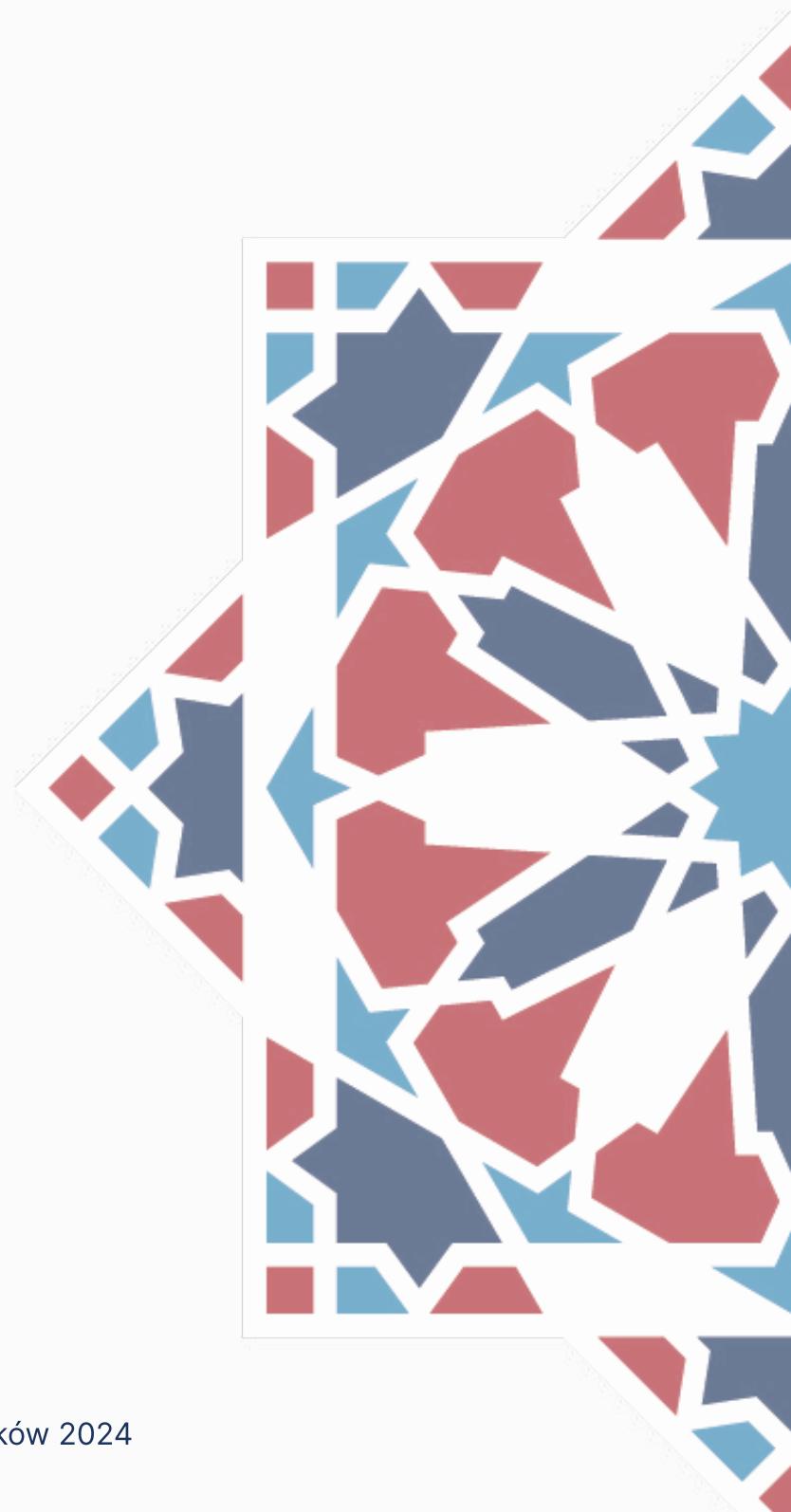


Report

Russian disinformation in Sudan



Contents

About the project.....	1
Author of the publication.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Chapter 1. Russian Information Strategy: Foundations in Hybrid and Information Warfare.....	3
Chapter 2. Political and media situation in Sudan.....	4
Chapter 3. Disinformation tools and techniques used by Russia.....	7
Chapter 4. Analysis of the effects of disinformation.....	12
4.1. Political effects of disinformation.....	12
4.2. The social consequences of disinformation.....	13
4.3. International and Regional Implications.....	15
Chapter 5. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	16
5.1. Recommendations.....	17
Bibliography and Sources.....	18

About the project



Instytut Badań
nad Turcją



Disinformation
in MENAT



Supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland under the "Public Diplomacy 2024-2025 - European dimension and countering disinformation" competition.

The publication expresses the views of the author only and cannot be identified with the official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Author of the publication



Nagmaddin Karamalla-Gaiballa

Polish Sudanese political scientist, economist, poet, writer, and Social-cultural activist. He has more than 20 years' experience in social and economic research, especially in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and the Gulf States. Combining field and academic qualifications (MENA, Africa, Europe) with a wide range of international and regional Organizations as well as CSOs and NGOs.

