

# The Role of Ukrainian and Russian Sources in the First Articles on the Makiivka Missile Attack

A content analysis of articles from six leading news portals (BBC, CNN, The Guardian, The New York Times, Reuters, and The Washington Post)

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## Introduction

In this study, we examine the initial coverage of the Makiivka missile attack by six leading English-language media outlets: the BBC, CNN, The Guardian, The New York Times, Reuters, and The Washington Post. We examine six articles, an article from each of the six news portals<sup>1</sup>. In these news portals' coverage the events were reported in different way using different language structures and naming types for Ukrainian and Russian sources. These differences matter because they affect the perception and the evaluation of the reported events by the reader (e.g., the perceived authority, credibility, or truth of a source [3], or the psychological proximity to the source [13]), which has particular importance in news and press reports [1].

There is a large body of research on how the language of news and the use of a wide range of textual devices affects the perception of events or topics by readers [1] [6] [11] [14]. Here we focus on only two aspects: (i) the weight of Ukrainian sources in the articles concerning the event and (ii) the linguistic presentation of the sources, highlighting the differences in the concreteness of naming of the Russian and Ukrainian parties and their effect on the point of view of the news portals and their readers.

Research on the cognitive effects of linguistic categories shows that the way an event is presented linguistically, especially the use of concrete language, strongly influences its evaluation [9]. The degree of concreteness affects the credibility of a statement: the more concrete a statement is, the more real and credible it is perceived to be [3], and the more likely readers feel that the event to which the statement refers actually occurred. *"There is converging evidence that the perceived likelihood, realness, and truth of a mental representation is linked to the level of its concreteness"* [3: 1577]. Concreteness is an important feature in the discursive construction of objects, phenomena, or events [8]. In addition, research by Menegatti and Rubini shows that a more concrete statement or description is better remembered, more salient, and more convincing than an abstract one [6].

The concreteness and detail of linguistic description used in media are also related to psychological proximity or distance. Events or persons described in more complex, detailed terms tend to be felt closer ('close up'); things described in less detail or more generally labeled are felt to be more distant [13]. Regularly, we describe an event or person closer to us (in space or time) in more detail and we feel closer to the person or event described in concrete words [5].

In general, news and information with sources are more credible to readers than those without sources [14]. However, there are also differences in terms of source credibility. For a newspaper reader, information about the source's reputation is essential when processing the information and even when the reader decides which article to choose to read [11]. How the sources are named and labeled is a rhetorical strategy used by the journalist or editorial staff to position themselves and readers. Elite sources ('expert' or 'government official') are more reliable to readers than ordinary people [10].

The correlations between a statement's degree of concreteness and credibility and its distance may apply to sources as well. A named source is perceived to be more credible than an anonymous source [10].

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<sup>1</sup> All articles analysed are published in the Annex (see Annex 1).

Likewise, a more precisely and more concretely named source is perceived as more credible, more convincing, and closer to the reader than a more generally named one.

In the case of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, the concreteness of the description of sources – based on its connection with psychological distance [2] – also matters because it implicitly reflects how the news portal positions itself in the war, which side it is closer to, and how it intends to present both sides and their points of view to the readers. Of course, these linguistic differences are not necessarily intentional or conscious since language inherently includes choices from various possible constructions and linguistic forms and excludes others. In this case, however, these differences could also be shaped by an important type of Russian propaganda technique, *the firehouse of falsehood* [4] [7]. Thus, the analysis of these differences is important for editors and readers of news portals for several reasons: recognizing the choice, role, and weight of sources of both (Russian and Ukrainian) sides in articles as well the implied messages or suggested perspective of a particular wording. Both kinds of analysis are necessary for a clearer understanding of events [11].

In the present study, the applied method of analysis is qualitative content analysis and in its theoretical background it relies on functional cognitive linguistics and the critical discourse analysis approach [1] [2], focusing on how *"discourse structures may influence the way recipients construe their mental models of specific situations, or how they generalize these to form stereotypes or prejudices"* [2: 474]. The paper also draws on related psychological work on the effects of concreteness and construal [9] [13].

The analysis focuses on how the first article on the attack in each of these six news portals reported it. For both the title and content of articles, it focuses on:

- (a) the extent they relied on Ukrainian sources compared to Russian ones;
- (b) if they relied on Ukrainian sources, how they did so. For example, how were these sources linguistically represented in the articles and how concretely and accurately were the Ukrainian sources named: (b1) a personal name of the source was given ["X.Y. spokesman of the military's General Staff of Ukraine said"]; (b2) the exact name of the reporting organization was given ["the military's General Staff of Ukraine said"]; (b3) the Ukrainian military was referred to with a broader, less concrete term ["[the] Ukrainian military said"]; or (b4) the source was referred to only by the very general term "Ukraine" or "Ukrainian" ["Ukraine claimed"].

The first (a) and second (b) aspects of both the content and title of each article are examined separately and the two are then assessed together to shed light on how these news portals position themselves in the Russian aggression in Ukraine.

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The method we used to analyze the textual weight of Ukrainian and Russian sources in each article was to examine the length (based on the number of characters) of texts that cite Ukrainian and Russian sources and their proportion in the content of the articles on the Makiivka missile attack. This percentage indicates how much the article relies on Ukrainian sources compared to Russian ones.

In the next step, we examined the terms used to name the Ukrainian and Russian sources in the articles.

The terms b1-b4 refer to the Ukrainian side with different concreteness and specificity and give a different piece of information on the source cited.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we posit that they also represent different psychological distances, in other words, how close or far a news portal wants readers to see the Ukrainian side or how close or far away it places the Ukrainian side from itself. This psychological distance is defined by naming b1, b2, b3 and b4 as  $d_{b1}$ ,  $d_{b2}$ ,  $d_{b3}$  and  $d_{b4}$ .

According to degree of concreteness this can be shown as:  $d_{b1} < d_{b2} < d_{b3} < d_{b4}$ .

Our results indicate that, of these six news portals, CNN's article relied most on Ukrainian sources and, The New York Times, and Reuters relied on them the least. The Guardian, The Washington Post and BBC ranked in the middle. The CNN's article did not address the views of pro-Russian war bloggers, commentators, and/or propagandists while the other five news portals did.

The Washington Post and The Guardian placed themselves closest to the Ukrainian side, based on our analysis of the concreteness with which these publications named their Ukrainian sources. In contrast, Reuters and The New York Times showed the greatest distance from the Ukrainian side. This result suggests a positive correlation between the two characteristics of the articles examined (weight of Ukrainian sources and the naming Ukrainian sources). When the two aspects are considered together, we see that on one side (closest to the Ukrainian side) is CNN while on the other side (furthest away from the Ukrainian side) are The New York Times and Reuters. An analysis of the titles of the articles gives similar results.

## Data

In the analysis, we used only the first articles/news from each source to report the missile attack in Makiivka. The titles and URLs of the articles analyzed are given in Table 1, and the articles are listed in Annex 1.

The articles analyzed covered the following (a-c) topics:

- (a) the missile attack;
- (b) the opinions of Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators, and/or propagandists on the attack;
- (c) other war-related topics.

The occurrence of each topic in the articles of the news portals is shown in Table 2. The table shows that CNN alone did not report the views of Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators, and/or propagandists.

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<sup>2</sup> The name of an object or actor provided by an author gives readers important information. For example, the labelling of Russian aggression in Ukraine (for instance using the term "special military operation") shows the extent to which a news portal uses Russian propaganda terms for this aggression [\[12\]](#).

**Table 1: The title and url of articles analyzed.**

#	News portal	The title of article	The url of article
1	BBC	Ukraine claims hundreds of Russians killed by missile attack	<a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64142650">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64142650</a>
2	CNN	Number of deaths in Russian-held city of Makiivka is "being clarified," Ukrainian military says	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-1-2-23/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-1-2-23/index.html</a>
3	The Guardian	Ukraine missile strike on Russian-held city of Makiivka kills scores of troops	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/02/ukraine-strike-russian-held-makiivka-reportedly-kills-troops">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/02/ukraine-strike-russian-held-makiivka-reportedly-kills-troops</a>
4	Reuters	Russia says 63 soldiers killed by Ukrainian strike in Donetsk region	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-shells-donetsks-makiivka-hitting-military-quarters-officials-2023-01-01/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-shells-donetsks-makiivka-hitting-military-quarters-officials-2023-01-01/</a>
5	The New York Times	A Russian proxy official calls the attack in Donetsk a "massive blow."	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/02/world/russia-ukraine-news#a-russian-proxy-official-called-the-attack-in-donetsk-a-massive-blow">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/02/world/russia-ukraine-news#a-russian-proxy-official-called-the-attack-in-donetsk-a-massive-blow</a>
6	The Washington Post	Dozens of Russian soldiers killed in massive Donetsk missile strike	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/01/02/ukraine-russia-war-donetsk-strike/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/01/02/ukraine-russia-war-donetsk-strike/</a>

**Table 2: Coverage of specific topics in articles analyzed.**

	Missile attack	Opinion of Russian pro-war bloggers / commentators / propagandists	Other topics
	(a)	(b)	(c)
BBC	Yes	Yes	No
CNN	Yes	No	Yes
The Guardian	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reuters	Yes	Yes	No
The New York Times	Yes	Yes	No
The Washington Post	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Results

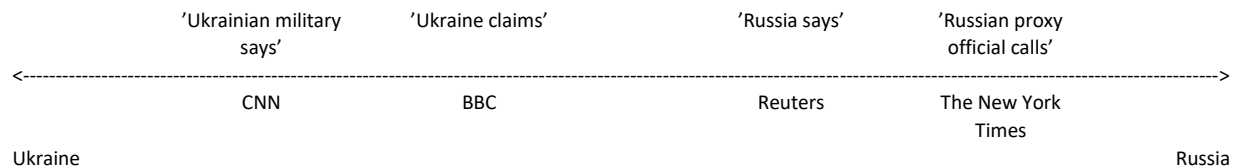
### The title of articles

The title of four of the six articles cite one of the fighting parties as source (see Table 3.). The BBC and CNN cite the Ukrainian side as the source in their titles, and Reuters and The New York Times cite the Russian side. The wording of the titles in the BBC's and Reuters' articles is based on general terms which indicate a more significant psychological distance ("Ukraine" or "Russia" "claims" or "says"). In contrast, CNN and The New York Times uses more concrete names, indicating a lesser psychological distance ("Ukrainian military" or "Russian proxy official"). If we plot the wording in the titles on a Ukrainian-Russian axis, we find that CNN is closest to the Ukrainian side and The New York Times closest to the Russian side (see Fig. 1).

