

Belarus Propaganda Update

Monthly review of Belarusian and Russian propaganda targeted at
Belarus

#9. June 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

BELARUS AND THE "UNION STATE"

- Preparations for the 2025 presidential elections are underway. Lukashenka has a personal interest in ensuring that the upcoming voting does not resemble the 2020 elections, which ended in mass protests.
- As elections approach, the "cult of personality" of the "leader" is being strengthened, with the image of the "father of the nation," the only uncontested candidate, and the "peacemaker president" being created.
- In June, the concept of the "Belarusian world" was presented, modeled on the concept of the "Russian world."
- During his visit to Mongolia, Lukashenka articulated the Kremlin's narrative, justifying the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Belarus' complicity in it.

THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN BELARUS

- Supporters of democratic change remain the main target for propaganda of the Lukashenka regime. To discredit them, various methods of are being employed, including intimidation, provocations, manipulation, disinformation, and fake news.
- The Belarusian State University Lyceum was renamed in honor of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the KGB. Many, including propagandists themselves, believe that this was done in retaliation for the lyceum's independent position and for its students' participation in peaceful protests in 2020.

UKRAINE

- Following Lukashenka's statement that "there is no need to bully Ukraine," there has been some softening of aggressive anti-Ukrainian rhetoric in Belarusian propaganda.
- The peace conference on Ukraine, held in Switzerland, produced a negative reaction among pro-Kremlin propagandists. They argued that the "peace summit" failed because Russia and Belarus were not represented.
- The regime's propaganda reacted extremely aggressively to Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis' statement that Russian military facilities on the territory of Belarus are a legitimate target for Ukraine.
- State media continue to hush up numerous Russian strikes on peaceful cities that have led to numerous casualties, as well as war crimes by the Russian

military in Ukraine. At the same time, Ukrainian retaliatory strikes are covered loudly and aggressively, calling them “terrorist acts.”

- In June, the Belarusian media actively developed a new narrative that Ukraine is supposedly preparing an attack on Belarus.

THE “COLLECTIVE WEST”

- The expansion of right-wing and conservative forces in the European Parliament following the June elections has sparked enthusiasm among propagandists who believe that new parties will help reduce aid to Ukraine.
- In June, state media actively discussed the migration crisis on the border with Poland. The death of a Polish border guard, killed by migrants, was presented by propagandists as another provocation of the West.
- The Lukashenko regime continues to complain about sanctions against Belarus.
- Authoritarian regimes are attempting to steal the human rights agenda from democratic countries. In June, the Foreign Ministries of Russia and Belarus released a joint report “on human rights violations” in the West.
- Statements by propagandists continue to threaten the West with nuclear weapons.

ARMENIA

- In the military conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Lukashenka openly sided with Azerbaijan, which gave the Armenian government a reason to make several harsh statements regarding Belarus. In June, Armenia and its Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan briefly became the main foreign policy target for insulting attacks by Belarusian propaganda.

NORTH KOREA

- Vladimir Putin’s visit to Pyongyang and the conclusion of a strategic partnership agreement between Russia and North Korea were presented by Belarusian and Russian propaganda as a major geopolitical achievement.

BELARUS AND THE “UNION STATE”

- *Regarding the 2025 presidential elections*

The approaching elections are increasingly concerning for Belarus' top authorities and their loyal supporters. The frequency and uneasiness of references to the upcoming vote in the media, including from the lips of the “presidential candidate” Aliaksandr Lukashenka himself, suggests that the regime perceives the elections as a period of inevitable turbulence and a test of strength, for which advance preparation is required. Lukashenka's worst nightmare is a repeat of the protests of 2020 when hundreds of thousands of citizens dissatisfied with the rigged results of the elections took to the streets. Therefore, the regime is already making efforts to eliminate any possible “problems.”

At a meeting with the head of the Central Election Commission, Ihar Karpenka, on June 11, Lukashenka ordered that “the 2025 election campaign [be organized] with dignity” so that “things would go without a hitch.” At the same time, he admitted directly that it was necessary earlier to rely on “administrative resources” during elections, but this time there will be no such need (apparently because the opposition and media landscape has already been scorched by political repression over the past few years):

“We have no need (as was the case in previous years) to apply pressure or use administrative resources. We can conduct these elections fairly and decently.”
(As quoted by [BeltTA](#))

Preparations for the elections most likely explain the government reshuffles that took place in mid-June, specifically the appointment of a well-known ideologist of the Lukashenka regime – head of the board of the propaganda television channel ONT, Marat Markov – as Belarus' Minister of Information. The Ministry of Information is the main ideological body responsible for censorship and regulation of the media; a kind of “ministry of truth.” Before his appointment, Markov not only headed the channel but also hosted a political talk show called “Markov – Nothing Personal.”

Meeting with the “president,” Markov [stated](#) that his strategic task in his new post is to “ensure complete dominance in the media field within the country and disseminate information about Belarus abroad”:

“On the eve of the elections, a new media must be built. And thanks to the decisions that you [addressing Lukashenka] made, today the television channels have opportunities. But these capabilities need to be developed and expanded.”

