

COMMENT RIGHT OF REPLY

Why Africa should be wary of Russia's disinformation

The EU and like-minded partners earlier this month at the UN voted against Russia's resolution Combatting glorification of Nazism, which was not about nazism and all about abusing history to justify its aggression



HENRIETTE GEIGER

@EUAmbKenya

The Ambassador of the European Union to Kenya



It is hard to imagine the well-informed readers of this newspaper will have fallen for the latest distortions of history, and the slurs against the EU and its international partners, which the Russian Ambassador chose to loosely scatter across his latest opinion piece (Africa should be wary of Nazism revival, November 11).

We are fully aware the war taking place in Europe is not a priority for many Kenyans, even though it deeply frightens us Europeans, not least because of Russian threats to use nuclear weapons.

We are conscious of the fact that many readers of these pages are tired of the back and forth, when there are more pressing priorities in Kenya. We trust that readers will have seen through the Russian Ambassador's distortions and propaganda.

We would be happy to leave it at that, were it not for the fact that the terms 'nazism' and 'fascism' are too significant to us Europeans for us to ignore their misuse by the Russian ambassador in his article.

It is very difficult to transmit in a few words what they mean to us. The terms conjure up very dark historical memories. They send a shiver down our spines.

The European Union and its member states have vowed that 'nazism' and 'fascism' would never be allowed to spread again on our continent, or elsewhere if we can help it. This is the reason for the EU's existence, to create and keep peace in Europe; it is part of its very DNA. Europe also vowed that it would not allow the

misuse of these terms for political purposes.

Unfortunately, misusing past events is precisely what the author of the article resorts to in an attempt to mask the realities of his country's aggression against its sovereign neighbor. These realities include the Russian regime's killing of civilians, the destruction of civil-

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paganda tool in the big power politics of the time, which sought to take advantage of the deep moral wrongdoings of the colonial period, and of a decolonization process that was long overdue and already underway.

But back to the core issue: What relevance do the terms 'nazism' and 'fascism' have for the events in Ukraine, and for the EU and Africa today?

The short answer is none.

That is why the EU and its like-minded partners earlier this month at the UN voted against the Russian resolution entitled Combatting glorification of Nazism, which was not about nazism and all about Russia abusing history to justify its current aggression.

Rising global neo-Nazism and antisemitism deserve a meaningful and constructive discussion, and the EU and its member states have supported resolutions on these matters in the past.

Equality and non-discrimination are core values of the European Union.

However, in a report to the Human Rights Council in June, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, raised the alarm about Russia's attempts to try to justify its aggression in Ukraine on the purported basis of eliminating neo-Nazism.

It should come as no surprise then that the EU and its member states opposed a resolution referring to the "denazification of Ukraine" and other propaganda elements, which are patently unfounded.

Since it has failed to provide any valid arguments in the face of overwhelming global opposition to its aggression — because there can be none — the Russian regime is again resorting to the disinformation route by denigrating courageous Ukrainians fighting for their country's freedom.

For the record, the military support to Ukraine of the EU, the member states and their international partners is measured, consistent and, owing to the resolve and sacrifices of Ukrainians, so far quite successful. It will continue regardless of Russian threats and disinformation.

In terms of the EU's priorities in Kenya, I can also reassure readers our priority is to deepen our partnership with Kenya and to help foster development and economic growth, not least in order to help Kenyans deal with the impact on local food and fuel prices of Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

ian property, the likely perpetration of war crimes, the senseless, vain-glorious conquest and then losing of territory that does not belong to Russia, the breaking of the European peace and global rules of non-aggression, which in the EU we have been trying to build and preserve for the past 60 years, and the Russian regime's stealing and withholding of Ukrainian grain and fertilizer that is affecting Kenyans daily.

It is also shameful that the Russian ambassador is bending reality by using his own country's history and sacrifices 75 years ago to try to justify the unjustifiable today. Undoubtedly, the Russian people made the biggest sacrifice, in terms of the number of human lives lost, for the liberation of Europe in World War II; but they were not the only ones to pay a heavy price.

Russian citizens, then as today, should really be asking themselves why Soviet Russia entered into a deal with Nazi Germany to carve up Poland; why soon after that it invaded Finland; why it continued to provide shipments of material to the Nazi regime almost two years into World War II and why, after the war, it occupied and exploited its eastern European neighbours. This past pattern of Russian behaviour is similar to Russia's behaviour in Ukraine today.

We certainly do not need to explain to African readers that altruism was not the motivation for Soviet Russia's past support to UN resolutions on decolonization. It was, more accurately, a useful pro-