



The International Strategic Action
Network for Security

“We kneel to beg the Chief to stay”

**MAIN NARRATIVES OF BELARUSIAN AND RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AIMED AT BELARUS IN THE
3RD QUARTER OF 2024**

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Analytical report

October 2024





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About the author: **Andrey Kalikh**, iSANS analyst

Media monitoring: Victoria Sakharova

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the third quarter of 2024 (July-September), the following narratives prevailed in Belarusian propaganda and in Russian propaganda aimed at Belarus:

1. BELARUS

- The upcoming presidential election, scheduled for January 2025, has a growing influence on the content and agenda of state media and Telegram channels. There are election campaigns in support of Aliaksandr Lukashenka in the country with a complete absence of campaigns of alternative candidates (as well as alternative candidates themselves).
- Ahead of the election, Lukashenka's image continues to be strengthened as the only and no-alternative candidate and the "father of the nation", whom "the core of the population" asks "on its knees" to remain in the post of president "forever".
- State holidays and commemorative dates, including those unrelated to Lukashenka's stay in power, such as the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Minsk from the German occupants, are used as an occasion for campaigning for him. In August, a new flow of praise for Lukashenka was connected with his 70th birthday.

2. NEW PROPAGANDA MEDIA

- Ahead of the election, the role of propaganda is increasing. New propaganda media are being launched to cover the population more widely. At the end of August, the "Belarusian killer of YouTube" – the first domestic video hosting and a new TV channel – were presented to the public. Lukashenka urged to "propagate only the Belarusian truth on it."
- Pro-government commentators responded to the arrest of founder of Telegram and media manager Pavel Durov in France with calls to create their Belarusian analogues instead of Western popular social platforms.

3. BELARUS' DEMOCRATIC FORCES

- August marked the fourth anniversary of the brutal suppression of the 2020 peaceful protests. The Lukashenka regime still considers the democratic forces its main enemy, which is evident from the degree of aggressive hate speech towards "those who left" in state media.
- Propaganda demands tougher legislation and continued repression of political emigrants and threatens them with all sorts of punishments, even physical extermination.
- On the fourth anniversary of the protests, the European Union issued a statement condemning the regime's crimes against its own people and calling for the immediate release of all political prisoners.
- In August and September, Lukashenka pardoned several groups of political prisoners by decree. The propaganda did not conceal that this was done in the hope of easing and lifting Western sanctions. The pardon of political prisoners gave a new reason for propagandists to praise Lukashenka for his "generosity" and "humanism."
- Likewise, the Belarusian media used the case of German citizen Rico Krieger, who was sentenced to death but then pardoned by Lukashenka. Krieger

became a participant of a large-scale exchange of spies and political prisoners between Russia and Belarus on the one side and Western countries on the other. The propaganda needed this picture to try to present Belarus as a “negotiable” country and to influence the easing of the sanctions regime.

- For the first time, Lukashenka publicly expressed concern about the “brain drain” abroad, thereby actually recognizing the problem of the fact that dissidents, most of whom are representatives of the most intellectual strata of society, are leaving Belarus.

4. WAR IN UKRAINE

- The previously noted slight decrease in the level of hostility of anti-Ukrainian rhetoric of Belarusian propagandists continues. The aggressive, defamatory tone is gradually replaced by softening and even friendly statements towards Ukrainians, calls for peace negotiations and for “crisis settlement,” which is absolutely impossible to imagine in the Russian propaganda. The main tone here is set, first of all, by Aliaksandr Lukashenka himself.
- In a big interview with Russia’s Rossiya 1 TV channel, Lukashenka said that “neither Russians, nor Ukrainians, nor Belarusians need this war” and called for “ending this fight.”
- At a meeting in Minsk with the head of the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR), Denis Pushilin, Lukashenka said that Belarus was ready to cooperate with Ukraine “on the same principles as with the DPR.”
- In July, Lukashenka’s mass media used the situation of a sudden increase in tension on the Belarus-Ukraine border to their benefit. It was announced that Belarusian troops were brought to full combat readiness, but after a while the “president” canceled this decision: “De-escalation – Lukashenka promised and fulfilled.”
- The unexpected operation of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Russia’s Kursk region, which has been ongoing since early August, initially caused confusion in the ranks of propagandists of the “Union State.” Later, narratives began to spread that it was “an attempt to prove that Ukraine can still do something” in order to “get more money from Western sponsors.”
- The propaganda cannot hide, but neither can it critically comment on the numerous cases of Russian military drones flying in and crashing on the territory of Belarus, launched to strike peaceful cities in Ukraine and accidentally going off course. Lukashenka has actually admitted that the drones are Russian.

5. THE “COLLECTIVE WEST”

- Anti-Western propaganda in Belarus, as in the case of Ukraine, remains contradictory. Extremely hostile rhetoric full of threats (including nuclear weapons), insults, fakes and manipulation alternates with calls to resume “business as usual” and return to friendly relations.
- Belarus’ closest western neighbors – Poland and the Baltic states – remain the main targets of threats and defamation for their consistent and tough stance towards the Lukashenka regime.

- In September, there was a burst of anti-Polish statements in the Belarusian mass media due to the so-called “National Unity Day” (September 17).
- Propaganda actively instrumentalizes the migration crisis at the borders of Belarus and the European Union.
- The presidential election in the U.S. scheduled for November 2024 has an increasing impact on the content of the information agenda of Lukashenka’s mass media. In general, there is an opinion in the propaganda environment that none of the candidates, if they win the election, will be able to influence the improvement of the U.S. relations with Belarus and Russia, as well as that the EU member states will not change their “anti-Belarus policy” because they remain “puppets of the United States.”

6. WESTERN SANCTIONS

- Despite the bravura statements that the sanctions are “useless” and even, on the contrary, stimulate the economy of Belarus, the propaganda continues to complain about them, calling them a “hybrid war” of the West against Belarus, and insist on their lifting. In order to ease the sanctions, the regime is ready to make various concessions, in particular, to release political prisoners.
- In August, the EU included a new group of Belarusian propagandists in the sanctions list. Lithuania sent materials against Aliaksandr Lukashenka to the International Criminal Court and a request to the administration of YouTube to block accounts of Belarusian propaganda channels on its territory. YouTube agreed. The democratic forces seek a complete ban of Belarusian media channels on YouTube.

PREFACE

The words in the title reflect the growing concern in the pro-government information environment of Belarus ahead of the upcoming presidential election. Undoubtedly, if four years ago Belarus had not been shaken by mass protests against the rigged results of the previous election, because of which the Belarusian regime was literally “hanging by a thread” for some time, there would not be desperate appeals to self-humiliation and adulation like this one now.

