary and executive.

These achievements were accompanied by a historical-political debate in society, which is articulated in a variety of fields of action in the public and discursive space (Overview: see Schenk 2020). After a first historical-

political transformation of public space, which began in 1917 and remained on the agenda throughout the 79 years of the Soviet Union's existence, a second “*large-scale wave in its history of renaming of city toponyms and settlements*” (Hirik 2018, 112) followed in Ukraine with the collapse of the Soviet empire and the attainment of independence.

Ukraine went through a third wave of outstanding historical-political changes after the “*Revolution of Dignity*” (2013/14). The four so-called “*decommunization laws*” passed in April 2015 changed the historical-political landscape of Ukraine, in particular the laws “*On Condemning the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes and Prohibiting the Propagation of their Symbols*” (Zakon Ukraïny 2015: Law no. 2558) and “*On the Legal Status and Honoring of the Memory of the Fighters for the Independence of Ukraine in the 20th Century*” (Zakon Ukraïny 2016: Law no. 2538-1).

The most prominent fields of action during this period included the changing of symbols and symbolic politics such as the state flag, anthem and Tryzub, stamps, banknotes or coins, the pantheon of national heroes, the “*erosion of the Soviet festive calendar*” (Schlögel 2018, 587) and the establishment of separate national holidays, a reinforced Ukrainian language policy, the erection or removal of memorials and about 2,500 monuments, among them 1,300 Lenin statues (*Leninopad*). Further activities concerned the publication of new text-, school- as well as picture books and — last but not least — the renaming of toponyms as a comprehensive term in the broadest spectrum between city and names of inner-city urbanonyms: agaronyms as names of squares, hodononyms for streets (Udovenko 2018, 129). Between 2015 and 2018 alone, this affected e. g. 32 towns and 58 settlements of an “*urban type*” as well as 897 villages and other settlements (Viatrovych 2018). Additionally numerous names of districts (*Rayony*), ports, and railway stations were changed in the process of “*toponymic cleansing*”.

Since the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, a fourth wave of historical-political renaming of Ukrainian toponyms can be observed. Activities to rename urbanonyms are reported from Kharkiv (Udovenko 2018), Pochoiv (Istorychna Pravda 05.08.2022), Lviv (Istorychna Pravda 18.08.2022), Dnipro (Istorychna Pravda 16.11.2022), Vinnytsya (Lozovenko

25.11.2022), Sumy (Istorychna Pravda 22.12.2022), Izyum (Istorychna Pravda 27.12.2022) and many other places. For the year 2022, as of 1 January 2023, @DecommunizeUkraine estimates 7,000 renamed streets, 263 and 98 removed monuments and memorial plaques, 72 removed decorative elements, and 72 models of Soviet orders or stars nationwide. Not all cities are equally committed. For example, a certain restraint in Kherson and its surroundings has received some critical attention (Istorychna Pravda 14.11.2022).

No one is surprised that Kyiv, as the capital and largest urban centre of Ukraine, also went through the periods described. A summary overview of Kyiv's long renaming history, its implementation practices, dynamics and especially the accompanying historical-political discourse in Ukrainian society is published by Males & Dejneka (2020). An example from late Soviet times is the renaming of Brezhnev square to Solomyansk square on 22 December 1988. Of course, this event was not an expression of an early campaign in the sense of “inner-Soviet de-Sovietization”. However, a changing view of the role of a former party leader who had died six years earlier certainly played a role. A “*silent (silenced) discourse of decommunization*” existed throughout the Soviet period. The authors characterise this phenomenon (Males, Dejneka 2020, 20). In 1989, renaming intensified when a total of 72 Kyiv toponyms received new names. Among these were not only clearly ideological ones, named after Lenin, Marx, Engels, Sverdlov, Uritsky or other revolutionaries, but even more neutral ones, e. g. streets named after non-Ukrainian authors Tolstoy or Shota Rustaveli (Mashkevych 2018, 303-305). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the first thing to be done was to remove the “*most abominable symbols of the Soviet era*”, about 10 % of the Kyiv toponyms, often replacing them with so-called “garden names” (ukr. *sadovo-parkovi nazvy*, Males, Dejneka 2020, 124). A return to historically overcome original street names also frequently occurred (Mashkevych 2018, 303-305). Compared to the rest of Ukraine, Kyiv remained one of the least decommunized parts of the country until 2014 (Belej 2014, 101-102).

Task and methodology

This study examines the effects of the current politics of history

in Ukraine on the cityscape using the example of street names and other toponyms in the capital Kyiv. For this purpose, the renaming of urbanonyms in Kyiv published by the Kyiv city administration were analyzed according to thematic categories (narratives) and compared for the first time in two time periods:

(1) between the Russian armed invasion of Crimea (February/March 2014) and the subsequent war in eastern Ukraine (Donbas, April 2014) and Russia's large-scale invasion on 24 February 2022.

(2) between 24 February 2022 and the first anniversary of the Russian invasion in 2023.

For this study, first was analyzed and evaluated the compilation of the “Department of Public Communications of the Executive Body of the Kyiv City Council (Kyiv City State Administration)” of Kyiv urbanonyms renamed since 2014 (Kyïvska miska derzhavna administratsiia, KMDA 2020). The document listed old and new names, the pertinent administrative acts as well as their dates and publishes it on Council’s website. By the end of July 2020, a total of 225 Kyiv urbanonyms had received new names. The City Council’s website supplements the list of renamed streets by short video sequences and booklets explaining the new names for each city district and covering the renaming campaign until 2020 with the exception of the year 2018.

On 27 December 2022, another list of the Department of Public Communications appeared online, with a total of 453 name changes, including 252 listed for the first time (Kyïvska miska derzhavna administratsiia, KMDA 27.12.2022). Separate publications between December 2022 and February 2023 add 40 additional cases to the overall picture (Kyïvska miska derzhavna administratsiia, KMDA 08.12.2022. 29.12.2022. 10.02.2023). Thus, a total of 517 renamed street names of Kyiv could be evaluated. These included alleys (ukr. *provulky*, a total of 109), boulevards (*bulvary*, 5), chaussees (*shose*, 2), cul-de-sacs (*tupyky*, 1), prospectuses (*prospekty*, 11), risers (*uzvisi*, 1) squares (*ploshchi*, 17) and last but not least streets (*vulyci*, 371), which were given new names between 2014 and 2023.

