

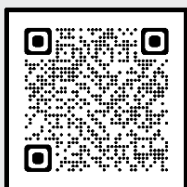


Final Report on OPEN Study Day: Russian, Chinese and Other Misinformation and Disinformation Efforts in the Sahel Region

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PREAMBLE

The two-day Open Study Day on “Russian, Chinese and Other Misinformation and Disinformation Efforts in the Sahel Region” was held on the 23rd and 24th of October 2024 at the Hotel Royal Continental in Naples, Italy. The Study Days aimed to enhance and develop NATO’s understanding of the potential medium-to-long-term challenges and risks emanating from Russian, Chinese, and others’ misinformation and disinformation activities in the Sahel, as well as how such activities are impacting the stability and socio-economic development of the Sahel region. This report combines the ideas, suggestions, and recommendations from the two-day exchange of ideas between experts and participants.

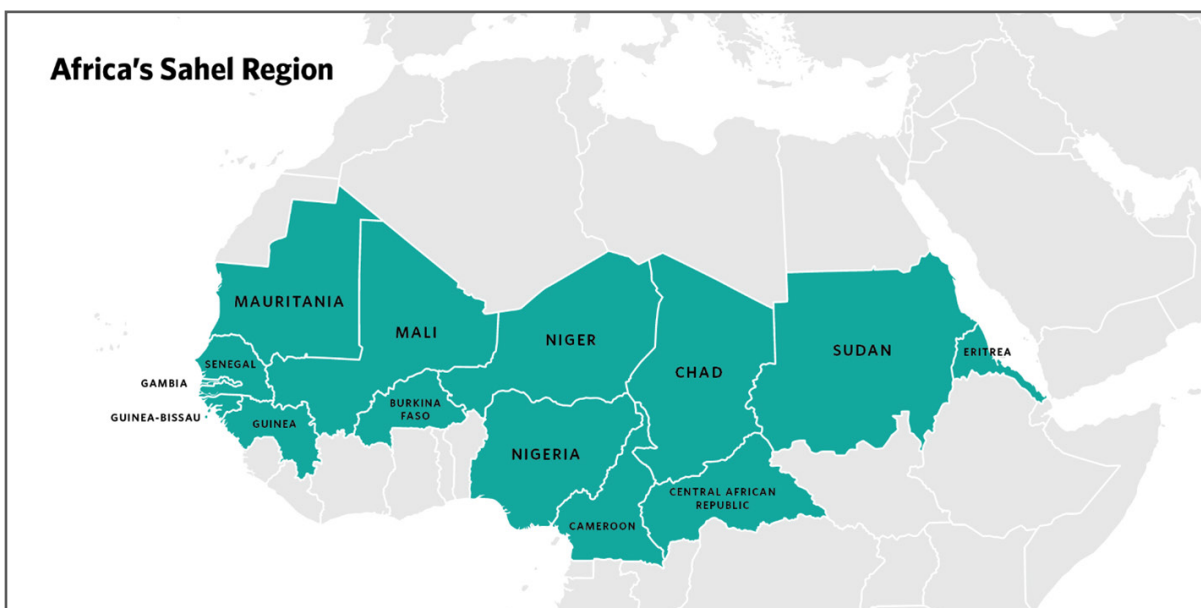
The conference, organised by Allied Command Transformation (ACT) under the Open Perspective Exchange (OPEN) framework and the NATO Strategic Direction-South (NSD-S) Hub, had a

