

L Deterrence through Transformation

ISA Security Summit 2026

Understanding & Deterring Information Confrontation

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Information Confrontation

- Informationsionnoe protivoborstv / "**information confrontation**", is a fundamental political-strategic idea in Russian military and academic thought, where information is a weapon, upstream of physical violence, with a **technical and psychological** /cognitive layer.
- Prof. Sergei Rastorguev's theory of the "information weapon" (informationsionnoe oruzhie), developed over two decades; involves an 'algorithm' enabling **decisive control of an information system** by manipulating incoming or processed data, aiming to make the adversary destroy itself without recognizing it is under attack.
- Mentioned in 'Gerasimov doctrine' and 'the Aquarium leaks' as part of GRU approach.
- "much has been done" in "the matter of information confrontation"...Russia "has no right to lose the **battle for the minds and hearts** of our citizens on printed, television, radio, and digital battlefields" (V.V. Putin, April 2023 Meeting of the Supreme State Council of the Union State of Russia and Belarus).

SOCIAL DESIGN AGENCY LEAKS



- 3114 files: earliest Oct 21 through to mid 2024 (lots undated)
- Plans; Protocols; Progress Updates; Audits / evidence; Support materials (media monitors, visuals etc.
- N = 33 planning docs. Some implemented, others just proposals.
- Presidential Administration – Sergei Kvrienko

N	Countries in Plan / Protocol Docs (Bold denotes individual country plan)
6	Ukraine ; Israel
4	USA
3	Germany (+13), Latvia , Italy, Georgia, Poland
2	Armenia; Moldova
1	France (+8); Turkey (+1); England; Kazakhstan; Azerbaijan; Kyrgyzstan; Uzbekistan; Turkmenistan; Estonia; Lithuania; Russia; Bulgaria; Cyprus; Greece; Macedonia; Montenegro; Romania; Serbia

АГЕНТСТВО
СОЦИАЛЬНОГО
ПРОЕКТИРОВАНИЯ



Conflictology = sub-discipline of Political Technology; SDA concept & methodology for adversarial information ops and information confrontation. Also mention “cognitive operations”.

7 Phase Model: ‘Algorithm for the Artificial Generation of Conflicts’: “Monitoring and analysis of the media, social networks, results of sociological research to **identify “pain points”** and hotbeds of increased **social and political tension.**”

“Development of a “scenario” for a conflict situation, narrative lines, a strategy for “stuffing” and further **“inciting” the conflict** using available means, neutralizing counter-propaganda.”

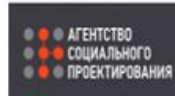
“Introduction of **conflict-producing material** through predetermined channels (spot or massive)...Further “heating up” of the conflict and the injection of additional materials.” (Document ‘International Conflictology’)

Systematic monitoring of target Western countries for ‘pain points’ and ‘indicators of effect’: media monitoring; government communications and reporting; think tanks; Western academia; social media influencers (n=200).

Political Technologists



Factory output per month



Text

Concepts and scenarios of promotions, flash mobs, video products – **12.**

Fake documents – **4.**

Longrides - **60.**

Short-form journalism (texts up to 1000 characters for author's posts in social networks) - **120.**

Texts for distribution in messenger(s) (up to 500 characters) – **90.**

44%

Video

Video memes - for TikTok, YouTube and Facebook - **30 stories.** timing 20-30 seconds. - **200.**

Videos: fakes, agitation - **12.**

33%

Images

Cartoons/charicatures (author's) - **60.**

Memes (pseudo-popular) – **120.**

28%



Target Armenia

- **Project “Analysis of the Current State of Affairs and Recommendations”** focuses on **Russian migrants** who left country following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, **includes Armenia** as a targeted geography. June-July 2023.
- **“Project of the Information Influence on the Relocators”** proposes news media channel targeting potential relocants called “Pumpkin Latte” in : Georgia, Kazakhstan, **Armenia**, Türkiye, Israel, Germany.
6 month KPIs: **25% increase** in people willing to come back to Russia; Increase in **15% increase** of people who **think new country is worse** in the new place than in Russia. The project details **3 narratives**:
 - Split of emigration, discrediting of leaders, fanning of scandals
 - Influence migrants to think that they can safely return to Russia
 - Discourage migrants from voting in Russian presidential elections in 2024
- **Project “International Conflictology”** - Targeting **Armenian diaspora** in France.

