

**“There is no need to shy away from the words
propaganda and counter-propaganda”**

Main trends in Belarusian and Russian propaganda directed at Belarus in the
second quarter of 2024



Analytical review



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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: Viktoria Sakharova

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROPAGANDA NARRATIVES:

1. BELARUS AND THE “UNION STATE”

- The upcoming **presidential elections in 2025** are gradually becoming the main factor influencing the Belarusian propaganda agenda. The Lukashenka regime is seeking to intensify propaganda and ideological work before the elections. These goals are served especially through the reshuffling of “ideological” positions in the government and the Presidential Administration.
- Belarusian propaganda continues to work determinedly to sacralize the image of Lukashenka as the “father of the nation” to whom there is no alternative in the elections while creating and supporting a “**cult of personality.**”
- On the eve of the elections, the “Belarusian world was created and popularized as a universal unifying “national idea.”
- “Creeping **re-Stalinization**” and the exploitation of nostalgia for the Soviet past continue through Belarusian state channels.

2. BELARUS’ DEMOCRATIC FORCES

- **Supporters of Belarus’ democratic transition** remain one of the primary targets of Lukashenka’s propaganda. Controlled state media are seeking any opportunity to discredit protest participants and political emigrants.
- In April–June, propaganda often threatened political emigrants with **confiscation of property.** New threats were also made against the **relatives of those still** in Belarus.
- In Belarus’ new military doctrine, adopted in May 2024, opponents of the current government are included among the “**internal military dangers.**”

3. UKRAINE

- During the period under review, a slight **softening of anti-Ukrainian rhetoric** was noted in Belarusian propaganda media along with a decrease in references to Ukrainian topics in general. Obviously, this is a result of Lukashenka’s direct appeal to state media journalists demanding less criticism of Ukraine. Another factor is the failure of the Russian army at the front in Ukraine and, in general, the failure of Putin’s objectives for the war.
- There are more and more **calls for peaceful negotiations** and statements being made that Ukraine is not a hostile country, but one that is close or even “native” to Belarusians. Lukashenka’s own “peaceful” statements show his irritation with the Kremlin’s ongoing attempts to drag Belarus into the war.
- In April–June, propaganda made a concerted effort to promote the myth of the “**illegitimacy**” of **Ukrainian President** Volodymyr Zelensky.
- Propaganda outlets negatively covered the preparations for and holding of the **peace conference on Ukraine**, held in Switzerland on June 15-16 (peace

summit in Ukraine). This was due to the fact that Russia and Belarus were not invited to participate. The irritation of the Lukashenka regime was intensified by the fact that the West determinedly does not want to see Belarus as a negotiating platform.

- Belarusian propaganda stubbornly continues to ignore **Russian missile attacks** on peaceful Ukrainian cities and the killing of civilians, but at the same time provides detailed coverage of retaliatory Ukrainian strikes on military targets and the energy infrastructure of Russia to weaken its ability to continue the war.

- In May and June, state-controlled media outlets actively disseminated fake news that “**Ukraine is allegedly preparing to attack Belarus.**”

4. THE “COLLECTIVE WEST”

- The “political part” of Belarus’ new military doctrine, adopted in May, consists of classic anti-Western propaganda myths and clichés. The entire concept of military development and defense of Belarus is grounded in false statements. The actions of the countries of the “collective West” are defined in the new doctrine as “**the main external military danger.**”

- Propaganda continues to use **threats of nuclear weapons** to intimidate the West. At the same time, propagandists insist that they only want peace and call on Western countries to return to “business as usual.”

- In their comments on the **elections to the European Parliament** (in June), state media expressed joy at the expansion of the presence of right-wing and conservative forces in the EP.

- A joint report of Russia and Belarus’ Ministries of Foreign Affairs “**On violations of human rights** in certain countries” criticizes the situation with civil liberties and rights in the West. This is not the first attempt by authoritarian regimes to suppress the human rights agenda of democratic countries.

- The main foreign policy targets for attacks by Belarusian propaganda remain **Poland and the Baltic countries**, primarily Lithuania. Propagandists are trying to shift responsibility for the **migration crisis** on the Polish-Belarusian border to Poland, the European Union, and the West as a whole.

- Controlled state media continue to sharply criticize **Western sanctions** imposed on the Lukashenka regime. At the same time, they argue that the sanctions have not only not harmed, but have contributed to the development of the Belarusian economy.

5. MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, AND ARMENIA

- Since the end of 2023, **Moldova** has been chosen as a new foreign policy target of pro-Kremlin propaganda. Through political support for the “separatist” regions – **Transnistria and Gagauzia** – Moscow hopes to weaken Moldova. Belarusian propagandists are also taking part in this campaign.

- Lukashenka’s media warmly welcomed the adoption of a law “on external funding” in **Georgia**, reminiscent of the Russian law on “foreign agents.” Propagandists tried to portray the mass protests in Tbilisi as “Western-inspired” attempts to organize a “color revolution.”

- In the **military conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh**, Belarus has openly supported Azerbaijan. After Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated that neither he nor any other official representative of this country would visit Belarus while the current “president” was in power, a media attack against Pashinyan and Armenia was launched in Belarus’ pro-Kremlin media.

6. ISRAEL

- The Lukashenka regime’s media adopt a hostile stance towards Israel.

- At the same time, propaganda speaks in laudatory terms about the main foreign policy threat to Israel – Iran. Regarding the death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, the response was as follows: “**A true friend of Belarus**” has passed away.

INTRODUCTION

The upcoming presidential elections in Belarus in 2025 are gradually becoming the main factor influencing the content and direction of Lukashenka's propaganda. One of the Belarusian ruler's main concerns was cracking down on the media so that "things would go without a hitch." His biggest nightmare is a repeat of the 2020 protests that nearly toppled him from power, so his dictatorial regime is careful not to allow any autonomy.

The same need has driven the new reshuffling of "ideological" positions in the government and Presidential Administration and demands to strengthen ideological work. Lukashenka's words in the title of this review are taken from this.

The emergence of the monstrous concept of the "Belarusian world" is another attempt to respond to the regime's demand for ideology. The "Belarusian world" in the minds of ideologists in the administration is a tortuous attempt to create something united and unifying, but in reality, it turns into the same kind of bogus and lifeless project as everything that the dictatorship squeezes out, from Stalin to Lukashenka. The result is something completely horrific: "Where the BELAZ dump truck, the MTZ tractor, and the Belkommunmash electric bus drive and an agricultural town is built, where the friendship of peoples and religions blossoms – from Venezuela and Zimbabwe to the North Pole – there lies the Belarusian world," Minsk propagandist Pyotr Petrovsky is convinced.

As before, propaganda sees two main targets for attack – Western countries (primarily its closest neighbors, Poland and Lithuania) and representatives of the democratic forces of Belarus. Here we see a significant difference from the Kremlin's propaganda: in the Russian national media, the place of honor of the "main enemy" has long belonged to Ukraine.

During the period under review (April-June), the media controlled by Lukashenka showed a different picture, with the flow of anti-Ukrainian statements decreasing significantly.

This report is not an exhaustive, detailed overview of all the meanings, storylines, and nuances of Belarusian propaganda during the period under review. Every day, tons of flattery and praise for the dictator Lukashenka continues to pour out from television screens and from the pages of Belarus' state press, accompanied by streams of hatred and dirt thrown on the West, Belarusian defenders of democracy, and Ukraine. iSANS monitoring does not aim to cover the whole of statements and assertions made by propagandists in detail during over the review period. The purpose of this study is to analyze and show the most striking examples of the main lines of propaganda in the second quarter of 2024.

Note: the quotations below retain their original spelling, punctuation, and style (in translation).

I. BELARUS AND THE “UNION STATE”

- *Preparing for the 2025 elections*

The approach to the 2025 presidential elections is gradually becoming the main factor influencing the direction of Belarusian propaganda. The frequency and nervousness of mentions of the upcoming vote on television – including from the lips of the “presidential candidate” Aliaksandr Lukashenka himself – suggests that the regime views the elections as an inevitable period of turbulence and a test of strength that must be prepared for in advance.

Lukashenka’s primary task is to prevent a repeat of the protests of 2020, when hundreds of thousands of citizens took to the streets, outraged by the rigged results of the elections that year. To that end, the regime is already making efforts to eliminate any possible “problems.”

In June, at a meeting with the head of the Central Election Commission, Ihar Karpenka, Lukashenka demanded that he “organize the 2025 election campaign with distinction” so that “things would go without a hitch” – smoothly and without any problems.

At the same time, he essentially admitted that earlier so-called “administrative resources” had always been used in elections in Belarus. Lukashenka believes that this time there will be no need for it. He did not indicate a reason why, but perhaps it is that the opposition and media landscape is already “burnt to the ground”:

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

Back in April, speaking from the podium of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly (a congress of regional representatives and the main ideological event of the past five years), Lukashenka essentially made it clear that if he ever leaves his post, it will not be as a result of elections:

“I will retire only when you tell me somehow that “that’s it,” and when there will be a person standing here who will not betray.” ([“Belarus-1” – ATN News](#))

By whom and in what exact form this “that’s it” should be said is not specified. Why Lukashenka does not think that this “that’s it” was said in 2020 is also not clear. His statement once again showed that elections in Belarus are purely decorative.

However, even such “elections” remain a serious test for the regime.

- *Staffing shuffles for ideological positions*

Preparations for 2025 most likely explain the new appointments in positions of media control in the Belarusian government.

