

Commercial tabloidization or political campaign?

Or how to fuse different internet bubbles to monetize. Tactics: coordinated distribution, clickbait and accidental viralization in the 2025 Facebook campaign



Commercial tabloid or political campaign?



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Or how to merge different internet bubbles to monetize. Coordinated distribution, clickbait and accidental viralization in the 2025 Facebook campaign

Facebook is already a common social network for Romanians, with over 11 million users in 2025. Information circulates intensely in public and private groups, on FB entertainment pages and beyond. EFOR monitors more than 1,000 public pages and groups, and in many of them we observe obvious patterns of coordinated distribution. Promoted content often follows a marketing logic centered on sensationalism, with the aim of generating visibility and engagement. Although these pages present themselves as apolitical and entertainment-oriented, some of them end up giving increased visibility to certain issues or candidates. In this context, it is fair to ask who is gaining the most attention in these digital spaces?

On TikTok we have already documented an industry of artificially grown accounts, probably used to be sold or rented for political campaigns (<https://expertforum.ro/industria-retelelor-inautentice-pe-tiktok/> / <https://expertforum.ro/cum-cresc-conturile-candidatilor-tiktok/>). On Facebook, this phenomenon has an older and more refined infrastructure, perhaps also because it has had time to adapt to the platform's obstacles and a different pace of viralization.

But anomalies abound here too. We are seeing an invasion of clickbait content, with pages generating traffic for entertainment content. In the absence of real-life traceability and accountability for the marketing networks create, social networks are replacing TV, but with no control over the source, purpose or methods used.

This phenomenon should be seen in the broader context of infiltration tactics: astroturfing in comments, fan accounts on TikTok and entertainment pages on Facebook. Among the memes and mundane news, political "pills" also creep in. At present we can only wonder: is this disguised political advertising or simple clickbait content for views? **In our opinion both scenarios are valid, as we did not find a majority positive trend for any of the candidates.**

This kind of repetitive messages can easily be found with a simple search. In this short report, we just want to show you a sampling of the 194 pages of entertainment that we have correlated with what we consider to be coordinated patterns designed to pollute the news space in this presidential election. It's not always clear whether they support one political camp or another. Often they don't. It's like the AI pictures with the "Romanian village", which do not directly promote anything political, but only a sense of wellbeing and nostalgia, but generate traffic, interactions and leave the user confused in a fabricated reality of fake accounts.

