

# Another week of barricade TV by the state media: the protesters don't act on their own, and a rift in the opposition

## Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(31/08/2020 – 06/09/2020)

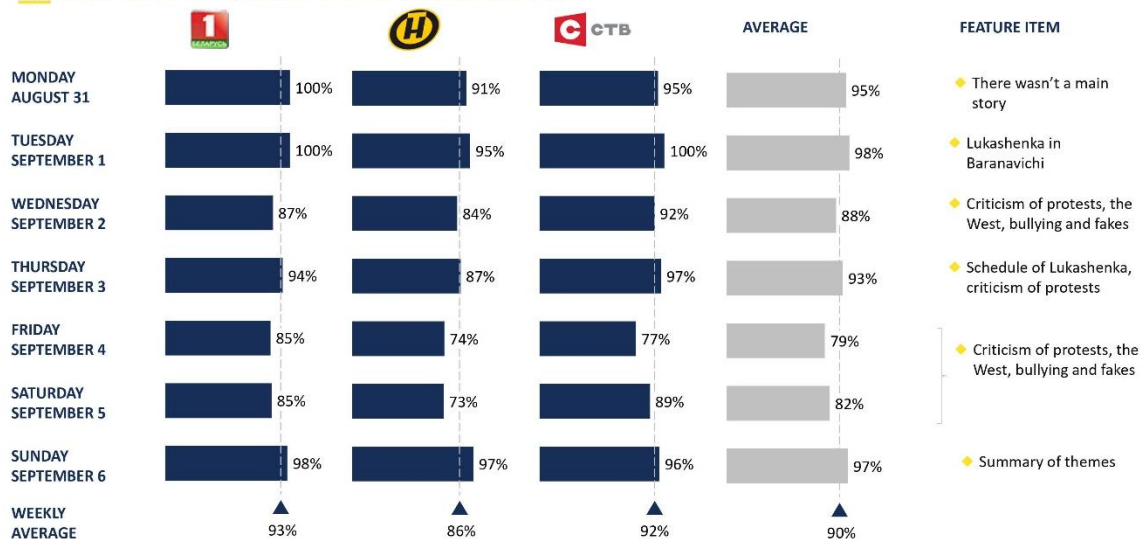
The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological messages. We monitor the outputs of the Agency of the Television News (ATN), which prepares the news broadcasts for the **Belarus-1** channel (“Panorama” and Sunday’s “Main Airtime”), the channel **ONT** (“Our News”, “Saturday’s Edition” and “Contours”), and the channel **STV** (“24 Hour News” and “The Week”).

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**State-run channels followed the traditional course of undermining the protests, denouncing the opposition, telegram channels, fake news, color revolutions, the EU and NATO, Maidan and the present-day Ukraine. The saturation with ideological subjects exceeded 90%.**

#### STATE-RUN CHANNELS FOLLOWED THE TRADITIONAL COURSE OF LAMBASTING THE PROTESTS, THE OPPOSITION, TELEGRAM CHANNELS, FAKES, COLOR REVOLUTIONS, THE EU AND NATO, MAIDAN AND UKRAINE

THE SHARE OF STORIES WITH STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE\*



\*STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE - one or more key ideas that define the content of a news story (e.g., the inadmissibility of destabilizing the political situation).

TV channels were strenuous to strip the protesters of their agency, trying to prove that the economic competitors and the “puppeteers of the protest”, pursuing their own vested and destructive interests, exert unprecedented pressure on Belarus, and the protesters are mere conductors of their will.

The theme of “rift in the ranks of the opposition” and “the flight of opposition leaders” became a new staple. The state-run TV channels got agitated by the discussion about the supporters of Viktor Babaryka creating a political party.

During the reporting week, State-run TV kept on lamenting the persecution of the government officials, emphasizing the reliance on the law enforcement and the genuine patriotism of Lukashenka’s supporters. The friendly rhetoric on Russia against the background of Mikhail Mishustin's visit to Minsk, as well as hostile attacks against other neighbors of Belarus, primarily Lithuania and Ukraine, became more pronounced.

