

# GIP

## WORKING PAPER

APRIL 2021

#15

### **MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ULTRANATIONALIST GROUPS IN GEORGIA: MAPPING THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISCOURSE**

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Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP) is a Tbilisi-based non-profit, non-partisan, research and analysis organization. GIP works to strengthen the organizational backbone of democratic institutions and promote good governance and development through policy research and advocacy in Georgia.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the Open Society Georgia Foundation. The views, opinions and statements expressed by the authors and those providing comments are theirs only and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Foundation. Therefore, the Open Society Georgia Foundation is not responsible for the content of the information material.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper [\*] analyzes the patterns of media coverage of Georgian ultranationalist groups and their discourse as covered by the three Georgian mainstream TV channels: Rustavi2, Imedi TV, and the 1st Channel of the Georgian Public Broadcaster. It examines whether and how much the ultranationalist narratives penetrate media discourse in Georgia, whether the media gives space to the counter arguments to ultra-nationalism, and who are the actors who set the discursive agenda around these issues. The analysis is based on the media coverage of four cases of activities by Georgian ultranationalist groups in the period of 2018-2019, which triggered a particularly strong resonance. These cases include the so-called Rave Revolution, Tbilisi Pride, the March of Dignity and the premier of the film *And then we danced*. The original data was collected using the quantitative content analysis of the primetime news programs of the aforementioned three channels. The paper utilizes the methods of Social Network Analysis to delve deep into the thematic and actor structures of the media discourse, and through this identifies the centrality of issue categories and the nature of agency within. The findings of the study suggest that issue-wise, the narratives of the ultra-nationalist groups have not penetrated the mainstream TV media in Georgia. Counter-discourse of ultra-nationalism is largely absent as well. What dominates the discourse instead of the substantial issues are the frames of negativity (insulting and offensive language), blaming rival groups and talking about violence. Ultranationalist groups seem to dominate the discourse in terms of the amount of statements they make, and together with journalists seem to be the key contributors to setting negative references and violence as the major categories on the discursive agenda.

*[\*] The author would like to thank Erekle Gozalishvili for his assistance in the data collection process.*

## INTRODUCTION

For several years now, it has not been uncommon to come across a scene on Georgian TV which shows two simultaneous demonstrations occurring in the center of Tbilisi, with police forces standing in the middle trying to avoid potential violence, and government representatives seemingly mitigating the tension with their statements. With the presence of multiple journalists, the scene is usually broadcast live and makes the major news segments of prime time coverage. This trend – which is relatively new to the Georgian public sphere – emerged together with and as a result of the rise of ultranationalist groups – sometimes also referred to as far-right groups – in 2013-2014, and permeated the mainstream media throughout the subsequent years, every time these groups became active. The usual scenario of these activities is that these groups organize demonstrations, or more often counter-demonstrations, in response to events which go against their ultranationalist agenda, especially if they are related to the issues of LGBT rights, immigration from Muslim countries, the liberalization of drug policies, etc. This trend became worrisome for researchers and policy practitioners concerned with the rise of far-right in Georgia, due to fears that exaggerated media attention might be instrumental for these groups to gain momentum and obtain more leverage to influence the politics of the country with their illiberal agenda (Stephan 2020; Gelashvili 2020). However, as very little research has been done on this subject, there is a lack of systematic empirical evidence, hence our knowledge about the patterns of media coverage of ultranationalist groups in Georgia, particularly that of their discourse, is rather scarce.

Observers agree that in general, for the moment, the political capital of the far-right parties as well as social movements in Georgia is not very strong. Rather, it is in its infancy (e.g. Stephan 2020). However, developments in recent years have already shown signs that the ultra-nationalist agenda of the country's far-right groups has the potential to advance further in the public and political spheres of the country, which in turn might threaten the democratic and Euro-Atlantic aspirations Georgia has committed itself to. To start from the most recent event, shortly before the 2020 Parliamentary elections, one of the most active ultranationalist groups – Georgian March – turned itself into a political party and participated in the elections, although it achieved little success (Civil.ge 2020; Central Election Committee 2020). Nevertheless, the Georgian Parliament has not been devoid of right-wing nationalist representatives in recent years. The Alliance of Patriots (AoP), which started participating in local elections in 2014, entered Parliament in 2016 with 5.1% of the votes. While the official results of the 2020 elections show a reduction of support from the electorate for the AoP (3.14%), the party is still an active participant of the post-election political process, whereby key players of the political opposition are involved in a protracted negotiation with the ruling party under international facilitation. Furthermore, even if conceived as a marginal force, right-wing political parties and extra-parliamentary ultranationalist groups manage to influence the legislative process indirectly through lobbying, and affect public opinion through their online activities (Gozalishvili 2020). This short list of examples pointing to the potential for the rise of the far-right becomes even more worrisome considering the strong conservative attitudes of the Georgian public, as documented by the PEW Research Center (2018). The latter can create a “fertile ground” for an ultranationalist agenda to flourish (Gelashvili 2019b).

Taking these circumstances into account, it is all the more important to advance our knowledge about whether and in what form the mainstream media contributes to the emergence of ultranationalist agendas in the Georgian public sphere. To that end, the main research question of this paper is the following: what are the patterns of media coverage of ultranationalist groups and primarily their discourses in the Georgian mainstream media? This entails systematically analyzing the extent of the visibility these groups are granted by the media, as well as answering the following sub-questions: how much of the ultranationalist narratives

penetrate mainstream media discourse? Do the media present counter arguments of ultra-nationalism to the public? What is the general actor constellation of the media discourse when covering the activities of ultranationalist groups? Who is given a voice? Who has a stronger agency in setting the discourse agenda – ultranationalist actors or others? To conclude, this paper maps the structure of the mainstream media discourse of and around ultranationalist groups in Georgia. Ultranationalist groups here refer to the organized, extra-parliamentary entities with far-right nationalist agendas. It is their narratives that this study aims at tracking in the media discourse. One of the contributions of the paper is that rather than focusing on the narratives of specific groups separately, it looks at ultranationalist groups as a cumulative actor, and through this depicts a broader and more general picture of their discourse in mainstream media. However, in order to identify how much their discourse and voice in general is heard in the media, it is important that the analysis takes other actors – including amongst others the far-right political parties in and out of the parliament – and their own discourse into account as well.

The paper is based on original data collected using the quantitative content analysis of the primetime news programs of the three leading TV channels in Georgia – namely Rustavi2, Imedi TV, and the 1st Channel of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB). The analysis focuses on the four cases of the activities of ultranationalist groups, which triggered a particularly strong resonance. Namely, (1) the so-called “Rave Revolution” that took place in mid-May, 2018; (2) Tbilisi Pride of June, 2019; (3) the March of Dignity, which occurred as a consequence of “Gavrilov’s Night” in July, 2019 and (4) the demonstration in response to the Premiere of Georgian-Swedish film about male romance *And, then We Danced* in November, 2019 (this case is labeled as ATWD throughout the paper). Aiming at mapping the structure of the discourse, the paper follows the approach by Abzianidze (2020) in using the method of Social Network Analysis (SNA) in order to tease out the structural properties of the discourse.

The main findings of the paper suggest that in general, while ultranationalist groups in Georgia are given air time, they are not very successful in advancing the substance of their discourse through the mainstream media. Analysis of the discourse structures show a complex picture behind this pattern. Issue categories, which are important to the ultranationalist narrative in Georgia, are only marginally represented in media discourse. Instead, most of the coverage in this regard is built up on negativity (including insulting and offensive language), blaming others, and talking about violence. Nevertheless, ultranationalist activists, their leaders, and the Church are among the most central actors whose voices are heard in the media coverage of the selected cases. While there are slight differences across the channels in this regard, the general picture is consistent in pursuing the agenda of negativity, blaming and violence, and representing ultranationalist actors among the most central contributors to this agenda. Furthermore, journalists themselves appeared to be actively expressing their own positions while covering the events under focus and accentuating negativity and violence as the major frames of reporting, further reinforcing these categories on the agenda.

The paper begins with a conceptual discussion offering terminological clarification about far-right (ultra) nationalism and proposing a framework for analyzing the discourse of and about ultranationalist groups in Georgia. The section on research design details the data collection efforts and describes how the Social Network Analysis is applied for studying the discourse. The sections that follow analyze thematic and actor structures of the discourse in the media under study. The paper concludes with summarizing the main findings, and discusses their normative implications for democracy. The limitations of the paper and avenues for further research are also discussed in the concluding section.

It is not the goal of this paper to engage in theoretical discussions about how far-right movements mobilize or what explains this mobilization (on far-right mobilization see Caiani, della Porta, and Wagemann 2012). It does not aim to test hypotheses about the causes or effects of certain patterns of media coverage of these movements either. The paper instead identifies, describes and, using the SNA methodology, systematically maps how the mainstream TV media cover the activities and discourse of ultranationalist groups in Georgia.

### Terminological clarification

The task, first of all, calls for terminological clarity, as terms such as “far-right”, “extreme right”, “ultranationalists”, “fascists”, “neo-Nazis”, “ultra-conservatives”, etc. are frequently used in Georgia – by politicians, journalists as well as experts – interchangeably with regard to the same groups known for their illiberal agenda (Gelashvili 2019a; Sartania and Tsurkava 2019). It is true that most of these ideologies or directions are represented among these groups in Georgia. However, it needs to be carefully considered as to which of these labels is best suited to be an umbrella term for all of them. While some of these groups such as, for example, Georgian National Unity (GNU) articulate neo-Nazi sentiments, not all the others do so. They also differ substantially in what topics dominate their agenda and their respective narratives (Sartania and Tsurkava 2019). As this paper does not look at the media coverage of any specific group, but is instead concerned with analyzing the more collective picture of how the discourse and activities of illiberal groups, as a cumulative actor, are covered by the media, it is instrumental to define this umbrella term. This will further allow the predefinition of the discursive categories to be analyzed.

