

“In the Country with Lukashenka, you want to be a Woman”.

Main directions of the Belarusian propaganda and Russian propaganda targeting Belarus, in the First Quarter of 2024

Analytic review

April 2024



"In a country where there is Lukashenka, you want to be a woman."

Main directions of the Belarusian propaganda and Russian propaganda targeting Belarus in the first quarter of 2024.

Analytical review.

© iSANS, April 2024

About iSANS

iSANS is an international initiative of experts from different countries aimed at identifying, analyzing, and countering hybrid threats to democracy, the rule of law and sovereignty of the countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia.

About The Author

Andrey Kalikh, iSANS researcher

Media monitoring: Victoria Sakharova

CONTENT

PREFACE	4
I. BELARUS AND THE “UNION STATE”	5
<i>“Elections” in Belarus. “Sanctity of presidential power”</i>	5
<i>“President-peacemaker”</i>	6
<i>Reaction to the elections in Russia. “There is a lot to learn”</i>	7
<i>The narrative of the “genocide of the Belarusian people” as an ideological weapon</i>	8
<i>“International Women’s Day” – the day of glorifying the “president.”</i>	9
<i>“The state ideology must capture the entire people”</i>	11
<i>Creation of a joint Russian-Belarusian commission on history</i>	11
<i>Media Holding of the Union State</i>	12
II. DEMOCRATIC FORCES OF BELARUS ARE THE MAIN “ENEMY OF THE STATE”	12
<i>“There are no political prisoners in Belarus”</i>	12
<i>Narrative: “The opposition is terrorists and saboteurs”</i>	13
<i>Intimidation and demands for more repression</i>	14
<i>“Those who left, come back!”</i>	15
III. UKRAINE	15
<i>“The West and Ukraine itself are to blame for the war”</i>	15
<i>Change of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine</i>	16
<i>Decade of the Ukrainian Maidan</i>	16
<i>Decade of Russia's annexation of Crimea</i>	17
<i>Transfer of hostilities to the territory of Russia</i>	17
<i>“Ukraine is deceiving the West to get financial assistance.”</i>	17
<i>Terrorist attack in Moscow: propaganda puts the blame on Ukraine and the West</i>	18
<i>Ukrainian children. Belarusian Red Cross’ complicity in their illegal transfer</i>	19
IV. “COLLECTIVE WEST”	20
<i>Narrative: Poland and the Baltic States are puppets of the U.S. and the EU</i>	20
<i>“Belarus is surrounded by enemies”</i>	20
<i>“The West is an alliance of hostile forces”</i>	21
<i>“Ashmiany Declaration”: New Threats</i>	23
<i>Nuclear Weapons as a Foreign Policy Argument</i>	24
CONCLUSION	26

PREFACE

Words highlighted in our review belong to the journalist of *Minskaya Prawdza* Yauhen Pustavoy. In his [article](#) dedicated to the International Women's Day on March 8, he writes about the wonderful conditions created in Belarus for the development of family and motherhood, and how Aliaksandr Lukashenka, who likes to call himself the "women's president", takes care of women. Belarusian propagandists used this holiday not to talk about the need to fight for women's rights, but to raise the rating of the "president".

Soviet holidays - March 8, Victory Day on May 9, October Revolution Day on November 7 and others - have been preserved in Belarus (and in Russia) since the Soviet era in an almost unchanged form. This happened because, by and large, no new ones have been invented, but the old ones fully meet the ideological needs of the regime, the main of which is unification around the leader.

The romanticization of the Soviet era is one of the pillars of Lukashenka's ideology. The regime considers the Soviet past as the only "anchor" around which the public majority can unite. The reasons for this, most likely, lie in the personality of Lukashenka himself. As journalist Ihar Kuley [said](#), "*Lukashenka is not a Belarusian, not a Russian, but a Soviet person, he likes to remind of the "good life" in the USSR and use typical Soviet propaganda clichés.*"

If we move away from the holidays, then the first months of 2024 were extremely full of events, to which Belarusian propaganda could not help but respond. First, the regimes in Russia and Belarus have gone through an important test – "elections", parliamentary and local in Belarus (February) and presidential – in Russia (March). During this crucial period, the controlled media were fully mobilized to fight against any alternative forces (there could be no question of independent candidates) and to rally the population of the two countries around their "leaders".

During the third year of the war in Ukraine, the latter dealt several painful blows to Russia in January-March, and the propaganda of both authoritarian regimes worked hard to minimize the reputational damage caused by these strikes. First, Ukraine began to hit Russian oil refineries and military facilities effectively and heavily – both inside the country and in the occupied territories. But the most significant event of these three months was the record in terms of duration and intensity raid of armed formations consisting of Russian citizens fighting on the side of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the territory of Russia. Judging by the fact that the information leaked even to Russian federal TV channels, and the Russian "president" himself was forced to react to them, the blow was painful. Belarusian propaganda also could not avoid this topic.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the degree of saturation of the air of Belarusian channels with Ukrainian content is decreasing from month to month. It is becoming more and more difficult for propaganda to explain to the population why this war has been going on for so long, why it is needed, and most importantly – why Belarus needs to support Russia and become an accomplice to its war crimes. No matter how hard the propagandists tried, they failed to make an enemy out of Ukraine. In general, **Ukraine is an "enemy" of Belarus only on the orders of the Kremlin.**

The same cannot be said, for example, about Belarusian political emigrants – representatives of democratic forces forced to leave the country due to mass repressions. Almost four years have passed since the brutal suppression of peaceful protests in 2020, but the "fugitives", as propaganda calls them, remain the main object of hatred of the pro-government media. Every protest, even smallest one, is suppressed in Belarus, independent media is destroyed, almost a thousand and a half

of protest participants, civil activists and journalists continue to be imprisoned,¹ but at the same time an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the high international rostrum of the UN claims that there are “no political prisoners” in Belarus.

In second place in the hierarchy of hatred of Belarusian propaganda is the “collective West”, primarily the countries of the eastern frontier – Poland and Lithuania. Threats continue to be made against the West, now backed up by “nuclear bravado”. However, for all the aggressive rhetoric towards Europe and America, Belarusian officials and propagandists do not forget to leave the “door open”. They continue to hint at their readiness to return to “business as usual” as soon as they “forget about mutual grievances.”

This report is not an exhaustive, detailed overview of all the meanings, storylines, and nuances of Belarusian propaganda in the period under review. Every day, tons of poison, hatred and dirt continue to be poured from the TV screens and from the pages of the state press of Belarus – on Ukraine, Western countries or on Belarusian defenders of democracy. The monitoring of iSANS does not aim to cover the entire volume of statements and comments of propagandists in all details during the period under review. The task of this study is to analyze and show the main directions and lines of propaganda in the first quarter of 2024.

Note: in the above quotes, the author's spelling, punctuation, and style are preserved.

I. BELARUS AND THE “UNION STATE”

“Elections” in Belarus. “Sanctity of presidential power”

The first quarter of 2024 was marked by two extremely important events for propaganda, namely the elections. In February, a “single voting day” was held in Belarus, during which deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly (the Parliament of Belarus, hereinafter referred to as the National Assembly) and local Councils were elected, and in Russia – presidential “elections” (March 15-17). In the pre-election period, the state media were thrown into solving one task – rallying their audiences around the authorities.

In Belarus, propaganda tried to convey a simple idea to the masses during this period: elections are held not to compete with the current government, but to help it win. At the end of 2023, “party purges” were carried out, because of which only four pro-government parties remained in the National Assembly out of 18. Propagandists explained the need for purges by saying that elections were “not a struggle for power.”

“Any political party must understand that it does not have the goal of seizing power for the sake of power, as it was before.” (Dean of the Faculty of Journalism of the Belarusian State University Aliaksei Bialiayeu (Minsk News, [MINSKNEWS.BY](#)).

