



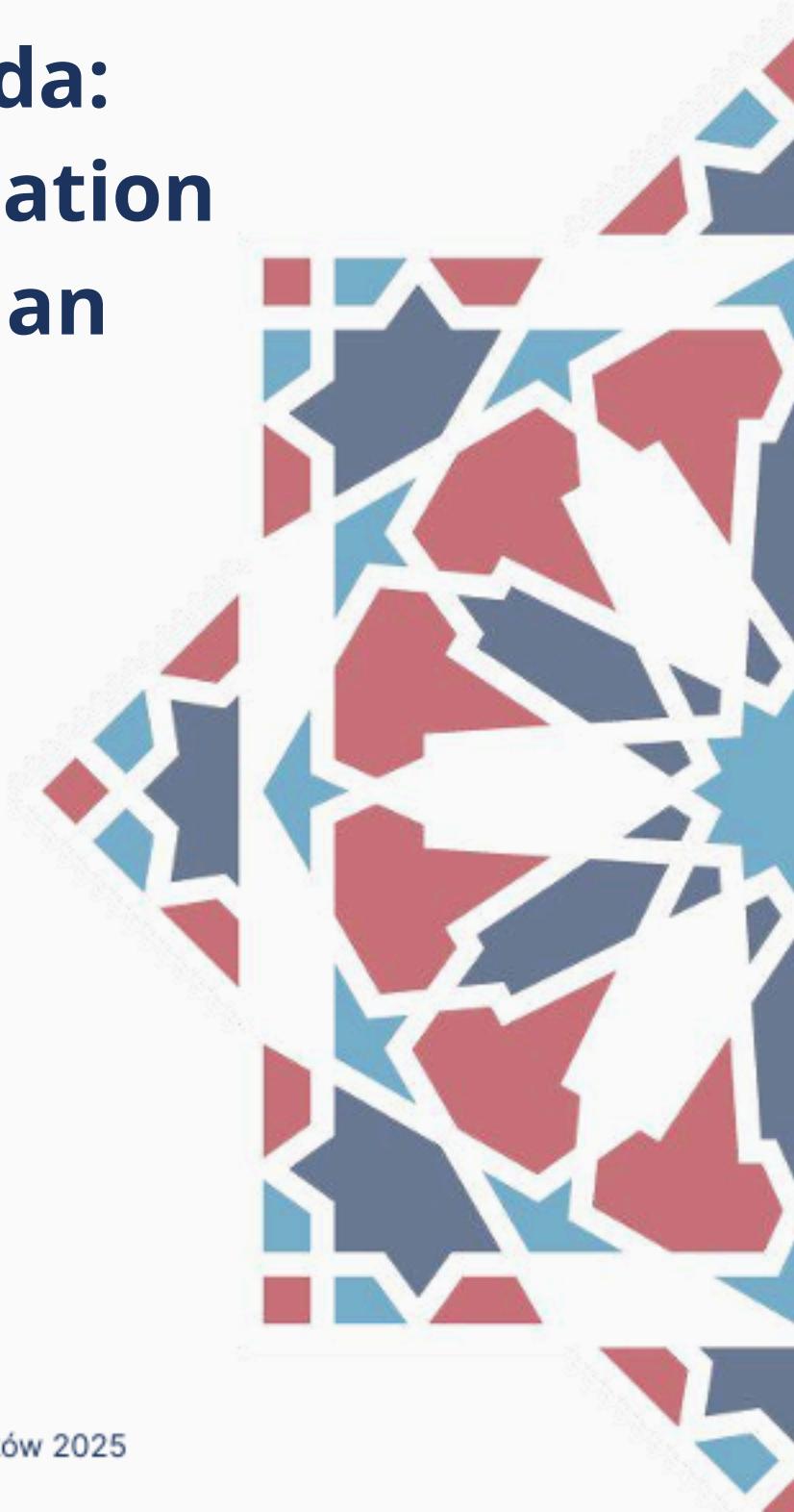
Instytut Badań
nad Turcją



Disinformation
in MENAT

Report

Soft Power and Hard Propaganda: Russia's Information Strategy in Jordan



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About the project



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This project was funded by the state budget as part of the competition organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, "Public Diplomacy 2024–2025 – The European Dimension and Countering Disinformation."

The publication solely reflects the views of the author and should not be regarded as representing the official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

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Introduction

In an era of rapidly changing information environments, disinformation has become one of the key tools of geopolitical influence used by states to achieve strategic objectives. Russia, with its long tradition of conducting information warfare, actively employs disinformation campaigns to shape narratives that serve its interests — not only in Europe and North America but also in the Middle East. Russia's presence in this region is neither new nor accidental; it is enduring and the result of a long-term political strategy. These activities form part of a broader rivalry with the West, in which Russia uses the Middle East to strengthen its global standing and to undermine the influence of the United States and the European Union.

Russia's involvement in the Middle East traces back to the Tsarist era, when Moscow aimed to access warm seas, control trade routes, and safeguard Orthodox communities. During the Soviet period, the Middle East gained even greater importance, becoming a major focus of Soviet foreign policy. Moscow supported countries like Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Libya — providing weapons, technical and military aid, and engaging politically in regional conflicts^[1], including the Arab–Israeli wars (1956, 1967, 1973), Yemen's civil war, and internal conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya ^[2]After the USSR's collapse in 1991, Russian activity in the region diminished considerably. For over a decade, Russia mainly maintained relations with three countries: Syria, Iran, and Turkey. The Russian naval base in Tartus, Syria, stayed operational until the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in December 2024; in early 2025, the new government ended the port maintenance contract^[3]. Collaboration with Iran focused largely on building the Bushehr nuclear power plant, while relations with Turkey revolved around economic cooperation^[4]. Although Moscow did not play a leading role in the Middle East at that time, it managed to keep a strategic foothold that allowed it to reassert itself more strongly when regional geopolitics began to shift. From the 2000s onwards, President Vladimir Putin systematically restored Russia's influence in the Middle East.

In 2005, Russia wrote off about 73 percent of Syria's debt, which allowed it to maintain influence in Damascus, continue arms sales, and secure strategic access to the port of Tartus^[5]. Simultaneously, Moscow strengthened its relations with other regional states, including Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, focusing on military, energy, and diplomatic cooperation^[6]. In 2013, Russia officially established a permanent naval squadron in the Mediterranean Sea, subordinate to the Black Sea Fleet, to maintain a continuous military presence in the region^[7]. This process reached its peak in 2015 with Russia's direct military involvement in the Syrian conflict — the deployment of armed forces, air defence systems, and combat aircraft solidified Moscow as the main supporter of Bashar al-Assad's regime^[8].

[1] E. Rumer, A. S. Weiss, Russia's Enduring Presence in the Middle East, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1 November 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/11/russias-middle-east-diplomacy-relationship>

[2] R. O. Freedman, The Soviet Union and the Middle East: The High Cost of Influence, "Naval War College Review", t. 24, nr 5, 1972, s. 17.

[3] Syria cancels port management contract with Russian firm, sources say, Reuters, 24 January 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/syria-cancels-port-management-contract-with-russian-firm-sources-say-2025-01-24/>

[4] G. Bahgat, Russia and the Middle East: Opportunities and Challenges, [w:] Russia's Global Reach: A Security and Statecraft Assessment, ed. G. E. Herd, 2021, s. 75–77.

[5] C. Hilleary, Second-guessing Vladimir Putin's Intentions in Syria, Voice of America, 27 September 2015. <https://www.voanews.com/a/second-guessing-vladimir-putins-intentions-in-syria/2981116.html>

[6] . Rumer, Russia in the Middle East: Jack of All Trades, Master of None, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 31 October 2019. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2019/10/russia-in-the-middle-east-jack-of-all-trades-master-of-none?>

[7] S. Blank, The Meaning of Russia's Naval Deployments in the Mediterranean, The Jamestown Foundation, 4 March 2016. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-meaning-of-russias-naval-deployments-in-the-mediterranean/>

[8] E. Rumer, ibid.

