

Belarus Propaganda Update

Monthly review of Belarusian propaganda and Russian propaganda targeting Belarus

#3. December 2023

Main storylines and topics of the propaganda in December 2023:

Belarus

- Efforts of the internal propaganda are aimed at strengthening presidential power and supporting a positive image of the president, emphasizing his significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability, his achievements in the international arena, successes in negotiations, etc.
- Another direction is ideological strengthening of state power. Celebrating the anniversary of the creation of the "Union State", the Day of KGB officers, the birthday of Joseph Stalin, etc.
- Exploitation of the theme of genocide of Belarusian people in WWII.

Belarusian democratic forces

- Discrediting the Belarusian democratic forces remains one of the main tasks of the state propaganda.
- At the same time the regime is very much interested in return of "escapees" to the country. A combined effort is being made to do this: forcible return (transfer of the issuance of documents from diplomatic missions abroad to Belarus), promises to pardon ("Commission for return of citizens"), ideologic appeals ("You are also Belarusians, the Homeland awaits you").

Ukraine

- In December, a significant decrease of interest of state mass media to the Ukraine topic was visible. This also mirrors the global mass media tendency in reporting on the topic of the war in Ukraine. Reasons: shift of focus from the war in Ukraine to events in Israel and Gaza strip, slowdown of Ukrainian counter offensive, seasonal lack of significant news from the frontline. Mentioned above is related to the period until December 29, before the large-scale mutual missile attacks of late December - early January, after which the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian war returned to the front pages of the Belarusian state mass media.
- Less attention than in a previous month is paid to the topic of Ukrainian children;
- Despite the aggressive anti-Ukrainian rhetoric, it cannot be concluded upon the analysis of the Belarusian state propaganda that Belarus is

preparing to join Russia in the war against Ukraine. In contrary, propaganda more often declares interest in peaceful negotiations, but directing the appeals not to Russian leadership, but in the same offensive manner to the Ukrainian president and government. It is obvious that Aliaksandr Lukashenka desperately needs the role of a peacemaker, who managed to get both parties of the ongoing war to negotiating table, for a personal legitimization in Belarus and abroad.

The West, Poland, and the Baltic States

- “The collective West”, especially countries at the EU’s Eastern flank – Poland, Latvia and Lithuania are the main targets of the propaganda.
- In December a new anti-Polish propaganda campaign, in the context of the change of Polish government, was visible in the Belarusian state Media.

Propaganda and censorship

- In December, the Lukashenka regime aimed at strengthening the control over mass media (national and regional), cleansing the media space with the aim to restrict small media outlets from the remaining leftovers of independence and increasing censorship.

Russian propaganda targeting Belarus.

- Russian propaganda continues to call Belarus Russia’s main strategic partner, at the same time, imposing pro-Russian narratives and ideological attitudes on the Belarusian media.

Topics and storylines of the Belarusian propaganda and the Russian propaganda targeting Belarus in December 2023

Belarus

In December, Belarusian propaganda reported detailed about international activity of the “President” Aliaksandr Lukashenka and his travels to Africa, South-East Asia, and China. The aim of the propaganda was to highlight that Lukashenka is not an international outsider, but an important and very much demanded political figure, an equal partner of the most important negotiations.

One of the brightest examples is reporting on the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) (Dubai, 30.11-13.12.2023). Headlines of the Telegram Channel *Pul Pervogo*, which is close to the Presidential Administration, made an impression that leaders of different countries lined up to see Lukashenka.

