2.3. DISCOURSE OF ECONOMIC SECURITY: DOMINANT NARRATIVES IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA

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Abstract. *This monograph examines the discursive construction of economic security in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024, highlighting thematic, emotional, semantic, and visual narratives that shape public understanding of economic threats, stability, and resilience. The study draws on the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), including M. Foucault's power/knowledge paradigm, N. Fairclough's view of discourse as social practice, R. Wodak's discourse-historical approach, T.A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, and the poststructuralist theory of hegemony by E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe. These approaches enable an analysis of how the concept of economic security is constructed in the public sphere through media, and what ideological functions are performed by dominant narratives. The research focuses on both public (LRT) and commercial (Delfi, 15min) media outlets. Using qualitative content and discourse analysis methods, more than 100 articles were analysed, identifying key discursive fields such as inflation, energy security, support for Ukraine, migration, and domestic political stability. The findings reveal that economic security is not portrayed as a neutral or technical indicator; rather, it acquires normative and ideological content shaped not only by expert reasoning but also by emotional metaphors, visual devices, and narrative patterns. Results indicate that media not only inform the public about economic processes but also actively interpret them, influencing citizens' perception of security, social attitudes, and political choices. The economic security discourse in the media functions as a powerful structuring tool of public communication, shaping not only awareness, but also collective interpretations of threats. It operates through metaphors, frames, and emotional cues that reinforce both cognitive and affective responses to economic phenomena. Framing strategies - such as threat narratives, individual responsibility, and state paternalism - determine how society perceives risks, evaluates institutional actions, and chooses behavioural strategies. Economic security in public discourse is both an objective condition and a discursively constructed concept that transforms structural challenges into moral, ideological, and emotional evaluations. Thus, discourse becomes a mechanism for behavioural norms and collective identity formation, exerting long-term influence on democratic decision-making and security policies. This monograph contributes to a deeper understanding of how economic security is shaped not only through policy documents or macroeconomic indicators, but also through discursive practices produced and circulated by media. The study is relevant to public policy researchers and communication specialists interested in the intersections of security, media, and ideology.*

Keywords: *economic security, discourse analysis, media, emotional narratives, public communication, ideology*

Introduction

In today's world, economic security is becoming an increasingly important subject of analysis, both in academic circles and political discourse. According to Jean-Paul and Martine (2018) and Rose (2017), this concept extends beyond mere financial stability or macroeconomic indicators. It has evolved into a complex, multidimensional notion encompassing national policy directions, as well as the emotional and social security of citizens. Scholars emphasize (Bajc & De Lint, 2011; Gomułka, 2023) that the foundation of economic security lies not only in objective data, but also in citizens' subjective trust in the future, the competence of the state, the reliability of systems, and the transparency of public communication.

Processes of globalization, increasing dependency on international markets, and geopolitical crises (such as the war between Russia and Ukraine) are radically reshaping the notion of economic security in Eastern Europe (Gomułka, 2023; Baldaro & Constantini, 2021). Traditional models of security, grounded in stability and growth, have become insufficient in addressing challenges such as energy vulnerability, inflation spikes, economic consequences of climate change, technological fragility, or the financial sector's dependence on external factors. These issues exacerbate public anxiety and give rise to new threat visualizations in media representations (Hase & Engelke, 2022; Ausat, 2023). These representations are often articulated through symbolic narratives in the media "the threat of inflation," "the energy crisis," or "pressure from global markets" which function not only as informational messages but also as mechanisms for generating emotional (in)security.

As Bajc and De Lint (2011) note, contemporary understandings of security can no longer be separated from everyday experience, economic security becomes a part of daily life, linked to job security, access to housing, price predictability of essential services, and the ability to live with dignity. Meanwhile, Nugaraitė (2015) emphasizes the role of public governance in communicating, anticipating, engaging with, and responding to crises. Thus, today's discourse on economic security encompasses not only economic indicators but also institutional trust, media-generated narratives, social solidarity, and the ability to critically evaluate risk communication. Economic security, then, emerges not only as a challenge for the state, but also as a mirror for society reflecting its value orientations, collective memory, and responses to uncertainty.

