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Master's thesis

**Cultural Diplomacy and Media Narratives in Building State Brotherhood:
The case of Lithuanian-Georgian Relations.**

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Abstract

The notion of state brotherhood gains incredible relevance and significance in the contemporary political world, which is characterized by political uncertainty and international armed conflicts. In the global chaos, state brotherhood serves as a tool for international communication, providing support, confidence, and a sense of belonging for the nations. It serves as an instrument for achieving a goal, surviving, and improving one's international status. Interestingly, state brotherhood is also a product of communication, which is implemented through cultural diplomacy and media content. It is built on similar identities, common meanings, and cognitive frameworks, shared values, goals, and interests. The study underscores the importance of the state brotherhood in the field of international communication and systemizes the process of state brotherhood building. The research aims to analyze what are the roles and functions of media content in maintaining the state brotherhood. Through the empirical research, media narrative analysis revealed the immense contribution of media content in state brotherhood maintenance, based on the case of the Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood. The research results reveal that media content holds a significant role in constructing and shaping state brotherhood by reflecting its existence and delivering it to the public consciousness. Over and above that, media content has a consequential effect on the development of the state brotherhood by crafting narratives that shape the public perception, and provoke predetermined emotions and attitudes in society. As a result, the media reflects and affects the state brotherhood and holds the power to either further strengthen the ties or completely disassemble the relations between countries.

Keywords: *state brotherhood, media narratives, cultural diplomacy, Georgia, Lithuania.*

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Santrauka

Valstybinės brolybės sąvoka įgauna neįtikėtiną aktualumą ir reikšmę šiuolaikiniame politiniame pasaulyje, kuriam būdingas politinis neapibrėžtumas ir tarptautiniai ginkluoti konfliktai. Visuotiniame chaose valstybinė brolybė tarnauja kaip tarptautinės komunikacijos įrankis, teikiantis paramą, pasitikėjimą ir priklausymo jausmą tautoms. Ji tarnauja kaip instrumentas tikslui pasiekti, išlikti ir pagerinti savo tarptautinį statusą. Įdomu tai, kad valstybinė brolybė taip pat yra komunikacijos produktas, įgyvendinamas per kultūrinę diplomatiją ir žiniasklaidos turinį. Ji grindžiama panašiais tapatumais, bendromis reikšmėmis ir kognityviniais modeliais, bendromis vertybėmis, tikslais ir interesais. Tyrimas pabrėžia valstybinės brolybės svarbą tarptautinės komunikacijos srityje ir susistemina valstybinės brolybės kūrimo procesą. Tyrimo tikslas – išanalizuoti žiniasklaidos turinio vaidmenį ir funkcijas palaikant valstybinę brolybę. Empirinio tyrimo metu žiniasklaidos naratyvo analizė atskleidė didžiulį žiniasklaidos turinio indėlį palaikant valstybinę brolybę, remiantis Lietuvos ir Gruzijos valstybinės brolijos atveju. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad žiniasklaidos turinys atlieka reikšmingą vaidmenį kuriant ir formuojant valstybinę brolybę, atspindėdamas jos egzistavimą ir perteikdamas ją visuomenės sąmonei. Be to, žiniasklaidos turinys daro reikšmingą poveikį valstybinės brolijos raidai, kurdamas naratyvus, kurie formuoja visuomenės suvokimą ir provokuoja iš anksto nustatytas emocijas bei požiūrį visuomenėje. Todėl žiniasklaida atspindi ir daro įtaką valstybinei brolijai ir turi galią dar labiau sustiprinti ryšius arba visiškai sugriauti santykius tarp šalių.¹

Raktiniai žodžiai: *valstybių brolybė, žiniasklaidos naratyvai, kultūrinė diplomatija, Sakartvelo, Lietuva.*

¹ Google Translate was used for translational purposes.

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INTRODUCTION

This research explores the notion of state brotherhood and its systematic development based on the case of the Georgian-Lithuanian brotherhood. The study is designed to understand the process of establishing a state brotherhood by analyzing the role of media and cultural diplomacy. For deeper analysis, the research tackles the importance of ideology, social identity, and purposefully crafted events in constructing state brotherhood. State brotherhood is a very underrated concept in the field of international communication. There is no clear understanding of what a state brotherhood is in the international communication field, or how cultural diplomacy and media content contribute to the development of the state brotherhood. Therefore, this research will try to find an answer to it. The international society is in the presence of wide-scale wars, and an alarming political landscape where the principles of freedom and equality are being disrespected and neglected, while international friendships and brotherhoods are awakening, creating bonds and choosing sides. Therefore, in today's international scene, we have an increasingly important role for state brotherhoods. State brotherhood is an instrument to achieve a goal, survive, and improve international status. Recent history carries a lot of examples when brotherhood between countries determined their place in the international arena. The rising interest in becoming a member of particular international organizations has also raised efforts to establish state brotherhood with relevant countries. This is why the case of Georgian-Lithuanian state brotherhood complements this research the best. The relations between these countries are based on shared experiences and assistance to Georgia to become a part of the EU. Hence, the research follows the traces of the state brotherhood formation and the role of media and cultural diplomacy in its maintenance.

The existing literature is extremely fragmented, and it is difficult to describe the reasoning and instruments of forming state brotherhood. Current scientific literature lacks a modern world analysis with a correlation of state brotherhood, which would have added a lot of insights into this concept. The literature lacks the presence of a general theoretical perspective that can explain how state brotherhood is established and constructed, and what shapes their communication and behavior. Over and above that, the studies lack general analytical frameworks that could guide the study of state brotherhoods. Analysis of numerous studies reveals that no in-depth scientific research has been conducted on the topic of cultural diplomacy and media narratives and their implications for state brotherhood. There are white spots in understanding how current political changes in Georgia are reflected in Georgian and Lithuanian media. Addressing these aspects is crucial to understanding what kind of impact media content has on the Georgian-Lithuanian state brotherhood. Filling these gaps

can positively contribute to the field of international communication and broaden the knowledge it holds about state brotherhood.

Communication is a main function of state brotherhood. It creates better conditions for communication among international entities. We are in the presence of military confrontations and hostilities, which push countries to take sides, form alliances, strengthen organic state brotherhoods, or establish them artificially. State brotherhoods are not just a historical or political category. It is sustained through narratives, which are conveyed through media and cultural diplomacy. The case of Lithuania and Georgia is especially fascinating and insightful because their brotherhood is rooted in shared social experiences and solidarity, which is being tested as we discuss it, due to current political disturbances in Georgia. It is crucial to dive deep into the Georgian-Lithuanian state brotherhood and explore the role of media content and cultural diplomacy. The latter political degradation in Georgia resulted in a loss of Lithuanian support and solidarity in becoming a member of the European Union. Georgia is going back to political settings that were once the reasons to establish state brotherhood with Lithuania.

The state brotherhood phenomenon is not thoroughly studied. However, there are still a few key authors worth mentioning, such as Plato, who speaks of brotherhood as a union of citizens, which excludes barbarians. Therefore, in Plato's understanding, brotherhood can only work within familiar groups that share a similar culture and understanding. Xenophon continues Plato's way and describes the brotherhood as a bond of friends, which eliminates those who are not friends. Greek poleis were characterized by establishing brotherhood with one polis, but eliminating other undesired poleis (Ratzinger, 1960). Alberto Melucci emphasizes the significance of collective identity in fostering a sense of brotherhood. Collective identity is one of the bases of brotherhoods, which creates a common cognitive framework for its members (Al-Anani, 2016). Over and above that, Gibbs (1962) believes that brotherhoods have socio-psychological, instrumental, integrative, and stabilizing functions (Gibbs, 1962). Other researchers, like Sundberg, suggest that Brotherhoods are well-organized social relationships that are extremely exclusive and collectivist. It is distinguished by the sense of solidarity and mutual assistance (Sundberg, 2019).

Walter R. Fisher proposes a concept of homo narrans – a different view of human beings from homo sapiens. Homo sapiens, as a rational being, understands the world based on evidence and logic only. However, Fisher believes that humans are communicating and understanding the world based on narratives, since stories can have different meanings and values, which determine the way of understanding. Narrative is a symbolic action that has meaning for humans, some kind of sequence, and an opportunity to interpret. It can be real and fictional depending on the interpretation. Therefore,

this theory proves that sometimes narratives can be more important in communication than logical reasoning and evidence. It does not deny the notions of rationality, logic, or reason, but it reengineers them and makes them applicable to a broader type of human communication (Fisher, 1985). The idea of homo-narrans is further supported by Alasdair MacIntyre (1984), who refers to people as storytelling animals (MacIntyre, 1984). In the structural analysis of narrative (1975), Roland Barthes suggests that we are surrounded by a variety of media and different narratives. There is no time or space as a limit, and the existence of narrative starts with the existence of mankind. Narrative is a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon that defines the means of understanding and decision-making (Barthes, 1975). Different narratives on one story might have different speeds, time orders, frequencies, be presented by different people (some more important, some less), and be shown from different perspectives, which will create a desired public perception and opinion in society (Genette, 1988).

The research is dedicated to answering the following scientific question: How does the media content participate in the Georgian-Lithuanian state brotherhood maintenance?

The research aims to disclose the role of media content in maintaining state brotherhood, exploring the Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood case.

In achieving the aims, the following tasks were performed:

- to define the meaning and importance of state brotherhood in the field of international communication and illustrate the role and functions of the media content in state brotherhood building;
- to disclose the existence and the grounds of the Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood;
- to find out the narratives of Georgian pro-governmental and anti-governmental media outlets about Lithuania;
- to find out the narratives of private and state-owned Lithuanian media outlets about Georgia.

The study is carried out in the following steps:

1. Analysis of scientific literature to discover the existing perspectives on the topic and identify the gaps.
2. Collection of empirical data from the Georgian and Lithuanian media outlets.
3. Systematizing and coding of themes.
4. Interpretation of general trends and narratives over the years.

The media articles were selected based on their relevance and insightful representation of the Lithuanian-Georgian relations. The themes of the articles were not predefined. Instead, recurring

themes emerged inductively after reading and analyzing the media articles. The coding aids in reducing the large number of topics and makes the dataset manageable by organizing interrelated sub-themes of the articles into larger thematic categories, based on conceptual relevance.

The empirical research analyzed data spanning 14 years from 2012 to November 2025. The timeframe is limited due to the unavailability of the prior coverage, since the earlier materials of media articles have already been archived. The materials were selected from the Georgian pro-government media outlet Imedi News and the anti-government media portal Radio Liberty. Also, from Lithuanian state-owned and private media organizations, LRT and Delfi. A total of 6,873 articles were selected for analysis. Upon completion of the thorough content analysis and coding process, 15 dominant themes emerged. The comparative analysis was conducted to determine the thematic trends over the years in Georgian and Lithuanian media and interpret the produced narratives.

The thesis is divided into 4 chapters. The first chapter explores the concept of state brotherhood and the role of media in its maintenance. The second chapter reviews the Georgian-Lithuanian state brotherhood by exploring the shared social and historical experiences, followed by an analysis of cultural diplomacy in the context of media and state brotherhood. The third chapter is devoted to the empirical research design, and the last chapter encompasses the results and findings of the research, followed by the discussion section that underlines the implications.

1. THE CONCEPT OF STATE BROTHERHOOD

1.1 What is state brotherhood

The state brotherhood is an extremely complex notion. It is an organized social relationship with a code of norms and an instrument to create a better society. It has integrative, instrumental, and socio-psychological roles. The topic of state brotherhood is extremely underrated in the field of international communication. Brotherhood is what has united different countries and nations for centuries and years. Therefore, it is a very old material of communication, however poorly studied and under-explored. Firstly, because state brotherhood is exceptionally complex, consisting of many interrelated subjects that create a system of communication. Even though many scholars have offered different explanations of this phenomenon, it is still not clear how to conceptualize the notion of state brotherhood (Sundberg, 2019). The brotherhood strongly stands on the principles of solidarity, a sense of belonging, shared social experiences, accountability, and psychological connection within the group. In the Byzantine Empire, the brotherhood was a social networking tool. It was highly incorporated in religious rituals, where the church could convert friendship into a brotherhood. This is the first clue that brotherhood and friendship were long-time differentiated (Rapp, 2016). Historically, the notion of brotherhood has primarily been considered as a blood-related relationship. However, its metaphorical understanding is way older. The concept of state brotherhood was an object of interest in ancient Greece, too. Plato refers to a citizen as a brother, which makes all citizens brothers to each other, even if they are not blood-related. As stated by Xenophon, brotherhood is a tool for unity, and it excludes those who do not belong. Ancient Greece was characterized by having brotherhoods within poleis and excluding others from the unity (Ratzinger, 1960). Another interesting case is the Muslim Brotherhood, where brotherhood turned into a sociopolitical movement in the Middle East. Scholars believe that brotherhoods derive from strong, collective identities, which work as a code of norms. It is because collective identity provides a shared cognitive framework, which, in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, is the Sharia (Al-Anani, 2016). State brotherhood is considered to be an instrument for creating a better world and society. The story of the African tribes, the Azande and Tanala, is a mesmerizing example of how brotherhood effects a socio-psychological environment by serving an instrumental and integrative functions. Establishing brotherhood helped the tribes to cooperate, share properties, and agree on mutual aid. It also brought the people together and mitigated conflicts, which proves that brotherhood can also be considered as a stabilizer (Gibbs, 1962). The phenomenon of state brotherhood is distinguished by its sophisticated model of communication. While freedom, equality, and fraternity are the core principles of Western political thought, fraternity, as a synonym for brotherhood, has always been neglected and sidelined. The principles of freedom

and equality are undoubtedly important, but brotherhood appears to be more relatable in present chaotic world. The epoch of the Enlightenment embraced the idea of brotherhood even more by advocating the idea that all people and nations are brothers (Kulska & Solarz, 2025).

Nowadays, a unique type of relationship between countries is often mentioned as international friendship. Countries do not have to be located close to each other to establish an international friendship (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014). International friendship does not need shared history, culture, or identity. For friendships, countries must share a future (Eznack & Koschut, 2014). Therefore, state brotherhood might be inherited from the past, but friendship is built on the future. International friendship can also be described as a peaceful and cooperative nature of existence between countries. Many scholars question even the existence of friendship in the global arena, but not only does it exist, but it also reshapes many different areas of the international system. International friendship affects not only the directly involved parties of the relationship, but also their surroundings. But sometimes international friendship can be perceived as a state brotherhood and vice versa.

Wolfers (1962) portrays international relations as a spectrum of enmity (hostility) and amity (Friendship). He believes that cooperation leads countries towards friendships, while states that prefer to act independently have little to no international friends. There are two types of international friendship: inward-directed and outward-directed. Inward-directed friendships are focused on developing and strengthening relationships with other countries for collaboration and internal benefits. On the other side, outward-directed friendships are formed due to external threats, where countries join their abilities to be more confident and safer. Another reason for creating international friendships is rooted in the theory of Democratic Peace. Russett (1993) and Doyle (1983) believed that two countries build friendship because it helps develop democracy and peace. It seems like Russett and Doyle have the same point of view as Wolfers. Except they think that friendships are both inward and outward directed. Also, they add that liberal states are more likely to form friendships with each other due to having like-minded democracies (Oelsner & Koschut, 2014).

The concept of a security community proves that countries form international relations to create a community where groups will cultivate shared confidence and identity. The community comes together for unity and cooperation, which guarantees them a secure existence. Karl Deutsch believes that countries establish relations not just for a stable global order, but for stable global peace. In a community, countries stay independent, but still have a sense of "We". It creates a situation where countries rely on each other, have trust, and fight together for peace, which requires well-tailored communication. There are many forms of communication, such as trading, migration, educational programs, tourism, and cultural projects, which create a social fabric between two states. These

processes can be explained from constructivism, which views international relations as a chaotic box of resources and rules, and countries have to build commonalities, such as shared identity, rules, and norms that will support peace and friendship relationships in the international arena (Adler & Barnett, 1998). On the other hand, realism does not recognize friendly relations between countries. Hobbes, one of the fundamentalists of realism, believes that there are no common values or shared ideas unless we live in a whole centralized authority. Countries should not trust each other and instead, expect only the worst from each other. Even the most trustworthy country can break faith with others if something doesn't correlate with its interests (Wendt, 1999). Following this idea brings us to the conclusion that international friendships are born from national interests and self-benefit. For instance, a fear of war pushes nations to unite and become stronger together. They do not unite because they care for each other, but because of the instinct of survival and fear of war. Representatives of neo-liberal institutionalism study how countries start to cooperate to ensure their safety and survival. They believe that countries establish a basic form of relationship with each other, but still dedicate their whole effort to pursuing their own interests (Adler & Barnett, 1998). Accordingly, international friendships are not established because of common identity or shared culture, but because "war may at any moment occur" (Wendt, 1999, p. 252). Another reason why countries engage in international friendships is that it helps them repair their reputation. Sometimes a country has to make international society forget about its past mistakes, things it has done against humanity, or another country. Contemporary relations between Germany and Israel are the best model to observe. The German-Israeli relationship has one of the main features of friendship, which is shared past and future, where the past is the Holocaust, and the future is to never let it happen again. Therefore, countries can use artificially established international friendships to change their global image (Berenskötter & Mitrani, 2022)

The ongoing political uneasiness in the world, wars, and an alarming political situation result in violating the principles of freedom and equality and push political nominees to rethink the importance of state brotherhood. State brotherhood can be utilized as a strategic communication tool for uniting and surviving. The present fragmented world has the perfect conditions for constructing new international relationships and establishing state brotherhoods. There are different motivations why one would want to establish brotherhood with another country. Obviously, war is one of the biggest motivations, because it directly influences a country's socio-political environment. Another motivation is related to becoming a part of a particular international organization. A great example would be the European Union and how the Eastern European countries raise the effort to establish state brotherhood with EU member countries, or the countries that have the same aims and goals. As already mentioned, the concept of state brotherhood can be confused with international friendship.

The main distinction between brotherhood and just a friendship lies in its collective nature. Referring to Durkheim's concept of mechanical solidarity, state brotherhood is considered a group relationship and communication that has a strong feeling of solidarity. It has strong ties to particular organizational membership and focuses on decision-making. Friendship between nations is usually considered to be self-centric, spontaneous, and voluntary, whilst brotherhood is distinguished by its exclusive nature, which is decided upon. It is less individual-centric and more collectivist. Shortly, brotherhood is a well-organized, exclusive social relationship (Sundberg, 2019).

