

Moot validation. State-run TV trivializes the All-Belarusian People’s Assembly’s role to legitimize the course long taken

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(18/01/2021 – 24/01/2021)

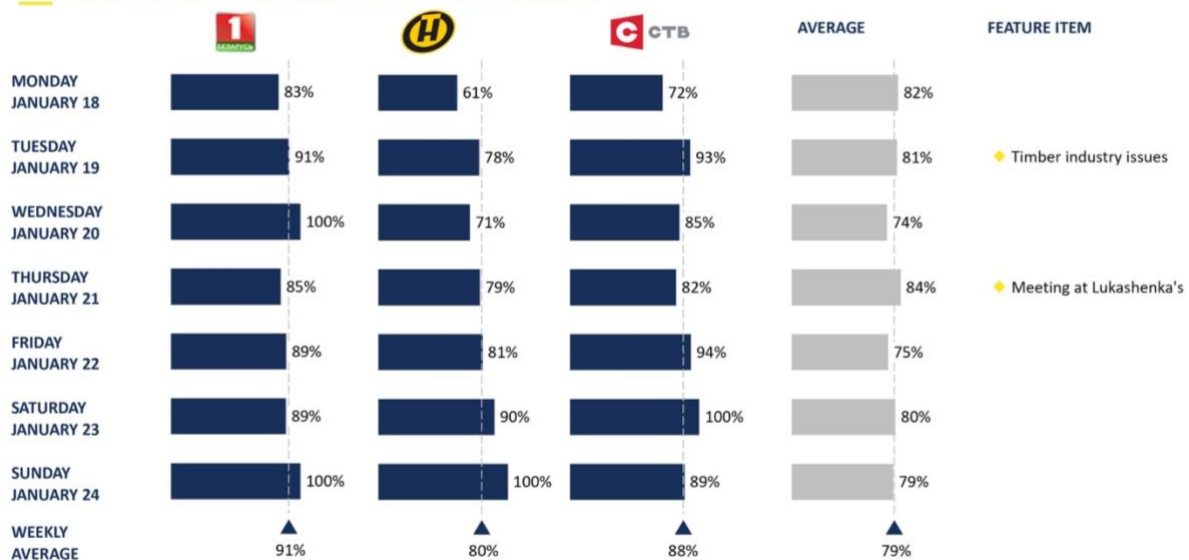
The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological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

Although State-run TV notes the extreme importance of the All-Belarusian Assembly, the characteristic narrative of the week is the extension of the current course of country’s development for the next five years.

THE CHARACTERISTIC NARRATIVES OF THE WEEK WERE PRAISE OF THE IMPLEMENTED POLICY AND THE EXTENSION OF THE CURRENT COURSE OF COUNTRY’S DEVELOPMENT FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS AT THE UPCOMING ALL-BELARUSSIAN PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY

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).

In fact, the role of the All-Belarusian People’s Assembly boils down to approving the already developed program and introducing minor addenda.

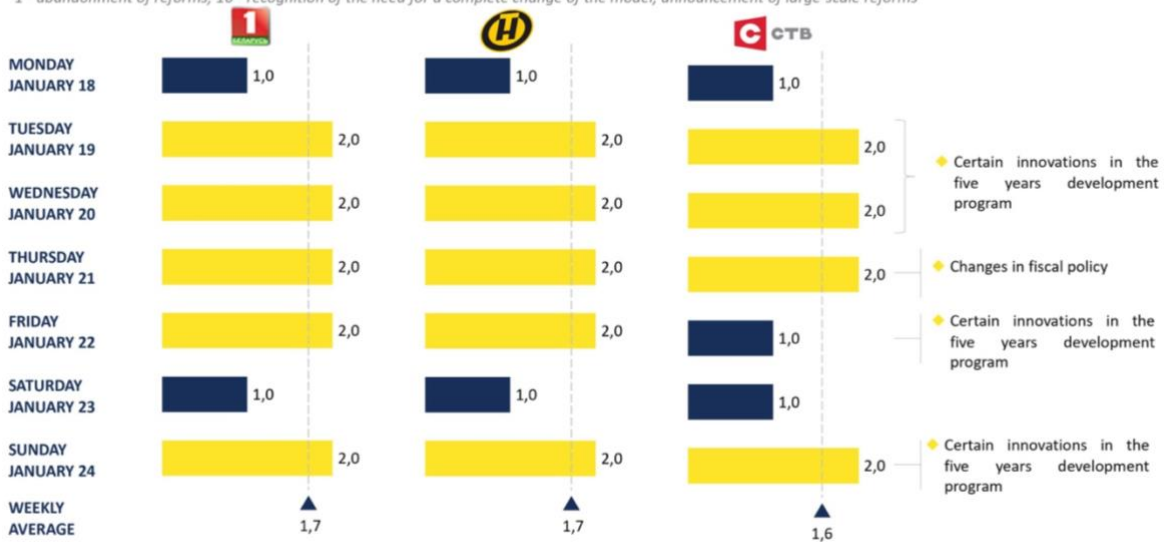
Key narratives can be found in [APPENDIX 1](#).

