

State-run TV made a lesson out of the Nagorno-Karabakh on the peaceful Belarus and the destructive nature of color revolutions

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(28/09/2020 – 04/10/2020)

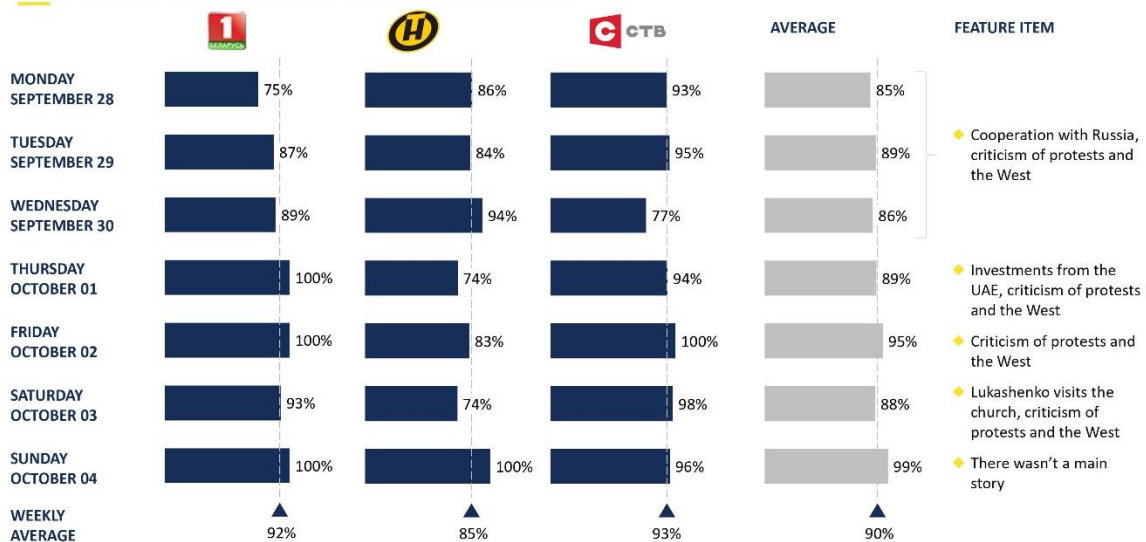
The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological 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 TV channels actively used the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to present Belarus as a haven of peace and stability in an ocean of chaos. This story was also used to showcase the fallout from the color revolutions, sometimes blaming Pashinyan's government for the problems, despite the fact that Armenia is an ally of Belarus under the CSTO.

■ THE NARRATIVE OF ALLIED RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA REMAINED ONE OF THE CENTRAL THEMES. THE THEME OF "NON-PEACEFUL PROTEST" DOMINATED THE DOMESTIC AGENDA

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).

Lashing out at "external and internal enemies" took up most of the airtime, supplemented by laudatory coverage of pro-government rallies. Exhortation, exposure, preaching, and "political stand-up" by Evgeny Pustovoy, Maria Petrashko, Grigory Azarenko, Andrey Mukovozchik are ever more hogging the airtime of news broadcasts.

Other important narratives included the allied relations with Russia, foreign intervention from Poland, Lithuania and France (after the statements by Emmanuel Macron and his meeting with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya). Also dominant was the theme of "non-peaceful protest", people's fatigue from opposition rallies and assertive praise of the law enforcement.

Key narratives can be found in [APPENDIX 1](#)

The conflictogenity index slightly decreased (from 7 to 6.3 points) due to the greater share of the foreign policy agenda, but there was no qualitative change in the content.

THE INTERNAL POLITICAL BLOC TURNED INTO A SUMMARY OF THE STRUGGLE OF SECURITY OFFICIALS WITH PARTICIPANTS OF PROTEST CHATS, THREATS AGAINST PROTESTERS AND CONFESSIONS OF DETAINEES

CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX*

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

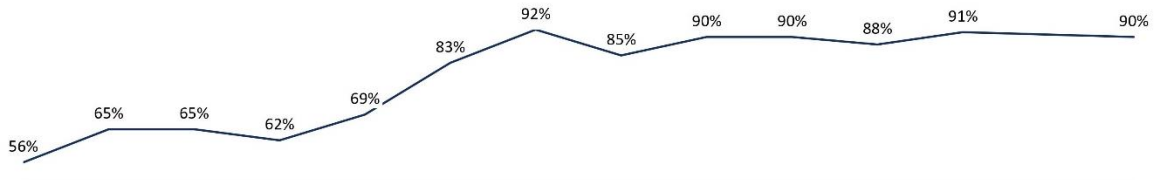


*CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX - an indicator measuring the percentage of news stories that intensify political tension and conflicts (through accusations and threats towards opponents, equating protests to violence, and similar).