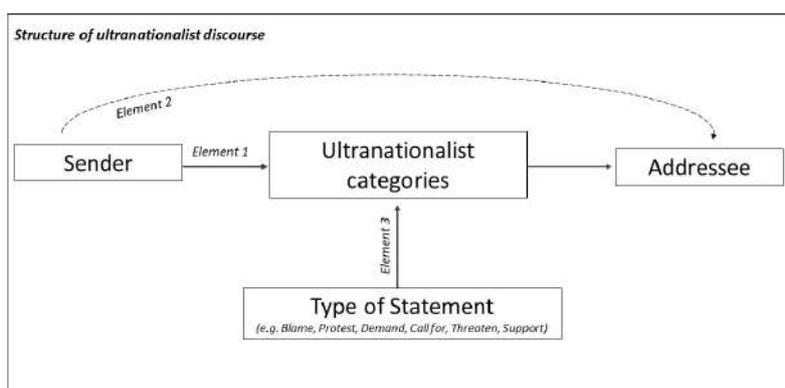
The major term this paper is concerned with is extreme-right nationalism – which is used interchangeably with ultra-nationalism and far-right nationalism – and considers it to be an umbrella term to characterize the groups under focus. In his effort to conceptualize right-wing extremism based on 26 definitions, Cas Mudde describes nationalism as one of the features of right-wing extremism along with xenophobia, racism, anti-democracy and the notion of a strong state. While these features are helpful for identifying if a group or a party has extreme right tendencies, the author acknowledges that it is not entirely clear what combinations of these features define right-wing extremism (Mudde 1995). Carter sees it problematic to conceive these five features as defining elements of the concept, given that they “do not all occupy the same place on the conceptual ladder of abstraction [...] nationalism, xenophobia, racism and a call for a strong state are all manifestations of the higher concept of anti-democratic sentiment” (Carter 2017, 30). The author suggests to think of these features in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, but argues that anti-democracy is what drives right-wing extremism, whereas the other four features can or cannot be part of it. As Sartania and Tsurkava (2019) rightly note, the specific nature of far-right extremism varies across different contexts and might take on different forms given the socio-cultural, political and/or historical experiences. Moreover, these forms might vary not only across countries but also across time. A good example brought by the authors is how extremists in Georgia targeted ethnic minorities in the 1990s, but then shifted their attention towards religious minorities in the 2000s and the LGBT community in the 2010s. Given the definitional confusion characteristic to the field and the focus of this paper on a specific context – the case of Georgia – it is more useful to focus on a constitutive element of right-wing extremism pertinent to that specific case.

In Georgia, the extreme-right groups are primarily nationalistic. In other words, nationalism is a major driving force of these groups (see the similar understanding of the right-wing extremism in Europe by Eatwell 2000). Even a mere look at the names of these organizations point to this fact: Georgian Idea, Georgian March, Georgian Power, Georgian National Unity. The nation – understood in ethnic terms – is the principal notion which these groups adhere to.

Nationalism in this study is defined as a “doctrine that people who see themselves as distinct in their culture, history, institutions or principles, should rule themselves in a political system that expresses and protects those distinctive characteristics” (Mansfield and Snyder 1995, 9–10; Snyder 2000, 23). What makes nationalism extreme right in the case of the groups under focus is its exclusionary nature, which can frequently turn into hostility towards the “other”. Everything and/or everybody that does not fit in their understanding of the “culture, history or principles” of the in-group or goes against these is an “enemy”. Several researchers have identified that the list of the issues that Georgian far-right groups appeal to and capitalize on in their discourses is dominated by those about LGBT rights, immigrants – particularly from Turkey, Iran and other Muslim countries – gender equality, drug policies, threats that stem from the West, and from liberal ideologies in general (Jgharkava 2017; Stephan 2020; Sartania and Tsurkava 2019; Gelashvili 2019a). While on the surface not all of these issues might seem linked to nationalism, in fact it is the nation (hence, the term Georgianness) that these groups “protect” from homosexuals, from Muslims, from migrants, from drugs, from “unhealthy” gender roles that destroy the traditional family structure, and from liberal values, which can enhance all the “enemies” mentioned above. Then, in this process of protecting the nation, some of these groups reside to the Nazi/Fascist discourse, others appeal to anti-democratic sentiments, yet others capitalize on conservative attitudes; the list can be long. However, what unites them all is the alleged perception of the “patriotic duty” to protect the Georgian Nation.

### What constitutes ultranationalist discourse?

This paper follows the approach by Abzianidze (2020) in understanding discourse as a complex semantic construct, the structure of which is defined by the interactions between and among its constituent elements. More precisely, these elements refer to the content of the discourse, i.e., thematic categories, the context in which these categories are mentioned, and the actors involved. Hence, interaction occurs on three dimensions: (1) among actors, i.e. actors interact with each other, and this interaction can take different forms such as blaming, protesting, demanding, calling for something, threatening, or supporting, etc.; (2) between actors and issues they refer to, i.e. actors interact with issues by mentioning them in their discourse or by being the targets of the mentioned issue; (3) between issue categories and the context in which they are mentioned, for example, is the thematic category of LGBT being mentioned in the context of blaming, protesting or condemning? Discourse then is a collection of statements made by actors. Each statement has a sender, that is an actor, who makes a statement and an addressee that is an actor towards whom the statement is made. To add more clarity, the argument is graphically illustrated in Figure 1. As the present study is concerned specifically with ultranationalist discourse, it is important to define what constitutes ultranationalist discourse both in terms of its content and actors.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework for the structure of ultranationalist discourse.

## **Ultrationalist discourse and thematic categories**

Typically, in the process of conceptualizing, i.e., identifying indicators of a certain concept, researchers rely on theoretical literature. In the case of this paper, this would mean resorting to literature on far-right nationalism and right-wing extremism in general in order to identify what exact issues constitute ultrationalist discourse. However, as mentioned before, the discourse of far-right groups and the thematic issues they capitalize on can be specific to a context. As the major interest of this paper is to find out whether and how much the Georgian mainstream media take up on the discourses of ultrationalist groups, it is more useful to concentrate on the issues used specifically by ultrationalist groups in Georgia. Several studies – research papers, reports as well as policy papers – have looked into this subject in the Georgian context and analyzed the discourses of various extra-parliamentary groups, as well as formal political parties, qualitatively based on the data from their own channels of communication, such as social media pages and manifestos (Sartania and Tsurkava 2019; Gelashvili 2019a; Jgharkava 2017; Kandelaki 2021; Stephan 2020). The findings of all of these studies are consistent with each other in identifying the main issues defining the illiberal agenda of the ultrationalist groups in Georgia.

The most dominant issues include the LGBT+ community, migrants, gender roles, religion and ethnicity, Georgian and world history, and defining the threat stemming from within and from outside of the country. In their multi-method study of the Facebook pages of the four major far-right nationalist groups – Georgian March, Georgian Power, Georgian Idea and Nationalists – Sartania and Tsurkava provide the most comprehensive analysis of the forms and nature of the discourse of these groups. They identify a long list of issues that these groups resort to using in their communication with the audience, and provide detailed descriptions of each of these issues as utilized in the discourse of the groups under focus (Sartania and Tsurkava 2019). It is important to mention here that as the study is based on the analysis of Facebook pages, the discourse it captures is fully controlled by the groups themselves. In other words, this is the discourse that these groups themselves would like to reach out to their audiences with. This information is instrumental, as it gives us the knowledge on what specific issues the ultrationalist groups in Georgia have on their discursive agenda. In order to find out how much of this discourse is represented in mainstream media and in what form, the present study utilizes the findings of the study by Sartania and Tsurkava (2019) to define the thematic categories constituting the content of the ultrationalist discourse. The list of these categories and their detailed description is presented in Table 1.

## **Ultrationalist discourse and agency**

Actors play a particularly important role in the spread of any kind of discourse. In order to identify how much the discourse of ultrationalist groups have penetrated the media sphere, it is important to include a wider spectrum of actors in the analysis and find out what is the share of the ultrationalist actors' agency among all the actors who are involved in the discourse. In this analysis, ultrationalist groups themselves are divided into ultrationalist leaders (that is the leaders of the organizations) and ultrationalist activists (that is the rank-and-file members of the organizations). Both of these are cumulative actors and are identified based on naming by the media itself (most frequently using captions, but also direct naming by journalists). Far-right political parties are considered as separate actors. Studies have shown that the Church and religion in general is an important aspect of far-right nationalism in Georgia (Kandelaki 2021). Therefore, in order to find out where the Church stands in the discourse, it is instrumental to include the Church as an actor as well. The activities of ultrationalist groups in Georgia most frequently occur as a response to the activities of more liberal groups, especially LGBT+ rights defenders, social movements for drug policy liberalization, etc. Hence, these activists are major participants of the events covered by this study.

