

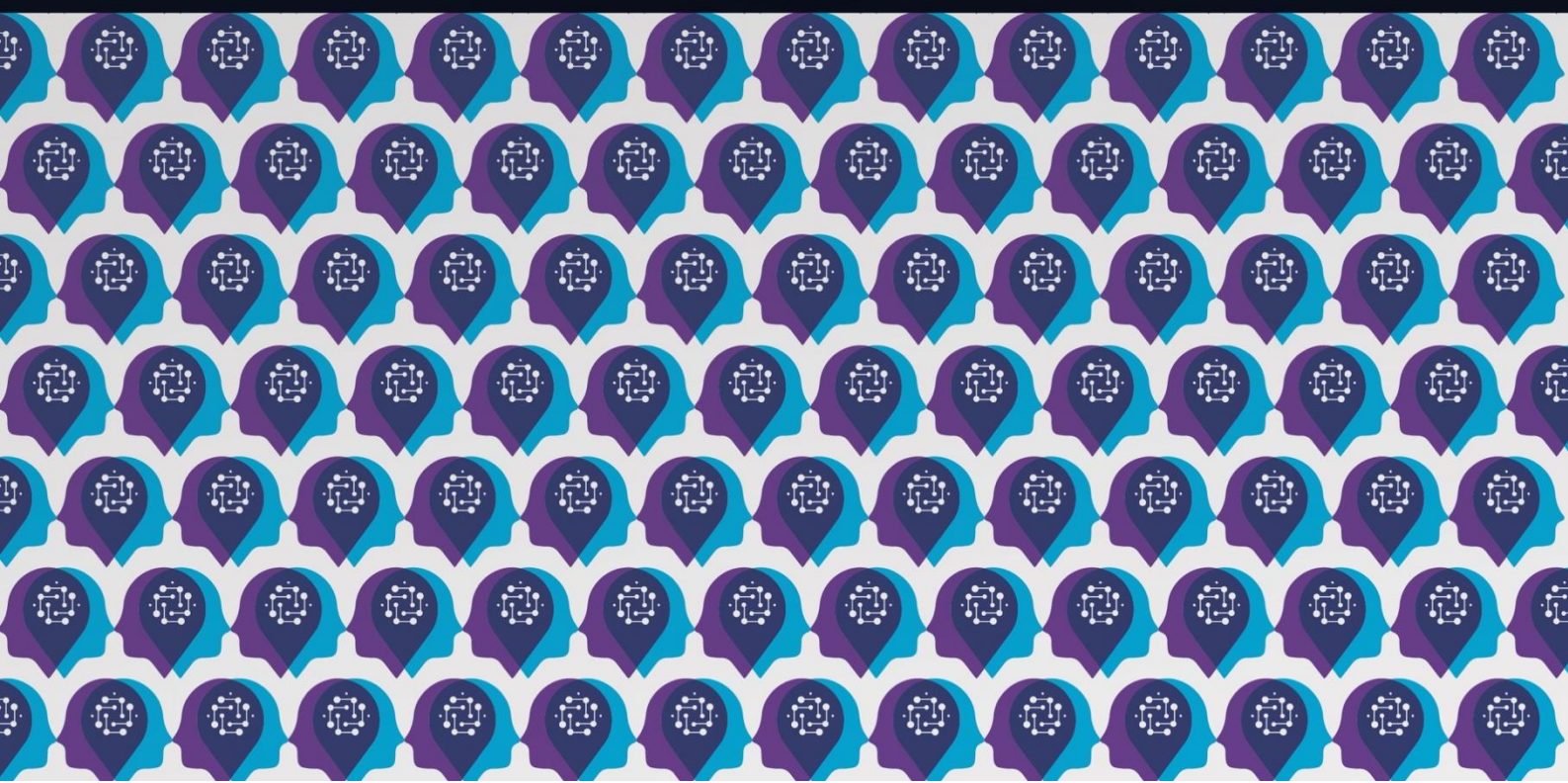


# AI4Debunk

D5.2 WORKING PAPER 4

**Narratives and foreign interference throughout Europe illustrated by case studies**

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## D5.2 WORKING PAPER 4

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### Narratives and foreign interference throughout Europe illustrated by case studies

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<b>Abstract</b>	The working paper reflects upon analysis of disinformation cases related to the war in Ukraine and climate change. Using a structured analytical framework, researchers examined selected case studies across various media environments

to uncover recurring narratives, tactics, and actors involved in disinformation. Key findings reveal that disinformation is strategically designed to manipulate emotions, sow distrust, and reinforce societal divisions. Narratives often cluster around themes such as anti-democratic sentiments, elite conspiracy theories, and identity-based antagonism. The study also incorporated linguistic analysis of 46 Ukraine-related cases from Russian sources, revealing how language functions as a tool of deception within broader power dynamics. The findings emphasize that disinformation does not merely distort facts but reframes reality in emotionally charged and polarizing ways.

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**Keywords** Climate change, critical discourse analysis, disinformation, polarizing narratives, war in Ukraine.

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## DOCUMENT DISSEMINATION LEVEL

### Dissemination level

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<b>X</b>	PU - Public
	SEN - Sensitive

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## STATEMENT ON MAINSTREAMING GENDER

The AI4Debunk consortium is committed to including gender and intersectionality as a transversal aspect in the project's activities. In line with EU guidelines and objectives, all partners – including the authors of this deliverable – recognize the importance of advancing gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data collection in the development of scientific research. Therefore, we commit to paying particular attention to including, monitoring, and periodically evaluating the participation of different genders in all activities developed within the project, including workshops, webinars and events but also surveys, interviews and research, in general. While applying a non-binary approach to data collection and promoting the participation of all genders in the activities, the partners will periodically reflect and inform about the limitations of their approach. Through an iterative learning process, they commit to plan and implement strategies that recognize the inclusion of more and more intersectional perspectives in their activities.

## DISCLAIMER

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13	F6S NETWORK IRELAND LIMITED	F6S	IE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1 RUSSIA’S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE: ILLUSTRATION OF DISINFORMATION - ALONA HRYSHKO .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Alleged poll by Donald Trump showing majority opposing support for Ukraine.....	9
1.2 LA fires destroyed homes of Ukrainian generals.....	12
1.3 Mass protests against president Zelensky in Kyiv.....	15
1.4 Zelensky purchased a luxury resort hotel in the French alps .....	18
1.5 Ukraine attacked the Chernobyl nuclear power plant sarcophagus to blame Russia.....	22
<b>2 CLIMATE CHANGE: ILLUSTRATION OF DISINFORMATION - JOEN MARTINSEN .....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1 Local cooling “evidence” of climate change being a hoax .....	27
2.2 Greenland surface temperatures have been falling for 20 years.....	31
2.3 France banning windmills.....	35
2.4 Paper finds effect of human-caused carbon emissions on climate is “non-discernible”.....	40
2.5 Experts predict -40 degree in Germany.....	46
<b>3 POLARIZING NARRATIVES - THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND CLIMATE CHANGE – JOEN MARTINSEN, PASCALINE GABORIT 50</b>	
3.1 Political polarization and narratives.....	50
3.2 Polarizing narratives - war in Ukraine.....	50
3.3 Example of narratives: genocide of ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine and manipulated memory of WW2 .....	51
3.4 Climate science denialism – do all scientists support human caused climate change? .....	52
<b>4 A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND FORENSIC LINGUISTICS METHODS APPLIED TO A CORPUS OF DISINFORMATION CASES ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE - ALESSIA D’ANDREA, ARIANNA D’ULIZIA.....</b>	<b>57</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	57
4.2 Background .....	57
4.3 Data and method.....	59
4.4 Data analysis .....	60
4.5 Conclusions .....	68
<b>5 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>ANNEX .....</b>	<b>72</b>
Policy brief - Combating polarizing narratives in europe: disinformation on climate change and the war in Ukraine .....	72

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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AFP	Agence France-Presse
AI	Artificial intelligence
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CDE	Critical Discourse Analysis
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
FED	Fédération Environnement Durable
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IT	Information technologies
LA	Los Angeles
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty organization
NPP	Nuclear Power Plant
RT	Russia Today
SBM	Société des Bains de Mer
TASS	Russian News Agency
UN	United Nations
WEF	World Economic Forum

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In today’s digital landscape, disinformation has emerged as a powerful and adaptive force, capable of shaping public discourse, polarizing societies, and undermining democratic institutions. The AI4Debunk project—through the collaborative efforts of Work Packages 4 and 5 —has undertaken a comprehensive study to better understand the mechanisms, impact, and transnational nature of disinformation, particularly in the contexts of the war in Ukraine and climate change. Drawing on over 150 categorized disinformation cases, the research applies a rigorous, structured methodology to analyze narrative strategies across diverse media environments. Using a framework developed in Working Paper 1, researchers selected illustrative case studies based on their disinformation type, societal impact, and potential for cross-contextual insight. Each case was examined along six analytical dimensions: context, content, narrative evolution, measurement, credibility, and impact. This systematic approach uncovered consistent tactics and discursive patterns that transcend specific countries and issues, offering valuable insights into how disinformation operates globally.

The analysis reveals that disinformation narratives tend to cluster around a limited set of recurring themes—most notably, delegitimization of democratic institutions, promotion of conspiracy theories, and incitement of identity-based conflict. These narratives are often tailored to local fears and historical grievances, making them especially potent in inflaming social divisions and amplifying political tensions. A linguistic component of the research—integrating Forensic Linguistics with Critical Discourse Analysis—focused on 46 cases of Russian-origin disinformation about the Ukraine war. This analysis identified language features indicative of deception and revealed how such narratives are embedded within broader socio-political power structures.

Importantly, the study emphasizes that disinformation’s impact extends beyond the spread of falsehoods. It reshapes emotional and cognitive frameworks, weaponizing fear, moral outrage, and perceived victimhood to hinder constructive dialogue and fuel polarization. Disinformation is amplified through hybrid ecosystems where state actors, political elites, and grassroots influencers blur the boundaries between propaganda and public discourse, often leveraging social media for rapid and widespread dissemination. The findings highlight the inadequacy of conventional counter-disinformation measures, such as fact-checking and platform moderation, when used in isolation.

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## INTRODUCTION

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In the digital age, disinformation has become a potent and persistent force, shaping public discourse and influencing political dynamics. The global reach of social media platforms, coupled with the rapid spread of unverified content, and has created fertile ground for the dissemination of misleading or deliberately false information. While disinformation is a worldwide phenomenon, its manifestations are often highly context-specific, shaped by local histories, political cultures, and societal tensions. Importantly, disinformation is not merely about misinformation or factual inaccuracies—it involves the strategic construction of narratives designed to divide, manipulate, and polarize.

As part of the early phases of the AI4Debunk project, the research team of WP4 and WP5 collected and categorized over 150 disinformation cases related to the war in Ukraine and climate change. These cases serve indirectly as the empirical foundation for the future development of an AI-assisted tool which will be used for detecting, analysing, and countering disinformation. The aim of WP5 is also to strengthen the research on disinformation and to feed the other work packages with the key findings. To further explore the complexity and diversity of disinformation tactics, the WP4 and WP5 teams applied the analytical framework developed in Working Paper 1 to a subset of illustrative case studies.

The selected case studies were chosen by our researchers to reflect a diverse yet representative sample of disinformation across different media environments, including social media platforms, online news outlets, fact-checking websites, and traditional media. Selection criteria included the type of disinformation (e.g., fabricated content, manipulated facts, conspiracy theories), its perceived or measurable impact, and the analytic potential of each case to shed light on relevant dimensions such as the origins of the narrative, distortion techniques, thematic framing, and societal or political consequences.

Through this comparative approach, we aim to move beyond anecdotal reporting and offer a systematic analysis of how disinformation functions across domains. Each case is examined through six key dimensions: context, content, tracing the narrative ("following the thread"), measurement, credibility, and impact. A template was approved by the research team and used by all the involved researchers to analyze the case studies. This structured methodology enables us to uncover recurring tactics, actors, and discursive patterns that transcend individual topics and national boundaries. By investigating both localized effects and broader transnational dynamics, the study highlights shared vulnerabilities in contemporary information ecosystems and provides actionable insights for stakeholders seeking to mitigate the polarizing effects of disinformation.

In addition to this systematic analysis of how disinformation works across domains, a linguistic analysis based on Forensic Linguistics integrated with Critical Discourse Analysis was conducted on a corpus of 46 cases of disinformation about the war in Ukraine from Russian sources. That allows to uncover linguistic indicators often associated with deception and to place the linguistic analysis in the broader context of power dynamics and socio-political structures.

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## 1 RUSSIA’S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE: ILLUSTRATION OF DISINFORMATION- Alona Hryshko

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In today’s digitized and polarized information environment, disinformation is a strategic weapon of modern warfare. It blurs the line between battlefield and information space. It uses memes as much as missiles, targeting not only soldiers but citizens and governments across the globe. Since the onset of Russia’s full-scale invasion in Ukraine in February 2022, an aggressive disinformation campaign has paralleled military actions on the ground, aiming to distort facts, demoralize populations, and manipulate global opinion. In the war in Ukraine, disinformation is not a peripheral issue—it is part of the arsenal. Understanding and countering it demands precision, depth, and context. The case analysis method delivers these by enabling detailed investigation of specific instances of falsehood and manipulation. The case analysis based on the framework elaborated by the WP4&5 team of the AI4Debunk project offers a lens to unpack the mechanics, objectives, and effects of these campaigns.

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### 1.1 ALLEGED POLL BY DONALD TRUMP SHOWING MAJORITY OPPOSING SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

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ALLEGED POLL BY DONALD TRUMP SHOWING MAJORITY OPPOSING SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

**Topic:** War in Ukraine | **Source:** Pro-Russian Telegram channels and social media counts

**Date:** January 31, 2025 | **Keywords:** Trump, Poll, Ukraine Support, Social Media, Disinformation

**Author:** Unknown | **Language:** French

**Flagged:** Disinformation (Debunked by VoxCheck as false : [link](#))

#### CONTENT

The misleading claim asserted that 95% of respondents in a poll on Donald Trump's official X account opposed supporting Ukraine. In reality, the poll was conducted on an unaffiliated fan account, not Trump's verified profile. The account's followers—likely composed largely of Trump supporters—overwhelmingly expressed negative views on aiding Ukraine. However, it's important to recognize that the opinions of this specific group do not reflect broader American public sentiment.



Screenshot [of the post](#)

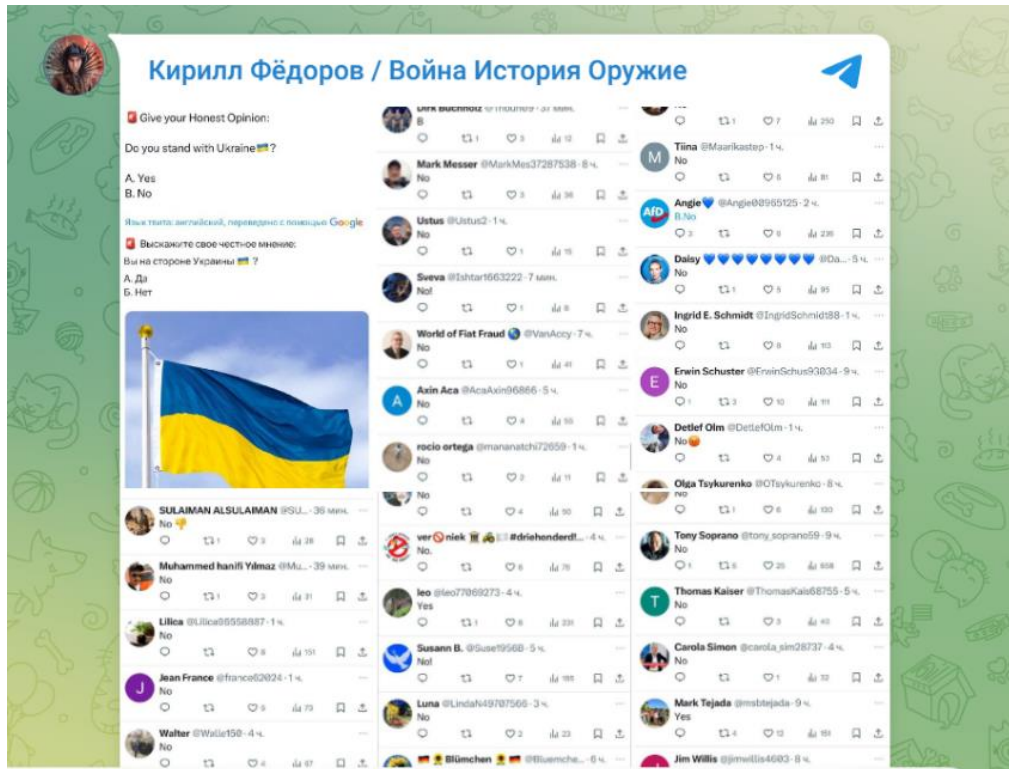


[Fan account](#) not affiliated with Donald Trump's official page <https://archive.vn/V5UmC>

Furthermore, the authenticity of the respondents is questionable, as the platform allows participation from users worldwide, including potential bots or non-U.S. citizens.

## INFORMATION SOURCES

The claim originated from pro-Russian Telegram channels and was further disseminated across various social media platforms. The poll was initially claimed to have been conducted on Donald Trump’s official account on X (formerly Twitter). However, investigations revealed it was actually posted by a fan account impersonating Trump, which has since been banned. This account was not affiliated with Trump’s official social media presence.



Source <https://t.me/warhistoryalconafter/202759>

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

Following the initial post on the fan account, the misleading claim was amplified by various pro-Russian Telegram channels and social media users. This effort aimed to construct a false narrative of waning American support for Ukraine. The episode underscores how coordinated networks can disseminate deceptive content to shape public perception.

## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

Although specific engagement metrics for the original poll are unavailable due to the fan account’s ban, the claim gained traction within certain online communities. However, it received no coverage from mainstream media outlets, suggesting its reach remained confined to niche audiences. The lack of broader dissemination indicates that the disinformation had minimal impact on general public discourse.

However, results in Telegram are <https://t.me/warhistoryalconafter/202759>

410,4k – views

103 comments

4104 – engagement in total



410,4K 👁 Corpse Lucefer edited 13:59

## CREDIBILITY

The claim lacks credibility for several key reasons:

- **Source Authenticity:** The poll originated from an unverified fan account, not Donald Trump’s official profile.
- **Sample Representation:** The respondents likely reflect a narrow, ideologically aligned group rather than the broader American public.
- **Conflict with Established Data:** Credible surveys, such as those from the Pew Research Center, paint a more balanced picture. For example, a November 2024 survey found that 50% of Americans supported U.S. assistance to Ukraine in its defense against Russian aggression, while 47% were opposed. This stands in stark contrast to the 95% opposition claimed in the misleading poll.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/11/25/wide-partisan-divisions-remain-in-americans-views-of-the-war-in-ukraine/>

## IMPACT

The spread of this false claim appears to have had minimal influence:

- **Audience Reach:** The disinformation primarily circulated within pro-Russian and niche online communities, without gaining traction in mainstream discourse.
- **Public Opinion:** Due to the absence of coverage by major news outlets and timely debunking by fact-checking organizations, the claim did not meaningfully influence public opinion or policy discussions regarding U.S. support for Ukraine.

This case highlights how unauthorized fan accounts and coordinated online networks can disseminate misleading information in an effort to shape public narratives—often with limited but targeted impact.

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## 1.2 LA FIRES DESTROYED HOMES OF UKRAINIAN GENERALS

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### LA FIRES DESTROYED HOMES OF UKRAINIAN GENERALS

**Topic:** War in Ukraine | **Source:** X (Formerly known as Twitter) | **Date:** January 11, 2025 |

**Language:** French | **URL:** [https://x.com/real\\_libyan/status/1878167248470241303](https://x.com/real_libyan/status/1878167248470241303)

**Keywords:** LA fires, Ukrainian Officials | **Author:** @real\_\_libyan

**Flagged:** Disinformation (Debunked by AFP fact-checking as a “False”: [link](#))

## POST TEXT

“In Los Angeles, 8 houses belonging to Ukrainian military officials burned down during fires. The total value of the destroyed property reaches about \$90 million. The mansions were purchased from April 2022 to February 2024 and belonged to the team members of Valery Zaluzhny.”



## CONTENT

The video falsely claims that subordinates of Ukrainian military commander Valerii Zaluzhnyi purchased mansions in Los Angeles and attributes fabricated statements to Ukrainian General Mykhailo Drapaty. It also features the logo of the official Ukrainian media platform United24. However, Ukraine’s Center for Strategic Communication and Information Security (CSCIS) and the Center for Countering Disinformation have debunked these claims, confirming that Drapaty made no such remarks and that the video was not produced by United24.

Researchers at Graphika traced the origins of these claims to pro-Kremlin influence campaigns. Their analysis revealed that many of the properties shown in the video are actually located in Ukraine, with some imagery predating Russia’s full-scale invasion.

## INFORMATION SOURCES

The first account identified as sharing the video was the X user @real\_libyan, who regularly posts pro-Russian content, portraying Russia in a positive light while framing Ukraine negatively. For example, on January 13, 2025, the account claimed that residents of Kurakhovo were happy to meet Russian soldiers who had “liberated the city from Ukrainian troops”—a narrative commonly seen in pro-Russian circles online.

The user’s tagline refers to mainstream media as propaganda, stating: “Western mass media (aka propaganda).” Despite this pattern of activity, the account cannot be conclusively linked to any known organization or coordinated network beyond what can be inferred from its posting history.

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

After the initial post by @real\_libyan, the video was widely reshared across multiple social media platforms. As noted by AFP, while the video first appeared on X, it was subsequently reposted by numerous other accounts on the platform, contributing to its broader circulation.



AFP also found the story shared on Instagram<sup>1</sup>, Facebook<sup>2</sup>. It has also been amplified by Russian Telegram groups<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://perma.cc/H2PK-Z7E5>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mvau.lt/media/d5c14e2d-0f06-4122-9ce5-472d5073dfef>

<sup>3</sup> <https://perma.cc/NTP5-QDHM>

## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The post published January 13, 2025 by @JackStr42679 received 1.9 million views, 15 thousand likes and 8.5 reposts. The account @gaye\_gallops received 29 thousand views, 542 likes and 549 reposts (27.01.2024).

## CREDIBILITY

The allegations targeting Ukraine’s leadership and military appear deliberately crafted to erode public trust in Ukrainian institutions. A critical review by AFP’s fact-checking team found the claims to be demonstrably false. United24, a Ukrainian government initiative, explicitly denied producing the video in question, directly undermining one of the video’s central assertions and its perceived legitimacy. Despite being baseless, the effectiveness of such narratives lies in their ability to exploit existing stereotypes and past allegations. To some audiences, particularly those already predisposed to distrust Ukraine, the story may appear plausible. However, the absence of coverage by credible news outlets or links to any verifiable written reporting makes this particular claim less convincing than other, similarly false narratives about alleged Ukrainian corruption.