Examples:

- “[Belarusian President was greeted by the President of the UAE](#) Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres”;
- “Discussions on the sidelines turn into [intercontinental convention!](#)”
- “President of Botswana waits in line to Lukashenka” https://t.me/pul_1/10659
- “[I’ll take contacts from my brother’](#). How African leaders share Lukashenka’s contacts”
- “[Place in a first row for the First!](#)” (*about a family photo of the attendees*)

Lukashenka himself made a speech at COP28, in which [he emphasized Belarus’ commitment to fulfil its international obligations](#) and accused Western countries of imposing unfair sanctions and waging wars: “Belarus is fully fulfilling its commitments under the Paris Agreement and even exceeding them. We are developing green and nuclear energy, minimizing the risks of climate change. Paradoxically, but in response we are receiving new economic sanctions... Why is there no peace in this part of the world today? Because those speakers who were here in the front rows are talking about peace, about keeping the planet clean, worrying about their grandchildren, while at the same time they have launched and are waging the worst war on the planet”.

On December 4, in Beijing, [Lukashenka tried to flatter Chinese leader Xi Jinping](#), for example, thanking him taking the time to receive him, because “the Chinese chairman bears the burden of leading the planet.” “The most important thing is that the goal you have set is the unified destiny of humanity. Unlike Western countries that are trying to chop everything apart, you have set a unified goal for all. Who can argue with that? No one. The world will be grateful to Great China for this,” Lukashenka said. The “president” of Belarus also said he is very interested in the greatness of China, [in return he has won the favor of the Chairman of China](#): “China firmly supports the development path of Belarus, which corresponds to its national conditions, and opposes the interference of external forces in the internal affairs of Belarus”.

In general, propaganda describes the tour through Africa, Middle East, and negotiations with China as [another success of Lukashenka's foreign policy](#). "Expert" of the State Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISR) Sergei Vergeichyk stated on air of the *ONT* TV channel, that "China sees Belarus as an important participant of the transformation of the current world order". *ONT* concludes: "China is actively involved into building new international relations. And Belarus, as an experienced player in this field, which did not surrender to and did not bend before the "collective West" can become a reliable partner".

Belarus and Russia held a series of events for the 24th anniversary of the so called "Union State" beginning of December (the Agreement on creating the "Union State" was signed on December 9, 1999). [In his speech on this occasion](#) Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Belarus is "Russia's closest strategic partner and ally." He also stated that in the framework of the "Union State" the [integration between Russia and Belarus is deepening](#): "The main goals of Russia's foreign policy are increasing strategic partnership and alliances with Belarus and neighboring countries".

In its column, the *ONT* TV channel calls the Agreement on "Union State", signed in 1999, "an act of historic justice". <https://t.me/ontnews/133844>

On December 6, Minister of Education of Russian Federation Sergei Kravtsov stated, that a ["united lesson about the Union State" will be organized at schools of both countries](#). This idea was supported by the Deputy Minister of Education of Belarus Aliaksandr Kadlubai. However, there was no information confirming the event of such lesson at the moment of issuance of this report, namely beginning of 2024.

On December 13, a festive assembly of the pro-government "Consultation Committee for Affairs of Belarusians Abroad" took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Members of National organizations of Belarusians, mainly from Russia, attended the meeting. [Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Aleinik stated](#) in his address that he "appreciates the work of Belarusians abroad in delivering the truthful reporting about Belarus".

Reflecting on the anniversary of the "Union State," one of the most notorious Belarusian propagandists Grigory Azarenok [said](#) that "Lukashenka sensed very subtly that people want unification, they want to correct the scourge that came in 1991 [the collapse of the Soviet Union]. I am absolutely convinced: Lukashenka saved Russia! Putin's course is for revival, opposition to the West, for a great Russia, but the author of this course is Lukashenka!". On this day in Belarus ideologic events devoted to the "Union State" also took place, for example, [meetings of students](#).

On December 9, the official Minsk commemorated quite intense the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide. In 2021, Belarus' General Prosecutor's Office opened a criminal case on the fact of genocide of Belarusian population during WWII. The Lukashenka regime uses the genocide topic as an element of anti-western propaganda.

On this day, in the Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Minsk "the memory of the innocent victims of genocide" was [honored with the](#)

[participation of state officials](#) - Minister of Internal Affairs, Assistant to the President, Chief of Police of Minsk and others.

