

Mapping Disinformation in Africa | Africa Center for Strategic Studies

By Africa Center for Strategic Studies

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Russia has pioneered a model of disinformation to gain political influence in Africa that is now being replicated by other actors across the continent.

Disinformation is the intentional dissemination of false information with the intent of advancing a political objective. Africa has been the increasingly frequent target of such campaigns. In recent years, dozens of carefully designed campaigns have pumped millions of intentionally false and misleading posts into Africa's online social spaces. The ensuing [confusion in deciphering fact from fiction](#) has had a corrosive effect on social trust, critical thinking, and citizens' ability to engage in politics fairly—the lifeblood of a functioning democracy.

Russia has been the leading purveyor of disinformation campaigns in Africa with at least 16 known operations on the continent. Drawing on a legacy dating back to Joseph Stalin (who coined the term *dezinformatsyia*), the targeted tactics of disinformation in Africa are adapted from the Russian military strategy of [“ambiguous warfare.”](#) This strategy amplifies grievances and exploits divisions within a targeted society, fostering fragmentation and inaction—all while affording the perpetrators plausible deniability. The objective often is less to convince as to confuse citizens—thereby creating false equivalences between democratic and nondemocratic political actors, precipitating disillusion and apathy.

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