In this cry of propagandist Ryhor Azaronak, there is a paranoid fear of responsibility for his crimes against his own people, of new unrest, protests and any fluctuation of the ground under his feet. A repeat of 2020 is Lukashenka’s worst nightmare. The political regime wants to hold the upcoming election “clean and smooth,” and the propaganda is ready to build a “cult of the chief,” to humiliate themselves and kneel before him, as long as everything remains as it is.

In our review, we note an increase in the number of such statements. Propagandists use any official occasion, such as the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Minsk from the Germans in 1944, to spew another stream of flattery and gratitude to Lukashenka.

Most of all, pro-government journalists thank him for “preserving peace.” At the same time, they do not want to recognize that Lukashenka actually entered the war against Ukraine by providing the Russian army in February 2022 with its military infrastructure and territory from which it invaded Ukraine and from where it launched missiles on Ukrainian cities, making Belarus an accomplice in the military aggression and crimes of Putin’s regime.

And now the war is gradually coming back as a boomerang to Belarus: attack military drones launched by Russia to attack peaceful cities in Ukraine have started to appear and explode in its skies more and more often. At first, Belarusian propaganda claimed without any evidence that the drones were Ukrainian, but after the Russian origin of the drones was recognized by the supreme ruler himself, it became silent, not knowing what to say.

It was similar to another resonant event of this period – the unexpected and quick operation of the Ukrainian army on the territory of Russia, in Kursk region. The propaganda tried to ignore and “keep silent” about the successful offensive of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, as it did not fit into the general victorious rhetoric in the official media (on the principle of “either good or nothing is said about war”).

In any case, Lukashenka’s desire to end the war as soon as possible and to appear before the voters in the image of a “peacemaker” becomes the dominant factor influencing the agenda of the Belarusian media in the run-up to the election. While maintaining a generally hostile tone towards Ukraine and the West, there are more and more frequent calls for peace talks, for the establishment of relations, and demands for the lifting of sanctions and a return to “business as usual.”

I. BELARUS AND THE “UNION STATE”

1. Presidential election-2025

The presidential election of the Republic of Belarus, scheduled for January, is gradually becoming a dominant factor influencing the agenda and content of state publications. In fact, the ideological preparation in the media for the upcoming election started in July 2024, i.e. from the moment when the first clear public statements of the “president” of Belarus Aliaksandr Lukashenka about his readiness to again participate in the election campaign were made.

Election preparations have two main components:

- A broad media campaign involving the entire range of pro-government publications, from the largest state media (TV channels, newspapers, etc.) to anonymous channels close to the power structures, and personal Telegram channels of pro-government journalists, experts and TV presenters, where they express “their” private opinions.
- Agitation events, such as the “Forum of Patriotic Forces” held in Minsk in July, dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's rule, or the “republican awareness-raising campaign ‘Belarus adzinaya’ [*‘Belarus United’*]” in September, as well as ‘tours’ of propagandists and media figures around towns and villages of Belarus, speaking in favor of Lukashenka.

During the media campaign, the image of Lukashenka as the only and irreplaceable ruler, “father of the nation,” “peacemaker” protecting Belarus from wars and upheavals is being strengthened. Judging by the concentration of flattery and requests (*“If necessary, the whole nation will kneel and ask him to rule for another 30 years,”* [Ryhor Azaronak](#)), we can speak about artificial creation and maintenance of a cult of personality of the “president.”

At the same time, nothing is known about the agitation campaigns of alternative candidates (nor is anything known about the alternative candidates themselves, even from systemic parties and movements). All the efforts of the state, including the work of propaganda, are aimed at strengthening only one candidate – Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

Any occasion, including official dates and holidays, is used to glorify Lukashenka's image as “savior and father of the nation.” For example, in July, such an occasion was the 30th anniversary of Lukashenka's victory in the second round of the presidential election in 1994 (July 10) and the 30th anniversary of his first inauguration (July 20).

On July 3, Belarus’ “Independence Day” was celebrated, which is actually a tribute to the liberation of Minsk (and not even the whole country) from German invaders in 1944. Nevertheless, this was no reason not to utter another praise for Lukashenka. At a reception in Moscow on this occasion, Ambassador of Belarus to Russia Dmitry Krutoi in his solemn speech found [symbolism](#) in the fact that this date “practically coincides with the 30th anniversary of presidential power in Belarus.” He called Lukashenka “a rock man, a legendary man, with whose name Belarus is associated all over the world,” noting his “incredible modesty.”

On September 17, on another semi-official holiday – “National Unity Day” – the propaganda again praised the “president” despite the fact that this date marks the “reunification of the lands” of Belarus, i.e. the actual partition of Poland between

Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939. This day causes ambiguous reactions among historians even inside Belarus and is perceived as ideological, with a distinctly anti-Polish and anti-Western subtext.

Aliaksandr Shpakouski, a pro-government and pro-Russian "political scientist," advisor to the Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in Moscow:

"The historical happiness of our country lies in the fact that at this critical period of time, Aliaksandr Lukashenka – a strong-willed and experienced politician, selflessly devoted to our dear Belarus – is the head of state." (Personal Telegram [channel](#), September 17)

On September 9, a broad pro-government election campaign called "[Belarus Adzinaya](#)" [Belarus United] was held in Belarus to agitate the population to vote for Lukashenka. The "main faces" of propaganda – TV presenters and journalists of state channels and other pro-government media – spoke at the event. Ryhor Azaronak, a TV presenter of STV TV channel and one of the most aggressive propagandists of the regime, said: "If necessary, we will go out and ask Aliaksandr Ryhoravich to continue to strengthen, preserve, protect, and carry our Belarus." (Personal Telegram [channel](#), September 9)

Ihar Tur, who also spoke from the same stage, said that "everyone should think, not make decisions under the influence of emotions and **vote for Aliaksandr Lukashenka**":

"You may like Aliaksandr Ryhoravich, you may not – from the point of view of politics and peculiarities of the economy, it is completely of secondary importance. It happens to be that he is the only one who can personally guarantee many issues." ([POZIRK](#), September 9).

New praise films, programs and articles glorifying the dictator are usually timed to coincide with the holidays, as it was the case for July 10 (the film "[Lukashenka is a national brand](#)," Belarus-1 TV channel; the film "[One for All](#)," ONT TV channel, etc.).

And the very air of propaganda media is literally filled with praise and gratitude to Lukashenka:

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

"30 years ago, an ordinary Belarusian called his compatriots to follow him. 80.3% of Belarusians supported their future leader. As a result, the Belarusian became Batska, and the people became the nation."