**Table 3: Naming of the sources in article titles.**

	Article title	Source: Ukrainian / Russian
BBC	"Ukraine claims hundreds of Russians killed by missile attack"	Ukrainian
CNN	"Number of deaths in Russian-held city of Makiivka is "being clarified," Ukrainian military says"	Ukrainian
The Guardian	"Ukraine missile strike on Russian-held city of Makiivka kills scores of troops"	-
Reuters	"Russia says 63 soldiers killed by Ukrainian strike in Donetsk region"	Russian
The New York Times	"A Russian proxy official calls the attack in Donetsk a 'massive blow.'"	Russian
The Washington Post	"Dozens of Russian soldiers killed in massive Donetsk missile strike"	-

**Fig. 1: The position of news portals by proximity to the Ukrainian or Russian side according to the concreteness of naming the sources in the titles.**





## The weight of Ukrainian and Russian side as sources

Our analysis began by counting the number of characters (without spaces) in each article (corpus1). Then we removed the characters from the sections that did not deal with the missile attack, which gives us a narrower corpus (corpus2). The omitted sections dealt with other issues (topic c). The sections based on Ukrainian sources dealt with only the missile attack. Finally, we only considered those texts that relied on either a Russian or Ukrainian source and contained information only about the missile attack (corpus3). The corpus3 does not contain the topic b, the texts concerning the opinion of Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists (see the A5.1. table).

We present the results of these analyses in Table 4.

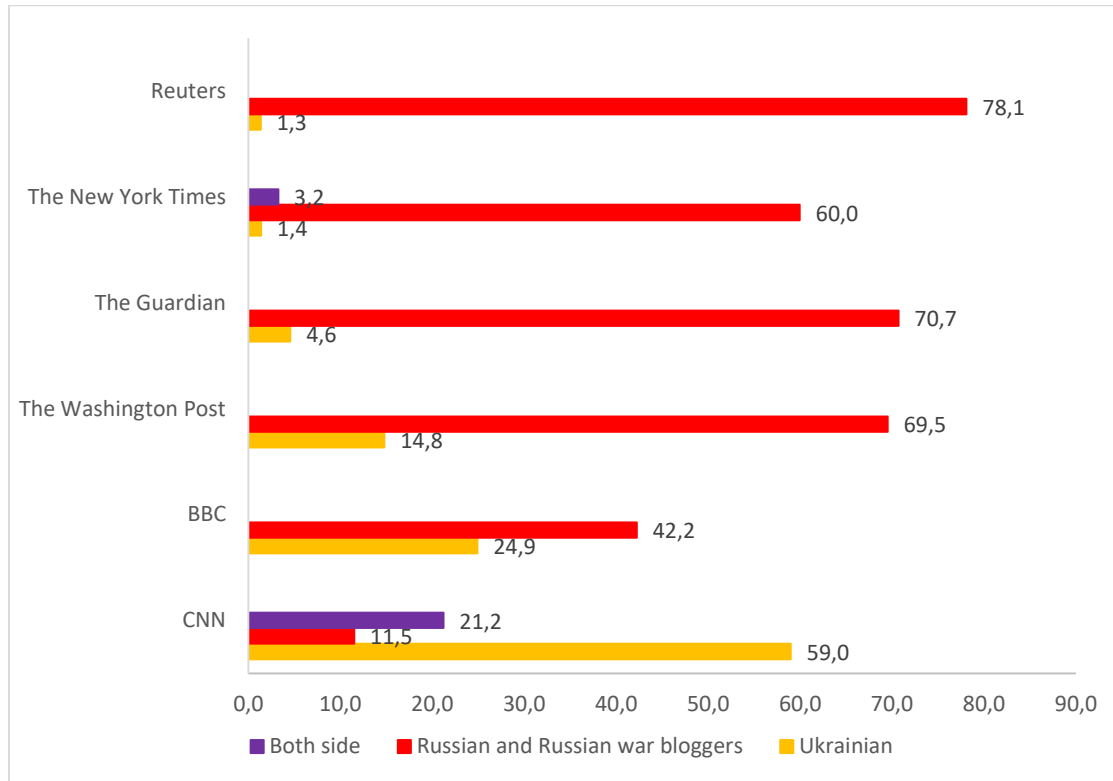
The results show a significant difference between the portals in term of using Ukrainian or Russian sources. The Reuters article contains the highest percentage of Russian sources (78.1 %), while the CNN article has the lowest percentage (11.5 %). The use of Ukrainian sources is reversed: CNN relies on them most (59 %) and Reuters least (1.3 %). Interestingly, The Washington Post uses Ukrainian sources ten times more than The New York Times (14.8 % against 1.4 %).

The significantly different use of Ukrainian and Russian sources by the six leading online portals in the first article on the Makiivka missile attack is shown in Fig. 2. The low proportion of Russian sources on CNN (11.5 %) is related to the fact that CNN did not present the views of Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists, while other news portals did. Fig. 3. - where we excluded the texts concerning the opinion of Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists) - shows the same order of portals by the weight of Ukrainian sources as in Figure 2.

**Table 4: The number of characters without spaces in sentences mentioning Ukrainian and Russian sources and the share in the total number of characters in articles excluding other topics (corpus 2).**

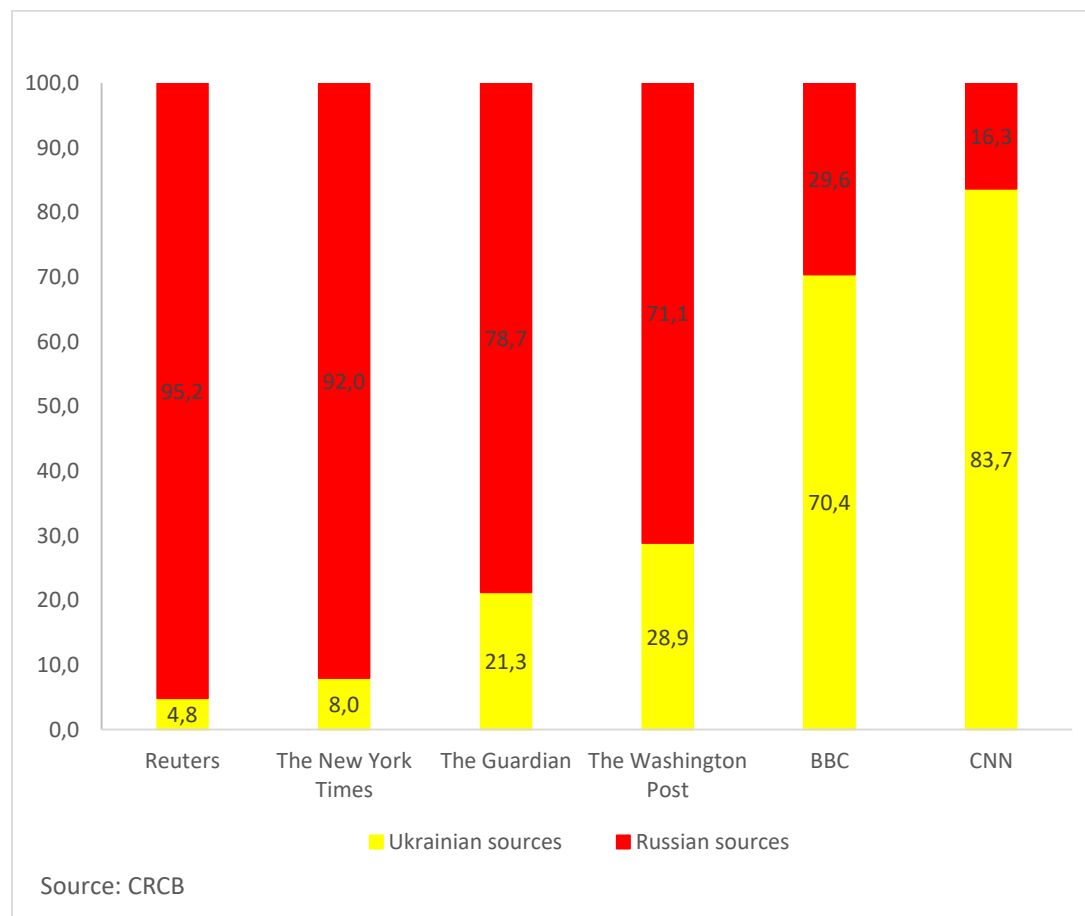
News portals	Ukrainian		Russian with Russian war bloggers		Russian without Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators or propagandists	Russian and Ukrainian side in the same sentence		Total number of characters without other topics (topic c)	
	n	%	n	%	n	n	%	n	%
BBC	561	24.9	951	42.2	236	0	0.0	2252	100.0
CNN	492	59.0	96	11.5	96	177	21.2	834	100.0
The Guardian	145	4.6	2247	70.7	537	0	0.0	3178	100.0
Reuters	46	1.3	2686	78.1	903	0	0.0	3439	100.0
The New York Times	51	1.4	2199	60.0	588	119	3.2	3667	100.0
The Washington Post	441	14.8	2073	69.5	1087	0	0.0	2982	100.0

**Fig. 2: The weight of use of Ukrainian and Russian sources in the news portals as a percentage of the total number of characters in the articles excluding other topics (corpus 2)\*.**



\*: 'both sides' means the article refers to both Ukrainian and Russian sides in the same sentence, e.g.: "...which both sides described as a vocational school".

