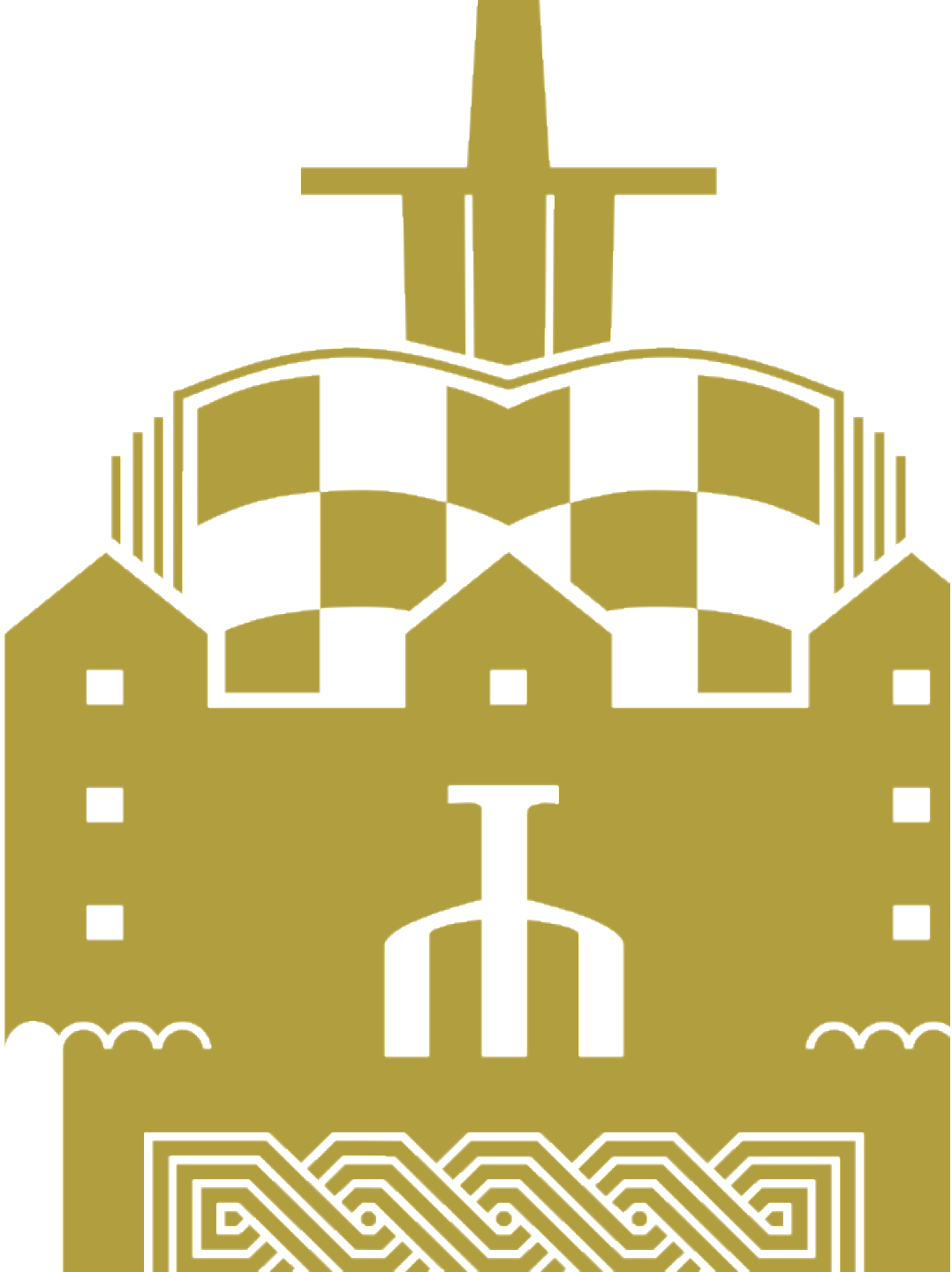
DR. FRANJO TUĐMAN DEFENSE AND SECURITY UNIVERSITY

University of Defence

Building the ‘RussieAfrique’