“No fifth column! No rubbish in the elections! There will be no [opposition] in the legal field. Forget it! ... Traitors to our Fatherland are trying to intimidate us, but it looks ridiculous.” (Leader of the pro-government LDPB party Aleh Haidukevich, [stream “Azaronak. Directly”](#)).

¹ According to the Human Rights Center “Viasna”, as of May 10, 1374 people <https://prisoners.spring96.org/ru#list> recognized as political prisoners in Belarus.

Obviously, all parliamentary parties and local councils should be united around the central leader, so various “political scientists” and “columnists” of the state media worked to romanticize and sacralize Lukashenka’s image.

“The sanctity of presidential power. ... The Third Rome is Holy Russia. And its capital is now Belarus. ... Holy Land. And its Leader is the one who restrains the world’s evil.” (Ryhor Azaronak, [personal Telegram channel](#)).

“We oppose ghouls, murderers, pedophiles, ritual Satanists. Therefore, the President of Belarus in this battle is not just a position. He is the Leader of Christ’s army. Captain of the Ark of Salvation. Who restrains the world’s evil over the people.” ([personal Telegram channel](#))

Western pro-Kremlin figures and politicians also took part in the legitimization of the Belarusian “elections”. Belarus refused to invite observers from the OSCE, however, there were still foreign observers at the polling stations. In addition to the group from the CIS countries, Western “observers” also visited Minsk. Many of them often come to Belarus and Russia, including the Russian-occupied Crimea and Donbas. One of them is the Polish right-wing politician, a member of the Front party loyal to Russia, Krzysztof Tołwiński. In an interview with the state agency BeltTA Tołwiński [said](#) that he has “no doubts” about the legality and correctness of the elections: *“Belarus has excellent democratic standards”*.

Another “observer” is Simon Vesperini from France. [He also praises the](#) organization of a “single voting day”: *“There is a festive atmosphere, and in general it is felt that the elections are a holiday for voters. The atmosphere is friendly and calm.”* (BelTA, February 25).²

Lukashenka himself, speaking at one of the polling stations, also called the elections a **“holiday”**, and also [announced](#) that he was going to participate in the presidential “elections” of 2025:

“I’ll go, I’ll go, I’ll go, tell them [the opposition] that I’m going. And the more difficult the situation is, the more actively they will disturb our society, including you [journalists], [...] the sooner I will go to these elections.”

Propagandists immediately rushed to explain why Lukashenka should remain “president” in the future:

“Lukashenka is not a politician, he is a LEADER who is interested not in the next elections, but in the next generations” (Ihar Tur, [ONT TV channel](#)).

“Having survived 2020, sovereignly and independently grinding the fifth column, our state is going through a new stage of sovereign development, in which a collective Lukashenka is being formed as a political basis and bearer of the values of the sovereign development of the Belarusian state in the future.” ([Piotr Piatrouski](#), [personal Telegram channel](#))

“President-peacemaker”

A favorite trick of TV channels before the elections was to show footage of a “peaceful” and “happy” Belarus against the backdrop of the disasters of Ukrainians and destroyed Ukrainian cities. Kseniya Lebiadzeva, a journalist of the state channel *ATN*, in an

² The independent publication Reform.news published a detailed review of 16 European pseudo-observers at the Belarusian “elections”: <https://reform.news/reform-by-nashel-12-iz-23-nabljudatelej-kotorye-priehali-v-belarus-iz-evropy-kto-jeti-ljudi>.

episode entitled “How was Ukraine sold? Zelensky is the main criminal in the Eurasian space” explains this opposition in the right way:

“We have a good example of how the country’s authorities, who dreamed of getting everything at once, let the state go around the world, and people to die - Ukraine. People believed that it was possible to start living well thanks to the free money of the West, its military aid and [rebellion against its own kind](#).”

Russian propaganda also joined in the promotion of the Belarusian “elections”. On February 25, the day of the vote, the “philosopher” and one of the ideologists of the Putin regime, Alexander Dugin, [said](#) that the “elections” in Russia and Belarus were just a tribute to a formality, and in fact, both “leaders” deserved lifelong rule:

“Our leaders – Lukashenka and Putin – are defenders of the Fatherland. They kept our countries in the most difficult conditions. ... Why choose them, put them next to others? They are not at the level to put them with someone. We say [with these elections]: yes, you are legitimate, yes, you are our leaders, you are our leaders. Continue to rule us, we are with you. We will achieve success, new victories with you.”

Reaction to the elections in Russia. “There is a lot to learn”.

After the “successful” voting in their homeland, Belarusian propaganda focused on the Russian “elections” of the “president”.³ The state media of Belarus covered in detail both the voting process and the reaction of the international community to them. The tone of the statements was the same as that of their Russian colleagues, who condemned Western countries for allegedly trying to interfere in the “electoral process” and calling the past “elections” “undemocratic”.

For example, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock described what is happening in the Russian Federation as “elections without a choice.” For this, the Belarusian state TV channel *ATN* devoted an entire story to her in its program, [calling](#) her “a descendant of a Nazi, now continuing his work as German Foreign Minister.”

The propagandist of the *Belarus-1* channel, Kseniya Lebiadzeva, observed the course of the “elections” in the Russian-occupied part of the Donbas. Her task was to note the “active” participation in the voting of the population of the territories not controlled by Ukraine.

TV presenter Ihar Tur, enthusiastically commenting on the “North Korean” percentage of votes for Putin (about 88%) on the *ONTTV* channel, openly and [proudly called](#) the political regime in Belarus authoritarian and considers it a plus:

“Instead of saying ten times about democracy, I would prefer to say once as it is: we have an authoritarian government, but our people democratically once decided that they need rational authoritarianism. And the people are satisfied with the result of this authoritarianism, so they democratically prolong this authoritarianism over and over again, voting again and again in the elections for Aliaksandr Lukashenka.”

³ Following the European Parliament (Resolution of 24.4.2024 - 2024/2665(RSP)), the authors believe that the event held in Russia on March 15-17, 2024, called the “presidential elections”, cannot be considered legitimate due to the lack of political competition, transparency and freedom of speech, and Vladimir Putin, who changed the Constitution of the Russian Federation in order to be able to participate in them, is an illegitimate president. For this reason, the words “elections” and “president” are put in quotation marks hereinafter.

Aleh Haidukevich echoes him:

"We have finally – both Belarus and Russia – stopped trying to please the West. We hold elections only for our people and ourselves. And this is a very good, correct trend that must be maintained for decades to come." (March 18, [personal Telegram channel](#))

Lukashenka himself called the absolutely predictable results of the "elections" in Russia "stunning."

"The elections were held in an organized manner like nowhere else. No matter how hard they try to swing us here from the West, the results are very good." (March 18, [TASS](#))

Lukashenka was the first to congratulate Putin on his victory. In addition, he ordered to "study as carefully as possible" how the Russian "elections" were held:

"There is a lot to learn. Everyone was mobilized and united – according to the plan of the Presidential Administration. Everyone performed patriotically and gave an excellent result. This is a lesson for us." (March 18, [Sputnik Belarus](#))

The Russian TV presenter Vladimir Solovyov most succinctly described the current place and importance of the institution of elections in Russia (and Belarus). On the eve of the voting, he called the "presidential" election an "[oath](#)":

"When your country is at war, for me these elections are more like an oath to the supreme commander-in-chief, so, of course, it is important to come and declare yourself, your position." (March 14)

The narrative of the "genocide of the Belarusian people" as an ideological weapon

In the Belarusian media, they are increasingly talking about the "genocide of the Belarusian people during World War II". Earlier, in [iSANS reviews](#), we have already given examples of how the topic of "genocide of Belarusians" is used in the anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian policies of the state media. At the beginning of 2024, this area was significantly expanded: on January 27, Lukashenka and Putin took part in the opening ceremony of the "memorial in commemoration of the civilians of the USSR – victims of the Nazi genocide" in the Leningrad region Russia, where they were already talking about the "[genocide of the Soviet people](#)".

