



University of
Sheffield | Disinformation Research Cluster

Disinformation in a Global Context

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5 March 2025

University of Glasgow

Today's Learning Outcomes

- By the end of the session, you should be able to:
 1. Define and critically engage with the term **disinformation**
 2. Examine the rise of **geopolitically** motivated disinformation campaigns.
 3. Discuss the role of disinformation in **elections** outside the Global North.
 4. Apply theoretical discussions to real-world case studies.

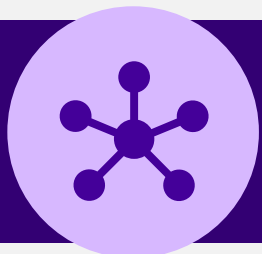
Outline



Terminology – Is “disinformation” the right term?

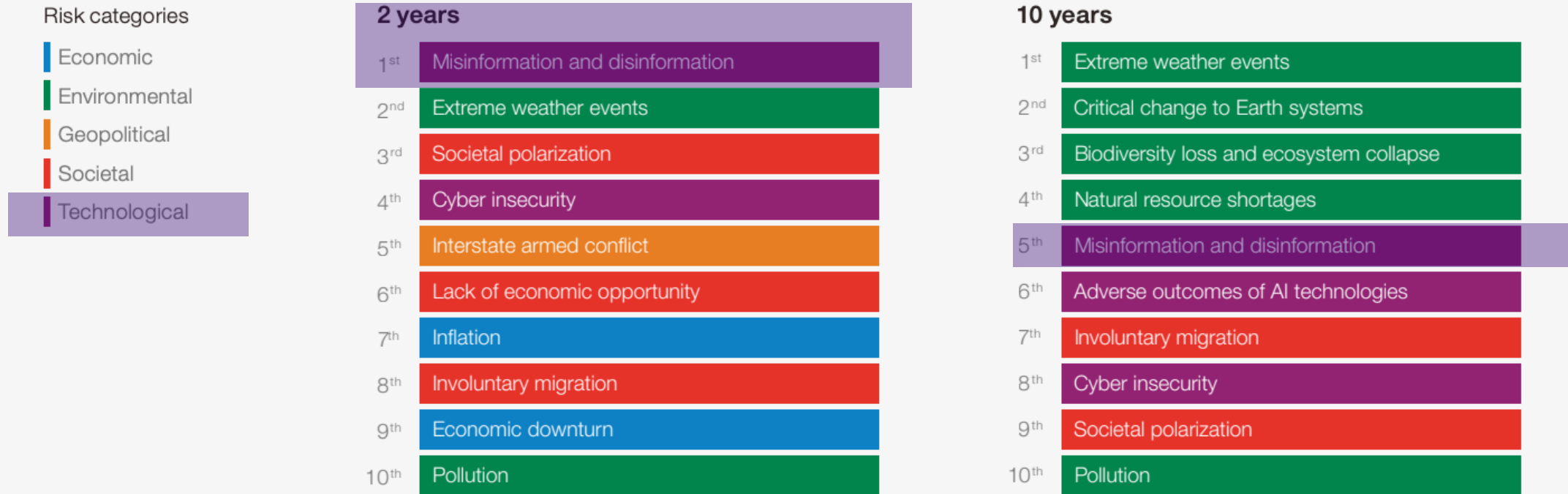


Geopolitics – Information manipulation and interference (FIMI)



Elections – Disinformation and elections in Sub-Saharan Africa

Most serious risks around the world – According to Economists

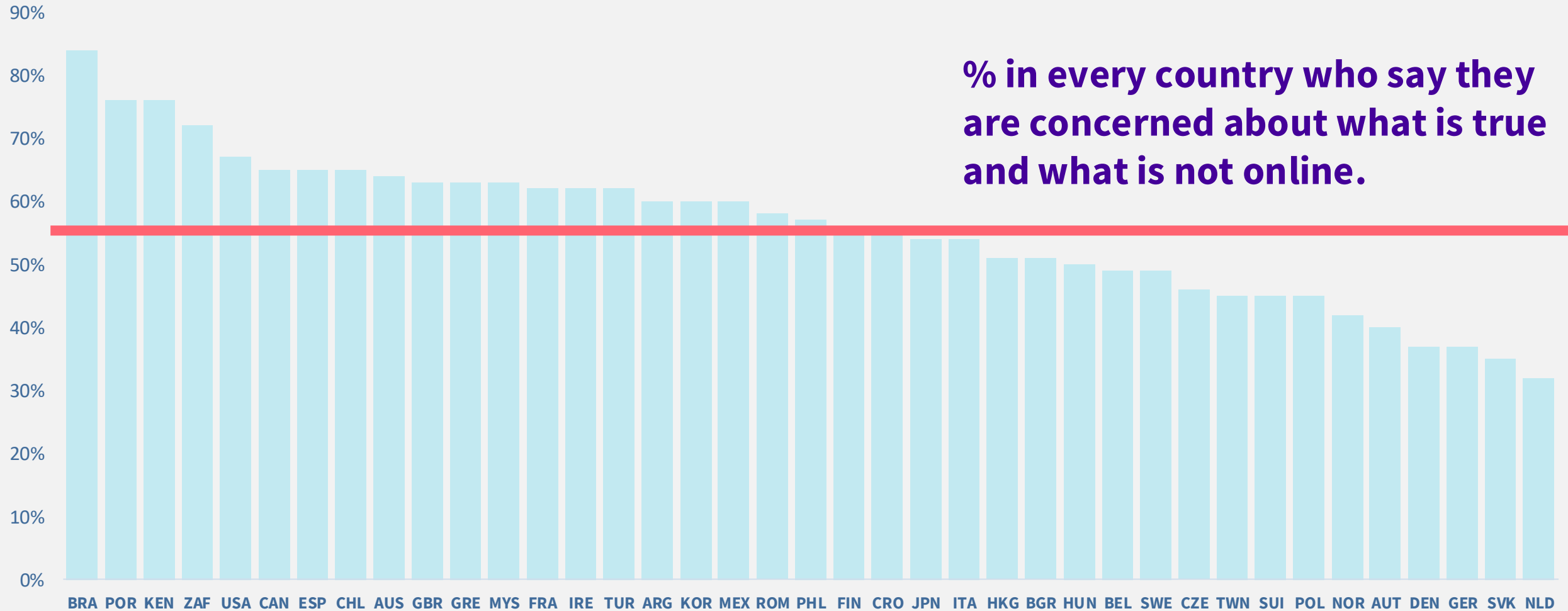


Source

World Economic Forum Global Risks Perception Survey 2023-2024.

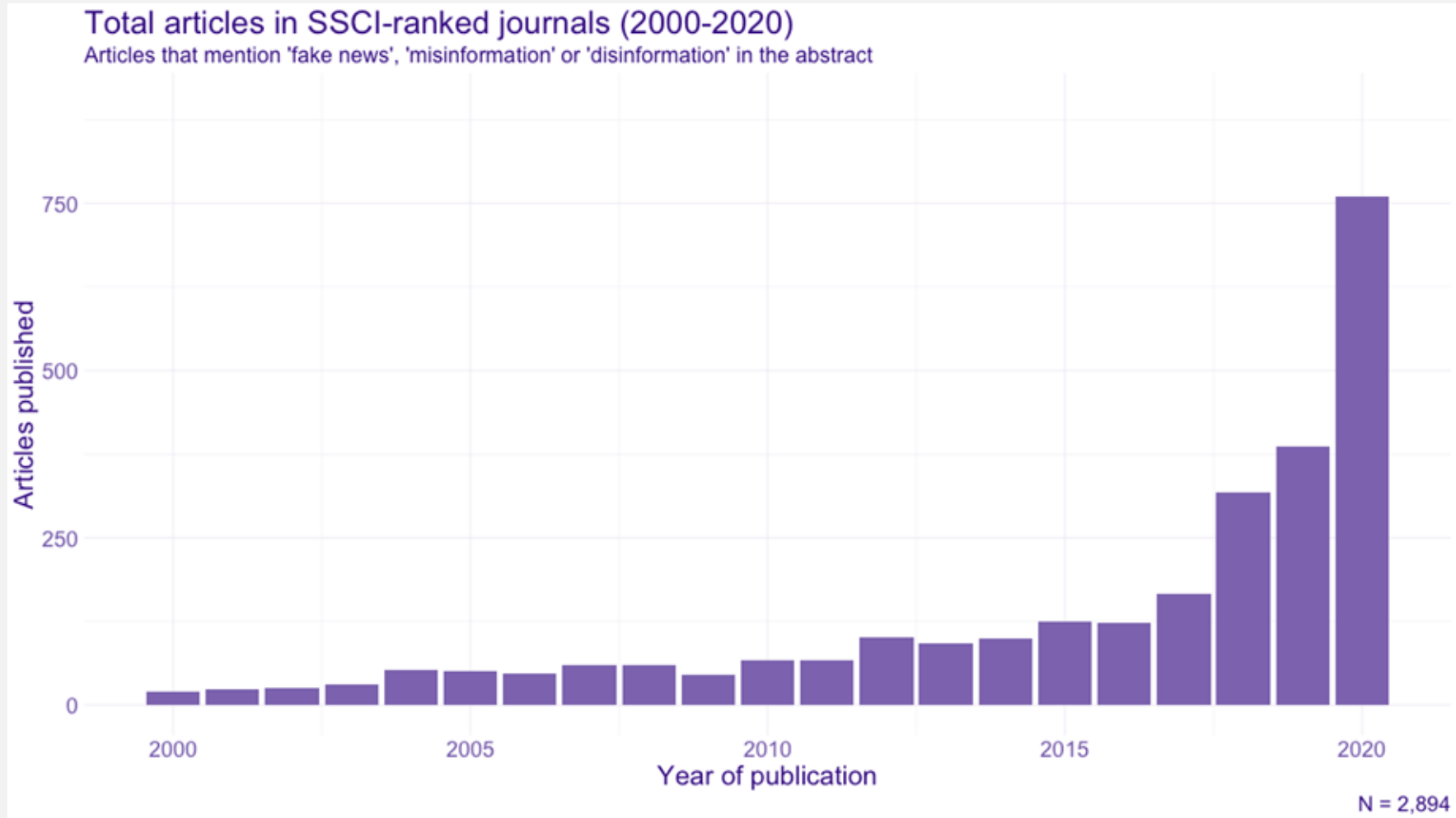
Source: https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2024.pdf

Media consumers' concerns



Source: <https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2020/overview-key-findings-2020/>

Disinformation Studies in Perspective



Source: [Madrid-Morales & Wasserman, 2022](#)



A Note on Terminology

Is this “disinformation”?