Meanwhile, Russia began positioning itself as a mediator in regional conflicts, contrasting its efforts with what it described as the West's interventionist and conditional policies. It aimed to present an image of a stable and predictable actor capable of engaging in dialogue without pushing ideological boundaries[9]. Following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the Middle East gained new geostrategic significance for the Kremlin. Under sanctions and conditions of international isolation, Russia increased its engagement with states in the region that avoided joining Western diplomatic efforts against Moscow. Cooperation with Iran became especially important: in January 2025, the two countries signed a treaty on strategic cooperation spanning both economic and military aspects[10]. Russia also actively used its relationships with Arab nations — especially Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia — to diminish international backing for Ukraine and spread anti-Western narratives across the region[11].

Jordan is particularly vulnerable to this type of influence. This analysis examines the nature, scale, and implications of Russian disinformation in Jordan, with particular focus on the presence and activity of pro-Russian narratives in the Jordanian mainstream media and in Russian outlets such as Sputnik and Russia Today.

The social media environment — which plays a key role in shaping the opinions of younger generations and facilitates the rapid spread of false information — was also addressed, albeit to a limited extent. The analysis was conducted within the context of three major conflicts exploited by Moscow: the war in Ukraine, the war in Syria, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The Kremlin consistently leverages these crises to undermine the credibility of Western states, strengthen its image as an alternative partner, and destabilise the strategic allies of the United States in the Middle East. Attention was given to the dominant pro-Russian narratives, the mechanisms of their dissemination, and the vulnerability of Jordanian institutions and public opinion to information manipulation. Understanding the mechanisms of Russian disinformation in Jordan is essential for developing effective strategies to counter external influence and protect the informational integrity of Middle Eastern states. This analysis not only enables the identification of specific actions undertaken by the Russian Federation but also situates them within the broader framework of hybrid threats confronting the countries of a region of growing strategic importance.

[9] E. Rumer, A. S. Weiss, *ibid*.

[10] Key provisions of Russia-Iran strategic cooperation treaty, Reuters, 17 January 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/key-provisions-russia-iran-strategic-cooperation-treaty-2025-01-17/>

[11] E. Rumer, A. S. Weiss, *ibid*.

Chapter 1

The Political and Media Landscape in Jordan

1.1. Political Background

Jordan, a Hashemite monarchy situated in the heart of the Middle East, has long served as an oasis of stability in a region characterised by geopolitical tensions and conflict. Traditionally regarded as a loyal ally of the United States, the country has in recent years demonstrated a gradual yet noticeable shift in its foreign policy. Amman has been steadily strengthening its ties with Russia, seeking a more balanced approach to international relations and fostering cooperation with multiple centres of influence. This does not signify a complete abandonment of its existing alliances but rather a conscious adaptation to the rapidly shifting global power dynamics.

Since the 1950s—virtually from the start of Jordan's independence—the United States has remained its primary strategic partner. In 2022, the two nations signed a new seven-year Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Partnership (covering fiscal years 2023–2029), under which Washington committed to providing Amman with USD 1.45 billion annually. Of this amount, USD 845 million was allocated for budgetary support and USD 425 million for military assistance[12]. Jordan is also among the main beneficiaries of the U.S. Foreign Military Financing programme. Through these funds, the country receives extensive military aid, including the modernisation of its air force (such as the delivery of F-16 Block 70 fighter jets), joint exercises, training, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism operations—particularly along its border with Syria[13].

These relations, however, have not been free of tension. In 2017, President Donald Trump's decision to relocate the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem and recognise the city as Israel's capital faced strong opposition from Amman. King Abdullah II repeatedly emphasised that the status of Jerusalem must be resolved within the framework of a Palestinian–Israeli settlement[14]. When, in 2025, the Trump administration proposed that Jordan—alongside Egypt—accept refugees from the Gaza Strip (potentially as many as 1.5 million people), King Abdullah firmly rejected the idea, describing it as tantamount to a “declaration of war”[15]. The divergence of positions on this issue—of fundamental importance to Jordan—became one of the main drivers behind Amman's search for new international partners who would not constrain its strategic autonomy. In this context, cooperation with Moscow began to gain importance. Although formal diplomatic relations between Jordan and Russia (formerly the USSR) were established as early as 1963, there was a noticeable revival after Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015. Faced with increasing threats along its northern border, Amman intensified its military dialogue with Moscow. The two countries collaborated in southern Syria: Russia supported local ceasefire agreements, while Jordan monitored security conditions and facilitated the return of refugees. Moscow also publicly endorsed Jordanian initiatives to rebuild Syrian territories and stabilise border regions[16].

[12] Jordan, US sign grant agreement worth \$845.1 million, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

https://www.mop.gov.jo/En/NewsDetails/Jordan_US_sign_grant_agreement_worth_8451_million

[13] U.S. Security Cooperation with Jordan, United States Department of State, 20 January 2025. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-jordan/>

[14] S. Al-Khalidi, Jordan's King warns Trump over moving U.S. embassy to Jerusalem: palace, Reuters, 5 December 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/jordans-king-warns-trump-over-moving-us-embassy-to-jerusalem-palace-idUSKBN1DZ2L7/>

[15] F. Bdour, Jordan's King Walks a Diplomatic Tightrope in Washington, United States Institute of Peace, 12 February 2025. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2025/02/jordans-king-walks-diplomatic-tightrope-washington?>

[16] Jordan, Russia set up mechanism of military coordination concerning south Syria, The Jordan Times, 24 October 2015. <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-russia-set-mechanism-military-coordination-concerning-south-syria>

Beyond military cooperation, Russia has also become an important economic partner for Jordan. In 2013, the government in Amman signed an agreement with Russia's Rosatom regarding the construction of the country's first nuclear power plant[17]. Although the project faced many challenges and was ultimately revised, it demonstrated Jordan's aim to diversify its energy sources by utilising technology from outside the Western sphere[18]. Economic cooperation, however, goes beyond the energy sector. In 2018, trade between the two nations exceeded USD 600 million. Jordan's main imports from Russia included grain, metals, and chemical products, while its exports mainly comprised fertilisers and vegetables. Moscow has also actively supported Amman's efforts to strengthen its relations with the Eurasian Economic Union. In 2017, the two countries signed a memorandum on establishing a free trade zone, creating new export opportunities for Jordanian companies in post-Soviet markets[19].

It is also important to recognise the often-overlooked historical context. One of the most significant ethnic minorities in Jordan is the Circassians — descendants of a community expelled from the Caucasus after a brutal war with the Russian Empire in the 19th century. As a result of mass deportations in 1864, hundreds of thousands of Circassians were forced to leave their homeland and settle within the Ottoman Empire, including in the territory of modern-day Jordan[20]. Their presence played a vital role in the development of modern Amman, which they helped to establish as one of the first settler groups. Today, the Circassian population in Jordan is estimated to be between 100,000 and 170,000 people, and their influence remains evident in the armed forces and public administration[21]. Although some Circassians still reside in Russia, the diaspora — particularly in Jordan and Turkey — generally maintains a critical stance towards Moscow. The memory of the 19th-century genocide remains a key part of their collective identity. However, in recent years, Russia has attempted to improve relations with the Circassian diaspora by providing educational scholarships, inviting community members to cultural events, and funding projects related to national heritage. These efforts, however, are widely seen by the community as part of a broader soft-power strategy aimed at reshaping historical narratives and diminishing critical attitudes towards Moscow[22].

Jordan's foreign policy — including its relations with Russia — is characterised by significant pragmatism. King Abdullah II, while maintaining close ties with the United States[23] and regularly attending NATO summits[24], has not ceased dialogue with Moscow. He continues to communicate with President Vladimir Putin, and their most recent direct meeting took place on 24 August 2021 during the Army-2021 military-technical forum in Moscow. The discussions addressed the situation in Syria, economic cooperation, and possible solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict[25].

[17] Jordan Signs \$10 Billion Nuclear Power Plant Deal with Russia's Rosatom, The Moscow Times, 25 March 2015.

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/03/25/jordan-signs-10-billion-nuclear-power-plant-deal-with-russias-rosatom-a45116>

[18] M. Ghazal, Funding issues behind scrapping nuclear deal with Russia - JAEC, The Jordan Times, 12 June 2018. <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/funding-issues-behind-scrapping-nuclear-deal-russia---jaec>

[19] EEC exploring EAEU countries' interest in concluding free trade agreement with Jordan, 24 March 2025.

<https://eec.eaeunion.org/en/news/EEK-prorabotayet-vopros-zainteresovannosti-stran-eaes-v-zaklyuchenii-soglasheniya-osvobodnoy-torgovli/>

[20] E. Littell, The Circassian Exodus, Boston 1864, s. 468.