Meanwhile, despite the obvious anti-Western orientation, the first victim of this narrative appeared inside the country. In early March, a resident of Minsk was arrested on charges of "[denying the genocide of Belarusians](#)." According to the court's decision, in 2020, he allegedly created and administered a group on a social network, where he posted some "information discrediting the republic and rehabilitating fascists." Belarusian branch of *Radio Liberty* (RFE/RL) notes that criminal cases had already been initiated under the article on the denial of genocide. Partially, in January, a case was opened against one of the authors of *Radio Svaboda*, Siarhei Dubavets.

With the approach of Victory Day on May 9 – an official holiday celebrated in Belarus and Russia – the concept of "genocide" is increasingly being used to "correct" history: new books are published, school and student textbooks are changed, films are made. For example, the state film company Belarusfilm [announced](#) plans to release two film projects dedicated to this topic at once.

“International Women’s Day” – the day of glorifying the “president.”

As mentioned above, Soviet holidays play an important role in the ideology of the regime. A striking example of such a holiday in Belarus in the first quarter of 2024 was “Women’s Day” or “International Women’s Day” on March 8. As in Soviet times, it was celebrated not so much to talk about women’s rights, but to consolidate traditional ideas about their “purpose”.

Propaganda used March 8 to increase the rating of the “president”. A special term was even invented – “women’s president”, which Lukashenka [likes to call himself](#).

In the first half of March, the Belarusian “president” met with women’s groups throughout the country. In his speeches, as well as in the statements of propagandists (and female propagandists) during this period, there were hints that in other societies could be perceived as manifestations of misogyny and discrimination.

For example, at a meeting with the leadership of the pro-government Belarusian Women’s Union (BWU) on March 5, Lukashenka [said](#) that *“the true purpose of a woman on earth is motherhood,”* and *“all talk about gender inequality is irrelevant”*:

“No matter what pink, multi-colored and others are in the West (this wave, perhaps, is already moving towards us, unfortunately), no one will be able to give birth to a real heir for us except a woman. A woman-mother is the keeper not only of the family hearth, but also of the traditional foundations of our society. By raising children as patriots, you strengthen the state, lay a reliable foundation for the future of our Belarus. Therefore, give birth, raise, take care of our children, and we will try to provide peace and prosperity, we are obliged to provide you” (March 5, BelTA).

At a meeting with the Belarusian Union of Journalists Lukashenka [raised](#) the issue of creating a women’s political party. The answer to this proposal was swift. A day later, in [an interview with](#) the pro-government newspaper “SB. Belarus Segodnya”, the head of the Belarusian Union of Women, Volha Shpileuskaya, said that the activists “will think” about creating such a party:

“As the head of state said, everything should come from within, from below. Therefore, we will discuss, convene our women’s assembly, and decide.”

In addition, Shpileuskaya [shared her understanding](#) of women’s rights:

“–Olga Alexandrovna, you are in favor of gender equality in our society. Do you think that maybe our rights should not be shared with men?”

“–Some rights are not worth sharing with men. For example, the right to bear and give birth to children... Moreover, our country preserves traditional values. The role of a woman is exclusively her role and right to be a woman in the family. We need to adhere to the traditions laid down by previous generations.”

It seemed that propagandists during these holidays competed in implanting patriarchal stereotypes. They emphasized the dependence of women on men (specifically on one man – the “women’s president”) and fiercely criticized the struggle for their rights.

Ryhor Azaronak:

“Feminism in the West makes women terrible, evil, vile creatures. For them, we have always had and will always have an atmosphere of complete love and respect. ... And March 8 is not suffragettes and other witches of the beginning of the 20th godless century. But flowers, love, and devotion. And “Batka”, of course, is a President of women.” (March 5, [personal Telegram channel](#))

The author's column of the "human rights activist" Alena Krasouskaya, published on the eve of March 8, can be deservedly considered an example of the "abolition" of women's rights:

"And what of the fact that the share of women in the world's parliaments has reached 26.9%? Constantly reminding of gender equality has already fed up the whole world so much that in many countries, to get rid of them, they simply set quotas for women and men. And they take anyone to the same parliaments, if they have a woman according to the documents. This unprepared ballast sits in parliament, only takes up space – and there is no sense in it." (March 7, [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#)).

"In a country where there is an Old Man, it is easy to be a mother, in a country where there is Lukashenka, you want to be a woman," writes propagandist Yauhen Pustavoi. His article entitled *"They don't give away their beloved! What the Women's President promised in a heart-to-heart conversation with Belarusian women"* is an example of how any holiday becomes just an occasion for the next praises of the ruler. Another quote from Pustavoy's article:

"The enemies of humanity know where to hit – "bull's-eye". A new apple from the serpent of modern Eve – a breakdown into genders, feminism, childfree – everything so that a woman is left alone. Only this is not about Belarus. It's there, in Europe, – the one who has become feminized political elite. And we have a gallant President of the continent. ... Belarus is a territory of courage, so [this] is a country where femininity is protected." (March 7, [Minskaya Prawdа](#))

On the same day, Yauheni Pustavoy, speaking in a stream with the host of the talk show "Hidden Springs of Politics" of the STV channel Ryhor Azaronak, [developed his idea](#):

"If Nuland [US Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland] or Ursula von der Leyen [President of the European Commission] saw a person like Lukashenka next to her, she would have become a normal woman. She would have felt here he is! A defender who solves all problems. I relaxed and discovered something good in myself. Their problem is the lack of normal men. ... Belarus opened because it was in the hands of our President. [A real man](#)."

And in the words of the editor of the TV channel *Belarus-4. Mahilou* by Vitalina Petrusevich, one hears hopelessness and lack of hope for change. And it is not clear whether Vitalina herself limits her life path to only 46 years, or hints that everything has its limit – even Lukashenka's presidential term:

"I'm 23. I was born under the President. I lived with him, I live with him, and I want to live with him for as long. Aliaksandr Grigorievich will not leave. Because he is a man. We, women, will always be for him." (March 8, [stream "Azaronak. Directly"](#))

At the same time, we should not forget that while propagandists and Lukashenka are making sweet speeches in honor of women on March 8, more than 170 female prisoners of the regime are still in Belarusian prisons, including at least nine journalists convicted for their professional activities. According to [a review by the Human Rights Center "Viasna"](#), over the past four years, thousands of women in Belarus have been persecuted for their beliefs.

Another example of romanticizing the memory of the USSR was the Day of Internal Troops on March 18. Internal Troops units were actively involved in the brutal suppression of peaceful protests in August 2020. Ryhor Azaronak in his stream puts them on a par with Stalin's NKVD troops:

“NKVD troops. How much sticky terror they brought to the trembling enemies of the people. And how much delight and joy, how many noble feelings they arouse in true patriots of the Fatherland. It was they who stood up for the President at a time when it was necessary to restore cruel order and save the people from the rule and lawlessness of bandits.” ([personal Telegram channel](#), March 17)

Another example of the use of Soviet ideological attributes (and at the same time intimidation of society): the news that the lyceum of the country’s main university – the Belarusian State University – will be named after Felix Dzerzhinsky, the creator of the first punitive bodies of Soviet Russia. Allegedly, the lyceum employees themselves asked to assign the name of an “outstanding native of the Belarusian land”. ([Sputnik Belarus](#))

The inculcation of nostalgia for the Soviet system is also manifested in the daily actions of the regime. For example, if it is necessary to rebuff the International Olympic Committee, which banned athletes from Russia and Belarus from competing under national symbols, then the symbols of the USSR come to the rescue. Yury Uvarau, [Minskaya Pravda](#):

“... For several years now, people have been saying that if a decision is made on the participation [of Russia and Belarus in the Olympic Games], then let our athletes compete under the flag of the Soviet Union. No one banned Soviet symbols. And this will be a worthy response to all the intrigues of Western enemies.” (March 19)

“The state ideology must capture the entire people”

On March 15, the Belarusian propagandist, director of the National Library, who is under sanctions from the European Union and other countries, Vadzim Hihin, [made a statement](#) in which he proposed to consolidate the foundations **of the state ideology of Belarus**. According to him, the updated Constitution lays the foundations of the ideological doctrine, but the provisions of the ideology of the Belarusian state themselves have not been formulated, so they should be “*to develop, summarize, submit for national discussion, and then adopt at the All-Belarusian People’s Assembly.*”

On the same day, the idea was [taken up](#) by the “president”:

“I support the proposal of Vadzim Hihin that we need to develop a state ideology. And, of course, we will discuss the concept at the highest level. Perhaps some specific plans... This state ideology should capture the entire people.”