In April, the media manager, head of the propaganda television channel ONT, and also host of an ONT political talk show, Marat Markau, became the Minister of Information of Belarus. The Ministry of Information is the country's main agency responsible for censorship and media regulation.

Former Information Minister Vladimir Pertsov moved to the post of Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration. As follows from Lukashenka's [remarks on the appointment](#), he connects Pertsov's new position with hopes for strengthening ideological work:

“Ideological work today comes to the fore... We need to tighten things up and bring in line **all the media and ideological work and take it to the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration**... I would like for all this to be sorted here in Belarus. I mean ideological work.”

The “president” also [stated](#) that “in this difficult period for the country, the most pressing issues of ideological work **are those of propaganda and counter-propaganda.**”

In May, Lukashenka returned to this topic again. At the Forum of the Belarusian Media Community in Mogilev, Lukashenka gave a whole speech in defense of propaganda. Addressing media personnel across the country, he said the country continues to be “subjected to the greatest hybrid pressure in recent history” and must “unabashedly” **step up its “propaganda and counter-propaganda,”** calling on the youth to do this:

“I want young journalists to take this in. **There is no need to be shy about such words and concepts** [*propaganda and counter-propaganda*]. Or is there no such thing in the West? They just call it something else – PR, or working with public opinion. The essence is the same.”

At the same time, Lukashenka [accused the West of violating freedom of speech](#), saying that they allegedly “throw their journalists into prison, closing media outlets and persecuting anyone who dares to disagree with the policies and actions of the authorities.” At the same time, in Belarus itself, [Lukashenka is certain](#) that things are much better with freedom of speech, because even in 2020 “they didn't arrest people for their opinions and didn't put them in prison.”

The head of the state-owned Belteleradiocompany (BTRC) Ivan Eismont said at the Media Forum that “**the West's attempt to drown out the voice of the Belarusian state media has had the opposite effect**” and that sanctions against propagandists [have given a qualitative leap in the development of the Belarusian media space.](#)” Eismont maintained that in Belarus over the past three years, “the amount of socio-political broadcasting has significantly increased, high-profile journalistic investigations and special projects are regularly published, and the pool of political experts and observers has been significantly expanded.”

Propagandists immediately supported the idea of tightening “ideological work.” For example, pro-government politician Aleh Haidukevich, in an interview with Minsk-Novosti on June 7, [said](#) that there is no need to be afraid of “**censorship because it's a good word.**”

- *Visit to Mongolia and Lukashenka's speech in defense of firm power*

The problem of maintaining power has so captivated Lukashenka that he does not hesitate to raise this topic even during his (rare) international visits. For example, he saw fit to proliferate his authoritarian narrative at a meeting with Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh in Ulaanbaatar on May 2. At a joint meeting, the Belarusian “ruler” unexpectedly began to share with him the “secrets” of maintaining power, [asserting that it should not be ceded to anyone](#):

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

Also at the meeting with the President of Mongolia, Lukashenka [expressed his dissatisfaction](#) with the way the Mongolian media are covering Russia's war against Ukraine and 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.”

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

“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.”

Among other measures to strengthen ideological work during this period, it is worth noting the creation in early June of the pro-government Belarusian Society of Political Scientists in Belarus. The association includes government officials, propagandists, media workers, pro-government “political scientists,” and “experts.”

At the same time, it is understood that the Society will assist the authorities in their ideological work. [According to](#) its head, Viktor Vatyl, “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.”

In addition, in June, Lukashenka's press secretary Natallia Eismont [announced plans to launch a new media television channel](#). According to her, the project “will become a landmark for the country's entire media sphere.”

Attention is also focused on efforts to organize ideological work among youth. For example, in June, Belarus' Ministry of Internal Affairs [announced the creation](#) of “**Schools of Young Journalists**” within its internal troops. Internal

troops are units in the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs created to combat internal threats (unrest, unrest, protests, riots, etc.) in Belarus.

- *Strengthening of Lukashenka's "cult of personality"*

On the eve of elections, Belarusian propaganda is creating an image of Aliaksandr Lukashenka as the only uncontested candidate. Every day, streams of flattery and lies flow from television screens and from the pages of media loyal to the regime. Exceptional and even sacred qualities are often attributed to the "president," with nonexistent successes in management and historical achievements being attributed to him. Pro-government commentators call him a "leader of international scale," "father," "bat'ka," and a "peacemaker," thanks to whom peace and prosperity are maintained in Belarus.

STV television presenter Ryhor Azarenok has advanced the furthest in lauding Lukashenka. Below is a brief selection of the most striking statements made by him and other propagandists in Belarusian media from April to June, illustrating the process of forming Lukashenka's "cult of personality" in state-controlled media. It can be seen that they are built based on absurd myths and statements, reminiscent of the deification of the leader in the ancient societies.

"When a father and son plant a tree, they honor our President. When a cleaner sweeps away leaves with a smile, he exalts our President. When a mother sings a lullaby to a baby about some magical kingdom and he smiles in response, they glorify our President. Because this is what he's all about – people's happiness." (Ryhor Azarenok, STV, [The Secret Springs of Politics](#))

"The answer to journalists on whether he will run for the post of President in 2025 is simple. The people want it, will ask for it, and they will support it. I am sure they will not just ask, but if necessary, **will beg on their knees**. Time chose **Him** and will not change its choice." (Ryhor Azarenok, [personal Telegram channel](#))

"**All of Belarus is his beloved daughter.** And her father will do everything to protect her... Lukashenka is life. He is the rising sun and children's laughter He is work, creation, exaltation. He is creativity and Victory...His enemies are death. That is why they are fighting – life against death." (Ryhor Azarenok, STV, [The Secret Springs of Politics](#))

"**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." (Ryhor Azarenok, STV, [The Secret Springs of Politics](#))

"**Aliaksandr Lukashenka is the Russian Renaissance, the Russian Reconquista...** The primary factor that returned Russia to its sovereign rails, to its sovereign power, was the election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka." (Ryhor Azarenok, [personal Telegram channel](#))

"**It's easy to engage in politics in Belarus, because everything is decided for you by the head of state,** who thinks strategically, understands, who sets the pace, and trends, and who 'settles everything

no matter what.’ (Yauheni Pustavoi, presenter for the [channel STV](#) and deputy of the Minsk City Council)

“...Aliaksandr Lukashenka always talks to the people. Because he is the Bat’ka. He always goes to the people and speaks with them. **Because they are our people. Native** [to us]... He is the master in Belarus, the Belarusian people, our Belarusian man. And that’s it. Bat’ka said so and did so.” (Liudmila Hladkaya, [newspaper SB. Belarus Segodnya](#))

“The President has been doing everything for the well-being of people all his life. Just be grateful, please – **no honor or praise needed**. Alexander Grigorievich is also a human being, but he does not spare himself. We can rest on a hard day, but **he is constantly alert, ensuring that drones don’t approach, saboteurs don’t get through, and cows don’t die.**” (Mother Gavriila, pro-government and pro-Russian abbess, [Minsk-News, MINSKNEWS.BY](#))

In April, the former Minister of Internal Affairs of Belarus, and now Lukashenka’s assistant Yury Karayev, speaking on Radio Hrodna, [said that he would like Lukashenka to rule in Belarus “as long as possible”](#):

“The Western model of democracy is four years, maximum eight, and then the leader of the country must leave... All this completely contradicts our Soviet, our Slavic, our Eurasian spirit and mentality, where historically things have turned out completely differently. **And we found this path where we have a strong head of the republic whom the people elected.**”

Developing the theme of strengthening power, propagandist Kirill Kazakevich on the air of Minsk News in a conversation with deputy Marina Liancheuskaya expressed the idea that **“the best democracy is a dictatorship.”** Liancheuskaya [picked up](#) this theme:

“We need to explain to people that dictatorship is not so bad. We need to explain to people that a strong and authoritarian government is wonderful. You just need to explain the pros and cons in simple Russian language. You know, everyone understands democracy in their own way.”

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 not a new practice of the “cult of personality” and are familiar from Soviet times. The head of the pro-government Union of Writers of Belarus, Aleksander Karliukevich, “expressed hope” to publish a collection of selected works by Lukashenka, and the honorary chairman of the Union, Nikolai Cherginets, [said](#) that the books of the “president” are “really needed by the people.”

The request of 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 “Belarusian world”*

Fulfilling the task of mobilizing society in authoritarian regimes requires the development of a single myth that would be attractive and unite the majority of the population. For the unfree societies of the post-Soviet space as a whole, such a universal myth has been created. It includes the use of anti-Western resentment, nostalgia for life in the USSR, memory of victory in the war and a common heroic past. Propaganda also presents society with a person, a single and strong “leader” who gives hope and “returns” this past.

In June, Minsk presented its own model – the concept of the “Belarusian world.” In its name and general outlines, this concept copies the well-known ideology of the “Russian world,” long used by the Kremlin to justify its imperial ambitions, however it has its own specifics.

[According to the concept](#), 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 has “exceptional features,” including **“a high degree of resistance by the Belarusian people to the destructive conditions of a passing existence.”** Thanks to these factors, “unique conditions have developed in Belarus for the formation 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.**”

When superficially comparing the concepts of the two “worlds” – “Russian” and “Belarusian” – at least one significant conceptual difference is striking. If the first is clearly extraterritorial in nature – i.e., goes beyond the borders of Russia (Putin remarking that [“\[t\]he Russian world is global in nature”](#)) and is aimed at expanding “Russian” influence abroad (which, as we see, does not exclude a forceful takeover of foreign territories) – then the concept of the “Belarusian world,” by contrast, is more similar to a model of existence within the existing borders of Belarus without any geopolitical claims.

