

**“Aliaksandr Lukashenka is the leader of the  
Russian world”**: Belarusian propaganda in the  
pre-election period at the end of 2024

MAIN NARRATIVES OF **BELARUSIAN AND RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA TARGETING AT BELARUS IN THE 4<sup>TH</sup>**  
QUARTER OF **2024**

—————→  
**Analytical report**

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## **“Aliaksandr Lukashenka is the leader of the Russian world”: Belarusian propaganda in the pre-election period at the end of 2024”**

Main narratives of Belarusian and Russian propaganda targeting Belarus in the fourth quarter of 2024

Analytical report

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# CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
PREFACE.....	6
<b>I. BELARUS</b> .....	7
Preparation for the “presidential election”-2025.....	7
Alliance with Russia.....	9
Hints at independence from Russia.....	10
A new security treaty with Russia and new threats to the West.....	11
<b>II. BELARUS’ DEMOCRATIC FORCES</b> .....	12
Pardon of political prisoners.....	12
Discrediting and threats.....	13
<b>III. WAR IN UKRAINE</b> .....	15
Factors influencing anti-Ukrainian narratives.....	15
Calls for peace talks.....	16
A new narrative on Ukraine’s post-war reconstruction.....	17
Discrediting and threats.....	18
Illegal deportation of Ukrainian children to Belarus.....	19
<b>IV. THE WEST</b> .....	21
Election in the U.S.....	21
Contradictions in anti-Western narratives.....	22
Poland and the Baltic states.....	22
“Spy” films and new statements on the role of propaganda.....	24
Visits of Western celebrities to Belarus.....	25
<b>V. EVENTS IN GEORGIA</b> .....	26
<b>VI. EVENTS IN MOLDOVA</b> .....	28
<b>VII. EVENTS IN SYRIA</b> .....	29
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	30

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## I. BELARUS

- At the end of 2024, the efforts of the Minsk propaganda were aimed at ensuring a successful and trouble-free “presidential” election with a guaranteed victory of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. The absence of independent candidates was presented as a sign of a “healthy” political process. Despite the importance of the topic, the state-controlled channels tried to pay as little attention to the election as possible, suppressing any broad political discussions.
- During the election period, vows of eternal friendship and “alliance” with Russia and praises for Lukashenka were especially loud. Propagandists proclaimed him the “leader of the Russian world” on a par with Putin.
- At the same time, Lukashenka himself denies the possibility of a takeover (annexation) of Belarus by Russia and says that he will not allow it. The propaganda speaks about independence, identity and sovereignty of Belarus.

## II. BELARUS’ DEMOCRATIC FORCES

- Lukashenka pardoned a number of political prisoners and removed the most prominent political prisoners from the incommunicado regime hoping for an easing of Western sanctions, as well as wanting to present himself as a generous politician before the election.
- State media of Belarus continue the campaign of discredit, disinformation and intimidation of supporters of democratic changes.

## III. WAR IN UKRAINE

- The regime in Minsk has to demonstrate its full support for Russia in the “Ukrainian issue,” but irritation with the “foreign” war near its borders is accumulating in government circles. The propagandists and, above all, Lukashenka himself, are calling louder and louder for peace talks.
- Although Lukashenka supports Russia and opposes Ukraine in words, he tries to put all the responsibility for the aggression on Putin.
- State-controlled commentators insist that these negotiations should take place in Belarus, which should become a rightful participant in them.
- A new propaganda narrative: Belarus should rebuild post-war Ukraine.

## IV. THE WEST

- The U.S. presidential election temporarily overshadowed other news and discussions in the media in Russia and Belarus. This time, “experts” accepted Donald Trump’s return to the presidency much more discreetly than in 2016.
- Anti-Polish and anti-Baltic narratives dominate in the anti-Western propaganda.
- In December, two “spy” propaganda films against Poland were screened.

## V. EVENTS IN GEORGIA

- Propaganda welcomed the victory of the pro-Russian Georgian Dream party in the parliamentary election in Georgia. The protests that erupted as a result were traditionally described by propagandists as an attempt to hold a “Maidan” organized by “Western puppets.”

## VI. EVENTS IN MOLDOVA

- Despite the Kremlin's extensive disinformation campaign against Moldova, democratic candidate Maia Sandu won the November presidential election.
- Pro-Kremlin media continue their discrediting policy against Moldova.

## **VII. EVENTS IN SYRIA**

- The victory of the armed opposition and the rapid change of power in Syria was unambiguously interpreted by propaganda as "Russia's defeat."

## PREFACE

The words put in the headline belong to Aliaksandr Shpakouski, a pro-government “expert,” a frequent commentator of Belarusian events on Russian political talk shows. The “presidential” election in Belarus, which took place at the end of January 2025, made Belarusian propagandists to work harder in search of new semantic lines to strengthen the cult of personality of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. As a result, they agreed to the point of proclaiming him a “great Russian politician” and even a “leader of the Russian world” along with Vladimir Putin.

During the entire period of preparation for the election, Lukashenka’s propaganda machine was preoccupied with preventing “the nightmare of 2020” – mass protests against the rigged results of the previous “presidential” election, demanding a change of power.

Although there could be no danger this time – as a result of the political repression that followed the 2020 protests, civil society was crushed, free media were destroyed, and democratic leaders and activists were forced out of the country or imprisoned. As a result, there could be no real independent candidates in the 2025 election. Instead of them, “alternative candidates” were selected to play the role of Lukashenka’s competitors and to create an impression of legitimacy of the electoral process by their presence. All of them were in one way or another connected with the incumbent regime. But even this was not enough – despite the complete predictability of the election, it was necessary to bring as many voters as possible to the polling stations in order to show a large turnout and “popular support” for Lukashenka “on the international arena.”

Thus, the tasks of the propaganda media of Belarus in the pre-election period at the end of 2024–beginning of 2025 can be described as follows:

- strengthening the image of Lukashenka as the only, irreplaceable candidate, “father (Batska) of Belarus” (propagandist Ihar Tur [spoke](#) separately about the difference between ‘father’ and ‘Batska’), “peacemaker” and “conciliator of peoples”;
- increasing efforts to further discredit Belarusian democratic forces, civil activists and independent media;
- support of the image of “sinless,” innocent Belarus, a fortress surrounded by enemies, the population of which should unite around the savior of the nation in the face of an external enemy.

In this analytical report, we tried to illustrate all these three directions of efforts of Belarusian propaganda during the pre-election period.

This study is not an exhaustive, detailed review of all the meanings, storylines and nuances of Lukashenka’s propaganda during the period under consideration. Every day tons of toxicity, hatred and dirt continue to be spread from the TV screens and from the pages of the state press of Belarus – against Ukraine, Western countries or on the Belarusian defenders of democracy. The iSANS monitoring does not aim to cover the whole volume of statements and utterances of propagandists in detail. The task of this research is to analyze and show the main directions and lines of propaganda in the third quarter of 2024.

## I. BELARUS

### Preparation for the “presidential election”-2025

By the end of 2024, the main task of Belarusian propagandists was to provide the elections with such information support that would maximally guarantee their calm, problem-free realization.

The “alternative” candidates allowed to participate in the “election” not only did not declare the struggle for power as the goal of their participation, but also emphasized their unity with Lukashenka in every possible way. For example, the program of one of them – the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus (CPB), Siarhei Syrankou, said that he was **“running not instead of, but together with Lukashenka.”** (Telegram [channel](#) of the CPB, 31.10). The role of the candidates was only to ensure the “legitimacy” of the election by their participation, giving the impression of a competitive electoral process.