**Fig. 3: The weight of use of Ukrainian and Russian sources in the articles analyzed as a percentage of the total number of characters in sentences that contain only Ukrainian or Russian sources and excluding the texts concerning the opinion of Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists (corpus 3).**



### The naming of Ukrainian and Russian sources in the articles

These six news portals cited different Ukrainian or Russian sources and named them differently in their articles. The naming of sources affects the reader's perception and provides essential information: it is not only about how precisely the sources are named but also highlights, depending on their concreteness and specificity, how much information the news portals publish about the source. More information brings the source closer to the readers and creates the smallest psychological distance between the readers and the source cited while, less information, on the contrary, tends to distance the source from readers.

As we mentioned in the introduction, the names of Ukrainian or Russian sources have been grouped into three categories associated with decreasing distance:

general and distant, as “Ukraine/Russia claims” (b4),  
specific and close, as in “[the] Ukrainian/Russian military says” (b3) and  
more specific and closer, as in “military’s General Staff said” (b2) and  
mention of a personal name of the source and the closest, as in “X.Y. spokesman of ... said” (b1).

**Table 5a-b: The naming of the Ukrainian and Russian sources in the article analyzed by groups of naming and news portals.**

**Table 5a: Ukrainian sources.**

News portals	Names of Ukrainian source in the article by information and distance		
	General - distant b4	Specific – close b3	More specific – closer b2
BBC	“Ukraine claims”; “Ukraine has confirmed”	“Ukrainian military’s (...) statement”; “Ukraine’s army claims”;	“Ukrainian military’s general staff said”
CNN		“Ukrainian military says”; “Ukrainian military said”; “Ukrainian military claimed”	“military’s General Staff”;
The Guardian			“Ukraine’s military command said”;
Reuters	“Ukraine had alleged”		
The New York Times	“Ukraine claimed”		
The Washington Post			“Kyiv’s military command said”; “the Department of Strategic Communications of the Armed Forces of Ukraine provided”;

**Table 5b: Russian sources.**

	Names of Russian source in the article by information and distance			
	General - distant	Specific – close	More specific – closer	mention of a personal name – the closest
	b4	b3	b2	b1
BBC		“Russian officials contested”	“Russia's defence ministry said”	
CNN			“The Russian Ministry of Defense (...) acknowledged”	
The Guardian			“Russia’s defence ministry, (...) said”	“Daniil Bezsonov, a senior Moscow proxy official in Russian-occupied Donetsk, earlier said” “Bezsonov wrote”
Reuters	“Russia says” “Russia said”		“Russia's Defence Ministry acknowledged” “A source close to the Russian-installed Donetsk leadership told” “The news outlet 63.Ru, based in Samara, quoted”	“Daniil Bezsonov, a senior Russian-backed regional official, said” “regional governor Dmitry Azarov as saying”
The New York Times		“A Russian proxy official calls”	“The Russian Defense Ministry said” “The Russian Defense Ministry said”	“A spokesman for the Russian-installed proxy government in the Donetsk region, Daniil Bezsonov, called” “(…) he wrote”
The Washington Post	“Moscow said” “Moscow authorities (...) acknowledged”	“Russian state media reported” “The Russian-installed administration said”	“Russia’s Defense Ministry put” “Russia’s Defense Ministry blamed”	“Daniil Bezsonov, a senior Moscow-backed official for the region, wrote” “Bezsonov wrote”

The occurrence of these three naming types in the articles analyzed is shown in Table 5a-b. There was no mention of the Ukrainian source in any of the articles in group b1. Therefore it is not included in Table 5a. It is remarkable that while The New York Times used only a general and distancing term to name the Ukrainian source (“Ukraine claimed...”), The Washington Post used only concrete and more specific terms, representing proximity to the Ukrainian side (“Kyiv’s military command said...” and “the Department of Strategic Communications of the Armed Forces of Ukraine provided...”). The BBC used all three groups of names, while CNN preferred those indicating a smaller distance from the Ukrainian side.

Based on the three naming types (b1-b4), we can define an indicator measuring psychological distance from the Ukrainian side: b3 namings represent a greater distance from the Ukrainian side than b2, and b2 represent a greater distance than b1 (see the Annex 4.).

The psychological distance from the Ukrainian side, as constructed in this manner, plus the weight of the use of Ukrainian sources together allow us to plot the relative position of the news portals studied. (See Fig. 4a-b. and Tables A5.2. and A5.3.). As shown in Fig. 4a-b, the closer a portal is located to the origo, the smaller its psychological distance from the Ukrainian side; the further away it is located, the greater this psychological distance. Accordingly, CNN was the closest to the Ukrainian side in the articles on the Makiivka missile attack, and Reuters and The New York Times were the furthest away. In Fig. 4a, the BBC, The Guardian, and The Washington Post were in the middle compared to the other three news portals. In Figure 4b, where only the sentences that relied on either Russian or Ukrainian sources and only those that referred to the missile attack were considered and the texts concerning the opinion of Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists excluded, the BBC's position slightly changed. Beyond that, the position of other news portals is hardly changed by this analysis: CNN presents the Ukrainian side as the closest in the coverage of the Makiivka missile attack and Reuters and The New York Times present it as the furthest (see Table A5.2. and A5.3.).

The psychological distance from the Russian side was calculated in the same way as before we calculated the distance from the Ukrainian side. The Fig. 5a-b and Tables A5.4 and A5.5 show the results. Accordingly, The Guardian was the closest to the Russian side in the articles on the Makiivka missile attack, and CNN, BBC were the furthest away. There are no significant difference between the results shown in Fig. 5a and 5b, except the New York Times' position slightly changed in Fig. 5b.

The psychological distance of each news portal from the Russian and Ukrainian sides is plotted simultaneously in Fig. 6a-b. CNN is the closest to the Ukrainian side, while The New York Times and Reuters are the furthest away. Meanwhile, the Guardian is the closest to the Russian side, and CNN and BBC are the furthest (see Fig. 6a-b).

**Fig. 4a-b: Relative position of news portals from Ukraine by name and weight of Ukrainian sources.**

Fig. 4a: Topic concerning Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists (topic b) included

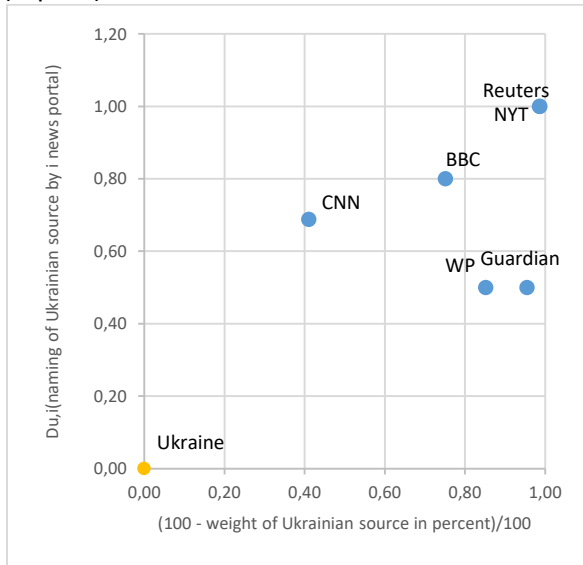
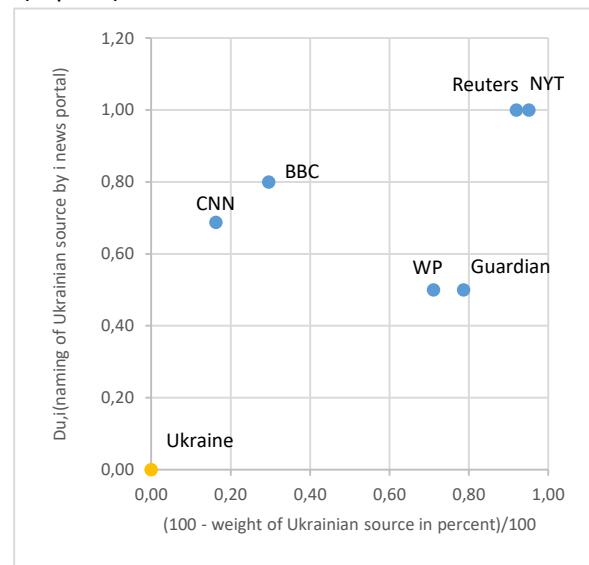


Fig. 4b: Topic concerning Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists (topic b) excluded



**Fig. 5a-b: Relative position of news portals from Russia by name and weight of Russian sources.**

Fig. 4a: Topic concerning Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists (topic b) included