[21] V. Hamed-Troyansky, Circassian Refugees and the Making of Amman, 1878-1914, "International Journal of Middle East Studies", t. 49, nr 4, 2017, s. 608-610.

[22] P. Goble, Moscow Faces Increased Difficulties in Countering Circassian National Movement, The Jamestown Foundation, 23 May 2023. <https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-faces-increased-difficulties-in-countering-circassian-national-movement/>

[23] J. M. Sharp, Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations, Library of Congress, 2025, s. 3-4.

[24] Visit to NATO by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, NATO, 30 November 2024. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_230915.htm

[25] Southern Syria High on Agenda of Summit Between Abdullah and Putin, The Syrian Observer, 24 August 2021. <https://syrianobserver.com/foreign-actors/southern-syria-high-on-agenda-of-summit-between-abdullah-and-putin.html>

These actions reflect Jordan's broader foreign policy strategy, based on a multi-vector approach and a deliberate balancing act among global powers. In a region where U.S. influence is gradually waning and both Russia and China are steadily increasing their presence, Amman has consistently sought to maintain its independence — avoiding dependence on any single side. Such flexibility allows Jordan to benefit from multiple partnerships: securing security and financial aid from the United States, developing energy and political links with Russia, and sustaining strong trade relations with the European Union and the Gulf states.

1.2. The Media “Landscape” in Jordan

The media environment in Jordan is lively but deeply divided, with the flow of information largely influenced by political factors and the growing significance of digital platforms. According to a 2024 report by Internews, Jordan has 39 satellite TV channels (16 domestic and 23 international), 40 radio stations, 19 print publications, and 122 licensed online news outlets[26]. State-owned media dominate the sector, including JRTV, Al-Mamlaka, the Petra News Agency, and the daily newspapers Al-Rai and Ad-Dustour. Although some of these outlets officially declare editorial independence, their programmes often mirror government policies, and their editors-in-chief are appointed either by the authorities or by individuals closely connected to them[27]. The private sector includes, among others, Roya TV and Al-Ghad, which try to maintain a certain level of autonomy—especially through their digital operations. However, their overall influence on shaping public debate remains limited. An alternative to mainstream media is provided by independent online platforms such as 7iber, AmmanNet, Aramram, and ARIJ (Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism), which focus on investigative journalism, social issues, and civil rights[28].

Although the constitution formally guarantees media pluralism, in practice, freedom of expression and journalistic independence remain restricted—mainly through restrictive legislation and direct government pressure. In June 2025, the Media Commission blocked access to at least 12 independent online news portals without providing any official explanation or court order. This action was condemned by international organisations as a clear violation of Article 15 of the Jordanian Constitution and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Jordan is a signatory[29]. Simultaneously, working conditions for journalists have become increasingly difficult due to the tightening of cybercrime laws. The 2023 amendment to the Cybercrime Law introduced hefty fines and prison sentences for publishing “fake news,” “inciting hatred,” or “undermining national unity”—terms that remain vague and broad[30].

[26] A. Al-Kaisy, Information Ecosystem Assessment - Jordan Media Landscape, Internews, 2024, s. 12-13.

[27] Jordan, Reporters Without Borders, 2025. <https://rsf.org/en/country/jordan>

[28] A. Al-Kaisy, *ibid.*

[29] Jordan: Lift ban on news sites and protect the right to freedom of expression, Article 19, 23 May 2025. <https://www.article19.org/resources/jordan-lift-ban-on-news-sites-protect-free-expression/>

[30] Jordan: Marking a year of oppression, fresh calls to scrap Cybercrime Law, Article 19, 13 September 2024. <https://www.article19.org/resources/jordan-fresh-calls-to-scrap-cybercrime-law/>

Using these provisions, authorities have detained several journalists, including Hiba Abu Taha and Ahmed Al-Zoubi, accused of posting “harmful content” on social media[31]. Legal pressure often results in self-censorship—many journalists and editorial teams deliberately avoid political or socially sensitive topics due to fear of legal and financial repercussions. High licensing costs, obligatory membership in the Jordan Press Association, and systematic monitoring of digital content have established an environment that effectively restricts editorial independence and freedom of expression[32]. Due to restrictions on traditional media, digital platforms and social networks are becoming increasingly important in Jordan. According to the 2024 Internews report, younger Jordanians now mainly rely on mobile applications and social media for their information, valuing the speed, accessibility, and local focus of the content. At the same time, trust in state-owned media continues to decline, as these outlets are widely seen as biased and closely aligned with government narratives[33]. While this shift promotes greater democratisation of access to information, it also poses significant risks: heightened exposure to disinformation, foreign influence, and propaganda activities.

[31] M. Al-Shawabkeh, Freedom of the Press in Jordan and Unconstitutional Interpretations, Al Jazeera Media Institute, 8 November 2024. <https://institute.aljazeera.net/en/ajr/article/2836>

[32] Jordan, Reporters Without Borders, *ibid.*

[33] A. Al-Kaisy, *ibid.*

Chapter 2

Russian Disinformation in Jordan: Mechanisms and Objectives

In recent years, Russia has intensified its information operations in the Middle East, with Jordan emerging as one of the main targets of these efforts. Although the country rarely features in geopolitical analyses, its strategic importance as a stable Western ally and partner of the United States makes it an appealing arena for Kremlin influence campaigns. According to a RAND Corporation report, Russia conducts a global, systematic disinformation campaign through social media, alternative communication channels, and advanced digital technologies. In the Middle East, these operations are described as “coherent, long-term, and deliberate,” aiming not only to create a positive image of Russia but also to undermine trust in the West, fuel social polarisation, and weaken the stability of U.S.-aligned states[34]. These efforts have obviously increased since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. During this time, Moscow used regional crises—such as the war in Syria and the escalation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict—as narrative tools to boost its image as a more “understanding” and dependable partner for Arab states. This rhetoric often accuses the West of hypocrisy, double standards, and a lack of genuine concern for civilian populations[35].

Russia primarily disseminates disinformation through its Arabic-language media outlets, notably Sputnik and Russia Today. According to the Nielsen Arab Study conducted in mid-2014, Russia Today ranked among the three most-watched news channels in Arab countries, including Jordan[36]. Analyses by The New Arab indicate that the channel publishes two to three times more content daily than other leading regional outlets such as Al Jazeera[37]. Within this context, Jordanian newsrooms rely heavily on foreign sources: up to 30% of published information stems from international agencies, with 8% originating directly from Russian media. Essentially, a significant portion of content reaches Jordanian audiences almost directly from Moscow, often without substantial editorial processing[38].

A key element of Russia’s influence strategy in Jordan is its activity on social media. According to a 2021 report by the Oxford Internet Institute, Russia is among the most active nations engaging in coordinated digital manipulation[39]. To achieve this, bots, fake accounts, and fabricated materials are employed—carefully tailored to local conditions and the current political environment. These tactics seek to reinforce pro-Russian narratives, undermine trust in the West, and deepen divisions within Jordanian society. The Russian information campaign is especially effective in Jordan, where conservative social values remain prevalent. Moscow aims to position itself as a defender of traditional norms and an opponent of Western liberalism. This narrative resonates particularly in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, where Russia seeks to portray itself as a more balanced and fairer partner than the United States[40].

[34] Great-Power Competition and Conflict in the Middle East, RAND Corporation, 2023, s. 111.

[35] E. Janadze, The digital Middle East: Another front in Russia’s information war, Middle East Institute, 19 April 2022. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/digital-middle-east-another-front-russias-information-war>

[36] RT Arabic Is Among Top-3 Most Watched News Channels in 6 Arabic Countries, PR Newswire, 23 February 2015. <https://www.prnewswire.co.uk/news-releases/rt-arabic-is-among-top-3-most-watched-news-channels-in-6-arabic-countries-293742441.html>

[37] T. O. Falk, The Ukraine war and Russia’s disinformation campaign in the Middle East, The New Arab, 7 September 2022. <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/russias-disinformation-campaign-middle-east>

[38] A. K. M. Ahmad, Jordanian Newspapers’ frames and treatment of the Russian–Ukrainian war: A content analysis into the online version of Jordanian daily newspapers, „Zarqa Journal for Research and Studies in Humanities”, t. 24, nr 3, 2024, s. 638.

[39] Cyber Troops Annual Report 2020, Oxford Internet Institute, 2021, s. 5.

