



CONTINENT MEANINGS

How External Information Influence is Structured in Africa

Table of contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Methodology	3
3. African Media Landscape: General Overview	5
3.1. Africa's Information Ecosystem	5
3.2. Social networks and messengers.....	7
3.3. Media Ownership Structure	9
3.4. Challenges and Vulnerabilities	14
3.5. Conclusions of the Section.....	15
4. Target Audience and Mechanisms of Influence	17
4.1. Youth.....	17
4.2. Women and Mothers in Traditional Communities.....	18
4.3 Military and Police.....	19
4.4. Urban Poor and Informal Groups	20
4.5. Elites, Officials, and Journalists	21
5. Key Trends in the Development of Psyops in Africa	23
5.1. Strategic Forecast: Development of Psyops in Africa, 2025–2030	24
6. Potential Escalation Points and Shifts in Power Dynamics	27
7. Recommendations for Countering External Information Pressure.....	30
8. Report Conclusions	33

1. Introduction

The modern media space of Africa has become an arena of active competition for the consciousness, loyalty, and strategic orientation of millions of citizens who find themselves amid rapid social, institutional, and digital transformation. The accelerated penetration of the Internet, the dominance of global platforms, the uneven development of information infrastructure, and the weakness of regulatory institutions create favorable conditions for systemic external influence – both through soft power and covert information-psychological operations (psyops).

In the context of a global geopolitical shift, Africa is becoming not just an object of economic and diplomatic interest, but also a key theater in the struggle over meaning. Classic forms of media influence – international broadcasting, educational projects, cultural diplomacy – are now actively supplemented by digital tools such as targeting, disinformation, counter-agendas, and behavioral engineering. The role of anonymous channels, memes, mobile messengers, and pseudo-expert content now goes far beyond secondary – they have become primary vectors of influence.

Analyzing the information space and influence strategies in the African context requires not only technological and media expertise, but also an understanding of cultural codes, social practices of information consumption, narrative dynamics, and the behavioral susceptibility of different audiences. Psychological operations in this context are not limited to propaganda – they aim to shape attitudes, redistribute trust, demobilize some groups, and radicalize others.

This report seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current configuration of Africa's media space in terms of its vulnerability to external informational influence. It examines the structural characteristics of the environment, analyzes mechanisms of influence and target audiences, identifies key actors and narrative strategies, and outlines possible escalation scenarios as well as practical recommendations to strengthen informational resilience.

The aim of this study is to offer a strategic tool for understanding, preventing, and neutralizing external informational pressure under conditions of limited resources, high fragmentation, and intense foreign policy competition. Today, Africa is not only a continent of economic prospects – it is also one of the most important arenas of global ideological competition in the 21st century.

2. Methodology

This analytical report is based on a **multi-level, interdisciplinary approach** combining tools from strategic communication, cognitive analytics, political sociology, and OSINT monitoring. The study is not descriptive; its aim was **to identify vulnerabilities, intrusion logics, points of influence, and narrative transformations** implemented by external actors within the media and psychosocial systems of African countries.

The research was structured around a four-stage model:

1. **Mapping the media environment and channels of influence** — including analysis of media reach, ownership structures, consumption formats, and digital infrastructure.
2. **Identifying key actors and mechanisms of psyops** — assessing influence tools, platform vectors, and narrative types.
3. **Typologizing target audiences** — through behavioral, socio-political, and cognitive segmentation.
4. **Strategic forecasting and scenario modeling** — identifying probable escalation zones, shifts in the balance of power, and vulnerable nodes.

The analysis was based on a combination of open and specialized sources, including:

- **OSINT platforms and data repositories:** African Media Barometer, DW Academy, Reporters Without Borders, GSMA Intelligence, *Digital 2023 Africa Report*.
- **Monitoring of social networks and digital platforms:** Telegram, TikTok, WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages, YouTube channels, and aggregators such as NewsNow and AllAfrica.
- **Documents and analyses from international actors:** reports by USAID, Fondation Hirondelle, BBC Media Action, CGTN Africa, France Médias Monde, the British Council, NED, and RAND Corporation.
- **Academic and semi-academic research:** publications indexed in Scopus/WoS, and reports by think tanks such as ACSS, ISS, Carnegie Endowment, and Chatham House.
- **Content analysis of local media** (radio, television, news portals) across a sample of 12 countries: Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ghana, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Rwanda.

The following analytical methods were applied:

- **Content analysis** — thematic and semantic breakdown of media and social media content, focusing on external narratives and psyops indicators.

- **Comparative institutional analysis** – evaluating infrastructure and political-cultural differences across countries.
- **Cognitive profiling of audiences** – based on models of perception, emotional involvement, and trust structures.
- **Network OSINT analysis** – mapping of channels, bots, and connections between media proxies.
- **Narrative decoding** – identifying metaphors, value frames, and recurring constructions in media stories.
- **Scenario mapping** – constructing predictive escalation models based on the dynamics of information flows, political calendars, and the activity of external actors.

Research limitations:

- The physical inaccessibility of a number of countries (Central African Republic, Libya, Chad) limited the depth of offline data verification.
- The complexity of interpreting “grey” Telegram networks and anonymous decentralized media structures.
- The high mutation rate of narratives (especially on TikTok and WhatsApp) requires constant updates to the analysis.
- Linguistic diversity (over 200 languages in the sample) was in some cases compensated for through translation and the use of transcripts.

3. African Media Landscape: General Overview

3.1. Africa's Information Ecosystem

The African media landscape is highly heterogeneous, due to uneven infrastructure development, differences in the level of urbanization and the dominance of certain types of channels depending on the region.

Geographical part	Dominant telecom companies	Presence of foreign media
South	MTN, Vodacom	BBC, RT, France 24
East	Safaricom, Airtel	CGTN, Al Jazeera, BBC
North	Orange, Etisalat	France 24, Al Jazeera
West	MTN, Airtel	BBC, Al Jazeera, RT
Center	Orange	France 24, RT
Geographical part	Dominant telecom companies	Presence of foreign media

Mobile networks and telecom infrastructure play a crucial role in African countries: 85% of internet access (mainly via 3G and 4G networks) is provided through them, and this creates a specific pattern of use (short videos, messengers, Facebook Lite).

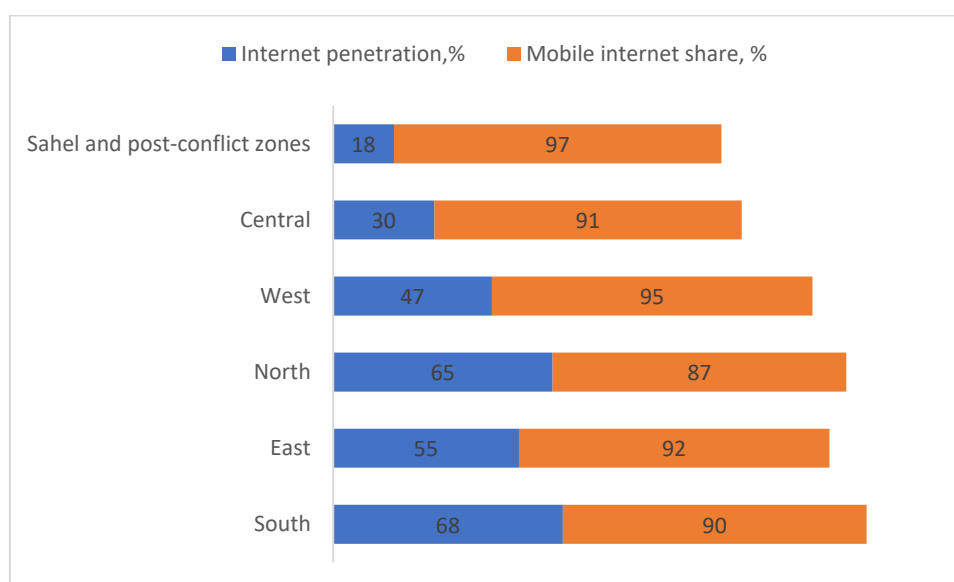


Figure 1. Digitalization in Africa

A key player in the construction of digital infrastructure is the Chinese company Huawei. The leading mobile network operators are mostly foreign companies:

- MTN Group – the largest on the continent, which has captured the market in South Africa
- Orange – operates in French-speaking Africa, closely affiliated with French soft power
- Airtel Africa – a British-Indian company, primarily operating in English-speaking Africa
- Safaricom – a Kenyan company, a leader in digital financial services.