Creation of a joint Russian-Belarusian commission on history

Historical science, as a rule, is one of the first to be sacrificed to authoritarian ideology and reshaped for the sake of the momentary needs of the authorities. The need to unify the history of the “Union State” has been discussed in both countries for a long time. Finally, it is the turn of concrete steps. In January 2024, a joint Russian-Belarusian commission on history was created, one of the first tasks of which was the development of unified history textbooks for universities and schools.

Russian Ambassador to Minsk Boris Gryzlov said [most succinctly about why this is necessary](#). According to him, the creation of the commission was “*a logical continuation of active joint work to preserve the historical truth, which is carried out on a systematic basis by Russia and Belarus... This topic is very important, because there are still discrepancies in the understanding of very important events in the history of the Soviet Union and in the history of the Russian Empire.*” Now the parties have agreed that they will “*consider these events from a single point of view.*”

A month later, it was reported that such textbooks already existed. Rector of Mahilou State University Dzianis Duk [said](#) that the unified textbook is already being used in schools “*as additional literature, as literature for optional classes, for in-depth study.*” And the director of the Institute of History, propagandist Vadzim Lakiza [donated](#) Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Bashkortostan a copy of the first textbook for universities “History of the Union State”.

In an interview with the independent publication *Reform.news*, the iSANS expert [said](#) that the main goal of creating a joint commission on history is not to “preserve historical truth”, but to unify Russian-Belarusian history:

“Several pro-Russian foundations and various historical organizations have been operating in Belarus for a long time. The creation of a commission, which will include their representatives, legitimizes their activities at the official high level and increases their influence.”

Professor and historian Pavel Tserashkovich [also believes](#) that the Russian approach will dominate in the unification of history. In his opinion, the publication of joint history textbooks is “*a logical step towards the creeping occupation of Belarus.*” As a result, the entire history of Belarus will be revised:

“Most likely, the changes will affect the ethnic history of Kievan Rus. In Soviet times, Academician Rybakov came up with the concept of the ancient Russian nationality. This also corresponds to the ideas of Putin, who constantly repeats that there was one people. It will not do without the intervention of politicians.”

Media Holding of the Union State

Talks about a joint television and radio broadcasting company of the Union State of Russia and Belarus have been going on since 2022. For a long time, the launch was postponed, as the parties could not agree on the regulations and financing.

In January, it was announced that a [draft](#) resolution on the creation of the holding had finally been prepared, and that the media company itself should start working by the beginning of 2025. By this time, the relevant ministries of the two countries [should prepare the charter](#) of this structure and register it.

Finally, in March 2024, State Secretary of the Union State Dmitry Mezentsev [announced](#) that 1 billion Russian rubles (about \$ 11 million) had been allocated for the launch of the media holding. In particular, more than 400 million have been allocated for the television and radio broadcasting organization for 2024, and 263 million for the *Soyuznoye Veche* newspaper. The headquarters of the holding will be located in Moscow and a representative office in Minsk.

II. DEMOCRATIC FORCES OF BELARUS ARE THE MAIN "ENEMY OF THE STATE"

“There are no political prisoners in Belarus”

Supporters of democratic transition have been the main object of lies provocations and speculations of Lukashenka’s propaganda for the fourth year in a row. Remembering the nightmare experienced in 2020, when the regime almost collapsed under the pressure of protesting citizens after illegitimate elections, the authorities are doing their best to discredit the democratic and national liberation movement both at home and abroad.

On March 15, 2024, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published an extensive [report](#) on Belarus, which sharply criticized the human rights situation before and after the 2020 presidential elections.

The report was criticized by the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the UN Office in Geneva, Larysa Belskaya. Speaking at the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council on March 20, she [said that](#) there are allegedly **no political prisoners** in Belarus:

“Persons serving sentences have been convicted of specific crimes, including against national security. In Belarus, lawbreakers are treated equally, although they are favorites of foreign politicians or act in their interests.”

Belskaya also [said](#) that the source for the report was “*anonymous first-hand interviews with ‘activists’ who fled the country, who failed to undermine the Belarusian state through an attempt at a color revolution, participation in illegal anti-government actions and clashes with law enforcement officers.*” According to Belskaya, “*now they are broadcasting [extremist](#) calls and plans from abroad to overthrow the legitimate government, up to an armed conflict in Belarus.*”

Narrative: “The opposition is terrorists and saboteurs”

On February 16, during his speech, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [quoted an](#) excerpt from alleged negotiations between Belarusian political emigrants and Western officials: “*Poland has the right to the western lands of Belarus. And in the event of Russia's defeat, Belarus will grow at the expense of the western lands of Russia.*” The source and authorship of the statement are unknown, but this did not prevent Lukashenka from speculating on this topic:

“Read, they will cut something from the Smolensk, Bryansk, maybe Pskov regions. And we must give western Belarus (before Minsk, as you know, there was a border) to Poland... How many of you can agree with this? Maybe someone can, but I can't. We will fight to the last for our lands. Moreover, we do not cause problems to anyone. We don't owe anything to anyone.”

Later, at a meeting with the leadership of the national security agencies, Lukashenka [raised](#) this conversation again, and also spoke about the “three main scenarios” of his overthrow, which are allegedly being developed by “*fugitives and their foreign curators.*” He also called for being ready for war “*mentally and strategically.*”

Regime propagandists have long frightened the population with “political emigrants”, presenting them as terrorist fighters who threaten both Belarus and Europe:

“\$5 billion is allocated by Western countries in 2024 to organize camps in Poland and Ukraine to train saboteurs from among the fugitive Belarusian opposition. Training is carried out by the special services of NATO countries. The tasks of the saboteurs are provocations in Belarus, Russia and Eastern Europe.” (Maria Piatrashka, [personal Telegram channel](#))

Aliaksandr Shpakouski, Minister-Counselor of the Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in the Russian Federation:

“It seems expedient to recognize all gangs gathered from Belarusian extremists on the territory of Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland as terrorist organizations in the Russian Federation” (March 7, [personal Telegram channel](#))

Anton Papou:

“...Poland may well face terror from Belarusian fugitives in addition to Ukrainian extremism.” (March 13, [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#))

Meanwhile, the “president” himself thanks God for remaining in power and repeats the myth that if the opposition had won then, “there would have been a nuclear war”:

“God helped us in 2020. If we had not survived then, there would have been a war here. They would have dragged NATO troops here. Imagine Russia’s reaction – NATO troops near Smolensk. This would be a nuclear war. We survived. God helped. Not a running President with a machine gun there, with a child... No one. God simply protected us.”

At a meeting at the Ministry of Information of Belarus, they also [talked about countering “external forces”](#). The deputy head of the “president’s” administration, Ihar Lutski, for example, called for more attention to be paid to the involvement of specialists in the “information confrontation”, calling it “*the number one task for 2024*”. The main threat at this meeting was some “**bloggers**”. Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of Belarus Ihar Petryshenka [said](#) that it is important “*not only to develop the information space, but also to continue to actively protect it*”:

“Often, alien values and priorities are invested by bloggers in immature minds. And this fact cannot but be alarming. At the same time, bloggers, like all owners of Internet resources, are obliged to comply with national legislation.”

