

## Belarus Propaganda Update

Belarusian propaganda and Russian propaganda aimed at Belarus

#10. July 2024

Executive summary:

This study outlines the main themes of Lukashenka regime and Russian propaganda targeting Belarus in July 2024.

### BELARUS AND THE “UNION STATE”

- In July, new examples of sycophancy and the strengthening of Lukashenka’s personality cult appeared against the backdrop of the celebration of “Independence Day” and the 30th anniversary of “presidential power”
- The ideological indoctrination of the people continues on the eve of the 2025 presidential elections
- State-controlled media are promoting the idea of a need to develop domestic media platforms and social networks and the inevitability of abandoning foreign platforms
- Lukashenka expanded visa-free travel for citizens of 35 European countries, giving rise to new claims from propaganda media that Belarus is a “peaceful and friendly country” that is “showing its openness to the international community,” despite Western sanctions
- In the same vein, the Belarusian media exploited the case of German citizen Rico Krieger. He was sentenced to death, subsequently pardoned by Lukashenka, and then became a participant in a major exchange of spies and political prisoners between Russia and Belarus on one side and Western countries on the other. State media employed this to again present Belarus as a country that is willing to negotiate
- Lukashenka continues to emphasize Belarus’ “inseparable connection” with Russia and adulate top Putin officials
- With creeping re-Stalinization, plans have emerged to erect a monument to the dictator Joseph Stalin in Minsk

### BELARUS’ DEMOCRATIC FORCES

- The Lukashenka regime continues to conduct its campaign of denigrating and discrediting opponents of the government
- Propaganda outlets demand tougher repression and punishment for those who call for sanctions against the Belarusian authorities
- Propaganda media is using the release of Belarusian political prisoners in its agenda

## POLAND AND THE BALTIC STATES

- Threats continue to be made against Belarus' closest neighbors amidst calls for resuming dialogue
- Lukashenka's propaganda is taking an active role in an ideological aggravation of the migration crisis on Belarus' borders with the EU and is criticizing the construction of barrages by neighboring countries
- In July, Polish President Andrzej Duda paid an official visit to China. His trip was covered negatively by Lukashenka's media

## THE "COLLECTIVE WEST"

- The West remains one of the primary targets of Lukashenka's propaganda. Despite threats (including nuclear weapons), the Belarusian regime is calling resuming dialogue with Western countries, however on its own terms
- During the Paris Olympics, propaganda outlets actively promoted the narrative that the games symbolized "the beginning of the end of Western civilization."

## UKRAINE

- In July, the wave of negative mentions of Ukraine in Belarusian propaganda continued to decline. Their primary narrative is that "[o]rdinary Ukrainians are our fraternal people who have turned off the correct path." There are increasing calls for peaceful negotiations and a "resolution to the crisis."
- Propaganda outlets continue to remain silent about Russian shelling of peaceful cities and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine and makes strident claims of "terrorist attacks" when it comes to strikes from Ukraine, following the Kremlin's lead
- In July, the Lukashenka regime's media turned the sudden increase in tension on the Belarusian-Ukrainian border to their advantage, announcing that Belarusian troops would be brought to full combat readiness – a decision that the "president" then withdrew: "Lukashenka promised and delivered on de-escalation"
- The calls for peaceful negotiations between Russia and Ukraine for a "resolution to the crisis" are heard more and more frequently

## SANCTIONS

- Despite blustering statements that the sanctions have not resulted in any harm to Belarus and have even stimulated the economy, Lukashenka's propagandists continue to demand the lifting of sanctions

## BELARUS AND THE "UNION STATE"

- Lukashenka's cult of personality

State media and pro-government propagandists continue to praise Lukashenka and glorify his image. In July, the official reasons for this were the 30th anniversary of Lukashenka's victory in the second round of the presidential elections in 1994 (July 10) and the 30th anniversary of his first inauguration (July 20). The Forum of Patriotic Forces was timed to coincide with the latter of these anniversaries. Also, on July 3, Belarus celebrated its so-called "Independence Day," which in fact is a tribute to the liberation of

the city of Minsk (but not the entire country!) from the German occupiers in 1944. Propagandists used this event as another opportunity to sing Lukashenka's praises. They call him "bat'ka" ("father of the nation") and claim that without Lukashenka, Belarus would have been "destroyed" or "sold off" long ago, and that Belarusians would not have become a nation without him.

For example, on July 1, at a reception in Moscow, Belarus' Ambassador to Russia Dmitry Krutoy [found symbolism](#) in the fact that the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from the Nazis "essentially coincides with the 30th anniversary of presidential power in Belarus." He called Lukashenka "a solid man, a legendary man, with whose name Belarus is associated throughout the world." According to the "diplomat," many "simply dream of such a 'dictator' in their countries."

On July 3, pro-government expert Aliaksandr Shpakousky [said](#) that "the time is coming to understand the ideas of Aliaksandr Lukashenka in relevant popular science literature, research, and documentaries." Considering that similar proposals have already been voiced earlier, we can soon expect the appearance of a large number of such "products" on screens and in print. Moreover, by July 10, state media had prepared films, programs, and articles glorifying the dictator ("Lukashenka is a national brand," channel [Belarus-1](#) "[One for all](#)," channel [ONT](#), etc.).

July 10, Lukashenka's press service ([official Telegram channel](#)):

"30 years ago, a simple Belarusian called on his compatriots to follow him. 80.3% of Belarusians supported their future leader. As a result, the Belarusian became Bat'ka, and the people became a nation."