- 1 Go to wooclap.com
- 2 Enter the event code in the top banner

Event code
SMHREM

 Enable answers by SMS

Everyday Disinformation

Source: <https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/beware-scam-facebook-page-and-blog-impersonating-kenyan>

Ramtons Appliances Kenya
16 June at 11:30 · 🌐

FLASH SALES! Up to 50% DISCOUNT! LIMITED Stocks!

RAMTONS 2 Gas Burners, Non Stick Complete Cooker with 13Kg TOTAL Gas + Free LPG Gas Pipe & Gas Regulator Ksh. 6500

✓ Complete Ramtons 2 Burners Cooker with 13kg K-Gas Cylinder @ Ksh 6,500... See more



Ramtons Appliances Kenya
Product/service

Send Message

Tuskys Supermarkets Recruitment
22 June at 18:08 · 🌐

Over 3010+ Jobs available in our supermarket branches across Kenya. To apply; kindly follow >> <https://bit.ly/3hNqzpa>



TUSKYS SUPERMARKETS OFFICIAL JOB APPLICATION FORM

TUSKYS Supermarket Stores is one of the largest superstore across Kenya. TUSKYS Stores are in need of more employees in current and new online-shop branches across Kenya in the following towns: Nairobi, Nakuru, Mombasa, Malindi, Kisumu, Eldoret, Kapsabet, Machakos, Kitui, Lodwar, Kakamega, Nyeri, Kiambu, Meru, Isiolo, Murang'a, Bungoma, Kisii, Homa-Bay, Kirinyaga, Iten, Kericho, Narok, Lemo, Busia, Vihiga, Siaya, Nanyuki, Makeni, Kitale and many more.

We target to employ 3020 employees, internship positions included.

The job opportunities available include:

- Cleaners and guards (1228)
- Delivery personnel (1018)
- Receptionists(449)
- Store keepers & Cooks(68)

DOCS.GOOGLE.COM

TUSKYS SUPERMARKETS OFFICIAL JOB APPLICATION FORM

Electoral Disinformation

Kennedy Nosa
@KennedyNosa2

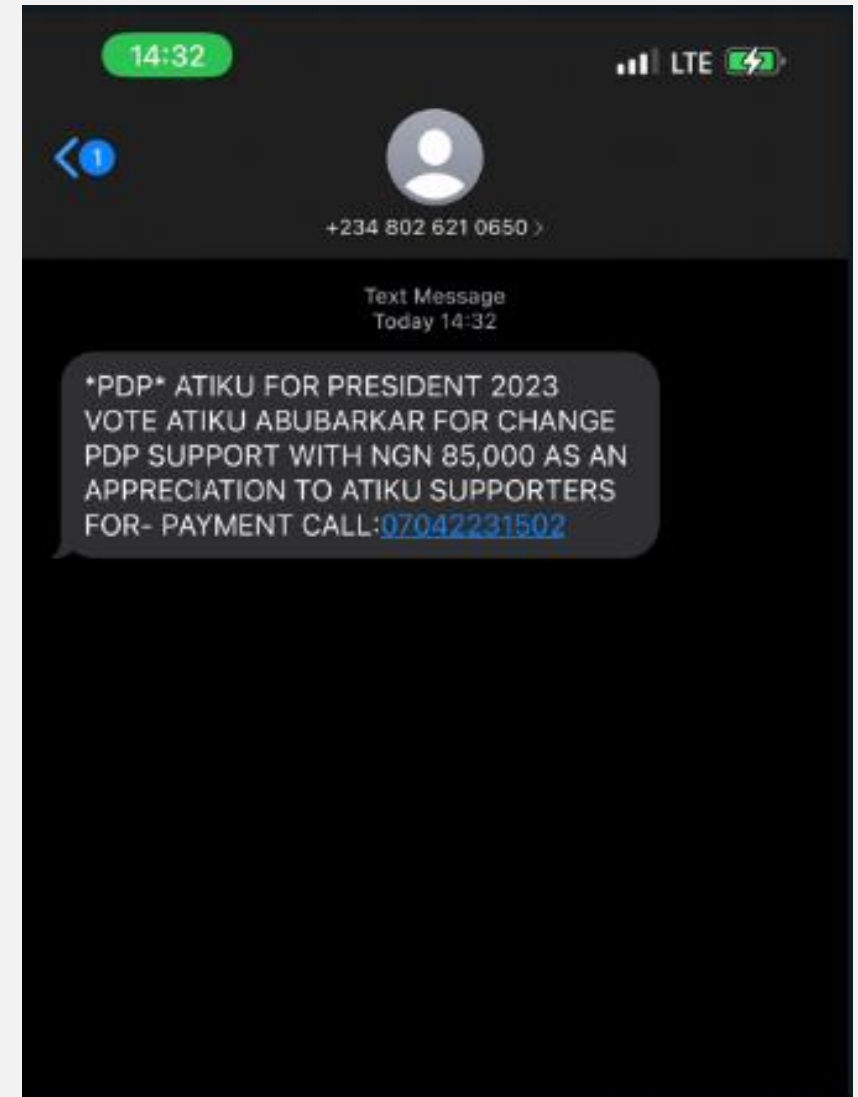
Happening now: [@officialABAT](#) on a courtesy visit to US President Joe Biden as part of his US on international engagements. Obidiots say Tinubu cannot visit US based on his indictment. He is there right now live with the US President. Let your Obi visit too. Mumu pipo.

[Tradueix el tuit](#)



8:44 p. m. · 29 de nov. de 2022

Source: <https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/no-image-doesnt-show-nigerian-president-jal-hopeful-tinubu>



Foreign Disinformation



Source: <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/12/removing-coordinated-inauthentic-behavior-france-russia/>

Types of mis/disinformation



TYPES OF MIS- AND DISINFORMATION

SATIRE/PARODY

No intention to cause harm but has potential to fool.

FALSE CONTEXT

When genuine content such as an image or video is shared out of context.

IMPOSTER CONTENT

When genuine sources, such as media organisations or public figures, are impersonated.

Source: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265552?posInSet=2&queryId=bea0f00b-2f6c-406c-83e7-9244978e99ee>

Types of mis/disinformation

FABRICATED CONTENT

New content that is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm.

MANIPULATED CONTENT

When genuine information, images or videos are manipulated to deceive.

CONSPIRACY THEORY

Explains an event or circumstances as the result of a secret plot – usually by powerful people or groups.

Source: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265552?posInSet=2&queryId=bea0f00b-2f6c-406c-83e7-9244978e99ee>

Influence operations, information manipulation & interference

 U.S. Department of State (.gov)

Building A More Resilient Information Environment

The information space has become more crowded, more complex, more confusing, more contested than ever. That, in turn, creates an enabling environment for...

18 Mar 2024




 United Nations Development Programme

Information Integrity: Forging a Pathway to Truth, Resilience and Trust

This strategic guidance paper is intended to provide a framework for UNDP teams and their partners to develop coherent and effective...

23 Feb 2022



 Welcome to the United Nations

United Nations Global Principles For Information Integrity

The principles envision an information ecosystem that delivers choice, freedom, privacy and safety for all, in which people everywhere can express themselves...

09 Jul 2024



 Yle

Finland launches information resilience unit

Finland launches information resilience unit. National stockpile agency NESAs says it wants to make it easier to detect influence campaigns.

17 Aug 2022



■ ■ ■ BBC

Digital and media literacy: Supporting resilience to mis- and disinformation

Information disorder, distrust and division are on the rise, and technology is evolving at lightning speed - leaving people unsure of what,...

1 month ago



Questions?





