

## **Belarus Propaganda Update**

Monthly review of Belarusian propaganda and Russian propaganda targeting  
Belarus

#8. May 2024

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

#### **Belarus**

- Aliaksandr Lukashenka calls for increased “propaganda and counterpropaganda”.
- In the state media, the flow of praise and gratitude to Lukashenka does not decrease. Combined with the prohibition of any criticism, the lack of freedom of speech, and independent media, these actions led to the strengthening of the dictator’s cult of personality.
- The main patriotic holiday – Victory Day on May 9 – gave rise to new statements that “peace in Belarus has been preserved thanks to the president”.
- Kremlin and Minsk ideologists insist on the unification of the history of Russia and Belarus and the creation of a single textbook on the history of the “Union State”.

#### **Belarusian Democratic Forces**

- Advocates of democratic change are still the main target of the propaganda attacks.
- In May, there were again calls for tougher repression against dissidents, confiscation of property, and even their physical destruction.

#### **Ukraine**

- Since April, propaganda has intensively promoted false claims about the “illegitimacy” of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
- At the same time, calls for peace talks and dialogue with Ukraine are growing louder. The main source of such calls is, first, Lukashenka himself.

#### **The Collective West, Moldova, and Georgia**

- In May, the case of Polish defector Tomasz Szmydt was actively discussed in the Belarusian media.
- Propaganda media ridiculed the presidential elections in Lithuania in May, calling the candidates “puppets” of the EU and NATO.
- Regarding Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, propaganda spread a conspiracy theory that the attempt on his life was organized by “Washington and Brussels” for “disobedience.”
- The Lukashenka regime, following the Kremlin, aims to defame the state power in the Republic of Moldova.
- Propaganda welcomed the adoption of the so-called “Russian” law on the transparency of external financing in Georgia and spoke extremely negatively about the participants in the civil protests.

- Belarusian media continue to use nuclear blackmail to intimidate the audience.

### **On Sanctions**

- Propagandists are trying to present the sanctions imposed against Lukashenka's media and individual "journalists" of the regime as an unsuccessful "attempt by the West", which "had the opposite effect".
- Regime officials and propaganda constantly convince the audience that, in general, the sanctions against Belarus have not only not harmed, but even stimulated the development of the country.
- Despite this, officials, primarily Lukashenka himself, continue to complain about the sanctions, calling them "discriminatory measures aimed at isolating Belarus."

In the above quotes, the author's spelling, punctuation, and style are preserved.

## Media Community Forum

The main informational and ideological event of the month was the Forum of the Media Community of Belarus, which took place in Mahilou on May 28. Of course, only media loyal to the regime could participate in the forum. The main guest of the event was the Belarusian ruler, Aliaksandr Lukashenka. He traditionally began his speech with accusations against the West and said that his country continues to be “subjected to the largest hybrid pressure in modern history.” Lukashenka concluded it is necessary to [strengthen “propaganda and counter-propaganda” “without hesitation”](#):

*“I want young journalists to learn this. There is no need to be ashamed of such words and concepts. Or are there none in the West? They just called it PR, that is, working with public opinion. The essence is the same.”*

In turn, Lukashenka [accused the West of violating freedom of speech](#), saying that Western countries allegedly “*throw their journalists in prison, closing the media and persecuting everyone who dared to disagree with the policies and actions of the authorities.*” At the same time, in Belarus itself, [Lukashenka is sure](#), things are much better with freedom of speech, because even in 2020 “*they were not arrested for an opinion and were not imprisoned.*”

Interestingly, just a day after these statements, the well-known propagandist, TV presenter of the state channel *ONT* Ihar Tur admitted in his program that he [was sending his questions to the “President for approval”](#), which somewhat contradicts the picture of freedom of speech that Lukashenka painted.

