

Names | A Journal of Onomastics



Editorial

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While reliable numbers are difficult to obtain, US government officials monitoring the war between Russia and Ukraine conservatively estimate that the number of dead and wounded soldiers from both sides of the conflict has exceeded half a million (Guardian 2023). And, as is always the case in war, the carnage has not been limited to the battlefield. According to a July 2023 report from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), between February 2022 and July 30, 2023, the number of recorded civilian casualties in Ukraine reached 26,015, with 9,369 killed and 16,646 injured. Included in this number are 1,680 children. While some of these noncombatant casualties have been accidental, there is much to indicate that in several instances, Ukrainian civilians have also been specifically targeted. In a 2023 report issued by the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry, it was announced that a substantial body of evidence had been collected which clearly documented the commission of war crimes, including the unlawful confinement, torture, rape, and murder of protected persons in Ukraine.

Along with these ongoing assaults against humanity, the ongoing armed offensive has also targeted priceless elements of Ukrainian cultural heritage (Farago 2022). It is no accident that along with military targets, the assault has decimated objects and repositories of Ukrainian culture, language, history. According to the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (2023), the war has resulted in more than 3,000 educational institutions, such as schools and universities being partially damaged or completely destroyed. The destruction does not end there. As of August 30, 2023, UNESCO officially verified that 285 sites key to Ukrainian culture and identity have fallen under attack (Larcan 2023). These sites include, among others, museums, monuments, libraries, and archives. For example, in the city of Odessa, UNESCO has recorded that the following cultural sites have fallen prey to the war: (1) the Odessa Fine Arts Museum; (2) the Odessa Archaeological Museum; (3) the Odessa Literary Museum; (4) the House of Scientists; (6) the Transfiguration Cathedral; and (7) St Nicholas Church (Larcan 2023). Sadly, Odessa is by no means alone. Widespread damage to cultural sites has been registered throughout Ukraine. As shown in the table below, no region has been spared.

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Table 1: UNESCO Tallies of Number of Ukrainian Cultural Sites That Have Been Damaged or Destroyed Since February 2022.¹

	Region in Ukraine	No. Sites Damaged		Region in Ukraine	No. Sites Damaged
1	Chernihiv	19	8	Sumy	12
2	Kyiv	38	9	Mykolaiv	8
3	Kharkiv	55	10	Vinnitsya	2
4	Zaporizhzhya	12	11	Odessa	13
5	Zhytomyr	3	12	Dnipropetrovsk	1
6	Donestk	80	13	Khreson	8
7	Luhansk	33	14	L'viv	1

While there is clear regional variation in the number of sites damaged or destroyed, the cumulative devastating effect is the same. According to a May 2023 report by the, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 5.1 million Ukrainians had been internally displaced, 6.2 million Ukrainians had become refugees, and 17.6 million Ukrainians were in dire need of humanitarian assistance. However, the impact of the war has not been confined to Ukraine or Russia. From soaring numbers of desperate civilians seeking forced to seek refuge abroad to the dwindling supply of already critical food stuffs,² the negative repercussions have been felt around the world.

Clear evidence of the war's ongoing global significance can be seen in the selection of terms nominated for the American Name Society's Name of the Year (NoY). Since the invasion began, an increasing number of names related to the ongoing armed conflict have been nominated. In 2022, for example, the following names were NoY nominees: *Volodymyr Zelensky(y)*, *Ukraine*, *Kyiv*, *Mariupol*, *Azovstal*, *Special Military Operation*, and *#STOPWAR*; and of the eight names that were considered for overall name of the year, the nominations ranking first, second, and third were all related to the war. At the end of the deliberations to determine the overall winner of the 2022 NoY, the 2022 Personal Name of the Year *Volodymyr Zelensky(y)* captured second place and first place was awarded to 2022 Place Name of the Year, *Ukraine*.³

In an effort to support the second-largest country in Europe, international efforts continue to be launched to protect Ukraine's vast cultural heritage. For example, in February 2023, the US Department of State allocated 7 million US dollars to assist in the emergency stabilization, conservation, and restoration of Ukrainian cultural artefacts. In addition, many international organizations have established relief programs for institutions and individuals in need of assistance. The European Commission, for instance, has created a regularly updated website that provides useful suggestions "to channel more assistance and support both to people who left Ukraine to seek protection in the EU and those who stayed in Ukraine" (European Union 2023).

Unfortunately, as the war to protect national sovereignty rages on, there are some who have begun to question the necessity of continuing to actively support Ukraine. There are others who may question whether continuing relief efforts can make any real difference given the scope of the devastation. In a recent article released by the German Marshall fund (GMF)⁴, precisely these concerns were addressed.