Case I – FIMI in Africa

Share your thoughts



1

Go to wooclap.com

2

Enter the event code in the top banner

Event code
RKREBC



Enable answers by SMS

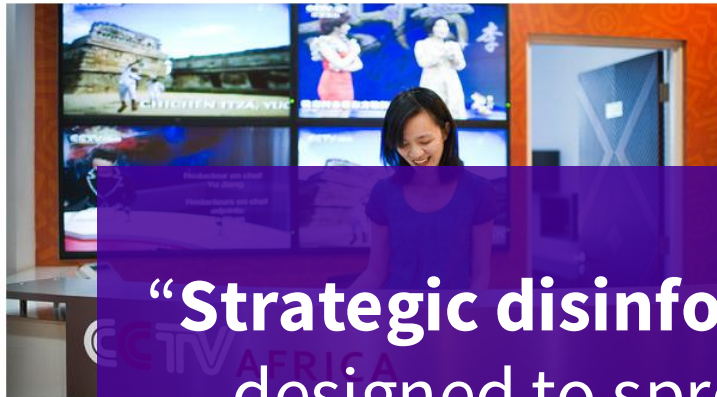
Context | The growing role of strategic narratives



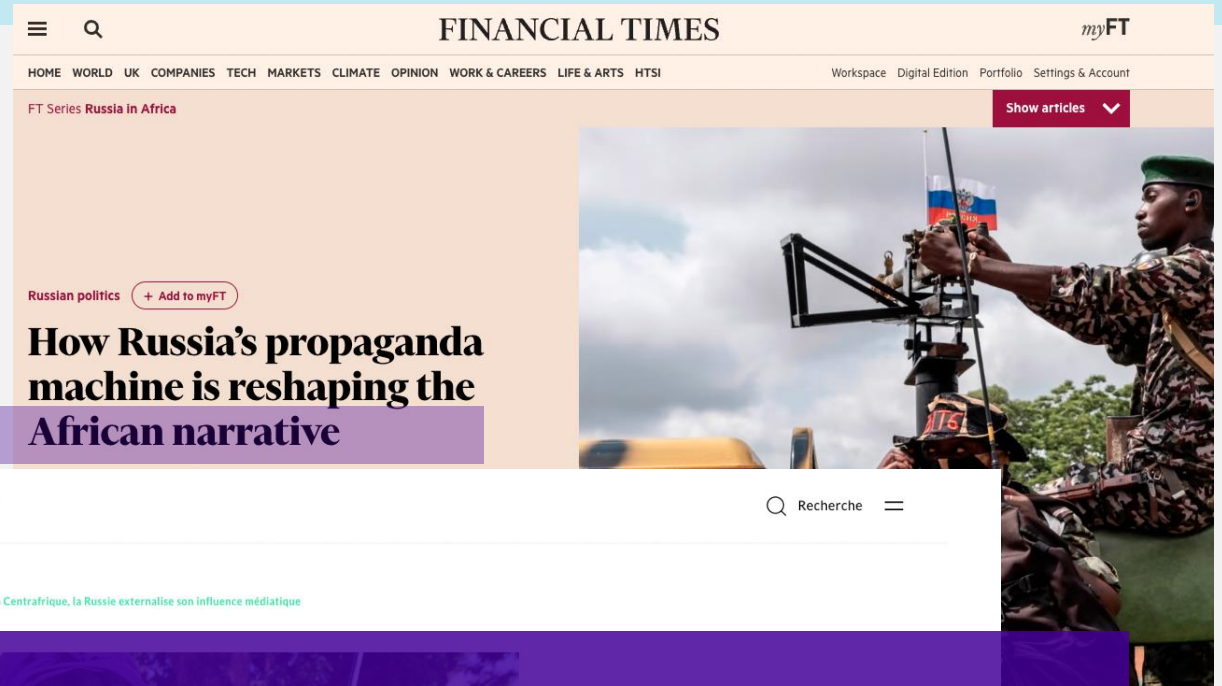
The New York Times

Africa

Pursuing Soft Power, China Puts Stamp on Africa's News



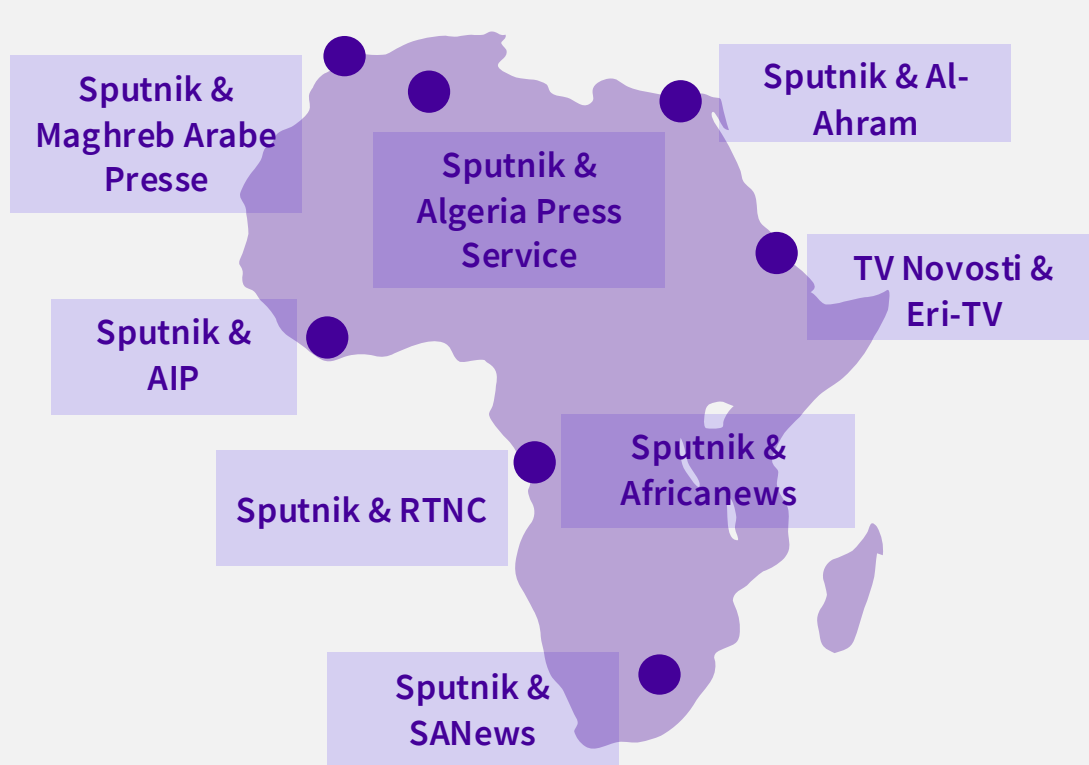
CCTV's set in Nairobi, Kenya. China's state-owned agency is increasingly spreading propaganda in Africa.



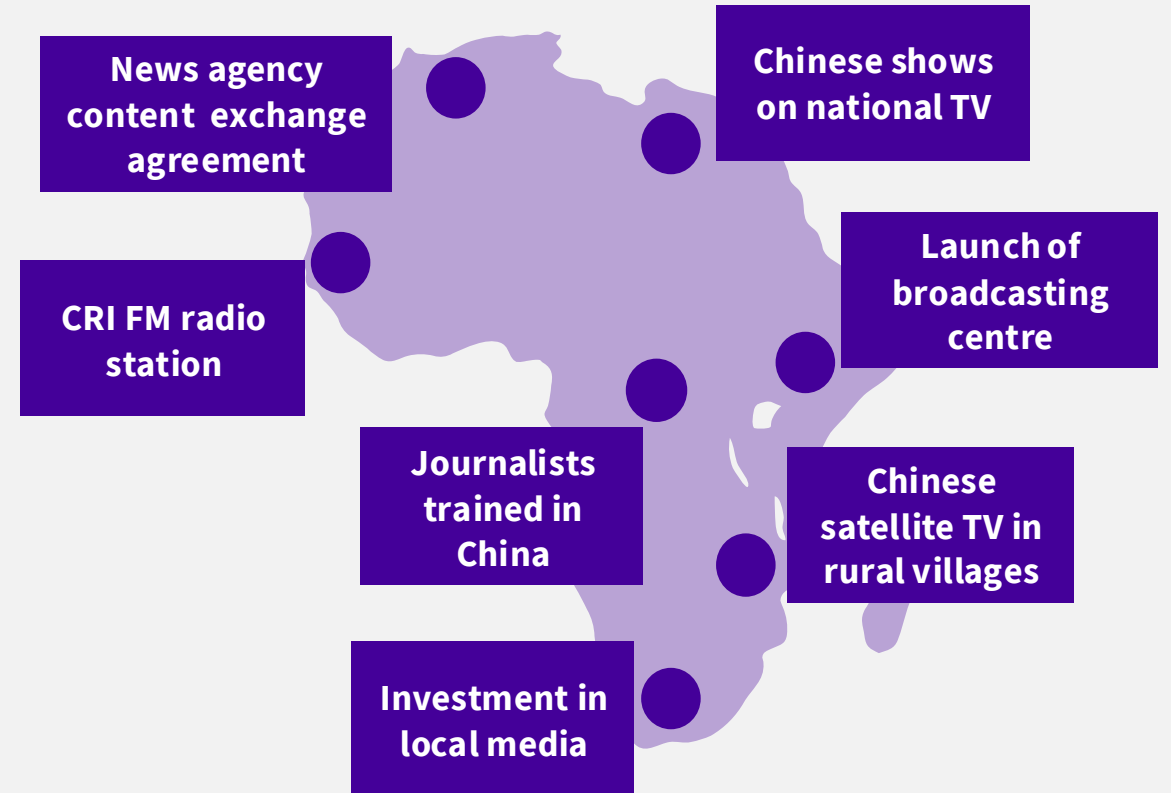
“Strategic disinformation narratives” are discursive constructions, designed to spread falsehoods, mislead, or distort facts to gain geopolitical influence.