The achievements of the current policy were actively praised - the successes of industrial modernization, high scores of Belarus in certain ratings, the foresight of earlier decisions (including on the pandemic). Praise of the official model was closely tied to personalism. For example, the government's proposals were assessed depending on Lukashenka's attitude to them.

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FIVE-YEAR PROGRAM, THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE BUSINESS CLIMATE AND CERTAIN ADDITIONS TO THE PROGRAM WERE MENTIONED, WHILE MAINTAINING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PREVIOUS COURSE

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX*

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

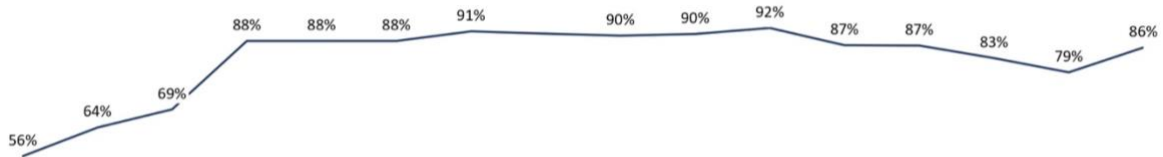


*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX – an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

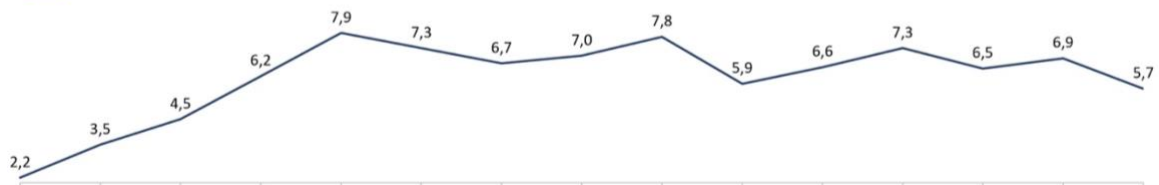
The protests in Russia were covered in detail. Any minor analogies, parallels with developments in Belarus were interpreted as a manifestation of a single plan, destructive activities of foreign curators.

THE PROTESTS IN RUSSIA WERE COVERED IN DETAIL. ANY MINOR ANALOGIES, PARALLELS WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN BELARUS WERE INTERPRETED AS A SINGLE PLAN OF FOREIGN CURATORS