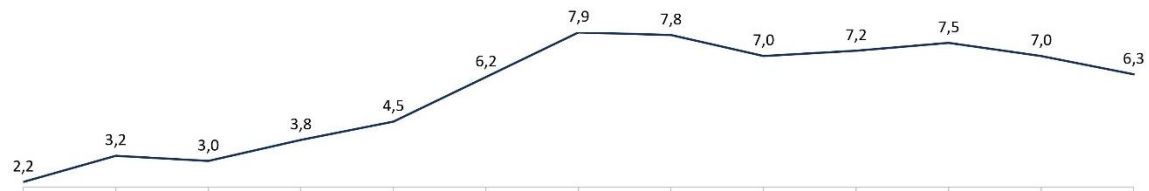
The internal political bloc ultimately turned into battlefield reports on the struggle of the law enforcement with participants of protest chats-rooms, threats against the protesters and confessions of those detained.

THE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX SLIGHTLY DECREASED DUE TO THE GREATER SHARE OF THE FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA, BUT THERE WAS NO QUALITATIVE CHANGE IN THE CONTENT.

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



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks



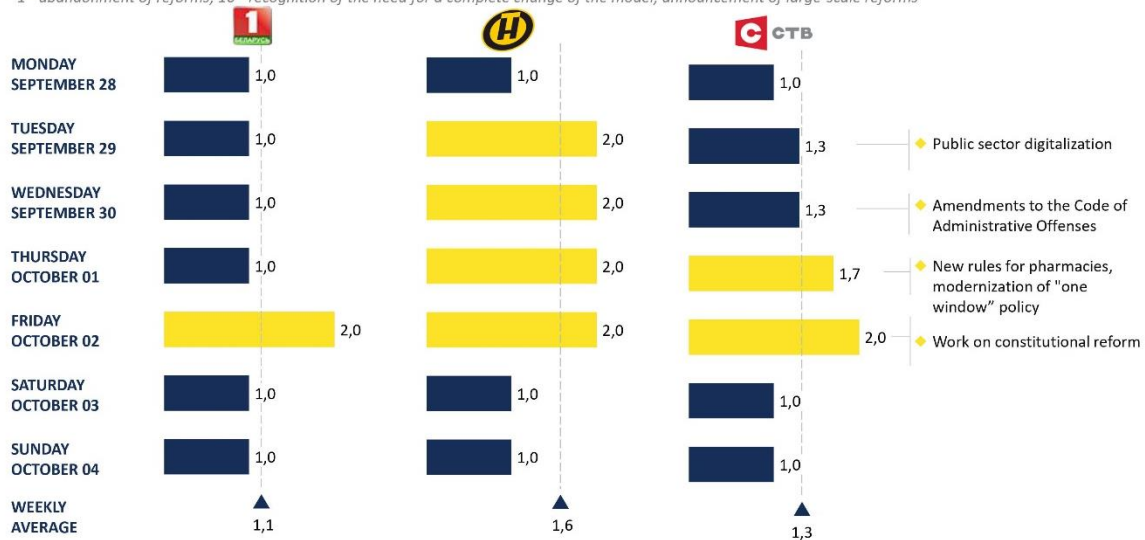
29.06 - 05.07 06.07 - 12.07 13.07 - 19.07 20.07 - 26.07 27.07 - 02.08 10.08 - 16.08 17.08 - 23.08 24.08 - 30.08 31.08 - 06.09 07.09 - 13.09 14.09 - 20.09 21.09 - 27.09 28.09 - 04.10

Reformist attitudes during the week manifested themselves in statements on the preparation of the constitutional reform, although there was again no specific information on the content of the drafts.