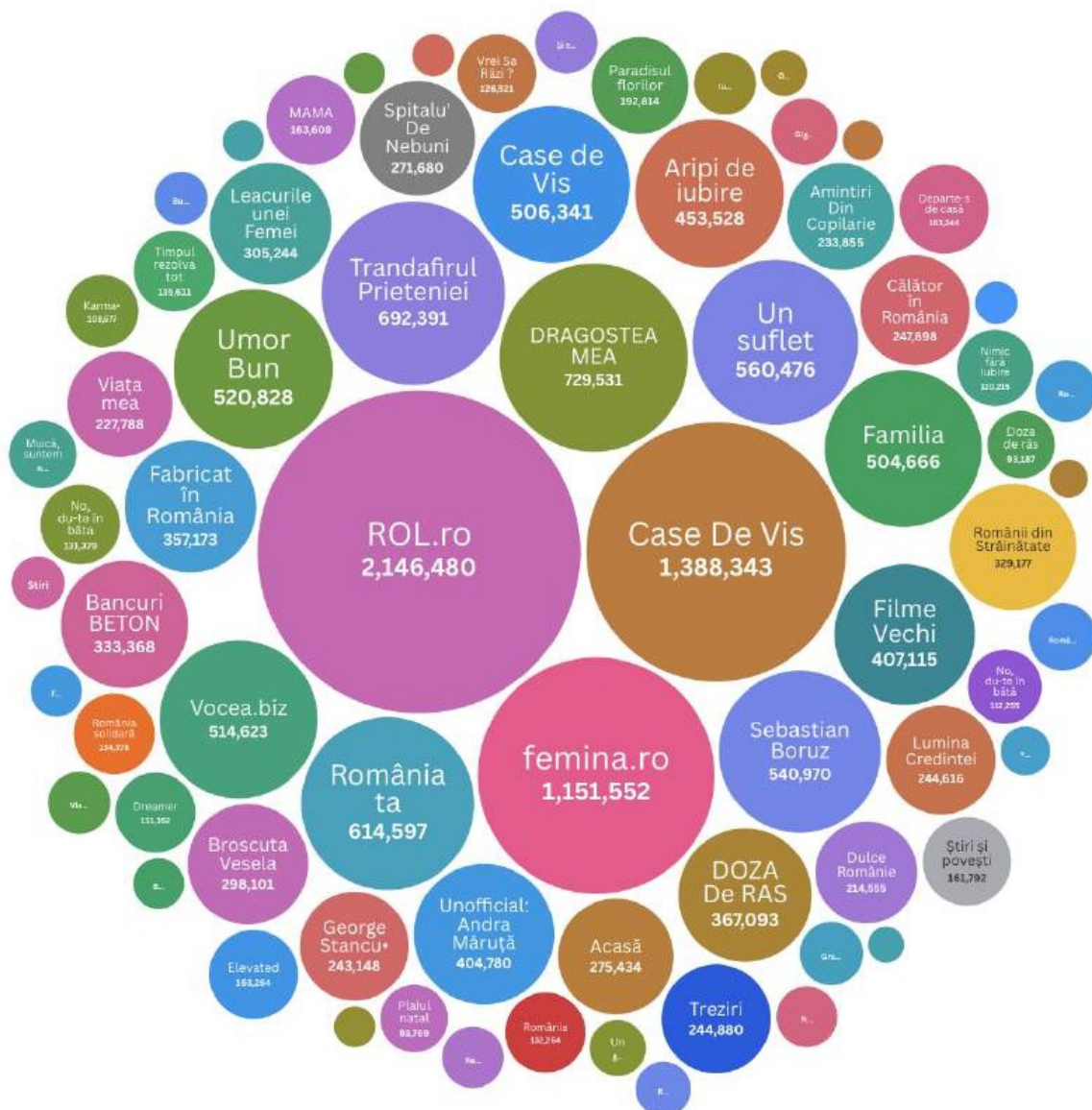
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The phenomenon is out of control. We don't know if the legislation can keep up with these infiltrations, however many definitions we try to invent. But it is clear that Romania needs an increased national capacity to detect these networks; to be able to attribute them to the real beneficiaries and payers; and to expose and punish them where necessary. But we see that good-faith legislation in digital regulation is a sensitive subject because it has to make a difficult trade-off: defending authentic content and the right to free speech, but without absurd protection for inauthentic networks and uncontrolled bots. The task is difficult and depends on how much we are willing to negotiate with the big platforms at EU level, and in addition to adapt to the reality of the new information age at national level.

