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RENAMING IN URBANONYMYAS A FORM OF FOREIGN POLICY DÉMARCHE

Introduction

Recently, the reports of renaming or naming of streets, city squares, public gardens, etc., which contain features of symbolic acts concerning other states or certain political forces in them, are being increasingly reported in the informational space. In diplomatic practice, there is the notion of *démarche* (French *démarche*), which means state measures aimed at preventing certain actions of the representatives of another state or inducing them to take a certain position, to provide support, etc. [Dictionary 1971: 234]. The Webster Dictionary (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>) defines a *démarche* as “a diplomatic or political initiative or manoeuvre; a petition or protest presented through diplomatic channels”. A *démarche* may contain a request, a warning, a protest, etc., and can be expressed in writing or verbally. There is also a household meaning of this term: a sudden, unexpected act, an outbreak.

Obviously, in a pure form, a *démarche* exists only within the diplomatic practice. It may occur through specific means and methods, quite common and conventional from the international law and diplomatic etiquette point of view. However, it is impossible to ignore the fact that in recent decades, especially in recent years, the practice of interstate relations significantly shifts towards ever increasing democratization or, more precisely, informalisation (for example, Donald Trump’s Twitter-based diplomacy and etc.).

It is necessary to make allowance for the “hybridization” of world politics, when two neighbouring countries, for example, are in a state of armed conflict with each-other and are leading informational warfare, while preserving bilateral diplomatic relations, economic and humanitarian contacts. In such cases (for example, in the current Russian-Ukrainian confrontation), foreign policy *démarches* can acquire non-traditional

forms, be carried out implicitly and directly on behalf of a state, and in a hidden form – through social activists, the media, etc.

Theoretical background

Ukrainian scholars Oksana Halai, Serhii Hrabovskyi, Anatolii Zahnitko, Yurii Karpenko, Liudmyla Males, Mykola Makhortykh, Lidia Ponomarenko, Oleksandr Riznyk, Nataliia Teres, Maryna Tsilyna, and foreign scholars Joel D. Weintraub, Mikhail Gorbanevskii, David R. Kehs, Stephen P. Morse, Eduard Murzaiev, Vladimir Neroznak, Vladimir Nikonov, Yaroslav Rudnytskii, Aleksandra Superanskaia, have studied the issue of urbanonyms change in the general context of toponymical problems. In particular, the influence of ideological factors and changes in the socio-political structure of the state in the area of urbanonymy of individual settlements or countries as a whole is reflected in the following works: [Neroznak 1991], [Males 1998], [Riznyk 2007], [Halai 2008], however, these researchers did not analyse the symbolic changes in urbanonyms in terms of the signs of a foreign policy *démarche*.

J. Vuolteenaho and L. Berg consider the act of naming and renaming geographic and topographical objects as “a socially embedded act, one that involves power relations” [Vuolteenaho, Berg 2009: 9]. At the same time, “the act of attributing names to streets and buildings produces the coherent and ordered urban space required by modern governmentality” [Rose-Redwood 2008; Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2010].

Results and discussion

In Washington, D.C., on February 27, 2018, the city council renamed a part of Wisconsin Avenue in front of the Embassy of the Russian Federation after Boris Nemtsov (Boris Nemtsov Plaza) (see, for example, “Street signs outside the Russian Embassy in Washington now honour slain dissident”, *The Washington Post* of 02/27/2018). It is noteworthy that in 1984, the Congress changed the name of a stretch of 16th Street NW outside the then-Soviet Embassy to “Andrei Sakharov Plaza”, which is mentioned in the same publication. Observers in the United States and other countries regarded both urbanonymic actions as symbolic gestures towards the Soviet Union (in 1984) and its successor state, the Russian Federation. And although in such cases the subjects of the naming / renaming do not directly indicate such a goal (presented in documents as “for the purpose of commemoration ...” or “tribute to the memory ...”), the general foreign policy context of the events clearly and unambiguously points to the presence of the intention to cause a definite impact on the country-addressee of the *démarche*. Actually, the fact

that a particular statement, this or that action is a *démarche* can be established by analysing the context and through the interpretation of the content and form of the most probable *démarche*; the statements of official speakers, and more often, of public representatives, such as initiators, renaming supporters, etc. One should take into account the nature of the comments on this issue in the media, in the blogosphere and public resonance in general. Of course, it is necessary to analyse the reaction of the probable addressee of the hidden message, which, through the mediation of the means of toponymy, namely in the form of an urbanonymic naming or renaming, one country sends to another.