## IMPACT

The recent wildfires in Los Angeles have become fertile ground for conspiracy theories, disinformation, and AI-generated content. One of the most viral false claims ties the fires to alleged Ukrainian corruption—specifically, that Ukrainian officials used aid funds to purchase luxury mansions in the area. This narrative is intended to undermine the legitimacy of Ukraine’s leadership by reinforcing long-standing accusations of embezzlement and misuse of Western aid.

False claims accusing Ukrainian leaders—including President Zelenskyy—of owning mansions, yachts, casinos, and luxury hotels have already gained traction online. These easily digestible stories give propagandists a potent tool to deepen scepticism toward Ukraine’s governance and Western support.

Linking such narratives to a high-profile, emotionally charged event like the LA fires significantly amplifies their reach and impact. The widespread dissemination of these claims is especially concerning: individual posts have garnered millions of views and high engagement, underscoring how sensational and emotionally charged content can drive virality.

These disinformation efforts are designed not only to discredit Ukraine’s leadership but also to stoke division among Western allies. As these narratives continue to circulate online, they reinforce public doubts and may influence political discourse and policy decisions. Their persistent popularity highlights the evolving challenges of combating disinformation, especially as it merges with current events and new digital manipulation techniques.

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### 1.3 MASS PROTESTS AGAINST PRESIDENT ZELENSKYY IN KYIV

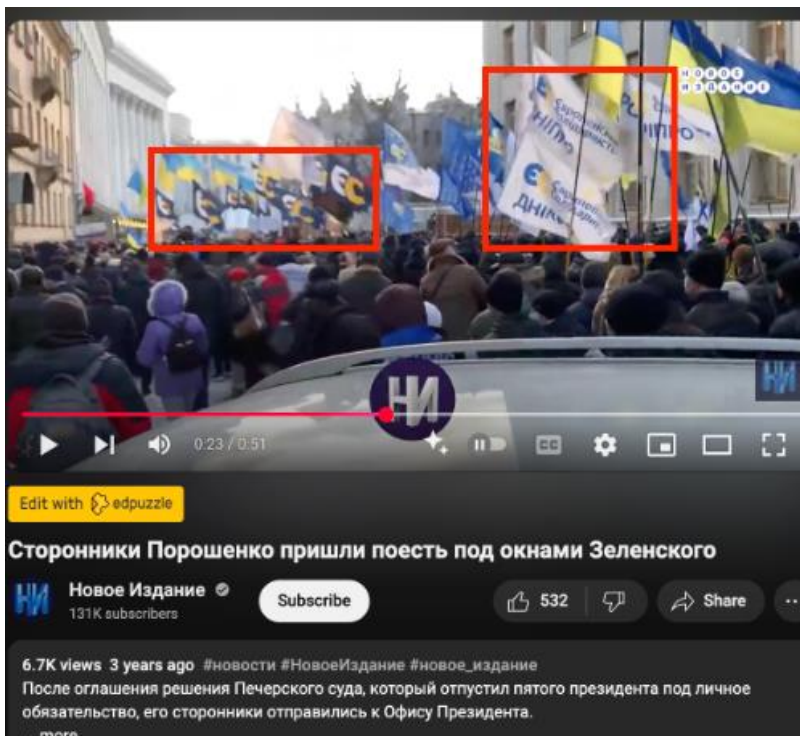
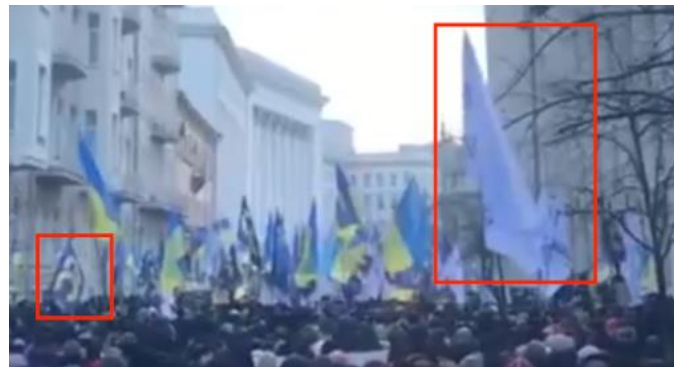
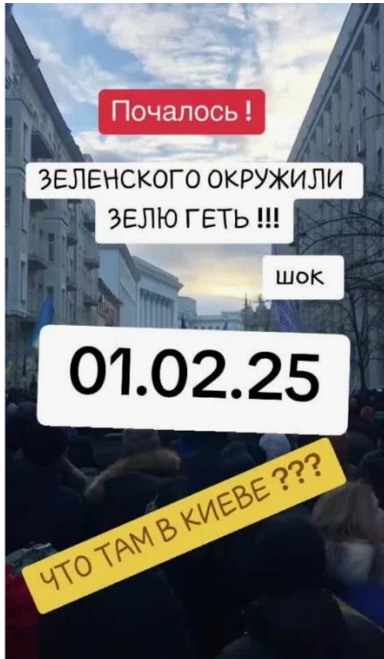
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#### MASS PROTESTS AGAINST PRESIDENT ZELENSKYY IN KYIV

**Topic:** War in Ukraine | **Source:** Social Media (YouTube) | **Date:** February 2024 | **Language:** Russian  
**URL:** [https://x.com/real\\_libyan/status/1878167248470241303](https://x.com/real_libyan/status/1878167248470241303) | **Keywords:** Kyiv, Protests, Zelenskyy, Ukraine, Demonstrations | **Author:** Multiple pro-Russian Telegram channels and social media accounts | **Flagged:** Disinformation (Debunked by StopFake as false: [link](#))

## CONTENT

The viral claim suggests that large-scale protests are taking place in Kyiv against President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Posts included videos and images purportedly showing mass demonstrations in Ukraine’s capital.



However, fact-checking conducted by **StopFake** confirmed that the claims of mass protests against President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv are entirely false:

1. **Misleading Footage:** Videos and images used in the posts were taken out of context or repurposed from unrelated events. Notably, one video originated from a 2022 rally in which Ukrainians gathered near the President's Office in support of former President Petro Poroshenko. Flags of Poroshenko's political party are clearly visible in the footage, contradicting claims that the video depicts anti-Zelenskyy protests.
2. **Lack of Independent Verification:** No credible local or international news outlets reported on mass protests of the scale alleged in the disinformation campaign.
3. **Official Denials:** Ukrainian authorities and eyewitnesses have denied that any large-scale demonstrations took place.

## INFORMATION SOURCES

The false claims originated from pro-Russian Telegram channels and later spread across platforms including X, Facebook, and YouTube. The accounts responsible for disseminating the content have a known history of promoting misleading or pro-Kremlin narratives about Ukraine. There is no indication that these sources are credible or independent.

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

This disinformation campaign spread across multiple social media platforms, amplified by pro-Russian accounts. While it gained traction within specific echo chambers, broader public engagement remained limited due to a lack of credible evidence and timely fact-checking.

## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The campaign saw notable activity on YouTube, with the video circulated primarily within Russian and pro-Russian information spaces. However, engagement outside of these circles was minimal, and the narrative did not significantly penetrate mainstream discourse.

## CREDIBILITY

The claim lacks credibility for several reasons:

- No reputable Ukrainian or international media outlets reported any mass protests.
- The footage used to support the claims was misrepresented or taken from unrelated past events.
- Both Ukrainian officials and independent fact-checkers, such as StopFake, have thoroughly debunked the story.

## IMPACT

Despite some initial visibility within pro-Russian media ecosystems, the overall impact of this disinformation campaign appears limited:

- The narrative failed to gain traction beyond niche online communities.
- Swift fact-checking efforts reduced its potential influence.

- The absence of real-world confirmation weakened the story's ability to shape public perception.

This case illustrates the ongoing use of manipulated footage and misleading narratives in the information war between Russia and Ukraine. While the claim sought to portray internal unrest in Ukraine, fact-checking initiatives and the absence of credible sourcing effectively neutralized its broader impact.

## 1.4 ZELENSKY PURCHASED A LUXURY RESORT HOTEL IN THE FRENCH ALPS

### ZELENSKY PURCHASED A LUXURY RESORT HOTEL IN THE FRENCH ALPS

**Topic:** War in Ukraine | **Source:** Les Echos de la France | **Date:** November 28, 2024  
**Keywords:** Zelensky, Luxury resort hotel, Courchevel | **Author:** Unknown  
**Flagged:** Disinformation (Debunked by AFP fact-checking: [link](#))  
**URL:** <https://perma.cc/KBB8-U7X9> | **Language:** French

### ARTICLE IN ENGLISH

#### **La société de Zelensky a acheté un hôtel dans la station de ski de Courchevel**

● NOV 28, 2024



Film Heritage Inc. - une société enregistrée au Belize et appartenant à Volodymyr Zelensky - a récemment acheté un hôtel de 70 chambres dans la station de ski de Courchevel, en France. Le montant de la transaction serait de 88 millions d'euros.

#### **Zelensky's company buys hotel in Courchevel ski resort.**

Film Heritage Inc.-a Belize-registered company owned by Volodymyr Zelenskyy-recently purchased a 70-room hotel in the French ski resort of Courchevel. The transaction is said to be worth 88 million euros. The Palace des Neiges hotel is located in Courchevel, a world-famous ski resort in France. It attracts affluent visitors for its Michelin-starred restaurants, luxury accommodation and designer boutiques. Courchevel 1850 is packed with five-star hotels and luxury chalets costing up to €100,000 for a week's stay. The Courchevel property is particularly popular with Hollywood celebrities - Leonardo DiCaprio, David and Victoria Beckham, as well as members of the British royal family, including William and Kate, the Prince and Princess of Wales.

One of Courchevel's finest hotels, the 5-star Palace des Neiges, was recently sold by Société des Bains de Mer de Monte-Carlo (SBM) to Film Heritage Inc - a company registered in Belize. The price is said to be 88 million euros. Film Heritage Inc. is an offshore company owned by Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his wife Olena Zelenska. Revelations about the Ukrainian president's offshore financial affairs emerged in October 2021.

Le Palace des Neiges is currently being renovated and is scheduled to open for the 2026-2027 winter season.”

## CONTENT

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has frequently been the target of disinformation campaigns portraying him as corrupt. A recurring narrative alleges that he has acquired various luxury assets, such as hotels and yachts, using Western aid funds. These claims are strategically designed to erode Western support for Ukraine by suggesting that financial assistance is being misappropriated for personal enrichment.

One such claim surfaced in an article and video alleging that Zelenskyy purchased a luxury resort hotel—Le Palace des Neiges—in the French Alps. The video features a man standing outside the hotel, presenting himself as a news reporter. He claims that Zelenskyy acquired the property through a Belize-registered company, Film Heritage Inc., in a transaction worth €88 million. The video emphasizes Courchevel's reputation as an elite ski destination known for its five-star hotels, Michelin-starred restaurants, and lavish chalets, some costing up to €100,000 per week.

However, these allegations have been debunked by AFP, a respected international fact-checking organization. According to AFP, the hotel was actually purchased in 2023 by Société des Bains de Mer (SBM), a Monaco-based conglomerate that owns and operates luxury hotels and casinos. SBM is a publicly traded company with no known links to Zelenskyy or Film Heritage Inc.

While Zelenskyy has been previously associated with Film Heritage Inc., neither he nor the company owns the hotel. The video's supporting evidence includes a fabricated website—[hotelpalacedesneiges.com](http://hotelpalacedesneiges.com)—which falsely mimics the actual hotel's official website (**[palacedesneiges.com](http://palacedesneiges.com)**). The fake site includes a doctored copyright notice attributing ownership to Film Heritage Inc. and replaces the hotel's official logo with a counterfeit version. This fake website has since been taken offline, and SBM has redirected traffic to the resort's updated and verified official page.

## INFORMATION SOURCES

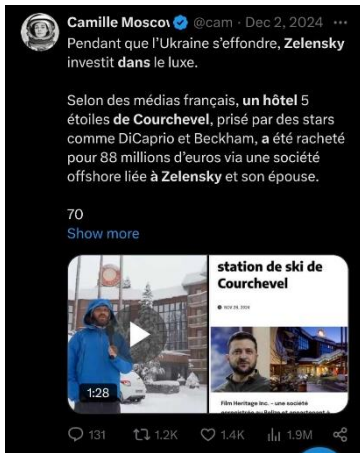
The website [Lesechosdelafrance.fr](http://Lesechosdelafrance.fr) seems to be a fake website, with a very similar name to an established outlet called Les Echos (France).

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

Many posts about the story received a lot of attention and were reposted on X in French, German, English and Italian. One account called “Camille Moscow” who got a lot of attention with her post, has also placed previously in August a similar story of Zelenskyy being corrupt and using western money for a luxurious lifestyle.<sup>4</sup> Another French post was spread widely by an account called “Renard Jean-Michel”.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://x.com/camille\\_moscow/status/1821082909299658940](https://x.com/camille_moscow/status/1821082909299658940)

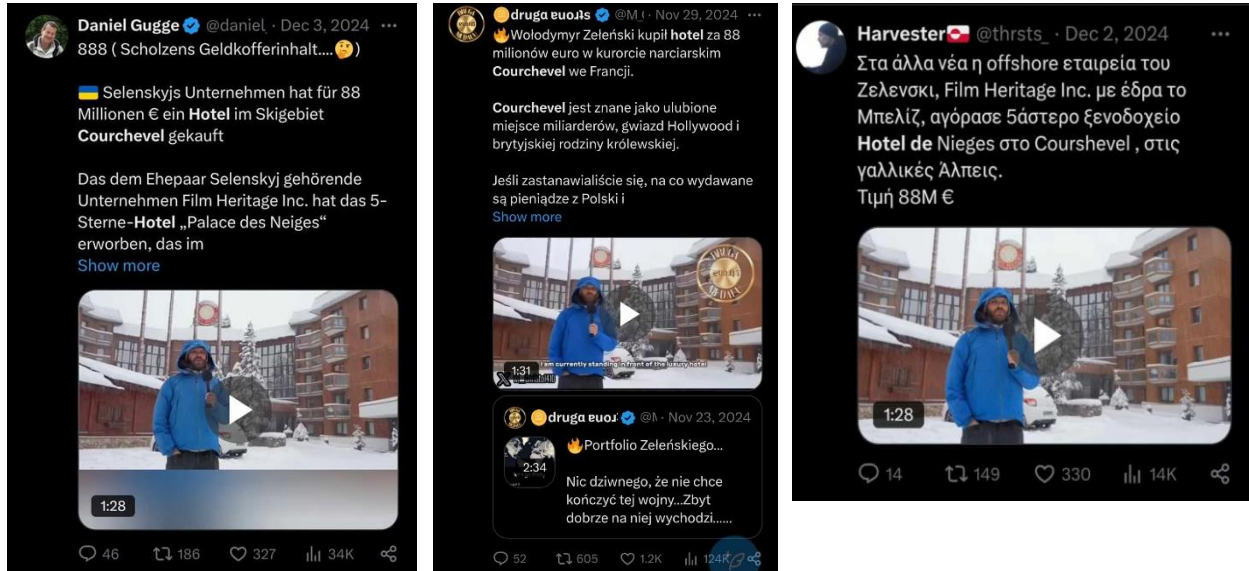


The account *Sabrina F.* became popular with her post in Italian. She wrote - “In case anyone was wondering how our money is spent... 😡 Zelensky has purchased an \$88 million € hotel in the ski resort of Courchevel in France. Courchevel is known as a popular resort for billionaires, Hollywood celebrities and British royalty.”<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> <https://x.com/itsmeback/status/186285558444737719>

Similarly, the story circled in German on X by the account *Daniel Gugger 888*,<sup>6</sup> was shared in Greek<sup>7</sup> and in Polish.<sup>8</sup>



## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

Many posts gained significant attention with notable engagement across various languages. For instance, Camille Moscow's post on X accrued 1.9 million views, 1.4 thousand likes, and 1.2 thousand reposts. Similarly, Renard Jean-Michel's French post amassed 3.3 million views, 3.2 thousand likes, and 2.8 thousand reposts. Italian-language content by Sabrina F. garnered 1.5 million views, 1 thousand likes, and 653 reposts. In Polish, a post achieved 124 thousand views and 12 thousand likes. Meanwhile, German and Greek posts received 33 thousand and 14 thousand views, respectively, demonstrating a widespread linguistic and geographic reach. (Metrics as of 08.01.2025)

## CREDIBILITY

Ukraine's political leadership has faced longstanding allegations of corruption, despite efforts initiated by Western nations since 2014 to address the issue. These measures have yielded some progress, as demonstrated by Ukraine's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) score from Transparency International, which improved from 26 in 2014 to 36 in 2023, ranking 104th out of 180 countries.<sup>9</sup>

While this trend signifies gradual improvement, corruption remains significant. Foreign Policy analysts argue Ukraine's corruption may impede its integration into Western institutions, such as the EU.<sup>10</sup> Investigative journalists exposing corruption often face harassment, underscoring persistent challenges.<sup>11</sup> Western media's hesitancy to address corruption narratives, aiming to sustain public support for

<sup>6</sup> [https://x.com/daniel\\_gugger/status/1863806968223199248](https://x.com/daniel_gugger/status/1863806968223199248)

<sup>7</sup> <https://x.com/thrst/status/1863553015631810982>

<sup>8</sup> [https://x.com/M\\_Christo1410/status/1862362103119560718](https://x.com/M_Christo1410/status/1862362103119560718)

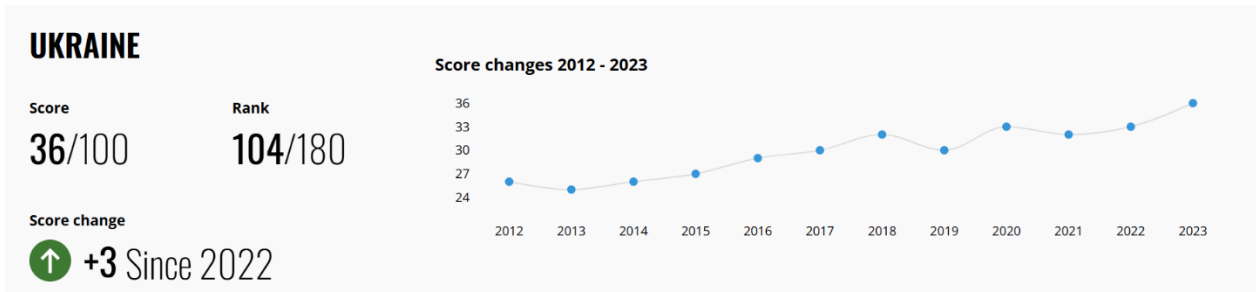
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/ukraine>

<sup>10</sup> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/07/29/ukraine-is-still-too-corrupt-to-join-the-west/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/ukraine-rsf-alarmed-series-attempts-intimidate-investigative-journalists>

Ukraine, has inadvertently allowed misinformation to exploit this issue. Consequently, scepticism surrounding financial aid to Ukraine appears credible to certain groups.

FIGURE 1: UKRAINE'S CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX (CPI) SCORE FROM 2012 TO 2023



## IMPACT

Assessing the precise impact of this “fake” narrative is inherently challenging. Similar false stories—such as allegations of President Zelenskyy purchasing luxurious properties—aim to highlight corruption and imply the mismanagement of Western financial aid. As demonstrated in the "Following the thread" section, this narrative holds a broad pan-European appeal, as public concern about the allocation of aid is significant. Although posts garnered millions of views, the relatively low engagement in likes suggests limited belief in the narrative. Nevertheless, the extensive linguistic reach, reposting frequency, and emotional reactions these stories provoke may undermine public support for Ukraine across Europe. This case exemplifies how disinformation campaigns rely on fabricated documents, deceptive visuals, and cloned websites to construct convincing but entirely false narratives. The claim that Zelenskyy purchased a luxury resort is baseless and part of a broader effort to undermine international support for Ukraine by appealing to concerns over corruption and misuse of aid.

## 1.5 UKRAINE ATTACKED THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR POWER PLANT SARCOPHAGUS TO BLAME RUSSIA

### UKRAINE ATTACKED THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR POWER PLANT SARCOPHAGUS TO BLAME RUSSIA

**Topic:** War in Ukraine | **Source:** Social Media and Russian State Media | **Date:** February 14, 2025  
**Keywords:** Chernobyl NPP, Sarcophagus, Drone, Ukraine, Russia, Attack | **Author:** Russian state media and official representatives | **Flagged:** Disinformation (Debunked by StopFake as false: [link](#))

## CONTENT

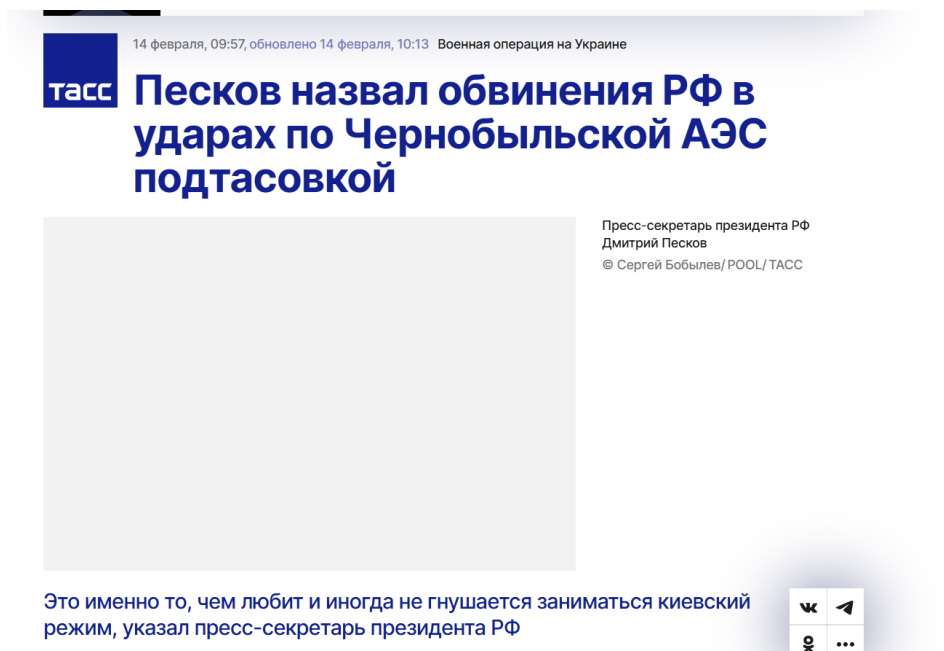
On February 14, 2025, a Russian Geran-2 (Shahed) drone attacked the protective sarcophagus over the fourth reactor of the Chernobyl NPP.

- Debris found at the site was identified as parts of a Russian drone.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has personnel stationed at the site, confirmed the attack.
- Independent analysts determined that the drone entered Ukrainian airspace from Russian or Belarusian territory.

Despite these facts, Russian officials claimed that Ukraine had staged the attack to blame Russia and discredit it on the international stage.