Pagini&Grupuri Publice Facebook

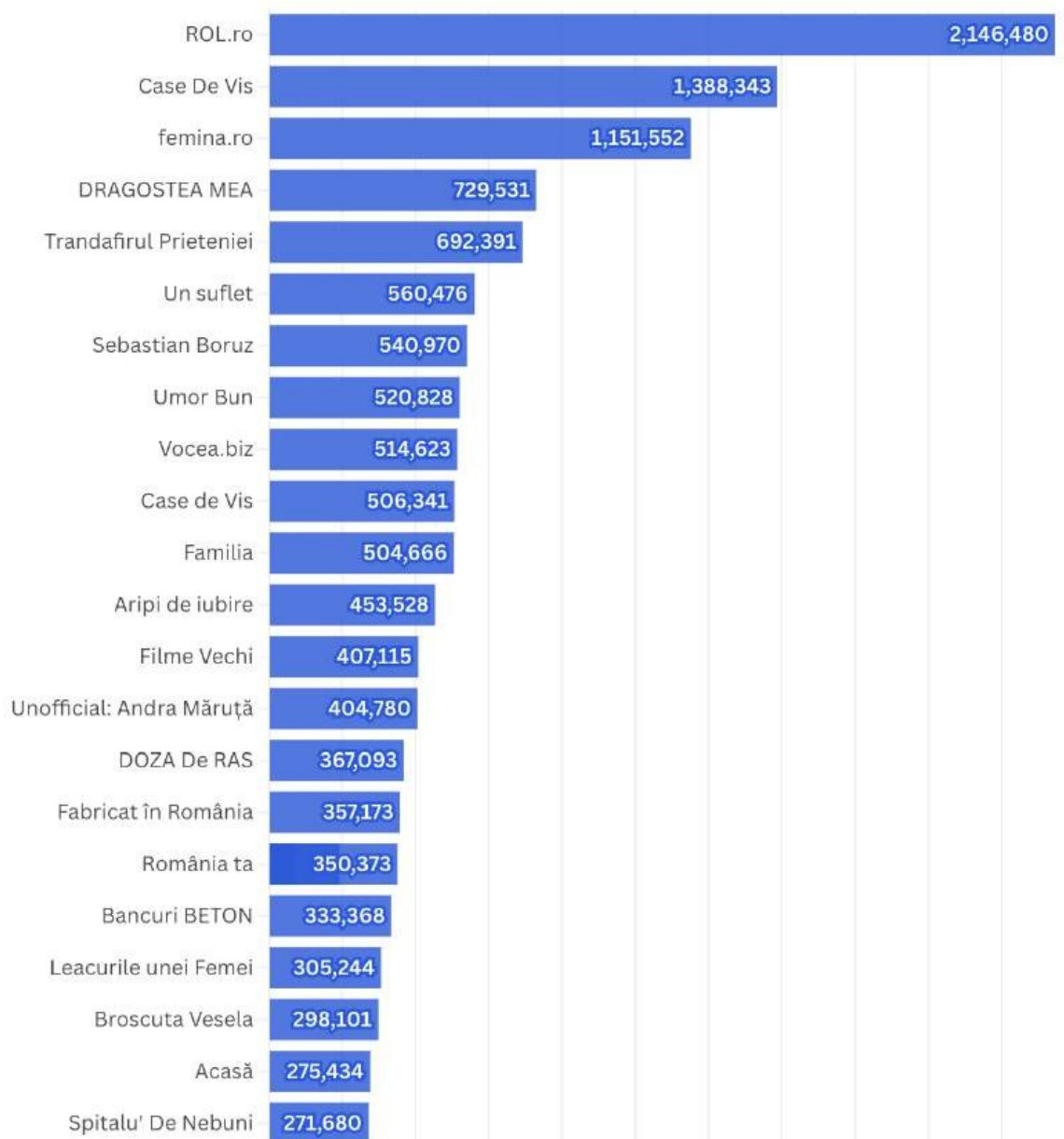
Conturi care au publicat conținut identic cel puțin o dată în ultima lună

Conținutul urmărit a fost exclusiv știri politice



Pagini și Grupuri Facebook

Conturi care au publicat conținut identic cel puțin o dată în ultima lună

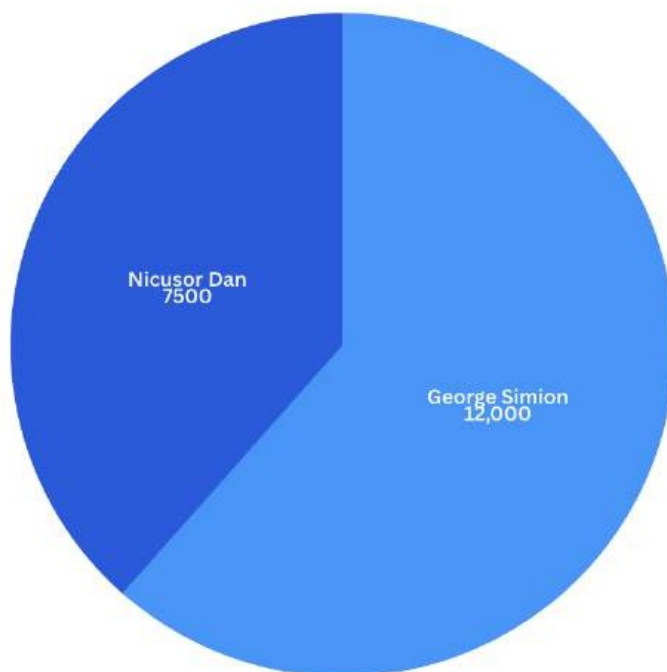


*Number of trackers

Paginile monitorizate

Frecvența menționării candidaților Nicușor Dan și George Simion în rețeaua analizată