GEOFFREY YORK
NAIROBI — The Globe and Mail
Published Wednesday, Sep. 11 2013, 10:14 PM EDT
Last updated Thursday, Sep. 12 2013, 10:37 AM EDT

Context | Growing Russian & Chinese mediated engagements in Africa



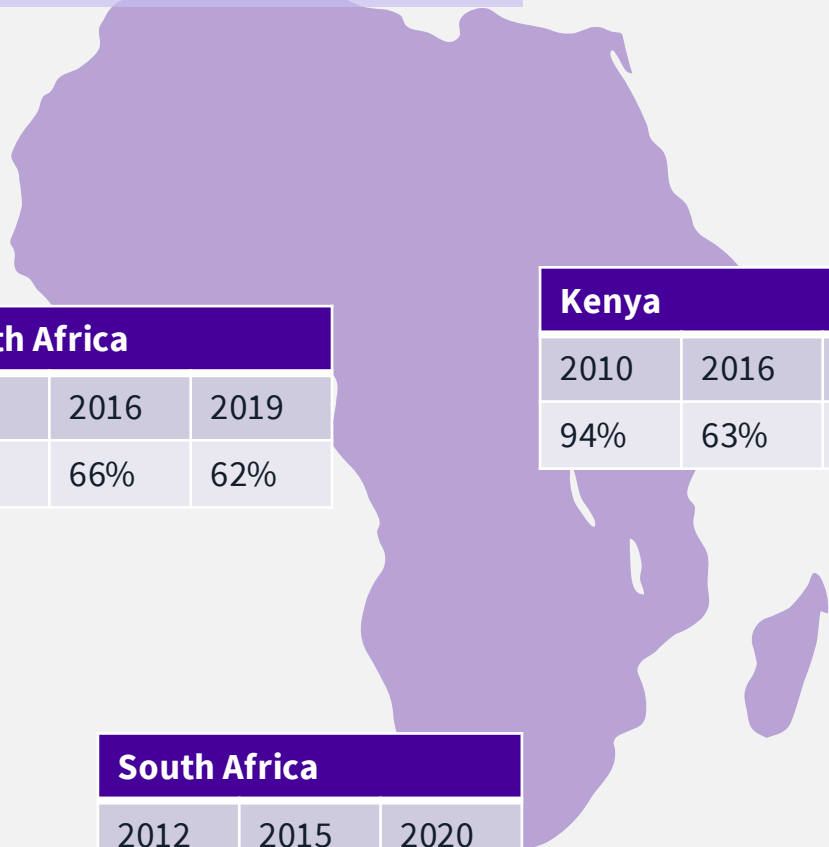
Source: [Birkevich \(2021\)](#)



Source: [Madrid-Morales \(2021\)](#)

Context | Declining views towards the 'West'

POSITIVE VIEW OF THE US



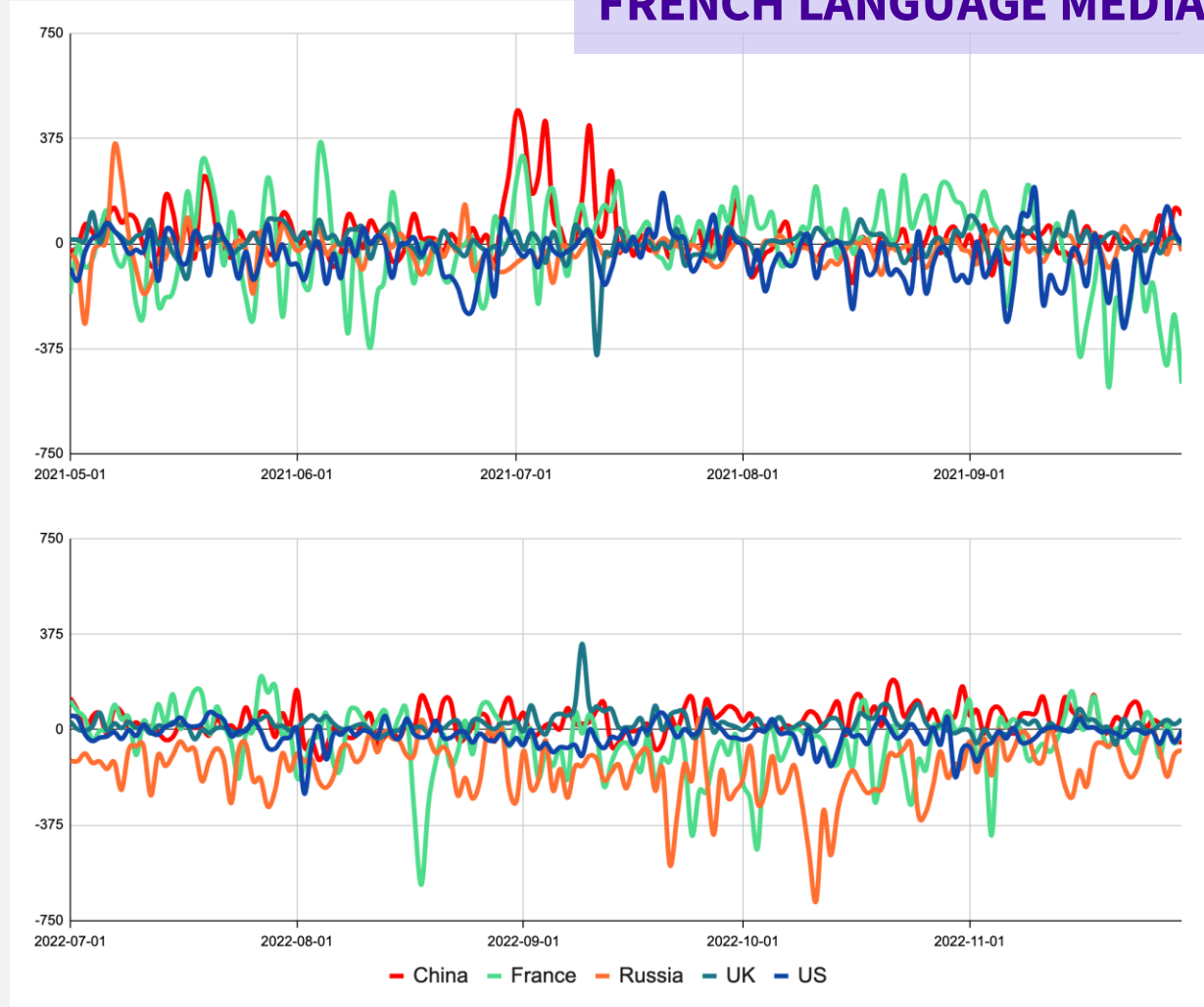
South Africa		
2010	2016	2019
81%	66%	62%

Kenya		
2010	2016	2017
94%	63%	54%

South Africa		
2012	2015	2020
72%	74%	50%

Source: Afrobarometer2

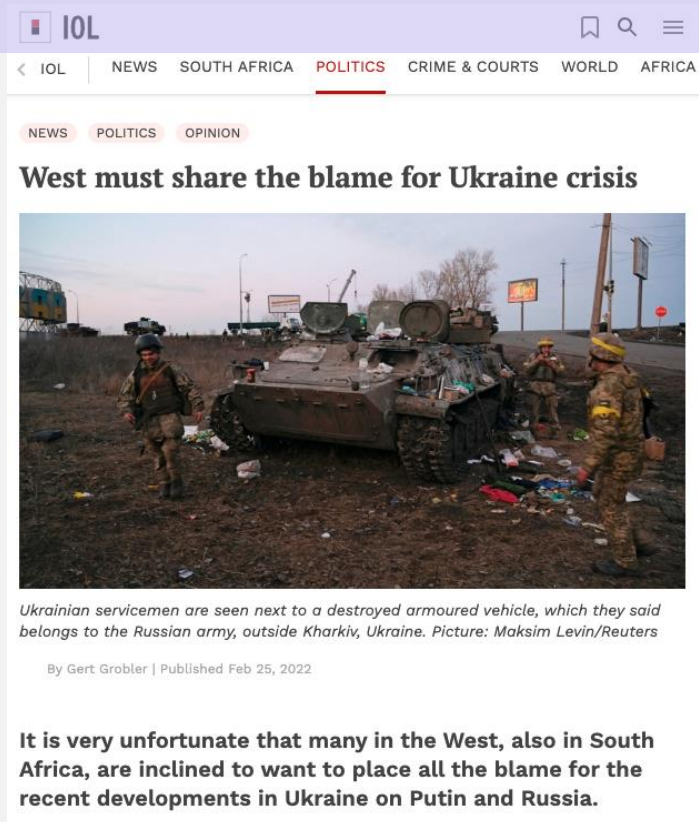
FRENCH LANGUAGE MEDIA



Source: [Madrid-Morales & Wasserman \(2023\)](#)

Research Design | Strategic narratives

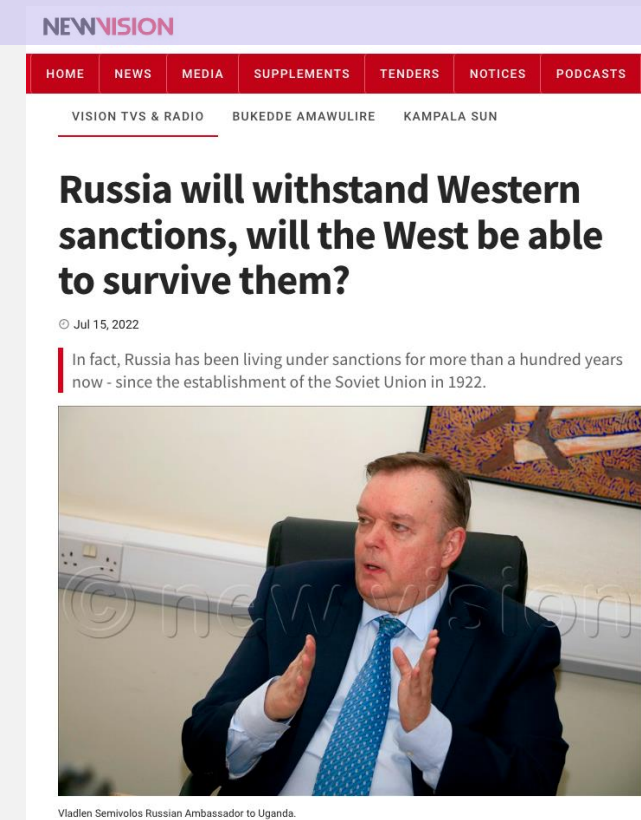
“The war in Ukraine is a consequence of NATO’s expansion in Eastern Europe”



The screenshot shows a news article from IOL (Independent Online) under the 'POLITICS' category. The headline is 'West must share the blame for Ukraine crisis'. Below the headline is a photograph of Ukrainian soldiers standing next to a destroyed Russian armored vehicle. The article is by Gert Grobler, published on Feb 25, 2022. A quote at the bottom states: 'It is very unfortunate that many in the West, also in South Africa, are inclined to want to place all the blame for the recent developments in Ukraine on Putin and Russia.'

