

MARITIME SECURITY CONFERENCE

The Gulf of Guinea and the Red Sea as learning curves for African decision-makers

**HARNESSING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TO
FORGE STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS
AND ENHANCE REGIONAL COMMITMENT FOR
MARITIME SECURITY**

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WHAT IS STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN MARITIME SECURITY?

Involves the deliberate and coordinated use of communication to achieve specific objectives, often **by shaping perceptions and influencing behaviors**. It encompasses public diplomacy, media outreach, crisis communication and information sharing (MDA)...

OBJECTIVES

- **Enhance Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** Help improve situational awareness -ensuring that information about maritime activities, threats, and incidents is shared among relevant stakeholders.
- **Promote Cooperation and Coordination:** Facilitate collaboration among countries, agencies, and organizations (through coordinated messaging and joint operations).
- **Influence Public Perception:** Shape public and international opinion on maritime security issues, policy decisions, and strategic interests.
- **Prevent and Respond to Threats:** Communicate strategies and responses to mitigate risks such as piracy, terrorism, and illegal activities



ABOUT

MARITIME DIPLOMACY

Involves diplomatic engagements, including negotiations of treaties, bilateral and multilateral agreements and cooperative measures conducted through different channels to achieve national interests and foster international cooperation.

Key Aspects

- **Resolve Disputes:** Address and resolve conflicts over maritime boundaries/resource exploitation
- **Foster cooperation:** Naval presence and joint exercises, and engage in peacekeeping missions
- **Build collaborative frameworks:** advocating for and adhering international maritime laws
- **Strengthen Bilateral and Multilateral engagements:** enhance strategic alliances and collective approach
- **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR):** Aid and support during maritime emergencies, natural disaster and humanitarian crisis



ABOUT

SOFT POWER in Maritime Security

Refers to diplomatic, cultural and economic influence to attract and persuade other nations and stakeholders to align with one's maritime security goals, rather than relying solely on military force or coercion.

OBJECTIVES

- **Promote Peace and stability:** Foster dialogue and cooperation to ease regional or global maritime tensions.
- **Enhance Regional Influence:** Strengthen a State's role as a leader or key player in Maritime security initiatives
- **Enhance regional cooperation:** Encourage collaborative efforts
- **Build maritime capabilities :** Assist through training, resource support or technology transfer
- **Promote sustainable practice:** Encourage and support efforts to protect common goods (environment) through international agreements
- **Foster mutual understanding and trust:** Encourage cooperative approaches
- **Enhance Global maritime governance:** Engage and strengthen maritime regional and global institutions for effective management of maritime issues



HOW ARE THEY LINKED?

Interconnected and mutually reinforcing

Enhances STRATCOM by building a positive image that facilitates effective communication

Ensures that efforts are appreciated and recognised by audiences



Provides input to develop key messages



Supports by ensuring that diplomatic initiatives are well-publicized and understood



Enhance diplomatic efforts and support joint initiatives



Leverage by fostering cooperative relationships and enhancing regional influence



HOW DO THEY ENHANCE STRONG PARTNERSHIP AND REGIONAL BUY- IN?

01

FOSTERING SHARED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

By emphasizing mutual benefits and shared challenges, these nations foster regional buy-in and collaborative efforts.

02

Building Trust and Transparency

Allows countries to align their efforts, share information, and address concerns openly, which is essential for effective collaboration

03

Enhancing coordination and reducing duplication

By clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and actions. This reduces duplication of efforts and ensures that resources are used efficiently

04

Securing international support and resource

By effectively communicating regional maritime challenges and strategies, countries can attract international support, funding, and resources.

HOW DO THEY ENHANCE STRONG PARTNERSHIP AND REGIONAL BUY- IN?

05

Promoting Capacity Building and training

Regional partnerships can be strengthened through joint training programs and capacity-building initiatives.

06

Creating unified Voice

A cohesive message strengthens the position of regional countries and increases their bargaining power.

07

Encouraging Joint Initiatives and Agreements

By demonstrating the benefits of collaboration and aligning interests, countries are more likely to commit to joint actions

In reality... can the three concepts come into conflict?