Ultimele 30 de zile



Titles of articles in the last 30 days that have posted content about two candidates

The content of the articles is a repetition of public statements made by the two candidates. But the clickbait headlines illustrate the promotional strategy, not the content on the website.

Top mentions George Simion	Top mentions Nicușor Dan
! Decision taken by George Simion, which turned the whole debate upside down! The AUR leader's gesture towards Elena Lasconi left everyone on the set speechless: "She's the only one who really..."	Nicușor Dan makes a move nobody expected. Surprising decision taken by the candidate. Nicușor Dan said in a press conference that he is ready for an electoral debate in which George Simion will participate. Nicușor Dan also presented his campaign strategy for the remaining days until the second round.
Who George Simion's wife is and what she actually does. Ilinca and the AUR leader have a baby boy together	Who is Mirabela Grădinaru, Nicușor Dan's life partner, and what she does
Now it's out what George Simion did in Vienna. What AUR says about the visit winner'Mr. President	Who Nicusor Dan will propose as Prime Minister if he wins the second round 🙌

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George Simion has produced several campaign materials (photos, videos) for the second round of the presidential elections, with well-known European politicians in the first part of the day.	
George Simion and Ilinca had a wedding like never seen before, they had 42 pairs of groomsmen and thousands of people attended the big event. Unlike him, the AUR leader's wife is a discreet young woman, and after married she was no longer at the center attention.	 George Simion receives PRIMA BREAKING after the presidential election results are announced. A leading Romanian party announces its support for Nicușor Da
NEW official POLL for Round II. The difference between George Simion and Nicușor Dan has changed dramatically in the most unexpected way	 BREAKING NEWS  Earthquake on the Romanian political scene! Dan Șucu intervenes and has a big demand for Nicușor Dan and George Simion 🤖 E mai vital than ever!
The age difference between George Simion and his wife Ilinca. Nobody expected that!	Traian Băsescu drops the bomb: "Nicușor Dan has to convince one partner for the second round." They all thought of big names, strategic alliances and spectacular scenarios - but nobody didnt expect the big SURPRISE
Who George Simion's wife Ilinca is and what she does. She's 11 years his junior and made him a father for the first time date	How much Nicușor Dan's wife earns each month. Mirabela works in the car industry and earns a impressive
Victor Ponta broke the silence with a a statement that left everyone in disbelief when he saw that George Simion is on 1st place at the moment:	Vica Blochina, certified numerologist, has analyzed the presidential candidates and gives her verdict: "He will win the elections"

Example 1

Content amplified by these sources: the case of Anamaria Gavrilă (POT)

On May 7, 2025, several online publications reported an incident in which Anamaria Gavrilă, the leader of the Young People's Party (POT), issued threats to the media and a fellow party member. The statement "*you are an endangered species*" was filmed and shared on social media, generating strong reactions from the public and fueling a wave of outrage. Gavrilă later posted a message on Facebook accusing the press of partisanship and reaffirming his support for "free press that does not live on party money".



Românii s-au revoltat, după ce Anamaria Gavrilă a amenințat presa și un coleg din POT. „Veți dispărea cu toții”

mai 7, 2025 / Leo / Uncategorized

This news was picked up and amplified by several pages in the monitored network, which published an identical version of the same article. The pages in question generally presented themselves as sources of entertainment or general news with no political affiliation, but contributed to the repetitive dissemination of this content. The amplification was clearly not aimed at supporting or attacking it, but at creating traffic by exploiting the viral and emotional potential of the topic, a strategy frequently observed in these networks.