Pagett (2022) highlights the growing strategic narrative of "resilient societies," aimed at neutralizing both external and internal threats to economic security. This resilience paradigm becomes not only a security policy, but also a communication policy requiring institutions to react to crises, communicate decisions transparently, strengthen social capital, and restore public trust. Here, resilience is understood not only as infrastructural or systemic stability, but also as the society's ability to reach consensus, unite, and act in solidarity under pressure.

Within this framework, Lithuania serves as a significant case study, as media discourse intertwines with transatlantic security paradigms especially in the wake of the 2014 and 2022 events in Ukraine. In Lithuania, both security policy and public debate have acquired a geopolitical tone: economic topics are increasingly discussed in the context of risk, vulnerability, resilience, and hybrid threats. These narrative transformations directly influence the way citizens perceive economic security.

The media, as a producer of social power, both reflect and actively construct imaginaries of economic security (Hase & Engelke, 2022). The media function as systems of threat interpretation, shaping what is defined as a "problem," a "threat," or a "solution." Journalistic interpretations, headline choices, source selection, and the emotional tone of narratives often serve as the primary information sources for the general public, as such their influence on social reality is profound (Nugaraitė, 2015; Matonytė et al., 2024). The media construct a symbolic landscape of economic security, dominated by visualized fears: from energy blackmail to the threat of bankruptcy. This can distort collective emotions, generate economic pessimism, a sense of "psychological crisis," or even intensify political cynicism. As research by Hase and Engelke (2022) and Larsen and Roslyng (2025) shows, contemporary media do not merely transmit objective *information*, they generate *meaning* through framing strategies, recurring symbols, and emotional metaphors.

To analyse Lithuania's media landscape, it is appropriate to employ both traditional quantitative content analysis and in-depth qualitative discourse analysis. Here, discourse is understood not only as linguistic expression, but also as socially organized meaning-making that shapes, rather than merely reflects, reality. Discourse analysis enables the identification of how specific narratives such as "economic crisis," "energy security," "inflation threat," and "declining trust" transform the public sphere, political atmosphere, and shape the emotional climate of society.

Discourse analysis methods allow for the deconstruction of these processes: identifying dominant semantic fields, emotional emphases, ideological tropes, and narrative structures through which the media construct the relationship between "problem" and "solution." This is particularly relevant in the context of crisis communication, where representations of mass concern can have long-term impacts on political attitudes or even electoral outcomes. Social trust during crises is closely tied to public communication (Hase & Engelke, 2022; Padilla, França & Melella, 2024; Vidra & Messing, 2025), which becomes a strategic tool not only for informing but also for restoring emotional stability, reducing anxiety, and fostering civic cohesion. Ambiguous or contradictory communication can undermine institutional image and the legitimacy of the democratic system itself.

In Lithuania, this issue becomes especially pertinent when media narratives intersect with geopolitical discourse and hybrid security topics. Issues such as inflation, energy, the migrant crisis, and support for Ukraine often acquire not only economic, but also moral, identity-based, and value-laden dimensions. In this light, discourse analysis allows us to "read" the public sphere, decode its structures, power dynamics, and ideological tensions.

Facing both local and external crises, Lithuanian society is increasingly exposed to signals of economic insecurity: inflation, energy price spikes, narratives of social injustice, and an unstable labour market. This echoes Rose's (2017) argument that economic security is not only a matter of state capacity, but also of citizens' everyday existence. At the same time, the public sphere, especially the media, becomes the main platform where economic facts are assessed and symbolic meanings are constructed: what citizens perceive as "threat," "stability," "crisis," or "resilience" (Wodak, 2009).

It is therefore *essential to study* the content of economic security and how it is represented and articulated in media discourse, what narratives are constructed by Lithuanian media, and how they influence collective societal perception. Media-generated representations during times of crisis become central sources of collective emotions and reactions (Roslyng, 2025; Zou, 2025), which is particularly important in a democratic society where citizens' trust in public institutions, their political choices, and social stability partly depend on the realities shaped by the information environment (Vidra & Messing, 2025). Thus, the analysis of economic security in public discourse becomes not only an

academic task but also a strategic societal imperative (Ausat, 2023), enabling a deeper understanding of modern threats and society's resilience potential.