Each case of name change was assigned two basic narratives that

determine the process of this renaming: firstly, the narrative characterizing the removed name and, secondly, the narrative describing the newly assigned name. The most important narratives of the removed names concerned the “Soviet-nostalgic” (SN) and the “Russian world” (RW) narratives, those of the reassigned names the “national-Ukrainian” (NU) narrative or international references (INT). “Non-political backgrounds” (NP) were shown separately in both cases.

A narrative is defined here as “*a story or representation used to explain or justify a society or historical period*” (Heine 2016). Narratives as criteria are one of the most diverse variants of the study of urbanonyms. Dolynska (2018, 23) lists a whole range of such criteria: Lexico-morphological structure of the name, origin, meaning of the name, spatial localization, as well as administrative-legal and chronological approaches, whereby the semantic approach to the meaning of the name comes closest to the classification according to narratives chosen here.

Basic narratives of newly assigned names were further subdivided thematically as needed.

Results

The chronological allocation of activities to rename Kyiv's toponyms between the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2023 show two clear peaks: First, the period between Q3 2015 and Q1 2016, with a total of 140 renamings; second, the period between an absolute peak in Q3 2022 (147 cases) and Q1 2023, with a total of 265 cases (Fig. 1)¹.

Assuming about 3,000 units of the Kyiv urbanonymic system (Males, Dejneka 2020, 120), 8 % (252 cases) were renamed between 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Between 24 February 2022 and the Q1 2023, the rate increased by a further 9 % (265) to a current total of about 17 % of Kyiv street names that have been renamed since 2014.

Between 2014 and 2023, the “Soviet nostalgic” narrative (SN: 302 cases / 58 %) and the narrative of the “Russian world” (“*Russkij mir*”, RW: 209 /

¹ The chronological assignment of the individual renamings was initially carried out according to: Kyivska miska derzhavna administratsiia (KMDA). Perelik vulyc (2014–2020/22). Name changes following the publication of this list could be scheduled case by case according to the individual decrees of the Kyiv City Council. An example of such decrees: Kyivska Miska rada , 27.10.2022. A complete list of all orders is not provided here.

41 %) were identified as fundamental **narratives**, described in this paper as “**abandoned**” or “**discarded historical contexts**” (Fig. 2). The process of their removal is referred to as “decommunization” or “derussification” in accordance with Ukrainian legislation. A subordinate role for renaming was played by non-political reasons for renaming, here “Non political” narrative (NP: 6 / 1 %).

87 of the 302 cases of toponyms cleansed of the “Soviet nostalgic” narrative (29 %) can be assigned to the theme of “revolution / civil war” of the period from the end of the 19th century to the 1920s. Examples are toponyms named after state and party leaders such as Vladimir Ulyanov [Lenin] (1870–1924, 6 cases) and Sergei Kirov (1886–1934) or the city of Kirovograd named after him (5 cases). Other cases assigned to this category are toponyms named after army leaders of the Civil War such as Mikhail Frunze (1885–1925, 6 cases), Mykola Shchors (1895–1919, 3 cases) or Semyon Budyonny (1883–1973, 3 cases). Even the execution during the Stalinist terror of the 1930s did not save revolutionaries from removal from the cityscape. Two of 17 cases are Andrei Bubnov (1884–1938) and Ivan Klymenko (1891–1937).

Another 71 cases (24 %) of toponyms of the “Soviet nostalgic” narrative removed from the street scene refer to terms and persons with a primarily military background. Examples include toponyms named after the “Red Army”, “Red Fleet” or Red Guards (10 cases), or after former USSR defence ministers such as Andrey Grechko (1903–1976) and Rodion Malinovsky (1898–1967). Victims of the Stalinist terror can also be found among the military leaders removed from toponyms. One example is Mikhail Tukhachevsky (1893–1937). Direct references to the “Great Patriotic War” (24 cases) such as “Heroes of Stalingrad”, “Heroes of the War”, “Victory” (in the Great Patriotic War) or “Patriotic” (War) play a major role.

The remaining 144 cases of the distant “Soviet nostalgic” narrative are of a general nature. These include toponyms referring to Soviet politicians (47 cases, example: Petro Shelest, 1908–1996) and Soviet symbols such as “red”, “red banner”, “red flag” or “red star” (9 cases), topographical backgrounds (11 cases, examples: cities of Kaliningrad, Krasnovodsk, Leningrad, Krasnodon), communists of other countries (32 cases, examples:

Wilhelm Pieck (1876–1960), Georgi Dimitrov, (1882–1949) or representatives of Soviet art and culture (21 cases, examples: Maxim Gorky (1868–1936), Mykola Ostrovsky (1904–1936).

Of the 209 renamings justified by the narrative of the “Russian world”, 95 cases (45 %) can be attributed to topographical backgrounds. Examples concern **rivers** such as Amur, Don, Irtysh, Yenisey, Moskva, Tobol and Zapadnaya dvina (Düna) via Lake Baikal, **cities** from Astrakhan, Brest, Chelyabinsk, Grozny, Izhersk, Krasnodar, Maykop, Moscow (7 cases), Novgorod, Oryol, Piter (colloquially for Saint-Peterburg), Rostov, Saratov, Tula to Zhigulevsk. **Political, economic-historical and geographical territories** such as Yakutia, Kantemirovsky rayon, Karelia, Kuznetsk Basin (short form Kuzbass), Novaya Rossiya (New Russia), Russkaya Federaciya (Russian Federation) and Ural are also affected.