Source: iol.co.za

“Sanctions against Russia are the main cause for the current food and energy crises”

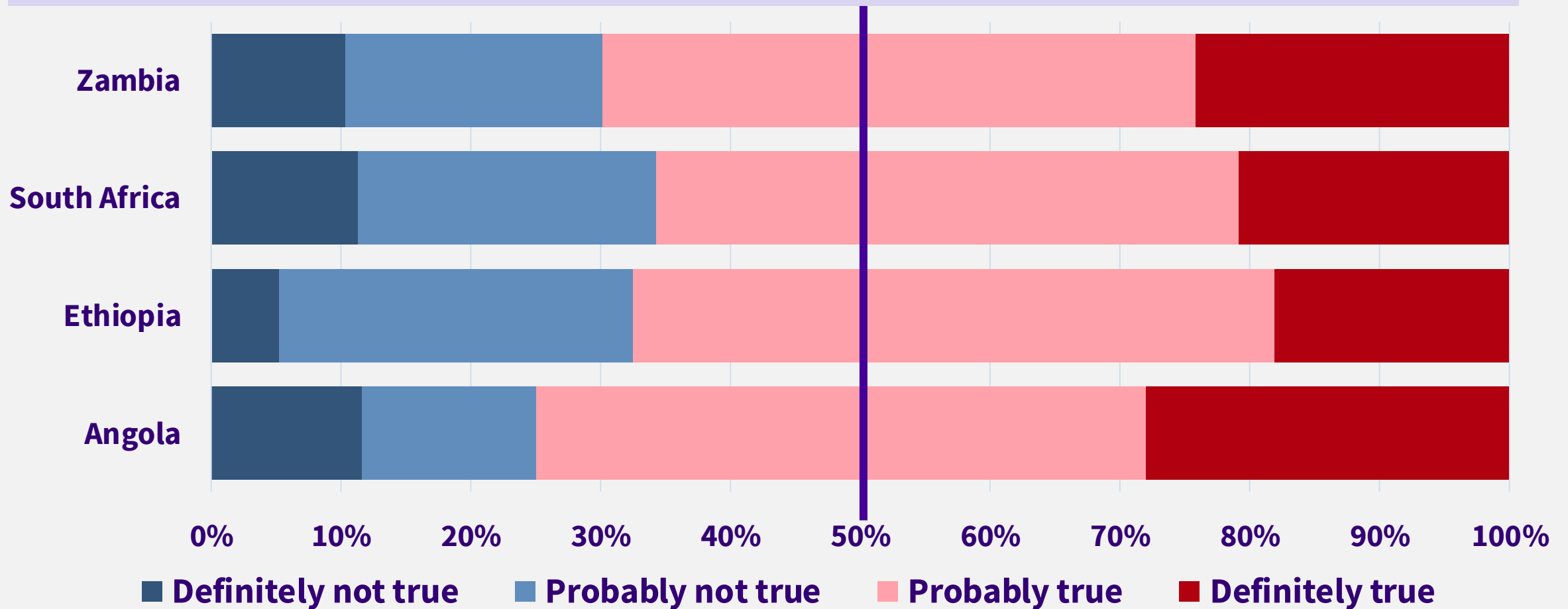


The screenshot shows a news article from New Vision under the 'NEWS' category. The headline is 'Russia will withstand Western sanctions, will the West be able to survive them?'. Below the headline is a photograph of Vladlen Semivolos, the Russian Ambassador to Uganda, speaking. The article is dated Jul 15, 2022. A quote in the article states: 'In fact, Russia has been living under sanctions for more than a hundred years now - since the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922.'

Source: newvision.co.ug

Prevalence | Narratives across countries

“The war in Ukraine is a consequence of NATO’s expansion in Eastern Europe”



Source: [Madrid-Morales, Wasserman & Ahmed \(2024\)](#)

“If a war break outs in Taiwan, it would be the United States' fault.”



The U.S. 'porcupine strategy' is destabilizing the Taiwan Straits

Opinion · 13:14, 13-Jun-2024

Yuan Sha

Samuel Paparo, the new head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, recently told a *Washington Post* reporter that the U.S. military intends to "deploy thousands of unmanned submarines, unmanned surface ships and aerial drones" as soon as Chinese forces start moving across the 100-mile waterway that separates the Chinese mainland and the Taiwan region, a plan Paparo calls "Hellscape." It demonstrated that Washington is stepping up the "porcupine strategy" on Taiwan, aimed at preventing the peaceful reunification of China by turning the island into a fully-armed and provocative "porcupine."

The U.S. 'porcupine strategy' on Taiwan

It's not the first time that the U.S. has made threats against China regarding the Taiwan question, and these threats have been more than rhetorical. The Biden administration has made more frequent, large-scale and high-profile arm sales to Taiwan. The U.S. National Defense Authorization Act of 2024 expedited arming the island by adopting the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act. In fact, arms sales to

Source: [cgtn.com](https://www.cgtn.com)

“Foreign forces organized anti-government protests in Hong Kong in

2019.”



China tells US to remove 'black hands' from Hong Kong



China tells U.S. to remove 'black hands' from Hong Kong

China accused U.S. officials on Tuesday of being behind violent protests in Hong Kong and advised them to remove their “black hands” from the territory.

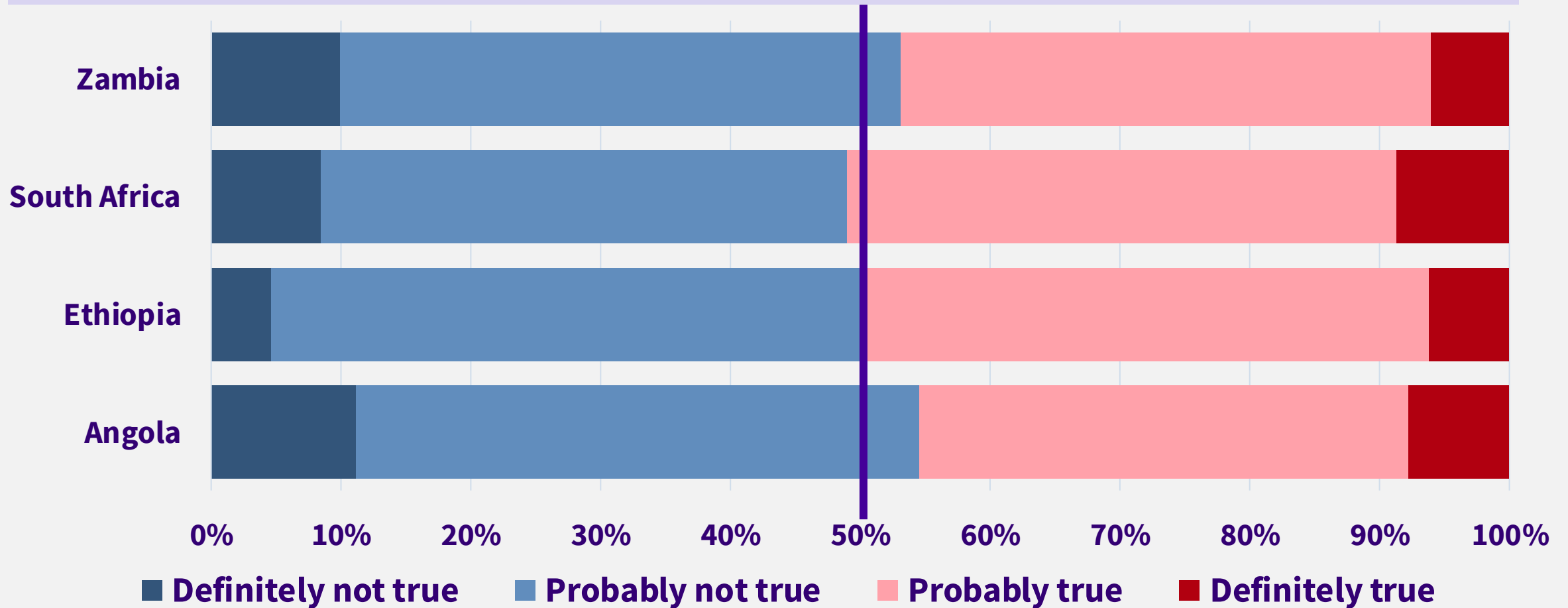
Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying made the comment at a news briefing in Beijing, when asked about the Hong Kong protests.



Source: [standard.co.ke](https://www.standard.co.ke)

Prevalence | Narratives across countries

“Foreign forces organized anti-government protests in Hong Kong in 2019.”



