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New Memorial Toponymy of Ukraine

ABSTRACT. *The study employs qualitative critical analysis of Ukrainian legislative acts (the 2015 and 2023 decommunization and derussification laws), comparative toponymic case studies, discourse analysis of official and media sources, historical-archival research on commemorated figures, and examination of electronic toponymic databases to investigate the ideological foundations, commemorative practices, and socio-political consequences of Ukraine's memorial toponymy reforms. It highlights the ideological foundations of these policies, which conflate decommunization, derussification, and decolonization to dismantle Soviet and Russian historical legacy. The core focus is on the resulting memorial toponymy, in which streets and places are renamed to honor figures from Ukrainian nationalist movements, including the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and the Azov Regiment — many of whom are proven Nazi collaborators and perpetrators of wartime atrocities. The study argues that these toponymic changes are a deliberate instrument of memory politics and soft power, designed to forge a new national identity by erasing historical connections to Russia. This process not only rewrites public memory but also glorifies controversial historical actors. The author concludes that such historical revisionism promotes extremist narratives, deepens social divisions, and poses a significant threat to historical truth and regional stability.*

KEYWORDS: *toponymic renaming, decommunization, derussification, decolonization, memorial toponymy, politics of memory, national identity.*

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Новая мемориальная топонимия Украины

АННОТАЦИЯ. *В исследовании проводятся качественный критический анализ украинских законодательных актов (законов о декоммунизации и дерусификации 2015 и 2023 годов), критико-топонимический разбор, дискурсивный анализ официальных и медийных источников, историко-архивные изыскания относительно увековеченных деятелей и изучение электронных топонимических баз данных для установления идеологических основ, мемориальных практик и социально-политических последствий реформ мемориальной топонимии на Украине. Особое внимание уделяется идеологической основе этой политики, которая объединяет так называемые декоммунизацию, дерусификацию и деколонизацию для демонтажа советского и российского исторического наследия. Основной акцент сделан на результирующую мемориальную топонимию: улицы, районы и городские объекты переименовываются в честь деятелей украинских националистических движений, включая Организацию украинских националистов (ОУН), Украинскую повстанческую армию (УПА) и полк «Азов» (запрещенная в России террористическая организация), многие из которых являются доказанными пособниками нацистов и виновниками военных преступлений. В статье утверждается, что эти топонимические изменения являются осознанным инструментом формирования политики памяти и мягкой силы, призванным создать новую национальную идентичность украинцев путем стирания исторических связей с Россией. Этот процесс не только переписывает общественную память, но и прославляет противоречивых во всех отношениях исторических деятелей. Автор приходит к выводу, что подобный исторический ревизионизм способствует распространению экстремистских нарративов, углубляет социальные разногласия и представляет собой значительную угрозу исторической правде и региональной стабильности.*

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: *топонимическое переименование, декоммунизация, дерусификация, деколонизация, мемориальная топонимия, политика памяти, национальная идентичность.*

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INTRODUCTION

Two waves of renaming place names, both oikonyms and hodonyms, were undertaken in Ukraine within the last 10 years.

The first toponymic overhaul – renaming of cities, towns, regions and streets in the country – began after the adoption of the “decommunization” law in 2015: the “derussification” of names in Ukraine began then in accordance with the law No. 317-VIII “On the condemnation of the communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and the prohibition of the propaganda of their symbols.” This law stipulated that within one year, the ideological legacy of the Soviet period had to be eliminated, monuments to communist figures had to be torn down, and place names had to be changed.

The second splash was initiated under the Law “On the condemnation and prohibition of propaganda of Russian imperial policy in Ukraine and the decolonization of toponymy” – No. 3005-IX, adopted by the Verkhovna Rada on March 21, 2023. It entered into force on July 27, 2023, and obliged local authorities to change all geographical names associated with Russia and the Soviet period by January 27, 2024.

