

# The West Blamed for Unrest in Ukraine, An Ideal Local Election Candidate – Belarus State TV Digest

Belarusian state-run Channel 1 regularly covered the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Journalists have often referred to the participants of protests and the opposition as radicals and extremists.

Reporters blamed Western politicians for the situation in Maidan. “Maidan” appeared also in the context of state officials-small businessmen talks with the Head of State. Lukashenka warned the Belarusian business from getting involved into some counter-activities.

Belarusian ONT TV channel organised a discussion about the forthcoming elections to local authorities. The programme featured representatives from state and opposition politicians.

## Ukraine

[Situation in Ukraine is getting worse.](#) The Ukrainian authorities agreed on amnesty for the participants of the protests, but only if the opposition would leave the government buildings they had seized. However, the city is getting ready for a new wave of unrest. A journalist from the Ukrainian newspaper “Vesti” was shot on the street by a group of unknown people. “Last night (18 February – BD) became the most bloody in the history of independent Ukraine”, the newscast pointed out. As a result, 26 people died, and at least 10 of them were policemen.

The opposition is clearly not ready for talks, Belarus state TV journalist stated. The European politicians ignored the outrageous actions of extremists and blamed only Yanukovich for all that was happening, he continued. "Although any hope that under the red and black black flags of 'banderovcy' democracy will come to Ukraine, is, in the least, a silly idea", the state journalist commented based on the opinion of unnamed experts.

[Kiev: the political crisis affects the economy.](#) The opposition fraction of the Ukrainian Parliament cannot agree on key questions of the Constitution reform. The international agency Fitch downgraded the credit rating of Ukraine.

[Moscow: the West is guilty of the Ukrainian crisis.](#) Journalist noted that the leaders of the opposition went to Berlin. They asked the European Union to impose sanctions on the Ukrainian authorities and the German chancellor for financial support. "Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia called the disorder in Kiev a result of politics of the West," journalist concluded.

## **International Affairs**

[The Western democracies violate human rights.](#) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus published its annual document on 23 countries that violated the human rights in 2013. State TV commented that it described predominantly the cases of racial hostility and discrimination in the countries of the European Union.

"A real wave of Nazism has swept over Europe. Manifestations of xenophobia are practically in all countries, even in the places that suffered from the red plague: Lithuania, Poland, Greece, France and Germany".

The publication of the Belarusian MFA referred to the countries which supported sanctions against Belarus due to the alleged human rights' violations.

“The staff of the MFA stresses that there are no perfect countries. Problems should be discussed rather than become a tool for pressure.” The unique feature of this Belarusian report is that it does not contain any conclusions, but presents only facts, the state TV reporter concluded.

## **Domestic Affairs**

### **Lukashenka: the industrial park is drowning in bureaucracy.**

Alexander Lukashenka chaired a meeting on the construction of the Belarusian-Chinese technology park in Belarus. The Head of State harshly criticised the officials for delays in its realisation.

Lukashenka said, “There is everything necessary in place to have such a plant in Belarus. There is stability in the state, which is absent in other countries.” Kiril Rudny, Lukashenka’s advisor, also raised some financial controversies around the project, such as the interest-rate of a loan from Beijing.

Throughout the state TV coverage, Lukashenka shouted at different officials for the slow pace of construction and demanded explanations from them. One reporter pointed out that according to experts, in a long-term perspective, the project could bring billions dollars in the form of investment to the country.

**Lukashenka: no “Maidan” in small business.** Lukashenka chaired a meeting with officials and businessmen. They discussed the proposal by the government introduction of the obligatory certificates on the quality of goods. “This is a right thing to do. But not everybody is ready to reject their own shady schemes,” the state TV journalist notes.

The Head of State referred to criticism on changes from the Belarusian business community. “It is pointless to threaten me. We will not allow a “Maidan” to happen in our country. Everything will unfold in a civilised manner.” In response, he warned against businessmen getting involved in

any reactionary measures against the planned policy's implementation.

Trying to convince the business community of the necessity of these changes, he said: "If you want to live like they do in the West, we are offering you those very conditions. If you want to live like on Maidan, well, then, this is not going to happen in Belarus."

### **The elections to local authorities**

[An ideal candidate for the local authorities:](#) According to state TV, gender does not matter, the most popular candidates are doctors, teachers and social workers, ideally between the age of 45-55 years.

Income plays an important role as well. Unemployed candidates do not have a very good chances, and those with a higher income also arouse suspicion. "If you are successful in business why are you trying to gain political power?", the state TV journalist asked rhetorically.

Belarusian voters pay attention to the experience where their candidates work, but also the biography of their candidates. "People do not vote for strangers and do not trust populists," the reporter comments.

In its coverage, state TV presents the profiles of two members of Bielaja Rus, a government organised non-governmental organisation.

According to the report, both the ruling and opposition political parties are not very involved in local elections. This is the the result of their being a small number of activists engaged in raising the profile of elections. The reporter also noted another reason – "political tourism in Ukraine is flourishing."

**Debate on the local elections.** Recently state-run [ONT](#)

[TV](#) site covered of the local elections scheduled to take place in March.

The show gathered both representatives from the authorities, but also a few opposition figures. It demonstrated that the Belarusian opposition had access to state media and can freely promote itself.

The head of the Central Election Committee [Lidzija Jarmoshyna](#) noted that “some political forces abuse the system by using their right to boycott.” According to Valery Uchnaliou from the party “Spravedlivi Mir” citizens should not boycott, but rather exercise their electoral rights. If they do not like the candidates, they should vote against all of them.

Uchnaliou argued that the amended electoral law still has not addressed all the standing issues, including the apparent pluralism of the members of the electoral committee, but also securing a transparent and open vote-counting process. Jarmoshyna explained that diverse social forces would be represented in the electoral commissions, including civil society, state officials and citizens.

*Belarus Digest prepared this overview on the basis of materials available on the web site of Belarusian State Television 1 (BT1) and ONT. Freedom of the press in Belarus remains restricted and state media convey primarily the point of view of the Belarusian authorities. This review attempts to give the English-speaking audience a better understanding of how Belarusian state media shape public opinion in the country.*