The reaction from the Russian side at the time the City Council of Washington introduced the draft on naming of the portion of Wisconsin Avenue in honour of Boris Nemtsov (January 2018), was extremely expressive and fairly straightforward. It was perceived in Russia solely as a “hostile act”, as “interference in the internal affairs of the Russian Federation” (Dmitri Novikov, First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs), as “a rude and rough decision ... just to spite Moscow” (Leonid Slutskiy, Chairman of the same Committee), “it is an immoral ... absolutely useless, a meaningless step” (Vladimir Dzhubarov, First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs) and others. Mikhail Degtiarev, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Physical Culture, Sport and Youth Affairs, made a proposal to Moscow Mayor’s Office to change the mailing address of the US Embassy in Russia to the “North American dead end” (quoted in <https://oleg-leusenko.livejournal.com/8566258.html>).

In theory, it might be assumed that the representatives of the Russian Federation had misinterpreted the usual memorialization act committed in another country. However, the initiators and supporters of “Boris Nemtsov Plaza” articulated clearly the meaning of this event - in particular, Senator from Florida, Republican Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), said at the opening of the square: “The street sign directly outside of the Russian Embassy will serve as an enduring reminder to Vladimir Putin and those who support him that they can’t use murder, violence and intimidation to silence the voices for freedom”.

It should be noted that in both cases mentioned above, the persons in whose honour renaming was performed, were world-famous figures opposed to the Kremlin regime; these *démarches* were especially exasperating, as the objects of naming were close to the diplomatic missions of the recipient country.

We can observe frequent examples of renaming and naming of this kind in Ukraine, especially in the last four years, during the period of acute conflict with Russia. Since 2014, there have been numerous proposals to rename *Povitroflotskyi* Avenue (English literally: *Air Fleet Av*) in Kyiv, where the Russian Embassy is located, despite the fact that the current name of this highway in no way contradicts the requirements of decommunization (namely, the norms of the Law of Ukraine “On condemnation of communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian

regimes in Ukraine and the prohibition of propaganda of their symbols”, 2015), is not inconsistent or difficult to pronounce, does not duplicate other toponyms within the city, etc. The only reason for which the name of the avenue becomes the object of a possible change, obviously, is the desire to express a negative attitude toward modern Russia by giving it a specific, more or less unacceptable for official Moscow, name.

Back in September 2015, Mayor of Kyiv, Vitalij Klitschko, at the meeting with Boris Nemtsov’s daughter, said that “in the near future, one of the streets in Kyiv, most likely Povitroflotskyi Avenue, will be named after Boris Nemtsov.” Zhanna Nemtsova, in response, “supported the idea of renaming namely Povitroflotskyi Avenue, on which the Russian Embassy is located today” (Emphasis by D.D.)[<https://www.pravda.com.ua/news-/2015/09/29/7083006/>]. And on March 1, 2016, the deputy faction “Solidarnist” in Kyiv City Council officially proposed to rename part of Povitroflotskyi Avenue – from Peremohy Avenue to Solomianska Square (that is, the segment where the diplomatic representation of the Russian Federation is located), in honour of Boris Nemtsov. However, the Names Commission recommended choosing another street for the naming (Minutes No. 4 of the meeting on March 2, 2016, posted on the website: <https://dsk.kievcity.gov.ua/files/2016/3/2/4-02.03.16.pdf>). In the public Kyiv citizens discussion it was proposed to name after Nemtsov: 1) unnamed square in Vyurivshchyna-Troyeshchyna (discussion period: May-July 2016); 2) unnamed city garden directly outside the Russian embassy – at the corner of Povitroflotskyi Avenue and Surikov Street (January-March 2018; actually, the last one has been named after Nemtsov).

