

I wish I may. State-run TV mimics Lukashenko’s inability to decide whether political parties are a bliss or a curse

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(05/04/2021 – 11/04/2021)

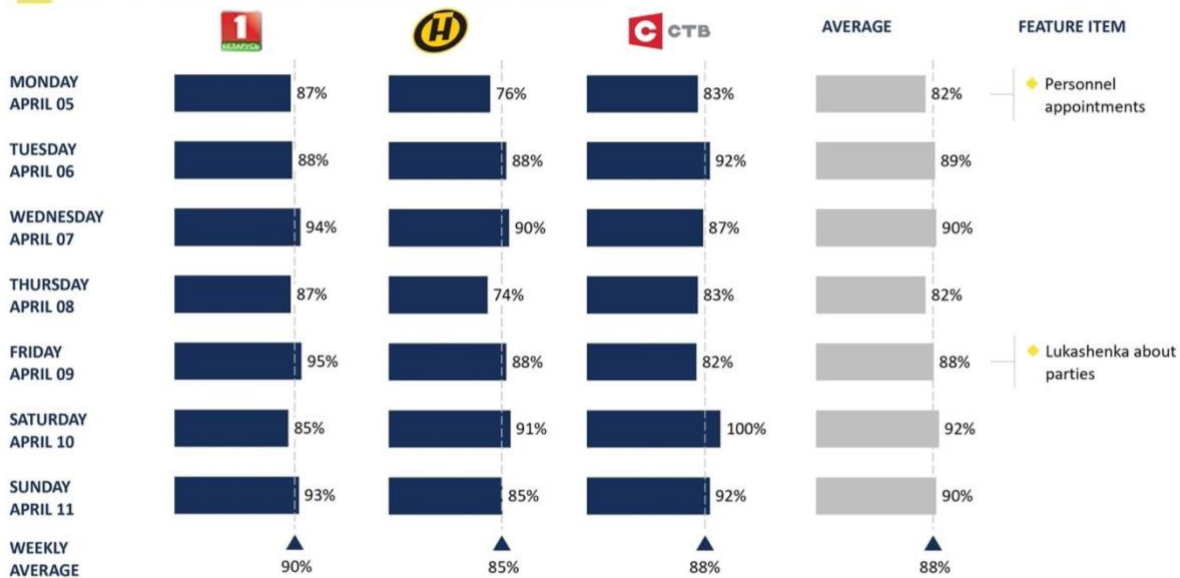
The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological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

Party system enhancement has become a significant topic of the week for the TV. The meeting held by Lukashenka on that issue prompted the state channels to assess the role of parties with extreme caution.

■ PARTY SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT HAS BECOME A SIGNIFICANT TOPIC OF THE WEEK. THE LUKASHENKA’S MEETING PROMPTED THE STATE CHANNELS TO ASSESS THE ROLE OF PARTIES WITH EXTREME CAUTION

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).

On the one hand, the need for their development was recognized, but at the same time the emphasis was placed on the risks to stability and customary order that parties carry, low credibility and interest in parties in society.