Apart from the legally required appearances on the state TV, no pre-election events of “alternative” candidates were observed. On the other hand, the election campaign for Aliaksandr Lukashenka was widely held in the country. The events within its framework were held at the state expense, such as the large-scale [all-Belarusian “Marathon of Unity”](#) or the “lecture” [“Diktat?Ura!”](#) [*“dictate? hooray!”* – ed.], organized in many cities by the pro-government “Patriots of Belarus” party. There were also examples of “national” self-organization, such as the [“You should!” street flashmob](#) in support of Lukashenka. [Students](#) of universities and [employees](#) of budgetary enterprises were gathered as participants at such actions, and [propagandists](#), officials and celebrities who spoke before them praised, thanked and agitated for Lukashenka. The police not only did not suppress such events, but also guarded them.

The fact that there were no truly independent candidates was presented by propaganda not as a flaw indicating the illegitimacy of the election, but as a sign of a “healthy” political process.

“There is no doubt that most of the candidates are supporters of the current government. **This indicates the formation of a political elite in Belarus capable of civilized competition** within the basic value framework.” (Aliaksandr Shpakouski, pro-government and pro-Russian “expert,” [SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 14.11)

“For the first time, no political clowns have submitted documents to the CEC [...] This time the presidential election is a healthy process. There is only one conclusion: we have grown up and the election is conducted in a civilized format. (Kiryl Kazakou, [Minsk-Novosti](#), 15.11)

Despite the fact that the outcome of the vote left no doubt to anyone, representatives of the Lukashenka regime diligently encouraged citizens to go to the polling stations, seeking a large turnout and, thus, the highest possible percentage of votes for Lukashenka. Lidziya Yarmoshyna, a member of the Central Election Commission of Belarus, argued that it was necessary to show popular support for the “president” at the international level:

“I just urge everyone to come to the polling stations. Because many people say: “Why go, the election is predictable.” **Yes, predictable.** But if you knew how important it is for our president to show on the international stage – especially to a global player like China – that a huge percentage of the

country's population voted for him. It is not just important to him. It is important to you and me." ([Nasha Niva](#), 15.12)

The main task of the campaign was to prevent Lukashenka's "electoral nightmare" – a repeat of the mass protests of 2020, so all forces were mobilized to prevent new unrest. The "president" demanded to hold the election "[cleanly and neatly,](#)" [flawlessly.](#)

While agitating for the non-alternative Lukashenka, the propaganda was also achieving another important task – to arouse a feeling of hopelessness and doom in the society, when it is impossible to influence anything, because "everything will be decided for us," thus minimizing the level of political discussions in the country. It was unthinkable to imagine discussion of candidates' programs or free pre-election debates on Belarusian TV. Despite the exceptional importance of the election for propaganda, the authorities tried to make sure that the topic of the election was heard in the state media as little as possible. The focus was shifted from domestic problems to discussion of problems in Western countries (unemployment, poverty, arms race, etc.), foreign policy and threats, and entertainment content.

The pro-government commentators glorified Lukashenka's achievements (real and imaginary), called to unite around him in the face of external and internal threats and swore their love for Belarus.

["There is no alternative to Aliaksandr Lukashenka at this stage.](#) And in the future, there can be only a successor of his course – the **'collective Lukashenka'**." (Piotr Piatrouski, pro-government "expert," 23.10)

["President of the Republic of Belarus Aliaksandr Lukashenka is a synonym of power."](#) (Ihar Tur, ONT TV presenter, 11.11).

["Where our President is, there is truth.](#) Where our President is, there is victory." (Vadzim Hihin, member of the House of Representatives of Belarus (parliament), pro-government "expert," 16.11).

Shortly before the election, on the air of the ONT state TV channel, Ihar Tur suggested calling Lukashenka the **"father of the nation"**:

"Why is Aliaksandr Lukashenka no longer "Batska," but "Father of the Nation"? Batya [*father – ed.*] in a family is the one who will solve any problem or task: build a house, improve the territory, start a household and maintain it, will not let anyone get hurt. A father will not only solve the problem, but will also teach his children to solve this problem on their own. The father will build, and the father will tell them how to do it, will be there for them, but as a **wise helper.**" (Quoted from: personal Telegram [channel](#), 21.10)

During the pre-election period, the court sycophants went so far as to proclaim Lukashenka the "leader of the Russian world" and put him on a par with Putin.

Propagandist and diplomat Aliaksandr Shpakouski:

"The preservation of Belarus in the orbit of the native East Slavic civilization [...] is one of the main historical merits of [A. Lukashenka as the leader of the Russian world](#) of the late 20th-first third of the 21st century."

"I have repeatedly said that the historical scale of Lukashenka's personality is broader than the context of the Belarusian state. Today, **along with Vladimir Putin,** Aliaksandr Lukashenka is the [leader of the Russian world.](#)"



“Aliaksandr Lukashenka is the [Belarusian President and a great Russian politician](#).”

“[Belarus is a unique part](#) of the great Russian (Orthodox, East Slavic) civilization. Ukraine is also such a part.”

Ryhor Azaronak, STV TV channel presenter:

“Batska came to power as a friend of Russia. [...] Batska came and said – I am with Russians. Be great, Russia. You will be. And it became. And he is still around. And so it will always be.” ([Azaryonok. Napryamuyu](#), 09.10)

During preparations for the election, propagandists once again tried to return the word “dictatorship” to a positive connotation. This is not a new idea: back in 2019, Lukashenka’s press secretary Natallia Eismant was the first to start promoting an “optimistic” image of dictatorship (“the word dictatorship sometimes acquires some positive connotation,” [“dictatorship is our brand”](#)), after which the state-controlled media began to “whitewash” this term.

In September 2024, a composition titled [“Ballad of the Dictator”](#) was presented in Minsk for “National Unity Day.” The above-mentioned propaganda lecture [“DIKTAT? URA!”](#) was named in the same positive vein. The ideological task of a number of prominent propagandists was to explain to the public that dictatorship is not a bad thing.

Ihar Tur, [speaking](#) at the pre-election “Unity Marathon” on December 14:

“We do have a **dictatorship of order, justice and goodness**. Sometimes those people who refuse to be good and just and right need to be **pushed a little bit** toward that. That’s perfectly normal.”

Also Tur:

“Evil, whether in dictatorship or democracy, is when scoundrels are in power. And whether they are democratic, authoritarian, dictatorial, monarchical or anarchic is the form, not the content. **Our “dictator”** (actually – no, we have an authoritarian regime) **is a good one**. Therefore, it is our **dictatorship that is good**, not any dictatorship.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 17.12)

Ryhor Azaronak:

“Start, for example, an anti-Russian course – and the West will recognize you. Then even if you eat people in the streets, no one will call you a **dictator**. No, he [Lukashenka] does not deviate from his course and does not follow the Westerners’ lead. [...] And I have only one question for the President: Aliaksandr Ryhoravich, who should I crush, what are my functions?” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 03.12).

## **Alliance with Russia**

The Belarusian regime still sees protection from unrest and instability in close cooperation with Russia. In December 2024, the next anniversary of the creation of the “Union State” was celebrated, which gave rise to further assurances of “friendship forever” and that the “union” is beneficial to both countries.

