

Analytical Report

Systematic Preparation by the Lukashenko Regime for Possible Entry into the War on Russia's Side and Recommendations for Preventing This Scenario

Preface

Pavel Latushka

Ambassador

Laureate of the Lech Wałęsa Solidarity Prize

Head of the National Anti-Crisis Management

Deputy Head of the United Transitional Cabinet of Belarus

This report has been prepared by the National Anti-Crisis Management in response to the alarming and rapidly evolving processes of militarization in Belarus under the control of the illegitimate regime of Alexander Lukashenko.

Since 2022, Belarus has entered a phase of systemic transformation in the military sphere. All this is taking place in the context of Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and escalating confrontation with NATO.

We record facts indicating Belarus's preparation for potential direct involvement in the war on the side of Russia. This readiness is manifested in changes to legislation, the abandonment of neutral status, the mobilization of the economy, increased military spending, the creation of a people's militia, and the growth of the armed forces, the construction of military infrastructure, deep integration with the Russian military-industrial complex and armed forces, as well as information and propaganda efforts aimed at fostering anti-Western sentiments within society. Belarusian territory is already being used as a logistics base and training ground, and since 2023 — as a potential site for the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons.

But the main purpose of this report is not merely analysis. We appeal to the international community with a clear call: to act preemptively. The Lukashenko regime, evolving within the logic of totalitarian mobilization, may once again turn Belarus into a foothold for unleashing war — this time with a much greater degree of readiness.

We offer concrete recommendations regarding political, sanction, and institutional responses. It is crucial to implement these measures before an order is given, not after a decision has been made. This is the only way to preserve peace, support the Belarusian people and stop further escalation.

It is important to understand that Europe's first line of defense does not lie along Belarus's borders with the EU. Europe's first line of defense is Belarusian society, which is strategically vital to support in its pursuit of democracy and freedom.

The report is based on facts, open sources, and expert analysis. It reflects the position of the democratic forces of Belarus, who stand against the war and for the restoration of our country's independence.

*Respectfully,
Pavel Latushka*

National Anti-Crisis Management

The National Anti-Crisis Management was established in October 2020 in response to widespread and systematic repression against civil society in Belarus and the brutal suppression of peaceful protests. It is an association of experts and professionals whose unique competencies are aimed at advancing the goals of the entire Belarusian democratic movement. The uniqueness of the expertise at the National Anti-Crisis Management lies in the fact that our team includes specialists who have worked for many years within the state administration system in various ministries and agencies of Belarus, as well as local government bodies, giving them an insider's knowledge of the regime's system. Among other works, the National Anti-Crisis Management has prepared reports such as: "The Role of the Lukashenko Regime and the Union State in the Program of Illegal Displacement and Re-education of Children from Ukraine", "The Union State as an Instrument for Masking Russia's Imperial Policy", "Systemic Discrimination by the Lukashenko Regime Against Belarusian Citizens Living Abroad and Ways to Overcome It," "Sanction Pressure on the Lukashenko Regime".

Summary

The Lukashenko regime has restructured the system of governance by strengthening the role of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly, which has been granted new powers related to decisions on entering a war. Legislation concerning martial law and the state of emergency has been adapted to the conditions of armed conflict. Additionally, a number of strategic documents have been adopted that allow for Belarus's participation in military actions initiated by its ally—Russia.

The Belarusian army is being strengthened both in terms of manpower and organizational structure, with the creation of a national militia. The powers of military commissariats have been expanded, and digital mobilization methods are being implemented. The army is also becoming an instrument of internal control. The civilian economy is shifting to a wartime footing: mobilization responsibilities have been assigned to the Ministry of Economy. The state budget has sharply increased military expenditures, and elements of a command economy are being introduced. The military-industrial complex is becoming a system-forming sector. Strategic infrastructure is undergoing rapid modernization, and the level of logistical readiness for large-scale military operations is being significantly increased.

Military cooperation with Russia has reached full integration: joint exercises are being conducted, and a unified regional grouping of forces has been established. Belarus is providing its territory for Russian troops, including nuclear facilities. The Belarusian army is effectively integrated into Russia's military infrastructure.