A little earlier, propagandist Liudmila Hladkaya [also spoke](#) about the harm of some “understudies of extremist resources”:

“Listen, maybe it’s time to take a closer look at them?... States are destroyed from within. These are the rats that destroy. Such rats are an element of the colossus launched against us by the West for the long game. As for me, they, rats, have long decided who they are with and against whom.”

Intimidation and demands for more repression.

In January-March 2024, the Belarusian regime actively worked to tighten criminal and administrative legislation against dissidents and protesters. Propaganda not only actively supported the state in this, but also called for repression.

On February 6, Belarusian Ambassador to Moscow Dzmitry Krutoy [said](#) that Belarus and Russia are working **to merge the “lists of extremists”** of the two countries into a common one. As a rule, these lists include the names of representatives of democratic forces and participants in peaceful protests. Propagandist and employee of the Belarusian Embassy in Moscow Aliaksandr Shpakouski [commented](#) the initiative in the following manner: “*We need synchronous approaches in the field of law enforcement activities of both countries and principled work to rehabilitate the information field.*”

In the newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya* in early February [an article](#) by Yauhen Pustavoy was published, which justifies the need to return punishment for “**parasitism**”. Earlier, this idea was proposed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Punishments for “freeloaders” and “dependents” served as an important tool in the fight against opponents and dissidents, independent poets, and writers back in Soviet times.

“In the internal affairs system, we analyzed the social portraits of extremists, street haters, habitual defendants in domestic offenses. Which was what had to be proven – often all these characters are without a permanent job. It turns out that the phenomenon of “unemployment” is not so much a matter of filling the budget as of public, state security.”

In February, the Prosecutor General of Belarus, Andrei Shved, [told](#) reporters that the prosecutor's office was ready to make decisions on **the deprivation of citizenship and confiscation of property** in relation to those convicted under "political" articles.

In March, pro-government "political scientist" Piotr Piatrouski expanded this idea in his Telegram channel, [advocating](#) **the introduction of criminal liability for raising funds to cover fines** for dissenters. Piatrouski was concerned that "*under the sauce of raising funds for the victims of the regime,*" the coverage of fines for offenses is actually legalized.

The Lukashenka regime uses more and more sophisticated methods to pressure political emigrants. In the second half of February, Belarusian political refugees in Lithuania suddenly began to receive calls allegedly from the police **demanding to leave the country**. These calls caused some tension in the diaspora. The State Security Department of Lithuania investigated and stated that the calls were the work of telephone scammers. However, state propaganda, turning a blind eye to the statement of the department, decided to take advantage of the situation to denigrate the authorities of this country once again. For example, to the propagandist of the newspaper *Minskaya Pravda* Dzyana Shybkouskaya this fake story gave reason to [compare](#) Lithuania with Nazi Germany:

"To be honest, what is happening now in the Baltic States is very much reminiscent of the events before World War II in relation to the Jews in the Third Reich. The only thing left for the Balts to do is to hold Kristallnacht, during which the victims will be Russians and Belarusians."

"Those who left, come back!"

At the same time, while threatening and intimidating, the regime cherishes the hope by hook or by crook to return the "fugitives" to Belarus – with the help of deception, pressure, or false promises. The key role in this game is assigned to the state media. "Eurasian" and pro-government "analyst" Aliaksei Dzermant:

"Unfortunately, many of our compatriots, who succumbed to the influence of political adventurers, left their homeland, and went to seek a better life abroad, especially many of them settled in neighboring Poland. And there they are very often in a disenfranchised position, no one can ensure their safety and well-being. ...I recommend that my fellow Belarusians return to their homeland as soon as possible, atone for their sins before it, if any, and live peacefully at home." (March 1, [personal Telegram channel](#))

The regime's information policy also provides for the use of various propaganda methods. In early January, it became known that the Ministry of Culture of Belarus in 2025 will finance the creation of a film, the theme of which is "[the heroism of law enforcement officers during the events of August 2020 in Belarus.](#)"

III. UKRAINE

"The West and Ukraine itself are to blame for the war"

Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion on February 22, 2022, the position of Belarusian propaganda in relation to Ukraine has not changed in general and has been trying to follow the main anti-Ukrainian ideological lines of its Russian colleagues. The Lukashenka regime faces a difficult task, firstly, to explain the need for a Russian invasion of Ukraine, and secondly, which is even more difficult – to explain why Belarus supports Russia in this invasion. The pro-government media continue to

impose the myth of Ukraine as an alleged “failed state” in which nationalists seized power.

For example, Aliaksei Audonin, an analyst at the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, who claims on [the STV channel](#) that Ukraine itself provoked the war, as it “planned to seize Crimea, seize the Black Sea coast of Russia, strike at Belarus.”

And Leanid Kasinski, Assistant to the Minister of Defense of Belarus for Ideological Work, in a long March [interview](#) with the *BelTA* news agency, once again shifted the blame for the Russian invasion of Ukraine to the West:

“[The Western “hawks”](#) who unleashed the conflict in Ukraine do not understand that Russia cannot lose, because the whole world will lose... The madness and desire of Western politicians [to unleash a third world war](#) will not lead to anything good. These politicians should be sent to us so that our President can teach them a few lessons of history. Apparently, they do not know it.”

Change of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

In early February, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed Valerii Zaluzhnyi from the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and appointed General Oleksandr Syrskyy.

During this period, most of the state media of Belarus, as if by methodology, repeated the myth that the decision to change the commander-in-chief, like other decisions of the “Kyiv regime”, is made “in Washington”. For example, the author of the pro-government newspaper *Minskaya Prada* Yuri Uvarov [writes](#): “every decision is coordinated by the Kyiv junta with the White House.”

Anton Papou [in a publication](#) in the newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya* on February 10 calls Syrskyy “General Butcher”, “a renegade and a mankurt who does not have military talents.” He believes that Zelenskyy chose a new commander-in-chief, assessing him not as a commander, but as a politically safe figure who will not be able to compete with him: “In addition, Syrskyy will obediently drive more and more crowds of mobilized people to slaughter on orders from Bankova, and if necessary, he will take on public indignation due to high losses.”

Decade of the Ukrainian Maidan

On the eve of the parliamentary elections on February 25, propaganda used the anniversary of the 2014 “Revolution of Dignity” (the Ukrainian Maidan) to present the events once again in Ukraine as “chaos” and against this background favorably set off the image of a “peaceful” and “safe” Belarus. Propagandist Siarhei Husachenka devoted the entire issue of his program “Understandable Politics” on the *Belarus-1* TV channel to the events on the Maidan. [According to him](#), Ukraine was “thrown into the abyss of chaos”, there “the coup d’état won”, after which “the state was destroyed in a short time”, and Belarus avoided such a fate only thanks to Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

In the newspaper *Belarus Segodnya* Liudmila Hladkaya also [tried to convince the reader](#) that Lukashenka had preserved peace and security in Belarus:

“Maidan is a direct path to war, suffering, devastation, loss of national identity. This is what our President has been constantly talking about for so many years.”

The odious propagandist Ryhor Azaronak [declares](#) against the backdrop of the clashes in Kyiv in 2014: “And all this would be with us now. If not for the Old Man with a machine gun.”

Russian propagandists also come to the aid in the implementation of this idea. "Political scientist" [Sergei Mikheev](#):

"Belarus shows the path of development that was possible for Ukraine. Ukraine has chosen a different path: to constantly conflict, to rely on strangers – this, as we see, leads to war, to disintegration. And Belarus, in my opinion, has chosen the optimal development strategy in the situation of the collapse of the Soviet Union."