To which the Belarusian “leader” sternly [responded](#):

“You will answer for opportunities with your head. **There's a lot of money there.** And you must continue the programs that you outlined.”

Other propagandists also discussed the role and place of the media in the run-up to the elections in June. For example, opinions are being expressed in defense of censorship and tightening of media laws. Aieg Haidukevich, a pro-government politician, [said in an interview](#) with Minsk-Novosti on June 7 that there is no need to be afraid of “**censorship; it's a good word.**”

- *Creating a “cult of personality” for Lukashenka*

In the run-up to elections, propaganda is working to strengthen the image of Lukashenka as the only uncontested candidate and the “peacemaker president,” thanks to whom peace and prosperity are maintained in Belarus.

The young propagandist of the state television channel STV, Grigoriy Azarenok, has been especially successful in this. In his praises to the “ruler” there are hints that not only Belarus, but also Russia owe their revival and greatness to Lukashenka, and that “Bat’ka” would be a suitable choice for the role of leader of the entire “union state”:

[“Lukashenka is a great Russian man.](#) A Slavic Leader. The Belarusian President. One of the leaders of the multipolar world. One of the gravediggers of the unjust satanic American order.”

“Aliaksandr Lukashenka is the [Russian Renaissance](#) and the Russian Reconquista.”

[“The first factor that returned](#) Russia to its proper place, to its great power, was the election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka.”

In June, a group of pro-government Belarusian writers approached Lukashenka with a request to write a book of memoirs or even an entire collection of essays. Such requests “from the public” are a practice of the “cult of personality,” common from Soviet times. The head of the pro-government Union of Writers of Belarus, Aliaksandr Karliukevich, “expressed hope” of the publishing of a collection of selected works by Lukashenka, and the honorary chairman of the Union, Nikolai Charhinets, [said](#) that the books of the “president” are “really needed by the people”.

The request by the “public” was personally [supported](#) by Lukashenka’s press secretary Natallia Eismont:

“A lot of people are coming to me with questions about the book that the president would write... We all understand how important this is. This is the first president of our country. And what he knows, of course, no one knows. I really hope, I really believe, that such a book or series of books will one day see the light of day.”

- *The concept of the “Belarusian world”*

Strengthening the cult of personality of the “leader” requires the creation of a universal ideology that would serve as a “binding agent” for all of society. In June, the concept of a “Belarusian world” like the Kremlin’s “Russian world” was presented. The introduction of this formula into circulation was solemnly announced by the Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NAS) Vladimir Gusakov.

[According to Gusakov](#), “the Belarusian world includes a system of national values – from ancient history and culture to the modern world order, including the traditional worldview of the people.” The historical path of Belarus, according to the head of NAS, has “exceptional features,” including **“a high degree of resistance of the Belarusian people to the destructive conditions of a transit existence.”** Thanks to these factors, “unique conditions have developed in Belarus for the creation of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-confessional society, a state with highly developed science, economy, culture, and a system of international relations – **what, without false modesty, should be called the Belarusian world.**”

A superficial comparison of the concepts of these two worlds – “Russian” and “Belarusian” – immediately reveals the differences in approach. If the first is largely extraterritorial in nature – i.e., goes beyond the borders of Russia ([“the Russian world is larger than Russia itself”](#)) and aimed at expanding “Russian” influence abroad (which, as we see, does not exclude the use of forcible seizure of foreign territories) – then the concept of the “Belarusian world,” on the contrary, is closer to a model of existence within the existing borders of Belarus and without any geopolitical claims.

The idea of a “Belarusian world” was enthusiastically picked up by full-time propagandists, including pro-government “political scientist” [Piotr Piatrouski](#):

“In my opinion, it is a very interesting and timely idea... There where the BELAZ dump truck, the MTZ tractor, and the Belkommunmash electric bus are driven and an agricultural town is being built, the friendship of peoples and religions blossoms – from Venezuela and Zimbabwe to the North Pole. There is the Belarusian world. I would not forget to add here a heightened sense of justice, because only a fair world order can be Belarusian.”

- *Lukashenka's visit to Mongolia*

On June 2, Aliaksandr Lukashenka flew to the capital of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, and met with Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh. At the meeting, he could not resist disseminating his authoritarian narrative there as well. He began to share with the president the “secrets” of long-term retention of power, [arguing](#) that it should not be ceded to anyone:

“Power must be tough and firm as a fist. No one holds power with their fingers outstretched.”

Also at the meeting, Lukashenka [expressed his dissatisfaction](#) with the way the Mongolian media are covering Russia’s war against Ukraine, especially Belarus’ complicity in it:

“I have read the whole range of [media]. I have especially paid attention to journalists from Mongolia. And I see that they are simply biased to one side. They do not see what’s happening... And this is thrown out into society. Don’t make us enemies of the Mongolian people. We are your closest friends and brothers. And [your] president and I will prove in the economy that we can do a lot here. No less so than the empires you border and with developed states.”

Then the “president” of Belarus [began to reiterate](#) standard Kremlin narratives to the President of Mongolia and his government ministers:

“The Russians don’t want this war. I know this well. Why not sit down at the negotiating table? Why not talk it out? The Americans want to drown Russia in this opposition and the war with Ukraine.”