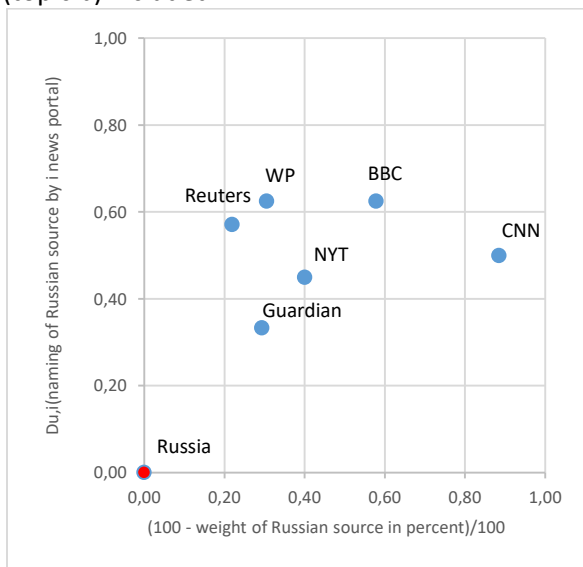
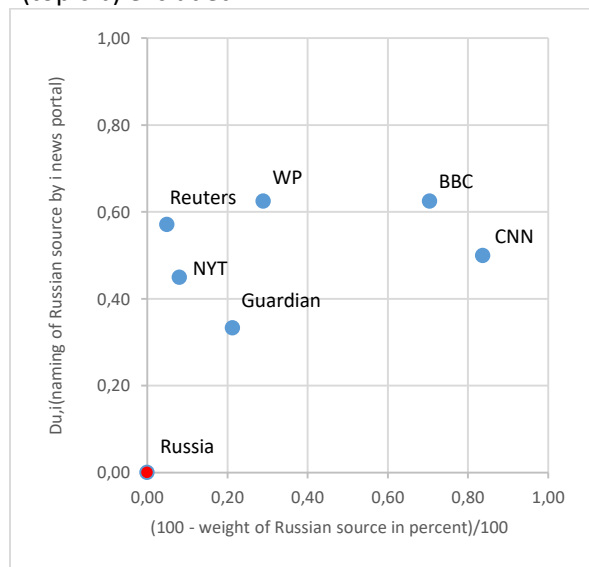


Fig. 4b: Topic concerning Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists (topic b) excluded



**Fig. 6a-b: Psychological distance of news portals from Russia and Ukraine (Euclidean distances).**

Fig. 6a: Topic concerning Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists (topic b) included

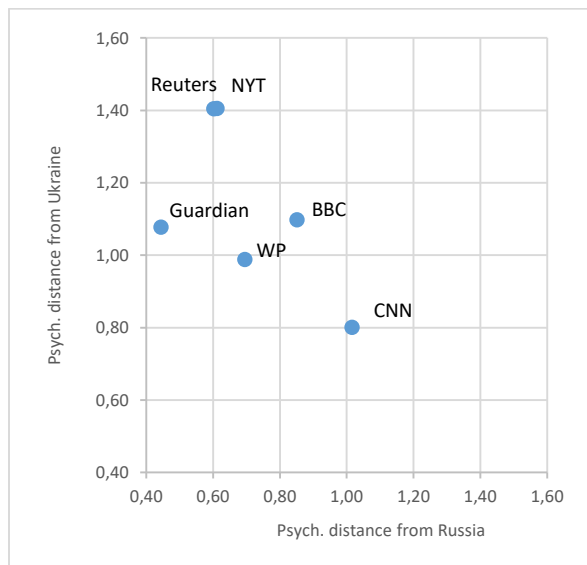
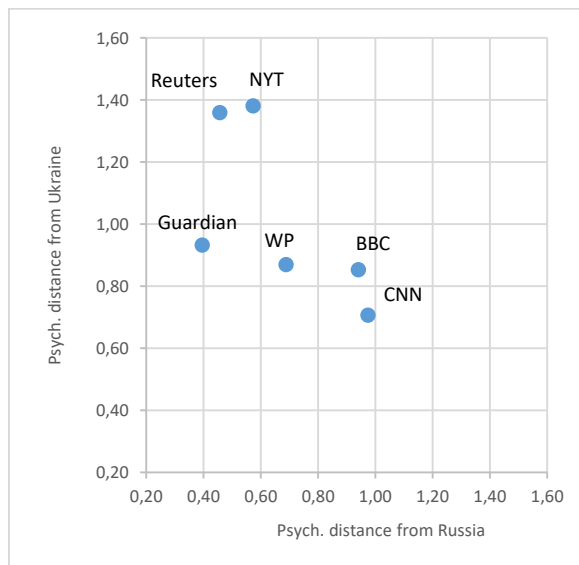


Fig. 6b: Topic concerning Russian pro-war bloggers, commentators and/or propagandists (topic b) excluded





## Conclusions

This study analyzed the first articles on the Makiivka missile attack from six leading international, English-language news portals. We investigated (i) the extent to which these articles relied on Ukrainian and Russian sources indicating the degree of balance for the parties involved, and (ii) the various naming types the articles used when referring to Ukrainian and Russian sources. These two aspects reflect the psychological distance of each news portal towards the Ukrainian and the Russian side and may influence their readers' perception of the sources cited and the events reported, as well as their general impressions and the psychological distance or closeness they feel towards the opposing parties in the war.

These results show that CNN and the BBC relied most on the Ukrainian sources and The Guardian most on the Russian ones. In contrast, the articles in The New York Times and Reuters relied the least on the Ukrainian sources and the articles on CNN and the BBC relied the least on the Russian ones.

Concerning the psychological distance from both sides, CNN was the closest to the Ukrainian side and the furthest away from the Russian one, and on the contrary, The Guardian was the closest to the Russian side and The New York Times and Reuters were the furthest away from the Ukrainian one (see Fig. 6a-b).

We analyzed only six articles that reported on a single event of Russian aggression. A much more in-depth analysis would be needed to determine the relationship of these leading news portals to each other and to the Russian and Ukrainian sides and, generally, the coverage of Russian aggression in Ukraine. Such an analysis would require analyzing the articles published (all or a sample of them) on these news portals on Russian aggression generally after 24 February 2022.

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## Annex

### A1: The articles analyzed

The meaning of colours and fonts:

**Bold: the title of the article**

- A: yellow: the sentence contains a Ukrainian source / opinion
- B: red: the sentence/text contains a Russian source / opinion
- C: dark purple: the sentence/text contains opinion a Russian pro-war Blogger / commentator / propagandist
- D: purple: the sentence/text contains Ukrainian and Russian source / opinion simultaneously
- E: light green: other sentences or texts
- F: dark green: other topics

corpus1 = A + B + C + D + E + F

corpus2 = A + B + C + D + E

corpus3 = A + B

A1.1: BBC

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64142650>

### **Ukraine claims hundreds of Russians killed by missile attack**

Ukraine has confirmed it carried out a strike in the occupied region of Donetsk, which it earlier claimed killed 400 Russian troops.

Russian officials contested the figure, saying only 63 troops were killed.

Neither claim has been verified, and access to the site is restricted.

The attack on New Year's Day hit a building in the city of Makiivka, where Russian forces were stationed.

It is extremely rare for Moscow to confirm any battlefield casualties.

But this was such a deadly attack, says the BBC's Russia editor Steve Rosenberg, that staying silent most probably wasn't an option.

It is the highest number of deaths acknowledged by Moscow in a single incident since the war began ten months ago.

In a statement on Monday, Russia's defence ministry said Ukrainian forces fired six rockets using the US-made Himars rocket system at a building housing Russian troops. Two of them were shot down, it added.

A number of Russian commentators and bloggers acknowledged the attack - but said the numbers were lower than claimed by Ukraine.

But Igor Girkin, a pro-Russian commentator, said hundreds had been killed and wounded, although the exact number was still unknown because of the large number still missing. The building itself was "almost completely destroyed", he said.

He added that the victims were mainly mobilised troops - that is, recent conscripts, rather than those who chose to fight. He also said ammunition was stored in the same building as the soldiers, making the damage worse.

"Almost all of the military equipment was also destroyed, which stood right next to the building without any disguise whatsoever," he wrote on Telegram.

Girkin is a well-known military blogger, who led Russian-backed separatists when they occupied large parts of eastern Ukraine in 2014. He was recently found guilty of murder for his part in the shooting down of flight MH17.

Despite his pro-Russian stance, he regularly criticises the Russian military leadership and their tactics.

According to the Ukrainian military's earlier statement, 300 were wounded in addition to the estimated 400 killed. Ukraine's army claims, almost daily, to have killed dozens, sometimes hundreds, of soldiers in attacks, so caution is needed.

A later statement from the Ukrainian military's general staff said "up to 10 units of enemy military equipment" were "destroyed and damaged" in the strikes, and that "the losses of personnel of the occupiers are being specified".

Ukraine has not confirmed the strikes were carried out with Himars missiles, maintaining a long-held strategy of not releasing specific details about its attacks.

A1.2: CNN

<https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-1-2-23/index.html>

**Number of deaths in Russian-held city of Makiivka is "being clarified," Ukrainian military says**

The Ukrainian military said the number of Russian servicemen killed in Makiivka, in Russian-occupied eastern Ukraine, is "being clarified".

In its latest operational update Monday, the military's General Staff reported that "up to 10 units of enemy military equipment of various types were destroyed and damaged in the area."

Earlier, the Ukrainian military claimed that around 400 Russian soldiers were killed and a further 300 were wounded, without directly acknowledging a role. CNN cannot independently confirm those numbers or the weapons used in the strike.