Channel [STV](#) propagandist Grigory Azarenok openly [calls](#) Lukashenka's victory a "miracle" and calls for people to pray for him:

"And Lukashenka fights. He fights for his people. Let us all bow to him. Let's pray for him. And let's try to be like him at least a little. And if necessary, the entire people will get on their knees and beg him to rule for another 30 years."

Azarenok also called Lukashenka "the last hope."

Parliamentarian Vadzim Hihin [joined](#) the harmonious chorus of officials spreading the narrative that "Lukashenka brought Belarus back from the brink":

"We were destined for the path of Ukraine or the Baltic states, being drawn into anti-Russian schemes and arrangements, the plunder of the national economy, rampant neo-Nazi ideology, and oligarchy. Aliaksandr Lukashenka did not allow this scenario to be realized."

On July 19, a strong storm hit Belarus. On July 20, Belarus' Ambassador in Moscow, Dmitry Krutoy, mentioned above, [suggested](#) that the storm was sent to Belarus by God in order to "please the Belarusian dictator":

"On July 19, our leader Aliaksandr Lukashenka asked why the Lord sent Belarus such a test in the form of a storm. The answer is very simple. Perhaps this is so that the president will be pleased that the system he created over 30 years has survived and endured."

These words were quoted by the newspaper *SB. Belarus Today*, but then disappeared from the site. However, the quote was preserved in the cache. Perhaps the publication felt that the official overdid it with his flattery.

On July 19, Lukashenka [called](#) for sending political prisoners to assist in the storm cleanup:

“We have more than 20,000 prisoners and so-called political prisoners. Go there and clean up! Help the country.”

On July 20, the Forum of Patriotic Forces was held in Minsk, dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the permanent rule of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. According to official media, it was attended by about eight thousand people, among whom were “representatives of leading public organizations and constructive-minded political parties.” The forum became another platform for praise and adoration of Lukashenka. For example, the head of the Council of the Republic, Natalya Kochanova, in her address to event participants, [called](#) the “president” of Belarus “the people’s leader,” “the father of the nation,” and “an outstanding politician of global significance, who essentially has no equal today.”

Paralympian Alexey Talai, whose foundation is involved in the illegal transfer of Ukrainian children to Belarus “for rehabilitation” (and who is under sanctions from Canada since 2023 and the European Union from 2024), [called](#) for Lukashenka to be given the title of Hero of Belarus:

“I urge everyone to accept this popular decision. He earned it a long time ago.”

Grigory Azarenok [spoke](#) in a similar vein, but this time he mentioned the students of the so-called military-patriotic clubs of the internal troops, who from a young age are taught to worship Lukashenka:

“They are growing, they are infused with their Motherland, and they will never accept any enemy poison. Amazing kids. They will give many adults a run for their money. Pure, strong, and ideological. They are eager to fight for the President and the Fatherland.”

The regime also [continues](#) to indoctrinate the people ahead of the 2025 presidential elections. For example, the leader of the pro-government LDPB party and deputy Aleh Haidukevich once again warns that in 2025 the forces opposing Lukashenka will “try to shake up the situation in the country,” and therefore calls on his supporters to be “ready.”

Lukashenka himself, at a meeting with a working group analyzing the activities of Belarus’ National Academy of Sciences on July 30, [noted](#) that the majority of scientists are “true patriots,” but at the same time emphasized that “a citizen with the rank of a scientist should be the most active promoter of the government’s position.”

- Preparing for the closure of YouTube and other Western media platforms

State-controlled media promotes the idea of a need to develop domestic media platforms and social networks and the inevitability of foreign ones being abandoned.

On July 12, during the event “The Union State of Belarus and Russia: 25 Years of Strengthening Cultural and Spiritual Traditions,” the new Minister of Information,

propagandist Marat Markou, [proposed](#) replacing YouTube, Telegram, Instagram, and TikTok with Belarusian-Russian social networks:

“We must have these kinds of tools and work with them. A significant portion of our children are on Telegram, TikTok, Instagram, etc. But these are not our tools. And this issue needs to be addressed.”

In an interview with the director of the *BelTA* news agency Irina Akulovich, the head of the propaganda channel *STV*, Aliaksandr Osenka, [compared](#) the work of propagandists on YouTube to “working in a minefield,” in the sense that you never know when and for what reason the video hosting service will block Belarusian state accounts. In response, Akulovich said that by the end of August, Belarus plans to create a domestic video hosting service called *Video.bel*, which will host materials from all state media. According to her, a streaming channel will also appear, where “important live broadcasts” will be conducted.

- Eliminating visas for citizens of European countries

On July 17, the Belarusian authorities introduced a visa-free regime for citizens of 35 European countries. Foreign Minister Maksim Ryzhenkou [commented](#) the following on this:

“While our closest neighbors close themselves off and create all sorts of obstacles to the development of cross-border cooperation between people, which, from my point of view, is a gross violation of all existing conventions, we, on the contrary, show our openness and a desire to present our country to the international community. Come, see, work with our people, do business, make tourist trips.”

This line was picked up by many Belarusian propagandists, emphasizing the “closed nature and hypocrisy” of the West and the “openness and friendliness” of the Belarusian authorities. Enticing “ordinary Europeans” to Belarus, they began to enthusiastically advertise the country’s beauty and attractions in their texts and stories, emphasizing especially that it is “clean and totally safe.”

