

Healer Leadership. State-run TV is dealing in COVID apologetics for Lukashenka now

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(14/12/2020 – 20/12/2020)

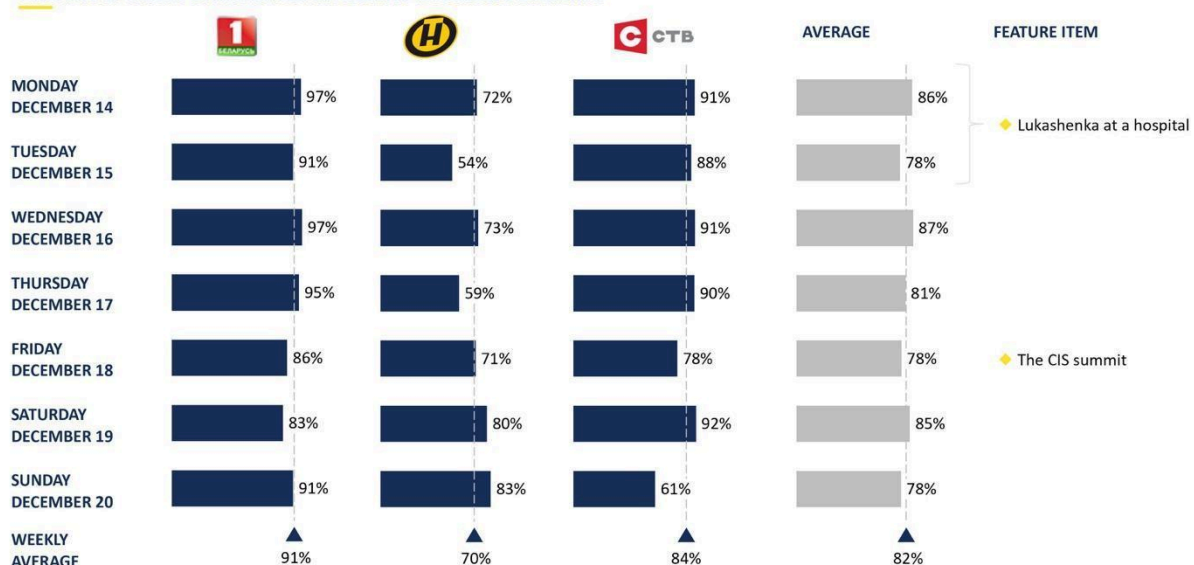
The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological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

Lukashenka’s visits to hospitals have firmly linked the praise for the leader with the second wave of the pandemic. As for the geopolitics, there was once again speculation about the post-Soviet arc of instability orchestrated by the West against Russia.

■ LUKASHENKA’S VISITS TO HOSPITALS, INTEGRATION WAS PRESENTED AS A KEY MEANS OF SALVATION FROM EXTERNAL THREATS AND A “FATEFUL MEETING” WERE THE KEY NARRATIVES OF THIS 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).

STV kept its lead in "opinionated journalism", thanks to its polemical pieces by Mukovozchik, Golikov and others, while Belarus-1 and ONT focused on a detailed description of Lukashenka's schedule and successes in various spheres, as well as on crisis or disastrous nature of developments in Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and the whole world.

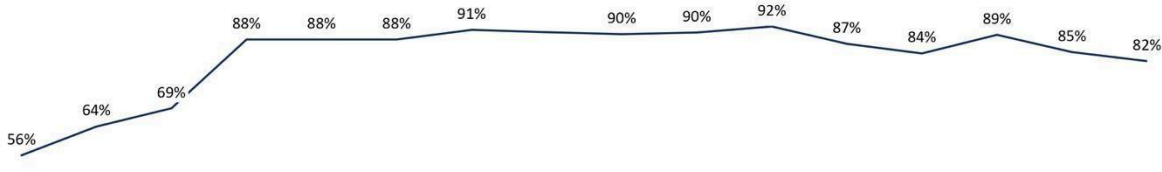
Key narratives can be found in [APPENDIX 1](#)

The emphasis on the need for joint efforts of the post-Soviet states to resist "external interference" was repeated many times, integration was presented as a key means of salvation from numerous threats. Lukashenko's statements at the CIS summit have strengthened the integration narrative.