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



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks



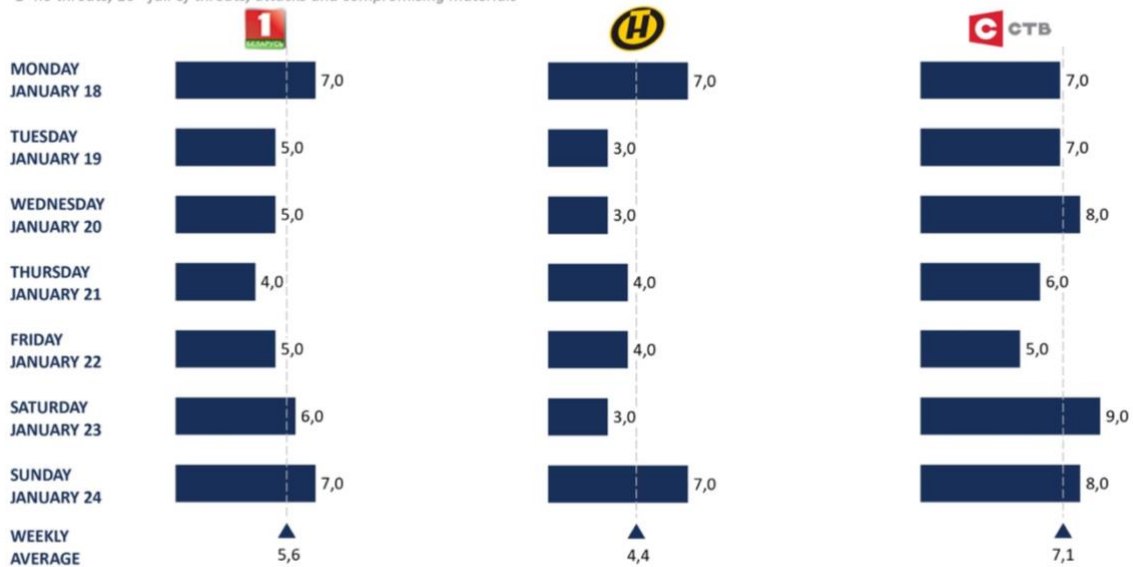
29.06 - 05.07 06.07 - 12.07 13.07 - 19.07 20.07 - 26.07 27.07 - 02.08 03.08 - 09.08 10.08 - 16.08 17.08 - 23.08 24.08 - 30.08 31.08 - 06.09 07.09 - 13.09 14.09 - 20.09 21.09 - 27.09 28.09 - 04.10 05.10 - 11.10 12.10 - 18.10 19.10 - 01.11 02.11 - 08.11 09.11 - 15.11 16.11 - 22.11 23.11 - 29.11 30.11 - 06.12 07.12 - 13.12 14.12 - 20.12 21.12 - 27.12 28.12 - 04.01 05.01 - 11.01 12.01 - 18.01 19.01 - 24.01

This reasoning was used to justify the use of force against protesters.

THE USE OF FORCE AGAINST PROTESTERS WAS JUSTIFIED. THE ACTIONS OF THE RIOT POLICE WERE INTERPRETED AS ACTS OF HEROISM, THEIR MORALE GLORIFIED.

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).

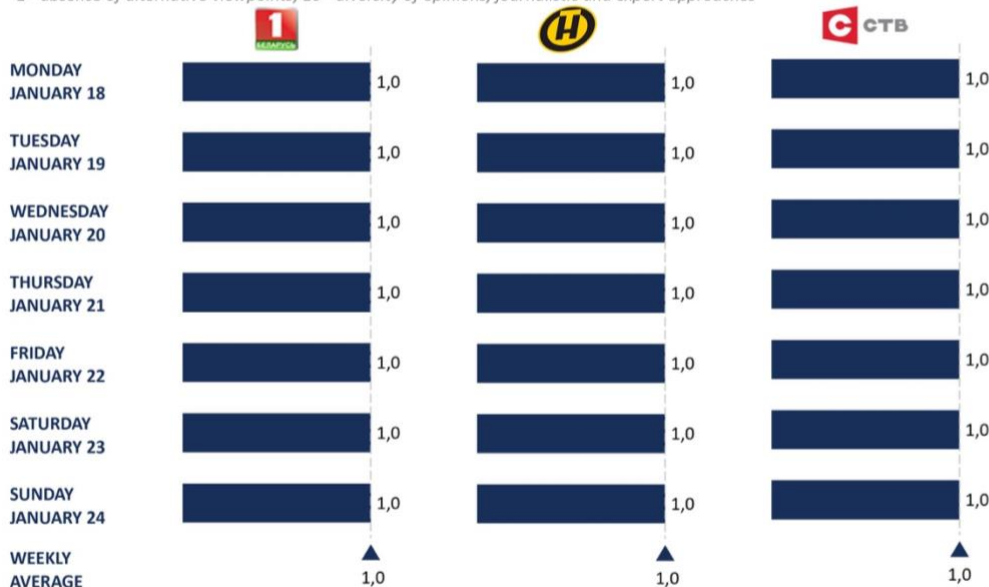
Instead of the "cunning" political technology schemes that are used in the Russian Federation and other countries, it was proposed to rely on the law enforcement. The actions of the riot police were interpreted as acts of heroism, their morale glorified.

