



VEIT NIKLAS VOGLER

**COMPARING CHINESE AND RUSSIAN NARRATIVE  
WARFARE STRATEGIES IN AFRICA  
-  
COMMON GROUND OR POTENTIAL CONFLICT?**

Dissertation to obtain a Master's Degree in  
Law, in the specialty of Law and Security

Supervisor:  
Felipe Pathé Duarte

September 2025

### **Declaração antiplágio**

Declaro por minha honra que o trabalho que apresento é original e que todas as minhas citações estão corretamente identificadas. Tenho consciência de que a utilização de elementos alheios não identificados constitui uma grave falta ética e disciplinar.

(Nome e assinatura do/a aluno/a)

### **Anti plagiarism statement**

I hereby declare that the work I present is my own work and that all my citations are correctly acknowledged. I am aware that the use of unacknowledged extraneous materials and sources constitutes a serious ethical and disciplinary offence.

(Student's name and signature)

Veit Niklas Vogler





## Table of Contents

|                                                                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| I. Introduction .....                                                                | 1  |
| 1. The Concept of Narrative Warfare.....                                             | 2  |
| 2. Africa as a Target of Narrative Warfare.....                                      | 4  |
| II. Literature Review.....                                                           | 6  |
| 1. Theoretical Foundations.....                                                      | 6  |
| 2. Narrative Warfare in Africa .....                                                 | 7  |
| III. Methodology.....                                                                | 10 |
| 1. Theoretical Framework .....                                                       | 10 |
| 2. Research Design.....                                                              | 16 |
| 3. Data .....                                                                        | 17 |
| IV. Chinese Strategic Narrative Warfare in Africa .....                              | 18 |
| 1. Background: Chinese Narrative Warfare Framework.....                              | 18 |
| 2. Main Narrative Themes.....                                                        | 21 |
| 2.1 System Narrative: Global South versus Global North .....                         | 21 |
| 2.2 Identity Narrative: Developed China as a role model for African development..... | 26 |
| 2.3 Issue Narrative: Mutual Benefit .....                                            | 34 |
| 3. Narrative Projection Techniques in Africa.....                                    | 37 |
| 3.1. Diplomacy .....                                                                 | 37 |
| 3.2. Media.....                                                                      | 38 |
| 3.3. Cultural Diplomacy .....                                                        | 43 |
| V. Russian Strategic Narrative Warfare in Africa.....                                | 45 |
| 1. Background: Russian Narrative Warfare Framework .....                             | 45 |
| 2. Main Narrative Themes.....                                                        | 46 |
| 2.1 System Narrative: De-Westernization of the Global Order .....                    | 46 |
| 2.2 Identity Narrative: Russia and Africa as “Brothers” against the West.....        | 49 |
| 2.3 Issue Narrative: Russian as a Security Provider for Africa.....                  | 52 |
| 3. Narrative Projection Techniques .....                                             | 58 |
| 3.1 Diplomacy .....                                                                  | 58 |
| 3.2 Media.....                                                                       | 58 |
| 3.3 Cultural Diplomacy .....                                                         | 61 |
| VI. Comparative Analysis .....                                                       | 63 |
| 1. System Narrative .....                                                            | 63 |
| 2. Identity Narrative .....                                                          | 65 |
| 3. Issue Narrative .....                                                             | 66 |
| 4. Narrative Projection .....                                                        | 70 |

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 4.1 Diplomacy .....               | 70 |
| 4.2 Media.....                    | 71 |
| 4.3 Cultural Diplomacy.....       | 73 |
| VII. Conclusion and Outlook ..... | 74 |

## **Abstract**

This thesis adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach to examine and compare how China and Russia construct and project strategic narratives in Africa. The analysis is grounded in Strategic Narrative Theory (SNT), as developed by Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle, and complemented by contemporary theories of Information and Hybrid Warfare. Under the overarching term of "Narrative Warfare", first introduced by Ajit Maan, the study explores how both states seek to shape the opinions and behavior of African actors to secure strategic influence.

These strategies are extracted by analyzing primary sources, mostly state-owned media and governmental channels, supplemented by secondary literature and analytical reports. Multiple case studies are employed to demonstrate both actors' general strategies. The respective Narrative Warfare strategies are laid out and subsequently compared, leading to an assessment of their underlying concepts, aims and overall compatibility on the African continent.

The comparison highlights both convergences and divergences in Chinese and Russian Narrative Warfare strategies. This raises broader questions about whether these geopolitical powers follow complementary or conflicting approaches in Africa and what the implications of such dynamics may be for the future.

## **Abstract (Portuguese)**

Esta tese adota uma abordagem qualitativa e interpretativa para examinar e comparar como a China e a Rússia constroem e projetam narrativas estratégicas em África. A análise baseia-se na Teoria da Narrativa Estratégica (Strategic Narrative Theory - SNT), desenvolvida por Miskimmon, O'Loughlin e Roselle, e complementada por teorias contemporâneas de Guerra de Informação e Guerra Híbrida. Sob o termo abrangente de «Guerra Narrativa» (Narrative Warfare), introduzido pela primeira vez por Ajit Maan, o estudo explora como ambos os Estados procuram moldar as opiniões e o comportamento dos atores africanos para garantir influência estratégica.

Estas estratégias são extraídas através da análise de literatura primária, principalmente meios de comunicação social estatais e canais governamentais, complementada por literatura secundária e relatórios analíticos. São utilizados vários estudos de caso para demonstrar as estratégias gerais de ambos os atores. As respetivas estratégias de Guerra Narrativa são apresentadas e, por fim, comparadas, levando a uma avaliação do seu conceito subjacente, do seu objetivo e da sua compatibilidade geral no continente africano.

A comparação destaca tanto as convergências como as divergências nas estratégias de Guerra Narrativa chinesa e russa. Isto levanta questões mais amplas sobre se estas potências geopolíticas seguem abordagens complementares ou conflitantes em África e quais podem ser as implicações de tal dinâmica para o futuro.

The following body of this thesis, including spaces, occupies a total of 199,967 characters.

## I. Introduction

“As America silences its voice in Africa, China and Russia amplify theirs,” is the title of an opinion piece by Cameron Hudson for *The Hill* in August 2025.<sup>1</sup> The former United States (U.S.) National Security Council director under the administration of George W. Bush refers to re-elected President Donald J. Trump’s plans to close the governmental international broadcasting agency *Voice of America*. According to Hudson, *Voice of America* has the mandate to “tell America’s story and explain U.S. policy to African audiences”, while its closure would grant the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Russian Federation uncontested narrative control over “the world’s youngest and fastest-growing population”.

Hudson’s opinion piece touches on two central topics in current geopolitical discourse: First, the concept of narrative dominance on the African continent and second, the actorness of the global powers China and Russia in this struggle. In Hudson’s piece, which is inherently shaped by a deeply U.S. perspective, he does little to differentiate between China and Russia and contributes to the general conception of some authors that group both actors together as common-interested, allied adversaries of the U.S. and other members of the so-called “Western World”. Although the latter term is ambiguous and contested, it is most commonly understood to encompass all member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), as well as Australia and New Zealand.<sup>2</sup>

Given China’s and Russia’s declarations of strategic partnership for change in the international order – especially to counter U.S. and EU influence – this assessment comes naturally.<sup>3</sup> Most notably, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized on the Sino-Russian bonds as “unbreakable”, making them “friends of steel”.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, both China and Russia have affirmed a central role of the African continent in their joint quest and their intention to further elevate the relationship with Africa.<sup>5</sup>

In this competition for influence on the world’s second largest continent, Hudson and many others point to a domain that has gained significant traction in international studies and has been conceptualized under many different names. While Hudson sees the U.S. facing Russia

---

<sup>1</sup> HUDSON, Cameron - As America silences its voice in Africa, China and Russia amplify theirs - The Hill.

<sup>2</sup> DANMARKS STATISTIK - Definition of western countries and non-western countries.

<sup>3</sup> JIA, Zhao - Xi: China, Russia to promote just, equitable international order - China Daily.

<sup>4</sup> BICKER, Laura - Xi shows he wants to be close to Putin - but not too close - BBC.

<sup>5</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Wang Yi Puts Forward China's Five-Point Proposal to Promote High-Quality Development of China-Africa Cooperation; PUTIN, Vladimir - Russia and Africa: Joining Efforts for Peace, Progress and a Successful Future.

and China in an “information war” in the African theater, the EU’s former commissioner for international partnerships similarly spoke of a “battle of narratives”, in which global powers are engaging to “make the best offer” to Africa, hoping to gain or retain their influence.<sup>6</sup>

This academic work will build on this idea and aims to answer the following two main questions:

First, what strategies and tactics do China and Russia follow in this “battle of narratives” on the African continent?

And second, how do their strategies compare? Do they mirror their public declarations of close partnership by operating similarly or at least complementarily? Or are they possibly on a collision course, implying an underlying geostrategic conflict between the self-proclaimed “partnership of steel”?

## **1. The Concept of Narrative Warfare**

This thesis argues that while the concepts of “information war” and “battle of narratives” both encapsulate important elements of geopolitical influence, neither alone adequately reflects the integrated and coordinated practices under examination here. “Information Warfare”, as Maan defines it, describes the struggle for control over information.<sup>7</sup> Strategic crafting, modification and dissemination of information are indeed essential to the influence strategies of geopolitical actors, yet drawing on Nissen, this thesis emphasizes that the concept of Information Warfare alone is too communication-centered and disregards the fact that strategic communication is only one among many kinetic and non-kinetic actions aligned to advance a broader strategic narrative.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the former EU commissioner’s concept of the “battle of narratives” suggests that the quest for influence comes down to “making the best offer”.<sup>9</sup> While this notion of crafting the most convincing or most tempting narrative for a target is vital, it disregards the coordinated information campaigns conducted to alter conditions and behaviors in favor of the bidding party.

The overarching term “Narrative Warfare” includes both these concepts. Building on Maan and Cobaugh, Narrative Warfare acknowledges that coordinated actions and messages are structured around strategic narratives, which give meaning to the diverse array of foreign

---

<sup>6</sup> FOX, Benjamin - EU must win 'battle of narratives' with Russia to retain African influence - Euractiv.

<sup>7</sup> MAAN, Ajit - Stories vs Facts: The Real Battleground in Narrative Warfare - Homeland Security Today.

<sup>8</sup> ELKJER NISSEN, Thomas - Narrative Led Operations - Militært Tidsskrift, p. 66.

<sup>9</sup> FOX, Benjamin - EU must win 'battle of narratives' with Russia to retain African influence - Euractiv.

policy, public diplomacy and covert operations.<sup>10</sup> As Nissen puts it, strategic narratives stand at the heart of political, economic and military operations of a state today, as there is an unprecedented need to legitimize and communicate these actions to the media and general public.<sup>11</sup>

Narrative Warfare therefore puts strategic narratives at the center of a geopolitical actor's coordinated operations for influence and power – as will this academic work. While Narrative Warfare is the domain it observes, strategic narratives are its core theoretical framework. To analyze Narrative Warfare strategies, one must look at the design and aim of strategic narratives as well as their projection methods. For this purpose, this work will build on Strategic Narrative Theory by Miskimmon et al. – a framework that will be explained in its own methodological chapter.

Moreover, Narrative Warfare also considers the classical elements of Information Warfare which may be used to support a strategic narrative. While a strategic narrative is inherently fed by a flow of information, the essence of Information Warfare is exercising control over that information flow. This might include stealing, planting, distorting, degrading or manipulating information.<sup>12</sup> As established by Wardle and Derakhshan, the three most prominent tactics are the dissemination of disinformation, misinformation and malinformation.<sup>13</sup> While disinformation is false or manipulated information, misinformation may be factually correct but is presented in a selective or misleading way. Malinformation describes reality-based information which is used for hate speech and polarization.

As this exercise of control over information ultimately aims at the cognitive domain and behavioral changes in its target, Information Warfare and therefore Narrative Warfare are sometimes considered forms of Psychological Warfare Operations.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, the terminology of “warfare” does not necessarily imply the embedding into an ongoing armed conflict. Instead, it draws on the concept of Hybrid Warfare, in which kinetic and non-kinetic operations are strategically combined to achieve security-related objectives. Although scholars have struggled to find consensus on a definition, it is generally acknowledged that

---

<sup>10</sup> COBAUGH, Paul - Narrative Warfare - Medium.

<sup>11</sup> ELKJER NISSEN, Thomas - Narrative Led Operations - Militært Tidsskrift, p. 66.

<sup>12</sup> GILAS, Keir - Handbook of Russian Information Warfare – NATO Defense College, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> WARDLE, Claire ; DERAKHSHAN, Hossein - INFORMATION DISORDER: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making – Council of Europe, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> BAKSHI, Bipin - Information Warfare: Concepts and Components, p. 179.

Hybrid Warfare is often conducted in a “gray zone” between war and peace.<sup>15</sup> This can either mean proximity to an armed conflict or precisely the absence of open confrontation while still achieving politico-military objectives.

While Narrative Warfare therefore may be used to support or legitimize battlefield operations, it can also be employed in traditionally “peaceful” settings to undermine trust in institutional capabilities, subvert public opinion formation processes or influence election results.<sup>16</sup> The term “warfare” is further justified by the typically coordinated narrative operations of a state’s civil and military entities, such as foreign intelligence services, psychological operations divisions and public diplomacy channels.<sup>17</sup>

Overall, Narrative Warfare is the operational domain of deploying and cultivating strategic narratives - potentially through methods of Information Warfare - to achieve influence or power. As Miskimmon et al. point out: Looking at how actors utilize Narrative Warfare helps explaining geopolitical dynamics and long-term strategies.<sup>18</sup>

## **2. Africa as a Target of Narrative Warfare**

The African continent has been recognized as an arena of geopolitical rivalries, with some observers suggesting a re-emergence of the role it played during the Cold War as a stage of East-West contention.<sup>19</sup> Policy analysts such as Akum and Tull describe this dynamic as a “strategic competition” for Africa, elevated by the emergence of the so-called “multipolar international order”.<sup>20</sup> This concept captures the transition from a bipolar Cold War era, through a subsequent period of unipolar dominance by the United States, to an international system in which multiple geopolitical poles now compete continuously for geopolitical weight without adhering to a clear hierarchy of power.<sup>21</sup> The actors most commonly referred to in this context are the United States, China, the European Union and Russia. But this list

---

<sup>15</sup> BANKOV, Borislav - Hybrid Warfare: How to Escape the Conceptual Gray-Zone – Journal of Strategic Security, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> PETROVIC, Petar - Disinformation and EU: The Role of Narrative in Hybrid Warfare within the European Union, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> THIBAUT, Kenton - Chinese Discourse Power: Ambitions and Reality in the Digital Domain – Atlantic Council, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> CILLIERS, Jakkie - Africa in the World - Institute for Security Studies; RUSSELL, Martin ; PICHON, Eric - Russia in Africa: A new arena for geopolitical competition – European Parliamentary Research Service, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> AKUM, Fonteh ; TULL, Dennis - Strategic Competition and Cooperation in Africa – Megatrends Afrika, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> PETERS, Michael A. - The emerging multipolar world order: A preliminary analysis, p. 1.



is by no means exhaustive, as emerging players like India or Turkey are cultivating their growing role in world politics.

In their efforts, many of these actors have already turned to African countries to expand their political, economic or security footprint on the continent.<sup>22</sup> This is unsurprising, given that Africa is endowed with 30% of the world's mineral resources, including rare earth minerals in rising global demand.<sup>23</sup> While the populations of major geopolitical players are facing demographic decline, Africa's total population is expected to add 796 million people to the global workforce by 2050.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the 54 African countries form the largest voting bloc in the United Nations General Assembly, constituting considerable weight in multilateral decision-making-processes.<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, many African countries have been suffering from high poverty rates, armed conflicts and governance deficits – which has ultimately prevented the continent from realizing its enormous potential in geo-economics and geopolitics.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, as Nigerian policymaker Oby Ezekwesili has stated: “The world needs Africa and Africa needs the world.”<sup>27</sup> The increased focus of global powers on the continent is regarded favorably by many African countries as it means opportunities to diversify international partnerships.<sup>28</sup> This constitutes a unique setting in which geopolitical actors employ Narrative Warfare to elevate their influence strategies. It also offers new insights beyond existing studies on narrative operations in various Western countries. Actors have to adapt strategic narratives for African target audiences while simultaneously being able to leverage different Narrative Warfare techniques due to lower internet penetration rates or differing media governance models.

Nonetheless, this work acknowledges that Africa is not a homogeneous entity but rather consists of 54 independent states whose interests, local conditions and susceptibility to

---

<sup>22</sup> KAS MEDIA AFRICA - It is about their story: How China, Turkey and Russia influence the media in Africa, Foreword.

<sup>23</sup> ZABELIN, Dimitri - Why Africa will become a prominent player in global geopolitics - World Economic Forum.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> NANTULYA, Paul - Africa's Role in China's Multilateralism Strategy – Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

<sup>26</sup> ZABELIN, Dimitri - Why Africa will become a prominent player in global geopolitics - World Economic Forum.

<sup>27</sup> GERMAN MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT - Shaping the future with Africa, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> AKUM, Fonteh ; TULL, Dennis - Strategic Competition and Cooperation in Africa – Megatrends Afrika, p. 1.

influence campaigns vary significantly. This work will therefore employ different case studies that examine more regionalized events to highlight local dynamics of Narrative Warfare. Despite this recognition, this analysis does not primarily seek African agency. Instead, it focuses on how external geopolitical actors approach the African continent through the domain of Narrative Warfare. This inherently means taking on the perspective of an outside player. Given that both Russia and China, as well as other geopolitical powers like the U.S. and the EU, usually construct their strategies through large-scale, continent-wide approaches, the analytical framework of this academic work mirrors this thinking. It does not put Africa at the center of its research, but rather the way external actors target it.

## II. Literature Review

### 1. Theoretical Foundations

The concept of Narrative Warfare as a way of pursuing geopolitical influence is well recognized within the literature, although a clear terminology is still missing: While renowned think tanks like the *Atlantic Council* or the *European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats* have picked up the term Narrative Warfare in research reports dealing with Russian and Chinese influence campaigns, they lack a theoretical framework and seem to use it as an overarching term for an array of operations within the Information Warfare and Hybrid Warfare domains.<sup>29</sup> These concepts have been exceptionally well explored over the past years following the Russian invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022, to the point that some authors criticize them as an “academic fashion”.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Hybrid Warfare studies focus primarily on the techniques through which information is weaponized or manipulated instead of recognizing the narrative framework behind state actions. Nissen was likely the first and most influential researcher to acknowledge the strategic significance of narratives at the heart of such operations (2013).<sup>31</sup>

The term Narrative Warfare was coined by Maan in her 2018 book of the same name, which remains the only comprehensive conceptualization.<sup>32</sup> She elevates Narrative Warfare to a standalone concept by pointing out that it goes beyond the existing frameworks of Information Warfare, arguing that Narrative Warfare is not a conflict over information but

---

<sup>29</sup> ATLANTIC COUNCIL - Narrative Warfare; AUKIA, Jukkia [et al.] - China's narrative influence in Sub-Saharan Africa - The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.

<sup>30</sup> LIBISELLER, Chiara - 'Hybrid warfare' as an academic fashion.

<sup>31</sup> ELKJER NISSEN, Thomas - Narrative Led Operations - Militært Tidsskrift, p. 66.

<sup>32</sup> MAAN, Ajit - Narrative Warfare.

rather over the meaning of information.<sup>33</sup> Since then, little has been done to develop this concept through in-depth research or case studies, as most publications on cognitive influence operations still adhere to the Information Warfare framework. This thesis addresses this gap by enriching Maan's concept of Narrative Warfare with the communication-centered Strategic Narrative Theory by Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle.<sup>34</sup> Strategic Narrative Theory is a widely acclaimed framework within the field of international relations studies, as scholars recognize the central role of storytelling in contemporary international politics and geopolitical conflicts.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, it is based on the established concept of "soft power" by Nye from 1990.<sup>36</sup> By combining the theories of Information Warfare and Strategic Narrative Theory, this academic thesis gives new life to Maan's concept of Narrative Warfare.

## 2. Narrative Warfare in Africa

The role of Narrative Warfare in Africa has gained traction among researchers of communication studies and international relations in the past years, although theoretical foundations are often missing. The field is not well explored, as many studies and analyses of Information and Narrative Warfare focus on the U.S. and EU space, which is characterized by comparatively high political stability and the absence of armed conflicts. Data and field studies on African countries are rare, while Russian actions in West Africa have received the most attention comparatively:

The *African Center for Strategic Studies* has been monitoring cases of Information Warfare throughout Africa and maintains a database of disinformation campaigns.<sup>37</sup> Analysts like Siegle and Nantulya have been interpreting the data with regard to Russian and Chinese geopolitical strategies, although rarely through a narrative lens. They have pointed out that Russia has used disinformation campaigns to destabilize West African nations and thereby expanding its regional security cooperation.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, they claim that China aims to

---

<sup>33</sup> MAAN, Ajit - Stories vs Facts: The Real Battleground in Narrative Warfare - Homeland Security Today.

<sup>34</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alistair - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order.

<sup>35</sup> CHABAN, Natalia ; ZHABOTYNSKA, Svitlana ; KNODT, Michèle - What makes strategic narrative efficient: Ukraine on Russian e-news platforms; VAN NOORT, Carolijn - Study of Strategic Narratives: The Case of BRICS, p. 124-125.

<sup>36</sup> NYE, Joseph S. - The Changing Nature of World Power – Political Science Quarterly, p. 181.

<sup>37</sup> AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES - Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

control the African information space through media cooperation, which enables Chinese disinformation campaigns.

As one of few researchers, Pathé Duarte has applied the Hybrid Warfare framework of “information disorder” to Russian disinformation campaigns in West Africa and established links between Russian paramilitary deployments and social media campaigns.<sup>39</sup> Studies by Audinet, the *NATO Stratcom Center of Excellence*, the *Stanford Internet Observatory* and the *Africa Data and Democracy Observatory* have analyzed large volumes of Russian-manufactured media and social media campaigns.<sup>40</sup> They all identify anti-colonial, anti-Western and pan-African messaging.

The *European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats* has released an extensive multi-domain observation report on Chinese Narrative Warfare operations in Sub-Saharan Africa, which remains the most comprehensive study in this field.<sup>41</sup> Aukia et al. argue that China goes beyond classical narrative dissemination by taking control of media ecosystems and leveraging economic dependencies. Like others, the policy-focused report lacks a theoretical framework.

Van Noort remains one of the few scholars who apply Strategic Narrative Theory in the context of outreach towards the so-called “Global South”, focusing on how strategic narratives are used to justify infrastructure investment projects and multipolarity ambitions.<sup>42</sup> Snigyr is one of the few researchers who has concentrated on finding narrative patterns shaping Russia’s information campaigns in Africa, although without a theoretical framework.<sup>43</sup> Her report outlines disapproval of liberal values and the idea of “De-Westernization”.

---

<sup>39</sup> PATHÉ DUARTE, Felipe - Information Disorder and Civil Unrest Russian Weaponization of Social Media Platforms in Mali and Burkina Faso – 2020–2022 – African Security, p. 219.

<sup>40</sup> AUDINET, Maxime - Le Lion, l’Ours et les Hyènes : Acteurs, pratiques et récits de l’influence informationnelle russe en Afrique subsaharienne francophone – IRSEM; AFRICA DATA AND DEMOCRACY OBSERVATOR - Challenging the West: Russian anti-imperialism narratives in Nigeria – Medium; GRAPHIKA ; STANFORD INTERNET OBSERVATORY - More Troll Combat - French and Russian Influence Operations Go Head to Head Targeting Audiences in Africa; SVOBODA, Karel ; MATLACH, Paula-Charlotte ; BADDORF, Zack - Russia's Activities in Africa's Information Environment (Case Studies: Mali, Central African republic) - NATO Stratcom CoE.

<sup>41</sup> Jukkia [et al.] - China’s narrative influence in Sub-Saharan Africa - The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.

<sup>42</sup> VAN NOORT, Carolijn - Study of Strategic Narratives: The Case of BRICS.

<sup>43</sup> SNIGYR, Olena - Ideological Agenda of Russian Information Influence in Africa - The Foreign Policy Research Institute.

The embedding of Chinese media and cultural institutions to gain narrative dominance in African countries has been covered by some case studies. Li and Wang find that Chinese media outlets, diplomatic channels and state-owned businesses cooperate to secure positive press coverage of Chinese-driven infrastructure projects in Ethiopia and Kenya.<sup>44</sup> Repnikova and Li point out the significance of Chinese cultural institutions in gaining local influence.<sup>45</sup>

There is little research seeking to compare the different Narrative Warfare strategies of China and Russia in Africa. *KAS Media Africa* has gathered Chinese and Russian media strategy in Africa in a comprehensive 2021 publication but does not offer a true comparative analysis. The report does, however, point out that Chinese messaging is primarily positive and backed up by extensive funding, while Russia primarily revives Soviet anti-colonial sentiments.<sup>46</sup> *The Africa Center for Strategic Studies* claims the Chinese strategy to be more institutionalized and long-term oriented, while Russia acts more like a local disinformation purveyor.<sup>47</sup> Huang comes to a similar assessment, as Chinese information campaigns are generally less covert.<sup>48</sup> The Digital Forensics Research Lab describes Chinese media amplifying Russian disinformation campaigns in Sub-Saharan Africa, suggesting a close strategic partnership claimed by both powers.<sup>49</sup>

Beyond the Narrative Warfare domain, some authors have begun to question Russia's and China's compatibility in their Africa policies. Many articles from Western or U.S. perspectives embody the bloc thinking emphasized by Russia and China themselves: Strategic influence competition between the West and a Russian/Chinese bloc.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Ramani sees a solid foundation of partnership between both actors, despite asymmetrical approaches.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, Moody suggests that Chinese ambitions for stable investment environments in Africa are diametrically opposed to a Russian tactic fostering instability and

---

<sup>44</sup> LI, Hangwei ; WANG, Yuan - African Media Cultures and Chinese Public Relations Strategies in Kenya and Ethiopia - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>45</sup> REPNIKOVA, Maria - Rethinking China's Soft Power: "Pragmatic Enticement" of Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia – The China Quarterly; LI, Siyuan - A Foucauldian Power Analysis of China's Confucius Institute in Africa: Power, Knowledge and the Institutionalisation of China's Foreign Policy.

<sup>46</sup> KAS MEDIA AFRICA - It is about their story: How China, Turkey and Russia influence the media in Africa, Foreword.

<sup>47</sup> AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES - Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa.

<sup>48</sup> HUANG, Echo - Why China isn't as skillful at disinformation as Russia - Quartz.

<sup>49</sup> DIGITAL FORENSIC RESEARCH LAB - In Sub-Saharan Africa, China embraces Russian messaging against Ukraine.

<sup>50</sup> STAVRIDIS, James - China and Russia Are Beating the US in Africa - Bloomberg.

<sup>51</sup> RAMANI, Samuel - Russia and China in Africa: Prospective Partners or Asymmetric Rivals?, p. 16.

offering security assistance services.<sup>52</sup> Hamilton argues that the future of their relationship depends on how much Russian disruption Beijing is willing to tolerate on the continent.<sup>53</sup>

This academic work seeks to address the existing gap in studies of Narrative Warfare in Africa by moving beyond the usual Information Warfare framework. This comparative analysis of Russian and Chinese Narrative Warfare strategies will be the first of its kind, enriching the debate on a possible conflict between both actors' Africa policies.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **1. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this thesis is largely grounded in Strategic Narrative Theory (SNT), a framework developed by Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle.<sup>54</sup>

SNT states that political actors employ narratives to construct a “shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international relations”.<sup>55</sup> They seek to influence the opinions and behaviors of other actors for strategic benefit. SNT draws significantly from Nye's concept of “soft power”, which is contrasted with “hard power” – commonly understood as the use of coercion.<sup>56</sup> Nye introduced the concept of “soft power” in the 1990s as a way to understand the changing forms of influence in the international system after the end of the Cold War, which ended a period of fixation on nuclear arsenals and conventional militaries.<sup>57</sup> He argued that hard power alone, meaning force or inducement, was becoming insufficient to shape world politics and maintain influence.<sup>58</sup> Instead, a more appealing way for a state to exercise power would be to make other states follow it voluntarily by providing attractive ideas or visions for the future.<sup>59</sup>

Nye's theory of soft power has limitations, as there is no clear distinction between “soft” and “hard” power assets. While one could understand military resources as hard power and state policy as soft power, the lines are blurred. Like Roselle et al. rightfully argue, a military

---

<sup>52</sup> MOODY, Jessica - Are China and Russia on a Collision Course in Africa? - Foreign Policy.

<sup>53</sup> HAMILTON, Robert - The Dragon and the Bear in Africa: Stress-Testing Chinese-Russian Relations - Foreign Policy Research Institute, p. 16.