Decade of Russia's annexation of Crimea

The anniversary of the illegal annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula was widely celebrated in Russia. Belarusian propaganda also cannot ignore this event, but it did not react to it so violently. A brief analysis of the media on the eve and during the celebration showed the absence of the "Crimean theme" in several key state publications on this day. Only the most "pro-government" sycophants were noted, for example, [Vadzim Hihin](#) said that Crimea is not only Russia's choice, but also Belarus's:

"Yes, 10 years ago the same Russian Spring took place. Then the "Crimean consensus" was experienced not only by Russia, but also by Belarus. ... Two-thirds of Belarusians supported the return of Crimea to Russia. In fact, I am sure that this number is even higher." (March 18)

"Imperialist" and Eurasianist [Aliaksei Dzermant](#) is trying to find an explanation for the illegal seizure of Crimea in world history:

"Crimea for me is a sacred land, one of the most important places of power of our civilization. Scythianism and Hellenism met there, and Holy Russia was born there. And this place, this land, can only be possessed by a truly Russian state. Happy 10th anniversary of returning to our native harbor!" (March 18).

Transfer of hostilities to the territory of Russia

In early spring 2024, armed formations of Russian citizens fighting on the side of Ukraine crossed the Ukrainian-Russian border and entered the Belgorod region. Hostilities on Russian territory lasted about ten days. Infiltration of armed groups into Russia had happened before, but this operation was the first to have the character of a long clash and caused a serious stir in Russia. The fighting in the Belgorod region even got on the screens of Russian federal channels.

To restore the ideological damage at least partially, propaganda tried to show that the strikes on the territory of Russia not only did not lead to the disruption of the "elections", but also achieved the opposite effect: the population at this crucial moment rallied even more around the "leader". Anton Papou [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#):

"The West and the Kyiv regime have placed their main stake on the disruption of the elections. ... The goal of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and their curators is quite transparent: by terrorizing the civilian population, they tried to convince the residents of the regions that the current President is not able to protect them. However, it is in the frontline territories that both a record turnout and a record level of support for Vladimir Putin were registered. Thus, the Ukrainians have achieved a result that is exactly the opposite of what was expected" (March 19).

"Ukraine is deceiving the West to get financial assistance."

Propaganda is doing everything to discredit Western assistance to Ukraine. One of the striking examples: the claim that Ukraine allegedly deliberately deceives European officials.

On February 7, the head of EU diplomacy, Josep Borrell, while in Kyiv during an official visit, was forced to go down to a bomb shelter due to another Russian missile attack. The official TG channel of Belarusian television *BT-ATN* [could not resist](#) hinting that Ukraine itself staged an air raid for Borrell to impress him and force the EU to give more money:

“Kvartal 95 is outrageously predictable.⁴ A performance in honor of the arrival of any purse with money.”

On February 25, *BT-ATN* published a photo of German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock in a bomb shelter with a similar [comment](#):

“All-inclusive tour in Ukrainian: Baerbock, who arrived in Odesa, organized a trip to a bomb shelter with a photo shoot – they turned on the air danger siren and said that she had to hide.”

Terrorist attack in Moscow: propaganda puts the blame on Ukraine and the West

On March 22, a large-scale terrorist attack took place in the Crocus City Hall shopping and entertainment center in the suburbs of Moscow. Russian propaganda and senior officials immediately accused Ukraine of organizing it. They did not back down from this version even when the terrorist organization “Islamic State” (ISIS) claimed responsibility for it.

Minsk propagandists, as usual in such cases, tried to follow the ideological guidelines of their Moscow colleagues. Their accusations are a mixture of absurd statements about the presence of [a “Ukrainian trace”](#) and a “collective West.”

Ksenia Lebiadzeva, [Belarus-1 TV channel](#):

“Of course, you can repeat aloud many times that it was not the Ukrainian special services who carried out the shooting at Crocus, but it’s like saying sweets to bitter things, it won’t get any sweeter.”

Andrei Mukavozchuk:

“The obvious thing is this: whether Bandera’s Ukraine or even the banned ISIS was behind the terrorist attack in Crocus – these are, in the end, the Anglo-Saxons. They, the United States and Great Britain, [are behind this terrorist attack](#).”

“National Security Expert” [Aliaksandr Tsishchanka](#), the newspaper “SB. Belarus Segodnya”:

“Undoubtedly, this sabotage is in the hands of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and on the conscience of Brussels and Washington.”

The terrorist attack in the Crocus City Hall became the reason for another surge in discussions about lifting the moratorium on the death penalty, which has been in force in Russia since 1997. Belarusian pro-government experts also contributed to the discussion – for example, the minister-counselor of the Embassy of Belarus in Moscow and a well-known propagandist Aliaksandr Shpakouski [called on](#) Russia to return the death penalty. On the air of the *ONT* TV channel on March 28, MP Ihar Marzaliuk expressed [confidence](#) that the death penalty in the Russian Federation will be returned “*in one form or another*”, possibly “*as a punishment for terrorism*”.

On March 29, Russian State Duma deputy Maria Butina said that Russia and Belarus were negotiating the possibility **of executing the accused in Belarus**. This idea was not enthusiastic in Belarus. Maryna Karaman, the host of the state TV channel *ONT*,

⁴ Kvartal 95 is an entertainment and production company where Volodymyr Zelensky began his acting career.

reacted harshest to it. In her [personal Telegram channel](#), she wrote that “*Such an execution will create a very shitty precedent of shifting responsibility for the mistakes of Russian officials onto the Belarusian law enforcement system*” and that “*there are deeds that brothers should not share.*”

Ukrainian children. Belarusian Red Cross' complicity in their illegal transfer

Pro-government media continue to reject accusations of deportation of Ukrainian children to the territory of Belarus.

Ludmila Hladkaya, propagandist of the newspaper *Belarus Segodnya* (January 1):

“These days we have brought sweet gifts from Belarusians to Donbas children. The children read poems, made wishes, and it was clear what they were talking about. And they believe in the power of good. This is the tenth New Year in wartime for these children. Let the next one be peaceful. Like in Belarus. [Our president, his team, security forces](#), and each of us tried to ensure that life in Belarus remained peaceful and safe.”

At the beginning of the year, the state [TV channel Belarus-4](#) showed another group of children from the Russian-occupied Ukrainian city of Antratsyt and reported that the authorities had sent them on an excursion and training with Belarusian security forces.

In February, State Secretary of the Union State Dzmitry Mezentsev said in [an interview with](#) the *BelTA* news agency that Russia and Belarus would continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the children of Donbas:

“We expect that this year we will be supported by the leaders of the Union State in continuing such work together with the ministries of education and educational institutions of Donbas.”

From the very beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Belarusian Red Cross has been actively involved in the movement of Ukrainian children to Belarusian territory. Dzmitry Shautsou, Secretary General of the Belarusian Red Cross, became famous for openly supporting the Russian invasion, coming to the occupied territories, speaking to propaganda channels with the chevron Z (a symbol of the Russian invasion) and justifying the deportation of children. In July 2023, Shautsou also publicly [stated](#) about the possibility of using nuclear weapons “to protect Russia and Belarus.”

As a result, in December 2023, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) suspended the membership of the Belarusian Red Cross, stopped its funding, participation in the General Assembly, voting or the opportunity to be elected at any statutory meetings. The IFRC condemned Shautsou's trip to the occupied Ukrainian regions. The Federation also demanded the resignation of Dzmitry Shautsou following the results of the investigation after Shautsou's statements about nuclear weapons and the transfer of Ukrainian children to Belarus.

In February 2024, Shautsou was included in the sanctions lists of Australia and the European Union for his involvement in the illegal transfer of Ukrainian children; in March, Switzerland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway, North Macedonia, Ukraine, and Montenegro joined the European sanctions. Earlier, he was included in the “list of blocked persons” of the United States.

Nevertheless, in February 2024, Shautsou again stated that the organization would continue to help the “children of Donbas,” and [for the first time announced](#) the figures: “*Today, 7200 citizens of this country are under the care of the Belarusian Red Cross, including 1995 children.*”

IV. “COLLECTIVE WEST”

Narrative: Poland and the Baltic States are puppets of the U.S. and the EU

Allegations about the “lack of independence” of Poland and the Baltic countries, which other countries of the Western world, primarily the United States, threw alone on the front flank of the confrontation against Belarus and Russia, remain in the first half of 2024 one of the popular storylines in the general anti-Western rhetoric of the Belarusian media. At the same time, another narrative is being played out, which contradicts the first, according to which Poland and Lithuania allegedly pursue an aggressive policy themselves, independently build aggressive plans, dream of dividing Belarus and returning their “historical lands”.