“Political scientist” Piotr Piatrouski [in his particular way commented](#) on the idea of a “Belarusian world”:

“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.”

- *Re-Stalinization and plays on nostalgia*

The “Belarusian world” with its “strong leader” or “father” mimics the Soviet past, including concerning the personality cult of Stalin. The time passed when

Stalin was condemned as a criminal and organizer of mass political repressions in the USSR. Now the reverse process is taking place with the rehabilitation of Stalin in the ideological space. Propagandists are bringing back the “good memory” of Stalin, foremost because for them he personifies a “firm hand,” which is exactly what they expect (and receive) from Lukashenka.

The process of gradually returning Stalin’s name to public discourse as a reference point for power can easily be called a creeping re-Stalinization. For example, the pro-government “philosopher” and frequent guest of political talk shows on propaganda television, Aliaksei Dzermant, thanked the unrecognized “republic” of South Ossetia for preserving the monument to Stalin and is [convinced](#) that such monuments should return to the streets of Belarusian cities:

“In Belarus today there are three monuments (busts) to Stalin... In a year we will celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War and it would be logical to open a monument to the leader of the country that defeated Nazism in the Belarusian capital, in the hero city of Minsk.”

Aliaksandr Shpakouski, propagandist and minister-counselor of Belarus’ Embassy in Russia, also [talks](#) about the return of monuments that glorify the Soviet era:

“In Belarus, it is advised not only to preserve monuments of the Soviet era, but also to erect new monuments, where special emphasis is placed on the period of the national liberation struggle against the Polish occupation of 1921-1939, the Great Patriotic War, and post-war state building in the BSSR.”

- *Renaming the BSU Lyceum after Felix Dzerzhinsky*

In this “creeping re-Stalinization” with elements of retribution can also be included the story of naming the Belarusian State University (BSU) Lyceum in Minsk after Felix Dzerzhinsky, the organizer of the “Red Terror” in Bolshevik Russia and the founder of the Cheka, the predecessor of the KGB. The fact is that this prestigious educational institution was known for its open-minded approach. In 2020, more than a thousand Lyceum graduates took part in protests against the falsification of the presidential elections, with many of them detained. After the suppression of the protests, at least 15 teachers were fired from the lyceum.

It was for this freedom that the dictatorial regime decided to “reward” this educational institution in the name of Dzerzhinsky.

Regime commentators interpreted this event in exactly this way – as revenge. 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. 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 Shpakouski [called](#) the naming of the lyceum after Dzerzhinsky “one of the most creative ideas of the Belarusian government implemented in the field of state ideological policy in recent years.”

The Stalinist Dzermant mentioned above [could not resist](#) returning to his favorite topic here. He commented on Shpakovsky’s message as follows:

“And if, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Great Victory, near the Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk, a monument to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief Stalin were erected? It would be worthy and fair.”

- *Victory Day*

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

On this day, “lessons of courage” were held in all Belarusian schools and a speech was broadcast by the archpriest of the Belarusian Orthodox Church Fiodar Pouny, who is considered Aliaksandr Lukashenka’s “confessor” (or a priest who accepts confession). In his speech, which was heard in all school classes in the country, Pouny [defended](#) Russian aggression against Ukraine:

“The Russian soldier, as then, fights for our world, for our churches, for our loved ones, for what we all together call the Motherland. These guys voluntarily go to the front, into the damp trenches, because their grandfathers fought and their grandchildren will not dare to dishonor them.”

- *The teaching of history*

The cleansing and presentation of history with the ideological focus desired by the regime is an important task of propagandists both in Belarus and in Russia. One of the most active proponents of the practice of correcting history is the influential Russian ideologist Vladimir Medinsky, historian, political scientist, and assistant to “President” Putin. In May, 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 we do not tell our children about our history, then **corresponding foreign foundations** will tell them about it. It will be a completely

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.

different story, and the ideas about good and evil among our younger generations will also be those that our geopolitical competitors want to see.”

Medinsky has been sanctioned by the U.S. since 2017 and Canada since 2022 for his “involvement in the dissemination of Russian disinformation and propaganda.”

II. BELARUS’ DEMOCRATIC FORCES

- *Attempts to discredit*

Leaders of the Belarusian opposition and supporters of democratic change remain the “number-one target” for Lukashenka’s propaganda. Regime media use every opportunity to try to discredit them, using various methods of media attacks, including provocations, manipulation, disinformation, and fake news.

Speaking in April at the celebration of the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia in the city of Hrodna, Lukashenka could not resist once again “poking” those who disagree with the regime. [Speaking](#) about the quality of healthcare in Belarus, he said that those who left still come back because medicine is “more accessible” here: “They come here cheaply to treat their teeth and other ailments – **at your expense.**”

The boss’s new message about the “teeth” was immediately picked up by propagandists. The host of the state channel STV, Ryhor Azaronak [appealed](#) to political emigrants to return:

“We are merciful. There is a commission [on the return of Belarusians who left]. They provide a channel for returning and living a normal life. Nobody needs you there, and we talked about this from the beginning... I understand perfectly well that it’s cheaper to treat teeth here, our food is better, our apartments are cheaper to rent...”

In April, at a meeting with the new deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Lukashenka [complained about his political opponents](#):

“They run to different centers of decision-making and to advisers from America to Brussels, asking for money. And, most importantly, they say, **“Give for media, for media, for media!”**

The Belarusian dictator also constantly reports on the “detection and neutralization” of sabotage groups and [maintains](#) that attempts to destabilize the situation in Belarus will continue, because in the West “fugitives” (i.e., political emigrants) are “determinedly pushed” towards this. Lukashenka appeals constantly to the people to “be vigilant.” At the All-Belarusian People’s Assembly, he called on people to “look around and inform the authorities on any issues.”

- *Threats to political emigrants*

Given trends, the hate speech spoken by propagandists no longer surprises anyone. Ryhor Azaronak openly [threatens](#) death to the unknown forces who supposedly want to liberate Belarus from the Lukashenka regime by force:

“They have not changed their goal, which is the overthrow of Aliaksandr Lukashenka and taking Belarus out from under Western influence. **You bastards cannot even imagine how ferociously we will destroy you.** We will burn out any speck of you, any smell, any breath from you with a hot iron. And yes, we are also closely watching who starts making signs at you from here. The **death penalty** is now delivered for high treason.”

Television presenter of the state-owned Belarusian Television (Belarus 1) Kseniya Lebiadzeva also [demanded](#) the “destruction” of dissidents:

“If anything happens, the events that took place in 2020 will seem like a fairy tale to them. **They need to be destroyed.** And this is not because we are so ruthless and aggressive, but because we need to defend what is ours.”

Azaronak agreed with her, noting that their enemies need to be “**killed like rabid dogs.**” Lebiadzeva added that the security forces in 2020 were right in using force to suppress the protests, and they should have done it “[more forcefully, so that the stupidity would be knocked out of their heads.](#)”

They were [joined](#) by the previously mentioned “political scientist” Aliaksei Dzermant:

“The whole essence of the *svyadomites* [pejorative nickname for the oppositionists] is that you cannot be reconciled with them. Like the Nazis, you cannot live together in one country, you cannot conduct a dialogue with them about anything, and you cannot agree on anything. **They just need to be shot on the spot.**”

In addition, propagandists with one voice are demanding tougher repressions against political opponents, specifically the confiscation of their property.

Propagandists have also threatened those who took part in the May elections to the opposition Coordination Council with loss of property and prison. [Yuri Tserakh](#):

“People, you still have a part of your life ahead of you, no matter how old you are. You can live this life as a happy person, next to your loved ones, watching your children, and maybe even grandchildren, grow up. Or you can go to prison, and it’s not certain at all that you will have time before you are released. And anyone from Belarus who gets involved in this will be sent to prison. The fugitives have already run away, they don’t care, so let them have fun by themselves.”

A deputy and frequent guest of political programs on controlled channels, Aleh Haidukevich, sees a way out for the West in restoring “normal relations” with Belarus and Russia. To do this, [according to Haidukevich](#), the following must be done:

“Stop sponsoring the [Belarusian] fifth column, stop organizing 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 either.”

- *Threats to relatives of political emigrants*

Lukashenka constantly [threatens](#) not only political emigrants but also their loved ones who have remained in Belarus, essentially declaring them his hostages:

“Don’t forget [addressing political emigrants] that you are **seriously harming your relatives**. Don’t forget that you have property here [in Belarus] – I advise you to forget about this property. But don’t put your relatives at risk.”

This is not the first time Lukashenka has made threats against relatives. But this time, the authoritarian regime has moved from threats to action. In May, the Investigative Committee announced the first confiscation of property from opposition representatives in Belarus. Television presenter of the state television channel ONT Ihar Tur immediately responded with joy to this news:

“I send my warm greetings to the ‘diasporas’ from among the destructive Belarusians abroad. **He promised that real estate would be confiscated. We wave bye-bye to your apartments and cottages**, from which you consistently received income from Belarus by renting them out. **This is exactly what the President spoke about when he said ‘think about your relatives.’**” ([Personal Telegram channel](#))

This same propagandist [demanded](#) compensation for the damage from the sanctions imposed by Western countries on Belarus through “economic measures,” i.e., confiscation of property from Belarusians who believe that Lukashenka’s regime deserves sanctions:

“And if we lost, say, a million dollars from sanctions, we will force them to compensate us for this million dollars. **The majority of those shouting ‘Crush Belarus!’ own real estate in Belarus.**”

The propagandist did not specify how the amount of damage should be calculated, and whether the damage is commensurate with the cost of the opposition members’ apartments.