“After the collapse of the USSR, there was an agreement that the West would not advance any power bloc to the Belarusian and Russian borders. But exactly the opposite happened. In Ukraine they began to create a springboard for an attack on Belarus and Russia.”

“The first to impose sanctions against us was Ukraine. Our dear friendly Ukraine. My roots are there. For what? The West demanded it. They imposed sanctions against us. We didn’t attack them, we didn’t assault them, we didn’t tell them how to live.”

Belarusian propaganda enthusiastically covered the visit of the Belarusian “ruler” to Mongolia. Vadzim Hihin, a deputy in the House of Representatives, on the program [Azarenok. Directly](#) on channel STV on June 5:

“Why did the Mongolian leadership invite Aliaksandr Lukashenka at this particular moment? Because Aliaksandr Lukashenka is a symbol of the fight against world hegemony. He is a symbol of resistance to foreign pressure.”

- *Propaganda news*

At the beginning of June, the creation of the pro-government Belarusian Society of Political Scientists was announced in Belarus. The association included government

officials, propagandists, media workers, pro-government “political scientists,” and “experts.”

[According](#) to the head of the Society of Political Scientists, Viktor Vaty, “it has been created so that the current government... receives through us an additional resource for theoretical, expert, and analytical support for the state program of implementation of domestic and foreign policy.”

At the beginning of June, the creation of a network of **Schools of Young Journalists** through the military-patriotic clubs of the internal troops of Belarus’ Ministry of Internal Affairs [was announced](#). Internal troops are units in the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs whose purpose is to suppress internal threats (unrest, instability, protests, riots, etc.) in Belarus.

On the occasion of the opening of the Schools of Young Journalists, participants and club leaders from different regions of the country were convened in Minsk “to discuss the details of future work.” In the capital, they met with propagandist Grigoriy Azarenok and “received their first journalistic assignment.”

Later, Azarenok [commented](#) on this on his page:

“We are starting a new big business... Children are eager to defend the President and the Fatherland not only with weapons in their hands, but also with words.”

On June 24, the European Union imposed sanctions on several Russian and Belarusian organizations and individuals, including the pro-government Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) and its chairman Aliaksandr Lukyanau. The reason for imposing sanctions on BRSM is the Union’s participation in organizing the illegal transfer of Ukrainian children to Belarus. Lukyanau himself, in an interview with the Russian pro-Kremlin publication RIA NOVOSTI, said that he and his associates [are proud](#) to be on “such an authoritative and representative” sanctions list along with “public figures” of the two countries.

Belarusian propagandists reacted to the EU decision with indignation. Aliaksandr Shpakousky, Minister-Counselor of the Embassy of Belarus in Moscow and participant in political talk shows on Russian and Belarusian television channels, [called](#) it a “theater of the absurd”:

“The elderly inhabitants of the Garden of Eden applaud those who kill children (supply deadly weapons, fire missiles) and discriminate against those who save lives.”

Deputy Vadzim Hihin went even further, [calling EU sanctions](#) against the Belarusian Republican Youth Union “**pure Satanism**.” He believes that BRSM “can only be congratulated on such a high assessment of its activities,” because, in his opinion, “if scoundrels and rogues reproach you, then you are doing a good deed.”

On June 28, news appeared that a number of propaganda media in Belarus received accreditation from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to cover the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris. The independent Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) [noted that](#), among others, were the state publications *BelTA* and *SB. Belarus Today*, some of whose employees are included in the EU sanctions lists. It is known that some representatives of *SB. Belarus Today* together with security forces

participated in interrogations of people detained during the peaceful protests in Belarus in 2020.

In response to a request from the independent Belarusian publication Zerkalo, the IOC [said](#) that media accreditation for the Games is the prerogative of national Olympic committees (NOCs), in this case, the NOC of Belarus, “whose activities, unlike the activities of the Russian NOC, have not been suspended.”

On June 28, Lukashenka’s press secretary Natallia Eismont [spoke](#) on state television *Belarus 1* about plans to launch a new media channel. According to her, the project “will become a landmark for the entire media sphere of the country.”

On June 14, at a meeting with the leadership of Belarus’ Council of Ministers, Lukashenka, speaking about the fight against corruption, [threw in an anti-Semitic comment](#):

“Today, three dozen people have been brought [to justice]. Excuse me, I’m not an anti-Semite, but more than half [of them] are Jews. Is it that they occupy a special privileged position among us, that they steal and don’t think about their future? Everyone is equal before the law – Jews, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Russians, and Poles. If they’re guilty, they’ll go to prison.”

Lukashenka’s statement was aired on the *Belarus 1* television channel but was not published by his press service.

BELARUS’ DEMOCRATIC FORCES

Leaders of the Belarusian opposition and supporters of democratic change remain the “number-one target” for Lukashenka’s state propaganda. The regime’s media has not ceased to discredit them, using various methods of media attacks, including provocations, manipulation, disinformation, fake news, and more.

- *Naming the BSU Lyceum after Felix Dzerzhinsky*

The ideological machine of the authoritarian regime is feebly trying to take revenge on those who took to the streets and demanded change in 2020. This includes the renaming of the Lyceum of Belarusian State University (BSU) in honor of Felix Dzerzhinsky, which took place in mid-June, which can be seen as nothing other than revenge on an entire educational institution for having taken an independent position. Dzerzhinsky is the founder of the punitive organs of the USSR, including the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission (Cheka), predecessor to the KGB.