Separately, it is argued that Poland has the same plans for Ukraine: it allegedly wants to take advantage of the ongoing war and regain Ukrainian regions in the west, including Lviv and Volyn. Obviously, the purpose of such “stuffing” is a desire to sow hostility between Poland and Ukraine.

Propaganda could not leave unnoticed the large-scale demonstrations of Polish farmers, protesting, among other things, against the import of Ukrainian grain on preferential terms. Alena Krasouskaya, a pro-government “human rights activist” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), February 1):

“Calls to support Ukraine at the cost of their own well-being only irritate European farmers and push them to active protests.”

“Belarus is surrounded by enemies”

Is the main leitmotif of Lukashenka’s propaganda for decades; The Belarusian ruler himself tirelessly reminds of him in his speeches. At a meeting with the General Staff of Belarus in January 2024, he again called for vigilance:

“...We have a special situation: in the south – war, in the west – Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic states – and even worse. I emphasize, even worse. Appropriate detachments are being trained there; commanders have been determined... Therefore, as I always tell the military and especially the Minister of Defense, we must not miss anything.”

He also called on the military to “keep in sight” the units of the United States and Germany, with which exercises are being conducted in Lithuania. ([Speech at the meeting with the Minister of Defense of Belarus](#), January 23).

The head of the pro-government LDPB party and a frequent guest of political talk shows, Aleh Haidukevich, reproaches Polish citizens for “fulfilling the order of the White House” and creating an “anti-Russian bridgehead” on their territory with the help of American money and weapons, which does not coincide with the interests of “ordinary Poles”. if they used their full potential for “normal human relations” with Russia and Belarus ([Sputnik Belarus](#), February 13).

According to propaganda, the former countries of the socialist camp would be better off if they returned to the “family of nations.” The same Haidukevich expressed a similar thing in relation to the Baltic countries:

“The union with Russia strengthens our sovereignty and statehood. And the European Union is taking away sovereignty and statehood. Here is the difference between conjunctions. Everyone who goes to the European Union loses sovereignty. That’s it, the end, goodbye. And we are strengthening it. Therefore, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, we are calling you. Please! But when you wake up and

come to your senses, welcome to the Union State. We will ensure your safety. Excellent S-400 missiles will stand on the border and protect you from NATO. Because you are threatened not by Russia and Belarus, but by the North Atlantic Alliance.” ([Belarus Segodnya](#)).

... And separately – Lithuania:

“Since the collapse of the USSR, every year, Lithuania has lost its sovereignty and today there is only one big thing left of it! Lithuania has a future only in [union with Belarus and Russia!](#)”

“The West is an alliance of hostile forces”

As before, the propaganda seeks to present the democratic world as a dark, aggressive alliance of forces hostile to Belarus, which is characterized by inhuman, and sometimes even diabolical features, where laws and moral principles do not apply. Ryhor Azarenok ([STVTV channel](#)):

“The West, then and now, is an absolutely mystical, satanic power and structure.”

[Aleh Dziachenka](#), Member of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly:

“As long as Washington, London and Brussels Satanists and Freemasons interfere in the affairs of the Slavs in the most brazen way, streams of human blood will continue to flood Mother Earth.”

On February 27, *BT* propagandist Kseniya Lebiadzewa praised Belarusians for “not becoming puppets of the United States” in her program “This Is Different” and [compared](#) the American authorities to the Nazi leadership:

“Today, the task of the West is to absorb and enslave the Slavs, to force them to serve Western moneybags. This was the opinion of Hitler, and this is the opinion of representatives of the State Department now.”

More often, propaganda focuses on specific events, commenting on them, as a rule, in a negative light, based on the formula: “everything the West does is hostile/stupid/ridiculous.” In the period under review, events or high-profile statements related to the ongoing war in Ukraine became newsworthy events.

One of these, for example, was the February statement by French President Emmanuel Macron that the troops of European countries could be sent to Ukraine. Later, Macron stressed several times that this was possible only hypothetically, but other French and EU officials confirmed this idea with hints and half-hints. The story caused a flood of publications in the pro-Kremlin media, in which Macron and at the same time the whole of France, was reminded of all the sins.

“...Macron declares the need to create a coalition of countries whose contingents will officially enter Ukraine to fight on its side. At this point, even his closest associates secretly twisted their finger at the temple. ... I wonder how the already enraged people would react if, in addition to all the problems, the French began to return en masse in coffins to the country? Obviously, they would return the scaffold with the guillotine to the Place de Greve for the hero of the occasion.” (Yury Tserakh, Dzmitry Krat, [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), March 16)

Vadzim Yalfimau, pro-government political scientist:

“...It is necessary to understand what prompts the Macrons and others to such dangerous political verbiage. Hurt pride is only part of the motive. Most likely, Emmanuel was simply used as a throat, as a membrane with which to voice their

own, still forbidden dreams. Who used it? Yes, Biden, of course. Or those who stand behind his bent back.” (March 4, [Minskaya Prauda](#))

Another high-profile event was Sweden’s NATO accession on March 7, which gave propagandists a reason to make new threatening statements. An example of such threats is in the text of Dziana Shybouskaya, a propagandist for the newspaper *Minskaya Prauda*:

“Sweden has officially painted a target on its forehead – it has become the 32nd member of NATO.” (March 9, [personal Telegram channel](#))

At the end of 2023, Russia set a new foreign policy goal – **Moldova**. Since the government of this country has taken a course towards rapprochement with the EU and NATO, the Putin regime has been trying to undermine the political situation and stability in this country. Russian and Belarusian propagandists present the government in Moldova as a regime hostile to the West, slave to the West, and its democratically elected President Maia Sandu as an authoritarian leader, trying to hold power by force. An attempt to undermine stability in Moldova is also being made through demonstrative support for Transnistria, a region that broke away in the early 1990s, and Gagauzia, an autonomous territorial entity within Moldova, where separatist sentiments were strong in Soviet times. The Bashkan (head) of Gagauzia, Eugenia Hutsul, who won the elections in the summer of 2023 from the pro-Russian Shor Party, came to Russia in 2024 and met with Vladimir Putin.

Propaganda accuses Moldova of almost harassing the new government of Gagauzia and persecuting its residents:

“It is clear that sooner or later people’s patience comes to an end. Even such peace-loving ones as the residents of Transnistria and Gagauzia. The history of the latter clearly shows the fascist essence of the puppet leadership of Moldova.” (Yuri Uvarov, [Minskaya prauda](#), March 5)

In another [article](#) in *Minskaya Prauda*, Uvarov already threatens Moldova with war:

“...Every Moldovan today understands that if good relations with Russia were maintained, people in the republic would live comfortably. And today, Moldovans are forced to wander around the world because of the policy of corrupt puppets. To be honest, I do not know whether it is possible to force Sandu’s Romanian group to come to its senses by political, economic, and diplomatic means. Practice shows that all these puppets act like zombies. Then you need to be ready for a military scenario.”

Kyryl Kalechyts, *Minskaya Prauda*, article [“Sandu’s regime. Does Moldova need a conductor?”](#):

“By the way, Moldova is a great example for Belarus. An example of what would have happened to our country if we had lost it in 2020. ... Escalation with Russia, acquiescence to the West and loss of all sovereignty...” (March 5)

With the general aggressive tone of anti-Western dialogues, Belarusian officials do not forget to leave the “door open” – and this is also part of the propaganda. Thus, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Siarhei Aleinik, speaking on March 6 at the board of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, first [stated](#) that “*the situation on the western borders of the country continued to deteriorate,*” and “*exclusively by the hands and efforts of our counter-partners*” but Belarus “*takes only retaliatory measures and declares readiness for an equal and mutually respectful dialogue*”.