Scholars have offered four pillars of brotherhood, which consist of solidarity, shared social experiences, belonging, and accountability. Solidarity is composed of mutual assistance and loyalty. Shared social experiences are all the political, historical, cultural, and religious commonalities that member countries have experienced (McCreary, 2015). For instance, the core ideology of post-World War II Yugoslavia was brotherhood and unity. Yugoslavia was dedicated to uniting diverse ethnic groups and nationalities, such as Slovenians, Serbs, Croatians, Macedonians, and others, under the same identity. To achieve this, Yugoslavia was putting emphasis on shared social experience, the historical struggle, and the past war. Also, there was an attempt to use shared achievements, such as building socialism together, as a ground for unity. This was supposed to avoid future conflict between different ethnicities. It is worth mentioning that state media played an enormous role in this process. The state media was carefully crafting narratives and using visual exposure to promote a harmonious multi-ethnic country. Over and above that, they have tried to sanitize the narrative of the past to align it with the vision of brotherhood and unity (Schwarzler, 2020). Accountability holds the members of the brotherhood responsible to each other, and when it comes to belonging, we must understand it as a feeling of being accepted and having a psychological connection with the group (McCreary, 2015).

Brotherhood could be analyzed as a very flexible phenomenon where the ideas of friendship, community, and solidarity overlap. Interestingly, as much as it unites, the state brotherhood can also become a reason for division. State brotherhood bonds the groups together, but it can cause hostility toward outsiders. That is why Pope Francis explained that even though fraternity is important, it will be more like a threat without good politics. Without good politics, brotherhood is just a political weapon used for manipulation. Pope emphasizes that state brotherhood must be built on honest commitment, where politics are devoted to the common good (Kulska & Solarz, 2025). According to Berger (1966), the social construction of reality explains how brotherhood works. It is a bridge between two different symbolic elements, which means that state brotherhood is not just political, but also a social and cultural weapon, which has to be used correctly and in a human way (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). On the other hand, Hannah Arendt believes that brotherhood should be understood as a natural bond, which will be driven emotionally. Brotherhood turns into a problematic and

dangerous concept in political life when it is created artificially. Unlike organic brotherhoods, artificial brotherhood fosters a false political community that disregards real historical divisions and puts down real political plurality. Therefore, brotherhood should be maintained as an organic process, which is not made up of a party's interests (Starkman, 2013).

1.2 How to build a state brotherhood

State brotherhoods are more common between nations that have a common language, culture, religion, and geographical location. However, its establishment begins with collective and social identity building among nations. Social identity is composed of individuals, groups of people, or, in some cases, bigger entities that form unity by sharing language, history, and complex symbolic settings (Kalin & Sambanis, 2018). Social identity works as a glue between groups of people. It brings a sense of belonging and provokes self-worth in individuals, and brings a purpose to life (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). No agreement on the definition of a social identity causes inconsistency in the study, but on the other hand, it gives us flexibility to apply different measurements to it. The complexity of the social identity varies, but when we relate it to the concept of state brotherhood, it comes to emotions, self-evaluation, and awareness. Sharing a similar identity helps the parties cooperate. However, it also leads them towards biases and exclusion of the "out-group". The stronger the group identity is, the more extreme the exclusion becomes (Jackson & Smith, 1999). During the formation of state brotherhoods, nations consider others "in-group" when they share commonalities, values, goals, and a general worldview. Whilst the "out-group" people are considered less trustworthy and remain hostile. When the members of different groups start to learn collective norms, it becomes possible to create a collective identity, which will generate a sense of belonging (Islam, 2014). This proves that state brotherhood can be formed between the countries that initially did not share any commonalities, but they learnt collective norms. In the modern world, state brotherhoods are formed even between nations that have a huge geographical distance. They might not have any single commonalities in religion or culture, but, sometimes, the same goal or enemy in sight is enough reason for nations to look forward to forming a state brotherhood. A great example of such would be the relations between Israel and the United States. They are located on different continents, but still managed to form strong bond. Apart from many social and economic reasons, one of the bases of their contemporary international relations is the same enemy in sight: terrorists. Therefore, the traditional understanding of state brotherhood is moving from the bond of nations with similar culture, to the bond of nations with the same goals and interests. This makes the concept of brotherhood even more complicated, but also very flexible.

State brotherhood can determine the behaviors of its members. For instance, the members of the brotherhood are most likely to support each other during the war. Coming back to the Social Identity Theory, an individual's behavior and self-concept are highly determined by their membership in a group (Jackson & Smith, 1999). State brotherhood building through identity is also powered by the self-categorization theory, which explains the stages of becoming a part of state brotherhood by applying the process of shaping group behavior. The self-categorization focuses on the importance of mentally identifying ourselves with a group. For this to happen, we need to see ourselves as a part of it. The next step is to adopt the group's characteristics and, lastly, create a mental image of what defines the group we are in. First, nations start to see themselves coming together, then they start sharing and adopting each other's cultural and social settings, and in the end, they come up with the mental image of the strong brotherly bond that they have created, which determines their behaviors, as well as decision-making processes. Some scholars refer to it as a depersonalization (Jackson & Smith, 1999). However, creating such a bond does not mean losing authenticity or freedom. It only reinforces the same goals, values, and emphasizes shared experience, commonalities, and aims. For example, the Eastern Partnership countries (Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia) have been trying to become a part of a bigger entity, such as the European Union. Part of the societies of these nations were concerned that joining the EU would lead their countries to lose traditions, culture, history, and values. The other part of society, which has mentally identified itself with the European Union, does not have such fears. It is because they have mentally understood that becoming a part of a bigger entity is more about getting stronger and having a safer community, which emphasizes diversity and cooperation.

Additionally, the theory of self-categorization proposes the thought that groups of people are afraid of uncertainty and by establishing bonds, they try to reduce it. For instance, the motivation of the nations is to reduce uncertainty about their status and place in the world. Becoming a member of an alliance helps in clarifying one's identities, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Identity brings validation and emotional support to our beliefs. Individuals tend to create bonds with others who have strong identities because it makes them feel safe and confident (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). This explains why nations tend to establish close relationships with stronger international entities. The moment we realize that we are not just individual animals, but members of a group, our personal and global view changes radically (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). After such a metamorphosis, nations are motivated to establish partnerships with strong entities, so they can feed their identity and feel confident. This explains why isolationism has never worked for any country. Being a part of a bigger entity is way more beneficial.

Looking from the other perspective, identity theories and their relations with the state brotherhood notion might be oversimplified. In today's realm, any kind of alliance has fluid dynamics. If we have

a look at the historical development of the various international relations, we will see that countries tend to change their partners according to the political and economic climate. Therefore, political and economic matters play a bigger role in cultivating a motivation to establish brotherhood with a strategic partner (Horsney, 2008).

Emotions are unavoidable and a fundamental part of a human being. Therefore, emotions play its significant role in state brotherhood building. Emotions can be derived from traumatic historical events. Emotions and trauma can bring nations together and contribute to creating “affective communities”. Such relations are built by utilizing representation. The representation usually consists of historical and media narratives, which collectively render the traumatic experience meaningful and important. Victims of a traumatic event represent and share emotional meanings with each other, which helps in building collective identity. Along with collective identity, traumatic experiences can be a foundation of new emotional cultures, which, on the other hand, construct new transnational communities. They are based on collective forms of feelings, which determine the notion of affective communities. Emotions shape our point of view and perception. Thus, they can never be left out of the nation’s social life (Hutchison, 2016). Trauma is not just as a personal struggle, but also as a symbolic and social process that pushes individuals together and forms unity. This idea is based on the theories of representation, which explain how different techniques of representation can turn trauma into a symbolic catalyst and play a role in the formation of state brotherhoods. It facilitates experiencing trauma collectively, create shared meanings, and form larger identities and communities. Trauma can be framed differently based on the cultures and political background. It can bring two nations together or pull them apart. Therefore, trauma can become a reason for the isolation of the two countries, but it is also possible to reconstruct and reestablish communication (Hutchison, 2016).

State brotherhood and mutual identity can be formed in both ways: when mutual identity pushes groups towards state brotherhood, and when state brotherhood causes the formation of mutual identity. For instance, countries that are related by geographical proximity, cultural or language settings usually share common values and the same identity settings, which increases the chance of state brotherhood formation. A great example of such a case is Azerbaijan-Turkish relations, which are often described as one nation, two states (Sariyeva, 2012). Neighboring countries often have similar international interests, which also helps build identity and establish brotherhoods based on shared interests and solidarity. At the beginning of the 90s, after the war of Nagorno-Karabakh, economic instability and crisis, Azerbaijan decided to build a stronger state with a Turkish orientation, avoiding the Russian orbit. During this period, Azerbaijan tried to embrace pan-Turkic customs, such as changing language and national names to reflect a more Turkish identity (Sariyeva, 2012). This helped Azerbaijan to become closer to Turkish identity and form a strong state brotherhood. However,

it raises a question: Are brotherhoods a natural phenomenon at all? Or is it a tool to navigate in an anarchical international system? Brotherhood is a pragmatic move in international relations, which doesn't have to be natural at all. It can be formed artificially with appropriate efforts. Azerbaijan and Turkey did have common values and identity. They just had to make it stronger. For Christians, brotherhood is a social capital, full of concrete norms, which creates bonds and establishes trust between two, which requires care and self-giving (Kulska & Solarz, 2025). Jewish people started to immigrate to the U.S back in the 17th century and since then have played a crucial role in the development of the states, and their presence is one story of integration, contribution, resilience, and identity shaped by pursuing the American dream. On the other hand, the U.S. is continuing to support Israel in the Middle East region and taking care of it like an older brother. The Christian approach to brotherhood precisely describes the relationship between Israel and the U.S., where brotherhood is seen as a social capital, which has a strong bond and trust, with dedication to care and protection. Consequently, brotherhood can be made from scratch, without countries being located near to each other, or having similar cultural settings and identity.

State brotherhood language usually consists of three main terminologies: religious solidarity, ethnic similarity, and cultural ties. As an example, Muslim nations emphasize Islamic teachings about spiritual relatedness, while Turkic states pay attention to their ethnic and ancestral connections. Governments use brotherhood language to express their loyalty and trust for other nations through high-level meetings. Political leaders use cooperative moments to address their close allies as brothers and promote ethnic, cultural, or religious unity through international organizations, non-governmental organizations, or even social media. In most cases, certain nations are given the status of "brother nations" if they have similar ethnic and religious backgrounds (Karataş, 2021). When two countries are called "brothers", it means they share a special and close relationship, which is different from being just strategic partners. A strategic partnership does not need shared cultural settings, common history, or religion, when this is exactly where brotherhood comes from. A great example is Arab countries, which are often mentioned as brothers due to language, religion and common faith. Similarly, Serbia and Russia have a strong state brotherhood, which can be explained by Slavic roots and religion. Such brotherhoods are tied emotionally and require reliability, trust, and loyalty. Unlike basic alliances between countries, which are mainly focused on economic and military benefits. Nonetheless, brotherhood is very fragile and can shatter at any time. Especially when brotherhood is mainly based on national interests. The moment an interest conflict arises, relations weaken and soon disappear. For example, Syria and Egypt were once standing together under the Arab Brotherhood umbrella, but the moment their political compass changed, their bond came to an end. Similarly, the brotherhood bond between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan was split after Pakistan did not send troops to

Saudi Arabia in Yemen, which ended their longstanding Islamic ties and brotherly relationship. Hence, state brotherhood is sensitive to economic crises and wars (Karataş, 2021).

Brotherhood can be crafted by shaping the historical memory of nations, mixed with the use of cultural symbolism and political strategy. Such transformation starts from elites, who start reinterpreting shared history and frame brotherhood as a natural kinship to mask the real pragmatism and national interests behind it. Following the logic, brotherhood is selective – two entities become brother nations if it fits their national interests and strategy. One of the most effective methods is the use of history, where specific events are shaped in order to establish a sense of solidarity. For instance, rebranded Slavic Brotherhood by Russia, Serbia, and Belarus, emphasize military cooperation, which invokes Pan-Slavic historical narratives. They try to frame economic partnerships, joint military exercises, and treaties as an expression of historical brotherhood (Pierzynska, 2020). When brotherhood is a deliberate construction of two countries, they need to bring the everyday relevance to their nations. For this, nations are using cultural diplomacy through media, arts, and academia, which embed state brotherhood ideas in public consciousness to make it feel more natural.

Such methods can result in establishing exotic brotherhoods. The best example will be Serbia's brotherhood with Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Armenia. They have a bond that was created by reordering history. The dissolution of the Soviet Union left many countries with a chance of creating something new. When the old system collapses, powers start to use history as a political tool to create new narratives and build new alliances on false grounds. Media is a key player in reordering history and crafting narratives. For example, the Russo-Serbian brotherhood is less about shared identity and more about anti-Western political orientation. Important political events in history can quickly destroy brotherhood between nations, just like it happened between Serbia and France, when they celebrated friendship after World War I, but buried it shortly after NATO's bombing in 1999 (Pierzynska, 2017). Therefore, creating brotherhoods helps nations in redefining who they are, who their friends and enemies are, especially in times of political crisis and confusion. Here reordering history come as a handy tool.

State brotherhood can be used not only for identity building but also for constructing a new ideology. Russky Mir is an excellent illustration of utilizing brotherhood for engineering a new system of beliefs and identity. Russian World is a strong geopolitical and cultural idea that appeared in XIX century and became powerful after the USSR's collapse as a liberal idea to gather and connect Russian-speaking people. The main idea was to support "compatriots" by spreading Russian culture and language, covering only post-Soviet borders (Meienberger, 2023). Russky Mir has strong ideological, sociocultural, and mythological dimensions. Language and religion were used as a soft power to the

target audiences (Starodubtseva, 2024). Russia was actively proposing initiatives for establishing new Russian language and Russian culture centers in many post-Soviet countries (Shyshkina, 2024). Russky Mir is an artificial construct made by Russia, which uses ideology, myths, and cultural settings to establish kinship and a sense of brotherhood among target countries. Myths emerge from collective experiences and lie in traditions, language, and cultural customs, which build a collective identity. The main narrative of myths is related to the Russian civilization, which spiritually unites Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians through language and religion and creates a sense of brotherhood (Starodubtseva, 2024). Russia has based its foreign policy on the idea of the Russian World. Putin portrayed the 2014 Crimea annexation as an operation to protect the Russian-speaking people (Meienberger, 2023). The same argument was used in 2008 when Russia invaded Georgia. Russian officials stated that it was a rescue mission of compatriots, meaning Abkhazians and South Ossetians (Pieper, 2020). Myths helped the Kremlin to develop a strong sense of belonging in Russky Mir, because it is deeply rooted in cultural and traditional values, covering the social environment and the unconscious through stereotypes that are ingrained from childhood. Such efforts result in anti-Western sentiments. Russky Mir diaspora started to develop a collective identity and a sense of brotherhood based on spiritual and traditional narratives, topped with shared history and the glorious victories of the past. The ideology of the Russian World speaks about Russian messianism and Russian civilization. Similar narratives were used back in the Kingdom of Moscow when they used to portray Moscow as a Third Rome (Starodubtseva, 2024). Russky Mir is not only a form of state brotherhood or ideology, but also a tool for informational war. It operates through fake news and “trolling farms,” which manipulate discussions on social platforms by following the propaganda narratives (Shyshkina, 2024).

1.3 The role and the functions of media in maintaining brotherhood

International communication has developed from print to the internet, expanding the role of media content in cultural identities, bilateral relations, and community building. Communication has biases, and usually, it is visible in the content of the information disseminated by media outlets (Tehrani, 1997). Media outlets carefully craft narratives in news content that influence the development of socio-political relations between entities. It has the power to persuade society to support or oppose the relations between two countries. The media content is utilized to spread cultural awareness, fill the cultural and societal gaps between two different societies, and prepare their consciousness for a deeper form of communication. While some scientists believe that the media communication and its weaponized content demolish cultural and national boundaries and produce “CocaColonized” reality, other researchers claim that the media is actually empowering relations between nations by appearing

as a platform for creating new political, social, cultural, and economic relations. The use of media and media content simplifies the process of creating bonds between nations and changes the game rules of international communication (Tehrani, 1997) by disseminating information in every possible way to reach out to all types of audiences and establishing proper exposure of the news.

The media happens to be one of the most effective instruments to shape and maintain state brotherhood. Media content shapes the perception of different societies. Media covers cultural diplomatic efforts, academic exchanges, cultural days, cross-border cooperations, and other activities held between countries. All the diplomatic efforts taken to cultivate or strengthen already existing brotherhood is delivered to the target audience by the media coverage, which makes it an important addition to the state brotherhood formation. The media contributes to the dissemination of unified values and goals for the nations through the exposure of diplomatic developments, bilateral and international programs, and their outcomes, highlighting their economic, social, and historical importance. All these efforts are made through the media to generate purposes and meanings for the whole relationship.

The media has become a cornerstone of modern international relations. Media content depict the development of brotherhood between countries. In the international relations theory, the followers of postmodernism highlight the importance of identity and linguistics in the analysis of state relationships. They picture international relations as a negotiation for security, identity, and power, which is often done through media platforms. Postmodernism perceives media as a medium between nations to support the fluidity of identities and encourages alignment of nations that come from different societal and cultural norms, by advocating tolerance and plurality. Studying media content allows us to understand how it reflects the complexity of the state brotherhood and its practical meanings. The media content gives us a brighter picture of how the media, as an agenda-setter, contributes to strengthening, maintaining, or destroying the brotherhood between two states. The roots of content analysis and its role in international communication and politics date back far in history, when humanity started to use voice, symbols, and textual matter to disseminate information. It has shaped ancient philosophy, religion, politics, and other areas of human existence. Nowadays, content, as a symbolic phenomenon and tool for governing and manipulation, is institutionalized in media, and it can be explored from different academic approaches and disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and, of course, the communication field (Krippendorff, 2004). Media disseminates content made out of hidden messages, narratives, symbols, and meanings related to state brotherhood. It offers arguments and support for understanding the complex process of state brotherhood building and provides a ground for analysis.