welcome address and Opening Remarks delivered by Brigadier General Aydin Kilic (NSD-S Hub, Director) and Major General Devin R. Pepper (ACT Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Plans & Policy). The Key Speaker was Ambassador Sergio Piazzi (Secretary-General, Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean), who focused on the weaponization of information. The two-day event was structured into three panels with six paper presentations and three moderated roundtables. The six papers with regional perspectives were presented by Mr Papa Amadou Diagne, Dr Joshua Bolarinwa, Mr Fidel Amakye Owusu, Ms Beverly Ochieng, Ms Aisha Dabo and Mr Nalova Akua. Mr Mario Nicolini, Mr Ignacio Cobo and Dr Andreas Liaropoulos provided Western viewpoints on the subject matter in the three roundtable discussions. Dr Ndubuisi Nwokolo moderated the sessions and presented the background paper introducing the discourse.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Africa's Sahel region has geopolitical and economic interests, as well as security, migration movements, climate risks, and other development challenges. Like most regions on the continent, the Sahel faces myriad security challenges that have continually weakened its political stability, economic growth and resilience, good governance, sustainable development, and largely democratic processes and progress.¹ Geographically, the Sahel links countries in the Sahara and Sub-Saharan Africa. These two regions are distinct regarding social composition, natural environment, and resources. However, they also have much in common, such as colonial history, the impact of climate change, terrorism and State fragility.

Countries such as Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Mauritania are regarded as the core of the Sahel. In addition, the Sahel is often disaggregated into Upper (comprising parts of Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad) and Lower (Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and Cameroon). Additionally, this region is often divided into Eastern, Western and Central Sahel. Eastern Sahel comprises Sudan, Eritrea and countries in the Lake Chad Basin area, namely, Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon and Central African Republic. Meanwhile, Mauritania, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire are called the Western Sahel. Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Eritrea, as part of the Sahel, are known as the



Source: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace²

¹UNDP (2023) "Journey to Extremism in Africa: Pathways to Recruitment and Disengagement" <https://www.undp.org/publications/journey-extremism-africa-pathways-recruitment-and-disengagement>.

²Stronski, Paul (2023) "Russia's Growing Footprint in Africa's Sahel Region". Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/02/russias-growing-footprint-in-africas-sahel-region?lang=en>. Accessed 12 November 2024.

Central Sahel. The Sahel is seen as a zone of interaction between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa in which multifaceted human, financial, and religious exchanges occur. It is commonly associated with demographic explosion, terrorism, conflicts, instability, and military coups, as well as drugs and human trafficking.

The last two decades have seen the Sahel become increasingly fragile and destabilised due to violent conflicts. The terrorist insurgency in North-East Nigeria spread to Cameroun, Niger and Chad, while violence in Mali's Northern region in 2011 spread to Central Mali, Northern Burkina Faso and Western Nigeria. As seen today, these countries are currently under military regimes. As explained in the World Bank report, "Currently, all G5 Sahel countries are either actively in conflict or dealing with its aftermath, including internal displacement and flows of refugees. Initially led by the presence of violent extremist groups, the conflict has become more localized with inter-community tensions driving fragility in areas previously unaffected by violence."³ In the Sahel, state and non-state actors engage in various forms of communication to influence the circumstances. As noted by Bencherif and Carignan (2023), the military government in Mali, like other military authorities in the region, conducted communication campaigns to rationalise their operations and political choices, as they frequently encountered resistance from insurgency factions and dissatisfaction among the citizens.⁴ The complexities in the Sahel are often associated with global, regional, national and local contestations and have led and sustained the ongoing insurgencies in the region. As Strauss (2011) argued, complexities in the Sahel have made it the epicentre of layered and interconnected security challenges, which need to be understood.⁵

Today, one of the major challenges that continue to destabilize the region is the impact of misinformation and disinformation by non-Western interests, mainly Russia and China. Propelled by economic interests, especially the abundant natural resources in the region, Russia and China

are actively deploying news media to influence public opinion in the region.⁶ With citizens of the Sahel buying into strategic disinformation, Russia and China cash in on the relationship between individuals' worldviews and news consumption to promote narratives that favour their interests. To support their economic interests in the region, China and Russia use their military and political influence to achieve these economic goals. As opined by Bencherif and Carignan, "The countries of the Sahel region are also strongly influenced by external media productions that are often locally accessible. Indeed, these external productions have an impact on the international understanding of the region's issues."⁷