By the way, a group of residents of Prague sent a petition to the city authorities of the capital of the Czech Republic with a request to provide the name of a murdered Russian opposition politician to current Kashtanova Square – also in front of the Russian Embassy [<https://prague-express.cz/politics/67105-activisty-prosyat-nazvat-prazhskuyu-ploshchad-imenem-nemtsova/>]; and the Vilnius City Council on May 23, 2018 also made a decision to name the city garden in front of the Russian Embassy in Nemtsov’s honor [<https://www.svoboda.org-/a/29283127.html>]. The evident reaction of the ambassador of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Lithuania, who called this step “incorrect” and, recognizing the sovereign right of the Lithuanian authorities to name objects on its territory, expressed the opinion that “the location of such a memorable object could be other than near the embassy” (quoted from resource www.svoboda.org).

In addition, after the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, petitions were filed by different subjects and at various times (posted on <https://petition.kyivcity.gov.ua>): “On the renaming of Povitroflotskyi Avenue to Stepan Bandera Avenue” of 02.11.2015; “Rename Povitroflotskyi Avenue to Ivan Vyhovskyi Avenue” of 20.07.2016; “Rename Povitroflotskyi Avenue near the Russian Embassy in honor of Boris Nemtsov” of 01.08.2017 (Emphasis by – D.D.). The media reported

on a proposal by one of the Ukrainian politicians to rename the Povitroflotskyi Avenue to “Memory Avenue of the Victims of Flight MN17,” and other suggestions were made to change the name of this highway.

Another address where the diplomatic institution of the Russian Federation is located in Kyiv has undergone changes after 2014: *Panfilovtsiv* Street (the Consular Section of the Russian Embassy in Ukraine is located here at No. 5) became in 2015 *Street of Dobrovolchykh Batalioniv* (English literally: *Volunteer Battalions Str*), in honor of the military, police and paramilitary formations created since 2014 in response to the Russian aggression in order to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. It should be noted that on the official website of the Russian Embassy in Ukraine <https://ukraine.mid.ru> under the heading “Contact information” the address of the embassy is indicated - three years after renaming – still in the old version: “5, *Panfilovtsiv* Street, “, that it can be considered as an indirect confirmation of the addressee’s perception of this urbanonymic action-message just as a *démarche*. On the same site there is the address of the consulate of the Russian Federation in Khar-kiv– 22 Olminskyi St., (despite the fact that in 2015, within the decommunization of toponymy, the historical name *of Maksymilianivska* was returned to this street).

The above-mentioned examples can be attributed to the options of the application of the means of urbanonymy, namely, renaming or naming streets, squares, etc., in order to implement a foreign policy *démarche*, a symbolic gesture directed towards a certain foreign country (usually - towards the governmental authorities of a country) and mostly aimed at the response from the addressee. Let us highlight the criteria by which we can distinguish foreign policy *démarches* in the form of urbanonymic actions against the background of other urbanonymic renominations:

1) the address of a message mediated by an urbanonymic act, a particular foreign country (or certain segments or representatives of the power elite in this country) is implicitly present or explicitly disclosed, hereinafter referred to as the addressee of the message;

2) the essence of the urbanonymic action as a foreign policy *démarche* is implicitly present or explicitly disclosed (the purpose, subtext, the symbolic / hidden meaning of the action is revealed directly through the text of the corresponding administrative and regulatory decision or (more often) through the statements by the initiators and / or supporters of renaming, media materials, etc.);

3) the presence of the circumstances of an acute international conflict - diplomatic, political, economic, military, etc., in which the country where the naming / renaming is implemented;

4) the presence of a negative reaction from the addressee of the message;

5) the content of the name provided in the process of naming / renaming of an object is annoying or even totally unacceptable for the addressee of the message;

6) the content of the name, which is eliminated in the process of naming / renaming of the object, is valuable for the addressee of the message;

7) the location of the object of naming / renaming is associated with the location of the diplomatic missions or other important institutions of the addressee of the message (or those that are associated with it in the mass consciousness).

Among the above-mentioned criteria, four (1-4) suggest taking into account the public, including informational and communicative context of naming / renaming, since without such a consideration it is impossible to establish the presence or absence of signs of a foreign policy *démarche* in such an urbanonymic action, especially when such signs are not explicitly revealed through the text of official documents, statements by official speakers and / or public activists, through media publications and the like.