The spread of mobile communication infrastructure across the African continent creates special conditions for mobile applications. Such initiatives increase the speed of dissemination of both useful content and misinformation.

Despite the growth in connections, the resilience of the digital space remains weak. Dependence on foreign operators and platforms, lack of local hosting, the use of kill switches, weak personal data protection laws — all of this creates a favorable environment for external interference in the internal political processes of countries.

The above is aggravated by the language barrier and low digital literacy, which makes the population in these countries susceptible to fake news, cyberattacks, and psychological operations, and translated information is used by external forces to manipulatively influence the population.

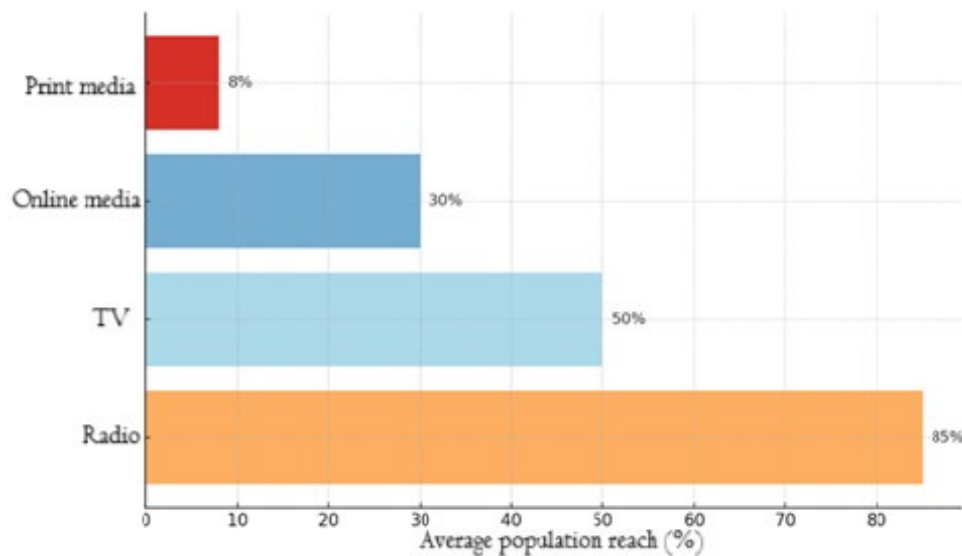


Figure 2. Average reach of media channels in Africa

At the same time, digital media behavior is fragmented and syncretic: users simultaneously consume memes, voice messages, religious videos, and news headlines. Oral and auditory news dissemination (a form of hybrid oral press) plays a significant role. Linguistic diversity makes it difficult for external players to exert a unified influence, which serves as a natural safeguard against malicious informational influence on political and social processes on the continent.

The African information ecosystem is a mix of traditional and digital channels, evolving unevenly depending on the level of urbanization, political stability and economic development. Radio remains the most wide-reaching and influential medium, especially in rural areas and among low-literacy populations.

This makes it a key tool for informational and psychological influence, including disinformation campaigns. Television occupies an intermediate position and is actively used by both external media structures (BBC, RT, CGTN) and national state channels to promote the official agenda. Online media and digital platforms demonstrate dynamic growth, especially in

cities, but often suffer from low credibility, political bias, and dependence on social networks. Print media are gradually losing their broad influence, remaining a tool for influencing narrow elites. This configuration of the media field creates favorable conditions for hybrid forms of psyops, combining oral, visual and digital channels depending on the target audience and region.

3.2. Social networks and messengers

Social platforms have become not just channels of communication, but **the core of Africa's digital social infrastructure**. They reach millions of users, including youth, politically active groups, bloggers, and marginalized communities. These platforms are now **key entry points for external influence and information-psychological operations (psyops)**.

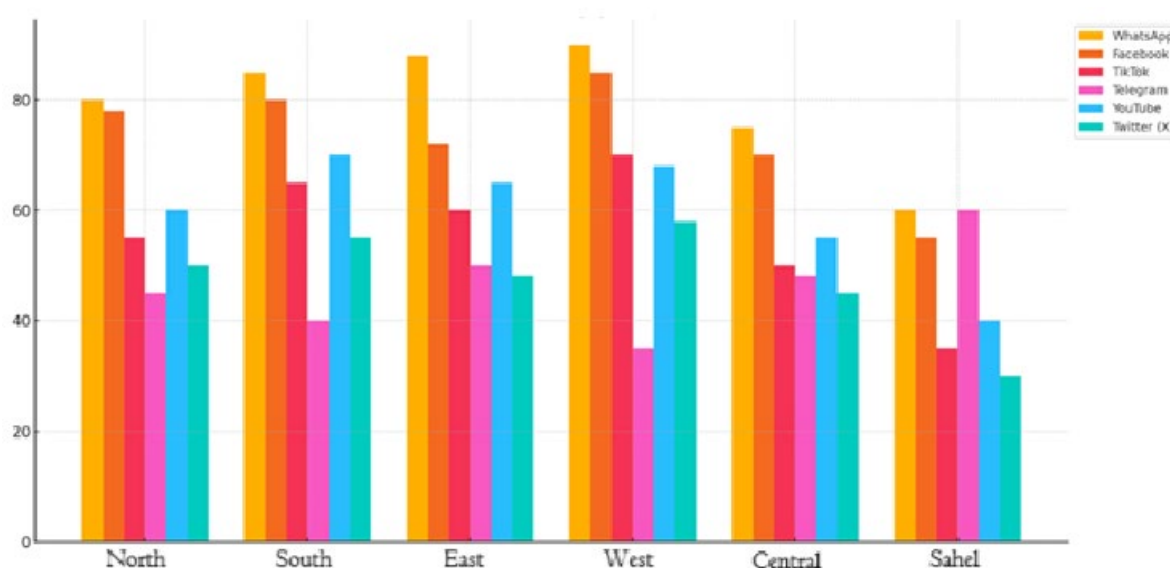


Figure 3. Popularity of social platforms by region in Africa

1. WhatsApp – the most popular platform across the continent:

- The most popular platform across all countries on the continent thanks to **low traffic, audio/video support and encryption**.
- Used not only for communication, but also for:
 - Spreading news, rumors, religious sermons, and fake information
 - Organizing protests or coordination hostile campaigns.
- Vulnerable to **organized disinformation** due to its closed nature and lack of moderation.
- Particularly dangerous in the context of psycho-emotional impact: mass distribution of videos, voice messages, rumors about threats or repression.

2. Facebook – social platform no.1

- **More than 300 million active Facebook users** operate across the continent.

- Used not only for communication but also for:
 - Spreading news, rumors, religious sermons, and fake content.
 - Organizing protests or coordinating hostile campaigns.
- Facebook was actively used during elections (e.g., in Nigeria and Kenya), including **influence campaigns involving foreign actors (Cambridge Analytica, political bots, disinformation)**.
- The problem of local context: **algorithms are not adapted to local languages and narratives**, which amplifies the spread of false information.

3. TikTok and Instagram – emotional impact and visual psyops:

- Rapidly growing reach among young people in metropolitan and suburban areas (especially in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt).
- TikTok’s video format is perfectly suited for **simplified narratives, political banter, memes, anti-establishment content**.
- Creating viral clips with emotional or panic-inducing messages.
 - Promoting images "heroes", "martyrs", and "enemies".
 - Introducing **externally produced videos** disguised as local content.

Table 1. Vulnerability of Social Platforms to Psyops in Africa

Platform	Type vulnerabilities	Target audience	Vulnerability level
WhatsApp	Closed groups, uncontrolled spread of rumors	Rural and urban residents of all ages	5
Facebook	Algorithm manipulation, political bots, weak moderation	General public, primarily 18 years old	4
TikTok	Viral video, emotional content, monetization	Urban youth, schoolchildren and students	4
Telegram	Anonymous channels, coordinated activity, political targeting	Politically involved activists, elites	5
Instagram	Influence through visual narratives and "lifestyle" propaganda	Female and youth audience	3
Youtube	Pseudo-documentary, interview, narrative-driven visual content	Middle class, active citizens, religious leaders	3
Twitter (X)	Targeting opinion elites, insider leaks, disinformation in the form of "expert ratings"	Journalists, diplomats, media elite	4

4. Telegram – a platform for coordination and semi-closed influence

- Telegram is actively used as **a means of bypassing censorship** and **anonymously distributing information**.
- It is especially important in countries with authoritarian regimes or in conflict zones (Ethiopia, Sudan, Mali).
- It allows for the launch of:
 - **Psyops channels** (anonymous groups posing as "internal sources")

- **Networked influence operations** with external coordination.
- Telegram is actively integrated into information operation strategies alongside TikTok and Facebook – but with a focus on elites and politically engaged groups.

