

Set the youth straight and ban their flags. State-run TV narratives follow Lukashenka’s meetings.

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(25/01/2021 – 31/01/2021)

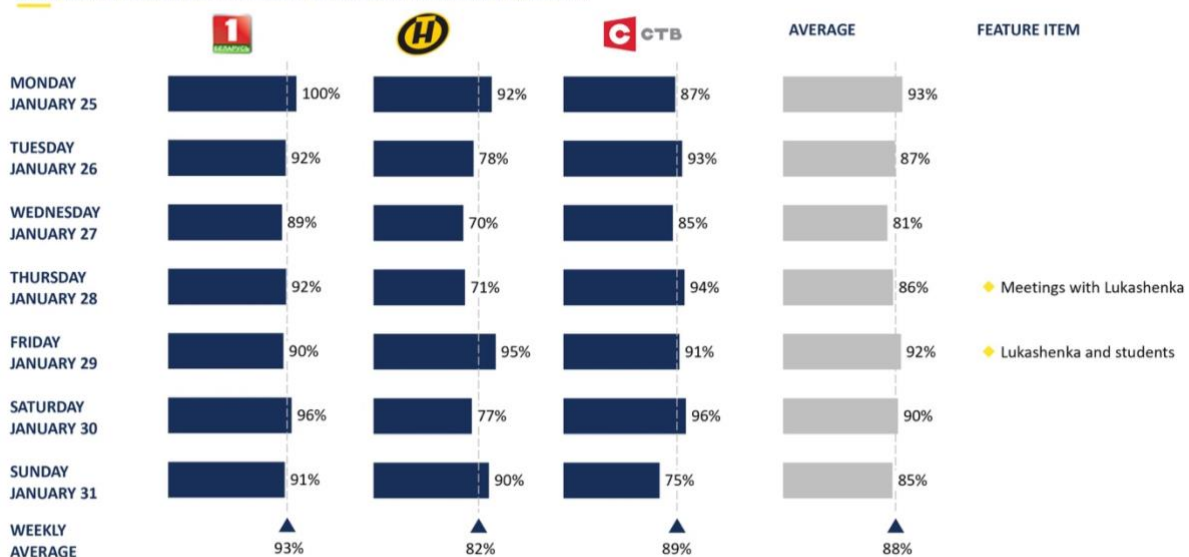
The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological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

Meetings involving Lukashenka on tightening the restrictive legislation and his meeting with students became the main topics of the week. State-run TV moved to open calls to ban the white-red-white flag while promoting the proper, pro-government youth, bewildered by the opposition.

MEETINGS INVOLVING LUKASHENKA ON TIGHTENING THE RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION AND HIS MEETING WITH STUDENTS BECAME THE MAIN TOPICS OF THE WEEK

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).

The usual praise for the All-Belarusian People's Assembly was substantiated by the examples of preparatory assemblies in the regions and the fate of individual delegates, symbolizing the humble origins and competence of the participants.

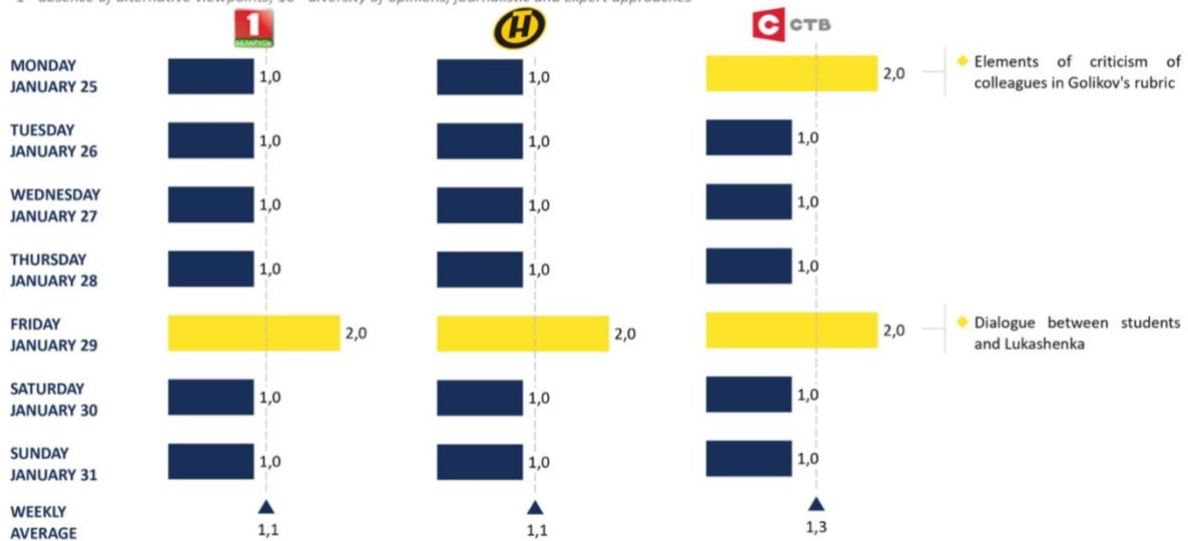
Key narratives can be found in [APPENDIX 1](#).