[40] Ibid., s. 11.

For years, Russia has also been steadily extending its presence in the Middle East's information space through both disinformation and the tools of soft power. In Jordan—as in other countries in the region—Russian cultural and educational initiatives have become increasingly prominent, aimed at cultivating a favourable image of Moscow and gaining the support of local elites and public opinion. Scholarship programmes, events organised by the Russian House (formerly the Russian Centre for Science and Culture[41]), and joint academic projects are part of this wider effort[42]. Official communication channels of Russian state institutions—including the social-media accounts of the Russian Embassy in Amman on Facebook[43], X (formerly Twitter[44]), and Instagram[45]—are a crucial part of this strategy. The content posted there, in Arabic, frequently criticises the West, supports messages aligned with the Kremlin's narrative, and influences Jordanian perceptions of international affairs.

[41] The official Facebook page of the Russian Cultural Center in Amman. <https://www.facebook.com/RussianCulturalCenterAmman>

[42] J. Daly, Russian House, Moscow's Global Propaganda Machine Disguised as a Humanitarian Organization, United24, 28 February 2025. <https://united24media.com/war-in-ukraine/russian-house-moscow-s-global-propaganda-machine-disguised-as-a-humanitarianorganization-6295>

[43] The official Facebook page of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Amman. <https://www.facebook.com/RusEmbJordan>

[44] The official X (formerly Twitter) account of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Amman. <https://x.com/RusEmbJordan>

[45] The official Instagram account of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Amman. <https://www.instagram.com/rusembjor/>

Chapter 3

Russian Disinformation in Jordan: Examples

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, combined with the Kremlin's earlier intervention in Syria, has considerably strengthened Moscow's presence in the Middle East's information sphere—including in Jordan—turning it into a battleground for competing narratives. A key tool of this influence is the Arabic-language editions of Russian state media outlets such as Sputnik and Russia Today. Their content is widely reproduced by Jordanian news portals and newspapers, often presented as standard news agency dispatches. In this way, Russian narratives—often lacking credible factual basis—enter the local information ecosystem, taking on an appearance of neutrality and credibility. This process extends beyond social media and informal content sharing to include formal media structures. Cooperation agreements between Russian broadcasters and Jordanian institutions have become a key method of influence. In May 2024, in Amman, the Petra News Agency signed a partnership agreement with Russia Today, covering content exchange, joint event organisation, and journalist training[46].

Just a few months later, a similar memorandum was announced by Roya Media Group—one of the country's largest private media conglomerates[47]. Initiatives of this kind not only boost the visibility of Russian narratives in Jordan's media environment but also give them institutional legitimacy, enabling broader dissemination of content aligned with the Kremlin's propaganda line. Research examining how three Jordanian online newspapers—Al-Rai, Ad-Dustour, and Al-Ghad—covered the Russian invasion of Ukraine reveals that, despite editorial efforts to appear neutral, the published content often allows space for Russian disinformation[48]. The most common theme focused on the bombing of Ukraine by Russian forces, with a primary interpretive frame centred on military-security concerns. Alongside this, political and economic aspects were also addressed, highlighting the war's effect on the international order and regional stability[49]. This framing—favouring strategic and military issues while minimising legal and moral considerations—obscured Russia's role as an aggressor. Consequently, the coverage increasingly aligned with the Kremlin's propaganda, depicting the war not as an invasion, but as a “special military operation” [50].



Graphic 1: “Putin: The decision to launch a ‘special operation’ in Ukraine was difficult but necessary.”
(Jfra News, June 17, 2022)

[46] Petra, RT Arabic Sign Cooperation Agreement, Petra – Jordan News Agency, 21 May 2024. https://www.petra.gov.jo/Include/InnerPage.jsp?ID=60123&lang=en&name=en_news

[47] Roya Media Group and RT Arabic sign content exchange deal, Roya News, 10 March 2025. <https://en.royanews.tv/news/58048>

[48] A. K. M. Ahmad, *ibid.*, s. 629.

[49] *Ibid.*, s. 636.

[50] <https://jfranews.com.jo/article/371569>

Rising energy and food prices, global economic instability, and increasing tensions in international relations were identified as the main consequences of the conflict[51]. While these outcomes are genuine effects of Russian aggression, the way they were portrayed often echoed Moscow's narrative—shifting responsibility for the outbreak of the war onto the West.



Graphic 2: "Has Jordan Coped with the Economic Consequences of the War in Ukraine on Its First Anniversary?" (Ad-Dustour, February 22, 2023)

This type of messaging also spread through Jordanian media. An example is a report published by Roya News on 26 February 2022, which—citing Sputnik as its source—claimed that the missile that hit a residential building in Kyiv was not Russian[52]. However, reports from international outlets, including Reuters[53] and Al Jazeera[54], indicated there was no evidence to suggest the attack was a "mistake" by Ukrainian forces. Based on the available information, the Roya News report effectively echoed a Russian propaganda narrative—shifting responsibility from the aggressor to the victim.



Graphic 3: "Sputnik: The Missile That Hit a Residential Building in Kyiv Is Not Russian – Video" (Roya News, February 26, 2022)

[51] <https://www.addustour.com/articles/1332085>

[52] <https://beta.royanews.tv/news/271775>

[53] No deaths from strike on residential building in Kyiv – Ukrainian government adviser, Reuters, 26 February 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/no-deaths-strike-residential-building-kyiv-ukrainian-government-adviser-2022-02-26/>

[54] Kyiv residential tower hit by missile as fighting rages: Mayor, Al Jazeera, 26 February 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/26/kyiv-residential-tower-hit-by-missile-as-fighting-rages-mayor>

Meanwhile, a Roya News article published on 28 February 2022, citing the Russian news agency Sputnik, reported that—following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine—thousands of Ukrainian Jews were planning to move to Israel. The article also mentioned the Jewish Agency, providing figures and details about organisational measures such as the establishment of special assistance points at the borders[55]. This messaging aligned with the broader strategy of Russian disinformation, which aimed to undermine the credibility and unity of the Ukrainian state. The narrative highlighted the supposed weakness of state institutions and the population's unpreparedness to defend the country, while reports of emigration were shown as evidence of social disintegration. In this way, Ukraine was depicted as a state in collapse, distracting public attention from Russia's responsibility for the aggression and presenting an image of an internally fragile society. Additionally, the same Roya News article featured a photograph of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky with leaders of the Jewish community, which enhanced the story's emotional impact and framed it within a specific interpretive context.



Graphic 4: “Sputnik: Over 5,000 Ukrainians Apply for Emigration to the Occupying State [Israel]”
(Roya News, February 28, 2022)

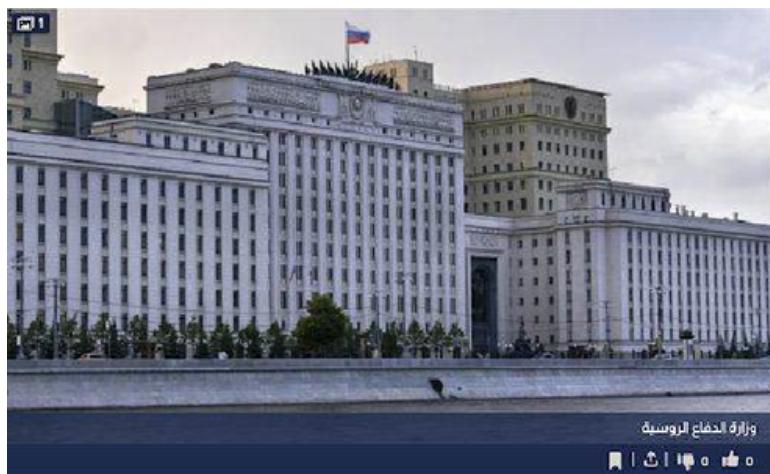
An even more striking example of Russian disinformation appeared in Roya News publications from March 10, 2022, concerning alleged biological laboratories operating in Ukraine. The portal published statements from the Russian Ministry of Defence, which included claims about “tagged birds,” “secret biological weapons projects,” and “American biological laboratories”[56]. These narratives were unequivocally refuted by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, which confirmed that there is no evidence of any biological weapons programme in Ukraine[57]. Roya News also disseminated additional materials based on reports from the Russian agency Sputnik, thereby amplifying Kremlin propaganda and presenting it as credible information within Jordan's media environment. Former Russian senator Frants Klintsevich claimed in these reports that the Russian-Ukrainian war—allegedly initiated at the request of two self-proclaimed republics in Donbas—was intended to prevent the establishment of an American military laboratory producing biological weapons in Ukraine[58]. Although these claims lacked factual basis, they were presented as the equivalent position of one of the parties to the conflict. In this way, Russia constructed an image of itself as a moral guardian, protecting the world from a supposed Western threat.