<sup>54</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 176.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; MISKIMMON, Alister ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben - Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power – Media, War and Conflict, p. 71.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> NYE, Joseph S. - The Changing Nature of World Power – Political Science Quarterly, p. 181.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

force can also serve as a soft power asset – for example through an exceptional military image or by partaking in successful stabilization and development missions.<sup>60</sup>

SNT can bridge this gap because it understands both hard and soft power elements as ways for a state to project strategic narratives, which in turn aim to influence other actors' opinions and behaviors.<sup>61</sup>

As Miskimmon et al. rightfully argue, narratives are essential in international relations because "human beings inherently think in narratives and use stories to make sense of the world, connecting events into a past, present, and potential futures".<sup>62</sup> Narratives serve as a personalization of "truth" and are able to influence human behavior more strongly than even the most convincing data.<sup>63</sup> "Truth", in this sense, is not to be understood as an "objective", factual truth, but instead as narrative truth – an image of reality that the narrative projects.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Question of "Truth" in this Work**

As mentioned before, strategic narratives are a way of storytelling and the resulting stories may feature disinformation, misinformation and malinformation. Disinformation, if possible, will be identified and pointed out in this thesis. However, in instances of misinformation or malinformation, factually correct information may be selectively interpreted to advance a particular narrative, often by excluding conflicting evidence. According to Maan, this is precisely the essence of Narrative Warfare: A conflict about the meaning of information.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, one cannot "fact-check" a strategic narrative in the conventional sense, especially when they are driven more by values or ideology than facts. It would also go beyond the scope of this academic work to evaluate the factual truth behind all the identified narratives of Russia and China. Nonetheless, a critical distance will be kept.

As Roach says: "History is littered with false narratives".<sup>66</sup> Just as international actors compete, narratives in international relations compete with each other. They claim moral or power superiority and they claim to be on the rise while their competitors are in decline.

---

<sup>60</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; MISKIMMON, Alister ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben - Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power – Media, War and Conflict, p. 73.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>62</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 176.

<sup>63</sup> WYDICK, Bruce - How narratives influence human behavior - World Economic Forum.

<sup>64</sup> BYERS, Patrick ; JEREZ, Melanie - Narrative Form and Forms of Truth, p. 61.

<sup>65</sup> MAAN, Ajit - Stories vs Facts: The Real Battleground in Narrative Warfare - Homeland Security Today.

<sup>66</sup> ROACH, Stephen - History is Littered with False Narratives - Yale University Press.

Ultimately, only time will tell whether Russia's and China's strategic narratives in Africa hold factual truth or not.

### **Three Types of Narrative Processes**

To deconstruct strategic narratives, SNT splits them into three, interconnected and complementary processes, namely “narrative formation”, “narrative projection” and “narrative reception”.<sup>67</sup>

The formation process is concerned with the construction components of the narrative (actors, conflict, and solution) and the intentional strategic design, pointing towards a strategic goal (for example legitimacy, agenda-setting, diverting attention).<sup>68</sup>

The projection process refers to the method of communicating the narrative to the target audience.<sup>69</sup> This work considers three main projection techniques: Diplomacy, media and cultural diplomacy.

Diplomacy is one of the tools of foreign policy and one constantly used to influence the will of foreign governments, as Morgenthau points out.<sup>70</sup> It can serve as a channel for narratives through diplomatic speech or diplomatic actions. Most importantly, narratives through diplomatic engagement do not only aim at influencing another state's government. Instead, Morgenthau states that it is “primarily the man in the streets” that is targeted through diplomacy and ought to be impressed by the outreaching state's qualities.<sup>71</sup> Following this line of thought, this work considers narrative projection through Chinese and Russian diplomacy targeting African states' governments and their spectating populations alike.

Narrative projection has been significantly shaped by media environments, especially the internet and the popularity of social media. Both have democratized the ability to forge and spread narratives, which scholars such as Castells have characterized as the “Network Society”.<sup>72</sup> These communication networks play dynamic roles in the narrative projection process of state actors, as the actor itself can initiate the projection process of a narrative in

---

<sup>67</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 83.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 62; MORGENTHAU, Hans Joachim - Truth and power: Essays of a decade, 1960-70, p. 320.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> CASTELLS, Manuel ; CARDOSO, Gustavo, eds. - The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy, p. 3.



the digital domain (by posting through a social media account), it can further disseminate it (by sharing through a social media account) or project it outside the digital domain, where it independently finds its way into social media (via online journalism).

This illustrates how the internet and social media platforms make narrative projection more multifaceted, non-linear and broaden the range of actors, ultimately strengthening the role of individuals in the process.<sup>73</sup> This offers both opportunities and challenges. While these transnational networks increase their reach and enable horizontal engagement with foreign audiences, the same platforms also open up space for contestation by other actors.<sup>74</sup>

Cultural diplomacy is the third projection technique considered here. Drawing on Nye, cultural diplomacy is an integral part of soft power, making a nation's values more attractive through open and popular culture.<sup>75</sup> Examples include educational and cultural exchanges, language learning, sports and art.<sup>76</sup>

The third process, narrative reception, describes the impact of a strategic narrative on the audience. Assessing whether a narrative has persuaded an audience is exceptionally complex and difficult. To identify such an impact, one needs to conduct an extensive contextual analysis of the general attitude, behavioral patterns, and personal opinions of the audience before and after being exposed to the narrative.<sup>77</sup> Even then, audiences are not passive recipients since they possess different media literacy levels and nuanced understandings of how they are targeted by strategic narratives.<sup>78</sup>

### **Narrative Reception in this Work**

The third process, narrative reception, cannot be answered conclusively by this work. Given the difficulty of extensive qualitative and quantitative research needed to measure the impact of a narrative on the target audience, such an assessment would go beyond the scope of this work. Instead, the focus is on deconstructing and comparing the narrative strategies of Russia and China in Africa. During the case studies, available field research will be cited to demonstrate how the populations of African countries potentially interact with the projected

---

<sup>73</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 176; *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>74</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; MISKIMMON, Alister ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben - Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power – Media, War and Conflict, p. 78.

<sup>75</sup> SALIU, Hasan - Narratives of Public Diplomacy in the post-Truth Era: The decline of Soft Power, p. 213.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

narratives and to point to possible links or potential future persuasion. But these studies are limited, not representative of the whole African continent and lack the contextual analysis needed to conclude if a narrative has actually successfully persuaded individuals. If a potential link between the narrative strategy and a real-life action is established in this work, then it should be regarded as circumstantial evidence rather than claiming conclusive proof.

Another reason to focus on the narrative strategies themselves rather than on the reception is that even the most elaborate narrative strategy might not produce measurable impact in a certain time frame. While some narrative strategies may be employed to achieve short-term effects, others may only produce effects in the long term – spanning multiple decades. The former US Secretary of State George P. Shultz once stated that diplomacy directed at overseas audiences can be understood as gardening – cultivating foreign soil for a future momentum, for when one will have a foundation to build on.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, some narrative strategies may prove their strategic benefit only much later. Especially narratives meant to influence long-standing attitudes or deeply embedded values may take multiple generations to unfold fully.

While one generation may have the media literacy or contrasting attitudes necessary to resist being substantially affected by a media environment dominated by strategic narratives, subsequent generations who grow up in such an environment may be more receptive to them. Environmental scholars such as Khan use the term “generational amnesia” to describe the phenomenon whereby new generations do not recognize the changes that their environment underwent before their time and consider the current state to be “normal”.<sup>80</sup> Successful long-term narrative strategies therefore may not produce measurable strategic benefit for years, but succeed over time.

While individuals may initially identify the insertion of strategic narratives into an information environment as artificial and biased, this may no longer be the case after some decades. This scenario of the “normalization” of narratives draws on Pauly’s theory of “shifting baselines”, which describes the partial or total failure to identify long-term environmental changes due to collective “forgetting” as generational change takes place.<sup>81</sup> Originally a concept from environmental sciences, it can also offer new perspectives on the

---

<sup>79</sup> U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE - Cultural Diplomacy The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> GARRIC, Audrey - Peter H. Kahn: ‘As human beings we destroy nature, but we never fully realize the extent of the damage and loss’ – Le Monde.

<sup>81</sup> ROST, Dietmar - Shifting baselines: interdisciplinary perspectives on long-term change perception and memory p. 2.

long-term evolution of knowledge within the social sciences.<sup>82</sup> Taking this into account, this work will consider sustainable narrative strategies aimed at long-term benefits as particularly elaborate and potentially successful, even when no immediate impact is assessed.

### **Types of Narratives Analyzed**

Firstly, “system narratives” describe the structure of the international order as a whole, as well as the actors partaking in it (which are primarily states) and the nature of their international relations in the global order.<sup>83</sup> The strategic purpose of system narratives is to influence how other actors view the hierarchy in the global landscape, the power dynamics between the actors and whom they classify as allies or threats.<sup>84</sup> An example of a system narrative was the “Cold War” narrative, which classified the international order as bipolar, suggesting competition between two blocs: The Western “capitalist bloc” and the Eastern “communist bloc”. These blocs were spearheaded by two major global powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Both of them strategically drew legitimacy for their leadership from supposedly being the “good” actor, opposing the “evil” actor.<sup>85</sup> They each represented contrasting economic and political systems. The bipolarity implied that other states and their populations were to choose a side and loyally align themselves with one of the two systems.

Secondly, “identity narratives” concern the public image of a nation-state, laying out its core values and biographical history. The strategic aim of an identity narrative is to give substantial meaning to the state itself and shape how other actors perceive its national essence and agency.<sup>86</sup> An example of an identity narrative was the German (pre-reunification: Western German) national identification as a “European nation” after the end of the Second World War. Given Germany’s role as an aggressor in two world wars, it had deeply embedded itself in multilateral institutions, most notably the European Union, and demonstrated reluctance toward unilateral international action and military force. Instead, it had created a self-understanding of “civilian power” and supranationalism to distance itself from its past, as Maul asserts.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; MISKIMMON, Alister ; O’LOUGHLIN, Ben - Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power – Media, War and Conflict, p. 76.

<sup>84</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O’LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 180.

<sup>85</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O’LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 46.

<sup>86</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; MISKIMMON, Alister ; O’LOUGHLIN, Ben - Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power – Media, War and Conflict, p. 76.

<sup>87</sup> MAULL, Hanns W. - Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers, p. 104.

The third group is classified as “issue narratives”, which identify certain conflicts or issues and then serve as justifications for corresponding governmental action.<sup>88</sup> This classification draws on the notion of policy legitimacy, which argues that policy must be justified by explaining it to domestic and foreign audiences.<sup>89</sup> As Smoke points out, this might be more obvious for democratic states, where the ruling elite depends on popular support, at least during election times.<sup>90</sup> But even authoritarian systems use indicators like national interest or economic prosperity to substantiate their rule and their policy decisions.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, in the field of international relations, the targeted audience when justifying foreign policy is often overseas, especially when it is potentially impacted by it.

In essence, these three types of narratives form a coherent framework where the broad understanding of the world (system) informs who the actors are (identity), which then in turn shape how specific conflicts are framed and addressed (issue). These narratives are fundamentally interconnected and constantly influence one another.<sup>92</sup> They cannot be isolated into strict categories but are destined to overlap. System narratives usually overarch identity and issue narratives. National identity can play a fundamental role in sustaining a system narrative. It also may set the stage for a corresponding policy. Therefore, the classification into these categories in this study should not be considered exclusive or complete. It is mainly done to clearly structure the vast amount of narratives projected by both actors and outline a general strategy for comparison.

## 2. Research Design

As this academic work aims to capture both processes of narrative construction and narrative projection, a multifaceted, non-linear research method is required. It adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach, supported by individual case studies.

In Chapters IV and V, each actor’s respective Narrative Warfare strategy in Africa will be analyzed. The first part of these chapters focuses on the main narratives and their construction, drawing heavily on the concept of narrative formation, with three dominant

---

<sup>88</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; MISKIMMON, Alister ; O’LOUGHLIN, Ben - Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power – Media, War and Conflict, p. 76.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> SMOKE, Richard - On the Importance of Policy Legitimacy – Political Psychology, p. 98.

<sup>91</sup> GERSCHEWSKI, Johannes - Legitimacy in Autocracies: Oxymoron or Essential Feature? – Perspectives on Politics, p. 22.

<sup>92</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; MISKIMMON, Alister ; O’LOUGHLIN, Ben - Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power – Media, War and Conflict, p. 76.

strategic narratives of each actor identified and analyzed. The second part addresses narrative projection, covering three main channels used to disseminate narratives to African audiences: Diplomacy, media and cultural diplomacy.

These two chapters form the basis for the comparative analysis in chapter VI, where similarities and differences between the two actors' Narrative Warfare strategies are highlighted.

Finally, Chapter VII draws conclusions and considers potential future developments, asking whether the two strategies are compatible and, if not, whether this could mean strategic competition.

### **3. Data**

This analysis focuses on events and primary sources from the period 2020 to 2025. This time frame encompasses several significant geopolitical developments that have shaped the international and regional information space. This includes seven military coups in Africa, particularly in the West African Sahel states.<sup>93</sup> It also covers the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent three years, during which Beijing and Moscow substantially deepened their bilateral ties, as analysts such as Soong observe.<sup>94</sup> The time span of five years provides a suitable observation cycle for identifying underlying strategies, as it captures not only short-term but also mid-term-oriented narrative actions. During this period, the authoritarian leaders of both countries, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, have remained in office while further consolidating their personal authority, which indicates a degree of continuity in strategic decisions and minimizes the risk of distortions in the observation cycle due to changes in the heads of state.<sup>95</sup>

For the narrative construction process, textual analysis will be employed to identify and extract recurring patterns of discursive framing, symbolic language and references indicating characteristic strategic narratives. For this purpose, this thesis will analyze official governmental press releases, speeches, diplomatic actions and communication through state-owned media from 2020 to 2025. In Russia and China, all major media outlets are state-

---

<sup>93</sup> AFRICANEWS - Africa: the 7 military coups over the last three years.

<sup>94</sup> SOONG, Claus - China-Russia alignment – a shared vision, without fully seeing eye to eye - Mercator Institute for China Studies.

<sup>95</sup> FREEDOM HOUSE - China: Country Profile; FREEDOM HOUSE - Russia: Country Profile.

owned or under strict state control.<sup>96</sup> For China, the analysis primarily relies on official press releases, mainly by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China) and the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. State media sources mainly include articles by *Xinhua*, *China Daily* and *Global Times*. Regarding Russian sources, this research was substantially affected by European Commission sanctions against the Russian Federation, which block access to domains affiliated with the Kremlin and state media.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, a limited number of publicly available Russian governmental documents, including the 2021 National Security Strategy and Vladimir Putin's opening statement at the 2023 Russia-Africa Summit, as well as multiple articles from *Sputnik* and *TASS*, were analyzed. These were complemented by secondary sources such as policy reports and case studies on Russian media production.

To substantiate the interpretations of the strategic benefit behind them, secondary academic literature on the broader geopolitical context as well as on Chinese and Russian national and military strategy will be incorporated.

Regarding the projection process of narratives, this thesis will rely heavily on case studies from secondary literature on Russian and Chinese hybrid threats and disinformation.

#### **IV. Chinese Strategic Narrative Warfare in Africa**

##### **1. Background: Chinese Narrative Warfare Framework**

The People's Republic of China has publicly formulated a strategy to spread Chinese narratives to international audiences in recent years. Since 2013, party leader and President Xi Jinping has been urging the PRC to "tell China's story well", placing special emphasis on a horizontal approach of "reaching the people" by targeting the grassroots.<sup>98</sup> Thibaut suggests that China has established a widespread institutional framework for this task, spearheaded by the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the State Council of the PRC (also known as the Central People's Government), both of which maintain various departments dedicated to communicating China's public image to foreign audiences.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> REPORTERS SANS FRONTIERS - Russia; REPORTERS SANS FRONTIERS - China.

<sup>97</sup> MARISTANY DE LAS CASAS, Pablo - Holding the line: Auditing the EU's ban of Russian state media 3 years on - Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

<sup>98</sup> BAIJIE, Ann - Xi: Spreading China's story key mission - China Daily.

<sup>99</sup> THIBAUT, Kenton - Chinese Discourse Power: Ambitions and Reality in the Digital Domain – Atlantic Council, p. 28.

Chinese universities and think tanks are under guidance to support this strategy.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, China can rely on the world's largest state-asset system, with key companies under direct political control to aid any outward-facing narrative efforts.<sup>101</sup>

The Chinese conceptualization of strategic narratives involves coordinated use of civil and military state entities, which is characteristic of Narrative Warfare. In openly available publications under the sponsorship of the Chinese Ministry of Defense, Chinese scholars argue that narratives are weapons comparable to military hard power, with language and rhetoric treated as tools to achieve strategic goals.<sup>102</sup> A strategic framework to shape narratives and information landscapes was adopted by the Chinese Central Military Commission in 2003 and is titled “Three Warfares”.<sup>103</sup> It comprises three branches of strategies that mutually enforce each other: Coordinated use of strategic psychological operations, media manipulation and, finally, legal warfare. Psychological operations are used to influence an opponent's decision-making capacity. Legal warfare (“lawfare”) uses legal arguments to justify Chinese actions. Media manipulation seeks to create an information environment that is favorable to Chinese actions and the PRC's self-proclaimed public image.<sup>104</sup>

Scholars such as Yoshihara pointed out decades ago that China recognizes information as an essential tool in state strategy to persuade and achieve favorable geostrategic outcomes.<sup>105</sup> Drawing on one of the most famous ancient Chinese strategists, Sun Tzu: “The skillful leader subdues the enemy's troops without any fighting”.<sup>106</sup> Direct methods of warfare may be employed against the enemy, but only indirect methods hold the key to victory. The former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger similarly assessed Chinese state doctrine as traditionally non-confrontational, low profile and focused on “strategic manipulation of events”.<sup>107</sup> Direct methods would only be employed after having exploited the opponent's psychological weaknesses and having him at a low point that would make an actual strike seem feasible and opportune. These concepts resonate strongly with the idea of strategic narratives as non-coercive tools to achieve favorable outcomes.

---

<sup>100</sup> KATJA, Drinhausen [et al.] - Image Control: How China Struggles For Discourse Power, p. 18.

<sup>101</sup> JIN, Xiankun [et al.] - Political governance in China's state-owned enterprises, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> SHEN, Wenke ; XUE, Yanxing - Xushi zhan: Junshi jingzheng de huayu wuqi [“Narrative War”: A discourse weapon in military competition] - China Military Network.

<sup>103</sup> RASKA, Michael - China and the ‘Three Warfares’ – The Diplomat.

<sup>104</sup> HALPER, Stefan - China: The Three Warfares, p. 30.

<sup>105</sup> YOSHIHARA, Toshi - Chinese Information Warfare: A Phantom Menace Or Emerging Threat?, p. 13.

<sup>106</sup> TZU, Sun - The Art of War, p. 9.

<sup>107</sup> KISSINGER, Henry - On China, p. 30.

According to military officials of the Chinese Military Network, “The ultimate goal of “narrative warfare” is to seize the right to speak and control the brain in the cognitive field”.<sup>108</sup> This so-called “right-to-speak”, sometimes translated as “discourse power” (huà yǔ quán), has repeatedly been mentioned by high-ranking state officials, including President Xi Jinping.<sup>109</sup> For them, discourse power is the ability to shape the global perception of China and to offer a vision of a China-led international order that counters a supposed “narrative hegemony” of the United States and other Western liberal democracies.<sup>110</sup> Any critique of Chinese foreign policy is regarded as wrongfully discrediting Chinese methods of achieving stability and economic prosperity. Some scholars have argued that the public image of the PRC, along with its control over it, can even be seen as an extension of Chinese self-understood sovereignty.<sup>111</sup>

Some years ago, China’s state-controlled media assessed Chinese narrative power as still lagging behind the dominance of the West in shaping discourse and norms in the global order.<sup>112</sup> But since then, China’s self-perception and its leadership ambitions on the global stage have significantly evolved. State-controlled media portrays the so-called West as rapidly declining and inferior to China as an emerging global power.<sup>113</sup>

### **Africa as a Target Audience of Narrative Warfare**

In the PRC’s quest for worldwide narrative power, it aims to create acceptance among foreign audiences for Chinese models of governance. The former editor-in-chief at the state-controlled media outlet *China Daily* has called this tactic of utilizing foreigners to promote the CCP’s narratives “borrowing mouths”.<sup>114</sup>

To achieve that, the CCP categorizes foreign audiences of Narrative Warfare into three groups: Those who are already favorable to the party-state, an ambivalent center group and fierce opponents of their vision.<sup>115</sup> The middle group is seen as the key audience, as it offers

---

<sup>108</sup> SHEN ; XUE - Xushi zhan: Junshi ...

<sup>109</sup> FRIEDMAN, Toni - Lexicon: 'Discourse Power' or the 'Right to Speak' (话语权, Huà yǔ Quán) - DigiChina.

<sup>110</sup> THIBAUT, Kenton - Chinese Discourse Power: Ambitions and Reality in the Digital Domain, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> KATJA, Drinhausen [et al.] - Image Control: How China Struggles For Discourse Power, p. 6.

<sup>112</sup> XINHUA - 西强我弱”国际话语格局怎样改变 (“How to change the international discourse pattern of “strong West and weak me”) – Xinhua.net.

<sup>113</sup> EDITORIAL - ‘China decline’ narrative is the West’s futile attempt of self-rescue – Global Times.

<sup>114</sup> BOGLE, Ariel [et al.] - Borrowing mouths to speak on Xinjiang, p. 6.

<sup>115</sup> HAMILTON, Clive ; OHLBERG, Mareike - Hidden Hand: Exposing How the Chinese Communist Party Is Reshaping the World, p. 22.



potential for persuasion. Drawing on this three-group model, China likely considers African populations to be in the middle group, assessing them as generally receptive to Chinese ambitions. Furthermore, pictures and commitments of Sino-African friendship and success are relayed to global audiences – helping China potentially increase its national image and discourse power far beyond the continent.<sup>116</sup>

Moreover, China looks to Africa as an untapped consumer market given that its own economy suffers from a declining consumption share.<sup>117</sup> Imports from Africa to China are primarily composed of natural resources, which are high in demand for battery production within the green economy.<sup>118</sup> Geopolitically, China looks to legitimize global governance ambitions and national interests.<sup>119</sup> African countries' voting power in multilateral institutions is therefore highly attractive.

## **2. Main Narrative Themes**

### **2.1 System Narrative: Global South versus Global North**

A central element of China's narrative strategy is to present itself as a fellow country of the so-called "Global South" and a trustworthy partner that interacts with African governments on equal terms. As President Xi himself has stressed publicly, China will always view itself as equal to African developing countries, despite its asymmetrical economic power.<sup>120</sup> The PRC publicly emphasizes a shared historical identity of subjugation by foreign powers, recalling its own history of colonial suffering and compares this to European colonialism in Africa.<sup>121</sup> It also refers back to the early years of post-colonialism and acknowledges its historical relations with African countries, recalling the support it received from African member states in the 1971 UN General Assembly vote that enabled the PRC's admission to the United Nations.<sup>122</sup> Drawing on the narrative construction mechanism laid out by

---

<sup>116</sup> KAS MEDIA AFRICA - It is about their story: How China, Turkey and Russia influence the media in Africa, p. 18.

<sup>117</sup> MANUS, George - How is China's economy faring? - Economics Observatory.

<sup>118</sup> CALABRESE, Linda - Why China is seeking greater presence in Africa – the strategy behind its financial deals - ODI Global.

<sup>119</sup> THIBAUT, Kenton - Chinese Discourse Power: Ambitions and Reality in the Digital Domain, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - Full Text: Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue.

<sup>121</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - Why is Africa so close to China?

<sup>122</sup> NANTULYA, Paul - Africa's Role in China's Multilateralism Strategy – Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

Miskimmon et al., China strategically uses an interpretation of “shared” history to legitimize present and future partnerships.

These constant calls to “South-South” solidarity blend into the main Chinese system narrative: An imbalanced international order dominated by a supposed “Western hegemony,” where global power dynamics are disproportionately tilted towards the United States and the European Union - the “old” and “new” colonial powers.<sup>123</sup> “The West” or the “Global North” is established as the counterpart to the so-called Global South, supposedly enforcing its policies on Africa.<sup>124</sup>

China claims to advocate for an alternative global order that benefits the African continent: A system of engaging every country with “mutual respect”, “equality” and without interfering in their domestic affairs.<sup>125</sup> China publicly references criticisms of past Western “Africa+1” summits, where African heads of state felt “humiliated” and “mistreated” when 54 African heads of state were seated opposite a single Western leader.<sup>126</sup> This storytelling capitalizes on existing African disappointments with Western condescending attitudes. Hogan and Patrick even argue that missteps in diplomacy are increasingly leading to the breakdown of North-South cooperation.<sup>127</sup>

The Global North’s outreach towards Africa is framed as paternalistic and “disrespectful”. China’s engagement, on the other hand, suggests emancipation. African countries receive a high volume of diplomatic resources to consolidate this image. China has the largest diplomatic presence in Africa, maintaining embassies in 53 of the 54 African countries recognized by the United Nations.<sup>128</sup> For the past 30 years, each Chinese foreign minister has dedicated its first overseas visit of the year to Africa.<sup>129</sup> China also established a multilateral cooperation platform for the entire African continent, “The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation” (FOCAC). During the FOCAC’s ninth ministerial conference in

---

<sup>123</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - Why is Africa so close to China?

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - China-Africa Relations

<sup>126</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - Why is Africa so close to China?

<sup>127</sup> HOGAN, Erica ; PATRICK, Stewart - A Closer Look at the Global South - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>128</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - List of Chinese Embassies in Africa.

<sup>129</sup> GREEN, Mark - For 30 Years Every Chinese Foreign Minister Visits Africa First – Wilson Center.

Beijing in 2024, President Xi Jinping held bilateral meetings with each of the 53 delegations in a major diplomatic reception.<sup>130</sup>

China's system narrative ultimately builds North vs. South bloc-thinking, aiming to unite Africans under a shared alliance of developing countries to shift global power. The invalidation of the current system is based on reinforcing African criticism of U.S. and European attitudes towards Africa and contrasting it with the idea of equality.

### **Reforms of Global Governance Norms**

To achieve this change in the international system, the PRC advocates reforming what it calls “Global Governance” norms.<sup>131</sup> China claims to support Africa against constant “interference” by the Global North. It states that Western countries misuse their governance norms, such as human rights, to infringe on the sovereignty of African states.<sup>132</sup>

As Drinhausen puts it, China sees itself as a strong defender of a strict normative interpretation of sovereignty.<sup>133</sup> To the CCP, domestic affairs fall under the exclusive control of the sovereign state and should not be subject to bilateral relations.<sup>134</sup> China views the legal principle of “non-interference” as the fundamental basis of global governance and the UN Charter.<sup>135</sup> It also serves as legal justification for rejecting any outside criticism of Chinese domestic issues, such as alleged human rights violations inside China.<sup>136</sup>

Although China regularly reaffirms its commitment to international law and subsequently universal human rights, it insists that interpretation of human rights should depend on a state's domestic “sociocultural values” and “each country has the right to independently choose the path of human rights development”.<sup>137</sup> Human rights should not serve as a justification for “interference in other countries' internal affairs”.<sup>138</sup> Using legal and diplomatic reasoning, China seeks to redefine the human rights framework in Africa.<sup>139</sup> While the African Union had previously considered human rights obligations unconditional

---

<sup>130</sup> NEEMA, Christian-Géraud - What FOCAC 2024 Reveals About the Future of China-Africa Relations - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>131</sup> XINHUA - Chinese FM calls for China-Africa cooperation on global governance reform - The State Council of the People's Republic of China.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> DRINHAUSEN, Katja ; OUD, Malin - Sovereignty - Decoding China.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> UNITED NATIONS NEWS - China's Foreign Minister stresses principle of non-interference at UN debate.

<sup>136</sup> DRINHAUSEN, Katja ; OUD, Malin - Sovereignty - Decoding China.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> LARKIN, Tanner - How China Is Rewriting the Norms of Human Rights - Lawfare.

and absolute, Chinese-African joint declarations now regularly emphasize the absolute nature of other principles of international law, namely non-interference, sovereignty and people's development.<sup>140</sup>

### **Case Study: Chinese-African initiatives against outside interference**

These refined governance norms are projected by signaling unwavering solidarity with African governments, rejecting any diplomatic pressure against China or Chinese allies. China has reacted to such interventions by reassuring strong support for African governments in multiple cases.