In 2020, more than a thousand graduates of this lyceum supported protests against the rigging of the presidential elections. Many of them were detained. After the suppression of the protests, at least 15 teachers were fired from the lyceum.

Pro-government “experts” commented on this event gloatingly and themselves seem to consider it revenge on the lyceum. Vadzim Hihin, deputy, [personal Telegram channel](#), June 17:

“Great news! A continuation of great historical and educational work in our country... It is no secret that a very conflicting situation has developed in the BSU Lyceum for many years. That’s putting it mildly. There was a very definite leaning there. We now call it simply and bluntly: there was *bchbeshniy*¹ bias.

¹ “*Bchbeshniy*” comes from the first letters of the Belarusian for white – red – white (“b” – “ch” – “b”), or the colors of the flag of a free Belarus, symbolizing opposition to the regime.

Now the situation is changing before our eyes, which is good news. **The name of Dzerzhinsky will become a symbol of positive change.**"

Propagandist Aliaksandr Shpakousky [called](#) the naming of the Lyceum after Dzerzhinsky "one of the most creative ideas of the Belarusian government implemented in the area of state ideological policy in recent years."

In mid-June, Poland deported Belarusian citizen Dzmitry Smaktunovich from the country. He was brought to the Polish-Belarusian border and left there. Smaktunovich refused to cross to the Belarusian side for several days and was in the neutral zone of the border checkpoint. Propagandists did not miss the chance to gloatingly laugh at the "defector," falsely presenting him as a participant in the protests, although Smaktunovich was not a participant. He was forced to leave the EU for violating the law and did not want to move to Belarus because he still had a wife and children in Poland.

Roman Rud from the newspaper [SB. Belarus Today](#) on June 20:

"So, were the crazy races in 2020 [meaning the peaceful protests of 2020] that make the fugitives afraid to return home worth it? First they were left without passports, now without work. Soon they will be without property that will be confiscated in Belarus. And without a piece of bread. Without a homeland. Without rights (and not just the right to drive). Without future."

Some Belarusians who left are "suffering behind the cordon," the head of the House of Representatives of Belarus' National Assembly, Ihar Sergeyenka, said on June 13 in an [interview](#) with the Soyuznoye Veche newspaper:

"There is no need to view everyone [who left] as enemies. Some of them are simply lost. Many have already realized how difficult it is there, in a foreign land, to find oneself, find a job, and take their place in life."

He called on Belarusians "not to be afraid to return home" and reminded them that there is a special return commission working in the country.

- *Ihar Tur's "Manifesto of Submission"*

Pro-government ONT television presenter Ihar Tur [published](#) a long text on his Telegram channel, which describes how, in his opinion, a real opposition should behave if it really wants to achieve any change. Briefly, the Tur model can be described with the words "not to demand, but to ask," and the name "manifesto of submission" is fitting for the text. In this text, Tur not for the first time openly admits that the regime in Belarus is authoritarian. Here are the most striking excerpts:

"A strong government cannot allow demands to be made on it. And even more so, a strong government should under no circumstances meet any demands, even the most reasonable and appropriate ones."

"One of the rules of successful strong government... is very simple. You hear the words "I demand!" and **you repress the person demanding right away**, without even listening to the essence of the demands and without even having time to assess whether you agree with the demands or not."

"Whatever the issue on which some citizens do not conditionally agree with the government's decision, it is extremely stupid to attend some kind of protest to attract the attention of the President – that is, a strong **authoritarian** government – to demand something."

"With this 'I demand' you are depriving yourself of the opportunity to get what you absolutely correctly want to achieve, and you are taking away from the

President the tools to help you. **Ask. Offer. Initiate...** But never demand. What's so complicated about that?"

Tur was [supported](#) by the Telegram channel Grafach, which may be run by the new Minister of Information Marat Markov:

"I think everyone understands this perfectly well. **Especially the fugitives who 'demand' the release of the so-called 'political prisoners.'** It's simple, the more... these impostors demand something from the legitimate authorities, the less likely it is that this will happen at all."

UKRAINE

- *Softening of anti-Ukrainian rhetoric*

In June, iSANS monitoring recorded a slight softening of propaganda rhetoric towards Ukraine and, in general, a decrease in the number of mentions of Ukraine in broadcasts and articles by Belarusian state publications. We attribute this decline directly to Lukashenka's speech at the Belarus Media Forum in Gomel at the end of May, during which he reprimanded propagandists, telling them to stop "bashing" Ukraine. Literally the "head" of Belarus then [said](#) the following:

"Don't forget that at some point we will have to establish relations with them. This is our neighbor, our relative. And I am sure that those who speak harshly about Ukraine do not understand that the overwhelming majority in Ukraine are normal people."

State media employees immediately rushed to carry out the boss's order. The most cunning of them went even further and began to praise Lukashenka for the directive.