It is important to note that this manner of transition from intimidation and threats to a “softening” tone, leaving the “door open”, distinguishes Belarusian propaganda from

Russian propaganda. The latter has been acting for many years only in the direction of escalation and “raising the stakes” and is considered by experts in the world as an information war against the West.

Here are examples of “softening” intonations in the statements of Belarusian officials. Andrei Bogodel, an employee of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus, during a political talk show on the *ONT* channel:

“We do not consider anyone to be enemies, not a single people. This is all so that everyone understands what we are ready for. We are ready to defend our country.”

Deputy Defense Minister Viktor Hulevich:

“We do not treat any people as our enemies. And those leaders who maintain negative rhetoric against our country, let them study our Military Doctrine after its publication.” ... “We are ready to resume pragmatic dialogue if they stop their aggressive rhetoric and actions against us.”

Andre Mukavozchyk (newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya*) discusses the possibility of using TNW:

“Our society must be internally ready for this because this is the only way to stop those who do not like the sovereignty and independence of our country. Belarusians should learn the lessons of the past in order not to repeat mistakes. And at the same time, we are still ready to extend a hand of good-neighborliness even to our most ardent ill-wishers, remembering that a bad peace is always and everywhere better than quarrels.”

“Ashmiany Declaration”: New Threats

On March 26, speaking to servicemen at the training ground in the Ashmiany district of the Hrodna region, Lukashenka demanded a tough response to possible provocations by Western countries:

“I will say publicly: any provocation must be suppressed by armed means. There is no need to joke with them. If you violate the state border, you will be destroyed. No one should stand on ceremony with anyone. And we will do so. Because if we chew snot, you know what will happen. Therefore, any violation of the state border is subject to destruction. They only understand power.”

Lukashenka also called *reports about the plans of Russia and Belarus to attack the West “complete nonsense”, saying that he does not want a war with “NATO” troops, which “provoke so that they are somehow answered.”* At the same time, according to Lukashenka, the NATO forces that are now in Lithuania, in the event of a clash with Belarusians and Russians, will “flee from the battlefield” because they are “mercenaries” and their land is “in Germany and the United States.”

Based on this speech, pro-government “expert” Vadzim Hihin proposed to call Lukashenka’s statements the “Ashmiany Declaration” because of their “*important and principled nature*”. Its essence, according to Hihin, boils down to the fact that the policy of Belarus and Russia is peaceful, and they do not want to attack neighboring countries:

“The Armed Forces, the entire system of ensuring national security are ready to give a decisive rebuff to any military invasion of our territory by NATO or structures controlled by this aggressive bloc ...Participants in such provocations will be destroyed. Our military-political alliance with Russia is stronger than ever.”

The term “Ashmiany Declaration” was eagerly picked up by other propagandists:

"If we weaken, the West will send troops to Belarus, and dismember Russia. They will finish us off to the end, they will never let us get up. Therefore, no slack! Hold on! Go forward! Don't listen to anyone! Live for your people! Legislation for oneself, elections for oneself. I don't care about them. To bring everything to an end" ([Aleh Haidukevich](#), leader of the pro-government LDPB party, March 15).

Nuclear Weapons as a Foreign Policy Argument

Tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) transferred to Belarus by the Kremlin remain a popular topic of speculation in the discussion of international issues. Propaganda is inclined to blame the West itself for the fact that Belarus now has TNWs.

"The return⁵ of TNW to Belarus is a forced measure to prevent the outbreak of an armed conflict. This is a measure to deter potential adversaries from causing us some harm with the help of military force" (Uladzimir Apolonik, head of the second department of the Information and Analytical Department of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus, [interview](#) with *BelTA*).

In February, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry [issued a statement](#) in which it called the deployment of TNW *"a forced defensive action in response to the build-up of military capabilities in NATO countries."*

At the same time, state media continue to relay threats of Russian propaganda in Belarus. State television *ATN* published a post by Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev in its Telegram channel with another threat to use nuclear weapons in the event of a war with the West⁶ and [added his comment](#): *"Then don't say that Russia did not warn. It cannot be clearer."*

Even though the management of TNW in Belarus under an agreement with the Kremlin remains entirely in the hands of the Russian military, Belarusian "geostrategists" are tempted to decide the fate of the world themselves with the help of nuclear blackmail. For example, the above-mentioned Andrei Bogodel, speaking on the air of the state channel *ONT*, said that Belarus has the right to a preventive strike:

"Another important aspect that was not in the previous military doctrine is an immediate threat. This is the moment that gives us all the right to launch a preemptive strike against the enemy when war is already inevitable. As Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin said, [if a fight is inevitable, strike first.](#)"

Representatives of the Russian state themselves say that the transfer of TNW to Belarus is the highest sign of trust between the two countries.

"Our foreign policy coordination with Belarus reached an unprecedented level last year. In the context of the provocative line of the West against our countries, [we] have taken additional measures to strengthen the defense and security of the Union State, including the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus" ([Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova](#), February 9).

⁵ Propagandists call the receipt of TNW from Russia a "return", meaning that in Soviet times there were already strategic and tactical missile complexes with nuclear warheads on the territory of Belarus, which were transferred to Russia after the collapse of the USSR.

⁶ "Ballistic and cruise missiles with special warheads will be used to protect the territorial integrity of our country. This is based on our doctrinal military documents and is well known to all. And this is the notorious Apocalypse. The end of everything." (Medvedev D. Personal Telegram channel, February 7, 2024 https://t.me/medvedev_telegram/443).

And the editor-in-chief of the Russian magazine *National Defense*, a frequent guest of propaganda talk-shows on federal channels, Igor Korotchenko, said that Belarus is the friendliest state to Russia:

“There is no doubt that this is so, given that we have common military planning, a single group of troops, and Russian tactical nuclear weapons transferred to Belarus. ...Between our presidents, Putin, and Lukashenka, I believe, the relationship is not just allied, but highly trusting.” ([BelTA](#), February 26)

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the storylines of Belarusian propaganda, as well as Russian propaganda aimed at Belarus, in the first quarter of 2024 allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- In the domestic direction, the efforts of propagandists in the past period are aimed at strengthening the legitimacy of the authorities and supporting a positive image of the “president” on the eve of the parliamentary and local elections on February 25. The image of Lukashenka as a wise, strict, and irreplaceable ruler is supported, his achievements in the international arena and his peace-loving policy are emphasized.
- State propaganda continues to exploit nostalgia for the USSR, painting positive pictures of life in Soviet Belarus and using this memory to strengthen authoritarian power and justify an alliance with Russia. The celebration of Soviet holidays, which have survived to this day in almost unchanged form, are an important part of maintaining this memory. In March, pro-government media took advantage of the International Women’s Day on March 8 to boost Lukashenka’s popularity, portraying him as a “women’s president” who cared about women and mothers.
- The regime is conducting a systematic campaign to discredit Belarusian democratic forces to deprive them of support within the country. Lukashenka’s propaganda not only supports the actions of the authorities to tighten legislation against political refugees and prisoners of the regime, but also calls for repression. At the same time, the authorities are interested in the return of the “fugitives” and are trying to lure them into the country with the help of false promises and pressure.
- The main foreign policy object of propaganda hatred is still Poland and Lithuania, as the closest neighbors who adhere to a tough position towards authoritarian regimes in Russia and Belarus. In general, the “collective West” is traditionally presented in propaganda narratives as a hostile alliance of “dark forces”.
- Propaganda continues to adhere to extremely hostile rhetoric towards Ukraine. At the same time, the mention of Ukrainian topics in the broadcasts and materials of the state media of Belarus is gradually decreasing against the background of the lack of significant victories and successes of the Russian army. It is becoming increasingly difficult for propaganda to explain the necessity of this war and the participation of Belarus in it on the side of Russia.

iSANS will continue to analyze the main directions of propaganda in Belarus and Russia in 2024.