INDEX INCREASED DUE TO THE STATEMENTS ON THE PREPARATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM. AGAIN, THERE WAS NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON THE CONTENT OF THE DRAFTS

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX*

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



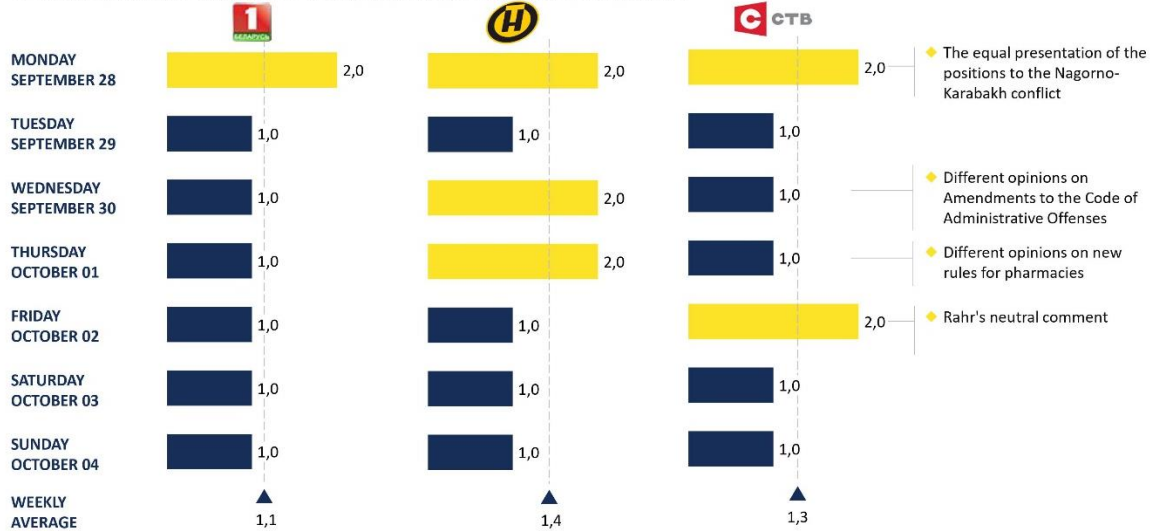
*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX – an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

Pluralism was mainly manifested in the equal presentation of the positions of the parties to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

PLURALISM WAS MAINLY MANIFESTED IN THE EQUAL PRESENTATION OF THE POSITIONS OF THE PARTIES TO THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT. BELARUS WAS PRESENTED AS A HAVEN OF PEACE AND STABILITY IN AN OCEAN OF CHAOS

PLURALISM INDEX*

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



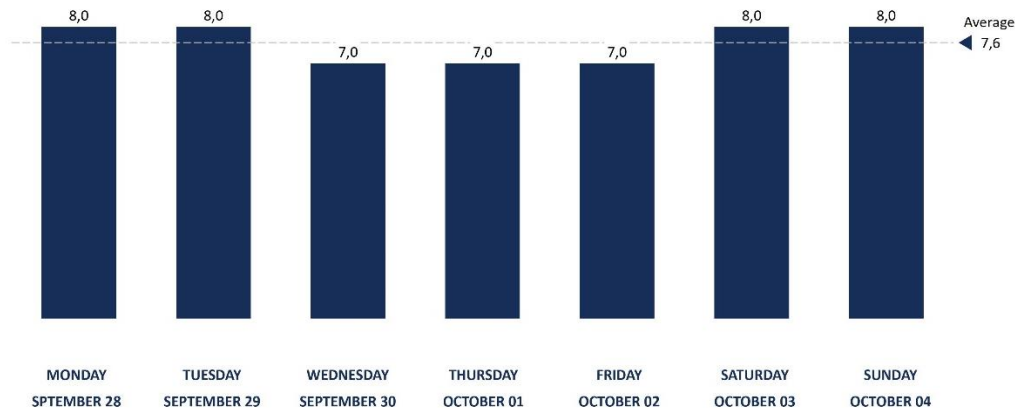
*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

5

The high level of uniformity of the content of the state-run channels (carbon-copied stories, identical ideological attitudes) traditionally reflected the tight coordination of news broadcasting (7.6 points).

THE HIGH LEVEL OF UNIFORMITY OF THE CONTENT OF THE STATE-RUN CHANNELS TRADITIONALLY REFLECTED THE TIGHT COORDINATION OF NEWS BROADCASTING

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.

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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

SUPPORT FROM RUSSIA

- “Within a, generally, standard package of proposals, Belarus tries to find a tailored approach for each region. After all, there is quite a contrast between the Pskov region on the border of our country and, say, Omsk of Siberia. But Belarus has active contacts with more than fifty regions of Russia.”
- “Russia starts right here. This is what the residents of Pskov say. The old Russian city is the administrative center of the neighboring region. Mikhail Vedernikov is the head of the region — even though it is his first visit to Minsk as a governor, one could hardly tell — so cordial was the welcome by Alyaxander Lukashenka.”
- “The inviolability of historical memory has been repeatedly proven to be the main focus of the union policy. Belarus and Russia cherish and honor it.”
- “Contacts with the Russian regions are one of the key components of the economy for Belarus. And trade remains the main focus area for the parties. And the fact that the governors came to Minsk in great numbers is another confirmation of this. People shouldn’t deal in absurd speculations saying that it doesn’t benefit the president to be meeting with the governors. Alyaxander Lukashenka has always been seeing the heads of Russian regions, and will keep doing so.”
- “Rzhevsk Initiative” should become a new integration platform connecting Belarus and Russia.”