The head of the state-owned *Belteleradiocompany (BTRK)*, Ivan Eismant, said at the Media Forum that “*the West’s attempt to silence the voice of the Belarusian state media had the opposite effect*” and that the sanctions unleashed by the collective West and the information war [gave a qualitative boost to the development of the Belarusian media space](#). Eismant argued that over the past three years Belarus “has significantly increased the volume of socio-political broadcasting, high-profile journalistic investigations and special projects are regularly released, and the pool of political experts and observers has been significantly expanded.”

## Strengthening the cult of personality

In May, several statements praising and extolling Lukashenka were recorded; let us cite as an example the most striking “North Korean” statement by the odious propagandist Ryhor Azaronak. The central figure was Lukashenka, whose support and stronghold, according to the propagandist, [is the “ordinary working people”](#):

*“When a father and son plant a tree, they glorify our President. When the janitor sweeps away the leaves with a smile, he exalts our President. When a mother bends over a lullaby and sings to a baby about some magical kingdoms, and he smiles in response, they glorify our President. Because he is all in this - in the people's happiness.”*

## Victory Day

On May 9, Belarus and Russia celebrated the Day of Victory in the Great Patriotic War (as the Second World War is called in Soviet historiography) – the main patriotic holiday in both countries. Propaganda uses this day to strengthen “national pride”, as well as to link between the past and the present, where Russia and Belarus continue to fight together against “external enemies”.

This year, during the holiday, a single lesson dedicated to Victory Day was held in all Belarusian schools. According to *Radio Liberty*, Belarusian officials have issued

methodological recommendations for its implementation. This time, during a single lesson, a speech by the Archpriest of the Belarusian Orthodox Church Fiodar Povny was broadcast in all schools. Povny is considered to be the “confessor” of Aliaksandr Lukashenka (i.e., a priest who receives confession). In this speech, he justified Russian aggression against Ukraine:

*“The Russian soldier, as then, is fighting for our world, for our churches, for our loved ones, for what we all call the Motherland together. The guys voluntarily go to the front, to the damp trenches, because their grandfathers fought, and their grandchildren do not dare to shame their honor.”*

Ideological excursions, competitions, as well as dictation on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Belarus with quotes from Aliaksandr Lukashenka were held in Belarusian schools these days. [The purpose of such a lesson](#) is “to educate students in citizenship and patriotism, pride in the heroic past of the Motherland, readiness to serve for the benefit of their people, the formation of an understanding of the value of peace on Earth.”

### Teaching History

Cleaning up and presenting history in the ideological direction needed by the regime is an important task of propaganda both in Belarus and in Russia. One of the most active implementers of the policy of correcting history is Vladimir Medinsky – an influential Russian ideologist, historian, and political scientist in the status of assistant to “president” Putin. On May 16, at a meeting of the “expert advisory Russian-Belarusian Council on History,” Medinsky [said](#) that “maximum balance” of history teaching in schools and universities in Russia and Belarus is one of the main tasks of this council:

*“If it is not us who will tell our children about our history, it means that the corresponding foreign foundations will tell it. It will be a completely different history, and the ideas of good and evil in our younger generations will also be those that our geopolitical rivals want.”*

Medinsky has been under US sanctions since 2017 and Canadian sanctions since 2022 for “involvement in the dissemination of Russian disinformation and propaganda.”

### BELARUSIAN DEMOCRATIC FORCES

Supporters of democratic changes in Belarus remain in the center of attention of propaganda. The tone is set by the Belarusian ruler himself. In a meeting with the Belarusian KGB Chiefs in May he [demanded](#) to once again strengthen “counteraction to foreign special services”, which allegedly organize subversive groups from “the fugitives”.

*“They respond in the opposite way to the policy of good-neighborliness that we have offered to our neighbors – the Poles, Lithuanians, and Latvians. In addition to information warfare, we also see an attempt to impose a war of sabotage groups on us. We see that they are preparing various armed groups and almost regiments<sup>1</sup>, as they call them, to invade the territory of Belarus”.*

In May, radical appeals to representatives of democratic forces were again met in pro-governmental channels. For example, Kseniya Lebiadzeva, a TV presenter of the state-run Belarus TV (*Belarus-1* channel), demanded to “destroy” dissenters in a stream by Ryhor Azaronak:

*“Those events that were in 2020, if something happens, should just seem like a fairy tale to them. They should be destroyed. And this is not because we are so ruthless, aggressive, but because we need to defend our own.”*

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<sup>1</sup> Probably the Kastus Kalinowski regiment is meant here, that consists of Belarusians and fights on the side of Ukraine.