- **Misalignment of message:** aggressive or overtly assertive messages v/s conciliatory tone
- **Transparency issues:** Prioritise certain narratives or omit some information

TRUST AND CREDIBILITY

POLICY EFFECTIVENESS



- **Operational focus:** Collaborative approach and careful navigation of regional sensitivities, v/s more forceful or competitive messaging
- **Diplomatic sensitivities:** Aggressive stratcom tactics undermine diplomatic efforts

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

REGIONAL STABILITY



- **Inconsistent values :** emphasize hard power or coercive tactics, v/s contradict the values and appeal that underpin soft power
- **Perceive hypocrisy:** Stakeholders may perceive a disconnect if the message conveyed is inconsistent= skepticism about genuine intentions



**IMPACT ON
PARTNERSHIP
AND
OWNERSHIP**

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

01

FRAGMENTED MARITIME GOVERNANCE:

Varying national interests, different levels of capability and inconsistent policies among

02

POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Frequent change of leadership, inconsistent policies can lead to uncertainty

03

RESOURCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS

Limited funds and outdated technological infrastructure

04

GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION

Conflicting interests can create tensions and hinder collective efforts and cooperation

05

LACK OF UNIFIED STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

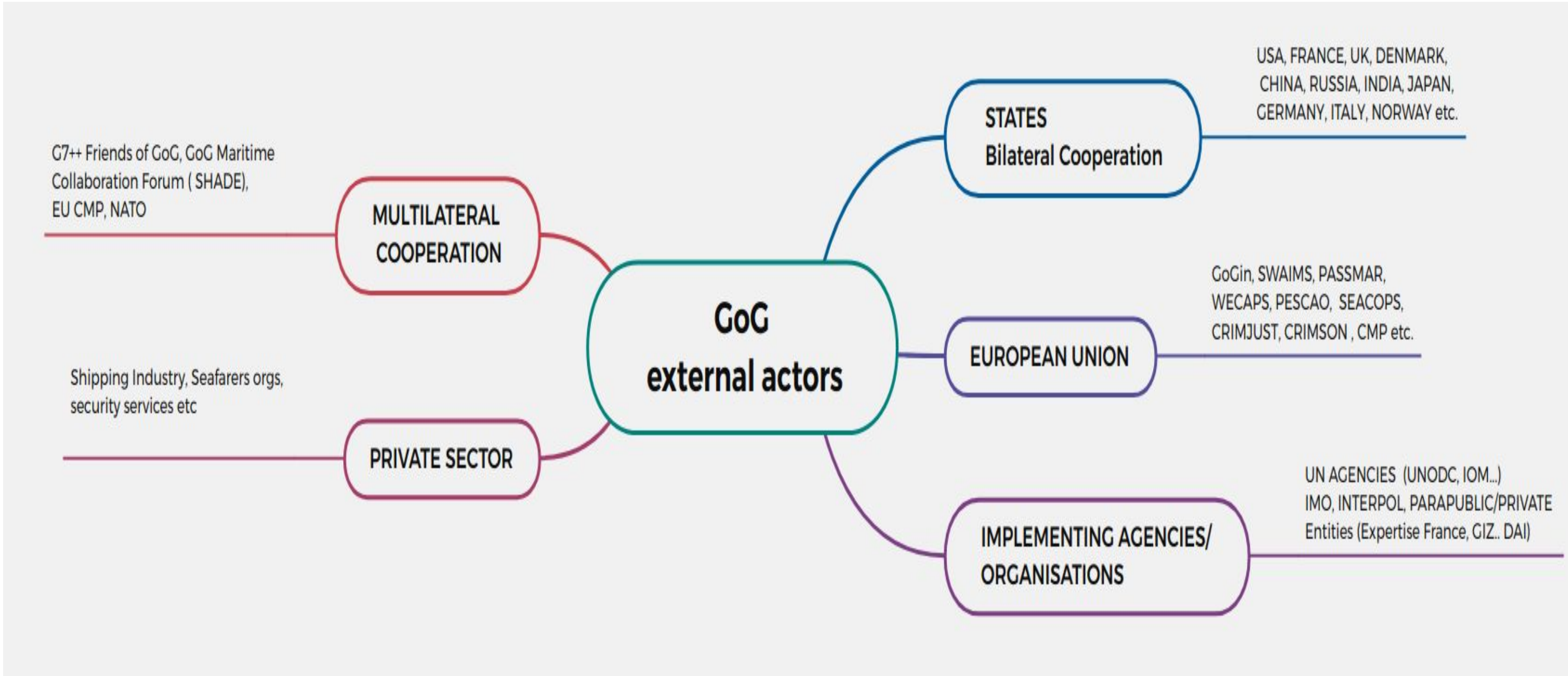
Fragmented communication strategies can lead to misunderstandings and inefficiencies