The patriarchal image of a leader mentoring the young people became prominent in connection with Lukashenka's meeting with students. His openness, willingness to manage dialogue and resolve issues were emphasized.

ALTERNATIVE OPINIONS WERE VOICED DURING THE COVERAGE OF THE MEETING BETWEEN STUDENTS AND LUKASHENKA. PLURALISM WAS ALSO DISPLAYED IN GOLIKOV'S CRITICISM OF HIS COLLEAGUES FROM STV

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 developments in Russia again provoked strong criticism from state TV. Demonstration of unity with the Russian authorities and the description of the "general scenario of destabilization" remain a typical reaction of state channels.

Individual references to national unity did not prevent aggressive rants and attacks.

THE KEY CONFLICTOGENITY NARRATIVES WERE CALLS TO BAN THE WHITE-RED-WHITE FLAG, TIGHTENING OF ANTI-PROTEST LEGISLATION, CHRONICLES OF DETAININGS AND THE RE-EDUCATION OF OPPOSITION-MINDED YOUTH

CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX*

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

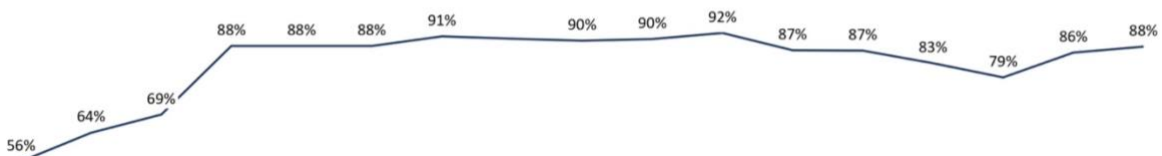


*CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX - an indicator measuring the percentage of news stories that intensify political tension and conflicts (through accusations and threats towards opponents, equating protests to violence, and similar).

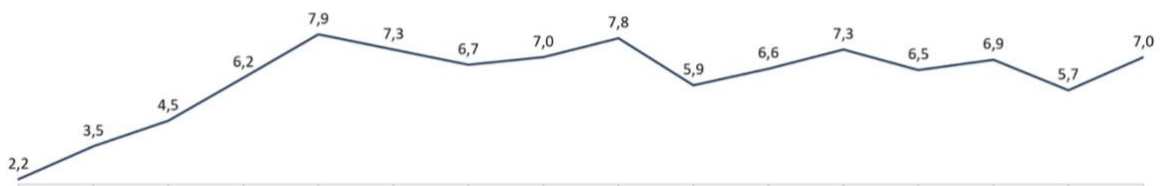
Quarantine measures in the fight against the pandemic in other countries have been compared to terror. This topic merged with speculations about the insidious plots of the global elites.

QUARANTINE MEASURES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE PANDEMIC IN OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN COMPARED TO TERROR

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



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks



29.06 - 05.07 06.07 - 26.07 27.07 - 02.08 10.08 - 16.08 17.08 - 30.08 31.08 - 20.09 21.09 - 04.10 05.10 - 18.10 19.10 - 01.11 02.11 - 08.11 09.11 - 22.11 23.11 - 06.12 07.12 - 20.12 21.12 - 03.01 04.01 - 17.01 18.01 - 24.01 25.01 - 31.01