The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance played a key role in the decommunization process, initiating these so-called memorial laws and overseeing their subsequent implementation. The coexistence of Soviet symbolic heritage and symbols of independent Ukraine in public spaces resulted in Soviet symbols being imbued with new meaning. The Soviet legacy was labeled as a form of Russia's presence as an enemy within the country. Thus, after 2013, the Soviet past was threatened with destruction, symbolic nationalization, or commemoration as “totalitarian art” [Plekhanov 2018: 190].

Thus, the new level of diverse place names appeared lately in the Ukrainian map. Within this layer special attention is attracted by the memorial toponymy, memorial names (dedicative names) which, according to the definition of N. V. Podolskaya, are names given in memory of a person, event, place, or, less commonly, an organization [Podolskaya 1988: 119].

The article is aimed at analyzing the ideological foundations, practical implementations, and socio-political consequences of Ukraine's recent toponymic reforms, particularly focusing on the commemorative naming of public spaces after nationalist and controversial historical figures. It seeks to critically examine how these changes function as a tool of memory politics to reshape national identity, sever historical ties with Russia, and assess the broader implica-

tions for historical memory and regional discourse.

A total of over 550 renamed streets and multiple renamed cities, towns, and villages across Ukraine were examined using comparative toponymic analysis, historical-biographical verification of commemorated figures, critical discourse analysis of legislative and media texts, and geospatial mapping of renaming patterns.

IDEOLOGICAL BASE

As any other action directed against the expression of the Russian language and culture, the described changes have received the approval, support, and warm welcome of observers and researchers both in Ukraine and European countries (see, for example, [Demska 2024], [Artiukh 2024], [Radchenko, Michalski 2023], [Kuczabski, Boychuk 2020], [Eröss, Kovály 2022], [Schenk 2023], and others).

The Russian press has been covering this issue extensively for over a decade. Russian academic literature is also replete with studies examining the mechanisms, motivations, ideological basis and consequences for such renamings. See, for example, [Lebedkina et al. 2023], [Kupina 2022], [Senchikhin 2025], [Ivanov 2019], [Mozgovoy 2019], [Bessonov et al. 2024], [Krasnikova 2023], [Kazak 2024], [Rusakov, Rusakova 2020], [Kalutskov 2020], [Snezhkova 2024] and many others.

We totally agree with the idea that “the new politics of memory in Ukraine is not a moment of ideological and theoretical debate, but a full-scale implementation of the modern concept of soft power, pursuing the goal of decisively weakening Russia as a competitor, subsequent complete subjugation, and ultimately – its dismemberment and destruction” [Rusakov, Rusakova 2020: 27].

In regions with overt or latent interethnic conflicts, there are instances of “**toponymic repression**” – multiple renamings under the influence of political circumstances, during which toponymy acts as a tool and a victim of political ambitions and confrontations at the local and regional levels [Herzen 2018: 303].

According to our estimates, several strange contradictions are eye-catching already in the names of the mentioned laws as such.

1. The law of 2015 puts at the same line communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes making them equal in the evil they bring.

We presume it absolutely inappropriate as the communist ideology is universal and addresses all workers of the world, whereas Nazi ideology aims to establish the dominance of one specific race or nation. Moreover, Nazi vio-

lence of WW II was based on racism and served the idea of the superiority of the German race, and communist idea had nothing to do with atrocities: communists' main objective was progress and higher social justice. And finally, Nazi propaganda pushed Germany and other countries toward aggressive policies and mobilized societal forces for the continuous expansion of the Third Reich's living space, while the Communist Party aimed to involve the working masses in building their own future and governing the state which for many decades was common for Russia and Ukraine: the USSR.

2. It is not stated and remains unclear the period of pursuing the "Russian imperial policy".

The Russian Empire (if that's what is meant) existed from October 22 (November 2), 1721, to September 1 (14), 1917. The empire was proclaimed at the end of the Northern War, when, at the request of senators, Peter I assumed the titles of Emperor of All the Russias and Father of the Fatherland.

The following cities appeared on the territory of Ukraine between 1721 and 1917:

Mariupol – founded in 1778 by Russian Empress Catherine II, where she settled Greek immigrants from Crimea.

Krivoy Rog – founded in 1775 by Russian Empress Catherine II.