In 2021, the UN and Western countries raised alarms over the humanitarian crisis during the two-year Tigray conflict that shook Ethiopia from November 2020 to November 2022; a civil war fought between government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).<sup>141</sup> These statements were quickly followed by an unscheduled high-level visit by the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who publicly rejected any criticism from outside.<sup>142</sup> China insisted on the "territorial integrity" and "sovereignty" of Ethiopia, forbidding any outside diplomatic interference, while simultaneously pushing for a peaceful but local solution.<sup>143</sup>

Such performative joint acts of open defiance against diplomatic pressure from outside are a recurring pattern. In 2024, the Kenyan and Chinese chief diplomats released a statement denouncing outside interference in Chinese domestic affairs, after U.S. officials remarked on Taiwanese election results and therefore touched upon the international status quo of Taiwan.<sup>144</sup>

These manifestations of Chinese "non-interference" governance appeal to those African countries that see themselves subject to Western scrutiny for human rights violations. China offers a new system narrative in which national sovereignty supersedes most legal obligations and in which outside pressure is met with joint defiance. This recalibration of diplomatic and legal norms positions China as an attractive partner for authoritarian African

---

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> OLANDER, Eric - Ethiopia: Chinese foreign minister's visit shows Beijing's support for Abiy - The Africa Report.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> XINHUA - China supports Ethiopia's efforts to achieve national peace, development: special envoy – Xinhua English News.

<sup>144</sup> DIPLOBRIEF - China, Kenya denounce US interference in internal affairs.

governments while simultaneously furthering China's ambitions to legitimize its own global governance norms.

### **Chinese Leadership in a Transformed Global Order**

While cultivating its narrative of the “unfair” international order, China proposes to lead a transformation process in the current system, in which the countries of the Global South collectively challenge the existing “unfair” geopolitical hierarchies through intensified Sino-African cooperation, leading to a “true multilateralism”.<sup>145</sup> Although this narrative is seemingly based on the promise of increased equality, it still implies a Chinese leadership role.

Aukia et al. at the *European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats* attribute this to the state doctrine of “Chinese exceptionalism”.<sup>146</sup> As Ho argues, Chinese exceptionalism differs from the notion that all nation-states consider themselves “exceptional” because of their unique national identity.<sup>147</sup> Instead, the specific essence of Chinese exceptionalism that emerges in this narrative of an international role model is the distinct claim of superiority that strives not for equal participation in the global system, but a desire to overtake it.<sup>148</sup>

To confer legitimacy to this leadership role, China's system narrative towards Africa relies on the idea of morality rather than political or military “hard power”: Equality between Africa and China, solidarity in times of internal domestic struggles and respect for the autonomy of African countries to choose their own political destiny. This not only supports Ho's thesis that Chinese leadership uses performative acts to project Chinese moral quality.<sup>149</sup> It also builds on Chinese scholars such as Yan who consider moral power as indispensable for a country's ability to lead an international order, even more important than economic or military power.<sup>150</sup> In its engagement with Africa, China aims to demonstrate moral superiority over the Western approach, laying claim to its global leadership role.

---

<sup>145</sup> HU, Changchun - A Better World for All - ChinAfrica.

<sup>146</sup> AUKIA, Jukkia [et al.] - China's narrative influence in Sub-Saharan Africa - The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats p. 18.

<sup>147</sup> HO, Benjamin - China's Political Worldview and Chinese Exceptionalism: International Order and Global Leadership, p. 208.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, p.108.

<sup>150</sup> BELL, Daniel A. ; ZHE, Sun ; XUETONG, Yan - Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power, p. 13-15.

The Chinese system narrative for Africa therefore pursues multiple objectives. Firstly, it promotes division between the Global North and the African Global South countries, creating two global blocs. Secondly, it confers legitimacy upon the Chinese ambitions on the global stage, serving as a mandate for leading transformation of the international order and its global governance norms. Finally, it creates a clear vision for African countries on whom should be perceived as an ally or a threat. While the West is portrayed as a foreign “colonial power”, China presents itself as a “moral” natural ally with a shared “South” identity – ultimately paving the way for an interwoven Chinese identity narrative.

## **2.2 Identity Narrative: Developed China as a role model for African development**

Chinese engagement in Africa is heavily centered on economic development. President Xi Jinping has stated that despite its rapid economic development, “China has been and will always remain a member of developing countries”, while pledging to aid fellow developing countries in their efforts to achieve similar results.<sup>151</sup> A key point in public communication is the goal to assist “self-generated” African development through capacity-building, which is based on the Chinese modernization experience rather than the so-called “Westernization”.<sup>152</sup> China claims to prioritize an “African way” instead of enforcing external norms.

Simultaneously, China promotes its own economic success to African countries and suggests that similar modernization can be achieved by following the Chinese national governance model, which should be considered “highly compatible with the strong aspirations of the Global South”.<sup>153</sup> China characterizes itself as harboring “wisdom and solutions” due to its own historical development experiences, which it is willing to pass on to African countries.<sup>154</sup> The PRC constructs an identity narrative as the textbook development nation by recalling its own national history of accelerated economic growth and social progress against poverty.

---

<sup>151</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - Full Text: Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue.

<sup>152</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - Why is Africa so close to China?

<sup>153</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Writing a New Chapter of All-Weather China-Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era.

<sup>154</sup> THE PEOPLE’S DAILY - China-Africa cooperation paves way toward better future - The 2024 Summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation.

It suggests to African states that they emulate the Chinese governance model, for which African leaders may consult guidelines like the manifesto of Xi Jinping: *The Governance of China*.<sup>155</sup> In joint documents like the FOCAC 2024 action plan, China and African partners pledge themselves to “experience sharing on national governance”.<sup>156</sup> For the CCP, Chinese “good governance” promotes economic prosperity by authoritarian means.<sup>157</sup> Its development wisdom includes individual rights and civil liberties yielding to development-centered, collective rights.

Drawing on the concept of Nye, China has assessed that economic engagement in Africa constitutes more than “hard power”. According to Nye, “hard power” is synonymous with the power to command another actor through inducements or threats, based on the possession of “tangible resources” from which the commanding power derives.<sup>158</sup> Economic power is based on those tangible resources, which can be financial, industrial or intellectual. These resources can be offered or withdrawn to coerce another actor, making economic power originally “hard power” that can be leveraged to command. But beyond this leverage function, economic power may also be used to project a narrative of “wisdom” and “partnership” and “progress”. China allocates significant resources to maintain and promote the PRC’s status as the continent’s largest trading partner over the past 15 years.<sup>159</sup> The communist government reports record-high trade volumes between China and Africa every year, allegedly reaching 293 billion U.S. dollars in 2024.<sup>160</sup> While this relationship between African countries and China enables material incentives, it also reinforces a narrative of “partnership” and “assistance” for future development.

China further claims to share wisdom through technological innovation for the African continent to take its “rightful place in the global economy”.<sup>161</sup> Chinese media places special emphasis on assistance to African digitalization, explaining that the aim of this approach is to “foster the creation of new meaningful employment opportunities” and therefore

---

<sup>155</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Writing a New Chapter of All-Weather China-Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era.

<sup>156</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027).

<sup>157</sup> DRINHAUSEN, Katja ; OUD, Malin - Good Governance - Decoding China.

<sup>158</sup> NYE, Joseph S. - The Changing Nature of World Power – Political Science Quarterly, p. 181.

<sup>159</sup> XINHUA - China-Africa economic and trade cooperation shows strong vitality – Xinhua Silk Road Information Service.

<sup>160</sup> XINHUA - China rolls out new measures to strengthen cooperation with Africa – Belt and Road Portal.gov.

<sup>161</sup> OMORUYI, Ehizuelen Michael Mitchell - How China's tech cooperation with Africa makes a difference – China Daily.

“developing the human capital base of the continent”.<sup>162</sup> In its narrative, it deeply associates Chinese knowledge with social, technological and economic progress. It suggests to African audiences that engaging with China paves the way toward a modern, prosperous future for the continent.

### **Connectivity as Chinese Development Wisdom**

China publicly promotes infrastructure development as the “cornerstone of African development”.<sup>163</sup> It frames its assistance to the large-scale expansion of African trade infrastructure as a central method of supporting African-led industrial development, thereby cultivating the image of a unique global power that aims to uplift the African continent rather than merely exploiting it.<sup>164</sup> This image further seeks to distance the Chinese approach from Western-led initiatives, which some African commentators, such as Mutebi, regard as extractive.<sup>165</sup> The solidification of trade routes between the PRC and Africa suggests connectivity between countries of the South, crafting an alternative to a Western-centric globalization model.<sup>166</sup>

The PRC claims that this approach draws from its unique development experience and builds on its national wisdom, such as the ancient Chinese proverb: “To get rich, build roads first.”<sup>167</sup> It therefore reinforces the notion that, by emulating Chinese governance and ideas, Africa may follow in the footsteps of China’s rapid economic development.

Drawing on van Noort and Larkin, the promoted infrastructure of roads, railroads and ports goes beyond technical machinery to embody the ambitions and hopes of many countries to participate in global supply chains and the rapid accumulation of wealth.<sup>168</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> XINHUA - (FOCAC) World Insights: China-Africa infrastructure. The 2024 Summit of China cooperation creating new opportunities for Africa's development - The 2024 Summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation.

<sup>164</sup> XINHUA - (FOCAC) World Insights: China-Africa infrastructure. The 2024 Summit of China cooperation creating new opportunities for Africa's development - The 2024 Summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation.

<sup>165</sup> JOFFE, Avril - China’s Institutionalised Cultural Presence in Africa, p. 20.

<sup>166</sup> VAN NOORT, Carolijn - Infrastructure Communication in International Relations, p. 101.

<sup>167</sup> XINHUA - (FOCAC) World Insights: China-Africa infrastructure. The 2024 Summit of China cooperation creating new opportunities for Africa's development - The 2024 Summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation.

<sup>168</sup> VAN NOORT, Carolijn - Infrastructure Communication in International Relations, p. 102.



This concept has been institutionalized within the frameworks of the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) and the *Global Development Initiative* (GDI).<sup>169</sup> The BRI in particular serves as an overarching narrative for a major trade infrastructure project cluster.<sup>170</sup> The BRI narrative invokes historical bonds of “South-South” trade and exchange, referring to the ancient “Silk Road” bridging China and Africa over a thousand years ago.<sup>171</sup> This narrative serves to legitimize China’s immense investments in African infrastructure. As of 2024, Chinese companies have reportedly helped to build or upgrade “more than 10,000 kilometers of railways, nearly 100,000 km of highways, nearly 1,000 bridges and 100 ports and 66,000 km of power transmission and distribution lines in African countries” under the BRI.<sup>172</sup> Similarly, the GDI emphasizes further cooperation in the industrial, energy and digital sectors.<sup>173</sup> As van Noort points out, showcasing and promoting BRI projects is a central part of the broadcasting strategy of Chinese media outlets situated in Africa, aiming to contain regional counter-narratives which may cast doubt on the compatibility of the Chinese investment practices with regional conditions.<sup>174</sup>

Van Noort has justifiably classified the promotion of infrastructural investments and their translation into economic success as a strategic issue narrative, since it justifies the BRI investment policy in participating countries.<sup>175</sup> Given the overlap with notions of China’s unique national identity, governance and historical wisdom, this study instead considers this narrative practice to be an identity narrative. But as Roselle et al. correctly argue, all three conceptual levels of SNT and the respective narratives are naturally “inextricably linked.”<sup>176</sup> Therefore both classifications can and should be considered possible.

Infrastructure projects such as the BRI are therefore not only the sum of transnationally organized construction projects, but also serve as an elaborate narrative to convince the Global South of a Chinese development wisdom which will enable African countries to

---

<sup>169</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - Full Text: Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue; INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - Why is Africa so close to China?

<sup>170</sup> THE PEOPLE’S DAILY - China-Africa cooperation paves way toward better future - The 2024 Summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation.

<sup>171</sup> THE STATE COUNCIL INFORMATION OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA - The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future - The Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - Full Text: Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue.

<sup>174</sup> VAN NOORT, Carolijn - Infrastructure Communication in International Relations, p. 102.

<sup>175</sup> VAN NOORT, Carolijn - Study of Strategic Narratives: The Case of BRICS, p. 124-125.

<sup>176</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; MISKIMMON, Alister ; O’LOUGHLIN, Ben - Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power, p. 76.

modernize through newfound Sino-African connectivity. These projects are not limited to physical infrastructure, but extend to financial and intellectual exchange.<sup>177</sup> Ultimately, China is portrayed as the singular country holding the “blueprint” for fulfilling African countries’ aspirations for poverty reduction and economic growth.<sup>178</sup> For the PRC itself, the infrastructure investments further diversify its resource flows and open new trade markets amid tensions with the United States and EU member states.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, analysts have suggested that the financial leverage associated with BRI funding may secure political gains in participating countries with weak governance structures, potentially influencing local elites to align more closely with Chinese national interests.<sup>180</sup>

### **Unique Power China: Economic Assistance with “No-Strings-Attached”**

In public communication, the PRC underscores its economic engagement as one of non-interference and non-imposition, claiming to “not attach any conditions” to the investments. This is said to be “fundamentally different from that of the US or the West”.<sup>181</sup> Instead, China states that it always takes into account the local conditions and needs of African countries and positions itself as an attractive alternative to the strictly-regulated lending schemes of multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Its messaging again builds on the self-identification of an exceptional China, being the only world power with whom Africans can economically engage without risking constant scrutiny from creditors in their internal affairs.

A *Bloomberg* report suggests that the continent’s total debt to China had reached 90 billion dollars in the year 2022.<sup>182</sup> China increasingly responds to international observers criticizing this loan strategy by highlighting initiatives to relieve and restructure African countries’ debt.<sup>183</sup> By doing so, China acknowledges that its narratives in the African information space are being contested by other actors in the international system. By responding to the contestations, China aims to regain its “discourse power” and to discredit them as fabricated

---

<sup>177</sup> THE PEOPLE’S DAILY - China-Africa cooperation paves way toward better future - The 2024 Summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation.

<sup>178</sup> VAN NOORT, Carolijn - Infrastructure Communication in International Relations, p. 101.

<sup>179</sup> WONG, Tessa - Belt and Road Initiative: Is China's trillion-dollar gamble worth it? - BBC.

<sup>180</sup> CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES - How will the Belt and Road Initiative advance China’s interests?

<sup>181</sup> CAIYU, Liu - BRI deeply integrated into African development; more pragmatic cooperation expected in FOCAC - Global Times.

<sup>182</sup> BLOOMBERG ECONOMICS - Africa Insight: Minerals in focus as China taps debt diplomacy – Bloomberg Professional Services.

<sup>183</sup> XINHUA - China helps African nations reduce debt pressure – Xinhua.net.

by outside agitators. This shows a level of coherence and coordination in its narrative strategy, demonstrating the ability to react to possible obstacles in the information environment.

### **Unique Power China: Benevolent Peaceful Nation**

When talking about peace and security in Africa, China often underpins these factors as deeply interconnected with modernization and development.<sup>184</sup> It communicates that peace is an essential factor in a country's quest for development.<sup>185</sup> This narrative interconnection resonates with findings of international scholars such as Wong, which have framed the Chinese foreign policy approach towards Africa as "Development Peace".<sup>186</sup> Wong argues that China's concept of Development Peace focuses on countering underdevelopment in Africa, which it perceives as a root cause for instability and insecurity, while being reluctant to take impactful political or security actions.<sup>187</sup> This idea corresponds with its system narrative of non-interference governance and supports the Chinese development-wisdom-identity. It also allows China to position itself to African nations as a "peaceful" major power, disapproving of any show of force and advocating for stability.<sup>188</sup> This narrative is a manifestation of the Chinese self-identification as a truly unique power of "benevolent pacifism". As Zhang points out, it is one of the most important Chinese foreign policy narratives since the end of the Maoist era.<sup>189</sup> It suggests that China is the only world power that abstains from waging war, using force only as a defensive last resort and never as a foreign policy tool.

The PRC therefore proclaims that any conflicts in Africa are an integral part of African countries' internal affairs and local solutions are needed instead of external pressure by the international community.<sup>190</sup> China has positioned itself as a peace facilitator in Africa on multiple occasions, consolidating this image through regional diplomatic instruments such

---

<sup>184</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027).

<sup>185</sup> XINHUA - Ethiopia's peace a victory for unity, dialogue: Chinese special envoy. Forum on China-Africa Cooperation – Forum on China Africa Cooperation.

<sup>186</sup> WONG, Kwok Chung - The Rise of China's Developmental Peace: Can an Economic Approach to Peacebuilding Create Sustainable Peace?, p. 1.

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> XIAODONG, Chen - China Is a Force for Peace, Stability and Progress of the World - Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of South Africa.

<sup>189</sup> ZHANG, Feng - The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations, p. 311.

<sup>190</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027).

as the “Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa” or by electing a special envoy for “Horn of Africa Affairs”.<sup>191</sup>

In media publications in the years before 2020, the Chinese security engagement is promoted as fundamentally “indirect”, suggesting that China, unlike any non-peaceful global powers, does not intend to directly intervene in Africa in the name of peace and security.<sup>192</sup> Even when China opened its first ever overseas military base in 2017 in Djibouti, this installation was downplayed as an infrastructural “support base”, mainly tasked with anti-piracy actions to promote maritime security and serve humanitarian relief at the Horn of Africa.<sup>193</sup> China also affirms the United Nations Security Council as the guiding principle to achieve and maintain stable peace in Africa. The PRC publicly highlights its extensive contribution to UN Peacekeeping missions through personnel and financing, being the biggest provider of peacekeeping personnel among the UNSC permanent member states. After not having any peacekeeping personnel stationed in Africa until 2000, 80% of Chinese peacekeeping personnel – 30,000 troops in total until today - have been sent to Africa according to the PRC.<sup>194</sup> China uses these efforts to further underline its public self-image of a major power guaranteeing peace and stability, while working hand in hand with the UN system.<sup>195</sup> In that process, it demands to better integrate African voices in global security governance.<sup>196</sup> This pacifist approach appeals particularly to long-term African conflict zones, in which populations seek stability after years of violence. On the other hand, African countries suffering from terrorism and insurgencies may look for a more securitized narrative that emphasizes direct action.

But in recent years, distinct patterns of change have emerged in Chinese communication with Africa. In 2022 the PRC launched an institutionalized worldwide security agenda under the “Global Security Initiative” (GSI), which China and Africa have affirmed to implement together.<sup>197</sup> It formulates security as an essential condition for world peace and development,

---

<sup>191</sup> XINHUA - China supports Ethiopia's efforts to achieve national peace, development: special envoy – Xinhua English News.

<sup>192</sup> YUYUAN, Zhou - Peaceful development is crucial for Africa - Chinadaily.com.

<sup>193</sup> ZHIWEN, Zhang [et al.] - PLA support base in Djibouti pursues peace, cooperation, friendship - Global Times.

<sup>194</sup> THE STATE COUNCIL INFORMATION OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA - Over 80% of Chinese peacekeepers deployed in Africa: White paper.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Joining Hands to Implement the Global Security Initiative to Safeguard World Peace and Security.

<sup>197</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Joining Hands to Implement the Global Security Initiative to Safeguard World Peace and Security.

emphasizing on supporting anti-terrorism operations on African soil under African leadership.<sup>198</sup>

The FOCAC 2024 joint action plan underlines that “peace and security in Africa remain an important part” of China-Africa cooperation.<sup>199</sup> The PRC has vowed to enhance Chinese-African military cooperation under the recurring “China-Africa Forum on Peace and Security”, which already includes “military construction, personnel training, maritime security, peacekeeping operations, health care, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief”.<sup>200</sup> China signals that it is able and willing to commit resources to African security issues, although the statements are still careful not to leave the narrative identity of the uniquely pacifist power that limits itself to “indirect” measures. But other public messages are even more explicit in opening up the possibility of direct security action.

The 2024 joint FOCAC document even includes a call to action by African countries for enhancing Chinese counter-terrorism engagement in crisis regions such as the Sahel.<sup>201</sup> In 2024, a spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of National Defense even formulated the goal of providing “reliable security guarantees” for a joint China-Africa community, pointing out the increased focus on African security under President Xi.<sup>202</sup> And also in 2024, military exercises with Tanzania and Mozambique have publicly shown comprehensive Chinese military capabilities in Africa for the first time, including the use of amphibious landing equipment and heavy artillery over larger deployment distances.<sup>203</sup> Such open articulations of military capabilities may even be considered through Nye’s lens of “hard power”, rather than just serving as a narrative projection technique. They do, however, symbolize a significant and progressive capability to shift the public narrative in Africa, surpassing the identity of China as the purely pacifist capacity builder for peace and potentially “preparing the ground” to build legitimacy for more direct safeguarding measures for security in Africa.

---

<sup>198</sup> CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES - Full text: The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper.

<sup>199</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027).

<sup>200</sup> WEI, Li - China-Africa defense cooperation to further improve quality, effectiveness: Defense Spokesperson - China Military Online.

<sup>201</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027).

<sup>202</sup> WEI, Li - China-Africa defense cooperation to further improve quality, effectiveness: Defense Spokesperson - China Military Online.

<sup>203</sup> NANTULYA, Paul - The Growing Militarization of China’s Africa Policy – Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

For many analysts, this narrative shift would likely mean no surprise. Ping and Odota argue that China may have to abandon its strictly non-interventionist stance to actively safeguard its BRI projects and Chinese nationals residing in African countries.<sup>204</sup> Nantulya even considers Africa a “testing ground” for Chinese security initiatives, which would allow Chinese law enforcement and military governance to expand its reach far beyond Chinese territory.<sup>205</sup>

So far, the notions of African security in Chinese narratives are not yet dominant enough to clearly support such claims. But Chinese media has indeed publicly acknowledged that security crises like Libya in 2011 proved a stress test for its purely economic engagement with Africa by endangering Chinese nationals and investment projects in conflict zones.<sup>206</sup> The increased narratives around Chinese security engagement possibilities in Africa can therefore be considered as a strategic effort to at least “reach out” to African audiences, which might later serve the benefit of legitimizing a Chinese identity as an active security-provider in Africa.

### **2.3 Issue Narrative: Mutual Benefit**

In most of China’s public media output on Chinese-African relations, certain “feel-good” terms are repeated in regular volumes, most notably “mutual benefit” and “win-win cooperation”.<sup>207</sup> Apart from creating a positive communication tone, these phrases sustain a vital issue narrative justifying the still growing Chinese all-domain entrenchments on the African continent. The notions of “mutual benefit” or “win-win cooperation” convey to African governments and public audiences that engagement with China is fair and reciprocal. The underlying narrative “issue” is the African countries’ desire for national development while the policy solution is welcoming the extensive Chinese economic influence – because both parties may benefit from this deal in their way.

---

<sup>204</sup> PING, Jonathan ; ODOTA, Joel - Will China Intervene Directly to Protect its Investments in Africa? - War on the Rocks.

<sup>205</sup> NANTULYA, Paul - Africa as a Testing Ground for China’s Global Security Initiative - Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

<sup>206</sup> YUYUAN, Zhou - Peaceful development is crucial for Africa - China Daily.

<sup>207</sup> XINHUA - China, Ethiopia to enhance cooperation in science, technology, innovation - The State Council of the People's Republic of China; CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Writing a New Chapter of All-Weather China-Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era.

Ho rightly argues that this idea again serves as an antidote to Western-African relations which are largely seen as based on terms that do not favor the African side.<sup>208</sup> But beyond being a policy justification, this narrative should be understood as a public manifestation of an underlying transactional aspect in the Chinese outreach, which is deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy.

It follows the concept of *Guanxi*, which some scholars describe as a “tactical tool to achieve-self-interest”, while Guo views it as a form of Chinese social etiquette, similar to returning a favor.<sup>209</sup> For Nantulya, *Guanxi* is one of the defining concepts in Sino-African relationships, representing mutual dependencies and obligations between the political elites of China and African countries.<sup>210</sup>

Nantulya argues that most economic agreements between China and African governments are negotiated informally behind the scenes, receiving only minimal public oversight.<sup>211</sup> But by integrating notions of *Guanxi* already in their public messaging, China manages to confer legitimacy to the implied transactional nature of its investments. Opening national economies towards a foreign actor like China harbors the risk of dependencies and asymmetrical economic leverage, but the “win-win” narrative suggests to African audiences that every Chinese project is a deal – justified by benefits on both sides. While Africans may profit from infrastructural and industrial development, China primarily receives an investment opportunity that secures a future trading partner. But secondly, China implicitly asks for compliance and loyalty in matters of Chinese national interest. To draw on Shultz image of diplomacy as gardening, the Chinese “mutual benefit”-narrative cultivates the ground for unconditional support in the future. This reciprocal nature is communicated in a surprisingly public way.

Within the United Nations architecture, the PRC and African countries support each other’s proposals and personnel elections, furthering their representation in UN bodies.<sup>212</sup> Analysts have furthermore pointed out that African member state votes have aided Chinese efforts to

---

<sup>208</sup> HO, Benjamin - China's Political Worldview and Chinese Exceptionalism: International Order and Global Leadership, p. 18.

<sup>209</sup> GUO, Xuezhi - Dimensions of Guanxi in Chinese Elite Politics, p. 70, p.90.

<sup>210</sup> NANTULYA, Paul - Guānxi: Power, Networking, and Influence in China-Africa Relations - Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

<sup>211</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*

defund UN Human Rights mechanisms and reshape UN texts in ways that fit the Chinese interpretation of “people-centered” human rights.<sup>213</sup>

### **Case Study: African Positions on the “One-China-Policy”**

Even more observable is the reciprocal nature in areas of Chinese core interests, like the international status of Taiwan. The PRC views Taiwan as a “sacred and inseparable part” of its sovereign territory and aims to integrate the islands back into the mainland territory.<sup>214</sup> The PRC is looking to legitimize these reunification ambitions within the international community through legal reasoning and fostering support for an officially “peaceful” unification.<sup>215</sup> Western military experts have accused these efforts of coercive measures to provoke government’s endorsements, misinterpreting international law and finally preparing legal grounds for potential use of force against Taiwan in the future.<sup>216</sup> Drawing on one of the three branches of the Chinese “Three Warfares” doctrine, this legitimization strategy not only reflects legal warfare or “lawfare”. It also corresponds with the Chinese system narrative communicated to Africa, which includes the promotion of Chinese governance norms based on its strictly normative interpretation of state sovereignty. In public communication and joint Chinese-African declarations, the PRC reiterates that the question of Taiwan is one of China’s internal affairs and, just like African countries’ domestic affairs, may not be a subject of outside interference.<sup>217</sup> Just like China came to the aid of the Ethiopian during the Tigray crisis against international criticism, it firmly demands the same stance of African countries when China’s internal affairs are at stake. The “mutual benefit” narrative therefore justifies a reciprocal relationship, supporting what Nantulya calls the Chinese “transactional diplomacy”.<sup>218</sup>

It is therefore notable that multiple African states in the 21<sup>st</sup> century abandoned their former recognition of Taiwan after deepening economic relations with the PRC.<sup>219</sup> In all public messaging to African audiences, the PRC publicly praises the dedication of 53 African

---

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - A policy of "one country, two systems" on Taiwan.

<sup>215</sup> EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA - Taiwan Is Part of China — an Indisputable Fact Supported by History and the Law.

<sup>216</sup> DENG FENG, Cheng ; BOYLE, Tim - Exposing China’s Legal Preparations for a Taiwan Invasion - War on the Rocks.

<sup>217</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027).

<sup>218</sup> NANTULYA, Paul - The Limits to China’s Transactional Diplomacy in Africa - Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

<sup>219</sup> KIRONSKA, Kristina - How Taiwan lost Africa - Central European Institute of Asian Studies.



countries to the “One-China”-policy, which denies any formal sovereignty of Taiwan and supports the Chinese ambitions. Any deviations of African countries have been explicitly branded “contrary to their interests”.<sup>220</sup> This red line is illustrated by the singular exception among African countries, which officially recognizes Taiwan as a sovereign state - Eswatini. Subsequently, it is the only country in Africa with whom the PRC holds no official diplomatic ties.

The constant Chinese reiterations of “mutual benefit” are therefore not only positive messaging, but should be seen as a strategic narrative. It promotes further Chinese economic engagement, since African audiences are able to recognize themselves as “winners” through receiving advanced trade and industry capabilities. It also serves as a counter-narrative to contestation of Western states, which accuse China of undermining African states’ sovereignty by gaining political leverage through the artificial dependencies of African governments on Chinese loans and investments.

Furthermore, the “win-win”-cooperation-narrative contrasts the notion of Western outreach, which is often perceived as slow, “paternalistic” and hierarchical under strict normative guidelines. Instead, the relationship with China promises a notion of eye-level despite its largely asymmetrical power advantage. And lastly, “mutual benefit” cultivates the ground for policy of reciprocal support in matters which are of special national interest to the respective partner – in particular matters of Chinese sovereignty.