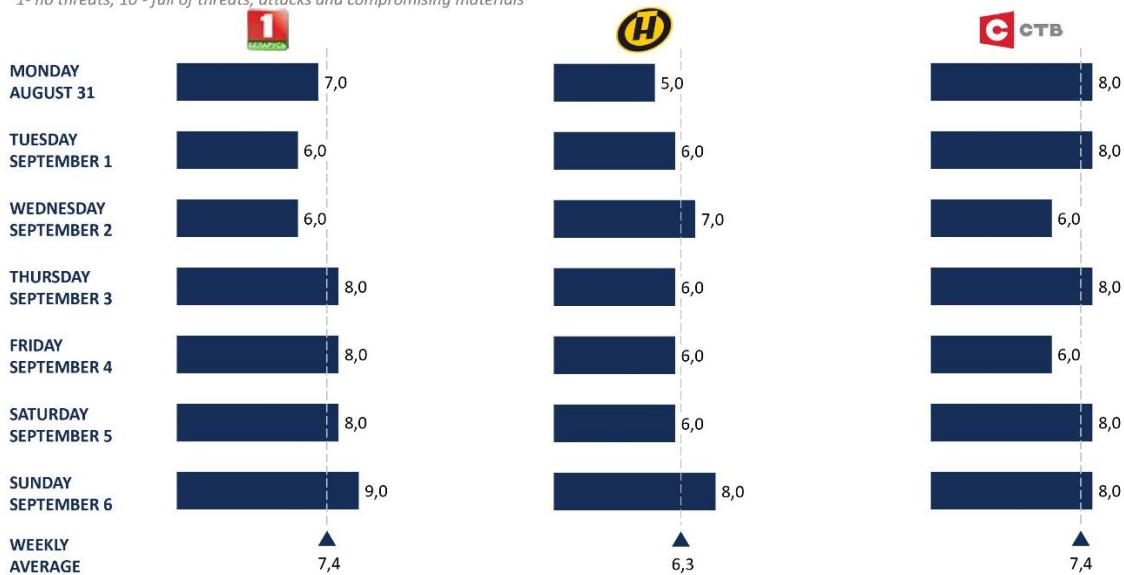
Key narratives can be found in APPENDIX 1

The **Conflictogenity Index** was only slightly inferior to that the previous week and amounted to 7.8 points.

**THE LEVEL OF CONFLICTOGENITY WAS SLIGHTLY INFERIOR TO THE PREVIOUS WEEK – IN ADDITION TO THE PUPPETEERS, THE WHITE-RED-WHITE FLAG, OPPOSITION LEADERS BECAME THE TARGETS OF ATTACKS**

**CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX\***

1- no threats; 10 - full of threats, attacks and compromising materials

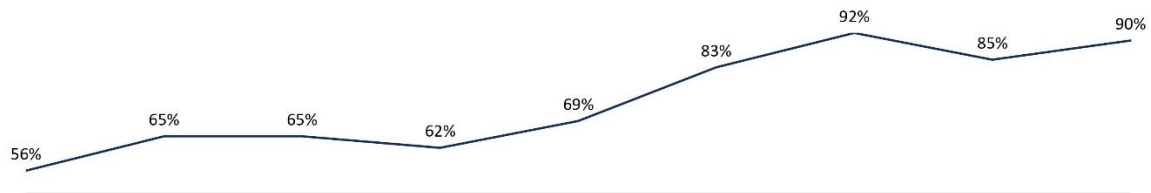


\*CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX - an indicator measuring the percentage of news stories that intensify political tension and conflicts (through accusations and threats towards opponents, equating protests to violence, and similar).

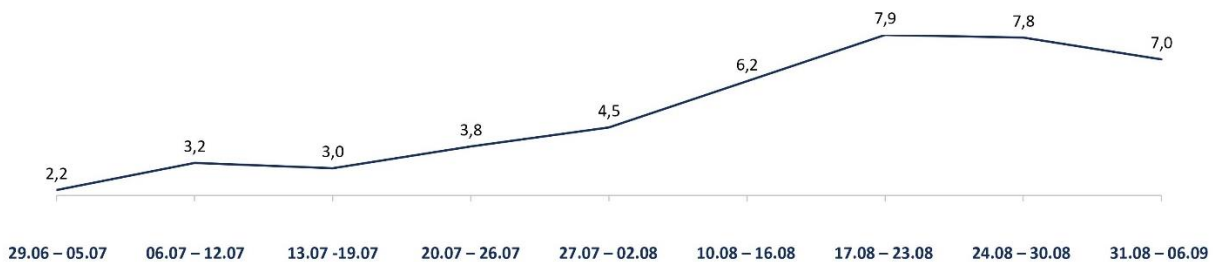
In addition to the loosey-goosey puppeteers, the white-red-white flag, as well as opposition leaders — Pavel Latushka, Maria Kalesnikava and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya — became the targets of information attacks.

