

The authorities use the State-run TV to urge itself to restore order in the country

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(16/11/2020 – 22/11/2020)

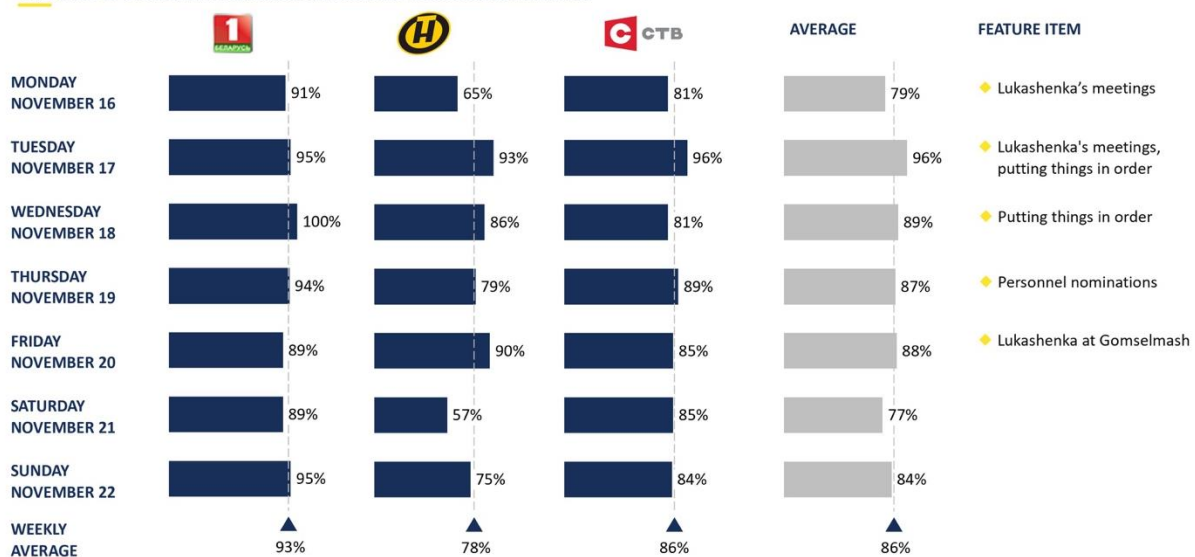
The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological 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

During the week State-run TV actively promoted the narrative of putting things in order. The narration was often delivered on behalf of the Belarusians tired of protests, who demand restoration of peace.

THE NARRATIVE OF PUTTING THINGS IN ORDER, BELARUSIANS TIRED OF PROTESTS, LUKASHENKA’S MEETINGS AND SPEECHES WERE THE CENTERPIECE OF THE NEWS COVERAGE

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).

State TV channels reported that Minsk residential districts turned into "cesspools", and the protesters are turning to outright terrorism.

MESSAGES ABOUT RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS TURNED INTO "CESSPOOLS", PROTESTERS' MALICIOUS INTENT AND TERROR AGAINST THE FAMILIES OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS WERE FOLLOWED BY HIGH-PRESSURE NARRATIVES

CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX*

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



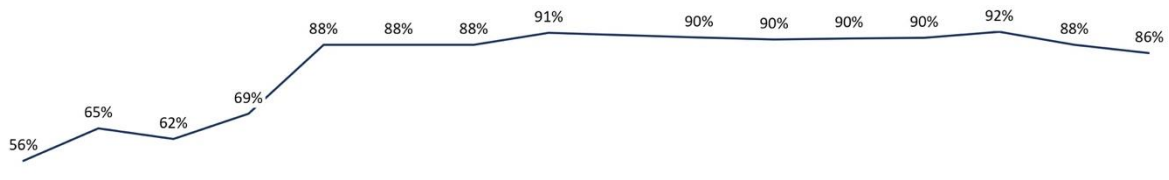
*CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX - an indicator measuring the percentage of news stories that intensify political tension and conflicts (through accusations and threats towards opponents, equating protests to violence, and similar).

Lukashenka's meetings and speeches were the centerpiece of the news coverage. Lukashenka's resilience was explained to be at the core of the stability of the system in the face of external pressure and internal threats. Personalism was evident in the descriptions of the popularity of the recent interview with Lukashenka.