Two more criteria (5 and 6) require an analysis of the etymology, semantics and symbolic load of the names of the object of naming / renaming. In particular, in the case of renaming, the symbolic signs of a foreign policy *démarche* can be contained separately only in cancelling the actual name of the object or only in providing the object with a new name; in many cases, such signs are observed in both of these components of urbanonymic renaming (for example, in the above-mentioned renaming of *Panfilovtsiv Street* in Kyiv to *Dobrovolchyykh Batalioniv Street*, or in the renaming of *Moskovskiy Avenue* (literally: *Moscow Ave*) to *Stepan Bandera Avenue* in 2016).

The last criterion (7) is based on spatial relations in connection with the geographical location of the object of naming / renaming, although here, of course, there is an element of influence of the general cultural context and the factor of public perception.

It should be noted that the seventh criterion is optional, because the symbolic naming / renaming may, in any way, concern the objects located on the street, square or surrounding area, and be associated only with the content or the internal form of the existing toponym. The fourth criterion is also optional - the presence of a reaction from the addressee, as it is quite understandable that in many cases the target country prefers not to react to any kind of *démarche* in its direction, that is “not to notice”, defiantly ignoring such gestures.

To a certain extent, the third criterion can be considered optional as well, because in some cases urbanonymic *démarches* occur in the absence of the above-mentioned varieties of international conflicts. This applies, among others, to naming / renaming initiated and implemented at the local level, without a participation of the central government, and often even contrary to that (in the latter case, we can speak simultaneously about the *démarche* of external and internal address).

One of the clearest examples of such a renaming-*démarche* initiated by the local, not central government, can be considered the change of the name of *Lermontov Street* in Lviv in 1996. Then this object was renamed to *Dzhokhar Dudayev Street*, shortly after the death (April 21, 1996) of this outstanding leader of the anti-Russian Chechen armed movement in the 90s of the twentieth century. At the

same time, the political, economic, and cultural relations of Ukraine and Russia at the official level were not marked by conflict at the official level – on the contrary, historians consider this period (the first term of Leonid Kuchma’s presidency) to be the period of closest convergence of the two countries for the entire time since the collapse of the USSR until the beginning of the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich [Bondarenko 2007: 279-281]. Therefore, it is more correct to speak here about the political position of the then majority of Lviv city council. In such cases of urbanonymic *démarches* at the local level, the presence of a conflict between Ukraine and Russia, despite the officially declared status of the interstate relations, is difficult to deny. In such a case, we should consider the value-based ideological aspect, since the conflict is not between the states, but between the peculiarities of the national mentality of the two peoples (nations).

It is interesting to know that a number of objects in different countries were named or renamed in honour of Dzhokhar Dudayev, namely: three streets in Lithuanian cities, an alley in the city of Riga (Latvia), a square in the city of Warsaw (Poland), three streets in the cities of Turkey, a street in the city of Goražde (Bosnia and Herzegovina), three streets in the cities of Ukraine (besides Lviv, also in the city of Ivano-Frankivsk, also named in 1996, and in the city of Khmelnytskyi). Due to the fact that since mid-1990s the name Dudayev has been featured only as a *terrorist*, *separatist*, etc., in the official Russian discourse, this onym, used in the composition of the new-named toponyms should be considered a rather expressive marker of positioning of the Russian Federation and, accordingly, an indicator of the Chechen movement for independence.

In some cases, signs of a foreign policy *démarche* are traced not in officially performed urbanonymic actions, but in spontaneous, unofficial naming / renaming, as well as in, so to speak, virtual quasi-reminiscences. The latter include a number of global flash mobs in the World Wide Web, the most famous of which in Ukraine was a flash mob with naming / renaming of objects (squares, city gardens, streets) in different cities of the world in honour of Nadiya Savchenko, for example, a park near the Russian Embassy in Warsaw or a city garden in front of the Kremlin in Moscow (January 2015). Such an “urbanonymic acts” are actually implemented only as users’ edits of Google’s electronic maps and are more of an Internet trolling character. However, such an initiative can also come from the administration of Internet companies – as in the case of “decommunization” on the Google Maps of settlements of the Ukrainian Crimea annexed by Russia (July 2016 – see, in particular, the publication: <https://www.depo.ua/ukr/life/2016/google-dekommuniziroval-mistakrimu-na-svoyih-kartah-27072016235900>).