5. Youtube and Twitter (X) – platforms for narratives and opinions.

- YouTube – second most popular platform in a number of countries after WhatsApp.
 - Used to distribute **propaganda videos, pseudo-documentaries, and speeches by opinion leaders.**
- Twitter (X) – less widespread but popular among **journalists, activists, diplomats.**
 - Often is used as a channel for **the initial 'leak' of a narrative**, which is then amplified across other networks.

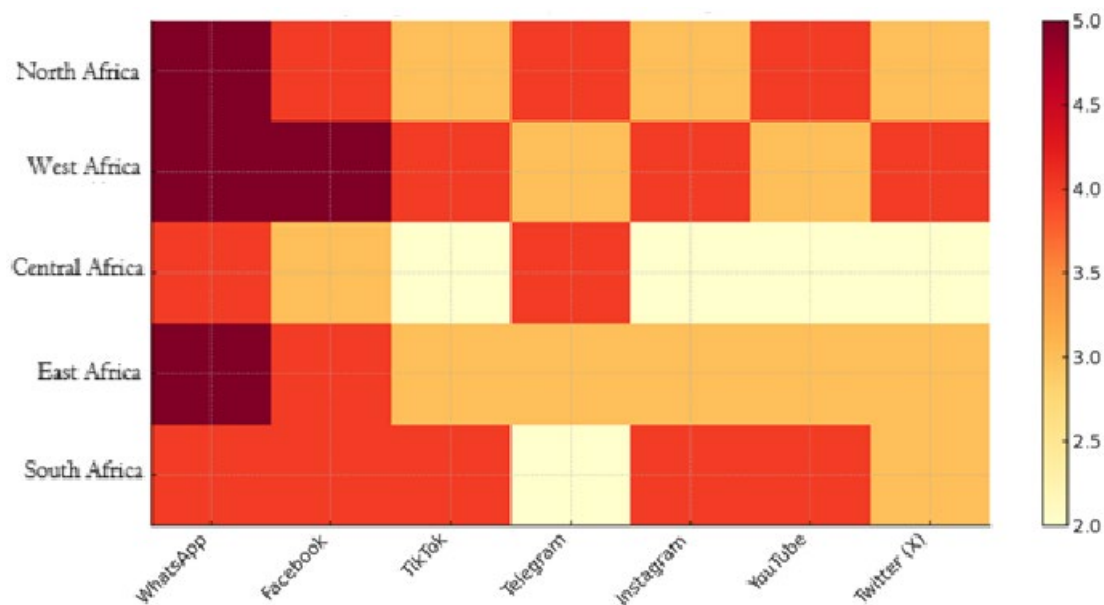


Figure 4. Regional distribution of influence of digital platforms in Africa

The African digital space is becoming an arena for **asymmetric information operations**, where **social networks and messengers are replacing traditional media**. Closed environments, low levels of media literacy and high user engagement make them ideal platforms for psyops: from spreading panic to undermining trust in government, Western structures or international organizations. Managing narratives on these platforms no longer requires physical presence on the continent – botnets, culturally adapted content, and precise targeting are enough.

3.3. Media Ownership Structure

Control over the media in Africa largely determines whose information agenda shapes public consciousness. The division into state, private and externally managed media resources reflects a complex balance between internal management, corporate interests and foreign policy influence.

State Media in Africa: Tools of Control and Points of Vulnerability

State media in Africa traditionally play a **dual role**: on the one hand, they serve as instruments for **asserting the legitimacy of power**; on the other hand, they become **targets and channels of external pressure** through mechanisms of manipulation, corruption, or technological interference.

Advantages	Flaws
Centralization of the agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows political leaders to monopolize the narrative, set the framing of events, choose the language and emotional tone of news Works effectively in conditions of low media literacy: official = true 	Loss of trust among urban and youth groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young, educated urban residents increasingly perceive state media as a “mouthpiece of propaganda” and shift to digital spaces This creates information gaps between generations and regions
Crisis management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In times of protests, epidemics, and armed conflicts, state media provide a “single voice of authority”, neutralizing panic or mistrust 	Vulnerability to external influence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> infiltration of editorial offices by influence agents, hacking, leaks, or broadcast tampering, funding of “partnership” programs by foreign entities.
Access to marginalized groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through radio and TV in national and local languages, the state can reach low-literate, rural, and religiously oriented audiences 	Dependence on infrastructure contractors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many state media systems rely on foreign technology providers (Huawei, Thomson, etc.), creating “backdoors” for interference
Legitimization of state actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State media are actively used to justify repression, military operations, or states of emergency as “responses to threats”, including external ones 	Editorial stagnation and lack of credibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive political loyalty leads to loss of professional staff, one-sided coverage, and declining competitiveness even within the country
Economic sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded by the state budget, not subject to market competition Often the only source of news in poorer regions 	Targets of internal sabotage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the event of regime change or instability, state media may become targets of takeovers or sources of leaks and “information sabotage” – especially if foreign-funded personnel are embedded in their structure

State media are both a **shield and an Achilles’ heel** of political regimes in Africa. They play an important role in managing the population and suppressing opposition, but they become vulnerable in the context of digital competition, external technological interference, and a loss of trust among key groups. This makes them key targets for both **external influence operations** and **internal information conflicts**.

For example:

NTA (Nigeria) – low public trust, political bias

ETV (Ethiopia) – ethno-political polarization, government dependence

SABC (South Africa) – financial instability, opposition pressure, ANC influence

KBC (Kenya) – editorial stagnation, loss of urban audience

RTNC (DR Congo) – underfunding, technical dependence on France

Private Media in Africa: Roles, Opportunities, and Vulnerabilities for Political Regimes

Private media structures in the African context are often **not neutral actors** but function as economic extensions of political elites or as opposition tools to pressure the government, especially in countries with relative freedom of speech. They include television stations, print outlets, online platforms, radio, and digital agencies. Their owners are often businessmen, former or current politicians, and foreign partners.

Advantages	Flaws
Creating a façade of pluralism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private media are used to imitate freedom of speech in the eyes of the international community This is especially important for countries dependent on Western aid or loans, where adherence to “democratic” procedures is expected 	Shift to opposition control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private media can change ownership or editorial stance and become powerful opposition platforms, especially during election crises or protests
Indirect agenda control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorities may not control media directly, but can dictate editorial lines through economic or legal pressure Example: the TV channel owner is a presidential ally; formally the channel is independent, but the editorial line is aligned with the government 	Influence of foreign shareholders and donors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even formally “local” media may be funded through international NGOs or business structures that promote external narratives This opens a window for external psyops under the guise of “independent journalism”
Use in intra-elite conflicts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private media can be used for attacks on opposition figures, business competitors, or autonomous military factions They are also used for leaks, smear campaigns, and manipulative narratives during elections 	Risk of information leaks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private outlets can serve as platforms for leaks of internal documents, evidence of corruption, or regime abuse
Flexibility and adaptability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlike state media, private outlets are more agile in responding to current events and can launch media attacks without formal links to authorities 	Difficulty of total control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the digital age, authorities struggle to exert full control – private channels can be registered offshore, distributed via social media, and published through blogging platforms

Kenya: The media market is dominated by two groups – Nation Media Group and Standard Media – both historically linked to political dynasties. During elections, they often serve the interests of different clans.

Ghana: Private radio stations are used for political talk shows and government criticism, but they are easily silenced through license revocation or tax-related claims.

South Africa: Despite a well-developed democracy, major private TV channels (eNCA, Newzroom Afrika) face pressure through advertising budgets and legal threats.

Nigeria: Private TV channels and news portals shape much of the media agenda, but the landscape is marked by strong political polarization and risks of violence against journalists.