Thematic categories (labels)	Description
LGBT	Mentioning of LGBT+ community or the defenders of LGBT rights in a negative context – portraying them as a threat to Georgia’s demography and to traditions; using words as “perverse”, “illness”, etc.; making statements against the LGBT+ rights.
Women	Mentioning women’s role in the family, portraying women as inferior to men, making derogatory comments about women’s political engagement, about socially active women and about feminism in general.
Religion	A general mention of religion as an important category. This can refer to the celebration of the Georgian Orthodox Church by talking about religious figures, values or other sacred categories. It can also refer to portraying other religious groups – within and beyond Georgia – in a negative context. For example, portraying Islam as a driver of terrorism or a threat to the Georgian nation.
Migrants	Mentioning of migrants – primarily from Asia and Africa – in a negative context: portraying them as threats, protesting against selling land to them and allowing them to do business activities in Georgia, mentioning of prostitution, rape, and illegal activities in relation to migrants.
Ethno-nationalism	Mentioning ‘Georgianness’ in an exalted way, praising the in-group ethnicity and using these categories for denouncing the “other”. Mentioning of race and using this category to discredit other groups. Calling for the State to serve Georgians exclusively.
Glorification of History	Mentioning historical events, figures (e.g. kings and saints), dates of wars. Heroic narratives of how Georgians have won wars in the past or how a specific historical figure has sacrificed their life for the homeland. This might also refer to the romanticizing of Monarchy and arguing for the special nature of the Bagrationi dynasty. Praising the national independence movement and the figures and events related to that (e.g., April 9th tragedy, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, etc.) This category can refer to any period of Georgian history.
Authoritarianism	Mentioning authoritarian leaders from the world history in a positive context and claiming that this kind of rule is justified in order to combat liberal values.
Drug Policy/Narcopolitics	Drug policy reform and its liberalization is portrayed as a threat to the nation and Georgian genetics and as a propaganda of drugs.
West as threat	The West in general and EU and USA in particular are portrayed as threats due to their efforts to propagate liberal values.
Support for Western Ultranationalists	Explicitly declared support for ultranationalist groups and far-right political parties in Europe and USA, portraying them as those protecting their nations against liberal values, depicting them as an example to follow.
Cultural affinity with Russia	Mentioning Russia in the context of religious and cultural affinity, legitimizing closeness to Russia due to this reason. Bringing quotes from Russian religious figures, mentioning the cultural similarities between Georgians and Russians.
Russia as an occupant	Mentioning the occupation of Georgian territories by Russia, portraying Russia as an enemy.
Negative/Positive reference (Actor level)	Negative: using insulting and offending language, comparing to negative characters from history, literature, mythology. Positive: praising, thanking, congratulating, apologizing.
Violence/No violence	Violence: mentioning violence as a means of solving a problem, talking of escalation, physical offend, someone being a victim of violence, something being damaged as a result of violence. No violence: mentioning peace as a means of solving a problem, rejecting any kind of violence, denying any violent action, condemning violent action.

**Table 1.** Thematic categories of ultranationalist discourse used in the analysis. The categories are based on the findings of Sartania and Tsurkava, 2019.

Moreover, one would expect that these activists might be the major source of counter-discourse to ultranationalism. This liberal wing is cumulatively labeled as Activists in this paper. Media discourses are highly affected by the representatives of governmental institutions. Therefore, including them in the analysis is crucial.

Political parties – including the ruling party and far-right parties – are considered as separate actors as they all have their own diverse agendas and can influence the discourse in a variety of ways. Furthermore, the media and journalists are labeled as actors as well, since they are the ones who control what is aired and what is not. Moreover, journalists – especially in such a polarized political environment as Georgia – are frequently engaged in opinionated discussions and make statements themselves, which in turn adds to their agency in the political processes. Other actors who can potentially influence media discourse include: The Ombudsman, intellectuals (a cumulative label for cultural elites, experts, academics, writers, artists, etc.), non-governmental organizations. A detailed list of actors is provided in the appendix.

### **Ultranationalist discourse and media [i]**

There is little to debate when it comes to the influence of media – both the mass media as well as social media – on the political and social life of a country. It has become a subject of worry for analysts if and how much the media contributes to the rise of the far-right in Western as well as Eastern Europe. In general, communication scientists have long agreed that the process of political communication is bottom-up as much as it is top-down, given that the media enjoys at least certain level of freedom. That is, elites determine the nature of this process as much as the media and audiences do. The media and journalists have the power of setting the agenda (McCombs 1981; McCombs and Shaw 1972; Weaver 2007) as well as determining how the issues on the agenda are framed (Entman 1993; Iyengar 1991). The implications of these powers are that the media can restructure the timing and character of political events, define situations as a crisis (or the opposite), inject new personalities in the political sphere or hinder this process, and also determine which political demands in a society are heard and which are deprived of a voice (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995).

As Ellinas (2018) argues, it is exactly through these two “powers” that the media has the potential to play a crucial role in the rise of the far-right or the lack thereof. The author distinguishes three mechanisms through which this can occur: recognition, giving push, and legitimization (Ellinas 2018). This argument resonates well with the literature on the media and democratization. While the key democratic functions of media can be summarized as performing the roles of a watchdog, the provider of information and that of the space for public forum, in democratizing context the media has additional functions to perform (Veltmer 2013): namely, to legitimize the concept of democracy, to legitimize new actors on the political scene, to educate the public on democratic procedures, and to facilitate national integration (Jakubowicz and Sükösd 2008; Sükösd 1997; Sükösd 2000). In its function of legitimizing matters, the media can also contribute to the mobilization capacity of the far-right nationalist groups by providing exaggerated attention to them and by letting their discourse and narratives proliferate through to the public sphere without scrutiny. Providing such discursive opportunities can further strengthen their structures for political opportunity (Giugni et al. 2005). Beyond legitimacy, Koopmans names resonance as an important category. His argument, according to which “messages that resonate, travel further” dictates that any resonance, even if negative, ensures at least partial reproduction of that message, which in turn ensures new audiences (Koopmans 2004, 374). Moreover, based on the experiences of European countries, Kavtaradze points out that even negative coverage of these groups – and particularly associating them with violence – may play a “decisive” role in making these groups and their leaders look important and thereby strengthening their positions (Kavtaradze 2019, 20).

While there are studies looking at the discourses of certain far-right nationalist groups in Georgia which have analyzed the Facebook pages of these groups, we have no systematic knowledge whatsoever of what these discourses look like in the mainstream TV media. To fill this gap in knowledge, this study aims at mapping the structure of these discourses. To that end, the next section presents the research design and methodology and introduces the original data that was collected for this study.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Following Abzianidze (2020), nationalist discourse in this study is understood as a network, the structure of which is determined by the interactions among different elements such as actors and thematic categories. This structural and relational approach to discourse calls for utilizing the methods of Social Network Analysis in order to tease out its structural properties (Wasserman and Faust 2009; van Atteveld 2008). The original data has been collected using quantitative content analysis of the primetime news programs of the three mainstream Georgian TV channels. Before turning to the detailed explanation of how these methods were applied, it is important to say a few words regarding sampling strategies.

The rationale behind focusing on the media coverage of the four specific cases of ultranationalist activities mentioned above rather than selecting news programs randomly was motivated by the fact that in general, the mainstream Georgian TV media only covers the groups under focus once they become active, and announce or organize a demonstration or counter-demonstration. These four cases are those which caused the most significant resonance in recent years. Hence, it is expected that the analysis would “capture” the best picture by focusing on the media coverage of these events.

The decision to analyze broadcast television rather than other types of media was determined by the fact that for many years now, TV has been the most consumed media in Georgia, which has been documented by the data from the various waves of the Caucasus Barometer surveys. [ii] Given these circumstances, TV media is considered as the strongest agenda-setter in the country. The primetime news programs of the three major channels – Rustavi2, Imedi and the 1st Channel of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) – were selected for the analysis. [iii] With this selection, the analysis will cover diverse types of media which also reflects the diverse forces on the political spectrum. As the analysis is concerned with the cases from the period of 2018-2019, the discussion of the media landscape refers to that period as well. In spring, 2020 the media landscape in Georgia has changed substantially, changing the power balance of major media actors. In 2018-2019, when these events occurred, Rustavi 2 was an openly self-declared oppositional channel. Imedi was and still is known for its governmental leanings. The GPB, meanwhile, as a public broadcaster has an obligation to balance its coverage by representing various groups of society. For each of these channels, two days were selected per case: the day when the event occurred or started, and the following day. This kind of selection resulted in 24 news programs in total. [iv]

Quantitative content analysis was utilized to collect the data. This implied developing a set of pre-defined clear rules for coding the news programs, which formed the basis of the codebook. Coding was conducted on two levels, a program level and statement level. This study only examines those stories which were dedicated to the four cases, therefore these were the only ones which were coded for the statement level. Coding on the program level, meanwhile, focused on the amount of air time given to the ultranationalist groups and all the other actors during the news programs in order to identify whether and how much the voice of the former dominates that of the latter.

However, the major interest of this study is the coding of the statement level variables, as this is where the structure of the discourse can be found. The unit of analysis here is a statement defined as the instance of expressing a position by an actor. Only statements with clear positions were coded. In line with the conceptualization presented in Figure 1, a statement comprises four elements: (1) a sender, i.e., an actor, who makes a statement; addressee, i.e. (2) an actor towards whom the statement is directed; (3) statement type predefined as the following categories: *blame, protest, demand, call for, threaten, deny, condemn, support, promise, predict*; and, most importantly, (4) content of the statement, which is defined by the thematic categories presented in Table 1. However, for each of the thematic categories presented in the table, the codebook allowed for the coding of the opposite categories (these variables have the same name with “*opposite*” used as a suffix). The rationale behind this approach is to make sure that the analysis covers the instances of the media pursuing a counter-discourse to that of the ultranationalist groups, in the event that such instances occur. For example, the variable “LGBT” would cover instances such as making statements against LGBT+ rights, whereas the variable “LGBT\_opposite” would be used to code the instances of mentioning the need to protect LBGT+ rights. Statements were delimited from each other based on the variables “sender” and “statement type”. In other words, one statement ends and another starts when either a sender or the statement type or both change. Thematic categories are not mutually exclusive, which means more than one thematic category can occur in a single statement. A predefined list of all the potential relevant actors has been included in the codebook. However, if other actors were identified in the process of coding, which were not part of this list, they were added to the codebook ad hoc. This kind of coding of the 24 news programs resulted in 812 statements being coded in total.