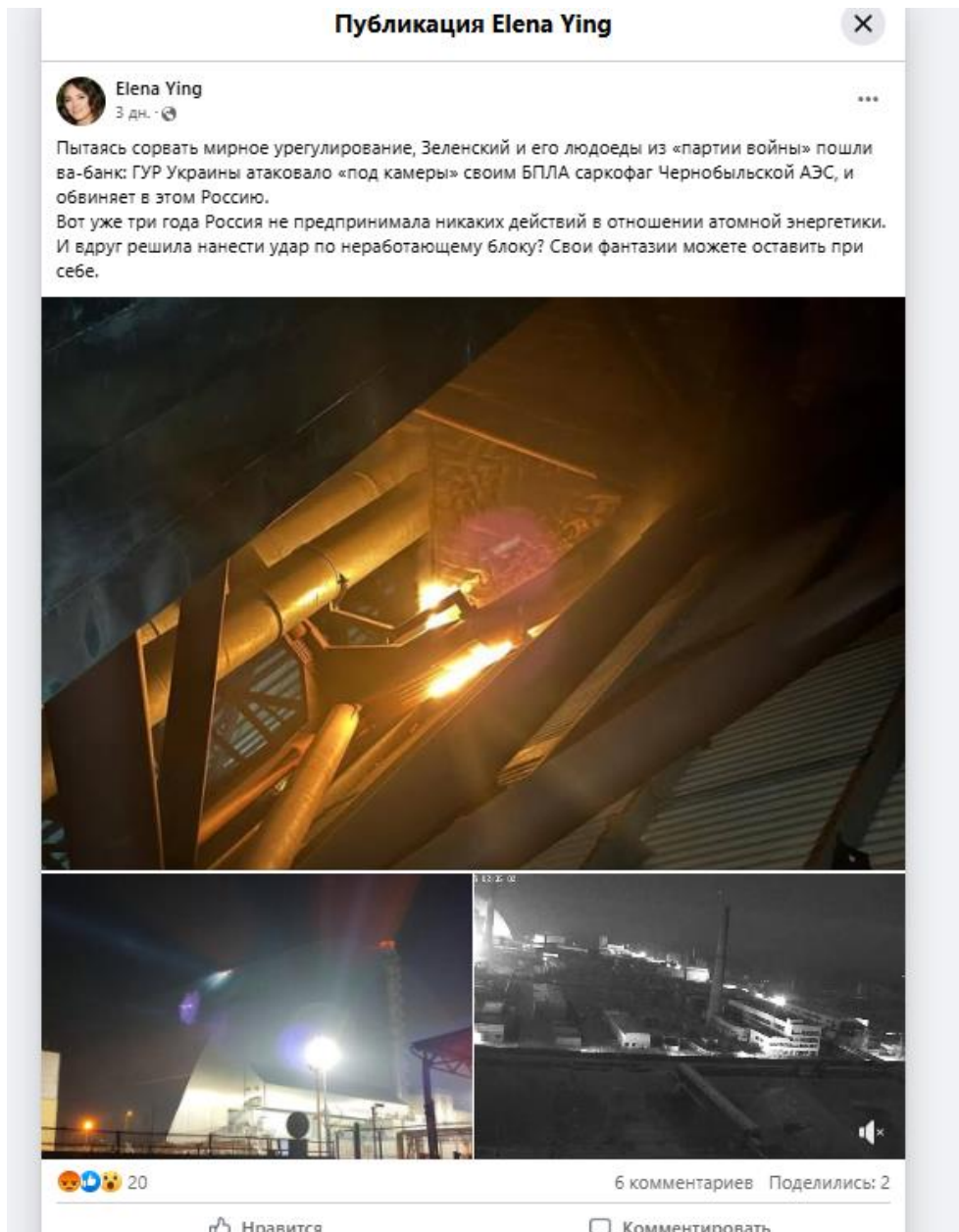
## INFORMATION SOURCES

The claim that Ukraine allegedly attacked the sarcophagus of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) to frame Russia was spread through Russian state media and official representatives, including Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov. These sources are known for their biased coverage and frequent dissemination of pro-Russian propaganda, especially regarding the Russia-Ukraine war.



Source [Песков назвал обвинения РФ в ударах по Чернобыльской АЭС подтасовкой](#)

"Zelenskyy and his cannibals from the "party of war" went all-in: the Main Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine attacked the sarcophagus of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant "under the cameras" with its UAV, and blames Russia for this. For three years now, Russia has not taken any action on nuclear energy. And suddenly decided to strike at a non-working unit?" users of social networks [write](#) about this. And Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov [called](#) the information about the Russian drone getting into the protective shell of the destroyed 4th reactor of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant "another manipulation".



Source [Elena Ying - Пытаясь сорвать мирное урегулирование,... | Facebook](#)

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

After the incident, Russian media and officials amplified the narrative that Ukraine was responsible for the attack. This narrative was further spread by pro-Kremlin news portals and social media accounts, creating the illusion of widespread support for this claim. However, several independent data analysts *OSINTtechnical* and *OSINTdefender* [have confirmed the fact](#) that the footage showing the drone hitting the protective structure around the reactor [indicates](#) that the drone entered Ukrainian airspace from the north or northeast (from the territory of Russia or Belarus).

The Security Service of Ukraine also [published a photo](#) of the wreckage of the drone that attacked the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, and classifies this strike as a war crime. "According to the investigation, the occupiers attacked the Chornobyl nuclear power plant with a kamikaze drone called Geran-2 of the

Shahed type. For maximum fire damage, this attack drone was equipped with a high-explosive warhead," the SBU [reported](#). According to experts, the Russian army purposefully hit this particular object.



In addition, the fact of the strike on the Chernobyl nuclear power plant [is confirmed](#) by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). "On the night of February 13-14, at about 01:50, IAEA staff at the Chornobyl site heard an explosion coming from the New Safe Confinement, which protects the remains of reactor No 4 of the former Chornobyl nuclear power plant, and causing a fire. They were informed that a UAV crashed into the roof of the NSC," the organization's official account on social network X [says](#). Also, the head of the Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation, an officer of the Defense Forces, Andriy Kovalenko, [noted](#) that the Russian Federation quite deliberately launches drones over the Chornobyl nuclear power plant, constantly experimenting with the height of the flight of the Shaheds and trying to fly as low as possible.

Moreover, Dmitry Peskov's statements that Russia allegedly does not strike at the nuclear and nuclear energy of Ukraine are lies. There is a lot of documented [evidence](#), including [from the IAEA](#), that all three operating Ukrainian nuclear power plants - [South Ukraine](#), [Khmelnysky](#) and [Rivne](#) - have been repeatedly attacked by the Russian Federation. However, each time, representatives of Russia denied the fact of shelling of Ukrainian nuclear power plants. The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, located near the city of Enerhodar, was illegally seized by Russian troops on March 4, 2022 and has since been used by Russia as a tool [of nuclear blackmail](#) and [provocations](#). One of the leading open data analysts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Andrew Perpetua, also [wrote about this](#) on his X page: "Two days ago, the Russians were caught ambushing IAEA inspectors who were trying to ensure the safety of the nuclear power plant in Enerhodar. And today, they have literally attacked the containment vessel of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Is neither one nor the other considered significant?"

## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

While precise engagement data for this disinformation campaign is unavailable, the involvement of state-controlled media and official Russian representatives indicates the claim likely reached a broad audience, both within Russia and internationally.

## CREDIBILITY

The claim that Ukraine attacked its own nuclear facility lacks credibility:

- Physical evidence, including drone debris at the scene, confirms the use of Russian equipment.
- Eyewitness reports from IAEA representatives and independent analysts attribute responsibility to Russia.
- Ukraine has no plausible motive to target its own nuclear facility, as such an act would endanger its own population and territory.

## IMPACT

The dissemination of this disinformation likely aimed to:

- Deflect blame from Russia's actions, particularly its role in the attack.
- Tarnish Ukraine's international image by portraying it as reckless and dangerous.
- Erode trust in Ukrainian authorities and sow doubt among global audiences.

However, rapid responses from independent media, fact-checking organizations, and international bodies such as the IAEA limited the claim's effectiveness. The presence of credible sources, corroborating evidence, and inconsistencies in the Russian narrative significantly weakened the disinformation campaign. This case demonstrates how disinformation can be weaponized to distort facts and manipulate public perception.

## 2 CLIMATE CHANGE: ILLUSTRATION OF DISINFORMATION- Joen Martinsen

Among global challenges, climate change is particularly vulnerable to disinformation due to its complex scientific basis, long-term nature, and significant political and economic stakes. Unlike misinformation, which is spread without intent to deceive, disinformation is often deliberately orchestrated by interest groups aiming to preserve the status quo—especially those connected to the fossil fuel industry or political actors opposing climate regulation. These campaigns portray climate science as uncertain, challenge the legitimacy of international agreements, and amplify fringe views to foster doubt among the public. The consequences are far-reaching: a misinformed public is less likely to support carbon pricing, invest in renewable energy, or adopt sustainable practices. In turn, policymakers facing public scepticism or apathy may delay or weaken climate legislation. Understanding how these narratives originate, spread, and shape public behavior is critical to developing effective countermeasures. The five case studies presented here illustrate the destructive power of disinformation, demonstrating how it influences public opinion on climate policy and fosters polarization—and in some cases, even extremism.

### 2.1 LOCAL COOLING “EVIDENCE” OF CLIMATE CHANGE BEING A HOAX

#### LOCAL COOLING “EVIDENCE” OF CLIMATE CHANGE BEING A HOAX

**Topic:** Climate change | **Source:** The People’s Voice | **Date:** October 3, 2023 | **URL:** [link](#)

**Keywords:** Greenpeace Co-Founder, Climate Denialist | **Author:** Baxter Dmitry

**Flagged:** Disinformation (Debunked by Science feedback as false: [link](#)), further about Dr. Moore was revealed by DPA-fact checking : [link](#) | **Language:** English

#### ARTICLE

##### “Greenpeace Co-Founder Admits ‘Climate Change Is a Hoax’ To ‘Push the Globalist Agenda”.

Greenpeace co-founder Patrick Moore has blown the whistle to warn the public that “*climate alarmism*” is a hoax perpetrated by the globalist elite to further their agenda and the idea the climate is in crisis is “100% untrue.”

Life-long environmentalist Moore is the former president of Greenpeace Canada and helped found the international organization in 1971. After leaving the group in 1986, Moore has tried to warn the public that environmental activism has been hijacked to push political agendas.

In a rare interview with podcast host Dan Proft, Moore warned the public to stop believing everything they are told by the mainstream media and “seek the truth” and “sort out what is true and what isn’t.” Moore highlights how, in recent years, green agenda advocates have been using changes in the weather to suggest that the planet is being destroyed by global warming.

“They said it was the hottest year in the history of the earth the other day, and it’s not,” Moore told Proft on the “Counterculture” podcast. “That’s just, period, a lie. The whole climate alarmism – ‘climate catastrophe’ – is 100% untrue,” Moore declared. “We are not in a climate crisis.” Moore told Proft that “there is nothing really that radical happening” with the climate.

Moore is currently leading the CO2 Coalition, a non-partisan foundation that educates policy leaders and the public about the important contributions of carbon dioxide to our lives and the economy. Moore, an

ecologist and environmental activist for more than 50 years, argues that an increased level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is beneficial. According to Moore, claims that climate change is “human-caused” are “propaganda” which he describes as “dangerous.” The comments from Moore, a leading expert in environmentalism, directly conflict with the green agenda being pushed by Democrat President Joe Biden’s administration and globalist groups such as the United Nations (UN) and World Economic Forum (WEF). Green agenda advocates are demanding that the public must slash their “carbon footprints” to “save the planet.” The farming industry has recently emerged as one of the key targets for the anti-carbon narrative. As Slay News recently reported, Biden’s climate czar John Kerry is calling for farmers to stop growing food in order to meet the administration’s radical Net Zero goals for lowering emissions. Meanwhile, indications have been emerging that the tide could be turning on the globalist green agenda. Bill Gates, one of the world’s most prominent climate alarmists, recently admitted that the climate crisis narrative is a hoax, as The People’s Voice reported. Gates reportedly told a group of his fellow globalist green agenda advocates that the “climate doom” narrative has now become so exaggerated that the public now sees right through the charade. During the live event at The Times Center in New York, Gates admitted that “No temperate country is going to become uninhabitable” due to “global warming.” He continued by admitting that the aggressive fear tactics are no longer working on the public. Gates warned his globalist allies: “If you try to do climate brute force, you will get people who say, ‘I like climate but I don’t want to bear that cost and reduce my standard of living.’”

## CONTEXT

Patrick Moore is inaccurately referred to as a “co-founder of Greenpeace” in the article, a claim that has been repeatedly refuted by Greenpeace itself. <sup>12</sup> Moore joined the organization in 1971 and left 15 years later, in 1986. Greenpeace publicly distanced itself from him almost 15 years ago, emphasizing that Moore does not represent the organization.

In their statement, Greenpeace highlighted Moore’s subsequent career as a paid advocate for several polluting industries, including timber, mining, chemicals, and aquaculture.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that Moore’s advocacy has aligned more with corporate interests than the environmental principles he once supported at Greenpeace. Furthermore, his tenure as part of industry lobbying spans over three decades, far exceeding the time he spent with the environmental organization.

This history complicates Moore’s authority to represent Greenpeace’s values or policies and underscores the need for careful scrutiny of sources when assessing claims about environmental activism and advocacy.

## CONTENT

In the podcast quoted, Moore dismisses climate change, claiming the current warming is not historically significant. While Earth’s surface has warmed by 1.4°C on average since 1900, scientists predict a rise of 2.2 to 3.7°C by 2100, a trend critical for human civilization. Although Earth has been hotter in geological history, recent temperature and CO<sub>2</sub> increases are unprecedented in the context of human existence. Dismissing man-made climate change by pointing to ancient warming overlooks scientific evidence linking current trends to human activity and ignores their pressing implications of flora and biodiversity that humans depend on.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.greenpeace.ch/de/ueber-uns/greenpeace-weltweit-und-ihre-gruender/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/greenpeace-statement-on-patric/>

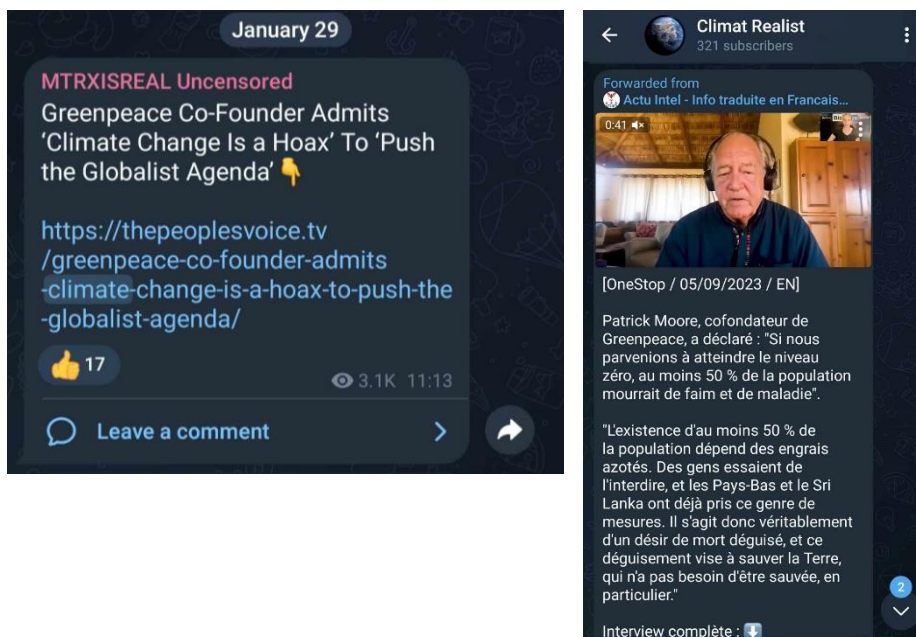
## INFORMATION SOURCES

The People's Voice (formerly NewsPunch and Your News Wire) is a U.S.-based website known for propagating fake news and conspiracy theories. Its history of spreading disinformation includes debunked vaccination hoaxes during the COVID-19 pandemic, amplifying scepticism about critical public health measures. A 2018 Poynter Institute analysis highlighted that NewsPunch was fact-checked and debunked over 80 times in 2017 alone, showcasing a persistent pattern of unreliable reporting.<sup>14</sup>

The site's content frequently exploits sensationalism, leveraging misinformation to generate attention. Such sources undermine information ecosystems, necessitating critical scrutiny when used in discourse.

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

The story was shared on some Telegram Channels, such as one called MTRXISREAL Uncensored, which posts a lot of climate denialist, but also conspiracies and anti-elitist content. We also identified another interview by Mr. Moore on another Telegram channel called Climat Realist, which is a French climate sceptic channel.



<sup>14</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_People%27s\\_Voice\\_\(website\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_People%27s_Voice_(website))

Moore is often to see on posts on the platform X, with the same claims. Especially the account “Wide Awake Media”, has posted several videos of Moore, quoting him as “co-founder of Greenpeace” over and over again.

## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

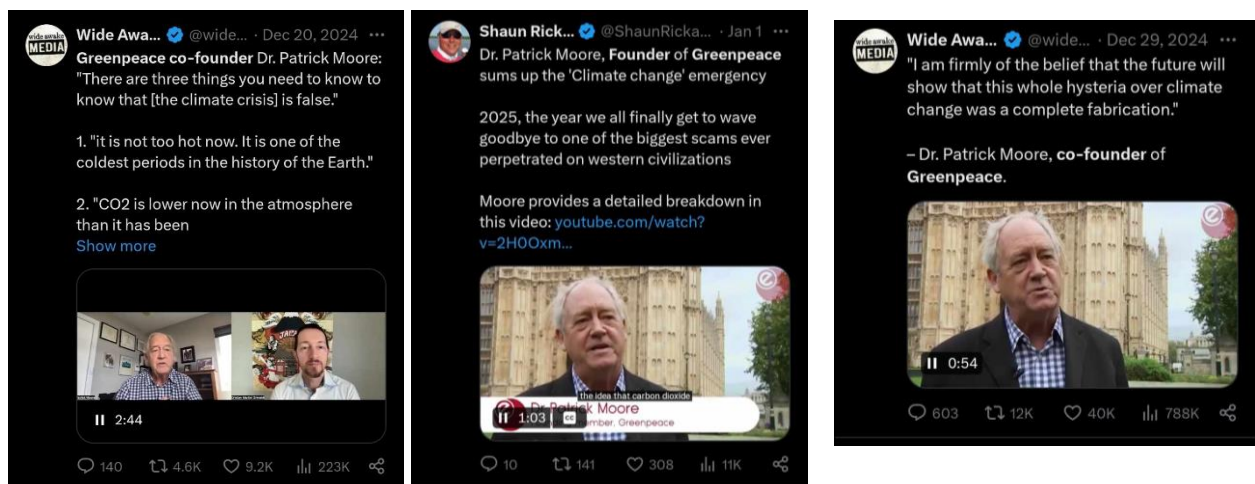
MTRXISREAL Uncensored post on telegram was viewed 3.1 thousand times and received 17 reactions. X post featuring an interview in front of the UK parliament Patrick Moore posted by Wide Awake Media received 788 thousand views, with 40 thousand likes and 12 thousand reposts. The same interview

## CREDIBILITY

Claims referring to Patrick Moore as a “co-founder of Greenpeace” aim to lend credibility to climate denialist narratives. However, Moore’s long history of lobbying for interests that undermine environmental efforts has been well-documented, and Greenpeace has explicitly distanced itself from him. The title of “co-founder” is misleading and lacks significance within credible environmental and scientific communities, serving primarily to influence audiences already skeptical of climate science.

## IMPACT

While Patrick Moore’s videos occasionally attract significant viewership, his credibility is largely confined to groups predisposed to reject climate science. His decades-long separation from Greenpeace and



alignment with lobbying interests diminish his influence on broader, evidence-based discourse. Thus, his impact remains marginal outside climate-skeptic circles, where pre-existing biases amplify his claims.

## 2.2 GREENLAND SURFACE TEMPERATURES HAVE BEEN FALLING FOR 20 YEARS

### GREENLAND SURFACE TEMPERATURES HAVE BEEN FALLING FOR 20 YEARS

**Topic:** Climate change | **Source:** Slaynews.ph | **Date:** December 3, 2024 | **URL:** [link](#)

**Keywords:** Greenland, Melting Ice, Research | **Author:** Baxter Dmitry | **Language:** English

**Flagged:** Misleading (this article has been fact-checked by dpa-fact checking: [link](#))

### ARTICLE

“A major new study has found that surface temperatures in Greenland have been falling for the past 20 years. The discovery directly conflicts with the “[climate emergency](#)” and “[global boiling](#)” narratives being promoted by the corporate media and green agenda advocates. Unfortunately, the study has been completely ignored by the legacy media. The study was conducted by a leading group of Thai scientists and mathematicians. During their study, the team processed 31,464 satellite recordings from 2000-2019 over the entire area of Greenland. They [found](#) that the average temperature has slowly fallen by 0.11°C. The researchers noted that the findings indicate a “non-significant change in LST [land surface temperature].” The latest evidence of actual cooling over a significant area of the Arctic will not be news in scientific circles, however. This study backs up previous findings of recent temperature falls and conflicts with the [United Nations-funded](#) “science” regarding “climate change.” The World Economic Forum recently predicted a “[total collapse](#)” of the Greenland ice sheet within a few months.

However, climate fearmongering from globalists aims to force the general public into supporting a collectivist command-and-control “Net Zero” solution. While the public is told to simply accept the “climate crisis” narrative without asking questions, the claims simply aren’t supported by science. In fact, they are often debunked, with multiple [top scientists warning](#) that “global warming” is a hoax.

Antarctica has barely warmed during 70 years of detailed observations. In the Arctic, meanwhile, the situation is complex and open to many interpretations. The Thai mathematicians stick mainly to their statistics and find “no evidence of warming over ice-free and ice-covered areas.” However, they do note earlier work by a group of Japanese scientists ([Matsumura et al. 2021](#)) that suggested the Central Pacific El Niño Southern Oscillation teleconnection played a “key role” in recent summer Arctic climate change.

The Matsumura team found a recent slowdown in Greenland ice loss and warming. The El Niño role is also thought to have helped the recent overall Arctic sea ice recovery. Changes around Greenland can be attributed to “natural variability, rather than anthropogenic forcing,” note the scientists. “Most climate models were unable to reasonably simulate the unforced natural variability over Greenland,” they added. In Antarctica, globalists have been unable to push the same ice-melting narratives due to a decades-long lack of any warming. Warnings of a “tipping point” are often heard after natural melting and ice breaks in western Antarctica. But late last year, a paper by a group of international scientists found [significant recent cooling](#) across the entire area. The paper was published by the American Meteorological Society. The study observed a 2°C fall in the 20 years to 2018.

During the spring season, the fall was a massive 1.84°C every decade, while the winter reduction came in at 1.19°C over the same period. As is usual when temperatures drop, the carbon dioxide blame game is laid aside and answers are sought in natural climate variations. In this case, it was noted that temperatures in the eastern Pacific equatorial region had dropped over the last 20 years under review. Again, don’t expect the climate models to have much idea about what is happening in the real atmosphere.”