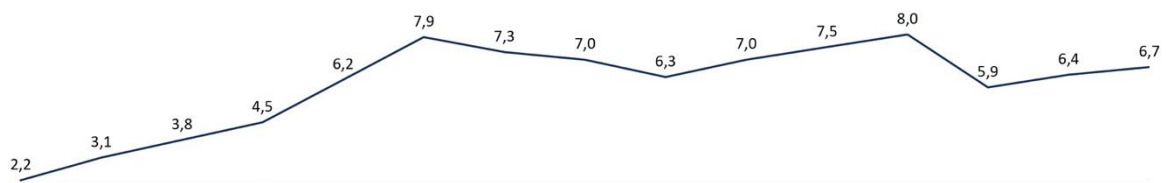
Fragments of messages from certain protest chats, usually anonymized, were very popular with state channels, serving the proof of the protesters' malicious intent. Thus, for example, accusations of preparing terror against the families of law enforcement officers became a staple.

PROTESTERS WERE PORTRAYED AS SELF-SERVING, INADEQUATE AND CRIMINAL ELEMENTS THAT UNDERMINE THE PEACE AND UNITY OF THE COUNTRY

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



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks



29.06 – 05.07 06.07 – 19.07 20.07 – 26.07 27.07 – 02.08 10.08 – 16.08 17.08 – 30.08 31.08 – 20.09 21.09 – 27.09 28.09 – 04.10 05.10 – 18.10 19.10 – 25.10 26.10 – 01.11 02.11 – 08.11 09.11 – 15.11 16.11 – 22.11

Coverage of the pandemic balanced between neutral and ideological one, and was often used to glorify the effectiveness of the state's policy. State-run channels started actively promoting campaigning for compliance with sanitary requirements and mask-wearing regime.

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

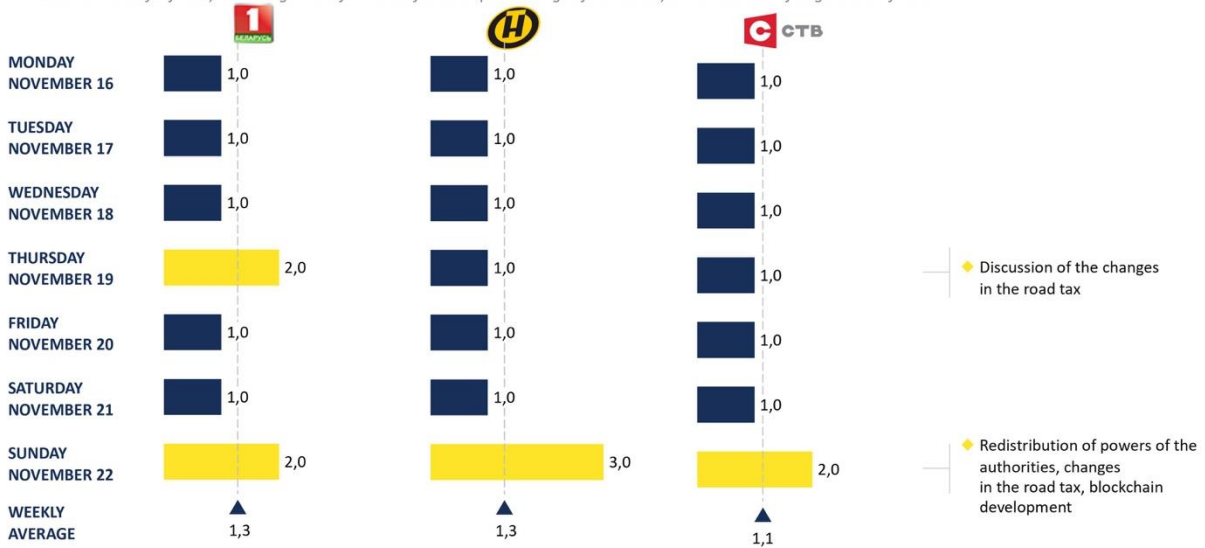
International issues boiled down to descriptions of tensions, protests in the world, and speculations about the double standards of Western countries. Nevertheless, the multi-vector narrative has reappeared on the state-run TV. Although the presenters stressed the readiness to respond to the sanctions pressure, at the same time they noted Belarus' openness to cooperation.

The reform messages were mainly concerned the changes in the road tax and the related redistribution of powers of the authorities.