In addition, a pro-government conference was held in Minsk to mark the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Genocide Convention. Speaking at the conference, Prosecutor General of Belarus Andrei Shved stated that young people in the West know nothing about the “Great Patriotic War” (WWII in Soviet rhetoric). “It is necessary to bring this information [to Western citizens] by all possible means. We are conducting broad explanatory work. Together with TV channels, we are preparing cycles of programs, documentaries, publishing print editions. [There should be many more such projects](#),” Shved said.

Also, Shved stated, that in 2024 his [institution plans to pass 10-15 criminal cases against those accused of war crimes](#) in times of WWII to the court. These accused ones died long time ago. According to him, [Belarus will demand restitution](#) for damage caused to Belarus during the WWII. How this will proceed remains currently unknown. Earlier, the Lukashenka regime estimated the damage at USD 2.3 trillion.

On the same day, at the unveiling of the memorial of the Ozarichi Nazi death camp in Belarus, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Igor Lutskij [said](#) that after what happened to the Belarusian people in WWII, “the countries imposing sanctions against Belarus have no moral right to advise us anything.” “What they are doing to the Ukrainian people now, what they are trying to do to us by imposing these sanctions is a repetition. I’m surprised why the Austrians and Germans behave this way towards us,” Lutskij said.

The most notorious propagandists couldn’t refrain from commemorating the 144th birthday of Iosif Stalin (21.12). A praise opus to Stalin by Grigory Azarenok was published by *Minskaya Pravda*: “You became the ruler of half a world. From Berlin to Beijing, dozens of nations prayed to you. And then everything collapsed. Today your beloved Ukraine, which you cherished as a baby on your sick hand, has become a monster. But in Belarus there is your Line. And there is your bust. I bow to you, Leader. I reject all slander against you. Only the Lord God is higher than you.”

In the last decade of December, the regime returned to the topic of Russian TNW deployment in Belarus, presenting it as one of the positive results of the year. On December 22, [during his festive speech congratulating the workers of energy sector Aliaksandr Lukashenka stated](#) that “Belarus is strengthening its positions as nuclear state” (even though the talk was about commissioning of the second reactor of the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant). On December 25, [while participating the EAEU Summit](#), he answered the question on whether the planned deployment of the Russian TNW took place: “Long ago. I have already said when the delivery was done. Already in September, I think, or October. Beginning of October, last one. Everything at its place, in good condition”. On December 27, the former representative of the opposition, currently pro-state politician Yury Voskressensky [named the deployment of the Russian TNW the main event of the year](#), as it “secures our defense capability for many years, enables our security, our political, economic and military

sovereignty and will cool the Western heads down from the wish to cut off the Belarusian balcony and make a sanitary zone at the western flank”.

“Main three words – I love KGB”

December 20 is the Day of the Chekist (KGB officer) of Belarus. Grigory Azarenok in his Telegram channel broke out with incredible declarations of love for the repressive bodies of the country:

“Belarusian chekists cannot be bought... Yes, there was a difficult story. And there were enemies of the nation. And there were bandits. And there were spies and saboteurs. And there were heroes-chekists, who fought against them. Fought and won. In Kurapaty [memorial for the victims of Stalin’s repression near Minsk] [a monument for servicemen of NKVD must be built](#)”.

[“Main three words – I love KGB”](#)

“[The country, the Power, is strong in organization](#). And at the heart of the organization is the Order”

“These are the people loyal to the leader. Those, who wake up at dusk, and they are not supposed to sleep. These are the people, who do not ask for attention and awards. They do not talk about their heroism; they are in the shadows. Nobody knows about them... You are pushing the wolves away. Strangle them. [You are good shepherds](#)”.

“These are the people who sink to the very depths of human depravity. They oppose scumbags, but remain crystal clear, because at their hearts there is Homeland. They know everything about everyone, but smile warmly, hoping that we will be better. They are guardian angels of the power. They are sword and shield. [They are the KGB](#)”.