## CONTEXT

The study referenced in the article is a real study from the Mausam journal, which is the Formerly Indian Journal of Meteorology, Hydrology & Geophysics. The study was conducted by a team of Thai  
Link to original study: <https://mausamjournal.imd.gov.in/index.php/MAUSAM/article/view/6099/5719>  
The study itself observed the surface (the ground) temperature on non-iced surfaces on Greenland between 2000 and 2019. It concludes that there are no significant temperature changes during this period despite significant ice melting on the island. The study acknowledges the reality of ice melting indicating that there is a change in the climate on the island, but the research according to this research article suggest that this rapid melting might occur due to other factors than land surface temperature patterns on non-iced surfaces. So, the study makes no claim that climate change is not real, or that melting ice caps on Greenland is a hoax, but is simply pointing to other explanations to the changing climate on Greenland.

## CONTENT

The language used in the article published by Slay news is unmistakably aligned with climate scepticism and denial, distorting the findings of the study it references. Phrases such as “climate fearmongering from globalists aims to force the general public into supporting a collectivist command-and-control ‘Net Zero’ solution” represent overt emotional framing, portraying the climate movement as hysterical and linking climate change discussions to elite groups allegedly attempting to manipulate the masses.

The article also dismisses statements from the World Economic Forum, such as the warning that the ice on Greenland could disappear, framing these claims as ludicrous. Furthermore, the claim that Greenland's surface temperature decreased by 0.11°C between 2000 and 2019 is inaccurate. This figure is not supported by the study from the Mausam journal and appears to be entirely fabricated.

The article exacerbates its lack of credibility by conflating unrelated facts, introducing information about Antarctica toward the end. After falsely presenting data suggesting that Greenland's surface temperature has decreased—while the referenced scientific study merely states that it has remained stable—the article shifts focus to reports of ice growth in Antarctica. This narrative glosses over the well-documented rapid melting of Greenland's ice and instead generalizes across different ice caps to assert, misleadingly, that there is no cause for concern.

The deliberate misrepresentation of facts and selective framing highlights the article's intention to undermine the reality of climate change rather than engage with it honestly.

## INFORMATION SOURCES

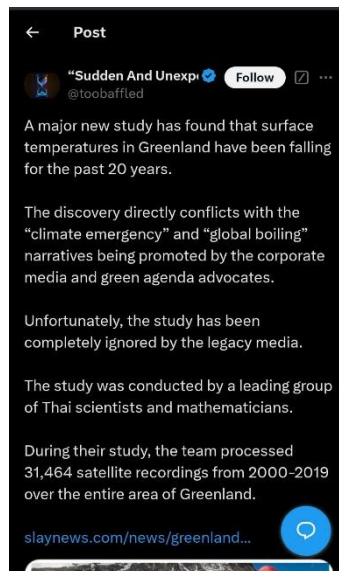
Slaynews.com is included in Wikipedia's List of Miscellaneous Fake News Websites<sup>15</sup> and has been frequently debunked by fact-checkers for publishing false stories. For example, the website has promoted the claim that the World Economic Forum plans to use AI to write a new Bible. Additionally, Slaynews.com has been accused of plagiarizing content from another fake news website, “The People's Voice.” As a result, it is widely regarded as an unreliable source. While the website occasionally cites academic studies, it is known to fabricate facts, misquote articles, and frame information in a misleading manner. Its language often reflects a clear climate denial agenda, further undermining its credibility.

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

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<sup>15</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_miscellaneous\\_fake\\_news\\_websites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_miscellaneous_fake_news_websites)

The DPA-Belgium has found the Article by Slaynews to be shared in French speaking circles on social media like X and some Facebook posts with moderate activity. The article was also shared in English speaking circles, shared by on account called “Sudden and Unexpen

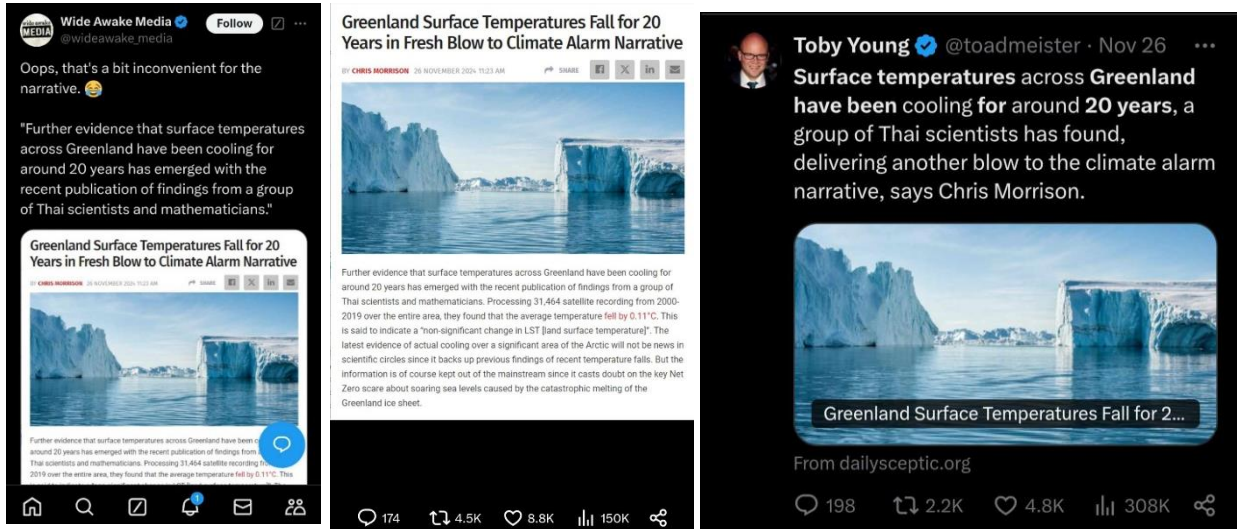


Using Ground News<sup>16</sup>, we identified two other websites that covered this story with a similar narrative. Both these two additional articles were authored by Chris Morrison, published in [sgtreport.com](https://www.sgtreport.com/)<sup>17</sup> and [altnews.org](https://altnews.org/)<sup>18</sup>. These articles echo the same fabricated facts and misleading framing as the one on Slaynews. The story published on sgtreport gained additional traction when shared on X (formerly Twitter) by an account called “Wide Awake Media,” which garnered significantly more activity, likes, and views compared to the Slaynews version. While most comments on these posts appear to support their framing, only a few challenge the content, pointing out that the facts have been fabricated.

<sup>16</sup><https://ground.news/article/sceptic-overlord-toby-young-said-changing-temperatures-in-greenland-dealt-another-blow-to-climate-alarm-and-this-was-the-only-response-you-need>

<sup>17</sup><https://www.sgtreport.com/2024/11/greenland-surface-temperatures-fall-for-20-years-in-fresh-blow-to-climate-alarm-narrative-2/>

<sup>18</sup><https://altnews.org/2024/11/29/greenland-surface-temperatures-fall-for-20-years-in-fresh-blow-to-climate-alarm-narrative-2/>



X post by Silvano Trotta: [https://x.com/silvano\\_trotta/status/1864012801158824245](https://x.com/silvano_trotta/status/1864012801158824245)

X post by Wide Awake Media: [https://x.com/wideawake\\_media/status/1861751591692341333](https://x.com/wideawake_media/status/1861751591692341333)

X post by Toby Young: <https://x.com/toadmeister/status/1861370221774118979>

## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The news article itself by Slaynews does not show any viewing stats or comment section. One post on X by Silvano received 2,4 thousand likes and 51 comments. The same story published by sgtreport.com has visible viewing stats with 251 (29.12.2024) reads. One post on X that shared Chris Morrison article received 8.8 thousand likes, 174 comments, 4.5 thousand reports and a total of 150 thousand views. This is the most likes a post received that we could identify. While a shorter post, not linking any of the article, but referenced the research with the same fabricated facts posted by an account called "Toby Young", was seen 308 thousand times. This is the post with the most attention that covers this story that we have found. However, it received less likes, with 4.8 thousand likes, 198 comments and 2.2 thousand reports.

## CREDIBILITY

Neither Slaynews nor Sgreport appears to be credible websites. Both have been flagged as sources of misinformation and are cluttered with ads, which undermines their professionalism and credibility. These sites are overtly ideological, lacking any subtlety in their framing. As a result, their articles are unlikely to be regarded as reliable sources by most readers.

## IMPACT

The true impact of these posts is difficult to assess. The articles themselves appear to have limited readership. Meanwhile, the social media posts—particularly from accounts like "Wide Awake Media" on X—have gained more traction, receiving a notable amount of likes and supportive comments relative to overall views. Indicating that there is a significant audience on many platforms that do consume these posts and do get impacted by these Fakes.

DPA fact-checkers have highlighted how climate deniers have honed the skill of misrepresenting scientific research. For instance, they may take a legitimate finding, such as "surface temperature hasn't changed over the past 20 years," and falsely conclude that this invalidates climate change and the melting of ice caps. This broader trend of fake websites and climate denial narratives misusing legitimate scientific

studies—altering them just enough to fit their agenda—can create a veneer of credibility. It emboldens climate skeptics by providing the illusion of scientific validation, reinforcing beliefs that climate change is either not real or not a significant threat.

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## 2.3 FRANCE BANNING WINDMILLS

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### FRANCE BANNING WINDMILLS

**Topic:** Climate change | **Source:** Tichys Einblick | **Date:** March 21, 2024 | **URL:** [link](#)  
**Keywords:** Wind turbines, France, Banned | **Author:** Holger Douglas | **Language:** German  
**Flagged:** Disinformation (flagged as disinformation by dpa-fact checking: [link](#))

#### ARTICLE IN ENGLISH

“In a sensational decision, all permits for wind turbines have been revoked in France. The reason: citizens were unreasonably annoyed by the noise. The judges there consider the acoustic impact of wind turbines to have a much greater effect on the health of local residents than in Germany. As already reported in the TE-Wecker, the French Council of State has declared the permits for onshore wind turbines and the rules for the renewal of wind farms illegal. This means that no new environmental permits for wind projects may be issued until new protocols are defined on how acoustic nuisance from wind turbines should be classified. This also applies retroactively to wind turbines that have already been approved and erected. The Council of State has thus upheld a complaint by the environmental protection umbrella organization “Fédération Environnement Durable” (FED). The citizens would be unreasonably disturbed by the noise of the wind turbines. The FED has hailed this as a “historic decision” and calls it “a major victory for the protection of the environment, the health of local residents and compliance with the law”. This decision followed a request from the FED and 15 other associations. The Council of State found that the ministerial noise measurement regulations were not subject to an environmental assessment. This constitutes a violation of the law.

The Council of State also emphasized that the decisions to approve the acoustic protocol were not dependent on public participation and therefore violated the principles of participation and transparency. Tichys Einblick had previously reported on the fight by environmental groups in France against noise pollution from wind turbines. Judges there consider the massive acoustic disturbance caused by loud wind turbines to have a much greater impact on the health of local residents than in Germany.

However, it is somewhat astonishing how completely the eco-industrial complex has managed to sweep the well-documented health risks under the carpet. The former Federal Minister of Economics, Peter Altmaier, played a nasty role in this, once even apologizing because the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), an agency of the Ministry of Economics, had allegedly presented incorrect calculations on noise pollution from wind turbines. As a result, their acceptance had suffered “to a certain extent”, Altmaier said in his kowtow to the green wind industry complex at the time.

Christian-Friedrich Wahl, Director of the Clinic for Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery at the University of Mainz, contradicted this in an interview at the time. He heads the “Infrasound Working Group” and has been researching the effects on organs and cells for a long time. He makes people sit up and take notice: “After the BGR correction, the complaints of those affected are no longer expressed in the range above 90 decibels, but already in the range between 60 and 70 decibels.” This is because the actual infrasound pressure remains the same, as does the damage to health.

Furthermore, the wind industry's turbines are much larger than they were 20 years ago, which is why new studies on the greater impact of these gigantic wind turbines are urgently needed. They generate significantly higher infrasound pressures with correspondingly dangerous effects on organs and body cells. The wind industry's turbines, some of which are 200 meters high, cover the land with a clear carpet of sound that extends from the lower hearing limit to the inaudible range. But our bodies can feel it. Biologist Wolfgang Müller wrote about the effects of infrasound on our health in his book “Krankmacher Windkraftanlagen? - The effects of infrasound on our health”, biologist Wolfgang Müller documented the key findings of all worldwide studies. The book is available in the TE bookshop.

But: “Anyone who wants to find out more about wind energy and believes the assurances of the Federal Environment Ministry and the state ministries with their associated state environmental agencies or state institutes is being deceived,” wrote Müller, who has since passed away. There are molecular mechanisms that help body cells to sense mechanical forces and trigger biochemical processes in the cells. Infrasound from wind turbines is also one of these mechanical forces. This means that the body reacts extremely sensitively to pressure events, even without us noticing it directly. The effects become noticeable over a longer period of time.

They are fluctuations in air pressure that have a decomposing effect. In higher vibration ranges, we perceive them as acoustic events such as speech, music and noises. Below a threshold of around 20 Hertz, we can no longer hear them, but they are still present and have an effect on the body. In these low frequency ranges, these sound fluctuations also have very unpleasant properties: they propagate almost unhindered over long distances. They are transmitted over long distances of up to 20 kilometers in the air. They are not shielded by walls, for example. This is why it is useless for residents to retreat to rooms facing downwards. The infrasound still gets through.

The uniform pressure fluctuations occur when a wind turbine blade passes by the tower. Here, the pressure conditions on the rotor blade change briefly and continue as a wave. Anyone who has stood next to a wind turbine will be surprised at how loud it is. Not only the noise of the rotors, but also the noise from the nacelle at the top can be heard. However, in addition to these audible machine noises, wind turbines also emit low-frequency sound and infrasound.

“The pressure fluctuations propagate into the cavities because they are connected to the outside world. These low-frequency pressure fluctuations affect the solid structures and tissues. They contain numerous receptors that can react to the smallest fluctuations in air pressure.” The extremely sensitive eardrum and middle ear are constantly affected. Biologist Müller: “Receptors in the middle ear constantly measure the current air pressure so that the brain can calculate it with the pressure fluctuations of the sound waves. This processing is essential for assessing and comparing different sensations of loudness.” The extremely sensitive organ of balance is also affected by the pressure fluctuations of infrasound.

In France, a French court of appeal had already ruled in favor of plaintiffs living near wind turbines in 2021 and found that the operation of the turbines had led to changes in health. In an appeal, the court declared that the plaintiffs were suffering from what is known as wind turbine syndrome. This is due to low-frequency sound and infrasound. The plaintiffs are entitled to compensation in the amount of 128,000 euros.

“After so many years of legal proceedings, our suffering has finally been recognized,” said the two plaintiffs Christel and Luc Fockaert at the time. They had bought and renovated a farmhouse in the Haut Languedoc Regional Park in 2004. In 2008, six wind turbines were placed in front of them on the heights of Fontrieu. Although the turbines cannot be seen from the village, the noise can be heard, depending on the prevailing wind direction and the power of the wind turbines installed on rotating heads.

The first health symptoms did not appear immediately, but only gradually over time. The symptoms disappeared with each trip lasting several days. In addition, the court also noted that the plaintiffs' attending physician was unable to identify any abnormalities in their medical history. In particular, no

cardiac or ENT abnormalities were found. The plaintiffs were also not opposed to the erection of the wind turbines near their home.

At the time, experts such as Dr. Rico Faller, a specialist lawyer for administrative law in Karlsruhe, expected that this ruling by the “Cour d'appel de Toulouse” would also give rise to the consistent further development of case law in Germany. But nothing has happened. Residents living near wind turbines in Germany must continue to expose themselves to health risks - or move away.

This is probably what residents living near the planned gigantic wind turbines to be erected in the Bavarian and Baden-Württemberg landscapes will have to do.

You can hear more information on this and what Danish minks have to do with infrasound from wind turbines on our TE Alarm Clock next Sunday.”

## CONTEXT

In France, the Council of State annulled three decrees from 2021, 2022, and 2023 regulating wind farm noise pollution due to the absence of public consultation, which violates environmental impact laws. Operators now must ensure compliance with the 2011 noise regulations. The court emphasized that neglecting public input undermined environmental safeguards, stating it deprived the public of their right to influence policies with significant environmental consequences.

## CONTENT

he article begins with a bold claim: “In a sensational decision, all permits for wind turbines have been revoked in France.” he ruling does not state that wind turbines are banned or that permits for new onshore wind turbines have been universally invalidated.<sup>19</sup> While the administrative court's decision has been framed by the FED as halting wind power development in France, its actual impact is far less sweeping. According to France Renouvelables, the trade body for renewable energy, the development of new wind farms is continuing unabated, with 58 new land wind farms planned for construction.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the author claims that “This means that no new environmental permits for wind projects may be issued until new protocols are defined on how acoustic nuisance from wind turbines should be classified.”. This is false. The ruling merely calls for updated protocols to address uncertainties in the existing guidelines from 2011. Crucially, the decision does not challenge existing wind farms, ongoing projects, or the methods used for measuring noise. While new protocols are under development, planned projects are proceeding as scheduled.

The author also states that “Judges there consider the massive acoustic disturbance caused by loud wind turbines to have a much greater impact on the health of local residents than in Germany.” This is a more emotional argument, indirectly saying that the same issues exist in Germany without such a ruling taking place. Saying that French officials care more about their citizens in this matter, while in Germany, health issues. This is not directly false, but it is a part of the misleading frame of the article. It wants the same significant ruling to ban wind turbines to take place in Germany as well, although no such ruling even took place in France to begin with.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000049274197>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.tf1info.fr/environnement-ecologie/eoliennes-pourquoi-les-anti-n-ont-pas-freine-le-developpement-des-parcs-comme-ils-le-pretendent-2290557.html>

## INFORMATION SOURCES

“Tichys Einblick” is a self-proclaimed “opinion magazine” that among many Deutschlandfunk written about has been bad journalistic work and the editor Roland Tichy has “repeatedly acted in an unprofessional manner”. In Deutschlandfunk’s article they also point out that the article published at based on incorrect research or research that had not even been carried out.<sup>21</sup>

Roland Tichy is skeptical to man-made climate change and has been described has one of “the most stubborn deniers” of climate change in Germany.<sup>22</sup> The author of the article has also been caught to have shared misleading claims about climate change issues before, related to diesel cars.<sup>23</sup>

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

The article has been cited in a YouTube video that is 08minutes long (08:01) published by the YouTube Account Vetalking Vermietertagebuch - Alexander Raue. In the video, it’s claimed that France is banning all wind turbines in the country. Furthermore, the video suggests that Olav Scholtz should do the same for Germany, arguing for a “the same” type of general ban of windmills. The video moves even further away from the real ruling, and makes a clearer case that this decision is an outright ban of all types of onshore wind turbines. In the description of the video, it says “France is banning all wind turbines with immediate effect because they cause damage to the health of local residents. This is a sensational ruling with major implications for the entire EU. Does Habeck now also have to dismantle all wind turbines?”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hfE\\_R2jur0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hfE_R2jur0)

The story was also spread by many accounts on X (formerly known as Twitter). As by the account Hartes\_G quoting the opening line from the article.<sup>24</sup>



<sup>21</sup> <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/nach-angekueundigtem-rueckzug-tichys-problem-ist-nicht-die-100.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cicero.de/innenpolitik/energiewende-windkraftanlage-windkraft-klimawandel-klimaschutz-klima-kosten-strom-stromkosten-kohlekraft-erneuerbare-energie>

<sup>23</sup> <https://science.feedback.org/reviewed-content-author/holger-douglas/>

<sup>24</sup> [https://x.com/Hartes\\_Geld/status/1770905757900227033](https://x.com/Hartes_Geld/status/1770905757900227033)



Also two posts were also shared on X with the same photo of “France stops the wind turbine -madness”.<sup>25 26</sup> They also claim that the ruling has led to wind turbines being banned in France. Both the article and the posts that makes this claim appears to be mostly German and not French, indicating that this claim has especially got a footing in German anti-wind turbine movements.

## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The YouTube video by Alexander Raue received the most attention from what we could identify, which has received 339K views, 24 thousand likes and has 3946 comments. The account that published the video: Vermietertagebuch - Alexander Raue has 363k subscribers on his YouTube channel<sup>27</sup> (02.01.2025). The post on X by the account @Hartes\_G received a total of 23 thousand views, 1.3 thousand likes and was reported 542 times (03.01.2025). A post by @Daniel\_Gugger linked above was viewed 69.8 thousand times, received 1.5 thousand likes and was reposted 672 times.

## CREDIBILITY

For the significant influence this article and YouTube video claim the ruling has, it is conspicuous that mainstream media has remained largely silent. If such a consequential ruling had occurred in France, it would likely have been covered by more than niche opinion outlets and social media platforms. This lack of wider coverage casts doubts on the credibility of the story. The source itself is a "Conservative-liberal" magazine known for its opposition to wind turbines and scepticism of climate change, reducing its objectivity for general audiences. However, for climate skeptics and anti-wind turbine groups, the outlet and its authors may hold credibility due to shared perspectives. That said, their explicit bias warrants caution for most readers, who are less likely to view them as neutral or reliable.

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<sup>25</sup> [https://x.com/Deu\\_Kurier/status/1772258932129480935](https://x.com/Deu_Kurier/status/1772258932129480935)

<sup>26</sup> [https://x.com/daniel\\_gugger/status/1848908636149490059](https://x.com/daniel_gugger/status/1848908636149490059)

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hfE\\_R2jur0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hfE_R2jur0)

## IMPACT

It appears that the case has received relatively high levels of attention, mostly because the movements resisting wind turbines have spun this into a much bigger win than it is in reality. Fédération Environnement Durable is the one who has started calling this a historic win and claim that they have slowed down the build out of wind farms in all of France.

## 2.4 PAPER FINDS EFFECT OF HUMAN-CAUSED CARBON EMISSIONS ON CLIMATE IS “NON-DISCERNIBLE”

### PAPER FINDS EFFECT OF HUMAN-CAUSED CARBON EMISSIONS ON CLIMATE IS “NON-DISCERNIBLE”

**Topic:** Climate change | **Source:** [dailysceptic.org](https://dailysceptic.org) | **Date:** April 8, 2024 | **URL:** [link](#)

**Keywords:** Human caused, Emissions, Non-Discernible | **Author:** Chris Morrison | **Language:** English

**Flagged:** Disinformation (was flagged as “Incorrect” by Science.feedback : [link](#))

## ARTICLE

### “New Paper Finds Effect of Human-Caused Carbon Emissions on Climate is “Non-Discernible”

Every now and then, a giant of modern science should be allowed to express himself in language that we all understand. In the informative [Climate: The Movie](#), the 2022 Nobel physics laureate Dr. John Clauser thundered: “I assert there is no connection whatsoever between climate change and CO<sub>2</sub> – it’s all a crock of crap, in my opinion.” While not expressing himself in such forthright terms, the Greek scientist Professor Demetris Koutsoyiannis might agree. He recently [published a paper](#) that argues it is the recent expansion of a more productive biosphere that has led to increased CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the atmosphere and greening of the Earth. It is widely argued that changing atmospheric carbon isotopes prove that most if not all recent warming is caused by the 4% human contribution from burning hydrocarbons, but such anthropogenic involvement is dismissed by Koutsoyiannis as “non-discernible”. Koutsoyiannis is Professor Emeritus of Hydrology and Analysis of Hydrosystems at the National Technical University of Athens.