The media forms a negative, positive, or neutral picture of the other nation, which will imprint on people's recollection, societal memory, and public consciousness. Media organizations, private or public, tend to choose sides that will either support or discourage the relationship with the other nation. Powerful or powerless, the media is definitely power-linked. Jurgen Habermas has offered one of the most influential takes on the media's role. According to him, the media is a crucial part of public debate, which, on the other hand, creates rationality in international communication. There is no well-defined and straightforward instruction on how media functions in the international communication process. However, it is apparent that media content holds great value in brotherhood building. Media outlets usually cover foreign state-related news based on drama, significance, and proximity. According to this view, local news media outlets communicate about other countries' socio-political matters if they are scandalous, consequential, have cardinal importance, and happened in the neighborhood or relevant region. However, this approach lacks fundamentalism and sounds irrelevant in the present globalized world, where international relations and communication are not limited by proximity and rather expand on a wider scale than neighborhood, regions, or even continents (Yordanova, 2012).

The field of international communication untangles the media webs and clarifies their functions in the process of building state-brotherhood. International Communication field consists of many different views on media, which can be positive and negative. However, in both cases, it is understood as a catalyst for new dynamics and waves in international communication. Some theories present the media's role as a tool for improvement, world-wide peace-making, democracy building, and development. For example, "the free marketplace of ideas" is a concept that appeared in the Cold War period and proclaimed that the media could be used by the West to disseminate democracy in other parts of the world and form diplomatic relations among countries (Yordanova, 2012). The MacBride Report, offered by UNESCO, is another notable document devoted to the media's role in international communication in terms of eliminating the old-fashioned Free Flow of Information principle that was causing the misproportion in the information flow in different parts of the world. This was keeping the different regions and countries separated, challenging the building of friendships. The central idea of this report was to fill the gaps of media inequality and demolish the one-way flow of information in the world and have richer international discourse instead. This would help in finding a common understanding and solidarity, which is a prerequisite for building transnational partnerships and friendships. The MacBride Report, also known as *Many Voices, One World*, aims to show that the media is not just a tool of dominance and repression, but rather a mediator between countries. Improving media relations between entities stimulates the formation of solidarity, empathy, and a mutual sense of understanding. The document stressed the significance of cultural appreciation

through the media, which has become one of the core elements of modern international communication and transnational friendships (Tresserras, 2005).

Media can have a positive role in international communication, as well as a damaging and destructive. The theory of dependency, the theory of imperialism, and the theory of hegemony consider the media as counterproductive for the countries that are not leaders, that are under the dominance of others, and are left aside in the inequality of the system (Yordanova, 2012). These are the issues the MacBride Report was supposed to eliminate in the global communication world. However, the question of whether these problems were solved or the informational inequality was banished falls outside the scope of this research and requires further investigation. field of International Communication is still unable to provide a systematic model of what kind of role the media play in the global arena, because the majority of theories and hypotheses are not universal and apply only to some specific cases (Yordanova, 2012). Considering this, a more preferable approach in defining the media content role in building brotherhood would be a media-international relations interaction model. According to this model, the media is sometimes placed within the international system, but it can also be left outside. It depends on the content of the media. For example, if the media product is strictly media-centered, meaning its only goal is to amuse or inform, then such a type of media cannot be a part of the international system. In this case, the media doesn't hold any power to affect the dynamics, but just to describe them. On the other hand, there are instances when the media becomes an international non-state actor. It happens when it influences on the functioning of international relations and foreign affairs. The tool for such influence is content, which is not just descriptive and informative but also includes specific narrative and discourse that will affect the dynamics of the international system and provoke change. Consequently, we foregather three criteria that turn the media into an international non-state actor and contribute to brotherhood building by utilizing its content as a tool. Firstly, the media must be capable of forming the local public perception (Yordanova, 2012). This explains why governments, in particular cases, are eager to control and manage the media content that is distributed to the public. Media outlets have the ability to shape the public perception and prepare their minds for the future possible agendas, which can be related to building a state brotherhood with another country. Media content is absolutely crucial in building or maintaining state brotherhood, and also in studying this issue, because the media crafts content that is intended to be read, seen, heard, understood, interpreted, and even acted on for initially intended meanings (Krippendorff, 2004). The next criterion to determine the role of media in the functioning of the state brotherhood is to be able to influence the international agenda and foreign affairs governments and lastly, to elicit actions from the actors (Yordanova, 2012).

Herman and Chomsky offered a theory of manufacturing consent, by which they prove that international relations are results of interactivity among the media and government. In the perfect world, media content should not be biased, but rather an objective mediator that provides information about socio-political reality in the country and the world. However, the propaganda, along with the manufacturing of consent, produce certain frames on popular issues to meet the government's agenda. The media limits the alternative points of view as much as possible and publishes content that is in accordance with the government's goals, creating a blockade. It needs to be noted that this model is usually common in authoritarian states, where media content is under censorship. However, modern technological development has allowed individuals to participate in the dissemination of information, as well as discover different approaches to popular issues, instead of staying in the one frame offered by the media. On the other hand, this creates a rising risk of fake news and disinformation. Herman and Chomsky also believe that power and money help the government and oligarchs to communicate their aspirations and messages to the public through the media. Lippmann once said that the reality and the political world we live in is practically impossible to understand, until the media reports and helps us imagine it (Kirinić, 2023). The manufacturing consent depicts the media as just an instrument for governmental decisions, but some of the theorists believe that the media can be the one that affects governmental decisions and influences foreign policy.

As Vernard Cohen said, the media might fail to tell people what to think, but at least it manages to tell them what to think about. This is when agenda-setting theory comes forward, where the media plays the byzantine role. Combining Shaw and McCombs' theories with Steven Levington's opinion on the CNN effect, the media is an agent in the agenda-setting process, which provides real-time diplomacy and aims to provoke rational or irrational emotions in the general public. However, many think that the "CNN effect" is exaggerated, and forming a new international relationship with another country is driven by the needs and interests, rather than by media content and narrative (Yordanova, 2012). It is true that the "CNN effect" is old, and the modern reality demands reconsideration of it to actually see the modern practical role of media in forming brotherhoods. Philip Seib describes the media as an instrument of war and peace. According to his studies, the modern media is beyond the initial understanding of it, which makes it an actor that reshapes the world, unites different nations around the world, and makes traditional borders appear irrelevant. Seib calls it the "Al Jazeera effect". We cannot blame the "clash of civilizations" for the ongoing wars, and the goodwill of leaders for peacemaking, but rather the media and its role in bringing nations together (Seib, 2008). Consequently, media content's role in state brotherhood building is immense, and its functions are to reflect the presence of the state brotherhood between the two nations and have an effect on its maintenance.

2. THE LITHUANIAN-GEORGIAN BROTHERHOOD OVERVIEW

2.1 The Lithuanian-Georgian brotherhood exists: Shared historical experiences.

The Lithuanian-Georgian relations have more than a millennium of history. Over the past few years, Georgia and Lithuania have been going through difficult socio-political changes, which have affected their relations both positively and negatively. These two countries have established strong international relations despite geographical distance, cultural, linguistic, and symbolic differences. The ground of their relations is a common faith. Lithuanian and Georgian history is exceptional for its fight for sovereignty and freedom (Gogoladze & Mindiashvili, 2011). Both ethnolinguistically and anthropologically, Georgians and Lithuanians are significantly divergent. Nonetheless, these nations stand close to each other ideologically and show similar ambitions and patriotism. Georgian and Lithuanian friendship has always been distinguished by its strong bond. Due to historical misfortunes, the paths of these two nations have crossed many times, which laid the foundation for the state brotherhood. The first documented interaction between Lithuania and Georgia dates back to the 15th century. The 15th century was a very difficult time for Georgia, seeking allies against the Ottoman Empire. Georgia sent an embassy to Spain and Rome to seek help, and on its way back, Georgian ambassadors ended up in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. According to the sources, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was extremely interested in Georgian ambassadors and their information about the Ottomans. The chancery of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania preserved Georgian letters to the Spanish authorities and the Pope in Rome. Without the Lithuanians' effort, the voice of Georgian European aspirations and foreign policy would likely have been lost (Korogodina, 2024). Georgian and Lithuanian people started cross-national mobility as military and civil servants starting from the 17th century. Many Georgian noblemen, princes, and public figures have served army in the Lithuanian territories. They used to provide information and views on Vilnius, Kaunas, and other Lithuanian cities to people back in Georgia (Javakhishvili, 2014). Another insightful period of the Geo-Lithuanian bilateral relations was the 19th century. In the second part of the 19th century large number of Lithuanian communities appeared in Georgia. Mainly, the reason for their relocation was professional purposes, whilst some of them were war refugees. They were pharmacists, doctors, teachers, and engineers who were forcefully relocated to Georgia by the Russian Empire. The number of Lithuanians in Georgia rapidly increased during the WWI. The war refugees and Lithuanian soldiers were moved to Georgia to join the Russian army and fight against Turkey. One of them was

Petras Vileišis, one of the main figures of the Lithuanian National Revival. The biggest community of Lithuanians was based in Tbilisi. They were actively engaged in the social and cultural events and established a society, which arranged Lithuanian evenings and popularized their culture. In 1917, Lithuanian soldiers established the Lithuanian language club for people willing to learn how to read and write in Lithuanian. As well as national committee of Lithuanian society and the Transcaucasian Lithuanian soldiers' organization. These communities and societies contributed to the future emancipation and development of the democratic republic of Lithuania. The representatives of the Lithuanian societies were not only in Tbilisi, but also in other large cities of Georgia, like Batumi. The Committee of the Lithuanian society in the Caucasus was actively engaged with the local governmental bodies of Georgia and was providing consular services for people. By that time, the government representatives of Georgia and Lithuania already had a friendly and supportive relationship. It is visible in the memories of the head of the Lithuanian committee of Caucasus, Pranas Dailidė, when he met the minister of foreign affairs of Georgia, Evgeniy Gegechkori, who demonstrated his respect for Lithuania and hope that Lithuania would support Georgia's aspiration to become a sovereign country. Soon after that, Dailidė became the official representative of Lithuania in Georgia. The further development of the Georgian-Lithuanian relations was interrupted by the revolution, and it was restored only after 80 years. In 1996, Lithuanians living in Georgia established a new society named *Ruta*. It is still active today, popularizing Lithuanian culture and arranging educational projects. In 1996 Lithuanian school was opened in Tbilisi, which is dedicated to teaching the Lithuanian language to the third generation of Lithuanians in Georgia, as well as willing locals. In 2004, the first Lithuanian embassy opened in Georgia, which was a new chapter of the Geo-Lithuanian friendship (Lithuanians in Georgia, 2024).

As previously mentioned, language plays a significant role in establishing and maintaining state brotherhoods. For a fact, Georgia and Lithuania have no commonalities in language. However, both countries endeavor to popularize each other's national languages, which will contribute to the formation of a common cognitive framework and the strengthening of the ties. The center of Lithuanian language, culture, and education in Tbilisi actively promotes and teaches the Lithuanian language to Georgian people. On the other hand, Georgian language courses are available in Lithuanian universities. Positive tendency is visible in the growth of language clubs and courses in both countries, which deepens the state brotherhood and promotes mutuality. Such cultural and educational centers aim to bridge the two nations by presenting and sharing cultural settings, traditions, values, history, and ways of understanding each other (Kavaliauskas, 2022).

The Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood is based on the common historical and social experiences. This refers to the common historical struggles of Georgian and Lithuanian nations driven by the

different forms of Russian imperialism. For Lithuania, Georgia is a long-standing friend, which strongly correlates with the shared anti-Russian sentiments and the common history in fighting for freedom, sovereignty, and democracy. After the end of the Soviet Union era, Russia decided to proceed with the compatriot policy. The concept of compatriot arose in the late 20th century, referring to ethnic Russian people along with Russian speakers outside the country. The Russian compatriot policy included both Lithuania and Georgia, and utilized soft power to maintain its influence on them. However, the Russian soft power soon transformed into a hybrid warfare due to local resistance. This policy of protecting the Russian diaspora outside the country soon led to war in Georgia and Ukraine. The best example of Russian soft power is Russkiy Mir, founded in 2007 to promote Russian culture and language. Many scientists believe that the Russkiy Mir was a response to the Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine in the early 2000s. Lithuania has proved to be an outstanding supporter of Georgia during the revolution and war. Both Lithuania and Georgia are under threat of Russian aggression. As Grigas (2016) says, Russia has entered these countries using soft power, which then turns into humanitarian and compatriot policies, transforming into an information war, propaganda, protection of its people, and, in the end, annexation (Sençerman, 2024). This threat has contributed to the strengthening of the Geo-Lithuanian bond and brotherhood. The Russian shift from soft power to aggressive warfare methods has not been easy to endure for Lithuania, but due to its EU and NATO integration, it stands strong against Russian disinformation and propaganda (Sençerman, 2024). Unlike Georgia, which is still under strong political turbulence, losing its European trajectory due to Russian influence.

Lithuania has always been one of the biggest supporters of Georgia's territorial integrity and, most importantly, the Georgian people's desire to become part of the European Union. Lithuania became a mediator between the EU and Georgia by sharing its experience, practices, and executing projects that led these two countries to become not only friends, but also partners (Tabatadze, 2021). Both countries devote huge efforts to building an exceptional relationship by utilizing diplomacy and media maneuvers. It includes cultural and academic exchanges, special projects, and programs, framing each other as desirable tourist destinations and employing positive media exposure to embed favorable narratives and perceptions between Georgian and Lithuanian people. However, for the last several years, the Georgian political picture has become unstable, since the ruling party, *Georgian Dream*, went through a major ideological remodeling, took a turn to pseudo-conservatism, fell under the Russian influence, and renounced its initial social and EU agendas (Kandelaki, 2024). These events affected the long-standing Geo-Lithuanian brotherhood. Lithuania, along with other European countries, imposed national sanctions and terminated important political, economic, cultural, and academic projects. Consequently, cultural diplomacy, which was one of the cornerstones of Geo-

Lithuanian brotherhood, is now weakening, and media content is shifting from positive to more negative narratives, which aggravates the problems in the Geo-Lithuanian relations.

Disregarding the unfortunate development of the last few years of this relationship, generally, Lithuania is actively engaged in the partnership programs, bilateral cooperations, tourism, city twinning, and educational and cultural initiatives with Georgia. The existence of the Georgian-Lithuanian brotherhood is further proved by the employment of symbolic meanings by Lithuania to demonstrate support, honor, and solidarity to Georgia. For instance, every Independence Day of Georgia is graciously celebrated in the main streets and squares of Vilnius. The Lithuanian leadership speeches clearly showcase the existing strong friendship with Georgia, which is based on shared values, visions, and goals of both countries. The solidarity and support of Lithuania for Georgia can be described as one of a kind. Lithuanian officials are constantly pushing the subject of Georgian territorial integrity, its security, and European aspirations in the Western agenda, which plays a huge role in the mediation of Georgian achievement in Eastern Partnership, Association Agreement, Visa-Free regime, the EU candidacy status, and handling the external threats and pressure coming from Russia. Russia has definitely played a significant role in bringing Georgian and Lithuanian societies together, because it has created a shared experience of economic, political, and military threat. The significance of this state brotherhood can also be explained by the geographical importance of Georgia. It is a part of one of the most strategically important regions of the modern geo-politics in terms of energy resources and security, such as gas and oil. Also, due to mobility and logistic significance, the South Caucasus has always been in the scope of the Euro-Atlantic powers (Alieva, 2006). Lithuania is not very interested in the other South Caucasian countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan. The media coverage and the number of diplomatic and bilateral cooperations are lower than in the case of Georgia. It is explained by the fact that Georgia is a buffer country between Europe and the Russian aggression, which further expands its significance and explains Lithuania's interest in Georgian socio-political development.

A close friendship with Lithuania was always beneficial and strategic for Georgia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia sought to implement democratic reforms and align its geopolitical compass with the West. Lithuania's practice of transitioning was a great example for Georgia, and it was one of the reasons to encourage forming a close relationship between these two countries. The initiatives were coming from both sides. Lithuania put a huge effort into helping Georgia during the difficult political times, such as the 2003 Rose Revolution and the 2008 war with Russia. In 2003, with the initiative of the defense minister of Lithuania, Linas Linkevičius, Vilnius hosted a conference regarding sharing their experience with Georgia and other countries of the Caucasus on cooperation with NATO and help in building stability in the region. During this important conference,

representatives of Lithuania have marked that stability and peace in Georgia is very important, and they were ready to share their experience to help Georgia achieve the EU aspirations. The reasoning behind the brotherhood between Georgia and Lithuania counts many aspects. However, why one should follow the Lithuanian experience is that both countries are very similar in size and have the same Soviet past. On the other hand, they differ in many ways. Their traditions and cultures are significantly different, but the faith has brought them together and closer than many. The factor of Russia and its constraints plays a huge role in Georgia and Lithuania coming together. Continuing the idea of Lithuania's efforts in helping Georgia, it is notable that from the very beginning of the 2000s, Lithuania had already signed a military agreement with Georgia, forming a cooperation and even financing studies of Georgian soldiers and officers in Tartu. Apart from military assistance, Lithuania was also helping Georgia to develop national integration and crisis management systems. The Geo-Lithuanian state brotherhood was encouraged not just by interstate communication, but also by the whole regional communication and diplomacy. Due to shared past, the South Caucasus and the Baltic states have a warm relationship. Bilateral defense cooperation between Georgia and Lithuania is a great example of state brotherhood building. Both countries seemed to initiate sincere and active engagement (Advanced Research Workshop, 2003).

Lithuania has demonstrated its interest in expanding the EU borders to the eastern part of Europe. Its diplomatic efforts with Georgia and Ukraine showcase huge support and dedication in building a stable and democratic environment in both countries (Gerhard Besier, 2017). As mentioned before, support is one of the pillars of the state brotherhood. Lithuania has always supported Georgia in the Europeanization process and in defending itself from the Russian threat. The state brotherhood is based not only on having the same enemy, but also on supporting the same third party. This is a story of how the war in Ukraine strengthened the Geo-Lithuanian brotherhood. Georgia and Ukraine have an unusually strong friendship, which is derived from their shared history, political and economic struggles, along with life-altering revolutions for the same aspirations towards democracy (Gerhard Besier, 2017). However, changes of governments have affected the Geo-Ukrainian cooperation. After the 2012 elections and the new ruling party of Georgia, as well as the 2014 Maidan revolution in Ukraine, the bilateral cooperation between these two countries was weakened. However, the brotherhood between the Georgian and Ukrainian people remains strong (Gerhard Besier, 2017). The deteriorated bilateral relationship between Georgia and Ukraine affected the Geo-Lithuanian brotherhood, since for Lithuania, supporting Ukraine is crucial, which does not fit in the Georgian pro-Russian government's agenda. Lithuania has been involved in the Ukrainian crisis from the very beginning. It facilitated Ukraine's success in the Association Agreement with the European Union (2013), supported the Ukrainian people during Euromaidan, and their democratic aspirations in

general. Georgia, having a corrupt pro-Russian government, would not be able to sustain a strong relationship with Lithuania, because Russia is the main political, ideological, and military threat to Lithuania (Gerhard Besier, 2017).