For political regimes in Africa private media are a **double-edged tool**. On the one hand, they provide flexibility, an imitation of openness and the ability to influence the agenda without direct censorship. On the other hand, they carry risks of loss of control, leaks and external interference. With digital disinformation on the rise, private media are becoming both a weapon and an Achilles' heel for African governments.

International Broadcasters and External Presence: A Dual Layer of Influence

International media are both instruments of external **soft power and levers of pressure on domestic political processes**. Their influence on Africa is systemic, long-term, and extends to both information policy and mass consciousness.

Advantages	Flaws
Support for an alternative narrative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International broadcasters can support the ruling regime when their geopolitical interests align 	Loss of control over the agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International channels are external centers of influence that are not accountable to African governments
Infrastructure support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational media often invest in studios, staff training, and local franchises, which may benefit political elites 	Informational asymmetry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadcasting information without considering the local context can provoke public dissatisfaction, unauthorized protests, or undermine the legitimacy of the authorities
International legitimization of the regime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through interviews, forum coverage, and exclusives — especially important for sanctioned countries (e.g., Eritrea, Zimbabwe) 	Creation of a parallel reality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The population, especially the educated youth and diaspora, tends to follow BBC, France 24, and Al Jazeera rather than state media, which disrupts the regime's communication hierarchy
Soft censorship and criticism neutralization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When relations are friendly, international media may ignore repression or corruption scandals, helping the regime preserve its image 	Conflicts among international broadcasters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competition between Western, Russian, and Chinese narratives radicalizes the information space, making it difficult for elites to balance external pressures

Table 2. Analytical Ranking by Level of External Influence

	France 24	BBC	CGTN	Al Jazeera
Level of Presence	5	4	4	4
Infrastructure Impact	4	3	5	3
Political Alignment	4	4	5	4
Impact on Target Audience	5	4	3	4
Psyops Threat Assessment	3	4	2	4
Total	21	19	19	19

International broadcasters in Africa are a **double-edged sword**: they can **support a regime, but just as easily undermine it** if the political direction changes. For external players, they are channels of influence and levers of pressure; for African regimes, they are both a resource and a threat. In the context of weak institutions and dependence on foreign aid, control over the media landscape becomes a matter of survival.

Hybrid Forms of Ownership and Affiliated Media

Hybrid media are **formally independent or “citizen” outlets** that are in fact **externally funded, coordinated, or directed**, often through **grant support, educational programs, or cooperation with international organizations**.

They are positioned as:

- platforms for “independent journalism”
- projects to “promote media literacy”
- initiatives to combat disinformation
- independent news portals and public pages

However, in reality:

- the agenda is often shaped **in the interests of the donor**
- there is **asymmetry in event coverage**, often biased toward democratic or Western ideologies
- editorial control may be exercised through **fundraising mechanisms and grant conditions**

Table 3. Major Stakeholders and Media Platforms

USAID	BBC Media Action, Internews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online outlets, YouTube channels, Telegram pages • local radio stations affiliated with NGOs • youth media centers based at universities • training “schools of journalism” funded by the EU/USA
NED	BBC Media Action, Internews	
Deutsche Welle Akademie	DW Akademie	
Fondation Hirondelle	BBC Media Action, Internews	
Open Society Foundation	BBC Media Action, Internews	

Advantages	Flaws
External legitimization • The regime can demonstrate “ openness ” and “ freedom of the press ” to international organizations, while maintaining de facto control.	Loss of informational sovereignty • Content, agendas, and narrative framing are shaped externally. This makes the regime dependent on Western ideological and political trends .
Soft influence channel for youth and NGOs • Use of “independent” media to gently promote pro-government or moderate narratives	Formation of an “alternative civil society” • These media often serve as platforms for soft criticism of the regime , youth mobilization, and NGO activism.
Imitation of political competition • The presence of hybrid media allows the regime to avoid real opposition while creating the illusion of pluralism.	Information subversion via embedded journalism • Under the guise of “investigative reporting,” coordinated psyops can include leaks, exposés, smear campaigns , and emotionally charged narratives.
Indirect control through co-optation • Regimes can create pseudo-independent projects , formally registered as NGOs or startups, but managed via intermediaries.	Media centers as hubs for opposition • Such projects often become cover platforms for activist networks, protest organizers, and digital agitators .
X	The Paradox of Control • Regimes that attempt to take control of hybrid media often face international backlash — accusations of “cracking down on press freedom.”

Hybrid and affiliated media are dual-purpose information hubs. On the one hand, they give regimes **room to maneuver between strict censorship and international rhetoric.** On the other hand, they become **entry points for external influence**, including under the guise of democratization, media literacy, and combating disinformation. For external players, this is **the most convenient format for entering the media space without direct confrontation with the state.**

Examples of projects:

HumAngle, Premium Times — funded by MacArthur Foundation, NED

PesaCheck, Africa Uncensored — supported by Internews, DW Akademie

Studio Tamani — funded by Fondation Hirondelle (until 2022)

KFM Radio, Observer — officially independent, but linked to the ruling party

Ndeke Luka Radio — funded by Hirondelle and coordinated with the UN mission

Le Faso.net — claims independence, but used by the junta for control

Daily Maverick, GroundUp — partially donor co-funded, aligned with Western narratives

The structure of media ownership in Africa creates a highly heterogeneous and vulnerable information space. State media remain key in a number of countries, however, they mainly serve the interests of the ruling regimes, restrict pluralism and reinforce control over the agenda. Private media are, in most cases, affiliated with political and economic elites, which makes them dependent on domestic power dynamics and deprives them of genuine independence. At the same time, international media structures such as BBC, France 24, RT, and CGTN are active, forming stable segments of external influence, often under the guise of neutral broadcasting. Hybrid and affiliated media, created through donor assistance and external projects, play a particularly significant role. While formally independent, they become channels for the transmission of external narratives, including as part of soft power strategies, ideological support for reforms, and, in many cases, covert information operations. For ruling regimes, such media represent both a convenient tool for simulating pluralism and a potential threat to their control over the informational architecture. The existing system makes African states especially vulnerable to targeted external psyops and semantic competition across media platforms.

3.4. Challenges and Vulnerabilities

The African information space is vulnerable at all levels — from the individual user to the platform. Low media literacy, politicization, infrastructural dependency, and cultural fragmentation create a favorable environment for external influence, particularly in the form of soft power and cognitive impact. These vulnerabilities enable high-density and high-precision information and psychological operations, often conducted without any physical presence on the ground. For external actors, this represents a unique opportunity to influence political processes,

public sentiment, and even the behavior of target audiences – bypassing traditional channels of diplomacy and military pressure.