Polish defector Tomasz Schmidt, now an author for the state agency *BelTA*, [wrote](#) on July 17:

“Lukashenka understands perfectly well the intentions of the governments of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia and is showing that the people of Belarus can be proud of their homeland. The head of state also emphasizes that Belarus is an open and friendly country. He understands that the negative actions of the governments of these three countries do not develop into hostility among ordinary citizens towards Belarusians. After all, nations, especially neighboring ones, should live in friendship, cooperate, get to know each other, and visit each other. I recommend that all citizens of Poland come to Belarus.”

Aliaksandr Tishchenka, a pro-government security expert, called the waiving of visas “an ironclad argument in favor of any peace initiatives” and “a surefire first step”:

“Belarusian visa-free travel is like an antidote to the restrictions and blocking measures implemented by Latvia and Lithuania. And against this background, the statement by the Polish Foreign Ministry that they would be ready for dialogue –

seeing only a desire to achieve short-term political goals from Belarus, rather than a strategic change in policy – looks very stupid” ([SB. Belarus Today](#)).

MP Vadzim Hihin [believes](#) that it is impossible to “ignore the sentiments of ordinary Europeans, including businessmen and heads of large corporations,” since they allegedly make it clear in every possible way that they are “against the suicidal sanctions policies”:

“In response to illegal restrictive measures by Western governments, we are introducing a visa-free regime for citizens of 35 European countries. And we can already see that this one measure has caused more irritation among our ill-wishers than a dozen retaliatory sanctions that we could have applied. The von der Leyens and Borrels come and go, but ordinary Europeans, our neighbors, remain.”

- The Rico Krieger Case

On July 19, the [Motolkohelp](#) Telegram channel reported that at the end of June, German citizen Rico Krieger was sentenced to death in Belarus.

On July 20, propagandist Lyudmila Gladkaya [published](#) a photo from the courtroom during the trial, reporting on an “exceptional measure” for Krieger.

On July 25, channel Belarus 1 showed a German citizen being sentenced to death in a 17-minute story titled “Confession of a German terrorist sentenced to death.” It claimed that Belarus has recently faced “news of terror and real terror” and “an increase in terrorist crimes,” leading to a change in legislation in 2022 that allowed for the possibility of execution for a terrorist attack “regardless of the consequences.” The story presented by Belarus 1 is in line with the official version put forth by propagandists. The authors of the story maintain that Krieger is “not a random victim” and “deliberately intended to commit a terrorist act” on orders from the SBU. The channel showed footage of the operation with Krieger in handcuffs and footage of him at the railway station dated October 4. Krieger said that he was supposed to go to the coordinates provided and find a certain backpack on October 5. It is assumed that the backpack contained explosives that caused the explosion at the Ozerishche station near Minsk. According to what is said in the propaganda film, Krieger put the backpack on the rails and sent the client a photo with confirmation. According to Krieger, he did not know what was in the backpack, and he learned about the explosion only after arriving at the airport.

It is worth [noting](#) that Krieger’s “confessions” could have been obtained under pressure. Since he speaks German in the video, and the Russian version is voiced over, it is impossible to say exactly how much what Krieger said matches the translation.

On July 30, Lukashenka discussed the case of Krieger, who asked him for pardon, with people he said were “immersed in the process.” Among these were the head of the KGB Ivan Tertel and, for some reason, the same journalist from the propaganda publication *SB. Belarus Today* Lyudmila Gladkaya, who was apparently appointed by the regime to be responsible for covering the case.

In the media, propagandists used Krieger’s situation to intimidate opponents inside and outside the country. Pro-government expert [Aliaksandr Shpakousky](#), July 20:

“German saboteur sentenced to death. Attempts to organize terrorist activity in our country will be severely punished, including by death penalty.”

[Liudmila Gladkaya](#), July 27: “We have the right and will defend our country. Terrorists deserve an exceptional measure of punishment – the death penalty. You try to kill us, our relatives – expect a bullet in the head, according to the law. Let me remind you that the sentence for the terrorist and spy from Germany Krieger has already entered into force. It can be carried out at any time – in a day, an hour, a minute...”

In addition, in connection with the Krieger case, the idea of exchanging prisoners with the West has been actively promoted in the Belarusian media. Pro-government activist Yuri Voskresensky [proposed](#) on state television that Krieger be exchanged for FSB agent Vadim Krasikov, who was found guilty of murdering Georgian officer Zelimkhan Khangoshvili in Germany:

“There are patriots in prison in the European Union and Germany. For example, Krasikov, the patriot of the Union State who liquidated a crook in the EU. Of course, it would be great to exchange him.”

Lyudmila Gladkaya [wrote](#) in her newspaper that “[Krieger’s] native country abandoned and ditched” him:

“Perhaps the German authorities just want the death sentence to be carried out? What do they care about this little man? It seems the only one in the whole world to whom this ‘little man’ can turn (and in general the only one who cares at all about Krieger) is Aliaksandr Lukashenka.”

MP [Aleh Haidukevich](#):

“And today Minsk looks much more civilized against the backdrop of the German authorities, who abandoned their citizen, than all this vaunted European democracy. The German government has shown that it does not protect its citizens and does not fight for them.”