New curricula are being introduced that construct the image of an enemy and promote loyalty to the regime. Ideology is becoming the primary tool for mobilization and the suppression of alternative opinions.

The international community is advised to respond proactively to Belarus's military transformation. Recommended actions include the application of sanction pressure on the Lukashenko regime, support for Belarusian democratic forces, and the development of deterrence mechanisms before the possible start of direct involvement in the war.

Introduction

At the end of April 2025, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky expressed concern over Russia's activities in Belarus. He stated that, under the pretext of military exercises, Russia may be preparing offensive operations while concealing its specific objectives and plans. Zelensky emphasized that such actions could pose a threat not only to Ukraine but also to other countries, such as Lithuania and Poland, and called on the international community to be prepared for any scenario¹.

Since 2022, the Republic of Belarus under Lukashenko's leadership has entered a phase of large-scale transformation aimed at preparing for a potential armed conflict on the side of the Russian Federation. Lukashenko has repeatedly emphasized the need to prepare for a possible war. In September 2024, he stated: "We must prepare for war."²

These processes have affected key areas of state and public life, including legislation, the armed forces, the economy, education, the ideological sphere, and infrastructure. As a strategic ally of Russia, Belarus is becoming increasingly integrated into the sphere of its military interests, establishing a comprehensive military, political, and legal foundation for entering the war.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the measures undertaken between 2022 and 2025, assesses the regime's level of preparedness for participation in military operations, and offers recommendations on how to counteract the implementation of negative scenarios.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxoEzr6VRAM>

² <https://belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-ob-oboronosposobnosti-nado-gotovitsja-k-voine-i-daj-bog-chtoby-etoj-vojny-ne-bylo-663476-2024/>

Chapter 1. Transformation of the Political and Legal System

1.1 Strengthening the Role of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly (ABPA)

The new version of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, adopted in 2022, significantly changed the structure of state power by strengthening the position of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly (ABPA). The ABPA is now empowered to approve the deployment of armed forces beyond the country's borders and to authorize states of emergency and martial law. As such, it becomes the key body in decision-making processes related to entering a war, including within the framework of alliance commitments with Russia.

This body effectively functions as a parallel parliament, operating outside the standard system of checks and balances inherent in classical democratic institutions. Its legitimacy is ensured through a carefully selected body of delegates representing forces completely loyal to the regime. Thus, if formal approval is needed for entering a military conflict, the ABPA will serve as a guaranteed source of legitimization rather than a venue for genuine deliberation³.

In February 2025, Lukashenko announced the upcoming session of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly to be held in April⁴; however, it never took place. Despite preparatory activities, it was announced on April 17, 2025, that the exact date had yet to be determined⁵. This may indicate either a tactical pause or preparations for extraordinary decisions—most likely related to military matters—that require special conditions.

1.2 Update of Military Legislation and Strategic Documents

At the 7th All-Belarusian People's Assembly in April 2024, a new National Security Concept and an updated Military Doctrine were

³ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12300248>

⁴ <https://belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-anonsiroval-na-aprel-ocherednoe-zasedanie-vns-belarusi-695021-2025/>

⁵ <https://belta.by/regions/view/s-uchetom-mnenij-na-mestah-delegaty-vns-ot-minskoj-oblasti-obsudili-program-mu-razvitija-regiona-709694-2025/>

approved⁶. According to these documents, Belarus officially declared for the first time its readiness to deploy troops abroad in support of its allies⁷⁸. This marks a departure from the previous principle of neutrality and a defensive strategy enshrined in earlier versions.

The new doctrine allows for preemptive strikes if a conflict is deemed inevitable. This creates a legal foundation for participating in military actions initiated by an ally—primarily Russia. In addition, the legal framework has been updated: new versions of the laws “On Martial Law” and “On the State of Emergency” have been adopted⁹, significantly expanding the state’s powers during crises and conflicts, including by restricting citizens’ rights.

In April 2024, a law was passed allowing individuals with criminal records and prisoners to be conscripted into military service¹⁰ — a measure that had previously been implemented in Russia. These steps align with the overall logic of mobilization readiness and reflect a shortage of personnel in the armed forces. The legislative changes enable the state to rapidly deploy a wartime model of national governance.