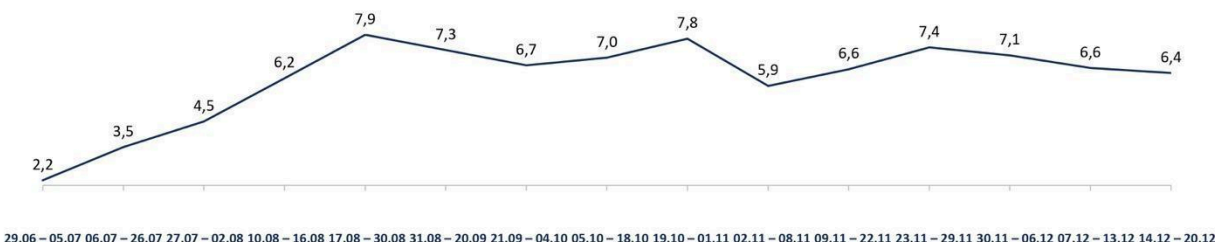
Vitaly Shklyarov's interview was often mentioned for the sake of accusing opponents of intolerance and broadcasting positive assessments of Lukashenko by a "critic". Famous Russian figures (Pozner, Sobchak, Svanidze) also received their portion of attacks for criticizing the Belarusian authorities.

■ THERE WERE AGAIN BROADCASTED DISCLOSURES OF SOLIDARITY FUNDS AND ATTACKS TOWARDS THE WEST. ■ AT THE HISTORICAL AND SYMBOLIC LEVEL CONTINUED THE "WAR FOR MEMORY"

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



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks



State channels actively voiced various mechanisms to combat protesters. Traditional stories about the inevitability of liability for the actions were supplemented by detailed descriptions of the system (database) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for recording protesters.

STATE CHANNELS ACTIVELY VOICED VARIOUS MECHANISMS TO COMBAT PROTESTERS. WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE SYSTEM OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS FOR RECORDING PROTESTERS

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 reformist attitudes again manifested themselves in the likely expansion of the powers of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly.

THE REFORMIST ATTITUDES AGAIN MANIFESTED THEMSELVES IN THE LIKELY EXPANSION OF THE POWERS OF THE ALL-BELARUSIAN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX*

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

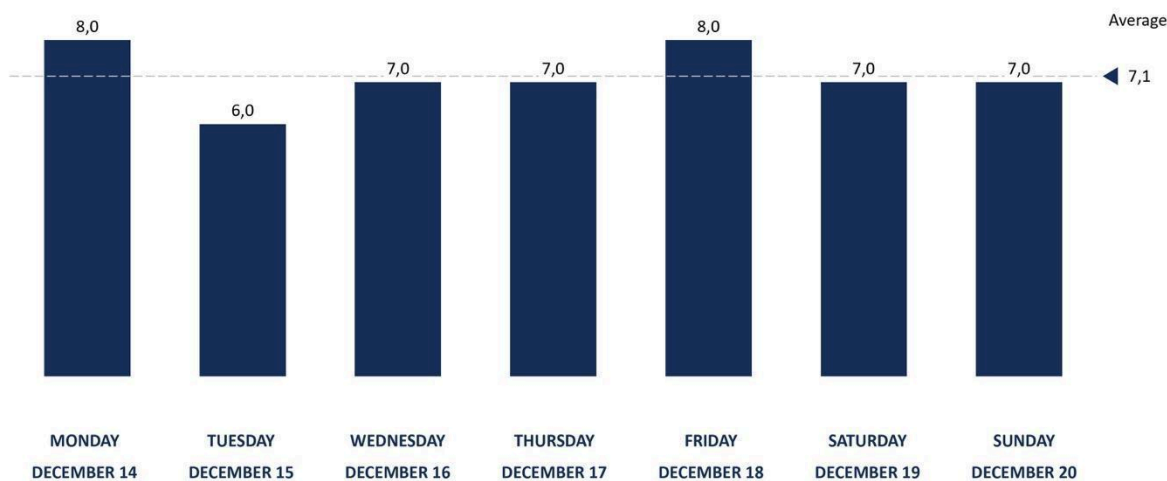


*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX - an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

State channels continue to broadcast a set of similar stories and opinions.