Source: [Madrid-Morales, Wasserman & Ahmed \(2024\)](#)

Three types of FIMI campaigns

Identity grievance

1. activates polarized social identities
2. exploits real or perceived wrongs
3. leverages low institutional trust
4. amplifies concurrent global political, social trends

EMOTION



Source: <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/12/removing-coordinated-inauthentic-behavior-france-russia/>

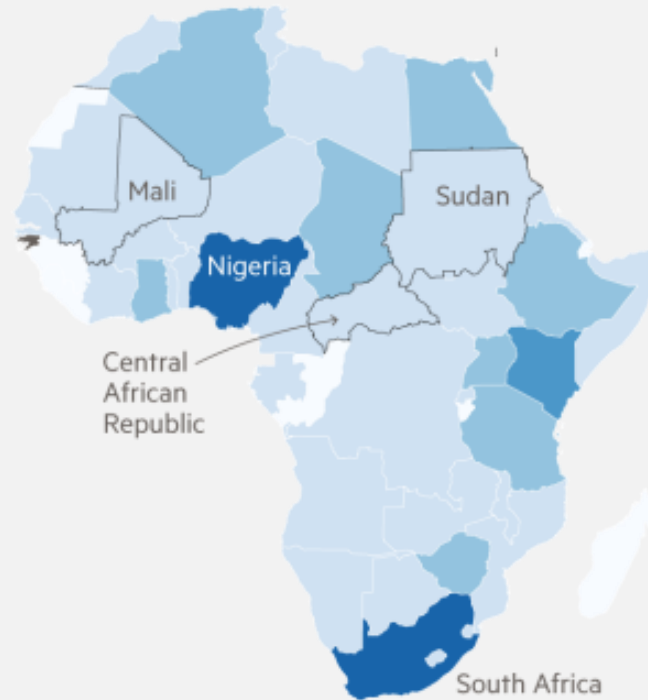
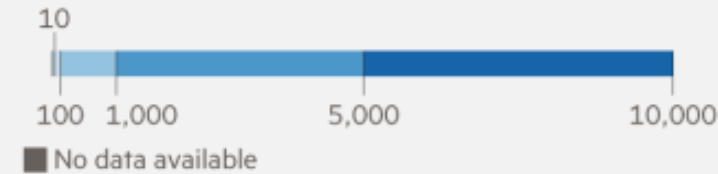
Three types of FIMI campaigns

Information gaslighting

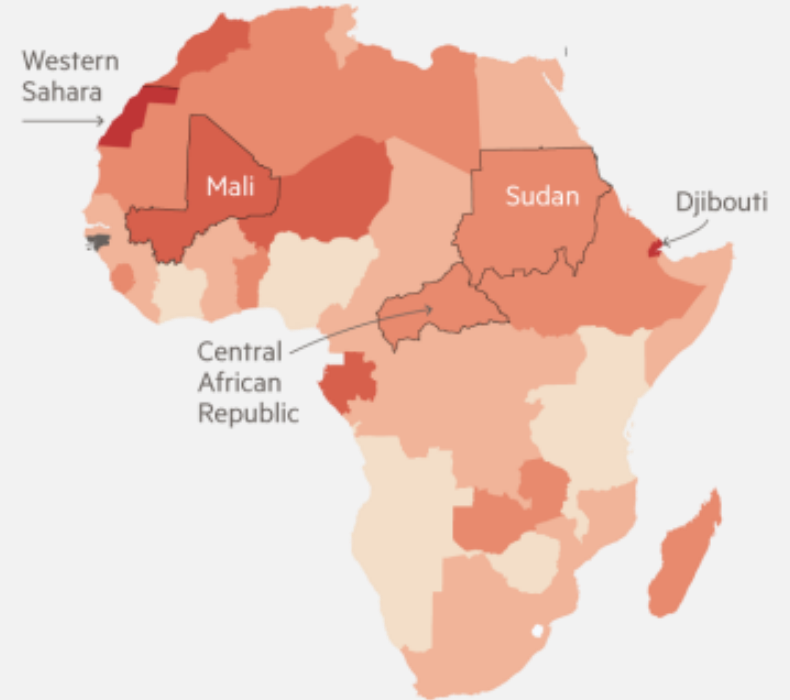
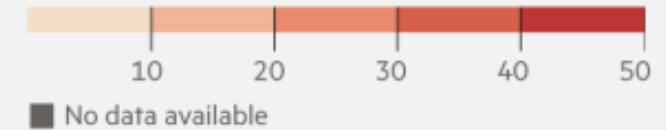
1. floods the information space as a form of 'strategic distraction'
2. seeks to sow uncertainty about issues
3. may lead to feelings of helplessness

FATIGUE

Number of Twitter users posting pro-Russian content (2021)



Relative frequency of bots per country (2021, %)



Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/d427c855-c665-4732-9dd1-3ae314464d12>

Three types of FIMI campaigns

Incidental exposure

1. uses range of channels, including fringe media, to increase incidental exposure
2. exploits declining trust in mainstream media
3. seeks to develop familiarity to narratives

BIAS

A historia de Stepan Bandera, o ideólogo do neonazismo ucraniano

24 de setembro de 2023 | notícias



Marcha em favor de Stepan Bandera

Stepan Bandera homem pintado como herói pela direita ucraniana e seu pensamento possui profunda influência na política do país e nos **grupos paramilitares neonazistas** como o Batalhão Azov.

Stepan Bandera nasceu 1909 na aldeia de Saryi Uhryniv, no distrito de Kalush, Galícia (Oblast de Stanyslaviv), então parte do Império Austro-Húngaro. O seu pai, Andriy Bandera, era o sacerdote greco-católico em Uhryniv Saryi. A sua mãe, Myroslava Bandera, também pertencia à família do clero, era filha de um padre greco-católico de Saryi Uhryniv.

Historia de Stepan Bandera, el ideólogo del neonazismo ucraniano

24 de setembro de 2023 | Noticias y artículos



Marcha en homenaje a Stepan Bandera, Ucrania

Stepan Bandera es un hombre descrito como un héroe por la derecha ucraniana y sus pensamientos tienen una profunda influencia en la política del país y en los grupos paramilitares neonazis como el Batallón Azov.

Stepan Bandera nació en 1909 en el pueblo de Saryi Uhryniv, en el distrito de Kalush, Galicia (Óblast de Stanyslaviv), entonces parte del Imperio Austro-Húngaro. Su padre, Andriy Bandera, era sacerdote greco-católico en Uhryniv Saryi. Su madre, Myroslava Bandera, también pertenecía a la familia del clero y era hija de un sacerdote greco-católico de Saryi Uhryniv.

Source: <https://dfrlab.org/2024/02/21/pro-russia-network-spreads-propaganda-and-disinfo-in-latin-america/>

Questions?





Case 2 | Electoral Disinformation

2024 – The “Mega Election Year”



International IDEA | SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY WORLDWIDE

Home > News > Artificial Intelligence and the integrity of African elections

< Back to overview

Artificial Intelligence and the integrity of African elections



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Home > ... > The Kremlin's Efforts to Spread Deadly Disinformation in Africa

★ ★ ★

The Kremlin's Efforts to Spread Deadly Disinformation in Africa

FACT SHEET
OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON
FEBRUARY 12, 2024



AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

25 YEARS

Français العربية

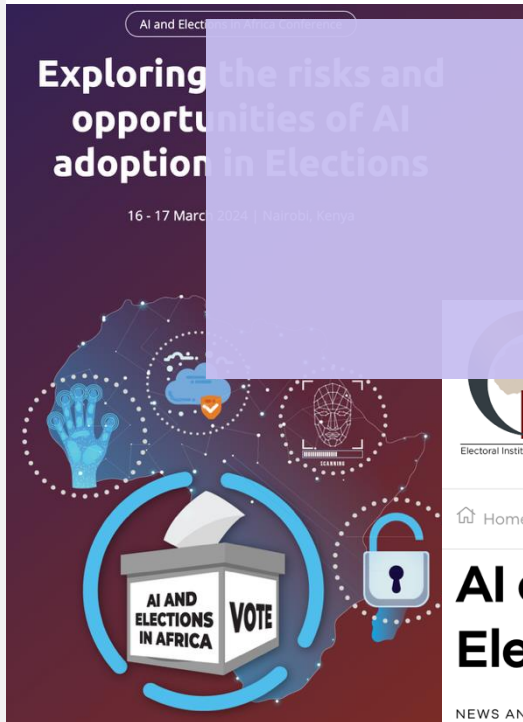
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INFOGRAPHIC

Print PDF

Tracking Russian Interference to Derail Democracy in Africa



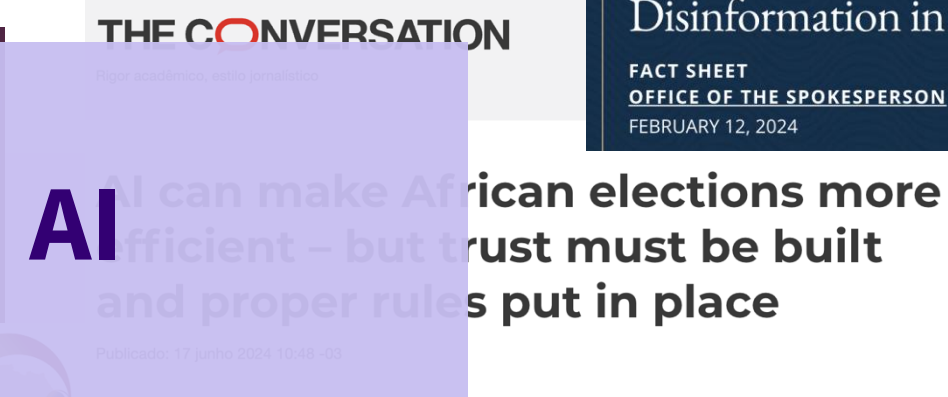
AI and Elections in Africa

Exploring the risks and opportunities of AI adoption in Elections

16 - 17 March 2024 | Nairobi, Kenya

AI AND ELECTIONS IN AFRICA

VOTE



AI can make African elections more efficient – but trust must be built and proper rules put in place