Chapter 2. Modernization of the Armed Forces

2.1 Increase in Personnel and Reorganization of the Army

As of 2024, the Belarusian Armed Forces comprise approximately 48,600 military personnel, and around 63,000 in total when including civilian staff¹¹. Since 2022, there has been a sharp increase in contract-based service: the number of contract soldiers has grown by 1.5 times¹². Unlike conscripts, contract soldiers can be deployed for more

⁶<https://belta.by/society/view/delegaty-vns-utverdili-kontseptsiju-natsbezopasnosti-i-voennuju-doktrinu-630487-2024/>

⁷<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P924v0005>

⁸<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P924v0006>

⁹<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H11500244>

¹⁰<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400363>

¹¹https://web.archive.org/web/20240110220528/https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=belarus

¹²<https://euroradio.fm/ru/v-genshtabe-rasskazali-naskolko-v-belarusi-uvelichilos-kolichestvo-kontraktnikov>

complex missions, including participation in actual combat operations abroad.

Plans are in place to expand the army's size to 80,000 personnel¹³, particularly in connection with the creation of a Southern Operational Command—a formation directly tied to the Ukrainian front. At the same time, the reserve of the Armed Forces is estimated at 289,000, providing significant potential for mobilization.

2.2 People's Militia and Personnel Mobilization

The initiation of the People's Militia in 2023, with a potential size of up to 150,000 personnel¹⁴, represents a key element of the total war strategy. These forces are being prepared for tasks related to territorial defense and internal control, including the suppression of potential uprisings. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Defense is strengthening special units within the internal troops, indicating plans to establish a domestic "second front" in the event of destabilization.

In 2024–2025, mobilization procedures were significantly simplified. Military commissariats gained the authority to send draft notices via SMS, which now carry legal force¹⁵. Similar measures had previously been implemented in Russia for mobilization purposes. Draft notices can now be delivered not only by commissariat staff but also by representatives of the KGB, local authorities, and even organizations. There have been documented cases of criminal prosecution for draft evasion. Fines have been increased several times over, and deferrals are granted only to individuals with two or more underage children¹⁶.

Chapter 3. The War Economy: Mobilization Transformation

¹³ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2022/06/7/7350976/>

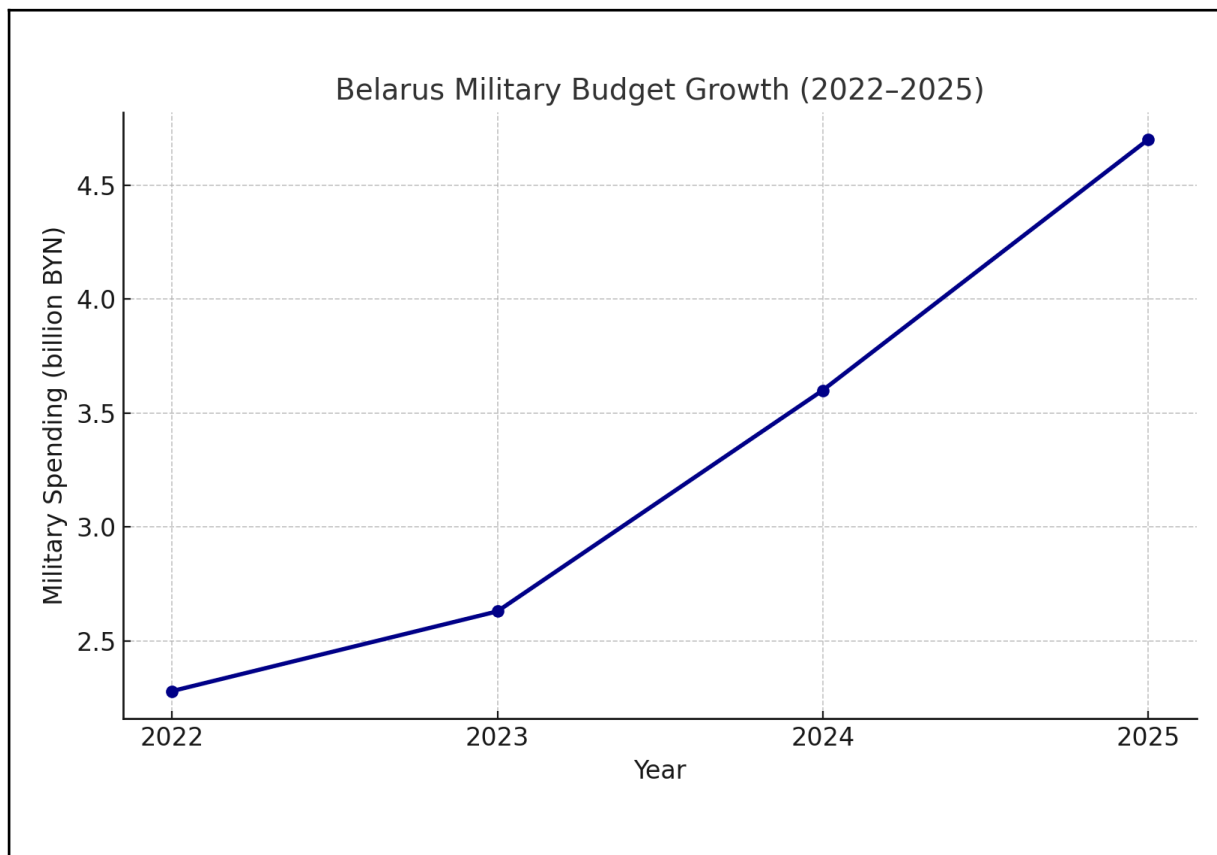
¹⁴ <https://www.sb.by/articles/khrenin-chislennost-narodnogo-opolcheniya-mozhet-sostavit-do-150-tysyach-chelovek.html?amp=1>