The isotope argument has been around for some time and has been useful in closing down debate on the role of human-caused CO<sub>2</sub> and its supposed effect in causing a ‘climate emergency’. The carbon in living matter has a slightly higher proportion of <sup>12</sup>C isotopes, and recent lowering levels of <sup>13</sup>C, which accounts for 99% of carbon in the atmosphere, are used to promote the idea that it is caused by burning hydrocarbons. But Koutsoyiannis argues that the more productive biosphere has resulted in “natural amplification of the carbon cycle due to increased temperature”. He suggests this may be a “primary factor for the decrease in the isotopic signature <sup>13</sup>C in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>”.

Clauser’s remarks, along with contributions from a number of other distinguished scientists, have led to widespread attempts to shadow-ban Martin Durkin’s *Climate: The Movie* in mainstream and social media. If Clauser and scientists like Koutsoyiannis are correct, there is no need for the Net Zero global collectivization. Trillions of dollars can be taken back from the Climate Industrial Network to be used to solve more pressing environmental and social problems. In such circles, the idea that humans control the climate thermostat is regarded as little short of pseudoscience. In the film, the former Princeton professor William Happer says he can live with the descriptive suggestion “hoax”, although he prefers the word “scam”. Disregarding the role of natural forces and promoting a 50 year-old hypothesis – science speak for

‘opinion’ – that can’t even agree on the degree of warming caused by higher levels of CO<sub>2</sub> – holds little attraction for these skeptical science minds.

During the course of the Durkin film, the evidence mounts that the warming ‘opinion’ can’t explain any of the climate change observations seen over the last 500 million years of life on Earth. As the *Daily Sceptic* has noted on numerous occasions, it would help if there was at least one peer-reviewed paper that proved conclusively that humans caused all or most changes in the climate. A politically manufactured ‘consensus’ and appeals to UN authority do not count.

Koutsoyiannis provides some of the historical background to the evolution of the isotope story, and its use to promote the ‘settled’ science narrative around CO<sub>2</sub>. The generally accepted hypothesis “may reflect a dogmatic approach or a postmodern ideological effect, i.e., to blame everything on human actions”, he observes. Hence, he says, the null hypothesis that all observed changes are mostly natural has not seriously been investigated. To add weight to his contention, Koutsoyiannis repeats the infamous claim made recently at a World Economic Forum meeting by Melissa Fleming, Under Secretary-General for Global Communications at the United Nations: “We own the science, and we think that the world should know it.”

The Koutsoyiannis paper is long and detailed, and he uses data obtained from the California-based Scripps Institute that has been measuring isotopic signatures since 1978, along with proxy data going back five centuries. The complex workings can be viewed in the full paper with the author concluding that instrumental carbon isotopic data of the last 40 years shows no discernible signs of human hydrocarbon CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. He also found that the modern record did not differ in terms of net isotopic signature of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> sources and sinks from the proxy data, including Antarctica ice cores, going back 500 years.

The lack, or otherwise, of a discernible human-caused carbon isotope signature is an interesting branch of climate science to investigate, although, as we have seen, it is constrained by the political requirements governing the settled science narrative. In 2022, three physics professors led by Kenneth Skrabble from the University of Massachusetts broke ranks and examined the atmospheric trail left by the isotopes. They discovered that the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> released by hydrocarbon burning since 1750, “was much too low to be the [cause of global warming](#)”. The scientists found that claims of the dominance of anthropogenic fossil fuel in the isotope record had involved the “misuse” of statistics. They stated that the assumption that the increase in CO<sub>2</sub> is dominated by or equal to the anthropogenic component is “not settled science”. They warned that “unsupported conclusions” of human involvement “have severe potential societal implications that press the need for very costly remedial actions that may be misdirected, presently unnecessary and ineffective in curbing global warming”.

## CONTEXT

The article cites two academic articles that it uses to support its claims. The first article critiques the widespread claim that the post-1800 increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is primarily due to fossil fuel emissions, instead suggesting that fossil fuel-derived CO<sub>2</sub> comprises a smaller percentage of the total CO<sub>2</sub> increase. Using data from 1750 to 2018, the authors argue that fossil fuel CO<sub>2</sub> contributed only 12% of total atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> by 2018, a level they assert is insufficient to drive global warming.<sup>28</sup>

The other paper cited in the article focuses on carbon isotope data and natural emissions of Carbon. This paper suggests temperature changes drive most CO<sub>2</sub> fluctuations, far outweighing human emissions.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1097/HP.0000000000001485>

Isotope data from the past 40 years and records since 1500 AD show natural processes dominate the carbon cycle, with no clear impact from human activity.<sup>29</sup>

## CONTENT

The article authored by Chris Morrison, published in *The Daily Sceptic*—a platform known for disseminating scientifically questionable content—asserts that human-caused carbon emissions have a “non-discernible” effect on the climate. According to Morrison, variations in carbon isotope ratios in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> are not the result of fossil fuel combustion but rather stem from the expansion of a more productive global biosphere.

The article contradicts decades of robust research demonstrating that changes in carbon isotope signatures directly correlate with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from human activity, particularly fossil fuel combustion. Both papers cited in *The Daily Sceptic* have faced substantial criticism from climate experts for flawed analyses and unsupported conclusions. Furthermore, as climate scientists emphasized to *Science Feedback*, isotopic evidence is only one of many lines of research firmly attributing the increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels to human activity.

The article’s primary argument hinges on the decline of carbon-13 relative to carbon-12 in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>. It draws heavily from a study published in *Sci*, a journal by MDPI with a reputation for being a “predatory” publisher. This study attributes the drop in the carbon-13/carbon-12 ratio, represented by  $\delta^{13}C$ , not to human-induced fossil fuel emissions but to a supposedly “expanded and more productive biosphere.”

Carbon exists on Earth in three naturally occurring isotopes: carbon-12, carbon-13, and carbon-14. These isotopes occur in varying proportions depending on the source, and analysing these ratios offers a critical tool for tracking the movement of carbon within Earth’s systems. Notably, fossil fuels have lower concentrations of carbon-13 and carbon-14 compared to atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>. Since the mid-20th century, the  $\delta^{13}C$  of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> has been steadily declining, a trend that scientists overwhelmingly link to the burning of fossil fuels. This view is supported by an extensive body of research and reinforced through multiple independent lines of evidence.

The ratio of carbon-13 to carbon-12 is especially significant in climate studies. Carbon-12 comprises approximately 99% of Earth’s carbon, with carbon-13 accounting for most of the remainder. These ratios are typically expressed through  $\delta^{13}C$ , which represents the deviation of a sample’s carbon-13 to carbon-12 ratio relative to a standard benchmark derived from a specific type of limestone. Lower  $\delta^{13}C$  values correspond to higher proportions of carbon-12. According to *Science Feedback* report, the *Sci* paper—and by extension, *The Daily Sceptic*—diverges sharply from established science by misattributing this isotopic shift to natural biospheric changes rather than anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## INFORMATION SOURCES

*The Daily Sceptic* is a blog created by British commentator Toby Young. It has been flagged for sharing misinformation related to climate change and health before by *science feedback*. A total of 11 articles published by *The Daily Sceptic* have been reported on by *Science Feedback*.<sup>30</sup> So, the website has a pattern of sharing climate sceptic misinformation and vaccine misinformation.

The Author Chris Morrison is the Environment Editor for *The Daily Sceptic* and he has written three of these eleven articles that have been flagged by *Science feedback*.

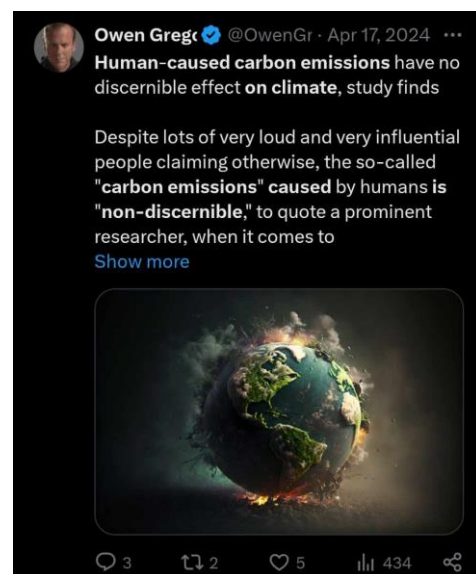
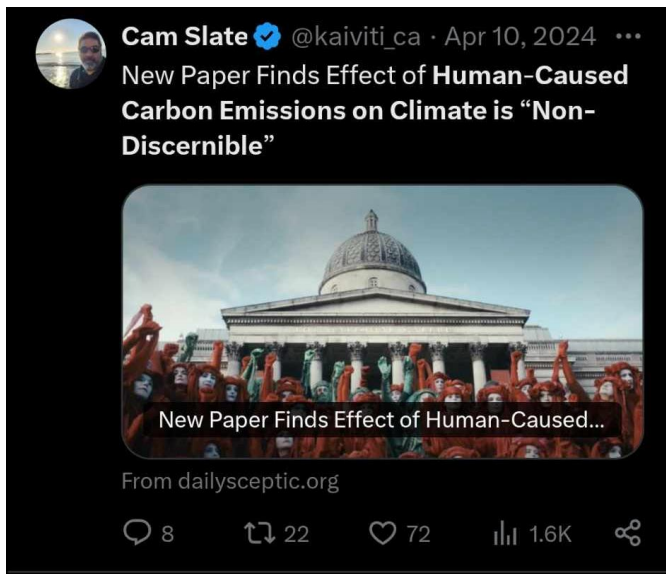
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<sup>29</sup> <https://doi.org/10.3390/sci6010017>

<sup>30</sup> <https://science.feedback.org/outlet/daily-sceptic/>

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

The article was republished by a magazine that is called “*whatsupwiththat*”<sup>31</sup>. This article and the original article by The Daily Sceptic were shared extensively on the social media platform X (Formerly known as Twitter). The most viewed post was a user called “Cam Slate”, with 1.6 thousand views.<sup>32</sup> The posts that linked the republished version by *whatsupwiththat* got a little bit less attention. All the post just copied the caption of the article and linked them to the article below in the post. So, little to no interpretation of the article is added in the X post we identified.<sup>33</sup>



One post by an account “Owen Gregorian” has been identified for sharing climate related misinformation in other case study reports, so this account appears to be very actively following climate sceptic articles, magazines and actively shares in on their platform.

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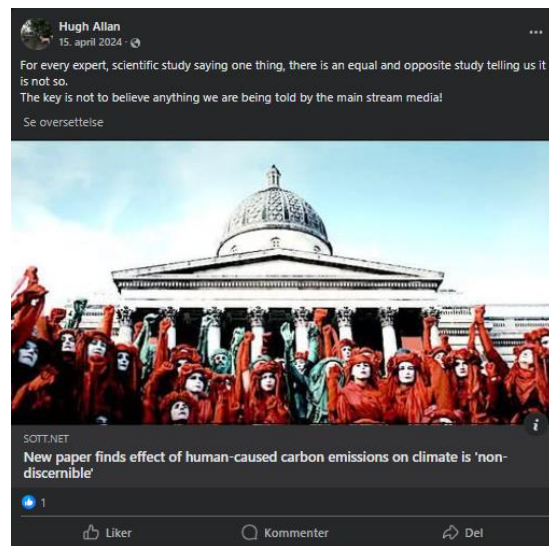
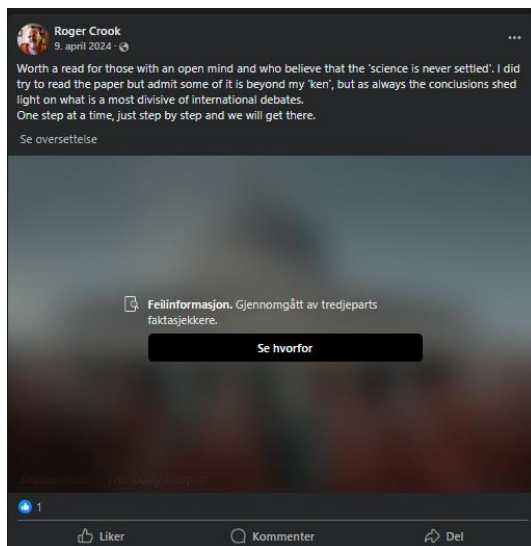
<sup>31</sup> <https://x.com/wattsupwiththat/status/1777682939100164461>

<sup>32</sup> [https://x.com/kaiviti\\_cam/status/1777911479251218710](https://x.com/kaiviti_cam/status/1777911479251218710)

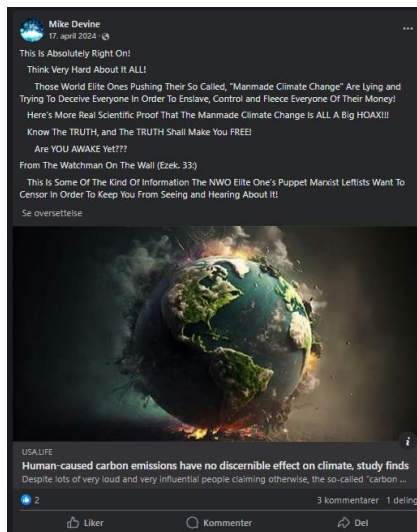
<sup>33</sup> <https://x.com/OwenGregorian/status/1780571242212335650>



The story had also been shared on Facebook, but most of the posts were flagged as misinformation.



One of the Facebook posts stated, "The key is not to believe anything we are being told by the main stream media". This post also cited the story from another website again called "Sott.net".



Another post stated that;

*"...Those World Elite Ones Pushing Their So Called"Manmade Climate Change" Are Lying and Trying to Deceive Everyone In Order To Enslave, Control and Fleece Everyone Of Their Money! Here's More Real Scientific Proof That The Manmade Climate Change Is ALL A Big HOAX!!!..."*

The story clearly appeals to a very anti-establishment and climate denialist audience.

## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The article itself has 20 comments, with the top rated comment has received 184 likes. On social media, the most viewed post was on X by an account called *Cam Slate* with 1.6 thousand views, 72 likes, 22 reposts.

## CREDIBILITY

The Daily Sceptic is a well-established blog that caters to an already climate-skeptical audience. For this group, the story presented in the article appears credible. The scientific basis of the story is less important to this audience; even if the studies referenced are cherry-picked, the audience places more trust in "alternative science." As such, whether the papers are credible within the broader scientific community is irrelevant to how credible they seem to the blog's readers.

A highly liked comment by a user named "varmint" illustrates this sentiment. The comment acknowledges the findings as interesting but dismisses the value of engaging with science-based arguments. It suggests that since climate policies are not grounded in genuine science, attempting to "play on the field of science" only benefits the so-called "climate establishment." The popularity of this comment, reflected by the many likes it received, shows that this perspective resonates strongly with The Daily Sceptic's readership.



**varmint** 8 months ago

Chris thankyou ----I appreciate all your hard work. This is ofcourse an interesting development. ----- I have come to the conclusion though that arguing about "science" is playing into the hands of the climate establishment. While we are all busy arguing about "science", the charlatans are getting on with what it is really all about —POLITICS. The Net Zero and Sustainable Development Politics doesn't even depend on "science". We are told day and night on mainstream News that the "science" says this and it says that. We are told "Listen to the scientists"----But almost all of this climate alarmism is based on Modelling. But modelling full of speculations, and assumptions about what effect CO2 will have on the climate is NOT SCIENCE, and the truth is that even the most basic parameters are poorly understood. There are no experts or scientists or modelers who know what the climate is going to do in 50 or 100 years. We now live in an age where science has been hijacked for political purposes. It has morphed into Post Modern Science where you don't require any evidence and observations don't even have to align with your theory. You simply form huge political bodies (IPCC) and declare the Truth in front of the watching media.

👍 184 | -2 🗨️

Source <https://dailysceptic.org/2024/04/08/fresh-science-challenges-unproven-claims-that-human-caused-carbon-dioxide-controls-climate/>

## IMPACT

Assessing the impact of this story is challenging. While it has been widely shared on platforms like X and Facebook, those reposting it seem firmly rooted in their existing ideological positions. However, the Daily Sceptic article likely reinforces these beliefs, bolstering the idea that "real science" supports their viewpoint and dismissing the majority of scientific research as part of an untrustworthy establishment. By presenting selectively chosen scientific evidence, the story has the potential to influence others, leading them to believe there is credible scientific support for the notion that human-caused climate change is a hoax. This could further undermine trust in mainstream climate science and policymaking.

At the same time, the posts we identified on social media sharing this story garnered minimal attention and reflected low activity. Therefore, the impact of this specific story may not have been particularly severe.

## 2.5 EXPERTS PREDICT -40 DEGREE IN GERMANY

### EXPERTS PREDICT -40 DEGREE IN GERMANY

**Topic:** Climate change | **Source:** Karlsruhe-Insider | **Date:** January 23, 2025 | **URL:** [link](#)  
**Keywords:** -40 degrees, Forecast, Germany | **Author:** Unknown | **Language:** German  
**Flagged:** Disinformation (flagged as false by Corrective Fact-checking : [link](#))

## ARTICLE IN ENGLISH

"Meteorologists are currently casting worried glances at their weather maps, as extreme cold could soon hit Germany. Temperatures of up to -40 degrees are expected in some areas.

Temperatures of up to -40 degrees – this is the extreme cold that some weather experts in Germany are expecting. They are casting worried glances at their weather maps and warning the population to prepare well.

Extreme cold wave: people freeze to death in sub-zero temperatures

North America is currently battling extremely cold temperatures. Even the swearing-in of US President Donald Trump had to be moved to the Capitol because of this cold. Some experts now fear that similar extreme cold could also come to Germany. If, for example, there are long-lasting easterly winds, icy air from Russia could reach Germany and lead to extremely low temperatures there. The weather experts are thinking here of the winter of 1929, which went down in history as the winter of the century. For several weeks, temperatures of around -30 degrees prevailed in Germany.

Such extreme cold caused the whole of Germany to freeze to death, especially given that at that time there were hardly any heating systems as we know them today. In the USA, the extreme cold wave is currently causing considerable disruption. In addition to blizzards, there are repeated power outages and even airports have had to be closed. Anyone who goes out on the street without protection can expect to freeze within a few minutes. Fortunately, the exact same extreme cold will not come to Germany, as the Gulf Stream largely protects Europe from the cold air and it is therefore not possible for the cold to travel across the Atlantic. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that people here will also have to shiver in freezing temperatures. However, temperatures in Germany will probably not be as extreme as in the USA. In the worst case, weather experts expect temperatures of up to -20 degrees at night.

Weather experts issue warning

People must prepare Extreme cold in Germany is not completely out of the question, but it is unlikely to be as dramatic as in North America. Nevertheless, people in this country should prepare for cold nights. If an extreme winter weather does occur, this could have a significant impact on traffic. In addition to airport closures and black ice on the roads, there could also be train cancellations. This would make everyday life much more difficult for Germans.”

## CONTEXT

In January 2025, there has been extremely cold temperatures in the US, reaching down to -40 degrees Celsius in some places like in the Dakotas and northern Minnesota <sup>34</sup>. However, the article insinuates that it can become equally as cold in Germany the coming weeks of 2025, which is inaccurate. Such colds are almost impossible in Germany, due to the gulf stream hindering arctic temperatures <sup>35</sup>.

This is not the first time this news outlet has published a similar story. KA-insider published a story also 17. December of 2021 claiming that Germany was to expect extreme cold temperatures of -40 degrees for Christmas that year. <sup>36</sup>Claiming that some experts predict this. Corrective fact-checking found no evidence of any experts claiming this back in 2021, and no one from KA-insider could tell where this current claim of -40 degrees comes from either.

## CONTENT

In the headline and in the introduction of the article, it appears that the claims are referring to Germany. “Meteorologists are currently casting worried glances at their weather maps, as extreme cold could soon hit Germany. Temperatures of up to -40 degrees are expected in some areas.” However, the article does not go into the temperature claimed in the title. Instead, it says: “However, temperatures in Germany will probably not be as extreme as in the USA. In the worst case, weather experts expect temperatures of up

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/extreme-cold-temperatures-forecast-for-much-of-the-u-s-in-days-ahead>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.merkur.de/deutschland/arctic-outbreak-wetterexperte-skizziert-frost-szenario-fuer-deutschland-erfrierungen-innerhalb-von-minuten-zr-93519928.html#:~:text=Besonders%20bei%20langanhaltenden%20Ostwindlagen%20k%C3%B6nnen,Grad%20in%20Deutschland%20gemessen%20wurden.>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.karlsruhe-insider.de/news/kaeltelawine-es-drohen-eisige-statt-weiße-weihnachten-in-deutschland-90169>

to -20 degrees at night." So, they go back on their claim in the article itself. It was asked of Karlsruhe Insider who the sources for the adventurous forecast were, and Corrective fact-checking did not receive a response before publication of their fact-checking of this story.

Most of the main body of the article focuses not on Germany at, but instead the wave of cold air over the US. It still is without a doubt that the headline claims that these extreme cold temperatures are anticipated in Germany.

This connection of bringing multiple cases of extreme cold weather is meant to illustrate how there is no global warming. This twisting of weather and climate, to use singular extreme cold weather events to use as evidence to undermine that the climate is getting warmer overall.

## INFORMATION SOURCES

Based on a website called Trustpilot, Karlsruhe-Insider's rating reveals a low score of 1.3 out of 5, with numerous user reviews describing it as unreliable, often using the term "Lügepresse" (lying press). Many comments criticize its content for being sensationalist and containing misleading or alternative narratives<sup>37</sup>. While the website does not appear on official "fake news" lists and has no known ties to Russian disinformation networks, its tendency to publish exaggerated headlines raises concerns. Given this pattern, its reporting should be approached with caution and critical scrutiny.

## FOLLOWING THE THREAD

The Article by Karlsruhe-Insider was found shared on TikTok. The article was not identified to be shared on X (Formerly known as Twitter).



## ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The post on TikTok published by the account *DR.X\_OFFIZIELL* received 7383 likes, 4535 comments and shared 9102 times. Another post on TikTok by the account *Oncescu* received 13 likes, 17 comments and no shares. (04.02.2025).

<sup>37</sup> <https://de.trustpilot.com/review/karlsruhe-insider.de>

## CREDIBILITY

The claim that temperatures in Germany will drop to  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  lacks credibility, as it is not supported by expert sources or verifiable data. Additionally, the article contradicts itself, further weakening its reliability. Climate denialists often mix climate and weather to mislead audiences, making such exaggerated claims seem plausible to those already skeptical of climate science. However, the falsehood will be self-evident once the predicted extreme temperatures fail to materialize, demonstrating the story's lack of scientific validity and undermining its overall impact.

## IMPACT

It is challenging to assess the exact impact of a false story such as this case. Due to the reasons in the assessment of credibility, the story is most impactful on readers who only read the headline and not the rest of the story. The story seems also not to have had a big reach on social media compared to other stories, so the impact seems to be limited.