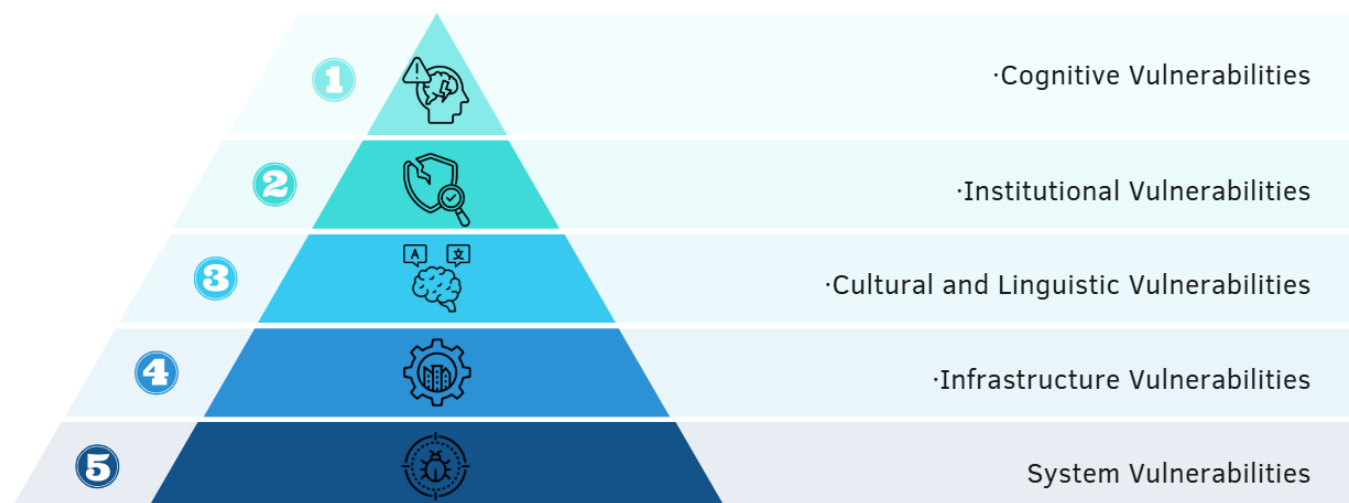


Figure 5. Pyramid of Vulnerabilities

Nº	Name	Description	Problem
1	Low media literacy of the population	In most African countries, media literacy levels are very low, especially in rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to distinguish fact from opinion or propaganda; • Trust in authority rather than in the source. High susceptibility to fakes, rumors, pseudo-scientific and religious content.
2	Distrust of official sources	As a result of colonial legacies, authoritarian regimes, and corruption, many countries experience high levels of public skepticism toward state media and institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased trust in alternative sources (religious leaders, social networks, street speakers) • Growing popularity of anti-system narratives • Dependence on external media structures perceived as more “objective”
3	Infrastructure dependency on external platforms	Most digital communications in Africa are carried out through global platforms: Facebook, WhatsApp, Google, YouTube, TikTok, Telegram.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of local control over algorithms, moderation, and blocking mechanisms • Potential for platforms to be used in foreign information operations without risk to the platform owner • Virtual impossibility of de-anonymizing sources of harmful content
4	Politicization and corruption in the media sector	Independent media are subject to pressure, repression or takeover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct control through the appointment of leadership • Editorial bribery and self-censorship • Use of legal mechanisms to pressure journalists
5	Lack of a unified linguistic and semantic environment	The continent is characterized by enormous linguistic and cultural diversity, from Arabic in the north to more than 500 ethnic languages in Nigeria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties in centralized communication • Ease of manipulating content depending on cultural code • Inability to build a unified media-resistance shield at national or regional levels
6	Weakness regulatory and legal mechanisms	Most countries either do not have disinformation laws or use them as a tool of political censorship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of full-fledged media market monitoring centers • No systems for auditing digital algorithms • Absence of independent media ombudsmen

3.5. Conclusions of the Section

Africa’s media landscape is emerging at the intersection of rapid digitalization and deep-rooted structural vulnerabilities. Despite growing mobile internet penetration and the active use of digital platforms, the media environment remains fragmented, politically dependent, and

susceptible to external influences. Radio retains the greatest reach, especially in rural areas, while television and online media are gradually gaining ground in urban agglomerations. However, the growth of digital presence is accompanied by low levels of media literacy and a lack of sustainable content filtering systems, opening the door to cognitive and distortive influences.

Social networks and messengers are becoming key channels for information exchange, displacing traditional formats. Platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and Telegram are gaining not only domestic but also political significance, turning into tools of influence, mobilization, or manipulation. Their closed architecture, lack of local regulation and high emotional engagement of users make them a convenient infrastructure for information-psychological operations.

The structure of media ownership exacerbates the situation: national state media are predominantly controlled by the authorities and are used to broadcast official agendas, while private media are often affiliated with political and economic groups. Alongside this, the persistent presence of international media organizations – BBC, France 24, CGTN, Al Jazeera – creates alternative channels of influence through which narratives favorable to external actors are promoted. A special niche is occupied by hybrid and affiliated media – formally independent, but dependent on grant funding or donor conditions. For African regimes, this is both a way to simulate pluralism and a risk of losing control over the semantic environment.

A set of problems – from low media literacy and distrust of official channels to dependence on foreign platforms and regulatory weakness – makes the continent a space of high vulnerability. These factors allow external actors to build complex architectures of influence, using entry points at the technological, institutional, and cognitive levels. Thus, Africa's information space today is not only an arena of internal competition, but also a strategic vector of foreign policy pressure, narrative competition, and psychological control over mass perception.

4. Target Audience and Mechanisms of Influence

The effectiveness of informational influence in Africa is determined not only by content delivery channels, but also by a precise understanding of the psychosocial characteristics of target groups – their needs, fears, cultural codes, and mental vulnerabilities. Foreign actors conducting psyops and strategic communications differentiate the audience not by demographic features, but by behavioral, sociocultural, and political-identification traits.

4.1. Youth

Youth (15-30 years) is the core of the demographic and cognitive field of Africa, forming agenda of the future and at this possessing high vulnerability to manipulative influences.

Africa is the youngest continent in the world: about 70% of the continent's population is under 30 years. This age group - basic engine urbanization, digitalization, migration and protest activity. Also, youth simultaneously most involved V digital culture and economically marginalized - high levels of unemployment, informal employment, lack of access to education and prospects.

Social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High unemployment, social marginalization• Urbanization, migration, protest potential
Psychological profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identity crisis: conflict between tradition and globalism• Emotional instability and susceptibility to influence• Desire for self-affirmation and belonging
Digital behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WhatsApp, TikTok, Facebook, Telegram, Instagram• Memes, challenges, shock content, influencers• Low level of critical source filtering
Main mechanisms impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Viral videos and voice messages• Narrative memetization• Gamification of protests• Visual idol production (heroes, martyrs)
Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Belief in rumors and visual “evidence”• Emotional polarization• Dependence on digital communities• Rapid mobilization and burnout

Young people between the ages of 15 and 30 on the African continent represent a demographically dominant and simultaneously socially unstable group. This generation has grown up in the conditions of postcolonial transition, blurred boundaries between tradition and globalism, the digital revolution, and economic instability.

Their identity is formed at the intersection of cultural gaps - between local ethnic norms and Western values, between religious orthodoxy and liberal ideals, between family duty and individual self-realization.

At the level of worldview, young Africans demonstrate a high level of ambition amid a lack of available means to realize it. This gives rise to a persistent sense of frustration, loss of trust in the state, disillusionment with traditional institutions, and heightened susceptibility to ideologies involving resistance, “new order,” or anti-elitism. They often identify themselves not with ethnic or national belonging, but with a media or cultural code – through music, fashion, street symbols, slang, or influencers.

At the behavioral level, young people gravitate toward horizontal communities and quick emotional reactions. The culture of immediate response dominates: likes, reposts, dares, challenges, flash mobs. Decisions are made under the influence of a visual or auditory trigger, without deep analysis. Moral guidelines are often situational: evil or good is determined not by ethics, but by a group reaction, a meme, or the external image of a hero/enemy.

This audience is sensitive to themes of injustice, betrayal, and deception on the part of the authorities or international structures. A paranoid style of perception often coexists with a naive trust in the “alternative truth” – especially if it is well presented. The attitudes “everyone lies,” “nobody needs us,” “we are being used” are widespread – this makes young people an ideal target for destructive narratives with a heroic or vengeful motive.

At the same time, young people retain a desire for social recognition, advancement, and belonging to something “bigger”: a movement, an idea, a mission. This makes them both vulnerable and easy to engage – with the right framing, they can become either a force for protest or a target group for influence programs, externally presented as “development”, “education”, or “protection of rights”. In the absence of stable guidelines, young people act according to the principle: “whoever is louder, brighter, faster – is right.”

4.2. Women and Mothers in Traditional Communities

This segment of the audience, as an object of information-psychological operations, is extremely sensitive, but important and often underestimated in strategic communications.

Women in rural and small communities in Africa are the centers of everyday communication, responsible for the family’s daily logistics, and the local bearers of traditional values. They often serve as “informational repeaters”, forming views not only at the family level, but also at the community level (through meetings, church and Muslim groups, markets, and wells).

Although they may be formally excluded from the political process, their attitudes towards threat, power and religion influence the behaviour of men, children and communities as a whole.

Social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary custodians of domestic information and rituals • Key role in family and local communications • Limited access to formal education and mass media
Psychological profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High sensitivity to issues of child health and safety • Trust in authorities: religion, elders, healers • Inclination toward confidential forms of information sharing
Digital behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WhatsApp, voice messages, radio • Women's groups, religious gatherings, community events • Mechanisms of "oral press" and auditory culture
Main mechanisms of influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals to fears: illness, abduction, poverty • Use of religious rhetoric and moral imagery • Dissemination of rumors via trusted audio messages • Calls to defend family, morality, and children
Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distrust of state institutions and science • Susceptibility to religious and traditional manipulation • Limited access to verified information • High emotional engagement

Women and mothers in traditional communities are a slow-to-respond but deeply receptive audience, capable of becoming both a stabilizing and a destabilizing factor. External actors use them not as a direct force, but as an infrastructure for legitimization and the dissemination of rumors, anxiety, and moral pressure. In the context of psyops, they are key carriers and transmitters of deep-rooted narratives that influence the behavior of families, communities, and entire regions.