¹⁵ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400363>

¹⁶ https://www.mil.by/ru/virtual_recruitment/prizyvnika/otsrochka/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

3.1 Funding and Mobilization Powers

In 2025, defense spending increased by 32% compared to the previous year, reaching 4.7 billion Belarusian rubles. Of this amount, 145 million were allocated specifically for mobilization preparedness¹⁷. Decree No. 29 of 2025 granted the Ministry of Economy the authority to coordinate mobilization activities¹⁸, signaling a shift toward centralized resource management under emergency conditions.



The Belarusian economy is effectively being shifted to a system of mobilization planning. In several sectors, there is a clear militarization of production processes, expansion of production capacity, increased control over labor discipline and access to raw materials. Restrictions are being introduced on the movement of specialists, and secrecy is being heightened at key enterprises.

¹⁷ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400048>

¹⁸ <https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=p32500029>

3.2 Development of the Military-Industrial Complex

The State Military-Industrial Committee reported that 2024 was a record year in terms of newly developed weapons systems—24 new types¹⁹. Approximately 4,000 units of new weapons, military and special equipment, and auxiliary gear were adopted into service in 2024²⁰. As of 2025, serial production of these new models has begun. Priority has been given to the development of drones and electronic warfare systems. Ammunition production and radio-electronic warfare capabilities are also being expanded.

The Belarusian military-industrial complex is deeply integrated into the Russian defense industry. Enterprises supply components, equipment, and software. The joint development program through 2025 envisions coordinated actions in the event of war and joint support for the front lines.

For Reference

Belarusian enterprises play a key role in supporting the Russian military-industrial complex by supplying a wide range of equipment, components, and software. For instance, joint projects within the framework of military-technical cooperation and industrial collaboration have continued. In 2024, as part of the Comprehensive Interdepartmental Program for Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus in the Field of Aircraft Manufacturing, the practical implementation of the “Osvey” aircraft project began. Additionally, there were announcements about the possible construction of a drone manufacturing plant in Belarus to serve the needs of the Russian army. Below are the main areas of cooperation:

Wheeled and tracked chassis

- **Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant (MZKT):** supplies chassis for various Russian weapons systems, including:
 - Mobile missile systems Topol-M and Yars (MZKT-79221 chassis)
 - Iskander-M tactical missile systems (MZKT-7930)

¹⁹<https://belta.by/society/view/vs-belarusi-v-2024-godu-prinjali-na-vooruzhenie-24-razrabotki-goskomvoenpro-ma-694281-2025/>

²⁰https://vpk.gov.by/news/comm_news/na-kollegii-goskomvoenproma-podveli-itogi-2024-goda-i-opredelili-zadachi-razvitiya-otrasli-na-2025-g.html

- S-400 and S-500 air defense systems
- Smerch and Uragan-1M multiple launch rocket systems
- Bastion and Bal coastal defense missile systems
- **Minsk Tractor Plant (MTZ):** supplies tracked chassis for Tunguska and Tor air defense systems.