### **3. Narrative Projection Techniques in Africa**

#### **3.1. Diplomacy**

As demonstrated within previous section, diplomatic outreach has been a central Chinese narrative projection tool for decades. The bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts of China towards African countries, regional organizations and the continent as a whole are extensive and long-term-oriented projection surfaces to showcase China as an “equal” partner and global power that is committed to the African continent. China is an advocate for enhanced African representation in global governance and part of the largest coalition of developing nations within the UN, the so-called *Group of 77*, which represents 134 UN

---

<sup>220</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning’s Regular Press Conference on September 4, 2024.

member states from the Global South.<sup>221</sup> Despite public criticism of the so called “Africa+1” summits, the FOCAC 2024 was frequented by 53 African high-level delegations.<sup>222</sup>

### 3.2. Media

China holds close ties with the African media space. China’s biggest media organization, *Xinhua*, maintains 37 offices on the continent – more than any African news agency.<sup>223</sup> It is part of the main “big four” state-controlled Chinese media outlets engaged with African audiences, the others being *China Daily*, *China Radio International* (CRI) and *China Global Television Network* (CGTN). Chinese media agencies address Africans through multilingual television, radio broadcasts, newspapers, internet presences and social media accounts.<sup>224</sup> The agencies recruit African journalists as public faces for Chinese media content and provide training exchanges for media professionals under the institutional framework of the “Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation”.<sup>225</sup> Reports by former staff have accused these media houses and their content of being heavily dominated by CCP officials.<sup>226</sup>

Furthermore, organizations like *Xinhua* have acquired equity in local media companies and forged content-sharing agreements with African news agencies, which then allow African outlets to use and disseminate content by Chinese corporations.<sup>227</sup> U.S. researchers have analyzed that the external content lowers the production costs of smaller, independent African media outlets while expanding *Xinhua*’s access to the African population.<sup>228</sup> China presents this strategy as a way of “providing African media outlets with opportunities to share their narratives”.<sup>229</sup>

Western analysts have labeled the extensive influence on African media as repressive and a tool to disseminate misinformation or even disinformation.<sup>230</sup> China, on the contrary, justifies its engagement with the African media space as a means to forge closer bonds with

---

<sup>221</sup> THE GROUP OF 77 - About the Group of 77.

<sup>222</sup> NEEMA, Christian-Géraud - What FOCAC 2024 Reveals About the Future of China-Africa Relations - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>223</sup> NANTULYA, Paul - China’s Strategy to Shape Africa’s Media Space – Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> EISENMAN, Joshua - China Is Tweaking Its Propaganda for African Audiences – Foreign Policy.

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> XINHUA - Guinea-Bissau seeks stronger media cooperation with China: national television chief – Xinhua English News.

<sup>230</sup> AUKIA, Jukkia [et al.] - China’s narrative influence in Sub-Saharan Africa - The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.

the African people.<sup>231</sup> This is part of the Chinese “borrowing mouths” tactic which incorporates African voices in CCP narrative projection. As recipients cannot identify the content as externally manufactured, the credibility of the narratives is strengthened.

Diplomatic personnel and institutions, such as The Department of African Affairs within China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, maintain their own *X* (formerly *Twitter*) accounts. According to a content analysis of 1,681 postings from September 2020 to February 2022, the two most frequently addressed topics were: General affirmations of bilateral China-Africa “good-faith”-partnerships (23.74%), followed by successful economic relations (22.61%).<sup>232</sup> China has at its disposal a large force of social media accounts, some of them posing as foreign citizens, which have been used to promote content favorable to Chinese interests. A joint US-French report estimates that China is able to requisition nearly 22 million people for such tasks.<sup>233</sup> This “50 cent army”, as dubbed by some, has been used to spread CCP-positive narratives around pro-democracy protests in Hong-Kong and the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>234</sup>

While it is likely that African social media users were also confronted with such fabricated postings, substantial evidence on China specifically targeting African audiences through this strategy is limited. According to a 2021 study by Associated Press and the Oxford University, China has used fake social media accounts to amplify and promote online posts by diplomatic personnel stationed in African countries.<sup>235</sup> But according to an extensive data analysis from the year 2024 by the *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, this remains the only documented case of an Africa-specific campaign utilizing Chinese fake-accounts.<sup>236</sup> This would support the thesis of Martin and Achmirowicz, claiming that China usually remains focused on relaying official government statements and rarely adapts to local interests and controversies within African populations.<sup>237</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> BEIJING DAILY - The Fifth Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation Opens - Information Center of Foreign Affairs Office of Beijing Municipal Government.

<sup>232</sup> XU, Minghua ; VINCENT, Mbonihankuye ; SALLAM, Marwan - China’s digital diplomacy agenda and public engagement: an analysis in Africa on twitter (X) - *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, p.1-17.

<sup>233</sup> MARTIN, Morganne ; ACHMIROWICZ, Julie - *The Changing Information Space in Sub-Saharan Africa*, p. 39.

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> KINETZ, Erika - Army of fake fans boosts China’s messaging on Twitter – Associated Press News.

<sup>236</sup> AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES - Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa.

<sup>237</sup> MARTIN, Morganne ; ACHMIROWICZ, Julie - *The Changing Information Space in Sub-Saharan Africa*, p. 40.

This is also reflected in the use of African influencers as projection channels. After being invited to visit the country, they receive state-media news coverage and promote Chinese narratives about superior national technology and infrastructure while challenging allegedly incorrect Western narratives.<sup>238</sup> This strategic use of foreign social media influencers is another example of the Chinese “borrowing mouths” doctrine to shape international discourse on China’s public image. It has been employed in the past to contest UN-verified reports of human rights abuses against the Uyghur minority in the Xinjiang-region.<sup>239</sup> While it exploits the low journalistic accountability of influencers and offers potential to easily reach large online-audiences, it engages little with the foreign audiences as it focuses mainly on Chinese core interests.

But China is not only heavily involved within the media information space itself, it also supplies much of the infrastructure on which it operates. The PRC has conceptualized its impact on African information and communications industry as the “Digital Silk Road” (DSR), which largely consists of large scale expansion of Chinese communication and technology companies onto the African continent.<sup>240</sup> Chinese firms like *Huawei* and *ZTE* have built large parts of the African digital infrastructure, financed by a volume of loans that has surpassed the combined digital development funding of all multilateral agencies and Western countries in the past few years.<sup>241</sup> 5G technology infrastructure by both companies has been formally considered potentially insecure and open to exploitation by authoritarian mechanisms according to the EU Commission.<sup>242</sup>

Through this “double-entrenchment” in both the information space as well as in the digital infrastructure that enables the population to access it, China invests significantly in their narrative projection capabilities. Improving the low internet penetration rates also brings more people in China’s digital reach. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 70% of the population still lack internet access, while the construction of a national fiber optic network was now awarded to Chinese companies.<sup>243</sup> Past cases in the DRC have shown that Chinese information technology can be utilized to censor public opinion or even shut off

---

<sup>238</sup> OPALI, Otiato - Kenyan influencer showcases China - China Daily.

<sup>239</sup> BOGLE, Ariel [et al.] - Borrowing mouths to speak on Xinjiang, p. 3.

<sup>240</sup> ARCESATI, Rebecca - The Digital Silk Road is a development issue – Mercator Institute for China Studies.

<sup>241</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> EU COMMISSION - Commission announces next steps on cybersecurity of 5G networks in complement to latest progress report by Member States.

<sup>243</sup> EXTENSIA - DRC: Two Chinese companies to build the national fiber optic network.

information spaces at critical times of elections or conflict.<sup>244</sup> While there has been no concrete evidence that China can independently make use of the African-housed infrastructure and override the national authorities, the technical analysis by the EU commission and substantiated claims of espionage in Chinese-constructed African data centers suggest that the technologies can be leveraged externally through backdoors.<sup>245</sup>

Miskimmon et al. argue that, for state actors to gain acceptance for their strategic narratives, they must not only exploit the communication infrastructure but also shape it.<sup>246</sup> China follows up on this, expanding capabilities to not only shape information spaces through narrative proliferation but also by potentially being able to censor them.

### **Case Study: Chinese Entrenchment in the Ethiopian Media Landscape**

The Chinese interconnections with the local African media landscape are particularly visible in the case of Ethiopia, as Ethiopian and Chinese media agencies maintain close ties. President Xi Jinping himself has hailed Ethiopia as “an example for African countries” and the PRC’s relationship with Ethiopia as an “exemplary model of China-Africa friendly cooperation”.<sup>247</sup> Furthermore, he characterized the relations as an “all-weather strategic partnership” and promised intensifying cooperation in the future.<sup>248</sup> It is important to note that the conditions for Chinese engagement in Ethiopia are specific to the country’s political system and socio-economic context. Therefore, the Ethiopian case study cannot serve as an absolute representation for the Chinese media strategy across all 54 African countries. Instead, Ethiopia should be considered particularly susceptible to the influence of Chinese narratives due to its longstanding political and economic ties with the PRC, a need for economic development, and a generally low-press freedom score (145<sup>th</sup> worldwide).<sup>249</sup> Scholars such as Skjerdal and Gusu argue that Ethiopian media culture is largely based on “development journalism”, which implies alignment of the government and state media to promote economic development by positive, non-critical messaging.<sup>250</sup> This in return

---

<sup>244</sup> GRIFFITHS, James - Congo net shutdown shows how Chinese tactics are spreading – CNN; PARADIGM INITIATIVE - Press Release: Net Rights Coalition Condemns Internet Shutdown in Goma, DRC.

<sup>245</sup> COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS - African Union Bugged by China: Cyber Espionage as Evidence of Strategic Shifts.

<sup>246</sup> ROSELLE, Laura ; O’LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, p. 110.

<sup>247</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Xi Jinping Meets with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali.

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> REPORTERS SANS FRONTIERS - Ethiopia.

<sup>250</sup> SKJERDAL, Terje ; GUSU, Fufa - Positive Portrayal of Sino-African Relations in the Ethiopian Press, p. 154.

heavily favors the dissemination of Chinese development-oriented narratives.<sup>251</sup> While these factors rule out broad generalizations for the continent, they still provide a particularly favorable setting to observe Chinese narrative strategy within a favorable information environment.

The *Xinhua News Agency*, one of the Chinese “Big Four” state-controlled media outlets, has reportedly become the primary source of news for Ethiopian state media like *ETV* (Ethiopian Television).<sup>252</sup> Local media lacks financial resources and relies heavily on Chinese media sources when reporting about Sino-Ethiopian relations. Flagship BRI infrastructure projects in Ethiopia such as the Addis Ababa–Djibouti Railway, which is largely constructed by Chinese state-owned companies, are therefore overwhelmingly covered through Chinese manufactured media content.<sup>253</sup> Through this embedding in local media outlets, the CCP has managed to establish an information environment in Ethiopia, which is largely positive toward Chinese investments in the country and which leaves little room for criticism against the dominant impact of China on the Ethiopian economy. In 2024, China accounted for almost 50 percent of all foreign direct investment flowing into Ethiopia.<sup>254</sup>

Due to concerns of economic dependencies eroding Ethiopia’s sovereignty, China’s projected narratives in Ethiopia are being increasingly contested by other international actors. The PRC has been criticized increasingly for its loan policy towards Ethiopia, facing accusations of “debt-trap-diplomacy”, as Ethiopia owes approximately multiple billion dollars to Chinese creditors.<sup>255</sup> China discredits these claims as fabricated Western media narratives and, on the contrary, praises its debt restructuring and debt relief efforts.<sup>256</sup> According to Chinese publications, more than 8.5 billion US dollars involving more than 3.300 Chinese projects haven flowed into Ethiopia “in recent years”, providing allegedly more than 325.000 local jobs.<sup>257</sup>

---

<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> LI, Hangwei - Chinese Media Engagement with Africa and the Role of African Agency - Megatrends Afrika, p. 5.

<sup>253</sup> LI, Hangwei ; WANG, Yuan - African Media Cultures and Chinese Public Relations Strategies in Kenya and Ethiopia - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>254</sup> XINHUA - Ethiopia calls for strengthening "long-standing" economic, trade ties with China - Forum on China-Africa cooperation

<sup>255</sup> XINHUA - (FOCAC) Explainer: Why Africans won't buy the "Debt Trap" narrative against China - Xinhua English News.

<sup>256</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> XINHUA - (Hello Africa) Yearender: Ethiopia-China all-weather strategic partnership solidified in 2024 - Belt and Road Portal.

Any domestic critical coverage of the asymmetric relationship between the two countries is rare. Firstly, because of the Chinese local discourse power through self-manufactured content. And secondly, because the restrictive development-journalism culture itself leaves little room for deviations. Ethiopian journalists have stated that any critical coverage of China-Ethiopia relations is generally considered damaging to the countries' own image and therefore rare.<sup>258</sup> The Ethiopian government has progressively intensified the cooperation with China to such a degree, that any criticism on Chinese investment practices would also implicitly raise doubts on Ethiopian national image and policy as a whole. This alignment of a large part of the local media with the Chinese development narratives creates an exceptional information space for China to further its asymmetrical economic ties with Ethiopia and deploy BRI infrastructure projects without substantial accountability to the Ethiopian population. In rare cases of unfavorable press coverage, the deep economic and political ties can be leveraged to quickly suppress any criticism. Investigative reports by the Washington-based *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* indicate that the close relations between the Chinese state-owned companies and Ethiopian media institutions have been used to suppress unfavorable press coverage of development projects.<sup>259</sup> The Chinese state-owned construction companies working on BRI projects also cooperate with the local Chinese embassy to determine the conditions and the scope in which local Ethiopian journalists are able to report on the projects locally.<sup>260</sup>

Through the institutional entrenchment in the local media space, paired with self-censorship stemming from development-journalism culture and punctual interventions by political leverage, China has been able to achieve substantial discourse power in Ethiopia. As of today, the PRC is largely able to determine the public image of China and China-Africa relations in the country.

### 3.3. Cultural Diplomacy

China openly promotes “cultural exchange”, “mutual respect” and “harmonious coexistence” between the Chinese and African community.<sup>261</sup> The PRC has set up extensive

---

<sup>258</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>259</sup> LI, Hangwei ; WANG, Yuan - African Media Cultures and Chinese Public Relations Strategies in Kenya and Ethiopia - *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, p. 17.

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>261</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Writing a New Chapter of All-Weather China-Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era.

educational exchange programs for African students and professionals.<sup>262</sup> These ties have been institutionalized through the establishment of over 70 Chinese *Confucius Institutes* and corresponding *Confucius Classrooms* in educational institutions across African countries, which are portrayed as platforms for fostering cross-border cultural and linguistic exchange.<sup>263</sup> A 2022 study found that, despite the public claims of intercultural reciprocity, programs are predominately Chinese-controlled and further entrench positive narratives on Chinese history and development.<sup>264</sup> According to a 2023 study by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the PRC ranks second among the most popular destinations for African students pursuing higher education abroad.<sup>265</sup>

### **Case Study: Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia**

Consistent with the larger continent-wide approach, China has pledged itself publicly to “strengthening people-to-people ties” with the Ethiopian population and especially with the Ethiopian youth.<sup>266</sup> Chinese media emphasizes the potential of “human resource development” and cites international scholarships and capacity-building as a Chinese strategy to enhance the Ethiopian job market.<sup>267</sup> The spread of *Confucius Institutes* (CIs) and mobile *Confucius Classrooms* (CCs) in Africa is also present in Ethiopia. Apart from their aim of invoking general curiosity of Ethiopians towards Chinese culture and language, studying Mandarin at the CIs or CCs has also been locally recognized as a potential door opener into the Chinese job market.<sup>268</sup> Chinese flagship infrastructure construction companies operating in Ethiopia, such as *China First Highway Engineering Co., Ltd* (CFHEC), are sponsoring and organizing sports events for the local community, fostering contact between Chinese and Ethiopian nationals.<sup>269</sup> Furthermore, through an initiative

---

<sup>262</sup> HE, Yin - To provide richer cultural nourishment for China-Africa cooperation – CPC Central Committee Bimonthly.

<sup>263</sup> XINHUA - Kenya hosts joint conference of African Confucius institutes - Global Times.

<sup>264</sup> LI, Siyuan - A Foucauldian Power Analysis of China’s Confucius Institute in Africa: Power, Knowledge and the Institutionalisation of China’s Foreign Policy, p.1465-1481.

<sup>265</sup> USMAN, Zainab ; ABAYO, Aline - What Are the Top Global Destinations for Higher Education for African Students? – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>266</sup> XINHUA - (Hello Africa) Yearender: Ethiopia-China all-weather strategic partnership solidified in 2024 - Belt and Road Portal.

<sup>267</sup> XINHUA - China, Ethiopia to enhance cooperation in science, technology, innovation - The State Council of the People's Republic of China.

<sup>268</sup> REPNIKOVA, Maria - Rethinking China's Soft Power: “Pragmatic Enticement” of Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia – The China Quarterly, p. 454.

<sup>269</sup> ZEYA, Zhu - CCCC Strengthens Ethiopia-China Friendship Through Long-Standing Commitment to Community Development - State-owned Assets and Administration Commission of the State Council.



called “China Hour”, Chinese audiovisual content - including movies, TV-series and documentaries - has been entrenched in the Ethiopian public media landscape.<sup>270</sup>

## **V. Russian Strategic Narrative Warfare in Africa**

### **1. Background: Russian Narrative Warfare Framework**

In its 2021 National Security Strategy, there are multiple passages highlighting Russia’s practice of utilizing narratives for strategic benefit in international relations. Not only does it formulate the goal of providing “reliable information about the domestic and foreign policy of the Russian Federation” to the “international public”.<sup>271</sup> It also states that Russia aims to strengthen “the position of Russian media and mass communications in the global information space”.<sup>272</sup>

Furthermore, the strategy paper points out the growing importance of “information warfare”.<sup>273</sup> As the 2016 NATO Defense College’s *Handbook of Russian Information Warfare* states, the Russian interpretation of “information warfare” is not limited to operations relating to ongoing armed conflict but should be understood as a broad “set of systems, methods, and tasks to influence the perception and behavior of the enemy, population, and international community on all levels”.<sup>274</sup> This may include a “case-by-case” dynamic interplay of coercive and non-coercive measures. Russia’s Chief of Military Staff, Valery Gerasimov, has acknowledged that “non-military” methods, like some Information Warfare operations, now play an essential role in achieving geostrategic goals, as they open up the possibility of destabilizing even “perfectly thriving states”.<sup>275</sup>

The deployment of strategic narratives is an essential part of Russian Information Warfare doctrine. During the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, NATO analysts characterized them as “fundamental” for the success of the Russian campaign, as they not only served as

---

<sup>270</sup> XINHUA - (Hello Africa) African youth embrace media, storytelling as bridges shaping Africa-China dreams - Xinhua English News.

<sup>271</sup> RUSSIAN MILITARY AND SECURITY RESEARCH GROUP - Strategy of the National Security of the Russian Federation (Translation), p. 14.

<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>274</sup> GILAS, Keir - Handbook of Russian Information Warfare – NATO Defense College, p. 6.

<sup>275</sup> GALEOTTI, Mark - The mythical ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’ and the language of threat – Critical Studies on Security, p. 1.

justification for the operation but also disrupted the information environment, creating a “smokescreen” or “fog of war”.<sup>276</sup>

### **Africa as a Target Audience of Narrative Warfare**

President Vladimir Putin is dedicated to presenting Russia as one of the world’s leading nations in the global order, but lacks widespread acknowledgment by Western countries following the economic and political isolation of Russia by the U.S. and Europe due to the aftermath of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Although Russia still holds close ties with China and other BRICS nations, a redistribution of global power dynamics is still high on the agenda. To gain widespread legitimacy for this idea, Africa’s 54 nations are potential diplomatic allies and therefore a strong focus in Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept of 2023, but only since quite recently. Analysts have therefore noted a significant shift in recent years, as Africa was hardly mentioned in earlier versions of Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept (2000, 2008, 2013, and 2016).<sup>277</sup> After only limited focus on exchanges with African countries following the fall of the Soviet Union, the 2010s noted first an increase in economic relations.<sup>278</sup> In 2019, the First Russia-Africa summit, bringing together 43 African heads of state, constituted a milestone for the public display of deepening ties between the African continent and the Russian Federation.<sup>279</sup> Since the start of the 2022 Ukraine invasion, Russian engagement with Africa has been scaled up substantially and visibly throughout all domains.<sup>280</sup> This illustrates the Russian need for reaching out to African audiences to shift the international discourse in its favor.

## **2. Main Narrative Themes**

### **2.1 System Narrative: De-Westernization of the Global Order**

In its outreach to African audiences, Russian channels formulate the necessity for a change in the international order, which it deems dominated by Western nations. This hegemonic structure should therefore be collectively overcome and replaced by a “multipolar” or “polycentric” global order, which describes a process of “De-Westernization”.<sup>281</sup> Pushing

---

<sup>276</sup> GILAS, Keir - Handbook of Russian Information Warfare – NATO Defense College, p. 46.

<sup>277</sup> GÖTZ, Elias ; GEJL KAAS, Jonas - Russia’s quest for influence in Africa after the 2022 Ukraine invasion Instruments, causes and consequences – Danish Institute for International Studies, p. 22.

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>281</sup> SNIGYR, Olena - Ideological Agenda of Russian Information Influence in Africa - The Foreign Policy Research Institute, p. 2.

back against Western influence is portrayed as particularly important for the African continent as the political and economic inequalities in the global order are attributed to Western “colonialism”. The Russian narrative capitalizes on existing historical resentments against the former European colonial powers in Africa and states that the process of decolonialization has not been achieved yet. Russia claims that underdevelopment and instability on the African continent are the product of the still-ongoing Western colonialism.<sup>282</sup> While Russia officially acknowledges the importance of international law and the UN system, it currently considers them partially corrupted and invalidated by Western nations, straying away from the fundamental concepts of state sovereignty and independence.<sup>283</sup>

Russia advocates that liberal and democratic governance models of Western nations hold no value for Africans, as they are supposedly neither more effective nor “better” or morally superior to other, illiberal governance forms. Instead, the West is accused of simply using these governance norms as a way to cement its “neo-colonialist” influence system that undermines the independence and the sovereignty of African nations.<sup>284</sup>

Fuente Cobo fittingly calls this Russian vision of the current international order, compromised by a hostile West, “almost apocalyptic”.<sup>285</sup> It constructs a clear system narrative of allies and enemies, with Western “colonialism” as the main antagonist to be countered. Only the destruction of the current international system, which would mean a major “de-westernization” as a form of post-colonial emancipation, would solve this conflict and open the door for African countries toward a bigger political and economic status. This new global order should be understood as “multipolar”, meaning that liberal and democratic governance values shall lose their supposed dominant role in international politics and law. This idea of power redistribution grants legitimacy to Russia’s goal of displacing so-called “Western values” in international politics while simultaneously establishing itself as a major power on the world stage without conforming to external pressure or norms.

### **Case Study: The Coups in West-Africa as “Post-Colonial Liberation”**

---

<sup>282</sup> THE KREMLIN - Russia-Africa Summit.

<sup>283</sup> THE KREMLIN - Russia-Africa Summit.

<sup>284</sup> SIEGLE, Joseph - Russia and Africa: Expanding Influence and Instability – George C. Marshall Center for European Studies, p. 80.

<sup>285</sup> FUENTE COBO, Ignacio - The new "Russianism". How Russia is colonising Africa – Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, p. 3.

In francophone African countries, the anti-colonial messaging by Russia heavily targets the contemporary role of France as part of the Western “colonialist bloc”. On August 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, a coup d’état took place in the West-African nation of Mali, when President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and other government officials resigned after being detained by mutinous military forces. This was the result of a month-long political crisis in Mali, accompanied by incidents of political violence, election overturns and mass protests. During this time, Russian flags and anti-French banners were regularly visible during manifestations, advocating against the then-strong political ties with the former colonial power France in favor of intensifying cooperation with Russia.<sup>286</sup> The narrative nexus between anti-French sentiments and Russia’s image as a partner for transitioning away from Western colonialism was welcomed and amplified by Russia, which also forged personal ties with local anti-French protest groups like *Groupe des Patriotes du Mali*.<sup>287</sup> When Keita’s government fell, the Russian ambassador was the first foreign diplomat welcomed by the military junta, while protesters celebrated Russia as an ally in disposing of the former government, which was backed by France and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).<sup>288</sup>

Russia was therefore able to capitalize on its “De-Westernization” narrative in Africa, gaining favor with the junta and public opinion. Some reports even suggest a deeper and more direct involvement of Russia in the events, as some of the leading Malian junta members, Colonel Malick Diaw and Sadio Camara, received training at the Higher Military College in Moscow shortly before the coup took place.<sup>289</sup> While such a direct involvement cannot be substantially proved, it would be consistent with the established Russian Information Warfare paradigm, in which non-coercive, strategic narratives may be combined with coercive measures to achieve strategic goals - including the destabilization of nations, like Gerasimov states.

A second coup in Mali in 2021 even led to an acceleration of diplomatically decoupling the country from France and other international actors, while Russia simultaneously consolidated its “savior role” and expanded its partnerships with Mali in the security, economic and mining sectors. Similar “anti-French, pro-Russia” messaging also accompanied the military coups in the neighboring countries of Burkina Faso in 2022 and in

---

<sup>286</sup> MUVUNYI, Fred - Was Russia behind the coup in Mali? - DW.

<sup>287</sup> KNIGHT, Tessa ; ROUX, Jean le - The disinformation landscape in West Africa and beyond – Atlantic Council, p. 14.

<sup>288</sup> DEUTSCHE WELLE - Des questions sur la présence russe aux côtés de la junte.

<sup>289</sup> MUVUNYI, Fred - Was Russia behind the coup in Mali? - DW.

Niger 2023, now both controlled by military juntas with close ties to Russia.<sup>290</sup> The three Sahel states have decoupled themselves from the ECOWAS community in January 2023 and formed a “Confederation of the Sahel States” while renouncing former Western allies. Russia was the first country to recognize this alliance and has vowed to help all three countries in their struggle against internal instability, militant uprisings and for achieving independence from “foreign powers”.<sup>291</sup>

This pattern shows the dual aim of the Russian “de-Westernization” narrative in Africa. Not only does it build legitimization for Russian domestic influence and leadership, but furthermore such narratives themselves favor local disruption and societal divide. The inherent oversimplification of complex issues in favor of the enemy/friend dynamic also aims to avoid that audiences engage in critical analysis of the narrative.<sup>292</sup>

Russia’s system narrative encourages social unrest and legitimizes the use of force against state institutions that are considered compromised by outside influence. Studies have shown that narrative campaigns by foreign actors can indeed cause or facilitate offline political violence.<sup>293</sup>

Political instability allows these disruptive narratives to penetrate society and while simultaneously being exacerbated by it. As Pathé Duarte points out, the three Sahel states’ fragile state institutions, their unstable security situation and the historical anti-French sentiment were highly permissive for these narratives to spread and justify power seizure by militant actors working with or at least favorable towards Russia.<sup>294</sup> Therefore Mali and the other Sahel-confederation states should not be considered examples of Gerasimov’s “most stable states” suddenly undermined by narratives, but instead an example of instable states being the prime target group of the Russian narrative warfare strategy in Africa.

## **2.2 Identity Narrative: Russia and Africa as “Brothers” against the West**

Russia portrays Russians and Africans as “brothers-in-arms” against Western hegemonic dominance. Central to this narrative is the Russian identity narrative of a historical defender

---

<sup>290</sup> REUTERS - Russia vows military backing for Sahel juntas' joint force.

<sup>291</sup> TASS - Russia becomes first country to recognize Alliance of Sahel States — Mali's top diplomat.

<sup>292</sup> DEL RE, Emanuela C. - Russian disinformation in Africa and the Sahel in the post-truth era, p. 541.

<sup>293</sup> ARAYANKALAM, Jithesh ; KRISHNAN, Satish - Relating foreign disinformation through social media, domestic online media fractionalization, government's control over cyberspace, and social media-induced offline violence: Insights from the agenda-building theoretical perspective, p. 9.

<sup>294</sup> PATHÉ DUARTE, Felipe - Information Disorder and Civil Unrest Russian Weaponization of Social Media Platforms in Mali and Burkina Faso – 2020–2022 – African Security, p. 219.

against Western colonialism in Africa, referencing the Soviet Union's 20th-century support for decolonialization and independence movements across the continent.<sup>295</sup> Moreover, Russia asserts that it was never involved in European colonialism in Africa, nor the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>296</sup> On the contrary, Russia frames itself as a fellow target of Western and, most notably, U.S. "imperialism", often referencing a global campaign of "Russophobia". It explicitly warns African audiences not to fall victim to this supposed "anti-Russian" bias of Western media.<sup>297</sup> This claim is regularly invoked by Russian communication outlets in response to the significant economic sanctions and the ongoing political isolation imposed by the EU and the U.S. following Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.<sup>298</sup> Through historical and present stories of common defiance against Western countries, Russia strategically interprets the past and present to invoke shared identity and meaning in Russo-African relations.