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## 3 POLARIZING NARRATIVES- THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND CLIMATE CHANGE – Joen Martinsen, Pascaline Gaborit

### 3.1 POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND NARRATIVES

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European democracies face significant challenges from narratives that exploit deep-seated fears and prejudices, creating societal fractures along political, ethnic, gender, and religious lines (Butcher & Neidhard, 2020: 5). These narratives frame facts and shape public discourse by influencing individual beliefs through exposure to different versions of reality. Such selective exposure drives polarization and deepens ideological divisions (Antinyian et al., 2022). In this paper, polarizing narratives specifically refer to *political polarization*, the process where public opinion splits toward extremes, dividing national politics into two opposing imagined communities (Schedler, 2023: 344). This division creates a stark divergence in political attitudes and ideologies, eroding common ground and intensifying partisanship. These narratives divide people by creating separate realities for different groups (Butcher & Neidhard, 2020).

Some topics are especially prone to competing narratives, which widen political and social divisions. In recent years, two prominent issues in European discourse—climate change and the war in Ukraine—have been focal points of false narratives that fuels polarization on these topics (EDMO, 2022; Sessa, 2022). These two topics are not exclusive and are simultaneous than other polarizing narratives in particular surrounding refugees and migrants in several European countries (Cordonier L. 2024). The war in Ukraine, in particular, has been shaped by Russian disinformation campaigns aimed at weakening Ukrainian nationalism, reducing support for alignment with the West, and exacerbating internal divisions within Ukraine. These narratives extend beyond the borders of Ukraine, influencing how the war is perceived internationally, playing into a larger “information war”. Research indicates a growing divergence in public opinion between Western countries (the so-called "united West") and other global actors such as India, China, and Turkey, where perspectives on the war are less critical of Russian aggression. In these regions, there is greater support for Ukraine accepting territorial and economic concessions to achieve a swift resolution, a stance that contradicts the prevailing Western position (Garton Ash et al., 2023). Similarly, climate change has been a subject of intense debate, with competing narratives often fueled by political and economic interests. These narratives exploit scientific uncertainties to frame reality in ways that serve specific agendas, contributing to public confusion and resistance to climate policies. Within these two topics, this paper will address some common narratives that have this polarizing effect.

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### 3.2 POLARIZING NARRATIVES- WAR IN UKRAINE

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As part of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russian tactics involve spreading strategic narratives about the conflict to shape public perception, not only within Ukraine but also internationally. Short after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, a senior researcher at the EU DisInfoLab Giovanna Sessa mapped out emerging false narratives and categorized disinformation narratives about the war in Ukraine into four broad themes: (1) military escalation, (2) the construction of the enemy, (3) conspiracy theories, and (4) the human cost of war These narratives serve to distort public understanding by sowing doubt

about military actions and responsibility for attacks, portraying Ukraine and Western allies as aggressors or complicit actors, undermining trust in world leaders, and downplaying the humanitarian consequences of the conflict (Sessa, 2022)<sup>38</sup>.

Building on DisInfoLab's findings, this paper examines the disinformation landscape three years into the war. It identifies new narratives designed to sow division between Ukraine and other countries, creating confusion and paralysis about the conflict. A prominent disinformation theme focuses on corruption allegations within Ukrainian leadership, particularly targeting President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. False claims—including accusations that Zelenskyy purchased luxury hotels and yachts with foreign aid—have circulated widely to portray him as a corrupt leader misusing international assistance. This narrative appears strategically crafted to undermine Western support for Ukraine, demonstrating how disinformation adapts to geopolitical developments.

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### 3.3 EXAMPLE OF NARRATIVES: GENOCIDE OF ETHNIC RUSSIANS IN EASTERN UKRAINE AND MANIPULATED MEMORY OF WW2

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One prominent narrative promoted by Kremlin claims that Ukrainian nationalists attempted genocide against ethnic Russians in the eastern provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk. This narrative has been used as a key justification for Russia's military invasion, which began on February 24, 2022. It fits into a broader rhetorical frame that portrays Ukraine as a "Nazi" state committing "Russophobic" acts of genocide against Russians. While this narrative may seem irrelevant if no absurd to Western audiences, it draws on decades of Russian propaganda rooted in a manipulated and distorted narrative revolving around World War II history. These narratives are aimed at shaping how Russians understand the conflict through official channels. The Russian genocide narrative is a part of a larger frame of Ukraine being led by a Russophobic Nazi government that commits genocide on Russians. Fortuin (2022) illustrates how this frame developed over time in five stages, from an embryonic stage in post-Soviet Russia and the Donbas in Ukraine, to the final stage with the full-blown invasion of Ukraine with the encouragement of the Russian army to commit atrocities against Ukrainian civilians. Fortuin (2022) points to the first coherent use of the "Nazi-genocide" frame emerged in Ukraine as early as 2003, when the pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko was portrayed by his opponents as a Nazi who wanted to purify the Donbas region. This narrative is polarizing because it directly challenges the widely accepted view in the West: that Ukraine was illegally invaded by a Russian government seeking to assert historical dominance over its neighbor. Western leaders, particularly in Europe, support this perspective and base their military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine on the principle of defending a sovereign nation against aggression.

Furthermore, the Russian genocide narrative is provocative, as it mirrors Ukrainian claims that the Soviet Union committed genocide against Ukrainians during the 1930s and 1940s — a claim Russia continues to deny. By accusing Ukrainians of genocide, Russia weaponized the term against those who see themselves as historical victims, adding another layer of offense. The Ukrainian discourse surrounding Soviet-era

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/ukraine-conflict-disinformation-worldwide-narratives-and-trends/>

atrocities serves to frame Ukrainians as victims of Moscow, legitimizing modern nationalist efforts to break away from Russian influence and align more closely with the European Union.

The deployment of the term "genocide" within the context of the Ukraine conflict serves to intensify divisions and exacerbate polarization, owing to its emotionally charged nature. Russia invokes this term to legitimize its military interventions, while Ukraine employs it to solicit support from Western nations for its sovereignty and independence (Irvin-Erickson, 2017). Chaban and Zhabotynska (2024) observed that this narrative has been disseminated beyond Europe, reaching audiences in China and the broader Global South. This global propagation suggests a strategic effort to influence international perceptions of the conflict, thereby contributing to heightened polarization regarding the war in Ukraine.

## CORRUPTION OF UKRAINIAN LEADERS AND ELITES

Pro-Kremlin disinformation has consistently portrayed Ukrainian elites as deeply corrupt, aiming to delegitimize Ukraine's leadership and erode international support. This narrative frames figures like President Zelenskyy and former President Poroshenko as puppets of oligarchs or actors complicit in systemic graft. Russian state media and affiliated outlets have claimed that Western financial and military aid is being siphoned off by corrupt officials. These portrayals are designed to undermine Ukraine's democratic legitimacy and justify Russian aggression (AI4DEBUNK D.12.4).

Such disinformation often paints Ukraine's anti-corruption institutions as mere façades imposed by the West, suggesting that real reform is impossible under current leadership. Pro-Kremlin narratives exploit public distrust in politics by circulating manipulated reports, such as distorted interpretations of existing reports, to accuse Ukrainian leaders of hiding illicit wealth. The overarching goal is not just to discredit Ukrainian elites but to cast Ukraine itself as a failed, ungovernable state unworthy of Western investment or solidarity. This information warfare plays a key role in Russia's broader hybrid strategy against Ukraine and its allies.

While polarizing narratives about the war in Ukraine are fueled by pro Kremlin state and non-state actors, the polarizing narratives about Climate change are much more spread out and diverse. They are also less systematic, in a way that they are not orchestrated by one or several governments. However, the change in the U.S. administration and the attacks on 'climate science' jointly with the decrease in content moderation by the social media platforms could facilitate the circulation of fake news on the matter.

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## 3.4 CLIMATE SCIENCE DENIALISM – DO ALL SCIENTISTS SUPPORT HUMAN CAUSED CLIMATE CHANGE?

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Science denialism supports polarizing narratives widely Vihma et al. (2021) define climate science denialism as the rejection of the established scientific consensus on climate change. This narrative seeks to counter the widely cited claim that 97% of climate scientists agree on the anthropogenic origins of climate change, with some studies indicating an even higher level of consensus (Turton, 2021). Vihma et al. (2021) further link this narrative to far-right actors, who portray climate change as a fabrication orchestrated by liberal elites to justify regulatory interventions. This discourse finds a large echo in some part of civil society including poorer groups and rural residents including farmers. This discourse not only politicizes climate science but also fosters societal divisions by framing environmental policies as instruments of ideological control. Other studies have found similar results. A study by Jylhä and Hellmer (2020) found out that individuals who oppose multiculturalism and feminism are more likely to reject

climate science. This could be interpreted as climate denialism functioning as a mechanism reinforcing ideological divides and promoting conservative roles in society (in line with several populist movements). This Climate Denialism is however multifaceted, and fake news can be relayed by polluters themselves using discredit of activists (AI4DEBUNK D.12.4.). The rejection of scientific consensus impedes constructive discourse on climate policy. By fostering distrust in mainstream media and scientific institutions, climate denialism exacerbates polarization, making meaningful policy discussions increasingly contentious. The propagation of this narrative undermines public confidence in scientific expertise and hinders collaborative efforts to address climate change effectively.

### CLIMATE CATASTROPHE NARRATIVE CAN ALSO BE POLARIZING

While some subscribe to extreme narratives of scientific denialism, some are more skeptical, but not in the science itself, rather on climate change impacts and on the policies. In this context, Cobb (2025) discussed the concept of "secondary denialism," where individuals acknowledge climate change but downplay its urgency. On the other side of the spectrum, we witness narratives of extreme urgency, featuring claims that climate change will inevitably lead to world ending scenarios and promoted by activists when not survivalists' movements. Killingworth and Palmer's (1996) looked at contemporary apocalyptic narrative of ecology, environment and climate change – namely, fear – and connect this with discourses about extreme weather and climate from earlier eras. Essentially, the apocalyptic climate change narrative aligns with this 'end of the world's scenario (Bushell, 2017). This apocalyptic narrative is polarizing as it can contribute to construct groups that see climate change as the most important issue of our time and leaves very little middle ground for people who feel this narrative is exaggeration. It presents climate action through ultimatums, to either act now or face catastrophe, which has been criticized for not being an effective strategy to make people act. Weston (2020) reviews this narrative and argues that although the apocalyptic climate narrative can make people more concerned about climate change, it does not lead to people taking more action or long-term enhancement in the issue (p.6-7). Also, the paper also points to the possibility that the narrative can lead to increased climate change denialism (Weston, 2020: 7-8). So, although this narrative is meant to help people understand the urgency and severity of climate change, it could be argued that it also contributes to a polarizing effect on the climate change debate.

### NARRATIVES ON WINDFARMS

Wind farm contrarianism has become a prominent feature of political discourse surrounding climate change, particularly in debates over renewable energy infrastructure. Opposition to wind farms is no longer confined to fringe voices; it has entered the mainstream, often reinforced by misinformation campaigns. Winter et al. (2024) found that a significant portion of the public is susceptible to such misinformation: over 25% of their survey respondents agreed with half or more of the false or misleading claims presented about wind energy. This suggests not only a widespread presence of misinformation but also a deeper ideological or emotional resistance to wind farms themselves. Many individuals appear willing to accept and even endorse false claims as a way to rationalize their opposition—whether due to aesthetic concerns, distrust of government policy, or broader scepticism toward climate initiatives. This pattern points to a politicized rejection of wind power, where factual accuracy becomes secondary to expressing identity-based or ideological positions.

## IMPACTS OF CLIMATE EVIDENCE SCEPTICISM ON FARMERS PROTESTS

Sometimes anger and divisions can manifest themselves in large movements which reflect larger polarizing narratives in our societies. During the summer of 2024, a series of farmers protests broke out in major European Countries, like Germany, France, Belgium, Poland, who showed discontent with the EU climate policies targeted on the agricultural industry to cut emissions in European food production as they felt it was imposed on them as a top down and not consulted decisions. In the growing environment fueled by distrust about European Institutions, polarizing narratives have emerged opposing climate action and support to agriculture. The farmers were negative to climate initiatives at the European and country level, for example the European Commission withdrew one of its climate policies against the use of pesticides at the beginning of February and put the nature restoration laws on ice again after member states withdrew support (Barnes, 2024; O’Carroll, 2024; The Guardian, 2024). Similarly, on the 18th of January in Germany, only a few days after the most prominent farmers’ protest in Berlin, the German government reacted and said they would reconsider the phase-out of tax breaks on agricultural diesel (Mäurer, 2024). Overall, the protest went against climate restrictions.

The protest is rather to be understood as a distrust against central institutions, than as evidence of climate denialism. It shows however that disinformation and misinformation can fuel further distrust and generate protests.

Increased polarized orientation in the climate issue, can according to Aasen (2017) be because of increased use of policy instruments, and focus on policy instruments in political debates. This polarizing orientation could be linked to narratives of evidence scepticism, which is brewing underneath, and gets infused by controversial policy instruments.

## POLARIZING NARRATIVES- CLIMATE CHANGE

In a more recent context, the U.S. president Donald Trump’s renewed attacks on climate science and environmental agencies risk significantly strengthening climate disinformation, both domestically and globally. By casting doubt on the legitimacy of scientific consensus and framing climate action as economically harmful or ideologically driven, we can assume that Trump’s administration reinforces a narrative that delegitimizes environmental regulation and renewable energy policies. His public statements—often shared widely across partisan media and social platforms—lend credibility to fringe claims, enabling misinformation to circulate more freely and with greater impact. This could undermine public trust in climate institutions, sow confusion about the causes and consequences of climate change and jeopardize mitigation efforts. It is expected that this rhetoric does not only disrupts U.S. climate policy but also emboldens disinformation actors abroad who benefit from a weakened Western commitment to environmental leadership.

Climate Change has become a polarizing political issue that features many polarizing narratives. There is a lot of evidence that points to an increased polarization surrounding Climate Change. Especially evidence of increased ideological polarization on online platforms (Falkenberg et al., 2022). Discourse on climate change when it first emerged in the 1980s which was all non-skeptical to climate science, but political discourse on climate change has evolved over the decades to become increasingly skeptical, which has contributed to more polarizing opinions (Chinn et al., 2020). This trend has major negative consequences, as polarization causes the public to lose trust in authorities. Poelzer (2024) points to an increase in anti-elitist sentiment and the rise of populist parties and connects these trends with increasing polarization on many issue dimensions, including climate change. These findings illustrate how polarizing narratives

regarding climate change are also linked to negative sentiments of the establishment, as media, politicians and other actors who could be perceived elitist. As polarization continues to grow, the barriers to finding policy solutions increases because of ideological polarization (Lelkes, 2016). Polarizing narratives on climate change can contribute to an environment where proposing climate policies becomes more challenging and complicated. False news creates many false narratives which contribute to this polarization of climate change. Primarily, the narrative that climate change is not real, and not related to human activity (EDMO, 2022). Undermining the established media, and science is a part of this scepticism to climate change, and builds narratives that frames these establishments as idiotic, inconsistent and saw doubt about their legitimacy and knowledge (EDMO, 2022).

Polarizing narratives are increasingly laced with hate speech, targeting specific ethnic groups (e.g. Ukrainians or Russians abroad), environmental activists, political opponents, and migrants. Disinformation often reinforces xenophobic or misogynistic tropes—portraying climate activists as "elitist extremists" or linking Ukrainian nationalism with Nazism. These attacks not only deepen societal divisions but also create hostile environments that silence democratic participation and escalate real-world violence. The blurring of disinformation and hate speech demands urgent regulatory and civil society responses.

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## 4 A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND FORENSIC LINGUISTICS METHODS APPLIED TO A CORPUS OF DISINFORMATION CASES ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE- Alessia D’Andrea, Arianna D’Ulizia

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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The role of disinformation as a tool for hybrid warfare is now widely recognized within the international security system. Since 2015, official European Union documents have highlighted that "Massive disinformation campaigns, using social media to control the political narrative or to radicalize, recruit, and direct proxy actors, can be vehicles for hybrid threats". In this context, the EU identifies the Russian Federation as the primary actor exploiting disinformation to destabilize European internal balances. To counter this threat, the European Union has adopted a multidisciplinary approach, in which linguistics plays a key role in identifying disinformation campaigns used for foreign interference (D’Andrea et al., 2025; D’Andrea et al., in press).

This study aims to analyze a linguistic corpus of disinformative news items from Russian sources, focused on the war in Ukraine. The research will systematically present the linguistic markers commonly associated with disinformation, with the goal of identifying their presence or absence within the corpus. The analysis uses an approach from Forensic Linguistics (Olsson 2008; Coulthard et al. 2017), focused on identifying linguistic evidence within discursive materials, integrated with Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak & Meyer 2009), which allows for placing the linguistic analysis within the broader context of power dynamics and socio-political structures involved in the corpus under analysis. The paper first outlines and describes the linguistic markers typical of disinformation, then discusses the process of constructing the corpus, and finally presents the results of the analysis.

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### 4.2 BACKGROUND

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In recent years, as the debate around disinformation has intensified, several branches of linguistics have focused their attention on the identification of specific linguistic indicators recurring in misleading news, identified as "predictive deception cues" (Conroy et al., 2016). Referring to the main contributions of linguistic research in the field of disinformation, this study aims to develop an analytical framework that identifies the main linguistic and stylistic patterns characteristic of disinformation, in order to trace their presence in the investigated linguistic corpus related to the case study of the Ukrainian war. In particular, disinformation conveyed through online articles is a complex phenomenon, which exploits a variety of linguistic devices operating on different levels of the text. These strategies manifest themselves already from the title, and then extend to the syntactic structure, semantic aspects, sentimental analysis and, finally, persuasive strategies based on the use of argumentation. Each of these levels systematically contributes to the construction of a manipulative narrative, the aim of which is to orient the reader

towards predefined interpretations with the desire to control their opinion, relying on emotions and immediate perceptions rather than on a rational and in-depth analysis (AGCOM, 2018).

Starting with the titles, there is a tendency to create a high information density, condensing relevant information into an extended and often complex structure. In fact, the titles of uninformative news are on average longer than those of authentic news, with the aim of presenting a complete message that can be easily assimilated without requiring further in-depth analysis, a strategy well suited to rapid consumption. The title tend to favour key words that refer to commonly used vocabulary, accompanied by proper nouns and action verbs, which evoke a sense of urgency and a direct link to the reader (Horne et al. 2017; Revenko, 2020). Such lexical choices often correlate with a strong emotional charge by privileging the reader's emotional sphere rather than the rational one.

From a syntactic point of view, low reliability news is characterised by the high presence of subordinates, such as relative propositions, aimed at providing apparently credible but hardly verifiable details (Grieve et al. 2023). This type of construction contrasts with the traditional journalistic approach, which favours a linear and compact syntax based on nominal sentences. In disinformation news, on the other hand, information is distributed over a larger number of sentences, giving the impression of a rich text, but reducing its information density. A further distinctive syntactic element is the extensive use of the passive voice, which allows the agent of the action to be concealed or emphasised depending on narrative needs. Specifically, when the verbal action is negatively connoted and the subject of the action is perceived as an adverse party, the agent is made explicit in order to emphasise responsibility and fuel feelings of anger against it. Conversely, the agent may be omitted to conceal responsibility when it does not benefit the news creator, thus creating ambiguity and limiting the reader's ability to verify the facts. This linguistic stratagem, widely used in disinformation news, allows the interpretation of events to be manipulated in favour of specific interests by selectively hiding or highlighting information (Grieve et al. 2023; Mahyob et al. 2021; Sousa-Silva 2022).

At the semantic level, a high degree of ambiguity can be found in low reliability news. It manifests itself through a disproportionate use of personal pronouns instead of specific nouns and through a deliberately generic lexical choice. Although pronouns are useful tools for ensuring textual cohesion and coherence, their excessive use can undermine the clarity and precision of the text, making it difficult for the reader to follow concrete references to the subjects performing the actions (Rashkin et al. 2017). Ambiguity is also reinforced by the presence of hedging words that soften the intensity of statements and create an effect of detachment or uncertainty (Grieve 2023). Although such expressions are also common in authentic news, it is their management that affects the overall perception of credibility. In fact, the uncertainty in inauthentic news is counterbalanced by the equally significant presence of evaluative and emphatic adverbs that intensify reality, whereas there is an almost total absence of adverbs of place and time, which are instead common in reliable news.

On the other hand, the study by Carvalho et al. (2021) focuses on demonstrating how untrustworthy news reports use emotionally charged language thus made up of a marked lexicon characterised by a negative orientation and a high frequency of adjectives and superlatives. This fuels the emotional intensity of the text in sharp contrast to traditional journalistic conventions, which favour neutral vocabulary and numerical data to contextualise and verify information. Emotional intensity is thus functional in capturing the audience's attention and influencing their perception through instant engagement mechanisms (Carvalho et al. 2021)

Finally, disinformation news tends to reduce the complexity of the reasoning it proposes into a dichotomous structure, eliminating ambiguities and interpretative alternatives. This approach exploits simplistic logical inferences that steer the reader towards predetermined conclusions. At the same time, the absence of empirical support, such as verifiable data or references to scientific studies, is compensated for by rhetorical language that appeals to emotions such as those of fear and urgency (Zhang et al. 2018; Carvalho et al. 2021).

These linguistic devices, widely documented in various unreliable news corpora, contribute to constructing a manipulated reality, in which the reader is guided to rely on a narrative deliberately shaped within the discourse itself. This discourse becomes the vehicle of interests and goals that transcend the content of the individual news item, becoming part of a structured and complex disinformation strategy.

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### 4.3 DATA AND METHOD

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The object of analysis in this study is Russian disinformation regarding the Ukrainian war, which is why the corpus analysed in this paper was built from the database of EUvsDisinfo<sup>39</sup>, one of the main tools of the European External Action Service (EEAS) dedicated to monitoring and documenting instances of Russian disinformation in the European area. The corpus comprises articles published by various media between 24 February 2021 and 24 February 2023, a period in which the Russian invasion of 24 February 2022 catalysed intense media disinformation activity related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The initial selection was performed using the filters available in the database, based on language (English), period and keywords such as ‘War against Ukraine’ and ‘Full-scale invasion of Ukraine’ resulting in a total of 71 reported instances of disinformation. Subsequently, a cleansing of the data was performed, excluding articles reported as English language but which were not, in order to avoid distortions due to translations and to ensure the linguistic coherence necessary for the analysis, non-accessible content such as inactive links, social media posts or video content in order to maintain the homogeneity of the text corpus and focus exclusively on journalistic articles. The decision to focus on digital newspaper articles stems from the need to analyse more extended texts, which allow for an in-depth exploration of the linguistic and rhetorical devices described in the previous sections. It is important to note that although the corpus is composed of articles, many of these also represent the basis for dissemination on social platforms, given the presence, at the foot of the texts, of explicit invitations to share. This element constitutes a distinctive feature of the analysed corpus.

The choice of selecting articles in English responds to two main purposes. Firstly, it guarantees a linguistic consistency that is indispensable for an accurate analysis, avoiding interpretative distortions that could result from translation. Secondly, it reflects the aim of analysing uninformative content aimed primarily at a Western European audience, presumably reached through the use of English. Although this targeting is not explicitly stated in the database, it can be reasonably inferred from the choice of language and the fact that some of the articles in English are also present in other Western European languages, such as French, German and Italian.