ANTI-WEST NARRATIVE

- “The situation in Belarus should be regarded solely as interference from the western neighbors in domestic affairs, it is fueled by the financing of protests. This point of view was shared with is by a reputed Latvian political scientist. In his opinion, only the Belarusian people will emerge victorious from the current situation, the people who did not allow external forces to weaken (or even destroy) the Belarusian state.”
- “Macron has no time to follow up on France’s own issues, he is too busy meeting citizens of other countries and giving unsolicited advice.”
- “One thing we have definitely learned over the past six months — the fewer such advisors as you, the sooner we will get back the Belarus that we have loved for the last quarter of a century.”
- “The internal political crisis in France is getting worse every day. Public confidence in the Macron government has dropped to its all-time low since the start of the pandemic. Meanwhile, the President of the Fifth Republic prefers interfering in the internal political nuances of other countries, rather than taking notice of France’s own problems.”
- “Against this background, it is difficult for us to comment on erratic emotional gestures, sometimes bordering on hysteria, of our Baltic neighbors. So they expanded the sanctions

lists... Well, from today, as promised, we are also introducing reciprocal symmetric restrictive measures for each of these countries."

- "The US election campaign is taking place against the backdrop of large-scale unrest. As candidates engage in verbal skirmishes during the debates, people take to the streets of American cities."
- "The debates took place against the backdrop of the protests ongoing for the fourth month in a row. Police clashed with BLM demonstrators in Portland the day before. In response to abusive shouts and violent actions, the police harshly detained the participants. "Well, this is different," the "peaceful protesters" (as they affectionately call themselves) from Belarus will say. Democratic batons and democratic gas will never paralyze those who oblivious to such facts."
- "There was another terrorist attack in Afghanistan, 9 people killed, there was shooting in Wisconsin in America, seven people injured. Riots, looting, murders in the streets in the United States have been going on for five months now. Europe is being torn apart by protests that are increasingly escalating into clashes with the police."
- "Political discord is growing stronger in the European Union. Certain suckers for sharing their "wisdom" on Belarus got a rap on their knuckles from Brussels. The EU itself has criticized Poland and Hungary for "not meeting democratic standards." Firstly, their judicial systems are under threat, and secondly, these two Eastern European countries condone corruption, and also infringe on freedom of speech. In particular, Warsaw was chastised for having issues in such areas as freedom of the media, anti-corruption measures and the national justice system."
- "The Lithuanian taxpayers called their president to account for the expenses associated with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's residency."
- "Color revolutions chronicles: in Chile, police used tear gas and water cannons on demonstrators."
- "Some our citizens, who put their trust in Europe and its values, have completely naive ideas about how world politics work. People who have never been interested in global processes altogether, firmly believe that there are good Western countries and all the rest are bad. That there is a UN that should not allow wars and support the protesters. Living for the past 26 years in a strong and stable state, which makes sure that they never have to hear the sounds of explosions, they do not understand the fatal breakdown humanity is now facing."

UNDERMINING THE PROTESTS

- "On Saturday, the boys routinely cling to apron strings, and the proud and noisy female rally marches through the capital city. This time it was a bummer, though. The rehearsal of Tsikhanouskaya's inauguration only saw a few dozen people show up along Nina Baginskaya. This is when a new order came from Poland — go to the Komarovka market to blend with the shoppers and make it look like a crowd this way."
- "The kind of weekend everyone is tired of. Protesters roaming the Belarusian streets again. Despite clear instructions and coordination, protests do not work. There are fewer people,

but the degree of aggression is only escalating. In the last 24 hours alone, the police have received hundreds of calls with complaints.”