- *Ihar Tur’s “call to submission”*

In June, this same “journalist” Igor Tur became well known for his appeal to protesters, which described how, in his opinion, the opposition should behave if it really wanted to effect any change in the country.

Briefly, the Tur model can be described with the words “You don’t have to demand, you have to ask.” In this text, Tur not for the first time admits that the regime in Belarus is authoritarian. Here are the most striking excerpts:

“A strong government cannot allow demands on itself. And even more so, a strong government should under no circumstances fulfill any demands, even the most reasonable and justified.”

“One of the rules of a successful strong government... is very simple: you hear the words ‘I demand!’ and **you repress those demanding right away**, without even listening to the substance of the demands and without even having time to assess whether you agree with the demands or not.”

“No matter the issue in which some citizens do not agree with the government’s decision, it is extremely stupid to go to some kind of demonstration to attract the attention of the President – a strong **authoritarian** government – to demand something.”

“With your “I demand” you are depriving yourself of the opportunity to get what you rightly deserve, 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?” ([personal Telegram channel](#))

Tur has been supported by other state-controlled media, for example, the Telegram channel [Grafach](#):

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

III. UKRAINE

- *Softening of anti-Ukrainian rhetoric*

Ukraine and events related to the Ukrainian-Russian war continue to be the focus of Minsk propaganda. Since the beginning of preparations and the start of the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2024, state-owned Belarusian media have generally followed the media framework set by the Kremlin. At the same time, from April to June, the substance and content of anti-Ukrainian narratives, as well as the intensity of mentions of Ukraine in news and comments, changed from month to month.

In June, iSANS monitoring recorded a **slight softening of statements** towards Ukraine and, in general, a decrease in the number of mentions of Ukraine in broadcasts and articles by Belarusian news outlets. Perhaps the reason for this was Lukashenka’s speech at the Belarus Media Forum in Gomel at the end of May, where he rebuked pro-government journalists, advising them to “trample on” Ukraine less. 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.”

Employees of state-controlled media immediately rushed to carry out the instructions of their boss. The most cunning ones joined him and began to criticize their colleagues for excessive attacks on Ukraine.

On the Belarus-1 channel, the general director of the Minsk-Novosti agency and the head of the pro-government Union of Journalists, Andrei Kryvasheyeu, [said](#) that some journalists should “tone it down a little” on Ukraine:

“Tone it down a little and don’t start generalizing. Believe me, 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. Some of them praise, whereas others scold.”

Another pro-government today, a regular guest on propaganda talk shows, Aleh Haidukevich, [even told a family story to the BelTA agency](#):

“I sometimes see experts **who allow 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.”

Propagandists echo the officials. Television presenter Igor Tur, already mentioned here, said that it is “**absolutely impossible to call all Ukrainians enemies,**” even though there are plenty of “Nazi scoundrels” there. [In his opinion](#), Ukrainians as a whole “remain our brothers.” Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine are “tied together forever.”

- *“Peaceful” statements by Lukashenka: irritation at Belarus being drawn into the war*

Along with the softening of anti-Ukrainian rhetoric, calls for peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine are increasingly heard. Of course, there can be no talk of any demands to end the war, withdrawal of the Russian army from Ukraine, or returning the occupied and annexed territories. Negotiations, according to Belarusian officials and propagandists, should be conducted only on Russian terms. However, it cannot help but be noted the increase in the number of such calls in Belarusian media.

The main source of these narratives is, foremost, Aliaksandr Lukashenka himself. In May and June 2024, he made a number of “peaceful” statements, in our opinion, indicating the growing fatigue and irritation of the Belarusian regime stemming from the protracted war and from the pressure from the Kremlin to drag Belarus into the war. These ideas were later widely disseminated by propaganda and deserve some attention from researchers.

For example, in April, during a visit to Moscow, Aliaksandr Lukashenka made several comments to state channels in Russia and Belarus. In responding to the question of whether Belarus would need to enter the war, he said the following:

“**There is not and will not be such a need.** I said the day before that Russia now needs a Belarus that is peaceful, quiet, calm, and which does its job. I won’t tell you in detail what we’re doing. **I will not deny that we**

are ‘co-aggressors.’ Putin and I are aggressors, you know, and they want to take us to court, they want us somewhere else... Everyone does their job... [the last pronounced with an ironic tone].

A little later in the interview, Lukashenka says similar things about his views on future cooperation with Ukraine: **“Ukraine could also use a Belarus like this”** (“quiet and peaceful”).

The second statement during the interview concerned Ukrainian drone attacks on businesses in the Russian energy sector:

“I say straight out that neither I nor Putin want our brotherly Ukrainian people to suffer. We do not want it...! But the Ukrainians must understand that if they drop UAVs into oil refineries, the response will be tenfold.”

Without a doubt, these statements are an example of the cynicism and hypocrisy of the Belarusian dictator, since it is Putin and Lukashenka who are responsible for the suffering of the Ukrainian people. To stop them, we must first end the war and withdraw Belarusian troops from Ukraine. It should be noted that Lukashenka had never earlier directly expressed compassion for Ukrainians.

And finally the third statement:

“Those jingoistic patriots in Russia who call on Belarus to enter the war are serving the bidding of NATO, which is doing everything possible to drag us into a war with Ukraine.” ([Telegram channel “Pul Pervogo”](#))

Later, in his [speech](#) at the All-Belarusian People's Assembly on April 25, the Belarusian “ruler” again appealed to the parties for a ceasefire, but on Russia’s terms:

“All military personnel, heads of Western intelligence services, politicians, and heads of state are already publicly saying that Putin’s victory cannot be allowed. **If you insist that it is not possible, then this is the moment for negotiations. It’s a draw at this stage.** There is no need to put forward radical solutions, like Volodya Zelensky’s formula... It’s not real. Russians today will not leave Crimea or the eastern regions. Therefore, if proposals are put forward that are unacceptable before negotiations, this means that the party that puts them forward is not ready to negotiate.”

During the military parade for victory in World War II on May 9, Lukashenka informally talked with officers of Belarus’ army. In a video published by his press service, the “president” tells them about his conversation with Russian servicemen who fought in Ukraine. According to him, they told him that they were really looking forward to the Belarusian army at the front, to which [Lukashenka answered](#) that Belarus would not participate in the war:

“[They] love Belarus very much, they value us. I say, **‘Guys, we are not going to go there.’** ‘We understand [they say], but we want you there,’” Lukashenka said.

At the same time, both the Belarusian “leader” and his propaganda outlets continue to support Kremlin narratives and shift the blame for starting the war to the West. At the meeting with the President of Mongolia Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh, described above, Lukashenka, among other things, [tried to defend](#) Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, and also retold standard Kremlin propaganda myths of the Russians and Belarusians allegedly involved in a war against their will.

“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.**”

Pro-government commentators are continuing the same line. Member of Parliament and “political scientist” Aleh Haidukevich [said the following in an interview with BelTA](#):

“Ukrainians must know 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.”

In general, the narratives coming out of Belarus are very different from the statements of Kremlin propaganda, which have long been dominated by demands to wage war until the complete capture of Ukraine and gloating about attacks on peaceful targets.

- *“Illegitimate president”*

However, aggressive anti-Ukrainian propaganda has not disappeared. Belarusian media generally follow Russian narratives, thereby demonstrating their lack of independence and dependence on the Kremlin.

Since April, Lukashenka’s media, following Russian channels, began doggedly promoting a new line that on May 21, Volodymyr Zelensky’s presidential term would expire and he would cease to be president. As is known, the Ukrainian government has decided not to hold presidential elections in 2024 due to martial law imposed in the country after the start of the large-scale Russian invasion. According to the Ukrainian Constitution, the president continues to perform his duties until a new elected president takes office. However, this did not stop state-controlled media from launching an entire campaign against Volodymyr Zelensky, claiming that he is “illegitimate.” The goal of this campaign is obviously to create a split within Ukrainian society and weaken the position of the current government.

Looking ahead, we note that these efforts did not lead to any even subtle results. Ukrainian society demonstrated the highest cohesion and solidarity in the face of external danger, and talk about the alleged “illegitimacy” of the president did not affect it in any way.

“And one more point that should not be forgotten. Volodya Zelensky’s term of office ends on May 22 or 21. A situation may arise when Putin himself says, ‘Guys, with whom should we sign an agreement? The powers of the President of Ukraine have expired. Today we sign, say, some kind of agreement with him, tomorrow somebody else will come to power, become President. You’re not going to like it...’ They will throw it all away and say, ‘Yes, the illegitimate president signed this!’” ([BelTA agency](#))

For the entire month, television propaganda discussed and repeated this statement in different ways. As soon as the deadline arrived, commentators began calling on Ukrainians to change the regime.

Kseniya Lebiadzeva ([channel Belarus 1](#)):

“Zelensky turned into a pumpkin on the night of May 20-21. Congratulate Ukraine or sympathize with it? Now it is free from stupid, inhumane, immoral, and unprofitable decisions for Ukraine and Ukrainians, because now it has no president.”