The final corpus thus consists of 46 articles related to the war in Ukraine from five different media, respectively:

- 19 articles from TASS (Russian News Agency), Russia's oldest and most authoritative state-owned news agency in charge of disseminating official communications;
- 11 articles by RT (Russia Today), a media organ closely linked to Russian state structures and directly funded by the government;
- 9 articles by Sputnik, also openly connected to the Kremlin and financially supported by the Russian authorities;

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<sup>39</sup> <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>

- 5 articles by NewsFront (one of which was also disseminated through Sputnik), a multimedia platform registered in Russia and associated with pro-Kremlin narratives.
- 3 articles from Geopolitika.ru, a geopolitical analysis portal registered in Russia and affiliated with pro-Kremlin positions.

Prior to analysis, the texts underwent a cleaning process to remove elements such as images, advertisements, and meta-information.

The compiled linguistic corpus was subjected to a qualitative analysis employing a methodology grounded in forensic linguistics (Olsson, 2008; Coulthard et al., 2017), with the objective of identifying the most recurrent linguistic features in news classified as unreliable. This approach was integrated with the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as outlined by Van Dijk (1998), with the objective of situating the corpus within its socio-cultural and situational context. Such integration facilitated the examination of discourse not as a neutral phenomenon but as one shaped by the power dynamics inherent in the corpus and the relationships among the actors represented, as reconstructed through language.

The analysis was conducted on two distinct levels: a micro-textual level, focusing on lexical and syntactic features, and a macro-textual level, which involved the interpretation of larger textual units beyond individual clauses. This dual-layered approach enabled the identification of rhetorical strategies and the detection of emotional intensity within the examined texts.

The study pursued two main objectives:

1. To determine the presence or absence within the corpus of all the linguistic and rhetorical devices highlighted in previous studies on unreliable news.
2. To identify distinctive linguistic features within the corpus characteristics of the corpus not reported in earlier research.

The adoption of this methodological framework, integrating perspectives from forensic linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of the discursive phenomena that characterize it. It is essential to note that the corpus consisted of news items already identified as unreliable by EUvsDisinfo. This status was taken as given and not subject to further scrutiny, while the corpus's explicitly pro-Kremlin perspective, previously acknowledged, was reconfirmed in the analysis.

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## 4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

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The first textual portion analysed in our corpus concerns **titles**, which, in accordance with the reference framework outlined in the first paragraph, do not merely perform a purely introductory function. Rather, they take the form of a central element in disinformation manipulative strategies. As already emphasised in the previous paragraph, the changing habits of online news consumption, characterised by fast reading and, in many cases, reading limited to the title (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2024), give this textual segment a particular importance. One of the first pieces of evidence to emerge from the analysis concerns the length of the titles in our corpus, which is significantly longer than the typical length of titles in authentic news, as highlighted in Horne & Adali's analysis (2017). This length fits in perfectly with the desire to condense a greater amount of information related to the main message to be conveyed in the title. Longer titles enable authors, in fact, to concentrate a large amount of information in a single text segment. In this way, the main message can reach a wider audience, avoiding the need to construct an article structured according to a clickbait logic, aimed at arousing the user's interest and prompting them to go deeper into the content. In the context of politically motivated disinformation articles, the primary objective is to manipulate public opinion, thus reaching as wide a readership as possible. In fact, the titles analysed are autonomous in their meaning and already convey the main message, orienting the

reader's perception, as can be seen in the following examples: *Kiev preparing 'dirty bomb' with West's participation, security chief warns; Stoltenberg; Says No Consensus for Ukraine to Join NATO, Warns Russia Against 'Aggressive Actions; Moscow Has No Plans to Occupy Ukraine, Russia's UN Envoy Says; Russian diplomat dismisses allegations that Russia wants to sweep away Ukraine; Ukraine's unprovoked attack on civilian areas condemned worldwide.*

The reported titles allow us to delve into a further level of analysis, concerning lexical aspects. In particular, the titles in our corpus tend to favour the use of full words (nouns, verbs and adjectives), in line with the need to concentrate crucial information in a limited space. What is interesting is the use of a predominantly common vocabulary, devoid of technicalities specific to the war or political context and thus more accessible to a wide audience. Also specific to the vocabulary used is its emotional connotation, which, together with a closed syntactic construction, directs the reader towards only one possible interpretation. In the title *Belarusian president urges Kiev to engage in talks with Moscow to end Ukrainian crisis*, the choice of the verb 'urges' is not configured as a neutral verb, but rather as a marked verb, as it expresses a sense of urgency and a crucial decision. In this case, the verb suggests that the request is not only urgent, but also implies a strong determination regarding an irrevocable choice that is not open to negotiation. Furthermore, the infinitive 'to end Ukrainian crisis' conveys a rhetorical structure that shifts the responsibility for the crisis entirely onto Kiev, representing the action of ending the conflict as a decision that rests solely with the Ukrainian side.

Another recurring element in the analysed corpus concerns the use of direct or indirect discourse, which contributes to the authoritativeness and credibility of the reported statements, while at the same time creating a detachment between the author of the article and the presented statements. For example, in the titles "*Kiev preparing 'dirty bomb' with West's participation, security chief warns*" and "*Russian strikes a response to Ukrainian 'terrorism' - Putin*", the use of indirect discourse and quotations from authoritative figures (such as the security chief and Putin) serves to legitimise and reinforce the message. However, within the textual development of the article, this type of narrative construction lends an effect of detachment from the claims by casting doubt on the authenticity of the claims, as we will see more clearly later.

At the **syntactic level**, in the corpus analysed, one observes a predominant use of subordinate clauses and relative constructions, employed primarily to convey interpretative clues rather than to enrich informational content. Let us take the example: *Because the Kiev regime is currently subjected to two mechanisms of external control: the West, led by the US, and the neo-Nazis, who promote their 'culture,' which blooms in the modern Ukraine.* In this passage, the relative does not merely perform a descriptive function, but directs the reader towards the perception of an expanding threat, helping to build an alarmist frame on the national scenario. The details provided by a relative clause, in reliable news, are generally employed to qualify or precisely identify the referent, offering sufficient data to verify its authenticity. In the corpus under analysis, however, such information appears to serve only an ostensibly qualificative role (Grieve & Woodfield, 2023). Consider the example: *Russian President Vladimir Putin has told a journalist previously imprisoned by authorities in Kiev for reporting on the conflict.* The relative clause 'previously imprisoned by authorities in Kiev for reporting on the conflict' appears as a qualifying detail about the journalist but fails to offer any verifiable information. Instead, it functions to reinforce a negative narrative about the enemy. The massive use of subordinates and relative clauses, not intended to increase information density, contrasts with traditional journalistic conventions based on syntactic linearity and synthesis. In fact, in reliable journalistic texts, there is a tendency to compress as much information as possible in a limited space, resorting to nominal sentences and linear structures functional to clarity and communicative effectiveness.

In the corpus under review, however, this procedure is subverted, as is most evident from a macro-textual analysis: *Kiev regime controlled by West, neo-Nazis, Lavrov says Russia's top diplomat stressed that nobody intended to attack the Ukrainian people and nobody intended to treat Ukrainian Armed Forces service in*

*a manner that humiliated human dignity MOSCOW, February 25. /TASS/. The current Kiev authorities are being controlled by Western states led by the US, and by proponents of neo-Nazism, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a press conference Friday. "Nobody intends to attack the Ukrainian people; nobody intends to treat Ukrainian Armed Forces service in a manner that humiliates human dignity. We are talking about preventing the neo-Nazis and those who promote methods of genocide from ruling this country," he said. "Because the Kiev regime is currently subjected to two mechanisms of external control: the West, led by the US, and the neo-Nazis, who promote their 'culture,' which blooms in the modern Ukraine." Answering a question from an American reporter, Lavrov recommended the Western media to meticulously examine official statements made by Russia. "I drew attention of two previous reporters to what President Putin said. I understand that you have other things to do than read the statements that describe the Russian position in minute details, but I invite you to do it nevertheless. Maybe, you will advise your Ukrainian colleagues, representatives of Ukrainian Armed Forces first and foremost, to read them.*

Indeed, the observation of textual segments that are longer than the simple sentence reveals a redundant narrative structure that repeats the same information through reformulations that do not enrich the informative content but reinforce its emotional perception. In this case, the repeated use of co-ordinate and subordinate clauses tends to reinforce the ideological intensity of the message rather than produce new information. Reformulations of the same concepts are proposed with slight variations, with the intention of consolidating the reader's interpretative orientation, rather than offering them a narrative or analytical development that enriches the understanding of the context. This type of structure is not only inadequate with respect to journalistic deontology, which privileges accuracy and synthesis of information, but also appears as a clear example of a manipulative discursive strategy. The content is repeated in such a way as to induce an emotional reaction in the reader, without stimulating critical reflection, but favouring an automatic response based on repetition.

An additional linguistic device identified in the disinformative texts concerns the strategic use of the passive voice, employed to emphasize or to obscure the agent of the action in advantageous circumstances. In the corpus analysed, this strategy is evident in creating ambiguity about responsibility, especially when this also or only falls on Russia. In 'Over 13,000 people, including children and elderly civilians, have been killed in the conflict, according to UN estimates', the passive structure obscures the agent of action recognisable, through co-textual interpretation, also in Russia. This reduces the perception of culpability. However, while it is true that the use of the passive voice obscures the agent, it is also true that it still implies the presence of an actor who remains in the background of the action, in contrast to other types of grammatical constructions, such as nominalization, which eliminate the agent altogether and are equally employed within our corpus. In fact, we find: *She also emphasized that the United Nations should know from the Russian Defense Ministry's reports that a strike on Vinnitsa, which involved Kalibr high-precision missiles, 'targeted a garrison officers' club where consultations between the command of the Ukrainian air forces and representatives of foreign weapons suppliers were underway.* In this context, agent roles appear blurred or absent altogether, merely emphasising the event 'to strike' instead of the responsible parties through the use of nominalisation, which transforms dynamic processes into static entities, suppressing the agent. A verb such as 'to strike' becomes 'a strike,' with the result of neutralising responsibility and directing attention to the result rather than the perpetrator. We observe a similar process in the statement: *Moscow has repeatedly stated that the decision made by the Crimean people was conducted in full compliance with international law and the UN Charter.* Here, the deletion of the agent by nominalising 'decision' removes the dynamics of the decision-making process, concealing any Russian influence on the outcome, which is presented as a neutral and concluded event. In this case, the use of the passive voice in 'was conducted' effectively obscures the active agent in the process. This linguistic strategy is effective in circumventing any critical scrutiny of Moscow's involvement. At the same time, however, the passive voice in this example does not obscure the 'Crimean people' who, in this manipulative construction, emerge as the sole actors involved in the narrative. Another example of the

passive voice being used as a linguistic device, not to obscure but rather to emphasize the agent, can be found in references to actions attributed to "enemy" subjects, such as *'Grain burned by Ukrainian nationalists'* or *'Kiev regime controlled by West, neo-Nazis.'*

From the point of view of a **semantic-lexical** analysis, there emerges a frequent use of personal pronouns that anchor themselves to nominal referents, favouring their use in place of anonomastic forms. Although personal pronouns are fundamental tools for ensuring textual cohesion and coherence, their excessive use can reduce clarity and expository precision, sometimes making it difficult for the reader to trace the subjects to whom actions refer. In this regard, Rashkin et al. (2017) point out that news stories of lower reliability tend to have a higher frequency of first- and second-person pronouns. In the texts under examination, first and second person pronouns appear predominantly in the plural, and only in rare cases in the singular. However, a single use of the first-person singular pronoun can be observed in a context of marked empathy, aimed at arousing a more intense emotional involvement in the reader. Moreover, although they are not numerous, some first and second person pronouns play a relevant role in pragmatics, helping to construct both an accusatory effect and a call to action. Such pronouns, in fact, are strategically employed to intensify the reader's participation and reactivity: *'You've seen the reasons for this war. The reason is that, had Russia not got ahead of NATO, you [Western states] would have organised yourselves and strike Russia instead,'* Lukashenko said, according to the French version of the interview. *'You are the initial cause [of the conflict] and you continue this war.'*

Of particular interest, however, is the use of first-person plural and third person plural pronouns, which delineate a dichotomous 'us vs. them' narrative. The polarising construction is governed above all by the description of 'Other' through marked semantic occurrences placed in a well-structured cognitive frame, while the formation of 'us' stems from a counter-narrative, often centred on absence or reaction, as we shall see further on. *'And why? Just because they simply don't need such a country as Russia, that's why. This is precisely why they supported terrorism, separatism in Russia, internal destructive forces and the 'fifth column' in our country. They all have been receiving and receive to this day unconditional support on the part of that very collective West,'* he concluded.' In the excerpt quoted, one observes how the pronoun 'they' is placed in the foreground, while 'we' is not made explicit, generating an effect of apparent impartiality or discursive objectivity. The text, in fact, shows a representation strategy based on a well-defined 'they', as opposed to an implicit 'we' that seems to emerge only by contrast. Here it also emerges how the personal pronoun 'he' is preferred to a nominal referent.

Doubtful reports are characterised, among other things, by a high degree of ambiguity achieved through various linguistic devices. Firstly, one observes an intensive use of pronouns (as already emphasised), but also of indefinite expressions such as *'a number of experts'* or *'some of its members'*, which convey only an appearance of authority and conceal, at the same time, the absence of verifiable sources. Incorrect or absent use of temporal and spatial anchors is also recurrent. Apparently precise expressions such as *'Thursday morning'* or *'Monday'* are not anchored to a specific year or month, thus eluding the unambiguous identification of the date - an indispensable feature in authentic texts. Occasionally, the context might orient the reader as to which week is in question, but this is an inferential interpretation based on assumptions, since, even in these cases, there is a lack of real deictic expressions (e.g. 'this Monday') to directly link the enunciated time to the moment of utterance. A further source of vagueness is the frequent use of the indeterminative article 'a' to refer to persons (*'a journalist'*) or to define spatial contexts relating to statements or actions (e.g. *'a meeting'*). Such constructions do not refer to a specific referent and prevent the verification of information, besides not making the communicative framework transparent. The resulting intrinsic vagueness hampers comprehension and the possibility of tracing back to a specific time or place, as exemplified by the expression *'Putin said in a televised address on Thursday morning'*, in which the absence of an explicit reference (such as the year or month) and the reference television broadcast makes it impossible to unambiguously place the event and, consequently, to verify its veracity and reliability.

A further linguistic device of the unreliable news revealed by Grieve & Woodfield's analysis (2023) concerns the high presence of **hedging** words, i.e. lexical forms that attenuate the scope of an assertion and allow the author to distance himself from the expressed content. However, in the corpus examined, such expressions are employed selectively: their function is to instil doubts only when the statement is attributed to the narrative subject 'they,' attributable to Ukraine. Consider, by way of example, the following utterance: *Fomin's press conference came after the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine said it was appalled by a video allegedly showing a Russian soldier castrating a bound and gagged Ukrainian captive.* Here the epistemic adverb 'allegedly' expresses doubt about the content of video. And again: *Russian Defense Ministry Spokesman Igor Konashenkov also pointed out that looters and robbers are on rampage in Kiev while the local authorities claim that 'Russian saboteurs' are active in the city.* In this case, the divergence in **verba dicendi** is also particularly interesting. The Ukrainian statement, introduced by 'claim' (used as a hedging word), manifests an attitude of scepticism, further emphasised by the inverted commas. In contrast, the Russian formulation adopts 'point out', which crystallises the content as fact, devoid of nuances of uncertainty. In parallel, while hedging words preferentially apply to the narrative about Ukraine, there are instead **intensifying adverbs** (e.g. *undoubtedly, absolutely, entirely*), employed to emphasise the absolute validity of certain statements, often associated with Russia's actions or aimed at attributing strongly negative connotations to Ukrainian or Western initiatives. Such adverbs amplify the emotional impact of the text and generate a highly polarised narrative, as can be seen in the example: (...) *which the West and its code of civilisation are not something whole and universal, but only a part and something local, regional and absolutely unnecessary for everything else. Intensifying adverbs are not the only ones detectable, modal and evaluative adverbs also emerge, as in 'Russia says a large granary in the port of Mariupol has been deliberately destroyed'. These lexical choices in fact belie the supposed impartiality of a journalistic text, further highlighted by the focal position (adverb + verb) that produces a markedly emphatic phrasal order, privileging the emotional dimension over the factual one.*

The high rate of **emotional** involvement found in the corpus is also manifested through the recurrence of strongly connoted adjectives ('belligerent rhetoric', 'violent removal', 'calamitous civil war', 'countless and bloody crimes', 'inevitable recession', 'terrorist attack', 'innocent Ukrainian residents'). These constitute stance adjectives: they do not merely describe the referent but orientate the perception by adding a judgement or conveying an emotional tension based on fear. In this way, such adjectives prove functional in an overall linguistic strategy that directs the reception of the message towards a defined ideological orientation, stimulating the reader's emotional sphere. Further amplifying a narrative connoted by feelings of fear, urgency and aggression, emerges in the analysed corpus a strategic and systematic use of a strongly marked lexicon. This phenomenon, already observed in the titles, manifests itself in the preferential use of verbs such as 'escalate', 'strike', 'condemn', 'swallow' and 'threaten', which replace more neutral terms such as 'increase', 'hit', 'criticise', 'include' and 'pose a risk'. Such lexical choices are not neutral, but functional to intensify the perception of urgency, aggression and moral condemnation. For instance, in the sentence 'the alliance has swallowed up all five members of the former Warsaw Pact alliance (including Czechoslovakia, which split into two countries), plus the three Baltic republics of the former Soviet Union, and four republics of the former Yugoslavia – which NATO bombed repeatedly throughout the 1990s,' the verb 'swallow' constructs an imagery that underscores an imbalance of power between the entities involved. This choice of language suggests that the process was characterized by dominance and a lack of mutual agreement. Similarly, the verb 'escalate', as opposed to 'increase', does not merely indicate a quantitative increase, but qualifies it as an out-of-control and irreversible process. Consider the headline: 'More Western weapons supplies to Kiev to bring about escalation - Russian MFA'. Here, the term *escalation* not only describes a change, but interpretatively orients it towards something highly dangerous and inescapable, reinforcing a sense of threat. Furthermore, the nominal modifier 'Western' adds an ideological connotation, suggesting that the arms supplies come from a specific geopolitical context,

associating implicit responsibility with the West. This lexical strategy is related to emotional heuristics, i.e. signals that stimulate quick and instinctive responses in readers, favouring superficial information processing. The marked lexicon thus plays a crucial role in cognitive manipulation, directing interpretation towards emotional rather than rational responses. This approach is consistent with Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM), which distinguishes between a central pathway, based on logical analysis, and a peripheral pathway, which relies on emotional stimuli. In our corpus, uninformative news favours the latter pathway, inducing the reader to take ideological sides without effective critical analysis.

This theme leads us to the final element identified in the analysed corpus, as outlined by the analytical framework introduced in the opening paragraph: what we have termed 'logos,' i.e. the text's **argumentative** mode aimed at supporting a given thesis. A low-credibility news item, in fact, is characterised not only by the absence of references to scientific studies or verifiable data, but also by the use of logical-discursive inferences unsupported by a solid argumentative apparatus. As just observed, these strategies exploit the emotional and irrational component of the reader, privileging emotional involvement over the rational validity of arguments and reducing complexity to a single consequential direction (Zhang et al. 2018; Carvalho et al. 2021). This is largely found in our corpus. Before proceeding with the results that emerged, it is worth highlighting the extensive reliance on direct speech in the analysed news items as it is precisely the statements contained therein that constitute the fundamental premise of the entire argumentative structure. Most of the inferences identified are based on statements from one of the two sides (in this case, Russia), thus generating an inherent fragility in the overall argumentation. Consider the following excerpt: *"In the headquarters of the Right Sector a laptop with intelligence about Donbas and the Crimea and with NATO markings was found," said the head of the Donetsk People's Republic Denis Pushilin. According to him, this is direct evidence that the alliance was helping nationalists in Ukraine. Pushilin said the Ukrainian military was planning to attack Crimea and Donbass on 8 March 2022. "The invasion was planned from land and sea. According to our intelligence and the testimony of Ukrainian captives, the offensive operation was to begin on 8 March this year. The facts indicate that a simultaneous invasion of both the territory of the Donbas Republics and the Russian Federation - Crimea - was planned," the DPR head said. In addition to this evidence, numerous other items characterising the intentions and support of the Kiev regime have been found.* The entire argument thus rests on the DPR's statement alone. Even though the article goes on to express the key message intended to be communicated, i.e. that of Ukraine's alleged planning to attack Russia, the presence of phrasal markers such as *'according to him'* reveals a detachment of the author from what is being reported. Indeed, the use of direct speech throughout the corpus seems to fulfil a dual function. On the one hand, it assigns authority to the text, since it almost always reports statements by institutional figures; on the other hand, it takes the form of a strategy of distancing the author from the enunciated content. It is also important to note the vagueness of the causal phrase *'numerous other items'* which does not provide a concrete and definite reference and description. References to evidence or data in support of the statements are often generic or lack referential anchorage from both a co-textual and contextual point of view. Consider, for example, the statement *'all the evidence shows that the missiles came from the north-western direction, where Kiev's forces were located,'* as well as the reference to "other items" in the previous passage. In most cases, the explicit relationship between cause and effect takes a declarative rather than a demonstrable form, given the absence of factual data to lend solidity to the argument. This lack of empirical support is compensated for by the rhetorical force of the statement itself, which tends to steer the reader towards a predetermined conclusion. Exemplifying further, we find: *"The Ukrainian authorities have declared a curfew and are persuading Kiev residents to stay in their homes," the spokesman said. "This proves once again that the Kiev regime is using urban civilians as 'human shields' for nationalists who have deployed artillery units and combat hardware in the capital's residential areas," the general said.* This narrative mode reduces the complexity of the geopolitical context to a schematic

sequence, eliminating possible ambiguities and nuanced interpretations. The example just cited demonstrates how the logic presented tends to suppress any margin of uncertainty by proposing an unambiguous conclusion presented as inevitable.

A distinctive feature identified within our corpus is the use of **presupposition**, an element with significant manipulative potential. In the field of pragmatic linguistics, presupposition takes the form of implicit information shared by the participants in a communicative act. Paul Grice (1975), with his studies on conversational meaning, laid the foundations for what Robert Stalnaker (2002) was later to formalise in the concept of common ground, i.e. the set of assumptions considered valid and undisputed by the interlocutors. These assumptions are not questioned and constitute the common ground from which further propositions are constructed. An example of an assumption is observed in the sentence '*Donbass republic says removal of social media accounts is in breach of UN principles*'. In the analysis, we may dispute the veracity of the statement regarding the violation of UN principles, but we do not question the existence of the '*Donbass republic*,' although from a contextual point of view (and in accordance with international law) this entity is only recognised by Russia. Similarly, in the headline '*Kiev regime uses local civilians as human shields, says Russia's top brass*', we could object to whether Ukraine does indeed use civilians as human shields, but the cognitive frame that defines Kiev as a '*regime*' is presupposed and is not subjected to critical scrutiny in the text. In fact, even if one were to question the main messages, the assumption underpinning the entire narrative would remain intact, resulting in an extremely incisive cognitive manipulation effect. From a pragmatic point of view, in fact, the propositions that constitute the presuppositions of linguistic expressions cannot be denied as easily or effectively as direct assertions. This characteristic makes it possible to construct, within the text, an alternative 'reality' shaped by the partial perspective of the statement.