The Russian Ministry of Defense on Monday acknowledged the attack and claimed that "63 Russian servicemen" died.

According to both Ukrainian and pro-Russian accounts, the strike took place just after midnight on Sunday, New Year's Day, on a vocational school housing Russian conscripts in Makiivka, in the Donetsk region.

Meanwhile, Ukraine shot down 27 Russian-launched Shahed-136 drones targeting civilian infrastructure on Monday, the General Staff said.

"The enemy, losing a lot of manpower, continues to focus on conducting offensive actions in the Bakhmut direction and is trying to improve the tactical situation in the Kupyansk and Avdiivka direction," the update noted. "In the Kherson direction, the enemy continues shelling the settlements along the right bank of the Dnipro River. In particular, civilian infrastructure of Kherson, Antonivka and Beryslav suffered from artillery shelling. There are wounded among the civilian population," the General Staff said.

A1.3: The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/02/ukraine-strike-russian-held-makiivka-reportedly-kills-troops>

### **Ukraine missile strike on Russian-held city of Makiivka kills scores of troops**

A New Year's Day attack on a complex in the Russian-controlled Ukrainian city of Makiivka has killed scores of recently mobilized troops sent by Moscow, in one of deadliest single strikes against Russia's forces since the war began.

Russia's defence ministry, in a rare admission on Monday, said 63 Russian soldiers died when Ukraine hit "a temporary deployment facility" with four US-supplied HIMARS missiles.

Without claiming the strike, Ukraine's military command said up to 400 Russian soldiers were killed in the city, which is in a Moscow-controlled area of the Donetsk region.

Even if the total numbers are lower, the strike in Makiivka would be one of the deadliest attacks involving conscripts and will add further pressure on Moscow's military leaders.

Daniil Bezsonov, a senior Moscow proxy official in Russian-occupied Donetsk, earlier said a Ukrainian missile had struck a vocational school in Makiivka that housed soldiers two minutes after midnight on New Year's Day.

"A massive blow was dealt to the vocational school from American MLRS HIMARS," Bezsonov wrote in a post on the Telegram messaging app, referring to US-provided missiles. "There were dead and wounded; the exact number is still unknown."

Photographs circulating on social media show what appears to be the ruins of the building in Makiivka used by the Russian army as barracks.

A number of prominent Russian pro-war bloggers and commentators also acknowledged the attack, but suggested the number of casualties was higher than the figures reported by the defence ministry.

"In terms of the number of victims, there are still no final figures, since many people are listed as missing (remained under the rubble). In any case, there are many hundreds dead and wounded," Igor Strelkov, a Russian ultra-nationalist commentator and former intelligence officer, wrote on Telegram.

"What happened in Makiivka is horrible," wrote Archangel Spetznaz Z, another Russian military blogger with more than 700,000 followers on Telegram.

"Who came up with the idea to place personnel in large numbers in one building, where even a fool understands that even if they hit with artillery, there will be many wounded or dead?" he wrote. Commanders "couldn't care less" about ammunition stored in disarray on the battlefield, he said. "Each mistake has a name."

Rybar, a popular Telegram channel with links to the Russian military, said on Monday as the clearing of debris continued that at least 70 people had died and more than 100 were injured.



The attack also sparked renewed criticism among pro-invasion bloggers and some officials over the state of Russia's military and the decision to use civilian infrastructure to house soldiers.

"Housing personnel in buildings instead of housing them in shelters directly aids the enemy. From the situation in Makiivka it is necessary to draw the toughest conclusions," wrote Andrey Medvedev, an ultra-conservative journalist who is deputy chairman of Moscow's city parliament.

Bezsonov called for the punishment of "those guilty of the decision to use the facility. The Donbas has enough objects with strong infrastructure where you can house army personnel."

Vladlen Tatarsky, a military blogger whom Putin met in the Kremlin in September, called for a tribunal for the Russian military leadership, describing Moscow's top officers as "untrained idiots", in a post on Telegram.

Russia's acknowledgement of scores of deaths in one incident was almost without precedent. Moscow rarely releases figures for its casualties, and when it does the figures are typically low - it acknowledged just one death from among a crew of hundreds when Ukraine sank its flagship cruiser Moskva in April.

Sunday's deadly strike came a day after the Ukrainian defence minister, Oleksiy Reznikov, said the Kremlin was planning to close its borders and announce a second wave of mass mobilisation in early January. The Kremlin earlier denied there were plans to launch a fresh recruitment drive.

There have been public expressions of anger from citizens over the way the first wave of mobilisation has been handled, including complaints that the conscripts were not adequately prepared and equipped.

Meanwhile, Moscow extended its bombardment of Ukraine into a second day, launching several waves of Russian drone attacks that targeted critical infrastructure in Kyiv and surrounding areas.

Energy infrastructure facilities were damaged in the overnight strikes, causing power and heating outages, Kyiv's mayor, Vitali Klitschko, said on Monday.

It was the second night in a row of strikes, after Kyiv was targeted on New Year's Eve. The damage to the capital was limited to two cases of rocket debris falling on the city, damaging a car in the city centre on Sunday.

Sunday's attacks came minutes after Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, delivered his new year's address, saying he hoped 2023 would bring a successful conclusion to the fighting, and peace to the country.

"We don't know for sure what 2023 will bring us. I want to wish all of us one thing - victory. And that's the main thing."

A1.4: Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-shells-donetsks-makiivka-hitting-military-quarters-officials-2023-01-01/>

### **Russia says 63 soldiers killed by Ukrainian strike in Donetsk region**

Russia said on Monday that 63 Russian soldiers had been killed in a Ukrainian New Year's Eve attack on their quarters, triggering furious criticism of the military leadership from lawmakers and pro-war bloggers.

Footage posted online showed a building purported to be a vocational college in Makiivka, a city in the Russian-controlled part of Ukraine's Donetsk province, reduced to rubble.

Daniil Bezsonov, a senior Russian-backed regional official, said the college had been hit by U.S.-made HIMARS rockets around midnight, just as people would have been celebrating the start of the New Year against the backdrop of a televised speech by President Vladimir Putin.

Russia's Defence Ministry acknowledged the attack only in the final paragraph of a 528-word daily roundup, more than 36 hours later.

Even then, it did not address some of the allegations made by pro-war bloggers, who said casualties were far higher, and that the military had not only failed to hide its soldiers from the enemy but also stored ammunition close by.

Nationalist bloggers and chat-show hosts with hundreds of thousands of followers have had licence from the Kremlin to publicise the failings of the army - a potential criminal act under a law passed shortly after the invasion of Ukraine in February.

But the open fury extended on Monday to lawmakers. Grigory Karasin, a member of the Russian Senate and former deputy foreign minister, not only demanded vengeance against Ukraine and the Western NATO alliance, whose members have been arming it, but also "an exacting internal analysis".

Sergei Mironov, a legislator and former chairman of the Senate, Russia's upper house, demanded criminal liability for the officials who had "allowed the concentration of military personnel in an unprotected building" and "all the higher authorities who did not provide the proper level of security".

"Obviously neither intelligence nor counterintelligence nor air defence worked properly," he said in a post on Telegram.

### **AMMUNITION STORE**

Ukraine had alleged that 400 Russians had been killed, a number dismissed as an exaggeration by Russian bloggers.

A pro-war blogger known as Rybar, with more than a million subscribers on Telegram, said that, besides around 70 confirmed dead, more than 100 had been wounded. He said about 600 people had been in the building.

Igor Girkin, a former commander of pro-Russian troops in east Ukraine who has become a high-profile critic of Russia's military, said on Telegram that there were "many hundreds" of dead and wounded.

Like Rybar, he said ammunition had been stored at the college, potentially accounting for its extreme devastation, and that the military's presence had not been disguised.

Archangel Spetznaz Z, another Russian military blogger with more than 700,000 followers on Telegram, wrote:

"Who came up with the idea to place personnel in large numbers in one building, where even a fool understands that even if they hit with artillery, there will be many wounded or dead?"

Reuters was unable to verify the battlefield accounts, but did confirm the location of the video from the buildings and road layout seen in the footage, although not the date that it was filmed.

A source close to the Russian-installed Donetsk leadership told Reuters the building had housed some of the 300,000 or more soldiers mobilised since September.

Many have already been sent to the front to bolster a 10-month-old campaign in which Russia has been driven out of large swathes of the Ukrainian territory it had seized, and been forced to replace many of its senior commanders.

The fact that so many of the dead were not volunteer career soldiers was likely to fuel the anger of relatives and some of the ordinary Russians whom Putin asked in his New Year address for support and sacrifices in the months ahead.

The news outlet 63.Ru, based in Samara, quoted regional governor Dmitry Azarov as saying some of those killed were from his region and advising concerned relatives to contact local recruitment centres for information.

#### A1.5: The New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/02/world/russia-ukraine-news?smid=url-share#a-russian-proxy-official-called-the-attack-in-donetsk-a-massive-blow>

##### **A Russian proxy official calls the attack in Donetsk a ‘massive blow.’**

Ukrainian forces used U.S.-supplied guided rockets to hit a building housing Russian soldiers in an occupied eastern city early on New Year’s Day, both sides said, in one of the deadliest strikes on Moscow’s forces in the 10-month-old war.

The deaths of at least 60 soldiers, and possibly many more, drew immediate and harsh criticism in Russia from supporters of the war, who said that the military was making repeated and costly mistakes, including housing soldiers in dense numbers within striking distance of Ukrainian weapons.

The Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday that 63 service members had been killed in the strike in the city, Makiivka, which is in the Donetsk region. Ukraine claimed that “about 400” Russian soldiers had died. Neither figure could be independently verified.

A spokesman for the Russian-installed proxy government in the Donetsk region, Daniil Bezsonov, called the strike “a massive blow” and hinted at errors by Russian commanders.

“The enemy inflicted the most serious defeats in this war on us not because of their coolness and talent, but because of our mistakes,” he wrote in a post on Telegram.

Ukraine hit the building housing the soldiers, which both sides described as a vocational school, using HIMARS, a guided rocket system supplied by the United States. The system’s range of dozens of miles has for months helped Ukraine’s forces strike deep behind the front lines, and it is part of a growing arsenal of sophisticated Western weapons that have helped change the course of the conflict.

Monday’s strike reflected a shift in Ukrainian tactics with the American-supplied rocket systems, Western military analysts said. Kyiv has moved from targeting ammunition dumps and supply lines to hitting barracks and other troop concentrations, said Michael Kofman, the director of Russian studies at C.N.A., a research institute in Arlington, Va.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that four HIMARS rockets had hit the building, while two others had been shot down by Russian air defenses.

A former Russian paramilitary commander in Ukraine, Igor Girkin, confirmed the seriousness of the disaster, writing on Telegram that “many hundreds” were dead and wounded and that many “remained under the rubble.”

Accounts by pro-war military bloggers — who have become influential opinion-makers in Russia amid the censorship of mainstream media — suggested that the strike in Makiivka had proved so deadly partly because of a litany of errors by Moscow’s forces, some of which have been repeated throughout the war.

Mr. Girkin, also known as Igor Strelkov, said that the vocational school had been “almost completely destroyed” because “ammunition stored in the same building” detonated in the strike. Video posted on social media showed firefighters amid the ruins of the structure and piles of steaming rubble.

The ammunition was stored “without the slightest sign of disguise,” Mr. Girkin wrote, adding that similar strikes had occurred earlier this year, albeit with fewer casualties. “Our generals are untrainable in principle,” he said.

Many of the soldiers appeared to be new recruits, recently mobilized in President Vladimir V. Putin’s drive to conscript more men into the fighting in Ukraine. One report in Russian state media said that “active use of cellular phones by the newly arrived servicemen” had been a prime reason for the attack, helping Ukrainian forces to pinpoint their location.

Throughout the war, Russian soldiers in Ukraine have spoken on open cellphone lines, often revealing their positions and exposing the disarray in their ranks.

But the military bloggers said that this official explanation shifted the blame for Makiivka onto the victims, without explaining why commanders housed so many conscripts in an unprotected building within reach of U.S.-made rockets.

“No one is assuming the responsibility for the needless deaths,” one blogger, Anastasia Kashevarova, wrote on her Telegram channel.

Dara Massicot, a senior policy researcher at the RAND Corporation, said it was highly unusual for Moscow to admit it had lost such a large number of soldiers in a strike. The Russians “do not typically provide this type of information after a major loss, which suggests they want to control the narrative on this event,” she said.

#### A1.6: The Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/01/02/ukraine-russia-war-donetsk-strike/>

##### **Dozens of Russian soldiers killed in massive Donetsk missile strike**

Dozens of Russian soldiers were killed in a massive missile strike early on New Year's Day in the country's Donetsk region, Moscow said, marking what could be one of the deadliest attacks on Russian forces since the start of the invasion.

Without claiming responsibility for the attack, Kyiv's military command said that at least 400 soldiers were killed in the attack in Makiivka, a city in eastern Ukraine under Russian occupation, and that at least 300 soldiers were injured.

Russia's Defense Ministry put the death toll at 63.

The Washington Post could not independently confirm an accurate toll.

In a statement posted to Telegram, the Department of Strategic Communications of the Armed Forces of Ukraine provided little detail, suggesting sarcastically that the incident was the result of "the careless handling of heating devices, neglect of security measures and smoking."

Moscow authorities, pro-Kremlin war bloggers and Telegram channels acknowledged the attack but provided inconclusive and contradictory death tolls.

Russia's Defense Ministry blamed Kyiv for the strike and said that the Ukrainian military had fired four longrange missiles from U.S.-provided High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), two of which were shot down.

Daniil Bezsonov, a senior Moscow-backed official for the region, wrote on Telegram that just after midnight on New Year's Day, a Ukrainian missile had struck a vocational school in Makiivka that housed soldiers. "A massive blow was dealt to the vocational school from American MLRS Himars," Bezsonov wrote. "There were dead and wounded, the exact number is still unknown."

Pro-Kremlin war correspondent Alexander Sladkov reported that recently mobilized Russian conscripts had been staying in the building. The incident has revitalized Russian criticism of the country's commanders, with high-profile commentators pointing to it as the latest example of the military leadership's ineptitude.

Igor Girkin, an ultranationalist figure who led Moscow-backed separatists during the conflict in Donbas in 2014 and regularly criticizes Russia's military decisions, said that the building had been "almost completely destroyed" and alleged that ammunition stored in the building had compounded the damage.

"Almost all of the military equipment was also destroyed, which stood right next to the building without any disguise whatsoever," Girkin wrote on Telegram, saying that "many hundreds" had been killed and wounded and that many were still missing under the rubble.

Several commentators said that the victims in Makiivka included men from central Russia who had been recently conscripted as part of the Kremlin's widely unpopular mobilization drive.

Russian state media reported that the recruits had been using their cellphones, which reporters speculated had revealed their location.

"No one is assuming the responsibility for the needless deaths" said Anastasia Kashevarova, a pro-Russian blogger.

Andrey Medvedev, a Russian propagandist, wrote that "housing personnel in buildings instead of housing them in shelters directly aids the enemy."

Photos and videos posted to social media appeared to show the wreckage of the building, with firefighters combing through the rubble.

The Russian-installed administration said at least 25 rockets were fired at the region overnight on New Year's Eve.

The incident in Makiivka marks a rare case of Moscow officially confirming substantial losses.

Last May, according to Ukraine's military command and Western intelligence, almost an entire Russian battalion and dozens of military vehicles were wiped out by Ukrainian artillery while attempting to cross a pontoon bridge on the Donetsk River, in eastern Ukraine. In August, Ukraine claimed to have struck a base in the southern occupied city of Melitopol that housed mercenaries from Russia's infamous Wagner paramilitary group. And on Dec. 11, Serhiy Haidai, Ukraine's governor for the Russian-occupied Luhansk region, said that a hotel serving as a base for Wagner soldiers in the eastern town of Kadiivka had been targeted. Moscow did not acknowledge any of the three reported attacks. The attack on Makiivka also follows an uptick in reported attacks on targets deep inside Russia. A reconnaissance drone was reportedly shot down over Voronezh, in southwest Russia, late Sunday, while the governor of Belgorod region said Monday that the village of Vyazovoe had "come under fire." Three separate drone attacks last month hit a Russian military air base in Engels, 300 miles from the Ukrainian border — three Russian servicemen were reportedly killed in one of the attacks. Meanwhile, Ukrainian officials said that infrastructure facilities in the capital had been targeted overnight Monday by Russian drones. The Kyiv City Military Administration said 20 drones were shot down, with Kyiv Gov. Oleksiy Kuleba saying on Telegram: "Air defense works." Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said early Monday that the attacks had damaged energy facilities, forcing emergency power outages in the city. The assaults were part of the latest wave of attacks throughout the country over the New Year's weekend that killed at least four civilians. On Saturday, amid the barrage of strikes across Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave an unusually combative prerecorded address, which was broadcast as Russians in the Far East began New Year's celebrations. Putin said Russia was fighting in Ukraine to protect its "motherland" and called 2022 "a year of hard, necessary decisions" and "fateful events" that had laid the foundation for Russia's future. Speaking against a backdrop of military service members, instead of the typical wintry vista of the Kremlin, Putin's speech marked a significant shift in tone — a reflection of the new path Russia has taken since the invasion, which has left the country internationally isolated and economically challenged. "The West lied about peace but was preparing for aggression" and is "cynically using Ukraine and its people to weaken and divide Russia," Putin said. "We have never and will never allow anyone to do this to us."