Introduction

Understanding the mechanisms and implications of Russian disinformation in Sudan is crucial to addressing its broader consequences for the country's stability and democratic aspirations. With Sudan emerging as a pivotal battleground for global powers, Russia has been increasing its strategic foothold by supporting the Sudanese Armed Forces (RSF) and the Rapid Support Forces (SAF) at various stages of the conflict (Afriyie, 2024). This support, in the form of military aid and economic interests, forms part of Russia's broader strategy to shape its influence. The strategic importance of Sudan's Red Sea coast, which Russia views as a vital waterway for its geopolitical presence in Africa, cannot be overstated (McGregor, 2024). Moreover, Russia is keen to capitalize on Sudan's abundant natural resources, particularly gold, with Sudan reportedly being used to finance its war effort in Ukraine (Pettersson, 2022).

Conflicts and wars are more suitable for the flourishing of propaganda discourse, especially when it is necessary to provide justifications to the domestic or international community and to add positive values to the actions and practices accompanying the war. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has witnessed comprehensive propaganda communication, especially from the Russian side, which used it to pave the way for war in its nature and characteristics. It is, in fact, a war of invasion, not a war of liberation or defense. It is a war between two unequal parties in terms of military, political, economic, and geographical power. It is a war between two countries that have much in common historically, civilizationally, culturally, and religiously. All of this necessitated the production of a propaganda discourse that seeks to create a dialectical communication environment abroad, especially in Africa, for example, where there is no consensus on condemnation, and domestically, to make a rally and bear the consequences of war as an inevitable option.

The research methodology for this report includes content analysis, examining media content, social media posts, and other materials related to Russian-backed disinformation campaigns. Case studies analyze a number of specific incidents or campaigns to illustrate the dynamics of Russian disinformation in Sudan. Academic literature reviews, policy reports, and reliable news articles complement primary research in this context. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, covering its various aspects and providing practical insights that empower us to counter its negative impacts.

Chapter 1.

Russian Information Strategy:

Foundations in Hybrid and Information Warfare

Hybrid warfare is certainly not a new phenomenon. Historians coined the term to describe the simultaneous use of conventional and irregular forces in the same military campaign (Concordiam, 2019). However, since the early 21st century, it has become a common way to describe the changing nature of contemporary warfare. It includes cyberattacks, massive disinformation campaigns, and information manipulation. Social media has become a major communication channel for spreading disinformation, rumors, and deepfakes and is an integral part of war strategy (Wither, 2016). It is widely used to coordinate actions, gather information, and, most importantly, influence the beliefs and attitudes of target audiences and even mobilize them for war.

Russia's information strategy is a key element of its foreign policy, rooted in the concepts of hybrid warfare and information warfare. This strategy uses disinformation and propaganda to achieve political, military, and strategic goals without direct military intervention (Kelley, 2024). Hybrid warfare refers to a combination of conventional military force and unconventional tactics such as cyberattacks, economic pressure, and information manipulation. Information warfare is a key pillar of this approach. In the Russian context, hybrid warfare aims to weaken opponents by exploiting internal divisions, eroding trust in democratic institutions, and fostering confusion and discord (Jakubiak, 2022). Russia uses a range of tools to spread disinformation, with state-run outlets such as RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik serving as disinformation vehicles, presenting biased or false narratives under the guise of credible journalism (Yang et al., 2024). Social media (Facebook, X, TikTok, etc.) and botnets amplify divisive content, spread fake news, and manipulate public opinion. Hacking and leaking sensitive information to embarrass political opponents or destabilize institutions is also used. Looking to the future, we can expect further developments in hybrid warfare, with the potential for more sophisticated cyberattacks, advanced deep fake technology, and the use of artificial intelligence to manipulate public opinion.

Chapter 2. Political and media situation in Sudan

Sudan has experienced multiple external interventions in its internal affairs, which have negatively impacted its ability to build strong and independent institutions and infrastructure. For decades, Sudan has suffered from poor infrastructure and the provision of essential services such as education, health, and economic infrastructure, which has hindered the building of effective institutions. Sudan has also experienced long periods of authoritarian rule and human rights abuses, making the process of building these institutions difficult and complex. Sudan suffers from enormous economic challenges, which negatively impact its ability to accommodate the process of creating a modern state that meets the needs of its people. While Sudan shares similarities with many other African countries in its post-colonial context and challenges, several factors distinguish it and make it a potentially useful model for addressing the crisis of building democratic institutions. Sudan is the third largest country in Africa in terms of area, with diverse geographic features ranging from deserts to savannas (worlddata.info, 2024). Its size and diverse terrain pose unique governance challenges, such as managing decentralization and addressing regional disparities, that may resonate with other large African states. Sudan is one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse countries in Africa, with over 500 ethnic groups and a mix of Muslims, Christians, and indigenous beliefs. This diversity, combined with historical tensions between Arab and African identities, reflects the complexities of identity politics prevalent in much of sub-Saharan Africa (Gumbert, 2010).

Sudan's protracted civil war between North and South Sudan, which led to South Sudan's secession in 2011, is a significant historical event with implications for state-building, conflict resolution, and post-secession reconciliation. Sudan has significant natural resources, including oil, which have impacted its economic dynamics and political stability. Managing resource wealth, coupled with economic challenges such as poverty and inflation, presents common dilemmas facing the country.