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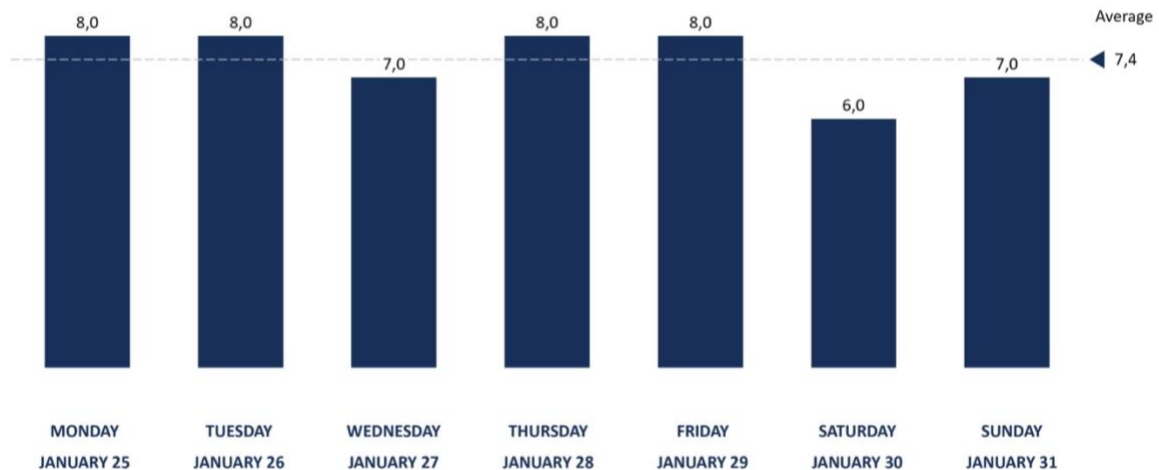


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Reform attitudes boiled down to the aforementioned tightening of legislation and the possible introduction of biometric documents.

IN TERMS OF THEIR KEY NARRATIVES THE TV CHANNELS REMAINED ALMOST IDENTICAL. NEVERTHELESS, EACH CHANNEL HAS ITS OWN STYLISTIC FEATURES, ESPECIALLY NOTABLE WAS

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.

As before, in terms of their key themes and basic narratives, the TV channels remained almost identical in their broadcast content. The broadcasting structure becomes most homogeneous in the days of Lukashenka's activity.

Minor manifestations of alternative views were observed during the Lukashenka's meeting with students, as well as in some headings. In particular, blogger Golikov, seeking to come off as objective, criticized the style of his colleagues from STV.

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

BELARUSIAN SCENARIO FOR RUSSIA

- “Russian rallies and events in Belarus once again prove that the trend of the current color revolutions is targeting the youth. They are used as cannon fodder. This opinion was shared with our TV channel by the German political expert Nikolai Erney.”
- “If the Belarusian protest autumn and the current Russian events have so much in common for Minsk and Moscow, it is quite logical to join efforts in countering destructive forces, as well as pressure from the West. Obviously this is what will happen.”
- “Calls and instructions, slogans and chants, pictures and videos that were massively replicated across the social media —we have already gone through this. Protest actions in Russia and Belarus follow one scenario. Well-known Polish political scientist Mateusz Piskorski told our channel this.”
- “The second wave of unrest is now being expected in Russia. Protests are scheduled for tomorrow. The opposition is going to take to the streets again. Both the protesters and the law enforcement are getting ready.”
- “Slepakov dared to doubt the “peacefulness” of the Russian protesters and reproached them for hypocrisy. For which he received undisguised threats. And a rebuke from Yulia Navalnaya, who temps for her now incarcerated husband.”

UNDERMINING THE PROTESTERS AND THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA

- “And it seems that the right to opinion and choice is not presumed in the new free Belarus, as it is pictured by the disgruntled protesters and the inciting Telegram channels.”
- “These “Incredible” people in our country form, though a miniscule, but still quite putrid mass.”
- “And the way of life of these characters was, so to speak, not the most exemplary one. Often these are people would be unemployed, while harboring aggressive civic position and the desire to teach others how to live.”
- “Officers of the Department of Financial Investigations uncovered financial fraud in one of the firms in Bobruisk.”
- “Fires, Molotov cocktails, edged weapons — all this is routinely found in the inventory of anarchists participating in protests.”
- “We will talk about the philosophy of protests with the heavyweights of the expert community — a member of the entourage since 1994, political scientist and sociologist Sergei Musienko and the voice of the likely opposition Yuri Voskresensky. Shake hands, after all, this is the year of national unity. As they say, one for all and all for the president.”