Another 47 cases (22 %) of connections with the “Russian World” refer to **art and culture**, such as for example the writers Anton Chekhov (1860–1904), Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881), Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841), Lev Tolstoy (1828–1910), Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930), Aleksandr Pushkin (1799–1837) and Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883), the composer Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857); 36 cases (17 %) refer to people with **military or political backgrounds**, such for example the commanders in the “Patriotic War” of 1812 against Napoleon Bonaparte General Petr Bagration (1765–1812) and Field Marshal Prince Mikhail Kutuzov-Smolensky (1745–1813), the military strategist Generalissimos Aleksandr Suvorov (1730–1800), Tsar Peter I (1672–1725) or the “Decembrists”, “Vozzednannya” (reunification, meant between Russia and Ukraine). 29 further cases (14 %) refer to **scientific biographies**, such as for example the natural scientist and polymath Mikhail Lomonosov (1711–1765), the biologist and plant breeder Ivan Michurin (1855–1935) or the plant physiologist Kliment Timiryazev (1843–1920). In addition, there is also the case of the chess player Mikhail Chigorin (1850–1908) with a sporting background.

If we look separately at the reasons for renaming Kyiv toponyms in the two periods before and after 24 February 2022, shifts in the share of the basic narratives become clear (Fig. 3). While before 24 February 2022 the “Soviet nostalgic” narrative strongly dominated with 88 % and we can thus speak

of a process of “decommunization”, the share of this narrative after the large-scale invasion of Ukraine went down to only 30 %. In contrast, in the period after 24 February 2022 the theme of “derussification” clearly dominates, i. e. the share of the narrative of the “Russian world” in the removed names increases from 11 % in the first to 69 % in the second period. The share of non-political justifications played a subordinate role in both periods, at 1 % each. An example of non-political connections of old names and political relevance of the new ones is the renaming of the street vul. Perspektyvna in the Pechersk rayon, which pointed to the connection with the perspective on the historical fortress of Vasilkivsk, to vul. Branovytskoho (named after Ihor Branovytskyi, born 1976, killed in eastern Ukraine in 2015).

With regard to the **newly assigned narratives** in the overall period (Fig. 4), it is first noticeable that “non-political” contexts with 35 % (NP, 179 cases) play a much greater role than they did among the previous urbanonyms. Among these newly assigned names classified as “non-political” (152 of 179 cases, 85 %), the general reference to topographical backgrounds (79 / 44 %) and the reference to original historical names (73 / 41 %) dominate in roughly equal proportions. A typical example of the first case is the renaming of the alley Mahnitohorsky in the Desniansk rayon, named after the city of Magnitogorsk, a centre of Russian steel production in the Chelyabinsk region, on the name alley Khersonsky after the Ukrainian city of Kherson. For the reference to original names, mention should be made of the renaming of the street named after the Russian military pilot Nikolay Gastello (1907–1941), killed in World War 2, in the Pechersk rayon, which was named after the hill Busova hora, a historical place where the street is located.

The rest of newly assigned “non-political” names are, on the one hand of a general nature (6 cases / 3 %). Examples are names after the Chumaki, Ukrainian traders and transporters of the 16th–19th centuries, or after the word “commerce” for the exchange of goods, services, money or valuables. On the other hand, there is the case of the allocation of 19 non-political names in the former village of Bortnychi of the Darnicya rayon in 2015. The newly assigned names of the renamed streets here, at the request of the local residents, went back to beekeeping, formerly the most important

trade in this locality. The two smaller streets named after Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which were initially “spared” in this area in 2015, were finally renamed after the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) and the Ukrainian painter, graphic artist and ethnographer Opanas Slastion (1855–1933) at the end of 2022.

The use of deliberately nonpolitical names is not a new phenomenon. Stefan Mashkevych (2018, 308) described the use of names that “are not [...] characterized by creativity”, such as successful, happy and creative streets in 2008 in Kyiv’s Zhulyani rayon or January, April, August Streets in 2013 in the Feofaniya rayon. The use of names that are “not linked to any particular political ideology” is also mentioned for Poltava (Klymenko 2019, 3). According to Maryana Baydak, among the new street names assigned throughout Ukraine, 1,583 are based on the following ten favorites: Garden (alone 907 cases = 57 %), Shevchenko, peace, school, youth, Gagarin, forest, Pushkin, Lesya Ukraïnka and 1 May streets, and thus mostly “nonpolitical” alternatives (Baydak 11.12.2019).

Narratives with an international reference could be found in 33 cases of newly assigned names (INT, 6 %). Examples include references to persons such as the Kyiv-born Israeli politician Golda Meir (1898–1978), who was one of the founders and 4th Prime Minister of Israel, the Pope John Paul II (1920–2005) and the Czech dramatist, civil rights activist, dissident, President of Czechoslovakia (1989–1992) and the Czech Republic (1992–2003) Vaclav Havel (1936–2011). Other international contexts involve toponyms given to the names of Kyiv’s European twin cities such as Brussels, Paris, Rome and Vienna. In addition, there are names after other cities such as Przemysł (Poland) or London (United Kingdom), countries such as Latvia or Portugal, mountains such as the Beskids or the Alps, and friendly peoples such as the Finns or Lithuanians.

The largest share of newly assigned toponyms in the period under consideration from 2014 to 2023 concerns the “National Ukrainian” narrative (NU, 305 cases/59 %). If these 305 cases are broken down further (Fig. 5), it becomes clear that the references to Ukrainian art and culture as well as science decrease significantly with the large-scale invasion of Ukraine, from 55 to 34 and 38 to 20 cases respectively. Some examples of designations after personalities of art and culture are the writer and one

of the founders of the modern Ukrainian language Ivan Kotliarevsky (1769–1838), the painter Ilya Repin (1844–1930), but also sugar factory owners and art patrons of the Brodsky (Lazar B., 1848–1904, Lev B., 1852–1923) and Khanenko families (Bogdan Kh., 1948–1917 and Varvara Kh., née Tereshchenko, 1852–1922). The universal scholar and first rector of Kyiv University Mykhailo Maksymovych (1807–1873) and the Ukrainian-Canadian economist and member of the Club of Rome Bohdan Havrylyshyn (1926–2016) are representatives of science.

