VULNERABLE SCENARIOS

HOW IS RUSSIA ATTACKING DEMOCRACY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA?

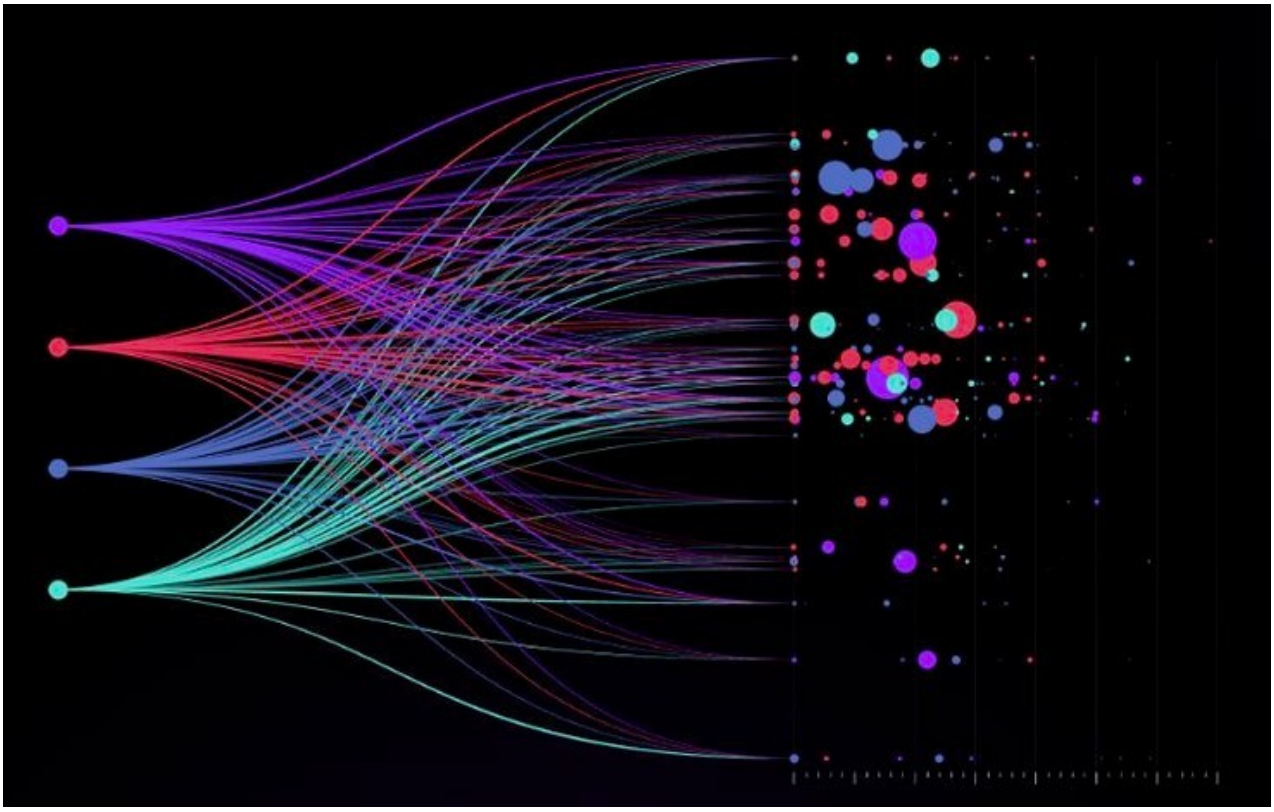
INFORMATION NOTE
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I. WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT?

Russia is waging a long-term hybrid war against the Republic of Moldova, aimed at exploiting internal vulnerabilities, fracturing the pro-European majority, and creating the conditions for a political realignment under Kremlin control. At stake is not only the political direction of the coming years, but the country's very strategic choice: continuing the path towards the European Union or a painful involution towards the Russian sphere of influence.

The 2025 parliamentary elections are the focal point of this confrontation. The Kremlin and its internal networks — avowedly pro-Russian parties, radical populist formations, and "false pro-Europeans" with hidden agendas — are coordinating their efforts to tip the balance. Their main objective is to install a pro-Russian government capable of blocking European integration, reversing democratic reforms, and reorienting the country's foreign policy.

CCSCD, together with other state institutions, constantly monitors threats and builds a response based on work scenarios validated from recent experiences. These scenarios result from the analysis of clear action patterns, adapted to the electoral context and based on massive financial resources, mostly illegal, directed by Russia and its proxies.