[55] <https://royanews.tv/news/272014>

[56] <https://royanews.tv/news/272953>

[57] United Nations Not Aware of Any Biological Weapons Programmes, Disarmament Chief Affirms as Security Council Meets to Address Related Concerns in Ukraine, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 11 March 2022. <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14827.doc.htm>

[58] <https://royanews.tv/news/272093>



Graphic 5: "The Russian Ministry of Defence Reported Information on Biological Weapons Projects Conducted in Ukraine."

(Roya News, March 10, 2022)

الدفاع الروسية تكشف تفاصيل مشاريع الأسلحة البيولوجية في أوكرانيا

On Jordanian news portals, including Ammon News, reports regularly appeared that echoed the Russian narrative about the alleged necessity of "denazifying" Ukraine. These outlets also published stories—citing the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs—claiming that Israeli mercenaries were allegedly fighting in Ukraine alongside the Azov Regiment, which Moscow consistently labels as "Nazi" [59].



Graphic 6: "Russia: Israeli Mercenaries Fight
Alongside the 'Nazi' Ukrainian Battalion."
(Ammon News, May 4, 2022)

[59] <https://www.ammonnews.net/article/679594>

A few days earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, in an interview with the Italian channel Rete 4, claimed that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky—despite his Jewish heritage[60]—“could be a Nazi,” and that Adolf Hitler allegedly had Jewish roots. Such statements found a receptive audience in Jordan. On May 8, 2022, Muhammad Kharroub, a columnist for Al-Rai, wrote that “Lavrov rightly said that the fact that Zelensky is Jewish does not mean he cannot be a Nazi.” Another Al-Rai columnist, Raja Talab, also endorsed Lavrov’s remarks, describing his claim that “Hitler had Jewish blood” as bold and—according to him—supported by “historical evidence” [61]. These examples illustrate that Russian propaganda narratives resonated positively in Jordan and were further reinforced by local commentators.

As part of this broader disinformation campaign, the “Matryoshka” operation targeted fact-checking organizations, including the Jordanian platform Misbar. An investigation by The New Arab[62] revealed that a network of accounts on X (formerly Twitter) inundated fact-checkers with fabricated content about Ukraine to divert their attention and exhaust their resources. Manipulated videos and images were used for this purpose and submitted for verification. One such case involved a request to verify an alleged mural in Paris depicting Volodymyr Zelensky sitting on the lap of Joseph Goebbels[63]. Misbar[64], however, determined that the mural did not exist and that the image was a photomontage circulated by pro-Russian accounts.



Graphic 7: Alleged graffiti in Paris depicting Volodymyr Zelensky sitting on the lap of Joseph Goebbels (X, September 22, 2023; link inactive as of August 27, 2025)

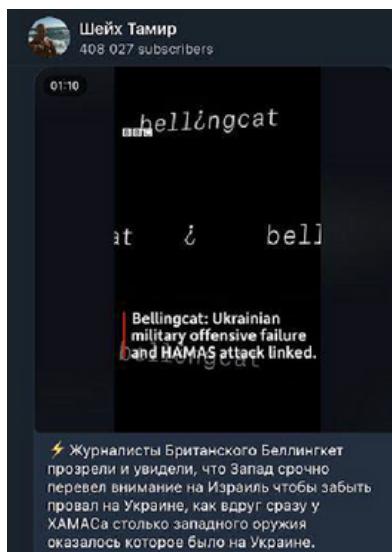
[60] K. Zielińska, Izrael wobec antysemickich wypowiedzi Ławrowa, Center for Eastern Studies, 5 May 2022. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2022-05-05/izrael-wobec-antysemickich-wypowiedzi-lawrowa>

[61] Antisemitic Messaging in Jordanian State Daily: Lavrov's Claim That Hitler Was Jewish Is Correct; Israel Supports A Neo-Nazi Regime, MEMRI, 12 May 2022. https://www.memri.org/reports/antisemitic-messaging-jordanian-state-daily-lavrovs-claim-hitler-was-jewish-correct-israel#_edn3

[zelenskyy-and-goebbels-in-paris-is-fake](https://www.rferl.org/a/zelenskyy-and-goebbels-in-paris-is-fake/31000001.html)

In their coverage of the conflict in the Gaza Strip, Jordanian news outlets consistently amplified Moscow's position, often relying on inaccurate or unverified information. On October 18, 2023, immediately after the explosion in the courtyard of the al-Ahli hospital in Gaza, Jordanian media published conflicting reports regarding responsibility for the incident. Roya News[65] released an article quoting statements from Vladimir Putin suggesting that Israel was to blame for the explosion. On the same day, the outlet[66] also cited remarks by U.S. President Joe Biden, who—referring to available U.S. intelligence—stated that Israel was not responsible and that the explosion had been caused by Palestinian actors. In the following days, independent analyses began to debunk these narratives. An Associated Press investigation[67]—based on video recordings, satellite imagery, and on-site material—concluded that the most likely cause was a misfired rocket launched from the Gaza Strip. A similar assessment was presented by French military intelligence[68], which determined that the explosion had been caused by a Palestinian rocket with a small warhead, explaining both the limited crater and the restricted extent of the damage.

A few days later, on 22 October 2023, the Jordanian daily Al-Ghad[69] published an interview with Russian commentator Ildar Murtazin, who claimed that Hamas and Hezbollah had been buying stolen weapons from Ukraine on the black market. Independent verifications consistently confirmed that the materials allegedly supporting this claim were fabricated. Reuters[70] exposed a fake article impersonating The Washington Post, reporting supposed arms deliveries from Ukraine to Hamas. Additionally, a video designed to look like BBC coverage, showing a Ukrainian politician as an alleged arms supplier to Hamas, was conclusively identified as inauthentic and described as part of a coordinated disinformation campaign by multiple sources, including the Associated Press[71].



Graphic 8: "Bellingcat journalists opened their eyes and noticed that the West suddenly shifted attention to Israel to forget about its failure in Ukraine, while Hamas suddenly came into possession of so many Western weapons that were previously in Ukraine." (Fabricated BBC video, Telegram, October 10, 2023)
<https://leadstories.com/hoax-alert/2023/10/fact-check-bellingcat-did-not-conclude-ukraines-muddled-weapons-to-hamas.html>

[65] <https://beta.royanews.tv/news/310972>

[66] <https://royanews.tv/news/310960>

[67] M. Biesecker, New AP analysis of last month's deadly Gaza hospital explosion rules out widely cited video, Associated Press, 22 November 2023.

[68] J. Irish, French military intelligence says Israeli strike not behind Gaza hospital blast, Reuters, 20 October 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/french-military-intelligence-says-israeli-strike-not-behind-gaza-hospital-blast-2023-10-20/>

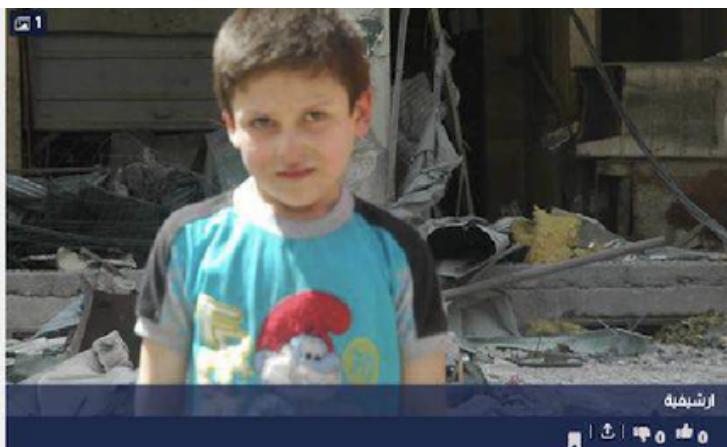
[69] <https://alghad.com/Section-199/1460523>

[70] Fact Check: Washington Post headline about Ukraine-Hamas weapon supply is fake, Reuters, 25 November 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/fact-check/washington-post-headline-about-ukraine-hamas-weapon-supply-is-fake-2023-11-25/>

[71] P. Marcelo, Fact Check: BBC did not report that Ukraine is sending arms to Hamas, a video was fabricated, Associated Press, 11 October 2023. <https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-israel-hamas-ukraine-russia-weapons-265852026856>

Another area in which Russian narratives were strongly present in Jordanian media was the war in Syria. In 2018–2019, Roya News[72] and Ammon News[73] reproduced the Kremlin's claim that the Syrian Civil Defence—known as the White Helmets—had staged the chemical attacks in Douma. As part of this narrative, Russia cited the testimony of 11-year-old Hassan Diab, a boy previously seen in footage from the attack, asserting that he had been used in a staged event orchestrated by the White Helmets—allegedly proving that the Douma incident had been fabricated[74].