Russia and China's understanding and interests have increased their growing influence in the Sahel region, signalling a shift in global geopolitical dynamics. The two countries are not merely interested in traditional instruments of power, such as military or economic domination. Still, they are increasingly focused on shaping the media and information landscapes through disruption to serve their strategic purposes and interests. The disruption of the media ecosystem in the Sahel by Russia and China has profound implications for regional governance, growth, development, democracy, economy, security and social cohesion. Beyond China and Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia are some of the other interests in the region. For instance, Wahhabi, a religious sect from Saudi Arabia, has, over the years, engaged in disinformation and misinformation roles in support of activities of state and non-state actors in the region⁸. In the Sahel, states such as Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad are pivotal in influencing the region's information landscape. State actors deploy diverse communication channels, such as state-run media, official declarations, and strategic communication campaigns to sustain dominance over public narratives. Following the above background context, the report provides an explanation of the approaches and strategies deployed by China and Russia to influence perceptions and information in the Sahel as presented by regional and subject matter experts.

³World Bank Group (2022) *G5 Sahel Region Country Climate and Development Report. CCDR Series*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

⁴Bencherif, A., Carignan, M. E. (2023) *Exploratory research report on the information environment in a political and security crisis context in the Sahel Region*. Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

⁵Strauss, Scott (2011) *Mali and its Sahelian Neighbours*. World Development Report, Background Study. Available at http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01306/web/pdf/wdr_2011_case_study_mali.pdf.

⁶Madrid-Morales, D., Wasserman, H., Ahmed, S. (2024) *The Geopolitics of Disinformation: Worldviews, Media Consumption and the Adoption of Global Strategic Disinformation Narratives*, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Volume 36, Issue 3, Autumn, edad042, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edad042>.

⁷Bencherif, A., Carignan, M. E. (2023) *Exploratory research report on the information environment in a political and security crisis context in the Sahel Region*. Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

⁸Thurston, A. (2022) *Wahhabi Compromises and "Soft Salafization" in the Sahel in: Wahhabism and the World*. Edited by: Peter Mandaville, Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197532560.003.0012

UNDERSTANDING RUSSIA AND CHINA'S APPROACHES IN THE SAHEL

The deteriorating security landscape in the Sahel has made space for the dominance of Chinese and Russian narratives. With the proliferation of non-state armed groups (NSAGs), failing democracy and governance is fuelling and exacerbating armed conflicts, terrorism and organized crime across the region. In this environment, Russia, for instance, is using its presence to deliver intense publicity that undermines Western interests and narratives. The declining relationship between the West and some core Sahelian countries, such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, has seen Russia embracing the military regimes in these Sahel states. It has provided security assistance, diplomatic backing and strategic support, mainly for misinformation and disinformation. This consists primarily of “a large social network that promotes anti-Western and pro-Kremlin ideas”.⁹ This is helping Russia expand its influence at the expense of France in some of its former African colonies.

With Russosphere (Russian Sphere), France is painted as promoting modern-day “colonialism”, while President Putin and Russian-sponsored mercenaries (e.g. Wagner Group) are praised for their efforts in the Sahel. In return, misinformation and disinformation strategically targeted at Africa, particularly the Sahel, build distrust and resentment towards the West. As witnessed in Niger during the last military coup, the Russian misinformation efforts pushed many people onto the streets, protesting against France and Western interests. As explained by Ulf Laessing of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a centre-right German think tank, “Russian misinformation was a factor helping to drive the French forces out of Sahel countries, especially Burkina Faso”.¹⁰