### **Case Study: The Ukraine Conflict in the Russia-Africa Context**

Droin and Dolbaia argue that many African countries regard the armed conflict in Ukraine as primarily a "Western problem", as its underlying drivers do not significantly touch upon African nations' national interests.<sup>299</sup> At the same time, the African Union and South Africa have publicly complained about the continent being a "collateral victim" of the conflict due to the negative impact on food security for many African countries.<sup>300</sup> In 2022, Africa reportedly imported 50 percent of its wheat supplies from Russia and Ukraine. The escalation of the conflict has led to severe food shortages and price surges across the continent.<sup>301</sup>

Russia, however, attributes these issues of food insecurity to the "illegal sanctions" imposed by the West.<sup>302</sup> Moreover, European countries are blamed for sabotaging and even diverting Russian humanitarian grain supplies to Africa for their own gain.<sup>303</sup> Russia links the origins of the conflict in Ukraine to broader claims of Western imperialism and cultural aggression,

---

<sup>295</sup> AFRICA DATA AND DEMOCRACY OBSERVATOR - Challenging the West: Russian anti-imperialism narratives in Nigeria - Medium.

<sup>296</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>297</sup> CLIFFORD, Cayley ; GRUZD, Steven - Russian and African Media: Exercising Soft Power, p. 1.

<sup>298</sup> UNITED NATIONS MEETINGS COVERAGE - 'Russophobia' Term Used to Justify Moscow's War Crimes in Ukraine, Historian Tells Security Council.

<sup>299</sup> DROIN, Mathieu ; DOLBAIA, Tina - Russia Is Still Progressing in Africa. What's the Limit?, p. 1.

<sup>300</sup> GÖTZ, Elias ; GEJL KAAS, Jonas - Russia's quest for influence in Africa after the 2022 Ukraine invasion Instruments, causes and consequences – Danish Institute for International Studies, p. 35.

<sup>301</sup> MURONZI, Chris - Is Africa still 'neutral' a year into the Ukraine war - Al Jazeera.

<sup>302</sup> THE KREMLIN - Russia-Africa Summit.

<sup>303</sup> PUTIN, Vladimir - Russia and Africa: Joining Efforts for Peace, Progress and a Successful Future.

suggesting that the war is a necessary defense of Russian identity, people, and traditions.<sup>304</sup> Russia compares its struggle in Ukraine to the Soviet Union's historical fight against European fascism, framing its military actions as a continuation of its legacy of resistance - now allegedly against "Nazism" in Ukraine.<sup>305</sup>

Furthermore, Russian public communication toward Africa does not acknowledge a war between two sovereign states but instead refers to a "Ukraine crisis," emphasizing the "defensive" and "justified" nature of its actions.<sup>306</sup>

In doing so, Russia strategically constructs an identity narrative portraying itself as a victim of Western "neo-colonialism," fostering a "shared destiny" with former African colonies who seek emancipation from Western influence. Furthermore, Russian values and culture, which are also claimed to be on the line in Ukraine, are presented as "traditional" or "conservative" family values, opposing the liberal value system that the West supposedly tries to forcibly expand worldwide. As Snigyr notes, this traditionalist identity is strategically crafted to resonate with conservative and religious African audiences, aimed at leveraging anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment to align them against Western notions of individual rights and self-determination.<sup>307</sup>

Through deploying narratives on the Ukraine conflict, Russia aims for international legitimization of its military endeavor by African audiences. Despite the apparent contradiction of the upholding of state sovereignty while attempting justification of a military invasion of another country, some instances at least suggest that this strategic narrative may produce favorable outcomes. In April 2022, volunteers queued outside the Russian embassy in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, demonstrating their willingness to fight for Russia in Ukraine.<sup>308</sup> But a closer investigation revealed that these men did not hold any sympathy for Russia or its conflict goals, but instead had followed social media rumors of employment opportunities and financial promises that would come with working for the Russian armed forces.

---

<sup>304</sup> UNITED NATIONS MEETINGS COVERAGE - 'Russophobia' Term Used to Justify Moscow's War Crimes in Ukraine, Historian Tells Security Council.

<sup>305</sup> SNIGYR, Olena - Ideological Agenda of Russian Information Influence in Africa - The Foreign Policy Research Institute p. 6.

<sup>306</sup> THE KREMLIN - Russia-Africa Summit.

<sup>307</sup> SNIGYR, Olena - Ideological Agenda of Russian Information Influence in Africa - The Foreign Policy Research Institute p. 6.

<sup>308</sup> ENDESHAW, Dawit - Ethiopians queue up to volunteer for Russia's fight in Ukraine.

A similar picture arises on the international stage. In the March 2022 UN General Assembly resolution condemning the Russian invasion, 17 African states abstained while another eight did not show up for the vote, accounting for over two-thirds of the 35 abstentions.<sup>309</sup> While it is notable that only 51 percent of African member states supported the resolution, in contrast to 81 percent non-African member, this voting behavior does not necessarily reflect narrative influence but could also stem from political leverage. Nonetheless, by framing the war in Ukraine as a Western-Russian culture war, Russia aims to leverage anti-Western sentiments to distract attention from its breaches of international law.

### **2.3 Issue Narrative: Russian as a Security Provider for Africa**

At the 2023 Russia-Africa summit, Vladimir Putin's opening statement emphasized stepping up cooperation with Africa "in all areas" to assist African countries in domestic struggles such as underdevelopment and poverty.<sup>310</sup> Although he promised develop economic and cultural ties among others, major focus in his speech was on Russian assistance in countering colonialism and insecurity through "military cooperation".<sup>311</sup> The narrative focus on Russia as a partner in the security and defense domain is rooted in real life capabilities. Although Russia publishes rising trade volumes of 24 billion U.S. dollars with the African continent in 2024, it admitted to missing the proclaimed goal of 40 billion, set by Putin himself.<sup>312</sup>

Russia published some economic prestige projects by state-owned companies in Africa in recent years, such as the Rosatom nuclear power plant in Egypt, which is about to become operational in 2030.<sup>313</sup> In these instances, Russia can substantiate its claims of "mutually beneficial" relationships, claiming to prioritize reciprocal business ventures and knowledge-exchange over Western "paternalistic", one-sided aid delivery.<sup>314</sup> But these proclamations of Russia as a development partner are usually vague, since Russia is unable to cite significant numbers. The Kremlin's economic engagements in Africa today are considered modest when compared to those of the Soviet Union, as well as those of modern-day China,

---

<sup>309</sup> GÖTZ, Elias ; GEJL KAAS, Jonas - Russia's quest for influence in Africa after the 2022 Ukraine invasion Instruments, causes and consequences – Danish Institute for International Studies, p. 2.

<sup>310</sup> THE KREMLIN - Russia-Africa Summit.

<sup>311</sup> THE KREMLIN - Russia-Africa Summit.

<sup>312</sup> KLOMEGAH, Kestern Kenn - Russia Enhancing its Economic and Investment ties in Africa - Modern Diplomacy.

<sup>313</sup> SIEGLE, Joseph - Decoding Russia's Economic Engagements in Africa – African Center for Strategic Studies.

<sup>314</sup> DROIN, Mathieu ; DOLBAIA, Tina - Russia Is Still Progressing in Africa. What's the Limit?, p. 5.



United States, and European Union.<sup>315</sup> In 2021, trade volume between Russia and African countries stood around \$17.7 billion, while Africa's trade with the European Union, China, and the United States respectively stood at \$295 billion, \$254 billion, and \$65 billion. Russia also invests little in Africa, representing less than 1 percent of total foreign direct investment (FDI) going to the continent in 2021.<sup>316</sup> Therefore, analysts such as Droin and Dolbaia assess that Moscow's main competitive asset in African countries is quick and relatively inexpensive deployment of security and military services to governments in crisis.<sup>317</sup>

For this strategy, the Kremlin primarily utilizes private military contractors that work under substantial guidance of the Russian state. The most prominent case is the former "Wagner Group", which has been largely reorganized under the "Africa Corps" and put under the control of the Russian military intelligence service after the death of its alleged founder Yevgeny Prigozhin in August 2023 – an incident that many assess as a state-sponsored assassination due to his open defiance of the Kremlin.<sup>318</sup>

Drawing on Siegle, Wagner should not be understood as simply a mercenary group but a network of entities with military, business, political and information technology capabilities.<sup>319</sup> Wagner operatives have been present in multiple African countries for various services such as military consultancy, but are most prominently involved with on-the-ground military and security assistance in countries suffering from internal conflict, militant insurgencies and military rule. This includes the three Sahel countries of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso as well as Libya, Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR).<sup>320</sup> The Russian strategy for Wagner's deployment in these countries included the support of African military juntas and coups which then in turn later cooperated with Wagner mercenaries to combat internal armed conflicts and militants.<sup>321</sup> This mechanism requires political crises and instability as permissive conditions for larger-scale Wagner-engagement.

Russian strategic narratives, especially in these countries, reflect this approach. Russia is presented as formidable, capable political force that is willing to help combat terrorist

---

<sup>315</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>316</sup> SIEGLE, Joseph - Decoding Russia's Economic Engagements in Africa – African Center for Strategic Studies.

<sup>317</sup> DROIN, Mathieu ; DOLBAIA, Tina - Russia Is Still Progressing in Africa. What's the Limit?, p. 5.

<sup>318</sup> STANYARD, Julia - Mercenaries and illicit markets: Russia's Africa Corps and the business of conflict, p. 5.

<sup>319</sup> SIEGLE, Joseph - Russia's Use of Private Military Contractors – Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

<sup>320</sup> STANYARD, Julia - Mercenaries and illicit markets: Russia's Africa Corps and the business of conflict, p. 6.

<sup>321</sup> SIEGLE, Joseph - Russia's Use of Private Military Contractors – Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

insurgencies. Western countries like France and their counter-insurgency operations are portrayed as “failed”, supposedly even exacerbating unstable security situations in conflict hubs due to “arrogance” and military incapacity.<sup>322</sup> In some instances, Western actors were even accused of potentially supporting local terrorist movements.<sup>323</sup> Even the Malian junta reiterated this disinformation and accused France of supplying jihadist groups, even though France itself reportedly lost more than 50 soldiers during its eight-year counter-terrorism operation in Mali.<sup>324</sup>

Russia is presented as a defender of sovereignty while the West is deemed a threat to the stability of African nations, often referencing the international community’s support for past regime changes in Africa, such as the international coalition against former Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi.<sup>325</sup> This messaging stirs fears of Western interventionism and positions Russia as a strong protector against outside interference. It further aims to legitimize Wagner security assistance for illiberal governments to stay in power, which is especially appealing for internationally isolated juntas. The promise of Wagner’s quick, non-bureaucratic and powerful anti-insurgency services furthermore capitalizes on the population’s desire for peace and security in conflict hubs. It crafts an issue narrative around the critical security situations in unstable African countries and legitimizes Russian paramilitary action as a superior and more effective solution over long-term Western capacity-building missions against local violent extremism.

### **Case Study: Russian Targeting of UN Peacekeeping Missions and Operation Barkhane**

Russia has strategically addressed peacekeeping missions in ways that reinforce the issue narrative of Russia as a superior security provider.

### **Central African Republic: MINUSCA - Early 2020**

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, also referred to as MINUSCA, is a 2014-founded UN peacekeeping mission in the CAR, tasked with stabilizing the volatile security situation within the country. It has been mandated by the UNSC resolution 2149. In early 2020, media outlets and social

---

<sup>322</sup> SPUTNIK AFRIQUE - Au Mali, la France "victime de son arrogance, de son comportement haineux et belliqueux".

<sup>323</sup> AFRICA DATA AND DEMOCRACY OBSERVATOR - Challenging the West: Russian anti-imperialism narratives in Nigeria - Medium.

<sup>324</sup> REUTERS - Mali accuses France of arming Islamist fighters in letter to U.N.

<sup>325</sup> AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES - Russian Disinformation Campaigns Target Africa: An Interview with Dr. Shelby Grossman.

media accounts that have been attributed to Russia and Wagner-actors by the Stanford Internet Observatory, published multiple stories targeting the MINUSCA mission. These included accusations that the mission had been corrupted and entirely controlled by France to harvest natural resources and instigate a regime change in the CAR.<sup>326</sup> The claims even included systematic fraud, organ trafficking and sexual violence by French soldiers. Moreover, the outlets framed the mission as useless, instead promoting the presence of Russian troops in the CAR.<sup>327</sup> While it is important to note that the MINUSCA mission has indeed been publicly criticized for substantiated reports of sexual violence by peacekeeping troops, these reports were not tied to French or Western troops, which only constituted a minority of MINUSCA personnel.<sup>328</sup> The MINUSCA head of mission has highlighted the problems which the mission has been facing due to “misinformation campaigns”.<sup>329</sup>

These stories from early 2020 emerged in a time frame in which Wagner soldiers were expanding their contingent in the CAR after the first Wagner military advisers arrived in 2018.<sup>330</sup> In late 2020, the CAR government brought in Russian paramilitaries to halt the advance of insurgents on the capital.<sup>331</sup> While the MINUSCA mission is still ongoing, the last French troops have left the CAR in December 2022 following tensions over the ongoing Russian military presence within the country.<sup>332</sup>

Similar stories about French subversion and support to local insurgent groups have also targeted the MINUSMA - United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali – mission in Mali, which ran from 2014 to 2022. These incidents were reported during a time in which Wagner operatives were reportedly planning a large-scale deployment for the Malian government in 2021.<sup>333</sup> As Duarte points out, this period was also coincident with the reorganization of the French military presence in the Sahel region, as

---

<sup>326</sup> GRAPHIKA ; STANFORD INTERNET OBSERVATORY - More Troll Combat - French and Russian Influence Operations Go Head to Head Targeting Audiences in Africa, p. 41.

<sup>327</sup> *ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>328</sup> DEBOUT, Barbara - In the Central African Republic, 'They say their peacekeepers came to protect us, but they rape us' - Le Monde; UNITED NATIONS - Summary of Contribution to UN Peacekeeping by Country.

<sup>329</sup> UNITED NATIONS MEETINGS COVERAGE - Urging Continued Support for Central African Republic, Peacekeeping Mission Head Cites UN's Role in Facilitating First Peaceful Transhumance Conference, Upcoming Elections.

<sup>330</sup> BAX, Pauline - Russia's Influence in the Central African Republic - International Crisis Group.

<sup>331</sup> AFP NEWS - Last French troops leave Central African Republic amid closer Bangui-Moscow ties - France24.

<sup>332</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>333</sup> AFRICA DEFENSE FORUM - Russian Path to Mali Paved With Disinformation.

France was preparing to end its most prominent counter-terrorism action in Sub-Saharan Africa, the so-called “Operation Barkhane”.<sup>334</sup>

### **Operation “Barkhane”**

The French counter-terrorism operation “Barkhane” was initiated in 2014 at the request of the Malian government to stop armed terrorist groups advancing on the capital of Bamako.<sup>335</sup> The operations were later expanded to other Sahel countries besides Mali. While public opinion in Mali was overwhelmingly positive in the beginning, the operation had later become a focal point for discontent and hostility towards the French presence.<sup>336</sup>

According to a 2020 study by Maxime Audinet, Russian state-controlled media channels regularly picked up the shortcomings of the French operation which allegedly failed to substantially stabilize the local security situation and echoed dissatisfaction of the local population.<sup>337</sup> While Audinet's findings indicated that the majority of Russian media outlets in 2020 refrained from defamations of France and open promotion of Russian security assistance, the tone seems to have shifted in the following years. In articles from 2022 and 2023, Russian outlet *Sputnik Africa* had adapted a sharper tone, which included attributing the critical security situation to “hateful”, “neo-colonialist” and “paternalistic” interventions by France and NATO.<sup>338</sup> Furthermore, the articles promoted Russia as a new and important ally for security. Another study by the *NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence* shows that Russian state-news coverage on Operation Barkhane, including the one implying ulterior French motives, spiked in the run-up to 2020 – a time in which the political crisis in Mali was stirring up before leading into the military coup of August 2020.<sup>339</sup>

These patterns hint at Russia's strategic deployment or reinforcement of existing narratives of Western peacebuilding shortcomings to undermine the international interventions in African nations. Existing and factual critique is mixed with unsubstantiated narratives of

---

<sup>334</sup> PATHÉ DUARTE, Felipe - Information Disorder and Civil Unrest Russian Weaponization of Social Media Platforms in Mali and Burkina Faso – 2020–2022 – African Security, p. 219.

<sup>335</sup> FRENCH MINISTRY OF THE ARMED FORCES - Opération BARKHANE.

<sup>336</sup> AUDINET, Maxime - Le Lion, l'Ours et les Hyènes : Acteurs, pratiques et récits de l'influence informationnelle russe en Afrique subsaharienne francophone - IRSEM, p. 59.

<sup>337</sup> *ibid*, p. 88.

<sup>338</sup> SPUTNIK AFRIQUE - L'Otan est responsable de l'insécurité dans le Sahel qui perdure, selon le chef d'un parti nigérien ; SPUTNIK AFRIQUE - Au Mali, la France "victime de son arrogance, de son comportement haineux et belliqueux".

<sup>339</sup> SVOBODA, Karel ; MATLACH, Paula-Charlotte ; BADDORF, Zack - Russia's Activities in Africa's Information Environment (Case Studies: Mali, Central African republic) - NATO Stratcom CoE, p. 16.

Western abuse and exploitation. Reports of military failure of French and UN peacekeeping operations are contrasted with promises of superior Russian counter-insurgency capabilities. Russian narratives undermining the legitimacy of UN missions are especially notable, considering the public commitment of Russia to the UN institutional mechanism. Although, the narrative framing does blend into its larger system narrative, which brands the international order and organizations as “corrupted” by Western powers. The correlations between intensified narrative projections, volatile domestic political and security situations and Wagner deployment timelines also indicate a comprehensive, step-by-step interplay: Strategic narratives “cultivate the ground” for Russian security engagement in African countries.

Parens has conceptualized such a tactic in a three-level approach, which he has deemed “The Wagner Group’s Playbook in Africa”, drawing on cases in the CAR, Sudan and Mali.<sup>340</sup> In the first stage, public opinion and governmental elites are targeted through strategic narratives that favor Wagner-deployment. These narratives capitalize on instable security situations, de-legitimize foreign security assistance, support anti-Western sentiment and lastly incite societal divisions and protests movements. As observable in the Sahel-confederacy states, this narrative strategy compliments or even encourages violent regime change and military juntas taking power. In Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the juntas and public opinion displaced Western influence and turned towards Wagner for security assistance.

This Russia-positive sentiment then facilitates stage two and three in the Wagner playbook - military-to-military assistance and subsequent payment. The military assistance ranges from direct troop deployment, to military advisory and arms delivery. The payment may be money, but often also concessions in the mining industry and control of extraction sites. A tactic that the British Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee has called “Guns for Gold” – employed to undermine the Western sanction regime and potentially funding the Russian military campaign in Ukraine.<sup>341</sup> As Parens rightfully argues, the Wagner playbook must be adapted to local conditions.<sup>342</sup> Regime change is not inherently necessary, especially when the government is already susceptible to Russian influence.

---

<sup>340</sup> PARENS, Raphael - The Wagner Group’s Playbook in Africa: Mali - Foreign Policy Research Institute.

<sup>341</sup> HOUSE OF COMMONS - FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE - Guns for gold: the Wagner Network exposed, p. 25.

<sup>342</sup> *ibid.*

The issue narrative of Russia as a security provider both depends on and simultaneously aims to exacerbate divide and instability. Domestic chaos is an essential condition and an end goal of the Russian Narrative Warfare strategy to achieve strategic benefits in Africa. Without any conflict, Russia's private military deployment strategy falls short.

### 3. Narrative Projection Techniques

#### 3.1 Diplomacy

Russia has leveraged diplomatic ties to project or support its strategic narratives towards the African continent. The first Russia-Africa summit in Sochi in 2019 was attended by 43 African heads of state, leading to images and public statements underscoring the Russo-African partnership narrative.<sup>343</sup> The second summit took place in 2023, although the heads-of-states quota dropped to only 17. Like in the Russian Foreign Policy strategy, the diplomatic engagement patterns illustrate a correlation between Russian diplomatic efforts and its military operations in Ukraine. The Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, who had never visited Africa before, made four visits within the 18 months since the Russian invasion – including a meeting at the African Union.<sup>344</sup>

#### 3.2 Media

Russia uses traditional and digital media channels to project strategic narratives on the African continent. According to an assessment by the Ukrainian intelligence services, Russia's state-controlled media outlets, such as *Russia Today* (RT), *Sputnik* and *TASS*, broadcast in 40 African countries in six languages – with expansions in progress.<sup>345</sup> Through content sharing agreements, more than 30 African TV stations are said to rely on Russian content.<sup>346</sup>

Despite this outreach, official state media representations on the continent are rare. Since 2022, new openings have been reported in Nairobi and Algeria.<sup>347</sup> Plans for an office in

---

<sup>343</sup> HAMILTON, Robert - The Dragon and the Bear in Africa: Stress-Testing Chinese-Russian Relations - Foreign Policy Research Institute, p. 3.

<sup>344</sup> HAMILTON, Robert - The Dragon and the Bear in Africa: Stress-Testing Chinese-Russian Relations - Foreign Policy Research Institute, p. 2.

<sup>345</sup> UTKINA, Alona - Russia scales up propaganda in Africa: HUR warns of Kremlin's information expansion - Ukrainian National News.

<sup>346</sup> FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE OF UKRAINE - Russian Media Expansion in Africa and Latin America: Tools of Influence and Threats to Ukraine and the Region.

<sup>347</sup> AFRICA DEFENSE FORUM - Russia Turns to TV to Influence African Audiences - Africa Defense Forum.

South Africa have apparently not materialized yet. State channels have been hit by Western sanctions even in Africa, as RT was cut from South African satellite TV services after the invasion of Ukraine. Most notably, a Chinese satellite provider, *StarSat*, also cut off RT in 2023.<sup>348</sup>

Catering to francophone African audiences, Sputnik launched a French-language platform named *Sputnik Afrique* in July 2022, following the forced shutdown of their representation in France.<sup>349</sup> In 2023, the Moscow-based *African Initiative* emerged as another flagship media project in Africa, affiliated with Russian intelligence services and former Wagner operatives.<sup>350</sup> In June 2025, Russian outlets reportedly started translating their content into Portuguese, targeting Angola and Mozambique.<sup>351</sup> These efforts again illustrate Russia's increased focus towards African audiences since February 2022.

Russia has also been accused of using local African media organizations as proxies, such as the Cameroon-based TV channel *Afrique Média*.<sup>352</sup> Among African-owned media outlets, *Afrique Média* particularly stood out for its positive reporting on Wagner. The paramilitary group has been described as providing “successful rapid response anti-terror solutions”, and its troops and fighting equipment have been claimed to be superior to those of national security forces.<sup>353</sup> Using established African outlets as projectors aims for increased legitimacy, with audiences being generally more receptive to narratives proliferated by local journalists.<sup>354</sup>

Russian media involvement also goes beyond audiovisual content. In 2024, RT launched a widespread advertising campaign on big screens and billboards, portraying anti-colonial and Africa messages, mixed with pictures of popular historical African leaders.<sup>355</sup> In countries like Burkina Faso, large banners in public spaces display junta leaders next to Vladimir Putin, promoting “support for change”.<sup>356</sup>

---

<sup>348</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>349</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>350</sup> NILSSON-JULIEN, Estelle - African Initiative: Russian-backed outlet peddles influence in Africa - Euronews.

<sup>351</sup> UTKINA, Alona - Russia scales up propaganda in Africa: HUR warns of Kremlin's information expansion - Ukrainian National News.

<sup>352</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>353</sup> AFRICA DATA AND DEMOCRACY OBSERVATOR - Afrique Média: Putin's voice in Africa's heartland - Medium.

<sup>354</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> AFRICA DEFENSE FORUM - Russia Turns to TV to Influence African Audiences - Africa Defense Forum.

<sup>356</sup> EHL, David ; GHAEDI, Monir - Russian propaganda: How Moscow uses disinformation in Africa - DW.

As radio is the most accessible and popular information source in countries like the CAR, Russia has also invested in radio stations such as *Radio Lengo Songo*.<sup>357</sup> In that case, the financial stream has been tracked back to a Wagner-affiliated mining company. Russian state media also trains African journalists in “education programs” such as the “RT Academy”, which claims to have more than 1 000 African media professionals participating.<sup>358</sup> During the course, participants are targeted with Russian narratives of “Western Fake News”. This includes the denial of Russian violations of international law, such as the 2022 mass killings of Ukrainian civilians in Bucha – a case which has been verified by multiple independent investigations, including through the UN Human Rights Office.<sup>359</sup>

### Social Media

A key aspect of Russian narrative projection in Africa is the use of social media networks. Multiple studies have shown that Russia has repeatedly used networks of inauthentic social-media accounts to publish and amplify strategic narratives, often liaising with traditional media coverage. Some refer to these networks as “troll factories”, hinting at their working mechanism of discourse polarization through controversial narratives.<sup>360</sup> Social media has become so integral to the formation of public opinion in modern societies that deliberate attempts by political actors to polarize these environments can swiftly lead to wider “offline” societal polarization.<sup>361</sup>

In December 2020, *Facebook* took down an elaborate Russian operation of 63 accounts, 29 pages and one *Instagram* account, which focused on projecting pro-Russian, anti-French and anti-UN narratives in the CAR.<sup>362</sup> According to *Facebook*, this operation used an account-cluster “to comment, amplify their own content, drive people to off-platform domains and run groups and pages posing as news and civic-focused entities”.<sup>363</sup> Some of the pages counted more than 50 000 followers. The projection process was partly based on highly controversial, non-substantiated criminal accusations of French forces, bearing potential for major social polarization – pillaging, theft, exploitation and sexual violence.

---

<sup>357</sup> CLIFFORD, Cayley ; GRUZD, Steven - Russian and African Media: Exercising Soft Power, p. 15.

<sup>358</sup> BBC NEWS RUSSIAN - Inside Russia’s campaign to turn African journalists into Kremlin mouthpieces - Meduza.

<sup>359</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>360</sup> WARD, Clarissa [et al.] - How Russian meddling is back before 2020 vote - CNN.

<sup>361</sup> NEYAZI, Taberez Ahmed - Digital propaganda, political bots and polarized politics in India, p. 50.

<sup>362</sup> GRAPHIKA ; STANFORD INTERNET OBSERVATORY - More Troll Combat - French and Russian Influence Operations Go Head to Head Targeting Audiences in Africa, p. 22.

<sup>363</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.



As an investigation by CNN from 2020 revealed, these networks are able to work through small, coordinated cells on the African continent, which are equipped and hired by individuals with connections to the Russian *Internet Research Agency* (IRA). The IRA was under the responsibility of former Wagner leader Prigozhin, who publicly admitted that the organization was tasked with digitally interfering in foreign countries – for example, during the 2016 U.S. election.<sup>364</sup> Another investigation by *Al-Jazeera* in 2025 uncovered that Russian individuals maintain *Facebook* and *X* profiles, masquerading as African journalists and political analysts by using identities of deceased African nationals.<sup>365</sup> A single fake persona can be used to disseminate pro-Russian and anti-French narratives in francophone Africa hundreds of times.

### 3.3 Cultural Diplomacy

Furthermore, Russia projects influence in Africa through “grassroots diplomacy”, a strategy involving direct engagement with local cultural and societal spaces. This includes multiple Russian films that convey positive narratives about Wagner-like Russian mercenaries as heroic counter-terrorism forces against Western-funded insurgents in the CAR or in Mozambique.<sup>366</sup> Russia has even developed a video game called *African Dawn*, in which players are able to reenact the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso, fighting either for the Russian backed Sahel-Alliance, or the ECOWAS states - in the game supported by the U.S. and France.<sup>367</sup> While such “militainment” products offer projection channels into a young and still developing African entertainment market, the reception of such products is hampered by low internet penetration rates in states like Burkina Faso, standing at only 28% of the population as of 2024.<sup>368</sup>

Furthermore, Russian education institutions have been gradually increasing their efforts to attract African students and academics by providing scholarships. In 2024/2025, the number of African students in Russia supposedly reached 40 000, increasing from 35 000 the year before.<sup>369</sup> While academic exchanges offer Russia the opportunity to promote soft-powers

---

<sup>364</sup> SAUER, Pjotr - Putin ally Yevgeny Prigozhin admits interfering in US elections - The Guardian.

<sup>365</sup> RITZEN, Yarno - The ‘ghost reporters’ writing pro-Russian propaganda in West Africa - Al Jazeera.

<sup>366</sup> KNIGHT, Tessa ; ROUX, Jean le - The disinformation landscape in West Africa and beyond – Atlantic Council, p. 5.

<sup>367</sup> ALLEN, Karen - What’s in a game? Video games and Russian influence in Africa - Institute for Security Studies Africa.

<sup>368</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>369</sup> WARURU, Maina - Russia embarks on new drive to lure more students from Africa - World University News Africa.

as academic and cultural quality, reports of African students fighting and dying at the frontline in Ukraine have hampered these efforts.<sup>370</sup>

Additionally, Moscow has cultivated relationships with multiple Pan-African, anti-colonialism movements and vocal pro-Russian individuals and groups. Through the *African Initiative* organization, it is sponsoring events or award ceremonies that celebrate and elevate pro-Russian influencers across the continent.<sup>371</sup> The local influencer and founder of Mali-based *La Perspective Sahélienne*, Mamadou Ba, was even invited on a Russia-tour in 2024, where he visited the Ukrainian city of Mariupol – a city annexed by Russia in 2022.<sup>372</sup> Such invitations strongly suggest that Russia is leveraging these ties to legitimize its forceful annexations of Ukrainian territory among local African communities.