- “As usual — there were drunk and aggressive people were in the chain. Including those who provoked conflict situations along the entire route.”
- “Roads are being blocked, public transport shut down, shops, cafes and restaurants closed. And all only so that a certain part of the population would aimlessly and wastefully walk along the streets shouting.”
- “Russian liberal pro-Westerners are campaigning for a boycott of all things Belarusian. However, it actually backfired. Moreover, both on the social media and in the stores. Russians started buying Belarusian products with a new-found enthusiasm.”
- “People are again being called to the so-called “peaceful” protests. Meanwhile, all these rallies are unauthorized and disrupt public order. Increasingly, minors are seen at these rallies. Teenagers are easily influenced, and malefactors take advantage of this, gathering crowds of schoolchildren in the streets of Belarusian cities.”
- “The participants of the chat-room were sure to discuss the behavior strategy for the protests, including how to avoid detention and dodge responsibility. However, now the radicals are detained, their homes being searched.”
- “The promenade along Independence Avenue with flowers, or, as the organizers called this event in one of the telegram channels, this Saturday's flower demarche offered little surprise. The waning in the protesters' mood is not only palpable, but also clearly visible.”

UNDERMINING THE PROTESTERS

- “Homemade spikes, bolts, a knife, and a club. This was the “inventory” of the resident of Lida, who came to the capital city for the so-called peaceful protest. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, several aggressive young people were detained in Minsk yesterday during unauthorized actions on Masherov Avenue. Among them was a 22-year-old resident of Lida. According to him, he needed the spikes and bolts to attack police cars, break glass, puncture tires. And the club with a metal rod, apparently, was intended for the riot police.”
- “Homegrown revolutionaries and incredible stupidity. The Interior Ministry continues detaining aggressive protesters, provocateurs and those who were conceiving arson and beatings, and those threatening others on the Internet.”
- “There are more and more reports on the so-called heroes of the protest. In chat-rooms and social media, they call to burn, beat, smash and fight, and when it comes to owning their actions, they pitifully plead mislead. No one will escape responsibility.”
- “We tell you almost every day that it is a bad idea to harass, threaten people and damage property. But not everyone wants to hear.”
- “The man who beat up the 72-year-old senior was detained by the police. The video of the man attacking the older passer-by got viral on the Internet. The reason for the attack was that the elderly man did not share the political views of the offender. Apparently, supporters of changes are following the principle “He that is not with us is against us.” The public called for the unscrupulous offender to be found and punished. And, of course, it is sad that such a cynical crime took place on the eve of the Day of the Elderly.”

- “Nazi tattoos, the appearance of young people also perfectly demonstrates their creed and how they plan to carry out the far-from- peaceful protests.”
- “A so-called “peaceful” protest in Grodno. A man runs up and starts hitting a uniformed police officer. Turns out, the riot police officer was a woman. The attacker, of course, was detained. Has a criminal record. Murder, robbery, possession of weapons, counterfeit. Despite the video evidence, he would not admit guilt. Now he is subject to criminal proceedings for assaulting a police officer.

SOVIET HISTORY NARRATIVE

- “The inviolability of historical memory has been repeatedly proven to be the main focus of the union policy. Belarus and Russia cherish and honor it.”
- “They did their utmost to bring about the Victory, at the cost of their own lives, in the name of future generations. 75 years later, some are trying to rewrite history. We need to develop immunity from falsification. The historical legacy of the Great Victory is in the focus of attention of the participants of the Forum of Regions.”

NAGORNO-KARABAKH — FOREIGN TRACE AND COLOR REVOLUTIONS

- “To be neutral is, in my opinion, the most correct decision, because on Karabakh — the conflict that began in 1987 — there was working group created in 1988, and in 1992 — the CSTO. It was initiated by Russia, France, and the USA. And, mind you, even the initiating country — France — in the person of its leader, instead of dealing with the Karabakh issue, which has now acquired a phase of active hostilities, got busy with something completely different.”
- “It is reported that most of the bodies are in the neutral zone, no one is taking them out. When discussing the reasons for the escalation, analysts speak of an externality, while others recall the recent political experience of Armenia, which went through a “color revolution.” And the supporters of the latter version are convinced that it was the internal contradictions that split the society that led to such sad consequences.”
- “According to the plan of the so-called centers of global influence, Armenia is the next item on the “color agenda” right after Belarus, a number of experts are convinced of this. In our country, the attempt at a revolutionary upheaval and importing “democracy” has failed. While Nagorno-Karabakh is bleeding.”

PERSONALISM, PRO-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISM

- “The story of the dismissal of workers at Grodno Azot turned out to be another fake. The administration of the company learned about the intentions of the staff from the Internet.”
- “For peace, order and tranquility in the country. At this moment the rally “for Belarus” continues in Minsk.”
- “Activists and leaders of the youth movement of Dubrovensky district, as well as veterans of the Komsomol from different years held an open dialogue, which is dedicated to the 100th anniversary of this organization. In support of traditions and memory, the youth organized a motor rally.”