Under the harsh conditions that threaten the collapse of state institutions, Sudanese journalists are courageously confronting the challenges of war and its impact on the media in Sudan. Since the outbreak of war between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces on April 15, 2023, The Sudanese media environment has been deeply affected by the war, transforming into a space dominated by challenges and conflicts. This transformation implies that the media is no longer just reporting on events but is itself embroiled in the conflict. It is a constant struggle, dealing with issues like political polarization, propaganda, disinformation, and threats to journalistic freedom. This makes the media landscape a reflection of the broader complexities and obstacles stemming from the ongoing war. (Free Press Unlimited, 2023). This impact has not spared any media

institution, from newspapers to radio stations and televisions. These institutions are now in a critical state, dealing with the destruction and looting of their resources caused by the war, including vital communication infrastructure and the Internet. They also face persecution and attacks on their media and journalistic staff, all while combating a systematic campaign of misinformation and false propaganda. (Al-Awad, 2024).

The suspension of newspapers and media outlets in Sudan as a result of the war has led to the displacement of journalists and media professionals in all media outlets. Most of them fled the war outside Sudan or into other states, while some of them are still present in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, in some safe areas, and even in areas of clashes (ADF, 2024). In addition to the suffering of journalists in light of this war, the weakness of the Internet network and the impact of its infrastructure on events, as some parties to the conflict used it as a weapon to win battles. For instance, there were cases where communication towers were targeted, leading to the weakening of the service or its interruption (UNESCO, 2024).

During the war, print media was greatly affected, and it struggled despite the difficult circumstances of the digital transformation. A number of journalists moved to work in other media outlets. The struggle to control the media narrative remains a large part of the broader conflict in Sudan. The power of the media narrative cannot be underestimated, as it shapes public perception and understanding of the situation, and it is this power that allows for the expansion of external media misinformation (Philip, 2023).

State media in Sudan aims to reinforce the official narrative of the state and is subject to strict censorship. For example, the Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SNBC) operates national television and radio channels, and the Sudan News Agency (SUNA) is the official news agency responsible for disseminating government news and announcements. Another example is Radio Omdurman, a state-owned radio station that broadcasts government views and cultural programming. Sudan Television, also known as Al-Sudania, is the national television network that often broadcasts pro-government narratives, official speeches, and carefully censored content. There needs to be more diversity in presenting viewpoints, making it less attractive to young people seeking credibility (International Media Support, 2007). Private media has more space for criticism and opposition. Examples include Al-Sudani, a widely read newspaper, and Al-Tayyar, which faced a government-imposed suspension for its critical reporting. Another notable outlet is Al-Jarida, which is known for its independent stance and willingness to address sensitive topics. Although based outside Sudan, Radio Dabanga is an important source of independent news for the Sudanese public, with a focus on humanitarian and political developments. However, it is not immune to challenges and faces financial constraints and political pressures, as the government can restrict some media outlets through closure or censorship. Alternative media outlets run by independent groups or activists have emerged to document events, especially during political crises.

However, the press is not immune to challenges and often faces financial constraints and political pressure. The government has a history of restricting media outlets through censorship, suspension, or outright closure, as evidenced by the frequent targeting of newspapers such as Al-Tayyar and Al-Jarida, which have been shut down or suspended multiple times for publishing critical content. For example, in 2008, during the era of ousted dictator Omar al-Bashir (1989-2019), more than 150 Sudanese journalists went on a 24-hour hunger strike to protest censorship by state security agencies. Three opposition newspapers announced that they would stop publishing for three days, and writers from other publications would withdraw their articles to draw attention to what is described as an escalating campaign to impose severe restrictions on the media. In 2012, Sudan witnessed a wave of protests against the Bashir regime, which led the authorities to confiscate copies of several newspapers, including Al-Sahafa and Akhir Lahza, due to their critical coverage of events. Also, in 2014, the government closed Al-Maidan newspaper, the mouthpiece of the Sudanese Communist Party, for covering issues related to corruption and the suppression of freedoms.

Public trust in the official media in Sudan has declined, especially in light of the ongoing war between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces, which has revealed the bias of official and private media in favor of certain parties. Journalists have faced intimidation by the warring forces on both sides of the unrest for reporting on human rights violations or even remaining neutral. A study conducted by the Sudanese Journalists Network confirmed that the Sudanese public is increasingly turning to alternative media and social media platforms for news due to the lack of transparency and credibility of the official media. Also, a report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in 2020 indicated that Sudanese people are increasingly using digital and independent media as their primary source of information, reflecting a decline in reliance on official media.

The media in Sudan, in general, reflects the reality of political and social divisions and shows the challenges facing the country in achieving a free and independent media that fairly represents all parties.

Chapter 3. Disinformation tools and techniques used by Russia

Russia presents itself as a global power that - unlike many other global powers - have never been a colonial force on the continent and harbors no imperial ambitions. This perception, which is deeply rooted in the African mentality in general and in Sudan in particular, remains part of the popular understanding that has been formed over the decades due to the history of relations between Russia and African countries.

Graphics 1 and 2 below show how this perception, which is linked to colonial history and imperialism, is exploited. These graphics, which contain demonstrations or celebrations under the slogan "Thank you, Russia," are accompanied by the flags of both Russia and Sudan. Graphics 1 (Shalabi, 2024) shows pictures of First Deputy Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy and Sudanese Army Chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. It says in Arabic: "I rose up free, proud, brave and a hero." This is linked to Russia's use of a veto at the UN Security Council on November 18, 2024, when Russia was the only country out of 15 members of the council to oppose a draft resolution calling for an end to the war in Sudan. However, pro-Russian media propaganda portrayed this veto as a defense of Sudan's sovereignty against Western hegemony, which helped reinforce the prevailing perception in some circles in Sudan and Africa of Russia as an ally against Western imperialism.



Graphics 1.