Optoelectronic Systems

- **OJSC "Peleng":** develops and supplies targeting systems, including:
 - Multi-channel sights Sosna-U for T-72B3, T-80BVM, and T-90 tanks
 - Thermal imaging sights Essa, Plisa, and Vesna-K
 - Sights for anti-tank systems Khrizantema-S
- **BelOMO:** manufactures optoelectronic devices for armored vehicles and small arms, holding around 10% of the Russian market in this field.

Electronics and Software

- **OJSC "Integral" and Transistor Factory:** supply microchips and semiconductor components for missile systems and other military equipment.
- **KB "Display":** develops and manufactures displays and compact computers for military aviation and armored vehicles, including the Armata tank.
- **OJSC "Ekran":** specializes in pilot-navigation complexes and control systems for fighter jets such as the Su-27, Su-30, MiG-29, and others.

Repair and Modernization of Equipment

- **OJSC "Minotor-Service":** the only Belarusian enterprise that performs serial repair and modernization of military equipment ordered by the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.
- Joint projects for the modernization of armored vehicles, including the BTR-80 and BMP-1/2, are carried out with the involvement of both Belarusian and Russian enterprises.

Chapter 4. Military Cooperation with Russia

4.1 Joint Exercises and the Formation of a Regional Grouping of Forces

Since October 2022, a Regional Grouping of Forces has been formed on the basis of interstate agreements between Belarus and Russia. Within this grouping, Russian military contingents—including aviation, artillery, and motorized rifle units—are permanently stationed on Belarusian territory. Their numbers fluctuate depending on the operational situation, but in some instances have exceeded 9,000 personnel, particularly during the active phases of combat in Ukraine.

Over the years, numerous joint exercises have been conducted, including *Union Resolve*, *Union Shield*, *Zapad*, and others. These drills have spanned the entire territory of Belarus and have displayed a distinctly offensive nature. The focus has been on practicing coordination among different military branches, logistical support, and the use of missile-artillery systems and unmanned platforms.

Neighboring countries have expressed particular concern over the upcoming *Zapad-2025* exercises scheduled for September 2025. “*Zapad-2025 is planned to be one of the largest exercises in recent years, involving more than 13,000 personnel*,” stated Valery Revenko, a representative of the Belarusian Ministry of Defense²¹.

In the previous large-scale exercise *Zapad-2021*, around 200,000 military personnel participated. While open sources do not specify how many of them were stationed on Belarusian territory, it is known that four training grounds in Belarus and ten in Russia were involved. Preliminary reports suggest that up to 100,000 troops may take part in the upcoming *Zapad-2025* exercises scheduled for September²².

According to Western and Ukrainian analysts, these exercises may serve as a cover for the deployment of additional Russian troops and infrastructure, and could potentially act as a launching point for an escalation of the regional conflict. A similar strategy was employed by Russia ahead of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

²¹<https://soyuz.by/bezopastnost/revenko-v-belorussko-rossiyskih-ucheniayah-zapad-2025-primut-uchastie-bolee-13-tys-chelovek-lichnogo-sostava>

²²https://soyuz.by/bezopastnost/revenko-v-belorussko-rossiyskih-ucheniayah-zapad-2025-primut-uchastie-bolee-13-tys-chelovek-lichnogo-sostava?utm_source=chatgpt.com

4.2 Arms Supplies, Training, and Deployment of Nuclear Capabilities

Russia has transferred a number of modern weapon systems to Belarus. These include S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems, Iskander-M operational-tactical missile systems, electronic warfare systems, and others²³. Russian military specialists are involved in training Belarusian crews and maintenance personnel. Joint training grounds in Belarus are used for combat coordination, testing of weapon systems, and tactical scenario exercises.