“I love the oprichnina of Tsar Ivan Groznoj. I love the oprichnik when he swings his saber. I love the gendarme. The Secret Chancellery. The Third Department. I love this boot. I love the Cheka OGPU NKVD [names of the Soviet secret service in different periods of time]. I stand against slandering them. [Those who deserved it got what they deserved](#).”

“Winners don’t get judged. [You are winners](#). Three times ruthlessness, three times vigilance...”

“[But later, you, honest warriors were betrayed](#). The highest political leadership of the country. ...But you went in disguise to come back later. KGB was not destroyed. It went to Belarus. To the partisan woods. And called on the chief. Aliaksandr Lukashenka served at Border troops. In Soviet times, they were the troops of the USSR KGB. And here, in the Homeland of Dzerzhinsky, chekists did not become bandits, bankers, godfathers of mafia, nationalists and businessman. They raised the sword and shield again”.

[Azarenok was joined by “president” Lukashenka](#), who delivered his traditional New Year’s speech, where he at the same time thanked the Siloviki: “In the past year, they have tried to bring us to our knees, to strangle us economically... But we not just survived, we developed, moved towards our goal! And we can do even more, knowing that we live behind the safe back of all those who faithfully serve and love the Motherland. Because there is no greater motivation for

development than being sure of tomorrow and being sure of national security. Men in uniform, thank you for peace!", said Lukashenka.

In relation to the upcoming parliamentary and local elections (February 25, 2024) the rhetoric of unification around "clever Batka" [a nickname for Lukashenka meaning 'Father'], otherwise Belarus will collapse, is increasing.

[Lyudmila Gladkaya, propagandist, who is related to the law enforcement bodies](#): "Our president, his team, Siloviki, and every one of us made efforts for keeping life in Belarus peaceful, safe. So that we could be sure of our lives. We have a responsible task ahead of us: we will elect the deputies of all levels, our representatives in governing bodies, in 2025 we will elect the head of state, our future. And 2020 [referring to the suppression of the peaceful protests of 2020], lessons from Donbass, Ukraine show that we do not have the right to be silent and do nothing. If we keep silent, the enemy will act. We bare great responsibility. We only have one Motherland."

The topic of the need to identify enemies and purge the ranks is complemented by numerous publications in the print media, stories on state TV, and posts on social networks of propagandists dedicated to the upcoming elections.

Belarusian democratic forces

In December, Belarusian propaganda worked on this topic in two main directions:

-Opposition, participants of the 2020 protest, emigrants, representatives of the democratic forces abroad are traitors, renegades, enemies of Belarus and puppets of the West.

-In addition to that, emigrants are "our Belarusian people". Once they repent, they can always come back. "Commission for Return" worked for this purpose for six months. In 2023 the official Minsk adopted many "stimulating" measures forcing the emigrants to come back.

[Andrei Mukovozchyk, propagandist](#) of the newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya*: "... Our ancestors weren't less clever than we are, when they burned out this contagion [opposition] with hot iron. They, different from us, saw the civil war and foreign intervention with their own eyes, felt on their own flesh, poured blood for their Motherland. They didn't raise the question: "to turn in or not", "to snitch or not to snitch", to aid "the bloody cabal" or not. And it is not up to us to tell them how they should act with accomplices and agents. Not up to us. We should learn from them. They not only defended their (but also our!) Motherland, but also cleaned, re-built, passed to us". (December 6)

[Grigory Azarenok](#): "Everyone, who will cross the border of Belarus, be it by a centimetre, by a millimetre, for a second – will be destroyed immediately. Fast. Without regret. Killed. To dust. Shot down. Blown up. Torn. With no hesitation. The army and the Ministry of Internal Affairs are preparing for a reason." (December 6)

[Oleg Gaidukevich, pro-state politician](#): "After all their statements our special services have the right to do anything, according to the law, international

agreements. They are terrorists. If they interfere, they will be destroyed.” (December 9)