The two nations have a bond that is interlinked to the past shared experience and modern socio-political challenges. These two nations went through enormously traumatic events together, starting from the Russian Empire period, Soviet times, and continuing till the present with the Russian Federation. The intensity of traumatic events differed from time to time. However, many scholars agree that the Soviet Union cast a shadow over Georgia and Lithuania by altering their social, cultural, and political reality. While building brotherhood, nations tend to share their experiences and practices to help each other, especially when it comes to overcoming historical traumas and damages. This can be done through cultural settings. For instance, Georgia has followed the practice of Lithuania in building collective memory over the Soviet occupation. According to Sontag's (2003) theory, collective memory is crucial, and it can be built without people remembering the events. Instead of remembering, collective memory is built by highlighting the event, its results, and creating a picture of it. That is what inspired Georgia to follow the Lithuanian practice (Museum of Occupation) and establish sites remembering the Soviet occupation. Also, Georgia's former president, M. Saakashvili, proposed a bill of the Freedom Charter, prohibiting Soviet and Nazi ideology and any symbols associated with them. The bill was officially based on the experience of Lithuania (Karaia, 2017).

Lithuania has successfully overcome the most difficult period of pre-accession to the EU, while Georgia is still going through this challenge. In both cases, the starting point of these processes was the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Lithuania has fought for many years to discard the "Post Soviet" and "Eastern European" badges and instead, reoriented itself towards Western and Northern Europe by employing trading tactics with economically strong countries. After becoming a respectable member of the European Union and NATO, Lithuania found it necessary to become an active participant in the European Union's foreign policy and international relations and upgrade its priority from being accepted as a "real European" to helping other aspirant countries to become perceived as European. This is when Georgia appears on the radars of the Lithuanian foreign policy. Since 2003-2004, Lithuanian governments have faithfully advocated for Georgia in the EU and have tried to keep Georgia's membership on the agenda of the European Union and NATO (Kesa, 2011).

After gaining independence, Georgia endeavors to be seen as a part of Europe, historically, culturally, and politically. Lithuania has become a guardian of Georgian EU aspirations and actively involves the Georgian issue in its foreign policy in the Eastern Neighborhood. For Georgia, it turned out to be a more difficult attempt to be celebrated as "European" not just in the speeches of the EU leaders, but

in the actual political realm. It was obviously not a random decision for Lithuania to devote such enormous support to Georgia in becoming a part of the European family. It is depicted by having shared social and historical experience, starting from the 19th century. The Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the modern Russian Federation have played a huge role in bridging the two very remote nations and developing the current state brotherhood of Georgia and Lithuania. Immediately after announcing the ENP (European Neighborhood Policy), Lithuania strengthened its bilateral relations with Georgia and made it a priority of its foreign policy agenda. This decision was very purposeful and intentionally calculated, which was related to Lithuanian politics and identity issues. The discourse of foreign policy is often related to finding a Self and Others (Kesa, 2011). For instance, some researchers believe that Lithuania describes the Russian Federation as the product of a lower civilization and a military threat to make it work as a compensation for Lithuania's weak place in the broader West (Mälksoo, 2009). In relations with Georgia, Lithuanian interest in the whole Eastern Neighborhood is also built on where and how Lithuania sees itself in the world. There are sufficient arguments to suggest that the Eastern Neighborhood was used as a means by Lithuania to find its place in the European Union. Following this path, we can find the common identities between the nations by paying attention to the circles of affiliation (Kesa, 2011). The external circles of affiliation refer to having a connection and being part of other unity. The circles of affiliation of Georgia and Lithuania overlap in cases of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. This influenced the roots of common identity and shared experiences of Georgia and Lithuania, which have merged into mutual understanding in modern state brotherhood. Therefore, Lithuania and Georgia both experienced the confusion of being perceived as European, but not quite fully. Lithuania struggled with its identity problem for quite some time after joining the European Union, but today it has fully embraced the European identity. Georgia, on the other hand, is still dealing with this challenge, and its society is extremely affected by the uncertainty of identity. The issue of being accepted as "Fully European" has caused identity issues in the Georgian nation, just like in once in Lithuanian people.

Georgia did not start moving towards Europe in the past 30 years. It is an aspiration that has been sparked for hundreds of years and still continues, yet in a very turbulent manner. European culture and values were always aspired to by Georgian royalty and intelligentsia. The poetry, starting with Shota Rustaveli's epic poem, continued by Ilia Chavchavadze, Jacob Gogebashvili, Vazha-Pshavela, Galaktion Tabidze, and Nikoloz Baratashvili, all devoted their magnificent work to European values and the independence of Georgia. The Georgian nation constantly tries to prove its cultural and historical belonging to Europe. The West was always perceived as a friend and a safe place, where freedom and equality are the pillars of life. According to the French philosophy, every nation that has accepted Christianity and been influenced by the Greek civilization is therefore fully European.

Georgia, as one of the oldest Christian countries and the manifestation of the old Greek civilization, is indeed a European country. It is embedded in Georgian society by the words of Zurab Zhvania: “*I am Georgian, therefore I am European*”. The history of Georgia remembers kings and queens who are recognized as images of the European social ideal. Also, accepting Christianity back in the 4th century was not just a matter of religion. It was a step forward for European culture and values, which built Georgian national identity (Nino Abesadze, 2018). Therefore, Georgia and Lithuania are both European nations, which must have played a role in finding commonalities, shared values, and visions. The European identity, shared historical experiences, and the same economic, political, and military threat from Russia are among the bases for state brotherhood between Georgia and Lithuania.

2.2 Cultural diplomacy as a tool to maintain state brotherhood

Cultural diplomacy in the context of state brotherhood maintenance is understood as an act of interaction between two nations through tourism, educational, and institutional cooperations, partnerships in cultural projects, and so forth. Such interactions contribute to the dissemination of information and awareness, constructing shared meanings and symbolic systems, promoting intercultural communication between countries. Cultural diplomacy influences not only the actual participants of the cross-national interactions but also the audience of the media, which covers the events and informs the public about ongoing cultural diplomatic efforts. Therefore, media exposure of the cultural diplomacy and interaction between people contributes to the maintenance of state brotherhood by providing a sense of belonging, provoking positive emotions towards other nations, and demonstrating aesthetic and symbolic connections.

Scholars believe that emotions are a crucial element of a cooperative international order, and although they have been neglected by scientists for a long time, it is undeniable that they drive communication processes and decision-making (Bleiker R. , 2018). People are cultural collectives that have feelings towards different groups (Bleiker R. , 2009). These feelings and perceptions are driven exactly by the cultural diplomacy and its exposure by the media. According to neuroscience, visual representation and frequent exposure of the product give better results in communication (Holmes, 2018). Consequently, media coverage of the national interactions, as a product of cultural diplomacy, directly influences the state brotherhood building and maintenance. State brotherhood building through cultural diplomacy and its media exposure can be approached from two perspectives in international communication. Some scholars deploy a realist approach and do not recognize the importance of cultural representation. Instead, they acknowledge only acts of power. On the other hand, the mimetic

approach is fully based on the cultural representation and deployment of cultural symbols and aesthetics in global communication (Bleiker R. , 2009).

As already mentioned, aesthetics play a significant role in cultural diplomacy and media representation. The study of aesthetics has emerged from visual representation, narratives, and popular culture and refers to the use of visuals in communication and its affect to the public's sensibilities and perceptions. Jacques Ranciere argues that aesthetics can alter our perceptions and experience in politics and communication (Bleiker R. , 2009). It is directly related to cultural diplomacy, interstate communication, and media studies. aesthetics delivering ideological, political, social, and cultural messages and affecting the way people think. They are not always used for good. For instance, Leni Riefenstahl's movies are distinguished by their artistic sophistication, but they were made for Nazi propaganda in Germany. On the other hand, Guernica by Picasso and its aesthetics delivered pacifistic messages by portraying the horrors of war. Studying aesthetics can tell a scholar more than a history book. For example, Dostoyevsky's and Tolstoy's novels illustrate way more details of Russia's political and social life than history books. Aesthetics are filled with symbols, which are utilized for communication. Countries often stage military parades or celebrate national days in a way that makes the country appear more powerful. What we speak, see, and hear is also part of the aesthetics. It changes the way people see the world, and that is why cultural diplomacy strongly employs aesthetics for communication (Bleiker R. , 2017). Culture is the heart of interstate relations, where culture diplomacy is a great other, meaning a symbolic structure that shapes reality (Jessica C E. Gienow-Hecht, 2003).

Cultural diplomacy covers numerous aspects of interaction between people. For example, the importance of music and art in cultural diplomacy is comprehensively explored in the Renaissance book *The Courtier* by Baldassare Castiglione. Cultural diplomacy and art representation have always been approved methods in international communication. However, armed confrontations in the 90s and early 2000s in Eastern Europe have contributed to renewed interest in cultural diplomacy and its ability to generate sympathy for one another. Cultural diplomacy utilizes art as a resource for peace-building, since just culture and art existing by itself would not be effective without structural efforts and communication (Frederic Ramel, 2018). Therefore, culture needs to be communicated, which is attainable through cultural diplomacy.

Exhibitions are often also deployed as a form of cultural interaction between different nations. Exhibitions not only gather and assemble works of art and cultures, but also incorporate diplomatic ideas and communicational efforts into them. For instance, countries often participate in world exhibitions and use their culture as a tool for communication. It is a way to create an intended national

image internationally. We have numerous examples in history of how countries have used exhibitions to create international friendships and expand communication and cooperation areas. As an illustration, in the middle of the 19th century, the world exhibition included a Japanese section, which raised Europe's interest in Japan by changing its national image from "Sleeping Beauty" to a potential partner that presented itself as a country in a process of political and economic modernization. Japan created a positive cultural perception and established new trade contacts. Moreover, it found international friends to protect itself from the colonial powers of China. This is how a country can obtain a fellowship in the family of nations and hold a cultural shield against imperialism by utilizing cultural diplomacy. Exhibitions contribute to the strengthening of existing friendships, like in the case of Britain and France, where exhibition employs symbolic function to reinforce the alliance (Jessica C E. Gienow-Hecht, 2003).

Movies and films a great foundation for interaction between people. Cinema can be utilized as a tool for country representation, seeding sentiments, popularizing culture, and gaining sympathy. Cinema became a part of the Geo-Lithuanian cultural diplomacy back in the 1960s. Just like in every aspect of social life, Lithuanian and Georgian cinema also had a similar fate under the Soviet system and faced the shared experience of academic and historical marginalization. They had a similar experience of being "other". In general, studies of Soviet cinema were mainly focused on Russian films and kept other member state cinemas in the shadows. Despite the fact of strong ideological and political pressure, state censorship, and suppressive policies in the Soviet movie industry, Georgia managed to create a flourishing, inspirational, and influential cinema. The Georgian New Wave in cinema had a huge influence on Lithuanian directors and their work, which can be seen as the first steps of cultural diplomatic relations and interaction between these people. Acknowledging the fact that both countries had to suffer the same and had consistent strategies of artistic expression might have deepened mutual understanding and broadened the shared symbolic system. Using Aesopian language to spark national sentiments and show the true face of the regime reinforced the collective understanding and formed corresponding aspirations. Even the ideas of the movie plots were evolving around the national identity issue and totalitarianism for both Georgian and Lithuanian directors (Mikonis-Railiene, 2015).

One of the best examples of interaction between different nations in the lens of cultural diplomacy and media is the so-called parapublic underpinnings. It is a concept of cross-border activities that strengthens relations between two countries and promotes shared purposes. Such activities are youth exchanges, educational programs, partnerships between various institutes and associations, projects for artisans, athletes, and even for unemployed citizens and last but not least, city twinnings. These activities do not involve state representatives, though they are financed by the state and often covered

by state media outlets. Therefore, it's not purely a governmental effort, but not fully private either. Media organizations carefully follow such interactions between the nations and utilize to craft the positive narratives, which will shape the public perception about other country. Media also helps to share the experience with bigger audience, instead of just the actual participants of the interactions. A great example of maintaining positive relations between nations through parapublic underpinnings is Franco-German friendship. Based on educational partnership, Deutsch-Französisches Institut was founded to encourage binational programs and build human infrastructure through public affairs and education. Soon, the federation of Franco-German Associations was founded, which boosted city partnerships, small clubs, and promoted the language projects on which the German Goethe Institute and the French Institut Français are based. To cultivate a unified values and goals for the French and German people, in 1992 Franco-German TV channel ARTE was established. It was important for structuring a mutual understanding of ongoing processes in the world, which would help the countries have a more similar worldview that can make cooperation processes easier for both sides. They initiated Franco-German prizes for journalists, translators, and other professions that contributed to the strengthening the ties between France and Germany (Krotz, 2007). Media communication and very well-crafted content have influenced diplomatic relations between countries and given rise to three different types of diplomacy: People Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy, and Virtual Diplomacy. Due to the increasing role of media in diplomacy, power politics was replaced by image politics (Tehrani, 1997).

Regional partnerships and city twinning programs plays a crucial role in fostering a friendship between participating countries. A broad definition of the city twinning concept is that distant cities agree on cooperation through culture, economy, tourism, and other ways of integration (Joenniemi & Sergunin, 2011). City twinning is different from partner cities or connected cities. City twinning emphasizes like-mindedness and a similar nature or even culture (Joenniemi & Sergunin, 2009). Twinning programs were started back in the 1940s. The programs focus on developing cultural, economic, social, and historical commonalities. Activities include cultural events, promoting each other as the next tourist destinations, opening new streets, parks, and squares in the name of the partner country or city. City Twin Association was established in 2006. Its main purpose is to connect cities and advocate the twin cities brand, help them share events and experiences (Joenniemi & Sergunin, 2009). Over time, the European city twinning idea has moved from “reconciliation partnerships” to “integration partnerships”, which is premised on togetherness and exclusive relations (Joenniemi & Jańczak, 2017). Parapublic underpinnings generate shared purposes and meanings for the countries. However, it has limitations that lie in its indirect impact. Parapublic underpinning is not engineering, but rather gardening. It is slow and takes time to see the results (Krotz, 2007).

However, if media will be used for the distribution of information and awareness about the ongoing activities and their benefits, the results can be seen faster and more effectively in the public and their consciousness. In the end, parapublic activities remain one of the most powerful tools for fostering a friendly relationship between countries, which offers a more sustainable type of relationship (Krotz, 2007).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Empirical research answers the initial scientific question. It is based on a mix of qualitative and quantitative research designs. The study employs an interpretivist research philosophy and adopts an inductive approach. The aim of the study is to unpack and conceptualize the Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood maintenance through the media content. The tasks are to examine the Lithuanian and Georgian media content reflecting the maintenance of the state brotherhood. Another task is to analyze how Georgian political uncertainty is disclosed in the media content and how it affects the existing state brotherhood between Lithuania and Georgia.

This pilot study was conducted by employing desk research and quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Focusing on the media narrative, the content analysis revealed the main themes, sub-themes, actors, and the overall dynamic of the Georgian-Lithuanian brotherhood. A total of 10 main themes were identified in the Lithuanian media narrative, and a total of 6 in the Georgian media landscape. The coding process facilitated our ability to accurately determine repeated themes in the media articles, generating a wider picture of the media narratives in Georgia and Lithuania, providing insights into the maintenance of the Geo-Lithuanian brotherhood.

Analysis of articles published by the Lithuanian and Georgian media outlets covers 14 years, starting from 2012, till November 2025. A total of 6,873 articles were selected for analysis from the main national and private media organizations of Georgia (Imedi news and Radio Liberty) and Lithuania (LRT and Delfi). After finalizing the content analysis of the media articles, the comparative analysis was conducted to determine the trends and differences in Georgian and Lithuanian media narratives.

ChatGPT was utilized as a tool for the primary selection of media articles and the extraction of themes. It was given strict and comprehensive instructions on how to extract the main themes and actors.

The research's limitation is its analysis of a relatively short time period (14 years), considering that Georgia and Lithuania have had official diplomatic relations since 1994. It is due to the unavailability of the prior coverage, since the earlier materials have already been archived. Another limitation lies in the number of analysed media outlets in each country, encompassing only two media platforms for

each. It is recommended that future research examine more diverse samples for content and comparative analysis.

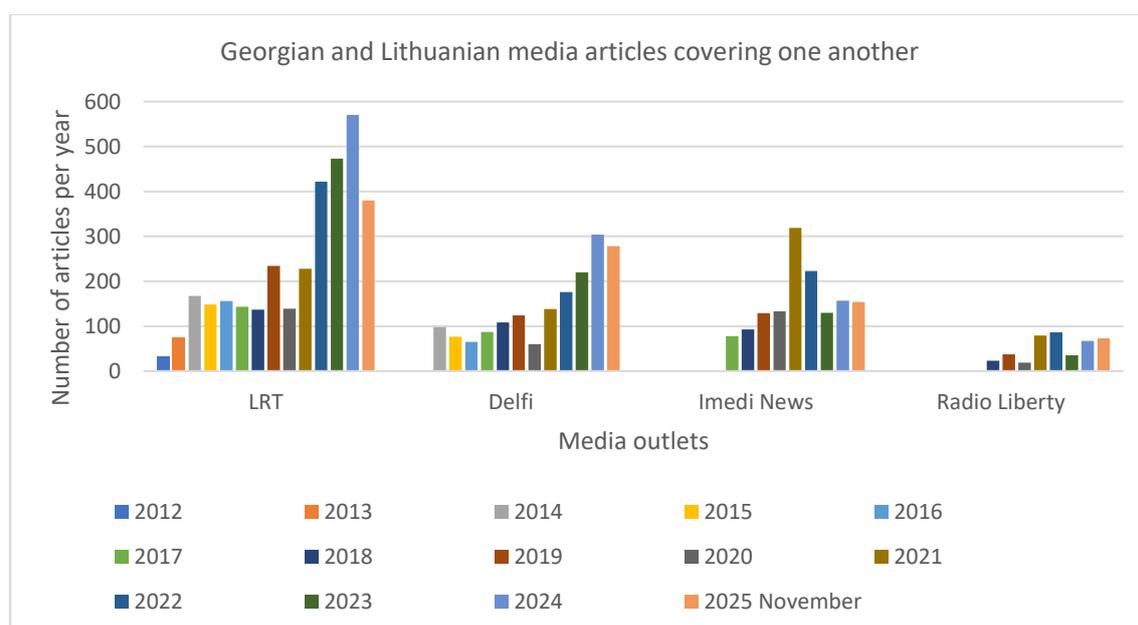
By using quantitative content analysis along with narrative analysis, it is possible to identify not only the quantitative elements of media storylines but also pinpoint the qualitative results found in the media framing and narrative formation. The empirical research is based on the approach where the narrative is understood as a set of stories. The entire narrative is shaped by stories that are thematically repeating. More precisely, media outlets gather different stories and create news, which forms the entire narrative over time. Therefore, a narrative is made up of the chronological sequence of events (Nabažaitė, 2017). A brotherhood narrative is a collection of different events and stories, and the image of the members of the brotherhood is framed by utilizing constant, recurring elements of narrative. These narratives can be focused on the reasons and motives of the brotherhood, or the benefits and characteristics of it.