Given the conceptualization of ultranationalist discourse (Figure 1) and the respective coding rules, the collected data is of a highly relational nature. To find out what kind of structures are formed by these relational aspects, methods of SNA are instrumental. [v] Utilizing the latter for analyzing discourse implies that discourse itself is understood as a network. In general, networks consist of so called “nodes” and “ties”, which form interactions between and among these “nodes”. In discourse networks, “nodes” can refer to either actors or thematic categories they mention in their statements; “ties” refer to any type of discursive interaction that can exist between actors on the one hand and between actors and thematic categories on the other. Depending on which is examined, networks can be either one-mode or two-mode in nature. In this study, two-mode networks are used to represent two types of interactions: (1) those that occur between actors and thematic categories and (2) those that are apparent between thematic categories and the type of statements. In short, two-mode networks represent the interaction between two sets of nodes.

Two measures of SNA – in-degree centrality and out-degree centrality – are utilized to discern the different aspects of the discourse structure. In general, centrality measures the dominance of a node, that is, for example, how central an actor is in sending ultranationalist statements or how central an issue (or thematic category) is in the discourse. More precisely, out-degree centrality measures the number of out-going ties of a node (e.g., how many statements an actor makes). In-degree centrality, meanwhile, measures the number of ties directed to a node (e.g., how many statements an actor receives as an addressee, or how many times an issue is mentioned by an actor). In order to be able to compare networks with each other, it is important to normalize these measures so that the size of the network (defined as the number of all the nodes in the given network) is taken into consideration. Hence, both in- and out- degree centralities are calculated by summing up all the incoming and/or outgoing ties respectively and dividing them by the total number of nodes in the network. In this way, resulting centrality numbers can be interpreted as percentages and networks can be compared to each other. This will further improve our understanding of the deep structures of the discourse of and around ultranationalist groups.

## RESULTS: THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ULTRANATIONALIST GROUPS AND THEIR DISCOURSES

Before turning to the results, it is important to provide brief descriptions of each of the cases under focus:

*The Rave Revolution* – On the night of May 12th 2018, heavily armed police forces raided three of Tbilisi's nightclubs on the pretext of detaining suspected drug dealers. This caused a strong reaction from the public, primarily amongst young people, as well as club owners and social activists for drug policy liberalization. The next day, a large, organized demonstration took place in front of the parliament building. The protest was joined by various NGOs and politicians. The protestors' demands included the resignation of the Minister of Internal Affairs (MIA), a government confession admitting that the authorities were at fault, as well as a public apology from the MIA. The demonstration evolved into a rave that garnered international attention, during which one of the activists expressed her protest by dancing on the memorial of the April 9th tragedy. This became a catalyst for a counterdemonstration organized by extra-parliamentary ultranationalist groups, primarily Georgian March and Georgian Idea. The situation rapidly devolved into a possible confrontation between the two groups, which was ultimately smoothed over by police forces, although still resulted in a few cases of physical altercations. Ultimately, an apology from the Minister of Internal Affairs and the promise to soften the country's drug policy de-escalated the situation. All these events, including the police forces' night raid, were transmitted live by all of the mainstream TV channels (Demytrie 2018).

*Tbilisi Pride* –The confrontation on this occasion started on the 14th of June, 2019, when the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church called for the Government to block the first-ever Tbilisi Pride event announced by the LGBT+ community earlier in February. According to the Church's statement, any public declaration of Pride would offend Georgian society and trigger violence. In response, LGBT activists and their supporters organized a small demonstration in front of the Georgian government's principle building and demanded security measures for the Pride participants from the side of police and the state. Some of the ultranationalist groups and their leaders marched against the LGBT activists and their small demonstration, with several priests counted as being amongst the counter-demonstrators. The scene turned once again into the two simultaneous demonstrations with police forces in between. The event was actively covered by the media (Civil.ge 2019a).

*The March of Dignity* – This event came as a continuation of Tbilisi Pride. As a result of the events of what came to be called "Gavrilov's night", the LGBT community decided to postpone their Pride celebrations. However, the date and the location was kept as a secret due to a number of open threats coming from the ultranationalist groups. The MIA warned the organizers of the Pride event that they would not be able to protect them against the anticipated threats. Nevertheless, the LGBT activists did manage to organize their March of Dignity on July 8th 2019. A counterdemonstration by ultranationalist groups was also planned, but the two demonstrations were kept apart this time (Civil.ge 2019b).

*And then We Danced (ATWD)* - Hundreds of ultranationalist activists and their leaders, as well as a representative of the Church, protested the premiere of the Swedish-Georgian Film *And Then We Danced*, which depicts a male romance that blossoms in the national dance ensemble of Georgia. Demonstrating in front of the cinemas in Tbilisi on November 8-9th, ultranationalist groups refused to let people attend the premiere, and later even attempted to enter a cinema hall to disrupt a showing. During these two days, the police had to take different measures to provide security to the citizens who were willing to see the film.

The event, which was accompanied by a few instances of violent action, was heavily covered by the media with live streams (Gray 2019).

The analysis of the media coverage of these four cases resulted in a total of 124 news stories coded. News stories were delimited from each other by the appearance of an anchor. Table 2 summarizes the program level data and its distribution across the three media channels covered by the analysis. While the channels do not differ substantially in the number of stories they dedicate to the coverage of the cases, differences in the number of statements show that the coverage on Rustavi2 is significantly more opinionated (350 statements in 35 stories) as compared to Imedi (198 statements in 33 stories) and to GPB (263 statements in 56 stories). The table also presents how many minutes in total were allocated to the ultranationalist actors as compared to all the other actors. While the amount of minutes allocated to ultranationalist actors does not exceed that of the other actors, it is rather high considering that “all the other actors” implies a diverse sets of actors. If we look at the channels separately in this regard, we can see that time-wise, the GPB has balanced the representation of these two sets of actors most adequately, while ultranationalist groups seem to be overrepresented in the cases of Rustavi2 and Imedi.

However, looking only at the distribution of air-time might be misleading, as it does not reveal much about the substance of the discourse and the role of different actors in it. In the sections that follow, deep structures of the discourse – including that of the thematic categories and actors – are identified based on the SNA methodology.

	<b>N. of stories</b> about the cases	<b>Length</b> of coverage (mins.)	<b>N. of Statements</b>	<b>Minutes</b> allocated to ultranationalist actors	<b>Minutes</b> allocated to all the other actors
Rustavi2	35	198	350	23.5	39.5
Imedi	33	164.5	198	14	46
GPB	56	298.5	263	21	118.5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>58.5</b>	<b>204</b>

**Table 2.** The distribution of the number of stories dedicated to the case in a given news program, length of these stories, number of statements coded, cumulative minutes allocated to the ultranationalist groups (including far-right political parties) and the cumulative minutes allocated to all the other actors across the media channels analyzed.

## HOW PRESENT IS THE DISCOURSE OF ULTRANATIONALIST GROUPS ON THE GEORGIAN PRIMETIME NEWS?

This section aims at identifying the thematic structure of the media discourse when covering the activities of Georgia's ultranationalist groups. The goal is to discover whether and how much the discourse of ultranationalist actors is present in the media and if a counter-discourse can also be identified. The analysis in this part is based on the in-degree centrality measure, which is applied to the two-mode discourse networks presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3. The first set of nodes are the actors (black labels) who make statements while the second set of nodes are the thematic categories these actors refer to (red labels). The size of the nodes and their proximity to the center shows the dominance of a thematic category in the discourse. The width of the arrows shows how intensely an actor uses this category in the statements.

Figure 2 shows the general discourse present in all three media channels after analysis. It becomes apparent from the Figure that the center of the discourse is formed by negative references (with 38.63% of centrality), which represent the instances of using insulting and offensive language such as calling someone a “pervert”, an “animal”, a “junkie”, or using homophobic or xenophobic words. The second most dominant aspect of the discourse is the talk of violence (19.77%) and non-violence (18.6%). Examples of the talk of violence include, but are not limited to, the mentioning and/or description of various types of violent actions (both in the past or in future, i.e., anticipating violent actions), stressing that someone was injured or something was damaged, and/or that physical tension occurred or is anticipated. Examples of non-violence would include stressing that something happens for or with peace, that peace is the only means of action, and that violence is unacceptable (see the detailed descriptions of the categories in the Table 1). While at first sight the category of non-violence seems to be balancing that of violence, this picture in fact shows that in general, violence as a category – which includes mentions of violent actions, physical injuries, potential for violence, or damaging to property – dominates the media discourse rather largely. Indeed, to the point that there is no space left for substantial issues to be discussed. As Figure 2 shows, almost all the thematic categories – predefined both based on the study of the Facebook pages of the ultranationalist groups as well as counter arguments to their discourses – are almost absent from the discourse occupying the places on the margins of the graph. Only the category of LGBT is relatively present in the picture (8.91%), but even that is in the form of the ultranationalist narrative.