**THE FLUCTUATIONS OF CONFLICTOGENITY AND IDEOLOGICAL BIAS ARE ACCIDENTAL - THE POLICY OF INFORMATION WARFARE AND BARRICADE JOURNALISM REMAINS UNCHANGED**

AVERAGE SHARE OF STORIES WITH STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE, by weeks



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks

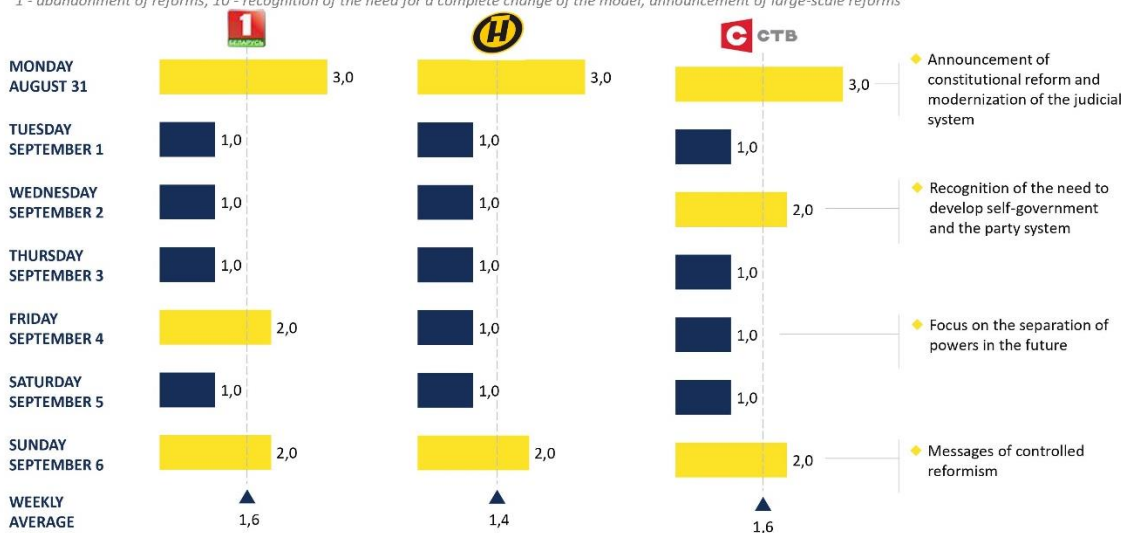


The Reform-Orientation Index rose slightly due to tentative allusions to the prospects for constitutional reform and modernization of the judicial system.

**STATE TELEVISION ADMITTED THE RHETORIC OF CONTROLLED REFORMISM WHEN SPEAKING ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND MODERNIZATION OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM**

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX\*

1 - abandonment of reforms; 10 - recognition of the need for a complete change of the model, announcement of large-scale reforms



\*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX – an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

The pluralism on television is now out of question, since, as before, it's only the official point of view that is broadcast.

- AS BEFORE, ONLY THE OFFICIAL POINT OF VIEW IS BROADCAST TOGETHER WITH THE USUAL FORMAT OF "CRITICISM OF THE OPPOSITION WITHOUT THE OPPOSITION ITSELF ON AIR".