Based on Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study of Georgian and Lithuanian media articles performs a detailed narrative analysis by studying media content, which combines discursive analysis and understanding of how media representation depicts the changes in socio-political dynamics. The study focuses not only on the narrative as a storyline, but also on the transitivity and nominalization. Transitivity will explain how the major events and changes are covered, whilst the nominalization part will explain what kind of words (adjectives or verbs) are used to frame the state brotherhood. The study is not simply descriptive, but rather critical, evaluating the narratives and employing rhetorical, ideological, and strategic critique. This will contribute to understanding how media outlets manipulate through narratives, and how they influence the dynamics of change by interpreting and constructing or reconstructing reality (Fairclough, 2012).

4. TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITHUANIAN-GEORGIAN STATE BROTHERHOOD THROUGH MEDIA NARRATIVES

After analyzing the articles of Georgian and Lithuanian media outlets, the existence and the gradual development of Georgian-Lithuanian brotherhood became more apparent. The picture of Georgian-Lithuanian brotherhood proved to be more complicated than it initially seemed, considering that, as of now, relations between the countries are in a state of turbulence. The analysis of Georgian and Lithuanian media articles will be divided into 2012-2017, 2018-2021, and 2022-2025. The proposed segmentation of periods corresponds to transformative events and turning points in Georgian-Lithuanian relations that have reshaped the patterns of their state brotherhood. Analyzing media articles this way contributes to the evaluation of the Geo-Lithuanian state brotherhood characteristics and dynamics. It demonstrates the trends, fluctuations, and patterns of changes in the relationship. LRT and Delfi together have published over 5000 articles since 2012, and Imedi News and Radio Liberty have published 1835 articles since 2017 (See chart 1).

Chart 1. Number of articles published by Georgian and Lithuanian media outlets since 2012.



4.1 Lithuanian and Georgian media narratives in 2012-2017

Two of Lithuania's influential outlets, LRT and Delfi, have published 1,049 articles from 2012-2017. These media outlets have covered a wide variety of areas of cooperation with Georgia: micro and macro levels of interactions, cooperations, partnership programs, systemic processes, institutional dynamics, political uprisings, diplomatic relations, and cultural matters that determined the building and maintaining process of the state brotherhood between Georgia and Lithuania. Between 2012 and 2017, LRT and Delfi were simultaneously mirroring the narratives about Georgia and Lithuania's

relations with the Georgian government. The main difference is in the number of published articles, where LRT dominates by issuing almost two-thirds of the total number of articles, compared to Delfi.

From the Georgian point of view, the two very contradictory media outlets, Imedi News and Radio Liberty, were analyzed, which offer different narratives about Lithuania. However, only Imedi news articles are available in the 2012-2017 timeframe, which amounts to 77 articles. The themes manifest in various forms for each country’s media. In the 2012-2017 period, Lithuanian media have developed six main themes recurring in the narratives. These are the EU alignment, Russian aggression, and occupied territories, democratization, Geo-Lithuanian cooperation, Georgian opposition, and lastly, tourism, culture, and sports (See Chart 2 and Chart 3).

Chart 2. The statistics of the recurring themes in LRT about Georgia.

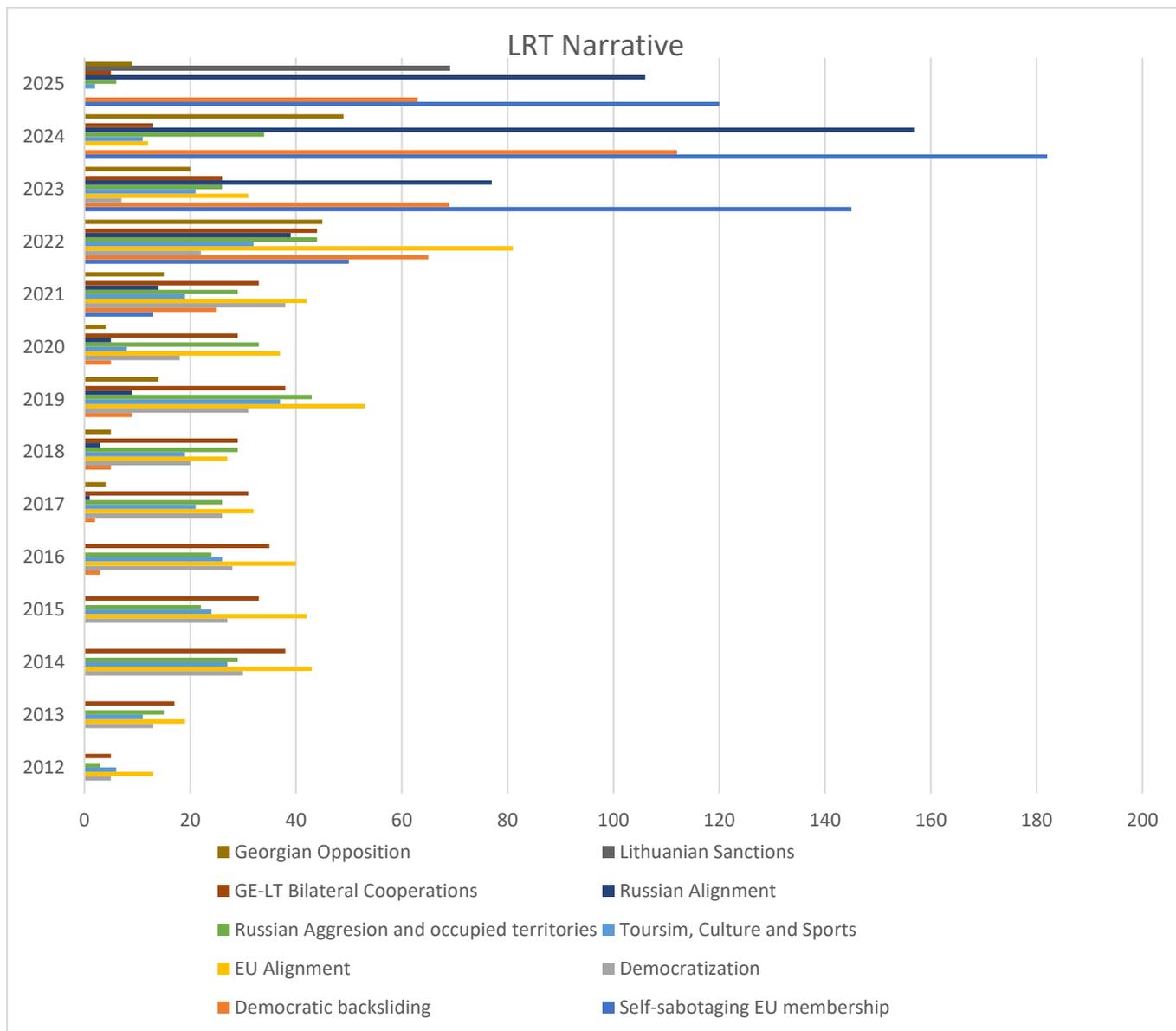
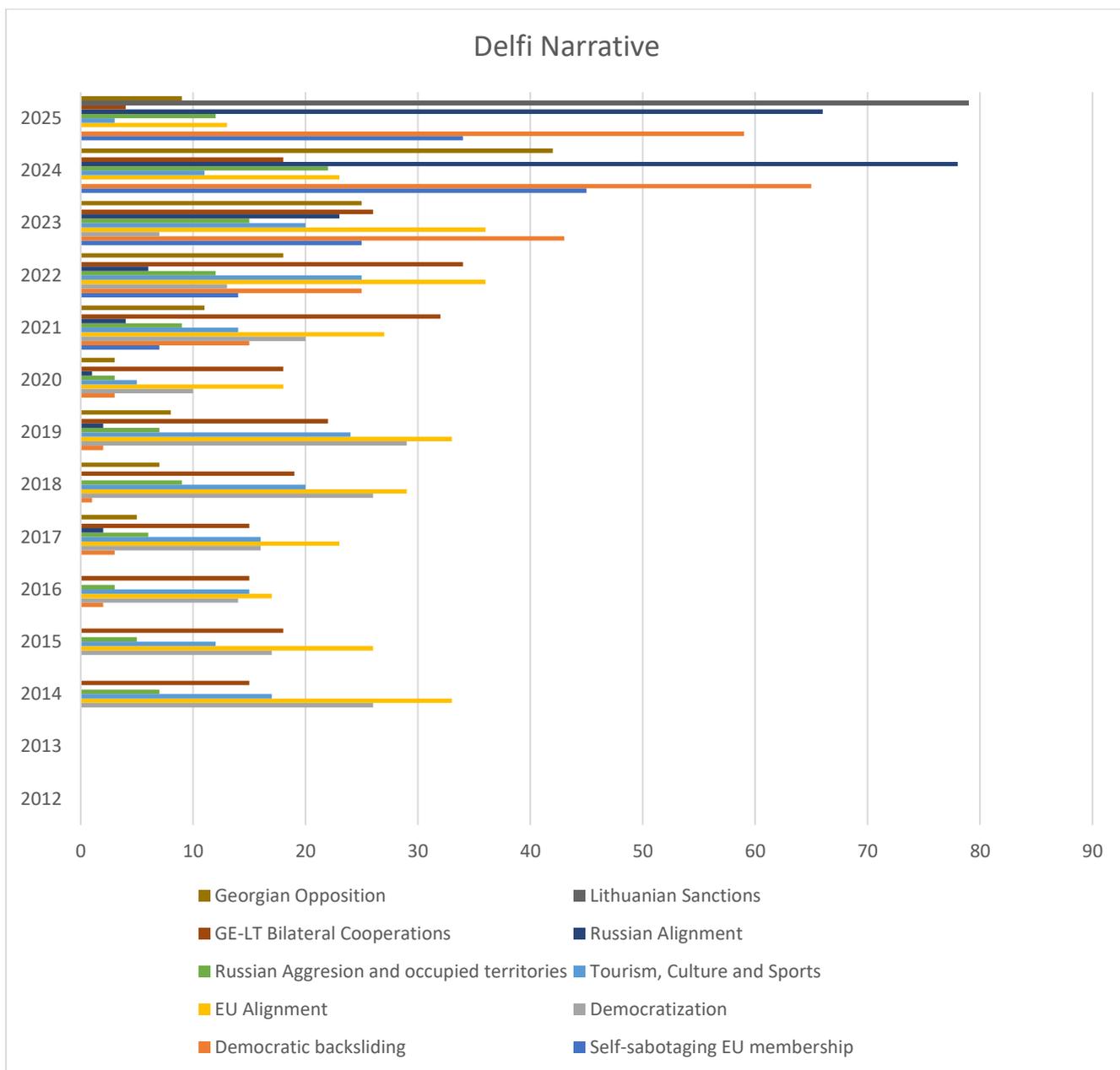


Chart 3. The statistics of the recurring themes in Delfi about Georgia.



In the period of 2012-2017, Lithuanian media have been characterized as very supportive and fond of Georgia, which is clearly visible in the positive choice of words and the final narrative. One of the dominant themes in the Lithuanian media narrative appears to be the EU Alignment and democratization processes of Georgia. The subthemes cleave into the Eastern Partnership and the Association Agreement, the decision-making of Georgia in terms of following the Eastern Partnership directions and putting efforts into socio-political developments accordingly. Lithuanian media creates a picture of Georgia, which demonstrates a huge determination to achieve its European aspirations and become part of the EU family. Notably, the academic and intellectual circles of Lithuania are often the leading actors in media articles. Media outlets often publish interviews or opinions of the Lithuanian intellectual community supporting Georgia's EU and NATO prospects. Also, an important

role holder is the Seimas as a whole, as an actor that demonstrates unwavering support for Georgia and actively continues to implement various initiatives to further strengthen interparliamentary relations with the Georgian government. In LRT and Delfi articles, Andrius Kubilius often appeared as a powerful actor in creating a pro-Georgian narrative. He has come forward with the initiatives to finance the studies of Georgian youth in Lithuania, to form the future Georgian elite in Lithuania. This highlights the will of Lithuanian political representatives to further strengthen relations with Georgia and even help it to generate a new Georgian elite in Lithuania, which will directly influence fueling the state brotherhood between the two. In terms of the Eastern Partnership, media articles highlight the role of Lithuania in helping Georgia to maintain the status of the leader of the region, developing internal policy, and implementing democratic reforms. The media narrative in 2013 was heavily focused on the Eastern neighborhood, the Eastern Partnership, and democratic reforms in Georgia. Georgia was represented in the narrative as one of the leaders of the Eastern Partnership Program. Linas Linkevičius emerges as another one of the most mentioned actors in constructing a pro-Georgian media narrative. LRT and Delfi often publish the public statements of Linkevičius as one of the biggest role holders in maintaining a positive attitude towards Georgia. The main narrative of Lithuania is that Georgia is already eligible to become a member of the European Union and constantly tries to push the issue of Georgia's European aspiration into the EU agenda.

Despite a very small number of articles tackling sparking concerns about politicized accusation campaigns in Georgia and the attempts to suppress Georgian opposition, the overall picture of Georgia remained highly positive during 2012-2017. Even the articles about anti-democratic decisions of Georgian Dreams back then were approached softly and were explained as minor turbulences, which were manageable and eligible for negotiations. Lithuanian politicians were always describing themselves as allies and friends of Georgia. Therefore, as friends, Lithuania was encouraging Georgian politicians to look beyond internal conflicts and not sacrifice the EU chances to private interests. Despite the unfavorable situation in Georgia, caused by the conflict between the Georgian Dream and the opposition parties, Lithuanian media maintained its optimistic and confident narrative that Georgia would overcome the obstacle and continue working for the EU candidacy and membership. However, this tendency drastically changes in the later years.

Another prevailing theme in the Lithuanian media is Russian aggression in Georgia and the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Ossetia. Russian aggression and related articles usually cover the territorial disputes of Georgia and Ukraine, caused by the invasion of Russia in their now-occupied regions. The Lithuanian media narrative about the 2008 war in Georgia was the center of attention and was framed as a lesson that the European Union did not learn from. LRT and Delfi both highlight the issue of Russia getting away with the crimes committed in the Abkhazia and Ossetia regions.

Russia is framed as an occupant and criminal state, which tried to break off the chances of Georgia becoming a member of the EU and NATO. Articles describe the Russian invasion of Georgia as an instruction of what would happen in Ukraine in the future. The media channels express hope in the articles that Georgia will pull through the Russian aggression and stay on European rails. This strongly demonstrates that Lithuania, its nation and government, is deeply concerned about Georgia's territorial integrity and a threat coming from Russia, which is also a very familiar problem for Lithuania itself. Sharing a common political, economic, and military threat further deepens the brotherhood between Georgia and Lithuania and, consequently, dominates the themes of media narrative. In relation to this narrative, one of the often-mentioned actors is Deputy Speaker Petras Auštrevičius, who devotes his efforts to encourage NATO and the EU to show wider support to Georgia. Another notable actor is Algirdas Butkevičius, who is also an active figure in Lithuanian media narratives. He is featured in numerous articles as a facilitator of Georgia in urgently becoming a member of the European Union. The parallel between the 2008 war in Georgia and the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine was massively employed by the above-mentioned media channels. Understanding the Lithuanian stance regarding the fate of Ukraine, making parallels with Georgia once more proves the existence of deep brotherly relations between Georgia and Lithuania, which is as honest and heartfelt as in the case of Ukraine. Lithuanian media devoted articles to the occupied territories of Georgia and their importance for the European audience. The president of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, and Linas Linkevičius were the most popular actors speaking about the occupied territories of Georgia in the media articles. This points out the importance of Georgian integrity for Lithuania and underlines the depths of the Geo-Lithuanian Brotherhood. The language of articles is very supportive and celebratory when tackling Lithuanian achievements in Georgian democratic development, but also critical about Russian pressure and influence on the whole Eastern Partnership, and obviously, Georgia. Often, Georgia is framed as a victim of Russian aggression and highlights the failure of the European Union and NATO in defending the territorial integrity of Georgia. The whole narrative of the 2008 Russian war in Georgia is used to present Georgia as a neglected lesson that is now resulting in the war in Ukraine.