Why do we think this episode is relevant? The example illustrates how networks of accounts that appear to aim to occupy the news space and populate it with entertainment content can take over and redistribute controversial events at key moments, **contributing to their opaque overexposure in a way that is difficult to trace in terms of purpose and effectiveness.** In the absence of transparency about the purpose or beneficiaries of distribution, such networks can disrupt the public agenda and influence political perceptions in an indirect but systematic way.

Vocea.biz
May 7, 2025, 8:45 AM
„Veți dispărea cu toții” - scena politică românească a fost zguduită de un nou scandal marca Anamaria Gavrilă! Românii s-au revoltat, după ce parlamentara a amenința...
[See more](#)



Hohote de ras
May 7, 2025, 2:01 PM
„Veți dispărea cu toții” - scena politică românească a fost zguduită de un nou scandal marca Anamaria Gavrilă! Românii s-au revoltat, după ce parlamentara a amenința...
[See more](#)



Amintiri frumoase
May 8, 2025, 10:00 AM
„Veți dispărea cu toții” - scena politică românească a fost zguduită de un nou scandal marca Anamaria Gavrilă! Românii s-au revoltat, după ce parlamentara a amenința...
[See more](#)



Acasă
May 8, 2025, 10:00 AM
„Veți dispărea cu toții” - scena politică românească a fost zguduită de un nou scandal marca Anamaria Gavrilă! Românii s-au revoltat, după ce parlamentara a amenința...
[See more](#)



Example 2

The news about Călin Georgescu, co-president

After the second round of the 2025 presidential elections, several online pages disseminated an alleged public statement by Nicolae Voiculescu, associated by these sources with candidate George Simion, who claimed that "Romania will have two presidents: George Simion and Călin Georgescu". The speculative statement invoked the possibility of a constitutional amendment that would allow for a "co-presidency", a concept that does not exist in the current legal framework and is unprecedented in Romania's constitutional architecture.

This claim, while obviously fanciful from a legal and political point of view, was picked up and amplified by several pages of the network analyzed in a way that suggests an intent to confuse and mislead voters. Unlike other cases of neutral or opportunistic redistribution, this example has a clearly manipulative purpose: to present a false assumption as a possible or imminent fact at a critical electoral moment.

This is a representative case of how networks can function as multipliers of speculative, unvalidated and deeply manipulative political content. Pseudo-constitutional scenarios distributed in this way contribute to the erosion of trust in the democratic process and potentiate the effects of disinformation in a digital environment devoid of editorial filters.

romaniinoștri.ro/calin-georgescu-ar-putea-fi-copresedintele-romaniei-alaturi-de-george-simion-scenariul-exploziv

Romanii noștri

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Home > De interes > Călin Georgescu ar putea fi copreședintele României, alături de George Simion. Scenariul exploziv lansat de apropiatul su



DE INTERES

Călin Georgescu Ar Putea Fi Copreședintele României, Alături De George Simion. Scenariul Exploziv Lansat De Apropiatul Suveraniștilor

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Romania eolidarÂ
M8y 9; 2025, 12'01 PM

ULUIITOR! Situation#s#s#stir! How could Călin Georgeacu cheat the CCR's decision to annul the fall elections? Ar pu"e fi copre\$edinte sl României SCENARIOUL care d8



R0Lro
May g, 2025, 4:02PM

ULUCOUS! Turning the tables! How Calin G"eorgescu might feel about the CCR's decision to annul the fall elections. Ar pMea fi dopră\$,edjnte âl'Rom8riiei. SCENARIO.care d8 everything on your head!,



Old F.lline
May 1B, 2B25, 7:Z2AM

ULUITOR! Turn .situation! How could C8tln Georgescu /ema C8tln Georgescu the CCR decision to annul the fall elections. Ar putea fi copre\$ediute al Róm6niei SCENARIOUL care. See more.



Case De Vis
Ma B, 202S 4:01 PM

ULUITOR! R8stumaré de úituati"e! How C8lin Georgescu could cheat CCR's decision to annul the fall elections. He could be co-president of Romania. THE SCENARIO that d8 totùl over your head!