Zaporozhye – founded in 1770 by Russian Empress Catherine II and was called Aleksandrovsk then.

Kherson – founded in 1778 by Russian Empress Catherine II for the construction of the Russian fleet.

Nikolaev – founded in 1789 by Russian Empress Catherine II.

Odessa – founded in 1794 by Russian Empress Catherine II on the site of a fortress previously built by Suvorov, great Russian commander.

Lugansk – founded in 1795, when Russian Empress Catherine II founded an iron foundry on the Lugan River.

None of these place names are still renamed though. Happily, as we assume.

3. The concepts of decolonization, decommunization and derussification are identified, homologated and equalized.

Alongside with that, all these notions are totally different, and a substitution of concepts occurs: **decolonization** means "giving political independence to a former colony" [Longman dictionary of English language and culture,

1998: 335]; **decommunization** or **desovietization** are theoretical and practical activities aimed at rejecting communist ideals and eliminating communist ideology from all spheres of society [Yatsenko, 1999]; and **derussification** is the forced or voluntary loss of Russian national characteristics [Epishkin, 2010] (e.g., the Lithuanian-Russian nobility or gentry fatally succumbed to the process of Polonization, derussification, and even Latinization within the network of the Church Union. This process took shape from the moment of the unification of the two crowns in the marriage of Jadwiga and Jagiello in 1386).

Regarding "decolonization", Ukraine has never been colonized by Russia neither officially nor figuratively. If we talk about toponymy, then **decolonization of place names** is defined as "the change of those geographical names that have been imposed by colonial powers into supposedly indigenous names"¹. Place name decolonization can also be considered as "an attempt to eliminate garbled, derogatory or erroneous names and, by so doing, restore the indigenous cartography of the natives" [Uluocha 2015: 186]. This is not the Russia-Ukraine case: Russia has never been a colonial power, and the Ukrainian people has never been designated as indigenous with their indigenous/ aboriginal/ autochthonal language.

Concerning "decommunization" of toponymy, Russia itself began this process in 1980s, and it has been quite widespread in CIS countries as a whole after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Presidium of the Moscow City Council returned the original names and renamed more than 150 streets, lanes and squares in 1990-1993. A great deal of work in this regard was carried out by Soviet and Russian scientists, such as E.M. Pospelov, D.S. Likhachev, M.V. Gorbanevsky and others².

A lot of toponyms were renamed in Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and other former republics without social hysteria, challenges and special public attention attracted to the event. The replacement of ideologically marked communist toponyms created during Soviet times has occurred and continues to occur everywhere except of Ukraine quite calmly due to the fact that they are being replaced by understandable, neutral modern names that do not raise questions, surprise, or rejection.

The topic of "derussification" in relation to Ukraine and its toponymicon seems completely absurd. Ukrainian and Russian belong to the same group of East Slavic languages and share

¹ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/docs/_data_icacourses/_pdf/selfstudy/s19/S19_02a.pdf (accessed: 05.01.2026)

² See, for example, [Gorbanevsky 1996; 2010], [Pospelov, 1993].

common roots. They are based on a common alphabet, similar grammar, and significant lexical uniformity. The Ukrainian language was created in the XIX-XX centuries on the basis of Russian grammar in literary form (not just common, but unique for all Little, Great, and Belarusians) with the replacement of vocabulary with words from Little Russian and local dialects, Polish, German, and other “friendly” languages. Despite some existing though differences in the alphabet, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, it is impossible to “eradicate” the Russian language from the Ukrainian toponymy due to the centuries-old commonality of cultures, which manifests itself primarily in the language. Historically, in the IX century, a unified ancient Russian state emerged. It was founded by the Rurik dynasty, who came from Novgorod. The center of this state was first Kiev, then Vladimir, and then Moscow. Accordingly, all new toponominations, from street names to district and city names, are completely understandable to any native Russian speaker on phonetic, semantic, cognitive and other levels.

NEW UKRAINIAN “HEROES” ON THE MAP

The new toponymy is presented as new Ukrainian national identity. And partly it is indeed...