Azaronak agreed with her and stated that enemies should be “shot like vagabond dogs”. Lebiadzeva added that the Siloviki was right in 2020 in using force to suppress the protest and they should have done it even harder to “[get stupidity out of their heads](#)”.

Pro-state expert Aliaksei Dzermant also [demanded](#) the death of dissenters:

*“...The whole point of the svyadomites [a derisive nickname for the oppositionists] is that, like the Nazis, you cannot reconcile with them, you cannot live together in one country, you cannot dialog with them, you cannot agree on anything. They should simply be shot on the spot.”*

Moreover, the propaganda in a joint choir demands harshening repressions against political opponents, and partial – confiscation of their property. On May 20, TV presenter Ihar Tur stated on air of the state TV channel *ONT* that the impact the sanctions made should be compensated by “economic means” – confiscating the property of those Belarusians, who think that the Lukashenka regime must be sanctioned:

*“...and if we lost, let's say Million dollars due to sanctions, we will be forced to compensate this million. Finally, the majority of those who shout, “Put pressure on Belarus!” have a property in Belarus.”*

Tur on a personal [Telegram-Channel](#):

*“I send my fiery greetings to the “diasporas” of destructive Belarusians abroad. He promised that the real estate would be seized – we wave goodbye to our apartments and cottages, from which the income from Belarus from renting out was steadily received. By the way, the President was talking about this very thing when he said, “Think about your relatives.”*

How the amount of damage should be calculated, and whether the damage is commensurate with the value of the oppositionists’ apartments, Thor did not specify.

Propagandists also threatened those, who would participate in Coordination Council elections, which took place in May, with jail and loss of property. [Yury Tserakh](#):

*“People, part of your life is still ahead, depending on age, of what is left to live. It is possible to live that life as a happy person, among the closest ones, seeing your children grow, and maybe even grandchildren. Or you can go to prison and the fact is, you might not get out of there. And everyone from Belarus, who will get involved in this – will be imprisoned. Fugitives have already left, they don't care, so let them entertain themselves there.”*

## UKRAINE

In May, the rhetoric of propaganda towards Ukraine remained aggressive. We cannot leave unnoticed the growing quantity of statements, where the attempts of “peace-loving” intonations and attempts to find a dialogue with Ukrainians, are visible. We are giving examples of it further in the review.

The main anti-Ukrainian storylines usually concentrate on the notion “Ukraine is occupied by Nazis (Bandera, fascists, etc.)”. In this context, the “new Ukrainian threat”, the essence of which was voiced by pro-government “political scientist” Aliaksei Dzermant, was particularly prominent in May. In his column on his personal Telegram channel, he traditionally called Ukraine “**Nazified**” and [stated](#) that Ukraine poses a threat as it strives to “**Ukrainize**” Russia and Belarus:

*“Ukraine is connected to us by millions of visible and invisible threads, so inevitably there is a “Ukrainianization” of ourselves to a greater or lesser extent and for this purpose the West needed it. Through spiritual and blood ties with Ukraine to*

*“Ukrainize” and nazify us, they are finally burying us as a civilization that has already defeated Nazism once”.*

On May 22-23, a “scientific and practical” conference entitled “Denazification: defining modern scientific approaches” was held in occupied Donetsk. Quote from the conference announcement: *“Denazification of Ukraine is one of the most important tasks of the Special Military Operation. For its solution it is necessary to unite the scientific community and practitioners”.* As representatives of such a “scientific community”, the event was attended by officials and propagandists from Russia, the occupied territories of Ukraine and Belarus.