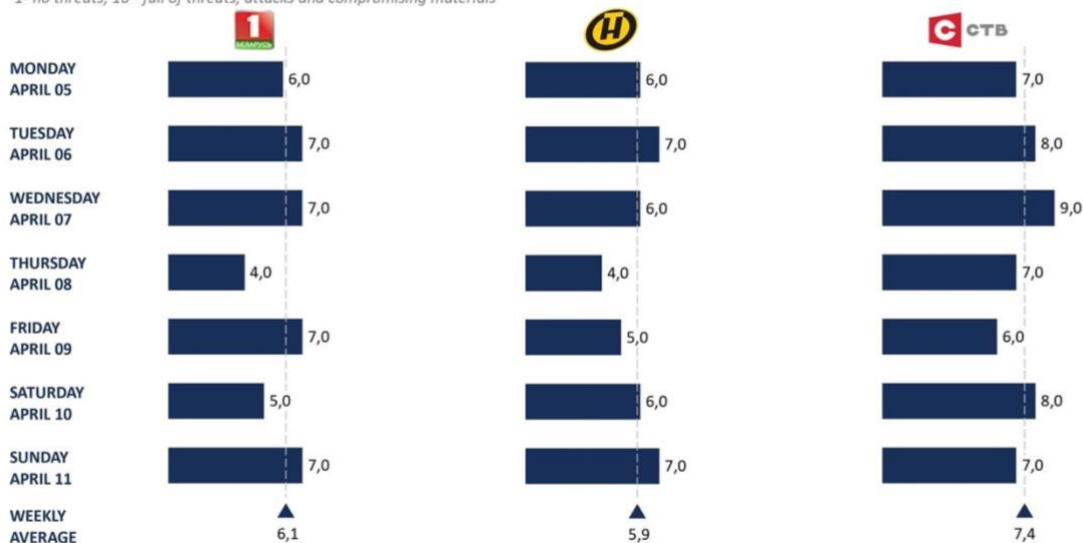
Key narratives can be found in [APPENDIX 1](#).

State-run TV keeps using the Soviet military-historical narrative to identify the threats of the past (war, Nazism, betrayal) with the current threats and thus deduces the mission of the current system — to defend the right attitude towards historic heritage. Along these lines of remembering the atrocities at concentration camps, special attention was paid to the Polish camp in Bereza, which supported the anti-Polish rhetoric.

IN ADDITION TO THE SOVIET MILITARY-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, STATE CHANNELS EXPLOITED THE DATE OF THE TERRORIST ATTACK ON THE MINSK SUBWAY. FROM THE IN-MEMORIAM STORIES, THEY EASILY SWITCHED OPPOSITION'S CRITICISM

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 memory war the state channels exploited the date of the terrorist attack on the Minsk subway ten years ago. From the in-memoriam stories, they easily switched to exposing the opposition ("mankurts", "fugitives", "traitors"), drawing a clear connection between the explosion and their interpretation of recent events. The government's opponents were also accused of organizing economic terror against the country.

THERE WERE NO NOTABLE PLURALISM DISPLAY ON THE AIR

PLURALISM INDEX*

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

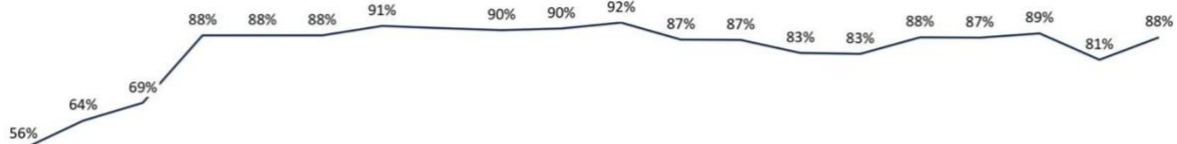


*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

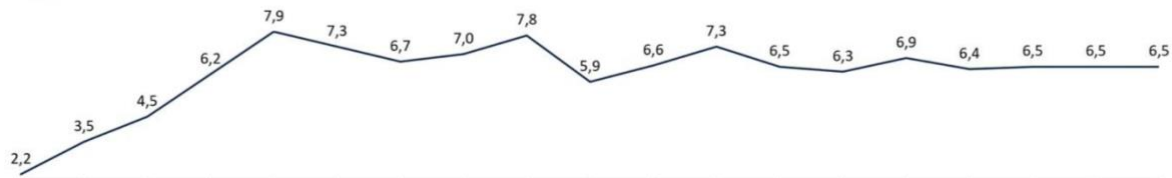
The wise Belarus's strategy of dealing with the pandemic was again praised, which, according to the state-run TV, was not only greatly effective, but also helped to save the economy, in contrast to the experience around the world. The Western domain of chaos, protests, crisis, lockdown, sanitary and digital dictatorship was traditionally juxtaposed to the prosperous image of Belarus.