[Marat Markov, propagandist](#): “These Comrades, they have only one goal: to divert peaceful Belarus into battlefield, to shed blood... tons of it.” (December 9)

[Alena Krasovskaya, pro-state “human rights defender”, columnist](#) of *SB. Belarus Segodnya*: “If someone poses a threat to national security of any country, it is our “freedom fighters” [traitors]. They’re insolent, and they have no sense of gratitude. Couple of years will pass and they will start barking at Lithuania, because they are always dissatisfied. Don’t tell us, we haven’t warned you. <...> So maybe don’t wait until you would be expelled, return on your own? Take your Lithuanian spouses, children, and pets with you, they’re welcomed too. You are always welcomed in our country. **Come back home, for good, Belarusians!**” (December 8)

Ukraine

Same as in the previous month, Belarusian propaganda expresses sympathy with “our common Ukrainian brothers”, as they allegedly die for interests of Zelensky, behind whom, as stated by the pro-state expert [Aliaksandr Shpakousky on December 22 on air of the TV show by Grigory Azarenok](#), stand “Western crusaders, that set the goal to defeat Russia”. [Azarenok himself shares his opinion](#): “This bastard breed of westerners is the most disgusting thing in the world. To kill a million men so that you can be locked up by uncles from the US and Europe. May you die in New Year.”

[The propagandists also reacted quite uniformly to the draft law on mobilization discussed in Ukraine](#), forecasting that ordinary people will become “cannon fodder” at the same time as oligarchs and their children will enjoy their lives abroad. For example, on December 27, columnist of the *SB. Belarus Segodnya* Anton Popov stated: “New law on mobilization <...> transforms Ukraine into brutal bioreactor on processing of own population. In his attempts to remain on the top of the food chain and snatch some more money, Zelensky seems to forget his disagreements with the military and is preparing to organize an unprecedented hecatomb on a large scale”.

On December 13 in the House of Moscow in Minsk an exhibition “Ordinary Nazism” [referring to the 1965 Soviet film ‘Ordinary Fascism’] about “crimes of Ukrainian fascists”, organized by the Russian History Society, opened. Belarusian propaganda TV channel *ONT* [claimed](#) that the exhibition collected evidence of crimes committed by the Army of Ukraine and servicemen of neo-Nazi formations against people of Donbass”. The Head of Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Sergei Naryshkin opened the exhibition. [The exhibits were collected in Russia’s occupied territories of Ukraine](#).

In December, [Lukashenka again brought up the topic of peaceful negotiations on Ukraine](#). On December 14, at a meeting of heads of security and intelligence agencies of CIS countries, he said that “Russia and the West are ready for that (negotiations), but the main hurdle remains Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelensky”. Lukashenka repeated a Russian propaganda myth that allegedly “Zelensky fights until the last Ukrainian” following the order of the U.S.

On December 28 in Minsk, [Lukashenka brought up the topic of Ukrainian children and implied that Belarus will continue to accept them](#): “...we do everything possible so that the children fleeing from war would feel themselves as home here. There are many of such. We see what happens in different corners of our planet. And we do everything in our power for those small creatures, who do not have the possibility to come to a nice hall and talk to their president, could feel themselves at home here in Belarus. There shall be no children, who flee from war. We must catch them in time, bring them to our home, warm them up and make their childhood happier.”

Journalists of state media attempted to whitewash the regime of Belarus, which is deemed by many Western countries as an accomplice in unlawful deportations of Ukrainian children. Many times, [they pointed on Lukashenka's “good intentions”](#) and declared their loyalty to him and his policies. Pro-state TV channel *ONT* propagandist Igor Tur: “I am convinced, Aliaksandr Grigorievich does this for the sake of children – all his children of his Belarus. I suppose, in 2023, with the Arab Israeli conflict, with the military operation in Ukraine we understood it quite well: The main goal is to make sure our children won't get to know what war is. Mothers and fathers are shoulder to shoulder with our Commander-in-Chief”.