**PLURALISM INDEX\***

1 - absence of alternative viewpoints; 10 - diversity of opinions, journalistic and expert approaches

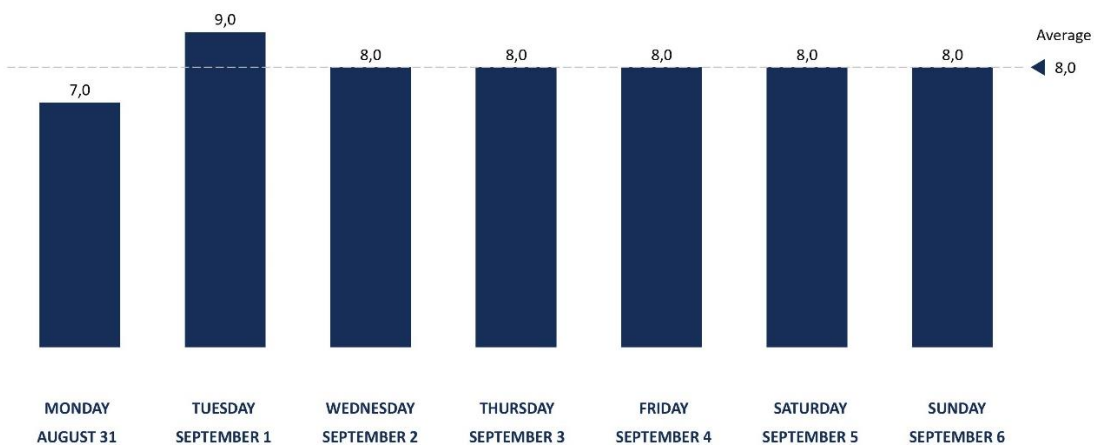


\*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

The uniformity of broadcasting of the three TV channels remained at an extremely high level (8 points).

- THE UNIFORMITY OF BROADCASTING OF THE THREE TV CHANNELS REMAINED AT AN EXTREMELY HIGH LEVEL, SLIGHTLY LESS AGGRESSIVE TONE OF COMMENTS AT ONT

**THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION\***



\*THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION – an indicator evaluating coordination across the air. This is inferred from news stories having similar structures, as well as the duplication of opinions, positions and ideologemes among state TV channels.

*The project “Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus” is implemented by Sense Analytics in partnership with Press Club Belarus and with the support of [Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung](#). The author of the weekly reports is Maxim Stefanovich, the editor and coordinator of the project is Artyom Shraibman. The authors of the project thank the SATIO team for their help with illustrating the monitoring results.*

To see the full version of the report in Russian [click here](#).

## APPENDIX 1 KEY NARRATIVES

### UNDERMINING THE “COLOR REVOLUTION IN BELARUS”, THE PROTESTS AND STRIKES

- “There will be no dialogue with them. We are trying to talk to them — they are not in the mood for talking. Their objective is to break the system: by hook or by crook, if not with the frontal attack then by flanking. These are the scenarios that have been field-tested for decades, and in different countries, in different cultures: from the Middle East, North Africa, Transcaucasia, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine. Cases are plenty.”

### THE GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTERS-TRUE-PATRIOTISM PARADIGM

- “There are representatives of public organizations, young people among the participants, and simply those not indifferent, those who are against the collapse of the country. Rallying around the slogan “You don’t give up the one you love” people supported peaceful and independent Belarus, where there is no place for chaos and war. The short phrases on the posters say more than some of the several-hour streams of the opponents.”
- “Hundreds of people came here, people who didn’t succumb to the the dopey calls for vague changes, they know exactly what they want, what country they want to live in peacefully and what state symbols belong on the Belarusian flagpoles. Especially concerning for the residents is the split in the society and the fact that certain categories of citizens do not want to reckon with the choice of the majority. This means that one needs to state their opinion loudly.”
- “Actions in support of peace, security and tranquility of Belarus continue throughout the country. Now people do not just take to the streets carrying state symbols, but come up with new ways to express their civic position. Bicycle and car rallies, flash mobs, relay races and support videos. Belarusians say that they live in a beautiful and free country, which they love, which they are proud of and which they do not want to give up.”

### PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- “The officials take the raised issues under personal supervision. There are examples of issues being resolved instantly. Other require detailed review by the specialists.”
- “Renovation of bridges, as well as roads in regional centers and the highways connecting them with Minsk, has been on the top of the agenda. The famous bridge over the Pripyat. Another one in Slavgorod. Reconstruction of the M6 highway. The result is a new alternative east-west corridor. The Brest western bypass is also impressive — the largest roundabout in the country. In a word, even in these conditions Belarus not only did not close the borders, on the contrary, did everything to increase the transit attractiveness”.
- “In our country, support starts even before the birth of a child. And this is very important. 100% of our mothers are covered by prenatal and postnatal medical supervision

— and this medical care is provided free of charge. After the birth of a child, those women of our country who were employed are granted a maternity leave for three years. And I must say that we are one of the few countries in the world where maternity leave is, firstly, granted for such a long period; secondly, is fully paid.”

▪ “No one was left without a job... The main recruiters of the teaching staff were the educational institutions in the capital and in Minsk region. A lot of young specialists returned to their cities and villages for their assigned jobs.”

## CRITICISM OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE, CHAOS ABROAD

▪ “On the other hand, an action in support of the Belarusian alternative forces was held in the Rada today. It is noteworthy that it was supported by party members who are often associated with George Soros, an international trader who is credited with trying to influence the politics of many countries. And the very fact of such a speech in the Rada can be regarded as interference in the internal affairs of Belarus.”

▪ “In the current information chaos, support gestures are especially valuable, and there are many. One of the deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine — Ilya Kiva — came to the opening session with the national flag of our country as a sign of solidarity.

▪ “Today the Belarusians who came to the Lithuanian embassy in Minsk urged not to interfere in the country's internal affairs”.

▪ “The citizens of Poland also spoke out in support of a real neighborly peaceful and prosperous Belarus. They held a rally at the consulate of our country in Warsaw. Curiously, the Poles called for the shutdown of the Belsat TV channel, whose policy does not contribute to normal diplomatic relations between the countries.”

▪ “The German President added: those wishing to protest — beware, the counteraction will be even harder. And just two weeks ago, Mr. Steinmeier personally called on the Belarusian authorities to start a “dialogue” with the peaceful protesters. Both of these words can be put in bold quotation marks.”

▪ “Meanwhile, information appeared that in Ukraine nationalists began raising funds for the so-called Belarusian “Maidan.”

▪ “Heavy equipment is being delivered to Lithuania — Abrams tanks, Bradley infantry fighting vehicles and all-terrain vehicles. The total number is 40 units. Such maneuvers are carried out ostensibly for the purpose of joint exercises. Western neighbors do not comment on their actions. In general, Lithuania is only the first stop of the NATO military bloc. Next on the list are Latvia and Estonia.”

▪ “Experts agree that external influence on events in Belarus is obvious. And the Baltic countries are doing all this at the bidding of their seniors from the EU comrades and their overseas partners.”

▪ “We want to teach a little history lesson to the Ambassador of Poland, because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs makes allegations about Grodno... We will not give it up so easily.”

## LASHING OUT AT THE OPPOSITION

- “As for the program of action, which is imposed on Belarusians by the Coordination Council and telegram channels, this is a path to nowhere and is simply offensive for any person reasonable,” the expert noted. It is obvious that this will make the country eventually go bankrupt.”
- As your overage teachers keep saying: it’s not "education, education and education", but "hammering, hammering and hammering"... Right, Masha Kalesnikava?
- “Worse is Better. The organizers of the protests presented a new "strategic action plan" for the opposition. Now, in addition to unauthorized rallies and marches, foreign coordinators use Telegram channels to urge the Belarusians to undermine the economy of their own country: to cause the deposits run from state banks, to not pay taxes and utilities, to boycott domestic goods. And also —to not send children to public schools and to not buy textbooks.”
- “The call to not pay taxes sounds no less strange. This is, at the very least, illegal. Not only in Belarus — all over the world. And any country would react to such calls unambiguously and harshly, up to criminal liability. Including in the West, where the opposition's strategic plan came from. Dodgy schemes, under-the-counter wages... Belarusians have already been there and seen this.”
- “We also learned that Pavel Latushka, a member of the illegitimate Coordinating Council, left for Poland. Well, as they say, nearly in the trunk of the Polish ambassador’s car. Experts suggest that there is no need to looking for the reasons for his imminent departure in Aliaksander Lukashenka's yesterday's statements about the crossed red line, but rather in Latushka's own understanding that he is simply being used as a façade. Just the day before, he himself said that he was not aware of the creation of a new party, and besides, its program was not clear to him.”
- “A puppet in the hands of the West — this is what experts say about the ex-presidential candidate Tsikhanouskaya.”
- “So, Latushka's delicate nature could not bear all these political vicissitudes. It's not about the current government — it's about vanity. Latushka, apparently, saw that he was being used.”
- “Meanwhile, the ranks of the opposition leaders — the instigators of the riots — are running thin every day. Today it became known that Volga Kavalkova, a member of the so-called Coordination Council, left the country.”
- “Ironically, the announcement of the creation of a new political party under such a catchy title — “Together” — was the last occasion of the Coordination Council getting together. More and more often we see them apart.”
- “Many people had their own interests in this political game. But Kalesnikava skillfully played them all, messing with their heads, they did the necessary stupid things — and then fled. Many stayed, but also — each with their own aspirations. There is no program, no unity, no goal, not even an objective. But acknowledging this is difficult or completely unbearable — and the meaningless "protest", while fading away, still continues. Kalesnikava's next puppets, most likely, will soon run away too. If they come to their bearing, of course. If not, they will be left with the product of their own making. No excuses, no reflection, no chance to change anything. While Maria has a golden parachute. Once the puppets run out, she can take