The object of investigation in this monograph is the discourse of economic security in Lithuanian media.

The aim of this monograph is to analyse the narratives of economic security as constructed in contemporary Lithuanian media, uncovering their semantic structure and assessing their impact on public perceptions of threats, institutional trust, and societal stability.

The specific objectives of the monograph are:

- To analyse theoretical approaches to the concept of economic security, distinguishing between various scholarly traditions (liberal, neorealist, critical, ecological, etc.), relevant evaluation criteria, and the role of economic security in national policy.
- To develop a theoretical foundation for media power and discourse analysis methodology, drawing on the principles of Foucault, Fairclough, and critical analysis, and to define the role of the media as a producer of ideology along with the application of selected methods in empirical analysis.
- To conduct a content and discourse analysis of economic security narratives in Lithuanian media from 2020 to 2024, identifying thematic, emotional, semantic, and visual narrative types and their distribution across public and commercial media platforms.
- To assess the impact of the economic security discourse on the content of public communication and the formation of societal perceptions of security.

Research methodology. The methodological framework is based on a combination of three approaches: qualitative content analysis, critical discourse analysis, and comparative media narrative analysis. This synthesis of methods allows not only for the identification of the most frequently articulated aspects of economic security in the media, but also for uncovering their semantic and emotional effects on the collective perception of security.

The study begins with qualitative content analysis aimed at systematically identifying recurring thematic elements related to economic security. This is grounded in Krippendorff's (2018) principle that "content analysis enables the identification of structural meaning patterns in texts without losing contextual integrity." This facilitates the development of a typology of narratives linked to symbolic representations of economic insecurity (e.g., inflation, energy, war, recession). Critical discourse analysis, as emphasized by Fairclough (2013) and Wodak (2009), provides tools to examine how language shapes social reality and may act as a vehicle for ideological structures. This analysis explores not only what is said but also how it is said: which metaphors, semantic structures, and rhetorical frames dominate in media reporting. The methodology of this monograph takes an interdisciplinary approach that allows for measuring the content of public discourse while also understanding its constructive power, its ability to shape collective attitudes, emotional responses, and indirectly influence civic behaviour and public policy directions.

Empirical data for the study was collected through targeted document selection, covering the online platforms of Lithuania's national and commercial media: LRT.lt, Delfi.lt, and 15min.lt. The analysed publication period spans from 2020 to 2024, enabling the examination of narrative shifts in economic security before, during, and after key crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022), and ongoing energy and inflation-related tensions.

Documents were selected using keywords and phrases such as: "economic security," "energy threat," "inflation," "economic crisis," "price spike," "Lithuanian economy," "resilience," etc. Article selection was carried out in two stages: (1) automated search and filtering (via site-internal search tools or Google site search), and (2) manual qualitative selection, focusing on texts that prominently articulate economic insecurity themes, emotional expressions, rhetorical frames, and ideological markers. The final corpus consisted of approximately 112 articles, proportionally selected from all three media sources.

The study focuses on qualitative analysis; therefore, the key criterion for article selection was not quantity but content quality, semantic density, narrative structure, ideological weight, and emotional tone.

The theoretical contribution of this monograph lies in its advancement of an interdisciplinary conceptualization of economic security, bridging approaches from political economy, security studies, media analysis, and discourse theory. The research expands the classical concept of economic security extending it beyond macroeconomic indicators to include narrative and communicative dimensions, which have so far received limited academic attention in Lithuania.

Based on critical discourse theory (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2009), this study reveals how narratives of economic insecurity in the media not only convey information, but also actively construct social reality, emotions, and political attitudes. In this way, the work contributes to the development of media power analysis in the Lithuanian context. Moreover, the monograph adds to regional security studies by presenting Lithuania as a case through which to examine how economic security discourses reflect transnational threats (e.g., Russian influence, energy blackmail, inflation waves)

and how they are localized in specific media practices. Finally, the study affirms the theoretical premise that economic security is not merely an economic or political category, it is also a culturally constructed communicative reality that requires new research methods sensitive to language, meaning, and symbolic structures of power.