Ryhor Azaronak, a TV presenter on STV channel:

"[...] And Lukashenka fights. He fights for his people. Let's 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 whole nation will kneel and ask him to rule for another 30 years.**" (Personal Telegram [channel](#), July 10)

"Yes. We're getting on our knees. **To kiss the banner and beg the Chief to stay.** [...] We will kneel and ask with the entire world, with the entire nation – **Batska, stay. Stay forever.**" (Personal Telegram [channel](#), August 16)

Vadzim Hihin, a deputy of the National Assembly:

"What is Belarus of Lukashenka's era? Let's be honest: the best time in the entire history of national statehood." (Personal Telegram [channel](#), July 10)

Maryna Karaman, a journalist of the ONT TV channel:

“Today is August 16. On this day 4 years ago [*referring to the events of August 2020*], the first rally for BATSKA took place. And hearing his speech then, I exhaled. There will be no catastrophe. It will not be like in Ukraine. He will not give us up, he will not abandon us, he is us, and together with him we will not surrender the country.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), August 16)

Moscow also does not stay aside and fully supports Lukashenka. In August, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church [awarded](#) Lukashenka with orders on the occasion of his 70th birthday. In September, Russian politician of Belarusian origin and former member of the Federation Council of Russia Frants Klintsevich, speaking on the air of Belarusian television, [said](#) without hesitation that Belarus is a happy country because it has Lukashenka:

“How lucky Belarus is to have such a president. His friendship with Putin and his relationship with Russia in these difficult times is first and foremost a guarantee of peace and stability.”

Lukashenka himself seems to be extremely concerned about making sure that future election campaigns go as smoothly as possible. He is constantly meeting with officials and media managers, discussing political campaigns with them. The main nightmare for the regime is a repeat of August 2020, when mass protests against the rigged election results took place in Belarusian cities for several months. On September 19, at the meeting with the heads of electoral bodies of the countries of the “Commonwealth of Independent States,” Lukashenka called the election a **“battlefield”**:

“This is already, let’s be frank, a battlefield in the pre-election and election periods, where the main actor is the CEC bodies and the election commission in general. Election campaigns have long ceased to be a technical procedure.” ([BelTA](#))

In his [opinion](#), in this sphere, it is important to “develop their own standards” so that the OSCE and other organizations do not impose “some principles”:

“Today we are thinking about what to do with the so-called **foreign observers**, because we know: their arrival is about documents prepared in advance, which they will then announce and sign.”

On September 26, Lukashenka once again spoke about the election. He [praised](#) the work of the propaganda media under his control and said that the Belarusian opposition was losing the information agenda to him, so the U.S. allegedly demanded more decisive actions from it – “like Ukrainians did in Kursk region.”

2. Creation of new propaganda media before the election

On September 17, on “National Unity Day,” it was [announced](#) that a new propaganda TV channel called “First Informational” would be launched. The editorial staff was formed based on the previously existing “Agency of TV News” (ATN). It is planned to open 24-hour news broadcasting on the channel, and an English-language version of the channel was also [announced](#) to be launched soon.

Ihar Tur, a TV presenter of the ONT channel, explained the need for a new propaganda television better than anyone else:

“We live at a stage where there is no such thing as news, any message is propaganda. The only difference is what propaganda is and whose

propaganda it is. At the state level, propaganda is meant to protect the national interests of countries. That is, if there is propaganda around, then all of it is protecting someone else's interests. **It seems obvious to me that one should choose one's own country's propaganda.**" ([ONT](#), September 17)

In summer, there were serious discussions in the pro-government media about shutting down the YouTube video hosting and other popular international Internet platforms. This was advocated by many propagandists. Former media manager and, more recently, Minister of Information Marat Markau suggested replacing YouTube, Telegram, Instagram and TikTok with domestic social networks in Belarus:

"We should have these kinds of tools, work with them. A significant number of our kids are on Telegram, TikTok, Instagram, etc. But those are not our tools. And that is an issue that needs to be resolved."

These discussions were particularly intense after the detention of Pavel Durov, the founder of the Telegram social network and a prominent Russian media manager, in August. His arrest gave an excuse for yet another statement about the "lack of media freedom" in the West. Propagandists started talking about the fact that Belarus should create its own social networks. Deputy of the National Assembly Aleh Tsilko [suggested](#) creating its own "independent" Internet platforms, for example, TGBY or InstaBY, "which every Belarusian could use without fear of being hacked or infected with an Internet virus."

In the end, these talks had an effect. After heated discussions, it was decided not to close YouTube after all. Instead, the Belarusian "killer of YouTube" – VIDEOBEL.BY video hosting – was presented in mid-September. Speaking at its presentation, Marat Markau, the Minister of Information of Belarus and former director of the propaganda ONT TV channel, [said](#) that the country needed the domestic video hosting "not to be left without tools of information influence":

"We are constantly under pressure when our resources start to be shut down as soon as we speak an inconvenient truth. That is why today we have created a Belarusian platform, where the main political video content produced by us will be accumulated."

At the same time, [according](#) to Markau, "there is no task to close YouTube in the republic" now, but if necessary, "measures will be taken."

On September 20, speaking at a conference dedicated to future election campaigns, he said that Belarus had greatly restricted the ["information space"](#) in four years:

"We have... radically strengthened our ability to regulate the country's information space. **Some will say that we are "tightening the screws" and that this is undemocratic.** I will answer that we have not yet adopted all the "democratic experience" of our Western neighbors, there is still potential, you can rest assured. The main thing is that today we have stopped being shy of decisive actions, we have drawn conclusions and know where our weak links are, and we are working on them."

Meanwhile, Lithuania started to fight against the Belarusian propaganda itself on YouTube. This country became the first country to submit a request to the administration of the YouTube video hosting to **block a number of accounts of Lukashenka's propaganda media on its territory.** This was reported in the media by Franak Viachorka, the advisor to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. At the same time, he

said that it would be necessary to fight to get Youtube to block these channels inside Belarus itself. “This is the result of the sanctions that were imposed against Belteleradiocompany, and in the end, YouTube decided to comply with them,” Viachorka [said](#).