New designations with the national-Ukrainian narrative, which occur in high numbers (41 cases each) both before and after the beginning of the invasion, concern questions of the history of the Ukrainian nation. This includes topics, personalities and organizations that support the so-called “postulate of the continuity of the Ukrainian history”. This is a narrative that connects for Ukraine the long traditions of proto-state and state forms: beginning with tribal alliances, through the first stages of statehood, Kyivan Rus, the principality of Galicia-Volhynia, the Polish-Lithuanian era and the existence of centres of “native” political organizations (“Ukrainian” magnates, princes), the Cossack era with the culmination of the “Cossack state”, the hetmanate with its semi-autonomous institutions, through the “national resistance” of the 19th century, the “Ukrainian Revolution” and the statehoods of the years 1918–20, also (but less so with the increasing enforcement of the already mentioned decommunization laws) Soviet Ukraine up to the independent Ukraine in 1991 as the culmination of the entire preceding history (Kasianov, Tolochko 2015–2016).

Examples of corresponding **themes** are the Haydamak movement (*Haydamatsky ruch*), an Ukrainian socio-political uprising development of the 18th century or the term “eternal” (*vichovy*) introduced as a street name in the district of Solomyansk rayon as an expression of a “*thousand-year tradition of democracy in the Ukrainian lands*” (Kyïvska miska derzhavna administratsiia, KMDA 27.12.2022). Another theme is connected to the term “*sobornost*” as a reference to the “Unification (*sobornost*) of Ukrainian Lands”, for example referring to the unification of UNR (Ukrainian People's Republic) and ZUNR (West Ukrainian People's Republic) on 22 January 1919 is also called, and which is celebrated annually in today's Ukraine

on 22 January as a state holiday. Typical examples of corresponding **personalities** are the Kyiv Grand Duke from the Rurikid dynasty Vsevolod I Jaroslavych (1030–1093) as well as Petro Doroshenko (1672–1698), hetman of Zaporizhian right bank Ukraine (1665–1676) and leader of the Cossack hetmanate (1668–1670). For corresponding **organizations**, the Taras Brotherhood (*Bratstvo taracivciv*) can be mentioned, a secret organization in the Ukrainian territories of the Russian Empire of the years 1891 to 1898, which advocated a greater dissemination and institutionalization of the Ukrainian language and culture as well as political independence for Ukraine. The UNR and the “Ukrainian Insurgent Army” (*Ukrainska povstanska armiya*, UPA) also fall into this category. Mentions of organizations such as the UPA or the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and their affiliated persons are numerically small, with eleven cases of street renaming.

The references to the national-Ukrainian narrative, which increase significantly from 14 before the full-scale invasion to 24 cases after 22 February 2022, concern cases directly related to the Russian-Ukrainian war itself. Examples include (1) renaming of toponyms before 24 February 2022 after heroes of the “Revolution of Dignity” (Maidan) or of the war in eastern Ukraine and Heroes of Ukraine (posthumous) such as the hero of the “Heavenly Hundred” Yuri Pashalin (1984–2014), who was shot in Kyiv in 2014, the Maidan activist Yevhen Kharchenko (1987–2014), who fell as a fighter of the “Donbas” battalion in eastern Ukraine, or the defender of Donetsk airport and paratrooper Ihor Branovytsky (1976–2015), who was shot dead after being captured by pro-Russian separatists. For the current war of aggression on Ukraine (2), the soldier of the engineer and pioneer section of the separate battalion of the 35th Marine Infantry Brigade and Hero of Ukraine (posthumous) Vitaliy Skakun (1996–2022) should be mentioned, who fell on the very first day of the invasion on 24 February 2022, and Roman Ratushny, Ukrainian journalist, Euromaidan activist and defender of his country in the Russian-Ukrainian war, who fell on 8 June 2022 near Izium.

The allocation of newly assigned names of renamed Kyiv toponyms to the basic narratives in the two periods before and after 24 February 2022 show no fundamental changes in the order of the narratives among themselves

(Fig. 6). Nevertheless, the national-Ukrainian narrative loses significantly from 67 to 52 % in favour of the non-political and international references, whose shares increase by 8 and 7 percentage points, respectively.

When comparing the dropped and newly assigned names, a close look reveals often cleverly chosen connections that reveal creative thinking on the part of the citizens involved. Some examples: In the Darnycya rayon, the era of communism is replaced in a street name by the archaeological period of the Tripolye culture. A street named after Mykola Shchors (1895–1919), one of the most famous Bolshevik army leaders of the Civil War, is demonstratively named after one of the best-known representatives of the OUN: Yevhen Konovalec (1891–1938, Pechersk rayon). Similarly demonstrative is the renaming of the street named after the Soviet general Nikolay Vatutin (1901–1944), killed by the UPA in an assassination attempt, to Shukhevych Street, after Roman Shukhevych (1907–1950), one of the most prominent representatives of the UPA (Desnyansky rayon).

Thälmann streets retain their reference to Germany with “German Street” (Holosiiv) or Goethe Street (Pechersk).

In the rayon of Shevchenkivsky, the change of the name of a street from the Bolshevik-revolutionary son (Vsevolod Dovnar-Zapolskyi, 1898–1919) to the father (Mytrofan D.-Z., 1867–1934), who is apparently blameless in this respect and known as a historian, is intended to make the Soviet-nostalgic context disappear. Names are being chosen with similarities. For example, the name of a street in the Shevchenkivsky rayon changes from Oleksandr Shcherbakov, (1901–1945, Soviet party leader) to Danylo Shcherbakivsky (1877–1927, Ukrainian ethnographer and archaeologist). Another street is to lose its “Russian World” background by changing its name from Samuil Marshak (1887–1964, Russian poet and literary critic) to Josyp Marshak (1854–1918, Kyiv Jewish merchant, jeweller and patron, Svjatoshyn).