- “ONT TV channel managed to obtain a videoconference recording where the leaders of the protests tell the truth. The most important thing: while publicly reiterating the allegedly belief in victory, when communicating in private it is all despondency, admission of mistakes and bickering over leadership.”
- “Journalism today has become a weapon of information war. Lies, fake news and misinformation reported by the so-called independent media, played the main role in the attempted color revolution.”
- “I would like to address the journalists of alternative media. Fellow Belarusians, rest assured, we can speak your language of emotions, incitement and harshness — “Pulling the Strings” is a proof of that. We can also shake, rattle and own you, both literally and in the information space. I mean, had you not had enough loving from the Belarusian riot police? Or maybe you liked it? It can be arranged again.”
- “Probably, it was not easy after the fine receptions at the Eurovision Song Contest, where you would loiter for hours, to switch to unpretentious grub of the detention center. But you praised it too and asked for more, because you would fawn on anyone. And just is the reward. You deservedly receive the “Order of Judas”.

TIGHTENING THE ANTI-PROTEST LAWS

- “The domestic legal system has been criticized for so long by the advanced democracies of the world, while they were clearly rocking both our and now Russian sovereignty, that they got their reaction. Laws similar to those of the US, Germany, France and Russia are already being drafted.”
- “We are talking about the Criminal and Labor Codes. A revision of the law on extremism and the norm against the glorification of Nazism is expected. Plus, strengthening the protection of personal data and privacy in general.”
- “It must not only react to any violations, but also anticipate possible threats. The head of state announced this during the meeting. And this is primarily due to the events that took place in Belarus in 2020 — the rocking of the situation inside the country, calls for strikes, street rallies.”
- “Not only the organizers of extremist groups and their leaders will be subject to criminal liability, but also any participants, as well as persons who provide assistance to extremist groups, finance them and in any other form contribute to extremist activities.”

PROMOTING THE ALL-BELARUSIAN PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY

- “These days Belarusians are actively preparing for the main political event in the country — the VI All-Belarusian People's Assembly. In the regions, there is a discussion of issues that they plan to bring to the people's council. All spheres of the country's life will be affected.”
- “From security to development of the country in all directions. The regions of the country are actively preparing for the All-Belarusian People's Assembly.”

- “The social and economic development program for the five-year period pays special attention to housing construction. Accessibility and comfort are a priority.”
- “In the image of the future, built by joint efforts, Belarus appears as a social, industrial-agrarian, high-tech, environmentally friendly republic.”
- “Development of promising scientific fields is on the agenda for the next five years. These include electric transport, space technologies, developments in agriculture and industry. ”
- “The upcoming People's Forum will bring together representatives of various professions. Not without the law enforcers. The military and first responders are those people who know firsthand about safety and can present their vision at the VI All-Belarusian People's Assembly.”
- “Preparations for the VI All-Belarusian People's Assembly are entering the finishing stage in Belarus. Let us remind you that it will be held in Minsk on February 11 and 12. The delegates, and their total number is 2,700, have already been elected and now they have a period of painstaking work on preparation.”

PERSONALISM

- “The grandeur of the palace is befitting the grand personality of our president. He conceived, he realized it all, materialized it. And all this by the efforts of our Belarusian production workers.”
- “Alyaksandr Lukashenka begins this talk in a fatherly manner. But his toughs are still foxed on the global issue — the fate of the state. Last year, the degree of politicization of society went off scale. Of course, there was a notable degree of foreign incitement, but why did the youth allow themselves to get incited?”
- “The head of state arrived as soon as the schedule allowed it. Alyaksandr Lukashenka starts without preambles — there is something to talk about. Life goes on, the world changes and we do too. What is invariable is the attitude of the president towards the youth”.
- “The street called and beckoned them. But no matter how insulting it is presidentially and personally, Alyaksandr Lukashenka does not relieve himself of responsibility.”

CHINESE VECTOR

- “Moreover, China has strategic cooperation with only four countries of the world — see the scale. Russia, Pakistan, Great Britain and Belarus are recognized as strategic partners of the PRC. Warrants no further explanation.”
- “And another minor, but “telling” sign: the Chinese leader was the first who congratulated the Belarusian president on his winning the elections.”
- “The plans are to increase supplies of Belarusian potash fertilizers to China. Among the main growth points are food products and timber. At the same time, Beijing is ready to continue investing in Belarus and developing the Great Stone project.”

- “Political cooperation, trade and supply of COVID-19 vaccine. These are the main topics of the telephone conversation between the leaders of Belarus and China, Alyaksndr Lukashenka and Xi Jinping.”
- “With regard to the vaccine, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus is very actively negotiating through the Belarusian Embassy in China with two Chinese companies, which have reached a a new high in the development of their vaccine.”