The use of the expression '*Kiev regime*' introduces another significant feature within our corpus: the **polarized narrative** "us vs. them," in which "we" is constructed as the positive pole and "they" as the negative pole. Such polarization is a distinctive feature of discourses elaborated in war contexts, as highlighted by Van Dijk (1998), who points out that discursive practices in conflicts tend to construct an image of the other as a threat characterized by dehumanizing traits. The analysis of this phenomenon within our corpus allows us to highlight ideological positioning and narrative *topoi* central to Russian war narratives. In particular, examining the lexical choices adopted in the representation of the actors involved allows us to highlight the cognitive frames that these lexical choices activate in the reader (Fairclough, 1989) by integrating them with a critical view of the geopolitical context of reference. Integrating linguistic analysis with a critical consideration of context therefore makes possible an in-depth reading of the discursive strategies employed to manipulate perception and orient public opinion. This approach, typical of critical discourse analysis, offers a framework for interpreting the ways in which language is employed not so much to describe reality as to recreate it altogether.

Regarding the narrative construction of "they", whose primary referent is Ukraine, a distinct lexical pattern emerges aimed at producing a negative representation of the enemy. In particular, the verbs associated with the subject 'Ukraine' are predominantly action verbs, forming what can be described as "grammar of agentivity" that contrasts with the "grammar of non-agentivity" or "of response" observed in the narrative relating to Russia, as will be explored later. Ukraine is depicted as a central actor in hostile actions such as, '*On Friday, Ukrainian troops shelled the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant.*'; '*The Kiev regime has sufficient research and production potential to make a dirty bomb.*'; '*Ukrainian forces have been using civilians as human shields, as well as using Western-supplied weapons and banned ordnance.*'; '*Grain burned by Ukrainian nationalists.*' These lexical choices activate cognitive frames that position Ukraine as the primary agent of the conflict, responsible not only for hostile acts but also for conduct perceived as threatening, immoral, and ideologically reprehensible. Indeed, a particularly prominent feature is the co-occurrence of the adjective '*criminal*' or '*terrorist*' relating to Ukrainian actions, e.g., '*The Kiev regime has been using terrorist methods for a very long time.*' This term reinforces a demonizing narrative of the enemy and

delegitimizes its military operations. The observed narratives frequently emphasize the violation of ethical and humanitarian norms as in *'it uses civilians as human shields'* and are part of a discursive strategy that aims to consolidate an interpretive frame of a Ukraine that is not only the enemy, but also profoundly 'other', i.e., distant from the moral and civic values that the target audience is expected to uphold. In this narrative polarization, the subject 'we', identified with Russia, emerges as the bearer of such values, reinforcing the dichotomy between a virtuous 'us' and a deviant 'them'. Of particular interest is the choice of vocabulary that is often used to designate the enemy i.e. *'Kiev regime'*. As noted above, the use of the term *'regime'* to refer to the Ukrainian government activates a cognitive frame that configures the government as authoritarian and repressive, helping to delegitimize its political authority in the international context. This lexical choice is not neutral, but strategically geared to shape the reader's interpretation, implicitly suggesting a tyrannical and illegitimate component. Next to this appellation two other words frequently occur in the narrative of 'they,' specifically *'genocide'* and *'Neo-nazis'*, the former to describe the actions committed by Kiev and the latter to describe the ideology by which it is driven. These terms jointly with *'kiev regime'* place Ukraine within a strongly connoted imaginary, evoking collective memories of Western oppression and violence. The representation of Ukraine as the bearer of Nazi ideas and ways reinforces the perceived link between her and the West, which is in turn represented as a third player in the game and also placed in the negative pole of 'they.' Such a discursive device invokes well-established historical and moral imagery, facilitating the reader in decoding the message and orienting them toward a critical judgment of Ukraine and its Western allies. These historical and moral references thus reinforce the construction of a narrative that identifies the enemy not only as politically illegitimate, but also as morally reprehensible, and introduces us to the third actor involved in the narrative precisely: the West.

The West is primarily portrayed as a monolithic entity led by the United States *'the US-led collective West'* effectively oversimplifying its geopolitical complexity and the diverse distinctions that constitute it. The examined corpus reveals that the United States is depicted as the true instigator of the current tensions and conflict, as the dominant narrative frames Russia's actions as a response to NATO's expansion. Within this narrative, the "Ukrainian enemy" is not identified with the Ukrainian people but rather with its governmental and military structures aligned with the West. In this construction of the "enemy", Ukraine is represented not only as an independent agent of its actions but also as the heir and bearer of a Western historical legacy that is universally condemned, a sort of ideological extension of the West itself. Particularly relevant is the way in which this construction evolves over time within the analyzed corpus. As the conflict progresses, the narrative increasingly focuses on the incoherence of the West, represented as a hypocritical bearer of democratic values masking a "true face" characterized by contradictions and actions opposed to the principles it proclaims to defend. This element takes on particular significance when we consider the primary target audience of these articles, namely the nations of Western Europe. Indeed, the narrative is designed to solicit feelings of tension and insecurity that directly touch the Western reader, questioning the foundations of democratic values and suggesting that these values are a mere façade. An emblematic example of this strategy is found in statements arguing how the escalation of the Ukrainian conflict risks further exacerbating the European crisis already grappling with skyrocketing inflation and energy shortages caused by anti-Russian sanctions. Here, the discourse shifts from describing the crisis in Ukraine to a global threat that directly involves the everyday lives of Western audiences, tying it to issues such as inflation and energy security. This approach amplifies the West's perception of risk and responsibility, channeling blame to Western policies and decisions. The narrative of the West, then, is aimed at soliciting fears and insecurities that directly affect the target audience. Through such a portrayal, the discourse attempts to expose what is referred to as the "evil face" of an entity that professes to be democratic, as evidenced by examples in which fundamental principles such as freedom of information and consequently freedom of expression are questioned *'The removal of the Internet resources of the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics violates the fundamental norms and principles of the United*

*Nations concerning the right for freedom of information.* This rhetorical and manipulative game aims to instill doubts in public opinion, reducing trust in the founding values of Western democracies and feeding a narrative that destabilizes the reader's perception.

Counterbalancing the negative narrative of "they" is the positive narrative of "we" embodied by the subject "Russia". Contrary to what might be expected in a polarizing narrative, in which the "they" plays the role of the enemy, Russia is not so much portrayed as a passive victim as an active protector. The role of "victim", in fact, might evoke cognitive frames of weakness that, in a geopolitical discursive context, are hardly functional, especially considering the importance of communication as a strategic weapon in a hybrid war (Giusti 2023). Russia, therefore, is portrayed as an offended but at the same time strong party, able to respond resolutely to perceived threats. At an early stage, there is a "grammar of non-agentiveness," in which negation is present preceding verbs of intention rather than action. For example, one reads, *'The Russian leader stressed that Moscow had no plans of occupying Ukrainian territories'* or *'the Russian Defense Ministry reassured that Russian troops are not targeting Ukrainian cities'*. This discursive strategy constructs a narrative in which Russia positions itself as a non-aggressor, emphasizing its unprovoked action with respect to the conflict. At a later stage, instead, what we might call a "grammar of response" emerges in which Russia's actions are described exclusively as reactions to external provocations, as in the case of *'Putin stated that Russia was retaliating for a number of attempts to strike Russian infrastructure that have been attributed to Kiev.'* Russian intervention is consistently described as a *'special operation'* a choice of terminology that implies precision and necessity, and is frequently accompanied by verbs in Infinitive clauses: which refer to a protective action. For example, *'Russia has been conducting its special operation to protect the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics'* or *'The purpose of this special operation is to protect people [in the Donbass] who have been subjected to abuse and genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years.'* Lexically, the terms associated with "we" and the locutions are strongly positively connoted, evoking security, morality and legitimacy. One notes expressions such as, *'Russia will guarantee Ukraine's security'; (... ) while Russia has treated its prisoners in full accordance with international law, Ukraine has not.'* In parallel, the narrative does not fail to emphasize Russia's military strength and capability, portrayed as a strategically powerful and assertive actor. This portrayal is reflected in statements such as, *'The main goal is to ensure Russia's security. The Russian government will never step back as long as it has Russia's power and wealth'; 'The Russian president has confirmed the launch of a major operation against Ukrainian infrastructure in response to the Crimean Bridge attack'* Such a discursive construction generates a dual representation: on the one hand, Russia appears as an actor forced to react to external threats; on the other hand, it is delineated as a strong and legitimized power, ready to defend its interests and its people. In light of the above, the polarization between "we" and "they" in this case is not limited to oppositions of action, but extends to ethical and political values. Russia is presented as the bastion of international conventions and morality, while the "other" is described as ethically aggressive and hypocritical. This discursive dynamic further reinforces the perception of a conflict that is not only military but also symbolic, with each actor representing an opposing value system.

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## 4.5 CONCLUSIONS

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The analysis conducted on our linguistic corpus revealed the prominent presence of linguistic markers associated with disinformative news in previous studies. The examined corpus displays several key features, including extended headlines predominantly composed of content words, a syntactic structure characterized by the frequent use of subordinate clauses that, while seemingly providing additional interpretative data, in fact serve to obscure or manipulate the information, and a markedly emotive lexicon

that amplifies emotional perception while simultaneously exposing the partiality of the narrative perspective. Furthermore, the observed argumentative logic appears notably fragile, often lacking verifiable data to support its claims.

In addition to confirming these established markers, the corpus also unveils distinctive linguistic peculiarities. One such feature is the pervasive use of presupposition, which increases the difficulty of refuting the conveyed messages. Presuppositions embed implicit assumptions into the discourse, shaping the reader's cognitive framework and anchoring the narrative within an unquestioned ideological stance. Another distinctive feature of the corpus is the reliance on a polarizing "us vs. them" narrative framework. In this dichotomy, the representation of the "other" is constructed through a lens of culpability and reprehensible actions, while the "we" is portrayed as adhering to morally righteous principles. This dichotomy is further reinforced by a "grammar of response," wherein the actions attributed to the "we" are framed not as aggressive or proactive but as necessary protective measures. By presenting the "we" as a reactive agent acting in self-defense, the narrative consolidates its moral legitimacy while simultaneously delegitimizing the "other." The study highlights how Russian disinformative news related to the Ukrainian war not only exhibits the typical features of low-credibility news but also incorporates distinctive narrative elements aimed at reconstructing a perception of reality profoundly different from the Western perspective (Latif et al. 2024). However, the primary objective of this strategy does not appear to be the creation of a new reality, but rather to instill doubts and uncertainties about the commonly accepted Western narrative (Bigazzi et al. 2022).

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## 5 CONCLUSION

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The findings of this study highlight the complexity and pervasiveness of disinformation as a strategic communicative practice. Across the ten country cases analyzed, disinformation narratives were not only present but deeply embedded within ongoing political conflicts, cultural debates, and media practices. These narratives were often adapted to resonate with local fears, historical grievances, and existing political cleavages—making them highly effective at mobilizing opinion and entrenching division.

A key insight from the analysis is that disinformation narratives tend to cluster around a limited set of recurring themes. These include narratives that question the legitimacy of democratic institutions, that frame elites or external actors as corrupt or conspiratorial, and that promote identity-based antagonism (ethnic, religious, or ideological). While the specific content varied by case, the structural function of these narratives was remarkably consistent: to undermine trust, promote a sense of crisis, and encourage binary thinking.

The study also finds strong evidence that disinformation narratives contribute to polarization not merely by spreading falsehoods, but by shaping the emotional and cognitive frames through which people interpret reality. These narratives often exploit moral outrage, fear, and perceived victimhood, fostering a media environment where compromise becomes impossible and adversaries are seen as existential threats. In several of the cases analyzed, disinformation campaigns escalated tensions around elections, public health responses, or national identity, demonstrating their capacity to shift public discourse and even policy.

Equally important is the role of actors and amplification mechanisms. In many instances, political elites, state-aligned media, or partisan influencers played a central role in disseminating disinformation, blurring the line between propaganda and organic content. Social media platforms served as powerful vectors for these narratives, amplifying their reach and allowing them to cross national borders. The hybrid nature of these ecosystems—where disinformation can originate from both top-down and bottom-up sources—makes regulation and counter-strategy particularly challenging.

From a policy perspective, the study underlines the limitations of traditional counter-disinformation strategies that focus narrowly on fact-checking or platform moderation. While such interventions are necessary, they are insufficient in addressing the deeper societal fractures that make disinformation so effective. A more holistic response must involve investing in civic education, supporting independent journalism, fostering digital media literacy, and encouraging public dialogue across ideological lines.

The narratives analyzed in this study reveal how disinformation exploits underlying societal tensions and contributes to the erosion of democratic norms. Tackling this challenge requires more than technical fixes; it demands a concerted, interdisciplinary effort to understand and counter the polarizing narratives that threaten the fabric of pluralistic societies. By dissecting these narratives and their effects, this paper contributes to a growing body of knowledge aimed at defending democratic integrity in an age of information warfare.

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## ANNEX

### POLICY BRIEF- COMBATING POLARIZING NARRATIVES IN EUROPE: DISINFORMATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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**Target Audience:** European policymakers, academics, media professionals, and civil society actors

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Europe faces intensifying challenges from polarizing narratives that exploit fears, grievances, and ideological divides. Disinformation surrounding the war in Ukraine and climate change is increasingly undermining democratic discourse, eroding trust in institutions, and weakening policy consensus. Russian-backed propaganda seeks to delegitimize Ukrainian leadership, while climate denialism and radical messaging fracture environmental debates. These trends are reinforced by digital platforms with limited moderation, amplified by populist actors, and increasingly intertwined with hate speech targeting ethnic, political, and activist groups. This brief identifies key disinformation themes and proposes targeted recommendations to build societal resilience and foster democratic cohesion.

#### KEY ISSUES

##### **1. War in Ukraine – Strategic Polarization by Design:**

Russian disinformation fosters division by portraying Ukraine as corrupt, exaggerating its military failures, and invoking fabricated claims such as the “genocide” of ethnic Russians. These narratives manipulate memory politics and weaponize historical grievances to polarize domestic and international audiences. Narratives that include historical revisionism and manipulations on memory politics had been seen in the EU Member States located close to Ukraine and playing an important role in accepting refugees and logistics. For example, disinformation campaigns that include historical revisionism and manipulations on complicated historical past were detected in Poland even in 2022, as for 2025 their quantity has increased. Allegations against President Zelenskyy are crafted to erode Western public support for continued aid. In addition to this, Russian disinformation keeps using the topic of Ukrainian refugees in the EU Member States, which includes dissemination of hate speech, fake news and manipulations about “criminal activity” of Ukrainians in EU countries and general impact of Ukrainian refugees on state welfare. These narratives aim to provoke xenophobia, distrust to national authorities and EU institutions and in some cases may result into vandalism against Ukrainian symbolics and even physical attacks on Ukrainians abroad.

##### **2. Climate Change – Fragmented Narratives and Science Denialism:**

Climate discourse is being polarized from multiple angles: traditional denialism (rejecting anthropogenic climate change), “secondary denialism” (minimizing urgency), and apocalyptic rhetoric (portraying imminent ecological collapse). The recent resurgence of anti-climate rhetoric from political figures like Donald Trump and declining platform moderation risks normalizing false claims. Populist responses, such as the 2024 farmers’ protests, also reveal deeper distrust in elite-led climate policy.

##### **3. Hate Speech – The Weaponization of Identity:**

Polarizing narratives are increasingly laced with hate speech, targeting specific ethnic groups (e.g. Ukrainians or Russians abroad), environmental activists, political opponents, and migrants. Disinformation often reinforces xenophobic or misogynistic tropes—portraying climate activists as "elitist extremists" or linking Ukrainian nationalism with Nazism. These attacks not only deepen societal divisions but also create hostile environments that silence democratic participation and escalate real-world violence. The blurring of disinformation and hate speech demands urgent regulatory and civil society responses.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUROPEAN DECISION MAKERS

- **Strengthen institutional resilience against disinformation** through cross-border coordination, including updates to the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation and mandatory transparency for online platforms.
- **Enforce existing hate speech laws** more consistently across member states, and promote the implementation of the Digital Services Act (DSA) to hold platforms accountable for harmful and illegal content.
- **Fund media literacy and civic education** across member states, targeting youth and vulnerable populations, with a special focus on digital critical thinking and resilience to manipulated content.
- **Engage rural and economically marginalized communities** in the design of green transition policies to avoid backlash and depoliticize climate measures.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACADEMIA

- **Support interdisciplinary research** on polarization dynamics, including the emotional and identity-based drivers of disinformation adoption.
- **Facilitate open-access knowledge translation** to help journalists, civil society, and policymakers access and use academic insights in real-time.
- **Collaborate with fact-checkers and media organizations** to co-produce content based on peer-reviewed evidence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA

- **Avoid false balance** when covering disinformation and hate speech topics (e.g., climate denialism, Ukraine war conspiracy theories); emphasize verified facts and scientific consensus.
- **Develop formats that counter polarization** by showcasing constructive debate, local narratives, and shared societal goals rather than reinforcing ideological binaries.
- **Partner with fact-checking networks** to quickly identify and rebut emerging narratives before they become entrenched.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- **Build community-based counter-narratives** rooted in local experience and emotional resonance, particularly in communities vulnerable to disinformation and hate speech.

- **Monitor and expose misinformation ecosystems**, including fringe influencers and alternative media channels that serve as vectors of polarizing content and targeted hostility.
- **Advocate for democratic dialogue** that bridges ideological divides through deliberative formats and participatory engagement, while promoting inclusion and human rights protections.

## CONCLUSION

Polarizing narratives are not only distorting facts—they are reshaping public perceptions, dividing societies, and weakening democratic cohesion. Addressing this challenge requires coordinated, multi-sectoral responses that prioritize transparency, inclusion, and resilience. Europe must act decisively to reclaim the narrative space with integrity, empathy, and democratic values.

## Review Sheet of Deliverable

### D5.2 Narratives and foreign interference throughout Europe illustrated by case studies

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<b>Review date</b>	17/06/2025

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Mark with X the corresponding column:

<b>Y=</b> yes	<b>N=</b> no	<b>N = not applicable</b>
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ELEMENT TO REVIEW	Y	N	NA	COMMENTS
<b>FORMAT: Does the document ... ?</b>				
...include editors, deliverable name, version number, dissemination level, date, and status?	X			
...contain a license (in case of public deliverables)?			X	
...include the names of contributors and reviewers?	X			
...has a version table consistent with the document’s revision?	X			
... contain an updated table of contents?	X			

ELEMENT TO REVIEW	Y	N	NA	COMMENTS
... contain a list of figures consistent with the document's content?		X		
... contain a list of tables consistent with the document's content?	X			
... contain a list of terms and abbreviations?	X			
... contain an Executive Summary?	X			
... contain a Conclusions section?	X			
... contain a List of References (Bibliography) in the adequate format, if relevant?	X			
... use the fonts and sections defined in the official template?	X			
... use correct spelling and grammar?	X			
... conform to length guidelines (50 pages maximum (plus Executive Summary and annexes))		X		
... conform to guidelines regarding Annexes (inclusion of complementary information)	X			
... present consistency along the whole document in terms of English quality/style? (to avoid accidental usage of copy&paste text)	X			
<b>About the content...</b>				
Is the deliverable content correctly written?	X			
Is the overall style of the deliverable correctly organized and presented in a logical order?	X			
Is the Executive Summary self-contained, following the guidelines and does it include the main conclusions of the document?	X			
Is the body of the deliverable (technique, methodology results, discussion) well enough explained?	X			

ELEMENT TO REVIEW	Y	N	NA	COMMENTS
Are the contents of the document treated with the required depth?	X			
Does the document need additional sections to be considered complete?		X		
Are there any sections in the document that should be removed?		X		
Are all references in the document included in the references list?		X		
Have you noticed any text in the document not well referenced? (copy and paste of text/picture without including the reference in the reference list)		X		
<b>SOCIAL and TECHNICAL RESEARCH WPs (WP4, 5, 12, 13, 14)</b>				
Is the deliverable sufficiently innovative?	X			
Does the document present technical soundness and its methods are correctly explained?	X			
What do you think is the strongest aspect of the deliverable?				<p>A very comprehensive, structured, and detailed methodology was used to analyse disinformation cases. The deliverable utilises a systematic analysis of how disinformation works across various domains, combined with a linguistic analysis based on Forensic Linguistics integrated with Critical Discourse Analysis on Russian-origin texts. This combination allows for a thorough exploration of how polarising narratives operate, emphasising their role in shaping public discourse and reinforcing societal divisions. The deliverable shows a considerable effort to maintain neutrality and professionalism, evidenced by the analysis being based on identified</p>

ELEMENT TO REVIEW	Y	N	NA	COMMENTS
				sources, which proves professional rigor.
What do you think is the weakest aspect of the deliverable?				While the deliverable provides valuable research through case studies, fully measuring the impact of disinformation on public opinion remains a challenge. The available engagement metrics provide some insight, but fully quantifying the depth and breadth of influence remains an area where further development could be beneficial. Additionally, incorporating more actionable strategies could further enhance the deliverable's practical utility. However, this was not a requirement for this deliverable.
Please perform a brief evaluation and/or validation of the results, if applicable.				The deliverable provides a reasonably strong and well-supported analysis. The use of a structured approach, integration of external sources, and clear methodological explanations enhances the credibility of the findings.
<b>AI AND TECHNOLOGICAL WPS (WP6 – WP11 )</b>				
Does the document present technical soundness and the methods are correctly explained?			X	
What do you think is the strongest aspect of the deliverable?			X	
What do you think is the weakest aspect of the deliverable?			X	
Please perform a brief evaluation and/or validation of the results, if applicable.			X	
<b>DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION WPs (WP15 – WP17)</b>				
Does the document present a consistent outreach and exploitation strategy?			X	

ELEMENT TO REVIEW	Y	N	NA	COMMENTS
Are the methods and means correctly explained?			X	
What do you think is the strongest aspect of the deliverable?			X	
What do you think is the weakest aspect of the deliverable?			X	
Please perform a brief evaluation and/or validation of the results, if applicable.			X	

**SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS**

PA GE	SECTION	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
<u>12</u>	<u>1.2</u>	It might be helpful to add descriptions for the abbreviations LA (Los Angeles) and AFP (Agence France-Presse) and include them in the list of abbreviations
<u>52</u>	<u>3.4</u>	Consider adding a link to the sources for the "renewed attacks on climate science."

**CONCLUSION**

Mark with X the corresponding line.

X	Document accepted, no changes required.
	Document accepted, changes required.
	Document not accepted, it must be reviewed after changes are implemented.

Please rank this document globally on a scale of 1-5 (1 = poor, 5= excellent) – using a half point scale. Mark with X the corresponding grade.

Document grade	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
									X