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Countering Russian Disinformation in Africa

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Countering Russian disinformation in

The full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine is causing one of the biggest wars in 70 years. In addition, since 2014, Russia has been distinguished by its powerful weapon, preserved from the times of the KGB and the USSR - propaganda. Russian propaganda left a special trace not only on the territory of Russia, but also beyond it, especially in the regions of Africa. At the beginning, a certain determination why Russia is interested in this region in particular, and why propaganda plays an important role in it. Russia has clear economic incentives for influence in Africa. It is deficient in minerals such as manganese, bauxite and chromium, which are important for industry. Aluminum company Rusal supplies bauxite from mines in Guinea, which are estimated to account for about a quarter of Rusal's total output. Russia is also interested in diamonds - the state diamond mining company Alrosa signed an agreement with Angola in 2017. East African gas, in particular, is of interest, and Rosneft has opened an office in Mozambique. Last year, Russia signed agreements on strengthening economic ties with Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia. Secondly, these are weapons that Russia supplies to African countries. According to the SIPRI database, the largest buyer of Russian weapons on the continent is Algeria. Egypt, which has received US military aid for years, has also become an important buyer of Russian arms. These orders and deliveries included transport and combat helicopters, combat aircraft and surface-to-air missile systems, in many cases retrofitted equipment that was previously in use. Russian military equipment is cheap compared to Western suppliers and still quite reliable in operation, which may make it attractive to poor countries. Analyzing this information we can see that most of the Africa region countries were strictly dependent on Russia and Russia itself used it by spreading its propaganda.

Moscow's influence in Africa was on display in March during the U.N. vote to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While 28 African nations voted in favor

of the resolution, a significant minority of countries on the continent — 25 — either voted to abstain or did not vote at all. Russia influences its commitment to the region through military assistance with the help of the private military Wagner group and fights for natural resources. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace report says, “Wagner is a vehicle the Kremlin uses to recruit, train, and deploy mercenaries, either to fight wars or to provide security and training to friendly regimes. Russia’s propaganda stated that the food shortage crisis appeared due to the West sanctions that cause prices for food and fuel to rise. The campaign can be considered as successful in food security. Russia tries to make it harder to recognize its propaganda usage of different techniques. Facebook, Twitter, and many other social media should not lose vigilance. The Russian information campaign deployed in the CAR uses a variety of tactics to spread its narratives. These techniques are consistent with those used by Prigozhin’s Internet Research Agency during the 2016 US presidential elections. They include repeated sharing of Russian narratives across platforms, incorporating relevant social and cultural issues, using local voices, creating division and amplifying conspiracies, and sponsoring NGOs. Russia in their policy emphasized the absence of the colonial past (others want to reproduce the new form of slavery), presence of military “assistance”, playing for influence for strategic locations, natural resources, young generation (through a scholarship for students), Washington Post is not readable. The phenomenal fact is that Russia cannot restore order in its domestic policy and West is still the source of all problems.