Yet another domineering theme in the Lithuanian media is increased bilateral cooperation with Georgia in different areas of interest. Paying attention to bilateral cooperation between governments, parliaments, educational institutes, local entities, and people, underlines the continuity of the Geo-Lithuanian brotherhood. The subthemes unfold into different major events that took place in 2012-2017. Mainly, the focus was drawn to joint participation in NATO programs, starting from military-related programs, continued by the energy security matters, cybersecurity, security forums, and economic partnerships. As well as tourism, sports, and culture. Already nominated as an important

actor in Georgian discourse, MP Algirdas Butkevičius, was constantly expressing how Lithuania values having strong bilateral cooperation with Georgia. He has contributed to the crafting of a pro-Georgian narrative by highlighting the importance of the long-standing history with Georgia and drawing attention to the importance of Lithuania sharing its experience with Georgia to help it become a successful member of the European Union. In the aim of deepening the mutual understanding and finding common grounds, the Lithuanian media narrative tends to include cultural and symbolic settings of Georgia in quite a big dosage. Hundreds of articles are celebratory, delivering the message of commemorating and acknowledging the important historical and socio-political days of Georgia. It is visible in the articles devoted to the Independence Day of Georgia, honoring the anniversary of the 2008 August war, etc. This promotes shared happiness and empathy, which contributes to the two very distinct nations coming together. The security and military readiness seem to be the main focus of Geo-Lithuanian cooperation to ensure the protection of sovereignty and overcome Russian pressure together. In the economic and trading corner of cooperation, the Lithuanian media narrative highlights the close relations with Georgia and the contribution of Lithuanian representatives in modernization and reforming related structures. The bilateral relations between the two are mainly pictured as value-driven and strategic, which is based on solidarity, freedom, shared history and experiences, democracy, and the duty of protecting Europe from Russia, as the countries are located in the Russian neighborhood.

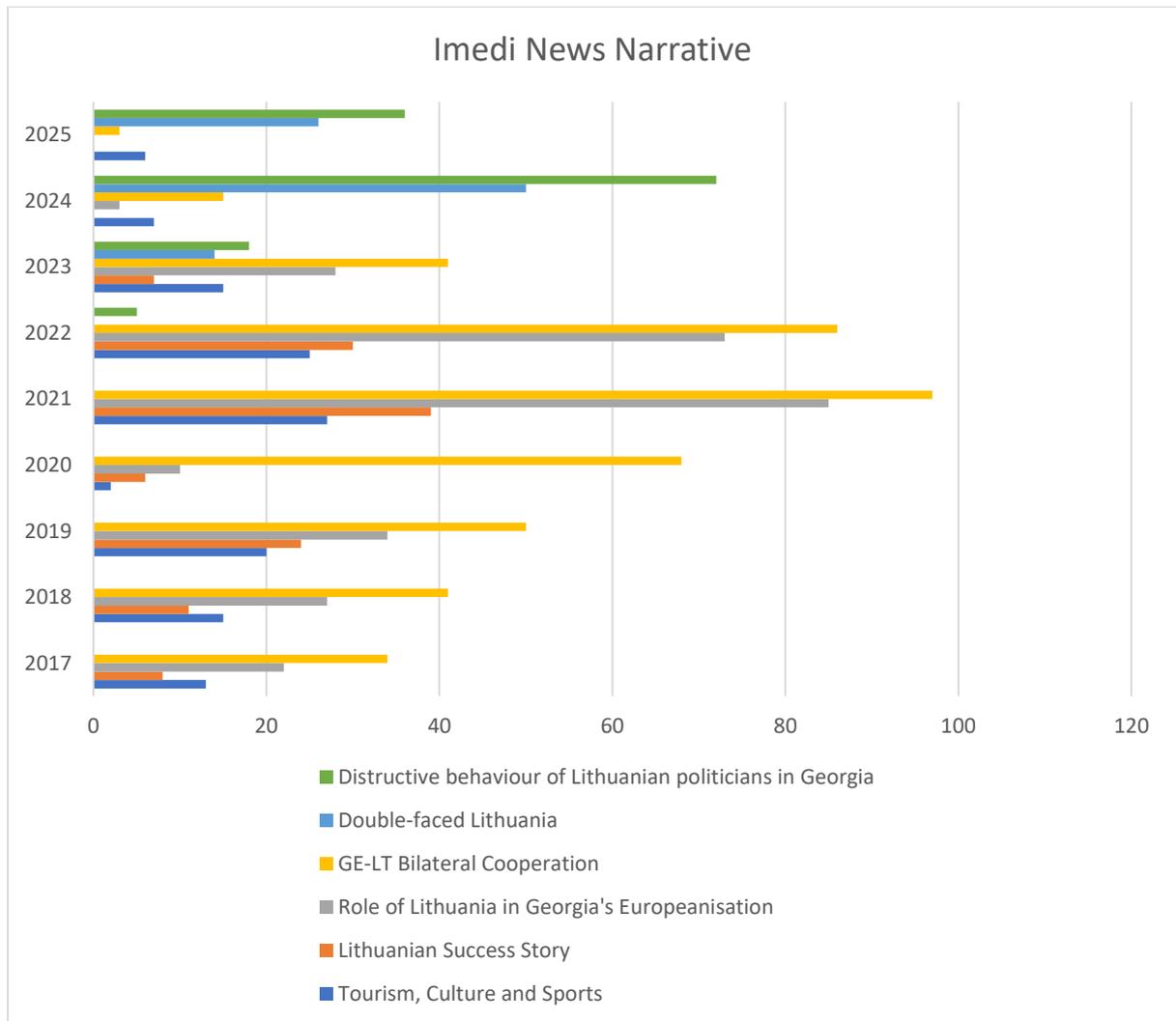
The Lithuanian media narrative clearly shows that Lithuania serves as a platform for Georgia to reach the EU audience. Media narratives demonstrate that Georgia is and will remain one of the most important parts of its foreign policy. The media constantly tries to disregard the (arguably) small political and institutional difficulties in Georgia and pushes the narrative that, despite everything, Georgia is standing on its feet and manages to follow the European course. The media actively covered Lithuania's presidency and its success in Georgian democratic development as well. During the EU presidency of Lithuania in 2013, Georgia was appointed as a key achievement and success of the Lithuanian presidency, which highlights the importance of Georgia in the Lithuanian foreign policy. Lithuania clearly presents itself as an advocate and mediator for Georgia.

2012 was a very important year for Georgia, because of the transition following the electoral outcomes and welcoming the Georgian Dream Party into the government. Despite the unfavorable long-term results of that, the 2012-2017 Lithuanian media narrative remained mainly positive and supportive. It does not necessarily mean that Lithuanian media were blindly or radically positive about Georgia. From time to time, we see problem-focused articles that are related to labor disputes, economic problems, and social struggles in Georgia, as well as relatively small political turbulences and institutional instability. For instance, from 2016, another theme emerges in the Lithuanian media

narrative, which is the democratic backslide of Georgia and the prognosis of Russian alignment. However, this topic was only rarely appearing and remained insignificant. Overall, 2012-2017 was highly focused on the integration and democratization of Georgia and the successful role of Lithuania in these processes. Despite that, the overall narrative about Georgia stayed lenient and sympathetic.

Since the articles in the Imedi News are available only from 2017, we cannot conduct a comprehensive analysis and comparison of the Georgian 2012-2017 media narrative with the Lithuanian one. However, it is still possible to draw a map of narratives and recurring themes by analyzing 77 articles published by Imedi News in 2017. Imedi news has crafted a very positive picture of Lithuania in 2017, paying most of the attention to the Geo-Lithuanian bilateral cooperation, the role of Lithuania in Georgia’s Europeanisation, as well as tourism, culture, sports, and the Lithuanian success story (See Chart 4)

Chart 4. The statistics of the recurring themes in Imedi News about Lithuania.



Imedi News mainly utilizes diplomatic engagements and the high-level visits between Georgian and Lithuanian officials as proof of firm, positive relations between the countries. Its narrative also draws attention to the shared values and Euro-Atlantic commitments of both nations.

The bilateral relations are described as deeply beneficial, friendly, and strategic. The bilateral relations are often explained not just by the goodwill of the two nations, but as a logical continuation of the two countries' foreign affairs, which share a similar threat in the name of Russia. This works as a catalyst for increased cooperation in trade, security, and military programs, especially in cybersecurity. The shared security interests are often mentioned sentence that frames Lithuania as a strategic partner in the Georgian narrative. Frequent institutional engagement and deep diplomatic relations are also leading to increased touristic and cultural interests with Lithuania, which takes up quite many articles. Lithuania is pictured as a strategic partner in culture and tourism. Huge emphasis is put on Lithuania as a target audience for the Georgian tourism development and promotion, which directly relates to Georgia's willingness to strengthen cultural and national ties with Lithuania and its people. The tourism cooperation is not focused only on Georgian representation, but also tries to promote Lithuanian cultural and historical heritage. In the cultural aspect, active communication is visible between Georgian and Lithuanian theatres, museums, and the movie industry representatives.

Another aspect that was leading the Georgian narrative was the support of Lithuania in terms of territorial integrity and the occupied regions. The articles focus on the Lithuanian official's statements about the importance of the Abkhazia and Ossetia regions for Europe. The solidarity is word which is often used by the Imedi News articles while speaking about the Lithuanian attitude towards Georgia and its support in the Europeanization processes. The articles are devoted to Lithuania's participation in the EU-related summits and programs, and the support for Georgia demonstrated in the speeches of the Lithuanian officials. Imedi news tries to create a narrative that speaks about Lithuania's active participation in Georgia's EU membership matters and its commitment to the state brotherhood. Lithuania's strong moral support is highly appreciated in the articles. Often, its role in the Europeanization processes of Georgia is framed not just by the political support, but also by the emotional bond between the nations, which is the result of the shared experience and strong mutual solidarity. The Visa liberalization of Georgia was celebrated by the Lithuanian officials, and a large number of articles were devoted to the appreciation of the received support and shared celebration. Linas Linkevičius is one of the most mentioned Lithuanian officials, who is visibly an important actor in building and maintaining state brotherhood. The Imedi News often follows the Lithuanian officials' stance regarding Georgia, highlighting important discursive markers, such as Georgia being called a dear friend of Lithuania and an unquestionable part of Europe. Such a narrative influences public perception to see Lithuania as a close friend and consistent advocate for its European future. The Visa

liberalization for Georgia was symbolically celebrated in Vilnius by banners and small surprises at the airport for Georgian travelers. This was translated in the Georgian media narrative as a very warm and friendly gesture that contributes to the building of state brotherhood. Imedi News frames the success in visa liberalization as thanks to Lithuania and its enthusiasm to help Georgian people. Also, a huge attention was drawn to the fact that Lithuania would be the country that presents the Georgian position during the international formats, which Georgia wouldn't be able to attend. Here appears another merited actor in the Georgian media narrative, the former president of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaite, who has personally contributed to the success of Georgian Euro-Atlantic goals. While discussing the role of Lithuania in the Europeanization process of Georgia in the media narrative, it is important to mention that Lithuania is perceived as a role model for Georgia, which country tries to follow. The media articles devote time to talking about how Lithuania drops the status of a "post-Soviet country" and accepts only European identity. Also, the narrative shows that Georgia actively follows the best practices of Lithuania in different areas of policy and technology development, such as anti-fire systems for forests, law enforcement, corruption, and human rights-related reforms. Overall, the 2017 Imedi News narrative represents the Georgian point of view of Lithuania as a long-standing friend and brotherly nation, that is dedicated to the development, integrity, and Europeanization of Georgia.

4.2 Lithuanian and Georgian media narratives 2018-2021

A new phase of the Georgian-Lithuanian state brotherhood emerges in the time period of 2018-2021. In this period, LRT and Delfi have produced 1,147 media articles (LRT - 738, Delfi - 409). The media articles and their narratives demonstrate the beginning of significant and alarming changes in the dynamics of Georgian-Lithuanian state brotherhood. It appears to be the period when Lithuanian media outlets start to abandon the very positive, sympathetic, and almost naive approach to the questionable decisions of the Georgian government. The Lithuanian media was carefully following the fluctuations of the Georgian socio-political realm, which turned out to be a groundbreaking moment for the state brotherhood between the two. If the period of 2012-2017 was extremely optimistic, convincing, confident, and forward-looking, the picture gradually changed from 2018. In the Lithuanian media narratives, it marks the point of a rapid increase in the articles about Georgia's Russian alignment and the democratic backslide of the country. Also, the articles about the Georgian opposition are gaining popularity due to the political unrest between the Georgian Dream and the opposition parties, which negatively contributes to the Lithuanian media narratives. Lithuania, as an exemplary country in its achievements in democratic reforms, is extremely concerned about the instability in the Georgian democratic reforms. However, it seemed that Lithuania and Georgia were still putting a huge effort into maintaining the cooperation in different sectors and areas of interest.

As a result, this period of Lithuanian media narratives over Georgia offers a very peculiar and interesting picture of Georgia as an irreplaceable, long-standing partner in security and defense projects, trade, education, and tourism. But at the same time, it critiques the ongoing anti-democratic shift in the country. Therefore, LRT and Delfi were spreading positive and negative narrative lines that existed in parallel. This proved that in the name of state brotherhood, Lithuania was not giving up hope on maintaining a close relationship with Georgia and keeping the positive image of the long-standing partnership, but at the same time not abandoning adequate critique, to help the Georgian government avoid an irreparable mistake. On the positive side of the media narrative, Georgia is framed as a strategic partner in the South Caucasus, with which cooperation in business and tourism remains active. It is evident in articles about renewed flights between Tbilisi and Vilnius, highlighting that Lithuanian people are already very much in love with Georgia, and it will only make it easier to further enhance the tourism and business-economic ties between the countries. Such Lithuanian media articles frame Georgia as a country associated with mountainous regions, wine, ski resorts, food, and try to embed Georgia in the Lithuanian audience as a dream destination. Discursive markers and choice of words are very positive and have promotional intentions.

The media narrative of LRT and Delfi is often based on cultural appreciation and symbolic gestures. For instance, discussions appear about the importance of changing the name of Georgia into “Sakartvelo”, the way Georgian people refer to themselves. As well as building the square of Tbilisi in one of the most prestigious districts of Vilnius, and designating a street in honor of Georgia, calling it the street of Georgians. The articles are also often devoted to the celebration of the cultural days of Georgia in Vilnius, the exhibitions of Georgian artists, archival presentations about Georgian history, and many more. Cultural interest in Georgia is massive in Lithuanian society. Perhaps this, along with nature, is what drives the cooperation in tourism between the two. After the COVID-19 epidemic and worldwide lockdown, Georgia and Lithuania were trying to restore the tourism cooperation as soon as possible, while leaving most of the other countries still under consideration. This obviously demonstrates the trust and dedication in their relationship. Unfortunately, year after year, we see a gradual decline in the topicality of culture, sports, and tourism in the Lithuanian narrative.

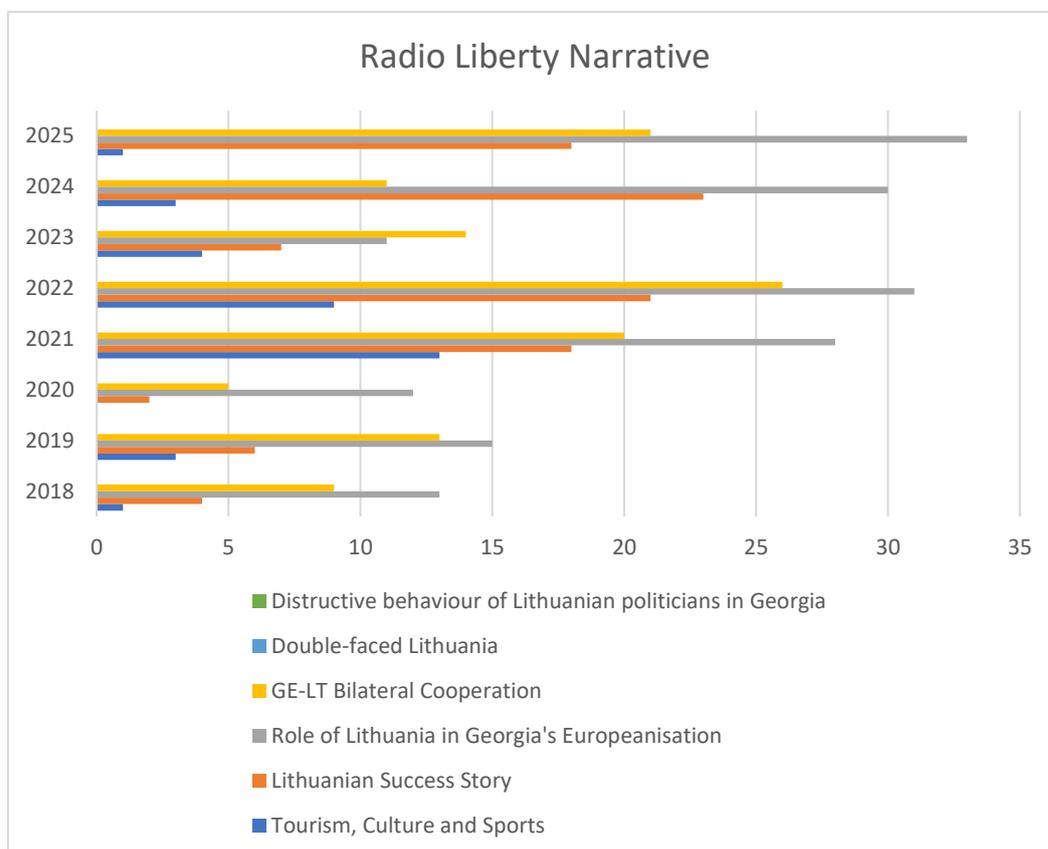
Lithuania put a huge effort into reinforcing not only the Baltic but also the European solidarity for Georgia, even in times of uncertainty in the Georgian political trajectory. However, due to the severity of Georgian anti-democratic political determination, the Lithuanian media could not resist adopting the narratives about the birth of Russian alignment in Georgia. The EU alignment topic remained a bigger and more recurring theme, but the manifestation of the Russian alignment in Georgian politics was impossible to avoid. As already mentioned, in the 2018-2021 Lithuanian media narrative splits into two: Positive and Negative. However, the approach to the Georgian issue is still relatively soft

and diplomatic. For instance, the Georgian government's anti-democratic decisions are explained as the unavoidable pressure from Russian aggression, of which Georgia has suffered for hundreds of years. Just like the period of 2012-2017, the foreign minister of Lithuania, Linas Linkevičius, remains one of the main actors in the media narrative related to Georgia. Based on his stances, LRT and Delfi further highlight the importance of Georgia in the context of Russia's attempts to hegemonize the whole Black Sea. Instead of harshly criticizing the Georgian government for its anti-democratic shift, Lithuania stays extremely diplomatic and supportive, and further pushes the narrative of the gravity of the support and importance of Georgia for Europe, reminding the West that Georgia's security is directly linked to peace in Europe. With the influence of Linas Linkevičius, Lithuanian media narrative draws attention to the occupied territories as well and portrays Georgia as a victim of Russia, a country that is being punished for making pro-EU decisions, and needs support from European countries and NATO. The tone of such narratives about Georgia appears to be diplomatic, but it has a very urgent tone, which is extremely anti-Russian and hopeful for Georgia. In 2019, protesters took to the streets of Tbilisi due to the visit of Russian official Sergey Gavrilov to the Georgian parliament. Lithuanian media expresses understanding of the Georgian people's sentiments, but at the same time, calls on protesters to remain peaceful and avoid violence outside the parliament. It clearly shows that, despite the reasons for the protests, Lithuania tries to help Georgia maintain stability, avoid clashes, and demonstrate internal solidity to Europe, which is watching closely. Lithuania doesn't take harsh steps against Georgia, but rather points out the issue and offers help to resolve it. However, gradually, the Lithuanian media starts to frame Georgia as an oligarchy controlled by Bidzina Ivanishvili, and it becomes harder for Lithuania to find yet another explanation for the Georgian government's pro-Russian decisions. Following protests in Georgia related to the alleged rigged elections also caught the attention of the Lithuanian media. Here, Žygimantas Pavilionis appears as an important actor. At some point, we can confidently say that his actions in Georgia in 2021 influenced the future development of the relations between the countries and the attitude of the Georgian government towards Lithuanian officials. This is the beginning of the degradation of the Geo-Lithuanian state brotherhood. The diplomatic unrest was caused by the criticism of the Georgian government by Žygimantas Pavilionis because of the detention of Nika Melia, one of the leaders of the Georgian opposition. This action was acknowledged by both sides as a mistake and an undiplomatic move. The attempts at mediation went wrong and caused a backlash from the Georgian authoritarian government. According to the Lithuanian narrative, Pavilionis had no right to make such statements, since there was a lack of evidence to prove that the elections were actually rigged. At the end of the 2018-2021 period of time, another game-changing theme appeared in the Lithuanian media narrative: the self-sabotage of EU membership by Georgia. When France made a statement that the Eastern Partnership does not necessarily give a chance for EU membership, Lithuania openly opposed this position and

continued to further strengthen the Eastern Partnership, believing that it would facilitate Georgia to become a full-fledged member of the EU. The local media narrative showcases that Lithuania is not demonstrating just a nominal commitment, but actually takes concrete and straightforward actions to help Georgia. It is visible in the action-focused tone of the articles, highlighting the motives and dedication of Lithuania. However, the anti-European decisions of the Georgian government gave a spark to another negative narrative line in the Lithuanian media, and the self-sabotage of the EU membership started to slowly gain popularity in the narrative.