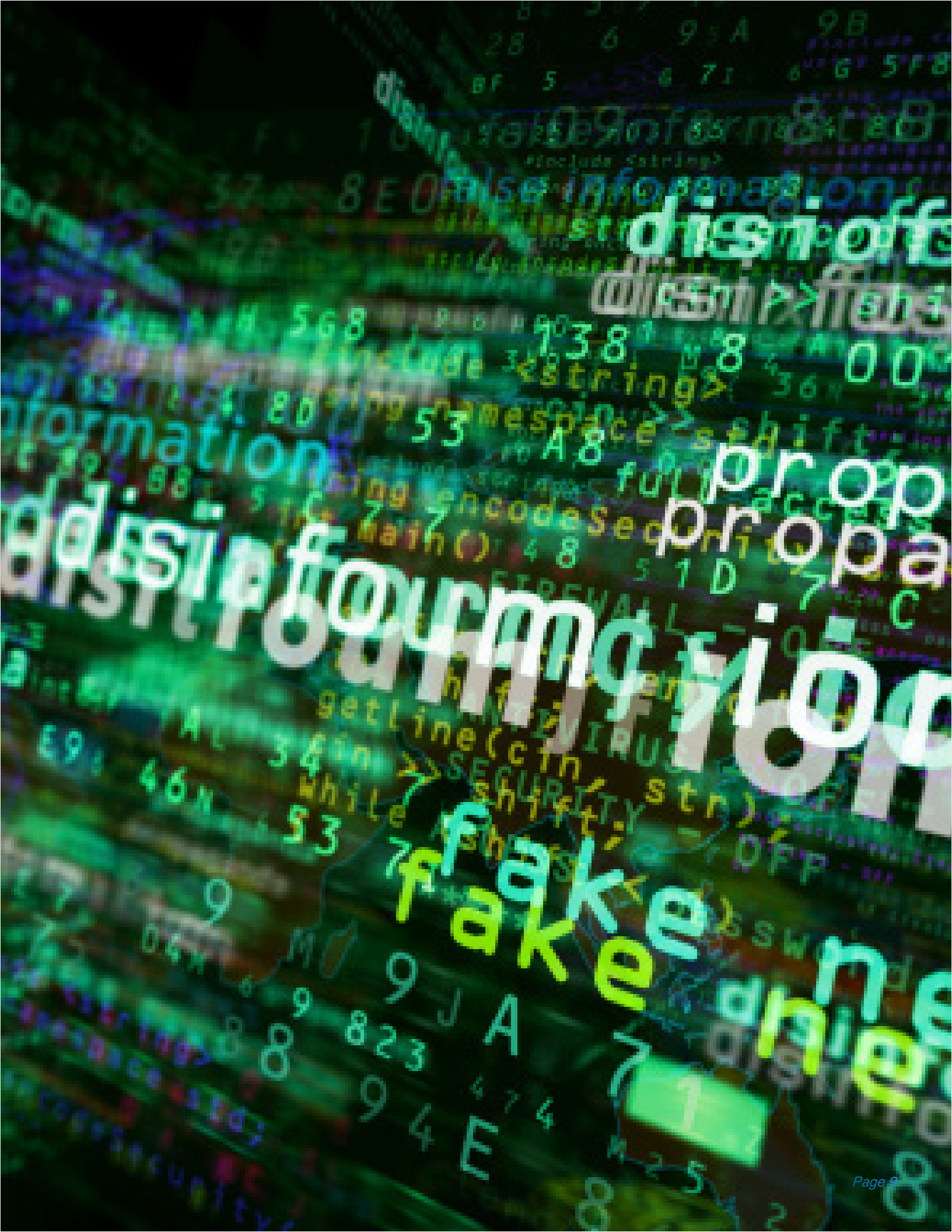
These misinformation and disinformation efforts help Moscow’s economic interests, mainly in controlling natural resources in the region.

The discussion and presentations from the experts further showed that Russia has relied heavily on disinformation and hybrid warfare tactics to create instability and undermine Western influence in the Sahel. On the other hand, China’s approach focused more on controlling the digital infrastructure that underpins the region’s media landscape. In both strategies, however, the target is to effectively reshape the Sahel’s media environment and extend their influence over the region’s political, economic and social systems. The most visible manifestation of China’s influence in the Sahel’s media ecosystem comes from its ability to dominate telecommunications networks, many of which have been built or expanded by Chinese firms as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. This digital infrastructure gives China a significant foothold in the region’s communications landscape, allowing Chinese state-owned media, like Xinhua and CGTN (China Global Television Network), to partner with local media outlets. Through these partnerships, China exerts influence over the type of content distributed, ensuring that narratives supportive of China’s role in the region dominate the airwaves. At the same time, stories critical of Chinese investments or human rights abuses are largely absent from the media landscape.¹¹ These approaches and agenda were further discussed under the themes: (a) Understanding information flow, dissemination and information disorder, (b) Weaponization of information, and (c) Tackling falsehoods and ways forward.