4.3 Military and Police

The security forces are the backbone of the regime and the guarantors of political stability. They are the first to respond to protests, coups, and crises, and also make crucial decisions regarding loyalty at key moments. For external actors, the demoralization, fragmentation, or redirection of the motivation of military and police personnel is one of the most effective and sensitive vectors of influence.

Social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key actors in ensuring internal order and regime protection • Often poorly paid, with a sense of detachment from elites • Can be used as a tool by both the authorities and the opposition
Psychological profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly susceptible to demoralization • Loyalty depends on the perception of justice and leadership • Strong sensitivity to internal hierarchy and authority
Digital behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WhatsApp, Telegram, closed groups, officers' channels • Video content on YouTube • Circulation of "insider" information and rumors within their communities
Main Mechanisms of Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demoralization through kompromat, leaks, and "betrayal from above" narratives • Mobilization via "military honor" or the image of a national savior • Spreading rumors about coups or illegitimate command
Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional burnout, trauma, stress • Distrust toward ruling elites and civilian institutions • Isolation from civilian information space • Potential to be used as a coercive force in others' interests

Military and police structures on the African continent are not only the backbone of regimes, but also a vulnerable target for information and psychological operations. Their key feature is a high degree of hierarchy combined with internal fragmentation related to social background, regional identity, and differences in access to information. Informational influence on security forces is carried out both through horizontal channels within groups (WhatsApp, closed forums) and through vertical ones – video messages, anonymous Telegram sources, and religious-patriotic rhetoric.

The effectiveness of such influence is amplified by existing tensions between lower and higher officer ranks, general demoralization, corruption in command, and lack of trust in political leadership. The impact is often built on emotional overload: fear, betrayal, abandonment, and manipulation of symbols of heroism and justice. In times of crisis, these messages can trigger chain reactions – disobedience, sabotage, public declarations of disloyalty, and, in extreme cases, support for or orchestration of coups.

Thus, the military and police represent both a protective asset of the state and a strategic entry point for undermining its stability. Information operations targeting this audience do not require large-scale campaigns – precise, repeatable demoralization may be enough to destabilize the coercive framework of the state.

4.4. Urban Poor and Informal Groups

This audience is one of the most vulnerable and at the same time least regulated within urban systems, which makes them an attractive target for external actors seeking to cause destabilization or apply "bottom-up mass pressure."

Social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents of slums, markets, and informal neighborhoods of megacities Often unemployed or engaged in the informal sector of the economy Participate in protests, riots, and street mobilization
Psychological profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of frustration and aggression toward authorities Prone to spontaneous actions and the influence of charismatic figures Interested in quick material gains and promises
Digital behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WhatsApp, street rumors, rap music, and conversational formats Reliance on oral sources and media via low-cost phones Mixed consumption of content both online and offline
Main mechanisms of influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spreading rumors about “handouts,” “provocations,” or “acts of betrayal” Calls to action through messengers and street agitators Use of violent or “authority-shaming” video clips Visual protest markers: masks, symbols, flash mobs
Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal nihilism, emotional impulsiveness Susceptibility to promises or threats Lack of access to alternative verified sources Easily drawn into street mobilization through symbols and rumors

4.5. Elites, Officials, and Journalists

This category includes high-ranking and mid-level government officials, ministry staff, advisers, local administrators, politicians, diplomats, party members, academic experts, opinion leaders in professional communities, editors, journalists, media analysts, and representatives of the security and economic elites.

Social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives of the political, administrative, and intellectual elite Participate in shaping policy, legislation, and external communication Influence decision-making and international positioning
Psychological profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oriented toward prestige, status, and external recognition Sensitive to reputation and expert opinion Prone to rationalization and symbolic thinking
Digital behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twitter (X), Telegram, niche media and policy reports Conferences, analytical platforms, international briefings Consume official reports, work with leaks and insider information
Key mechanisms of influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disinformation injected via “analysis,” “reports,” and “leaks” with a veneer of expertise Reputation attacks, smear campaigns, forged letters/dossiers External pressure via sanction lists, rankings, investigations Manipulation through diplomatic and media channels
Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desire to be seen as part of the “global class,” aligned with Western values Dependence on foreign funding, expert consultations, international travel Susceptibility to reputation damage and fear of losing legitimacy Distrust of domestic sources; orientation toward international narratives

Elites, officials, and journalists in African countries represent a strategic target group for external information influence. Despite their relatively small numbers, this audience exerts a decisive impact on agenda setting, institutional responses, and the international reputation of states. Their involvement in global communication and expert networks, orientation toward external legitimacy, and dependence on international partnerships make them especially susceptible to semantic and narrative influence from abroad.

The mechanisms of influence include not only overt information pressure—through publications, leaks, and analytical interventions—but also more subtle tools: invitations to join expert communities, access to prestigious platforms, and integration into international agendas. Elites are influenced through simulated insider information, the construction of pseudo-rational choices, and direct reputational pressure. Their vulnerability is heightened by political fragmentation, career dependence on foreign funding, and a growing gap between local identity and globalist aspirations.

External actors do not merely transmit information—they construct a competitive legitimacy infrastructure, in which elites begin making decisions not based on internal logic and national interest, but in response to external standards of recognition. This makes them not only a target for pressure, but also a conduit for the internalization of external narratives across political, media, and expert institutions.

5. Key Trends in the Development of Psyops in Africa

1. Shift from Mass to Micro-Targeted Operations

Traditional broadcast-style propaganda is giving way to precise, segmented operations aimed at narrow social, ethnic, age-based, or professional groups. Behavioral data, local languages, mental models, and cultural codes are employed, making the influence less visible and more integrated into the audience's environment. Example: closed WhatsApp groups for mothers in Nigeria or Telegram channels targeting military personnel in Mali.

2. Growing Importance of Visual-Emotional Content

Images, short videos, memes, fan art, and TikTok clips are replacing conventional propaganda tools. In an environment of low media literacy and a dominant oral perception culture, visual formats have become the primary vehicle for cognitive manipulation — easily triggering fear, hatred, mobilization, or alienation. The shift toward “psychological clips” renders psyops unrecognizable in format, yet highly effective in impact.

3. Rise of Nonlinear and Asymmetric Operators

Beyond traditional state actors (USA, China, France, UK), a new wave of non-state and proxy players is gaining ground: political-commercial alliances, religious networks, private military companies, pseudo-NGOs, and media production factories. They operate anonymously, in decentralized ways, often via intermediaries. What sets them apart is their rejection of official visibility and reliance on hybrid tactics that combine cultural, informational, and psychological influence.

4. Institutionalization of Informational Pressure Through “Soft Channels”

Psyops today are deployed not only through media and social networks, but also through education, culture, language, expert communities, and civil society initiatives. Institutions such as the British Council, Confucius Institutes, Goethe-Institut, as well as media schools, academies, and so-called “media literacy hubs” become long-term channels for normalizing specific values and meanings. This makes the influence less visible but more systemic and resilient.

5. Exploitation of Crises and Institutional Voids

Crises—elections, conflicts, ethnic clashes, uprisings, pandemics—become entry points for large-scale campaigns aimed at delegitimizing authorities, mobilizing the discontented, and destabilizing state institutions. These campaigns use elements of panic, distrust, and accusations of “betraying the people's interests,” while the content is presented as coming from

“the people,” “a warrior,” “a mother,” or “a pastor.” In such structures, who speaks does not matter — what matters is that emotion overrides rational perception.

6. Integration of AI, Algorithmic Targeting, and Behavioral Analysis

Advanced actors—primarily Western and Chinese entities—are beginning to use neural network models for behavioral prediction, behavioral analytics, and algorithm-driven individual targeting. This transforms African populations into subjects of machine-optimized psyops, where every message, image, or video is personalized and empirically tested for emotional impact.