However, findings by international institutions unequivocally refuted these accusations. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirmed that on April 7, 2018, a chemical attack using chlorine gas did occur in Douma, Syria[75]. In 2023, a special investigative team of the organisation concluded that the attack had been carried out by Syrian government forces, who dropped two chlorine cylinders from helicopters onto residential buildings[76]. Jordan played a particularly notable role in this context. In July 2018, Amman agreed to accept hundreds of members of the White Helmets and their families, evacuated from Syria as part of an operation coordinated by Western countries with Israeli support. This decision was presented as a gesture of humanitarian solidarity[77]. At the same time, however, Jordanian media continued to circulate messages echoing Russian narratives that questioned the credibility of the White Helmets. This discrepancy demonstrates how strongly Russian propaganda can shape local media discourse—even in a country actively involved in humanitarian efforts for the victims of the Syrian war[78].



Graphic 9: "Russia Releases Footage of a Syrian Child Allegedly Witnessing a Staged Attack in Douma." (Roya News, April 19, 2018)

روسيا تكشف تسجيلاً لطفل سوري يقول إنه شاهد على فبركة هجوم دوما

نشر: 2018-04-19 21:10 | عربي |

[72] <https://royanews.tv/news/153011>

[73] <https://www.ammonnews.net/article/440980>

[74] P. Reevell, Russia accused of 'obscene masquerade' after flying in alleged witnesses to Syrian chemical attack, ABC News, 26 April 2018. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/russia-accused-obscene-masquerade-flying-alleged-witnesses-syrian/story?id=54748334>

[75] Report of the Fact-Finding Mission regarding the incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 April 2018, S/1731/2019, Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, 2019, s. 4.

[76] OPCW releases third report by Investigation and Identification Team: Reasonable grounds to identify Syrian Arab Air Forces as perpetrators of 2018 Douma chemical attack, Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, 27 January 2023. <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2023/01/opcw-releases-third-report-investigation-and-identification-team>; <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2023/01/opcw-releases-third-report-investigation-and-identification-team>

[77] D. Williams, S. Al-Khalidi, Syrian 'White Helmets' Flee to Jordan with Israeli, Western Help, Reuters, 22 July 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/syrian-white-helmets-flee-to-jordan-with-israeli-western-help-idUSKBN1KC060/>

[78] Sputnik Falsey Accuses U.N. of Supporting the White Helmet Disinfo Campaign Sputnik, Itself, Spreads, Voice of America, 16 August 2018. <https://www.voanews.com/a/fact-check-sputnik-accuses-un-of-supporting-the-white-helmet-disinfo/6741903.html>

Russian disinformation had reached Jordan even earlier, appearing in reports directly related to the country itself. In 2017, Sputnik published a false story claiming that Jordan had been criticised by Saudi intelligence chief Khaled Humaidan—an allegation later debunked by the Jordanian fact-checking organisation Akeed[79]. This demonstrates that Russian propaganda has not always been confined to international affairs but has also targeted Jordan directly. A similar manipulation occurred a year earlier, when Russia Today published an infographic titled “The 10 Smartest Arab Countries by IQ,” placing Jordanians in fourth place alongside Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The material provided no sources, methodology, or publication date. An analysis conducted by Akeed revealed that the data originated from a 2013 Good Net report, which had already been widely discussed in Jordanian media several years earlier[80]. Russia Today reused this information and presented it as current, thereby misleading readers and distorting reality.

Russian disinformation in Jordan functions on two levels: institutional and grassroots. It relies on official partnerships between Russian media outlets and Jordanian agencies and TV stations, and it also spreads via social media networks. Nevertheless, it faces resistance from local fact-checking platforms such as Misbar and Fatabyyano, which systematically debunk false narratives. Despite these efforts, monitoring by Akeed shows that in the first half of 2025, the Jordanian information environment recorded up to 547 instances of manipulated information[81]—highlighting a high level of audience vulnerability to simplified messages that blame the West for the war and depict Russia as the victim. Such narratives achieve a “normalization effect” when local media—aiming for speed and perceived neutrality—reproduce the messaging of only one side of the conflict. As a result, Russian narratives in Jordan not only influence public opinion but also adapt to the local context, weakening societal resilience against disinformation and placing Amman in a challenging position between cooperating with the West and maintaining relations with Moscow.

[79] H. Assal, Story on Saudi Intelligence Chief Criticizing Jordan "Fabricated", Akeed, 12 February 2017. <https://akeed.jo/en/post/> خبر-انتقاد-رئيس-الاستخبارات-السعودية

[80] A. Ziadat, Jordanians Have Fourth Highest IQ Among Arab Peoples...Study Republished Three Times Since 2006, Akeed, 18 November 2017. https://www.akeed.jo/en/post/1569/Jordanians_Have_Fourth_Highest_IQ_Among_Arab_Peoples_Study_Republished_Three_Times_Since_2006

[81] AKEED documents 547 rumours in first half of 2025, Petra – Jordan News Agency, 23 July 2025. https://www.petra.gov.jo/include/InnerPage.jsp?ID=73848&lang=en&name=en_news

Chapter 4

The Impact of Russian Disinformation on Public Opinion in Jordan

Russian disinformation in Jordan is becoming an increasingly serious challenge, especially amid rising distrust in traditional sources of information. According to a 2023 Internews report, Jordanian society shows low levels of trust in both local and international media. Many Jordanians see the media as tools of political influence, which has led to a growing tendency to avoid political news altogether. However, the lack of verification mechanisms and dependence on biased outlets weaken social resilience to disinformation while also increasing susceptibility to alternative narratives—including those promoted by the Russian Federation[82].

In Arabic-language pro-Russian media, such as Russia Today and Sputnik, Russia is consistently depicted as a close ally of Arab nations, an opponent of Western imperialism, and a supporter of the Palestinian cause. These narratives mainly reach audiences disillusioned with U.S. and EU policies in the Middle East. As mentioned earlier, Russian media do not restrict themselves to promoting pro-Russian content; their main aim is to systematically weaken the credibility of Western information sources, diminish trust in institutions, and build an alternative vision of the international order—a multipolar world where Russia is seen as a stabilising force and a counterweight to Western dominance[83].

Russian information messaging in Jordan influences different age groups in various ways. The younger generation, which primarily depends on social media for information about global events, is especially vulnerable to manipulation[84]. According to a 2022 BBC study, as many as 70% of young Arabs—including Jordanians—view Russia as an ally, while only 26% see it as a potential threat[85]. Similar trends were confirmed by research conducted a year later among youth in nine Arab countries, including Jordan, by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. The findings showed that in five of these countries—including Jordan, which is traditionally seen as a U.S. ally—young respondents had greater trust in Russia than in the United States. In seven countries, including Jordan, the conflict in Ukraine was seen primarily as a geopolitical clash between Russia and the West rather than as a war between two states[86]. Across all nine countries surveyed, Washington was also identified as the primary beneficiary of the conflict[87].

[82] A. Al-Kaisy, *ibid.*, s. 3, 37.

[83] A. Borshchevskaya, Russia's Disinformation Machine Has a Middle East Advantage, The Washington Institute, 23 March 2023. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/russias-disinformation-machine-has-middle-east-advantage?>

[84] A. Al-Kaisy, *ibid.*, s. 18-19.

[85] <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/world-62179256>

[86] M. Schneider, D. Gürsel, C. Starke, Multipolarity and the Middle East: Exploring Regional Attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine War - Short Analysis., Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2023, s. 12.

[87] *Ibid.*, s. 7.