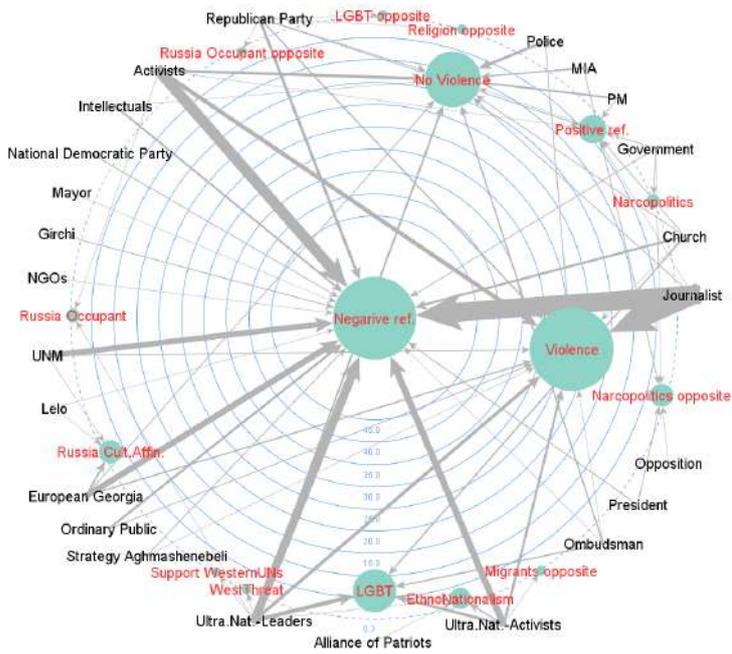
If the LGBT opposite category is examined, it could be stated that it is almost non-existent in the discourse with a centrality of 0.26%. This picture points to the fact that in general, in the process of covering events related to the activities of the ultranationalist groups, the Georgian media almost always concentrates on negativity and accentuates issues related to violence. On the one hand, the fact that ultranationalist thematic categories are not present in the media discourse might sound as a positive point; this indicates that ultranationalist groups are not very successful in pushing their thematic agenda into the mainstream TV media space. However, highlighting negative language and emphasizing the linkage between these groups and violent actions to this extent does have the potential to increase the visibility of these groups in a way that stresses their importance as actors.



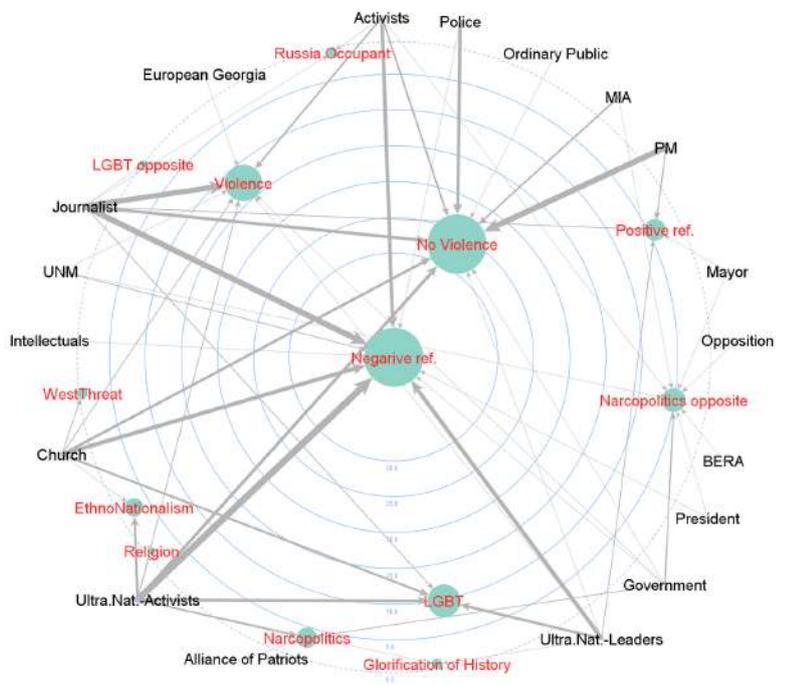
Scholars agree that reporting patterns of media outlets can vary as a result of such factors as organizational culture, daily routines, and – most importantly – the political and corporate agenda of these outlets (E.g. McQuail 2010; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). As mentioned above, the media channels selected for analysis differ substantially in their agenda. Therefore, there are good reasons to expect that if we disaggregate this general picture across the channels, we should identify certain apparent differences. However, if the picture persists, that would add robustness to the general finding regarding the thematic structure of the discourse analyzed.

Figure 3 presents a comparison across the three media channels. At the very first glance at the Figure, it becomes apparent that the general picture of negativity and the talks of violence dominating the media discourse persists across all the media channels covered in the study. At the same time, other thematic categories – both ultranationalist and those opposing it – remain marginal. Similar to the general picture, the category of LGBT seems to attract more attention from all three media outlets compared to other categories. However, the level of negativity varies, with Imedi and GPB showing 31.09% and 34.81% centrality respectively, with a figure of 46.62% in the case of Rustavi2. The most notable difference is the centrality of violence that is visibly more dominant in the case of Rustavi2 (23.47%) as compared to GPB (20.74%), with a greater disparity shown with Imedi (12.44%). Overall, despite these differences in the levels of negativity and attention to violence, the general discursive picture described above is consistent across all of the channels.

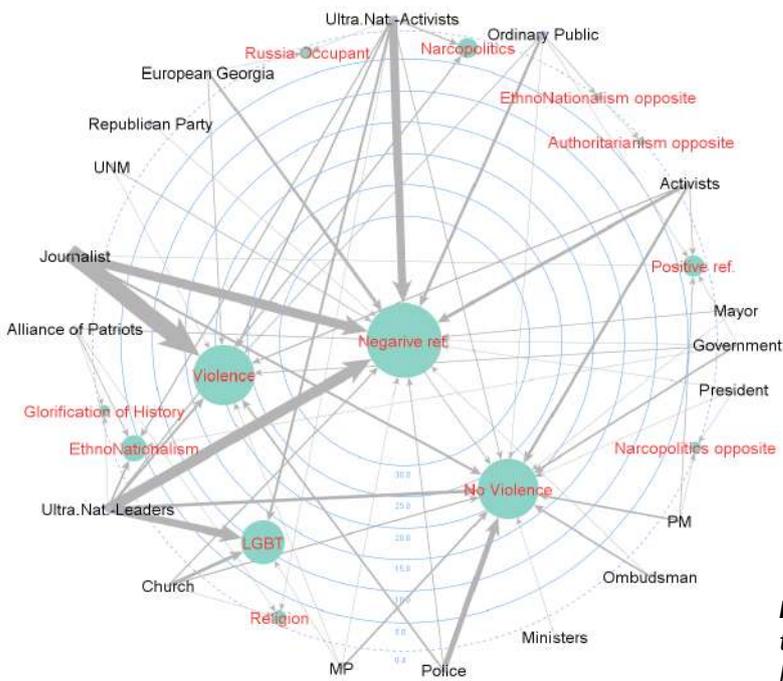
To dig even deeper into the discursive structures, it is important to put these thematic categories into context by linking them to types of statements and examining in what context these issue categories are mentioned most frequently. Figure 4 presents the two-mode network of the thematic categories and the types of statements made. Thematic categories are presented in pink while the statement types are represented with green boxes. The size of issue nodes shows in-degree centrality, i.e., how dominant the issue is in the discourse. The width of the ties shows how intense the usage of a specific issue is with regards to a given statement type. The variables negative and positive references are not the parts of this network as statement types were not coded in relation to them. Clearly, given the findings above, once negativity is removed, the most dominant categories left are violence (34.96%) and no-violence (31.93). Interestingly, as Figure 4 shows, what forms the most central part of this discourse network is blaming each other for violent actions (with the 35.66% out-degree centrality of Blame). Also, there are a handful of instances of threatening with violence. However, the total out-degree centrality of threatening is rather low, amounting to 3.49%.