STATE CHANNELS CONTINUE TO BROADCAST A SET OF SIMILAR STORIES AND OPINIONS

THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION*

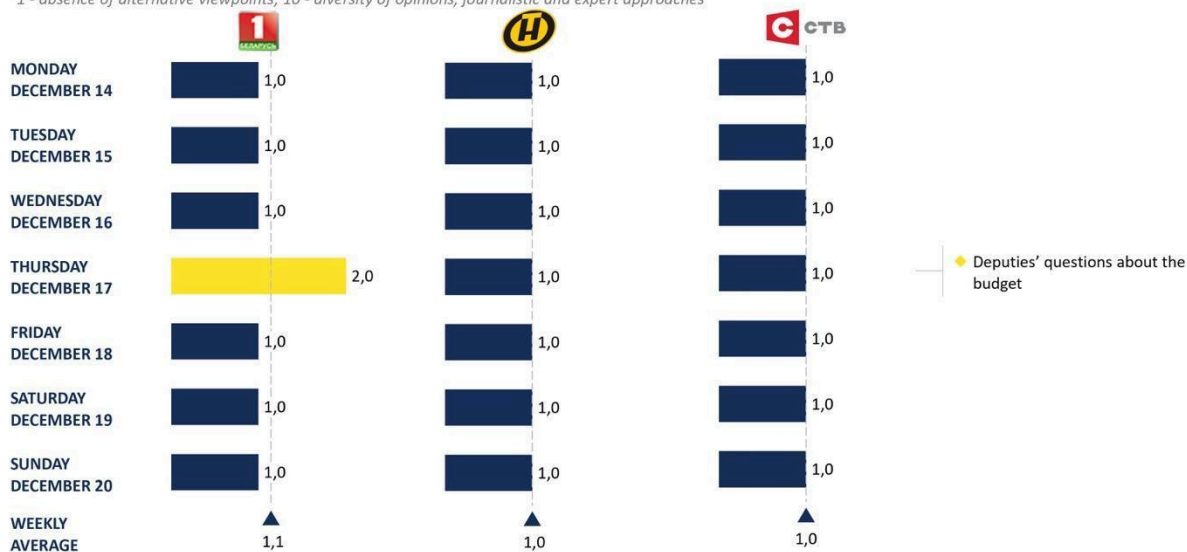


*THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION – an indicator evaluating coordination across the air. This is inferred from news stories having similar structures, as well as the duplication of opinions, positions and ideologemes among state TV channels.

YURI VOSKRESENSKY'S PROPOSAL TO HOLD A POLITICAL AMNESTY – OCCASIONAL AND THE ONLY ELEMENT OF PLURALISM OF THIS WEEK

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.

Elements of pluralism could be seen only in Yuri Voskresensky's proposal to hold a political amnesty.

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

PRO-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISM

- “The patriotic action “Memory of the Heart ” continues in Belarus.
- “Today Belarusian student teams took over the patriotic project “Memory of the Heart”. A requiem rally was held at the Trostenets memorial complex in Minsk near the Gates of Memory monument.
- “This weekend, the participants of the rally “For the United Belarus” decided to stay in the capital city. The New Year's Eve gave it a new impulse. People become Santa Clauses for those kids, who were left without parental care.”
- “Participants of the rally “For the United Belarus” are ready to defend their position, while not destroying, but creating and even giving joy to others.”

UNDERMINING THE PROTESTS, FIGHTING FAKE NEWS

- “Any illegal actions that lead to a color revolution make the state dependent and the people poorer. Nowhere after such riots did people live better. This was the opinion by the famous Ukrainian political strategist Vasily Stoyakin in an interview for our TV channel.
- “Golems of Russian liberalism joined the information attacks against Belarus. First came the musty voice of Vladimir Pozner.”
- “So today a statement appeared on one of the telegram channels, which seemed to stir up the vipers’ nest. According to a personal assistant to the founder of the fund, he and a number of other people discussed how to inflict grievous bodily harm on the alleged traitor. It gets even worse. A group of the notorious freedom fighters, as it turns out, was considering a murder.”
- “Police officer Bichikov also has his share of supporters of the new Belarus in his area of responsibility. Two, for example, unemployed, with numerous offences on their criminal record. Now these characters are already in the files of the information system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.”
- “Calm down. Give people a peaceful New Year and Christmas. And then we will fight you. Have no doubt.”
- “In addition to opponents of the abortion bill, those who disagreed with the actions of the authorities in the fight against the pandemic also took to the streets of the Polish capital. People oppose the ruling party's policies and harsh police actions during the rallies.
- “Only my colleague Grigory Azarenok saw nothing democratic in the actions of the democratic opposition”. The buzzing continued throughout the summer. Intrusive flies, crickets, mosquitoes were constantly buzzing about “fair elections”.