Source: Shalabi. [@user28141595681538]. (10.12. 2024). Sudan's media shift during the war [Wideo]. TikTok. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNeTKEmxc/>



Graphics 2.

Source: Shalabi. Osman. F. [@fouadosman23]. (10.12.2024). Sudan's media shift during the war [Wideo]. TikTok. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNeTKEWb8/>

In recent years, Russia has extended invitations to several African leaders to visit Moscow, including Sudan, in a bid to leverage its relations with African elites who were educated in the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Many of these African leaders, who studied in Soviet countries, have risen to prominent positions in their respective countries, such as South Africa, Angola, and the Central African Republic.

Russia uses a variety of tools to achieve its strategic goals in Africa, including propaganda campaigns that promote the narrative that Russia supports the liberation of Africa from Western imperialism. Russia has relied heavily on the Wagner Group to achieve its strategic goals in sub-Saharan Africa. Although the Wagner Group's presence was intended to protect Russian companies in Africa, its role in reality extended to establishing economic ties in extractive activities such as mining natural resources such as gold in Sudan. Sudan ranks third in Africa, producing over 90 tons of gold annually, although production is often inaccurate due to artisanal mining and smuggling (Nasr, 2023). The Wagner Group has also helped Russia establish political and military ties and alliances on the African continent by providing support in the form of weapons and training.

Russia positions itself as an alternative partner to former colonial powers (such as France and the United Kingdom), often criticizing these powers for what is seen as

neocolonialism, with the aim of securing access to Africa's natural resources such as gold, uranium, and oil (Ikenze, 2022).

Russia in Africa uses a combination of disinformation, media, and informal networks to spread its influence through state-controlled media and disinformation campaigns. RT and Sputnik are expanding their operations in Africa, producing content in multiple languages, including English, French, and Portuguese, tailored to African audiences (Wesolowski & Gatanazi, 2023). These outlets often portray Russia as a champion of sovereignty and anti-colonialism, in contrast to the West's "exploitation" of Africa.

Social media and bots linked to Russia also amplify pro-Russian narratives, especially during elections or political crises. Examples include discrediting opposition groups or promoting narratives against Western-backed initiatives. It presents itself as a long-standing ally of African sovereignty and independence. Private military contractors and propaganda groups such as the Wagner Group play a dual role in militarily supporting regimes (e.g., Mali and the Central African Republic) (Marigliano et al., 2024).

Pro-Russian narratives dominate local media, portraying Russia as a stabilizing force while criticizing French and UN operations. In Mali, after the withdrawal of French forces, Russia filled the vacuum with military aid and support for Wagner, and disinformation campaigns accused France of supporting terrorism, fanning anti-French sentiment, and legitimizing Russian intervention.

In Sudan, Russia supports the ruling elite, exploiting disinformation to influence public opinion and secure favorable mining concessions, especially for Gold. Russian tactics in Sudan are often tailored to the Sudanese social and political landscape. However, the urgency and relevance of the topic are highlighted by the key tool and technique used by Russia-digital media manipulation. This involves spreading pro-Russian narratives across social media platforms, particularly Facebook, with content that promotes pro-Russian positions and discredits Western powers. Networks of fake accounts run by organizations such as the Internet Research Agency amplify Russian narratives and undermine opposing views. Disinformation campaigns are often tailored to local cultural and political contexts, such as emphasizing anti-colonial rhetoric or resonating with historical Sudanese grievances.

On May 27, 2021, Facebook took a significant step in combating disinformation by removing a network of accounts that used fake profiles, pages, and groups to amplify pro-Russian content in Sudan (Graphics 3 and 4). The content primarily focused on promoting Russia's image as a friend of the Sudanese people while simultaneously portraying prominent Sudanese leaders as pawns of the United States. The pages and profiles promoted positive stories about Russia, with a particular focus on aid packages sent by

Russian oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin and exaggerating the benefits of establishing a Russian military base in Port Sudan (Knight, 2021).



Graphics 3.

Source: <https://medium.com/dfrlab/inauthentic-facebook-assets-promoted-russian-interests-in-sudan-2623c58b1f7f>



Graphics 4.

Source: <https://medium.com/dfrlab/inauthentic-facebook-assets-promoted-russian-interests-in-sudan-2623c58b1f7f>

This is not the first time Russia-linked content has been identified in Sudan. In 2019, Facebook identified pages linked to entities associated with Prigozhin and his private military company, the Wagner Group. Again, in 2020, the Stanford Internet Observatory and Graphical analyzed eight pages targeting Sudan that were linked to Russia as part of a Russian operation. In both reports, a number of the pages presented themselves as "news" pages and posted political content focused on improving Russia's image (Knight, 2021).

So, the themes covered by Russian disinformation in Africa are anti-Western colonialism messages, criticizing Western powers as neo-colonial exploiters, and positioning Russia as a fair and equal partner. Russia promotes strongman politics in Africa by discrediting democratic opposition as puppets of Western interests. It also exploits conflicts and crises in Africa to amplify pro-Russian narratives while blaming Western powers for instability. It highlights resource deals as mutually beneficial partnerships while undermining competing bids from Western companies. Many regions in Africa lack strong media literacy, making it challenging to detect disinformation, and political instability creates fertile ground for Russian narratives.

Chapter 4.