ANTI-WEST NARRATIVE CONTINUES WITH PORTRAYAL OF CHAOS, PROTESTS, CRISIS, LOCKDOWN AND DIGITAL DICTATORSHIP. IT WAS JUXTAPOSED TO THE PROSPEROUS IMAGE OF BELARUS

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



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks



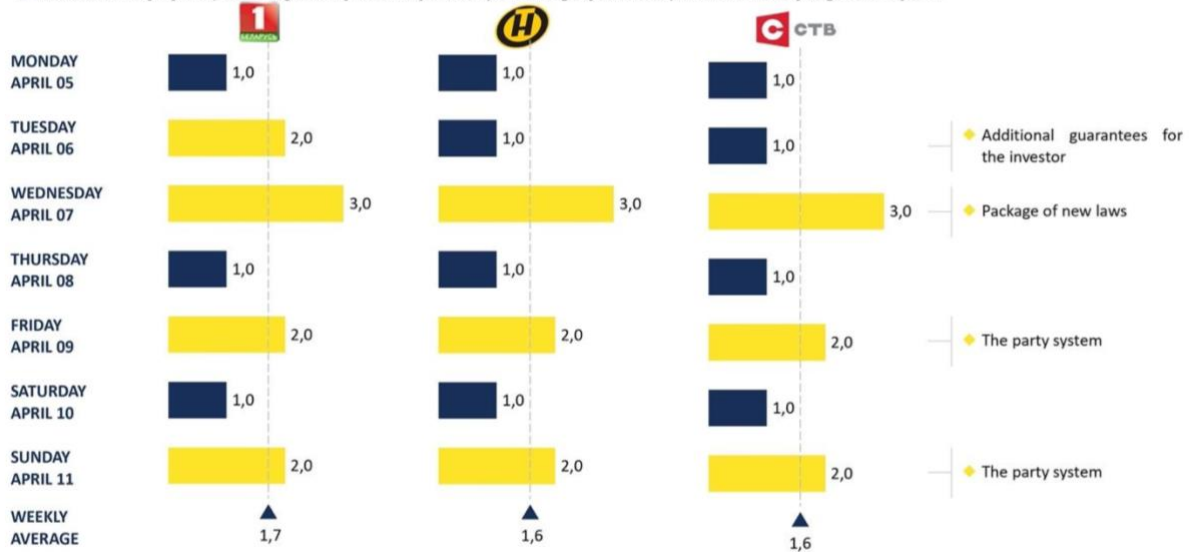
29.06 - 05.07 06.07 - 26.07 27.07 - 16.08 10.08 - 16.08 17.08 - 30.08 31.08 - 20.09 21.09 - 04.10 05.10 - 18.10 19.10 - 01.11 02.11 - 08.11 09.11 - 22.11 23.11 - 06.12 07.12 - 20.12 11.01 - 24.01 25.01 - 07.02 08.02 - 21.02 22.02 - 14.03 15.03 - 04.04 05.03 - 11.04

The coverage of the work of the parliament and the prospects for the development of the party system formed the basis of the aired reform topics.

THE COVERAGE OF THE WORK OF THE PARLIAMENT AND THE PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTY SYSTEM FORMED THE BASIS OF THE REFORM-ORIENTED NARRATIVES