In the end, Lukashenka pardoned Krieger by decree, which confirmed the hypothesis that the German citizen was being prepared for exchange. Propagandist [Yuri Terekh](#), July 31:

“I have always said that our Bat’ka is too kind. I believe this Nibelung should have been shot and a beautiful swastika should have been carved on his skull and sent to his small homeland by parcel postal so that terrorists would not come to us as if they were coming home... How is it that our President cares more about this German than Scholz? There they were too lazy to even scratch their left heel for him, but here they issued him a full pardon.”

- An “inseparable connection” with Russia

Aliaksandr Lukashenka and his supporters continue to emphasize in every way the existence of inseparable ties and “common values, plans, and goals” with Russia. Many of them broadcast the idea of the importance of maintaining a union with their eastern neighbor, claiming that the well-being of Belarus depends, among other things, on the good state of affairs in Russia. Some propagandists do not attempt to hide their enthusiastic attitude towards Vladimir Putin in their publications.

On July 2, Lukashenka [called](#) the Chairman of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin, who came to participate in the events in Minsk on the occasion of official Independence Day, “an older brother”:

“To you, my older brother and friend, thank you very much for the fact that Russia is represented at this holiday – Belarus’ Independence Day – by a high-level government delegation.”

On July 3, during his speech at the parade, Lukashenka [explained](#) why Belarus is building an alliance with Russia:

“We have common values with Russia, common plans, common goals. We do not have such relations with any other state.”

Propagandists continue to promote the line that all “enemies of Belarus” are really looking forward to a split between Belarus and Russia, between Lukashenka and Putin. Grigory Azarenok calls for not giving the “insidious, cunning, evil enemy” a single [opportunity](#):

“And Belarus and Russia will stand together forever and ever. And remember, as history shows, those who loudly shout about Lukashenka’s ‘betrayal’ very soon find themselves in NATO countries, betraying and slinging mud at Russia.”

[Commenting](#) on Lukashenka’s meeting with Putin on Valaam Island, Azarenok again anointed both “leaders”:

“The leaders are Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Vladimir Putin... Look at the photo. The leaders are praying for the victory of our army, for the triumph of God’s truth on earth, and for peace and prosperity. And behind them are warriors in halos. And it’s true, the damned vile lying heretics are mendacious, talking about Orthodoxy as if it were some kind of sweet rose-colored literature. This is the faith of warriors, fighters, real crusaders, and not the dogs of the Vatican.”

- Creeping re-Stalinization

In July, the possibility of erecting a monument to Joseph Stalin in the Belarusian capital was actively [discussed](#) among propagandists and experts. Propagandist Alexei Dzermant [supported](#) the idea of returning a Stalin monument to Minsk. At the same time, he acknowledged that the attitude towards this figure in Belarusian society is “still ambiguous,” proposing “to conduct a broad media and information campaign” that would include “republishing his works on the national question and on support for Belarusian statehood, including those in Belarusian language.”

On July 30, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [discussed](#) with the leader of the Communist Party of Russia Gennady Zyuganov the holding of the Anti-Fascist Forum in Belarus in the fall. Pro-government and pro-Russian expert Piotr Petrovsky spoke approvingly of these plans and noted that Lukashenka “keeps his finger on the pulse,” since “the ideals of social justice, friendship of peoples, and the protection of the common working man are close to him. There is an entire global network of authoritative people and countries with similar views and positions, concerned about those militaristic and ultra-liberal tendencies of dehumanization, which today, unfortunately, are increasingly manifested in the world.”

- Belarus' accession to the SCO

On July 4, Belarus was accepted into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). State media devoted much attention to this event in attempting to convince people that Belarus had made a huge breakthrough in the international arena.

Alexey Dzermant used the compare/contrast method and claimed that for a long time Belarusians were "trying to convince themselves" that integration could only be of a Western orientation and that this turned out to be a dangerous illusion for many post-Soviet countries:

"Belarusians... have chosen the East. An alliance with Russia, and now close, comprehensive partnership with China."

According to Dzermant, Belarus is important for the SCO as an example of how non-Western integration models can be effective and attractive.

Speaking at the SCO summit on July 4, Aliaksandr Lukashenka said that he views this conference as "a kind of Eurasian alternative to the transatlantic Munich Conference" and urged representatives of SCO foreign ministries to take part in it.

On July 4, *ONT* propagandist Marina Karaman wrote in her Telegram channel that the significance of Belarus' accession to the SCO is that large SCO member countries will now ask Belarusians "what to do with the continent's resources and how to divide them among its residents." These countries "will include Belarus, a baby in comparison with the countries that are already in the SCO, in the distribution schedule."

#### BELARUS' DEMOCRATIC FORCES

- Denigration, threats, and calls for increased repression

Both political prisoners in Belarus' prisons and Lukashenka's opponents who managed to leave the country remain one of the main targets of propaganda. In July, calls for tougher repressions against critics of the regime, stripping them of their citizenship, confiscation of their property, and even eliminating them physically were once again recorded.

On July 2, propagandist Andrei Mukovozchik wrote in his column for *SB. Belarus Today* that our "ancestors" who were "no dumber than us" were simply "put against the wall" for "collaborating with the enemy" during an "armed and existential conflict of values":

"We'll crucify you in the square at the slightest attempt at a terrorist attack. Believe me, no one will beat around the bush."

On July 11, Grigory Azarenok showered vlogger Nikita Melkozherov with insults and obscene language for talking in one of his videos about the Kastus Kalinouski uprising (1863-64). At the same time, he addressed the author and his colleagues with the following promise: "We'll hang you too, bastards. By your tongues."