From the Georgian media narrative side, the 2018-2021 provide a wide range of interesting nuances in the maintenance of the Geo-Lithuanian brotherhood. In this phase, another Georgian media outlet appears in the analysis. It is Radio Liberty, an extremely anti-government private media platform. Unlike Imedi News, which is radically pro-government. The beginning of this period is a continuation of the 2012-2017 period. The overall picture is calm, remains very positive, and has the same attention to the same themes. No new themes emerge in this stage of media narrative. Both Imedi News and Radio Liberty, despite their different political views, have an extremely favorable narrative of Lithuania. Imedi News has devoted 556 articles to Lithuania in 2018-2021, and Radio Liberty issued 162 of them (See Chart 5). In the period of 2018-2022, both media outlets demonstrate the same attitude and narrative about Lithuania.

Chart 5. The statistics of the recurring themes in Radio Liberty about Lithuania.



In terms of EU aspirations, Lithuania remains an important mediator between Georgia and the European institutions. The Georgian media narrative continues to frame Lithuania as a role model for Georgia and underlines its success in handling the Russian propaganda. Many articles are devoted to the success of Lithuania in science. For example, in terms of leading the European Union in the number of women engineers and scientists. Also, media attention was drawn to the contribution of Lithuania in reducing the dependence on Russian gas in the EU and anti-Russian decisions of the Lithuanian government, like sentencing former USSR officials from Lithuania in 2019, or prohibiting the broadcast of “Russia Today”. By that, the media frames Lithuania as a like-minded and exemplary country. The bilateral and diplomatic relations continue to remain in a positive stance. A huge number of articles are devoted to the meetings of the officials from both sides. The bilateral relations are framed as expanding in many different ways, such as education and scholarship programs, energy market frameworks, diversification of Georgian exports, and communication. The cooperation in defense and cybersecurity remains as important as in previous years. Cybersecurity is framed as a shared problem of Georgia and Lithuania, pointing out that both are the main targets of the Russian cyberattacks. A rapid increase in the agriculture and wine exports is often covered in a celebratory manner, since these are the central points of the export economy of Georgia. Georgia has also made an employment memorandum with Lithuania, which is designed to help Georgian and Lithuanian expats find work in the partner country. The bilateral relations are also expressed in international and national conferences, where both countries are actively participating. Such conferences draw media attention because Lithuania often pushes the issue of Georgian territorial integrity and sovereignty, which is highly appreciated by the Georgian side. Such stages often turn into a platform for both countries to demonstrate mutual respect and friendship for each other. Georgian media narrative especially likes to point out Lithuania’s firm stance about Georgia’s EU aspirations, and its solidarity that is presented as evergreen. The Georgian media also seems to favor the topic of NATO security programs and the joint participation of Lithuania and Georgia in the particular projects, which helps the media create a picture where Lithuania, as a member of NATO and the EU, participates together with Georgia and underlines the friendship and a strategic point of view of this cooperation. Notably, during the COVID-19 period, the bilateral friendship was highlighted by the human aid and the receipt of a large number of vaccines from Lithuania. There are few actors that have contributed in the shaping of the Georgian media narratives about Lithuania. First and foremost, we must mention the ex-president of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė. Her remark that only brave countries love and recognize the importance of Georgia and Lithuania has influenced the Georgian media narrative to create a picture of the two nations as very similar, which share the same struggles, in the past and in the present. Also, Linas Linkevičius continues to remain as a popular actor in the Georgian media narrative, who has massively contributed to the maintenance of the Geo-Lithuanian state brotherhood.

Georgian media narrative also focuses on the tourism relations. The articles actively cover the development of tourism relations with Lithuania, highlighting the increased number of Lithuanian visitors in Georgia. Special attention was devoted to the city of Batumi, located in Adjara, and its popularity in Lithuania. Adjara was also presented at the international exhibition in Lithuania. During the COVID-19 period, the articles about tourism, culture, and sports decreased in the Imedi News narrative, and completely disappeared from the Radio Liberty articles. However, after the lockdown, Lithuania was one of the few countries with which Georgia renewed flights and opened borders. The further increase in tourism is explained as an enhancement of the Georgian and Lithuanian nations' relations, symbolic and cultural engagement, which contributes to the deepening of the shared understanding. Cultural interchange in the movie industry is also a popular topic in the Georgian narrative, along with the cultural collaborations between different Georgian and Lithuanian institutions. Highlighting the historical and cultural part of the state brotherhood, Georgian media often cover the independence of Lithuania and its history of resilience, framing the Lithuanian nation as heroic. Georgian media devotes articles to the iconic Lithuanian artists, such as Jonas Mekas, and commemorates his byzantine work in the Lithuanian culture. Articles also involve information about the Georgian language courses in Lithuania, which is a visible sign of growing interest in Georgian culture. A thriving cultural diplomacy is portrayed by the initiative of Lithuania to adopt the authentic name of Georgia in the Lithuanian language, which is understood as a cultural appreciation by the Georgian side, which embeds a favorable perception of Lithuania in the Georgian people. Apart from that, other symbolic actions populate the Georgian media narrative, for example, the participation of the Georgian soldiers in the Lithuanian march to celebrate the 100 years of the Lithuanian Army. This event was employed as a symbol of long-standing and flourishing friendship, highlighting the cooperation in different areas, and especially in defense and security.

Despite all the positive articles, some cracks appear in the Georgian media narratives. Imedi News and Radio Liberty narratives start to deallocate. 2019-2020 were the years when the tension between the Georgian government and the opposition reached its peak. The rival was related to the alleged rigged elections. Lithuania was playing a pivotal role in the mediation between the government and the opposition representatives. In the later years, this action from Lithuania will be completely misunderstood by the government of Georgia, and it will lead to the decline in the state brotherhood. However, in 2019-2020, both media outlets, Imedi News and Radio Liberty, are sticking to the positive representation of Lithuania in the ongoing internal political uprising. By this time, Imedi News was already openly a pro-governmental propagandist media outlet, which was actively trying to frame the Lithuanian position more pro-Georgian Dream, even the critical ones. The Imedi News narrative was doing its best to frame Lithuanian politicians as supporters of the Georgian Dream

position in the conflict. Whilst Radio Liberty was doing the complete opposite. This is the point when two different media narratives emerge in the Georgian media reality. In reality, Lithuanian officials were not supporting the Georgian government, and instead, they were sending immense criticism towards them. In this narrative, the biggest role holder was Andrius Kubilius. Towards 2021, Imedi News narrative cannot hold on to the false support of Lithuania anymore and lets it go. As the main channel of the government propaganda, Imedi News changes its narrative about particular Lithuanian officials, but not yet about the whole country of Lithuania. It starts to use very emotional and accusatory words. The whole new narrative emerges as particular Lithuanian officials blackmailing and betraying Georgia for criticizing the detention of the opposition representatives. Andrius Kubilius and the ambassador of Lithuania in Georgia, Andrius Kalinda, became the center of the criticism. Kalinda was almost crucified for visiting the office of the opposition party of Georgia. On the other side, the Radio Liberty narrative showed this act of Lithuanian officials as a friendly gesture and as an attempt to mediate between the Georgian government and the opposition for the good of the Georgian people and their European aspirations. The Imedi News was actively attempting to frame Lithuanian officials as the supporters of the ex-president Saakashvili and the opposition party, which is a trigger marker for the supporters of the Georgian Dream. The name of Mikheil Saakashvili was also used to damage the reputation of Zygimantas Pavilionis, claiming that the two had met at the Airport of Istanbul, which further proves that the Lithuanian officials are fond of the destructive forces of Georgia, like Saakashvili and the opposition. Pavilionis was also criticized by the propagandistic Imedi News channel because of his opinion that Georgia had already lost its occupied territories. This caused a huge backlash in the anti-Lithuanian narrative. However, he denied the accusation and called it a misunderstanding. Above that, his statement that he is preparing for a personal war with Ivanishvili in Georgia further escalated the issue. It is important that Salome Zourabichvili, the president of Georgia, continues the positive relations with the Lithuanian officials. Gabrielius Landsbergis was another target of the Imedi News. In general, Landsbergis was always demonstrating his support for Georgia and its EU aspirations. He became a persistent actor in the Geo-Lithuanian relations from 2021. The Radio Liberty narrative was underlining Landsbergis's interests as pro-Georgian, whilst the Imedi News narrative was describing it as anti-Georgian. Despite the disapproval towards these Lithuanian officials, the Imedi News narrative was playing games and creating a narrative that the Georgian government will never give up the friendship with Lithuania, and the opinion of some of their politicians does not mean anything. The relations with the Georgian government and the president of Gintanas Nauseda were highlighted as a real face of Geo-Lithuanian friendship, and the role of the other above-mentioned actors was disregarded. The Imedi News has divided Lithuania into two: self-interest-driven liars (Pavilionis, Landbergis, etc) and the real friends (President Nauseda and other Lithuanian politicians, who were not as actively criticizing the Georgian

Dream). Georgian Dream propagandists Gia Khaindrava, Gia Abashidze, Davit Kartvelishvili, and many more started to refer to Lithuanian officials as Pharisees and accused them of having double standards.

4.3 Lithuanian and Georgian media narratives 2022-2025

The Lithuanian Media outlets LRT and Delfi have published 2780 articles since 2022 till November 2025. The number of articles containing themes such as democratization in Georgia and EU alignment significantly declines. Also, the narrative about successful bilateral relations with Georgia disappears, tourism, culture, and sports lose their actuality, and instead, themes such as Russian aggression, self-sabotage of the EU achievements, and democratic backslide increase. All these themes started to appear in the second part of 2021. But back then, the number of articles was relatively small, and the narrative was still hopeful. However, in 2022-2025, both countries' media narratives are mainly negative, which severely damaged the Geo-Lithuanian state brotherhood. The Georgian media narrative is still divided into two: the negative narrative about Lithuania is developed by the pro-government outlet Imedi News, with 560 articles. On the other hand, anti-government Radio Liberty is constructing a pro-Lithuanian narrative, accumulating 263 articles till November 2025. In the Lithuanian media narrative, only one new theme emerges in 2025, which is Lithuanian sanctions against Georgian officials. The Radio Liberty narrative sticks to the same themes as before, which are only positive towards Lithuania. However, in the Imedi News narrative, two new themes emerge. These are "The double-faced Lithuania" and "the destructive behavior of Lithuanian politicians in Georgia".

At the beginning of 2022, despite the tension between the Georgian Dream party and the Lithuanian officials, the Geo-Lithuanian bilateral relations remained active and a popular theme in the media. However, it slowly started to decline and at the end of the period reached its lowest minimum. The same goes for the themes such as tourism, culture, and sports, which have completely lost their actuality in the Georgian and Lithuanian media narrative. The themes related to the Lithuanian success story and the role of Lithuania in the Europeanization of Georgia completely vanish from the Imedi News media narrative, and framed Lithuania as an enemy of Georgian sovereignty and the freedom of choice. Unlike Radio Liberty, which actively continues to push the narrative about Lithuania's important role in the Geo-EU relations and frames Lithuania as the mediator and a strategic friend. Also, it actively continues to publish articles about Lithuanian success stories to counter the negative narrative of the Imedi News.

The Lithuanian media narrative for 2022-2025 is extremely different from the past. Due to internal political tension between the government and the opposition in Georgia, themes of political

oppression by the ruling Georgian Dream have become popular. It gives a way to the articles related to the Georgian opposition. The Lithuanian media narrative doesn't align with any of the Georgian political parties. The articles are clearly free of biases and rather follow a common democratic rule of condemning political repressions and calls for pluralism and open political discourse. The articles related to the Geo-Lithuanian bilateral relations and cooperation slowly started to decrease in 2022 and reached their minimum point at the end of 2025. It is explained by the oligarchization of Georgia. Autocratic shifts in the Georgian Dream party damaged the long-standing bilateral relations between the countries. If in the past, cooperation in trade, defense, tourism, and cybersecurity was utilized to strengthen ties and maintain brotherhood, the last few years of the Georgian de-democratization process, violence, and abuse of human rights, and the drastic change of political radar, demolished long-sought efforts and achievements of the Geo-Lithuanian state brotherhood. Stemming from the same issues, the Lithuanian media started to actively publish articles covering the democratic degradation in Georgia led by the oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili and his party. The narrative of Georgia's strong EU alignment was replaced by the Russian alignment, especially from 2023, and completely disappeared in 2025. It is generally illustrated by the disapproval stance of the Georgian government on the sanctioning of Russia. Lithuania very often stresses the role of Georgia in transiting Western products in Russia (Mickus, 2025). The Georgian government started to actively criticize the EU institutions and their representatives. The Foreign Agent Bill was the last straw of the complete political disaster in modern Georgia. The Foreign Agent Bill targets independent media and NGOs to mitigate foreign influence in the country. The bill was also aiming to mitigate the electoral turnover and strengthen the hegemony of the Georgian Dream (Tavkhelidze, 2024). The related protests held in Tbilisi were at the epicenter of the Lithuanian media. The official visits of the Lithuanian representatives and their appearance at the anti-government protests were evaluated by the Georgian government as a betrayal of Lithuania. Therefore, extreme criticism was now aimed at Lithuania and its officials, which was actively covered by the Lithuanian media outlets, creating a new narrative about Georgia – a country self-sabotaging EU membership. The planned intervention and deliberate anti-European actions of the Georgian Dream were understood as a self-sabotage that alienated Georgia from the EU membership context. Soon, due to the extreme violation of human rights and offensive criticism, the pro-Russian Georgian Dream party fell under Lithuanian sanctions. The Lithuanian media articles were predominating this theme, and it further altered the past-like positive narrative about Georgia. The Lithuanian media narrative of 2022-2025 reflected the downgrade of the Georgian democratization and Europeanization process, as well as the demolition of the Geo-Lithuanian state brotherhood, which stood on trust, solidarity, and cooperation. Lithuania, as the biggest supporter of Georgia and a mediator to the EU, is now unable to defend Georgia's inadequate political decisions and has no choice but to impose sanctions on Georgian officials who

are responsible for systematic human rights violations, repression of civil society and media, and the distance of the Georgian people from Europe (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 2025).

Remarkably, the Lithuanian media narrative dichotomizes the Georgian government and the Georgian people. Understanding the disagreement between the government and the people, Lithuanian media creates two different narratives about the Georgian government, and a completely different one for the Georgian people. The articles highlight the difference between the two and note that Lithuania stays loyal to the Georgian nation, demonstrates sympathy, and underlines the significance of their disobedience in the sake of the European spirit. This dichotomy was evaluated by the propagandists of the Georgian government as a Soviet practice that Lithuania is employing today. Davit Kartvelishvili, one of the influential propagandists, in an interview with Imedi News, said that the Soviet Union was using a method of differentiation between the government and the people to justify its foreign intervention. Imedi News started to actively use the comparison of Lithuania and the Soviet Union to discredit its image. Notably, no matter how offensive and discrediting the anti-Lithuanian narrative is in Georgia, Lithuania remains extremely careful and diplomatic, attempting to address the Georgian people in a positive context and the Georgian government in an advisory and warning tone. It is apparent that the Georgian Dream propaganda machines, like Imedi News, are actively attacking the Lithuanian officials, but they remain calm.