A key event was the signing of an agreement in 2023 regarding the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons on Belarusian territory. According to official information, the relevant infrastructure facilities were modernized and are ready to accommodate the munitions. Additionally, Lukashenko announced the readiness to deploy the "Oreshnik" missile system in Belarus²⁴. Lukashenko also announced his readiness to deploy the *Oreshnik* missile system on the territory of Belarus.²⁵ This significantly increases Belarus's strategic importance in the context of the confrontation between Russia and NATO countries.

An important element of military cooperation was the involvement of representatives of the Wagner Group in the training of Belarusian troops. After Prigozhin's mutiny and the partial withdrawal of the group from Ukraine, some of its units were temporarily stationed in Belarus, where they participated in training personnel, particularly in storming tactics and small-group operations in urban environments.²⁶

Chapter 5. Infrastructure and Territorial Defense

5.1 Strengthening of Borders and Construction of Defensive Structures

²³https://iz.ru/1443297/2022-12-19/belorusiia-postavila-na-boevoe-dezhurstvo-s-400-i-kompleksy-iskander?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁴ <https://www.interfax.ru/world/964576>

²⁵ <https://www.interfax.ru/world/1004727>

²⁶https://overclockers.ru/blog/Zelikman/show/99059/instruktory-chvk-vagner-nachali-podgotovku-belorusskih-bojcov?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Since 2023, Belarus has been actively implementing a project to build a system of defensive fortifications known as the "Khrenin Line." These fortified areas, officially called "resistance hubs," are located along strategically important directions, primarily in the south — along the border with Ukraine, and also in the west — near the border with Poland and Lithuania. They include a system of trenches, permanent firing positions, mine-explosive barriers, and logistical hubs.

For reference

Key facilities of the "Khrenin Line"

1. *Kalino, Gomel Region*

The first fortified area was established in May 2023 in the village of Kalino, approximately 20 km from the border with Ukraine and 10 km from Gomel. It includes trenches, firing positions, and anti-tank obstacles.

2. *Saki, Brest Region*

In June 2023, the construction of fortifications began near the village of Saki, 5 km from Zhabinka, 28 km from the border with Poland, and 47 km from the border with Ukraine. Trenches, bunkers, and "dragon's teeth" are being constructed here.

3. *Hrodna, Hrodna Region*

In January 2024, the construction of a fortified area near Hrodna began.

Additionally, work is underway to modernize the transportation infrastructure. Airfields, bridges, and roads are being updated, and temporary crossings suitable for heavy armored vehicles are being constructed. Military infrastructure from the Soviet era is being restored, including ammunition depots, hangars, and dual-use railway tracks.

The Belarusian Railway is transitioning to a higher level of security. Personnel changes have been reported, along with stricter access control measures. All of this may indicate preparations for logistical support for a large military grouping within the country or the transit of Russian forces to the western and southern fronts.

5.2 Preparation of Territorial Troops and Civil Reserves

Since the beginning of 2024, there has been a significant increase in the intensity of exercises involving territorial troops and civilian personnel. In January 2025, large-scale training events were held in the Gomel district, involving reservists, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the people's militia. In April, similar activities took place in the Grodno district. During the exercises, tasks such as camouflage, countering saboteurs, ensuring the resilience of command posts, and coordination between various security structures were practiced.

At the same time, a system for preparing the population is being developed. Special training centers have been established, where classes on the basics of military service, handling weapons, and actions in emergency situations are conducted. These activities involve both youth and representatives of the civilian administration. The pre-conscription training program is being expanded in schools, colleges, and universities.

Chapter 6. Ideological Mobilization and Control over Internal Stability

6.1 Military-Patriotic Education and Ideological Training

After the suppression of the 2020–2021 protests, Lukashenko's regime shifted towards active ideological mobilization. Patriotism education programs cover schools, universities, and youth organizations. All 10th and 11th-grade students are required to undergo pre-conscription training, which includes physical fitness, shooting practice, and drill training. Elements of military uniforms are introduced, and ceremonial oaths of allegiance are organized.