Analysis of the effects of disinformation

4.1. Political effects of disinformation

First, there is a strong link between the scope of disinformation and instability. Disinformation campaigns have directly led to deadly violence (disinformation is one of the causes of the current war in Sudan), encouraged and approved military coups, silenced members of civil society (character assassination campaigns), and served as a smokescreen for corruption and exploitation (Sudanese gold by the Wagner Group).

Evidence that Russia plays a major role in destabilizing and supporting military coups in Sudan is the role played by the Russian Wagner Group since December 2017. The group began providing its political and military services to former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir after Moscow negotiated a series of economic and security deals with him in November of the same year. These deals included granting gold mining concessions to the M-Invest company linked to the head of the Wagner company, Yevgeny Prigozhin (Ramani, 2019). They were accompanied by misleading media campaigns that supported the survival of the regime. This regime came to power through a military coup in 1989 and committed horrific massacres against the Sudanese people, especially in the Darfur region. The International Criminal Court also accused the ousted head of state and coup leader, Omar al-Bashir, of committing crimes against humanity (Mendes, 2019). After al-Bashir was overthrown in April 2019, Wagner's activities in Sudan continued through misleading media campaigns that enabled it to adapt to the transitional government. In October 2021, the group supported a military coup that led to the formation of a government more inclined to strengthen relations with Russia. However, this coup fueled conflicts between political and military forces in Sudan, paving the way for the devastating war that broke out on October 15, 2023 (Doxsee, 2023). These Russian interventions, which included political and economic support and media disinformation, proved to be of great importance in undermining stability in Sudan and dragging it towards more conflicts and coups.

The political effects of disinformation also include undermining trust in political institutions and destabilizing the political and social order, which may lead to violence or rebellion (as in Sudan). Disinformation can also change public attitudes toward foreign countries, such as Russian disinformation toward Western countries (Sanchez & Middlemass, 2022).

For example, reports published in the Sudanese newspaper Al-Rakoba alleged that Russian intelligence conducted a large-scale disinformation campaign, promoting claims

that Ukrainian forces were fighting alongside the Sudanese army in the war against the Rapid Support Forces. The reports indicated that these forces, estimated to number 650, operate under the umbrella of a network run by a Ukrainian businessman close to the Kremlin, Viktor Medvedchuk, and are stationed at a mountain base near the city of Al-Jili in Sudan's River Nile State. According to the newspaper, this campaign aims to achieve two goals: discredit Ukraine and link it to war crimes in Sudan, in addition to providing logistical and military support to the Sudanese army to secure Russia's interests in the region, including the establishment of a military base on the Red Sea (alrakoba, 2024). Although there is no evidence to support these claims, Russian intelligence's disinformation has contributed to distorting Ukraine's international image and complicating diplomatic efforts to end the Sudanese conflict.

With the outbreak of the December 2018 revolution in Sudan, which toppled the deposed dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019 (Medow, 2022), the counter-revolutionary forces used websites and social media networks to practice media and information deception by spreading fake news, lies, and rumors to hinder the democratic transition. Countries going through periods of democratic transition and various crises, as is the case in Sudan, are burdened with a double burden that hinders the process of democratic transition and sustainable development (el-Battahani, 2023).

4.2. The social consequences of disinformation

The social effects of disinformation are profound and have a significant impact on society. They include incitement to political violence and hatred against a specific group in society, as is happening now in Sudan (Vasist et al., 2024). The exploitation of ethnic, customary, and religious diversity in this context is a pressing issue. Disinformation is increasing social division by spreading information that stirs up tensions between different social groups. It also delegates trust in social institutions, deepens negative classification and prejudice against others from the social classes, reduces the participation of individuals and institutions in social programs, and reduces the sense of belonging of individuals in society to their society. Most importantly, it leads to a feeling of alienation from society's values, which has a significant societal impact (Lartey, 2024).

There are many examples of this during the current conflict in Sudan between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces. Misinformation has spread on social media, accusing certain groups of allying with the parties in the conflict or conspiring against the interests of the community (Saad, 2024). For example, information has spread claiming that some tribes from the Darfur region in western Sudan support the Rapid Support Forces, leading to acts of revenge and violence between local communities.

Some misinformation campaigns have also included accusations that refugees and displaced persons, especially from Darfur, are responsible for the escalation of the conflict due to their support for one of the parties to the war, especially the Rapid Support Forces (Gallopin, 2024). These allegations have contributed to increasing discrimination against displaced persons and their exclusion from humanitarian assistance in some areas. This information can easily be misleading and very harmful. The social and ethnic reality in Sudan is very complex, especially since the vast majority of the Rapid Support Forces are from the tribes of the Darfur region. However, their presence in these forces does not necessarily represent those tribes, and thus, it is easy to use media misinformation in this context. These examples reflect how disinformation can deepen social divisions, intensify conflicts, and be easily exploited by external actors, including Russia.

Sudanese society is multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural. This diversity has caused many wars and conflicts that have continued for decades and led to the secession of the South from the North in 2011 (Vhumbunu & Rudigi, 2019). The wars that broke out in the Darfur region also led to the displacement of millions of people from their areas (Ammar, 2023). Consequently, this media deception and disinformation pursued by regional parties, including the United Arab Emirates, Russia, and other parties, has further exacerbated this reality. Media deception and disinformation in Sudan are also considered one of the main tools used in the current war in Sudan between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (Plaut, 2024). This conflict has caused the worst humanitarian disaster in history, a perspective echoed by the United Nations organizations (Al Jazeera, 2024).