an exit at any time. At least she thinks so. However, life is unpredictable. Let's see how it actually plays out.”

## LAMENTING THE BULLYING OF THE AUTHORITIES' ADVOCATES

- “Let us remind you that in connection with the political situation in Belarus, many media personalities and public figures faced outright threats against them. These are the “peaceful changes” they talk about.
- “It is now very difficult for many to focus on their official duties. There is tension building up all around. In addition, there is direct moral pressure, threats of reprisals. And, alas, this is happening en masse. Threats keep coming in, targeting the families of the police, civil servants, and journalists.
- “Deputies, judges, members of election commissions, teachers are now under pressure. They receive messages threatening violence against their family and demands to resign immediately. More than 150 such cases have been registered throughout the country.
- “The Emergencies Ministry staff have now become new targets of harassment on the Internet. Hate speech towards the enlisted men is incited by the opposition telegram channels, which coach their subscribers to attack the rescuers. Personal data, photos and phone numbers are all now in the public domain. An employee of the fire rescue unit in Minsk was bullied today.
- “The editors of the protest media indoctrinated their audience to turn against this man. He was accused of removing a white-red-white banner from the facade of a residential building in the capital city. He is an emergency response climber, he does not discriminate, he simply risks his life. He comes to the rescue when people are in distress, including those threatening and insulting him today. And nevertheless, all that slur did not affect his morale. He’s been through hell and high water — he can definitely manage the aggressors.”
- “The foreign artists and athletes will, naturally, cope with these cases of bullying — they will perform at other venues, there is no shortage. But the Belarusians should take a closer look at the “peaceful” changes that are being praised in the streets and on social media. Harassment and bullying — these are the methods of the protesters.”
- “Journalists, TV presenters, artists and actors saw insults and threats on social networks, they were harassed at their places of residence, they had their intercoms buzzing at night. Some of them had their cars damaged.”

## PUTTING THE STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

- “That is, now the strong personalities come to the fore, those hardened and schooled in state security. Committed to work for the sovereignty and stability of the country. By relying on such people, the President is true to himself and makes it clear: the government has not faltered, quite the opposite, is ready to respond clearly to all challenges, relying on the professionalism of the patriots.”
- “The level of combat readiness is quite high, and the operational and combat training activities are simply stellar and in terms of assessment and the results. Therefore, I would not

take the Belarusian army lightly if I were you. For it has great capacity, and we will not tolerate any provocations against our state.”