Belarus was represented at the conference by the Advisor of the General Prosecutor of Belarus Ihar Maroz. Maroz presented some sort of “system of means for tackling Nazism, drafted in the Republic of Belarus”. The General Prosecutor’s office of Belarus did not disclose the essence of the system. On the second day of the conference, there was a round table “The concept of the denazification of Ukraine: scientific and practical foundations”, where, as follows from the information of the Prosecutor’s Office, “new practical recommendations on denazification were proposed”.

Propaganda, same as before, choose not to notice and stay silent about numerous war crimes committed by Russia against the peaceful population of Ukraine, in particular – strikes on civic infrastructure in Ukrainian cities and people’s homes, but reacts quite stormy to the response strikes of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Kseniya Lebiadzeva, *Belarus-1*, personal [Telegram channel](#), May 11:

*“Today, the Khokhls traditionally “congratulated” the DNR on another holiday and life outside Ukraine. They congratulated them not with flowers, but with rockets launched at civilian buildings. Creatures... animals... burn in hell...”*

Aliaksei Dzermant, personal [Telegram channel](#):

*“Terrible footage from Belgorod. Rocket, launched by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, hit the entrance of a house. ...Ukrainian Nazism must be destroyed”.*

Propaganda comments on the rumors about the involvement of Western troops in the military activities in Ukraine in the same vein. Aleh Haidukevich on his personal [Telegram channel](#):

*“Ukraine wants deployment of the Western contingent on its soil. Particularly – soldiers from Poland, France, Austria, Germany, Italy... But what will happen in Europe?... It’s simple! Europe will get coffins.”*

### **“Illegitimacy” of the Ukrainian President**

In May, the Belarusian propaganda, at the suggestion of their Kremlin colleagues, actively promoted the story that Volodymyr Zelenskyy was allegedly no longer the legitimate president of Ukraine, as his term of office expired on May 21, and no new elections were held. As is known, the Ukrainian government decided not to hold presidential elections in 2024 due to the “martial law” declared in the country after the start of the Russian full-scale invasion. According to the Ukrainian Constitution, the president continues to fulfill his duties until a newly elected president takes office. Nevertheless, this did not prevent the Minsk media from persistently developing a fake about Zelenskyy’s “illegitimacy”. The purpose of this information operation is obviously to create a split within Ukrainian society and weaken the current government's position.

Propagandist Kseniya Lebiadzeva, who is pro-Russia’s war against Ukraine, [stated](#) on the air of her TV show “*Eto Drugoe*” [This is different] on *Belarus-1* channel, that “Zelenskyy turned into a pumpkin in the night from May 20 to May 21, and now he is a nobody”, and called Ukrainians “to take power into their hands”.

Ihar Tur, [state TV channel ONT](#):

*"Today [May 20] – de jure is the last evening when Zelenskyy is the Head of State of Ukraine. ...I hope that as of tomorrow, this citizen, who must obey democratic laws and the sacred Constitution of his Homeland, will stop nominally ruling the country and its army, and will return to something more suitable for him. Like playing the piano with your genitals again".*

These statements by propagandists generally work in line with the narrative disseminated by the "leaders" of Russia and Belarus that there is allegedly no one to conduct peace talks with on the Ukrainian side.

On May 24, during his visit to Minsk Vladimir Putin stated that "the legitimacy of acting Head of State ended", even though the Western community and "Kyiv's sponsors" are "ready to approve it" during the upcoming peace conference in Switzerland and that the "only legitimate power in Kyiv is the Verkhovna Rada and its Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk".

Aliaksandr Lukashenka [agreed](#) with Putin by stating that in the current situation, "there is no legal clarity":

*"Neither the current President nor the next one won't decide on these big questions that stand before the state of Ukraine, before Ukrainian peoples, they will be decided "from the other side of the ocean".*

### **"Conciliatory" intonations**

Despite the abundance of hostile rhetoric, we cannot but note the growth of statements of a softening, conciliatory nature concerning Ukraine or even reminiscent of attempts to find a dialogue with Ukrainians. The tone of the general direction is set by the Belarusian ruler himself, who is more and more dissatisfied with the ongoing war.