⁹BBC (2023) “Russia in Africa: How disinformation operations target the continent” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64451376>. Accessed 20 October 2024.

¹⁰BBC (2023) “Russia in Africa: How disinformation operations target the continent” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64451376>. Accessed 20 October 2024.

¹¹King, G., Pan, J. and Roberts, M. (2017). “How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument.” *American Political Science Review*, 111, 3, Pp. 484-501.



UNDERSTANDING INFORMATION FLOW, DISSEMINATION AND INFORMATION DISORDERS IN THE SAHEL

New technologies, including social media platforms, artificial intelligence, and digital infrastructure, are increasingly being leveraged for information dissemination, which makes them easily deployable for disinformation, misinformation and malinformation. Some programmes, practices, or materials are key disinformation modalities that lead to information channels and flow. Russia and China currently employ these strategies or information disorder modalities to influence the Sahel. Russia primarily uses disinformation and hybrid warfare tactics, while China focuses on controlling digital infrastructure and fostering long-term media partnerships.

Common information disorders include clickbait, where sensational headlines and exaggerated stories are designed to grab attention and drive traffic to websites or social media posts. There is also memetic warfare, which uses viral memes to spread disinformation quickly. Memes are highly effective because they are simple, shareable, and often emotionally charged. This makes them powerful tools for spreading disinformation. For instance, during foreign elections, Russia used memes on social media to influence voters by distorting facts or pushing polarizing messages. This has remained one modality used to distort the situation in the Sahel in favour of Russia and China and against the West. Their information flow and disorder also include the use of astroturfing, which is a fake grassroots campaign created

to appear as if local communities or interests organically drive them. However, the sponsors of these campaigns are hidden and could be working with proxies.

Propaganda is also used as a strategy for misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. It is often a state-sponsored effort deliberately deployed to spread biased or misleading information. As an information-distorting tool, authoritarian regimes, unpopular governments and undemocratic states use propaganda to influence public perception. For example, in many authoritarian countries, state-run media are used to push propaganda narratives, ensuring that the population only receives information that aligns with the regime's agenda. In the Sahel, this has become predominantly evident in the military-ruled countries of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and the Central African Republic, which are not exempted from this information manipulation. Principally, with the spread of false information, facts are manipulated, shaping public perception and presenting a narrative that suits the government in power, which the people will ultimately believe.

As seen during these Study Days, the Sahel has its share of spheres of disinformation influence, which are environments where disinformation thrives and has the most significant impact. For instance, info bubbles, algorithms on social



media platforms, gaslighting, and political and sociological disinformation are some tactics created and used in the information environments to polarize and shape views. These new frontiers of disinformation include biotechnology, artificial intelligence (AI), and driven disinformation, which automates information faster, as well as deepfakes.

In 2023, the Sahel region was the focus of a significant disinformation campaign in Africa. A false narrative began circulating, claiming that international forces operating in the region were not contributing to peace efforts but exploiting local resources. This narrative gained traction quickly,

resonating with the local population's pre-existing history, fears and suspicions. The Sahel witnessed a campaign that questioned the legitimacy of international peacekeeping missions in the region, framing the missions as self-serving rather than supportive. The spread of this information uses traditional and social media platforms, such as Facebook and X (Formerly Twitter, Telegraph, etc.), allowing the false narrative to reach a broad audience rapidly. At the same time, local radio stations and WhatsApp groups played a significant role in spreading the message further, especially in areas with limited social media usage. The local media channels give disinformation campaigns more credibility, making it harder for the public to discern the truth.

WEAPONIZATION OF INFORMATION IN THE SAHEL

As technology advances, so do the tools and tactics used in disinformation campaigns. The weaponization of information in the Sahel involves every aspect of the information sphere relying on the existing circumstances for distortion. Therefore, it consists of manipulating scientific narratives, history or other forms of data to spread fear or false information using old and emerging technologies. Limited internet access across Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso; rising citizens' journalism in the past decade; restrictions on independent reporting of security operations; and local politics are factors that have actively fuelled information distortions.