## SUPPORT FROM RUSSIA

- “As much as some hate to see this, the economy of Belarus is rock-solid. 10 Belarusian enterprises are included in the Eurasian register of industrial products. Among them are MAZ, Amkodor, Kamvol, Vitebsk Carpets. The unified database qualifies us for public procurement on the territory of Russia.”
- “By the way, Mishustin is also of Belarusian descent. Many Russians are, if you dig deep, therefore in Belarus they are treated not as guests, but as family. At the same time, it is generally accepted that Russia is like an older brother to us, aware of all the things that are happening here and around us. We watch the lives of our neighbors too. As in recent weeks, the Kremlin has been unambiguous. It offered a shoulder to lean on.”
- “Spotting the representatives of the Russian media in the crowd of reporters, Aliaksander Lukashenka was quick to thank our colleagues who came to provide technical support and back the Belarusians up during these trying times.”
- “At the same time, it is generally accepted that Russia, as an older brother, is aware of everything that is happening in our country and around us. But Belarus is also actively watching the events in Russia. As they say, what we can and we will help. And now Aliaksander Lukashenka expresses his opinion on a topic most discussed in the neighboring country — and offers documented proof.”
- “There are our opponents who say that we will build a fence off Russia and go to the European Union — firstly, no one is waiting for us there. There is fierce competition, it is very difficult to break through there. Therefore, damage will be huge in the event of a break-up with Russia. Therefore, this is something we should not even consider, while we must discuss how to strengthen, first of all, economic integration with Russia, with possible introduction of a common currency in the future. But all this should be on equalitarian terms. Therefore, Russia for us is a friend, a comrade and the main economic partner, a very efficient one. We should really appreciate it.”
- “In general, regarding the Union State, there was a revival of negotiation in all areas. The pandemic has put many issues on halt, but now countries are again showing readiness to discuss many things pertaining to integration. Moreover, we have made progress in addressing even the most sensitive ones.”
- “On Friday, Belarus handed over to Russia an intercepted telephone conversation between Berlin and Warsaw, which concerned Navalny. In general, contacts between Minsk and Moscow have noticeably intensified lately. Which, apparently, makes some Western politicians restless. Negotiations of the foreign ministers, the arrival of the Russian prime minister, the recently announced personal meeting of the presidents in the coming weeks. And the Navalny case, according to experts, is nothing more than an attempt to put pressure on Russia itself in order to distract it from the Belarusian agenda. It’s nothing new in terms of the methods used by the Western countries. But will it work this time?”

## PERSONALISM

- “Speaker of the Federation Council Valentina Matvienko and head of the Communist Party faction in the State Duma Gennady Zyuganov, as well as the leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, addressed the Belarusian leader in a personal telephone conversation. People of culture and art, famous athletes and public figures of Belarus and Russia — all joined with the numerous congratulations.”
- “The team of Belteleradiocompany also joins the kind words addressed to Alexander Lukashenko and congratulates the head of state on his birthday with wishes of courage and fortitude.”
- “Under the leadership of Alexander Lukashenko, Belarus has become one of the most steadily developing states in the post-Soviet space. This was stated by the head of Chechnya in his address to the Belarusians, whom he urged to support the current government.
- “We see full recognition of the legitimacy of Alexander Lukashenko and the recognition of his victory in the elections by the headquarters of Babaryka.”

## UNDERMINING THE PROTESTS

- “Today, the organizers of the street disorder were especially short of manpower. It’s mostly same old clowns, who wander from rally to rally, who embarked on a political walking tour of Minsk. They pose as journalists, then miners, then doctors, and today they are students. The support, so to speak. To at least make some noise, because the protest looks like it’s on its last legs. It all would have been fine, had it not been for the aggression that this roaming of the streets turns into. By the way, our wandering “freedom fighters” made one interesting thing obvious today. Idle youths are the backbone of the protests. Carrying smartphones their moms bought them, which they use to receive orders — sit, roll over, run. Only most don’t have the stamina. A young protester waking it all the way to the next rally checkpoint without running out of breath is a rare sight. They even burst into tears. Here, here, don't cry. Both funny and tragic, actually. I am sorry, but this is surreal. Yet, this is how flimsy the rebels of today are. This is exactly what the couch warriors looks like. Although when they flock together, they make a highly aggressive substance. Parents, a question for you: what are your children doing at political rallies? The telegram channels say that the riot police are targeting children. But the question is: firstly, why do children roam the city instead of studying, and secondly, why are the children so aggressive? It’s loitering and truancy. And we witnessed on Sunday, how it can all spin out of control.”
- “Stupidity as a political commodity — after unsuccessful attempts to organize a coup d’état immediately after the elections, to undermine the economy through strikes a little later, Internet provocateurs switched to a new tactic — to calls for a boycott of the educational process”.
- “But in the Myadel region, hemp and marijuana were found in large quantities on those favoring the opposition symbols”.
- “So what, we are not supposed to take our kids to school? Not bring flowers to school? This is such a far-reaching ideological sabotage. But the education system will not yield, because such a national education system is a product of a huge amount of work done by the country.”