For example, at the already mentioned Forum of the Media Community held in Mahilou on May 25, Lukashenka [noticed](#) that "some of our "star journalists" must be controlled more thoroughly, as they criticize Ukraine too much in their TV shows:

*"Don't forget that at some point we will have to mend relations with them. This is our neighboring country. It is our own country. And I am sure that those who speak harshly about Ukraine do not realize that the overwhelming majority in Ukraine are normal people".*

In his other speech, Lukashenka [expressed hope](#) that "May will bring peace to brotherly nation" but did not specify to which nation. He was [confident](#) that "with the help of our prayers we will return to the times, when our nations will be together", despite that "there was trouble in the neighborhood".

On May 9, Lukashenka's press service published a story about his "informal conversation" with Belarusian generals, during which he shared his impressions from the trip to Moscow, partially, from his talks with Russian servicemen who returned from combat duty from Ukraine. According to him, participants of the "Special Military Operation" said that Belarusian soldiers are very much needed at the front, but he [made them understand](#) that the Belarusian army will not participate in this war: "[They] love Belarus very much, appreciate us. I said: "Fellows, we are not going to go there". "We understand [they say], but you are needed there".

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Siarhei Aleinik in an interview with the Kremlin's *RIA Novosti* stated that "sooner or later" negotiations with Ukraine will resume and that Minsk is ready to accept them. Once again Aleinik [underlined](#) that Belarus is a peace-loving country:

*“According to our Constitution, no aggression can be committed from the territory of Belarus. These are postulates that are immutable”.*

But obviously, Aleinik did not bring it up that in 2022 Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine was conducted also from the territory of Belarus.

Officials are echoed by propagandists. The very same Ihar Tur stated all Ukrainians “cannot be called enemies”, even though there are plenty of “scumbag Nazis”. In his [opinion](#), Ukrainians “remain our brothers”, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine “are tied for centuries” and the USA is to blame for the war:

*“Not the Ukrainians are enemies, but Nazis, and they might be of any nationality. Russia fights with the Collective West in Ukraine, in general – with the USA, which... are pitting Russians and Ukrainians against each other and want to involve Belarusians in the conflict”.*

## **Ukrainian Children**

On May 30, Russian “President” Putin presented awards for “outstanding personalities of Russia”. Surprisingly, Belarusian Aliaksei Talai was among these people. Talai is a famous Paralympian and director of a charitable foundation of Aliaksei Talai, who is engaged among other things in the illegal transfer of Ukrainian children from Russia’s occupied territories to Belarus. In his speech after receiving the award, Talai [turned](#) to Putin and promised “not to disappoint”:

*“We are proud that you and our leader Aliaksandr Grigorievich Lukashenka hold the line so brotherly! And the third bogatyr, Novorossiya, will return to us one day! We are Russians! God is with us!”*

In January 2023 Ukraine imposed sanctions against Talai for transfer of Ukrainian children and in 2024 Talai and his Foundation landed on the European sanctions list. The EU Council considers that Talai’s Foundation carries out “the ideological processing of Ukrainian children”.

## *THE COLLECTIVE WEST, MOLDOVA, AND GEORGIA*

The efforts of propagandists are aimed at discrediting the West. Most news from democratic countries is presented to the audience in a hostile and mocking way. Sometimes hatred of the West seems irrational and acquires comically horrible images:

*“About renouncing Europe. The evil, vile, satanic Europe. It must be renounced. Stomp on the Schengen visa. Burn your Polish card. Spit on the West. And look up to the sky. And there are our Ancestors.”* – stated Ryhor Azaronak on air of STV channel’s show [“Tainye pruzhyny politiki”](#) [Secret Springs of politics].