II. MAJOR DESTABILISATION SCENARIOS PURSUED BY RUSSIA AND ITS ALLIES IN MOLDOVA

Russia and pro-Russian networks in the country exploit economic, social and political vulnerabilities to influence public opinion, divide society and weaken democratic institutions. Ultimately, the goal is to stop European integration and bring Moldova back under Moscow's control. To this end, it uses four destabilisation scenarios.

a) **"Economic vulnerability"**, or Exploitation of economic difficulties. High prices, low incomes and the 2025 energy crisis are presented as effects of rapprochement with the EU rather than as a result of Russian blackmail. Moscow positions itself as a saving "solution", masking the real costs of energy dependence. In this type of propaganda, the increase in heating bills, the instability of electricity prices and the decrease in purchasing power are blamed exclusively on "anti-Russian obsession" and "selling Moldova to Brussels".

b) **"Alleged external control"** or Exploitation of the fear of denationalisation. The European Union is portrayed as a hostile force that "destroys traditional values" and "controls" Moldovan institutions. Diaspora participation in voting is used to induce the perception of external interference, and European investments are presented as forms of colonisation. It is persistently argued that pro-EU subjects are manipulating the elections and that the only option for saving Moldova's culture and resources is a break with the West.

c) **"**The proximity of **war in Ukraine"** or Exploitation of physical insecurity. The conflict in Ukraine is transformed into a direct warning: Moldova will be the "next victim" if it remains pro-Western. The constitutional "neutrality" topic is abused to undermine public support for European integration, and the promoted rhetoric induces the idea that rapprochement with the West inevitably brings war to Moldovan territory.

d) **"Regions and minorities"** or Exploitation of social and ethnic divisions. The problems in the Gagauzia ATU and the Transnistrian region are used to fuel the feeling of Russian speakers' discrimination and to create the perception of an imminent risk of internal conflict. The 2025 energy crisis, constitutional tensions and economic difficulties are integrated into these narratives to suggest that Chisinau does not govern for all and that rapprochement with the West risks provoking hostilities.

III. PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

Ahead of the election, the central objective of Russia and its local actors is to shape public perception and erode trust in key institutions, such as the Central Election Commission, the judiciary, and the independent press. The tactic applied is "3DP" - Divide, Delegitimise, Discredit, Promote - to which "Discourage" can be added, i.e. reducing participation where pro-democracy votes cannot be changed (as is the case with the diaspora).

The actions aim to launch anticipated accusations of fraud, supported by manipulated polls and false data leaks, fuelling narratives such as "captured state", "EU is using us", "lost identity" or even "fascism" and "genocide", moving the debate from the rational to the emotional level.

The deliberate fragmentation of the pro-European vote is being done by promoting "new" parties, presented as constructive alternatives, but which are indirectly financed from obscure, non-transparent sources. Public figures who still enjoy a pro-EU image are being used to send ambiguous messages, creating confusion and diluting support for democratic governance.

Domestic proxy networks and external actors (such as fugitive oligarchs) are intensively activated on Telegram, TikTok and YouTube, using deepfakes, distorted satire and conspiracy theories. Religious and cultural networks are used for "narrative laundering", i.e. inserting propaganda messages into discourses with moral authority and community influence. The capacity for mobilisation through electoral corruption has already been demonstrated: over 130,000 votes bought or influenced in the past elections, with an emphasis on economically vulnerable areas such as Gagauzia, Taraclia and the rural north.



IV. ELECTION PERIOD

On election days, Russia and its allies may shift from informational influence to direct actions to disrupt the electoral process. Blocking access to polling stations, intentionally crowding the process to prevent voters from casting their ballots, false alarms leading to the temporary suspension of voting, and spreading fake news about "frauds" in the diaspora are predictable tactics.

"Spontaneous" protests may be organised near polling stations, with the aim of intimidating voters, while social networks will be saturated with synchronised posts, live broadcasts and alarmist messages intended to induce the idea that the electoral process is compromised even before the polls close. These actions are meant to create a climate of chaos, reduce voter turnout and prepare the ground for contesting the results.

In the face of such attempts, state institutions maintain their vigilance and responsiveness, leaving no room for manoeuvre for those who would seek to hijack the democratic process.



V. POST-ELECTION PERIOD

After the results are announced, Moscow will continue its strategy regardless of the composition of the parliament. In the case of a fragmented parliament, the tactics aim to form a pro-Russian government through non-transparent negotiations, force new elections, block the formation of a pro-European government, or undermine the democratic consensus through protests, delegitimisation campaigns, and accusations of fraud.

The actions are integrated into a continuous cycle of Divide - Delegitimise - Discredit - Promote - (Discourage), designed to maintain social tension, erode the authority of institutions, and prepare the next opportunity for intervention.

VI. CONCLUSION

These scenarios are not mere theoretical exercises, but the result of an analysis based on actions already used against the Republic of Moldova. The danger is real, the adversary's resources are considerable, and the struggle is unequal: Moldova respects the rules of democracy, while Russia and its local network operate outside of any legal or moral constraints.

Protecting democracy is not only the responsibility of state institutions. Every citizen has a direct role: to get information from credible sources, to reject manipulation, to participate in the vote and to report attempts to corrupt elections. In the face of an adversary who relies on intimidation, speculation on ignorance and the capture of the popular will, the strongest response is a vigilant, informed and united society.