Andrey Mukovozchik, July 23:

"You know, let them shoot this Krieger to hell and forget about it. But for the fugitives, I would recall impalement. And I would specially introduce it into practice. Only for our own people."

Grigory [Azarenok](#), July 23:

“You are preparing a coup, war, and destruction in a country with the money of foreign countries, and we are supposed to talk to you with white gloves? We will trample, crush, and destroy.”

- Lukashenka regarding political prisoners

On July 2, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [touched](#) upon the topic of political prisoners, announcing the release of some. At the same time, he emphasized his own “humanism”:

“Do not be surprised if in a few days, our very seriously ill (as they are called) who did not manage to escape and who are close by, who broke and crumbled the country in 2020, are released. These are really seriously ill people, mainly with cancer. We treat everyone humanely.”

- “Victim-blaming” by propagandist Tur: justification of the actions of security forces in 2020

*ONT* television presenter Igor Tur [admitted](#) on air that there “excesses” were found in the dispersal of the protests. But, in his opinion, it is not the police who are to blame, but those Belarusians who took to the streets and took part in peaceful protests, thereby provoking the security forces to a harsh response. He called the representatives of the security forces “heroes,” since, in his opinion, they “protected the country from street riots, which would inevitably and under any circumstances have led Belarus to war.”

## UKRAINE

- Calls for peace talks and “normalizing the Ukrainian crisis”

In July, Belarusian media continued to soften their rhetoric towards Ukraine, with occasional calls for peace talks and dialogue. Also popular were the contrasts between “ordinary Ukrainians” and the Ukrainian authorities, as well as “excursions into history” describing what techniques and methods “neo-Nazis” and “Anglo-Saxons” allegedly used to “trick” Ukrainians and tear them away from “brotherly” Russia, and how they are now “prohibiting” Zelensky and his supporters from starting peace talks with Russia.

On July 4, at the SCO summit, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [said](#) the following in a conversation with Chinese leader Xi Jinping:

“We strongly support all your initiatives. Especially the main initiative, which is to resolve the Ukrainian crisis.”

BT propagandist Ksenia [Lebedeva](#), July 23:

“While the Ukrainian authorities refuse to conduct any kind of peace negotiations, Ukrainians of draft age continue to be forcibly mobilized to the front... Bankova [a street in Kyiv where the Ukrainian government is located] refuses to listen to its people. Ukraine is, therefore, divided into those who send people to die, and those who are trying to escape from the strong “'love' for the Ukrainian people.”

MP Oleh Haidukevich, [interview](#) with the state news agency *BelTA*, July 14:

“We have never said that Ukrainians are our enemies. It is not the Ukrainians’ fault that their country is governed from outside. Most Ukrainians are normal

people. It's just that no one tells them the truth and they are not allowed to decide the fate of their country. They have lost their sovereignty – that's the problem. But we will always extend a hand to the Ukrainian people when they ask for it. It has always been like this and will always be so.”

Propagandist Andrei [Mukovozchik](#), *Belarus Segodnya* newspaper, July 22:

“The Ukrainian people – their mentality, their self-awareness, their internal foundations – were changed not only by the Banderites, who were given free rein. The role of the new Nazis (and all the presidents, each of whom opened new gates to hell) in the trivialization of Ukrainians is undeniable.”

Aliaksandr [Tikhansky](#), pro-government security expert, *Minskaya Pravda* newspaper, July 7:

“Modern Western elites are trying to kill with the hands of others, with a new term appearing: ‘proxy war.’ For example, they have allowed calls for reprisals against Russians in their social networks and they are supplying Nazi Ukraine with long-range offensive weapons. And they are prohibiting the bankrupt ‘Maidan’ regime from starting negotiations on capitulation.”

- Silence on Russian strikes in Ukraine

Pro-regime media do not focus on the Russian army's strikes on peaceful Ukrainian cities (or copy the rhetoric of their Russian colleagues in covering these topics) and do not describe the war crimes of the Russian military in Ukraine. However, when Ukraine retaliates, Lukashenka's supporters compare these actions to terrorist attacks or describe them as “war crimes.”

For example, on July 8, most state-run media and propagandists did not comment on the Russian army's attack on the Kyiv children's hospital Okhmatdet, but some reprinted the [news](#) and [posts](#) reflecting the Kremlin's position on this issue. At the same time, *Zheltyye Slivy*, a Telegram channel associated with the Belarusian Ministry of Internal Affairs, [began](#) suggesting that the Ukrainian authorities are allegedly creating a “second Bucha” from the Okhmatdet tragedy:

“The closer the NATO summit, the more provocations from the Kyiv regime. They called the Ukrainian air defense missile hitting the children's hospital building an ‘attack by Russia’ and, judging by how the propaganda is unfolding, they intend to demand more money from the West under the guise of a new Bucha. The Russian Defense Ministry has [denied](#) any involvement in the incident.”

- “De-escalation” on the Ukrainian-Belarusian border: “Lukashenka promised and fulfilled his promise”

In June and early July, Belarusian state media developed further the theme that Ukraine was allegedly preparing to attack Belarus. However, after reports that Lukashenka had supposedly reached an agreement with Ukraine, they changed the topic and tone, following his rhetoric. Events developed as follows:

On July 2, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [remarked](#) the following:

“Our neighbors [Ukraine] have become very active. And our military, especially border guards, immediately noticed this. They reported that they had essentially expected this.”