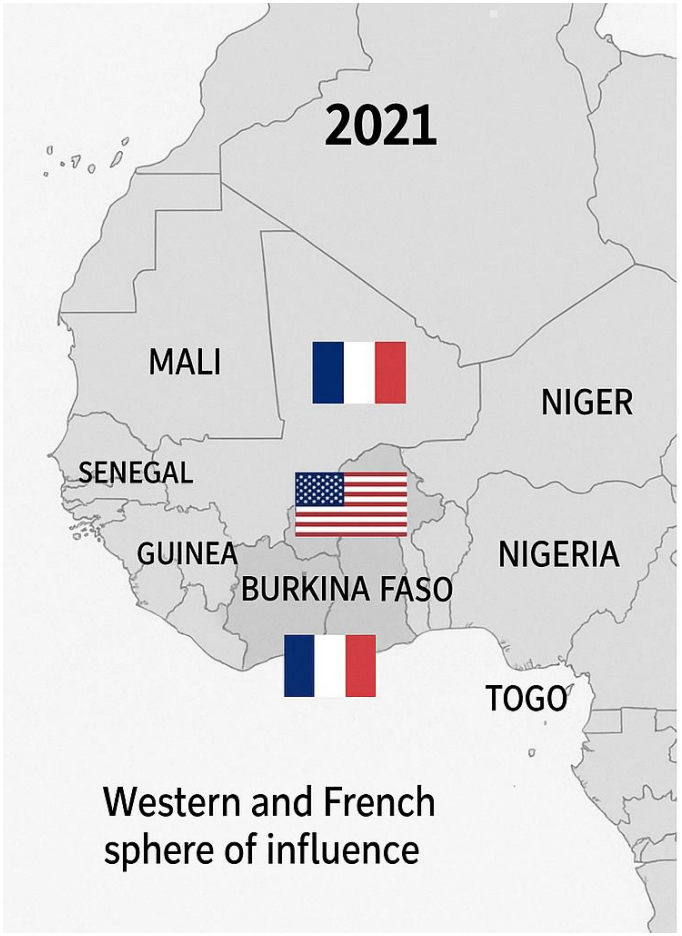
Russian Hybrid Warfare Changing the Geopolitics in the Sahel

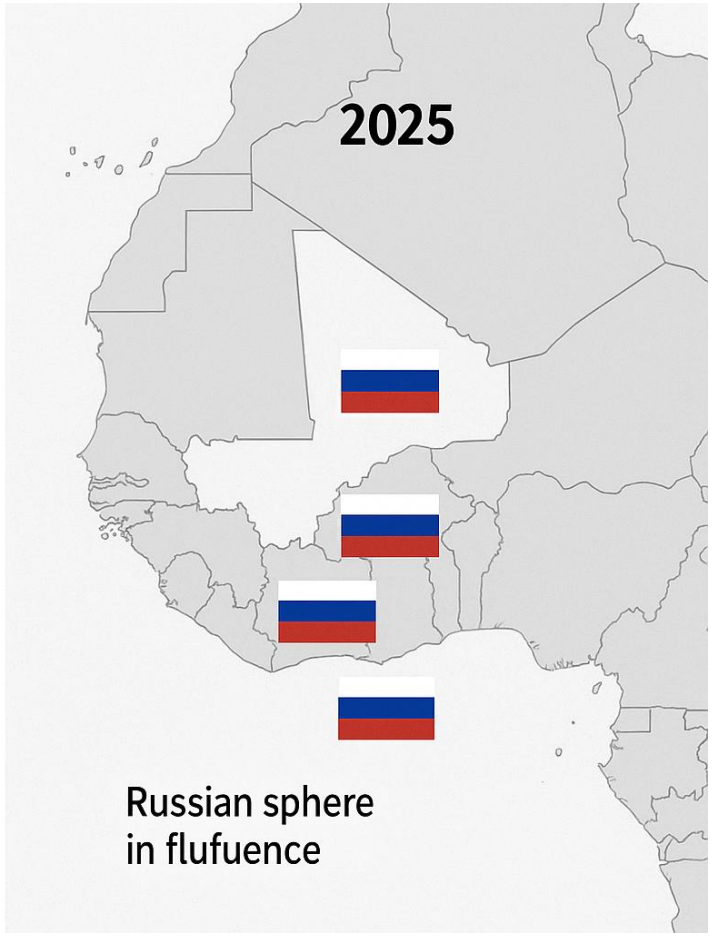
Sapere Aude et Agere



How did this happen?