In an episode of the program *Speak, Don't Be Silent* aired on the Belarus 1 channel, the head of the pro-government Union of Journalists Andrei Krivosheyev [said](#) that some journalists should "tone it down a little and not make generalizations" about Ukraine:

"The Union of Journalists has received dozens of complaints about our colleagues who are conducting emotional opinion journalism," and since people are "really paying attention, it concerns them."

Aleh Haidukevich, another pro-government sycophant who is a regular guest on propaganda talk shows, even [told a family story](#) to the BelTA news agency:

"I sometimes see experts who permit themselves to say bad things about all Ukrainians. But this is not true. My grandmother is from Odessa. And I know that Ukrainians are good people. Bad peoples or nations do not exist."

"Ukrainians must understand one truth. And I think that smart Ukrainians know it. **The only ones who wish them peace are us, Belarusians and Russians [!!].** Because we live here, next door. We don't need war."

At the same time, propaganda outlets are increasingly heard calling for peace negotiations. The emphasis is always on the fact that Belarus "has always wanted peace" and therefore can and should become a negotiating platform. Belarus' Minister of Foreign [Siarhei Aleinik](#):

"Since 2014, the word 'Minsk' has become a symbol of persistent attempts to find a peaceful solution to the Ukrainian conflict and revamp the European security system."

- *Peace Conference on Ukraine in Switzerland*

The peace summit on Ukraine held in Switzerland in mid-June gave rise to numerous indignant statements from Belarusian state media. Following their Russian

colleagues from state media, they repeated the idea that no negotiations without Russia are possible (despite the fact that Russia [has repeatedly stated](#) that it will not go to the conference, even if invited), and all decisions of the summit without Russia's (and Belarus') participation are irrelevant.

Aliaksandr Tishchenka in an [article for SB. Belarus Today](#) noted that some conference participants were united by "rabid Russophobia":

"The 'Peace Summit' in Switzerland predictably did not uncover non-military tools to end the war... Because only Russia losing is a fair outcome for them."

Columnist for the newspaper *SB. Belarus Today* Anton Papou, in the article "[Empty chatter: the peace conference in Switzerland failed as expected](#)," noted that despite the belligerent position of Western "hawks" who are "ready to fight until the last Ukrainian," the failure of the meeting in Bürgenstock was "expected" and "deafening" because they failed to develop a common position with the countries of the Global South.

Anton Papou, propagandist, [SB. Belarus Today](#), June 18:

"Last weekend, a widely publicized summit took place in Bürgenstock, Switzerland, which the West tried to present as the beginning of the peace process in Ukraine... However, this could not be achieved and the meeting turned into empty chatter."

Vadzim Hihin, deputy, [personal Telegram channel](#), June 17:

"The Bürgenstock Conference failed, but there is still a lot of work to be done before victory... The West is not going to give in. Therefore, maximum concentration and expansion of international cooperation are required from Russia and Belarus."

- *Gabrielius Landsbergis: "Ukraine has the right to attack Belarus"*

On May 31, 2024, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said that Ukraine has the right to strike the territory of other countries where Russian military installations may be located:

"If Russia, fearing that [its military] facilities might be attacked, can move them somewhere else, then I think the selection of targets needs to be moved."

Landsbergis did not say this directly, but commentators from the Lukashenka regime logically interpreted this statement about Belarus, since there are no other similar territories near Ukraine. Ksenia Lebedeva, employee of the Belarus 1 television channel, in her [personal Telegram channel](#):

"The head of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry simply forgets the other side of what he is considering. Based on his logic, Russia has the right to strike at countries that repair military equipment of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other armed formations of Ukraine..."

At the same time, the propagandist once again tried to justify Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. According to her, one of the reasons for the launch of the so-called "special military operation" (SVO) is precisely NATO's advance towards the borders of Russia:

"From the lips of both diplomats and the President of Russia, the phrase was repeatedly heard that 'we must protect ourselves' by not allowing NATO to the borders of Russia. But, in this case, Russia acted – according to the rhetoric of the West – as an aggressor."

[Aliaksandr Shpakousky:](#)

“Why does the head of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry make such statements? We understand that Lithuania is trying to... please the American leadership. That is, the role of Lithuania in the international arena for many years has been to be significantly ahead in its Russophobia of those opponents of Russia who are opponents of Moscow at the strategic level.”

- *Response to missile attacks*

Propaganda resources continue to ignore Russia’s daily rocket attacks on Ukrainian cities and civilian targets and the death and suffering of hundreds of Ukrainian civilians as a result of war crimes by Russian troops. However, when there are retaliatory strikes on military targets in Russia or in occupied zones, state media immediately and loudly shout about terrorist acts by Ukraine.

On June 23, Ukraine fired missiles at the Russian military airfield of Sevastopol in occupied Crimea. As a result of the work of Russian air defense, one of the missiles was shot down and exploded over a beach where tourists were relaxing. As a result, several people died and more than a hundred were injured.

Almost all Belarusian and Russian propagandists reported on the attack. Most of them, as if following instructions, blamed not only Ukraine, but also the U.S. and other Western countries for the “terrorist attack.”