Aliaksei Dzermant, pro-government “philosopher”:

“Belarus is important for Russia not only from a geostrategic and technological point of view, but also as a **kind of training ground** where

decisions important for the whole of our Russian-Eurasian civilization are being worked out.” (Quoted from: personal Telegram [channel](#), 08.12)

Iryna Douhala, member of the House of Representatives:

**“The Union State is a model of real consolidation, friendship and development.** [...] The Union State does not threaten anyone with anything. The presidents of Belarus and Russia simply want to ensure security for their citizens, for all of us together and for each of us individually.” ([BelTA](#), 08.12)

Viktar Azaronak, member of the House of Representatives:

**“The Union State is an alternative integration model to the Western ones,** based on the principles of equality, equity, and mutual respect of partner countries.” ([BelTA](#), 08.12)

Aliaksei Dzermant, pro-government “philosopher”:

“Belarus, Belaya Rus, Belorussia is certainly part of Rus, of Russianness, of Eastern Slaviness, of the Russian-Eurasian world. **That’s why we have a close Union with Russia,** which should become the core of the Union 2.0.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 04.10)

### ***Hints at independence from Russia***

Despite the oaths of brotherhood and “friendship forever,” propagandists from time to time find it necessary to remind that Belarus is an independent and autonomous state with the right to develop its distinctive culture and language. Although official Minsk recognizes itself as a part of a certain “Russian world” in words, in reality the takeover (annexation) of Belarus by Russia is not in its interests. During the pre-election period, Lukashenka himself as the main “propagandist” spoke about it more loudly than anyone else:

“There are two states, there is a common Fatherland. Russians don’t object to it. It is from Brest to Vladivostok. [...] I have never once heard the President of Russia say: ‘Listen, tomorrow we should definitely live in one state!’” (At a meeting with the governor of Smolensk region of Russia, quoted from: [BelTA](#), 18.10).

“Two sovereign states: Belarus and huge Russia. This is the relentless law of our time. That’s why there is all kinds of talk about [...] joining Russia and so on. This state would be destroyed tomorrow. I can’t go for that and no one has authorized me to do that.” (Interview with the Russian [Izvestiya](#) newspaper, 25.10).

“Our cooperation – Belarus with Russia – is closer than if we lived in one state.” ([BelTA](#), 18.11)

Another statement by Lukashenka. The well-known formula of coexistence of Israel and Palestine “two countries – one state” is probably taken as an example:

“A unique world experience has been created: ‘two countries – two economies – one economic space.’ This experience is time-tested and has proven its validity.” ([BelTA](#), 06.12)

Belarusian officials are not far from their patron either. Member of the House of Representatives and pro-government historian Ihar Marzaliuk said that although Belarusians, Russians, and Ukrainians are equal “peoples of the Eastern European,

Eastern Christian civilization,” he is “irritated by the mantra” about “a common history”:

**“We have a distinctive Belarusian history, we have a distinctive Belarusian language,** which has lost certain of its positions as a result of unfavorable conditions, when they wanted to make more Poles out of us than Poles themselves, and then more Great Russians than Great Russians themselves.” ([SKAZHINIEMOLCHI](#), Belarus-1 TV channel, 21.11)

### ***A new security treaty with Russia and new threats to the West***

On December 6, Putin and Lukashenka signed a treaty on security guarantees between Russia and Belarus and approved the Security Concept of the “Union State.” The document defines, in particular, mutual obligations on the defense of the Union State. The signing of the treaty gave Aliaksandr Lukashenka an excuse to once again put himself on a par with Putin:

“My condition to Putin was one: “We in Belarus will determine the targets, not Russians. But you will help us exploit them.” **That is, we will press the button together,** God forbid, if it is necessary. But we will determine the targets. He agreed.” ([BelTA](#), 10.12)

Commenting on the signing of the agreement, State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus Aliaksandr Valfovich answered a journalist’s question whether it is necessary to press the second button “to make the first one work”:

“It’s up to the two presidents to agree. We are brothers. We have common national interests in terms of the Union State, common tasks.” ([BelTA](#), 06.12)

After the treaty was signed, Putin [promised](#) Lukashenka that he would share Oreshnik missiles with him. The propaganda was excited about these prospects and talked about the exceptional trust between the two dictators. The world learned about the Oreshnik medium-range ballistic missile on November 20, 2024, when Russia struck the Ukrainian city of Dnipro with it in response to the U.S. permission for Ukraine to use missiles against Russian territory.

Aliaksei Dzermant, pro-government “philosopher”:

“Only the closest person, not even an ally, but a brother – a blood brother, can ask for such a weapon.” ([Azaryonok. Napryamuyu](#), STV TV channel, 13.12)

Vadzim Yelfimau, “political scientist”:

“Targets and flight assignments for Russian missiles and warheads will be determined by the Belarusian military and political leadership! I would like to emphasize: **this is the highest degree of trust!** Such a thing does not exist anywhere, especially in NATO. [...] **Belarus is becoming an important global player.**” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 12.12)

Propagandists say that Belarus needs Russian missiles, including nuclear ones, in order to permanently suppress any attempts of influence from the outside.

Kseniya Lebedzeva, propagandist for the ATN channel:

“I am confident that we will stand a truly impregnable fortress forever. We have a ‘red button,’ there will be Oreshnik as well. Let everyone sleep in peace.” ([ATN](#), 06.12)

## II. BELARUS' DEMOCRATIC FORCES

Propagandists continue to recall the protests of five years ago as the biggest nightmare of their lives. The political regime, as it did then, considers the movement for the democratization of Belarus as the main threat to its stability. One can speak about the presence of a well-organized and planned campaign to “demonize” the 2020 protests in the narratives of the state media.

### ***Pardon of political prisoners***

In the second half of 2024, the attitude of propaganda towards the supporters of the Belarusian democratic movement was influenced by two main factors: the upcoming “presidential” election and harsh Western sanctions, which put Belarus in a very difficult economic situation and in even greater dependence on Russia.

Since August, Lukashenka has pardoned several groups of political prisoners. This process continues to this day – the last (at the time of publication of this study) group left Belarusian prisons in January 2025. In total, [according](#) to DW, 227 people were released during this period. Meanwhile, according to the [calculations](#) of the Viasna human rights center, there are still 1254 political prisoners behind bars (data as of 10.01.2025), and their number, according to human rights activists, increases almost every week, so there is no question of liberalization of the political regime.

The propaganda did not conceal that the release of political prisoners was connected with hopes for a softening of the sanctions regime. Yury Vaskrasenski, formerly an opposition activist and now a propagandist and member of the so-called “Amnesty Commission,” explained the suspension of pardons in October by the fact that the easing of sanctions did not follow:

**“We need benefits. We’ve been waiting for benefits. There are no benefits. And that’s why no more releases [of political prisoners] are being considered for now.”**

**“‘Bold’ political prisoners will be exchanged for ‘bold’ offers.”** ([Facebook](#), 02.10)

During the same period, several political prisoners, including Maria Kalesnikava and Viktor Babaryka, were removed by the punitive authorities from the so-called incommunicado regime, which implies complete isolation of a convict from the outside world, and shown to the propaganda media. In November, [Kalesnikava was finally able to meet with her father](#), and Raman Pratasevich, former co-editor of the NEXTA opposition Telegram channel and now an employee of the regime, was allowed to visit Babaryka. Pratasevich recorded a [video](#) with the former presidential candidate. The purpose of these meetings was obviously to show pre-election generosity, as well as to show the world both famous political prisoners alive and well.

Propagandists afterwards extolled Lukashenka’s “wisdom and humanism.” As for Maria Kalesnikava, they said that the opposition allegedly needed her image of a “martyr,” so they would benefit from her further imprisonment or even death.

Ryhor Azaronak:

“Masha in a [coffin], dead, blue, cold, beginning to rot – that’s how she would be very profitable for them. And a fat and happy one is no good at all.”

([recording](#) of a live broadcast in the *Azaryonok*. *STV. Belarus* Telegram channel)

### **Discrediting and threats**

On the eve of the election, propaganda efforts were aimed at preventing any protest manifestations inside the country. Various methods are used in the fight against dissidents, including discrediting, intimidation, provocations in order to cause mutual suspicion and split among oppositionists.

As an example of discrediting – a quote from the speech of MP Aleh Haidukevich:

**“Half of those in Poland are recruited by the KGB.** If people think that someone ran away abroad, you have to ask the question: ‘And who says that a person ran away, and it was not us who drove him to the border and gave him an assignment?’” ([Minsk-Novosti](#), 02.10).