Aliaksandr Lukashenka quoted excerpts from Russian media, which write that the Belarusian “president” has “positive color blindness.” They say that Lukashenka will not draw any red lines, and Belarus’ response to aggression will be terrible.

Lukashenka:

“If anyone crosses the Ukrainian border, I will not just be a good color-blind person: I may be struck by night blindness. Therefore, the response will be very harsh and swift.”

Lukashenka asked Ukrainians “not to fool around and not to play with fire,” warning that the Air Force and Air Defense Forces of Belarus and Russia are on high combat alert. He said that the West is “escalating” in response to proposals for peace talks, since “enormous amounts of money have been thrown into it” and, therefore, “the Americans and the West are not going to leave Ukraine” and want to bring NATO there, because “there is no one left to fight” in Ukraine itself.

On July 5, Deputy Chief of the Belarus’ General Staff of the Armed Forces Vladimir Kuprianyuk announced a “systemic build-up of NATO coalition forces” in the west and that the presence of Ukrainian special forces units in close proximity to the border of Belarus “is nothing if not one of the stages of advance preparation for the possible movement of sabotage groups to our territory.”

However, a week later, on July 13, Lukashenka ordered the withdrawal of troops on the southern borders to their permanent deployment locations, declaring an “elimination of tension” on the border with Ukraine. He said that he had “reached an agreement” with Ukraine, since there are “enough normal people there, especially among the military.”

Following this message, propaganda outlets switched from the topic of “growing tensions on Belarus’ southern borders” to glorifying Lukashenka’s “diplomatic genius.” Propagandist Grigory Azarenok, July 13:

“Nobody knows and is unlikely will ever know what it cost Bat’ka to prevent the big trouble that the West was preparing. One thing is clear – the main factor that prevented them from interfering with us is the endless will and determination of the President.”

Olga Shpilevskaya, chair of the pro-government Belarusian Union of Women, July 13:

“The whole society, especially women, is closely monitoring the situation on the southern borders. We clearly understand how much effort the West is making today to drag us into a military conflict through any means possible.”

MP Aleh Haidukevich, *BelTA*, July 14:

“And the people believe only the President. Such a direct connection. And the President knows what the people want. The people want to live in peace, so that there would be calm in the country. Belarusians really appreciate that they live in peace and tranquility, they hear their President and know that he takes

responsibility for his words. If the President says that there will be peace, then there will be peace.”

## POLAND AND THE BALTIC STATES

- Simultaneous threats and offers of cooperation

Propagandists and officials continue to present neighboring EU countries – Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia – as enemies of Belarus. At times their rhetoric includes a proposal to “resume dialogue,” but, as a rule, this means dialogue on the terms of Lukashenka’s regime.

For example, on July 15, Foreign Minister Maxim Ryzhenkov stated that “the ball is in Poland’s court.” According to him, Lukashenka offered to receive a delegation consisting of any Polish experts and specialists to “look at the situation on the border together.” But while extending a hand of friendship, the minister at the same time [criticized](#) Poland:

“We are ready for dialogue, and the President is ready for this. But apparently the Polish side is not very interested in resolving this issue. And their plans likely include continuing to escalate tensions on the border.”

On July 16, Lukashenka [said](#) that in the west and northwest we must “keep our powder dry”:

“We will fight only when someone else’s boot steps on our soil. We will do everything diplomatically to normalize our relations, primarily with our neighbors. We propose normalizing relations with Poland and Lithuania in exactly the same way. But so far, we are not seeing the same [from them].”

- Migration crisis

Propaganda outlets continue to instrumentalize the migration crisis that persists on Belarus’ borders with EU countries.

The Lukashenka regime is extremely unhappy with the EU’s measures to strengthen their borders. Propagandists use various methods and techniques to discredit the “border fence” and also use striking language to talk about the “atrocities of border guards” in Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia against illegal migrants. Regime representatives also reiterate that they will not prevent illegals from getting themselves to an “unfriendly West” that is imposing sanctions against Belarus.

On July 2, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [warned](#) that the border fence would not help Poland stop migrants because they were heading to Germany, to where they were “invited” and “called”:

“I do not intend to give orders to border guards, military, and civilians to protect the EU on the border of Belarus and Poland. You [the EU] have put a noose around our necks and are still forcing us to protect you from these poor people.”

On July 23, the television channel *Belarus 1* [aired](#) the film *Inhumans*, in which Belarusian propagandists claim that Lithuanian, Polish, and Latvian border guards were involved in “horrible atrocities” against “refugees,” whom they call “victims of European ‘democracy.’” “Cruelty that cannot be justified is simply fascism! Polish border guards have been granted permission to open fire while Belarus calls for dialogue,” the film [says](#).

- Criticism of the Polish President's visit to China

In July, propagandists followed closely the actions taken by the Polish authorities to resolve the migration crisis, which was discussed by Polish President Andrzej Duda and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Aliaksandr [Tishchenka](#), "security expert":

"In an effort to punish the Belarusian bison, the Polish bird is trying to peck the Chinese dragon. This is how it all looks now from the point of view of foreign policy."

Vita [Khanataeva](#), *BelTA* international observer:

"The main delusion of the Polish authorities is the blind belief that Warsaw has some kind of leverage. In fact, there is nothing unexpected in Warsaw's actions, which are the same tactics of blackmail and threats to which Belarus has already developed immunity." "Poland and the Baltic states are satellites of the U.S."