## **Poland**

The main “Polish” storyline of 2024 became the case of a Polish judge Tomasz Szmydt, who fled to Belarus. Later, after the investigation of Polish Security Services, it became known, that Szmydt had security clearance for secret information and, possibly, was agent of Belarusian (and Russian) special services. Propaganda used this case for further discreditation of Poland. [Aliaksandr Lukashenka](#):

*“We investigated it – he is a normal, patriot Pole. Colleagues never said anything bad about him. But this [escape] is a kick in the butt to whom – to the Polish government. They start [talking] traitor. He is not a traitor. He looks at things realistically, compares Poland and Belarus, and draws consequences.”*

Quickly the escapee Szmydt became part of the propaganda. After his arrival in Belarus, he voiced a series of propagandistic clichés during the press conference. For example, the USA and Great Britain [“strive to drag Poland into war”](#) and called on the Polish side



to [restore dialogue](#) with Russia and Belarus. Szmydt became a frequent guest of the state media. For example, TV channel *Belarus-1* actively advertises an interview with him “on working methods of foreign special services, mass media and life threat due to strong position and unwillingness to close the eyes before sacrificing Poland’s National interests for the benefit of the USA or Great Britain”.

In an interview with the propagandist Yauhen Horyn Szmydt [stated](#) that “90% of Polish mercenaries returned in coffins from Ukraine”.

In an article with *Belarus Segodnya* on May 17, propagandist Liudmila Hladkaya [called](#) Polish high officials “traitors and criminals” for accusing of espionage and betrayal of the homeland those who want to “*live in friendship with neighbors, cooperating as before in economic, cultural and other spheres*”.

Piotr Piatrouski, pro-state, and pro-Russian “political scientist” in his article with *SB. Belarus Segodnya* [elaborated](#) on the non-independence of Poland:

*“Local elites are guided not by national, but by the Euro-Atlantic interests of Washington and Brussels. Therefore, Poland acts not as a sovereign and independent state, but as an instrument of the American and European Union policy towards Belarus and Russia”.*

## Lithuania

In May, the *Belarus-1* channel broadcast a prank interview with Giedrimas Jeglinskas, a candidate for the Lithuanian presidency. To talk to the politician, the “journalists” introduced themselves as correspondents of the Russian independent publication *Meduza*. The [announcement of the program](#) called the candidates “puppets” and insinuated that they were defending the interests of the United States rather than their own country:

*“For more than 30 years of so-called “independence,” Lithuania has turned from a showcase of a once great country into a doormat at NATO’s door. Trained puppets are at the helm. Instead of economic support – militarization and transformation into a military bridgehead. The trend is toward mopping up for the sake of America’s greatness”.*

On the eve of Lithuania’s presidential election, Belarusian propaganda gave their own estimates on the outcome of the election. For instance, on the voting day the Minister-Counselor of the Embassy of Belarus in Russia Aliaksandr Shpakouski [wrote](#) that no significant change after the Lithuanian presidential election should be expected. According to him, the personality of the winner doesn’t matter as “Vilnius is ironcladly subordinated to the United States and is used by Washington to inflame tensions in the region,” and “Lithuania’s anti-Belarusian activity will only intensify in the 2024-2025 perspective”.

MP Vadzim Hihin also [tried](#) to blame Lithuania for not being self-reliant:

*“Renowned expert on the Baltic Region Aliaksandr Nosovich even ironically suggested changing the Head of State of Lithuania into Artificial Intelligence. Saying, that he will obediently follow orders coming from Washington, foment Russophobia, and rattle weapons”.*

Pro-state politician Aleh Haidukevich [called](#) on his channel Lithuanian and Latvian leadership “so-called presidents” and said they are “nobodies”, whereas “the fate of the world depends on Putin and Lukashenka is defending the country’s national interests”.

## **Slovakia. Assassination attempt on Prime Minister Robert Fico**

Propaganda spread the conspiracy theory that the assassination attempt on Fico was organized by NATO, the European Union, and the USA because he was “against military support for Ukraine”. The pro-government media claimed that “[the West is cracking down on the unwanted](#)”, “[Washington and Brussels wanted to eliminate an inconvenient politician](#)”, that the assassination attempt was a “[special operation of Western intelligence services](#)” and so on.