Alyona Krasouskaya, pro-government human rights activist:

“In any country except Belarus, they are forever second-class people. [...] **Many people now think that it is better even in a Belarusian prison than in another country.**” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 04.10)

Ryhor Azaronak, presenter of STV TV channel:

**“How did our land ever carry them? How did they eat our bread?** The Zmahars continue to persist in their Nazism. They are dead men themselves. And if there is even a drop of tolerance towards them, if someone somewhere thinks, ‘So what, they have such views’ – then we are worthless as a nation.” (STV TV channel. Quoted from: personal Telegram [channel](#), 04.12).

The Russian regime actively helps the Belarusian regime to fight the opposition on the ideological front. For example, Russian Ambassador to Minsk Boris Gryzlov promised that in case of “destabilization” of the situation during the election, Russia would help Belarus to restore order:

“The specialized agencies of Russia and Belarus are constantly exchanging information through operational channels. We share data on any potential threats in real time. There is no reason to believe that the Belarusian law enforcement and special services will need additional assistance. They are coping with their tasks perfectly well. **But if necessary, Russia, within the framework of its obligations, will certainly provide assistance and support** that our closest ally and strategic partner asks us for.” ([RIA NOVOSTI](#), 22.10)

Other efforts to discredit democratic forces in the pre-election period are aimed at accusing them of corruption and fraud. ONT TV propagandist Ihar Tur [claimed](#) embezzlement of “Western grants” (“In Warsaw and Vilnius, it is still possible to plunder money allocated to fight the Belarusian authorities”) and [predicted](#) that “the media attack of the fugitives will begin right the day after the main voting day.”

Pro-government “experts” [intimidate](#) the audience with statements that the West is creating some forces to attack Belarus, in which the main role is assigned to **“opposition militants.”**

Valery Revenka, Assistant Minister of Defense for International Military Cooperation:

“The intensity of NATO’s activity doesn’t change. What is changing are threats. Threats first of all from a number of our neighbors, who create **illegal armed**

**formations**, including those citizens of the Republic of Belarus who left our state for various reasons.” (In an interview with [BelTA](#), 08.12)

In November 2024, Lukashenka visited Minsk State Linguistic University (MSLU). His visit there was not accidental - students of this university took an active part in the 2020 rallies. At the meeting at MSLU, the “president” [threatened](#) that if the protests were repeated, he would **shut down the Internet** throughout the country in order to “preserve the country” and “so that the special services would not control our society from there [*from abroad – ed.*].”

In addition, at the meeting Lukashenka [tried to convince](#) students that they should stay at home and not go abroad, where “no one is waiting for them.” According to him, “crowds” of critics of the regime “ask to return,” as Belarusian citizens are considered “second-class people” there, while in Belarus today there are “huge opportunities.”

Author of *SB. Belarus Segodnya* Raman Rudz’ writes in his column that Belarusians shouldn’t go “there” because “we’re second-class people to them.” He writes about the hard fate of Belarusian children in Polish schools, about how “young Poles mercilessly bully, humiliate, beat” them”:

“The steamroller of Polish nationalism, with which it is unlikely to be possible to live in a good neighborly way, is only gaining momentum. Those who have already realized this sad fact are **hurrying to return home, to the Belarusian legal field.**” (*SB. Belarus Segodnya*, 24.11)

Propagandist Yury Tserakh went even further and openly threatened supporters of the protest with execution if they took to the streets:

“Zmahars [*protesters*], you cannot understand the most important thing... **We too are yearning, we too are catching the same vibe of the twentieth [2020].** We want to go back to the battle as well, to feel those emotions, those sensations again. **To feel the crunch of the rebel’s spine breaking** under our knee, to remember how numb the toes in the forged boot, with which the rebel was hammered into the wet fall soil. To feel the vibrations running through our bones from the **sledgehammer** we used to crush those who threatened our loved ones, who promised to kill us, who carried out terrorist attacks. To hear the engine of that very **roller of repression**, which we rolled you all into the asphalt with, starting up with the pungent smell of burnt diesel fuel. We miss it all, too.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 01.12)

### III. WAR IN UKRAINE

#### ***Factors influencing anti-Ukrainian narratives***

In our opinion, three factors influenced the coverage of Ukrainian events by Lukashenka's propaganda in the second half of 2024:

1. Fully dependent on Russia, the Belarusian dictator still has to **support Russia** in word and deed, publicly opposing Ukraine's sovereignty, providing Russian troops with territory, military infrastructure, etc.
2. At the same time, Lukashenka is trying his best to **prevent Belarus from direct participation in the war.**
3. Before the "presidential" election, he was keen to **regain his image as a "peacemaker" and "conciliator"** who brought the warring parties to the negotiating table, as he did in 2014-2016.

We can see that Lukashenka has managed at least one task so far: the Kremlin has been unable to draw Belarus into military actions for three years already. Soldiers from faraway North Korea fight on the side of Russia, but not Belarusian soldiers.

Lukashenka describes his motives as follows:

"I don't want war on my land. But, unfortunately, the escalation continues. How should I behave in this situation? You can't get involved in this under any circumstances. And if Russia and NATO clash, it won't be easy for us either." (at the [meeting](#) in MSLU, 22.11)

However, all three factors put the political regime in Belarus in a difficult position. Obviously, before the invasion, Lukashenka (like Putin) assumed that Russia's aggression would be a short victorious operation and would entail minimum consequences, so he supported Putin by providing him with a bridgehead to attack Ukraine. However, the plans of the dictators of Russia and Belarus failed: thanks to the courage and dedication of the Ukrainian defenders, Russia has been unable to achieve strategic success for the third year. "Special operation" has turned into a bloody massacre with victims and destruction of colossal scale, right at the Belarusian borders. Since August 2024, in addition to all the hardships that the regime suffers because of the war, another "headache" has been added – regular flights of Russian attack drones into Belarus' territory, sent to attack Ukrainian cities. Experts have different opinions about whether these flights are accidental or not. In any case, all this together causes the ruler's growing irritation and desire to end the conflict as soon as possible, preferably by getting away with it. Lukashenka is more and more often calling for peace talks, of which, according to his belief, Belarus should become a full-fledged participant.

His speeches on Ukraine in the second half of 2024 more and more often resemble excuses. On the one hand, he is trying to whitewash Putin by proving that he was allegedly "forced" or "provoked" to start the war, and on the other hand, he is trying to relieve himself of responsibility for complicity by making Putin the sole culprit of the aggression.

A vivid example of such claims can be found in an October [interview](#) with BBC Moscow correspondent Steven Rosenberg, in which Lukashenka said that Belarus did not provide Russia with territory to attack Ukraine. When asked by the journalist how he then allowed the Kremlin to enter Ukraine from his territory, Lukashenka replied:

There were exercises going on involving several thousand Russian soldiers. Putin started withdrawing these troops from where they were in southern Belarus, down a road, along the border with Ukraine. **At one point he redirected some of these troops to Kyiv. I'm sure they'd been provoked. Why did this happen? Ask Zelenskyy.**"

"Didn't you call Putin to ask what was going on?" the journalist asks him.

"No. He didn't call me. And I didn't call him. **These are his troops and he has the right to move them out whichever way he likes,**" Lukashenka responded.

As Rosenberg writes in his [commentary](#), Lukashenka's words reflect the degree of influence the Kremlin has on the Belarusian regime. Agreeing with the British journalist, we at the same time believe that in this episode the dictator is trying to relieve himself of any responsibility for the war ("Russian troops invaded Ukraine from the territory of Belarus against his will and without his influence") and to make Putin the only culprit of the aggression.

In the same BBC interview, the Belarusian "president" [assured](#) Rosenberg that he was in favor of peace, not war:

"We are not going to attack anyone, Ukraine included. **These are our people – Ukrainians.** Our people live there. We are ready to cooperate with them, whatever happens there. Sooner or later we will get to that point."