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX*

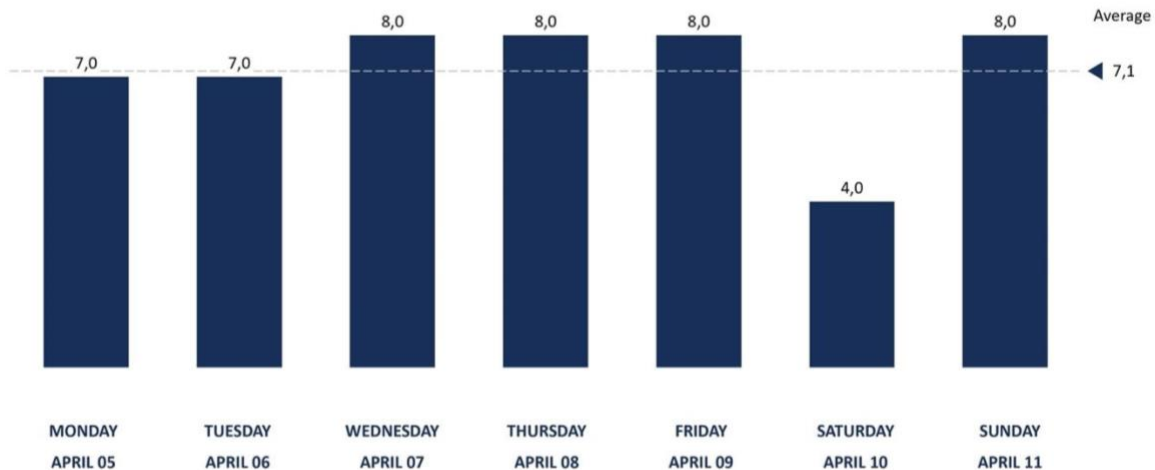
1 - abandonment of reforms; 10 - recognition of the need for a complete change of the model, announcement of large-scale reforms



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

STATE-OWNED CHANNELS ADHERED TO THEIR PRINCIPLE OF CONSOLIDATED NARRATIVES, BUT ALLOWED MORE VARIETY ON SATURDAY FEATURING

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.

State-owned channels adhered to their usual principle of consolidated broadcasting of narratives but allowed more variety on Saturday featuring the editorials.

The project “Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus” is implemented by Sense Analytics in partnership with Press Club Belarus. The author of the weekly reports is Maxim Stefanovich, the editor and coordinator of the project is Artyom Shraibman.

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

APPENDIX 1 KEY NARRATIVES

ANTI-PROTEST NARRATIVES

- “Yes, such a story just gives you chills when you realize that today some political fighters who have settled in the West do not care about the lives and destinies of people. An example of this is the recently prevented attempts at terrorist attacks in Minsk and Pechi”.
- “The criminals received severe punishment. According to law. Unfortunately, not everyone drew conclusions. For some, even today, terror seems to be a very real means of achieving their goals.”
- “Only now they failed to pull off a coup d’etat in the streets. Therefore, they are trying to throw the whole country under the bus through economic terror. Well, the trademark quality of fugitives is betrayal of the interests of the people. Q.E.D”.
- “The “Mankurt” documentary is not trending according to “Yandex.” Both episodes are now in the top ten most watched videos and continue to gain traction.”
- “Estonian intelligence services and diplomats could have been involved in the Mankurt spy scandal.”
- “The main defendant again tried to politicize the case. Although he himself actually confirmed that the bank’s top managers took part in the activities of commercial companies that received financing from Belgazprombank.”
- “Come to Voskresensky and register political parties. There is a chance to get on this ship. See: there will be no more conversations with street charlatans and marginal politicians.”
- “Political squabbles are less and less present in the everyday life of Belarusians. Only a handful of people still believe the fugitive politicians; they also failed to radicalize the situation. It is clear that external actors will not leave us alone, but the society itself has already calmed down.”
- “Gentlemen, runaways, there is no doubt that you have once again lost to common sense. There is no arguing that by instigating the protests you brought fines and sensitive massage to posterior of the Belarusian people. Do you know why? At least because it did not affect you personally. You were just making dough, pardon my language. And the Belarusian people will not forgive you for this pain and betrayal.”

ANTI-PARTIES NARRATIVES

- “After all, the experience of countries, including the post-Soviet area, shows how painful party confusion can be. That is why it demands to approach the development of the law as responsibly as possible.”
- “Without pocket one-off parties and radicalism, which will stop not only the normal life of the capital, but also the economy.”
- “Increasing the minimum number — a group of only a thousand citizens should not decide the fate of 10 million Belarusians”.