Publicado: 17 junho 2024 10:48 - 03



EISA
Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa

Home > News > News and Views > AI and the 2024 South African Elections

AI and the 2024 South African Elections

NEWS AND VIEWS SOUTH AFRICA - 9 May 2024 - By EISA, IJR, and MMA

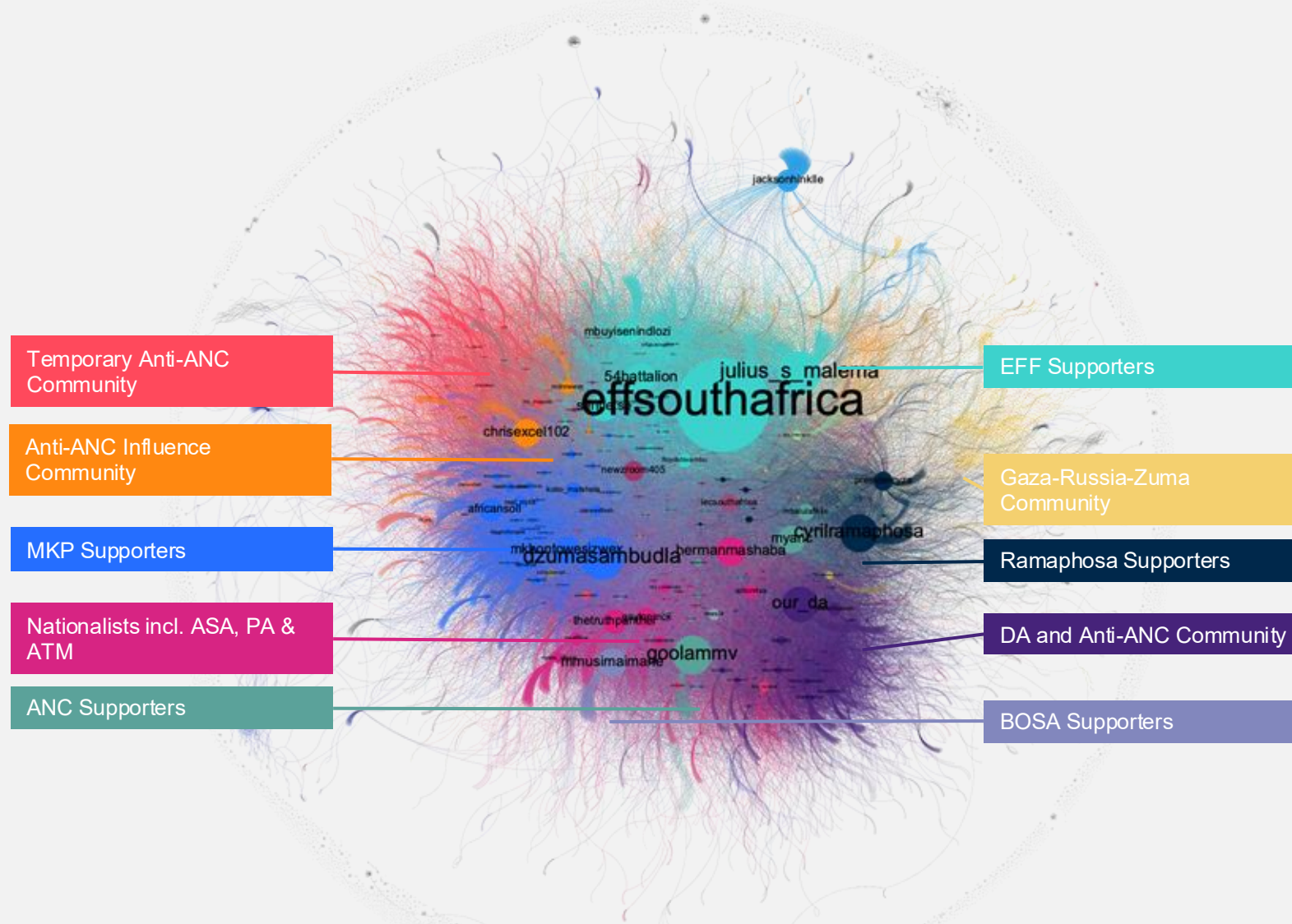


FIMI

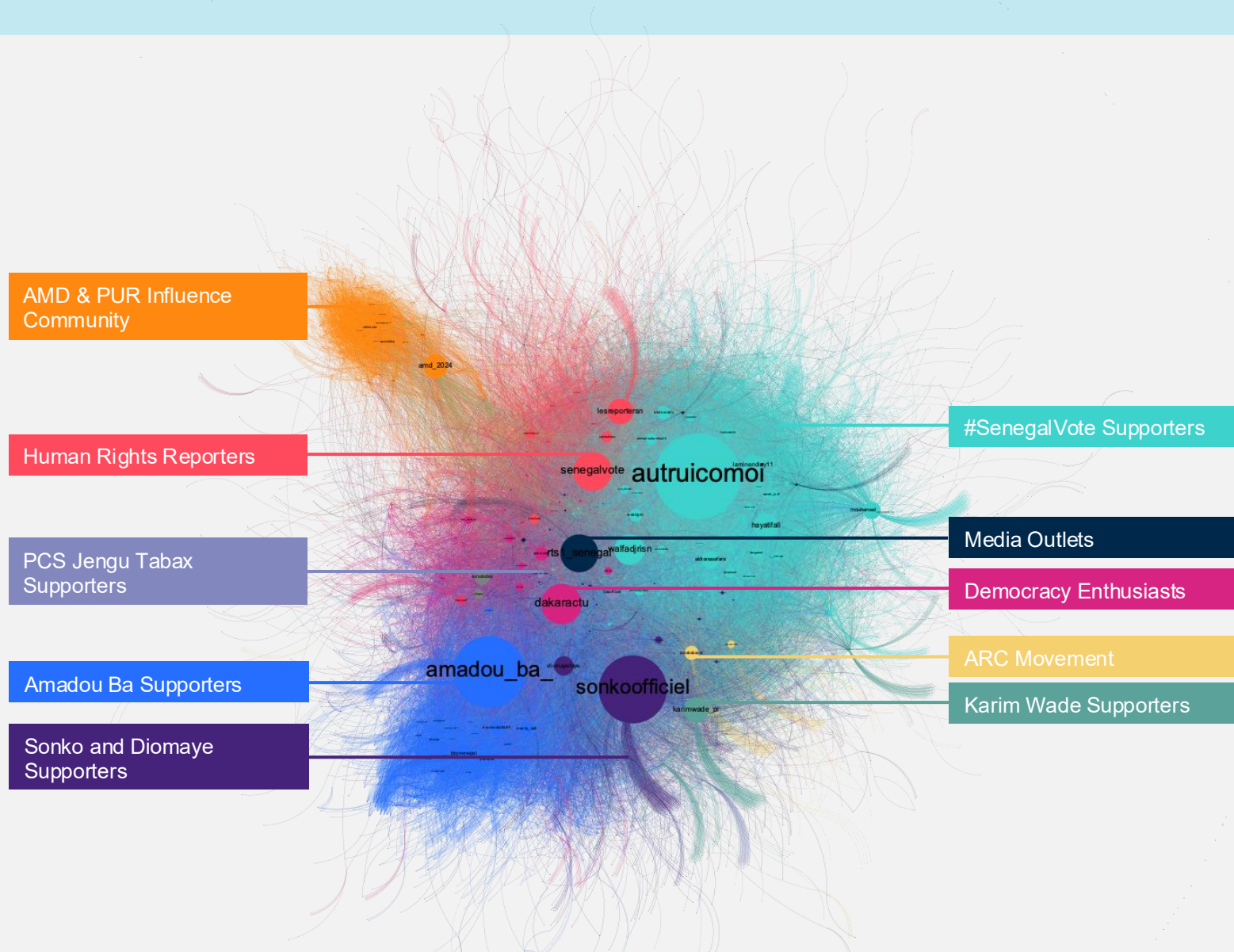
Safeguarding Democracy: Navigating the Complex Landscape of Foreign Interference in Elections

in Africa have can countries.

2024 South African Election | X Communities



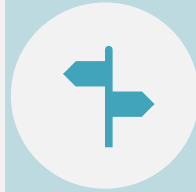
2024 Senegalese Election | X Communities