- “For United Belarus! — carrying this motto, the motorists will drive from the eastern borders of our country to the western ones. All one needs to partake is a car and the state symbols... Hundreds of concerned Belarusians who value peace and tranquility in the country are ready to join the marathon.”
- “Only together we will build a peaceful and prosperous Belarus. This is the message from the youth of Grodno region. More than a thousand participants from all over the region gathered for the regional youth forum.”
- “Alexander Lukashenko donated an icon to the parish. And he also gifted the new church the icon presented to him by Metropolitan Benjamin. The President was in no hurry to leave the church; he cordially talked with the parishioners, leaving many pictures taken as a keepsake of this day. It took about two years to build a church in Shershun.”

PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- “Unlike the capital, people in the regions are concerned about pressing issues... harvesting, sowing winter crops, landscaping, uninterrupted work of educational institutions, healthcare institutions.”
- “The level of medical care in Belarus remains at a high level. Large-scale modernization also continues. City, regional and district clinics get new equipment.”
- “The General Prosecutor's Office urges citizens to report cases of infringement of labor rights. Each situation will be scrutinized. The agency also drew attention to the fact that they will conduct inspections at small enterprises that have not previously come into their view.”
- “As requested by the head of state, a large-scale work has been started to improve the state's criminal law policy. All in all, there is a lot of work to be done, and the key to success will be everyone's professionalism. This session begins in a difficult foreign policy environment. The activity of the deputies will also influence the fate of the country. Their role now, more than ever, has increased multifold.”
- “The new five-year program rests on the shoulders of the prime minister! It will have to be shaped by the main priorities. Among them are the decent living standards and quality of life. In general, the Prime Minister will speak in detail about the current economic situation, saying that the country, albeit not as quickly as we would like, is surely returning to smooth operation.”
- “And here is an illustrative example of the efforts undertaken by Belarus — we are still attractive for foreign investments. They strengthen the foundation of our economic stability. Confirmation of this is the new "Smart City" project. Moreover, it will become a hallmark not only for our country, but for the entire European region.”
- “The Head of the House of Representatives noted that the work on changing the basic law of the country should be systematic and well-coordinated. Here it is important to manage a direct dialogue with the people, to study the opinion of voters. The new Constitution should be based on a symbiosis of public initiatives and expert opinion. At the same time, all the proposals still have to be carefully verified and approved at the All-Belarusian People's Assembly.”

- “While some ex-politicians, experts and the media are engaged in demagoguery, concrete work with foreign investors continues in the country. These same investors already know Belarus well and pay attention to the business climate and geography, rather than loud slogans and attempts to cause political turbulence. The Middle-Eastern example of this week is the United Arab Emirates.”

ALL STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

- “Police officers are now receiving letters of gratitude from residents of Grodno and the region. In this difficult time, every word of support is important for men in uniform. Such letters now come for the Grodno policemen every day. There are already more than 500 of those.”
- “First Deputy Minister Gennady Kazakevich expressed hope for a balanced and objective approach by the international organization to assessing the events that took place in the country after the presidential elections. Unfortunately, conclusions are often made based on unverified information, and sometimes even outright fakes.” During the meeting, video footage was shown that refuted stories of alleged excessive violence against protesters. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Ministry of Health, the General Prosecutor's Office and the Investigative Committee. We were not aiming to talk them into something. We are honest with our people. We have ensured stability of our country. We set ourselves the task of conveying truthful, valid information about how law enforcement agencies operate, how public order and public safety are ensured in the Republic of Belarus. The negative assessment given by the international community of the situation in the Republic of Belarus is based on inaccurate information. They can cite no facts of violence, specifically facts of torture, rape, and so on. Everything is somehow generalized. While we provided specific information.”
- “The level of training of anti-terror units is higher than the very threat of extremist manifestations. This opinion was expressed today by the Minister of Internal Affairs Yuri Karaev. He praised the actions of the special forces while the closing of the live firing tournament dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Almaz unit.”
- “The criminals are wrong to count on the Belarusian police being preoccupied with something else during this crucial period for the country. The country's law enforcement system is in good shape and keeps an ear to the ground. The home-grown IT specialists are being quickly identified, and, moreover, the general public being is actively informed about the danger, which is sometimes just a click away.”