PREPAREDNESS FOR COVID-19 SECOND WAVE

- “Today, only the installed roller shutters, which used to triage patient flow, remind of the coronavirus period.”
- “The statistics of the last day on COVID are encouraging: the number of cases in Belarus has dropped sharply. There are fewer reported cases of pneumonia. And this allows hospitals to gradually return to their usual profile and routine schedule.”
- “Hospitals that were previously redesigned to receive COVID-infected people are returning to their usual operating hours. Of course, not in a hurry, in a balanced way - after having carried out thorough sanitization.”

ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES

- “So, the outgoing Prime Minister of the Netherlands called the protests criminal violence, which has nothing to do with fight for freedom, and deemed the actions of the police adequate. Take notice, when it comes to Belarus or Russia, all assessments are exactly the opposite.”
- "And the actions of the authorities are compared by the Ukrainian experts with the secret plan of the Wehrmacht to enslave and destroy the Slavic population."
- “There were riots in Israel. The reason was the shutdown of religious educational institutions that worked despite the quarantine restrictions. ”
- “Another wave of protests over the restrictive measures because of the coronavirus swept across the EU.”
- “There is strong external pressure on Russia. They want to clash Russia and Belarus and make them fight.”
- “Warsaw right now has the maximum concentration of police and special forces. The Poles are again going to block the traffic and march to the headquarters of the ruling party. This is the reaction to the entry into force of the controversial abortion law.”

SETTING THE PROTESTING YOUTH STRAIGHT

- "They were made into a senseless, thoughtless, soulless herd."

- “Your idols don't sing about your homeland. They sing about a sad dance. They drive you into eternal drug depression, they drive you crazy, make you selfish, cowards and traitors.”
- “And while some take the opportunity, initiate, speak honestly, sincerely care, also about the future of their mates, others begin to bully and persecute them for this.”
- “In the context of today's global challenges, civil-patriotic education of young people is gaining special prominence. Natalya Kochanova, the head of the upper house of parliament, spoke during a visit to the linguistic university.”
- “A three-and-a-half-hour talk: about the allegedly secret inauguration, handling complaints from victims of the August protests, censorship on social media and expressing one's opinion. All these topics were discussed today in great depth by the BSU students with our President.”
- “First, the students should just be busy. All their time, the entire schedule should be tight: works, sports, some kind of social activity, studies. When they are involved in some kind of constructive activity, even they are oppositional in their attitude, then at least they won't have time for such manifestations as these riots, arson and so on.”

ALL STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND WEAPON EMPLOYMENT

- “Belarus continues to build up its defense capacity. Let me emphasize the word defense. If someone nearby wants to do some sabre rattling, we also have something up our sleeve. More than 2 thousand units of new types of weapons, military and special equipment entered operational service last year.”
- “Well, everyone who gives in to destructive appeals will be held accountable according to the law. Thus, the investigation filed the materials of the criminal case on the riots in Minsk on October 4 last year to the court.”
- “Another participant in the August riots in Brest was identified and detained by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus. As law enforcement officers have repeatedly reminded, everyone will be held accountable for the riots, despite the statute of limitations.”
- “Screenshot from a closed Zoom conference. The participants are as follows: Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya, Pavel Latushko, Vadim Prokopyev, Olga Karach and other fugitives. They discuss with residential initiative groups what to do on the weekend of January 16-17. Participants and, specifically, organizers of neighborhood rallies, you are in big trouble.”
- “Activists have been detained. During interrogations, some of them said that they took part in the riots, succumbing to the calls of destructive telegram channels and the mob mentality. Now they face 3 to 8 years in prison.”
- “As for the employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who took part in the Brest confrontation in 2020, this only brought them closer together. The state is strong only as long as it can defend itself.”

PRO-STATE ACTIVISM, PATRIOTISM

- "Those loyal to their motherland". Participants of patriotic associations, national actions, motor rallies "For Belarus" and simply those not indifferent to the fate of the country visited the Palace of Independence."
- "Monday morning in the northern region began with a joint activity to shovel snow at the Rylenki memorial."
- "A new patriotic project of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union "Winter Route" has started in the Vitebsk region."
- "This time the students of the Pedagogical University will visit several districts of Minsk and Grodno regions. The itinerary includes meetings with veterans, rallies and flower-laying at mass graves."
- "Aura" band is a real hitmaker of the Belarusian playlist. Their songs became the anthem of peaceful motor rallies and anti-protest actions."