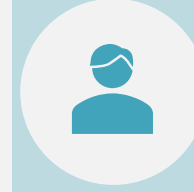
Typology of Disinformation Narratives



**Ethnic and
identity
divisions**



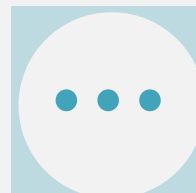
**Challenges to
electoral
integrity**



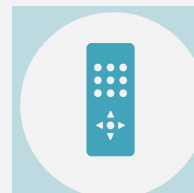
**Attacks on
female
candidates**



**Economic
discontent and
class conflict**



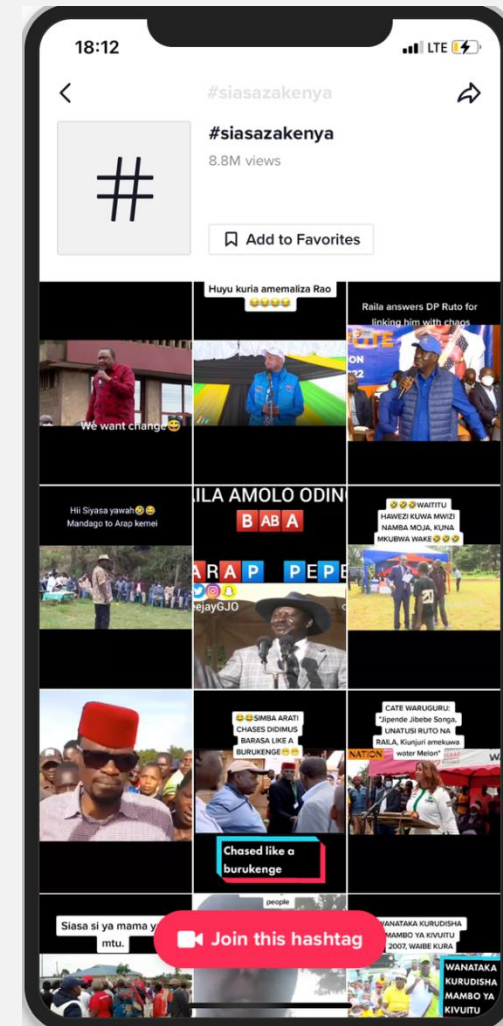
**“Radical” and
disruptive
narratives**



**Narratives
against the
media**

Ethnic and identity divisions

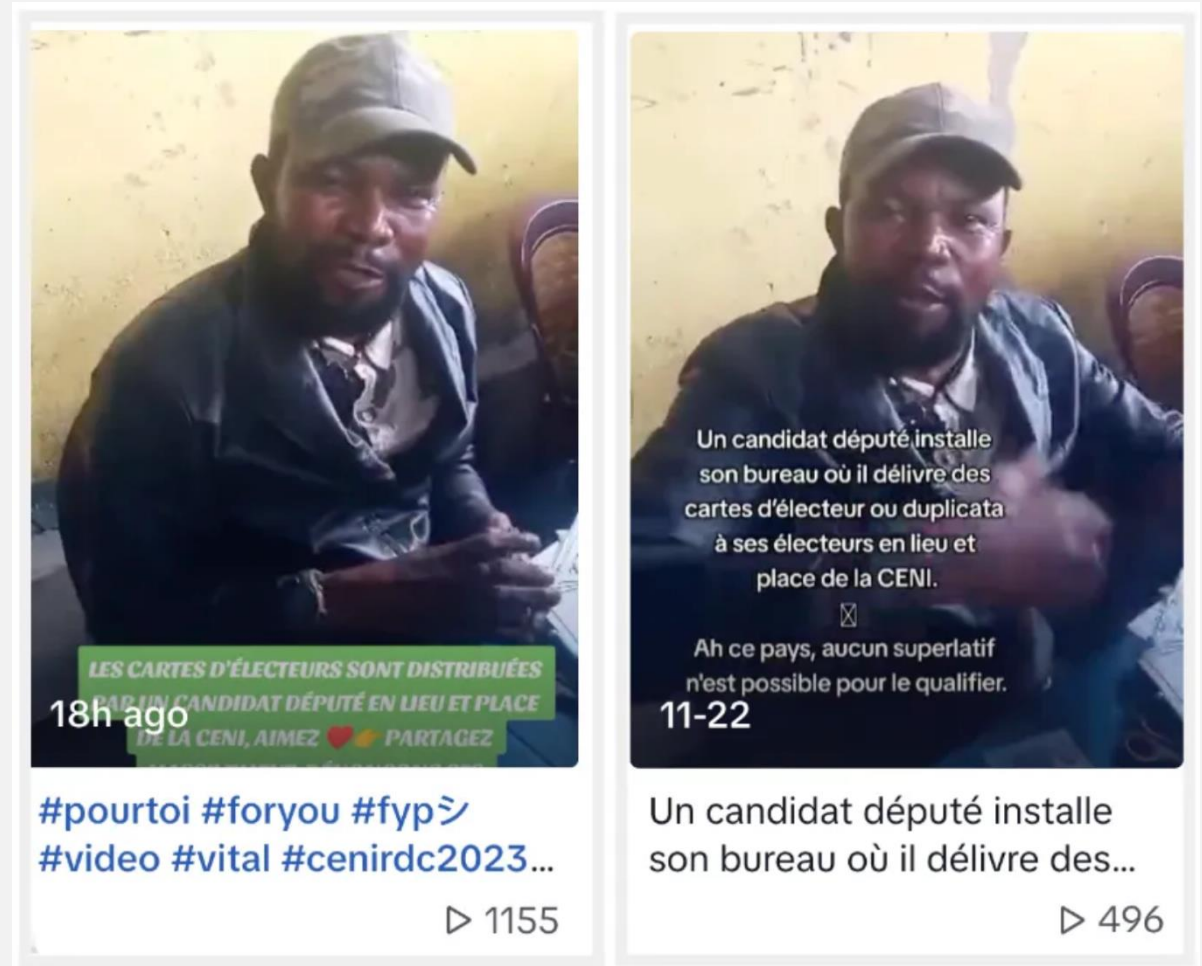
- Cambridge Analytica secretly ran campaigns during Kenya's 2013 and 2017 elections, developing online campaigns that portrayed opposition leader Raila Odinga negatively, **exacerbating ethnic tensions**.
- In the DRC, disinformation campaigns claimed that certain candidates were backed by foreign actors (such as Rwanda's intelligence services), **targeting specific ethnic groups** to polarize the population.



Sources: <https://globalvoices.org/2024/04/25/how-gendered-disinformation-on-social-media-harms-kenyan-women-seeking-political-office/>

Challenges to electoral integrity

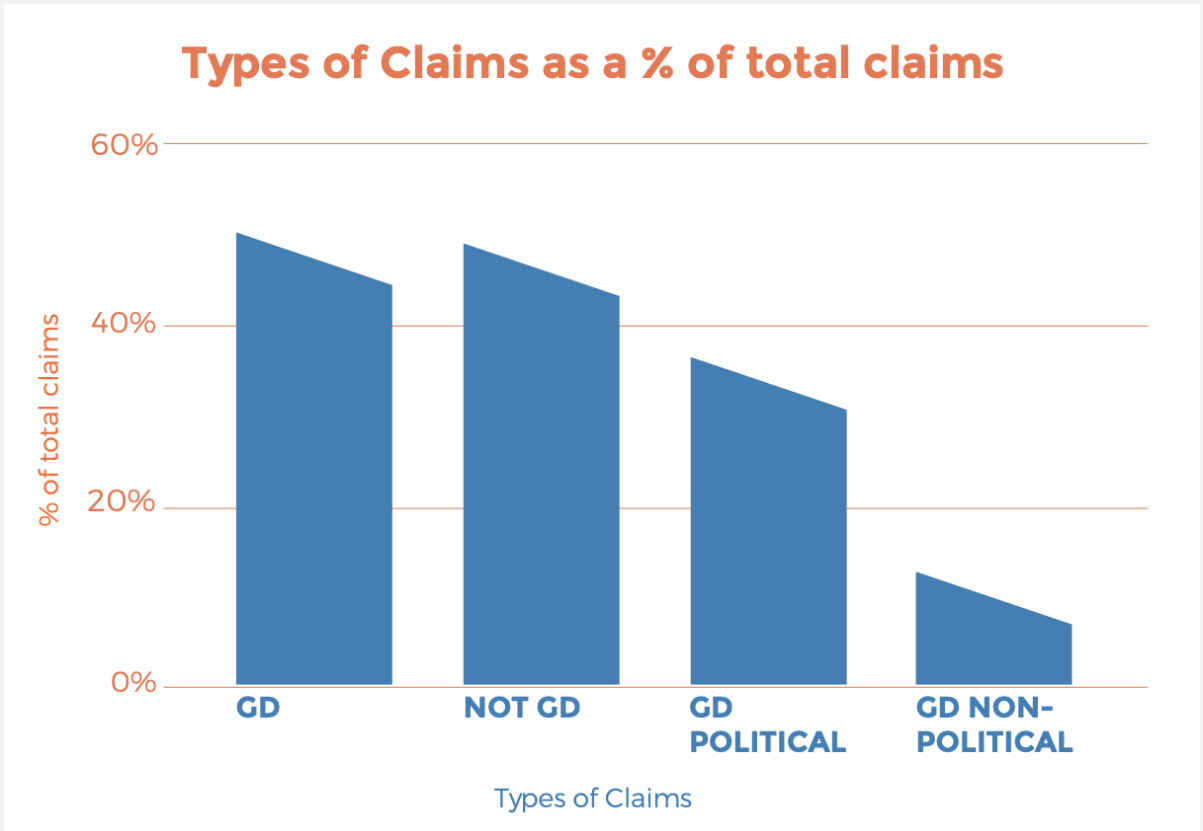
- In the DRC, false reports circulated on social media claiming that the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) had **postponed the elections** due to logistical issues.
- Fake Twitter accounts impersonated the **Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC)**, spreading misinformation about voter registration and polling station locations.



Source: <https://disinfo.africa/drc-battles-disinformation-during-2023-elections-6f3c7e4b8a42>

Attacks on female candidates

- Diane Rwigara, a businesswoman and presidential candidate, faced a **smear campaign** involving the circulation of fabricated nude photos shortly after announcing her candidacy.
- In Togo, female candidates were targeted with gendered disinformation, including false narratives **questioning their competence**, morality, and suitability for leadership roles



Source: https://theawjp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/AWJP_-_Trends-in-Gendered-Disinformation-During-Togo-Elections.pdf

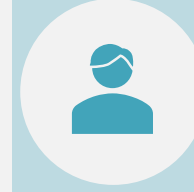
Typology of Disinformation Narratives



**Ethnic and
identity
divisions**



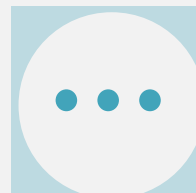
**Challenges to
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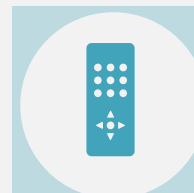
**Attacks on
female
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**Economic
discontent and
class conflict**



**“Radical” and
disruptive
narratives**



**Narratives
against the
media**

Challenges Democratic Process

- **Erosion of Public Trust** – Citizens lose faith in democratic institutions due to conflicting information.
- **Voter Suppression** – Fake news discourages people from voting or misleads them about election procedures.
- **Political Polarization** – Disinformation deepens ethnic, economic, and ideological divides.
- **Violence and Unrest** – False narratives incite protests, riots, and ethnic conflicts.
- **Foreign Interference** – External actors manipulate narratives to influence political outcomes.
- **Weakening of Media** – Journalistic integrity is undermined, making it harder to counter disinformation.

Today's Learning Outcomes

- By the end of the session, you should be able to:
 1. Define and critically engage with the term **disinformation**
 2. Examine the rise of **geopolitically** motivated disinformation campaigns.
 3. Discuss the role of disinformation in **elections** outside the Global North.
 4. Apply theoretical discussions to real-world case studies.

Questions?





University of
Sheffield | Disinformation Research Cluster

Disinformation in a Global Context

Dani Madrid-Morales, PhD

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5 March 2025

University of Glasgow