“Collectivization” becomes “James Mace” in the Solomyansk rayon after the US historian (1952–2004) and one of the leading proponents of the Holodomor genocide thesis, Reunification (*Vozzyednannya*) in the Dniprovsk rayon becomes the Collection (*Sobornost*) of Ukrainian Lands, Nevsky (after the Russian Grand Duke Alexandr Nevsky, approx. 1220–1263) becomes Nyvki Street after the Kyiv district of the same name, Karelia

becomes “Finnish people” (Dniprovsky and Desnjansky rayons). Ukrainian Ilya Repin (1844–1930) replaced Russian Painter Ivan Shishkin, (1831–1898, Shevchenkivskyi rayon). People connected with river or sea navigation (*Vodnyki*, Podil r.) are followed by the deepest Ukrainian lake Svitiaz. Novgorod gives way to Novhorod (Solomyanka), Piter (St. Petersburg) to London and Russian Svetlogorsk to Ukrainian Svitlodarsk (Solomyanka). Several Russian rivers are replaced by Ukrainian ones, such as the Daugava (Düna) by the Dnistr (Dniprovskyi r.), the Moskva by the Zbruch (Svyatoshyn).

Other renaming preserves at least technical or contextual connections: an alley and street named after the Russian plant physiologist Kliment Timiryazev (1843–1920) are named after the nearby botanical garden (Pechersk), World War II aviators or defenders are replaced by corresponding heroes of the current Russian-Ukrainian War (Svjatoshyn), the Russian Decembrists are replaced by the Ukrainian Taras Brotherhood (Darnicya). Other examples could be given. Hirik (2018) noted similar cases in Mariupol, after its liberation from incorporation into the so-called “Donetsk People's Republic” in 2014/15. He speaks of how “*some of the names are just amusing*” (Hirik 2018, 115).

Discussion

Kyiv's renaming policy is in line with state ideas. Among the ten most frequent street-names in Ukraine, whose renaming was recommended by the Expert Council of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine on 22 August 2022, regardless of affiliation to the narratives considered here, are Yuri Gagarin, Aleksandr Pushkin, Ivan Michurin, Valeriy Chkalov, Maksim Gorky, Mikhail Lermontov, Aleksandr Suvorov, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Aleksandr Matrosov and Vladimir Komarov streets (Ministerstvo informacynoi polityky Ukraïny (MKIP) 02.08.2022). Half of these names belong to the Soviet nostalgic and half to the “Russian world” narrative. Apart from Gagarin and Chkalov, these favourites of Ukrainian renaming activism, have also been affected by renaming in Kyiv, Michurin and Gorky even in six cases, Lermontov in five.

Both peaks of the renaming of Kyiv toponyms (turn of the year 2015/16 and 2022/23) are immediate reactions to escalation stages of the armed conflict with the Russian Federation.

The first peak of renaming after the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of parts of the Donbas was legally based on the adoption of the decommunization laws of April 2015. Historically, topographically, and poetically justified reallocations of toponyms, as Gnatyuk (2014, 124) distinguishes them for this period, are found according to the system proposed in this paper as subdivisions of the national-Ukrainian narrative (history, arts/culture) or “apolitical” naming (topography). The three discursive positions of renaming toponyms under the aegis of decommunization described by Males & Dejneka (2020, 125-127) also fit into the system used here: Specifically, position 1 (position of the local or imperial past) corresponds to a largely apolitical position with local or personal historical references, position 2 (heroic-patriotic — nationalist — position) corresponds to the national-Ukrainian narrative of various contexts and manifestations, and position 3 (decommunization and, in an extended sense, decolonization) ultimately means turning away from the “Russian world”, both in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Russian Federation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Decolonization in these contexts is described by Lim & Perono Cacciafoco (2021) as “*the achievement of self-determination by a previously colonised country*” (See: Collins 2016). The new rulers use renaming to rid newly independent countries of the last vestiges of colonialism by renouncing the colonial powers and redefining the city’s new identity as an independent nation (Wanjiru, Matsubara 2018).

In general, as Males & Dejneka (2020, 128) rightly note, neutral (non-political) references must be relativised in some cases. As an example, they cite the existence of a vul. Rizdvyana (Christmas street), but not of streets named after Ramadan or other non-Christian festivities. In this context, it is worth noting Hirik’s (2018, 114-115) comment that in the period 2015-2017 in Kyiv, in contrast for example to Dnipro, very few Jewish personalities were taken into consideration for the renaming of streets.

The escalation of the all-out aggression of the Russian Federation on 22 February 2022 was met with a much more vigorous reaction with regard to the transformation of public space. Thus, on 22 May 2022 already President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed as a corresponding basis

the Law of Ukraine adopted by the Verkhovna Rada “On the prohibition of propaganda for the Russian Nazi totalitarian regime, the armed aggression of the Russian Federation as a terrorist state against Ukraine and the symbols of the military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Nazi totalitarian regime” (Zakon Ukraïny 25.05.2022).

With the law submitted in April 2022 and only passed in 2nd reading by the Verkhovna Rada on 21 March 2023 and still to be signed by the President “On the condemnation and prohibition of propaganda of the Russian imperial policy in Ukraine and decolonization of toponyms” (draft bill 7253) more detailed guidelines for the change of toponyms are now available (Zakon Ukraïny, 21.03.2023). The objectives of the law are defined as “*to protect national interests and national security, to ensure the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of Ukrainian citizens, society and the state*” and to counter the aim of the current Russian aggression, which consists in “*depriving the Ukrainian people of their independence and sovereignty and returning them to a state of dependence as it existed in the times of the Russian Empire and the USSR*”.