- “Party trap — the party leaders want to rule, but society refuses to trust them. Doesn't see real deeds and strong party programs.”

PERSONALISM

- “Let us remind you that as instructed by the President, control over prices is entrusted to parliamentarians and trade unions.”
- “On behalf of the President, the Prime Minister awarded today almost 40 representatives of various fields.”
- “The President's team won the main trophy. There were a lot of emotions on the ice and in the stands. After all, they came for hockey, and got much more.”
- “At the same time, Alexander Lukashenko once again stressed: in any case, we should be talking to our neighbors. Ordinary people are not to blame for being drawn into dirty political games.”
- “President Alexander Lukashenko met with the Indian ambassador and invited the Prime Minister of India to Minsk.”

PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- “New opportunities for business and cooperation between the largest developer in our market and Belarusian companies, regardless of the form of ownership.”
- “The country's largest developer Dana Holdings has decided to double its business with another Belarusian producer.”
- “The main task of our embassies is to facilitate trade and the promotion of our goods. That is, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not so much a foreign policy structure, but, in fact, an external economic agency.”
- “This means that both in big cities and in rural areas, the required facilities will be built and reconstructed: schools, sports centers, clinics”.
- “The government calls this year the year of the new investment cycle. And in the first quarter we carried out a kind of revision of the projects, determine the priorities.”
- “Over the past coronavirus year, exports of goods and services decreased by 12%. Not too good, but not tragic. In general, Belarus maintains diplomatic relations with 183 countries. Six dozen foreign missions work in 58 of them.”
- “The anti-trust regulator published the “Tariff Notebook” for this year. Decisions on changes in prices or tariffs will be made taking into account the economic situation in the country and inflation, as well as based on the growth of people's incomes.”
- “The brands of all glassworks in the country will be preserved, and the trademark of the Belarusian Glass Company will be promoted at the same toime. The general director of the holding company told us about this.”

ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES

- "According to the reputed political scientist Tomasz Jankowski, these actions of Poland are associated with political dependence and active influence from the outside, especially from overseas."
- "Much richer countries got burned on this. Both literally and figuratively. Remember the storming of the Capitol in the States, separatism in Spain, yellow vests in France and the plummeting rating of the green project by Mr. Zelensky. We definitely don't need that."
- "America, you are done. The 500-year hegemony of the West is over."
- "Let's look take neighbors — zemaity, aukshaity, zhudins — in a word, they have never had their own statehood".
- "As for the name "Lithuania" — well, a maid cannot inherit the princess's jewels".
- "Content removal, usurpation of freedom and arbitrariness of American digital platforms. This is the digital GULAG that experts and the media are talking about — it is already upon us."
- "Another wave of protests swept over the weekend in European countries. In Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, demonstrations ended in clashes with the police."
- "In the world, the situation with COVID-19 remains difficult. Mass vaccination, which has been expected since the middle of last year, is yet to live up to the expectations."

IMPOSING PATRIOTISM, PRO-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISM

- "We must convey to our society an understanding of history in a way that reflects the objective interests of the sovereign Republic of Belarus at the present stage."
- "Motivational speaker Aleksey Talay spoke today to the young audience at a rehabilitation center for children with disabilities. They talked not only about Talay's life, but also touched upon the issues of preserving the memory of the Great Patriotic War and Alexei's work in the Constitutional Commission."
- "In Gomel, students of cadet and military classes took up the Memorial Watch near the Eternal Flame. Every day until June 22, schoolchildren will be on duty at the mass grave of Soviet soldiers and underground workers."
- "The visit to the forest in Logoisk district by the deputies of the House of Representatives was without incident. They joined a large landscaping campaign by planting 16 thousand young pines and birches."
- "Today the "Patriots of Belarus" is the youngest public association that is not limited to motor rallies. They do educational initiatives, sports, charity and, of course, politics — sincere and unconditional support for the state policy."
- "The Veteran Organization is actively working on the patriotic education of the population, youth, and comes up with a number of initiatives. It is especially important in the period of important historical events to hear the opinion of ordinary people, wise from life experience."
- "People express their concern about how they are trying to split society in our country. And many letters came in from believers. People speak out for it being very important for them now to unite in a single prayer in order to turn to the Almighty and overcome attempts at schism."