1. Rustavi2

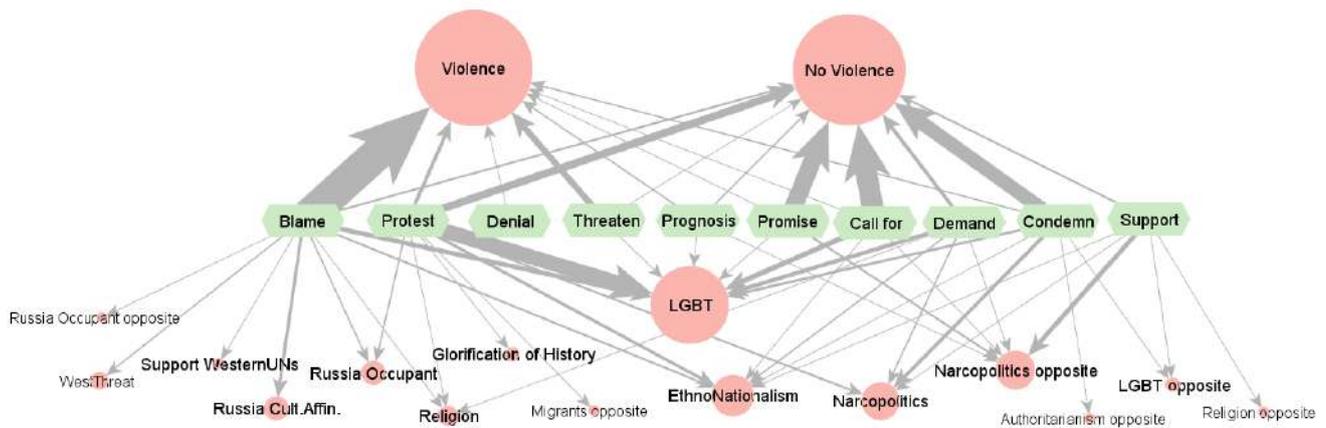


2. Imedi



3. GPB

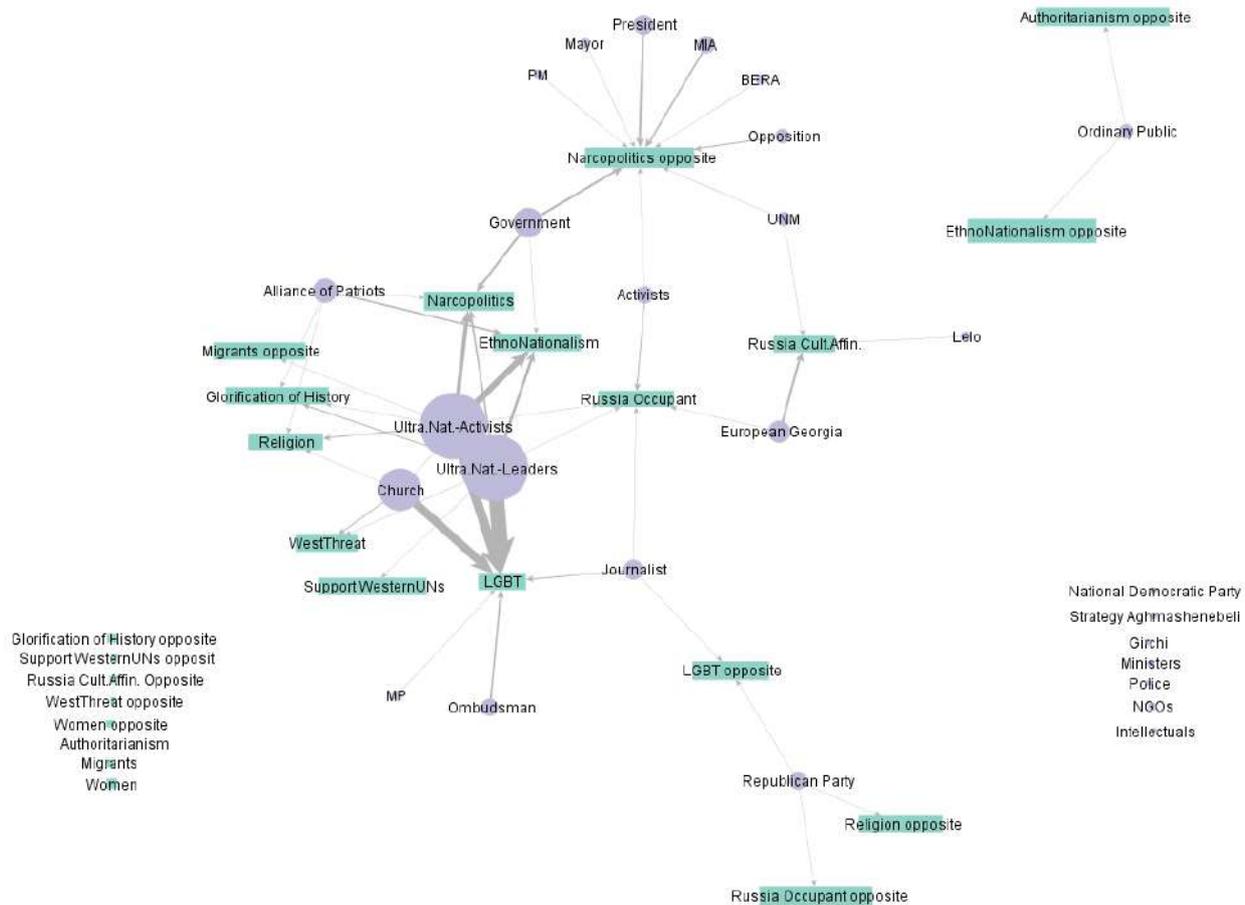
Figure 3. Discourse network present in the media coverage of the ultranationalist groups across TV channels. 1. Rustavi2; 2. Imedi; 3. GPB.



**Figure 4.** Thematic categories put into context. Pink nodes represent thematic categories. Green boxes represent the type of statements with which actors address the thematic categories. The bigger the thematic categories are, the more dominant are they in the discourse. The graph does not include negative or positive references as the variable statement type was not coded in relation to these categories.

On the other hand, the high centrality of the no-violence category is determined by promising no violence, by calling for it, by demanding and condemning it. Beyond the talks of violence, the category of LGBT stands out amongst all the other thematic categories as being relatively more central. A closer look at Figure 4 shows that this category is primarily mentioned in the context of protesting and blaming, indicating that this issue is more dominant in the form of an ultranationalist narrative. The LGBT\_opposite category seems to be marginal, and even when mentioned, it is in the context of condemning, while there is a very thin tie between this category and support.

Last but not least, if the categories of violence and no-violence are removed, and we look closer at how actual issues are structured in relation to actors, we find an interesting picture. Figure 5 maps issues in relation to actors using a two-mode network. The size of actor nodes, represented in a violet colour, shows how central they are to the discourse. Thematic categories and the actors in the lower left and right corners are so-called isolates, as they are not connected to any other node, which means that they are not present in the discourse. As we can see in this Figure, when it comes to the actual issues being examined, the voice of ultranationalist activists and leaders are particularly actively heard in the media. As their most intense adjacent ties show on the Figure, they are most actively pressing on the category of LGBT. Interestingly, ultranationalist activists and leaders are closely located with the Church, while the Alliance of Patriots is occupying a place close-by as well. As the Figure shows, the pool of the issues these actors press on in their discourses coincide closely and together with LGBT include categories such as religion, glorification of history, ethno-nationalism, drug policy, the West as threat and support for Western ultranationalists.



**Figure 5.** Constellation of actors around thematic categories. Actors are represented in violet nodes. Thematic categories are highlighted in green. Thematic categories on the left side and the actors on the right side of the graph do not form any interaction and are thus isolates. Size of actor nodes refer to its centrality in the discourse. The width of the arrows shows the intensity of the usage of the thematic category in the actor's statements.

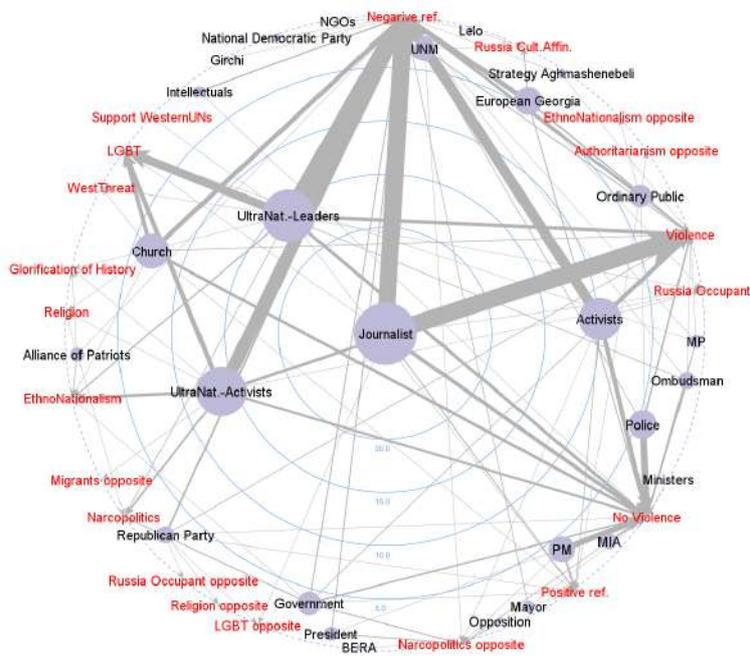
On the right side of Figure 5 we can see that European Georgia, UMN and Lelo – all of them self-identifying as pro-Western parties – surround the category of cultural affinity with Russia. If we look at the Figure 4, this category is exclusively mentioned in the context of blaming; the linkage between these parties and this thematic category then becomes clear. In the upper part of the Figure, we see that most of the governmental actors – Prime Minister, the President, Minister of Internal Affairs, Mayor as well as Bera Ivanishvili (the only individual actor in the codebook) – are grouped around the issue of drug policy liberalization. The very center of the Figure suggests a remarkable pattern. Pro-Western parties, ultranationalist activists and leaders, activists on the liberal side as well as journalists, all have one issue in common, which is Russian occupation. In other words, the category of Russia occupant bridges the discourses of these actors.

The next section delves deeper into the issue of agency and looks at the patterns of actor dominance in the media discourse about ultranationalist groups.

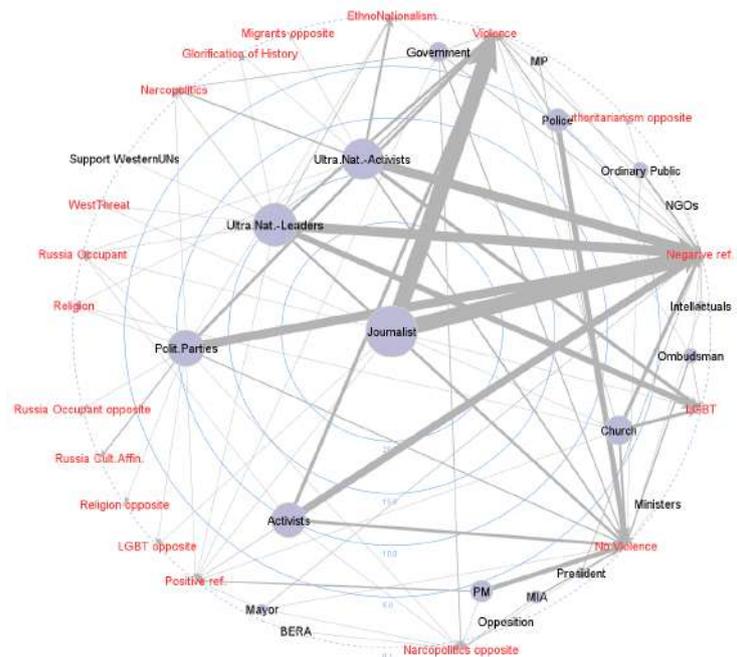
## WHO SETS THE TONE OF THE DISCOURSE?