As the war grinds on and international support wanes in the face of competing political priorities and 'fatigue', **long-term commitments to stand by and rebuild Ukraine are becoming ever more critical**. Such support has the most direct and positive impact on Ukrainian cities. It eases suffering, raises morale, and offers perspectives for the future for Ukrainians who have stayed and those considering a return (Abdulla, et al. 2023, para 5, [emphasis added]).

With that spirit of hope in mind, in the summer of 2022, a call for papers was released for a special issue of *NAMES* on **Ukrainian Names and Naming**. Submissions addressing any name type or method of onomastic research were welcome. Suggested topics for proposals included, but were not limited to, the following issues: (1) controversies in Ukrainian naming policies and practices; (2) Ukrainian names and naming as acts of resistance; (3) Ukrainian names and naming at home and in exile; (4) contested place names in Ukraine. In response to the call, *NAMES* received a wealth of proposals from an international pool of researchers. All submissions were subjected to double-blind review and the proposals with the highest quantitative and qualitative ratings were invited to submit a manuscript for possible publication. In the end, five articles were selected for inclusion in this special issue.

The first contribution was the result of an international collaboration between two researchers: (1) **Professor Oliviu Felecan**, faculty member of Romania's Universitatea Technica Cluj-Napoca and the Editor-in-Chief of *Onoma*, the scholarly journal of the International Council of Onomastics; and (2) **Dr. Adelina Emilia Mihali**, a post-doctoral researcher in the Department of Onomastics at the Institute of Linguistics and Literary History of the Romanian Academy. The title of their co-authored work is "Romanian-Ukrainian Anthroponymic Contact on the Interstate Border along the Tisza River". The second article featured in this special issue comes from **Dr. Wojciech Włoscowicz**, of the Instytut Języka Polskiego in Cracow,

Poland. His contribution is entitled “Homeland on Foreign Maps: Toponymy of Western Ukraine on Austrian, Interwar-Polish, and Soviet Topographic Maps with Special Focus on Toponymy of the Carpathian Mountains”. The third article selected for this special issue represents another collaborative effort—this time by **Dr. Oleksiy Gnatiuk and Dr. Anatoliy Melnychuk**, from the Department of Economic and Social Geography at Ukraine’s Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The title of their joint investigation is “A Case Study of De-Russification of Ukrainian Hodonyms”. Taken together, these first three articles provide a fascinating look at the ways in which armed conflicts have been inscribed into the toponymy of Ukraine’s topography.

The final two articles appearing in this special issue shift the investigatory focus from toponymy to anthroponymy. The first of these two contributions is entitled: “Вільні Люди ‘Free People’ and Надійний тил ‘Reliable Rear’: Names of Ukrainian Resistance and Support”. This riveting piece of research was conducted by **Dr. Olena Kadochnikova**, from Ukraine’s National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. The second anthroponymic contribution also comes directly from Ukraine. Entitled “Ukrainian Onomastic Identity (2006–2021)”, this diachronic investigation was authored by **Dr. Olena Karpenko and Dr. Valeriia Neklesova**, from Ukraine’s Mechnikov National University in Odessa. Seen separately or as a whole, each of these works provides significant insights into the power of names and naming to reflect substantive social, political, geographic, and historical shifts in cultural identity and identification.

The authors featured in this special issue come from different countries and represent a dynamic cross-section of research being conducted in onomastics today. However, the value of this issue does not simply lie in the scientific findings presented here. It is hoped that this collection of articles may also serve as a source of inspiration. As the locations of many of the contributors reveal, several of the authors conducted their research under truly dire conditions where their lives and the lives of their loved ones were under constant threat. Despite these incredible challenges, they prevailed and produced work which promises not only to make a lasting contribution to onomastic science, while simultaneously helping to preserve and celebrate Ukraine’s precious cultural heritage.⁵

Notes

¹ Numerical data taken from UNESCO’s November 2023 Report (Larcán 2023).

² According to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization, “in addition to the 720 to 811 million people already facing chronic hunger in 2020, Russia’s war in Ukraine risks raising—by 7.6 to 13.1 million—the number of undernourished people in 2022 and 2023” (Caprile 2022, 2).

³ For more on the 2022 Name of the Year, see Nick 2022.

⁴ The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) was established on June 5, 1972 to mark the 25th anniversary of the Marshall Plan. The GMF is a nonpartisan policy organization that is committed to strengthening the peaceful alliances between the nations of Europe and the United States. For more on the GMF, see: <https://www.gmfus.org/about>

⁵ To provide humanitarian aid and assistance to Ukraine, please see the following websites:

(1) https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/helping-ukrainians-how-you-can-donate-and-engage_en;

(2) <https://help.gov.ua/en/>; and (3) <https://donate.unhcr.org/int/en/winter>

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