

Title MD Vietnamese Bots Boost Pro-Kremlin Channels Meddling in Moldovan Elections 10/09/2025

Summary

- In January 2024, Facebook and Instagram accounts under the brand “Moldavian Calendar” were created. The accounts were managed by administrators in Thailand and Russia, and the content aligned with Ilan Shor’s political position. The assets posed as independent news sources while promoting anti-government narratives, running Facebook ads to attract Moldovan followers, and using networks of inauthentic accounts, primarily located in Vietnam, to artificially inflate their visibility.
- The assets portrayed the ruling PAS party and President Maia Sandu as corrupt puppets of the West who undermine Moldova’s sovereignty, silence opposition, and misuse public funds.
- The assets built large inauthentic followings (31,500 on Facebook and 29,100 on Instagram) and were actively attempting to increase organic reach through ad campaigns.
- The assets aimed to cultivate support for Shor’s political movements, run smear campaigns on PAS and Sandu, create inauthentic news sites to push inauthentic claims, and use inauthentic accounts to boost legitimacy and social proof.
- It is recommended to flag the assets to Meta as coordinated inauthentic behaviour, and to alert civil society and media literacy organizations in an effort to help counter the narratives.

Incident

The “Moldavian Calendar” (Молдавский Календарь) [Facebook page](#) and [Instagram account](#) promote content that aligns with Shor’s political agenda. The accounts promote narratives associated with Shor’s political parties or allies, centered around criticisms of the government of Maia Sandu, PAS, and Moldova’s pro-European direction. They adopt the language and style typical of propaganda targeting Russian-speaking audiences, evoking nostalgia for the Soviet Union.

Both assets were created in January 2024. The Instagram account administrator’s location was set to Thailand, while the Facebook page showed four administrators located in Thailand and one in Russia. The page posed as an independent news source and was running a Facebook ad [campaign](#) to attract genuine followers, claiming, “Do you live in Moldova? On our page you will find all the main events of the country! Follow the news with us!” The Facebook page was flagged in 2024 by local fact-checking organizations as a source disseminating [false information](#) about the Moldovan referendum on EU accession.

Despite having a considerable number of followers (31,500 on Facebook and 29,100 on Instagram), many [appear](#) to be inauthentic. An analysis of a sample of 2,896 follower accounts on the Facebook page showed that most of them (973) use the same profile picture and have very generic names like “Triumph earnest love abundance,” “Tranquil love soul purpose,” and “Calm sparkle appreciate bravery,” which is an identified [technique](#) used by bot accounts. Another subset (135 accounts) used the same profile picture and one of two usernames: “Vinh Văn Khánh Thu” or “Thiện Văn Đan Vân.” Using Google’s language detection function to assess the usernames, 1,253 (43 percent) were identified as Vietnamese, 1,055 (36 percent) as English, and 274 (9 percent) as Thai. Only 57 (2 percent) and 52 (1.8 percent) were categorized as Romanian and Russian language usernames, respectively. A similar pattern can be seen with followers of the Instagram account. Only 404 of 29,060 (1.4 percent) followers had seemingly Romanian usernames, while 10,685 (37 percent) had seemingly English ones. Interestingly, the first follower of the Instagram account was the pro-Russian propaganda [account](#), “Ordinary Citizen” (Рядовой Гражданин), which also manages a pro-Kremlin [Telegram channel](#) with the same name.

Systemic violation assessment

The assets sought to influence Moldovan public opinion around high-salience political events (e.g., the EU accession referendum), employing cross-border administrators and large, mostly inauthentic followings. The inauthentic narratives promoted by the accounts increase the risk of voter deception and distortion of democratic deliberation. The pages pose as neutral news sources while smearing the Moldovan ruling party and president, potentially eroding trust in institutions and disadvantaging authentic domestic voices ahead of elections.

The pages disseminated anti-government propaganda and false claims related to the EU referendum, framing PAS and Sandu as corrupt and illegitimate, promoting common Ilan Shor-aligned narratives. Second, the accounts employed manipulative tactics, including coordinated inauthentic behavior involving apparent bot followers (such as large clusters of accounts with generic or Vietnamese names and duplicate images), foreign-based administrators (from Thailand and Russia), non-transparent political advertising aimed at attracting Moldovan audiences, and impostor “news” branding designed to confer undue credibility.

Narrative

Meta-narrative: The ruling PAS party and President Maia Sandu are illegitimate, corrupt, and controlled by Western interests, threatening Moldova’s sovereignty, democracy, and national values.

Sub-narratives: EU manipulates Moldova to follow its agenda; The government silences opposition parties and controls the media; PAS and government officials are involved in nepotism and misuse of public funds.

Impact

Reach: The accounts have 31,500 followers on Facebook with 15,800 likes, and 29,100 followers on Instagram.

Outcome: N/A

Key Objectives and Behaviours

Objective: [T0136.006: Cultivate Support for Ally](#) - Cultivating support for Ilan Shor’s political movement.

Objective: [T0135.001: Smear](#) - Smear campaign against PAS and Sandu.

[T0098.001: Create Inauthentic News Sites](#) - Fake pages posing as objective news sources.

[T0146.002 Paid Account Asset](#) - The usage of paid accounts to boost the visibility and credibility of the assets.

Recommendations and Actions Taken

Actions taken: Case flagged to Meta for take-down.

Recommendations: Meta to analyze the activity for coordinated inauthentic behavior and take action against the assets.

Report	Threat Actor	Evidence	Authors	Platforms	FIMI Assessment
N/A	Russia	Google Drive	Jakub Kubś, GLOBSEC	Facebook, Instagram	High certainty