“Political scientist” Vadzim Yalfimau on the air of *Alfa Radio* [stated](#) that only two “sound” leaders are left in Europe, who “openly contradict dragging the EU and NATO into the war against Russia and Belarus” – these are Viktor Orban (Prime Minister of Hungary) and Robert Fico.

In the hot aftermath of the assassination attempt, Russian State Duma deputy Andrei Krasov [proposed](#) to create a commission in the “Union State” of Belarus and Russia to investigate terrorist attacks, war crimes, and acts of aggression against the “Union State” to “prevent and destroy the plans of our enemy – the collective West”.

## **Moldova**

Russian regime made Moldova the new foreign policy target already at times when in December 2020 the elected Moldovan President Maia Sandu declared the political course of the country towards Europe and NATO membership. The tone of Russian policy is set, primarily, by the high officials under leadership of the “president” Vladimir Putin. In 2023 and 2024, for example, Putin has already met several times, bypassing the Moldovan authorities, with the head of the autonomous territory of Gagauzia, Eugenia Gutsul. Gutsul claims that the Moldovan authorities are allegedly oppressing the inhabitants of Gagauzia, and Putin’s support for “separatist” regions seeks to divide society and weaken the Moldovan state.

Also, other “heavyweights” of Putin’s regime elaborate on the topic. For example, in May, Director of Russia’s FSB Alexandr Bortnikov said that NATO drags Moldova into military confrontation with Russia and Belarus.

*“We can see how the tools of external governance work in the example of Moldova. The Moldovan authorities have lost their political independence. Moreover, today Chisinau is facing the question of abandoning its national identity and statehood in general. The Alliance is dragging Moldova into a military confrontation with Russia and Belarus”.*

Bortnikov’s words were [quoted](#) by the Belarusian state news agency *BelTA* and other Belarusian propagandists disseminated them further.

However, the Lukashenka regime carries out its own, independent from the Kremlin, policy of pressure on Moldova. In May, the Belarusian Embassy in Chisinau opened a photo exhibition “Sovereign Belarus” in the capital of the autonomy of Gagauzia, Comrat. The announcement of the exhibition says that it is timed to the Independence Day of Belarus and the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from Nazi invaders. Speaking at the opening ceremony, honorary consul of Belarus Kanstantsin Sibau talked about the establishment of “close economic ties” in Gagauzia, bypassing official Chisinau:

*“On the territory of Gagauzia, we have set up two assembly shops for Belarusian tractors, which allowed us to have equipment at a favorable price. I hope that we will continue our fruitful cooperation and develop our relations further”.*

First Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee of Gagauzia Ilya Uzun noted that “it is Belarus that sets the right vector of development”:

*“Belarus is one of the few republics that gained real independence. The Belarusian people have a core. We have a lot to learn. We are making only the first steps, and Belarus sets the right vector.”*

## Georgia

Belarusian propagandists, following their Kremlin handlers, enthusiastically welcomed the adoption in May in Georgia of the law on transparency of external financing, which is called “Russian” because of its similarity to the Russian law on “foreign agents”.

Anton Papou, columnist of the newspaper [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#):

*“For many years, this state [Georgia] has been a reliable conductor of Western policy in the region. ...The law on foreign agents has become such a sore subject for the US, the EU, and their local puppets that the entire arsenal of means is used to pressure Georgia – from blackmail to attempts to organize a “color revolution”.*

On May 14, propagandist Yury Tserakh spoke out in his channel about the protests against the law in Georgia. He mockingly sympathizes with the protesters, as “they are all being filmed, even from the videos that can be found on the Internet, it is not difficult to determine their identities”. The propagandist promises the Georgian protesters “a roller of repression that will soon start rolling the naive dreams of unique snowflakes into the asphalt”.

## Iran. Death of a President Ebrahim Raisi

On May 20, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus [expressed its condolences](#) on the accidental death of the President of Iran Ebrahim Raisi, and other high officials following the aircraft crash, underlining that **“true friends of Belarus have died”**.