On July 8, during the Minsk-Moscow livestream, Deputy Chairman of the National Security Committee of the House of Representatives Ruslan Kosygin [said](#) that Europe and the U.S. are actively preparing for war against Russia and Belarus and called Poland "an American outpost for pushing U.S. interests in the region."

Siarhei [Musienka](#), July 9:

"I agree with the opinion that 'Poland is not a sovereign state and is dependent on the U.S.,' as expressed by retired Polish judge Tomasz Schmidt. We have noticed this before in many ways, including external debt and the desire to please the U.S., even when they do not ask."

Propagandist Andrei [Mukovozchik](#), July 24:

"The Baltic States are borderlands. They demonstrate that they are not countries at all – they are territories. For the West, they are a territory on which a military base can be placed, on which waste can be... housed. We will see all of this yet."

On July 30, on *Alfa Radio*, the dean of the faculty of journalism of BSU Alexei Belyaev [said](#) that Warsaw has "rebelled" against the "peace initiatives" of Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán and called Poland "an American agent" and a "U.S. Trojan horse in Europe." In his opinion, Orbán's initiatives run counter to the strategic interests of the United States, which is supposedly interested in prolonging the Ukrainian conflict as much as possible, weakening not only Russia, but also its allies in Europe, so that the latter "become dependent on the U.S."

## THE "COLLECTIVE WEST"

- Creating an image of an enemy

Propaganda continues to show the "hostile" "collective West" as a threat to Russia and Belarus.

In his speech on the eve of the so-called Independence Day on July 2, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [called](#) the leaders of Western countries "ideological and direct heirs of those who capitulated" in World War II, who supposedly still believe that "it is possible to grow Nazism somewhere far from one's own home and keep this monster on a short leash":

“All – from the Wehrmacht soldier to manufacturers of chocolate, clothing, weapons, and equipment for the needs of the German army – are responsible for the genocide of the Soviet and Belarusian people. It was they who, over more than three years of occupation, turned Belarus into scorched earth. And today, their descendants, instead of repenting and atoning for the sins of their grandfathers, strangle us with sanctions and [threaten](#) us.”

“[Western](#) heirs of the Nazis have launched a new ‘crusade.’”

Propagandist Grigory Azarenok stated in a video stream that during World War II, all of Europe came to Belarus “to kill us.” <https://t.me/AzarenokCTV/32205>

At the parade on July 3, Lukashenka [lashed](#) out specifically at the United States:

“In the high offices of Washington, they are calculating the benefits of selling weapons and driving the Ukrainian people into poverty, moving towards their main goal. It has not changed for centuries... We know the true goals, we know who is behind every provocation on Belarus’ border, behind every terrorist threat to the civilian population.”

Propagandist Andrei [Mukovozchik](#):

“The civilization of Western values — Anglo-Saxon first and foremost — has always been interested in Slavs killing each other. For Slavs to betray each other and destroy each other. If you look deep into history, you will find a lot of factually confirmed examples.”

*BT* propagandist Ksenia [Lebedeva](#), July 29:

“Only 80 years have passed, and Europe has once again fallen sick with fascism. It is once again trampling on our Christian values, instilling sodomy and immorality, and wants to erase us from history once again. So maybe our grandfathers shouldn't have freed them from the brown leprosy back then, in '44-45? They should have! Because they did it not for them, but for us. The generation that has not forgotten. That remembers and honors. And we will liberate Europe again! For future generations.”

- Calls for renewing dialogue

Still, there are sporadic calls for dialogue with the West – the EU, the U.S., and individual Western countries. However, as in the case of Poland and the Baltic states, Lukashenka and his supporters emphasize that such a dialogue should follow their own plan:

Aliaksandr [Lukashenka](#), July 2:

“We are still ready to begin a constructive dialogue with our neighbors in the West. Our conditions are simple: respect for the sovereignty of Belarus, national traditions, our historical memory, and the choice of the Belarusian people.”

- U.S. presidential elections

In July, pro-government propagandists and experts were active in commenting on the assassination attempt on Donald Trump and Joe Biden’s withdrawal from the presidential race. Although there are some voices in their ranks that support Trump,

most propagandists admit that his victory will most likely not mean an improvement in U.S. relations with Belarus and Russia, and also warn against excessive enthusiasm and high hopes for the best outcome, since, in their opinion, “Americans still remain the greatest danger to all of us” and “American nationalists are not our friends.”

Some of them also spread elements of conspiracy theories. Grigory [Azarenok](#), July 16:

“Trump openly killed one of the leaders of Iran. Trump almost attacked the DPRK. Trump unleashed a trade war with China. Trump began supplying Ukraine with weapons. Trump attacked Syria. Bolton and Pompeo, neocon hawks, largely determined Trump’s foreign policy. Under Trump, the deep state and global pharma launched the “Covid” project, closely linked to military developments and biological weapons. Under Trump, an attempt at an anti-Russian Maidan began in Belarus. And I don’t remember what good he did for Russia and for us.”

Piotr [Petrousky](#), pro-government and pro-Russian expert, July 21:

“Even if Trump returns to the White House, it is not a fact that he will make peace in Ukraine at any cost. And the price is Russia’s return to the zone of Western influence and its turn against China. Does Putin need this? That’s a big question.”

Ksenia [Lebedeva](#), propagandist for Belarusian Television, July 22:

“In any case, whoever wins the U.S. presidential election — Trump or Harris — the policy towards us will remain the same. There will be no ‘thaw.’”