Further reinforcing its narrative footprint, Russia operates a number of institutions in Africa dedicated to promoting Russian language and culture. In 2022, the “Russian Houses” started appearing in various countries. As of 2025, they operate in the Sahel countries, Ethiopia, Egypt, Senegal, Tanzania, the CAR and beyond - numbers increasing.<sup>373</sup> In the CAR, the Russian House is not only led by a former Wagner operative, but also regarded as a “humanitarian front” for the group’s activities.<sup>374</sup> Such evidence suggests that these centers may go beyond their acknowledged function of projecting Russian culture and ideological values into local communities - often mixed with nostalgia for the Soviet Union and Red Army militarism. Instead they might serve as unofficial Africa-Corps outposts for coordinating cells and operatives for further narrative projection.<sup>375</sup>

The recent and still ongoing expansion of such grassroots institutions could indicate Russia’s willingness for long-term entrenchment in non-digital local information spaces and expand beyond short-term local polarization.

---

<sup>370</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> AFRICA DATA AND DEMOCRACY OBSERVATOR - Grassroot movements entrenching Russia’s position in Africa - Medium.

<sup>372</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>373</sup> TOUNKARA, Aliou - Non-Governmental ‘Russian Houses’ in Africa: Focus on Mali and the Dynamics of Influence – Valdai.

<sup>374</sup> AFRICA DEFENSE FORUM - Kremlin Opens ‘Russian Houses’ as Soft Power Tool.

<sup>375</sup> REJICHI, Driss - “Russian Houses,” Putin’s Soft Power Arm in Africa - Investigation - Afrique XXI.

## **VI. Comparative Analysis**

### **1. System Narrative**

Russia's and China's system narratives both call for change in the global order, portraying Western "hegemony" as depriving Africa of power, development and security.

Similar to the Cold War, both narratives feed on a "clash of systems" storytelling, in which Western norms and policies serve as tools to subjugate the Global South. Both Russia and China present themselves as partners for African emancipation from Western dominance, fostering bloc-thinking between allies and adversaries of the Global South. On that level, the system narratives are fairly similar and the elements of African agency craft an attractive narrative for Africans who are disappointed by Western outreach.

But differences emerge in the nuances. The Russian lens on Western hegemonic power in Africa is centered on neo-colonialism. It attributes local instability and underdevelopment to the exploitation of resources, the undermining of political sovereignty and the fueling of domestic insecurity by external Western adversaries. This corresponds with Russia's heightened engagement with francophone countries in West Africa, such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and the CAR. Domestic instability and historical resentment towards the former French colonial power offer fertile ground for antagonism, since France has continued to be a visible post-colonial political player in the Sahel region. This neo-colonialist framing is highly polarizing, fueling social movements and mass protests, such as those in Mali or Burkina Faso before recent military coups. The portrayal of France as a perpetrator or agitator of local conflict legitimizes violence as an act of self-defense.

The Chinese narrative also includes references to past Western colonialism, but is less focused on an outside Western agitator in Africa. While it does frame the West as paternalistic and hypocritical, the Chinese system narrative is much more based on offering an alternative global order instead of fostering antagonism. It emphasizes the superiority of a Chinese model for African development and portrays the Western order as in decline. This perception was already present in African politics in 2005, when Zimbabwe's former President Robert Mugabe proclaimed: "We have turned east, where the sun rises, and given our back to the west, where the sun sets".<sup>376</sup>

---

<sup>376</sup> MELDRUM, Andrew - Mugabe turns back on west and looks east - The Guardian.

This notion of Chinese exceptionalism surpasses the aims of Russia's system narrative. While the latter is more focused of displacing and destroying current balances of power, the Chinese narrative works to justify its own superiority based on values, morality and efficiency.

Russia and China both advocate for a global system of geopolitical multipolarity, in which Africa should take on a bigger role on the international stage without conforming to Western norms and principles.

To achieve that, they aim for a change in global governance norms. Both publicly commit themselves to the universal principles of the United Nations architecture and international law, although with certain restrictions. China and Russia both proclaim that the West has abused these instruments through politicized interferences. Both system narratives feed on a strict interpretation of national sovereignty, which resonates with the criticism of Western "paternalism" towards Africa, and claims a superior morality to the current world order.

Despite public commitment to the United Nations, Russian-affiliated disinformation campaigns have worked to delegitimize multilateral peacekeeping missions in African conflict hubs and displace UN influence, paving the way for its own security engagements. The discrepancy between public statements and covert operations can be explained by Russia's efforts to still use the narrative arena of the UN to legitimize its military actions in Ukraine. By sabotaging international action and consensus, the Russian narrative strategy aims for destabilization to further national interests. This narrative double game appears short- to mid-term-oriented. If Russia wants to maintain or even expand its role as an exclusive security provider in African conflict hubs, locally delegitimizing UN efforts and stabilization missions will continue to be in Russia's national interest. If Russia does not deliver on its promises of stabilizing African countries' security environments, this strategy could backfire. The UN still enjoys high approval ratings in many African countries, such as Kenya, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Ghana.<sup>377</sup> Such countries will be less susceptible to anti-UN narratives and the messaging style that Russia has employed in the Sahel countries. Likewise, African ambitions for stronger representations within the UN architecture are unlikely to go along with Russia's unilateral stance on conflict resolution.<sup>378</sup>

---

<sup>377</sup> GORDON, Jason - Net Favorability of the UN Remains Positive Overall - The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

<sup>378</sup> MUGABI, Isaac - African nations want a seat at the UN Security Council – DW.

Russia's unwillingness to engage in multilateral cooperation in Africa could undermine its projected narrative of a legitimate partner in Africa. Overt aggression towards the UN and countries of the Western hemisphere contradicts Moscow's efforts to claim a higher morality for its system narrative. To draw on Ramani's analysis of Russia's Africa policy: The Russian narrative appears less focused on truly promoting multipolarity and more on building a Soviet-like client network, in which global governance norms are constantly shaped by Russian national interests.<sup>379</sup> There is little vision for the future, aside from resistance and emancipation.

China, on the other hand, invests substantial soft power to align itself with the UN system and promote multilateral efforts in Africa. The rapidly growing presence of Chinese peacekeeping forces in recent years and the visit of UN General Secretary Guterres to the FOCAC 2024 illustrate China's self-portrayal as a benevolent, multilaterally engaged power. Although China has worked to reform UN treaties and institutions according to its interests, its system narrative is less confrontational and emphasizes long-term stabilization over short-term goals. This multilateral, great power narrative contrasts with Russia's more isolationist one. An example of a clear cut conflict between these narrative strategies is the case of Mali, in which Russia has actively worked to undermine the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission, to which China on the other hand has contributed troops and even reported a casualty among its peacekeeping soldier.<sup>380</sup>

## **2. Identity Narrative**

Both China and Russia recall the past to create a sense of shared historical identity and long-lasting friendship with African countries.

Russia emphasizes the Soviet Union's support for anti-colonial African movements, suggesting a historical alliance against Western powers. Moreover, it evokes a sense of common victimhood, as Russia presents itself as a fellow target of Western expansionism in the Ukraine conflict. It publicly identifies as a defender of conservative values, which it claims to share with many African audiences.

---

<sup>379</sup> SIEGLE, Joseph - Russia in Africa: Resurgent great power or bellicose pretender? - South African Institute of International Affairs.

<sup>380</sup> CHINA MILITARY ONLINE - Chinese military dispatches peacekeeping troops to Mali for 10 consecutive years - Chinese Ministry of National Defense.

China also reiterates its historical ties with Africa through its own colonial experiences and 20<sup>th</sup> century ties. Its identity narrative frames both the PRC and African nations as part of the Global South, drawing on a shared sense of belonging and a mutual commitment to development. This sets up the promise of achieving Chinese-like modernization success by emulating Chinese governance and policy. It incorporates Chinese national and cultural values, making “wisdom” and history integral to the concept of rapid development. The narrative is therefore much more ideological and comprehensive. It goes far beyond the Russo-African shared identity promoted by the Kremlin, which is limited to “common defiance against the West”, characterized by confrontational messaging. China cultivates its “shared vision for mankind” side-by-side with the African continent through extensive projections of Chinese investment capabilities in Africa and the self-presentation as an exceptional, benevolent superpower.

As African audiences strive for development and stability, a Chinese “role model”, based on a comprehensive value and cultural system, might offer a more cohesive and more attractive identity narrative than one based on open conflict with a distant West. Russia’s self-proclaimed identity of a “defender of sovereignty” is also contradicted by its war efforts for territorial gain in Ukraine. As Droin and Dolbaia suggest, the observable impact of this double-standard in Russia’s narrative in African has so far been limited, largely due to African indifference to European territorial conflicts.<sup>381</sup>

It is therefore unlikely that the Russian “brothers in arms” identification with Africa will prove to be a long-term, cohesive narrative. Instead, the Chinese “rising power” identity is backed up by a strong perception of China’s international status among Africans. In a 2024/2025 survey, 60% of Africans in 29 countries ranked China as the most favorable of any regional or global powers, while only 36% viewed Russia as a positive influence.<sup>382</sup>

### **3. Issue Narrative**

In their issue narratives, both China and Russia promote “mutual benefit” cooperation policies with the African continent, presenting themselves as “fair” partners rather than one-sided donors. Both reject conditionality to differentiate themselves from Western institutions and accountability mechanisms. Both narratives incorporate elements of “win-win”

---

<sup>381</sup> DROIN, Mathieu ; DOLBAIA, Tina - Russia Is Still Progressing in Africa. What’s the Limit?, p. 1.

<sup>382</sup> OLANDER, Eric - China Tops Favorability Rankings in Africa, Outpacing U.S. and EU, New Survey Shows - China Global South Project.

cooperation with African countries, which often translates into affirming African support for issues of national interest, such as the “One-China policy” or the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Both actors call for increased cooperation with Africa in all areas, although Chinese messaging is more detailed and diverse across domains, including culture, technology and society.

Large-scale Chinese investments in African trade infrastructure are central to the Chinese narrative in Africa, as they symbolize long-lasting support for African-led development. China also reacts to Western narrative contestation of its loan policies and deploys counter-narratives, hinting at the close monitoring of information spaces.

While China establishes itself as a development agent bringing superior knowledge, technology and capital into the Sino-African partnership, Russia’s issue narrative is narrowly focused on security assistance. Economic cooperation is part of the Russia-Africa narrative but is limited to a few flagship projects and suffers from “say-do gaps”. As Russia lacks the resources to match Chinese cross-domain engagement, it is unable to substantiate its narrative with significant data.

Russia’s strategic narrative of a security provider focuses on delegitimizing Western and international security initiatives while promoting its own military capabilities. Subsequently, Russian communication is often marked by a negative undertone, amplifying African security issues and leveraging sovereignty concerns - predominantly in West Africa. Russia utilizes narratives in African countries to complement and prepare military deployment, resembling classical Russian Information Warfare strategies in which the cognitive domain and coercive measures enhance each other.

This is contrasted by the Chinese narrative of benevolent and peaceful “great power” politics in Africa, emphasizing conflict resolution, embedded in multilateral peacebuilding systems. In that sense, China’s self-portrayal is much more reminiscent of Maull’s concept of post-war Germany’s and Japan’s “civilian power”.<sup>383</sup>

The Chinese issue narrative on Africa is dominated by overwhelmingly positive reporting and consists of “feel-good messages” about the future of Sino-African development

---

<sup>383</sup> MAULL, Hanns W. - Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers, p. 104.

cooperation. It is reminiscent of classical Beijing-state propaganda which some analysts such as Huang characterize as “clumsy” or at least easily identifiable as state-driven.<sup>384</sup>

This contrast also stems from the different aims of both actors: China seeks to control the public discourse to maintain a positive image on the international stage, while Russia often camouflages and weaponizes its communication for offensive tactics.<sup>385</sup>

### **Compatibility**

Given that the Russian issue narrative focuses on legitimizing Russia as a security provider and the Chinese narrative primarily positions China as a development agent, the narratives do not necessarily contradict each other initially. They reflect the current division of influence in Africa: Russia is more prominent in the security domain while China plays the dominant role in African development.<sup>386</sup>

However, the conditions for both narratives to sustain themselves in the information space differ fundamentally. Russia’s self-promotion as a security provider relies on fostering local conflicts and cultivating an information environment that sustains fears of human insecurity and foreign interference. As Del Re points out, Russia is generally more interested in prolonging conflicts rather than in resolving them.<sup>387</sup> The Chinese issue narrative in Africa, on the other hand, is rooted in stability and development – essentially deriving from the “Development Peace” concept. It mostly abstains from polarizing content.

Local conflict and instability are framed as issues that can be overcome through peaceful resolutions and by developing African countries through trade, investment and intellectual exchange with the PRC. In the long term, however, this vision for the future cannot coexist in the same information environment as the Russian security provider narrative.

Conflict narratives, disinformation and accusations of foreign involvement thrive in regions of insecurity.<sup>388</sup> They foster societal discontent and undermine stable local governance and development, which are diametrically opposed to the Chinese narrative strategy of positive “feel-good-messages” and its aim of legitimizing long-standing economic entrenchment in Africa. It is also questionable if a constant Russian narrative of polarization is sustainable.

---

<sup>384</sup> HUANG, Echo - Why China isn’t as skillful at disinformation as Russia - Quartz.

<sup>385</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>386</sup> HAMILTON, Robert - The Dragon and the Bear in Africa: Stress-Testing Chinese-Russian Relations - Foreign Policy Research Institute, p. 15.

<sup>387</sup> DEL RE, Emanuela C. - Russian disinformation in Africa and the Sahel in the post-truth era, p. 537.

<sup>388</sup> RALEIGH, Clionadh - As conflict rates soar, misinformation is getting worse - Politico.



Besides the risk of wearing itself out, the issue narrative will inevitably lack substance if the promises of increased human security through Russian military actors are not realized soon.

Moreover, recent Chinese public messaging through security-focused initiatives and public military exercises hint at the possibility that China might try to expand its issue narrative onto the security domain – hinting at a possible direct competition between the two actors in the future. So far, China had been reluctant to deploy substantial security capabilities to African countries, which would risk contradicting its “non-interference” narrative on the continent.<sup>389</sup> Nonetheless, China has discreetly cultivated its securitized influence in Africa through arms exports, law enforcement cooperation and private security contractors in more than a dozen countries.<sup>390</sup>

This includes states with a strong Chinese narrative influence such as Ethiopia, but also countries such as Mali and the CAR – both with extensive Russian influence in their information environment. So far, the regional power dynamics are clear-cut and also mirrored in the way both actors communicate locally. Official Chinese communication on Mali emphasizes largely economic and cultural cooperation, barely mentioning engagement in the security domain.<sup>391</sup>

As Hamilton calls the Chinese-Russian military relations “compartmented” – aware of each other but staying out of the other’s way – this is likewise the case for their regional narrative strategies in the security domain: Russia is steering the security narratives in West Africa, while China generally concentrates on the Eastern part of the continent, such as the Horn of Africa.

As Gogny and Castro argue, China’s gradually heightening narrative focus on peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Africa aims to cultivate an image of actorness across various fields, including regional stability.<sup>392</sup> While this concept initially considers competition with the West, this effect could also sideline Russia one day. If China is perceived as exceptionally capable in every domain, what exactly can the Russian narrative offer audiences that the Chinese one cannot? Sovereignty, non-interference and emancipation are not exclusive to the Russian narrative but are likewise found in China’s public messaging to the African

---

<sup>389</sup> HAMILTON, Robert - The Dragon and the Bear in Africa: Stress-Testing Chinese-Russian Relations - Foreign Policy Research Institute, p. 9.

<sup>390</sup> WEINBAUM, Cortney [et al.] - China's Weapons Exports and Private Security Contractors, p. 2.

<sup>391</sup> CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - Mali.

<sup>392</sup> GOGNY, Laura; DE CASTRO, Andres - Mali as a Theatre of Great Power Competition: A Realist Approach, p. 253.

continent. China, on the other hand, claims dominance in technology, industry, diplomatic power and development governance.

In Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, Russia capitalized on largely Russo-positive information environments to legitimize heavy Russian influence and effectively displace France in its role as a regional player. If Russia were to fail to fulfill its promises and fall out of favor in these countries, China could become the next “more capable” player that, in turn, displaces Russia.

Most notably, in August 2025, the Chinese state-sponsored Global Times echoed a warning by the Chinese embassy in Mali in English, urging all Chinese nationals to increase security measures and cease mining operations due to repeated attacks on Chinese nationals and assets in the country.<sup>393</sup> This is a public acknowledgment of the deteriorating security situation in a country that largely relies on Russia for security assistance. It serves not only as a reminder that China’s economic engagements in Africa are always under threat from local instability, but also marks a shift in the PRC’s usual “feel-good” narrative style. Such reports could later serve to legitimize an increased role in Malian security – either together with Russia or unilaterally.

## **4. Narrative Projection**

### **4.1 Diplomacy**

China and Russia both engage in “Africa+1” summit diplomacy and heightened diplomatic focus on Africa to invoke the picture of engaging African countries at eye level, distancing themselves from alleged Western “paternalism”. While this tactic is a long-standing Chinese projection strategy, there is a notable increase in these efforts in Russian foreign policy since the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as Moscow seeks political and economic alternatives to Western countries.

---

<sup>393</sup> GLOBAL TIMES - Chinese Embassy in Mali urges nationals to strengthen security, suspend gold mining operations.

## 4.2 Media

Both actors use traditional media and social media to project strategic narratives in Africa. There has been a significant expansion of Russian and Chinese media products on the African continent.

Overall, China's traditional media footprint in Africa is larger and more institutionalized. While Russia has substantially expanded its projection capabilities through its state-owned outlets and the *African Initiative*, the Chinese regional footprint is more deeply rooted due to the significance presence of the “Big Four” Chinese media outlets on the African continent. Both China and Russia cultivate a system of African media proxies, maintained through content-sharing agreements. Likewise, both Russia and China train African journalists in education programs. While China is generally considered the more established, pioneering player in the traditional African media landscape, Russia is stepping up its reach and seems to imitate Chinese strategies.<sup>394</sup>

Through its investments in the African information technology sector, China has supplied much of the hard- and software through which its narrative projection operates. This not only gives China critical control over parts of the African information space, but also a competitive advantage over Russia, which partially depends on Chinese satellite TV providers to broadcast its channels - especially to circumvent EU sanctions. Russia lacks the economic and technological resources to replicate this strategy.

China has repeatedly used its media infrastructure in Africa to publish Russian narratives on its invasion of Ukraine.<sup>395</sup> In these instances, Russia's anti-Western narratives align with China's interest in delegitimizing international power hierarchies, resulting in what Matura calls a pragmatic “convergence of strategies”.<sup>396</sup> Nonetheless, such cases appear issue-driven and opportunistic rather than coordinated collaboration.<sup>397</sup> While some Russian disinformation and conspiracy theories on Europe and the U.S. serve China's agenda well, Russian media's polarizing content endangers Chinese interests – possibly explaining the absence of large-scale collaboration.

---

<sup>394</sup> DIGITAL FORENSIC RESEARCH LAB - In Sub-Saharan Africa, China embraces Russian messaging against Ukraine.

<sup>395</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> MATURA, Tamás - Sino-Russian Convergence in Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference: A Global Threat to the US and Its Allies - Center for European Policy Analysis.

<sup>397</sup> AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES - Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa.

Although China is the dominant and more entrenched actor in the African media space overall, Russia is actively expanding its influence. Analysts have correctly pointed out that the Chinese media strategy for projecting narratives in Africa is generally more long-term and institutionalized than the Russian tactic of disseminating disinformation on social media and in local communities.<sup>398</sup> Nevertheless, this situation should not be considered static. This research has shown that Russia has been gradually increasing its long-term-oriented media outreach since 2022, effectively imitating the Chinese entrenchment.

## **Social Media**

On social media, the power dynamics shift the other way around. While China uses coordinated social media networks or local influencers mainly to amplify Chinese governmental sources, Russia's use resembles more a "weaponization". Operating through coordinated local cells, often hired and equipped by Wagner-entities, Russia cultivates polarization methods that cross online and offline discourse. It amounts to being the main sponsor of documented online disinformation campaigns on the African continent.<sup>399</sup>

Drawing on the cases from Mali and Burkina Faso, Pathé Duarte classifies this tactic as an "information disorder campaign", a term which could not be more accurate.<sup>400</sup> Information disorder exploits the inherent mechanisms of social media networks such as rapid information proliferation and "echo chambers", where the public information space is fragmented into smaller, like-minded online communities.<sup>401</sup> The Russian information disorder campaigns are best described through Nimmo's "4-D" framework: They dismiss unfavorable information, distort factual information, distract by accusing others and spread dismay by warning of catastrophic consequences.<sup>402</sup> The end results are societal divide and disruption of decision making processes, creating permissive conditions for Russia to realize its foreign policy goals.<sup>403</sup> Local fragility is both a useful precondition and an end goal of the Russian narrative projection on social media.

---

<sup>398</sup> AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES - Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa.

<sup>399</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> PATHÉ DUARTE, Felipe - Information Disorder and Civil Unrest Russian Weaponization of Social Media Platforms in Mali and Burkina Faso – 2020–2022 – African Security, p. 210.

<sup>401</sup> WARDLE, Claire ; DERAKHSHAN, Hossein - INFORMATION DISORDER: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making – Council of Europe, p. 49.

<sup>402</sup> NIMMO, Ben - Anatomy of an Info-War: How Russia's Propaganda Machine Works, and How to Counter It - Stop Fake.

<sup>403</sup> ROBERTS, Tony ; KAREKWAIVANANE, George Hamandishe, eds. - Digital Disinformation in Africa, p. 48.

Mirroring the underlying conflict in strategic narratives, both actors utilize social media for different purposes. China leverages social media in Africa to shape a positive image, discredit Western ambitions and gain discourse power. Russia primarily subverts the discourse, corrupting it and distorting dynamics of public space. This leads to local instability through mass protests, political violence and the erosion of state institutions – in contrast to China’s economic engagements, which capitalize on stability.

In Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, information disorder campaigns have likely enabled or at least contributed to successful military coups.<sup>404</sup> The continuous decline in local security in the Sahel, coupled with the juntas’ and Russia’s inability to improve it, clearly demonstrates to Beijing that the Russian handbook of online information disorder campaigns offers little prospect of achieving its geo-economic goals on the African continent.

### **4.3 Cultural Diplomacy**

Both China and Russia use academic institutions and exchanges to foster ties with African societies. As Russian resources for scholarships and cultural institutions are limited, China is the more advanced actor in this field. Its network of Confucius Institutes and Classrooms in Africa is widespread and embedded in local education. In countries like Ethiopia, learning the Chinese language is linked to better job opportunities. As the second most popular destination for African students, China exercises substantial soft power, promoting a positive image of Chinese education and welcoming culture.

Although both China and Russia have emphasized reaching the “grassroots” in local African communities, Russia has generally made greater efforts to engage with pan-African local groups and protest movements – especially in countries where it has actively supported social movements for regime change. This highlights a difference in the more institutionalized Chinese approach of leveraging educational facilities or even local infrastructure projects to promote Chinese culture, while Russia uses a nexus of social media and local movements to merge anti-colonialist and pro-Russia sentiments.

Russia likewise maintains local cultural institutions in Africa, which are generally considered not yet competitive with the Chinese ones. In Repnikova’s 2022 study on Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia, the local Russian director admitted that China is far more

---

<sup>404</sup> AHMAD, Aluko - Information Disorder is Fuelling Military Populism in West Africa - Centre for Democracy and Development.

advanced in this strategy.<sup>405</sup> But the recent surge of Russian Houses opening in multiple African countries indicates again that Russia aims to strengthen its long-term entrenchment in Africa, possibly turning away from a more “guerilla” Narrative Warfare approach to a more Chinese-oriented “here to stay” strategy.

## **VII. Conclusion and Outlook**

This analysis demonstrates that both actors deploy strategic narratives that specifically target African audiences and aim to achieve geostrategic goals on the continent. To do that, elements of strategic communications, kinetic and non-kinetic actions and Information Warfare tactics are combined. At the same time, factual information and African agency are being strategically interpreted by both powers to further their respective storytelling. Drawing on Maan, this conflict over the meaning of information is the essence of what makes all these actions part of Narrative Warfare.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis reveals similarities and differences between the Russian and the Chinese strategy.

Both Narrative Warfare strategies emphasize change in the global order and build on criticism of the Western world, offering Africans emancipation from the current international system. While China offers a clear future vision built on national identity and values, Russian messaging is more centered on antagonism and resistance. While Russia promotes economic and technological cooperation, it lacks the resources to compete with the Chinese multi-domain narratives and therefore concentrates on issues of security and sovereignty. This is contrasted by the dominant Chinese narrative concepts of “development peace” and “benevolent pacifism”, which emphasize stabilization.

While China’s Narrative Warfare strategy is largely based on the dissemination of overly positive state propaganda to gain discourse power over Chinese national image and foreign policy, Russia’s aggressive messaging often complements covert Information Warfare strategies such as “information disorder” to polarize and distort public opinion formation processes. While the Chinese narrative strategy aims for stable, positive information spaces, Russia’s narrative depends on unstable, polarized ones. This reflects their central geopolitical resources in Africa, economic investment and security assistance.

---

<sup>405</sup> REPNIKOVA, Maria - Rethinking China's Soft Power: “Pragmatic Enticement” of Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia – *The China Quarterly*, p. 458.

In terms of projection techniques, China has a substantial advantage through its media and information technology infrastructure, which allows it to exercise control over large parts of the African information spaces in which it operates. In countries such as Ethiopia, where local conditions are particularly favorable, Chinese diplomatic, media and economic institutions collaborate to create an information environment that secures Chinese discourse power and economic aims.

While there have been instances of strategic convergences, there is little evidence of cooperation between Russia and China in Narrative Warfare in Africa. Russia uses social media and grassroots diplomacy to leverage local information dynamics, while China engages less with local African issues.

The findings generally support the assessment of some analysts who argue that the Chinese narrative projection strategy builds more on institutionalization – effectively controlling large media or cultural networks.<sup>406</sup> Nonetheless, Russia has emulated this Chinese strategy and therefore seems to strive for a similar, long term entrenchment. This could signal a strategic shift from its previous “short-term”, case-based approach, in which narratives mainly serve the deployment of paramilitary forces.

Despite mainly operating in different domains and geographic areas of main influence, the two current Narrative Warfare strategies are likely incompatible in the long-term. China depends on stable and secure investment environments for its economic and infrastructure investment strategy to thrive. If Russia’s paramilitary deployments in West Africa do not manage to stabilize the local security situation, China as well as African countries may lose patience with Russia’s security provider narrative. Furthermore, some narrative patterns in the recent past indicate that China may be looking to expand its narrative onto the security domain. This could mean not only a narrative conflict but also a geostrategic one.

The Sahel states in which Russia has intervened through Wagner and later the Africa Corps have experienced more deterioration than stabilization of the local security situation: In Mali, Wagner failed to significantly disrupt jihadist forces due to operational failures, instead supposedly inflicting high civilian casualties in the process.<sup>407</sup> In Burkina Faso, death tolls have been rising since the military coup and Moscow’s heightened involvement.<sup>408</sup> This

---

<sup>406</sup> AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES - Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa

<sup>407</sup> KUMAR, Riza - Wagner May be Out, but Russia remains “In” with Mali - Counter Extremism Project.

<sup>408</sup> BROWN, Will - The sweating bear: Why Russia’s influence in Africa is under threat - European Council on Foreign Relations.

could not only mean a loss of appeal for Russia's narrative as a security provider, but could also open a narrative gap that China could capitalize on to legitimize heightening its own involvement.

However, it is unlikely that China will alter its Narrative Warfare strategy in a way that tries to aggressively compete with or delegitimize Russia in the near-term future. Given their strategic convergence on displacing Western influence in the global order, outward competitiveness in the coming years is unlikely to be seen. Like Hamilton argues, both actors have realized each other's importance in eroding Western influence in Africa and this long-term project is not at its end yet.<sup>409</sup> Nonetheless, that does not per se constitute a solid partnership and their divergence on how they use Narrative Warfare in Africa illustrates that.

---

<sup>409</sup> HAMILTON, Robert - The Dragon and the Bear in Africa: Stress-Testing Chinese-Russian Relations - Foreign Policy Research Institute, p. 9.



## Bibliography

AFP NEWS - Last French troops leave Central African Republic amid closer Bangui-Moscow ties - **France24** [Online]. 15 Dec. 2022. [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20221215-last-french-troops-leave-central-african-republic-amid-closer-bangui-moscow-ties>>.

AFRICANEWS - **Africa: the 7 military coups over the last three years** [Online]. 30 Aug. 2023. [Accessed: 12 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.africanews.com/2023/08/30/africa-the-7-military-coups-over-the-last-three-years/>>.

AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES - **Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa** [Online]. 13 Mar. 2024. [Accessed: 14 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mapping-a-surge-of-disinformation-in-africa/>>.

AFRICA DATA AND DEMOCRACY OBSERVATOR - Afrique Média: Putin's voice in Africa's heartland. **Medium** [Online]. 19 Oct. 2023. [Accessed: 13 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://disinfo.africa/afrique-média-putins-voice-in-africa-s-heartland-480da8d90a90>>.

AFRICA DATA AND DEMOCRACY OBSERVATOR - Challenging the West: Russian anti-imperialism narratives in Nigeria. **Medium** [Online]. 24 Jan. 2025. [Accessed: 27 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://disinfo.africa/challenging-the-west-russian-anti-imperialism-narratives-in-nigeria-dc8bfb7cc52d>>.

AFRICA DATA AND DEMOCRACY OBSERVATOR - Grassroot movements entrenching Russia's position in Africa - **Medium** [Online]. 30 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://disinfo.africa/grassroot-movements-entrenching-russias-position-in-africa-73aa9e60a711>>.

AFRICA DEFENSE FORUM - **Russian Path to Mali Paved With Disinformation** [Online]. 15 Dec. 2021. [Accessed: 8 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://adf-magazine.com/2021/12/russian-path-to-mali-paved-with-disinformation/>>.

AHMAD, Aluko - Information Disorder is Fuelling Military Populism in West Africa. **Centre for Democracy and Development** [Online]. 14 May 2025. [Accessed: 13 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.cddwestafrica.org/blog/information-disorder-is-fuelling-military-populism-in-west-africa/>>.

AKUM, Fonteh ; TULL, Dennis - **Strategic Competition and Cooperation in Africa** [Online]. Berlin : Megatrends Afrika, 2023. 7 p. (Policy Brief 13). [Accessed: 21 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.megatrends-afrika.de/publikation/policy-brief-13-strategic-competition-and-cooperation-in-africa>>.

ALLEN, Karen - What's in a game? Video games and Russian influence in Africa. **Institute for Security Studies Africa** [Online]. 18 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/what-s-in-a-game-video-games-and-russian-influence-in-africa>>.

ARAYANKALAM, Jithesh ; KRISHNAN, Satish - Relating foreign disinformation through social media, domestic online media fractionalization, government's control over cyberspace, and social media-induced offline violence: Insights from the agenda-building theoretical perspective. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change** [Online]. ISSN 0040-1625. 166 (May 2021) 14. [Accessed: 5 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.120661>>.

ARCESATI, Rebecca - The Digital Silk Road is a development issue. **Mercator Institute for China Studies** [Online]. 28 Apr. 2020. [Accessed: 22 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://merics.org/de/kommentar/digital-silk-road-development-issue>>.

ATLANTIC COUNCIL - **Narrative Warfare** [Online]. Washington D.C. : Atlantic Council, Digital Forensic Research Lab, 2023. 54 p. (Research Report). [Accessed: 22 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Narrative-Warfare-Final.pdf>>.

BAIJIE, Ann - Xi: Spreading China's story key mission. **China Daily** [Online]. 23 Aug. 2018. [Accessed: 9 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201808/23/WS5b7de976a310add14f387392.html>>.

BAKSHI, Bipin - Information Warfare: Concepts and Components. **International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews**. ISSN 2348 –1269. 5:4 (2018) 178-185.

BANKOV, Borislav - Hybrid Warfare: How to Escape the Conceptual Gray-Zone. **Journal of Strategic Security** [Online]. ISSN 1944-0472. 17:1 (Apr. 2024) 1-23. [Accessed: 19 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.17.1.2118>>.

BAX, Pauline - Russia's Influence in the Central African Republic. **International Crisis Group** [Online]. 3 Dec. 2021. [Accessed: 8 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/russias-influence-central-african-republic>>.

BBC NEWS RUSSIAN - Inside Russia's campaign to turn African journalists into Kremlin mouthpieces. **Meduza** [Online]. 26 Feb. 2025. [Accessed: 13 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://meduza.io/en/feature/2025/02/26/not-so-soft-power>>.

BEIJING DAILY - The Fifth Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation Opens. **Information Center of Foreign Affairs Office of Beijing Municipal Government** [Online]. 29 Aug. 2022. [Accessed: 23 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://wb.beijing.gov.cn/en/center\\_for\\_international\\_exchanges/headlines/202212/t20221214\\_2878891.html](https://wb.beijing.gov.cn/en/center_for_international_exchanges/headlines/202212/t20221214_2878891.html)>.

BELL, Daniel A. ; ZHE, Sun ; XUETONG, Yan - **Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power**. Oxford : Princeton University Press, 2013. 317 p. ISBN 9780691160214.

BICKER, Laura - Xi shows he wants to be close to Putin - but not too close. **BBC** [Online]. 9 May 2025. [Accessed: 17 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c753ng233nvo>>.

BLOOMBERG ECONOMICS - Africa Insight: Minerals in focus as China taps debt diplomacy. **Bloomberg Professional Services** [Online]. 10 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 11 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.bloomberg.com/professional/insights/regional-analysis/africa-insight-minerals-in-focus-as-china-taps-debt-diplomacy/#:~:text=China%20is%20Africa's%20biggest%20bilateral,biggest%20holders%20of%20this%20debt.>>>.

BOGLE, Ariel [et al.] - **Borrowing mouths to speak on Xinjiang** [Online]. Canberra : Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2021. 41 p. (Report No.55/2021). [Accessed: 26 Mar. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.aspi.org.au/report/borrowing-mouths-speak-xinjiang>>.

BROWN, Will - The sweating bear: Why Russia's influence in Africa is under threat. **European Council on Foreign Relations** [Online]. 9 Oct. 2024. [Accessed: 29 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://ecfr.eu/article/the-sweating-bear-why-russias-influence-in-africa-is-under-threat/>>.

BYERS, Patrick ; JEREZ, Melanie - Narrative Form and Forms of Truth. **International Review of Theoretical Psychologies** [Online]. ISSN 2597-3479. 2:1 (Dec. 2023) 57-71. [Accessed: 3 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.7146/irtp.v2i1.142791>>.

CAIYU, Liu - BRI deeply integrated into African development; more pragmatic cooperation expected in FOCAC. **Global Times** [Online]. 27 Aug. 2024. [Accessed: 11 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202408/1318702.shtml>>.

CALABRESE, Linda - Why China is seeking greater presence in Africa – the strategy behind its financial deals. **ODI Global** [Online]. 30 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://odi.org/en/insights/why-china-is-seeking-greater-presence-in-africa-the-strategy-behind-its-financial-deals/>>.

CASTELLS, Manuel ; CARDOSO, Gustavo, eds. - **The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy**. Washington D.C. : Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2006. 434 p. ISBN 9780976643456.

CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES - **How will the Belt and Road Initiative advance China's interests?** [Online]. 2025. [Accessed: 13 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://chinapower.csis.org/china-belt-and-road-initiative/>>.

CHABAN, Natalia ; ZHABOTYNSKA, Svitlana ; KNODT, Michèle - What makes strategic narrative efficient: Ukraine on Russian e-news platforms. **Cooperation and Conflict** [Online]. ISSN 1460-3691. (Mar. 2023) 001083672311612. [Accessed: 22 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1177/00108367231161272>>.

CHINA MILITARY ONLINE - Chinese military dispatches peacekeeping troops to Mali for 10 consecutive years. **Chinese Ministry of National Defense** [Online]. 4 Jan. 2024. [Accessed: 7 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News\\_213114/Features/16278161.html](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/Features/16278161.html)>.

CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES - **Full text: The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper** [Online]. 21 Feb. 2025. [Accessed: 25 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://mv.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgyw/202302/t20230221\\_11028774.htm](http://mv.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgyw/202302/t20230221_11028774.htm)>.

CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA - **Taiwan Is Part of China - an Indisputable Fact Supported by History and the Law** [Online]. 25 Apr. 2025. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://za.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/xwfb/202504/t20250425\\_11604294.htm](http://za.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/xwfb/202504/t20250425_11604294.htm)>.

CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - **A policy of "one country, two systems" on Taiwan** [Online]. [Accessed: 7 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/wjls/3604\\_665547/202405/t20240531\\_11367561.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/wjls/3604_665547/202405/t20240531_11367561.html)>.

CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - **China-Africa Relations** [Online]. [Accessed: 7 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/wjls/3604\\_665547/202405/t20240531\\_11367591.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/wjls/3604_665547/202405/t20240531_11367591.html)>.

CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - **Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on September 4, 2024** [Online]. 4 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 8 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/202409/t20240904\\_11485051.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/202409/t20240904_11485051.html)>.

CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027)** [Online]. 5 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 24 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyxw/202409/t20240905\\_11485719.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyxw/202409/t20240905_11485719.html)>.

CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - **Joining Hands to Implement the Global Security Initiative to Safeguard World Peace and Security** [Online]. 26 Mar. 2025. [Accessed: 25 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xw/wjbxw/202503/t20250326\\_11582622.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xw/wjbxw/202503/t20250326_11582622.html)>.

CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - **List of Chinese Embassies in Africa** [Online]. [Accessed: 7 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zwjg/zgdsg/2491\\_665346/](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zwjg/zgdsg/2491_665346/)>.

CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - **Wang Yi Puts Forward China's Five-Point Proposal to Promote High-Quality Development of China-Africa Cooperation** [Online]. 11 June 2025. [Accessed: 20 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjzbzd/202506/t20250612\\_11646484.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjzbzd/202506/t20250612_11646484.html)>.

CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - **Writing a New Chapter of All-Weather China-Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era** [Online]. 16 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 8 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/zwbd/202408/t20240815\\_11474115.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/zwbd/202408/t20240815_11474115.html)>.

CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - **Xi Jinping Meets with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali** [Online]. 4 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 13 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq\\_665435/2913\\_665441/2984\\_663984/2986\\_663988/202409/t20240906\\_11486307.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/2913_665441/2984_663984/2986_663988/202409/t20240906_11486307.html)>.

CILLIERS, Jakkie - **Africa in the World. Institute for Security Studies** [Online]. 28 June 2025. [Accessed: 12 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://futures.issafrica.org/thematic/18-africa-in-the-world/>>.

CLIFFORD, Cayley ; GRUZD, Steven - **Russian and African Media: Exercising Soft Power** [Online]. Johannesburg : The South African Institute of International Affairs, 2022. 18 p. (Policy Insights 125). [Accessed: 29 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://saiia.org.za/research/russian-and-african-media-exercising-soft-power/>>.

COBAUGH, Paul - **Narrative Warfare**. Medium [Online]. 21 Jan. 2019. [Accessed: 19 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://medium.com/@paulcobaugh/narrative-warfare-14ab7fa7ef89>>.

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS - **African Union Bugged by China: Cyber Espionage as Evidence of Strategic Shifts** [Online]. 7 Mar. 2018. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.cfr.org/blog/african-union-bugged-china-cyber-espionage-evidence-strategic-shifts>>.

DEL RE, Emanuela C. - Russian disinformation in Africa and the Sahel in the post-truth era. **Rivista Di Studi Politici Internazionali** [Online]. 89:3/4 (2022) 535-550. [Accessed: 3 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27273639>>.

DENG FENG, Cheng ; BOYLE, Tim - Exposing China's Legal Preparations for a Taiwan Invasion. **War on the Rocks** [Online]. 11 Mar. 2025. [Accessed: 12 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://warontherocks.com/2025/03/exposing-chinas-legal-preparations-for-a-taiwan-invasion/>>.

DANMARKS STATISTIK - **Definition of western countries and non-western countries** [Online]. 2025. [Accessed: 9 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/SingleFiles/GetArchiveFile.aspx?fi=383815563763&amp;fo=0&amp;ext=befolkning>>.

DIGITAL FORENSIC RESEARCH LAB - **In Sub-Saharan Africa, China embraces Russian messaging against Ukraine** [Online]. 12 June 2024. [Accessed: 12 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://dfrlab.org/2024/06/12/china-russia-sub-saharan-africa/>>.

DIPLOBRIEF - **China, Kenya denounce US interference in internal affairs** [Online]. 28 Jan. 2024. [Accessed: 13 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://thebrief.co.ke/foreign/china-kenya-denounce-us-interference-in-internal-affairs/>>.

DRINHAUSEN, Katja ; OUD, Malin - **Decoding China** [Online]. 2023. [Accessed: 21 Mar. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://decodingchina.eu/good-governance/>>.

DRINHAUSEN, Katja [et al.] - **Image Control: How China Struggles For Discourse Power** [Online]. Berlin : Mercator Institute for China Studies, 2023. 26 p. [Accessed: 26 Mar. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://merics.org/de/report/image-control-how-china-struggles-discourse-power>>.



DROIN, Mathieu ; DOLBAIA, Tina - **Russia Is Still Progressing in Africa. What's the Limit?** [Online]. Washington D.C. : Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023. 13 p. (Report). [Accessed: 2 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-08/230815\\_Droin\\_RussiaInAfrica.pdf?VersionId=MG4MmQLckwRh.JrAWq3QKtMbgD TDgO35](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-08/230815_Droin_RussiaInAfrica.pdf?VersionId=MG4MmQLckwRh.JrAWq3QKtMbgD TDgO35)>.

EDITORIAL - 'China decline' narrative is the West's futile attempt of self-rescue. **Global Times** [Online]. (24 Jan. 2025). [Accessed: 4 Mar. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202401/1306007.shtml>>.

EHL, David ; GHAEDI, Monir - Russian propaganda: How Moscow uses disinformation in Africa. **DW** [Online]. 3 Feb. 2025. [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.dw.com/en/how-russias-propaganda-machine-sows-disinformation-in-africa/a-71453082>>.

EISENMAN, Joshua - China Is Tweaking Its Propaganda for African Audiences. **Foreign Policy** [Online]. 16 Mar. 2023. [Accessed: 23 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/16/china-propaganda-africa-soft-power/?utm\\_source=foreignpolicy&utm\\_medium=pdf&utm\\_campaign=fp\\_pdf](https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/16/china-propaganda-africa-soft-power/?utm_source=foreignpolicy&utm_medium=pdf&utm_campaign=fp_pdf)>.

ELKJER NISSEN, Thomas - Narrative Led Operations. **Militært Tidsskrift** [Online]. 141:4 (Jan. 2013) 67-77. [Accessed: 18 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://research.fak.dk/view/pdfCoverPage?instCode=45FBI\\_INST&filePid=1334201420003741&download=true](https://research.fak.dk/view/pdfCoverPage?instCode=45FBI_INST&filePid=1334201420003741&download=true)>.

ENDESHAW, Dawit - **Ethiopians queue up to volunteer for Russia's fight in Ukraine** [Online]. 21 Feb. 2022. [Accessed: 2 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.reuters.com/world/ethiopians-queue-up-volunteer-russias-fight-ukraine-2022-04-21/>>.

EU COMMISSION - **Commission announces next steps on cybersecurity of 5G networks in complement to latest progress report by Member States** [Online]. 15 June 2023. [Accessed: 22 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_3309](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3309)>.



**EXTENSIA - DRC: Two Chinese companies to build the national fiber optic network** [Online]. 8 Apr. 2025. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://extensia.tech/drc-two-chinese-companies-to-build-the-national-fiber-optic-network/>>.

**FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE OF UKRAINE - Russian Media Expansion in Africa and Latin America: Tools of Influence and Threats to Ukraine and the Region** [Online]. 18 May 2025. [Accessed: 13 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://szru.gov.ua/en/news-media/exposure/russian-media-expansion-in-africa-and-latin-america-tools-of-influence-and-threats-to-ukraine-and-the-region>>.

FOX, Benjamin - EU must win 'battle of narratives' with Russia to retain African influence. **Euractiv** [Online]. 12 July 2023. [Accessed: 17 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-must-win-battle-of-narratives-with-russia-to-retain-african-influence/>>.

**FRENCH MINISTRY OF THE ARMED FORCES - Opération BARKHANE** [Online]. 2025. [Accessed: 8 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/bande-sahelo-saharienne/operation-barkhane>>.

**FREEDOM HOUSE - China: Country Profile** [Online]. 2025. [Accessed: 12 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://freedomhouse.org/country/china>>.

**FREEDOM HOUSE - Russia: Country Profile** [Online]. 2025. [Accessed: 12 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://freedomhouse.org/country/russia>>.

FRIEDMAN, Toni - Lexicon: 'Discourse Power' or the 'Right to Speak' (Huà yǔ Quán) – **DigiChina by Stanford University** [Online]. 17 Mar. 2022. [Accessed: 4 Mar. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://digichina.stanford.edu/work/lexicon-discourse-power-or-the-right-to-speak-huayu-quan/>>.

FUENTE COBO, Ignacio - **The new "Russianism". How Russia is colonising Africa** [Online]. Madrid : Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 2024. 19 p. (IEEE Analysis Document 43/2024). [Accessed: 26 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2024/DIEEEA43\\_2024\\_IGNFUE\\_Rusianism](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2024/DIEEEA43_2024_IGNFUE_Rusianism)>.

GALEOTTI, Mark - The mythical 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and the language of threat. **Critical Studies on Security** [Online]. ISSN 2162-4909. 7:2 (Feb. 2018) 157-161. [Accessed: 19 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2018.1441623>>.

GARRIC, Audrey - Peter H. Kahn: 'As human beings we destroy nature, but we never fully realize the extent of the damage and loss'. **Le Monde** [Online]. 14 Apr. 2022. [Accessed: 5 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/environment/article/2022/04/14/peter-h-kahn-as-human-beings-we-destroy-nature-but-we-never-fully-realize-the-extent-of-the-damage-and-loss\\_5980499\\_114.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/environment/article/2022/04/14/peter-h-kahn-as-human-beings-we-destroy-nature-but-we-never-fully-realize-the-extent-of-the-damage-and-loss_5980499_114.html)>.

GERMAN MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT - **Shaping the future with Africa** [Online]. Berlin : BMZ, 2023. (The Africa Strategy of the BMZ). [Accessed: 21 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/137602/bmz-afrika-strategie-en.pdf>>.

GERSCHEWSKI, Johannes - Legitimacy in Autocracies: Oxymoron or Essential Feature? **Perspectives on Politics** [Online]. ISSN 1541-0986. 16:3 (Aug. 2018) 652-665. [Accessed: 6 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592717002183>>.

GILAS, Keir - **Handbook of Russian Information Warfare** [Online]. Rome : NATO Defense College, 2016. 77 p. [Accessed: 19 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/NDC%20fm\\_9.pdf](https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/NDC%20fm_9.pdf)>. ISBN 978-88-96898-16-1.

GLOBAL TIMES - **Chinese Embassy in Mali urges nationals to strengthen security, suspend gold mining operations** [Online]. 3 Aug. 2025. [Accessed: 12 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202508/1339956.shtml>>.

GOGNY, Laura ; DE CASTRO, Andres - Mali as a Theatre of Great Power Competition: A Realist Approach. **International Critical Thought** [Online]. 15:2 (2025) 241-267. [Accessed: 7 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1080/21598282.2025.2520479>>.

GORDON, Jason - Net Favorability of the UN Remains Positive Overall. **The Chicago Council on Global Affairs** [Online]. 17 Dec. 2024. [Accessed: 26 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://globalaffairs.org/commentary-and-analysis/blogs/net-favorability-un-remains-positive-overall>>.

GÖTZ, Elias ; GEJL KAAS, Jonas - **Russia's quest for influence in Africa after the 2022 Ukraine invasion: Instruments, causes and consequences** [Online]. Copenhagen : Danish Institute for

THE GROUP OF 77 - **About the Group of 77** [Online]. [Accessed: 8 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.g77.org/doc/>>.

International Studies, 2024. 50 p. [Accessed: 21 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/23606439/Russia\\_s\\_quest\\_for\\_influence\\_in\\_Africa\\_DII\\_S\\_Report\\_2024\\_02.pdf](https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/23606439/Russia_s_quest_for_influence_in_Africa_DII_S_Report_2024_02.pdf)>. ISBN 978-87-7236-130-7.

GREEN, Mark - For 30 Years Every Chinese Foreign Minister Visits Africa First. **Wilson Center** [Online]. 28 Mar. 2023. [Accessed: 8 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/30-years-every-chinese-foreign-minister-visits-africa-first>>.

GRIFFITHS, James - Congo net shutdown shows how Chinese tactics are spreading. **CNN** [Online]. 2 Jan. 2019. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/01/02/africa/congo-internet-shutdown-china-intl>>.

GUO, Xuezhi - Dimensions of Guanxi in Chinese Elite Politics. **The China Journal** [Online]. ISSN 1835-8535. 46 (July 2001) 69-90. [Accessed: 27 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.2307/3182308>>.

HALPER, Stefan - **China: The Three Warfares** [Online]. Washington, D.C. : Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2013. 556 p. (Report for the Office of the Secretary of Defense). [Accessed: 4 Mar. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/FOID/Reading%20Room/Litigation\\_Release/Litigation%20Release%20-%20China-%20The%20Three%20Warfares%20%20201305.pdf](https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/FOID/Reading%20Room/Litigation_Release/Litigation%20Release%20-%20China-%20The%20Three%20Warfares%20%20201305.pdf)>.

HAMILTON, Robert - The Dragon and the Bear in Africa: Stress-Testing Chinese-Russian Relations. **Foreign Policy Research Institute** [Online]. 9 Nov. 2023. 20 p. [Accessed: 10 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/11/the-dragon-and-the-bear-in-africa-stress-testing-chinese-russian-relations/>>.

HE, Yin - To provide richer cultural nourishment for China-Africa cooperation. **CPC Central Committee Bimonthly** [Online]. 3 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 16 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://regional.chinadaily.com.cn/Qiushi/2024-09/03/c\\_1017999.htm](https://regional.chinadaily.com.cn/Qiushi/2024-09/03/c_1017999.htm)>.

HO, Benjamin Tze Ern - **China's Political Worldview and Chinese Exceptionalism: International Order and Global Leadership**. Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2021. 264 p. ISBN 978946372 5149.

HOGAN, Erica ; PATRICK, Stewart - A Closer Look at the Global South. **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** [Online]. 20 May 2024. [Accessed: 26 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/05/global-south-colonialism-imperialism?lang=en>>.

HU, Changchun - A Better World for All. **ChinAfrica** [Online]. 16 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 13 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://www.chinafrica.cn/Homepage/202408/t20240830\\_800376047.html](http://www.chinafrica.cn/Homepage/202408/t20240830_800376047.html)>.

HUANG, Echo - Why China isn't as skillful at disinformation as Russia. **Quartz** [Online]. 21 June 2022. [Accessed: 8 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://qz.com/1699144/why-chinas-social-media-propaganda-isnt-as-good-as-russias>>.

HUDSON, Cameron - As America silences its voice in Africa, China and Russia amplify theirs. **The Hill** [Online]. 15 Aug. 2025. [Accessed: 16 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/5452490-russia-china-africa-disinformation-surge/>>.

HOUSE OF COMMONS - FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE - **Guns for gold: the Wagner Network exposed** [Online]. London : House of Commons, 2023. 80 p. (Seventh Report of Session 2022–23). [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmfaff/167/report.html>>.

INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - **Full Text: Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue** [Online]. 25 Aug. 2023. [Accessed: 10 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.idcpc.org.cn/english2023/ttxw\\_5749/202308/t20230825\\_162001.html](https://www.idcpc.org.cn/english2023/ttxw_5749/202308/t20230825_162001.html)>.

INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF CPC - **Why is Africa so close to China?** [Online]. [Accessed: 7 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.idcpc.gov.cn/english2023/opinion/202409/t20240902\\_165116.html](https://www.idcpc.gov.cn/english2023/opinion/202409/t20240902_165116.html)>.

JIA, Zhao - Xi: China, Russia to promote just, equitable international order. **China Daily** [Online]. 16 June 2025. [Accessed: 17 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.chinadailyhk.com/hk/article/616002>>.

JIN, Xiankun [et al.] - Political governance in China's state-owned enterprises. **China Journal of Accounting Research** [Online]. ISSN 1755-3091. (May 2022) 100236. [Accessed: 10 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cjar.2022.100236>>.

JOFFE, Avril - **China's Institutionalised Cultural Presence in Africa** [Online]. Stuttgart : Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 2023. 120 p. [Accessed: 13 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://opus.bsz-bw.de/ifa/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/960/file/ifa-2023\\_joffe\\_china-africa-cultural-invst\\_EN.pdf](https://opus.bsz-bw.de/ifa/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/960/file/ifa-2023_joffe_china-africa-cultural-invst_EN.pdf)>.

KAS MEDIA AFRICA - **It is about their story: How China, Turkey and Russia influence the media in Africa** [Online]. Johannesburg : Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Regional Media Programme Sub-Sahara Africa, 2021. 132 p. [Accessed: 25 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.kas.de/documents/285576/0/How+China,+Turkey+and+Russia+influence+media+in+Africa.pdf/6594fc3e-f240-6aea-342d-92c8f90dbf43>>. ISBN 978-0-620-91386-7.

KINETZ, Erika - Army of fake fans boosts China's messaging on Twitter. **Associated Press News** [Online]. 28 May 2021. [Accessed: 16 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://apnews.com/article/asia-pacific-china-europe-middle-east-government-and-politics-62b13895aa6665ae4d887dcc8d196dfc>>.

KIRONSKA, Kristina - How Taiwan lost Africa. **Central European Institute of Asian Studies** [Online]. 21 Dec. 2022. [Accessed: 24 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://ceias.eu/how-taiwan-lost-africa/>>.

KISSINGER, Henry - **On China**. New York : Penguin Press, 2011. 586 p. ISBN 9781594202711.

KLOMEGAH, Kestern Kenn - Russia Enhancing its Economic and Investment ties in Africa. **Modern Diplomacy** [Online]. 14 June 2025. [Accessed: 3 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2025/06/14/russia-enhancing-its-economic-and-investment-ties-in-africa/>>.

KUMAR, Riza - **Wagner May be Out, but Russia remains “In” with Mali. Counter Extremism Project** [Online]. 28 Aug. 2025. [Accessed: 29 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.counterextremism.com/blog/wagner-may-be-out-russia-remains-mali>>.

LARKIN, Tanner - How China Is Rewriting the Norms of Human Rights. **Lawfare**. [Online]. 22 Sep. 2022. [Accessed: 24 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/how-china-rewriting-norms-human-rights>>.

LI, Hangwei ; WANG, Yuan - African Media Cultures and Chinese Public Relations Strategies in Kenya and Ethiopia. **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** [Online]. 27 Feb. 2023. [Accessed: 15 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/02/african-media-cultures-and-chinese-public-relations-strategies-in-kenya-and-ethiopia?lang=en>>.

LI, Hangwei - Chinese Media Engagement with Africa and the Role of African Agency. **Megatrends Afrika** [Online]. 8 July 2024. [Accessed: 15 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.megatrends-afrika.de/publikation/policy-brief-26-chinese-media-engagement-with-africa-and-the-role-of-african-agency>>.

LI, Siyuan - A Foucauldian Power Analysis of China’s Confucius Institute in Africa: Power, Knowledge and the Institutionalisation of China’s Foreign Policy. **Journal of Asian and African Studies** [Online]. ISSN 1745-2538. 58:8 (Dec. 2023) 1465-1481. [Accessed: 16 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi-10.1177/00219096221086546>>.

LIBISELLER, Chiara - 'Hybrid warfare' as an academic fashion. **Journal of Strategic Studies** [Online]. ISSN 1743-937X. (Feb. 2023) 1-23. [Accessed: 22 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2023.2177987>>.

MAAN, Ajit - **Narrative Warfare**. Scotts Valley : CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018. 98 p. ISBN 9781986694957.

MAAN, Ajit - Stories vs Facts: The Real Battleground in Narrative Warfare. **Homeland Security Today** [Online]. 11 Apr. 2025. [Accessed: 19 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/stories-vs-facts-the-real-battleground-in-narrative-warfare/>>.

MANUS, George - **How is China's economy faring? Economics Observatory** [Online]. 22 May 2025. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.economicsobservatory.com/how-is-chinas-economy-faring>>.

MARISTANY DE LAS CASAS, Pablo - Holding the line: Auditing the EU's ban of Russian state media 3 years on. **Institute for Strategic Dialogue** [Online]. 5 Aug. 2025. [Accessed: 12 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[MARTIN, Morganne ; ACHMIROWICZ, Julie - \*\*The Changing Information Space in Sub-Saharan Africa\*\* \[Online\]. Paris : Ecole de Guerre \(French Ministry of Armed Forces\), 2023. \(Cognitive Warfare Report\). \[Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025\]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://hal.science/hal-04224034v1/file/finale%20achmi%20version%20hal,%20à%20jour.pdf>>.](https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/investigation-holding-the-line-auditing-the-eus-ban-of-russian-state-media-3-years-on/#:~:text=Dissemination%20of%20Russian%20state%20media%20on%20X&text=VLOPs%20including%20platforms%20like%20X,have%20not%20been%20completely%20removed.>.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

MATURA, Tamás - Sino-Russian Convergence in Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference: A Global Threat to the US and Its Allies - **Center for European Policy Analysis** [Online]. 30 June 2025. [Accessed: 13 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/sino-russian-convergence-in-foreign-information-manipulation-and-interference/>>.