Learning from Moldova

What worked in defending elections in Moldova?

- Moldovan Elections
 - 2024 Presidential Elections – 20/10 (R1) & 03/11 (R2) + Euro Elections – 20/10
 - 2025 Parliamentary Elections – 28th Sep
- USAID shut down in 2025: 83% cancelled by end of March and officially closed July, *estimate \$157.9 million in disbursements & obligations linked to projects active in 2025 were ended.*
- Data from news articles from Moldovan media, Russian media, and the Russian IIO Portal Kombat collected via Webz (paid data aggregation service) and scraping of key Moldovan sites. 6 month samples = 4 months pre-election, election month and 1 month post
- **SOURCES: 2024 N=252,820 2025 N=223,802**
- **DATA:** documents processed & categorised for topic modelling: **2024 – 86K; 2025 – 71K.**

Topic Modelling: Attack v Defence

Sources were split into 5 categories (based on OSINT+ academic / gov reports):

Portal Kombat (aka Pravda) IIO

Moldovan facing sites – FULL CONTENT

Remaining sites – FILTERED CONTENT

Russian State Media – FILTERED (for matches on Moldovan keywords: political parties/groups, key cities & regions)

Pro-Russia Moldovan Media – FULL

Independent Moldovan Media – FULL

Pro-West Moldovan Media – FULL

Top three are “Attackers” and remaining two “Defenders”

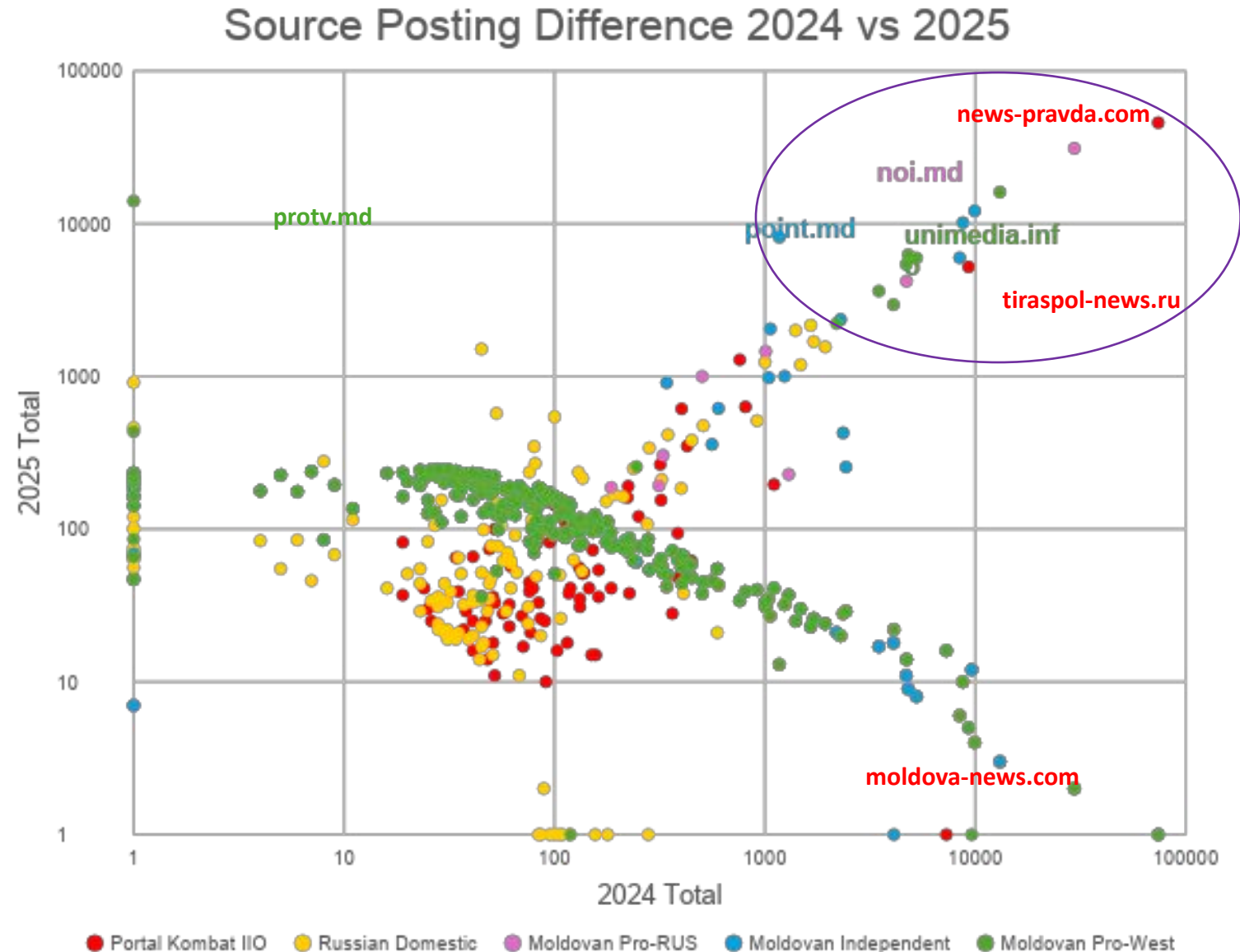
Multiple Topics:

- 2024 **Offline protests** against Sandu government (attacker dominant)
- **Disputed regions** of Transnistria & Gagauzia esp. arrest + protest (2025) of Evghenia Guțul, Gagauz leader. August saw a particularly sharp increase in attacker narratives as Guțul was sentenced this month. 2024 attack dominant – 2025 contest.
- **Energy supply crisis**: ‘humanitarian crisis’ cessation of RU gas supply, and refusal to pay Gazprom bill.

LLM based Topic Modelling affords a novel, quantitative, ‘system-level’ view of narrative contests in the information space.

Source Changes

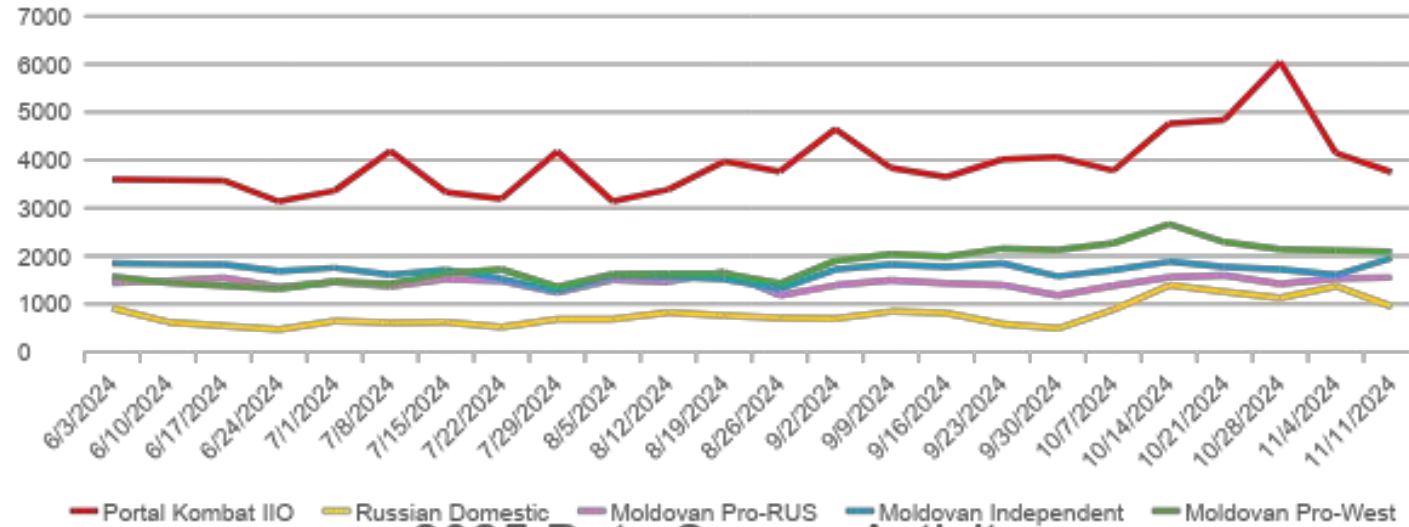
- Top right quadrant: highest volume 2024+2025
- Dataset isn't perfect with several sources only present in single years (protv.md, jurnal.md, agora.md)
- Key instance of site removal = moldova-news.com