Aliaksandr [Shpakousky](#), pro-government and pro-Russian expert, July 30:

“I would like to warn some of our colleagues who are euphoric about the prospects of Donald Trump’s victory. I don’t understand where all this joy comes from. I don’t see any encouraging statements there regarding Russia and Belarus. This is a confrontation between globalists and nationalists. American nationalists are not our friends.”

- “The Paris Olympics are the beginning of the end of Western civilization”

Propagandists did not fail to take advantage of the disagreements that arose against the backdrop of the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Paris, and accused Paris, France, Europe, Europeans, and Western civilization as a whole of degradation, moral decline, debauchery and even “worship of Satan.”

Grigory [Azarenok](#), July 27:

“At the opening of the Olympics was unbridled, unpunished, undisguised Satanism. The Pale Horseman, the call of the Antichrist, mockery of the Last Supper, and the severed head of the Queen were an open black mass. All this was done without any embarrassment, in view of a billion believers on the planet. Satan shows his power over the world.”

Pro-government propagandist Yevgeny Pustovoy, in his [article](#) for Minsk Pravda newspaper on July 31, called Europe a “Borrelian Sodom civilization”:

“But this is democracy! There are different versions as to why they are doing this, but the fact remains. Thousand-year-old foundations are being destroyed. The

civilization of Borrell's Sodom is not the elimination of normality, it is the abolition of man. The ultimate goal is to turn the whole world into opposition to God, the Creator, and the Good."

- Nuclear threats

On July 16, at a ceremony honoring graduates of higher military educational institutions and senior officers, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [said](#) that Belarus should not "give our enemies the opportunity to drag us into a military conflict":

"We are doing everything we need to for this, including deploying the most terrible nuclear weapons. We are accused of escalation and intensification of the situation. But in fact, we are ensuring our military security and strengthening the state's defense capabilities."

State media and pro-government propagandists continue to justify Lukashenka's decision to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, calling it a "preventive measure."

Diana [Shibkovskaya](#), propagandist, July 3:

"A powerful signal to enemies. Today, Minsk is hosting a military parade dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from the fascist invaders. Pay attention to the stickers on the Iskander, which clearly point to tactical nuclear weapons in the warhead of the missiles. Obviously, they were not loaded for the parade, but as a signal to enemies this is very important."

Aliaksandr [Alesin](#), pro-government military expert:

"There are no accidents at military parades. Since Soviet times, it has been the case that the equipment being paraded served as a kind of signal to our, let's say, international partners. This meant that we were ready for any eventuality and it was better not to touch us. It was better to have a peaceful dialogue with us, because we would respond to a military invasion with a nuclear strike – that was roughly how they responded in the Soviet Union."

Konstantin [Gagarin](#), military observer for Minsk-Novosti, July 12:

"In response to the West's openly aggressive steps, threats, provocations and build-up of NATO forces near the borders, the Belarusian capital was forced to deploy nuclear weapons on its territory. With the help of the military atom, the Commander-in-Chief fulfilled a key mission in these kinds of dangerous games contrived by the West."

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Aliaksandr [Shpakousky](#), pro-government and pro-Russian "expert" and staff member of the Belarusian embassy in Moscow, July 29:

“If Belarus had not made well-timed far-sighted decisions, our country would have probably been in a different situation in terms of security, and defense capabilities, considering the Ukrainian conflict. History will show that we did absolutely the right thing. We preserved peace in Belarus.”

## SANCTIONS

Propagandists continue to claim that the sanctions imposed against Lukashenka’s regime “failed,” did not give their adversaries the result they wanted, and even stimulated economic development. However, officials call them “illegal” and “discriminatory” and promise an “asymmetric response.” They hint that such responses are a “forced measure” and that they would prefer to continue cooperation.

ONT propagandist Igor [Tur](#), July 1:

“The Eurocrats who do not accept responsibility for anything, together with the politicians of the Baltic states and Poland who have nothing particular to show for themselves, shout about unlimited sanctions against Belarus... And then those who are interested in working with Minsk come and keep their mouths shut.”

Anatoly [Glaz](#), press secretary of Belarus’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 1:

“All these multiple EU decisions on sanctions have one main thing in common – the absolute futility of achieving their destructive goals. The sooner European bureaucrats understand this, the less harm they will manage to inflict on European businesses and the people. For us, these new restrictive measures are totally a passing phase. We have many plans for development, the economy is actively running and, frankly speaking, there are many projects to do and things ahead.”

Nevertheless, during the period under review, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [admitted](#) that cooperating with neighboring countries is still desired:

“These are our neighbors – the EU. We need to find ways to cooperate with them. If they need to purchase something and we need to sell it on their market, this is a mutually beneficial interest. No matter how politicians try to erect barriers, if businesses need it, they will find ways to break into certain markets.”

Pro-government political scientist Piotr Petrovsky went even further, proposing that German citizen Rico Krieger, sentenced to death in Belarus, be exchanged for the lifting of [sanctions](#):

“The only thing we can exchange this crook for is for all sanctions imposed after 2020 to be lifted, provided Belarus was also paid appropriate compensation for these four years of sanctions. Economists need to calculate [all this].”

According to Petrovsky, the West is obligated to pay Belarus reparations “for the hybrid war that they unleashed against us in 2020,” which, he claims, is still being waged “through sanctions and the closing of borders.”

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