Propagandists repeated Lukashenka's old thesis of "provocation" by the West. Vadzim Baravik, a pro-government "political scientist":

"A political decision has been made by Washington to do what? Destabilization of the European Union, maximal weakening of Russia up to its collapse and weakening of China. **For this purpose, Russia was provoked and forced to launch this special military operation.** They achieved the result, received economic dividends and so on." (STV TV channel, *Po sushchestvu*. The recording saved in Baravik's personal Telegram [channel](#), 14.11)

Vadzim Yelfimau, pro-government "political scientist":

"When the attack of Ukraine, encouraged and armed by the States, on Russian Donbas and the entire Russia became inevitable, *[Putin]* **struck first.**" (Minskaya Prouda [newspaper](#), 20.11)

### ***Calls for peace talks***

During the period under review, there were more and more frequent calls for peace talks on Ukraine from propagandists. At the same time, Lukashenka and his ideologists insist that Belarus should become a platform for negotiations, as it was in 2014-2016, and a full participant in them. Calling for negotiations, Lukashenka sought by all means to regain the laurel wreath of "peacemaker" during the election period, as well as to distance himself from accusations of complicity in aggression. At the meeting with students of MSLU, Lukashenka said that he is "not asking for it," but [wants and must](#) participate in the negotiations on the settlement of the situation in Ukraine:

"We are three Slavic peoples. No Americans, no Europeans – no one will do us any good and help us. We have to sit down and agree. Why in Belarus?"



**Because it's near our fence, near our border.** And our interests must be respected.”

Speaking at the climate summit in Baku on 12.11, Lukashenka spoke about the damage wars cause to the environment, including [mentioning](#) Russia's war against Ukraine.

In the statements of propagandists, calls for peace talks alternate with aggressive pro-war rhetoric.

Vadzim Yelfimau, pro-government “political scientist”:

“It should be made so that the entire territory of Ukraine, within whatever borders, but all of it, whatever remains! – would be friendly to Russia and Belarus. Not neutral, but friendly. [...] Therefore, we have a vested interest in complete denazification and demilitarization of our southern neighbors. Complete means taking into account the interests of Belarus. So **we should become participants in future negotiations.**” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 05.12).

Ihar Tur, ONT TV presenter:

“Since 2014, Aliaksandr Lukashenka has been repeating that he does not like the very institution of mediation, does not want to be a mediator and is not eager to be in them, but is ready to become one between Russia and Ukraine in order to **save the lives of Slavs.**” ([Propaganda](#), ONT TV channel, 09.12)

Yury Ambrazevich, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus:

**“Belarus is more interested than anyone else in a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Ukraine,** because the situation on its southern borders is very complicated. And against this background, the **accusations of our country of complicity in aggression look absurd.**” ([BelTA](#), 16.12)

Other propagandists blame the West for attempts to drag Belarus into military actions.

“Since the beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine, the West's attempts to drag Belarus into the conflict have not stopped. **We do not need this conflict.**” ([BelTA](#), 04.10)

Against this background, Lukashenka's words about the “unsettled” status of Crimea no longer seem exceptional. In an [interview](#) with Izvestiya, he questioned the peninsula's belonging to Russia:

“De facto Crimea is Russian, de jure it is not. Why? Because legally these issues are settled unilaterally. And the international, so-called, community does not recognize Crimea as Russian. This is my position.”

Lukashenka, however, immediately emphasized that he was not refusing to cooperate with the occupation “authorities” of Crimea. Earlier, he said that he would cooperate with Ukraine “on the same principles” as with the [occupied territories of Donbas](#).

### ***A new narrative on Ukraine's post-war reconstruction***

The confidence of propagandists that after the end of hostilities Belarus will have to participate in the reconstruction of post-war Ukraine, and the Ukrainians will certainly address Belarusians with this request, looks no less contradictory. It remains

a mystery what gives them grounds to believe in this after Belarus has actually become an accomplice of war crimes against Ukraine.

“He [*Volodymyr Zelenskyy*] thinks that Americans will restore Ukraine after the war. No one will restore them. If the government changes, they will say: “Volodya, who are you?” Therefore, the leadership of Ukraine should take their heads in their hands and realize that they will have to restore the country first of all. **With the help of people close to them, first of all, Belarusians.**” (During a working [trip](#) to Brest region, 04.10)

The propaganda was gladly involved in the popularization of this thesis, without ceasing to justify the Russian invasion.

Aleh Haidukevich, deputy of the National Assembly:

**“It’s not Russia that unleashed this war that is going on now,** it’s the misfortune of Ukraine, which is not sovereign, and who else is going to help rebuild Ukraine? Certainly Belarusians, certainly Russians. And who else cares about them but us.” ([Sputnik-Belarus](#), 07.10)

Aliaksandr Alesin, pro-government “expert”:

“Who will rebuild it [*Ukraine*]? Not everyone will want to start from scratch, dismantle the ruins and build the new. I think many people will simply leave. **And, along with Russia, Belarus will become a country for many Ukrainians to move to.**” ([BelTA](#), 07.10)

### ***Discrediting and threats***

At the same time, hostile anti-Ukrainian narratives have not disappeared from the air of the Belarusian media. Propagandists continue to cheer missile strikes on peaceful cities of Ukraine, vilify the Ukrainian leadership, justify the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children, and generally support Russian aggression.

A typical example is another appeal “to Ukrainian servicemen” to seize power in Ukraine and accusations against Volodymyr Zelenskyy of “genocide of Ukrainians”:

“Take power into your own hands, remove the Nazi regime! Zelenskyy wants to destroy the entire Ukrainian army. [...] We have called on the Ukrainian leadership many times: save your people, do not kill Ukrainian soldiers with your own hands. [...] This is called genocide of the Ukrainian people: we will do politics, and let them die.” (Yury Vaskrasenski, [Azaryonok. Napryamuyu](#), 04.10)

Three years ago, at the very beginning of the full-scale invasion, [Vladimir Putin](#) made exactly the same appeal (and to no avail) to the army of Ukraine.

In November, state-controlled commentators enthusiastically discussed the Russian Oreshnik ballistic missile strike on the Ukrainian city of Dnipro and actively joined the Kremlin’s campaign to once again intimidate the world. The *SB. Belarus Segodnya* newspaper called the launch of Oreshnik “[a warning shot upward](#).” Pavel Muraveika, the head of the General Staff of the Belarusian Armed Forces, said in an [interview](#) with propagandist Lyudmila Hladkaya (*SB. Belarus Segodnya*) that the strike was “a gesture of goodwill and a signal that one should not joke with Russia.”

Siarhei Mikhovich:

“It is important that Russia launched this strike precisely for **defensive purposes**, after the U.S. and its European allies allowed the Ukrainian armed

forces to strike the territory in Kursk and Bryansk regions.” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 02.12)

According to Mikhovich, this “hitherto secret weapon became another reliable shield” for the security of Russia and Belarus.

Activist of the pro-government *Patriots of Belarus* society, Stanislau Yaskevich, immediately drew the routes of Oreshnik and established that it would be more effective to deploy the missile in Belarus, because it would reach the European capitals much faster than from Russia.

“Belarusian land may well become a key factor in the global balance of power,” Yaskevich summarizes. (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 23.11)

Lukashenka himself immediately began planning the deployment of Oreshnik on Belarusian soil. At the meeting of the CSTO member states, he [told journalists](#) with a smile:

“I told a joke to my older brother [*about Putin – ed.*], I said, ‘The places are ready for dislocation. When?’ – ‘We’ll think about it.’ [*Putin replied.*]”

Meanwhile, as experts note, Russia could “blow” Lukashenka’s peace ambitions with its Oreshnik. The propaganda has been working for a long time to create an image of a “peacemaker” for him, and a new round of escalation [did not fit into his plans](#) of bringing the parties to the negotiating table.