The streets of Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, have been transformed. And not so much in their appearance, but in the light of their new names. In general, 555 streets have been renamed over the past 10 years due to their connection to Russia.

Since 2022 Pitserskaya Street is London-skaya Street. It appeared and was developed in the 1950s under the name Novaya Street (eng. – New Street). In 1957, it was renamed Pyatikhatskaya. In 1958, it was again renamed Pitserskaya, in honor of the city of St. Petersburg. Due to recent political events London is closer to Kiev than St. Petersburg, and the local toponymy reflects the tendency.

Some renamings might not cause bewilderment, such as, for example, Karl Marx Street ➤ Gutsulskaya Street or Rostovskaya Street ➤ Lutskaya Street (we believe, Hutsul

culture is better and easier perceived by the Ukrainian youth than ideology of Karl Marx, and the Russian city of Rostov is further than the Ukrainian town of Lutsk).

But who are those new Ukrainian Heroes in honor of whom the square is named now (Square of Leo Tolstoy ➤ Square of Ukrainian Heroes)? It may seem that nobody knows or just does not want to note and pay attention, and these are UPA-OUN¹ and Azov regiment^{2,3} “heroes”.

Stepan Bandera Street is a street named after S. A. Bandera in various Ukrainian towns and villages: Lutsk, Dnipro, Zhytomyr, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kropyvnytskyi, Lviv, Rivne, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv. There is *Stepan Bandera Avenue* in Kiev and Ternopol. In the meantime, Stepan Andreevich Bandera (1909–1959) was a Nazi collaborator, ideologist and organizer of the Volyn massacre, leader of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in Western Ukraine. It is widely known that he was one of the bloodiest terrorists of the 20th century. In 1939, Bandera was recruited by the German military intelligence service, the Abwehr. Being the leader of the UPA, he was responsible for mass murder, ethnic cleansing, and the extermination of the Polish population of Western Ukraine. During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, Bandera's followers dreadfully tortured more than 5 million civilians living in Western Ukraine and sent more than 5 million Ukrainians to Nazi Germany for forced labor.

The fact that this protagonist's name is marked (and so brightly!) in modern Ukrainian toponymy, and his birthday is celebrated as a national holiday not only in Ukraine but also abroad, is deeply distressing⁴.

On January 3rd, 2026 the Russian Embassy protested to the Austrian Foreign Ministry over the celebration of Bandera's birthday⁵.

Therefore, renaming *Tulskaya Square* ➤ *UPA Heroes Square* directly supports the concepts against which the law of 2023 is hypothetically aimed at: Nazism and fascism. The atrocities committed by UPA include terror against the civilian population, the destruction of military personnel and small military units, and ele-

¹ The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was a terrorist military organization, the armed wing of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN, Banderites), which operated from April 1943 to 1956 in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, the southern regions of the Byelorussian SSR, and the eastern regions of Poland. It is banned in the Russian Federation.

² The Azov Regiment is recognized as a terrorist organization and is banned in Russia.

³ “Azov” soldiers. URL: <https://cont.ws/@sipkin2003/2958839>; <https://boosty.to/igorufa/posts/d6d5be6e-d607-4a88-a28c-d3b19db42e80>; <https://cont.ws/@pythagoras2904/2320204> (accessed: 10.01.2026).

⁴ Torchlight procession on Stepan Bandera's birthday, Kiev, 2024. URL: <https://360.ru/tekst/mir/ulitsy-imeni-ubijts/?ysclid=mjwqohmxmh838663509> (accessed: 10.01.2026).

⁵ https://rg.ru/2026/01/03/rf-napravila-protest-mid-avstrii-rech-idet-o-prazdnovanii-dnia-rozhdeniia-bandery.html?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fdzen.ru%2Fnews%2Fstory%2F6865bb45-a47c-5870-b18f-0c5971510d0f (accessed: 03.01.2026).

ments of genocide against members of a different ethnic group [Turitsyn 2012]. The UPA, initially fighting against its “disloyal” fellow citizens and Soviet partisans, shifted its focus to “cleansing Volyn of Poles.”¹ Their “exploits” included the execution of Jews in Lviv and participation in the destruction of the Belarusian village of Khatyn, where 149 civilians were burned alive². In May 2025, the Russian Ministry of Defense declassified documents on the atrocities of Ukrainian nationalists: tortures, rapes, mass sophisticated murders, including of children³.