Since the end of the Cold War, the situation in the Sahel included the rise of Tuareg Nationalism after the death of Col. Gaddafi of Libya. Other issues are increased terrorism, socio-economic issues, reduced/lack of state presence, youth unemployment and ethnic rivalry. These factors created a fertile ground for youth recruitment as tools for political instability and foreign interest, especially disinformation. These circumstances mean that Russia and China find the manipulation of the situations easy using disinformation, malinformation or misinformation strategies. Olena Snigyr of the Eurasia Program, Foreign Policy Research Institute, explained, "Russian information operations in Africa are multidimensional, malleable, and opportunistic. It is hard to find a sphere of social life where Russians are not present—from the daily life of small villages to cooperation in the nuclear sphere and space industry."¹² For example, as part of its strategy, the Wagner group deployed socio-interventionalist tools such as sinking boreholes and constructing feeder roads to influence

perceptions about Russia and its activities. Unfortunately, even educated and enlightened members of society are caught in the web of manipulation. Another common occurrence is funding non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, and academic centres, which present leftist ideology as welcoming and inclusive. Furthermore, some security elites consisting mainly of retired Military Generals and officers are approached and supported to propagate Russian ideas. Also, the weaponization of information includes the targeting of regional organizations like the ECOWAS (Economic Community for West African States).

The weaponization of information in the Sahel by Russia, China and others as part of their foreign information and manipulation interference (FIMI) strategy has grown profoundly and become more widespread, especially in urban areas. These efforts to manipulate information and influence perceptions are aided by resisted access to information, a ban on political discussion in countries such as Mali, and a crackdown on civil society organizations (CSOs) in Burkina Faso. Accordingly, local and state-controlled media have become the willing channels for propaganda for Russia and China. A more detailed analysis of media outreach in the Sahel shows that Russian Television Network (RT) and Sputnik give wider coverage of security and economic development as they concern Russia. Their engagements as the mouthpiece of Russia are no longer contentious. At the same time, Telegram presents many positive pictures of Wagner's activities in the Sahel. This situation has further fuelled anti-Western sentiments, with pro-junta CSO groups using social media and traditional media to

¹²Olena Snigyr (2024) "Ideological Agenda of Russian Information Influence in Africa" Eurasia Program, Foreign Policy Research Institute. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/11/ideological-agenda-of-russian-information-influence-in-africa/>. Accessed 9/11/2024

influence public opinion in support of the military regimes and against the existing international order headed by Western interests and ideology. Sadly, Western media's reduced reach and presence, especially the French Media that held sway previously, leaves room for Russia, which shows solidarity with the Sahelian governments. The ban or prohibition of major French and International media outlets such as RFI, French 24, and TV5 Monde means RT and Sputnik have free rein and are gaining popularity, especially with the large unemployed youth population. Also, Roscosmos, also known as the Roscosmos State Corporation

for Space Activities, supports Sahel countries with communication technology to synchronize media and telecom operations in the region.

China, on the other, uses its strategic presence for preferential treatment, therefore gaining grounds to operate. China's key economic interests are better served and supported by media and political influence. However, unlike Russia, China has no overt media and political influence. To achieve its influence in the region, it has developed a robust education exchange programme with many universities and research centres in the Sahel.