Map of geopolitical spheres of influence in West Africa and Sahel comparing the years 2021 / 2025





DR. FRANJO TUĐMAN DEFENSE AND SECURITY UNIVERSITY

University of Defence

Sapere Aude et Agere

Building the 'RussieAfrique'

STRATEGIC DOMAIN	SPECIFIC INSTRUMENT OF INFLUENCE / WARFARE
Political	Targeted diplomacy and support of specific political actors or specific policies Supporting the proxies, oligarchs, warlords
Military	Military-economic diplomacy Covert military support, export of military technologies, evading and bypassing the sanctions (security / military), Usage of private military companies and entities (connecting private and military sector) Usage of organized / non-organized crime entities to faciliate goals or policies (asassinations, blackmail..) Usage of covert methods, clandestine operations and secret services (RISS – GRU, FSB, SVR) Usage of methods if Information Warfare and Cognitive Warfare (or Information-Psychological Warfare)
Economic	Economic diplomacy, economic leverages Energy diplomacy, energy dependency and exploitation of energetic and natural resources sector Supporting the proxies, bribery and corruption
Social	Exploitation of cultural, ethnical, ethical or ideological domains via Information-Psychological Warfare Support of civil unrests Exploitation of local religious organizations, NGOs and GONGOs Creating cultural centres and creating connections to Russia and Russian culture
Information	Information-technical warfare activities – cyber operations, usage of Electronic Warfare and other technologies Information-psychological warfare activities– targeted disinformation campaigns, propaganda and fake news, cognitive warfare, social media manipulation, support of agitation and civil unrests, exploitation of media, sophisticated influence operations via information domain
Infrastructure	Creating Russian-based infrastructure and installations, leading to economic or other form of dependency

How did Russia efficiently oust the West?

Combination of tailoired information-psychological warfare with social-cultural indoctrination

Driven by the Kremlin or RISS (Russian Intelligence and Security Services) or Presidential Administration

Focused on two main points:

(1) support of Russian activities worldwode and in Africa, maximise Russian approval rating in the target region

(2) protection and support for the local regime.

Similar methods can be seen in EU and Ukraine, however modus operandi of Russia in Aftica is much more aggressive and direct

How did Russia efficiently oust the West?

1) SPUTNIK AFRIQUE, RT ACTIVITIES

Media influence – Sputnik Afrique, Russia Today and other known platforms

- focused on local radios, not the traditional press due to illiteracy

2) AFRICAN INITIATIVE PROJECT

Finalcial and educational support to local media (radio, social networks)

Networking and education, educational workshops in Moscow, Russia

Massive social networks campaigns

Workshops in cultural and social scene in region of Sahel

Spreading active influence to all countries of West Africa

Cooperation with Rossotrudnichestvo and Russian cultural centers in region

African Initiative as an active tool of influence

Russian-state-driven and funded entity with the aim of actively engage with local population and influence hearts and minds

Not just spreading the propaganda like Sputnik or RT, but creating networks of local influencers, educating them and funding them