In 2024 in the town of Nikopol, *Pavlogradska Street* was named after Nazi war criminal Pyotr Dyachenko. He served in the SS Galicia Division and took part in punitive actions against civilians during the Great Patriotic War, being an accomplice to the Holocaust. Pyotr Dyachenko was awarded the Iron Cross by Hitler for his services to Nazi Germany.

This isn't the first time Ukrainian streets have been renamed in honor of those who fought on the side of Nazi Germany. In 2023, the Kiev City Council decided to rename *Przhevalsky Street* in honor of Volodymyr Kubiiovych. During the Third Reich, Kubiiovych headed the Ukrainian Central Committee, which advocated collaboration with Nazi Germany. He was also one of the initiators of the creation of the SS Galicia Division. However, the Israeli Ambassador to Ukraine, Mikael Brodsky, intervened at the time, announcing after a meeting with Kiev Mayor Vitali Klitschko that the renaming was cancelled. Meanwhile, streets named after Kubiiovych already existed in Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv at the time. A memorial plaque was even erected in Lviv.

In 2015 the Kiev City Council renamed two streets in honor of Nazi collaborators. One street is now named after Ivan Pavlenko, commander of the 109th SS Auxiliary Police Battalion. Kiev City Council renamed *Suvorov Street* after him. And the other – after Nil Khasevich, an activist of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. Pavlenko was a mass murderer, executioner, punisher, and a war criminal, and received an award from the Nazis—“Distinction for Bravery for Representatives of Eastern Peoples.” Khasevich was an organizer of the murders of Jews, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, as well as the author of anti-Semitic cartoons. Later, in the UPA, he participated in organizing the mass murder of Poles.

In 2023, *Stoletov Street* in Kiev was renamed in honor of the Ukrainian writer Ulas Samchuk. Ukrainian media reports on the renaming modestly referred to him as a “famous writer.” In reality, historians call him the “Volyn Goebbels.” In 1941-1942, he worked for the pro-Nazi newspaper *Volyn*, where he supported the Third Reich's line and the genocide of the Jews. For example, shortly before the massacres at Babi Yar, he wrote: “The element that populated our cities, whether Jews or Poles brought here from outside Ukraine, must completely disappear from our cities. The Jewish problem is already in the process of being solved.”⁴

In Ukraine, e.g., in Lviv, a number of streets are dedicated to other individuals who were members of the OUN, for example, Yevhen Konovalets, Roman Shukhevych, and Andriy Melnyk.

Streets are also being renamed in honor of earlier heroes of the struggle for Ukrainian “independence”. In Kherson, for example, a street was named after Hetman Ivan Mazepa, who betrayed Peter the Great during the Northern War by siding with Russia's enemy, the Swedish King Charles XII. Previously, Mazepa's name was practically synonymous with the word “traitor.” In Ukraine's current political and historical discourse, Mazepa is literally glorified as a fighter for the country's independence. In Kharkiv, *Rosynsky Lane* was renamed *Pylyp Orlyk Lane* after Mazepa's comrade-in-arms.

In May 2015, then-President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko designated the OUN-UPA as “fighters for Ukraine's independence,” and its members were entitled to social benefits. Russia condemned this decision, noting that “Ukraine is a country where neo-Nazis have gone from words to deeds and killed thousands of civilians” and that “such actions must be adequately assessed at the international level.”⁵

In 2017, Kiev authorities changed *General Vatutin Avenue*, named after the Soviet commander who liberated the city from Nazi occupation in 1940s, to *Shukhevych Avenue*, after a Ukrainian collaborator and accomplice of Nazi Germany. Shukhevych was associated with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which fought alongside Hitler and was implicated in crimes against humanity, Jewish and Polish pogroms, and the fight against partisans.