- “Indeed, the factory workers are getting used to seeing the crowd with its slogans and posters. But they keep away anyway. They would like everything to be peaceful. Like before. The mob with posters comes to the gateway of the factories comes exactly at lunchtime of shift change. To mix with the crowd — make a picture. Everyone in Belarus already knows this.”
- “But the “freedom fighters” supporting the factory workers, without the very workers actually asking them, keep loitering the premises, or rather doing their work as extras for the shot. This, only means that the cafeteria of these industrial companies make more money — the workers tend to have their lunch there, since the hardworking Belarusians do not take kindly the calls to boycott work.”
- “Every single one of them will be identified — everyone who was hurling rocks and setting fire. Everyone who was there. And cameras, and all other means, their friends posting the videos — everything will be used. Everyone who raised a hand to a police officer (and this will be objectively confirmed by the video), everyone will be held liable.”
- “Generally speaking, being “against” is easy and convenient: one simply needs to learn a few staples about the elections, about the president and the authorities. And you are kind of ready to fight. After all, in the street one does not need to think and guide, it’s all about reaction and instincts. Others will tell you where to go, and whom to target with your energy and aggression.”
- “These so-called peaceful protests that allegedly do not get into anyone’s way... After all these protests, housing and utility services have to allocate extra resources to clean up the places where these so-called protests are held. I am yet to see one opposition channel filming and showing what remains after these rallies — there is a mess to clean up, to sweep out of the city at best. In the worst case, they also have to restore the damaged landscaping and hardscape elements, traffic signs and traffic engineering items.”
- “Perhaps many of those who decided to carry the white-red-white flag along the streets of their city simply do not know its history. During the Nazi occupation in the Second World War, traitors and collaborators were flying the white-red-white flag while serving the Nazi occupiers. They helped the fascists burn down villages with their dwellers. And seeing how today the memory of the forefathers is dishonored, hurts both the veterans and their heirs.”
- “This young man was spotted among the active protesters. After the arrest, his house was searched. A cache of plant matter was found in the case of his computer. The forensics are finding out what it is, but the guy says it's marijuana.”
- “Coordination of the Belarusian protest from abroad has already become a meme. Although many still do not want to believe and see the obvious. However, many Belarusians are already frankly tired of their weekend getting repeatedly spoiled and openly express their dissatisfaction with the protesters, urging them to take a sensible view of what is happening.”
- “It seems that while at it the organizers completely forgot for what purpose they summoned the youth to the streets. And everything would be fine if it were not for traffic violations. The demonstrators endangered not only their own lives, but also some random people.”
- “At the same time, the doors have already been opened in the Red Church and they are inviting passers-by and worshippers to sign political petitions. It is obvious that this initiative hardly contributes to the unity and harmony of the Belarusian believers”.

## INFORMATION WARFARE

- “The following video is an example of a failed fake news piece. With a view to escalate the situation, some Telegram channels published a post with the caption saying “BelAZ silent again today. No workers to be seen.” It is not clear from what angle they were shooting it. What you see on your screens is a video taken a few hours ago at this industrial flagship. Everything is in its place, the production process goes unhalting, not for a minute. There is no time to relax at this Zhodino-based production facility, because they have big plans.”
- “All our neighbors are far from being liberal with the media. Ukraine has banned Russian TV channels, publications, and books, it blacklisted a number of people denying them entry. Broadcasting by Sputnik has been shutdown in Estonia. But when our democrats look in that direction, they immediately put on the rose-tinted spectacles and fail to notice any of that.”
- “Berlin's reaction followed as expected. I mean, what else could they do?! The German government refuted the words of the Belarusian president. They are saying that it is: “Naturally, not true.” However, the recording of a telephone conversation confirms what Alexander Lukashenko said. Well... Now we have a transcript that we can publicize. We present you an audio file! If goes, as they say, with no further comments.”