THE REFORM MESSAGES WERE MAINLY CONCERNED THE CHANGES IN THE ROAD TAX AND THE RELATED REDISTRIBUTION OF POWERS OF THE AUTHORITIES

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX*

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



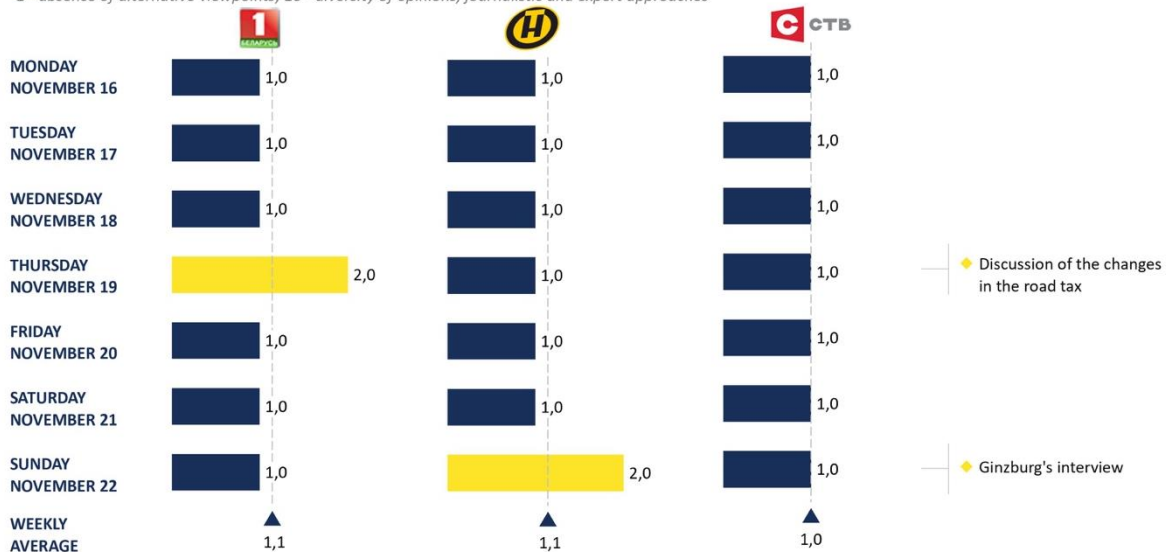
*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX – an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

There were practically no alternative opinions.

APART FROM PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGIES AND GENERAL MODERNIZATION IN AN INTERVIEW WITH MARK GINZBURG IN "CONTURS", THERE WERE NO ALTERNATIVE OPINIONS

PLURALISM INDEX*

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

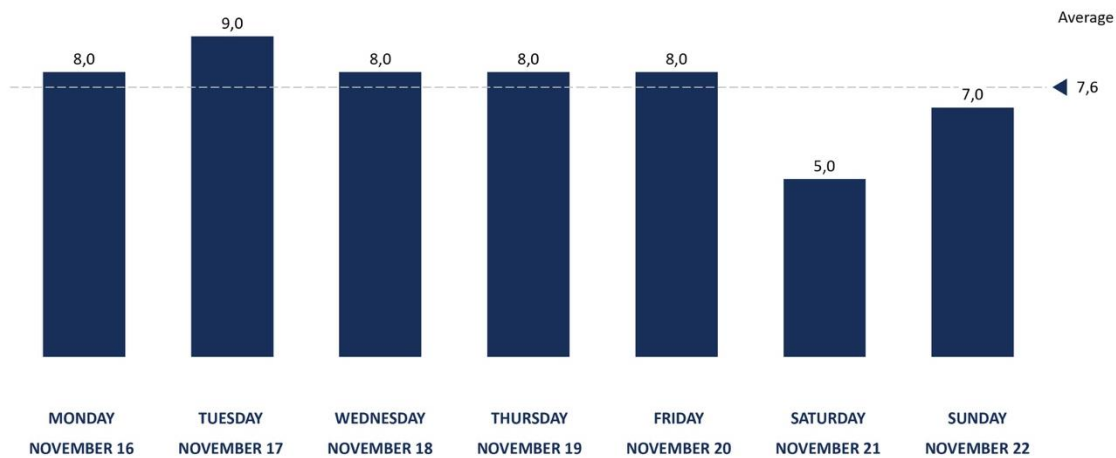


*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

The uniformity of ideological messages remained extremely high, plot diversity increased in the absence of new statements by Lukashenka.

THE UNIFORMITY OF IDEOLOGICAL MESSAGES REMAINED EXTREMELY HIGH, PLOT DIVERSITY INCREASED IN THE ABSENCE OF NEW STATEMENTS BY LUKASHENKA

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

PREPAREDNESS TO COVID-19 SECOND WAVE

- “The growth of morbidity is also noted in Belarus. However, we managed to put up a reliable barrier in time. The first wave was deflected. Now we hold the blow of the second one. The situation is still manageable.”
- “A mask is now a must in Belarus! Mask-wearing regime. Remember: wear it in public places, transport, shops, in the streets too. In a word, everywhere.”
- “The Ministry of Health of Belarus expects to see the COVID incidence plateau in December-January.”
- “Experts ask to take care of yourself and not to panic: the bed capacity will be redesigned if necessary, and the ventilators fleet, for example, in the Grodno region, is only used up by 10%. The country is also building up the reserve of healthcare workers”.