Lebiadzeva also called on Ukrainians to **“take power into their own hands.”**

Ihar Tur, [ONT state television](#):

“Today [May 20] is *de jure* Zelensky’s last evening as head of Ukraine... I really hope that starting tomorrow this citizen, who must democratically observe the laws and the sacred Constitution of his Motherland, will cease to nominally lead the country and its army and return to something more like itself. **For example, playing the piano with your penis again.**”

On May 24, Vladimir Putin, during a visit to Minsk, said that “the legitimacy of the current head of state has ended,” even though the Western community and “Kyiv’s sponsors” are “going to confirm it” at the upcoming peace conference in Switzerland, and that “the only ‘legitimate authority in Ukraine’” is supposedly the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) and its speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk.

Aliaksandr Lukashenka [agreed](#) with Putin, saying that in the current situation, “there is no legal purity”:

“Neither the current President nor the future one will resolve these big issues that face the state and people of Ukraine, but they will be resolved ‘overseas.’”

- *Peace Conference on Ukraine in Switzerland*

In mid-June, Switzerland hosted the Ukrainian Peace Summit – an international conference at which military and economic assistance programs for Ukraine, as well as the peace plan of President Volodymyr Zelensky, were discussed.

Propaganda media in Russia and Belarus commented on this event in extremely negative tones. Both countries were not invited to the conference, with Russia [saying many times](#) that it would not attend the summit even if it

were invited. However, this did not stop pro-Kremlin commentators in both countries from arguing that no negotiations are possible without Russia and Belarus, and that all summit decisions without their participation will be “insignificant.”

Adding to Lukashenka’s resentment is the fact that the world stubbornly refuses to recognize Belarus as a platform for peace negotiations, as was the case at the beginning of Russian aggression in 2014 and 2015.

Belarus’ Minister of Foreign Affairs Siarhei Aleinik [stated the following](#):

“The lack of an invitation [to the peace summit] absolutely does not reflect the reality that is emerging in the European region, **and the contribution that Belarus has made and continues to make to the peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian crisis.**”

According to Aleinik, “any events, any conferences that relate to European security, without the participation of Belarus and Russia, have neither prospects nor meaning.” At the same time, Aleinik himself [insists](#) on Belarus becoming a platform for negotiations:

“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.”

Lukashenka’s statements were actively broadcast by Belarusian propagandists and gave rise to new obsequious statements.

Vadzim Hihin, deputy, pro-government expert:

“Now peace [in Ukraine] is only possible if we consider the real state of affairs. Otherwise, it will be a fiction. Like the fiction the ‘peace conference’ convened in Switzerland in June. Without the participation of Russia and Belarus, it is meaningless.” (Speech on the Russian talk show Sunday Evening with Vladimir Solovyov, [channel Russia-1](#))

[Aliaksandr Shpakouski](#):

“The whole farce in Switzerland is being organized to draw the maximum number of countries into the ‘peace formula,’ which is obviously unacceptable to Moscow and therefore cannot be supported. At the same time, the organizers perfectly understand the essence of their actions and calculate the result in advance. Accordingly, the goal is not peace at all, but escalation. **In turn, Belarus remains ready to take on the function of a mediator. The peacekeeping mission of Belarusian diplomacy is well known.**”

Alexander Tishchenko in an article for the newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya* said that some conference participants were [united by “rabid Russophobia.”](#)

Another author for the same newspaper, Anton Papov, in an article entitled “Empty chatter: the peace conference in Switzerland failed as expected,” [noted](#) that the failure of the Bürgenstock meeting was “expected” and “deafening.”

- *Response to missile attacks*

Propaganda media 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 were retaliatory strikes on military targets on Russian territory or in occupied zones, state media began to immediately and loudly declare them terrorist acts by Ukraine. Their comments are accompanied by curses and threats.

Kseniya Lebiadzeva (Belarus 1, [personal Telegram channel](#), May 11):

"Today, the *khokhols* as usual 'congratulated' the DPR on yet another holiday and life outside of Ukraine. They congratulated us not with flowers, but with rockets launched at civilian buildings. Creatures... animals... you will burn in hell."

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

"Terrifying footage from Belgorod. A shell fired by the Ukrainian Armed Forces hit the entrance of a residential building... **Ukrainian Nazism must be destroyed.**"

Another recent example is the June 23 rocket attack by Ukraine on the Sevastopol military airfield with Russian military equipment in occupied Crimea. As a result of the work of Russian air defense, one of the missiles was shot down and exploded over the beach where tourists were relaxing. Several people died and more than a hundred were injured. The missiles fired by the Ukrainians were American.

Belarusian and Russian propagandists immediately claimed that the beach attack was deliberate and that both Ukraine and the U.S. carried out a "terrorist attack."

Propagandist and diplomat at the Belarusian embassy in Moscow, Aliaksandr Shpakouski, [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 "tasks to destabilize the situation in Russia and spread panic and protest sentiments against the authorities."

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

On May 31, 2024, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis allowed that Ukraine has the right to strike the territory of other countries where Russian military facilities may be located. When asked by an RFE/RL correspondent whether Ukraine should strike military targets in Belarus, [he replied](#):

"Ukraine must be able to defend itself. If Russia, fearing that [military] targets might be attacked in Russia, can move them somewhere else, then I think that the selection of targets needs to be moved."

Landsbergis' statement caused a storm of indignation from propaganda outlets. Kseniya Lebiadzeva of channel Belarus 1, [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 Ukrainian Armed Forces and other Ukrainian military outfits.”

[Aliaksandr Shpakouski](#):

“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 adversaries of Russia who are opposing Moscow at the strategic level.”

- *“Ukraine is preparing to attack Belarus”*

End of June the Belarusian propaganda started to spread one more anti-Ukrainian narrative – about an alleged preparation of “Ukraine and NATO to attack Belarus”. The start was the words of the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus Pavel Muraveika. On air on the ONT TV Channel on June 29, [Muraveika said](#):

“Just in recent weeks, we have seen activity near our borders from Ukraine that is not yet justified and that we do not yet understand. ... We are forced to move our units there, ... to move artillery sometimes and to be able to react. And we would not like our southern neighbor to fall for someone's instructions and try to give Belarusians a taste of our teeth”.

However, such statements may indicate the opposite – the possible preparation by Belarus of a military provocation on the border, which would be a pretext for the reopening of the “northern front” and the invasion of Russian and Belarusian troops from the territory of Belarus into Ukraine. We would like to remind you that in 2021-2022 such throw-ins served as signals for Russia’s preparation for the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. At the time, the [Kremlin claimed](#) that Russia had launched what it called a “special military operation” to protect the occupied territories of Donbas from alleged Ukrainian and NATO aggression.

The propaganda promptly reacted to such a statement. Anton Papou, propagandist, newspaper [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#):

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

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

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

The head of Belarus' KGB, Ivan Tsertsel, speaking at the All-Belarusian People's Assembly in April, sparked a provocation that could cost the lives of civilians, especially children. He [published](#) the address of a children's hospital in Kyiv, where, according to him, wounded Belarusian soldiers fighting on the side of Ukraine are allegedly being treated:

"In the fight against terrorism, we act according to the laws of war, without hesitation. Among the terrorists and their accomplices, there are those who have been killed and wounded. Without a doubt, they will be met with well-deserved punishment, even though they have chosen Kyiv hospitals at the address ul. Bogatyrskaya, 30 and 32, where they hid behind sick children."

The Kyiv authorities were forced to [urgently evacuate these hospitals](#), as they rightly feared a possible missile attack following Tsertsel's words.

IV. THE "COLLECTIVE WEST"

- *The new military doctrine of Belarus*

In April a [new military doctrine](#) was adopted in Belarus. This document should be considered separately, because its "political part" contains a set of classical myths and false statements of the propaganda, based on which the entire concept of military construction and planning in this country is already being built.

- "External military threats"

For the first time, the new doctrine identifies the actions of the "collective West led by the United States of America" as the "main potential external military danger". The role of Poland and the Baltic States in "increasing the risks of military conflict" is also emphasized. In particular, it states the following:

"The aggressive nature of the military policies of Western countries is no longer masked by articulations about the solely defensive orientation of their military doctrines, strategies, and concepts."

"The consequence of such steps is an increase in the aggressiveness of the politics of the leadership of Poland and the Baltic countries, their forming of an image of an enemy in Belarus in favor of their internal political interests, and their active militarization while at the same time attempting to baselessly accuse Belarus of escalating the situation."

The military doctrine defines Russia's attack on Ukraine as **"a military conflict in Ukraine provoked by the collective West,"** without mentioning Russia's role. This conflict, according to the authors of the doctrine, "created in the short term a hotbed of tension near the borders of the Republic of Belarus".

- „Internal military threats"

The actions of Belarus' "internal enemies" are also included among "military threats."

These include, for example:

- propaganda of ideas and plans “to change the current government,”
- dissemination of “ideas of **cosmopolitanism**, statelessness, and others, leading to the rejection of traditional spiritual and moral values and guidelines in citizens’ performance of the responsibilities and sacred duty to protect the Fatherland,”
- provoking “hostility or discord based on ideological and political beliefs,”
- “the creation or financing of organizations (organized groups) in Belarus, whose activities are aimed at replacing the “current government using means of armed struggle,”
- “propaganda that undermines the people’s trust in the military-political leadership of the state,”
- “the escalation of hostility or discord based on ideological and political beliefs... into mass unrest.”