06

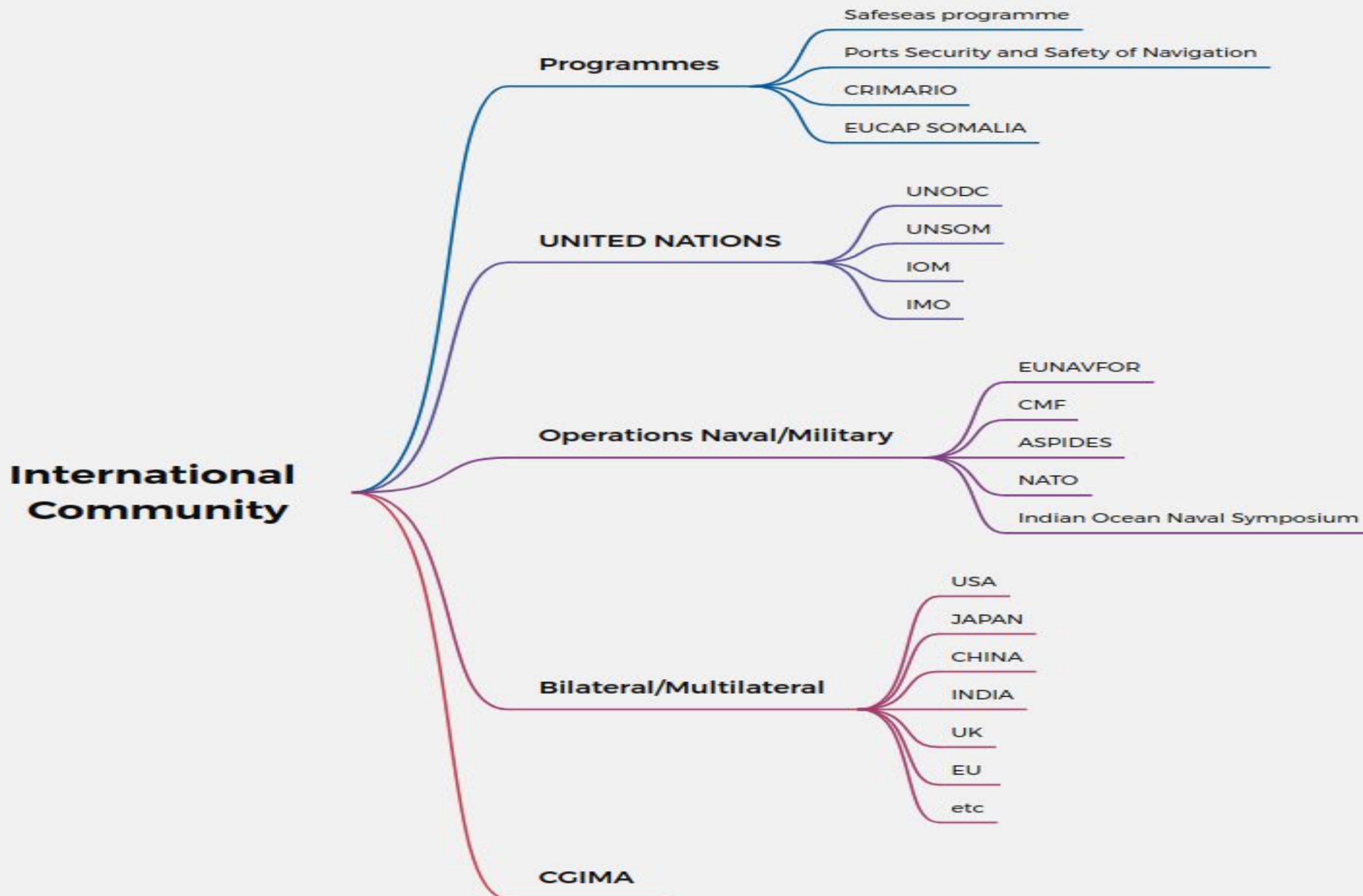
DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION

Distort perceptions, create confusion and undermine trust in maritime diplomacy efforts.