¹ <https://ria.ru/20250710/materialy-2028247645.html> (accessed: 03.01.2026)

² <https://nstarikov.ru/18-volynskaya-reznya-slabonervnym-ne-smo-39044?ysclid=mjy1ldwqv672741564> (accessed: 03.01.2026)

³ <https://ren.tv/longread/1334031-pytki-tokom-iznasilovaniia-ubiistva-prestupleniia-ukrainskikh-natsistov> (accessed: January, 3, 2026).

⁴ <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2024/03/05/derusifikaciya-poukrainski-ulicy-pereimenovuyut-v-chest-nacistov.html?ysclid=mjwqqwtorh508541521> (accessed: January, 3, 2026).

⁵ <https://ria.ru/20191113/1560888221.html?ysclid=mjwqu5san7240687787> (accessed: January, 4, 2026).

The glorification of the UPA and its leaders, Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, has drawn criticism from many war veterans and politicians, who accuse Banderites of collaborating with the Nazis.

Boris Garin Street (Hero of the Soviet Union, fought on the 3rd Ukrainian Front, lived the last 20 years of his life in Kiev) is now just *Dachnaya Street*¹.

The same thing happened to *Marshal Malinovskyi Street*: now it's *Heroes of Azov Regiment Square*. Examples of Azov's atrocities against Donbas residents during the last 10 years abound: wanton killings, torture, rape, and the use of civilians as human shields. Several hundred pieces of evidence proving the terrorist activities of this Ukrainian group were presented at the trial in 2022^{2,3}.

We agree that “giving names to city streets, squares and other places is a complex and ideologically important process. The life of toponyms is closely related to the historical memory. It is unacceptably to give simple and unified solutions for names in a nationalistic, pragmatic or any other manner” [Rozhansky 2014].

The Ukrainian population has often protested against name changes. Ukrainian researchers also confirm this fact (e.g., [Kuczabski 2022], [Gnatiuk 2022]). However, the will of the people is being flagrantly flouted. Thus, the city of *Kirovohrad* founded in 1754 by Russian Empress Elizabeth Petrovna as a fortress to protect the southern borders of the Russian Empire from the Tatars is now named *Kropyvnytskyi* in honor of the actor and playwright Mark Kropyvnytskyi, one of the founders of the professional Ukrainian theater. A survey was conducted among city residents on this issue, which showed that 82% of city residents were against the renaming. As a result, on June 10, 2016, the city council deputies did not support this proposal⁴. Nevertheless, on July 14, 2016, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine voted with 230 votes to rename Kirovohrad to Kropyvnytskyi, and the resolution on renaming the city came into force on the day of adoption.

The actual state of affairs regarding toponyms depends on the values promoted in society and the genuine attitude towards the implementation of legal norms Herzen 2019: 145]. Kiev's current city authorities ostentatiously demonstrated such values and attitudes: they erased the names of Chekhov, Mayakovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Lobachevsky, and Michurin

from the city's streets. The same fate befell true heroes of the Great Patriotic War Marshal Yakubovsky (hero of the Soviet Union for the liberation of Fastov), Marshal Malinovsky (Odessa native, commander of the 3rd and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts, liberated Odessa), and General Zhmachenko (originally from Volyn, fought in Ukraine, among other places). There is a term for such phenomenon: it is called *topoamnesia* [Carvalho 2022]. However, that is of secondary significance. The paramount consideration is that these names remain indelibly etched within the collective memory, cultural fabric, and historical consciousness of the people.

We would like to draw attention to the absence in Russia of a tendency to rename geographical names that are in any way connected with Ukraine: on the map of Moscow, you can still find, for example, *Taras Shevchenko Embankment* (it is located practically in the center of the city and was named in 1961 in connection with the centenary of the death of the Ukrainian writer Taras Shevchenko), *Ukrainian Boulevard* (it runs from the *Kievsky railway station*, on the boulevard there are two sculptures associated with Ukraine: a monument to the writer Lesya Ukrainka and the Commonwealth monument, symbolizing the unity of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus).