Opponents of the government were called the "fugitive politicians" and traitors. The theme of betrayal was repeated in various versions — from attacks on Alexandra Gerasimenya to the narrative about traitors under white-red-white flags during the war.

THE RANGE OF OPINIONS DIDN'T GO BEYOND THE OFFICIAL DISCOURSE

PLURALISM INDEX*

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

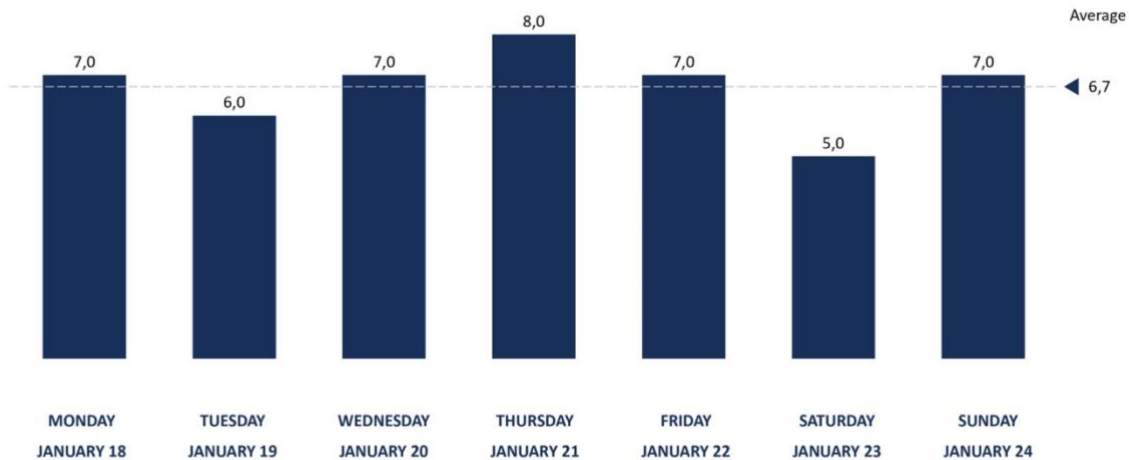


*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

State channels find their own face in the division of functions. The main layer of themes and plots is repeated in all programs, often almost identically. But there are also differences. For example, STV maintains most aggressive and geopolitical bias with discussions about the hidden meaning of the world order. "Panorama" paid more attention to the benefits coming from the state and preparation for the All-Belarusian People's Assembly.

THE MAIN LAYER OF THEMES AND PLOTS IS REPEATED IN ALL PROGRAMS. NEVERTHELESS, STATE CHANNELS DIVIDED FUNCTIONS. STV MAINTAINED MOST AGGRESSIVE AND GEOPOLITICAL BIAS, WHILE "BELARUS-1" PRAISED STATE ACHIEVEMENTS

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

POLITICAL RELOCATION OF THE ICE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

- “The International Ice Hockey Federation was unable to resist the political lobby and moved the World Championship from Minsk to another country. It is hardly possible to see this decision from the logical point of view. By the way, there no attempts in Switzerland to even pretend: the politically biased decision with the abolition of hockey championship in Belarus was planed by European politicians. Never ever in world history has the abolition of sporting events influenced the change in the political system in a particular country.
- “You have to be an incredible intellectual to relish in the problems of your family, your people, your country. The cancellation of the World Ice Hockey Championship in Minsk hit millions of Belarusians right in the heart.”
- “It’s bitter that because of political intrigues, thousands of Belarusian fans were deprived of the opportunity to root for “their own” while hosting the world championship.”
- “One can only imagine the level of a hastily prepared championship in a country that only now, at T minus three and a half months, will take additional obligations to host the forum. Let alone, during a pandemic!”
- “And will they go to France, where demonstrations and killings take place? They will, this is a purely partisan policy.”
- “Please tell, why are you depriving Belarusian children of the opportunity to see world stars on the hospitable Belarusian ice?”