Another popular propaganda line is that Ukraine is a puppet of the West, fulfilling the whims of its American or European masters and not independent in its decisions.

Maryna Karaman, ONT TV channel:

“On the territory of Ukraine, with Zelensky’s approval, the U.S. fought against Russia with the bodies of Ukrainians, and it is the U.S. and Russia that will negotiate peace, Ukraine is just a platform for war, who will ask it about anything?” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 18.11)

Aliaksandr Tsishchanka, pro-government “expert”:

“Today’s Ukraine, in its position, is a purely American project.” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 06.12)

Andrei Bahadzel, officer of the General Staff of the Belarusian Armed Forces:

“If we talk about Zelensky, it is obvious that he is non-subjective in many aspects [...]. The fact that he is traveling, talking about something, he is expressing not so much his own point of view, but the point of view of those elites, which today are leading somewhere in the West.” ([BelTA](#), 11.12)

Aliaksandr Alesin, pro-government “expert”:

“The Ukrainian card has already been beaten, but Trump will play it to the last, squeezing concessions out of Russia.” ([BelTA](#), 11.12)

### ***Illegal deportation of Ukrainian children to Belarus***

Belarus and Russia continue to illegally transfer Ukrainian children to their territory. The propaganda tries to justify the regime’s actions by saying that children from the combat zone are being rehabilitated in Belarus. Human rights activists have

repeatedly noted that Ukrainian children taken to Belarus are subject to ideological manipulation aimed at “washing out” the Ukrainian identity, re-education and militarization of consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

On December 3, another group of children from eastern Ukraine arrived in Belarus for “treatment in a sanatorium.” Propagandist and member of the House of Representatives (“parliament” of Belarus) Vadzim Hihin [commented](#) on the news as follows:

“The most important thing is to help the children of Donbas. No matter how hard the enemy tries to prevent it, no matter what nefarious tricks they try to use, we have done and will continue to do this work.”

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see: Stolen Childhood: How the Belarusian Regime is Erasing Ukrainian Children's Identity through Displacement, Re-education, and Militarization. Special Report 2024. Freedom House <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2024/stolen-childhood-how-belarusian-regime-erasing-ukrainian-childrens>

## IV. THE WEST

### ***Election in the U.S.***

There is no doubt that the U.S. presidential election was the main foreign policy event that influenced the agenda of the pro-Kremlin media at the end of 2024. Propaganda in Russia and Belarus followed the results with bated breath, putting domestic political events and even the war in Ukraine on the back burner.<sup>2</sup>

After the election results were announced, many of them expressed reserved joy over the victory of Donald Trump, with whom they pinned their hopes of recognizing Russia's occupation of Ukraine and lifting sanctions. But on the whole, the propaganda in Russia and Belarus did not feel any euphoria, remembering the experience of Trump's previous presidency, when not only was it impossible to reach an agreement with him, but the number of sanctions only increased.

At the same time, sooner or later, all propagandists, raising the topic of the election in the U.S., came to a general criticism of the West.

Siarhei Klishevich, member of the House of Representatives ("parliament" of Belarus):

"As a deputy, as a citizen of Belarus, I don't care who will win there. The most important thing is that I am sure and understand, knowing the American political system, how it works, that they have interfered and will continue to interfere in the affairs of other states until their internal political system collapses." ([Azaryonok. Napryamuyu](#), 05.11)

Yury Uvarau:

"In political circles of Europe, the degree of Russophobia is not just off the scale, hatred of Russia has become a prerequisite for staying in power." ([Minskaya Prauda](#), 14.11).

On November 6, even before the results of the U.S. election were announced, Lukashenka declared Trump "the winner" and later called his re-election "[the embodiment of a personal feat.](#)" He also recalled Trump's promise to end all wars and said that if he succeeded in doing so, he would **nominate Trump for the Nobel Prize**. Propagandists took this statement not as an instruction to praise Trump, but as an occasion for new praises for Lukashenka:

Anton Papou, *SB. Belarus Segodnya*:

"The Belarusian leader called Trump 'winner' back in the morning after the vote – this reaffirmed the significance of the President's tremendous international experience and his understanding of political processes, which allows Minsk to build a balanced policy in a multipolar world." ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 07.11)

"Political scientist" Vadzim Hihin [called](#) Lukashenka "the first politician to call things by their names," and his assessment of the U.S. election results, according to Hihin, was echoed by "all world agencies."

The "president" himself [praised](#) the supporters of the U.S. Democratic Party for their "restraint," because, despite the defeat, they did not call on their supporters to go out to protests or "go to the authorities with a pickaxe and an axe."

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<sup>2</sup> For more details, see: I. Shelepin "Trump is already pissing off the propagandists." Popular politics, 15.11.2024 <https://youtu.be/985cBwiRHn4?si=e44LElQsXnNFYZwi>

## **Contradictions in anti-Western narratives**

In propaganda narratives, the West remains both an enemy and a desirable business partner. From the very beginning, two mutually exclusive messages have been exploited with regard to Western sanctions:

- sanctions are a “hybrid war” unleashed by the West against Belarus, i.e. they are illegal and harmful;
- sanctions stimulate economic development, Belarus becomes more independent, i.e. they are useful.

An example of such inconsistency is a quote from an article by pro-government expert Vadzim Yelfimau. In the first quote, he makes traditional claims reflecting the grievances of the political ruling class of Belarus against the sanctions, but two paragraphs later he already “thanks” the West for them:

“Everything that is going on today under the guise of these or those sanctions is absolutely illegal and represents the arbitrariness of certain, albeit the most brazen countries.”

...

“The West does not learn the lessons of history well. They do not realize that sanctions cannot kill us, and what cannot kill us only makes us stronger! And we are developing thanks to sanctions, because they are an additional incentive for us to prove to everyone that we can do what others cannot.” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 03.10)

The main message regarding the sanctions is that Belarus has always been a peaceful country and sought to establish relations, but the West “burned bridges” and imposed restrictions against it. In such a scheme, Belarus is presented as an “innocent victim” and the West as an “aggressor.”

Aliaksandr Lukashenka:

“I have never said that we are interested in worsening relations with the West. It was you who chose this path and started imposing sanctions against us under certain pretexts.” (BBC [interview](#), 22.10)

## **Poland and the Baltic states**

In anti-Western propaganda narratives, Poland and Lithuania take the “honorable” place of the main “enemies of Belarus” due to their firm and consistent position towards the crimes of the Lukashenka regime. The most absurd narrative spread by the propaganda is that Poland and Lithuania are allegedly just waiting for an opportunity to attack Belarus and divide it among themselves, seeking to create an image of an “external threat” for the population.

Aliaksei Audonin, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies:

“They [*Poles*] have some kind of bzik-idea [*idea-fix*] that they will attack Belarus, reach Moscow, ruin it and live on the ruined [*lands*] for a hundred years. We understand perfectly well that this illusion can turn out in the most deplorable way.” (Quoted from: Telegram [channel](#) of propagandist Lyudmila Hladkaya, *SB. Belarus Segodnya*, 08.10).

Aleh Haidukevich, member of the National Assembly:

“We have not been attacked so far – neither by Poland, nor by NATO, nor by the West in general – not because they don’t want to. They would have invaded long ago, taken away sovereignty, and there are many such examples in the world because [they] are not afraid of a response. As long as they are not afraid of the response, they always attack, so if we were weak ... they would have attacked long ago.” ([Sputnik Belarus](#), 07.10)

Aliaksandr Valfovich, State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus:

“It’s not Belarus and Russia that provoke the West, but the West provokes Belarus and Russia, as well as the Union State as a whole, with its actions.” ([BelTA](#), 06.12)

Aliaksandr Lukashenka:

“Poland spends huge resources on arming its army. If they want to live in peace with us, as they claim, then why spend billions of dollars on armament? [...] And this is already a threat to our joint group.” ([BelTA](#), 06.12)

Also Lukashenka during a working trip to Barysau:

“God forbid we wouldn’t have made it in 2020, everyone would be here by now. Both NATO and the Americans behind their backs. And they would push the Poles – the Poles have their own interests – they need to seize western Belarus, as they once did.” (official [website](#) of the “president,” 10.12).