As for current Ukrainian oikonymy, the city of *Chervonohrad* was renamed *Sheptytskyi* in honor of the OUN-UPA ideologist, Greek Catholic hierarch Andriy Sheptytskyi, who wrote letters of allegiance to the Führer Hitler.

The village of *Chervonoe* in the Zolochiv district was renamed *Halytskoe* in honor of the SS Galicia Division.

In 2024, an electronic database entitled “Dynamic changes in Kiev's urban microtoponymy: derussification, westernization, nazification” was created in Russia [Slyshkin et al. 2024]. It contains the following sections: the original name of the intracity object, its origin, its affiliation with a specific cultural code, and the motivation for its destruction; the year of renaming; the target name, its origin, its affiliation with a specific cultural code, and the motivation for its creation. This database will allow everyone not only to identify the fact of renaming, but also to systematically analyze it as an act of memory politics, revealing the struggle to interpret history and shape collective identity through the language of urban space.

It's worth remembering that “people-created names can live for millennia, but they can also

¹ Dacha – Rus. “country house or cottage”.

² <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/20228338-fEkdN.html?ysclid=mjy1rvzs3e685684607> (accessed: January, 3, 2026).

³ <https://life.ru/p/1804532?ysclid=mjy1unikxf76377222> (accessed: January, 3, 2026).

⁴ <https://www.pnp.ru/in-world/2016/06/11/na-ukraine-nikak-nemogut-pereimenovat-gorod-kirovograd.html> (accessed: 05.01.2026).

be destroyed with a stroke of a pen to suit opportunistic political considerations. It's clear, however, that the unjustified change of geographical names is no less vandalism than the destruction of monuments, churches, palaces, and other objects of material culture" [Pospelov 1993: 6].

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis shows that the politics of memory has long ceased to be only a phenomenon of public consciousness and political theory. Like any politics, i.e. relations regarding public power, it relies on a variety of power resources: material, institutional, and ideological.

Moreover, in the current conditions of the promotion and use of "soft power" technologies, the politics of memory mobilizes unprecedented resources, especially those associated with the mediatization of politics, to achieve its political goals. The main goals of the new politics of memory are: a revision of the interpretations of the recent past established in political science and, above all, the causes and nature of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the Russian Civil War (1918-1922), the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) and its outcome – the Victory of the USSR (1945); an anti-communist and anti-Soviet revision of the results of the socio-political, economic, and cultural transformations of the Soviet state in order to declare the entire Soviet period of Russian history "criminal"; a revision of the system of international relations of the Russian Federation as the legal successor to the USSR in order to "justify" the legitimacy of demands for various "compensations" from the Russian Federation; the undermining of the socio-political unity of Russian society and the discrediting of the Russian state on an international scale.

The infrastructure of the new politics of memory is clear: various institutions (institutes of national memory, museums of the Soviet "occupation", veteran organizations of pro-fascist collaborators, youth Nazi organizations, etc.), political and legal acts, commemorative practices ("the fight against monuments", renaming of places and streets, preparation and publication of educational and propaganda literature, etc.).

The new politics of memory under which the renaming is being done, through its very infrastructure, demonstrates that pseudoscientific theories and propaganda campaigns under the slogan of a "return to historical truth" have nothing in common with the scientific knowledge. Moreover, it plays an extremely dangerous role as a provocateur and instigator of various political extremism, undermining and destroying the international security system and the global legal order, inciting hatred between peoples, and sowing chauvinism and racism.

Street renamings are primarily part of a policy of subverting historical memory, aimed at creating a new Ukrainian identity through Ukraine's new "heroes" – Holocaust participants. Its main goal is the naive and potentially disastrous attempt to erase Ukraine's connection to Russia from the public consciousness.

It's hard to predict where the wonders of "derussification" will lead Ukraine next. But the fact that fascists, traitors and Nazis are preferred over Pushkin, Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky in Nezalezhnaya speaks volumes about the country's current state.

One cannot help but speculate, given the current trajectory, which infamous figures might next be honored in the Ukrainian capital—raising the troubling prospect of streets named after Hitler or Goebbels.

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