In the first two months of 2022, Imedi News was still holding on to the narrative that, despite everything, Lithuania continues to cooperate with the Georgian government. The bilateral cooperation was still one of the dominant themes, demonstrating the willingness of Lithuania to continue the diplomatic and friendly relations with Georgia. The biggest highlight was the continuous cooperation in cybersecurity and partnership with the cybersecurity center of Kaunas. Also, the partnership between the parliaments and their representatives is strongly underlined. Disregarding Landsbergis, Pavilions, and other antagonists, Imedi News tries to spread a narrative that, despite the difficulties, Lithuania continues to support the Georgian government. However, from March 2022, the picture drastically changed. The Imedi News narrative becomes aggressive towards Lithuania, accusing it of having double standards, and spreads information about Lithuania purchasing 40% of its gas from Russia, while lecturing Georgia to join the sanctions and stop trading with its neighbor. Zurab Kadagidze appears as another propagandist helping Imedi News to develop a negative narrative about Lithuania. However, it is interesting that, at the same time, Imedi News was actively publishing articles about Geo-Lithuanian cooperation, continuing to work on strengthening economic relations and investment promotion. However, the discreditation of some Lithuanian officials continues. For instance, Žygimantas Pavilionis is portrayed as a supporter of Saakashvili and the ex-ruling United

National Movement Party. Understanding the negative emotional attitude of some Georgian people towards the United National Movement Party and Saakashvili, Imedi News labels all the unfavored Lithuanian officials as their supporters. The Imedi News calls Lithuanian officials immoral for manipulating the Georgian people's European aspirations for their benefit. The benefit is explained as a contribution to the success of the "Global War Party". Membership of Lithuania in the Global War Party becomes one of the main narratives of Imedi News. It is important to remember that in 2022, the Georgian Dream was still pretending to be aspiring for membership in the EU. therefore, the narrative follows the line that Lithuania is interfering with Georgia's success in the EU membership process, and tries to make Ukraine and Moldova leaders of the region, instead of Georgia. From June, the situation becomes worse, and Imedi News pushes a narrative that Lithuania is trying to neutralize Ivanishvili, which will destroy Georgia. Lithuania is portrayed as manipulating power, a hand of the West and the Global War Party, that tries to bring destruction to Georgia and transfer the power to a group of people, who will execute the intentions of the West in Georgia and control it. Lithuanian officials who pay attention to the importance of depolarization in Georgia are addressed as enemies of Georgian sovereignty. Moreover, Lithuania or the EU does not really care what regime will be in Georgia. The main goal is to have someone who will follow their instructions. As propagandist Nana Kakabadze says, their main goal is to use Georgia as a second front. Manipulating Georgia and opening a new front there apparently will protect Lithuania from the intervention of Russia. Therefore, Lithuania is portrayed as betraying a friend nation and sacrificing it in war with Russia. Yet another government propagandist, Soso Archvadze, continues to contribute to forming the anti-Lithuanian narrative by claiming that Lithuania is trading with Russia even more than Georgia does. For 2023, Lithuania remains a strategic partner in wine export for Georgia. For the same year, some of the articles still mention Lithuania as the biggest supporter of Georgia in becoming an EU member and highlight the cooperation in tourism, agriculture, innovations, telecommunication, energy, etc. The dualism of the narrative creates an absurd picture of the Geo-Lithuanian relations and especially the attitude of the Georgian government towards Lithuania. Also, the articles related to bilateral relations often foretell the continuous cooperation of the countries. Therefore, by that time, the government media outlet was still trying to show that the Georgian Dream is not giving up the friendship and is looking forward to future developments in cooperation.

Lithuanian success story as a theme reaches its minimum in 2023 and completely disappears in the next years from the Imedi News narrative. However, it remains dominant in the anti-government media Radio Liberty. Imedi News creates a picture where Lithuania is a victim of the Visa-free regime and the EU membership. It is explained by the opinion that after Lithuania became a member of the EU and was granted visa-free, migration increased, and more than half a million people left the

country. Therefore, Lithuania is an example of what happens to a small country after becoming a member of the EU and having a visa-free regime: emigration increases and the population declines. Utilizing selective statistics, Imedi News tries to scare the Georgian population.

In 2024, the attitude towards the West and Lithuania becomes even worse. If in 2022-2023 we still had at least a few articles with a positive narrative, in 2024 the picture changes. Lithuania's offer for mediation and stabilization of the internal socio-political uprisals is evaluated as evil and manipulative. Imedi News says that Lithuania is trying to drag Georgia into war and revisits the 2008 war in Georgia, underlining the ineffectiveness of Europe in resolving the conflict. In the text of the articles, ironic language is used, mocking the "successful" country of Lithuania, with the highest number of suicides and the "happiest" people who are "escaping" to another country. Many articles underline that Lithuania has a difficult psychological climate, and alcoholism is one of the biggest problems in the country. From May 2024, the media narrative becomes even more dramatic, claiming the EU is not trying to get a member status for Georgia, Landbergis and Pavilionis are agents of the global war party, which is bringing destruction in Georgia, and it is the only explanation for their support of anti-foreign agent bill protests, and not an honest will. Also, Lithuania is labeled a hypocrite for being a leader in the Baltics in exports with Russia. Even more, the narrative says that Lithuania increased its exports to Russia after the start of the Ukraine war. Also, Imedi news was devoting a large number of articles to the fact that Lithuania is the leading alcohol importer in Russia, and especially in wine, accusing them for re-exporting. Further aggravating the situation, pro-government media describe Lithuanians as nationless people who have become puppets of the global war party and the deep state. Lithuanian ambassador Andrius Kalindra is described as shameless and unprincipled. The whole Lithuanian representation is accused of implementing malicious propaganda. The Imedi News narrative says that for all these years, the Geo-Lithuanian friendship and brotherhood were based on lies and Pharisaism. They add that Lithuania is being brave just because it has NATO protection. If it were as alone as Georgia is, it would not implement the same politics as it does now. Another popular topic is the Lithuanian elections, where Georgian Dream claims that voting confidentiality was violated. By such a narrative, Imedi news tries to show that Lithuania is double-faced and hypocritical, which has no right to judge the Georgian government and accuse it of rigged elections. Interestingly, many articles portray Georgian Dream as seeking sympathy and acting as a victim, claiming that Lithuania has decided to sacrifice its friendship, but the Georgian government will remain a one-sided friend of the Lithuanian people. Ironically, such articles are usually followed by the ones that criticize the sanctions coming from Lithuania targeting the Georgian officials and comparing them to fascists. Fascists, pseudo-liberals, agents, nationless, a

puppet of the West, evil clowns are the short list of words used in the Georgian anti-Lithuanian narrative of 2022-2025, which has seriously damaged the state brotherhood.

Despite the persistent counter-attempts of the pro-Lithuanian and anti-government media outlet Radio-Liberty to keep publishing articles about the role of Lithuania in Georgia's Europeanization processes and the Lithuanian success story, the anti-Lithuanian propaganda machine is stronger in Georgia. The number of articles and the frequency of the information dissemination are way less than they are in the case of Imedi News. However, Radio Liberty creates an opportunity to counter anti-Lithuanian propaganda and maintain a positive public consciousness regarding Lithuania and the Geo-Lithuanian state brotherhood.

4.4 Discussion

The primary aim of this research was to disclose the role of media content in maintaining state brotherhood, based on the case of the Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood. The main findings of this study clearly demonstrate that the Georgian and Lithuanian media outlets were actively engaged in the development and maintenance of the state brotherhood. They have published thousands of articles over the years, transmitting the messages about the state relations and shaping the public consciousness accordingly. In the case of the Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood, LRT, Delfi, Imedi News, and Radio Liberty media channels gave us an opportunity to follow the dynamics of the state brotherhood. Observing the main media narratives, we were able to reveal the complex nature of these relations and divide it in three distinct time periods. The 2012-2017 articles show that the Geo-Lithuanian state brotherhood was entirely positive, constructive, and confident. It reveals the various forms of cooperation, bilateral projects, memorandums, official visits, strong support, and optimistic attitudes. The main narratives are brotherhood-focused, portraying each other as strong allies, united by shared goals, values, and views. In Georgian media narratives, Lithuania is framed as the biggest supporter and the main mediator between the EU and Georgia. On the other hand, in Lithuanian media narratives, Georgia is presented as a nation with a huge potential to become a member of the European Union, highlighting its achievements in the democratization of the country. However, the media articles of the 2018-2021 period offer slightly different narratives, which indicate the small fluctuations appearing in the Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood. Both of the countries' media organizations keep the positive narrative about bilateral cooperation and partnership in the economy, tourism, education, and security. However, the Lithuanian media channels do not produce entirely positive narratives about Georgia, and instead, they start to point out the internal political turbulences and the oppression of democratic institutions in the country. However, instead of a harsh

critique, the narrative approach was mainly diplomatic and friendly, keeping the tone of advice and hope for stabilization. In the Georgian media narratives, Lithuania remained a close ally and a strategic partner. However, negative narratives start to emerge regarding particular Lithuanian officials for delivering false accusations. Although the whole picture of the state brotherhood remained positive, but not as confident as in 2012-2017. The negative narratives were further developed in 2022-2025. In the Lithuanian media narratives, the good messages slowly disappear, and most of the articles are focused on the irreversible mistakes of the Georgian government, damaging the long-standing friendship of the countries and their chance to become a member of the European Union. LRT and Delfi start to separate the Georgian government from the Georgian people and produce the negative and supporting narratives accordingly. From the Georgian point of view, the media outlets Imedi News and Radio Liberty fully separate their visions of the problem and produce completely different narratives about Lithuania. Radio Liberty remains loyal to the state brotherhood and actively publishes pro-Lithuanian articles with the narrative that Lithuania is a successful country and a role model, which can facilitate Georgia in the Europeanization process. On the contrary, Imedi News, as a government propagandistic media outlet, creates a drastically negative narrative about Lithuania, accusing it of interfering in the domestic affairs of the sovereign country, implementing the directive of the Global War Party and the Deep state and bringing destruction and war in Georgia. As a result, analyzing the media articles and their narratives gave us a full picture of the Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood of the last 14 years, providing a comprehensive view of the entire relationship and the whole story of the development.

Interpreting these findings in a broader context of the media and state brotherhood correlation reveals what the role and functions media content holds in state brotherhood maintenance. First and foremost, the media content reflects the existence and the development of state brotherhood. Media narrative, as a set of stories, tells us about the successful relations between the countries, highlighting the important events, bilateral cooperation, symbolic communication, support, and alliance between the nations while focusing on shared goals, meanings, views, and common values. Media outlets extensively report on government actions and their relations with other foreign entities, which allows the public to follow the development of foreign affairs and be informed about the current state of relations with particular countries. The second suggestion from the study is that media not just reflect, but also affect the state's brotherhood. Firstly, media narrative contributes to the construction of social and cultural identities. Despite the geographical, anthropological, and ethnolinguistic differences, media outlets are able to craft a narrative that will overcome the above-mentioned tangible or intangible obstacles and connect two different nations. This finding is significant for this research because it explains one of the mechanisms of state brotherhood building. Instead of just proving and

highlighting the existence of state brotherhood, the media also functions as a catalyst for its maintenance. Understanding the fact that media narratives influence the public consciousness, the frequent exposure of the state brotherhood in the media content determines the public attitude, emotions, and even the social memory corresponding to the state brotherhood. Media narratives contain cultural symbols and social meanings, and encourage diplomatic and ambassadorial communication between the countries. The media contributes to the dissemination of unified values and goals for the nations through the exposure of diplomatic developments, bilateral and international programs, and their outcomes, highlighting their economic, social, and historical importance, and shaping the public perception accordingly. Therefore, all these efforts are made through the media to generate purposes and meanings for the whole relationship. The media acts as a platform for the countries to establish, shape, and maintain the state brotherhood. The media and its international capacity simplify the process of brotherhood maintenance by speeding up the communication process and delivering strong messages embedded in the media narratives. The media is not disseminating plain information as a story, but also puts effort into delivering the message and generating the intended attitudes in the public about the country in question. The media can become a medium between the nations to strengthen the ties and prepare the collective awareness and communal consciousness by encouraging the fluidity of identities and creating a positive picture of the partner state. The media holds the responsibility to initiate positive attitudes and manipulate the public into supporting the state brotherhood in question. However, the media can use well-crafted narratives to damage the state brotherhood as well. In cases when the media outlets fall under the influence of the government, they start to follow their directives, which is visible in the change of narratives related to a particular country. In such a case, the media tries to change the public perception of that country, remove positive attitudes from society, and embed the negative ones instead. As a result, the narratives shift from the successful cooperations, supportive statements, and cultural or societal appreciation to the discreditation of the other nation by focusing on its drawbacks, mistakes, and controversial decisions. On the other side, the media outlets that stay loyal to the state brotherhood can play a crucial role in keeping the spirit of the state brotherhood by countering the opposing narratives and crafting a positive and supportive set of stories. Consequently, the media content holds a crucial role in the state brotherhood building and maintenance, which can be either positive or negative. It reflects the overall existence of the state brotherhood and further affects it by crafting the narratives that shape the public perception, collective consciousness, and attitudes in society. It is a weapon to either strengthen the state brotherhood by inducing the establishment of shared identities, common meanings, goals, and values. But at the same time, it holds the power to weaken the relations by altering the narrative and changing the public perception to negative.

CONCLUSIONS

State brotherhood is a multi-layered concept, defined as an organized social relationship and a special form of international communication, which is based on collective identity, shared meanings, solidarity, and common values. It is an instrument for creating a peaceful world society by promoting cooperation and integration. State brotherhood can be organic and artificial. In organic brotherhood, nations have a long-standing common ground, shared language, religion, and culture, that organically bonds them into a state brotherhood. In the case of artificial brotherhood, countries put effort to learn collective norms and creating a similar identity, which did not exist in the past. This proves that identities and cultural settings are adjustable in constructing state brotherhood. Artificially constructed brotherhoods are driven by political interests, motivation to become a part of a particular international organization, and the survival instinct to find an ally against a common enemy. These efforts are reinforced and implemented through cultural diplomacy and media content.

The Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood is an exemplary case of artificially constructed state brotherhood, which is based on common social and political experiences, as well as assistance and solidarity for Georgia to become a member of the European Union. Despite the different cultures, languages, and huge geographical distance, Lithuania and Georgia managed to build strong relations, utilizing diplomatic and media maneuvers. However, the latest political turbulences in Georgia damaged the long-standing state brotherhood, which is clearly demonstrated in the media narratives of both countries. The most positive period for media narratives was 2012-2017, when Georgian pro-governmental and pro-oppositional media organizations were aligned in representing Lithuania as the closest friend and the biggest supporter of Georgia. Lithuanian media narratives of state-owned and private media outlets were depicting Georgia as an ally with a huge potential to become a member of the EU, highlighting its achievements in the democratization of the country. From 2018 to 2021, the Georgian media narratives remained mainly positive, but the Lithuanian media outlets started to point out the internal political turbulences and the oppression of democratic institutions in Georgia. Even though the tone was not critical, but rather friendly and advisory, it still reflected the beginning of degradation in the Lithuanian-Georgian state brotherhood. The latest period of 2022-2025 shows the disappearance of positive messages in Georgian pro-governmental and Lithuanian media narratives. It reflects how the authoritarian government of Georgia uses media to craft anti-Lithuanian narratives and change the public perception accordingly. Whilst Lithuania answers with counter-narratives against the Georgian government, it stays supportive of the Georgian people. Therefore, the overall narrative of Lithuanian media is that Georgia has always been a trusted ally and a potential candidate for EU membership, yet its fall under Russian influence is endangering the friendly relations. However, Lithuania remains hopeful for Georgia's political awakening. The Georgian media

narratives of pro-governmental and pro-oppositional outlets were the same for a long time, framing Lithuania as a reliable friend, strategic partner, mediator, and a role model. While the oppositional media narrative stays the same, the pro-governmental channel switches stance to a more negative narrative, where Lithuania is presented as a double-faced hypocrite nation, which tries to bring revolution and war in Georgia.

Cultural diplomacy and media play an immense role in the state brotherhood maintenance. Cultural diplomacy is an act of interaction between nations, such as bilateral cooperation in tourism, culture, and education, which is further reinforced by constructing media narratives based on them. Consequently, it influences not only the actual participants of the cross-national interactions but also the audience of the media, by provoking positive emotions and spreading the experience of cultural diplomacy on wider audience.

The media organizations establish, shape, and maintain the state brotherhood by producing narratives that reflect and affect the development of state brotherhood. The media narratives, as a set of stories, provide a comprehensive picture of the whole relationship, providing visibility of the turning points and the reasoning behind the trends. The frequent coverage and exposure embed the importance and the significance of the state brotherhood in the collective consciousness and memory of the public. Media narrative is built on stories that include social and cultural symbols, meanings, attitudes, and emotions that are supposed to direct the public on what to think and how to think. Media narratives shape public perception of the country in question. The media organizations emerge as mediators between the entities. It can strengthen or weaken the state brotherhood. The media outlets that are controlled by authoritarian governments tend to easily change their narratives according to the governmental directives. In such a case, the media employs hostile narratives that shape the antipathetic public perception of the particular country, damaging its credibility and reputation.

Finally, state brotherhood is a product of communication and a tool for communication at the same time, which determines a nation's global orientation, based on collective identity, political interests, and international goals. The traditional understanding of state brotherhood is moving from the bond of nations with similar culture, to the bond of nations with the same goals and interests. It reduces uncertainty and brings validation for the nations. State brotherhood is acquired by forming common identities and shared meanings, which is implemented through cultural diplomacy, as a direct interaction between nations, and media narratives. Media is a mediator, an agenda-setter, and an actor that reflects and affects the maintenance of state brotherhood by crafting narrative that shape the public perception. It can either strengthen the brotherhood or damage it, just like in the case of the Georgian-Lithuanian state brotherhood.

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Appendix 1. Declaration of the use of artificial intelligence tools

FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION, VILNIUS UNIVERSITY DECLARATION ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

Student's name, surname: Magda Devadze

Study programme, year of study: International Communication. 2nd year

Title of the written work: Cultural Diplomacy and Media Narratives in Building State Brotherhood: The Case of Lithuanian-Georgian relations.

Type of written work (e.g., essay, term paper): Master's Thesis

Course / subject: Master's Thesis

Date of submission of the declaration: 12/25/2025

The written work submitted for assessment has been prepared in accordance with the *Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University*, the *Methodological Guidelines for Written Works of the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University*, the *Guidelines on Artificial Intelligence Usage at Vilnius University*, and the *Recommendations on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Study Assignments at the Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University*.

I confirm

I do not confirm

The following artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in preparing this written work (please mark appropriately and specify their purpose):

ChatGPT: For the empirical research, ChatGPT was utilized as a tool for the primary selection of media articles and the extraction of themes. It was given strict and comprehensive instructions on how to extract the main themes and actors.

Grammarly: Grammarly was used for the correction of some punctuation and grammar errors.

Midjourney: _____

Gemini: _____

Other: Google Translate was used to translate the abstract of the thesis from English to Lithuanian.