On September 19, Andrei Mukavozchyk, a columnist of the pro-government “SB.Belarus Segodnya” newspaper and a well-known propagandist, published a resonant article, which could be called a manifesto “In Defense of Propaganda.” In the material titled “Media culture and boundaries,” Mukavozchyk raises questions about the boundaries and limits of permissibility in the work of propagandists and answers them himself. For this, he uses the hackneyed narrative that there is allegedly a war against Russia and Belarus, which means that one should use military methods in the war. Therefore, propaganda should “feel free not to be subtle” and propagandists should “forget about white jackets and gloves” [politeness]. In Mukavozchyk’s [opinion](#), one can even use an obscene language, be tough and even “show meat with blood” to achieve this goal:

“The task of propaganda (especially in war) is not only to 'lead by raising the level of the public' – but to explain simply and quickly to the population what is good and what is bad. Where are their own, where are the strangers. The best response, as we know from the arms race, is an asymmetric response. An asymmetric response is [*as in chess*] to sweep away the pieces and hit the head with the board. **If there is the result we want, then it is done right.** [...] That’s why media culture now is what it is: what allows us to survive is cultural. Propaganda is the culture of a strangled state.”

3. Western sanctions

Regarding the Western sanctions imposed against the Lukashenka regime, there are two contradictory “lines of defense” in the official propaganda. According to the first one, the sanctions are “senseless,” “failed,” did not give the opponents the desired result, and even allegedly stimulated the development of the Belarusian economy, i.e., turned out to be even useful for Belarus. Many media personalities, including, for example, Natallia Kachanava, the Chairwoman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly (Parliament), claim this:

“The sanctions imposed on our countries have **created new opportunities for us**. We started to produce new competitive products, identified the bottlenecks of our economy and closed them so that we would not depend on anyone. We have once again realized that we know how to do everything and we can do anything.” ([BelTA](#), September 19)

Another line of propaganda, contradicting the first one, says that the sanctions are “illegal,” “discriminatory,” “aimed at destroying/weakening Belarus” and they should be lifted. Lukashenka himself often complains about them in his speeches and [calls](#) the sanctions a “hybrid war” of the West.

Pro-government “expert” Piotr Piatrouski [demands](#) the West to pay reparations to Belarus “for the hybrid war, which they unleashed against us in 2020,” which, as he claims, is still being conducted “through sanctions and border closures.”

Ryhor Azaronak, a propagandist of the STV TV channel:

“They write that we are the fifth in the world in terms of sanctions. Can you imagine, there are 200+ countries on the planet. And we’re a magnificent five. Rebels. Bold. Strong. Standing. Russia Iran Syria DPRK Belarus. Powerful. Everyone else is in the herd. But we will free them.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), August 24)

Also, the propaganda does not hide the fact that the real reason for the large exchange of political prisoners and spies, which took place in early August between Russia and Belarus on one side and Western countries on the other, was the expectation that sanctions would be lifted or eased. The same Piatrouski, commenting on the case of one of the participants of the exchange – German citizen Rico Krieger, sentenced to death – [said](#):

“The only thing we can trade this thug for is for **all the sanctions imposed after 2020 to be lifted**. And that Belarus is properly compensated for these four years of sanctions.”

In August, the European Union imposed new sanctions against a group of officials of the Lukashenka regime, including several Belarusian propagandists. The blacklist included Director General of the largest state information agency BELTA Iryna Akulovich, journalist of the STV state TV channel Mikita Rachylouski and head of the “Belarus Segodnya” publishing house Dzmitry Zhuk.

II. BELARUS' DEMOCRATIC FORCES

1. Anniversary of the 2020 protests

August marked four years since the mass peaceful revolution in Belarus, which began spontaneously in Minsk and other major cities amid outrage over the rigged results of the 2020 presidential election. The popular protests ended in bloody suppression, and Belarus entered a black, endless period of repression, the destruction of the last freedoms, the defeat of independent media and public organizations, the absolute power of the security forces, and the final establishment of the dictatorship.

On the occasion of another anniversary of the suppression of mass protests, The European External Action Service (EEAS) [called](#) for “the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners” in Belarus.

The EEAS statement, signed by the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, also says that the EU remains “united in its support for the Belarusian democratic movement” and is ready to activate the Comprehensive Plan of Economic Support of up to 3 billion euros on condition that the country takes the democratic path of development.

In response to this statement, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Anatol Hlaz [said](#) that with the help of such statements, “European officials” wanted to hide “their own failures and ill-considered decisions in the economy, energy sector, and migration policy.” At the same time, Hlaz did not miss the opportunity to propose that the EU “return to objective realities, pragmatism and dialogue” and build “constructive interaction.”

2. Threats and repression

Even four years after the suppression of the protests, the Lukashenka regime still sees the supporters of democratic changes as its main threat. This can be judged, in particular, by the degree of bitterness and aggressiveness of hate speech towards them in the materials of the pro-government media. As well as four years ago, the main accusation of the propaganda is the unsubstantiated assertion that the “fugitives” with the help of the West are allegedly preparing a forceful seizure of power and an armed invasion of Belarus. This myth is the basis for the creation of the whole complex of narratives and threats addressed towards the democratic forces, on which the Belarusian propaganda is based and without which it cannot exist.

It should be noted that the level of threats against opponents of the authorities does not weaken over time, but even grows. In addition – and this really raises concerns – the regime now does not hesitate to threaten the relatives of political emigrants with repression, first of all, with confiscation of property (much has been said about this in our [previous issue](#)). Propagandists are trying to intimidate protest-minded citizens, both at home and abroad, with all sorts of punishments, including physical extermination.

Andrei Mukavozchyk:

“We will crucify them on the square at the slightest attempt of a terrorist attack, no one will hesitate, just believe me.” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), July 2).

Ryhor Azaronak:

“We will hang you, you bastards. By your tongue.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), July 11).

“You are preparing a coup, war and destruction in the country for the money of foreign countries, and we have to talk to you with white gloves? We will trample, crush, destroy you.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), July 23)

While threatening emigrants with terrible punishments, the authorities simultaneously try to lure them back to Belarus with false promises. The so-called “Commission for Return” still works, promising that if a Belarusian has not committed crimes against law and order, he/she will not face anything in case of return and repentance. However, few cases of those who still believed in the promises of the Commission and decided to return to their homeland show that this is [far from being true](#).

Lukashenka’s officials continue to publicly divide Belarusians into “right” (i.e., loyal to the regime) and “wrong” (opponents of the regime). On August 7, deputy of the National Assembly Anzhalika Kurchak [said](#) that she does not recognize those who left the country as Belarusians:

“As for those destructive resources, you know, in our mentality of Belarusians, those who live outside Belarus – **they are not Belarusians, and we do not hear them**. We hear, understand and believe those who are close to us.”

At the same time, amid the continuous aggressive statements and threats towards the democratic forces, there are more and more obvious signs of the regime’s concern about the large outflow of people from the country. For example, speaking at the Republican Pedagogical Council in Minsk on August 27, Lukashenka himself [raised](#) the topic of “**brain drain**”:

“Talents must stay in our country! Work with talented children in schools and universities must be strengthened. There is one goal – they must live and work in their country.”