As already mentioned, the presence of a “*démarche*” context in the urbanonymic actions (if not explicitly seen in the texts of official rulings) can be detected through the semantic analysis and the discourse analysis of the content of the accompanying spoken and written texts. The transcripts of meetings of relevant

collegial bodies that make decisions on naming / renaming at various stages of this process, as well as journalistic publications, Internet blogs and other texts based on materials from such meetings, can be an important source in this case.

In particular, on June 22, 2018, the discussion of the options for renaming *Rosiyyska* (“Russian”) Street in the Darnytsia district of Kyiv lasted for almost two hours at a meeting of the Naming Committee at the Kyiv City Hall. Two of the three proposals concerned the provision of this street with the names of the participants in the defensive war against Russian aggression in the East of Ukraine (the so called ATO), namely Amin Okuyev (1983-2017) and Yuri Lytvynskyi (1967-2014). Since the relevant initiative groups turned out to be competitors in the effort to name the same object in honour of either Amin Okuyev or Yuri Lytvynskyi, the Chairman of the Committee suggested that one of the groups, after agreeing on the propositions, give up and agree to rename some other street in the same area or name a newly paved street. It is noteworthy that both initiative groups further insisted on renaming precisely *Rosiiska* Street, presenting the following arguments: “The country of the aggressor must feel our attitude towards it ... It is necessary to remove the name in honour of Russia from Kyiv...” etc. In particular, such ideas were heard in the video message of Okuyev’s mother and in the speech of Lytvynskyi’s widow. (At the time of writing of this article, the project for renaming the Russian street into Yuri Lytvynskyi street was submitted for public discussion, and the name of Amin Okuyev is planned to be given to another object).

Of course, one cannot neglect the presence of memorial motivation in such urbanonymic actions, especially since such a goal – commemoration — is usually declared in the motivational part of the naming / renaming decisions in honour of the dead. However, if the initiator of the memorial renaming insists that the name of the person’s commemoration be provided without fail instead of the name that “exalts the aggressor country”, then it is more correct to speak about the presence of two, at least equal at the same time, memorial and *démarche* motives (that is, purely social communicative, informational and symbolic). Even obviously motivating a *démarche*, the initiators of urbanonymic actions prefer, as practice shows, to pose it as exclusively memorial, which is explained by their unwillingness to be involved in lawsuits or open diplomatic or even military conflicts. In general, the ratio and the real value of each of the motivations, in particular urbanonymic actions, is difficult to establish unequivocally, and we plan to devote one of our next studies on the socio communicative aspect of urbanonymy to this issue.

Conclusions

According to the results of the study, it was established that some of the acts of renaming and naming objects of urbanonymy contain signs of foreign policy

démarches, that is, measures aimed at cautioning the representatives of another state from certain actions or encouraging them to take a certain position, etc. Unlike the classic démarche, which is carried out through diplomatic channels, the démarche in the form of changing the urban names has a form of an official regulatory act at the level of central or local government, in most cases accompanied by an information campaign in the media and social networks. In some cases, such démarches occur informally, as public initiatives on spontaneous renaming and naming of objects of urbanonymy.

In general, this kind of urbanonymic changes is intended to manifest the attitude of the state (represented both by official governmental institutions and socially active groups of the public) to the statements and actions of a certain foreign state. Signs of a foreign policy démarche clearly manifested, in our opinion, in a number of urbanonymic change acts carried out in Ukraine during the armed conflict with the Russian Federation caused by its 2014 aggression, the annexation and occupation of part of the Ukraine's sovereign territory.

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Summary

The article presents one of the manifestations of the socio-communicative function of urbanonymy, namely the symbolic role of renaming in the context of foreign policy. The purpose of this article is to establish and describe the signs of foreign policy démarches or similar symbolic acts in renaming (changes in urbanonymy, renominations). To achieve this goal, the author does the lexical-semantic analysis of the concept 'démarche' using the induction and deduction methods; the features of démarche were found in certain types of urban renaming of the new period, recorded in the mass media. Finally, with the help of the induction and generalization methods, seven basic criteria for the presence of démarche features in renaming acts are formulated. Materials of the research were presented at the International Scientific- Practical Conference «Language. Society. Journalism» (Kyiv, November 02, 2018).

Key words: toponymy, urbanonymy, renaming, demarche