Propagandist and diplomat at the Belarusian embassy in Moscow, Aliaksandr Shpakousky, [suggested](#) that “all terrorists are controlled from one center,” including those who carried out the “strike on the beach.” In his opinion, both events occurred within the framework of “missions to destabilize the situation in Russia and spread panic and protest sentiments against the authorities.”

- *“Ukraine is preparing an attack on Belarus”*

At the end of June, Belarusian propaganda began to develop a new storyline about the alleged preparation of “Ukraine and NATO for an attack on Belarus.” The primary source of these statements were the words of Belarus’ Chief of the General Staff Pavel Muraveiko. Speaking on June 29 on the ONT state television channel, [Muraveiko said](#):

“Literally in recent weeks, we have been observing activity that is so far baseless and still incomprehensible to us near our borders with Ukraine... We are forced to move our units there... occasionally moving artillery and [needing to] be able to react. And we wouldn’t want our southern neighbor to fall for someone’s directives and try to test the Belarusians.”

Such statements may well indicate the opposite, that is a possible preparation by Belarus of a military provocation on the border, which would become a reason for the re-opening of the “northern front” and the invasion of Russian and Belarusian troops from Belarus into Ukraine.

It should be noted that in 2021-22 it was precisely this kind of rhetoric from the Russian media that served as a signal for preparations for Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2024. Then the Kremlin [claimed](#) that Russia had launched a so-called “special military operation” to protect the occupied territories of Donbass from the supposed aggression of Ukraine and NATO.

Anton Popov, propagandist, newspaper [SB Belarus Today](#):

“NATO is preparing to fight... A sign of an impending storm is the use of Ukraine as a battering ram against Russia and as a constantly unnerving factor against Belarus. **The raison d’être of the Kyiv regime... is to inflict as much damage as possible on Moscow without the direct participation of NATO countries.**”

Nikolai Buzin, deputy of the House of Representatives and “political scientist,” [BelTA](#):

“In essence, another anti-Russian alliance has been created and is functioning in Europe, the combat core of which is the revived neo-Nazi state, and the military-technical base is NATO.”

iSANS continues to closely monitor the statements of Belarusian propagandists and officials.

THE “COLLECTIVE WEST”

Regarding elections to the European Parliament

Propaganda outlets actively commented on the results of the European Parliament elections held in June. The range of opinions can be described as “conciliatory” (“[We are ready to work with everyone](#)” – Aliaksandr Shpakousky) to aggressively hostile (“[The past elections to the European Parliament](#) showed the true face of Western ‘democracy’” – Vadzim Hihin).

In general, Belarusian media welcomed the expansion of right-wing and conservative forces in this EU representative body. Not least of all, this is due to hopes that European countries will focus more on solving their national problems and less on helping Ukraine. Andrey Bogodel, head of the educational and methodological department of the Faculty of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Army, in an [interview with BelTA](#) (June 10):

“Yes, perhaps it was the nationalists [who won the EP elections]. Perhaps there is no place to put a mark on them. But the problems of Ukraine will worry them least of all. They will be concerned about the problems of their own states. And this is very good for us. And it’s very bad for that ‘party of war’ that is trying to aggravate the conflict in Ukraine.”

Vadzim Hihin, deputy of Belarus’ House of Representatives, [personal Telegram channel](#) (June 10):

“We didn’t expect anything different from these elections. There were no illusions. For example, experts assumed that the Alternative for Germany would take second place in their country, ahead of Scholz’s Social Democrats. But this means nothing, since the ‘Alternative’ was isolated, demonized, and blocked.”

- *Migration crisis and the murder of a Polish border guard*

During the first half of 2024, groups of migrants from Asian and African countries continued to attempt to storm and cross the EU border from Belarus. This led to numerous clashes between refugees and Polish border forces. In June, tensions on the Polish-Belarusian border reached a breaking point after a group of migrants attacked Polish soldiers, one of whom subsequently died from his wounds. Belarusian propaganda tried to turn this incident to its advantage.

On June 7, the press secretary of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, Anatoliy Glaz, [said](#) that his department had received a note from the Poles regarding the death of the Polish soldier and called it “the politicization of a very specific issue.” Warsaw, according to Glaz, is trying to “justify itself to public opinion and shift responsibility.” At the same time, the official promised that the note “will be considered taking into account all the circumstances” despite the fact that Poland “rather loudly broke off cooperation with Belarus in the area of law enforcement.”

Immediately after the incident, a film crew from the state television channel Belarus 1, led by propagandist Kseniya Lebedeva, went to the Belarusian-Polish border, where they reported on the misfortunes and hardships of migrants, likely with the aim of

“interrupting” the news about the dead Polish soldier. In her report, Lebedeva talked about [“open border genocide](#) on the part of official Warsaw.”

Other Belarusian pro-government media were also pursuing the same goal – to “hijack” the agenda and shift the blame to the West.

Lyudmila Gladkaya, journalist for the newspaper [SB. Belarus Today](#):

“Border Euro-democracy has turned into a real death machine... Murders, beatings, and robberies of refugees have become the norm for the border guards of Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania.”

[According](#) to another “expert,” Piotr Piatrousky, the murder of a Polish soldier is “a typical media provocation against Belarus”:

“The soldier died. But most people with such injuries do not die if they have good outpatient treatment. Either their healthcare system works very poorly, or here we see a typical provocation, similar to what the Germans did when they attacked Poland.”