In a condolence message sent to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Aliaksandr Lukashenka also [called](#) Raisi **“a true friend of Belarus”** and emphasized that the “active work and decisive steps” of the people who died in the crash *“ensured the proper position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the world, contributed to the strengthening and growth of the high status of the state in the international arena.”*

As usual, Lukashenka blamed the West for the catastrophe, as the USA and other countries sanction Iran:

*“As a person, not as a President, I will say this: the vile, repulsive attitude of the United States has led to this [to the avia catastrophe]. These scumbags had no right to impose sanctions on ships, airplanes, helicopters, and other means of transport that are used to carry people... This is why they are also to blame”.*

For this, Lukashenka [threatened](#), that some kind of God’s punishment would be sent down on the guilty parties:

*“He [God] will send them a response. This is not the way the world behaves. This once again confirms what Russia and others who support it are doing today with the destruction of the unipolar world.”*

Propagandists took the words of their bosses. Maryna Karaman, presenter of the TV channel *ONT* on her [personal Telegram channel](#):

*“If this is the case, there is no doubt that it is assassination. The hunt for the leaders of truly independent states has begun in earnest”.*

Aliaksei Dzermant, [personal Telegram channel](#):

*“Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and the country’s Foreign Minister were killed in a helicopter crash.... Against the background of recent events in the region, the helicopter crash does not look accidental”.*

## New Threats

Tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) continue to be used to intimidate the West. In early May, Belarus held joint military exercises with Russia, during which the practice of managing and using TNWs was practiced. Lukashenka [spoke](#) extensively on this issue, emphasizing that “we are not doing anything wrong”:

*“We are not doing anything special. We are preparing training. We must be ready. The world is unstable and dangerous. We cannot miss this blow, as we did in the middle of the last century [probably referring to World War II]. But we are not escalating the situation: we don't need war. ...But we keep our powder dry – it's no big deal”.*

ONT TV presenter Ihar Tur on air of the TV show “Propaganda” stated that Belarus is preparing for war – but exclusively so that “it wouldn't start against us”. He is [confident](#) that “there will be no war”, because in case of an attack on Belarus, the enemy will suffer inevitable damage, as Lukashenka is ready to give the order to strike.

Vadzim Hihin follows the same version. The MP writes in his [column](#) in *SB. Belarus Segodnya*:

*“Russian Tactical nuclear weapon is on the territory of Belarus. ...I am sure nobody in the West doubts that Aliaksandr Lukashenka has enough political will to defend his people. However, we do not want to do this, this is why we say: don't intervene in our affairs, don't infringe Belarus, the price will be too high”.*

On May 31, reacting to the statement of Lithuania's Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis that Ukraine has the right to strike with Western weapons on military objects on Russian territory, pro-government politician Aleh Haidukevich [said](#) that in case of an attack on Belarus, which “doesn't want war”, they “will hit on centers of decision making, and won't hesitate”.

### SANCTIONS

Despite Minsk's assurances that the sanctions were useless, as they had no impact on the country's economy and even stimulated domestic production, representatives of the regime continue to lament the restrictions imposed by the West.

For instance, on May 20, during the meeting with the KGB Chiefs Lukashenka was very [offended](#) about the blocking of Baltic ports for Belarus:

*“Practically this is economic diversion and war against Belarus. It breaches all international contracts and agreements. They have obligations to us as a landlocked country. They have no right to block us. This is an international agreement. But you know what is going on”.*

In May, the topic of “sanctions pressure” was also raised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Siarhei Aleinik. In a conference of the Shanghai Organization for Cooperation he [called](#) on the member states for solidarity and expressed his hope for further “constructive cooperation” in opposing sanctions.

In a speech at a meeting of the Council of Defense Ministers of the CSTO member states, Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin said that “U.S.-led Western countries” are actively aimed at “introducing unprecedented discriminatory measures aimed at isolation and deterioration of the economic situation, as well as waging a large-scale information war”.

**iSANS continues to follow the main storylines of Belarusian and Russian propaganda in 2024.**