Opening the offices in other regional countries, sending personnel abroad

Renewal of „active-measures" doctrine in informatinal-psychological warfare

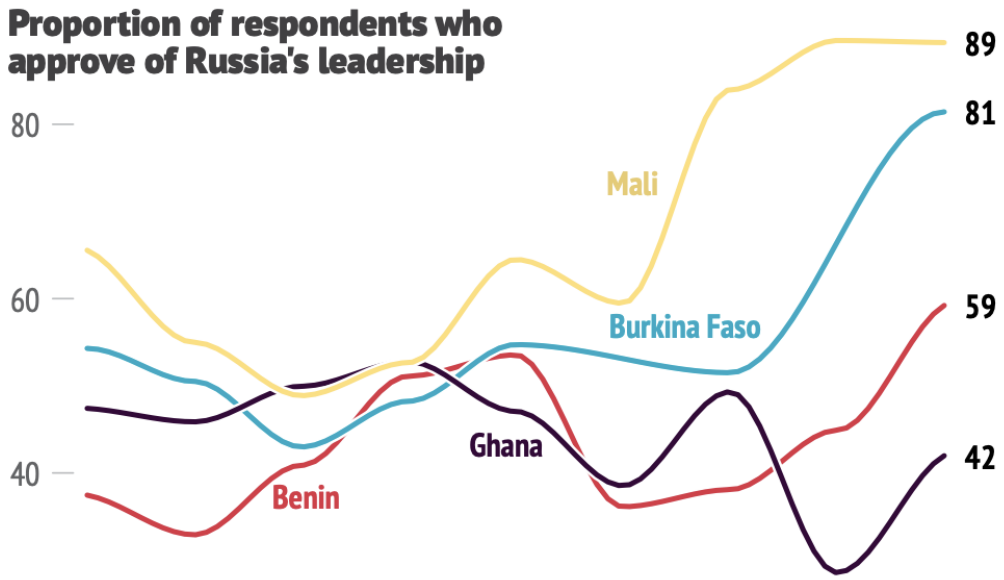
DR. FRANJO TUĐMAN DEFENSE AND SECURITY UNIVERSITY

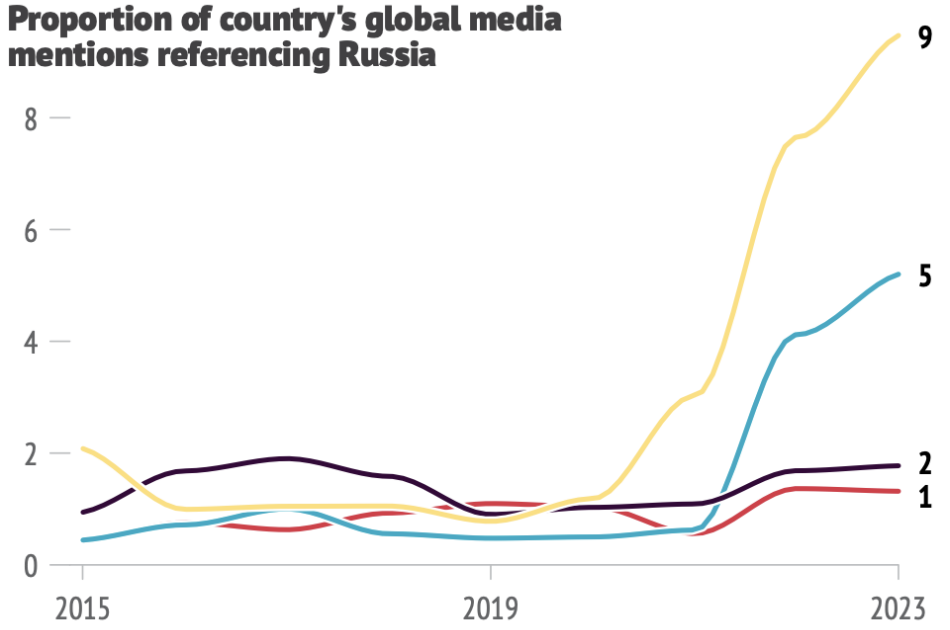
University of Defence

Sapere Aude et Agere

Building the 'RussieAfrique'