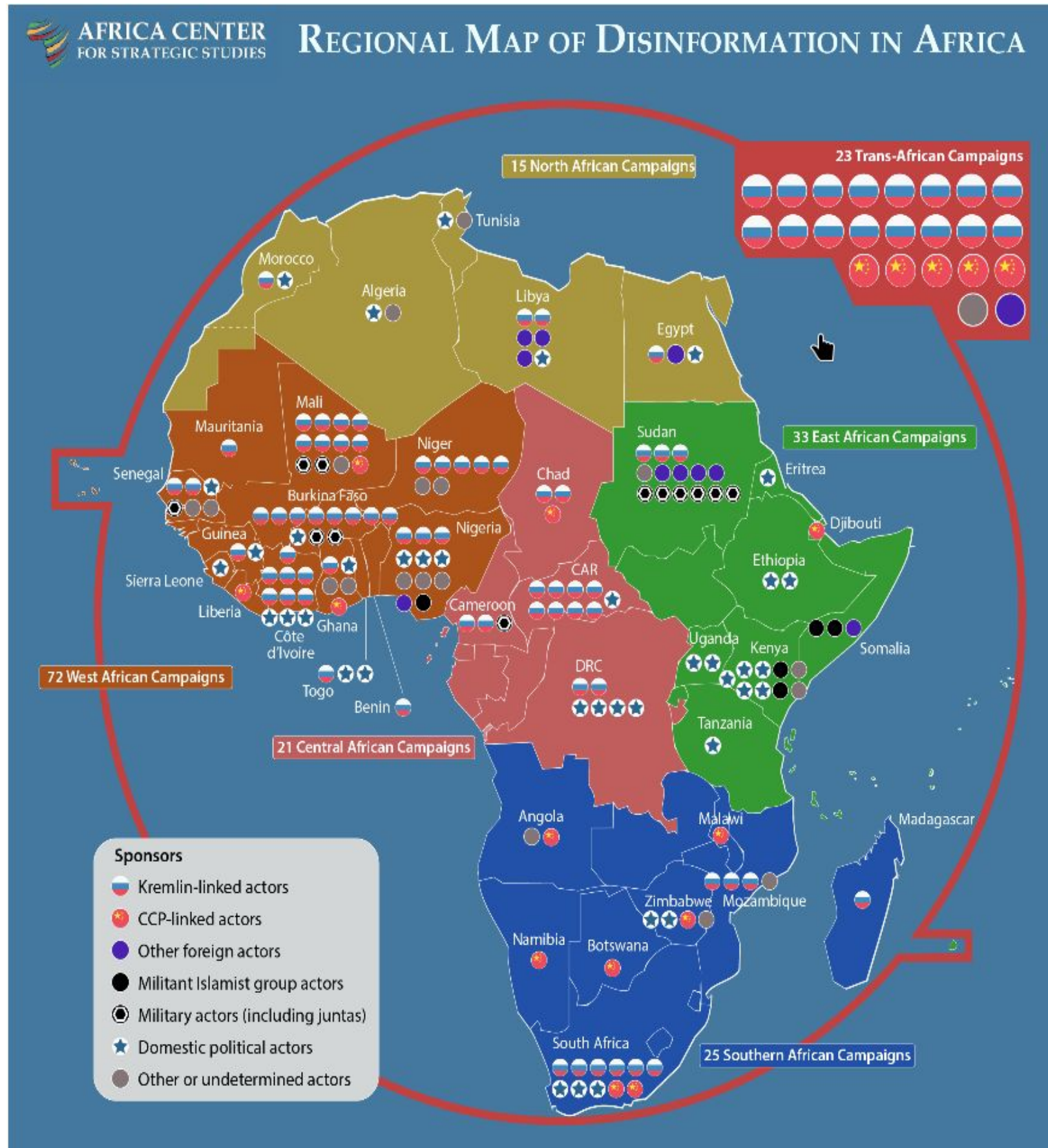
MAPPING OF EXTERNAL ACTORS IN GoG



MAPPING OF EXTERNAL ACTORS IN WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN



DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION... potential threats to maritime security



STRATCOM

- Misleading threat perceptions
- Confusion in crisis situations
- Undermining strategic objectives = affecting public and political support