In fact, the dictator expressed concern about the outflow of the protest- and democracy-minded part of citizens, because they have been the basis of the intellectual elite of Belarus.

3. Pardon of political prisoners

In August and September 2024, Lukashenka pardoned several groups of political prisoners, who were in Belarusian prisons mainly because of the events of 2020, by his decrees. This was used by the pro-government commentators to again praise the dictator for his “wisdom,” “humanism,” and “generosity,” while remaining silent about the reasons why these people were in prison in the first place. Yury Vaskrasenski, a former opposition activist and member of the so-called “pardon commission,” does not [hide](#) the fact that the purpose of releasing political prisoners is to ease Western sanctions against Belarus:

“**If it is necessary to release another batch in exchange for the lifting of sanctions**, we will consider this option. We can consider all the issues, because we need to pay pensions, we need to support women in labor, maternity leave, raise children.”

In his [interview](#) with the Zerkalo independent media outlet on September 24, Vaskrasenski said that the further process of pardoning political prisoners “may

stall,” among other things, because “sanctions will not be lifted” and “the West will continue to put pressure.”

Lukashenka himself claims that he makes decisions on pardons solely of his own free will:

“First of all, no one can force me to do anything. It is impossible. I often say to journalists and others: you know me well, I have never made decisions on orders or under pressure.” ([Website](#) of the “president” of Belarus, September 10)

On September 27, at a meeting with BSUIR students, he [said](#) that he planned to continue the practice of pardoning political prisoners, once again emphasizing that no one puts pressure on him in this matter. At the same time, he indirectly recognized the existence of such pressure, as he connected the release of political prisoners with the easing of Western sanctions.

III. UKRAINE

1. Contradictions in anti-Ukrainian propaganda narratives

Anti-Ukrainian propaganda in Belarus consists of several components, often mutually exclusive.

On the one hand, Belarus, as Russia's "satellite" that has fallen into complete dependence on it, is forced to support Russia's aggression not only materially – by providing the Russian Armed Forces with military infrastructure, airfields, territories, etc. – but also ideologically, explaining to its population the necessity of war with Ukraine and its participation in it. That is why from the very beginning of the full-scale invasion and during the period of preparation for it, the propaganda of the Lukashenka regime has unconditionally taken the side of Russian propagandists and calls for the destruction of the Ukrainian "Nazi regime," supports attacks on peaceful cities, and spreads misanthropic myths about Ukrainians, except that it does it in a less aggressive manner than its Russian colleagues.

On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify the necessity of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and especially Belarus' complicity in it. This is influenced, first of all, by the close family and economic ties between the two countries and the fact that citizens of Belarus have always considered Ukraine a friendly, dear country, and Ukrainians – good neighbors, close "Slavic brothers." As a result, the image of Ukrainians as an enemy cannot be fabricated, despite all the efforts of the propaganda.

It is also difficult to explain to the Belarusian society for the sake of what ideals it should receive new restrictions, suffer from Western sanctions and isolation because of someone else's war.

2. New "peaceful" statements

In the Belarusian media broadcast, the calls, if not for the end of the war, then for peace negotiations are becoming louder and louder. Officially, the mass media constantly emphasize Lukashenka's image as a "peacemaker" trying to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table. Analysis of the media rhetoric allows us to conclude that hostile anti-Ukrainian propaganda is increasingly combined with calls for negotiations and softening, conciliatory statements towards Ukrainians. And as we approach the election, this narrative becomes dominant.

Deputy Aleh Haidukevich:

"We never said that Ukrainians are our enemies. It is not the Ukrainians' fault that their country is ruled from outside. Most Ukrainians are normal people. It's just that nobody tells them the truth, they are not allowed to decide the fate of their country. They have lost their sovereignty today – that is a tragedy. But we will always extend a hand to the Ukrainian people when they ask for it. It has always been and will always be so." (In an [interview](#) with BelTA, July 14)

Kseniya Lebedzeva:

"While the Ukrainian authorities refuse to conduct any small peace talks, Ukrainians of conscription age continue to be forcibly mobilized to the front." (Belarus-1 TV [channel](#), July 23)

Lukashenka presents himself as a peacemaker who wants to resolve the conflict, at the same time accusing Ukraine of allegedly trying to drag him into the conflict but not succeeding:

“Ukrainians ... at the command of the Americans began to aggravate relations with us: they expected that I would also start to get involved in the war. They would be happy now if Belarus joined this war. But to date, as far as possible, I am doing everything to end it.” ([BelTA](#))

The argument in favor of Belarus becoming a platform for peace talks between Ukraine and Russia is the statement that Belarusians understand the “Slavic brothers” better than others.

Foreign Minister Maksim Ryzhankou:

“We offer our peacemaking efforts even now, for we know and understand Russians and Ukrainians better than anyone else. And we will do everything in our power to achieve peace on the long-suffering Ukrainian land. We are most interested in this!” ([Website](#) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, September 28)

Belarusian ambassador to Switzerland Aliaksandr Hanevich:

“Only we and the Russian Federation understand what is happening there [*in Ukraine*], because we are Slavic peoples, and we understand more humanly the processes that are going on there”. ([RTVI](#), September 17)

In August, in a big interview with Rossiya 1, one of the main Russian federal TV channels, Aliaksandr Lukashenka spoke about some “threats” coming from Ukraine, but immediately said that the goals of the war have already been [achieved](#), because Ukraine “has already been denazified.” And in general, he said, “Ukraine is not at war with us”:

“You [*in Russia*] sometimes talk about Nazis. **There are no such Nazis there [*in Ukraine*] anymore. Ukraine has been denazified.** But there are a few rampaging Nazis who remain there, but they are no longer a trend.”

“**Still, Ukrainians will be our people.** No one in the West is waiting for them, no one needs them.”

“**I was very close to Ukrainians, I know this people very well.** Hardworking, decent.”

“**No Ukraine is at war with us today.** All this massacre was started before my eyes, these are what you call them – ‘Nazis’ – the nationalist elite. [They are to blame.](#)”

The conclusion is that it is time to end the war:

“[Let’s sit down at the negotiating table](#) and **end this fight.** Neither the Ukrainian people, nor Russians, nor Belarusians need it. They [*Western countries*] need it.”

On August 24, Lukashenka’s press-service [published](#) the address of the “president” to the people of Ukraine on Independence Day of Ukraine. The tone of the address was so friendly towards Ukrainians that it seemed as if Lukashenka was indirectly asking for forgiveness for his complicity in Russia’s crimes. Here are some of the most notable quotes:

“Belarusian land has always treated the warm-hearted and hardworking people of Ukraine with special respect and warmth. For a long time, our nations have found strength in unity, shared joy and sorrow, shelter and bread, overcame adversity together and were proud of our successes. We are united not only by common destiny and family ties, but also by the desire to be friends and get along with neighbors.”