Efficienty of Russian influence operations in Sahel

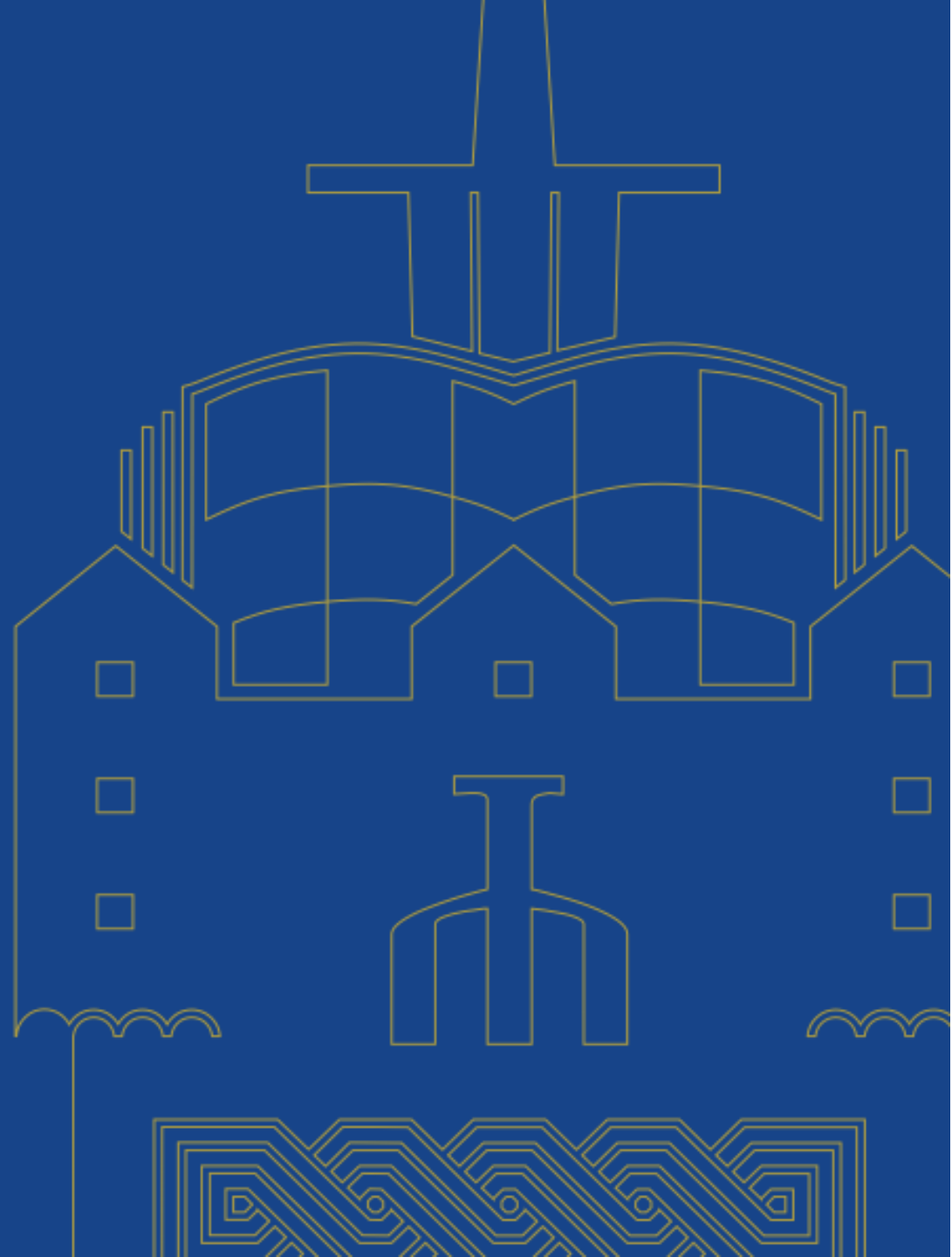




Data: Gallup World Poll data on approval of Russia's leadership (N=1000 per country), 2024; Media-based proxy measure of Russian engagement, CFI Project, EUISS, 2024

Conclusion

- Actively engaging the local population and media scene to propaganda, multiplying its effects
- Combining active propaganda and disinformation with social-cultural approach simultaniously, educating, funding and training new generations of locals
- Continuation of the state-driven contracted model of Russian specialists (Political technologists) with new phoneomena – building active networks of local influencerrs from youngest genetations
- Active modern social-networks driven approach – TikTok, WA Groups, Telegram, Facebook, X (Twitter)



WWW.SOIS-FT.HR