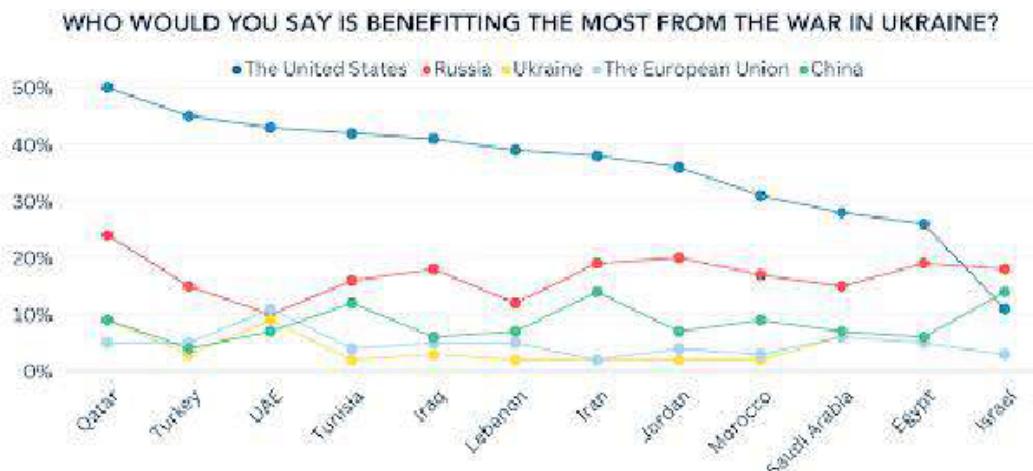


Figure 1. Perceptions among Middle East and North Africa residents — Who benefits most from the war in Ukraine (% of responses by country)

The older generation displays a more nuanced stance. In a survey conducted by Jordan News in April 2022, 72% of respondents—including those over the age of 30—condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, while only 14% saw Russia as Jordan's strategic partner[88]. However, just a year later, a survey conducted by The Washington Institute (March 2023) revealed that as many as 78% of Jordanians considered a Russian victory in the Russia–Ukraine war to be the most favourable outcome—even if it involved the annexation of parts of Ukrainian territory[89].

Another significant arena for the influence of Russian disinformation is regional conflict coverage, particularly the wars in Syria and between Israel and Palestine. Regarding Syria, a 2015 study by The Washington Institute found that 86% of Jordanians held a negative view of Russia as an ally of the Bashar al-Assad regime[90]. However, in relation to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the latest data from the Arab Barometer (2023/2024) indicates growing sympathy towards Russia. Forty-seven percent of respondents expressed a positive opinion of Russia—an increase of eight percentage points compared with 2022—while only 28% viewed the United States positively, marking a decline of twenty-three points in the same period[91]. The Kremlin has effectively capitalised on this shift in sentiment, shaping its image as an advocate for the Palestinian cause and a counterweight to the West. These messages resonate deeply within Jordanian society, where a large portion of the population is of Palestinian descent. In an environment marked by low media trust and the lack of strong fact-checking mechanisms in the digital sphere, such narratives find receptive ground and exert a noticeable influence on public opinion.

[88] Majority of Jordanians oppose Russian war on Ukraine and prefer ties with US - poll, Jordan News, 1 May 2022. <https://www.jordannews.jo/Section-109/News/Majority-of-Jordanians-oppose-Russian-war-on-Ukraine-and-prefer-ties-with-USpoll-16225>

[89] F. Almaari, New Public Opinion Poll: Jordanians Favor De-escalation in the Region, But Sentiment Against Israel Remains, The Washington Institute, 9 June 2023. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/new-public-opinion-poll-jordanians-favor-de-escalation-region-sentimentagainst>

[90] D. Pollock, Jordan's Public Dislikes Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, and ISIS - but Wants to Stay Out of Syria, The Washington Institute, 9 October 2015. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/jordans-public-dislikes-russia-iran-hezbollah-and-isis-wants-stay-out-syria>

[91] Jordan - public opinion data on report (Wave VIII), Arab Barometer, 2024, s. 50.

Chapter 5

Legal, Institutional, and Social Measures in Jordan Against Disinformation

In recent years, Jordan has increasingly focused on fighting disinformation, which has become a major challenge for both the state and society. According to data from the Jordanian news agency Petra, over the past five years, more than 2,100 cases of disinformation and unverified rumours have been recorded on social media. This scale emphasises how serious the problem of false content has become and the considerable pressure it exerts on public institutions, prompting them to take decisive action[92]

In response to the growing challenges of disinformation, the Jordanian parliament enacted the Cybercrime Law (No. 17 of 2023) in August 2023, which came into effect on 13 September. The new law introduces strict penalties, including imprisonment and significant fines, for disseminating false information, impersonating others, or inciting social unrest online.

Particularly strict are Article 15, which penalises the publication of false information related to national security, and Article 17, which provides penalties for spreading materials that could provoke social or religious tensions. Violations of this kind can result in fines of up to 20,000 Jordanian dinars (approximately 28,000 USD) and imprisonment for up to three years[93]. The government asserts that these provisions are meant to protect society from disinformation; however, organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International warn that they could be used to justify censorship and restrict civil liberties[94].

Alongside legislative measures, Jordan has also adopted institutional tools. One example is the platform “Haggak Tiraf” (“You Have the Right to Know”), launched by government authorities to verify and refute false content appearing in the public sphere. Its purpose is to enhance transparency and strengthen the credibility of information disseminated by the authorities[95]. A similar aim guides the Akeed project—a media-monitoring tool that has analysed and evaluated the reliability of content published and broadcast by Jordanian media since 2014. This initiative was launched by the Jordan Media Institute, with support from the King Abdullah Fund for Development, as part of the Democratic Empowerment Programme[96]. Continuing these efforts, in January 2023 Jordan presented to the League of Arab States a draft law aimed at standardising rules regarding content published on social media, with a particular focus on combating disinformation and hate speech[97].

[92] Government: 2,151 rumours recorded in Jordan in five years, Petra – Jordan News Agency, 21 January 2023. https://www.petra.gov.jo/Include/InnerPage.jsp?ID=47691&lang=ar&name=en_news

[93] Jordan: New Anti-cybercrimes Law Enacted, Library of Congress, 27 September 2023. <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2023-09-27/jordan-new-anti-cybercrimes-law-enacted/>

[94] Jordan: Scrap Draconian Cybercrimes Bill, Human Rights Watch, 24 July 2023. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/07/24/jordan-scrap-draconian-cybercrimes-bill>; Jordan: New Cybercrimes Law stifling freedom of expression one year on, Amnesty International, 13 August 2024. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/jordan-new-cybercrimes-law-stifling-freedom-of-expression-one-year-on/>

[95] Citizens' Voice in Jordan: The Role of Public Communication and Media for a More Open Government, OECD Public Governance Reviews, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, s. 13.

[96] The official website of the Akeed, https://www.akeed.jo/index.php?option=com_aboutakeed&view=item&id=1&Itemid=102&lang=en

[97] Jordan: Freedom on the Net 2023 Country Report, Freedom House, 3 October 2023. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/jordan/freedom-net/2023>

International organisations also play a vital role in combating misinformation. The UNDP Jordan Accelerator Lab developed a five-step approach to counter disinformation, which involves diagnosing the problem, analysing data, testing tools (including artificial intelligence), and implementing practical solutions[98]. Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF conducted social listening—monitoring social media content and addressing circulating concerns through information campaigns. As part of this effort, over 100 question-and-answer posts were created, significantly helping to counter false narratives about vaccinations[99].

In this context, education and youth engagement are becoming increasingly crucial. An example is the TechCamp Jordan programme (Hakkerhal!), implemented with support from the U.S. Department of State. Participants—young social leaders—gained skills to identify false content and counter it through innovative projects[100].

Independent fact-checking platforms also play a vital role in combating disinformation in Jordan and across the Arab region, with the most notable being the previously mentioned Fatabyyano[101] and Misbar[102]. Fatabyyano, the first Arabic-language organisation certified by the International Fact-Checking Network, has been operating in Jordan since 2016. Its aim is to verify information accurately; the platform employs a transparent methodology, documents sources, and emphasises its independence from political or financial pressures. It also collaborates with international partners, including Meta on regional fact-checking initiatives and Meedan in developing the first Arabic automated system for reporting false content, known as the Kinan tipline[103].