The law defines for the first time terms such as “Russian imperial policy” and its propaganda, “Russification”, “Ukrainophobia”, as well as “enslaved peoples of the Russian Federation”. Furthermore, the law and defines under Article 2, point 4) h) [4) ye)], in particular, also the symbolism of Russian imperial policy underlying decolonization as “*the names of regions, districts, settlements, neighbourhoods, squares, boulevards, streets, alleys, descents and ascents, avenues (prospektas), majdans, riparian areas, bridges and other toponyms of settlements, enterprises, institutions, organizations on the territory of Ukraine which bear names or pseudonyms meeting the criteria set out in points c) [v] and d) [h], names of events related to the implementation of Russian imperial policy, the names of Russian cities and other geographical, historical and cultural sites of the Russian Federation not directly related to the protection of the political, economic and cultural rights of the Ukrainian people, the development of Ukrainian national statehood, science, culture or the culture of the enslaved peoples of the Russian Federation.*”

The following two points concerning names are of particular importance for the renaming of toponyms. To be removed are “*pictures,*

monuments, memorials, inscriptions dedicated to persons who held leading positions in Russian and pro-Russian authorities, political organizations, parties and armed groups and 'participated in or contributed to the implementation of Russian imperial policy', as well as collaborators of the Soviet state security organs at all levels" (point c) [v]) or "who have publicly, including in the media, in literary and other artistic works, supported, glorified or justified Russian imperial policies, called for Russification or Ukrainophobia" (point d [h])). The latter clause is the one by which, according to Shamaida's interpretation, "Pushkin, Bulgakov and the rest of the troubadours of the empire will follow the Russian ship" (Shamaida 2023). For both points: "The exception (which, however, does not apply to employees of Soviet security organs) is persons connected with the protection of the political, economic and cultural rights of the Ukrainian people, the development of Ukrainian national statehood, science and culture." (Zakon Ukraïny, 21.03.2023).

The two basic narratives, one of which plays a dominant role in the present research against the background of decommunization among the discarded names and one against the background of derussification and decolonization among the newly assigned names, concern the "Soviet nostalgic" (58 % of the discarded names) and the "national-Ukrainian" narratives (59 % of the new names) respectively. The Soviet-nostalgic narrative rejects pluralism and represents an "exclusivist model" of historical memory and the corresponding historical policy (Kasianov 2022, 19).

With their elimination of the Soviet-nostalgic narrative, 58 % of the Kyiv toponyms to be renamed concerned street names, which Richard Stites (1988, 208-209) described as Soviet name groups of "*revolutionary heroes*" and "*revolutionary terms*" coined to their inner order and logic. At other places in Europe, the spectrum of street renaming is larger, including toponyms which Stites calls "*terms of modernization*" or "*terms from the world of culture*". An analysis of 81 streets renamed in the eight major German cities Berlin (37 Streets), Hamburg (13), Köln (12), Frankfurt/Main (6), Leipzig (5), Düsseldorf (4), München (3) and Stuttgart (1) between 2010 and 2020 showed that the renaming of two thirds thereof (54 streets) had no political background. However, here too, there were key aspects such

as the elimination of references to national socialism (22) and antisemitic racist ideas (2) at a total of 29 % of street renaming (Lindenfeld 2021).

The national-Ukrainian narrative, especially if, like occasionally by Kasianov (2015, 150), it is undifferentiatedly described as “*national-nationalist*”², must also be classified as a blanket “exclusivist model”. What is special about this construction is that it encompasses the entire range that opens between “national” variants of a perception of history in the sense of a “healthy” patriotism and “unhealthy” nationalist variants. This covers a very wide range of topics and ideas from the pluralistically inclusive idea of the state people of independent Ukraine to the uncompromising ethnocentrism mentioned above: nationalist, ethno-cultural exclusive ideas of a linguistically and culturally homogeneous Ukrainian ethnic group. The disadvantage of the construction “national/nationalist narrative” is therefore that the national-Ukrainian narrative is conceptually burdened with the word “nationalist” from the outset, i. e. even in the case of inclusive-pluralist events such as the Euromaidan. In this paper, the more neutral term of the national-Ukrainian narrative is used. The national-Ukrainian narrative thus conceptually retains the chance to function as an “inclusive model”.

In this context, it is difficult to classify the references to organizations such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (*OUN*) or the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (*UPA*), which are often grouped together as “*OUN/UPA*”. In this study, renamings to honour “*OUN/UPA*” have been assigned to the “history” theme of the national-Ukrainian narrative, but with a variety of other persons and organizations associated with Ukrainian history they could well have been assigned to the continuity theme.

Even though the topic of “*OUN/UPA*” is underrepresented in terms of numbers, representatives, and policies of the “*OUN/UPA*” can, if viewed indiscriminately, promote an extreme nationalist view of Ukrainian history. The outstanding personality in the present context is Stepan Bandera (1909–1959), after whom one of Kyiv's central prospectuses, the former Moscow Prospect leading through the rayons of Obolon and Podil, was renamed. The renaming of the Moscow Bridge connected to this prospectus as Bandera

² In Kasianov's 2015 work, the composition “national/nationalist narrative” is initially also found as a “national(ist) version” of history or collective memory.