“I am convinced that in today’s difficult conditions, it is not only possible, but also necessary to speak the language of peace for the sake of the present and future generations of the Slavic peoples. There is no other alternative. For its part, Belarus will continue to do its utmost to ensure security in the region as soon as possible.”

Lukashenka also wished the residents of Ukraine “a peaceful sky and civil accord.”

Besides, one should pay tribute to the Belarusian dictator: despite the pressure, Putin has never managed to persuade Lukashenka about direct participation of the Belarusian army in the war against Ukraine (at least, not yet). Apparently, the Kremlin’s insistent demands have to be rebuffed even now. At the end of August, Lukashenka again [confirmed](#) his determination not to send troops:

“There were and will be no orders to go to war outside Belarus. We will only go to war when they come to us with bad intentions. That’s all.”

At the meeting with Denis Pushilin, the “head” of the so-called “Donetsk People’s Republic” (an illegal territorial entity in the occupied part of eastern Ukraine) on September 19, Lukashenka [said](#) that he was **ready to cooperate with Ukraine** “on the same principles as with the Donetsk Republic.”

3. Kursk operation of the Ukrainian Armed Forces

In August, an unexpected operation of the Ukrainian army began on the territory of Russia – in Kursk region. Ukrainian troops moved forward rapidly without encountering serious resistance on their way. As of this writing (October 2024), this operation is still ongoing, meaning that Ukrainian units have been on the territory of Russia for the third month. The purpose of the operation is probably to divert the attention of Russian troops and redeploy them from the Ukrainian front into Russia to defend their territory.

The success of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Kursk region has caused a great resonance and confusion in the ranks of propagandists both in Russia and Belarus. Both are trying to convince their audiences that the purpose of the attack on Kursk region is to show Ukraine’s Western “sponsors” that their help was not in vain.

Vadzim Hihin

“Recent disturbing events indicate that the Kyiv regime is not determined to settle the armed conflict peacefully.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), August 10)

Aleh Haidukevich:

“Is victory the goal of terror attacks in Kursk region? No. They need to show the Western partners that there is some success. There is no success on the front, and it means more terror attacks.” (ONT TV [channel](#), August 7)

“**This is a PR campaign**, this is a terrorist action, this is an attempt to show its people and the West that we can do something, let’s finance us.” (ONT TV [channel](#), August 21)

They also constantly [spread a fake](#) that foreign mercenaries are allegedly fighting in the Ukrainian Armed Forces on the territory of Russia and that Russia is actually fighting against NATO.

4. Russian drones in Belarus' airspace

The war against Ukraine unleashed by Putin with the help of the Lukashenka regime is gradually “coming back as a boomerang” not only to Russia itself, but also to Belarus. Beginning from August, Russian military drones, launched to attack Ukrainian cities and deviated from their course, are regularly appearing in Belarusian airspace. Belarusian fighters even took to the sky to destroy them. [According](#) to our colleagues from the Belarusian Hajun monitoring project, on the night of September 4-5, two out of eight drones that flew into Belarus were shot down over Homiel, a city with a population of half a million people, and Khoiniki district. The drones continued to fly into Belarus in September and October.

It was impossible to ignore such an event amid a wide public resonance. The Belarusian Ministry of Defense [confirmed](#) the destruction of the drones in Belarus' sky, but did not mention whose drones were shot down and how they ended up there.

Lukashenka's “information troops” immediately blamed Ukraine for the launch of the drones. For example, Aliaksandr Shpakouski [wrote](#) in his Telegram channel that the UAVs were Ukrainian even before the statement of the Belarusian Ministry of Defense and that it was “a provocation of the Kyiv regime on the eve of the presidential election in Belarus.” State Secretary of the “Union State” Dmitry Mezentsev [called](#) the flights of the UAVs into Belarus “clear Russophobia” and “a provocation committed under the global order from overseas,” the purpose of which is to “stop the movement in Belarus and Russia, belittle [their] role on the international arena, and nullify our culture.” At the same time, propagandists [urge](#) people to “be vigilant” and not to spread “unverified information.”

However, there was another reaction as well. For example, regional news portal *Mazyr News* quoted the statement of the Ministry of Defense of Belarus about the attack on Belarus by “Ukrainian UAVs,” but a few hours later corrected the statement by deleting the word “Ukrainian,” *Flagshtok* independent media outlet [wrote](#).

In a commentary for the BelTA state agency, Lukashenka was extremely controversial, accusing Ukraine of all sins as always, but at the same time he actually [confirmed](#) that Russian drones had flown into Belarus as well:

“I must tell you openly: we have agreed through channels with the Ukrainians that we will not mention the facts of drones, **both Russian and Ukrainian**, flying into our territory in the media. Why is this happening? Because both of them are operating these drones poorly. [...] And these were Ukrainian drones, not Russian ones. **Although it happens from the other side as well.**”

IV. THE “COLLECTIVE WEST”

1. Contradictions in anti-Western rhetoric

With regard to the Western countries, the situation in the Belarusian official discourse is approximately the same as in the coverage of the events in Ukraine. In general, there prevails a picture in the center of which is an “innocent” Belarus surrounded by enemies who are just waiting for their time to invade it, “to take away the Western lands,” “to divide” and “to destroy.” The rhetoric built on such a false model is characterized by aggressiveness mixed with accusations, intimidation and threats. At the same time, the propaganda does not forget to emphasize the “peaceful nature” of the Lukashenka regime, to claim that “Belarus leaves the door open for negotiations,” that it is ready to “start relations anew, from scratch” and to resume business “as if nothing ever happened.”

In such a policy of “not slamming the door” one can see, by the way, a serious difference between the rhetoric of Belarusian propagandists and the rhetoric of their Russian colleagues. The latter have long ago “slammed” any door behind them, openly calling for the destruction of Ukrainians and Ukraine from the screens of TV channels with multi-million audience, being actually accomplices of the armed invasion along with those who give and execute orders, and at the same time trying to intimidate the rest of the world.

Belarusian propaganda likes to accuse the West of all deadly sins, indiscriminately calling the leaders of Western countries “[direct descendants](#)” of the Nazis, interested in “[Slavs killing each other](#),” and demanding to “[liberate Europe again](#)”.

But at the same time, along with the heavy accusations, Lukashenka and pro-government commentators do not hesitate to suggest that Western countries return to “business as usual.”