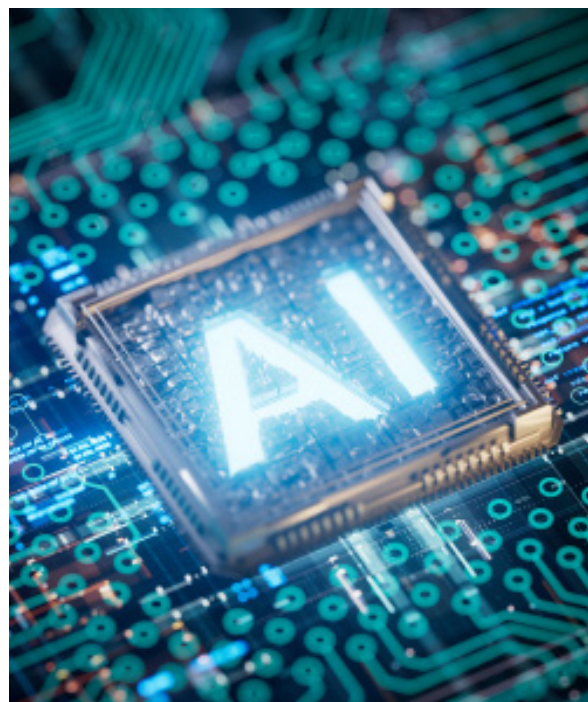


TACKLING FALSEHOODS AND WAYS FORWARD

The current information and media environment in the Sahel is championed by untruths from Russia, China, Iran, and others. This circumstance is aided by the support to the spread of such rumours by the region's military and undemocratic governments. Misinformation and disinformation have become very formidable and easily reach ordinary citizens, who are their primary targets. For instance, Russia and China use the existing contradictions and complexities as their support system to influence public opinions and conflict dynamics to their advantage. Consequently, they continue to influence the military governments in power. In the Sahel, local media partners like Awolo and M62 are making bids for China and Russia and are ready to use their platforms to disseminate such information further. This situation became more challenging because of the over-simplification of narratives by NATO member countries. Tackling falsehoods is becoming more difficult due to resources deployed to disinformation and misinformation efforts by China, Russia and other interests. China has invested heavily in digital streaming across Africa to protect its economic interests and investments in the Sahel and Africa. Additionally, Iran is strengthening cultural and religious relationships through university exchanges and donations. Countering falsehoods on liberalism, post-colonialism, and French interests and image in the Sahel is one of the hard-to-crack nuts in the region.

Therefore, tackling these falsehoods and finding a way forward may require some out-of-the-box ideas. First, France's admission of past errors and failed systems will present room for trust and a new partnership. With people as the main targets of Russia's and China's falsehood, using non-state actors and groups to disseminate information to

the people and create better images is significant. This could include music, art, and exchange of academic programmes. Further, NATO members need to understand the integrity of information to tackle falsehoods. Secondly, other strategies could include getting big media firms to debunk false information and using family heads and village leaders as entry points for disinformation control. Also, understanding local information and situations is vital to tackling disinformation and misinformation in the Sahel. Therefore, deploying local languages and providing training for the local media by NATO member states are needed to counter disinformation. Finally, building AI to counter AI use for disinformation and building a group of data centres by NATO and its allies would also be beneficial in tackling this menace.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The measures proposed during the Study Days for enhancing and developing NATO's understanding of the efforts, potential challenges, risks, actors, strategies, means, and impacts posed by Russia, China, Iran, and others' misinformation and disinformation activities in the Sahel include the following:

1. NATO needs to understand its role and what part it can play in developing better ways of handling disinformation and misinformation in the Sahel. Developing and understanding this strategic awareness, which should cut across all spheres of activities and engagements in the Sahel, will be pivotal in checking Russia, China, and others' disinformation and misinformation efforts in the region.
2. NATO and its Allies' efforts against Russia and China's disinformation and misinformation in the Sahel require a coordinated and sustained effort across all levels—regional, national, and international. The efforts must prioritize continuous collaboration and innovation, judging that disinformation and misinformation tactics constantly evolve. So, we need to stay vigilant and adaptive in our approach. This means continuously innovating the efforts using new technologies and strategies to stay ahead of disinformation and misinformation campaigns and ensure our defences remain strong.
3. NATO needs to recognize the critical role of regional actors in information control. Local actors are often the best positioned to understand the unique dynamics in their context and respond effectively. They have the local knowledge and connections to identify disinformation early and develop targeted responses. Supporting these actors will strengthen our overall resilience against disinformation.
4. Global partnerships are also essential in the fight against disinformation and misinformation in the Sahel and worldwide. Collaboration across regional, national, and international levels is necessary for a comprehensive and effective response to disinformation. No single country or organization can combat this alone. We can only create a lasting impact in countering disinformation through a coordinated global effort—where we share intelligence, resources, and expertise. Silo efforts by member-states in tackling disinformation should be discouraged, while group/organization efforts led by NATO and like-minds should be encouraged and coordinated. The fragmented interests of EU members, who are more numerous in NATO, seriously affect coordinated interest and action. Therefore, NATO and the EU need to cooperate in strategic development in Africa. In short, only the harmonization of policies and actions by NATO and Allies will be productive.
5. Investing in CSOs and citizens as part of the fact-checking strategy and social movement will play a proactive role. Establishing and supporting these independent fact-checkers and media watchdogs is crucial for debunking false stories and restoring trust in credible information. A good example is Africa Check, one of the leading African fact-checking networks. It plays a crucial role in verifying information across the region and providing the public with reliable, trustworthy sources.