Bridge, initiated by the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance under the leadership of its then director Volodymyr Viatrovych, failed in a digitally conducted vote. In the meantime, the names proposed by Kyiv citizens ranged from nationalistic (Bandera) to humorous (Tom and Jerry, Males, Dejneka 2020, 133). Bandera, head of the *OUN (B)* faction after the split of the *OUN*, is extremely controversial as a Ukrainian politician in the struggle against Soviet power. This is especially true in connection with his failed efforts to found a Ukrainian state after Germany occupied western Ukraine in June 1941 and the associated efforts to collaborate with Nazi Germany. The latter failed, Bandera was imprisoned as a special prisoner in Sachsenhausen from 1941 to 1944 and died after an assassination attempt by the Soviet secret service in post-war Munich. A clearer renunciation from “Moscow”, i. e. turning away from the “Russian World”, than the demonstrative renaming of one of the busiest traffic arteries in Kyiv after “Bandera” is hardly imaginable. According to Volodymyr Viatrovych, the new name was not a decision “from above”: about 5,000 Kyiv citizens participated in the public discussion of the issue, and most deputies of the Kyiv city parliament voted in favour of the name change (Pyetsukh 2016). In Kherson, on the other hand, residents have at least until December 2021 rejected attempts to rename a Moscow Street (Ukrainska Pravda 09.12.2021). The journalist Dubynianskyj (2016) criticized the uncritical glorification of dubious figures in Ukrainian history and summarizes the position of the citizens on the controversial Bandera prospect as follows: *“Let's be frank: First and foremost, this was taken up as an element of hybrid resistance, as a resounding slap in the face for the enemy, and only then as a reminder of a concrete person.”* Even if Ukrainian historians complain that to this day they are haunted by the constant reference to Ukrainian nationalism, as if *“the Ukrainian nation is a single spawn of nationalist aspirations”* (Thiel 2023), one can counter these complaints: *OUN/UPA*, Bandera, Shukhevych and other organizations or persons of the national-Ukrainian narrative of nationalist character are signs of an unreflective use of such symbols, if not of the presence of nationalist networks. A clearer service can hardly be rendered to Russian propaganda, which for decades, beginning in the Soviet era, spread the negative Bandera myth (Summary, see Struve 2022).

The renaming of urbanonyms, as analyzed here using Kyiv as an example, has led to a radical change in the urban symbolic order within Ukraine. Ukraine is appropriating these spaces, displacing the Russian imperial legacy. The radicalization of this policy is a result of Russian aggression. It reinforces already existing tendencies and currents. This is also an act of defiance, implementing the exact opposite of what the aggressor might have planned and implemented if it had come to occupying Kyiv. The sad but also resistant irony is thus that the attempt to reintegrate Ukraine into the Russian imperial order has led to the exact opposite, to a fundamental rejection of the symbols of the “Russian world”.

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СПИСОК СКОРОЧЕНЬ

INT — International

KPU — Communist Party of Ukraine

NKVD — People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs

NP — Nonpolitical narrative

NUN — National Ukrainian narrative

OUN — Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists

SN — Soviet nostalgic narrative

RW — Narrative of "Russian World"

UINP — Ukrainian institute for national remembrance

UNR — Ukrainian People's Republic
UPA — Ukrainian Insurgent Army
USSR — Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
ZUNR — West Ukrainian People's Republic

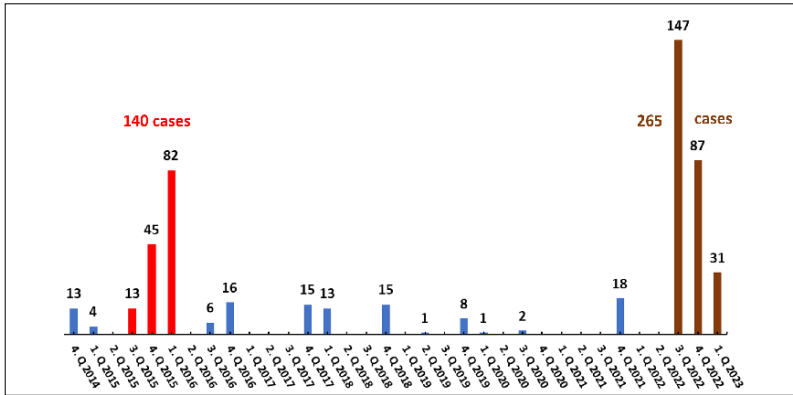


Figure 1. Timing of renamings of Kyiv toponyms between November 2014 and February 2023 by quarter.

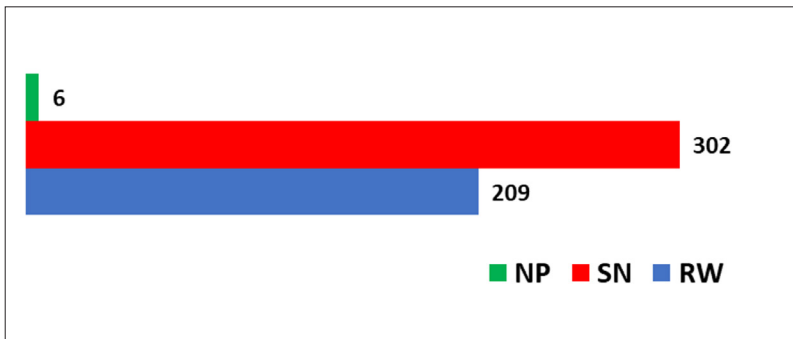


Figure 2. Allocation of the total of 517 renamed toponyms of the city of Kyiv in the period November 2014 to February 2023 according to the “discarded” narratives “Soviet-nostalgic” (SN) and “Russian World” (RW). NP = apolitical.

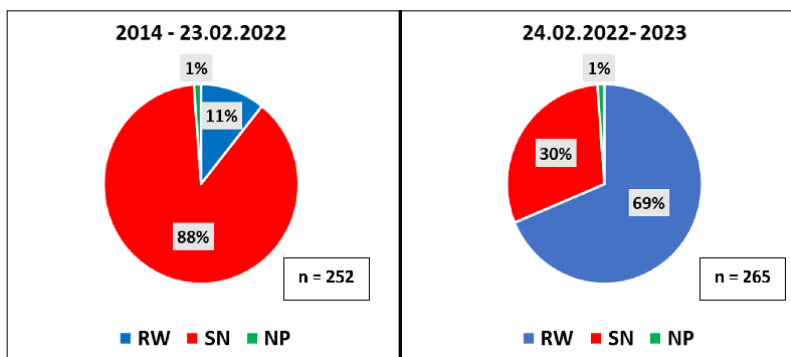


Figure 3. Allocation of the renamed toponyms of the city of Kyiv 2014–2023 in temporal differentiation before and after Russia's comprehensive invasion of Ukraine on 24.02.2022 according to the “detached” narratives “Soviet-nostalgic” (SN) and “Russian world” (RW). NP = apolitical.