Belarusian pro-government propagandists gloated over Russia's shelling of peaceful Ukrainian cities and, in line with the Russian propaganda, called the retaliatory shelling of the Russian city of Belgorod a “terrorist attack”, presenting Russia as the injured party and omitting the victims of Russian aggression in Ukraine. [Aliaksandr Shpakouski calls](#) the strike on Belgorod “another war crime of the Kyiv regime” and believes that “it is impossible to negotiate with terrorists”. Pro-state expert [Aliaksei Dzermant](#): “My sympathies with the residents of Belgorod and with Russians. Unfortunately, this terror will not end until the top leadership of Ukraine won't be destroyed.”

The West, Poland, and the Baltic States

In December, iSANS noted the new storyline of the anti-Polish campaign of the Belarusian propaganda in the context of the change of Polish government. [The audience is presented with the idea](#) that the new Polish government will remain “under control” of the EU or “Anglo-Saxons”. On December 23, during the show “Editor's club”, the leader of the Belarusian liberal-democratic party Oleg Gaidukevich said: “Political field is very much cleared in Poland! There is no democracy and no freedom of speech there, and it never will be! There is a showdown between two political parties. One party was supported by Americans. As it came to power, it promised to defend national interests, but went down under the U.S.” At the same time, unproved statements continue that Poland intends to get territories of Western Ukraine. For example, the pro-state “human rights defender” [Alena Krasovskaya writes](#), that there is an understanding between presidents Duda and Zelensky to pass the territories of Volyn, Ternopol, Rivne and Lviv regions to Poland and warns Poles, that in case of such scenario “Ukrainian westerners with support of the Ukrainian criminal cast (which is already present in Poland) can organize another “Volyn massacre” and practically seize power”.

On December 13, the [Head of the Belarusian KGB Ivan Tertel stated](#), that CIA agents were revealed in Minsk. He noted that the counterintelligence records “the arrival of foreign diplomats, sometimes scouts with various purposes.” “They have an interesting reaction when they visit Minsk, various objects. Recently there were CIA officers and they moved around Minsk very actively.” Allegedly, the CIA officers were surprised by the “good situation” in Belarus, which does not correspond to the perceptions formed in the West.

“One of the goals of the West is destroying integration and brotherly relations with Russia” and other countries of the former USSR, and the Belarusian diaspora in Poland prepares to “commit acts of terrorism in Belarus”, [said Tertel](#) at the same meeting. [He also said](#), he knows the names of the servicemen of Polish intelligence coordinating these activities. However, “[Belarus is ready to turn the page](#)”, said Tertel. “We did not impose sanctions against Poland. We did not close the border checkpoints. On the contrary, our Head of State gave orders to the government to restore good, neighborly relations and discussing issues without any preconditions. Unfortunately, there was no response.”

Also, [during the St. Petersburg Summit](#) on December 25, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [called](#) the Head of the EU diplomacy Josep Borrel, who previously raised concerns about Russia’s plans to attack NATO countries, “stupid person, who has no relation to politics”. Propagandists disseminated his words quite broadly over state media and went even further by naming Borrel “[stupid](#)”(Novikov), “[moron](#)” (Gladkaya), and also insulting other European politicians (Ursula von der Leyen, Radoslaw Sikorski, Jose Manuel Barroso and others).

Propaganda and censorship

In December, attempts of the Lukashenka regime, same as previously, was diverted to increasing the control over national and regional media, and enforcing censorship.