Speaking at the conference on the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide on December 12, Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin once again [accused](#) Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic states of “Nazism and fascism”:

“At the forefront of this reckless policy is the leadership of Poland, the Baltic states and Ukraine. [...] It is obvious that the plague of Nazism has not only come close to our borders, but has spread like a malignant tumor to many Western countries.”

Due to Trump’s election, propagandists discussed the fate of Poland and Lithuania in the face of new challenges. The main line is that Trump will “abandon” both countries (as well as the rest of Europe) and stop supporting them.

Anton Papou:

“Last time Trump actively supported Poland, including militarily, but now **Warsaw’s aggressive inadequacy towards Belarus and Russia is not to his liking**: Polish militarists who live at the expense of fables about the threat from the East will put sticks in the wheels of his peace plan.”

“The change of government [*in Poland*] last fall did nothing. They are trying to sell the remnants of sovereignty more cheaply, and **the country is being turned at a rapid pace into an analogue of Ukraine**, filling it with weapons and inviting foreign military personnel, who treat Poles as second-class people.” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 12.11)

At the same time, the Belarusian regime extends a “hand of friendship” to Poland and offers to return to “business as usual.” On November 11, Lukashenka congratulated Poland on Independence Day and expressed confidence that “public diplomacy” would help to improve relations between the two countries.

“Step by step, as more Poles come to our country under the visa-free regime, public diplomacy is being strengthened and the need to return to normal relations at the interstate level is growing.” (official [website](#) of the “president,” 11.11)

Also, at one of his election events, Lukashenka addressed Poland, Lithuania and Latvia with a proposal to live “neighborly,” and if they refuse, [“they will have problems”](#):

“If you don’t want to, you don’t have to. We will find other countries with which we will develop cooperation. But if we leave you, you will not come back to us.”

### **“Spy” films and new statements on the role of propaganda**

In December 2024, the Belarus 1 state TV channel showed two “expose films” about Poland’s “spy activity.” In the first one titled “Counterintelligence of the KGB of Belarus against the special services of Poland: agents and traitors,” it was about two Polish prisoners of Belarusian prison – Tomasz Bieroza and Jerzy Żywalewski. Both of them were arrested by the KGB on charges of espionage and agent activity and sentenced to long prison terms.

On December 10, the second [“spy film”](#) about Poland was aired. It told about the attempts of Polish spies to recruit a Belarusian diplomat.

Andrei Lazutkin, a pro-government “political scientist,” when commenting on these films, said that Polish security services are “sad now” because “there are no even remotely similar movies about ‘Belarusian spies’ in the Polish media.” ([Minskaya Prawdа](#), 04.12).

And Ivan Eismant, chairman of the National State TV and Radio Company (the main information broadcaster of the country), in an interview to BelTA agency praised the Belarusian media for giving a decent response to the West:

“Certainly the state media has changed their work dramatically recently. [...] We have quickly reorganized, I think we are holding the blow with dignity. [...] Our former Western partners allocate huge money allegedly for the development of democracy in Belarus, in reality – for the fight against state power in our country.” ([BelTA](#), 18.12)

On November 22, Lukashenka also discussed the importance of mass media at a meeting with students of MSLU. According to him, only propaganda media can be trusted in the conditions of the “information warfare”:

**“If you want to know the truth, read and watch the state media.** [...] People became certain where the truth is. That’s why, first of all, people trust the state media. And I advise you to be very attentive to it,” Lukashenka [advised](#) the students.

The “president” also [emphasized](#) the place and role of propaganda in the existence of the regime:

**“All journalists, all politicians are propaganda, counter-propaganda and agitation.** They all do it. Some from abroad say today, “Oh, please, that’s a propagandist!” And what are you? We propagate our way of life, our culture, and so on. We agitate people for it. And who do you stand for? For those who give money.”



## **Visits of Western celebrities to Belarus**

Western politicians, businessmen, famous athletes and cultural figures, heads of major international organizations continue to visit Belarus from time to time. On the example of the visit of the IAEA Director to Minsk in October 2024, we have already [written](#) about the potential damage they do to their reputation by coming to Belarus and meeting with representatives of the Lukashenka regime in a friendly manner. Western celebrities unwittingly become “faces” of Belarusian propaganda, as they are used in order to legitimize and create a false image of normality and openness of the authoritarian state. The controlled media, as a rule, widely cover such visits. Upon their return home, these people inevitably face public criticism and the need to justify themselves.

An example is the visit of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to the BRICS summit in Kazan on October 22-24. Guterres respectfully shook hands and hugged Putin and Lukashenka. The UN Secretary General's visit to Russia provoked condemnation in the world. Lukashenka, speaking after the BRICS summit at the Second Minsk Conference on Eurasian Security on October 31, [expressed support](#) for Guterres and said that the “relentless attacks” against him “have nothing to do with democracy.”

In November, exactly this story happened to the famous German actor and director, Til Schweiger, who came to Minsk to shoot a promo video for a certain sports company. During his press conference, Schweiger praised Belarus:

“I like Belarusian food, people and relations between them. I was especially touched by the warm welcome I received here. [...] I have heard only the best things about your country.” ([BelTA](#), 09.11)

The reaction of the Western media was immediate. Bild [reproached](#) Schweiger for doing propaganda for “Putin's friend,” other German media also wrote about it. As a result, the actor had to justify himself:

“I attended the press conference solely to talk about my involvement in the movie as part of the advertising campaign, and to share with the public the creative work behind it. [...] To be clear, I did not support any political or ideological position as stated in this article and I am distancing myself from it.” (Quoted from: [Focus.de](#))

Another category is defectors hiding from criminal prosecution in their home countries. They find salvation in Belarus, where they apply for political asylum allegedly because of persecution at home, after which they inevitably begin to serve Lukashenka's propaganda. An example is former Polish judge [Tomasz Szmydt](#), who was found guilty of fraud in his home country, as well as Italian David Karbonaro, who fled to Belarus in late fall 2024 because of accusations of tax evasion. Both defectors now appear in the state media: Szmydt works as a political columnist for the *International Radio Belarus*, while Karbonaro writes in the *SB. Belarus Segodnya* propaganda newspaper. One can't tell from the articles of the latter that it was written by a man of Western democracy, not an ideologist of authoritarianism. Here is a characteristic excerpt:

“President Aliaksandr Lukashenka is still offering an **olive branch** to his Western neighbors with a proposal to resume negotiations on resolving refugee issues. [...] Why do **countries that boast of their advanced democracy** actually play with people's fates, considering themselves superior and elitist?” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 20.11)

## V. EVENTS IN GEORGIA

State-controlled media were actively commenting on the parliamentary election in Georgia at the end of October and the mass street protests that followed. After the pro-Russian Georgian Dream party won, which announced the freezing of negotiations on accession to the European Union, the opposition and President Salome Zurbishvili personally declared the election results rigged and called on citizens to take to the streets. Thousands of people protested for two months (November and December 2024). Rallies and demonstrations were brutally suppressed by the police. Propagandists in Minsk expressed support for the actions of the security forces and compared the protests in Georgia to the “riots” on Maidan in Kyiv in 2013 and the rallies in Belarus in 2020.

Anton Papou, columnist of the *SB. Belarus Segodnya* newspaper:

“In an attempt to overthrow the legitimate authorities in Tbilisi, the West uses the same arsenal it previously used in Belarus and other countries that were subject to hybrid attack.