Aliaksandr Lukashenka:

“We are still ready to start 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.” ([BelTA](#), July 2)

Deputy Vadzim Hihin:

Businessmen and heads of major Western corporations are “against the suicidal policy of sanctions” and “wish for the development of relations” with Russia and Belarus. (Personal Telegram [channel](#), July 23)

2. Poland and the Baltic states

The main spearhead of propaganda in the information agenda on foreign policy is aimed, first of all, at the closest western neighbors of Belarus – Poland and the Baltic states, known for their irreconcilable and strict position in relation to the Belarusian regime. From the screens of the state mass media of Belarus, propagandists claim that these countries have no freedom and independence and are actually “puppets” of the U.S., Brussels or NATO, that they implement their “anti-Belarusian” policy not of their own free will, while the peoples of these countries advocate the preservation and improvement of relations with Belarus and Russia.

Ruslan Kasyhin, the Deputy Chairman of the National Security Commission of the House of Representatives:

“Poland is an outpost of the Americans to promote the interests of the U.S. in the region.” (The Union State is entirely in the SCO. All is calm on the border of Belarus and Ukraine? “Minsk-Moscow,” [YouTube](#), July 8)

Siarhei Musiyenka, the director of the ECOOM analytical center:

“I agree with the opinion that ‘Poland is not a sovereign state and depends on the U.S.’ We have noticed it before in many manifestations.” ([BelTA](#), July 9)

Andrei Mukavozchyk:

“The Baltic countries are limitrophe, they show that they are not countries, they are territories. They are a territory for the West, on which one can place a military base, on which one can ... place waste.” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), July 24)

On July 16, Lukashenka said that it was necessary to “keep the powder dry” in the western direction:

“We will go to war only when someone else’s boot steps on our land. We will do everything diplomatically to settle our relations, first of all with our neighbors. We propose to settle our relations with Poland and Lithuania in the same way. But so far, we do not see reciprocity.” ([Website](#) of the “president”)

In September, there was another growth of anti-Polish statements by Belarusian propaganda and, as a consequence, a growth of tension in Polish-Belarusian relations due to the so-called “National Unity Day” with a distinctly anti-Polish ideology (for more details, see Chapter 1). In particular, in the materials dedicated to this day, the propaganda regularly repeated the myth that Poland was experiencing some “phantom pain” from the loss of territories and dreamed of regaining them, and for this purpose wanted to attack Belarus.

Aleh Ramanau, the head of the “Belaya Rus” pro-government party, in an [interview](#) with ONT:

“We have to admit that [*the Poles*] are a people with historical greatness, who were able to create an **empire, and they are an imperial people**. And this imperialism is being reproduced in ugly and inadequate forms in modern times.”

Yury Vaskrasenski, [ONT](#):

“Of course, they [*Poles*] dream of reuniting these four parts here: the Lithuanian, Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian parts, that empire that existed “od morza do morza” [*from sea to sea*].”

Employee of the General Staff of the Belarusian Armed Forces Andrei Bahadzel, [speaking](#) in a political talk show of the same TV channel, accused Poland of preparing for aggression against Belarus:

“Soldiers sing songs about how they occupy the respective cities, maps are drawn, the population is prepared – psychologically, morally, i.e. by and large, [...] if Drang nach Osten happens, it is most likely that Poland will be in the forefront.”

On September 12, at a meeting with representatives of diasporas, Lukashenka expressed readiness to normalize relations with Warsaw “even tomorrow,” but Poland still wants to annex Western Belarus:

“Well, why would Poles spend 5% of GDP, billions of dollars today to buy weapons? Who is going to attack Poland? And what do we need from the Poles? We don’t need anything. What do the Poles need from us? Well, it’s clear, they need to take Western Belarus and Western Ukraine over there again. [...] Listen, it’s absolutely impossible. Nobody will be able to conquer Belarus.” ([Website](#) of the “president” of Belarus)

At the festive event on September 17, Lukashenka once again threatened that “an attack on Belarus would mean the beginning of World War III.” [According](#) to him, “puppeteers from Washington [...] are pushing Ukraine to confront Belarus.”

Propagandists commented on this speech. Aleh Haidukevich:

“The President told the truth! The attack on Belarus is really World War III. Wake up, Poles, Germans, French, wake up, Europe! It’s not Belarus that’s being dragged into the war, you’re all being dragged. Americans, wake up, you’ll get it too, you won’t be able to stay away on the island! Belarus will never kneel, remember that!” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), September 17)

Andrei Mukavozchyk, a propagandist of the pro-government “SB. Belarus Segodnya” newspaper:

“We are not afraid to die defending a just cause, we will go to heaven – that’s for sure, but you will simply die. The West is constantly “trying its teeth” on Russia, making steps to escalate the conflict, to bring it to an extreme degree. They are clearly provoking Russia so that it makes a rash step.” (at Ryhor Azaronak’s [stream](#), September 13)

At the same time, official propaganda promotes a completely opposite narrative:

“We are absolutely open and will be open to everyone who comes to us with pure thoughts, with peace. Therefore, it is difficult for Belarusians to understand what drives the European elites in their desire to isolate themselves and build the “iron curtain” again. Realizing that this is a way to nowhere, we respond by opening the borders and addressing the peoples of Europe directly. Fortunately, they hear us.” (Aliaksandr Lukashenka, [BelTA](#), September 12)

“We are not turning our backs on our Western neighbors. On the contrary, we are taking steps toward them and continue to demonstrate our willingness to build a common global community together.” (Foreign Minister Maksim Ryzhankou, [BelTA](#), September 12)

In late September, the Lithuanian government sent materials to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to accuse Lukashenka of possible crimes against humanity against Belarusians. This is an important political step to recognize the crimes of the regime against its own citizens, which is why the dictator himself reacted to the news quite painfully. On September 30, when commenting on the news, he [said](#) that his opponents want to exclude him from the peace talks on Ukraine:

“...The purpose is to bring the President of Belarus to responsibility and take him off the agenda. As they write, so that the President of Belarus, if peace

negotiations start in Ukraine, will not be able to take part in these negotiations.”

3. Nuclear threats

With the receipt of tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) by the Lukashenka regime from Russia (there is no clear evidence of their presence on the territory of Belarus), the state propaganda received an occasion for new serious threats. During the period from July to September 2024, such threats were heard regularly from pro-government channels and regime officials. As a rule, propagandists refer to TNWs as a “preventive measure” that protects Belarus from an “attack of the West.”

On July 16, Aliaksandr Lukashenka said that Belarus should not “allow its enemies to drag itself into the conflict.”