The independent publication Reform.news, in analyzing this, [writes](#) that now “mass riots” and everything that the authorities want to understand through them – for example, mass marches – can be qualified as a “military threat.” “The introduction of these points into military doctrine may indicate a transition from authoritarianism to full-fledged totalitarianism, where even a public discussion is considered a **military threat**,” writes Reform.news.

Including “internal enemies” (the opposition) in the list of “military threats” in the military doctrine gives the Lukashenka regime a free hand and **provides the basis for using the army to suppress peaceful protests**, the article says.

- Comparisons to Russia’s military doctrine

A brief analysis of the political sections in both military doctrines shows general similarities in the assessment of external threats and significant differences in the assessment of internal threats. Like the Belarusian, the Russian doctrine also includes “internal military threats” in a separate section, but is spelled out in much less detail than its Belarusian counterpart. It includes only four short paragraphs, while the Belarusian one is a multi-page list of internal dangers, also divided into levels of “risks,” “challenges,” and “threats”. In all likelihood, this indicates the degree of seriousness in the assessments of internal risks determined for themselves by each party.

- *Nuclear threats and conciliatory tones*

Propagandists, of course, adhere to the same version. Vadzim Hihin [in his column](#) in the newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya* writes:

Belarusian propaganda continues to broadly use the “nuclear club” to intimidate the West. At the beginning of May, joint military exercises were held with Russia, during which the practice of controlling and using tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) was practiced. The main idea behind the propaganda is [“Belarus is preparing for a strike”](#):

“We don’t do anything special. We are preparing, we are training. We must be ready. The world is unstable and dangerous. **We cannot miss**

this blow, as happened in the middle of the last century. [It is not clear what is meant. Probably the German attack on the USSR.] But we are not escalating the situation. We do not need war... But we keep the gunpowder dry – nothing special.” (Lukashenka, at a briefing following a meeting with Vladimir Putin, May 24)

“We have never threatened anyone. Moreover, we openly communicate our approaches to everyone. Whoever wants to hear it will hear it.” ([Lukashenka](#), meeting of the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus, June 18)

Propagandists, of course, adhere to the same version. Vadzim Hihin in his column in the newspaper “SB. Belarus Segodnya” writes:

“There are Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus... I am convinced that no one in the West doubts that **Aliaksandr Lukashenka has enough political will to protect his people.** However, we do not want to do this, so we appeal again and again: don’t meddle in our affairs, don’t encroach on Belarus. The price will be very high.”

Aliaksandr Lukashenka himself has long served as a mouthpiece for Kremlin propaganda, using anti-Western narratives of a “surrounded fortress”:

“With the expansion of the North Atlantic Alliance, which admitted Finland and Sweden, Washington and Brussels continue to form a belt of unfriendly states around Russia. The next step is for other European countries to join the alliance. Their goal is known. **According to the plan, everything along this line should be on fire.**” ([Speech at the All-Belarusian People's Assembly](#), April 2024)

At the same time, in the general anti-Western rhetoric there are sometimes interesting statements. Here is an example of statements by the head of the pro-Lukashenka party LDPB [Aleh Haidukevich](#). Probably the idea behind these statements is an attempt to “split” Western society in favor of an alliance with Russia and Belarus:

“America does not know how to compete fairly, it only knows how to lie and start wars. **The U.S. has an enemy – not only Russia and China... They have another enemy – the European Union.** And it is true. **They don’t need a strong Europe.** That is why they were so jealous of the relations between Germany and Russia. They didn’t want Nord Stream. They didn’t want competition.” ([Stream from Ryhor Azaronak](#), April 2024)

“We want to see Europe independent! We dream of a strong and independent Germany. Of an independent Poland that does not lie down for the Americans. The actions of the Americans in Ukraine are directed against Europe primarily because they do not need a strong Europe. They cannot forgive Europe for the euro.”

He is echoed by the pro-government “philosopher” Aliaksei Dzermant, who complained that NATO head Jens Stoltenberg, while listing the countries of the “authoritarian alliance” (or “axis of evil”), **did not mention Belarus.** Dzermant called on people “not to follow Western terminology” and to “formulate more clearly” the Russia-Iran-China-North Korea-Belarus alliance as “something like

the Union of Traditional Values. “We need to formalize our own value, ideological, and geopolitical bloc,” Dzermant [emphasized](#).

Threats are surprisingly combined with conciliatory and mitigating motifs. “Political scientist” and Minister-Counselor at the Belarus Embassy in Moscow [Aliaksandr Shpakouski](#):

“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: Belarus. **We don’t need a world without Belarus**. And we will defend ourselves.”

During the ceremony for the laying of a capsule with a “message to descendants” in Hrodna, Aliaksandr Lukashenka again criticized the West, but the tone of his statements was [somewhat conciliatory](#):

“We want to build our own peaceful future. We are only determined to create... Don’t believe anyone who says that we want to fight.”

“Poland and Lithuania are conducting the Brave Griffin exercise in the Suwalki corridor... We receive all the news on the maneuvers, and we know what to do with provocations. Belarus has a consistent position on this matter: **“The most peace-loving country in the world is Belarus. We only want peace.”** (Anatoli Hlaz, press secretary of Belarus’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [MFA’s Telegram channel](#))

“Everything we do is aimed at ensuring peace. We are strengthening the borders, training the army, **deploying nuclear weapons, adopting strategic documents – all this in order not to fight**, so that people will not die...” (Aleh Haidukevich, [Minsk-News](#))

Lukashenka himself, saying that Belarus does not want to attack anyone, always emphasizes that [“our love of peace is not pacifism.”](#) And again, as in many other cases, his words are immediately picked up by his circle of interlocutors:

“What is important is that Belarus does not threaten anyone. We are always ready to provide our good offices and our potential to de-escalate the international situation. But we should not confuse the peace-loving nature of our foreign policy with pacifism.” (Aliaksandr Shpakouski, Minister-Counselor of the Embassy of Belarus in Russia, [BeITA](#))

Viktor Khrenin, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Belarus, [channel ATN](#):

“We do not consider any state or people our enemy, regardless of the actions of the government! On the contrary, we are open to conversation, consensus, to finding common ground to ensure peace in our region.”

Belarus’ Minister of Foreign Affairs Siarhei Aleinik once again [emphasized](#) that Belarus is a peace-loving state:

“According to our Constitution, no aggression can be committed from Belarus. These are contensions that are unshakable.”

At the same time, Aleinik, of course, remained silent about the fact **that in 2022, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine was conducted, also from Belarus.**

Sometimes hatred of the West takes on **comical** tones:

“Regarding the repudiation of Europe. Vile, evil, satanic Europe. One needs to repudiate it. Trample over the Schengen visa. Burn the Polish Card. Spit on the West. And look at the sky. That is where our Ancestors are.” (Ryhor Azaronak, channel STV, [“The Secret Springs of Politics”](#))

- *Elections in 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 in terms of “conciliatory” ([“We are ready to work with everyone”](#) – Shpakouski) to aggressively hostile ([“The past elections to the European Parliament showed the true face of Western democracy”](#) – Hihin).

Belarusian media welcomed the expansion of right-wing and conservative forces in the EP. This is not the least due to hopes that European countries will be more focused on solving their national problems and will help Ukraine less. Andrei Bagadel, head of the educational and teaching department of the Faculty of the General Staff of the Army’s Armed Forces, 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.”

- *Human rights in the West*

Authoritarian regimes often try to hijack the human rights agenda from democratic countries.

In June, a [joint report of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs](#) of Belarus and Russia “On the situation with human rights in specific countries” was published. Similar “investigations” have been published before, but independently of each other. This time, the departments of the two countries decided to join forces to criticize “human rights violations” in the West.

The report reports on the situation in 43 countries, including the EU, the U.S., Australia, Japan, and Ukraine. The authors of the report state that special attention was paid to “double standards” in the field of human rights, as well as “manifestations of racism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, and **Russophobia**.” Russophobia then, according to Belarusian and Russian Foreign Ministry officials, is also a violation of human rights.

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

Obviously, 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, meaning that the accusations against Russia and Belarus are worthless.

- *Poland*

- “A military springboard for an attack on Belarus”

Poland is constantly a target of Belarusian propaganda, as it takes a consistent and uncompromising position towards the authoritarian regimes in Belarus and Russia and towards Russian aggression against Ukraine. In the Belarusian media, Poland is often presented as a ready NATO springboard for an attack on Belarus. [Aliaksandr Lukashenka](#) himself never tires of repeating this:

“It is obvious that the territories of **Poland and the Baltic countries** are purposefully being **turned into a military springboard** for possible use by NATO. That is, almost everything has been done to prepare the leadership of the alliance for the decision to use military force, including extreme military force.”

Despite the supposedly “increased militarization” of Poland, Belarus, according to Lukashenka, will not fight against it:

“They should not expect any active, aggressive actions against the Polish state and people from Belarus.”

Russian propagandist and pro-war Z-blogger Konstantin Pridybaylo, during an online stream of *Minsk - Moscow*, held in April, [expressed](#) the idea that “**the Polish regime is an enemy of Belarus.**” His co-host, propagandist Lyudmila Gladkaya, clarified that it is an enemy “**for the entire Union State.**” A guest on the program, the head of the Main Directorate for Ideological Work for Belarus’ Ministry of Defense, Leanid Kasinsky, drew on the old myth about [Poland’s territorial claims to Belarus](#):

“**If Poland has territorial claims to our country, and they are visible to the naked eye**, and have been expressed by individual Polish politicians, then why can’t we talk about this situation as some kind of risk, threat or challenge?”