Grigory Azarenok, channel STV, [personal Telegram channel](#):

“The soldier’s death happened at a very timely moment for Duda’s clique... From all this one can clearly draw a conclusion. A POLISH SERVICEMAN WAS KILLED BY THE WARSAW RULING ELITE... And if not, in any case, the brutalization of refugees is the result of three years of atrocities [by Polish border guards].”

Aliaksandr Tishchenka, pro-government expert, [SB. Belarus Today](#):

“Poland was directly involved in the destruction and degradation of these eastern states and also stimulated large-scale migration waves into Europe.”

Deputy and guest of propaganda programs Aleh Haidukevich also placed all responsibility on the West, which was “engaged in the destruction of the countries of the Middle East, interfering in the affairs of other countries, and starting wars.” The pro-government politician sees a way out of this situation in restoring “normal relations” with Belarus and Russia:

“Poland won’t solve anything without us, they won’t do anything. We are ready for normal relationships, but on equal terms.”

For such “normalization,” the West, [according](#) to Haidukevich, must “stop sponsoring the [Belarusian] fifth column, stop preparing terrorist attacks and extremism, hand over all fugitive leaders to us here immediately... establish a normal relationship, and return international law to our relations. We don’t interfere in your elections and you don’t interfere in ours.”

The Polish defector, judge Tomasz Schmidt, who asked for political asylum in Belarus in May 2024, is also taking an active part in the “migration” campaign against the West. As expected, he quickly became the face of Lukashenka’s propaganda. [Speaking on Belarusian state television](#), Schmidt blames his country’s government for the refugee crisis:

“Stop the killings. It’s not Belarusians who are killing these people. This is being done by Polish border guards. However, the authorities in Warsaw do not need this. They benefit politically from the death and suffering of refugees.”

According to Diana Shibkovskaya from Minsk Pravda, [“the Americans are waging a hybrid war at the hands of the Poles](#), directed against Belarus.”

- *Regarding sanctions*

On June 13, at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Belarus, Valentin Rybakov, once again [criticized](#) Western countries for the sanctions imposed against the Lukashenka regime:

“We propose considering illegal unilateral sanctions not just economic terrorism, but acts of aggression with all ensuing consequences.”

He said that because of the sanctions, Belarus was left without some Western medicines, but immediately emphasized that the medicines were quickly replaced, so the sanctions are not worrying. At the same time, according to him, sanctions against Belarus “doom millions of people in the countries of the Global South to starvation”:

“A direct consequence of sanctions on Belarusian potash fertilizers, which amount to almost a third of global exports, was a significant decrease in yields in Africa.”

In conclusion, Rybakov from the UN podium began to [insult those present](#):

“Those who come up with unilateral sanctions have no brains. Those who use them have no heart. Those who justify sanctions have no conscience. It’s very sad that some people have all three of these qualities combined.”

Propaganda outlets enthusiastically commented on Rybakov’s performance. [Aliaksandr Shpakousky](#):

“The Permanent Representative of Belarus to the UN has branded ‘economic terrorists’ with shame... The damage from economic terrorism must be carefully calculated. Do not delay for 80 years the decision to initiate a criminal case of demonstrable genocide of the Belarusian people.”

Anton Popov, propagandist, [SB Belarus Today](#):

“NATO is preparing to fight... The first evidence of preparation for hostilities is the illegal sanctions that were introduced against Belarus and Russia under various pretexts.”

[Aliaksandr Volfovich](#), Secretary of State of Belarus’ Security Council:

“The inability of the collective Western countries to implement a military solution leads to their use of sanctions pressure on the economies of countries they consider undesirable.”

- *Regarding human rights in the West*

Authoritarian regimes are attempting to hijack the human rights agenda from democratic countries.

On June 20, the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Russia [presented](#) a joint report “On the situation with human rights in individual countries.” The report tells about “human rights violations” in 43 countries, including the EU, U.S., Australia, Japan, Ukraine, and others. The authors of the report state that special attention paid to “double standards” in the field of human rights, as well as “manifestations of racism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, and Russophobia.”

In the joint foreword to the report, Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Russia Yury Ambrazevich and Sergei Vershinin write that “the facts collected clearly demonstrate that Western “model democracies,” in principle, have been characterized by racist, neo-colonial views.”

Of course, such a document has purely propaganda value and is issued for an internal audience. The goal is to convince people that human rights are violated in the West, so any accusations thrown against Russia and Belarus are worthless.

- *Threats and peaceful statements*

Following reports that Belarus received tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) from Russia, for which there is still no clear and unambiguous evidence, the Lukashenka regime never misses an opportunity to brandish the “nuclear baton.”

In June, joint military exercises with Russia on the use of TNWs were held in Belarus. Belligerent statements from officials and propagandists on state television channels were heard almost every day during this period. At the same time, threats were surprisingly intertwined with assurances of peaceful intentions and Belarus’ “open door” for negotiations with the West.

On June 10, Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin [said](#) that military exercises with nuclear weapons are a response to “aggressive attacks” from the West:

“Today we are proactive, planning to increase our readiness to use so-called retaliatory weapons. More than ever, we are determined to respond to any threats that will be created both for our country and the Union State.”