It is already apparent from the Figures in the previous section that there are certain actors who are more active in setting the agenda than others. This means that the thematic categories that these actors refer to most frequently form the center of the discourse. For example, in Figure 2, all of the most central categories (negative reference, violence, no-violence and LGBT) display particularly wide ties with specific actors: ultranationalist activists, their leaders and the Church are placed on one side of the divide, while journalists, liberal activists, the police and the Prime Minister sit on the other. Figure 5 follows this pattern by showing that once the categories of negative references and (no-) violence are taken out of the discourse, the out-degree centrality of the ultranationalist activists, their leaders and the Church remains most dominant among all the other actors, which indicates that when actual issues are concerned, these actors are heard more than others. To identify a clearer picture of what is the actor constellation in the media discourse around the ultranationalist groups, this section focuses on the out-degree centrality measure. The Figures in this section should be read in exactly the same way as in the previous section with the only difference that here, the size of the node and its proximity to the center represent how dominant an actor is in the discourse.

Figure 6 presents a cumulative discourse across all three TV channels. From the very first glance it can be seen that the middle of the discourse is occupied by journalists, with an out-degree centrality of 21.58%. It needs to be mentioned here that the statements were coded only when a certain kind of position was expressed. Therefore, the dominance of a journalist in the discourse network indicates that in general, journalists make more statements that express positions compared to other actors, pointing to an opinionated type of reporting. More importantly, the widest ties adjacent to journalists shows that the levels of negativity and the talks of violence, which appeared to be the most dominant categories of the media discourse (Figure 2), are predominantly driven by journalists.



**Figure 6.** Actor centrality in the discourse network present in the media coverage of the ultranationalist groups. The size of the node and its proximity to the center shows how central an actor is in the discourse. Width of the ties show the intensity of usage of specific thematic category by a given actor.

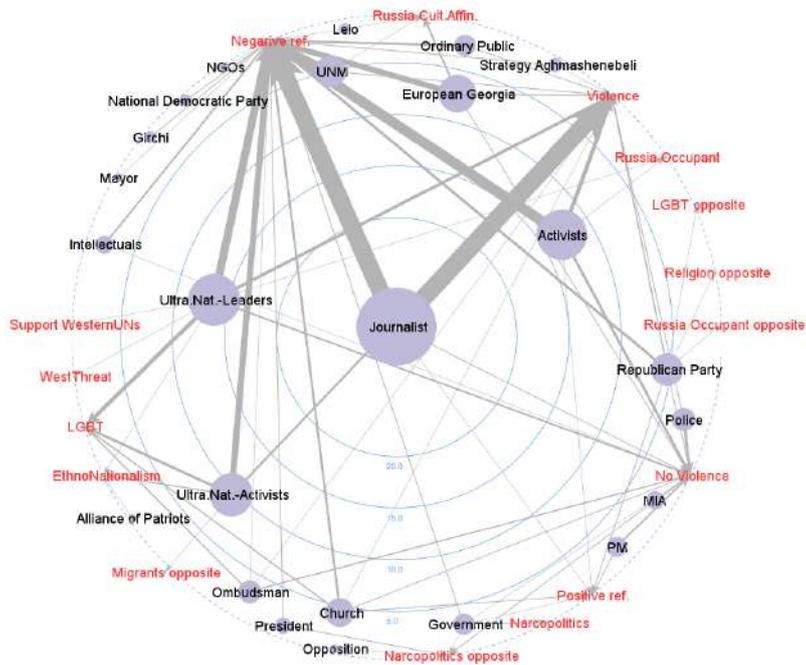


**Figure 7.** Actor centrality in the discourse network present in the media coverage of the ultranationalist groups. Political parties aggregated as one, cumulative actor.

Most importantly, the second most central actors dominating the discourse are ultranationalist activists (13.7%) and their leaders (13.70%), closely followed by the Church with a centrality number of 6.72%. As the Figure shows, these three actors are also largely contributing to the high levels of negativity in the discourse. They also refer to the categories of violence and no-violence, although far less than journalists do. It is interesting to observe that while the voices of extra-parliamentary ultranationalist groups and the Church are actively heard in the media, the far-right nationalist party Alliance of Patriots seems to be less dominant in the discourse, occupying a marginal position on the graph. Another actor dominating the discourse are the activists on the liberal side with a centrality of 9.82%. This cumulative actor amongst others includes LGBT+ rights activists, members of the social movement fighting for the drug policy liberalization, as well as other activists who protested the raids against the night clubs in May, 2018. Their discourse – as represented in the media – is also concentrated on negative references and talks of violence. All the other actors are mostly distributed on the margins of the graph with varying degrees of centrality. This picture of the actors mentioned above dominating the discourse in media does not change even if we aggregate all the political parties together and, as a matter of a robustness check, test if this changes the positions of the actors. Figure 7 shows that, even if all the political parties are represented as a single cumulative actor, the general distribution of actors around the center does not change; ultranationalist activists and their leaders maintain the most dominant positions after journalists.

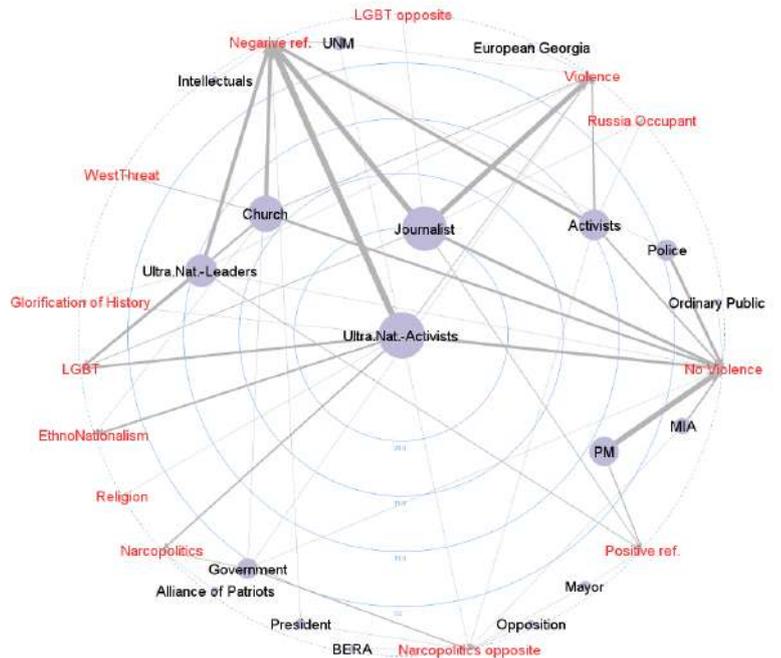
When we compare the actor constellation of the discourse across media channels, certain differences are identified as presented in the Figure 8. The first difference is seen in the center. While the Rustavi2 journalist (22.83%) is considered to be the most dominant actor in the discourse, both on Imedi and GPB ultranationalist activists occupy the center with the centralities of 21.24% and 11.94% respectively. In addition, while ultranationalist actors are also relatively dominant on Rustavi2 compared to other actors, liberal activists and pro-Western parties such as European Georgia and the Republican party are also active participants of the discourse. Whereas on Imedi TV, the Church comes across as one of the most dominant actors.

Meanwhile, on GPB, discourse is dominated by ultranationalist activists, but it needs to be mentioned that the center of the discourse on this channel is distinguished by the diversity of actors, pointing to the fact that there is a greater range of voices – including those of the ordinary public – on GPB in comparison with other channels. Liberal activists are relatively dominant on all three channels, which is not surprising as they have been active participants of all the events covered. It is also interesting to observe that actors representing the government are marginal on all three channels. The media seems to be more interested in the actors on the front lines of the conflict, namely the ultranationalist groups and the Church on the one hand and liberal activists on the other, which further accentuates the conflict itself.

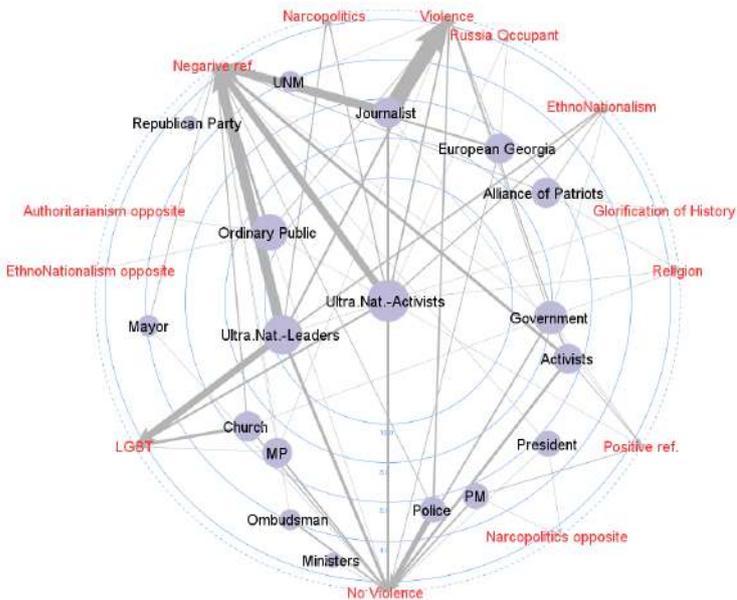


1. Rustavi2

2. Imedi



3. GPB



**Figure 8.** Actor centrality in the discourse network present in the media coverage of the ultranationalist groups across TV channels. 1. Rustavi2; 2. Imedi; 3. GPB.