MAULL, Hanns W. - Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers. **Foreign Affairs** [Online]. ISSN 0015-7120. 69:5 (1990) 91. [Accessed: 6 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.2307/20044603>>.

MELDRUM, Andrew - Mugabe turns back on west and looks east. **The Guardian** [Online]. 19 Apr. 2005. [Accessed: 26 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/apr/19/zimbabwe.andrewmeldrum>>.

MOODY, Jessica - Are China and Russia on a Collision Course in Africa? **Foreign Policy** [Online]. 31 Mar. 2025. [Accessed: 25 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/03/31/china-russia-wagner-security-stability-africa/>>.

MORGENTHAU, Hans Joachim - **Truth and power: Essays of a decade, 1960-70**. London : Pall Mall, 1970. 449 p.

MUGABI, Isaac - African nations want a seat at the UN Security Council. **DW** [Online]. 29 Aug. 2024. [Accessed: 26 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.dw.com/en/africa-pushes-for-permanent-un-security-council-seat/a-70071815>>.

MURONZI, Chris - Is Africa still ‘neutral’ a year into the Ukraine war? **Al Jazeera** [Online]. 26 Feb. 2023. [Accessed: 2 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/2/26/is-africa-still-neutral-a-year-into-the-ukraine-war>>.

MUVUNYI, Fred - Was Russia behind the coup in Mali? **DW**. [Online]. 26 Aug. 2020. [Accessed: 1 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.dw.com/en/was-russia-behind-the-coup-in-mali/a-54705282>>.

NANTULYA, Paul - Africa as a Testing Ground for China’s Global Security Initiative. **Africa Center for Strategic Studies** [Online]. 4 Aug. 2025. [Accessed: 6 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-china-global-security-initiative/>>.

NANTULYA, Paul - Africa’s Role in China’s Multilateralism Strategy. **Africa Center for Strategic Studies** [Online]. 24 Jan. 2023. [Accessed: 8 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-china-multilateralism/>>.



NANTULYA, Paul - China's Strategy to Shape Africa's Media Space. **Africa Center for Strategic Studies**. [Online]. 16 Apr. 2024. [Accessed: 23 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/china-strategy-africa-media-space/>>.

NANTULYA, Paul - Guānxì: Power, Networking, and Influence in China-Africa Relations. **Africa Center for Strategic Studies**. [Online]. 7 Dec. 2021. [Accessed: 27 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/guanxi-power-networking-and-influence-in-china-africa-relations/>>.

NANTULYA, Paul - The Growing Militarization of China's Africa Policy. **Africa Center for Strategic Studies** [Online]. 2 Dec. 2024. [Accessed: 12 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/militarization-china-africa-policy/>>.

NANTULYA, Paul - The Limits to China's Transactional Diplomacy in Africa. **Africa Center for Strategic Studies** [Online]. 30 June 2025. [Accessed: 26 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/china-transactional-diplomacy-africa-niger/>>.

NEEMA, Christian-Géraud - What FOCAC 2024 Reveals About the Future of China-Africa Relations. **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** [Online]. 21 Nov. 2024. [Accessed: 8 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/11/what-focac-2024-reveals-about-the-future-of-china-africa-relations?lang=en>>.

NEYAZI, Taberez Ahmed - Digital propaganda, political bots and polarized politics in India. **Asian Journal of Communication** [Online]. ISSN 1742-0911. 30:1 (Dec. 2019) 39-57. [Accessed: 5 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2019.1699938>>.

NILSSON-JULIEN, Estelle - African Initiative: Russian-backed outlet peddles influence in Africa - **Euronews** [Online]. 18 June 2025. [Accessed: 13 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/06/18/the-african-initiative-russian-backed-outlet-peddles-propaganda-to-buy-influence-in-africa>>.

NIMMO, Ben - Anatomy of an Info-War: How Russia's Propaganda Machine Works, and How to Counter It. **Stop Fake** [Online]. 19 May 2015. [Accessed: 13 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.stopfake.org/en/anatomy-of-an-info-war-how-russia-s-propaganda-machine-works-and-how-to-counter-it/>>.

NYE, Joseph S. - The Changing Nature of World Power. **Political Science Quarterly** [Online]. ISSN 0032-3195. 105:2 (1990) 177. [Accessed: 3 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.2307/2151022>>.

OLANDER, Eric - China Tops Favorability Rankings in Africa, Outpacing U.S. and EU, New Survey Shows. **China Global South Project** [Online]. 5 June 2025. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://chinaglobalsouth.com/2025/06/05/china-most-favored-global-power-in-africa/>>.

OLANDER, Eric - Ethiopia: Chinese foreign minister's visit shows Beijing's support for Abiy. **The Africa Report** [Online]. 13 Dec. 2021. [Accessed: 19 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.theafricareport.com/155619/ethiopia-chinese-foreign-ministers-visit-shows-beijings-support-for-abiy/>>.

OMORUYI, Ehizuelen Michael Mitchell - How China's tech cooperation with Africa makes a difference. **China Daily** [Online]. 22 July 2024. [Accessed: 17 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW:

<URL:<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202407/22/WS669db30da31095c51c50f2f3.html>>  
.

OPALI, Otiato - Kenyan influencer showcases China - **China Daily** [Online]. 20 Dec. 2024. [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202412/20/WS6764c857a310f1265a1d3fa5.html>>  
.

PARADIGM INITIATIVE - **Press Release: Net Rights Coalition Condemns Internet Shutdown in Goma, DRC** [Online]. 31 Jan. 2025. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://paradigmhq.org/press-release-net-rights-coalition-condemns-internet-shutdown-in-goma-drc/>>.

PARENS, Raphael - The Wagner Group's Playbook in Africa: Mali. **Foreign Policy Research Institute** [Online]. 18 Mar. 2022. [Accessed: 10 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/03/the-wagner-groups-playbook-in-africa-mali/>>.

PATHE DUARTE, Felipe - Information Disorder and Civil Unrest Russian Weaponization of Social Media Platforms in Mali and Burkina Faso – 2020–2022. **African Security** [Online]. ISSN 1939-2214. (Nov. 2024) 205-219. [Accessed: 1 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2024.2423139>>.

PETERS, Michael A. - The emerging multipolar world order: A preliminary analysis. **Educational Philosophy and Theory** [Online]. ISSN 1469-5812. (Dec. 2022) 1-11. [Accessed: 21 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2022.2151896>>.

PETROVIC, Petar - **Disinformation and EU: The Role of Narrative in Hybrid Warfare within the European Union** [Online]. [S. l.] : The European Land Force Commanders Organisation, 2024. 8 p. (Info Flash). [Accessed: 20 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://finabel.org/https-finabel-org-wp-content-uploads-2024-09-if-pdfs-3-pdf/>>.

PING, Jonathan ; ODOTA, Joel - Will China Intervene Directly to Protect its Investments in Africa? **War on the Rocks** [Online]. 25 Oct. 2024. [Accessed: 26 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://warontherocks.com/2024/10/will-china-intervene-directly-to-protect-its-investments-in-africa/>>.

PUTIN, Vladimir - **Russia and Africa: Joining Efforts for Peace, Progress and a Successful Future** [Online]. 24 July 2023. [Accessed: 2 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/zv5JSBtjX9EsGqehQEBPksj2wJy1LQk.pdf>>.

RALEIGH, Clionadh - As conflict rates soar, misinformation is getting worse. **Politico** [Online]. 27 Jan. 2025. [Accessed: 5 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.politico.eu/article/as-conflict-rates-soar-misinformation-is-getting-worse-gaza-ukraine-war/>>.

RAMANI, Samuel - **Russia and China in Africa: Prospective Partners or Asymmetric Rivals?** [Online]. Johannesburg : South African Institute of International Affairs, 2021. 16 p. [Accessed: 25 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Policy-Insights-120-ramani.pdf>>.

RASKA, Michael - China and the ‘Three Warfares’. **The Diplomat** [Online]. 18 Dec. 2015. [Accessed: 3 Mar. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://thediplomat.com/2015/12/hybrid-warfare-with-chinese-characteristics-2/>>.

REJICHI, Driss - “Russian Houses,” Putin’s Soft Power Arm in Africa - Investigation - **Afrique XXI** [Online]. 14 Jan. 2025. [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://afriquexxi.info/Russian-Houses-Putin-s-Soft-Power-Arm-in-Africa>>.

REPNIKOVA, Maria - Rethinking China's Soft Power: “Pragmatic Enticement” of Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia. **The China Quarterly** [Online]. ISSN 1468-2648. (Apr. 2022) 440–463. [Accessed: 19 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305741022000340>>.

REPORTERS SANS FRONTIERS - **China** [Online]. 2025. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://rsf.org/en/country/china>>.

REPORTERS SANS FRONTIERS - **Ethiopia** [Online]. 2025. [Accessed: 30 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://rsf.org/en/country/ethiopia>>.

REPORTERS SANS FRONTIERS - **Russia** [Online]. 2025. [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://rsf.org/en/country/russia>>.

REUTERS - **Mali accuses France of arming Islamist fighters in letter to U.N.** [Online]. 18 Aug. 2022. [Accessed: 8 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/mali-accuses-france-arming-islamist-fighters-letter-un-2022-08-17/>>.

REUTERS - **Russia vows military backing for Sahel juntas' joint force** [Online]. 4 Apr. 2025. [Accessed: 2 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/russia-vows-military-backing-sahel-juntas-joint-force-2025-04-04/>>.

RITZEN, Yarno - The ‘ghost reporters’ writing pro-Russian propaganda in West Africa. **Al Jazeera** [Online]. 20 Mar. 2025. [Accessed: 15 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/3/20/the-ghost-reporters-writing-pro-russian-propaganda-in-west-africa>>.

ROACH, Stephen - History is Littered with False Narratives. **Yale University Press** [Online]. 9 June 2023. [Accessed: 17 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/2023/06/09/accidental-conflict-america-china-and-the-clash-of-false-narratives/>>.

ROBERTS, Tony ; KAREKWAIVANANE, George Hamandishe, eds. - **Digital Disinformation in Africa** [Online]. [S. l.] : Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2024. [Accessed: 13 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350319240>>. ISBN 9781350319240.

ROSELLE, Laura ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben ; MISKIMMON, Alister - **Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order**. New York : Taylor & Francis Group, 2014. 240 p. ISBN 9780415721882.

ROSELLE, Laura ; MISKIMMON, Alister ; O'LOUGHLIN, Ben - Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power. **Media, War & Conflict** [Online]. ISSN 1750-6360. 7:1 (Mar. 2014) 70-84. [Accessed: 2 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635213516696>>.

ROST, Dietmar - **Shifting baselines: interdisciplinary perspectives on long-term change perception and memory** [Online]. 2018. [Accessed: 5 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssolar-56971-0>>.

RUSSIAN MILITARY AND SECURITY RESEARCH GROUP - **Strategy of the National Security of the Russian Federation (Translation)** [Online]. 2 July 2021. [Accessed: 18 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://rusmilsec.blog/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/nss\\_rf\\_2021\\_eng\\_.pdf](https://rusmilsec.blog/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/nss_rf_2021_eng_.pdf)>.

RUSSELL, Martin ; PICHON, Eric - Russia in Africa: A new arena for geopolitical competition [Online]. Brussels : **European Parliamentary Research Service**, 2019. 11 p. (Briefing PE 642.283). [Accessed: 12 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS\\_BRI\(2019\)642283](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2019)642283)>.

SALIU, Hasan - Narratives of Public Diplomacy in the post-Truth Era: The decline of Soft Power. **Communication & Society** [Online]. ISSN 2386-7876. (Apr. 2023) 209-224. [Accessed: 17 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.15581/003.36.2.209-224>>.

SAUER, Pjotr - Putin ally Yevgeny Prigozhin admits interfering in US elections. **The Guardian** [Online]. 7 Nov. 2022. [Accessed: 15 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/07/putin-ally-yevgeny-prigozhin-admits-interfering-in-us-elections>>.

SHEN, Wenke ; XUE, Yanxing - Xushi zhan: Junshi jingzheng de huayu wuqi (“Narrative War”: A discourse weapon in military competition). **China Military Network** [Online]: 7 Dec. 2021. [Accessed: 26 Feb. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2021-12/07/content\\_304715.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2021-12/07/content_304715.htm)>.

SIEGLE, Joseph - Decoding Russia’s Economic Engagements in Africa. **African Center for Strategic Studies**. [Online]. 6 Jan. 2023. [Accessed: 3 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/decoding-russia-economic-engagements-africa/>>.

SIEGLE, Joseph - Russia and Africa: Expanding Influence and Instability. In **Russia’s Global Reach: A Security and Statecraft Assessment** [Online]. Garmisch-Partenkirchen : George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, 2021. [Accessed: 27 June 2025]. p. 10. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/marshall-center-books/russias-global-reach-security-and-statecraft-assessment/chapter-10-russia-and-africa-expanding-influence-and>>.

SIEGLE, Joseph - Russia in Africa: Resurgent great power or bellicose pretender? **South African Institute of International Affairs** [Online]. 10 Dec. 2022. [Accessed: 9 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://saiia.org.za/research/russia-in-africa-resurgent-great-power-or-bellicose-pretender/>>.

SIEGLE, Joseph - Russia’s Use of Private Military Contractors. **Africa Center for Strategic Studies** [Online]. 15 Sep. 2022. [Accessed: 4 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://africacenter.org/experts/russia-private-military-contractors/>>.

SKJERDAL, Terje ; GUSU, Fufa - Positive Portrayal of Sino-African Relations in the Ethiopian Press. In **China’s Media and Soft Power in Africa** [Online]. New York : Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016. [Accessed: 30 May 2025]. p. 149-161. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137539670\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137539670_11)>. ISBN 9781349713776.

SMOKE, Richard - On the Importance of Policy Legitimacy. **Political Psychology** [Online]. ISSN 0162-895X. 15:1 (Mar. 1994) 97. [Accessed: 6 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.2307/3791441>>.

SNIGYR, Olena - Ideological Agenda of Russian Information Influence in Africa. **The Foreign Policy Research Institute** [Online]. 8 Nov. 2024. 7 p. [Accessed: 27 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/11/ideological-agenda-of-russian-information-influence-in-africa/>>.

SOONG, Claus - China-Russia alignment – a shared vision, without fully seeing eye to eye. **Mercator Institute for China Studies** [Online]. 25 July 2025. [Accessed: 12 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://merics.org/en/comment/china-russia-alignment-shared-vision-without-fully-seeing-eye-eye>>.

SPUTNIK AFRIQUE - Au Mali, la France "victime de son arrogance, de son comportement haineux et belliqueux" [Online]. 14 Feb. 2022. [Accessed: 8 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://fr.sputniknews.africa/20220214/au-mali-la-france-victime-de-son-arrogance-de-son-comportement-haineux-et-belliqueux-1055151211.html>>.

SPUTNIK AFRIQUE - L'Otan est responsable de l'insécurité dans le Sahel qui perdure, selon le chef d'un parti nigérien [Online]. 29 July 2023. [Accessed: 9 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://web.archive.org/web/20241207080350/https://fr.sputniknews.africa/20230729/lotan-est-responsable-de-linsecurite-dans-le-sahel-qui-perdure-selon-le-chef-dun-parti-nigerien-1060893224.html>>.

STAVRIDIS, James - China and Russia Are Beating the US in Africa. **Bloomberg** [Online]. 13 June 2024. [Accessed: 25 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2024-06-13/china-and-russia-are-crushing-the-us-in-rivalry-for-africa-influence>>.

SVOBODA, Karel ; MATLACH, Paula-Charlotte ; BADDORF, Zack - **Russia's Activities in Africa's Information Environment (Case Studies: Mali, Central African republic)** [Online]. Riga : NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2021. 25 p. [Accessed: 9 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/russias-activities-in-africas-information-environment-case-studies-mali-central-african-republic/6>>. ISBN 978-9934-564-96-3.



TASS - **Russia becomes first country to recognize Alliance of Sahel States — Mali's top diplomat** [Online]. 3 Apr. 2023. [Accessed: 1 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://tass.com/world/1938437>>.

THE KREMLIN - **Russia-Africa Summit** [Online]. 28 July 2023. [Accessed: 1 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71826>>.

THE PEOPLE'S DAILY - China-Africa cooperation paves way toward better future. **The 2024 Summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation**. [Online]. 06 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 2 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <[https://2024focacsummit.mfa.gov.cn/eng/ttxx\\_3/202409/t20240906\\_11486237.htm](https://2024focacsummit.mfa.gov.cn/eng/ttxx_3/202409/t20240906_11486237.htm)>.

THE STATE COUNCIL INFORMATION OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA - **Over 80% of Chinese peacekeepers deployed in Africa: White paper** [Online]. 26 Nov. 2021. [Accessed: 25 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2021-11/26/content\\_77895291.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2021-11/26/content_77895291.htm)>.

THE STATE COUNCIL INFORMATION OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA - The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future. **The Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation** [Online]. Oct. 2023. [Accessed: 12 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<http://www.beltandroadforum.org/english/n101/2023/1010/c124-895.html>>.

THIBAUT, Kenton - Chinese discourse power: Ambitions and reality in the digital domain [Online]. Washington, D.C. : **Atlantic Council, Digital Forensic Research Lab**, 2022. 31 p. (Research Report). [Accessed: 27 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Chinese-Discourse-Power-Ambitions-and-Reality-in-the-Digital-Domain.pdf>>.

TOUNKARA, Aliou - **Non-Governmental 'Russian Houses' in Africa: Focus on Mali and the Dynamics of Influence**. Valdai Discussion Club [Online]. 27 Feb. 2025. [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/non-governmental-russian-houses-in-africa/>>.

TZU, Sun - **The Art of War** [Online]. Leicester: Allandale Online Publishing, 2000. 62 p. [Accessed: 27 Feb. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://sites.ualberta.ca/~enoch/Readings/The\\_Art\\_Of\\_War.pdf](https://sites.ualberta.ca/~enoch/Readings/The_Art_Of_War.pdf)>. ISBN 1-903328-03-9.



UNITED NATIONS - **Summary of Contribution to UN Peacekeeping by Country** [Online]. New York : UN Peacekeeping, 2020. 72 p. (Report 31/7/2020). [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/03\\_country\\_and\\_mission\\_27.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/03_country_and_mission_27.pdf)>.

UNITED NATIONS MEETINGS COVERAGE - **‘Russophobia’ Term Used to Justify Moscow’s War Crimes in Ukraine, Historian Tells Security Council** [Online]. 14 Mar. 2023. [Accessed: 2 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15226.doc.htm>>.

UNITED NATIONS MEETINGS COVERAGE - **Urging Continued Support for Central African Republic, Peacekeeping Mission Head Cites UN’s Role in Facilitating First Peaceful Transhumance Conference, Upcoming Elections** [Online]. 27 July 2024. [Accessed: 16 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15751.doc.htm>>.

UNITED NATIONS NEWS - **China’s Foreign Minister stresses principle of non-interference at UN debate** [Online]. 27 Sep. 2012. [Accessed: 28 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://news.un.org/en/story/2012/09/421682>>.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE - **Cultural Diplomacy - The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy** [Online]. Washington D.C. : U.S. Department of State., 2005. 28 p. (Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy). [Accessed: 5 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/54374.pdf>>.

USMAN, Zainab ; ABAYO, Aline - **What Are the Top Global Destinations for Higher Education for African Students? Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** [Online]. 13 July 2023. [Accessed: 17 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2023/07/what-are-the-top-global-destinations-for-higher-education-for-african-students?lang=en>>.

UTKINA, Alona - **Russia scales up propaganda in Africa: HUR warns of Kremlin's information expansion. Ukrainian National News** [Online]. 13 July 2025. [Accessed: 13 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://unn.ua/en/news/russia-scales-up-propaganda-in-africa-hur-warns-of-kremlins-information-expansion>>.

VAN NOORT, Carolijn - **Infrastructure Communication in International Relations**. New York : Taylor & Francis Group, 2020. 160 p. ISBN 9781003098027.

VAN NOORT, Carolijn - Study of Strategic Narratives: The Case of BRICS. **Politics and Governance** [Online]. ISSN 2183-2463. 5:3 (Sep. 2017) 121-129. [Accessed: 2 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v5i3.961>>.

WARD, Clarissa [et al.] - How Russian meddling is back before 2020 vote - CNN [Online]. 12 Mar. 2020. [Accessed: 14 July 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/12/world/russia-ghana-troll-farms-2020-ward/index.html>>.

WARDLE, Claire ; DERAKHSHAN, Hossein - INFORMATION DISORDER: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making [Online]. Strasbourg : **Council of Europe**, 2017. 107 p. (Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09). [Accessed: 13 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-research/168076277c>>.

WARURU, Maina - **Russia embarks on new drive to lure more students from Africa.** **World University News Africa** [Online]. 20 Feb. 2025. [Accessed: 15 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20250218114903709#:~:text=Campaign%20posters%20by%20the%20Racus,general,%20said%20in%20recruitment%20campaigns.>>>.

WEI, Li - China-Africa defense cooperation to further improve quality, effectiveness: Defense Spokesperson. **China Military Online** [Online]. 29 Feb. 2024. [Accessed: 25 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA\\_209163/TopStories\\_209189/16289872.html](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16289872.html)>.

WONG, Kwok Chung - The Rise of China's Developmental Peace: Can an Economic Approach to Peacebuilding Create Sustainable Peace? **Global Society** [Online]. ISSN 1469-798X. (June 2021) 1-19. [Accessed: 26 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2021.1942802>>.

WONG, Tessa - Belt and Road Initiative: Is China's trillion-dollar gamble worth it? - **BBC** [Online]. 16 Oct. 2023. [Accessed: 13 Sep. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-67120726>>.

WYDICK, Bruce - How narratives influence human behaviour. **World Economic Forum** [Online]. 9 Jan. 2015. [Accessed: 3 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2015/01/how-narratives-influence-human-behaviour/>>.

XIAODONG, Chen - China Is a Force for Peace, Stability and Progress of the World. **Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of South Africa** [Online]. 3 Oct. 2024. [Accessed: 26 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://za.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng//zt/2024twosessions/202405/t20240520\\_11307716.htm](http://za.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng//zt/2024twosessions/202405/t20240520_11307716.htm)>.

XINHUA - China-Africa economic and trade cooperation shows strong vitality. **Xinhua Silk Road Information Service** [Online]. 5 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 10 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://en.imsilkroad.com/p/341955.html>>.

XINHUA - China, Ethiopia to enhance cooperation in science, technology, innovation. **The State Council of the People's Republic of China** [Online]. 27 July 2024. [Accessed: 19 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202407/27/content\\_WS66a4341dc6d0868f4e8e97ec.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202407/27/content_WS66a4341dc6d0868f4e8e97ec.html)>.

XINHUA - China supports Ethiopia's efforts to achieve national peace, development: special envoy. **Xinhua English News** [Online]. 15 Mar. 2023. [Accessed: 19 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://english.news.cn/africa/20230315/a7fdb2bfb4c848e696db749cac6b92a7/c.html>>.

XINHUA - China helps African nations reduce debt pressure. **Xinhua.net** [Online]. 24 Aug. 2024. [Accessed: 11 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://english.news.cn/20240820/2b7aadc714444bb68c34ab5dd890a5fd/c.html>>.

XINHUA - China rolls out new measures to strengthen cooperation with Africa. **Belt and Road Portal** [Online]. 18 Feb. 2025. [Accessed: 10 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/0OPPSGLR.html>>.

XINHUA - Chinese FM calls for China-Africa cooperation on global governance reform. **The State Council of the People's Republic of China** [Online]. 11 Jan. 2025. [Accessed: 11 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202501/11/content\\_WS6781d6aec6d0868f4e8eebae.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202501/11/content_WS6781d6aec6d0868f4e8eebae.html)>.

XINHUA - Ethiopia calls for strengthening "long-standing" economic, trade ties with China. **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation**. [Online]. 18 Apr. 2025. [Accessed: 13 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://www.focac.org/eng/zfzs\\_1/202504/t20250417\\_11596255.htm](http://www.focac.org/eng/zfzs_1/202504/t20250417_11596255.htm)>.

XINHUA - Ethiopia's peace a victory for unity, dialogue: Chinese special envoy. **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation** [Online]. 25 Apr. 2023. [Accessed: 19 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://www.focac.org.cn/eng/zfzs\\_1/202304/t20230425\\_11065051.htm](http://www.focac.org.cn/eng/zfzs_1/202304/t20230425_11065051.htm)>.

XINHUA - (FOCAC) Explainer: Why Africans won't buy the "Debt Trap" narrative against China. **Xinhua English News** [Online]. 1 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 19 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://english.news.cn/20240901/8e9eb017e7f64b23a8a6d92da133e753/c.html>>.

XINHUA - Guinea-Bissau seeks stronger media cooperation with China: national television chief. **Xinhua English News** [Online]. 3 Feb. 2023. [Accessed: 23 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://english.news.cn/africa/20250203/395f07346f874a0fac5b18db45eb6296/c.html>>.

XINHUA - (Hello Africa) African youth embrace media, storytelling as bridges shaping Africa-China dreams. **Xinhua English News** [Online]. 18 May 2025. [Accessed: 19 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://english.news.cn/20250518/78971a6e33b64d83ae1d9f96107717ae/c.html>>.

XINHUA - (Hello Africa) Yearender: Ethiopia-China all-weather strategic partnership solidified in 2024. **Belt and Road Portal** [Online]. 30 Dec. 2024. [Accessed: 13 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/07T9IL9V.html>>.

XINHUA - 西强我弱”国际话语格局怎样改变 ("How to change the international discourse pattern of “strong West and weak me”). **Xinhua.net** [Online]. 5 Feb. 2017. [Accessed: 21 Mar. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-02/15/c\\_1120468174.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-02/15/c_1120468174.htm)>.

XINHUA - Kenya hosts joint conference of African Confucius institutes. **Global Times** [Online]. 31 May 2024. [Accessed: 16 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202405/1313387.shtml>>.

XINHUA - Zimbabwe's ruling party expresses support for China's measures in Xinjiang. **Forum of China-Africa Cooperation** [Online]. 26 Feb. 2021. [Accessed: 13 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://www.focac.org/eng/zfzs\\_1/202102/t20210225\\_10021811.htm](http://www.focac.org/eng/zfzs_1/202102/t20210225_10021811.htm)>.

XINHUA - (FOCAC) World Insights: China-Africa infrastructure. The 2024 Summit of China cooperation creating new opportunities for Africa's development. **The 2024 Summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation**. [Online]. 28 Aug. 2024. [Accessed: 2 June 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://2024focacsummit.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxyw\\_1/202408/t20240828\\_11480297.htm](https://2024focacsummit.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxyw_1/202408/t20240828_11480297.htm)>.

XU, Minghua ; VINCENT, Mbonihankuye ; SALLAM, Marwan - China's digital diplomacy agenda and public engagement: an analysis in Africa on twitter (X). **Journal of Information Technology & Politics** [Online]. ISSN 1933-169X (2024). 1-17. [Accessed: 15 Apr. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19331681.2024.2438090#d1e1729>>.

YOSHIHARA, Toshi - **Chinese Information Warfare: A Phantom Menace Or Emerging Threat?** Pennsylvania : Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), 2001. 42 p. ISBN 1-58487-074-5.

YUYUAN, Zhou - Peaceful development is crucial for Africa. **China Daily** [Online]. 26 Nov. 2017. [Accessed: 6 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/kindle/2017-11/26/content\\_35016093.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/kindle/2017-11/26/content_35016093.htm)>.

ZABELIN, Dimitri - Why Africa will become a prominent player in global geopolitics. **World Economic Forum** [Online]. 12 July 2023. [Accessed: 21 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/07/why-africa-will-become-a-prominent-player-in-global-geopolitics/#:~:text=Rich%20in%20strategic%20resources,opportunities%20presented%20in%20their%20excavation.>>>.

ZEYA, Zhu - CCCC Strengthens Ethiopia-China Friendship Through Long-Standing Commitment to Community Development. **State-owned Assets and Administration Commission of the State Council** [Online]. 3 Sep. 2024. [Accessed: 19 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:[http://en.sasac.gov.cn/2024/09/03/c\\_18219.htm](http://en.sasac.gov.cn/2024/09/03/c_18219.htm)>.

ZHANG, Feng - The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations. **European Journal of International Relations** [Online]. ISSN 1460-3713. 19:2 (Oct. 2011) 305-328. [Accessed: 26 Aug. 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066111421038>>.

ZHIWEN, Zhang [et al.] - PLA support base in Djibouti pursues peace, cooperation, friendship. **Global Times** [Online]. 7 Sep. 2023. [Accessed: 12 May 2025]. Available from WWW: <URL:<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202309/1297754.shtml>>.