Special attention is given to military-patriotic camps. It was reported that in 2024, Lukashenko's regime planned to "rejuvenate" over 30,000 children in military-patriotic camps, organized on the basis of military

units and formations²⁷. Specialized institutions such as cadet corps, military-oriented classes, and military-patriotic clubs are actively developed. These initiatives present military service as a prestigious and heroic occupation, fostering a sense of loyalty to the state and the armed forces among the youth.

State media and propaganda resources broadcast narratives about the threat from the West, NATO, and Ukraine. The image of the enemy is used to consolidate society and justify repressions. A campaign has been launched on television and the internet to promote military service and voluntary participation in the country's defense.

6.2 Repressive Policies and Purging of Regime Opponents

At the same time as mobilization, the authorities are conducting a campaign to purge potential opposition. Between 2022 and 2025, dozens of criminal cases have been initiated for charges such as discrediting the army, evading conscription, and spreading "fake news." Human rights organizations report about 1,200 political prisoners. Administrative arrests, dismissals, and expulsion from universities are being widely used.²⁸

Control over citizens' activities is tightening at all levels. Civil servants, employees of the transport sector, and key enterprises are required to undergo ideological screening. Measures to monitor migration and travel abroad have been strengthened. In many cases, individuals who

Furthermore, the regime of Alexander Lukashenko is systematically fighting against alternative power centers, such as the United Transitional Cabinet (UTC) and the Coordination Council (CC). These structures, formed after the 2020 protests, represent an attempt to create a democratic and legitimate political representation of the Belarusian people.

²⁷https://belta.by/society/view/bolee-30-tys-detej-planirujut-ozdorovit-letom-v-voenno-patrioticheskikh-lagerjah-belarusi-637871-2024/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁸ <https://prisoners.spring96.org/ru>

Lukashenko and his security apparatus view the UTC and CC as a threat to their power, labeling them as "extremist" and even "terrorist organizations»²⁹. Criminal cases are opened against participants in these bodies, a propaganda campaign is launched, and any interaction with them within the country is punished as "treason" or "anti-state activity." This approach demonstrates the regime's intent to completely suppress any forms of alternative political institutions and competition.

Chapter 7. Recommendations for Western Partners

The Lukashenko regime is steadily strengthening its military, logistical, and industrial cooperation with the Russian Federation, reproducing elements of the preparation for aggression observed in 2020–2022. The lack of preventive measures during that period allowed Russia to use Belarusian territory for its invasion of Ukraine. Today, there is an urgent need to increase pressure to deprive the Lukashenko regime of the resources necessary to pursue this goal and to prevent a repeat of this mistake.

In 2021, Belarus, already under sanctions by that time, unexpectedly significantly increased trade turnover with the European Union. It reached 16.3 billion USD, which was 36.5% more than in 2020³⁰. Trade turnover with the European Union. It reached 16.3 billion USD, which was 36.5% more than in 2020. This could indicate an attempt to build reserves in case of more severe sanctions. Although the growth in trade can partly be attributed to the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, other measures taken simultaneously support the theory that preparations for sanctions were underway.

Before the full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022, the regimes of Russia and Belarus took large-scale steps to prepare for the anticipated restrictions, covering the financial, industrial, and logistical sectors. Some of the most notable of these are

²⁹<https://prokuratura.gov.by/ru/media/novosti/nadzor-za-resheniyami-po-ugolovnym-i-grazhdanskim-delam/generalnyy-prokuror-30042025/>

³⁰https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/belarus_en

1. **Currency Security and Reserve Operations:**

- **Import of Cash Currency:** Russia secretly imported tens of billions of dollars and euros to ensure liquidity amid sanctions.³¹
- **Withdrawal of Gold from Western Vaults:** Russia withdrew gold from reserves held in Western countries and relocated it to friendly jurisdictions.

2. **Creation of Logistical and Financial Bypass Schemes:**

- Mass registration of intermediary companies through third countries.
- Testing of grey import schemes using Belarusian intermediaries.

3. **Import Substitution and Economic Mobilization:**

- The import substitution program (2020-2021) within the framework of the Union State of Russia and Belarus.
- Creation of redundant production facilities in Belarus, including military components.