“We are doing everything necessary for this. Including the deployment of the most terrible nuclear weapons. We are reproached for escalation and aggravation of the situation. But in fact we are ensuring our military security and strengthening the defense capability of the state.” ([Website](#) of the “president”)

Kanstantsin Haharyn, a military observer of the “[Minsk-Novosti](#)” media, July 12:

“In response to the openly aggressive steps of the West, threats, provocations and the build-up of NATO forces near the borders, the Belarusian capital had to deploy nuclear weapons on its territory.”

In late September, Vladimir Putin announced a change in Russia’s nuclear doctrine, significantly lowering the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons in case of an attack on Russia and Belarus.

[Commenting](#) on Putin’s decision, Lukashenka was once again threatening:

“As soon as they attack us, we use nuclear weapons. And Russia gets involved for us. We use nuclear weapons – we can be retaliated against. And against Russia, among other things. So Russia will use the entire arsenal. And this is already a world war.”

4. Manipulation through the migration crisis

The migration crisis on the borders of Belarus with Poland and Lithuania has been going on intermittently since 2021. This phenomenon refers to attempts by mass and numerous groups of migrants from Africa, Central and South Asia and the Middle East to illegally break through the border of Poland and Lithuania from the territory of Belarus to the territory of the European Union. The EU countries call the crisis on their border with Belarus a tool in Lukashenka and Putin’s “hybrid war” against the West.

The political regime in Belarus, in turn, has long been trying to manipulate the issue of the migration crisis in order to weaken the West. State channels claim “atrocities of border guards” of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia towards migrants, and threaten that Belarus will not prevent “illegals” from crossing the border if the West continues to impose sanctions against Belarus.

Lukashenka:

“I am not going to order border guards, military and others to protect the EU on the border between Belarus and Poland. You [*the EU*] put a noose around our neck and yet you force us to protect you from these poor people.” ([BelTA](#))

On July 23, the Belarus-1 TV channel aired the [documentary](#) “Inhuman” about “terrible atrocities” of Lithuanian, Polish and Latvian border guards towards “refugees,” who are called “victims of European ‘democracy’” in the film.

5. Cancellation of Belarusian visas for citizens of European countries

On July 17, Belarus introduced a visa-free entry regime for citizens of 35 European countries. The propaganda could not resist using this story for its own purposes and spoke about the “closedness and hypocrisy” of the West and the “openness and friendliness” of Belarus.

Foreign Minister Maksim Ryzhankou [commented](#) on it as follows:

“When our nearest neighbors close themselves off and make all sorts of obstacles for the development of cross-border cooperation between people, we, on the contrary, show our openness. Come, look, work with our people, do business, make tourist trips.”

Aliaksandr Tsishchanka, a pro-government “security expert”:

“The Belarusian visa-free regime is like an antidote to restrictions and blocking measures in the Latvian and Lithuanian version.” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), July 18).

Lukashenka said in his solemn speech dedicated to “National Unity Day” that Belarus is a more peaceful country than all its European neighbors:

“Even now, when NATO guns are aimed at us from the territories of our western and southern neighbors, and kilometers of fences and minefields are growing along our borders, we respond simply and in the best traditions of ‘Europe’s last dictatorship’ – we open our borders and do not require permits or visas. And people on the other side hear us. They come, look, draw conclusions – not at all in favor of those who forbid them to come here.” ([BelTA](#), September 17)

6. The U.S. presidential election

Pro-government commentators are actively discussing the upcoming U.S. presidential election in November 2024. Most of them tend to support Donald Trump, but the general opinion prevails that the victory of any candidate will not affect the quality of U.S. relations with Russia and Belarus.

Many prefer to discuss safer topics, for example, the impact of the U.S. election on Europe. Aliaksandr Chorny, a columnist of the “Minskaya Prawdа” state media outlet, [predicts](#) a weakening of the EU in any outcome:

“Whoever becomes the American president, Europe will lose, because its dependence on Washington will not disappear. The only question is who will be the lesser evil for the EU – Trump or Harris.”

Political observer of “SB. Belarus Segodnya” Anton Papou focuses on the fate of Poland and Hungary. He calls the Polish side “[tame hyenas of the U.S.](#),” who

demonstrate a desire to “push Hungary out of NATO and the EU” because of its “blind obedience to Washington’s interests.”

The narrative “the U.S. prevents the EU countries from improving relations with Belarus” is supported by pro-government politician and frequent guest of propaganda talk shows Aleh Haidukevich. He [claims](#) that “the majority of Poles want normal relations with Belarus, normal borders, business relations, peace, calmness,” but since “the Americans came to Poland,” they allegedly set up an “outpost” there to fight Belarus and Russia.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the storylines of Belarusian propaganda in the period from July to September 2024 allows us to draw the following conclusions:

Domestic direction

- The coming presidential election, scheduled for January 2025, has an increasing influence on the agenda and content of pro-government channels. Propagandists are actively involved in agitation campaigns for Aliaksandr Lukashenka, while there is a complete absence of such campaigns for alternative candidates in the country (as well as alternative candidates themselves).
- Ahead of the election, the propaganda intensifies the promotion of the image of Aliaksandr Lukashenka as “father of the nation,” “peacemaker” with no alternatives, glorifying his merits before the nation, strengthening his “cult of personality.”
- The regime takes measures to strengthen the ideological influence on the audience: in September, a new propaganda TV channel and the first Belarusian video hosting were launched. There is also a discussion on the creation of domestic social networks in Belarus.
- Belarusian democratic forces continue to remain the main target of propaganda in the course of these three months. Pro-government media are actively calling (inciting?) for tougher legislation against political emigrants and for new repression.
- Lukashenka is showing growing concern over the “brain drain” – the outflow of political emigrants from the country.
- The regime is still interested in lifting Western sanctions. In August and September, the “president” pardoned several groups of political prisoners with his decrees and also released one German citizen sentenced to death, expecting the sanctions to be eased.

External direction

- The propaganda supports the image of Belarus as an innocent victim of the conspiracy of the “collective West.” According to the main ideological line, the West is making plans to destroy (or divide) Belarus.
- Poland and the Baltic states take the leading place among the Western countries in the number of attacks by Belarusian propaganda due to their consistent and irreconcilable position towards the Minsk regime.
- Propagandists continue to threaten the West with nuclear weapons in case of an attack on Belarus.
- The general hostile rhetoric persists in the anti-Ukrainian propaganda of the Belarusian media. At the same time, however, signs of softening and conciliatory intonations are becoming more and more evident. Calls for peace and negotiations are heard more and more often. Lukashenka demonstrates a clear unwillingness of Belarusian troops to participate in the war in Ukraine on Russia’s side.

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