This should also serve as a containment approach and measure to curtail the spread of such negative narratives from the Sahel to the Coastal states.

6. There should be a new focus on creating a new diplomatic alliance between NATO members and African countries to reduce the influence and negative perspectives Russia, China, and other interests are sponsoring in the Sahel. Such an alliance will impact Russia's new agenda of building a military/ arms sales industry around Africa. It will also lead to a new relationship in natural resource businesses.
7. Training for African elites, journalists, and other media literacy in the Sahel needs to be scaled up to outperform the current efforts on media training for local journalists provided by Russia and China in the Sahel. Building a digital literacy that includes collaborative fact-checking between NATO members and Sahelian countries, structured cross-border cooperation in the Sahel, and support for independent and grassroots media operations will make a long-term impact.
8. Trust between the West (especially France and the United States) and many Sahel countries is at an all-time low. There should be a deliberate plan and effort to rebuild the trust that once existed. China and Russia are exploiting this issue in their new relationship with countries of the Sahel. The issue of conditionalities for aid and cooperation by many NATO members should be reviewed. NATO needs to do more in Africa and, very importantly, needs to define what it wants from Africa and what it can offer to Africa. NATO members should weaponize truth, thereby allowing for a rebuilding of trust, cooperation and legitimacy.
9. NATO's image must be shifted from an aggressor to a more compassionate and accommodating organization. This should include getting a non-colonial power to lead its engagement and discussion in the Sahel. Its counter-terrorism strategy should consist of a mix of traditional and new media.
10. NATO's values and political guidance need to be reframed. This remains one area that is often cited against the organization. Local context and concepts must be considered when making political guidance.
11. Creating academic ideas through new Centres for European and American Studies in Africa or the Sahel that could challenge the upcoming Centres for Chinese Studies in the region. These Centres will be greatly needed to match the information and ideology propagated by China in Africa and the Sahel.
12. Soft power is required alongside positive messaging to present a good image for NATO. This should be complemented with a beneficial partnership hub.
13. NATO should help with humanitarian efforts and operations in Africa to mend fences. NATO should also consider other issues, including filling capable persons in missions, increasing its risk appetite and moving towards progressive liberal values while leveraging the strength between the EU and NATO.

CONCLUSION

The last decade has seen growth in rising insurgencies, bad governance, climate change, youth bulge, poverty, and unemployment in the Sahel region. This situation has allowed Russia, China, Iran, and others to deploy various information disorientation strategies such as disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation to deepen and maintain their interests and presence. Western values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law have been threatened by military governments with support from Russia, China and others using platforms such as traditional and social media, direct relationships with ruling governments, CSOs, academia and the public. With the re-shaping of facts, public opinion, and

manipulation of information, Russia and China have embedded their propaganda in the Sahel, to the detriment of the interest of NATO and its Allies and the stability of the region. Therefore, to curb this growing influence of Russia, China and others in the Sahel, NATO and its Allies must define and understand its strategic role, interests, policies and actions in that region. This should include developing its strategic awareness and interest in countering disinformation, establishing a new partnership with African states, projecting a new image for NATO and its Allies, and promoting better and stronger values for stability and good governance throughout the Sahel nations.



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