[...] The West is following familiar patterns, trying to repeat the **scenario of the Ukrainian Maidan**. Just as in Kyiv 11 years ago, numerous NGOs have brought hundreds of radicals to the streets, who cover themselves with crowds of fooled youth.” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 03.12)

Yury Uvarau (Minskaya Prauda):

“Georgian marginals under the leadership of the still acting president Salome Zurbishvili and their Western masters, having realized that they are finally losing the political battle, decided to apply the **Ukrainian scenario**.” ([Minskaya Prauda](#), 03.12)

Aleh Haidukevich, “political scientist”:

“Looking at the events in Georgia, you realize that history goes in circles. All **color revolutions** are organized in the same way and there are always those who fall for the same technologies.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 01.12)

Yury Tserakh, commentator:

“The **Georgian rebellion seems to have followed ours**. [...] Well, the manual is the same, that’s why everything turns out the same.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 04.12)

Kiryl Kazakou, “expert”:

“Look at Georgia. [...] You can remove the inscription “Georgia, 2024” under the photos and instead insert “Belarus, 2020.” **The curators of our enemies, and they have them, and the masters of the independent press turned out to be the same.**” ([Minsk-Novosti](#), 06.12)

Yury Tserakh, *SB. Belarus Segodnya*:

“The brutal Georgian enforcers took the matter seriously, did not discuss it, and strangled it all at once and in the bud without any unnecessary sentimentality. The classic set of weapons: water cannons and tear gas. Everything was very beautiful and inspiring. **But there’s still a manual**, and soon we will be hearing hundreds of stories about terrible atrocities and unmotivated brutality [by the enforcers].” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 29.11).

Ryhor Azaronak, a TV presenter of STV TV channel, [welcomed](#) the decision of Georgian Dream to abandon the course of European integration:

“There is no more European dream. There is only one choice – peace or war, life or death. Grants from the EU and the U.S. are investments in murder, grief, blood and tears. And nothing else.”

The anonymous pro-government Telegram channel Zheltiye Sliiv [claimed](#) that in Georgia, “the pro-Western opposition lost the election with a bang,” despite the fact that their “masters” had spent 20 years investing “an enormous amount of money to turn friendly Georgia into a **Russophobic plague barrack.**”

## VI. EVENTS IN MOLDOVA

Unlike Georgia, during the presidential election in Moldova (October 2024), the democratic power stood firm despite serious challenges inside the country and the “hybrid war” that Russia unleashed against it. The Kremlin used disinformation against Moldova, discrediting democratic institutions (especially against pro-Western President Maia Sandu), manipulating public opinion, financing and supporting anti-Western protests, cyberattacks, and bribing protesters intensively.<sup>3</sup>

Belarusian commentators did not hide their sympathies for the pro-Russian candidates and sharply criticized the country's choice of the “European path.” Propagandist Anton Papou [predicted](#) a “Maidan from above” for Moldova, suggesting that Sandu “will try to plunge the country into the abyss of a coup just to hold on to power and not to let down the Western masters.”

“Political analyst” Aliaksei Dzermant called Moldova “[Eurasia](#)” and urged opposition candidates to unite to “bring down this puppet [Maia Sandu] and put [pro-Russian candidate] Alexandr Stoianoglo into the presidency.”

Nevolfovich, a Telegram channel linked to Belarusian security forces, [believes](#) that Moldovans “understand perfectly well that European integration is a path to war with Russia” and do not want to “become a tool in the geopolitical games of the U.S.”

There were also hints in the state press that the Moldovan election had been rigged. Lyudmila Hladkaya, *SB. Belarus Segodnya*:

“That’s exactly where Sandu is leading the people of Moldova – to nowhere of the ‘garden of Eden.’ The same one who is already preparing ballot fraud. The same one that treats her own citizens like nothing and shuts their mouths. (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 09.10)

After Maya Sandu’s victory, pro-government “expert” Vadzim Yelfimau called the election a “[meaningless show](#)” because among the 11 candidates, there was “not a single truly opposition candidate advocating integration with Russia and the Union State.”

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<sup>3</sup> For more details, see: Bilal, Arsalan. Russia’s hybrid war against the West. NATO Review, 26 April 2024 <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2024/04/26/russias-hybrid-war-against-the-west/index.html/>

## VII. EVENTS IN SYRIA

Propagandists were united in their negative perception of the overthrow of dictator Bashar al-Assad in Syria and the coming of the opposition to power in the first half of December 2024. Most of them regarded these events as a geopolitical defeat for Russia. Learning lessons was a natural and inevitable step. The main conclusion is that you need a strong army and special services to ensure that something like this never happens in your country.

Vadzim Hihin:

“Assad is done. Russia will now accomplish its tasks in Syria without him. Difficult, but not impossible.... Assad’s fall is a strong blow for Russia.” (Personal Telegram [channel](#), 08.12)

Kseniya Lebedzeva, Belarus 1 TV channel:

“This is a good example of the West’s techniques: divide and conquer. And for us it is a memo: any power must be strong, otherwise there will be no state.” ([Belarus 1](#) TV channel, 10.12)

Aliaksandr Shpakouski, pro-government “expert”:

“The bitter experience of the Syrian mistakes must be taken into account by any state seeking to pursue a sovereign course. [...] We need to rely on our own motivated army, special services, law enforcement bloc and state apparatus, where there should be a constant struggle for purity of ranks.” ([SB. Belarus Segodnya](#), 12.12)

Lukashenka spoke publicly about the situation in Syria for the first time only three days after the opposition’s victory and said nothing new: what happened in Syria is a conspiracy of “external forces”:

“This is a lesson for us. We have to determine our own fate. We must save our country!” (Official [website](#) of the “president,” 10.12)

He also denied the accusations against Bashar al-Assad:

“How is Bashar al-Assad a dictator? A doctor by profession, I have known him for a long time. We had good friendly relations. He is not a dictator. He treated people as a doctor. He never killed anyone.” ([BelTA](#), 10.12)

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of the storylines of Belarusian and Russian propaganda targeting Belarus in the fourth quarter of 2024 allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- Starting from October 2024, the efforts of the propaganda machine were aimed at the successful, calm and unhindered re-election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka for the seventh presidential term. For this purpose, efforts were intensified to strengthen Lukashenka's personality cult, to discredit Belarusian democratic forces and Western countries, and to support the image of Belarus as an "innocent" fortress surrounded by enemies.
- Before the election, the Belarusian regime was interested in creating an image of a "just and humane" dictatorship and easing Western sanctions. For this purpose, since August 2024, Lukashenka has pardoned several groups of political prisoners. However, the wheels of political repression in Belarus did not stop.
- Pro-government commentators associate the re-election of Donald Trump as U.S. president with hopes for better relations, detente, recognition of the Belarusian regime, and easing of sanctions. However, in general, skepticism towards Trump prevails, as there were no easings during his previous presidential term.
- The following factors influenced the anti-Ukrainian narratives of propaganda during this period: the forced necessity to support Russia in the war against Ukraine in words and in deeds, the desire to prevent the participation of the Belarusian army in military actions on the territory of Ukraine, the desire to finish the war at the borders of Belarus as soon as possible and to appear as a "peacemaker" before the election. One can also observe the desire of the Belarusian ruler to relieve himself of responsibility for complicity in the aggression and to make Putin the only culprit in the war.
- The propaganda of the Lukashenka regime supported the victory of pro-Russian forces in the parliamentary election in Georgia and the country's rejection of association with the European Union. At the same time, despite an intensive campaign of discrediting against Moldova unleashed by the Kremlin, in which Belarusian propaganda also took part, democratic president Maia Sandu was re-elected in that country. Propagandists accuse her of election fraud and of "giving" Moldova into the hands of the West.

**iSANS will continue to analyze the main directions of Belarusian and Russian propaganda in 2025**