But at the same time:

“We do not project relevant military threats onto third countries or anyone else. We are a peaceful state and we do not threaten anyone and do not seek confrontation with anyone. But we will keep the gunpowder dry.”

[Aliaksandr Shpakousky](#):

“Our position is that we are not brandishing a nuclear baton. But remembering the words of Vladimir Putin about what is the point of a world without Russia, I will add: and Belarus. We don’t need a world without Belarus. And we will defend ourselves.”

Aliaksandr Tishchenka, pro-government expert, [SB. Belarus Today](#):

“For any aggressive actions, we have provided a stop valve from all dangerous directions at once. After all, what stops enemies is not even the presence of nuclear weapons, but the readiness to use them when the time comes. And the more we train, the lower the chance that our enemies will break us.”

At the same time, Minsk constantly emphasizes that it “never threatens anyone.”

For example, Aliaksandr Lukashenka, speaking on June 18 before members of the Security Council, again [mentioned](#) that Belarus is “a peaceful country, always open to equal dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation”:

“We have never threatened anyone. Moreover, we openly communicate our approaches to everyone. Whoever wants to hear it will hear it.”

[Conciliatory motifs](#) are also heard in the words of propagandist Aliaksandr Shpakousky:

“For our country, we are certainly not talking about European politicians taking a pro-Belarusian position. It is quite obvious to us that a national leader in the average European state must take a position in the interests of their own country and their own people. But it is precisely on the agreement of national interests, on the readiness to defend a sovereign path, and with an understanding of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of third countries that we can find a common language and come to an agreement.”

ARMENIA

In June, diplomatic relations between Belarus and Armenia blew up in a way that propaganda could not ignore. The crisis occurred around the military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is a territory disputed by the two countries. Intense fighting took place there in 2020, resulting in Azerbaijan gaining control of most of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia was then outraged that it was not supported in the conflict by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), of which it is a member. In February 2024, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced the freeze of Armenia's membership in the organization and the suspension of payment of membership fees, and also promised that if the situation does not change, his country will leave the CSTO. In addition to Armenia, the CSTO includes Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan.

In May, the "president" of Belarus Aliaksandr Lukashenka openly sided with Azerbaijan, which is not a member of the CSTO. At a meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Lukashenka called the operation in Nagorno-Karabakh a "war of liberation" for Azerbaijan and wished him victory.

Lukashenka's position caused a new outburst of indignation in Armenia. On June 13, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that from now on, neither he nor any other official representative of Armenia will visit Belarus as long as Lukashenka remains president. The Armenian ambassador was recalled to Yerevan "for consultations."

Belarusian propaganda over those days poured tons of dirt and lies on Armenia and its prime minister, without mincing words. It explained as usual Pashinyan's "demarche" as a demand of "Western coordinators."

Pro-government "political scientist" Aliaxey Dzermant in his [personal Telegram channel](#):

"Nikol Pashinyan seems to be continuing his political hysteria for the second day... His problem is not Lukashenka, Russia and the CSTO. His main problem is the Armenian people, who do not want the country to be torn apart as a result of his adventurous political somersaults."

Anton Papou, propagandist, [SB. Belarus Today](#), June 13:

"Prime Minister Pashinyan is leading the train of Armenian statehood straight to disaster. Judging by the latest statements made by the head of the Armenian government, **Western coordinators** have given clear instructions to speed up the destruction of relations with Belarus and Russia... Attacks against our leader are the highest degree of nastiness on the part of the Prime Minister of Armenia. Aliaksandr Lukashenka has always tried to help Yerevan and Baku find a way out of their current situation."

Marina Karaman, columnist for the ONT television channel, in her [personal Telegram channel](#):

"Nikol Pashinyan ate too much henbane and said that he will not set foot in Belarus as long as our President is our president. We, of course, are publicly mourning the foot of this person, but the 'Batka betrayed me, that's why I let my country go' line will not work."

Vadzim Hihin, deputy, on his [personal Telegram channel](#):

"Pashinyan switched to direct insults. He said that he would not visit our country again. It's worth expressing gratitude to him. **The air in Belarus will be cleaner without him.**"

NORTH KOREA

The visit of the Russian “president” to the DPRK in June was covered solemnly in detail by Russian and Belarusian propaganda. On June 19, in Pyongyang, Putin and North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un signed a strategic partnership agreement, which was touted in Russia and Belarus as a great geopolitical achievement.

Belarusian Television journalist Mariya Petrashko, like many other propagandists, [wrote](#) about the creation of a new Russia-China-DPRK alliance:

“Stoltenberg [then NATO Secretary General] should think twice if it is it worth a full-scale attack on Russia with these kinds of allies.”

Of course, Lukashenka’s propagandists insist on including Belarus in this “union.” Vadzim Elfimou, pro-government political scientist, in [SB. Belarus Today](#):

“[Now] we need the Big Three again, only in a different composition – Russia, China, and Belarus. Why Belarus? Because Belarus and Russia together are the driver of Eurasian integration, which means they will become one in the New Big Three, breaking through to a multipolar and stable world order...”

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