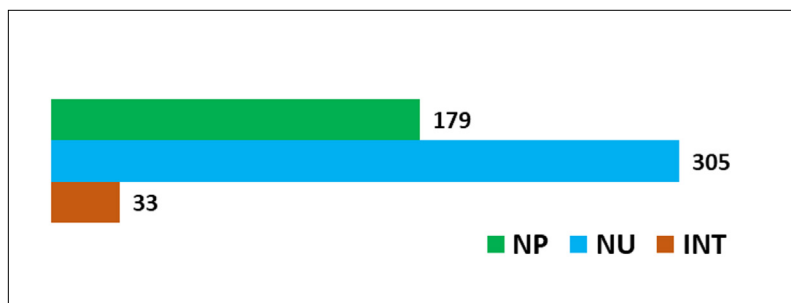


Figure 4. Allocation of the total of 517 renamed toponyms of the city of Kyiv in the period November 2014 to February 2023 according to the narratives of the newly assigned names “National-Ukrainian” (NU) and “International” (INT). NP = apolitical.

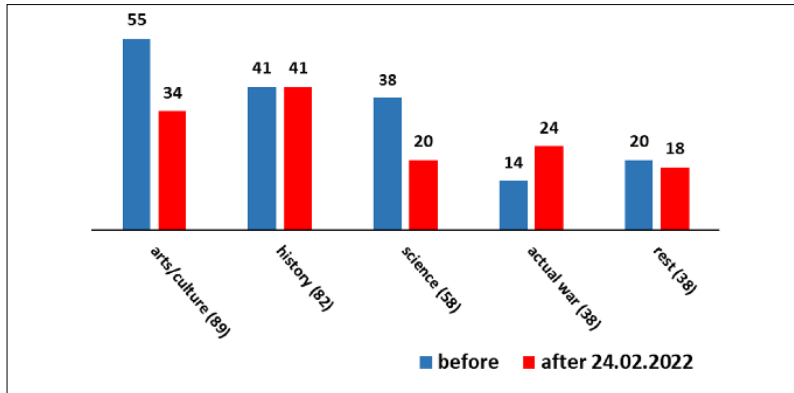


Figure 5. Subdivision of naming according to the “national-Ukrainian” narrative into references to “art/culture”, “history”, “science” and “current Russian-Ukrainian war” in comparison of the periods before and after Russia's comprehensive invasion of Ukraine on 24.02.2022.

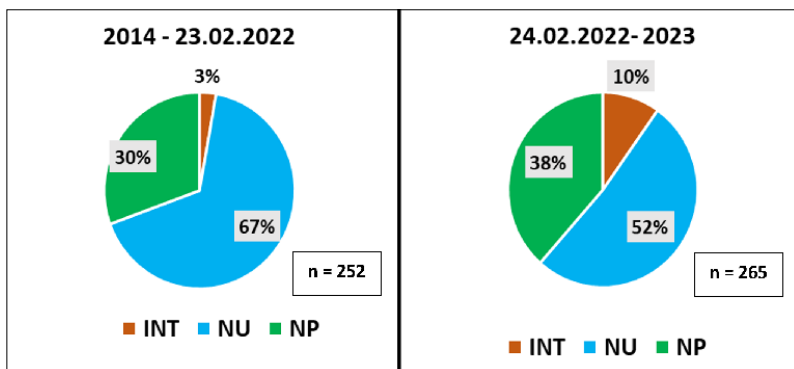


Figure 6. Allocation of the renamed toponyms of the city of Kyiv 2014–2023 in temporal differentiation before and after Russia's comprehensive invasion of Ukraine on 24.02.2022 according to the newly assigned narratives “National-Ukrainian” (NU) and “International” (INT). NP = apolitical.

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**ПЕРЕЙМЕНУВАННЯ ВУЛИЦЬ КИЄВА ПІД ЧАС
РОСІЙСЬКОЇ ЗАГАРБНИЦЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ:
ІСТОРИЧНА ПОЛІТИКА МІЖ «ДЕКОМУНІЗАЦІЄЮ»
ТА «ДЕРУСИФІКАЦІЄЮ»**

У статті здійснено порівняльний аналіз змін у тенденціях перейменувань вулиць Києва, оприлюднених Київською міською державною адміністрацією, у двох часових періодах за тематичними категоріями (наративами): (1) між 2014 р. і широкомасштабним російським вторгненням в Україну 24 лютого 2022 р., (2) між 24 лютого 2022 р. і першою річницею російського вторгнення у 2023 р. За досліджуваний період 517 (близько 17 %) вулиць Києва отримали нові назви. 58 % перейменувань за весь період — це урбаноніми, що втілюють «радянський ностальгійний» наратив, 41 % — наратив «русского мира». 1 % перейменованих урбанонімів мали неополітичний характер. Якщо до 24 лютого 2022 р. домінував «радянський ностальгійний» наратив (88 %), що свідчить про процес «декомунізації», то після широкомасштабного вторгнення в Україну частка цього наративу становила лише 30 %. Натомість у період після 24 лютого 2022 р. явно домінує тема «дерусифікації», тобто частка наративу «русского мира» у вилучених назвах збільшується з 11 у першому до 69 % у другому періоді. Найбільша частка новоприсвоєних топонімів у період з 2014 по 2023 рр. стосується наративу «національний український» (59 %). 35 % стосуються «неполітичного» контексту, а 6 % мають посилання на міжнародний зміст. У статті робиться висновок, що перейменування вулиць Києва спричинило радикальні зміни в символічному просторі українських міст, насамперед ці зміни втілювалися в бажанні позбутися російської імперської спадщини. Тригером зазначених процесів послужила російська військова агресія, яка поєднала вже наявний тренд. Українська влада здійснює протилежне тому, що, можливо, зробив би агресор у разі захоплення Києва. Отже, російська військова агресія проти України спричинила категоричне відкидання будь-яких символічних проявів «русского мира».

Ключові слова: декомунізація, дерусифікація, Київ, перейменування, історична політика, тематичні категорії (наративи), урбаноніми.

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