CRIMINAL PROSECUTION OF BABARYKA

- “The criminal case against the top managers of Belgazprombank was transferred to the Prosecutor General's Office for submission to court. It is already poised to be the loudest economic crime in the history of sovereign Belarus. Eight defendants, bribes amounting to millions of dollars and a sophisticated criminal scheme for money laundering.”
- “On the part of his defenders and individual citizens, there have been repeated calls to change his measure of restraint from detention to bail against personal guarantee. Vladimir Tsesler, Svetlana Aleksievich and others came to the KGB to submit a petition. However, there is little trust in Babaryka's guarantors: almost all of them have recently fled the country themselves. Well, very soon the case of Viktor Babaryk will be heard in court. All questions will have to be answered there.”
- “According to the Prosecutor General’s Office, he was charged with accepting a grand bribe on behalf of an organized group, as well as legalizing criminal funds. During the investigation, it was established that Babaryka, being the chairman of the bank, created this group from

among his deputies. By the way, six former deputies of Babariko are also accused of receiving grand bribes on behalf of an organized group."

UNDERMINING THE PROTESTORS

- "Defectors and traitors are the core of the anti-Belarusian revolt. One of them is Igor Makar, a former enlisted man of the Almaz special forces. But for some reason all the so-called "flippers" turn out to be dishonest people with a very dubious record."
- "You, Sasha "Fish" Gerasimenya, were made a star, you were trained, you were adored by the press. You got everything here. You did not betray the president. You betrayed your uniform, your medals, your mentors and coaches, you betrayed those people who were rooting for you, you betrayed the anthem that you listened to on the pedestal, you betrayed the flag that you carried on your shoulders. You even betrayed your husband and child, left them here and chased the money. "
- "We revealed another fake item from the incredible ones. According to Sharpe's manual, those who have fallen as a sacred victim of the "color revolution" become the highest caste in the perception of the protesters. Therefore, the path to democracy will require sacrifices — require, no less! This is an excerpt from the famous textbook on conducting revolutions."
- In addition to a bunch of articles of the Administrative Offenses Code and the Criminal Code, the self-immolator managed to prove a worthless employee — as a trolleybus driver, which he has been since 2016."
- "Anti-state garbage dumps today got back to their favorite pastime — they started sculpting a new sacred victim. This time they chose Irina Schastnaya. Innocent, but arrested. Well, let's get to know her better. She coordinated the 2006 square event. Went to Kiev before the current elections. To receive instructions or to get inspired by the story of the Maidan?"
- "This is exactly what happened in December with the resident of Brest, Roman Reshetsky. The Belarusian revolutionaries turned out to be completely omnivorous and indiscriminate — making no discrimination of whom to proclaim their saints. As a result, the hero-martyr of the Belarusian failed revolution is a person with a criminal record of aggravated rape and the murder of a young girl with an attempt to burn her body."

BELARUSIAN SCENARIO FOR RUSSIA

- "The situation in neighboring Russia is heating up — a ruthless plan is being implemented in the country to stir up the situation. With a massive information attack, manipulation and calls for unauthorized actions."
- "From the very first shots it is clear — just like in Minsk, the stake is on a militant action. Here are the main characters — Alexey and Yulia Navalny. Sounds familiar? Yes, this is a well-known case in Belarus, when a wife follows her husband, and, if necessary, and believe me, most likely it will be, acts in his stead."

- “This is one force — Tsikhanouskaya and Navalny, Nevzorov and Putilo, Katz and Shraibman are one family. Their task is the destruction of the state. Nevzorov said frankly: they need the overthrow of Lukashenka, then they will be able to carry out a coup in Russia. Therefore, do not be surprised if Navalny’s couch warriors run into Dmitry Balaba in the streets of Moscow.”
- “Supporters of Alexei Navalny announced massive protests next weekend — they are to help following the imprisonment of an opposition activist. A massive information attack is already underway in Telegram channels and across various online platforms. The Prosecutor General's Office of Russia demanded to restrict access to websites where calls to participate in illegal actions are posted. Minors are actively encouraged to attend rallies on social media.”
- “In Ufa, the police were pelted with snow, and in Yekaterinburg — with smoke grenades. Against the background of provocations on the part of activists, clashes with law enforcement officers happen. The police use relentless force.”