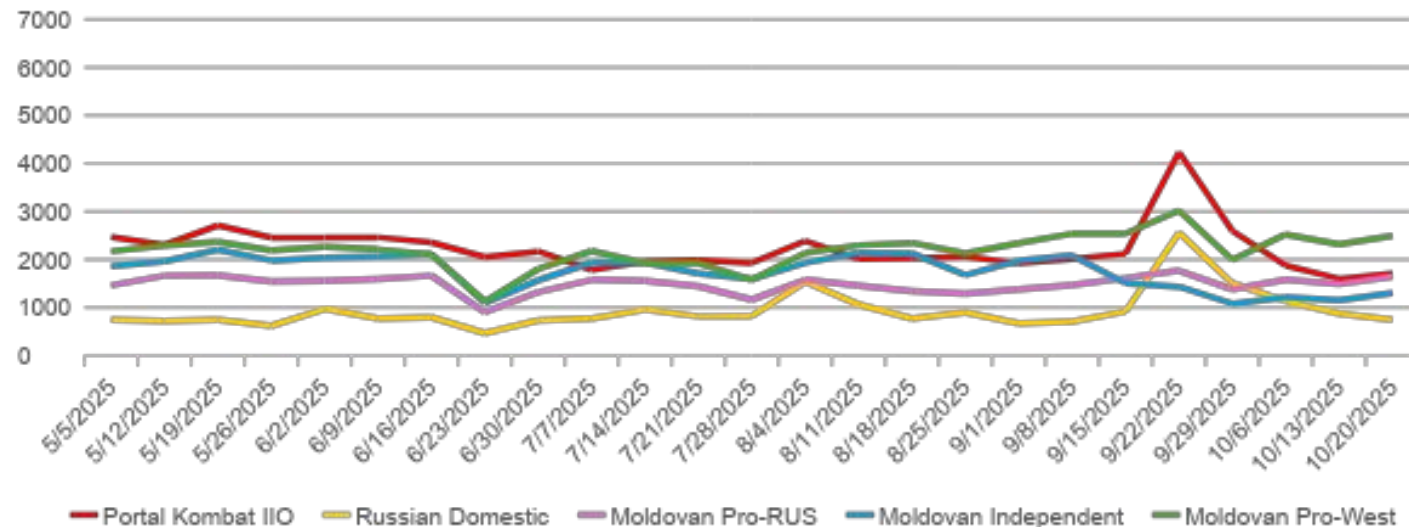
Timelines

- Significant drop in overall activity from Portal Kombat (-15%), closed attacker v defender content gap.
- 2025 more pronounced spike of activity for Russian sources around elections