## A2: The title and url of the articles analyzed

#	News portal	The title of articles	url
1	BBC	Ukraine claims hundreds of Russians killed by missile attack	<a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64142650">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64142650</a>
2	CNN	Number of deaths in Russian-held city of Makiivka is "being clarified," Ukrainian military says	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-1-2-23/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-1-2-23/index.html</a>
3	The Guardian	Ukraine missile strike on Russian-held city of Makiivka kills scores of troops	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/02/ukraine-strike-russian-held-makiivka-reportedly-kills-troops">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/02/ukraine-strike-russian-held-makiivka-reportedly-kills-troops</a>
4	Reuters	Russia says 63 soldiers killed by Ukrainian strike in Donetsk region	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-shells-donetsks-makiivka-hitting-military-quarters-officials-2023-01-01/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-shells-donetsks-makiivka-hitting-military-quarters-officials-2023-01-01/</a>
5	The New York Times	A Russian proxy official calls the attack in Donetsk a 'massive blow.'	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/02/world/russia-ukraine-news#a-russian-proxy-official-called-the-attack-in-donetsk-a-massive-blow">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/02/world/russia-ukraine-news#a-russian-proxy-official-called-the-attack-in-donetsk-a-massive-blow</a>
6	The Washington Post	Dozens of Russian soldiers killed in massive Donetsk missile strike	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/01/02/ukraine-russia-war-donetsk-strike/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/01/02/ukraine-russia-war-donetsk-strike/</a>

## A3: Sentences mentioning / describing Ukrainian and Russian sources in the articles analyzed

#	News portal	Source / opinion Ukrainian	Source / opinion Russian
1	BBC	<p>Ukraine claims hundreds of Russians killed by missile attack</p> <p>Ukraine has confirmed it carried out a strike in the occupied region of Donetsk, which it earlier claimed killed 400 Russian troops.</p> <p>According to the Ukrainian military's earlier statement, 300 were wounded in addition to the estimated 400 killed. Ukraine's army claims, almost daily, to have killed dozens, sometimes hundreds, of soldiers in attacks, so caution is needed.</p> <p>A later statement from the Ukrainian military's general staff said "up to 10 units of enemy military equipment" were "destroyed and damaged" in the strikes, and that "the losses of personnel of the occupiers are being specified".</p>	<p>Russian officials contested the figure, saying only 63 troops were killed.</p> <p>In a statement on Monday, Russia's defence ministry said Ukrainian forces fired six rockets using the US-made Himars rocket system at a building housing Russian troops. Two of them were shot down, it added.</p> <p>A number of Russian commentators and bloggers acknowledged the attack - but said the numbers were lower than claimed by Ukraine.</p> <p>But Igor Girkin, a pro-Russian commentator, said hundreds had been killed and wounded, although the exact number was still unknown because of the large number still missing. The building itself was "almost completely destroyed", he said.</p> <p>He added that the victims were mainly mobilised troops - that is, recent conscripts, rather than those who chose to fight. He also said ammunition was stored in the same building as the soldiers, making the damage worse.</p>



			<p>"Almost all of the military equipment was also destroyed, which stood right next to the building without any disguise whatsoever," he wrote on Telegram. Despite his pro-Russian stance, he regularly criticises the Russian military leadership and their tactics.</p>
2	CNN	<p>Number of deaths in Russian-held city of Makiivka is "being clarified," Ukrainian military says</p> <p>The Ukrainian military said the number of Russian servicemen killed in Makiivka, in Russian-occupied eastern Ukraine, is "being clarified". In its latest operational update Monday, the military's General Staff reported that "up to 10 units of enemy military equipment of various types were destroyed and damaged in the area."</p> <p>Earlier, the Ukrainian military claimed that around 400 Russian soldiers were killed and a further 300 were wounded, without directly acknowledging a role.</p> <p>According to both Ukrainian and pro-Russian accounts, the strike took place just after midnight on Sunday, New Year's Day, on a vocational school housing Russian conscripts in Makiivka, in the Donetsk region.</p>	<p>The Russian Ministry of Defense on Monday acknowledged the attack and claimed that "63 Russian servicemen" died.</p> <p>According to both Ukrainian and pro-Russian accounts, the strike took place just after midnight on Sunday, New Year's Day, on a vocational school housing Russian conscripts in Makiivka, in the Donetsk region.</p>
3	The Guardian	<p>Without claiming the strike, Ukraine's military command said up to 400 Russian soldiers were killed in the city, which is in a Moscow-controlled area of the Donetsk region.</p>	<p>Russia's defence ministry, in a rare admission on Monday, said 63 Russian soldiers died when Ukraine hit "a temporary deployment facility" with four US-supplied HIMARS missiles.</p> <p>Daniil Bezsonov, a senior Moscow proxy official in Russian-occupied Donetsk, earlier said a Ukrainian missile had struck a vocational school in Makiivka that housed soldiers two minutes after midnight on New Year's Day.</p> <p>"A massive blow was dealt to the vocational school from American MLRS HIMARS," Bezsonov wrote in a post on the Telegram messaging app, referring to US-provided missiles. "There were dead and wounded; the exact number is still unknown."</p> <p>A number of prominent Russian pro-war bloggers and commentators also acknowledged the attack, but suggested the number of casualties was higher than the figures reported by the defence ministry.</p> <p>"In terms of the number of victims, there are still no final figures, since many people are listed as missing (remained under the rubble). In any case, there are many hundreds dead and wounded," Igor Strelkov, a Russian ultra-nationalist commentator and former intelligence officer, wrote on Telegram.</p> <p>"What happened in Makiivka is horrible," wrote Archangel Spetznaz Z, another Russian military blogger with more than 700,000 followers on Telegram.</p> <p>"Who came up with the idea to place personnel in large numbers in one building, where even a fool understands that even if they hit with artillery, there will be many wounded or dead?" he wrote. Commanders "couldn't care less" about ammunition stored in disarray on the battlefield, he said. "Each mistake has a name."</p> <p>Rybar, a popular Telegram channel with links to the Russian military, said on Monday as the clearing of debris continued that at least 70 people had died and more than 100 were injured.</p>

			<p>The attack also sparked renewed criticism among pro-invasion bloggers and some officials over the state of Russia's military and the decision to use civilian infrastructure to house soldiers.</p> <p>"Housing personnel in buildings instead of housing them in shelters directly aids the enemy. From the situation in Makiivka it is necessary to draw the toughest conclusions," wrote Andrey Medvedev, an ultra-conservative journalist who is deputy chairman of Moscow's city parliament.</p> <p>Bezonov called for the punishment of "those guilty of the decision to use the facility. The Donbas has enough objects with strong infrastructure where you can house army personnel."</p> <p>Vladlen Tatarsky, a military blogger whom Putin met in the Kremlin in September, called for a tribunal for the Russian military leadership, describing Moscow's top officers as "untrained idiots", in a post on Telegram.</p>
4	Reuters	Ukraine had alleged that 400 Russians had been killed	<p>Russia says 63 soldiers killed by Ukrainian strike in Donetsk region</p> <p>Russia said on Monday that 63 Russian soldiers had been killed in a Ukrainian New Year's Eve attack on their quarters, triggering furious criticism of the military leadership from lawmakers and pro-war bloggers.</p> <p>Daniil Bezonov, a senior Russian-backed regional official, said the college had been hit by U.S.-made HIMARS rockets around midnight, just as people would have been celebrating the start of the New Year against the backdrop of a televised speech by President Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>Russia's Defence Ministry acknowledged the attack only in the final paragraph of a 528-word daily roundup, more than 36 hours later.</p> <p>Even then, it did not address some of the allegations made by pro-war bloggers, who said casualties were far higher, and that the military had not only failed to hide its soldiers from the enemy but also stored ammunition close by.</p> <p>Nationalist bloggers and chat-show hosts with hundreds of thousands of followers have had licence from the Kremlin to publicise the failings of the army - a potential criminal act under a law passed shortly after the invasion of Ukraine in February.</p> <p>But the open fury extended on Monday to lawmakers. Grigory Karasin, a member of the Russian Senate and former deputy foreign minister, not only demanded vengeance against Ukraine and the Western NATO alliance, whose members have been arming it, but also "an exacting internal analysis".</p> <p>Sergei Mironov, a legislator and former chairman of the Senate, Russia's upper house, demanded criminal liability for the officials who had "allowed the concentration of military personnel in an unprotected building" and "all the higher authorities who did not provide the proper level of security".</p> <p>"Obviously neither intelligence nor counterintelligence nor air defence worked properly," he said in a post on Telegram.</p> <p>a number dismissed as an exaggeration by Russian bloggers.</p> <p>A pro-war blogger known as Rybar, with more than a million subscribers on Telegram, said that, besides around 70 confirmed dead, more than 100 had been wounded. He said about 600 people had been in the building.</p>

			<p>Igor Girkin, a former commander of pro-Russian troops in east Ukraine who has become a high-profile critic of Russia's military, said on Telegram that there were "many hundreds" of dead and wounded.</p> <p>Like Rybar, he said ammunition had been stored at the college, potentially accounting for its extreme devastation, and that the military's presence had not been disguised.</p> <p>Archangel Spetznaz Z, another Russian military blogger with more than 700,000 followers on Telegram, wrote:</p> <p>"Who came up with the idea to place personnel in large numbers in one building, where even a fool understands that even if they hit with artillery, there will be many wounded or dead?"</p> <p>A source close to the Russian-installed Donetsk leadership told Reuters the building had housed some of the 300,000 or more soldiers mobilised since September.</p> <p>The news outlet 63.Ru, based in Samara, quoted regional governor Dmitry Azarov as saying some of those killed were from his region and advising concerned relatives to contact local recruitment centres for information.</p>
5	The New York Times	<p>both sides said, in one of the deadliest strikes on Moscow's forces in the 10-month-old war.</p> <p>Ukraine claimed that "about 400" Russian soldiers had died.</p> <p>which both sides described as a vocational school</p>	<p>A Russian proxy official calls the attack in Donetsk a 'massive blow.'</p> <p>both sides said, in one of the deadliest strikes on Moscow's forces in the 10-month-old war.</p> <p>The deaths of at least 60 soldiers, and possibly many more, drew immediate and harsh criticism in Russia from supporters of the war, who said that the military was making repeated and costly mistakes, including housing soldiers in dense numbers within striking distance of Ukrainian weapons.</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday that 63 service members had been killed in the strike in the city, Makiivka, which is in the Donetsk region.</p> <p>A spokesman for the Russian-installed proxy government in the Donetsk region, Daniil Bezsonov, called the strike "a massive blow" and hinted at errors by Russian commanders.</p> <p>"The enemy inflicted the most serious defeats in this war on us not because of their coolness and talent, but because of our mistakes," he wrote in a post on Telegram.</p> <p>which both sides described as a vocational school</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry said that four HIMARS rockets had hit the building, while two others had been shot down by Russian air defenses.</p> <p>A former Russian paramilitary commander in Ukraine, Igor Girkin, confirmed the seriousness of the disaster, writing on Telegram that "many hundreds" were dead and wounded and that many "remained under the rubble."</p> <p>Accounts by pro-war military bloggers — who have become influential opinion-makers in Russia amid the censorship of mainstream media — suggested that the strike in Makiivka had proved so deadly partly because of a litany of errors by Moscow's forces, some of which have been repeated throughout the war.</p>

