

RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE IN MOLDOVA AHEAD OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2025

by Sanda Sandu, security expert

KEY TAKEAWAYS – RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE IN MOLDOVA’S 2025 ELECTIONS

- ▶ Russia has allocated over €100 million for operations in Moldova, with actual flows likely higher due to opaque illicit networks and cryptocurrency channels.
- ▶ Vote-buying tactics tested in Gagauzia have been scaled nationally, integrated with clientelist networks, offshore financing, and corruption in the justice system.
- ▶ High risk of provocations escalating protests into violence, combined with arson, hooliganism, false bomb alerts, and cyberattacks designed to overwhelm institutions.
- ▶ Russia deploys AI-enabled full-cycle disinformation: micro-targeting, deepfakes, bot networks, fabricated articles, targeting even youth as young as 12.
- ▶ Fragmentation is deepened by segregated information spaces and the instrumentalisation of the Orthodox Church, which acts as a civic and logistical vector of influence.
- ▶ Exploitation of vulnerabilities in justice and electoral oversight to block investigations, shield intermediaries, and promote narratives of “fraudulent elections”.

The parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025 will determine the country’s trajectory between deeper European integration and renewed vulnerability to Russian influence.

For the Kremlin, these elections are a high-stakes opportunity to restore political leverage in Chișinău, weaken Moldova’s

democratic institutions, and obstruct its EU accession process.

The scale and intensity of Russian interference reflect the broader strategic contest over Moldova’s alignment, making this electoral cycle not only a national challenge but also a frontline issue for European security.

The Russian Federation is conducting a multidimensional hybrid campaign aimed at distorting Moldova’s electoral process, reducing voter turnout, and undermining the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Estimates indicate over €100 million has been allocated to these operations, though the true flows are likely higher due to the opacity of illicit financial channels. The risk level for the pre-election and immediate post-election period is assessed as high, with considerable potential for destabilization.

The financial architecture of interference is sophisticated, involving large-scale injections of resources through offshore networks, electoral corruption mechanisms, and the use of cryptocurrencies, with the Șor Party playing a central role. Vote-buying practices, first tested in Gagauzia as a “laboratory,” have been scaled up nationally during the 2023 local elections, the 2024 presidential elections and referendum, and now the 2025 parliamentary elections. These resources are directed both toward mobilizing clientelist networks and fueling propaganda and protest activities.

On the kinetic dimension, scenarios anticipate provocations and coordinated actions designed to turn protests into violent episodes. Arson, hooliganism, street fights, false bomb threats, and cyberattacks may be activated simultaneously to saturate and exhaust state institutions, undermining the government’s capacity to ensure secure elections.

RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE IN MOLDOVA AHEAD OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2025

These tactics seek to create an image of chaos and dysfunction, reinforcing narratives of state failure.

In the information space, Russia leverages AI-driven disinformation campaigns ^[1] based on “Matryoshka” or “Calin Georgescu” models, which combine micro-targeting, bot networks, deepfakes, and fabricated articles. This ecosystem ensures a full cycle of disinformation that institutions cannot match in speed or volume. Audiences targeted include very young demographics, starting from 12 years old, drawn into parallel and segregated information spaces where official messaging has minimal impact. These operations are further reinforced by organizations such as Evrazia and Kovcheg, which coordinate massive disinformation flows, blending traditional propaganda with AI-enhanced content to saturate Moldova’s digital and social media space. Independent investigations^[2], including those by Ziarul de Gardă^[3], have revealed how these networks intensify their activities ahead of parliamentary elections, systematically seeking to delegitimize democratic institutions, manipulate voter perceptions, and undermine electoral trust.

This integrated approach demonstrates a deliberate Russian strategy to overwhelm Moldova’s information environment, making it increasingly difficult for domestic actors to counter or neutralize hostile narratives.

These operations also pursue deeper social fragmentation and regionalization, by consolidating segregated online ecosystems and inflaming local tensions. Religious infrastructure, particularly the Orthodox Church subordinated to the Moscow

Patriarchate, plays a central role as a mobilization vector and a channel for legitimizing pro-Russian narratives. Civic networks around churches provide both logistical cover and enhanced penetration into local communities.

Another core vector is the exploitation of institutional vulnerabilities, particularly in the judiciary and electoral oversight mechanisms. Investigations into fraud are obstructed, while intermediaries enjoy protection. Simultaneously, narratives framing elections as “fraudulent” aim to discourage participation and prepare the ground for contesting results. These tactics are reinforced through the mobilization of assets and resources from outside Moldova, designed to escalate pressure on institutions at critical junctures.

Future scenarios range from an intensification of information warfare combined with manipulated protests, to a worst-case escalation involving simultaneous violence, cyberattacks, and functional paralysis of electoral bodies. Early warning indicators include surges of deepfake content, atypical cash/crypto transfers in regions, synchronized protest calls, waves of false alerts, and accelerated spread of “fraud” narratives before polls close.

To counter these challenges, priority measures must focus on strengthening inter-institutional coordination, monitoring illicit financial flows, preparing rapid-response cells for provocations and violence, and securing cyber infrastructure. It is necessary to coordinate transparent communication regarding vote counting. International observers, partnerships with civil society, and engagement with religious leaders willing to resist external interference will be key to maintaining stability.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST), a project of The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF). Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Platform for Security and Defense Initiatives (PISA) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the BST/GMF.

[1]<https://brodhub.eu/en/republic-of-moldova/republic-of-moldova-before-elections-10-17-september-2025/>

[2]<https://www.zdg.md/investigatii/ancheta/video-armata-digitala-a-kremlinului-investigatie-sub-acoperire-se-plateste-hai-sa-va-spun-se-plateste-direct-de-la-moscova/>

[3]<https://www.zdg.md/importante/pobedaleaks-sute-de-cetateni-din-r-moldova-in-grupul-de-entitati-rusesti-controlate-de-ilan-sor-eroi-ai-investigatiilor-zdg-pe-listele-de-plati/>