Misbar, founded in 2019 and currently operating in both Jordan and the United States, specialises in verifying content published in traditional and social media. The platform allows users to report suspicious content, and all verifications are conducted according to clearly defined journalistic standards and the principle of full transparency[104]. In 2024, Misbar received recognition from the Arab Fact-Checkers Network for its collaborative efforts with the Palestinian platform Tahaqaq and the Lebanese platform Sawab during the conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon. As part of this cooperation, joint analyses of disinformation were prepared, training sessions for journalists were held, and educational campaigns targeting residents were organised.

Both platforms, operating independently of state structures, serve as a valuable complement to Jordan's institutional and international efforts to combat disinformation, offering citizens access to reliable information and tools for critical content analysis.

[98] Unravelling the Web of False Information in Jordan, UNDP Jordan, 29 November 2023. <https://www.undp.org/jordan/blog/unravelling-web-false-information-jordan?>

[99] N. Adly, From social listening to countering misinformation, UNICEF Jordan, 9 January 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/stories/social-listening-countering-misinformation?>

[100] TechCamp Jordan (Hakkerhal!): Entrepreneurial Approaches to Countering Disinformation & Misinformation, Search for Common Ground, 16 April 2024. <https://www.sfcg.org/project/techcamp-jordan/>

[101] The official website of the Fatabyyano. <https://fatabyyano.net/>

[102] The official website of the Misbar. <https://www.misbar.com/>

[103] Meedan partner Fatabyyano launches tipline for earthquake crisis response, Meedan, 23 February 2023. <https://meedan.com/post/meedan-partner-fatabyyano-launches-tipline-for-earthquake-crisis-response>

[104] Explainer: Guide to fact-checking platforms in the Arab world, BBC Monitoring, 6 May 2025. <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/b0003fc1>

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The analysis of Russian disinformation in Jordan indicates that Kremlin activities are systematic, long-term, and multi-layered. Their primary aim is not merely to promote a favourable image of Russia but, more crucially, to erode trust in the West, deepen social divisions, and destabilise one of the United States' key allies in the Middle East.

Russian Arabic-language media—mainly Sputnik and Russia Today—play a crucial role in this process. Their content frequently appears in Jordanian newspapers and on local online portals, often published with little alteration, giving Russian narratives the semblance of neutrality and credibility. Social media also remains a significant influence. Russia employs bots, fake accounts, and manipulated content customised to Jordanian political and cultural contexts. These actions enable Moscow to effectively influence public discourse and reinforce its messages. Supporting this information campaign are soft power tools: educational programmes, cultural events, and the activities of the Russian House in Amman. Simultaneously, the Russian embassy maintains active online engagement, promoting content aligned with Kremlin narratives and integrating Russian messaging into Jordan's public sphere.

The vulnerability of Jordanian media to Russian information efforts stems from limited press freedom, low public trust in state media, and the increasing influence of digital and social media, which are the primary sources of information for younger generations. In such conditions, Russian narratives readily attract receptive audiences—Moscow is often seen as more understanding of Middle Eastern realities, while the West is increasingly portrayed as hypocritical and double standards.

The impact of Russian disinformation in Jordan also arises from its connection to conflicts that directly affect the lives of people in the region, including Jordanians. One of the most significant is the war in Ukraine—although it takes place far from Amman, its effects are mainly felt in the Middle East through economic consequences. Russian aggression and the sanctions that follow have caused a sharp increase in energy and food prices, impacting Jordan's economy, which heavily depends on importing grain and raw materials. In the Kremlin's narrative, these hardships are blamed on the West, which allegedly provoked the conflict and ignores the interests of Global South countries.

Another key reference is the war in Syria. Its effects are particularly severe for Jordan, which has welcomed over a million Syrian refugees, stretching social services, healthcare, and the labour market. At the same time, the country's northern border remains especially vulnerable due to the activities of smugglers, fighters, and groups involved in drug trafficking, which directly affect internal security. In this context, Russia's presence in Syria since 2015 is highly significant. This presence includes military aspects—such as Russian bases and participation in local ceasefire agreements in the south, in which Jordan was also involved—and media initiatives through the Arabic-language channels Russia Today and Sputnik. Using these platforms, the Kremlin not only increases its influence in the region but also aims to shape the narrative around the conflict to serve its strategic interests.

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict, particularly the repeated escalations of violence in the Gaza Strip, remains a significant point of reference for Jordanian society. Jordan, where a large proportion of the population is of Palestinian descent, reacts strongly to the suffering of civilians in Gaza—both emotionally and politically. In this context, Russia consistently promotes its image as a supporter of the Palestinian cause, criticising Israeli actions and highlighting the double standards of the United States and the European Union, thereby reinforcing its position as an alternative political actor in the region.

Russian disinformation in Jordan is thus multifaceted and closely tied to local realities. It blends institutional efforts—grounded in official media cooperation and diplomatic initiatives—with grassroots influence in the digital space, where emotionally charged content related to the wars in Ukraine, Syria, or the Gaza Strip resonates with audiences. The effectiveness of this messaging is amplified by weaknesses in Jordan's media system, as well as genuine economic and social challenges that the Kremlin skilfully exploits for its own gain. As a result, Russia secures not only a platform to broadcast its narratives in Jordan but also a way to undermine Western credibility and strengthen its role as an alternative political actor in the region.

Recommendations

The state's primary priority should be providing access to reliable information rather than enforcing censorship. Instead of implementing restrictive measures like the 2023 Cybercrime Law to combat disinformation, the government should encourage transparent communication and support independent media and fact-checking initiatives.

Implementation of rapid communication response teams: Models like the UK's Rapid Response Unit or U.S. "tiger teams" demonstrate that swiftly countering false narratives and monitoring in real time can significantly reduce their spread.

Developing pre-bunking programmes: Brief educational resources that teach audiences to recognise manipulative techniques (e.g., emotional appeals, creating false enemies) enhance societal resilience. Research from the University of Cambridge and Google Jigsaw indicates that this approach is effective, although it requires repetition and adaptation to local languages.

Building trust through media transparency standards: Initiatives such as the Journalism Trust Initiative or The Trust Project help audiences recognise credible sources and understand the verification process, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of independent newsrooms.

Collaboration with local fact-checkers: Organisations such as Misbar and Fatabyyano possess regional expertise and can swiftly expose false narratives, including those influenced by Russia. Their efforts should be supported by the government and international partners.

Promoting practical media literacy education: Tools like the SIFT method (Stop, Investigate, Find better coverage, Trace) and databases such as EUvsDisinfo and Fact-Check Insights provide practical ways to distinguish facts from manipulation. Short training sessions significantly improve societal resilience to disinformation.

Engaging the international community: Jordan can utilise the expertise of the EU (FIMI, demonetisation of manipulative content), the OSCE (election monitoring), and programmes such as DFRLab Digital Sherlocks. International standards can serve as a benchmark for local practices.

Demonetisation of disinformation content: Withdrawing financial support from websites spreading false information reduces their commercial appeal. The European Code of Practice on Disinformation demonstrates that this method is effective when properly regulated and enforced.

Systematic monitoring and evaluation: Key indicators should include response speed to false content, the reach of corrections, and citizens' ability to spot manipulation. Regular assessments are essential to refine strategies and enhance their effectiveness.

Enhancing public diplomacy in Jordan: Poland should actively engage with Jordanian media and digital platforms, sharing its narrative and countering false information influenced by Russia.

Partnering with local fact-checkers: Collaborating with Misbar and Fatabyyano allows for quick identification and correction of anti-Polish content within the Arabic linguistic and cultural context.

Supporting OSINT and media literacy training: Poland—through diplomatic missions, the Polish Institute, or EU-partnered projects—could fund workshops based on the SIFT method or programmes similar to Digital Sherlocks, focusing on examples of Russian disinformation about Poland and Ukraine. **Demonetisation and pressure on digital platforms:** Poland should actively work with the EU and through bilateral channels to ensure that global platforms stop funding advertising on content spreading Russian propaganda in Arabic.

Building a positive narrative about Poland: Beyond correcting false information, it is essential to depict Poland as a country that supports the region, stands in solidarity with Ukraine, and participates in development initiatives in Jordan.

Coordinating actions within the EU and NATO: Poland could propose extending FIMI mechanisms and OSCE practices to the Middle East, including Jordan, to better monitor and counter Russian influence operations.

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