4. **Legal and Technical Isolation Measures:**

- The law on the "sovereign internet" in Russia and the deployment of offline versions of software.
- Tightened control over NGO financing and independent media.

5. **Expansion of Ties with China and Asian Countries:**

- Growth of China's share in foreign trade, transition to settlements in yuan and dirhams.

6. **Military and Propaganda Measures:**

- Joint exercises (including "Zapad-2021") and an increase in anti-Western rhetoric.

Given the above, the European Union and other democratic countries must deliver a preemptive sanctioning blow to prevent a possible

³¹<https://www.occrp.org/en/scoop/western-banks-sent-billions-in-cash-to-russia-on-eve-of-ukraine-invasion-data-shows>

renewed invasion from Belarusian territory into Ukraine or aggression against NATO countries.

I. To enhance the effectiveness of already imposed sanctions and eliminate the possibility of circumvention, several methods and measures will be effective, such as:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

II. To increase pressure on the Lukashenko regime and compel a shift in its policy, the following measures can be implemented:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

³² <https://istories.media/en/stories/2024/10/17/fake-transit/>

³³ https://belzhd.info/statistics/zheleznodorozhnyi-eksport-belorusskih-gruzov-za-11-mesyaczev-2024-goda-chast-3-polsha/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

All of the measures already enacted must be maintained and strengthened. An escalation of sanction pressure should send a clear signal that a united Europe and its allies will not tolerate the use of Belarus as an instrument of Russian aggression.

In addition to sanctions, support is needed for Belarusian democratic forces and independent structures. The West must send an unequivocal message: any assistance in military aggression will result in complete international isolation.

We call on our Western partners to revise the current reactive approach to sanctions against the Lukashenko regime and to adopt preventive, preemptive measures. Instead of responding to repressions and

³⁴ <https://eurasia.expert/voenno-tekhnicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo-rossii-i-belarusi-perspektivy-i-riski/>

aggressive acts after they occur, sanctions should deter and deprive the regime of resources before it can repress and oppress society, deepen its military-industrial integration with the aggressor, and, above all, before it has the opportunity to carry out a new full-scale act of aggression against Belarus's neighbors. Only such a proactive strategy will prevent further crimes and ensure the security of the entire region. Without decisive preemptive action, Belarus may once again become a tool of war. The purpose of sanctions is not only punishment, but prevention.

Conclusion

The period from 2022 to 2025 marked a stage of systemic transformation of Belarus into a mobilization-based autocratic state. The Lukashenko regime systematically built a legal, political, economic, and ideological infrastructure that enables a rapid transition to martial law and participation in an armed conflict.

Integration with the Russian armed forces, the revision of the military doctrine, increased defense spending, the militarization of education and propaganda, the creation of reserve and territorial formations, intensified repression, and logistical preparations all indicate a high level of the regime's readiness for war. The cancelled session of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly in April 2025 may represent either a tactical pause or a prelude to extraordinary decisions.

In 2022, the Lukashenko regime and the Kremlin refrained from deploying the Belarusian Armed Forces due to Belarus's unpreparedness for such a development, which posed a threat to the regime itself. Now, the degree of readiness for more aggressive scenarios has significantly increased. This suggests that the Lukashenko regime is already potentially prepared for the next phase—entry into war. However, this does not mean that events will necessarily follow this scenario.

Additionally, the analysis shows that Belarus is actively involved in schemes to circumvent sanctions, providing Russia with dual-use goods,

logistics, and industrial cooperation. The regime has deliberately prepared for external pressure: mechanisms for evading sanctions were created, production was duplicated, and foreign trade was reoriented. Belarus has effectively become not just an ally, but also a part of the military-economic machine of the Kremlin.

The disregard for these processes in 2020–2022 led to catastrophic consequences. Repeating this mistake is unacceptable. A strategy of preventive deterrence—through sanctions, blocking logistical hubs, supporting democratic forces, and clear international signals—is essential to prevent a new wave of aggression, including from Belarusian territory.

The goal of the proposed measures is not merely punishment but prevention. Without an active response, Belarus could once again be used as a launchpad for destabilizing Europe. The window of opportunity for pressure is rapidly closing. A decision must be made as soon as possible—before the cost of delay becomes irreversibly high.