The national state television and radio company, reporting on Polish affairs in April, repeatedly called Polish President Andrzej Duda a “**dictator**” (e.g., the news that “[\[d\]ictator Duda announced his readiness to defend Lithuania](#)”).

- The defector Schmydt

In May, propaganda outlets covered widely the case of a Polish defector, Judge Tomasz Schmydt, who asked for political asylum in Belarus. As it became known later, Schmidt had access to classified materials as part of his service and may have been an agent of the Belarusian (and Russian) intelligence services. Propaganda media used this incident as another reason for media attacks on Poland. [Aliaksandr Lukashenka](#):

“[We] looked. He is an absolutely normal, patriotic Pole. Nowhere did his colleagues say anything bad about him. But this [his fleeing] is a blow to the gut—to the Polish authorities. So they start [saying] he’s a traitor. He

is no traitor. **But he really looks at things, compares Poland and Belarus, and draws conclusions.**”

Soon after his flight, Schmidt predictably became the face of Belarusian state propaganda and a frequent guest of state media. At his first press conference in Minsk, he voiced a number of standard propaganda clichés, for example, that the U.S. and Great Britain “[want to drag Poland into war](#),” and called on the Polish side to [restore dialogue with Belarus and Russia](#). In May, Schmydt, in an interview with the Belarus 1 channel, spoke “about the methods of work of foreign intelligence services, Western media, as well as threats to life because of [his] principled position.”

In an interview with propagandist Yauheni Horin on channel ATN, Schmydt [said](#) that “90% of Polish mercenaries returned from Ukraine in coffins.”

- Migration crisis on the border and the death of the Polish soldier

From April to June, groups of migrants from Asian and African countries did not abandon attempts to storm and cross the EU border from Belarus. This led to 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 has traditionally shifted the blame for the migration crisis onto neighboring countries and tried to erase the blame of Lukashenka’s government.

On June 7, Belarus’ press secretary for the Foreign Ministry, Anatoli Hlaz, [said](#) that his department had received a note from Poland regarding the death of a Polish soldier and called it “the **politicization** of a very specific issue.” Warsaw, according to Hlaz, is trying to “defend itself to its own public and shift responsibility.” At the same time, the official promised that the note “will be considered taking into account all the circumstances” even though Poland “with great fanfare broke off cooperation with Belarus in the sphere of law enforcement.”

Immediately after the incident, the film crew from the state television channel Belarus 1, led by the channel’s journalist Kseniya Lebiadzeva, went to the Belarusian-Polish border, where they reported on the disasters and hardships of migrants. The goal was likely to “interrupt” and drown out the news of the dead Polish soldier. In her report, Lebiadzeva 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.

Liudmila Hladkaya, newspaper [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#):

“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 Piatrouski, the murder of the Polish soldier is a “media provocation against Belarus”:

“The soldier died. But most people with such injuries do not die if they have good 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.”

Ryhor Azaronak, [personal Telegram channel](#):

“The soldier’s death happened at a very timely moment for Duda’s clique... From all this one can clearly draw the conclusion that THE POLISH SERVICEMAN WAS KILLED BY THE WARSAW RULING ELITE [author’s emphasis].”

Aliaksandr Tsishchanka, pro-government expert, [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#):

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

The Polish defector Tomasz Schmydt mentioned earlier also took part in the “migration” campaign. Speaking on Belarusian state television, Schmydt [blamed](#) his country’s government for the refugee crisis:

“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.”

- *Lithuania*

- Provocation involving drones

Lithuania is also the target of constant attacks by Belarusian propaganda. As in the case of Poland, the Lukashenka regime cannot forgive the country for its intransigence towards human rights violations in Belarus and Lukashenka's complicity in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The regime’s propaganda employs all its available tools against Lithuania, from slander to provocations.

On April 25, the head of Belarus’ KGB, Ivan Tsertsel, speaking at the National Assembly, [said](#) that the Belarusian State Security Committee, in cooperation with colleagues from other law enforcement agencies, “conducted several acute security measures, making it possible to prevent **attacks by combat drones from Lithuania** on sites in Minsk and its suburbs.”

An official representative of the Lithuanian Armed Forces said that the report about drones was [“100% disinformation”](#) and that such words “bring a smile.”

In May, the state channel Belarus 1 aired a prank interview with Lithuanian presidential candidate Giedrimas Jeglinskas. To talk to the politician, the “journalists” introduced themselves as “correspondents” of the Russian independent publication Meduza. [In the announcement for the program](#), the candidates are called “puppets” and it is hinted that they defend the interests of the U.S. and not their country:

“For more than 30 years of so-called ‘independence,’ Lithuania has turned into a doormat for NATO. At the helm are trained puppets. Instead of economic support there is militarization and transformation into a

military springboard. The trend is to purge for the sake of American greatness.”

- Attempts to discredit the presidential elections

On the eve of the presidential elections in Lithuania, Belarusian propagandists gave their forecasts for their outcome. For example, on voting day, Aliaksandr Shpakouski, Minister-Counselor of the Belarusian Embassy in Russia, [wrote](#) that no significant changes in Lithuanian politics should be expected based on the election results. According to him, the identity of the winner does not matter, because ‘Vilnius is essentially subordinate to the U.S. and is used by Washington to escalate tension in the region’ and ‘Lithuania’s anti-Belarusian activity in the upcoming 2024-2025 will only get stronger.’”

Deputy Vadzim Hihin also [tried](#) to reproach Lithuania for its lack of independence:

“A well-known expert on the Baltic region, Alexander Nosovich, even ironically proposed replacing a person as head of the Lithuanian state with artificial intelligence. It too will obediently carry out orders coming from Washington, whip up Russophobia, and saber rattle.”

Pro-government politician Aleh Haidukevich on his channel [called](#) the leaders of Lithuania and Latvia “so-called presidents” and said that “they are nobody,” while “the fate of Russia and the world depends on Putin, and Lukashenka is defending the country’s national interests.”

- *Slovakia*

- An assassination attempt on Prime Minister Robert Fico

In May, Belarusian propaganda disseminated a conspiracy theory that the assassination attempt on Robert Fico was organized by NATO, the European Union, and the U.S. because he “was against military assistance to Ukraine.” Pro-government media claimed that [“Washington and Brussels wanted to eliminate an troublesome politician,”](#) that the assassination attempt was a [“special operation of Western intelligence services,”](#) etc.

“Political scientist” Vadzim Elfimov [said](#) on Alfa Radio that there are only **two leaders left in Europe “with common sense”** who “openly do not accept the involving of the EU and NATO in the war against Russia and Belarus” – **Viktor Orban** (Prime Minister of Hungary) and **Robert Fico**.

Hot on the heels of the assassination attempt, Russian State Duma deputy Andrei Krasov [proposed](#) creating a commission in the “Union State” of Belarus and Russia to investigate terrorist attacks, war crimes, and acts of aggression against the Union with the aim of “preventing and destroying the plans of our enemy – the collective West.”

- *Western sanctions against the Lukashenka regime*

Propagandists continue to be indignant about Western sanctions, while sincerely not understanding the reasons for which they were introduced. At the same time, some are trying to convince their audiences that sanctions not

only do not harm the economy of Belarus but even contribute to its development, stimulating “import substitution” and the production of goods locally. However, this is not going well, as increasingly citizens of Belarus are experiencing a real need due to sanctions.

For example, on June 13, the permanent representative of Belarus to the UN, Valiantsin Rybakou, in his speech at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, [criticized](#) the sanctions policies of the West. As an example, he stated that Belarus was left without some important imported medicines, but immediately emphasized that they were quickly replaced, so sanctions are not concerning. At the same time, according to him, sanctions against Belarus “doom millions of people in the countries of the global South to starvation.” Specifically, Rybakou said the following:

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

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

In conclusion, Rybakou [moved to insults](#) from the UN podium:

“Those who come up with unilateral sanctions have no brains. Those who use them have no heart. Those who defend sanctions have no conscience. Sadly, some people have all three of these qualities combined.”

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

“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 genocide of the Belarusian people.”

Lukashenka himself, at a meeting with the leadership of the KGB on May 20, [spoke](#) about blocking Belarus’ access to Baltic ports:

“**This is essentially economic sabotage and war against Belarus.** In violation all international treaties and all international agreements. Let’s say they have obligations to us as a landlocked country. They have no right to block us. This is an international agreement. However, you know what’s going on.”

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

“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.”

The topic of “sanctions pressure” was also raised by Belarus’ Minister of Foreign Affairs Siarhei Aleinik in May. At the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conference, he [called on](#) the organization’s member countries to show solidarity and expressed hope for continuing “joint constructive work” to counter sanctions.

In a speech at a meeting of the Council of Defense Ministers of the CSTO member countries, Belarus' Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin [said](#) that “Western countries led by the U.S.” are introducing “unprecedented **discriminatory measures** aimed at isolating and worsening the economic situation and waging a large-scale information war.”

V. OTHER COUNTRIES

- *Moldova – a “Russophobic and anti-Russian regime”*

Another foreign policy target for Lukashenka's propaganda is Moldova and the Moldovan government. In a broad information campaign against Moldova, the Belarusian pro-government media are following in the wake of Kremlin propaganda. The country's current president, Maia Sandu, announced foreign policy goals aimed at joining the European Union and NATO. Moldova is actively resisting the Kremlin's attempts to bring the country under Russian influence. All this has resulted in an angry backlash in Russian and pro-Russian media.