ALL STAKES OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, MILITIA

- “Those who were not afraid in difficult times, did not succumb to the calls of traitors and sweet, but empty promises of a better life — the real patriots of Belarus were honored today at the Palace of Independence. The most grandiose symbol of our country's sovereignty was visited by those who bravely stood up for our independence.”
- “The 38th Brest Separate Airborne Assault Brigade worked out tactical exercises together with Vitebsk colleagues. Actions unfolded at once on four training grounds.”
- “Regular users of social networks who insulted police officers from Bereza and Gantsevichi have been identified.”
- “Belarusians know the price of peace and tranquility and cherish it. Therefore, they themselves are actively involved in the maintenance of public order. Citizen militia are already a kind of trend. Women also join the ranks of the neighborhood watch. And also young people join the experienced participants of the movement.”
- “The militia is an entirely voluntary initiative. And I must say, there are many who want to join the ranks, but there are also eligibility criteria. First of all, this means age and clear criminal record.”
- “The national air defense system is being built taking into account world experience, economic opportunities and a dynamically changing military-political situation. Military experts rightly classify the Belarusian model as one of the most advanced setups in Europe.”

SOVIET MILITARY AND HISTORIC NARRATIVE

- “It is surprising and very sad to realize this, but as life shows, the memory of the events of the Great Patriotic War needs protection.”
- “The facts are on the surface, as well as the fact that helpful neighbors tried to teach modern Belarusian children in our country a different interpretation of history”.
- “They sent Belarusians, Ukrainians (“objectionable” peoples in the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) and even the Poles themselves to Bereza-Kartuzskaya without trial or investigation. Isolation period — up to 3 months, easily extended.”
- “As it turned out, the Lithuanians themselves are not happy with the influence of NATO and the EU on their internal politics, and are nostalgic for the Soviet Union.”
- “The Belarusians sacredly honor the memory and heroic deed of the people, and therefore they also treat all historical places with reverence. Today, the responders the Ministry of Emergency Situations and forestry workers planted a cove near the Uzrechye memorial.”
- “The issue of extradition of war criminals for an open trial in Belarus is also on the agenda. A list of all deceased and living criminals will be drawn up. The investigation team has a lot of work to do with archives and thousands of criminal cases.”
- “Replacement of state symbols: flag – with a white-red-white banner, coat of arms – with “Pogonya”, the national motto — with “Long live Belarus!” would mean to justify the victims of the war, the villages burned by those flying these symbols, to devalue the Victory over

fascism, to rewrite history, to wash away the heroic deed of the people from the face of the earth.”

SUCCESSFUL GOVERNMENT’S ANTI-COVID STRATEGY

- “A year ago, when little was known about the coronavirus, it was sometimes necessary to take risks and act quickly. But the clear strategy that was formed then is already bearing fruit.”
- “Mass vaccination against COVID-19 has started today in the capital city. Not only risk groups are being vaccinated, but also those who signed up in advance through polyclinics. Patients can choose from two vaccines - the Russian "Sputnik V" and the Chinese one.”
- “Is the current government to blame for the deaths of our relatives and friends? We are diligently force-fed the idea that the absence of total quarantine and the indifference of officials are to blame. The hack writers, who suddenly discovered themselves to be virologists, not so long ago diligently promoted the dubious expert arguments that there are too many hospitals in Belarus.”