Social media has become an arena for a moral war that is raging in parallel with the ongoing battles on the ground in Sudan between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces. It serves as a tool to gain public support or spread misinformation and fake news. The virtual battles on social media were monitored by the Beam Reports Center, which specializes in investigating the flow of misleading information in Sudan. Their report, published in conjunction with the outbreak of fighting in Sudan in mid-April 2023, revealed that social media sites were flooded with a torrent of misleading information from both sides of the conflict and news and video clips about victories in fictitious and unreal battles (Beam Reports, 2024). This was all promoted by an electronic army that broadcasts conflicting information that serves the party it works for, with the aim of mobilizing public opinion highlighting the significant impact of social media on public perception. Since the beginning of September 2023, the Beam Reports Observatory has begun publishing a monthly report detailing the most prominent false claims and disinformation operations that have been monitored, as this comes in the midst of a fierce media war that has been raging between the warring parties on the ground in Sudan since April 15, 2023. The study monitored foreign actors, representing: "Russia - United Arab Emirates - Egypt - Ethiopia."

4.3. International and Regional Implications

Media misinformation is one of the tools of propaganda and psychological warfare directed at public opinion in circumstances of political crises and wars. Black propaganda, rumors, and fake news are used to mislead, distort facts, confuse matters, and cause political poisoning to confuse local, regional, and international public opinion (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). With the explosion of communication technology and digital transformation, the emergence of social networking sites, and the flow of information, the danger of media and information misinformation on public opinion has doubled due to the speed and ease of the flow of news and information in the virtual digital world in the Internet space or the global village (Grzywińska & Batorski, 2016). Despite the massive and unprecedented flow of information in the digital world, the world, without exception, has begun to suffer from what is known as information disorder and information imbalance, which, in its various forms, has dire consequences for journalism and the news industry (Kandel, 2020). It causes further erosion of confidence in the credibility of news, journalism, and journalists in favor of individuals or entities who share inaccurate, fabricated, or misleading information. Misinformation is considered one of the most prominent threats to democracy worldwide, as even countries with long-standing and established democracies have not been spared from its threat (Baron & Ish-Shalom, 2024).

The activities of media disinformation, particularly by Russia, have significantly influenced Sudan's international relations, both regionally and globally. In its regional environment, misinformation campaigns have exacerbated tensions with neighboring countries with whom Sudan shares historical and tribal connections (IWMI, 2024). For instance, Sudan and Chad share a long history of ethnic and tribal overlap, with many communities straddling the border. This shared history has often led to close ties but also to tensions, as is the case now. Similarly, Sudan and Ethiopia have a complex relationship due to their shared border and historical interactions (Berg, 2008). Misinformation also works to draw tensions between Sudan and other countries or regional organizations such as the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and countries such as the United States, the European Union, and others.

Chapter 5.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The disinformation dynamics used by Russia in Sudan highlight a broader strategy of hybrid and information warfare aimed at advancing its geopolitical goals. This is achieved by exploiting Sudan's political instability, economic challenges, and the ongoing conflict between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces since April 15, 2023. Russia leverages systematic media disinformation to secure access to strategic resources, such as Sudan's gold, while positioning itself as an alternative to Western influence, which it portrays as imperialistic. This manipulation extends beyond traditional media to social media platforms, particularly Facebook, where bots, fake accounts, and targeted propaganda campaigns amplify pro-Russian narratives.

Sudan's geopolitical importance and strategic Red Sea coastline, coupled with its abundant natural resources, have made it a focal point for international competition. Russia's activities in Sudan reflect a multi-faceted approach combining military support, economic partnerships, and disinformation campaigns that align with its broader global objectives.

The consequences of Russia's strategy are profound: it undermines Sudan's democratic aspirations, deepens societal divisions, and perpetuates cycles of conflict and dependency. To counter these challenges, Sudan needs a comprehensive approach that includes strengthening independent institutions, promoting media literacy, and fostering international cooperation to combat disinformation.

Addressing Russian disinformation in Sudan is not just a regional concern but a global imperative, as it reveals the interconnectedness of hybrid warfare tactics in shaping the political landscape. Understanding and countering these efforts requires vigilance, cooperation, and a commitment to promoting transparency, accountability, and democratic values in Sudan and beyond. The lack of binding international regulations on disinformation and the misuse of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, further complicates efforts to address these challenges. Countries undergoing democratic transitions, such as Sudan, face a compounded burden that hampers their ability to achieve sustainable development and political stability.

Information manipulation has strained Sudan's relations with neighboring countries such as Chad and Ethiopia. With which it has long-standing historical ties while also complicating its interactions with global powers and regional organizations. The interplay between disinformation and geopolitical interests has exacerbated tensions and threatened long-term peace and cooperation in the region.

5.1. Recommendations

Sudan must first establish democratic foundations for governance that are capable of adopting or strengthening legal regulations to define, criminalize, and punish media deception and disinformation as international crimes.

The most important thing in this context for Sudan and the countries of the region is to encourage media literacy and public awareness and to include educational initiatives that include curricula on how to identify, verify, and combat false information, as well as awareness of the dangers of disinformation and empowering societies to question and challenge misleading narratives.

It is essential for the concerned countries, as well as Sudan, to establish specialized units within state institutions to monitor, analyze, and effectively combat disinformation and to invest in advanced communication technologies and training programs for specialists in corporate communications as a necessity. In this context, it is necessary to cooperate and work together with international organizations, such as the United Nations, the African Union, and the European Union, to combat the global nature of disinformation in Sudan, which has been suffering from exploitation for decades, wars, economic and social backwardness, poverty, and underdevelopment, recognizing and addressing social and economic disparities, ethnic tensions, and historical grievances to reduce societal divisions exploited by Russia and other countries to exploit its natural resources and fostering an environment conducive to peace, stability, and democratic growth.