7. Development of “Reverse” Psyops Under the Guise of Resistance

There is a growing number of cases where external influence is disguised as internal “anti-system” activism, allegedly aimed at resisting imperialism, colonialism, or dictatorship. These operations create the illusion of grassroots movements, while in reality they are covertly directed from abroad. Example: networks of media activists promoting anti-French narratives in the Sahel often replicate the messages and visual styles of proxy groups affiliated with Russian, Turkish, or Iranian interests.

5.1. Strategic Forecast: Development of Psyops in Africa, 2025–2030

1. Increasing Competitive Density in the Information Field

Africa will become a frontline for the clash of competing media models promoted by external actors: the Western model (democratic normativity + commercialization), the Chinese model (infrastructure integration + censorship-driven stability), the “alternative” Eurasian model (narrative-symbolic dominance aimed at anti-Western mobilization). The number of parallel, conflicting narratives will grow, leading to “media segregation” within countries — where one part of the population consumes Western content, while the other is immersed in anti-colonial or religious-conservative discourse.

2. Institutionalization of Information Sovereignty

As awareness of digital vulnerabilities grows, African governments will begin establishing national centers for strategic communication, media literacy agencies, and analytic departments under security structures. However, due to limited capacity and resources, many of these institutions will be secretly advised or directly influenced by external players — such as France, China, or international NGOs.

3. Hybridization of Media and Special Operations

The boundaries between media campaigns and covert operations will increasingly blur. We can expect a surge in operations that combine information manipulation, political pressure, economic leverage, and social engineering. These campaigns will be launched ahead of elections, elite transitions, international negotiations, or peacekeeping missions. Africa will become a testing ground for new forms of “smart influence” – including fake expert forums and simulated social movements on TikTok and Telegram.

4. Technological Sophistication of Operations

In the coming years, key players – primarily the US, China, and the UK – will begin deploying AI-enhanced influence tools across Africa:

- Automated content-generation platforms in local languages;
- Deepfake videos embedded in political and religious narratives;
- AI-powered monitoring and forecasting of public sentiment via social media analysis;
- Geotargeted content for hyperlocal segmentation within cities and ethnic communities.

5. Increase in “Black” and Untraceable Operations

Operators will increasingly rely on fake entities, proxy accounts, and autonomous media formats that are impossible to link to any state or identifiable actor. This will lead to a state of “informational lockdown”, where society is disoriented, and regimes are unable to trace or attribute the source of an attack. The risk of reputational collapse and administrative destabilization will grow – especially in politically fragile states.

6. Fragmentation and Radicalization of Target Audiences

Information operations will become more targeted: aimed at youth – through cultural and visual influence; at military personnel – through demoralizing scenarios; at women – through emotional narratives around safety. This will lead to increased societal tension, including generational, class, and identity-based conflicts. Some audience groups may become radicalized to the point of active resistance or violent actions.

7. Shift of the Center of Gravity – from Capitals to the Periphery

Technological accessibility and the spread of cheap smartphones, satellite internet, and autonomous messengers will cause operations to shift to small towns, rural areas, and tribal zones, where resistance is weaker and state control is minimal. This will make crises less predictable and more sudden.

Overall Assessment

By 2030, Africa will have become a full-fledged theater of cognitive competition, where the battle for the minds of the population will be waged not only between external powers, but also between competing visions of the future – from technocratic modernization to neotraditionalist models of identity. Information and psychological operations will become a systemic and unavoidable feature of the continent’s political and economic landscape.

Table 4. Forecast development psyops in Africa on 2025- 2030

Year	Key trend	Main risks	Involved actors
2025	Rise of targeted psyops via messengers and influencers	Erosion of public trust, mobilization through fake content, street protests	Turkey, China, USA, UK, France, non-state networks
2026	Institutionalization of countermeasures and strategic comms agencies	Politicization of countermeasures, use as tools against opposition	EU, UNESCO, China, African union
2027	AI-enhanced influence campaigns	Inability to detect attacks, escalation of panic and cognitive overload	USA, UK, China, private contractors
2028	Hybridization of informational and diplomatic operations	Erosion of boundaries between diplomacy and covert actions	France, Saudi Arabia, regional political factions
2029 – 2030	Fragmentation and radicalization of audiences along ethnic and religious lines	Social destabilization, increased violence, identity crisis	All major powers + local network-based actors

6. Potential Escalation Points and Shifts in Power Dynamics

Scenario	Actors	Tools	Regions
Escalation in the Sahel	Turkey, Saudi Arabia, China, private proxies	Radio, TikTok, Telegram, cultural narratives	Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger
Psyops during 2025–2026 elections	USA, UK, China, local campaign teams	AI-generated content, deepfakes, Telegram networks, pseudo-analytics	South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia
Anglo-French competition	France, UK, USA	BBC, France 24, expert commentary, panel discussions	Cameroon, Senegal, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire
Religious confrontation	Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia	Sermons, YouTube, WhatsApp, NGOs	Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, Ethiopia
Hybrid humanitarian operations	EU, China, international NGOs	Medical aid, climate agenda, educational campaigns	CAR, DRC, Sudan, Somalia, Lake Chad region
Media-driven elite disruptions	Western foundations, diplomatic networks, media alliances	Insider leaks, reputational attacks, parallel media structures	Senegal, Rwanda, Uganda, Guinea-Bissau

1. Radical Shift in the Balance of Influence in the Sahel

France’s withdrawal from Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger – combined with the rise of anti-Western narratives – has created a vacuum of informational legitimacy that is now being filled by alternative players such as Turkey, Iran, and China, often operating through proxy, unofficial structures.

This implies:

- The rapid emergence of an alternative media ecosystem designed to drive anti-Western mobilization;
- Radicalization of narratives, particularly among youth and military personnel;
- Political and psychological decoupling of the region from ECOWAS and the African Union, especially at the level of shared meanings and strategic communication.

2. Escalation of Information Warfare Around Elections (2025–2026)

Upcoming presidential elections in Ghana, South Africa, Ethiopia, and regional contests in Nigeria are expected to become flashpoints for large-scale psyops campaigns.

Key indicators:

- Use of AI-generated content and deepfakes;
- Mass network operations conducted via Telegram, WhatsApp, and TikTok;

- A battle not only between local candidates, but also between external powers with vested interests — for example, USA vs. China in South Africa.

3. Rising Tensions Between the Anglophone and Francophone Zones

The divide between English-speaking and French-speaking information spheres on the continent is deepening.

Possible developments include:

- media proxy conflicts between the UK, the US, and France in West and Central Africa;
- narrative competition: “liberal democracy” versus “autonomous national path”;
- use of the media space to reshape cultural identity, especially in countries with historically divided loyalties (e.g., Cameroon).

4. Escalation of Religious and Informational Confrontations

The Islamic sphere in Africa is becoming a battlefield for mediated competition between Sunni and Shia projects, backed by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran.

Possible trajectories:

- Growing influence of religious preachers as influencers, especially via radio and Telegram;
- Launch of pseudo-religious psyops under the guise of humanitarian, medical, or educational initiatives;
- Risk of secular regimes being destabilized through ideologically charged media mobilization.

5. Military–Humanitarian Hybrid Scenarios

An increase is expected in the use of humanitarian, climate-related, or crisis-response campaigns as a cover for information operations, especially amid growing climate instability (e.g. Sudan, Lake Chad, eastern Congo).

Such cases will employ:

- medical aid as an informational façade;
- the climate agenda as an “ecological tool of subjugation”;
- the promotion of resilience projects as a means of systemic semantic intervention — through language, cultural patterns, and grant-based dependencies.

6. Risk of “Media Coups” via Domestic Elites

There is an emerging risk that domestic elites — including military personnel, officials, and journalists — integrated into international expert and media networks, may begin to use external informational cover to politically transform regimes without direct protests or coups.

Tactics may include:

- disintegration of authority through information scandals and insider leaks;
- creation of alternative legitimacy structures via media platforms;
- diplomatic delegitimization of ruling leaders.

7. Recommendations for Countering External Information Pressure

This section offers strategic and practical guidance – both for African governments and for international partners aiming to support information resilience while preserving national sovereignty.