2024 Data Source Activity



2025 Data Source Activity

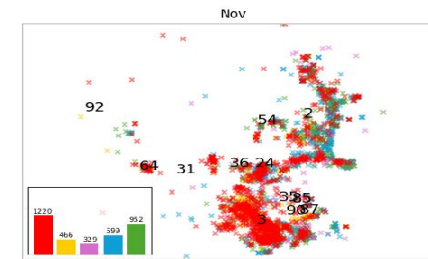
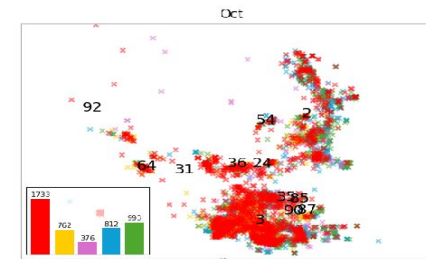
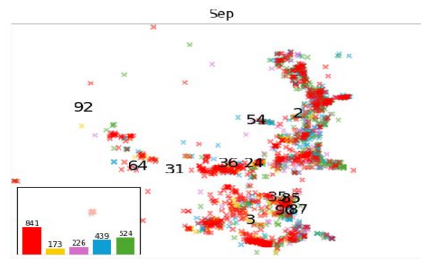
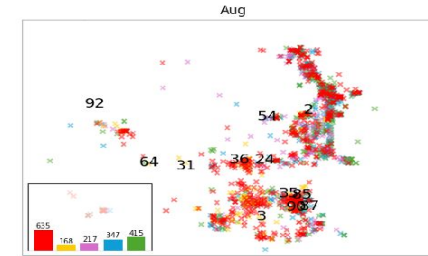
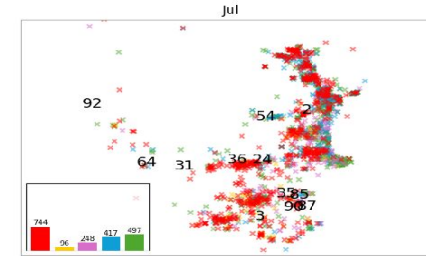
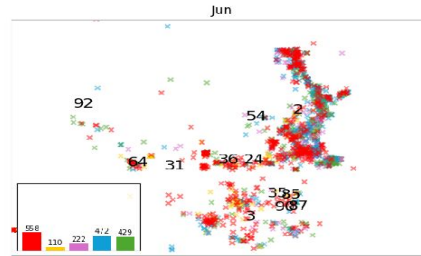


Elections: Attack v Defence

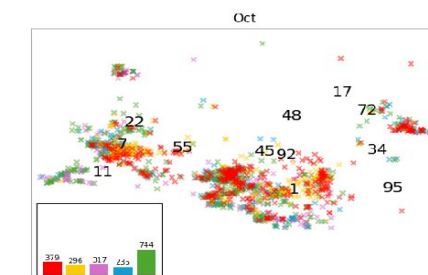
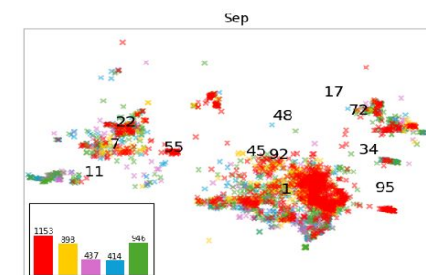
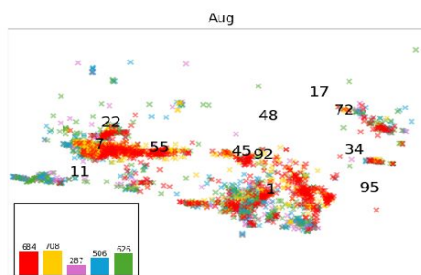
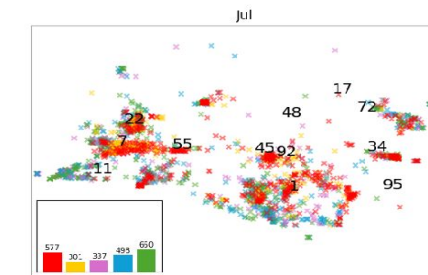
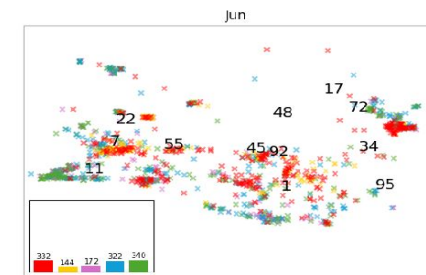
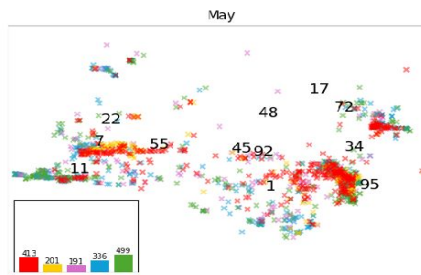
- **2024: Election Moldova (T: 3, N=5782)**
- RU media dominate with spike in activity October & Nov
- Highest activity among attacker/defender in October (1st round of election)
- PK activity Oct is highest and Nov (2nd round)
- **2025: Election Moldova (T: 1, N=6344)**
- RU media higher but contested.
- Highest activity in September (election month)
- PK activity dominates June, July, Aug, & Sept
- Increase in pro-West media in October