Poland, as an important and active member of the European Union, can play an important role in helping Sudan counter Russian disinformation by focusing on initiatives that strengthen the resilience of Sudanese institutions and media outlets, especially since Poland has long-standing historical ties with Sudan. Moreover, Poland should focus on implementing concrete and direct-impact projects, such as infrastructure development and educational exchange programs. Such initiatives demonstrate a genuine commitment to the well-being of Sudan and contribute to countering narratives that portray Russia as a defender of Sudanese interests against Western imperialism.

Poland could lead the establishment of an EU task force dedicated to combating media disinformation in Sudan. This team could provide the necessary expertise and develop strategies tailored to the Sudanese context. At the same time, Poland could actively support peace negotiations and conflict resolution in Sudan, thus strengthening its role as a compelling stabilizing actor. In addition, Poland can leverage its expertise in cultural diplomacy to foster good relations through cultural exchanges, providing scholarships, and organizing cultural initiatives that reflect a genuine partnership built on mutual respect and shared values.

Bibliography and Sources

1. ADF. (10.12.2024). Cyberattacks Target Sudan Media's Independent War Reporting. Africa Defense Forum.
<https://adf-magazine.com/2024/12/cyberattacks-target-sudan-medias-independent-war-reporting/>
2. Afriyie, F. A. (2024). Sudan: Rethinking the Conflict Between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs, 80(3), 439–456.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/09749284241264073>
3. Al Jazeera. (20.03.2024). Sudan one of the 'worst humanitarian disasters in recent memory'.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/20/sudan-is-one-of-the-worst-humanitarian-disasters-in-recent-memory-un>
4. Al-Awad, M. B. (10.12.2024). Alnizam Al'iilamiu Fi Alsudan "Athna" Alharb [The media system in Sudan during the war].
<http://institute.aljazeera.net/ar/ajr/article/2875>
5. Alrakoba. (17.04.2024). Musku Dalalat Alealama... Alquaat Alati Tuqatil Mae Aljaysh Alsudanii "Rusia" Walaysat" 'Uwkraniatan" [Moscow misled the world... The forces fighting with the Sudanese army are "Russian" and not "Ukrainian"]. Alrakoba Newspaper.
<https://www.alrakoba.net/31923795/موسکو-ضللت-العالم-القوات-التي-تقاتل-م/>
6. Ammar, A. (20.11.2023). At least 5 million children at the brink in Darfur as unchecked conflict worsens.
<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/least-5-million-children-brink-darfur-unchecked-conflict-worsens>
7. Baron, I. Z., & Ish-Shalom, P. (2024). Exploring the Threat of Fake News: Facts, Opinions, and Judgement. Political Research Quarterly, 77(2), 620–632.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129241234839>
8. Beam Reports. (2024, December 20). kayf tadur alharb al'iilamiat almuaziat bayn aljaysh alsudanii waldaem alsariei? [How is the parallel media war between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces going?].
<https://www.beamreports.com/2023/04/19/%d9%83%d9%8a%d9%81-%d8%aa%d8%af%d9%88%d8%b1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d8%b1%d8%a8-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a5%d8%b9%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%85%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d9%88%d8%a7%d8%b2%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a8%d9%8a%d9%86/>
9. Berg, P. (2008). The Dynamics of Conflict in the Tri-Border Region of the Sudan, Chad, and the Central African Republic. Country conflict-analysis studies (. 33–35). Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

10. Bhushan, T. (2024). Artificial Intelligence, Cyberspace and International Law. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, 21(2).
<https://doi.org/10.17304/ijil.vol21.2.3>
11. Concordiam, (11.12.2019). Defining Hybrid Warfare. Per Concordiam.
<https://perconcordiam.com/defining-hybrid-warfare/>
12. Doxsee, C. (2023). How Does the Conflict in Sudan Affect Russia and the Wagner Group?
<https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-does-conflict-sudan-affect-russia-and-wagner-group>
13. el-Battahani, A. H. (2023). The Dilemma of Political Transition in Sudan: An Analytical Approach. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).
<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2023.51>
14. Free Press Unlimited. (23.06.2023). The Sudan war is also a crisis for the safety of journalists.
<https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/current/sudan-war-also-crisis-safety-journalists>
15. Gallopin, J.-B. (2024). "The Massalit Will Not Come Home." Human Rights Watch.
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/05/09/massalit-will-not-come-home/ethnic-cleansing-and-crimes-against-humanity-el>
16. Grzywińska, I., & Batorski, D. (2016). How the Emergence of Social Networking Sites Challenges Agenda-Setting Theory. *Konteksty Społeczne*, 4, 19–32.
17. Ikenze, S.-A. (2022). Policy Choices in African Structural Adjustment: An Exploration of Sectoral Continuity [Elektronisk resurs]. Lund University.
18. International Media Support. (14.11.2007). International Media Support. IMS.
<https://www.mediasupport.org/publication/media-in-sudan-at-a-crossroads/>
19. IWMI. (2024, October 30). Misinformation deepens the impact of conflict and floods in Sudan. International Water Management Institute (IWMI).
<https://www.iwmi.org/blogs/misinformation-deepens-the-impact-of-conflict-and-floods-in-sudan/>
20. Jakubiak, E. (2022). HYBRID WARFARE AS A NEW TYPE OF ARMED CONFLICT IN THE MODERN WORLD. *National Security Studies*, 24(2), 71–82.
<https://doi.org/10.37055/sbn/151015>
21. Kandel, N. (2020). Information Disorder Syndrome and its Management. *JNMA: Journal of the Nepal Medical Association*, 58(224), 280–285.
<https://doi.org/10.31729/jnma.4968>
22. Kelley, M. J. (2024, May 29). Understanding Russian Disinformation and How the Joint Force Can Address It. US Army War College - Publications.
<https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/News/Display/Article/3789933/understanding-russian-disinformation-and-how-the-joint-force-can-address-it/>
23. Knight, T. (4.06.2021). Inauthentic Facebook assets promoted Russian interests in Sudan. DFRLab.
<https://medium.com/dfrlab/inauthentic-facebook-assets-promoted-russian-interests-in-sudan-2623c58b1f7f>