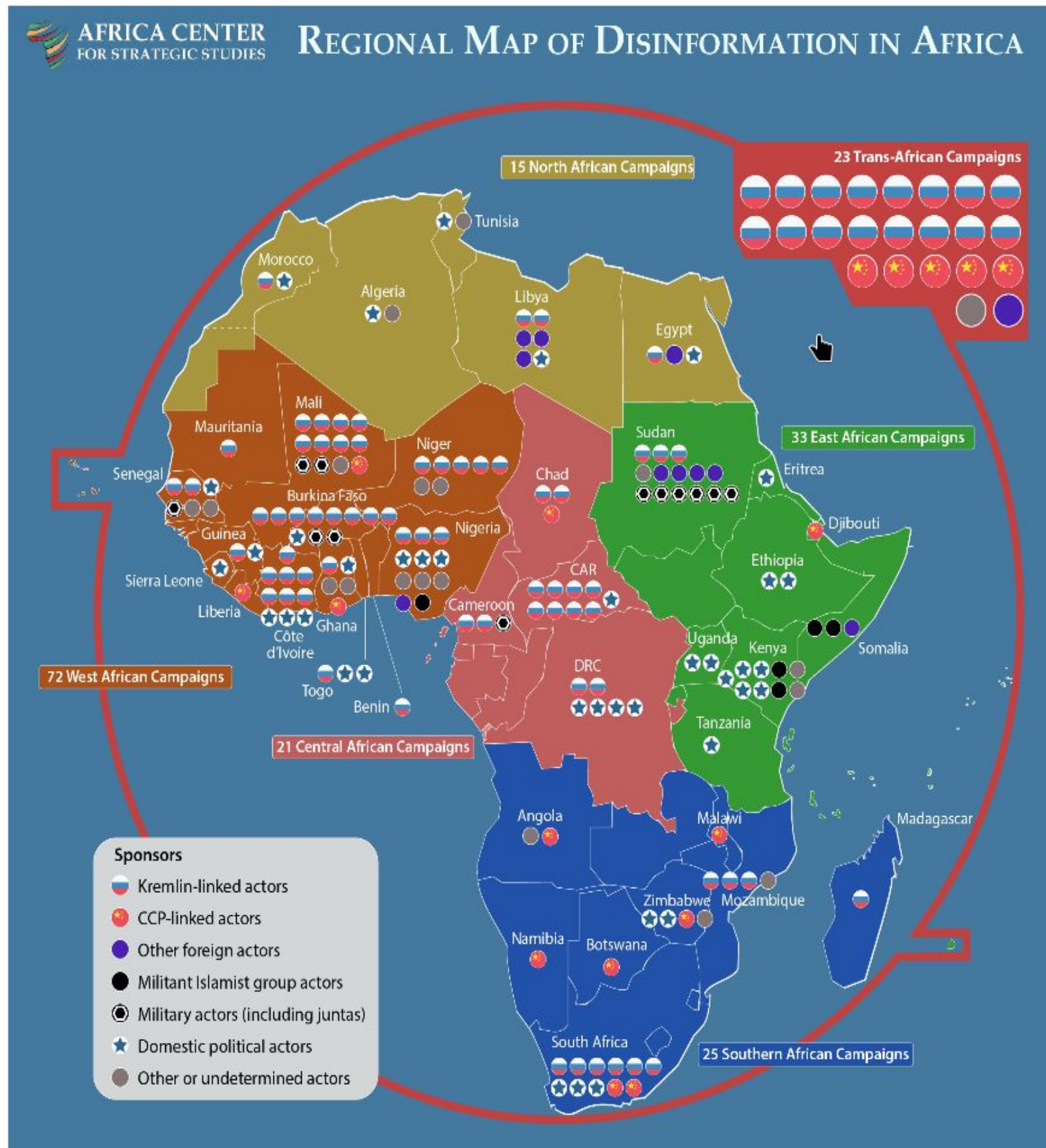
MARITIME DIPLOMACY

- Diplomatic Tensions
- Complicated negotiations
- Eroding trust - impact on joint exercises, search and rescue operations

REGIONAL COOPERATION

- Fragmentation of regional security efforts
- Distrust in multilateral initiatives
- Reduced effectiveness of maritime security policies

DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION... addressing the challenges



- **Strengthen regional cooperation:** Stronger regional cooperation (regular dialogues, joint exercises etc)
- **Public diplomacy and awareness:** Engage in public diplomacy and promote accurate information and awareness on maritime security
- **Enhance surveillance and monitoring:** Invest in advanced technologies and methods for monitoring and fact-checking
- **Develop robust reporting mechanisms:** Develop transparent and reliable reporting mechanisms for maritime incidents to ensure accurate and timely dissemination of information.
- **Collaboration with media and tech platforms:** Work with media organizations and technology platforms to identify and address disinformation campaigns and to promote accurate reporting.

HOW DO REGIONAL COUNTRIES NAVIGATE AND OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES?

RECOMMENDATIONS

◆ **Strengthen regional frameworks:**

Develop and support **regional frameworks and regional organisations.**

◆ **Invest in capacity building:**

Increase investment = contribute effectively to regional initiatives

◆ **Promote stable governance:**

Stabilised political environments and ensure consistent maritime policies

◆ **Enhance strategic communications**

Develop clear, consistent and transparent communication

◆ **Combat disinformation:**

measures to counter misinformation and ensure the dissemination of accurate information

◆ **Foster inclusive dialogues:** encouraged to build consensus and share understanding of maritime issues

HOW TO ENSURE SYNERGIES?



THANK YOU