Kseniya Lebiadzeva (channel ATN), for example, believes that Moldova's desire to join the European Union is also part of an insidious Russophobic plot:

“Maia Sandu, a protege of the West, is slowly but surely attempting to surrender Moldovan sovereignty. **This is part of the Russophobic and anti-Russian policy of the EU...** Surrendering the sovereignty of the Moldovan state is a crime and is a betrayal of the people of Moldova.” ([personal Telegram channel](#))

One of the most important areas of media pressure from Russia and Belarus against Moldova is an attempt to undermine power and the state through support for the authorities of “separatist regions,” primarily Transnistria, an unrecognized state on the left bank of the Dniester River that broke away from Moldova in 1992 as a result of a military conflict.

Modern Moldova views Transnistria as its territory, occupied by Russia. In March 2022, after the start of the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, [PACE officially recognized](#) Transnistria as a zone of Russian occupation. Moscow supports Transnistria politically, economically, and militarily. Russian military garrisons are based in the unrecognized republic.

The second region that the Putin regime considers a vulnerable link and a target of force for undermining the Moldovan state is the autonomous territory of Gagauzia. In the early 1990s, separatist sentiments were strong, but Gagauzia was preserved within Moldova peacefully. Today's Russia, bypassing Chisinau, is trying to again strengthen separatist sentiments there, claiming that the Moldovan authorities are suppressing and degrading Gagauzia. In 2023 and 2024, Vladimir Putin met several times with the head of the autonomous territory of Gagauzia, Evgenia Gutsul, who came to Moscow. Gutsul willingly works to the benefit of Kremlin propaganda and talks in the Russian media about the alleged oppression of the residents of Gagauzia by the authorities.

The “soft power” of the Lukashenka regime is also involved in the campaign to increase pressure against Moldova. For example, in May, the Belarusian Embassy in Moldova, bypassing the country’s officials, opened a propaganda photo exhibit called “Sovereign Belarus” in the capital of the Gagauzia autonomous territorial unit, the city of Comrat. The [announcement for the exhibit says](#) that it is timed to coincide with Belarus’ Independence Day and the 80th anniversary of its liberation from the Nazi invaders. Speaking at the opening, Honorary Consul of Belarus Kanstantsin Sibau talked about establishing “close economic ties” with the region:

“We have opened two workshops in Gagauzia for assembling Belarusian tractors, which have allowed us to have equipment at a favorable price. I hope we will continue our fruitful cooperation and develop our relations.”

First Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee of Gagauzia Ilya Uzun [noted](#) that “it is Belarus that is setting the right direction of development” for this autonomous unit:

“Belarus is one of the few republics that has gained true independence. The Belarusian people have a foundation. We have a lot to learn. We are only taking the first steps, and Belarus is setting the right course.”

- *Georgia*

Belarusian propagandists followed their Kremlin handlers in cheering Georgia’s passage in May of the Foreign Influence Transparency Law, which requires non-governmental organizations to register as “agents of foreign influence” if their foreign funding accounts for more than 20% of their total income. In essence, this law copies the Russian law “on NGO-foreign agents,” adopted back in 2012. Propaganda as usual presents resistance to the adoption of this law and mass street protests as attempts to undermine the government and as inspired by the West.

Propagandist Yuri Tserakh, for example, [promises](#) Georgian protesters an “avalanche of repression,” as if talking not about Georgia, but about Lukashenka’s Belarus.

Anton Papou, columnist for 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 U.S., the EU and their local puppets that their entire arsenal of means is used to put pressure on Georgia – from blackmail to attempts to organize a “color revolution.”

Aliaksei Dzermant, pro-government [“political scientist”](#):

“The elites are trying to sell the Georgian people to Europe! What do we get from the West? An imposed model of values that distorts the ancient culture of [Georgia]. I am glad that they have the will to resist, even though they’re breaking them.”

- *Armenia*

In June, a serious diplomatic crisis occurred between Belarus and Armenia, which propaganda outlets could not ignore. The origins of the crisis are in the military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is a disputed territory for these 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. According to the security treaty, the parties to the agreement must come to each other's aid in the event of an attack by external forces. However, in the case of Armenia, this did not happen, although Azerbaijan is not a member of the CSTO and is by definition an external force. In addition to Armenia, the CSTO includes Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan.

In February 2024, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced the freezing of Armenia's membership in the organization and the suspension of payment of membership fees. He also promised that if the situation does not change his country will leave the CSTO.

But Belarus went even further. In May, Lukashenka openly sided with Azerbaijan. At a meeting with President Ilham Aliyev, he called Azerbaijan's operation in Nagorno-Karabakh a "war of liberation" and wished him victory.

Lukashenka's position resulted in a new outburst of indignation in Armenia. On June 13, 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 in Minsk was recalled to Yerevan "for consultations."

Belarusian propaganda at that time poured tons of dirt and lies on Armenia and its president, without mincing words. As usual, outlets explained Pashinyan's "demarche" as a demand by "Western handlers":

Pro-government "political scientist" Aliaksei Dzermant, [personal Telegram channel](#):

"It seems Nikol Pashinyan's political hysteria is continuing for the second day... His problem is not Lukashenka, Russia or the CSTO. His main problem is the Armenian people, who do not want the country to be torn apart because of his adventurous political somersaults."

Anton Papou, propagandist, [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#):

"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 handlers have given clear instructions to speed up the destruction of relations between Belarus and Russia... Attacks by the Prime Minister of Armenia against our leader are the lowest form of nastiness. Aliaksandr Lukashenka has always tried to help Yerevan and Baku find a way out of their current situation."

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

“Pashinyan has started 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.”

- *Israel*

- Iran missile attack

On the night of April 13-14, Iran launched an unprecedented missile attack on Israel. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry [responded](#) to it only towards noon on April 14, without mentioning either Iran or Israel in its statement. In the first part of the message, Belarusian diplomats expressed their “deep concern about the escalation of the situation in the Middle East region,” and in the second they recommended that citizens of Belarus when traveling “consider the current situation.”

Against the backdrop of these events, propagandist Ryhor Azaronak [concludes](#) that the whole world is sliding into the abyss of a global war, so “we need to prepare – arm ourselves to the teeth and not be afraid of anything, because those who choose shame, hoping to elude, will be the first to be destroyed.” “Political scientist” Aliaksei Dzermant [agrees](#) with him, taking advantage of the situation to once again call for “strengthening our military alliance with Russia.” And pro-government historian Vadzim Hihin [placed all the blame](#) for the “situation” on the Americans and suggested that Zelensky and his team are now “in great disarray” because “the world has no time for them again.”

- Anti-Semitic statements by Lukashenka

On June 14, at a meeting with the leadership of Belarus’ Council of Ministers, Lukashenka, speaking about the fight against corruption, [permitted himself 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.

- *Iran*

On May 19, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and several other senior officials died in a plane crash. The next day, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry [expressed condolences](#), emphasizing that **“true friends of Belarus have passed away.”**

In his condolences 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 disaster “ensure the proper position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the world, contributed to strengthening and growing the great status of the state in the international arena.”

Lukashenka, as usual, blamed the West for the plane crash, since Iran is under sanctions from the U.S. and other countries:

“As a human being, not a president, I will say that the vile, disgusting position of the United States led to this. These scoundrels had no right to impose sanctions against ships, planes, helicopters, and other things that transport people... Therefore, this is also their fault.”

For this, Lukashenka [threatened](#) that some kind of divine punishment would be sent down on the perpetrators:

“He [the Lord] will send them an answer. This is not how people behave in the world. This once again confirms what Russia and others who support it are doing today with the destruction of the unipolar world.”

The words of their bosses were picked up by propagandists. Marina Karaman, ONT television channel, [personal Telegram channel](#):

“If everything is like that, there is no doubt that this is murder. A serious hunt has begun for the leaders of truly independent states.”

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

“The President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, and the head of the Foreign Ministry of this country were killed in a helicopter crash... **Against the backdrop of recent events in the region, the plane crash does not look accidental.**”

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the storylines of Belarusian propaganda and Russian propaganda directed at Belarus in the second quarter of 2024 allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- Internally, the efforts of propagandists this past period were aimed at strengthening the singular power of Aliaksandr Lukashenka, clearing out the media field, and strengthening ideological work in preparation for the 2025 presidential elections. Propaganda creates and supports a “cult of personality” of Lukashenka, emphasizing his image as a “father” (bat’ka), a “peacemaker,” and an uncontested candidate in the elections.
- State propaganda continues to exploit nostalgia for the USSR, painting a positive picture of life in Soviet Belarus and using this memory to strengthen authoritarian power and justify an alliance with Russia. Celebrating Soviet holidays, which have survived to this day almost unchanged, is an important part of maintaining this memory. In May 2024, Victory Day, one of the main patriotic holidays, was celebrated.
- The regime is conducting a systematic campaign to discredit the Belarusian democratic forces to deprive them of support within the country. During the period under review, calls for tougher property confiscation penalties against political emigrants intensified, and threats against their relatives began to be heard with renewed vigor. At the same time, the authorities are interested in the return of these “fugitives” and are trying to lure them into the country with the help of false promises and pressure.
- The “Collective West” remains the primary foreign policy enemy. The new military doctrine is entirely built on anti-Western propaganda myths. The objects of hatred are Belarus' closest neighbors – Poland and Lithuania. Since the beginning of 2024, Moldova and Armenia have also become targets of propaganda.
- In April – June 2024, a softening of anti-Ukrainian rhetoric was noted in Belarus' controlled media.

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