24. Lartey, S. (2024). Exploring the Spread of False Ideas on Social Media and the Necessity of Addressing Misinformation Through Regulatory Measures.

25. Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., Seifert, C. M., Schwarz, N., & Cook, J. (2012). Misinformation and Its Correction: Continued Influence and Successful Debiasing. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(3), 106–131.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612451018>

26. Marigliano, R., Ng, L. H. X., & Carley, K. M. (2024). Analyzing digital propaganda and conflict rhetoric: A study on Russia's bot-driven campaigns and counter-narratives during the Ukraine crisis. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 14(1), 170.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-024-01322-w>

27. McGlynn, J. (12.12.2024). Why Russia Markets Itself as an Anti-Colonial Power to Africans. *Foreign Policy*.
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/08/russia-ukraine-colonialism-diplomacy-africa/>

28. McGregor, A. (2024). Russia Switches Sides in Sudan War. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 21(102).
<https://jamestown.org/program/russia-switches-sides-in-sudan-war/>

29. Medow, Z. (2022). The Spread of Non-Violent Action: The Case of the 2018–2019 Revolution in Sudan. *Freedom House*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2022/civic-mobilizations-authoritarian-contexts/Sudan-summary>

30. Mendes, E. P. (2019). *Peace and Justice at the International Criminal Court: A Court of Last Resort*, Second Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783477098>

31. Nasr, M. (23.04.2023). In Sudan, he who has the gold makes the rules.
<https://en.majalla.com/node/289866/business-economy/sudan-he-who-has-gold-makes-rules>

32. Pettersson, N. E., Barbara Arvanitidis, Tamara Qiblawi, Gianluca Mezzofiore, Mohammed Abo Al Gheit, Marco Chacón, Natalie Croker, Henrik. (2022, July 29). Russia is plundering gold in Sudan to boost Putin's war effort in Ukraine. *CNN*.
<https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/29/africa/sudan-russia-gold-investigation-cmd-intl/index.html>

33. Philip, O. J. (7.06.2023). The silencing of Sudan's journalists—Again.
<http://institute.aljazeera.net/en/ajr/article/2216>

34. Plaut, M. (17.11.2024). Why the United Arab Emirates supports Sudan's Rapid Support Forces. Martin Plaut.
<https://martinplaut.com/2024/11/17/why-the-united-arab-emirates-supports-sudans-rapid-support-forces/>

35. Ramani, S. (11.07.2019). Moscow's Hand in Sudan's Future. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
<https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2019/07/moscows-hand-in-sudans-future?lang=en>

36. Saad, H. (8.11.2024). Azmat Khitab Alkarahiat Almutanamiat Fi Alsuwdan [Sudan's Growing Hate Speech Crisis]. Sudan Justice Hub.
<https://sudan-justice-hub.wayamo.com/ar/article/أزمة-خطاب-الكراهية-المتنامية-في-السودان/>

37. Sanchez, G., & Middlemass, K. (26.07.2022). Misinformation is eroding the public's confidence in democracy. Brookings.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/misinformation-is-eroding-the-publics-confidence-in-democracy/>

38. UNESCO. (18.06.2024). Upholding Press Freedom Amidst Conflict in Sudan.
<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/upholding-press-freedom-amidst-conflict-sudan>

39. Vasist, P. N., Chatterjee, D., & Krishnan, S. (2024). The Polarizing Impact of Political Disinformation and Hate Speech: A Cross-country Configural Narrative. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 26(2), 663–688.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-023-10390-w>

40. Vhumbunu, C. H., & Rudigi, J. R. (2019). Sustainability and Implications of the Sudan-South Sudan Secession: Perspectives from the Ground. *Journal of African Foreign Affairs*, 6(3), 23–42.

41. Wesolowski, K., & Gatanazi, E. (27.07.2023). Fact check: Russia's influence on Africa – DW – 07/27/2023. Dw.Com.
<https://www.dw.com/en/fact-check-russias-influence-on-africa/a-66310017>

42. Wither, J. K. (2016). Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare. *Connections*, 15(2), 73–87.

worlddata.info. (2024). Sudan: Country data and statistics. Worlddata.Info.
<https://www.worlddata.info/africa/sudan/index.php>

43. Yang, Y., McCabe, S., & Hindman, M. (2024). Does Russian Propaganda Lead or Follow? Topic Coverage, User Engagement, and RT and Sputnik's Agenda Influence on US Media. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 19401612241271070.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612241271074>