Left to Right is:
Red - IIO
Yellow - Rus media
Purple - Moldovan pro Rus
Blue - Independent Moldova
Green - Pro west Moldova

Elections (2024)



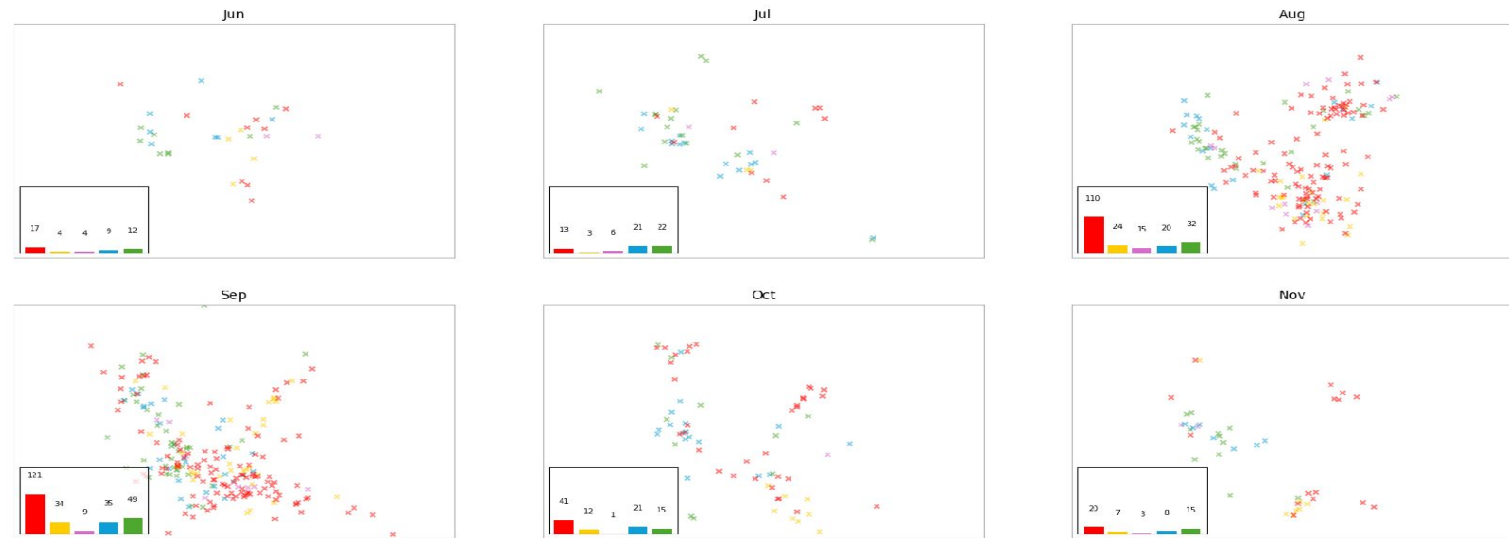
Elections (2025)