Example 3

Expanded content: the 500,000 parasites in the public system

On May 7, 2025, during the Congress of the National Trade Union Bloc, George Simion, leader of the AUR and qualified candidate in the second round of the presidential elections, resumed the theme of reducing the budget, saying that "political parasites" are those who are blocking the public administration. Simion said that teachers, the military or honest civil servants are not targeted, but "party members" who would have occupied posts on clientelist criteria.

George Simion's statements were heavily redistributed on these pages with a copy paste style, same picture, graphics and text. The case demonstrates how polarizing political statements can be quickly converted into content of the type that has the potential to influence voters emotionally and cognitively.



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Original Românesc

May 7, 2025, 10:51 PM

George Simion spune răspicat STOP joc! Decizie fără precedent luată de șeful AUR



SIMION OPREȘTE JOCUL



Eduard

May 9, 2025, 7:45 AM

⚠️ George Simion spune răspicat STOP joc! !! Decizie fără precedent luată de șeful AUR 🗣️👉



SIMION OPREȘTE JOCUL



DRAGOSTEA MEA

May 8, 2025, 6:50 AM

George Simion spune răspicat STOP joc! Decizie fără precedent luată de șeful AUR 🗣️



SIMION OPREȘTE JOCUL



Bianca

May 10, 2025, 1:00 PM

George Simion spune răspicat STOP joc! Decizie fără precedent luată de șeful AUR...V VEZI IN PRIMUL COMENT



SIMION OPREȘTE JOCUL

Example 4

Amplified content: Nicușor Dan's call for an electoral debate

After the first round of the 2025 presidential elections, candidate Nicușor Dan publicly declared in a press conference that he is ready to participate in an electoral debate with George Simion. The news about Nicușor Dan's statements were copied and pasted on several pages of the monitored network, especially political or content aggregators. The amplification of this information was most likely aimed at capitalizing on public interest in a possible debate between the two candidates, a potentially viral topic. This example shows how an electoral message, the organization of a debate, can be quickly amplified in networks of pages with coordinated activity, either for editorial or traffic reasons.



MUST READ

INTERVIEU: N-AM SĂ CHICIEȘTI INGREDIENTUL SURPRIZA CARE ÎȚI VA SCHEMBA COMPLET PASTELE.

SHARE

NICUȘOR DAN A SPUS ÎNTR-O CONFERINȚĂ DE PRESĂ CĂ ESTE PREGĂTIT PENTRU O DEBATERE ELECTORALĂ LA CARE SĂ PARTICIPE ȘI GEORGE SIMION. TOT NICUȘOR DAN ȘI-A PREZENTAT STRATEGIA DE CAMPANIE PENTRU ZILELE CARE AU RĂMAS PÂNĂ ÎN TURUL DOI.

Networks of accounts can quickly amplify such messages in a blatant form of clickbait, without it being clear who is behind them or for what purpose. Without transparency and clear rules, the risk of these networks distorting the public conversation, especially in an election campaign, is very high. It is therefore essential to keep a close watch on how such content circulates and to understand who stands to gain from its propagation.

Is this content illegal? Not necessarily, but there are serious questions about where we draw the line. In many cases, pages or accounts that distribute coordinated content are not clearly in breach of platform rules or national law. We are rather in a gray area, to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Some distributions may be for purely commercial or traffic purposes, others may aim at manipulating public opinion, in which case they should be reported to the authorities.

In a digital landscape where pages appear and disappear at the speed of light, there is a risk that heavy-handed regulation or reckless enforcement can also affect legitimate content published by real people. Interventions must be carefully calibrated: to avoid censorship and protect freedom of expression, contrary to the simplistic direction set by the government in GEO 1 2025 or by some decisions taken by the BEC. We are in a context in which limited access to data significantly restricts the ability to thoroughly investigate online coordination phenomena. Under these conditions, researchers are forced to maintain a delicate balance: on the one hand, to identify networks acting in concert and, on the other, to protect the fundamental right of users to express themselves freely, including anonymously. Fortunately, many of the propaganda strategies encountered are unsophisticated, relying on volume and visibility rather than precision, as the case analyzed in this report shows.



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