			<p>Mr. Girkin, also known as Igor Strelkov, said that the vocational school had been “almost completely destroyed” because “ammunition stored in the same building” detonated in the strike. Video posted on social media showed firefighters amid the ruins of the structure and piles of steaming rubble. The ammunition was stored “without the slightest sign of disguise,” Mr. Girkin wrote, adding that similar strikes had occurred earlier this year, albeit with fewer casualties. “Our generals are untrainable in principle,” he said. One report in Russian state media said that “active use of cellular phones by the newly arrived servicemen” had been a prime reason for the attack, helping Ukrainian forces to pinpoint their location. But the military bloggers said that this official explanation shifted the blame for Makiivka onto the victims, without explaining why commanders housed so many conscripts in an unprotected building within reach of U.S.-made rockets. “No one is assuming the responsibility for the needless deaths,” one blogger, Anastasia Kashevarova, wrote on her Telegram channel.</p>
6	The Washington Post	<p>Without claiming responsibility for the attack, Kyiv’s military command said that at least 400 soldiers were killed in the attack in Makiivka, a city in eastern Ukraine under Russian occupation, and that at least 300 soldiers were injured.</p> <p>In a statement posted to Telegram, the Department of Strategic Communications of the Armed Forces of Ukraine provided little detail, suggesting sarcastically that the incident was the result of “the careless handling of heating devices, neglect of security measures and smoking.”</p>	<p>Dozens of Russian soldiers were killed in a massive missile strike early on New Year’s Day in the country’s Donetsk region, Moscow said, marking what could be one of the deadliest attacks on Russian forces since the start of the invasion. Russia’s Defense Ministry put the death toll at 63. Moscow authorities, pro-Kremlin war bloggers and Telegram channels acknowledged the attack but provided inconclusive and contradictory death tolls.</p> <p>Russia’s Defense Ministry blamed Kyiv for the strike and said that the Ukrainian military had fired four longrange missiles from U.S.-provided High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), two of which were shot down. Daniil Bezsonov, a senior Moscow-backed official for the region, wrote on Telegram that just after midnight on New Year’s Day, a Ukrainian missile had struck a vocational school in Makiivka that housed soldiers. “A massive blow was dealt to the vocational school from American MLRS Himars,” Bezsonov wrote. “There were dead and wounded, the exact number is still unknown.”</p> <p>Pro-Kremlin war correspondent Alexander Sladkov reported that recently mobilized Russian conscripts had been staying in the building. The incident has revitalized Russian criticism of the country’s commanders, with high-profile commentators pointing to it as the latest example of the military leadership’s ineptitude.</p> <p>Igor Girkin, an ultranationalist figure who led Moscow-backed separatists during the conflict in Donbas in 2014 and regularly criticizes Russia’s military decisions, said that the building had been “almost completely destroyed” and alleged that ammunition stored in the building had compounded the damage. “Almost all of the military equipment was also destroyed, which stood right next to the building without any disguise whatsoever,” Girkin wrote on Telegram, saying that “many hundreds” had been killed and wounded and that many were still missing under the rubble.</p>

			<p>Russian state media reported that the recruits had been using their cellphones, which reporters speculated had revealed their location.</p> <p>“No one is assuming the responsibility for the needless deaths” said Anastasia Kashevarova, a pro-Russian blogger.</p> <p>Andrey Medvedev, a Russian propagandist, wrote that “housing personnel in buildings instead of housing them in shelters directly aids the enemy.”</p> <p>The Russian-installed administration said at least 25 rockets were fired at the region overnight on New Year’s Eve.</p>
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#### A4: A possible calculation of average psychological distance between the news portal $i$ and the Ukrainian/Russian side

Let  $d_{i,j}$  be the  $i$ -th news portal for the  $j$ -th naming of Ukrainian/Russian sources and let

- $d_{i,j} = 1$  if the  $j$  naming is general – distant (group b4) and
- $d_{i,j} = 0.75$  if the  $j$  naming is specific – close (group b3) and
- $d_{i,j} = 0.50$  if the  $j$  naming is more specific – closer (group b2) and
- $d_{i,j} = 0.25$  if the  $j$  naming is more specific – the closest (group b1).

The values given here (1, 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25) are, of course, arbitrary, but they express a sort of distance of news portals from the Ukrainian/Russian side as represented by naming of Russian or Ukrainian source in the texts.

The average distances between the news portal and the Ukrainian side ( $D_{s,u}$ ) and the news portal and the Russian side ( $D_{s,r}$ ) for every  $i$ -th news portal are given by the following:

$$D_{s,u,i} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^n d_{i,j}}{n} \text{ for the Ukrainian side}$$

where  $n$  is the total number of case naming of Ukrainian sources in  $i$ -th news portal, and

$$D_{s,r,i} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^n d_{i,j}}{n} \text{ for the Russian side}$$

where  $n$  is the total number of case naming of Russian sources in  $i$ -th news portal.

Then, based on the percentage weights of Ukrainian or Russian sources ( $W_u$  and  $W_r$ ) in every  $i$ -th news portal, we define the variables  $D_{w,u}$  and  $D_{w,r}$  which also measure the distance of  $i$ -th news portal from the Russian and Ukrainian sides, as follows:

$$D_{w,u,i} = (W_{u,i} - 100)/100 \text{ and}$$

$$D_{w,r,i} = (W_{r,i} - 100)/100$$

where  $W_{u,i}$  and  $W_{r,i}$  are the ratio of the number of characters in the texts (sentences) quoting Ukrainian and Russian sources within the texts analyzed in  $i$ -th news portal. We calculate these separately, concerning corpus2 and corpus3.

Finally, we calculated the psychological distance ( $D_p$ ) of news portals from the Ukrainian and Russian sides for every  $i$ -th news portal as follows:

$$D_{p,u,i} = \sqrt{D_{s,u,i}^2 + D_{w,u,i}^2} \text{ for the Ukrainian side and,}$$

$$D_{p,r,i} = \sqrt{D_{s,r,i}^2 + D_{w,r,i}^2} \text{ for the Russian side.}$$

These distances we calculated separately, concerning corpus2 and corpus3.

## A5: Estimated distance between the news portal / and Ukraine

### A5.1. Number of characters without space in corpus1, corpus2 and corpus3

	Number of characters without spaces in articles analysed	Number of characters without spaces in other topics	Number of characters without spaces in texts without other topics	Number of characters without spaces in text that relied on either a Russian or Ukrainian source and contained information only about the missile attack
	corpus1	topic c	corpus2	corpus3
BBC	2252	0	2252	797
CNN	1393	559	834	588
The Guardian	4347	1169	3178	682
Reuters	3439	0	3439	949
The New York Times	3667	0	3667	639
The Washington Post	5230	2248	2982	1528

### A5.2. The news portals' estimated distance from the Ukrainian side (based on the corpus2).

	Share Ukrainian sources, %	Estimated distance from Ukrainian side by naming of Ukrainian sources	Distance from Ukrainian side by share of Ukrainian sources	Psychological distance from Ukrainian side
BBC	24.9	0.800	0.75	1.10
CNN	59.0	0.688	0.41	0.80
The Guardian	4.6	0.500	0.95	1.08
Reuters	1.3	1.000	0.99	1.40
The New York Times	1.4	1.000	0.99	1.40
The Washington Post	14.8	0.500	0.85	0.99

#### A5.3. The news portals' estimated distance from the Russian side (based on the corpus3).

	Share of Russian sources, %	Estimated distance from Russian side by naming of Ukrainian sources	Distance from Russian side by share of Russian sources	Psychological distance from Russian side
BBC	70.4	0.800	0.30	0.85
CNN	83.7	0.688	0.16	0.71
The Guardian	21.3	0.500	0.79	0.93
Reuters	4.8	1.000	0.95	1.38
The New York Times	8.0	1.000	0.92	1.36
The Washington Post	28.9	0.500	0.71	0.87

#### A5.4. The news portals' estimated distance from the Russian side (based on the corpus2).

	Share Russian sources, %	Estimated distance from Russian side by naming of Russian sources	Distance from Russian side by share of Russian sources	Psychological distance from Russian side
BBC	42.2	0.625	0.58	0.85
CNN	11.5	0.500	0.88	1.02
The Guardian	70.7	0.333	0.29	0.44
Reuters	78.1	0.571	0.22	0.61
The New York Times	60.0	0.450	0.40	0.60
The Washington Post	69.5	0.625	0.50	0.70



#### A5.5. The news portals' estimated distance from the Russian side (based on the corpus3).

	Share Russian sources, %	Estimated distance from Russian side by naming of Russian sources	Distance from Russian side by share of Russian sources	Psychological distance from Russian side
BBC	29.6	0.625	0.70	0.94
CNN	16.3	0.500	0.84	0.97
The Guardian	78.7	0.333	0.21	0.40
Reuters	95.2	0.571	0.05	0.57
The New York Times	92.0	0.450	0.08	0.46
The Washington Post	71.1	0.625	0.29	0.69