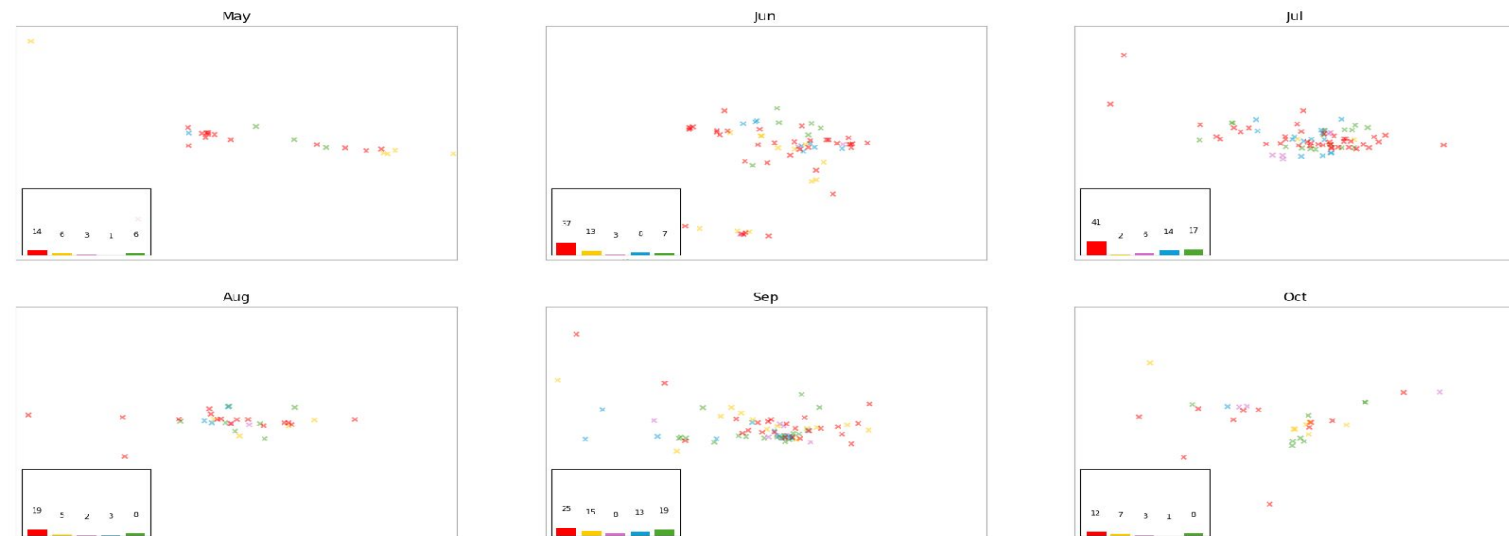
Attacker narratives focus on Orthodox Church across 2025, with early peaks in June and July.

- Russia “defender of traditional values” and protector against western liberalism.
- Articles claim the Orthodox Church being attacked by the “Sandu regime” and mention Sandu’s comments on the church an instrument of influence for Russia.
- Multiple mentions of Armenia. One article states, “In the history of the Armenian nation, the Armenian Apostolic Church (Part of the Oriental Orthodox communion) has always been an institution that has made it possible to preserve identity, culture, and language. Today, the church and its leadership are being brutally attacked, priests are being arrested as part of an anti-state policy dictated by external masters.”

Orthodox Church (2024)



Orthodox Church (2025)



6 'Take Home' Points

- Information confrontation = system level view of attacker + defender media actions.
- SDA - Conflictology + Armenia expertise and experience.
- 'Digital meat grinder' – inefficient (don't need oversell capability), but high volume, relentless and persistent, so works over time.
- 'Fuzzy' (or blended) information threats combine domestic + foreign manipulation / interference, identified by Russia's systematic 'open-source' monitoring for 'pain points'.
- 'What works' in defending the media / social media space?
- Some similar thematic targets for Moldova & Armenia, but comparing 2024 and 2025 in Moldova - reduced attacker content and contested key issues more, but not all need confronting.