- “The interview with Sveta Tikhonovskaya The New Yorker, clearly reveals two messages: finally, the housewife is finally getting some perspective, and the secondly — this woman will set America against Europe.”
- “Please do not try to replace the children's Christmas trees with protests. These are not carol singing outings. We have explained a thousand times why it can end badly — from simply “the mob runs” to “the child will instinctively try to protect you in any situation.”
- “Look, the deal is: you go out to the local rallies tomorrow, you act a fool, you get locked up. You get 15 days detention. That is, you spend the New Year behind bars.”

FIGHTING FOR HISTORY

- “Could we imagine that the terrible things that happened on our land 75 years ago could happen again? That we will again see the collaborationist flags, hear calls to divide the people into friends and foes. And that some of us, Belarusians, will be able to believe in this and go for it. That is why it is so important today to remember history, know your true heroes and honor the memory of those who defended our land.”
- “Recently, the drive for a rift, and on an international scale too, has become more and more obvious. In some countries, they want to declare the former members of the SS organization noting short of activists of the national liberation movement.”
- “Nazism is an aggressive ideology, nothing more than a manifestation of extremism. Without regard to their own history and the patriotic upbringing of children (which was self-explanatory for the older generation), others are beginning to write this story. And this is the way that would lead anywhere, but not to a bright future.”
- “No wonder — today the West is tolerant of fascists in Eastern Europe. They march with torches, proclaim their ideas, propagate hatred... All this is at the borders of a country that was literally wiped out, where every third person died. And today they taint what is most sacred — the memory, trying to clean it up.”

ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES

- “What security and safety does the budget provide for Ukrainian citizens, if such decisions threaten the collapse of the medical sector, which is already underfunded by almost four hundred million dollars, and the education system, which is down five hundred fifty million. People's Deputy of Ukraine Ilya Kiva called such a budget a criminal one.”
- “Well, the world economy is clearly not up to social guarantees.”
- “And their main interest is instability. And the fact that Russia will be next after Belarus is already obvious to everyone. A controlled process of regional destabilization has been launched at a scale — from the Baltic to the Black and even to the Caspian Sea. The “Belarusian bulge” is just the last fort in the Eurasian arc of instability created by the West.”

- "Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła", but the story of this song, like the geopolitical ambitions of Warsaw, is all cunning, lies and betrayal of neighbors."
- "Will Trump be able to defend the truth in the face of total American censorship — the analysis by our correspondents." "No matter how hard it is for our Facebook intelligentsia to acknowledge, we must admit that France is an authoritarian dictatorship."
- "Hundreds of anti-lockdown and anti-vaccination protesters took to Parliament Square in the center of the British capital."
- "At least 20 people died in the last month. The aftermath of mass protests is being summarized in Peru."
- "No one has any doubts that the Ukrainian government is focused on protecting the interests of foreign creditors, and not the country's citizens. The structure of the national budget, which is adopted by the Verkhovna Rada, convincingly proves this, according to politicians and experts."

PREPAREDNESS FOR COVID-19 SECOND WAVE

- "While Western countries are rushing about in search of the right strategy to combat the coronavirus, Belarus and Russia should rely on the well-proven Soviet experience. This opinion was expressed to our TV channel by the well-known Russian doctor Alexander Myasnikov."
- "In the meantime, countries, however they can, are fighting the insidious virus. Belarus, according to experts, is reaching a plateau."
- "In several regions of Belarus, clinics are going back to their usual routine".
- "Six new ventilators were delivered to the Brest Regional Hospital."
- "Lukashenka is deeply involved in the coronavirus issue. He himself was affected and recovered without taking a leave from work and understands perfectly well that the pandemic will not end tomorrow. Vaccination is the only way to deal with it. And Belarus has several options in this area. Every one valid."

PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- "The main financial document is drawn up with a deficit, that is, expenses will be greater than income. But the social orientation of the budget is preserved and strengthened! " "New mechanisms of social support are also spelled out in the document."
- "On the eve of the New Year holidays, control over food prices will become tighter. Special focus will be on what makes up the New Year's table."
- "The UN Conference on Trade and Development — UNCTAD — praised the Belarusian legislation in the field of competition development".

- "Next year, special attention will be paid to the salaries of low-paid specialists. It's about employees of the education system, culture and social protection. "
- "The results that we have today indicate that many industries are performing better today than last year. According to our estimates, this is a quarter of industries. Yes, about half of them are working at rates worse than last year, but we noticed such a tendency that from the beginning of the summer they all started to gain a little bit."

PERSONALISM

- "Healthcare workers, and in general Belarusians, are already accustomed to seeing Alaiksandr Lukashenka in the red zones. The President is deeply involved in the COVID issue."
- "The President not only coordinated the tactics of fighting covid, but also shared his own experience of recovery. And, of course, tried to help — albeit in small things."
- "Alaiksandr Lukashenka spoke with a representative of the Holy See About spiritual affairs".
- "Alaiksandr Lukashenka reassured doctors during the week: don't worry, everything will be fine. And he wished everyone a good and calm New Year's holidays. This, perhaps, is what we all want. "
- "Personally, I do not understand everything what the authorities are doing - not all decisions are liked. But the way Lukashenka, for 25 years old, like the character of the story "Slavka", stands over a piece of land called Belarus, shielding it from rain and snowy blizzard, is worthy of respect."

CIS SUMMIT, INTEGRATION

- "The formalistic approach is definitely not our way. And definitely not the one of Lukashenka. It was personal energy and interest in this plan that became the driver of integration."
- "Belarus has always openly declared the need to strengthen integration ties. Today it has become more evident than ever."
- "Integration as a necessity - this is how Alexander Lukashenko suggests looking at the Commonwealth of Independent States. The President took part in the CIS online summit today. For Minsk, this meeting is a reason to declare its own plans for integration."

ALL-BELARUSSIAN PEOPLES ASSEMBLY

- "The first meeting went down in history as the busiest — almost 5 thousand delegates. As a result, the tasks of stabilizing the economy have been addressed, which means that a way out of the difficult situation has been found."

- “Fast forward to May 2001. The idea is the same: improving the quality of life, the slogan “For a strong and prosperous Belarus”. We came to the conclusion that over the past five years we have managed, and some areas even where over performed.”
- “It is proposed to give the All-Belarusian People's Assembly a constitutional status. This means that this forum will be directly mentioned in the Constitution. Perhaps a special section will be devoted to it.”
- “For three days, 60 active and motivated young men and women are discussing topical issues — and not only for their generation. Development and strengthening of good-neighborly relations, opposition to fakes news, as well as the state system. We spoke today about the upcoming All-Belarusian People's Assembly. This topic was especially relevant within the walls of the upper house of parliament.”
- “One of the key topics of the upcoming All-Belarusian People's Assembly will be the search for ways to strengthen our sovereignty.”

ALL STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND WEAPON EMPLOYMENT

- “Also, the court ruled to recover 500 rubles from the man as compensation for moral damage — this amount the policeman plans to spend on toys for the orphanage.”
- “While in destructive chats they try to demonize the officers in every possible way, they continue to serve every day — saving lives, preventing tragedies.”
- “And while some supporters of changes create anonymous telegram channels, the administrators of which, by the way, are increasingly falling into the hands of law enforcement officers and repenting of their deeds, the Ministry of Internal Affairs methodically replenishes its system with data from those who violate order on the streets and prevent Belarusians from living in peace. That is, everyone, as they say, is on the hook.”
- “The pre-holiday period is a time to remember about safety. However, this task is primarily for law enforcement officers, which they manage.”
- “The Investigative Committee of Belarus continues to investigate criminal cases on the facts of the riots in August”.