## CONCLUSION

This paper mapped the structure of the media discourse around the activities of ultranationalist groups in Georgia. The study focused on the media coverage of the four events of the far-right nationalist activities: The Rave Revolution, Tbilisi Pride of 2019, the March of Dignity and the premier of the movie *And, then We Danced*. The analysis was based on original data collected as a result of a quantitative content analysis of the primetime news programs of the three mainstream TV channels: Rustavi2, Imedi TV and GPB.

To summarize, what is the story that the analysis presented in this paper tells us? In general, ultranationalist groups in Georgia are not very successful in pushing their discursive agenda via the country's mainstream TV media. Major thematic issues that these groups are attempting to appeal to on their Facebook pages are mostly marginal in the media, except the issue of the LGBT community, which is relatively more visible in the discourse, mostly in the context of blaming and protesting. Instead, most of the discursive space in the media under study is taken by negative references, insults, offensive language, or talking about violence. It seems from the data that the media uses negativity and violence as the major frames in the process of covering the events and activities of the ultranationalist groups.

There are certain normative implications that this pattern suggests. Firstly, according to the normative democratic theory, all groups of the country's society should be represented in the public sphere. As mentioned elsewhere in the study, the Georgian public is not devoid of conservative and nationalistic attitudes. Therefore, the discourse of the ultranationalist groups does have a certain amount of leverage in society. The TV channels seem to be careful with depriving these groups of their freedom of expression, and do grant them the airtime. However, given the analysis presented above, a substantial discussion of the issues of concern is not part of the discourse. The latter does not necessarily imply pushing any ultranationalist discourse. Rather, on the contrary, a substantial discussion of the issues at hand, including presenting counter arguments to far-right narratives, might be instrumental in informing audiences about the problematic aspects of the ultranationalist agenda. Silencing these issues by coating them in negativity or using language which attempts to place blame, or especially by turning to violence as the major category of discourse, might instead help ultranationalist groups emerge as important actors, creating the risk of legitimizing them further.

Despite it being the very first attempt of analyzing the media coverage of ultranationalist groups in Georgia in a systematic manner, the study is obviously limited in a number of ways. To begin with, it only covers a limited number of media outlets. The Georgian media landscape is both diverse and unstable. Research encompassing other types of media outlets – including regional media outlets – would give a broader and a more comprehensive picture on the subject matter. Other types of programs beyond the news might, and probably will, be even more informative about the structures of the media discourse around the activities of ultranationalist groups. Another limitation of the study is that it has not distinguished between the events that it covered. There are reasons to think that the thematic structures of the discourse could vary across the cases under study.

There is a broad avenue for further research on this topic. Beyond the need to extend the efforts of mapping how the media covers far-right nationalist groups, their discourse and activities, it is important to bring in the questions of causes and effects. Questions are open about what determines the patterns of media coverage of these groups, how structural factors of the media landscape influence these patterns, and what is the role of journalistic professionalism in covering these groups.

Furthermore, research needs to be done on how the existing patterns of media coverage of ultranationalist groups affect their mobilization capacity, and even more importantly, whether and how does it affect the attitudes of various parts of the country's society.

Meanwhile, the Georgian media might need to be reminded of what The Guardian wrote in 2019 as a result of the interview with Johan Galtung, a scholar who has defined the principles of news journalism: "The academic who first defined the essence of news journalism has said the media have misconstrued his work and become far too negative, sensational and adversarial... [He] said his work was intended as a warning, not a guide" (The Guardian, 2019).

## Endnotes

[i] This study builds up on a Policy Paper by Tamta Gelashvili published under the framework of the same project. For a more comprehensive theoretical discussion see Gelashvili, T. 2020. The far-right honeytrap: Georgian media and the mediagenic far-right. Georgian Institute of Politics. Policy Paper #14. Available at: <http://gip.ge/the-far-right-honeytrap-georgian-media-and-the-mediagenic-far-right/> (retrieved on: 31 March, 2021)

[ii] Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC). Caucasus Barometer. Available at: <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets/> (Retrieved on: 31 March, 2021)

[iii] For further details, see the 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Georgia by U.S. Department of State. Available at: <https://ge.usembassy.gov/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices-georgia/> (Retrieved on: 31 March, 2021).

[iv] There was only one news program Kronika (Imedi) from 08.11.2019 - that was not available in online archive and, therefore, the sample does not include that program.

[v] For a detailed discussion on why Social Network Analysis is effective for studying nationalist discourse, how can it be utilized for this purpose as well as for detailed description of each of the measures used in this study and their application to discourses, see Abzianidze (2020).

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## Appendix

### 1. List of Actors

Code	Actor Name	Comment
1	Government	
1.1	PM	Prime Minister
1.2	President	
1.3	Ministers	All the other ministers than the Minister of Internal Affairs
1.4	MIA	Minister/Ministry of Internal Affairs
1.5	MP	Members of Parliament (Georgian Dream members were mostly coded under this category)
1.6	Mayor	Mayor of Tbilisi
1.7	Head of Parliament	
1.8	BERA	Bera Ivanishvili, son of Bidzina Ivanishvili (leader of GD)
2	Opposition	Cumulative category – coded when referend in such way
3	Ombudsman	
4.1	UNM	United National Movement
4.2	Lelo	
4.3	Girchi	
4.4	European Georgia	
4.5	Alliance of Patriots	
4.6	National Democratic Party	
4.7	Republican Party	
4.8	Strategy Aghmashenebeli	
5	Church	Church was coded for any priest as well as the institution
6	Intellectuals	Includes experts, academia and cultural elite such as, for example, writers, artists, singers, etc.
7	Journalist	Coded as a generic category for any journalist
7.1	Media	Coded when referred as such
8	NGOs	Civil society organizations
9	Police	
11.1	Activists	Refers to the group of liberal activists, including those fighting for LGBT rights and for drug policy liberalization
11.2	Ultra.Nat.-Activists	Ultrnationalist activists – anyone who was participating in the (counter-) demonstrations organized by ultrnationalist groups
11.3	Ultra.Nat.-Leaders	Leaders of the extra-parliamentary ultrnationalist groups
12	Ordinary Public	e.g. citizens on the streets, citizens going to the movie premiere, etc.
13	Russia	
14	West	
15	USA	
16	Unidentified	This category was included in coding when the actor was not identified (e.g. a statement did not have a clear addressee). However, it was not included in the analysis.

## Appendix

2. In-degree centrality of the thematic categories (Figures 2 and 3 are based on the numbers in this table)

Thematic categories	General	Rustavi2	Imedi	GPB
Authoritarianism opposite	0.13			0.37
EthnoNationalism	2.71	1.61	3.11	3.7
EthnoNationalism opposite	0.13			0.37
Glorification of History	0.52		1.04	0.74
LGBT	8.91	6.75	9.84	10.74
LGBT opposite	0.26	0.32	0.52	
Migrants opposite	0.13	0.32		
Narcopolitics	1.94	0.64	3.63	2.22
Narcopolitics opposite	2.33	1.93	5.18	0.74
<b>Negative ref.</b>	<b>38.63</b>	<b>46.62</b>	<b>31.09</b>	<b>34.81</b>
<b>No Violence</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>11.58</b>	<b>26.42</b>	<b>21.11</b>
Positive ref.	3.1	2.89	4.15	2.59
Religion	0.52		0.52	1.11
Religion opposite	0.13	0.32		
Russia Cult.Affin.	0.78	1.93		
Russia Occupant	0.78	0.64	1.04	0.74
Russia Occupant opposite	0.13	0.32		
Support WesternUNs	0.13	0.32		
<b>Violence</b>	<b>19.77</b>	<b>23.47</b>	<b>12.44</b>	<b>20.74</b>
WestThreat	0.39	0.32	1.04	

## Appendix

3. Out-degree centrality of the actors (Figures 6 and 8 are based on the numbers in this table)

code	id	General	Rustavi2	Imedi	GPB
1	Government	3.1	2.25	4.15	7.46
1.1	PM	3.75	1.93	8.29	4.48
1.2	President	1.16	1.29	1.04	4.48
1.3	Ministers	0.13			1.49
1.4	MIA	1.29	1.61	2.59	
1.5	MP	0.9			5.97
1.6	Mayor	0.78	0.32	1.04	2.99
1.8	BERA	0.13	4.18	0.52	
2	Opposition	0.26	0.32	0.52	
3	Ombudsman	1.68	2.57		2.99
4.1	UNM	2.84	4.82	2.07	2.99
4.2	Lelo	0.26	0.64		
4.3	Girchi	0.26	0.64		
4.4	European Georgia	4.26	7.07	0.52	5.97
4.5	Alliance of Patriots	1.03	0.32	0.52	5.97
4.6	National Democratic Party	0.26	0.64		
4.7	Republican Party	2.2	5.14		1.49
4.8	Strategy Aghmashenebeli	0.39	0.96		
5	<b>Church</b>	<b>6.72</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>12.95</b>	<b>5.97</b>
6	Intellectuals	0.78	1.61	0.52	
7	<b>Journalist</b>	<b>21.58</b>	<b>22.83</b>	<b>19.69</b>	<b>5.97</b>
8	NGOs	0.13	0.32		
9	Police	4.39	2.57	4.15	4.48
11.1	<b>Activists</b>	<b>9.82</b>	<b>12.86</b>	<b>9.33</b>	<b>5.97</b>
11.2	<b>Ultra.Nat.-Activists</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>9.32</b>	<b>21.24</b>	<b>11.94</b>
11.3	<b>Ultra.Nat.-Leaders</b>	<b>15.63</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>10.36</b>	<b>10.45</b>
12	Ordinary Public	2.58	2.25	0.52	8.96