On December 2, the independent media outlet *Nasha Niva* (NN) [reported](#) about the “seizure of popular small local media” by large state media actors that had started in Belarus. NN reports about at least three such cases: the re-formatting of the Telegram channel of the city of Lahoisk, the seizure of the Stoubtsy City Instagram channel and the replacement of owners of the *kraj.by* independent media outlet. According to NN, in October 2023, the independent channel *Lahoisk (ne) ofitsialno* (Eng: Lahoisk (not) officially) was renamed to *Nash Rodny Krai Lahoisk* (Our Native Land Lahoisk). Later, the new channel published he news that “extremist materials” were found on the original channel, so a “new channel” was created instead. All publications on the old channel have been deleted. The new channel now quotes official news and articles from the state propagandist, anti-Semitic and “yellow” newspaper *Minskaya Pravda*. Later, similar changes occurred on the Stoubtsy City Instagram page with more than 10 thousand subscribers. It is reported that this page is also run by *Minskaya Pravda*. Also, in summer of 2023, the imprint details of the popular non-political outlet *kraj.by* were replaced with those of *Minskaya Pravda*. There were no reports about this. NN concludes that the pro-

government *Minskaya Pravda* tries to obtain control over all - state and non-state - media in the region.

On December 5, during the seating of the [National Council for Historic Policy under the Presidential Administration of Belarus](#) possibilities of “cleansing” of libraries from “wrong” books was discussed. According to the state agency *BelTA*, “sale restrictions and ban from libraries of publications, that distort the historical truth, and “extremist materials”, were discussed during the meeting. All this process was called “cultural import substitution”.

On December 6, State Secretary of the “Union State” [Dmitry Mezentsev stated](#), that the soviet tradition of writing propagandist letters to your fellow pupils in the West about the “horrors of war and in support of peace” by Russian and Belarusian schoolchildren will be revived.

On December 15, a meeting of propagandists – summit of the heads of state news agencies of the CIS countries, took place in Minsk. Traditionally, ways of closer cooperation between propaganda media and the state are discussed at such meetings. During his speech, the [Deputy Secretary General of the CIS Leonid Anfimov said](#), that the “rampant democracy in Telegram channels is simply unacceptable”. “Speaking about Belarus, the year 2020 taught us a lot. We allowed this rampant democracy in Telegram channels, where everyone allowed oneself to say anything that comes to the mind. And to 99.99 percent it was a lie”, Anfimov said

Russian propaganda targeting Belarus

Russian political leaders and officials quite often state their support for the regime in Belarus, calling it the closest strategic partner of Russia (an example of such statement by Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is given under “Belarus” chapter).

On December 9, in an interview with the state TV channel *Belarus-1*, [Russian “expert” and propagandist Konstantin Shadrov said](#), that the international isolation of Belarus is a myth, but the Western countries are rather isolated: “Belarus is gladly received in China... Because it is profitable to cooperate with Belarus. Speaking about international isolation, it takes place rather regarding Western countries. Turning away from Belarus, they showed that the place doesn’t stay empty: we can cover the gaps, there are no problems in finding new partners and building normal relations with them”, said Shadrov.

On December 10, the “Special Envoy for Crimes of the Kyiv regime” (position created under Russia’s MFA in August 2023) [Rodion Miroshnik in an interview with the Belarusian state TV channel STV stated](#), that Russia uses certain “Minsk platform” for returning Ukrainian deported children back to Ukraine: “Often the return of these Ukrainian children to their parents or relatives was done at the Minsk platform”, Miroshnik said, at the same time confirming that Russia uses Belarus as a neutral place, or a “third party” for returning Ukrainian children to their homeland. [At the same show, Miroshnik said](#) that “Donbass is very grateful for the actions of the government of Belarus in organizing the “Minsk accords” (formal title of the peace negotiations on Ukraine).

On December 5, a [forum in commemoration of Akhmat Kadyrov](#) (a leader of the pro-Russian government in Chechnya until 2004) took place in Minsk. The forum was organized by the Muslim religious association in Belarus and Special Spiritual Envoy of the Muslims of Chechnya in Belarus Batrudin Turloev. How Akhmat Kadyrov relates to Belarus, organizers did not explain. Belarus was represented by the MPs Lilya Ananich, Aleksandr Markevich, Tengiz Dumbadze