CONTROLLED DIALOGUE

- “Retirement pensions, choice of medical institutions for treatment, work of deputies, consumer services in the rural areas. These are the questions brought up by the residents of the Grodno region today during the public reception.”
- “An opportunity to express one’s opinion and be heard. Public reception offices on constitutional reform and other topical issues continue their operation in Belarus.”
- “Of course, there are special places for mourning, there are places for disputes and, of course, there is always a place for dialogue. This is exactly why public receptions were opened.”

ALL STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND WEAPON EMPLOYMENT

- “And while some are doing their best to split society, others know for sure that in the fight against the radical mob one cannot take a step back.”
- “Not all citizens rely on the police, they will not come to home. We have to unite in citizen militia to cleanse our turf.”
- “The General Prosecutor's Office of Belarus has strengthened control over security on the railway, where cases of sabotage have recently become more frequent”.
- “The only peacekeeping company in Belarus is training at the boot camp near Vitebsk. It was set up on the basis of the 103rd Airborne Brigade. Servicemen have combat training almost daily.”
- “More than 120 case of damage and disabling of communication lines have been registered, more than 50 criminal cases have been initiated. Most of these offenses are in the Minsk region.”
- “Law enforcement officers keep identifying the violators of public order. This time, with the support of special forces, two residents of Zhlobin were detained. These two are active right-wing radicals.”

- “Not a single riot police officer will leave the streets and will not take a step back. Nobody will back down. They will defend their homeland and their Belarusian land.”
- “So: if these couch warriors dare touch the veterans, old people who remember the war and restoration, and simply decent citizens of Belarus, even offend them with a word... We will beat you up. All of us. Not to discipline, not to teach a lesson, but break your arms. Or break anything for that matter. I repeat, all the people, the entire militia. And then we will call the police to take you in.”

UNDERMINING THE PROTESTS

- “Belarusians are tired of protests, provocations, aggression, appeals and slogans. Tired of insults and attempts to tarnish their reputation just because they are the majority.”
- “Unfortunately, the increase in the aggression of some protesters is predictable. Experts also agree on this, Ukrainian political strategist Kirill Molchanov expressed his opinion to out channel”, “ according to German journalist and once deputy of the Bundestag Wolfgang Gerke, what is happening in Belarus is part of a large old scenario which Ukraine was once drawn into. The ultimate goal of the curators is the Maidan in the Red Square.”
- “They were admonished and reasoned with. They were lectured by historians and narrated by by journalists. They were asked and warned. Now the society has had it: the red-white-red mob will be banished from the public spaces of Belarus. By all means the state has it its disposal and with the approval of the majority of the population (remember the referendum?). By any means the state has it its disposal, heed to this warning.”
- “Minskians have virtually no chance for peaceful pastime in their own homes, because of the large number of unknown people who are being loud and gather in mobs in the streets.”
- “And more and more people are asking why the protesters are becoming so intolerant. Why are the residential districts being so fanatically covered with red-white-red symbols? Why are they calling for the persecution of those who have a different opinion, and what would happen if these people came to power?”
- “The experts have already established what these “warriors” were under. Psilocybin. It is stronger than LSD. Two so-called men with an unearthly love for red-white-red symbols and a faggy dream to shatter the regime.”
- “The reluctance of the destructive forces to admit the obvious interference in what is happening in the country is understandable. They put money before their conscience.”
- “It’s just right to use the favorite word of the “incredible”. Incredible, gentlemen! Incredibly monstrous. I would like to ask - what next? Next come the calls to kill children... just think about it. After all, they openly write about this in their telegram chats.”
- “And don't say that people became suddenly infatuated with all this. Before August, for decades, this did not occur to anyone. These feats and performances are part of the political technologies of the color revolution.”
- “It’s just becoming scary. I believe that they should be found, punished, and very harshly, to the fullest extent of the law. To the maximum, hold them accountable for this. This is no good. “Peaceful” protests have crossed all the lines.”

- “Another walk-through took place in Minsk today. According to their plans, the crowd was to come to the Independence Square. However, the protesters did not even manage to get out of their districts. Law enforcement officers completely controlled the situation, although the violators provoked them in every possible way, went out into the roadway, acting rude and obscene.”
- “Couch warriors have already come across of senior with a shocker. Soon they will run into women wielding rolling pins, farmers wielding pitchforks, workers wielding tire irons. You’ll even get some from the kids with their spades. So you better calm down.”

PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- “No matter how much the the state was criticized for supporting the industry, numbers are not everything. For the current government, the main thing is people. For capitalism, the main thing is super profit, and privatization is far from being a panacea for the public sector of a socially oriented state.”
- “For a quarter of a century we have been gaining both political weight and economic potential. We will not deviate from this course, no matter how much any external force wants it.”
- “The renovated district polyclinic is one of the large-scale projects that was implemented due to government support. Millions of rubles of investment in the health of residents of the Osipovich region.”
- “Belarus was the higher education destination of choice for 18,000 young people from countries near and far away. Almost 70% are from the CIS countries. By the way, over the past 2 years, the number of foreign students in our country has doubled. In the global education index rating, Belarus sits confidently in the top thirty.”
- “While some are calling for sabotaging and canceling the events that shape the image and development of the country, others are working productively. The development of an innovative petrochemical cluster was discussed in Novopolotsk. A visiting session of the Scientific Advisory Council under the Presidium of the Council of the Republic was held there.”
- “Construction of a new school has begun in Gomel in the new residential district No. 96. This architectural project will be the first of a kind for the region. Student teams of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union have already expressed their desire to work at this socially significant construction site.”
- “The Belarusian economy is capable of operating in difficult, sometimes unpredictable conditions. Thus, since June the GDP has been gradually recovering and for 10 months it has practically caught up with the last year's performance.”
- “And here's a real case of responding to people's needs. In the Vitebsk region, another village — Sosnovka — has been connect to gas supply grid.”

ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVE

- “Protests continue throughout Europe, and the information field is still boiling even after the American elections. Meanwhile, Belarusians are quietly putting things in order in their

own land. The main thing is to prevent provocations and conflicts which may hurt the people."

- "The interests of world players have converged around our country, and an open geopolitical struggle is taking place. The position of Belarus is transparent and simple: we do not want to fight, but we will not allow manipulating the country, we will answer with the same force."
- "Tear gas, stun grenades, water cannons and violent detentions. This was the aftermath of the rally against the bill on global security the French capital city. The law prohibits photographing and filming French police officers during protests. Punishable by a fine (just think about it!) of 45 thousand euros. Or one year in prison."
- "In Poland, protesters almost disrupted the work of the Seim. The police literally dragged people away from the parliament building by force."
- "Anti-government protests continue in Chile amid the second wave of the pandemic."
- "At some point it seemed like the friendly European family was ready to embrace the last dictatorship of Europe as it is. The key word is "seemed"."

PERSONALISM

- "It is all about financial influences, and numerous cases of fake news, threats, bullying. All this combined could become a deadly weapon in the hands of the opponents of the authorities, who just wanted to sweep away everything and everyone in their path. The experts believe that the President personally played a special role in disrupting the blitzkrieg and in extinguishing the fire in the city streets on time."
- "An interview with the President of Belarus brought the Ukrainian channel to the top of the trending videos."
- "He is the people's president, statesman, patriot. Unlike some... We would love to have such a president, given the potential we have... "
- "Today Aliaksandr Lukashenka stressed (and this immediately became the main news item in the information field) that decisions should not necessarily be made only by the head of state. There is also a government and parliament."
- "After the President ordered to take control of the issue, the problem was resolved. The work went on all night and already this morning hot and cold water supply was restored for the residents of the district. "
- "Regional development, industrial future of the whole country and live communication with the workforce. Aliaksandr Lukashenka visited the Gomel region today. The main topic of the trip was the development of one of the national flagships - the Gomselmash industrial company."
- "The president does not neglect to acknowledge that there is surplus workforce at the factories — this is a serious argument of the proponents of market economy. But Aliaksandr Lukashenka sees the solution not in the revolution, but in natural selection."

PRO-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISM

- “They are ready to once again cast their votes in support of peace and stability. Only this time — from the stage. A concert featuring the best performers of Belarus will take place in Minsk tomorrow”.
- “Traditional actions in support of peace, security and tranquility of the home country of Belarus were held throughout the land in large and small cities. The large-scale events of this Saturday were the car rally and the song concert in the Central Officers Venue”.
- “Activities fuelled by the desire to safeguard the achievements of one’s country and to walk together into the happy future along the path that has been built for 26 years, will continue tomorrow. And today from here, from the heart of Minsk, once again we say in unison: "We stand for the united Belarus!"
- “The factory workers support the president’s policy. On the busiest days in the evenings after work, they went to the rally "For Belarus!"