Table 5. Key Threats and Strategic Countermeasures

Threat	Mechanism of Impact	Countermeasure
Psychological operations via messengers and TikTok	Emotional content, memes, fake news, manipulative videos	Cyber volunteers, critical-thinking influencers, development of counter-narratives
Manipulation through foreign media and think tanks	Pseudo-expertise, biased reports, strategic “leaks”	Strengthening local analytical centers and independent fact-checking organizations
Demoralization of elites through insider leaks and reputation attacks	Simulated leaks, fake dossiers, fabricated investigations	Establishing internal insider channels and crisis-based reputation protection strategies
Fake campaigns and rumors on WhatsApp	Voice messages, “eyewitness” accounts, panic chains	Regional monitoring and early response centers, collaboration with trusted local voices
Cultural and religious programming	Sermons, educational networks, cultural hubs	Integrating local cultural codes into strategic communication, engaging alternative opinion leaders
Institutional pressure via international platforms	Content takedowns, algorithmic suppression, narrative monopoly	Advancing digital sovereignty and fair platform governance

1. Building Institutional Information Resilience

- National centers for strategic communications and counter-disinformation should be established – not as censorship bodies, but as analytical hubs.
- It’s essential to integrate media analytics, fact-checking, forecasting, and strategic response into a unified institutional architecture.
- Crisis response protocols should be developed for information attacks – ranging from rumors and fake news to operations targeting the demoralization of elites and the military.

2. Supporting Trusted Local Media Platforms

- Strengthen public and independent media outlets that possess cultural and linguistic legitimacy within their communities.
- Design sustainable funding models to reduce reliance on foreign donors and ensure long-term editorial independence.

- Promote local journalistic standards and ethical codes — with an emphasis on contextual accuracy rather than imported Western templates.

3. Targeted Development of Media Literacy

- Introduce media literacy as a standalone subject in school and university curricula.
- Create visual, audio, and multilingual educational materials to help users recognize manipulation techniques.
- Conduct awareness campaigns through respected local figures — such as teachers, religious leaders, and elders — to build community-level resistance to disinformation.

4. Digital Sovereignty and Platform Governance

- Develop or localize national platforms for content and news distribution, including secure channels for official communication.
- Engage in negotiations with global tech giants (Meta, Google, TikTok, Telegram) to open regional offices and assume shared responsibility for information oversight.
- Promote regional digital regulation alliances — modeled on the EU — with a focus on the African Union and ECOWAS frameworks.

5. Information Diplomacy and Narrative Sovereignty

- African foreign affairs services should develop and promote their own media narratives about domestic and foreign policy, national history, and cultural identity.
- Establish media departments within Ministries of Foreign Affairs focused on rapid rebuttals, explanatory communication, and neutralization of distorted narratives.
- Actively participate in global dialogues on digital justice to shift external pressure into a space of negotiation and diplomatic protection.

6. Counter-Narrative Initiatives Through Culture, Art, and Influencers

- Launch national competitions, TV series, short videos, and memes that promote a positive, empowering identity and alternative visions of the future.
- Collaborate with TikTok creators, music labels, and street artists — not for propaganda, but for the organic dissemination of narratives that resist external control.
- Invest in local-language media platforms capable of competing with adapted English- and French-language external channels.

7. Establishing a “Cyber Civil Defense” Network

- Build volunteer networks — digital guardians or “cyber immunity units” — trained in monitoring, verification, and countering disinformation.
- Engage youth and university students in simulation exercises and gamified formats for psyops resistance, including the development of local counter-influencers

Table 5. Checklist By neutralization pressure

No./p	Direction	What to Do	Responsible Actors	Expected Result
1	Institutional Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a national center for strategic communications • Integrate monitoring, forecasting, and response 	1. Government 2. National Security Council 3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Improved governance capacity in the face of information crises
2	Support for Local Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance and protect independent local media • Develop professional codes and standards 	1. Ministry of Culture 2. Media Agencies 3. Regional Authorities	Increased trust in domestic information channels, reduced dependence on external media structures
3	Media Literacy for the Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce media literacy in schools • Launch visual/audio community-based training 	1. Ministry of Education 2. NGOs 3. Local community leaders	Improved resistance to fakes and manipulation, reduced impact of external influence
4	Digital sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop national content and news platforms • Engage global tech platforms in accountability agreements 	1. Ministry of Digital Development 2. Telecom Regulators 3. IT Platforms	Reduced vulnerability to platform manipulation, increased control over algorithms and data flows
5	Information diplomacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen MFA capabilities in narrative strategy • Respond rapidly to disinformation and media injections 	1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2. Diplomatic Missions 3. National Media Centers	Enhanced international legitimacy, defense of sovereign narratives from distortion
6	Counter-Narratives and Cultural Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in TikTok, music, TV series, memes that promote sovereignty and identity 	1. Ministry of Culture 2. Youth Agencies 3. Creative Hubs	Strengthened emotional cohesion and cultural identity, competitive local media content
7	Cyber Civil Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build volunteer digital watchdog networks • Train youth to detect and counter disinformation 	1. Intelligence Services 2. Youth Organizations 3. IT Activists	Fast-response horizontal networks for disinformation, increased civic engagement
8	Protection of Security Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create psy-ops departments in military units • Train commanders to detect demoralizing influence 	1. Ministry of Defense 2. Military Academies 3. Psychological Services	Prevention of military demoralization, resilience to hostile psyops
9	Educational Reform (Information)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update university curricula • Introduce courses in critical thinking and IT security 	1. Ministry of Education 2. Digital Development Agencies 3. Universities	A generation of critically thinking citizens, sustainable knowledge base
10	Monitoring of Platforms & Algorithms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish national hubs for algorithm auditing • Publish reports on digital manipulation 	1. Analytical Centers 2. Parliamentary Committees 3. Ministry of Digital Development	Transparency in content delivery, early detection of manipulation, reduction of hidden influence
11	Digital Resistance Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch an African alliance for platform accountability • Coordinate joint response mechanisms 	1. African Union 2. Regional Blocs 3. Digital Regulators	Collective cyber resilience, regional coordination instead of fragmented responses
12	Prevention of Media Extremism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct early detection of toxic content • Develop soft-power counter-radicalization initiatives 	1. Ministry of Internal Affairs 2. Prosecutor's Office 3. Human Rights Groups 4. Messaging Platforms	Reduced radicalization via media, disruption of extremist narratives and networks

8. Report Conclusions

In the early 2020s, Africa's information space emerged as a key battleground in the global competition for influence. Accelerated digitalization, the rapid growth of social media audiences, and the institutional and legal fragility of many African states have created a unique environment in which external actors can conduct effective information and psychological operations without the need for overt interference.

The continent's media ecosystem is marked by deep fragmentation, low levels of media literacy, widespread distrust toward official information channels, and a high degree of reliance on foreign digital platforms. Within this ecosystem, radio and messaging services—particularly WhatsApp and Telegram—maintain the widest reach, making them optimal vectors for decentralized and anonymous influence campaigns. Social networks such as TikTok and Facebook further amplify these effects through emotionally charged, visually impactful, and behaviorally targeted content.

Media ownership structures significantly compound this vulnerability. National broadcasters tend to operate under state control, while private media are often tied to political and economic elites. International media organizations shape stable external narratives across the continent. Meanwhile, hybrid media and pseudo-independent initiatives—frequently sustained by grants or foreign patrons—serve as soft-entry points for external agendas disguised as civic engagement.

Influence is exercised in a targeted manner, taking into account cultural codes and behavioral profiles: youth are engaged through memes and TikTok, women—through rumors and religious networks, elites—through insider leaks, reputational pressure, and pseudo-expert analyses. Information operations are becoming less visible and more personalized, increasingly incorporating AI, behavioral analytics, and hybrid socio-cultural packaging.

The primary risks stem from electoral cycles, regional crises, religious radicalization, and the erosion of public trust in the state. Potential flashpoints for escalation include the Sahel, Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other countries marked by digitally active youth populations and weak institutional resilience.

To counter external pressure, it is vital to strengthen institutional frameworks for strategic communication, advance digital sovereignty, support trusted local media platforms, and establish robust systems for media education. In parallel, states must cultivate cultural and psychological immunity through alternative narratives and proactive engagement with influencers. The creation of a “civil cyber defense” architecture and active participation in international coalitions for information sovereignty will also be crucial.

The future of Africa's information security will depend not only on the scale of external interventions, but above all on the capacity of national and regional elites to build an adaptive, decentralized, and culturally grounded system for protecting narratives, communication channels, and collective identity.