PERSONALISM

- “What is the president guided by when making decisions? First of all, by expediency and economic efficiency. If there was criticism from Alyaksandr Lukashenka to the Council of Ministers, it was only justified.”
- “Two weeks have passed since the release of the “Characters” program with Alyaksandr Lukashenka, and the view counter is still spinning. ONT TV channel was able to obtain the uncut footage. And it turned out that the broadcast version did not include everything that should be known, first of all, to Belarusians. The ONT observer decided to go all-in and prepared her own version of the sensational interview.”
- “Animated sleepy herbivorous amorphous puppets are horrified by a strong leader. They hate him. Because he is alive, and they are walking corpses. But they cannot defeat Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Life is always stronger than death.”
- “Oncologists, potash workers and the author of the sculptural monument in Trostenets. Alyaksandr Lukashenka awarded state prizes.”
- “The President also showed excellent physical shape that day. The head of state spent some time recreationally, splitting firewood in the cold.”

PROMOTING THE ALL-BELARUSIAN PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY

- “Renovation of equipment, expansion of production and, ultimately, an increase in turnover — it is with such a proposal to support and develop the cold storage facility that Inna Kononovich will go to the All-Belarusian People's Assembly.”
- “The provisions of the program of socio-economic development for the next five years have been determined. The trajectory of movement will remain the same — the socially oriented state.”

- “Ahead is the All-Belarusian People's Assembly — a forum that has already faced fierce opposition from opponents. But this only underlines its importance. Plus, the socio-economic model is already ready. The program point by point has prescribed guidelines for all the most important areas.”
- “Women, as before, will advocate strengthening the institution of the family and additional incentives for having children”.
- “Among the development priorities for 5 years, along with strong regions and an intellectual country, is the support of family values. It's about finding new approaches in the system of benefits, the availability of square meters for the expansion of living space and the construction, at least as an initial incentive, of rental apartments.”
- “It is an unwritten truth that the state and business should not oppose each other, but be partners. This is the world experience that we use in Belarus as well. And the key here is mutual trust. The same emphasis will remain on the next five years.”
- “This is by no means a departure from social guidelines! But if life presents us with unexpected scenarios like COVID, we need to react! The state investment program will be finalized. The main criterion for the upcoming adjustments is investment efficiency and return.”

PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- “A happy family, strong regions, an intellectual country, a partner state — these are the priorities. The state will preserve its social orientation.”
- “Young people are listened to. Thus, in Belarus, over 15 million rubles will be allocated for the implementation of youth policy in the next five years. This money will be used to build new dormitories for students, as well as provide support in finding the first job, talented youth will be paid special bonuses.”
- “But we remember the hysteria of the Belarusian pseudo-independent experts regarding the modernization of enterprises in the industry. Today it is obvious that investments are paying off. By the way, the pandemic did not interfere. Last year, despite COVID-19, we saw record-breaking numbers.”
- “If in the 90s someone would have told us that by 2015 Belarus would enter the top thirty countries in terms of educational development, and Belarusian universities would be among world's-best, they would call it daydreaming. Today it is taken for granted.”
- “The forest is our wealth, literally. According to the last year's figures, the enterprises of the Ministry of Forestry reported record-high revenue.”
- “We are working on electric vehicles, most sought-after, middle class, which will be available to a wide range of the population, to all consumers.”

PREPAREDNESS FOR COVID-19 SECOND WAVE

- “This morning it’s business as usual in the central polyclinic of Vitebsk. Although the city has embarked on a new stage in the fight against the disease, vaccinations against COVID-19 are routine. The clinic staff was the first to be invited to the office — hundreds of patients are treated here every day, they are the frontline workers. ”
- “Operating like before the pandemic! Hospitals and clinics redesigned for COVID are gradually returning to their usual routine. Shedding the protective screens and special suits is the 3rd city clinical hospital of Grodno.”
- “Belarus stays on the plateau. For the last three days, the daily incidence of COVID-19 remains at the level of 1,800 people.”

ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES

- “Biden’s recipe for American democracy comes with a dictatorial flavor.”
- “Indeed, this institution of democracy, so praised by numerous Internet evangelists, remains such only in its name.”
- “The results of last year — how the economies performed during the pandemic — are being summed up by the governments of different countries. The findings are disappointing. Only China and some Asian countries show moderate growth.”
- “Protests against tariff genocide are taking place in Ukraine”.
- “Troubled in Poland. The local protest movement erupted with renewed vigor. Clashes with the police took place in Warsaw. Not only women are protesting against the ban on abortion, but also farmers.”

ALL STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND WEAPON EMPLOYMENT

- “Belarus and Russia are jointly responding to external challenges and potential threats. Minsk and Moscow agreed to hold their own exercises together this fall.”
- “That is, either you can bring out the riot police and chase everyone of with batons, or you cannot do it, because society no longer allows you to do this, as it was in Armenia, for example. And without this, the state system simply falls apart. ”
- “In the controversial 2020, it was the riot police that became the wall for our country and the entire Belarusian people. They swore allegiance to their homeland, and they did not betray it. Heroes of our time who did not allow chaos into Belarus.”
- “The process of the criminal case on leaking the personal data of police officers has been completed. The accused is now a former employee of Belpochta.”
- “The future of any country needs protection — Belarus and Russia are preparing for the “West 2021” exercise.”

- “Some of the men, saving others from the mob, were the first to take the blow. They are still undergoing treatment for injuries caused by stones and bottles, after being rammed by cars.”

INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY

- “Tools of the media war and psychological influence: we will take the masks off the foreign curators and secret objects.”
- “Alyaksandr Shpakovsky, who holds the post of Ombudsman for the Protection of his colleagues, wanted to speak at the event, but he was denied, quite cynically. Instead, we were judged by those who have no relation to the profession or to Belarus as such.”
- “Do you remember how it all started with rumors that your votes were stolen, then the ballots were burned? Then there was torture, rape with truncheons, rupture of uterus and much else, which was never confirmed neither by facts, nor even by the names of the victims. At the top of the iceberg in terms of the impact on society are the statements of people who served the Lukashenka regime and suddenly, for no reason at all, have seen the light. Remember the fellow who allegedly served in the death squad and assassinated Lukashenka’s political opponents? He was silent all that time, and then when money became an issue for a knee, the sense of justice flared up with renewed vigor. And he went to the media. However, this story brought about nothing but noise.”
- “Today, social media, primarily American media giants, who positioned themselves as a platform for free expression of opinion, are turning into institutions of a new digital totalitarianism. They themselves decide who will be given the floor, who will not.”
- “Today the Ministry of Information continues to monitor the information space of Belarus. As noted by Igor Lutskiy, in case of detection of facts of breach of law, either warnings or demands to remove inaccurate information will be issued. A decision may also be made to terminate the activities of the media that disseminates false information.”
- “The Internet portal TUT.BY finally lost its status as a media after the day before the Economic Court of Minsk did not honor its appeal.”
- “Journalism should be a state matter, Alyaksandr Pushkin said that, if memory serves me right. And in Russia, during this time, the oligarchs grew fat, bought themselves the media. And it is clear what tune these media dance to.”

PRO-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISM, PATRIOTISM

- “Among the fans at the Olympic Arena there were participants in the rally for a united Belarus, a healthy lifestyle and ice hockey enthusiasts. They were moving to the place of the tournament in one formation. Following the transfer of the World Championship from our country, those not indifferent decided to support the Belarusian athletes with this act of unity.”

- “During a patriotic rally, state symbols are a must. Properly outfitting the cars is a special ritual. About 70 vehicles have parked here today! Bearing more than 300 passengers!”
- “The Belarusian Union of Women launched the action for the Year of National Unity. And these are real “Christmas miracles”.”