The practical relevance of the study emerges in several interrelated areas. First, the analysis enables the identification and naming of the dominant economic security narratives in Lithuanian media. This is valuable to academics, journalists, communication strategists, and media editors seeking to understand how their content shape's public opinion about economic conditions, threats, and state policy. The research is also relevant to public policymakers who, based on these results, can better comprehend which aspects of economic insecurity (e.g., inflation, energy dependence, geopolitical risk) most strongly affect the emotional climate, institutional trust, and civic behaviour. These insights can be applied to crisis communication strategies, risk prevention, and enhancing the transparency of decision-making. The findings also contribute to media literacy and can be incorporated into educational contexts, civic education programmes, or NGO-led awareness campaigns, encouraging a more critical approach to economic narratives and their emotional impact.

Study limitations. The study's limitations relate to thematic, temporal, spatial, and source typology constraints. First, it examines the discourse of economic (in)security as publicly articulated meanings, not factual economic data or indicator shifts. Thus, the focus is on representations, linguistic models, and narratives through which the media convey concepts of threat, stability, or resilience. The research is limited to the period from 2020 to 2024, encompassing four significant socio-economic phases: the onset and progression of the COVID-19 pandemic, the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the wave of energy crises, and the period of inflation-related uncertainty. This timeframe was chosen for its informational intensity and crisis-marked nature, allowing for the analysis of economic security narratives under conditions of heightened risk.

Geographically, the study is confined to Lithuania's public information space. In terms of source typology, it focuses on three main information channels: LRT.lt (public), Delfi.lt, and 15min.lt (commercial media). The study excludes television broadcasts, social media, and comment sections, this was a deliberate decision to concentrate on professionally edited media content. Also excluded are user behaviour metrics, public opinion polling, and empirical impact measurements, the object of this study is media discourse structures, not their psychosocial or statistical effects.

Approaches to Economic Security

The Concept of Economic Security. The concept of economic security has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades. Initially, it was considered a secondary component of national security, dominated by macroeconomic variables - budget deficit, trade balance, GDP growth or inflation rate. However, the modern approach increasingly treats economic security as a multi-level and interdisciplinary concept, covering both the state and individual levels. Such an approach, according to Bilgin (2023), allows us to discuss not only the objective parameters of the economic system, but also the subjective sense of security of members of society.

Economic security is becoming a fundamental condition for the resilience of a modern state. It is defined not only as the capacity to avoid economic shocks, but also as the ability to quickly adapt to their consequences and ensure the continuity of the well-being of the population. Pisani-Ferry et al. (2024) points out that the paradigm of economic security must be revised in light of constantly changing global risk factors – energy crises, pandemics, military conflicts or climate challenges. Such changes show that traditional assessment models based solely on economic indicators are becoming insufficient.

Historically, economic security emerged as a branch of geopolitical economics, in which states sought to ensure the independence of their economic systems, control of resources, and resilience to external pressure. However, at the end of the 20th century, the concept of human security emerged, which integrated social, economic, and cultural aspects. According to this paradigm, security could no longer be defined solely by state power – it had to be measured by the parameters of the individual's quality of life (Lindstaedt, 2021). Scientific research highlights the importance of human security in the context of 21st-century challenges – from climate change to pandemics. According to Gasper (2005), human security helps to combine the goals of development, human rights, and security policy: "Human security is about the vital core of all human lives, in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment." Furthermore, Acharya (2001) suggests that human security is an effective instrument for regional conflict prevention, as it targets the most vulnerable groups and the structural causes of violence. Despite its broad applicability, the concept of human security has also been criticised for its conceptual vagueness. Paris (2001) notes that this concept is too broad to be of practical application in policymaking: "Human security is like sustainable development – everyone is for it, but few people have a clear idea of what it means." However, authors such as Owen (2004) emphasise that the flexibility of human security allows it to be applied in different regional and cultural contexts, which is its strength.

Andersen-Rodgers and Crawford (2022) emphasise that the change in the concept of security allows for the inclusion of aspects such as job stability, access to basic services, lifestyle continuity, and the ability to avoid poverty. In

this way, economic security becomes not only a structural issue, but also a matter of everyday life. It also includes an emotional component - even with good macroeconomic indicators, residents may feel insecure about the future, political instability, or changing prices.

After analyzing a number of scholarly works (Mishchuk, 2023; Kalyniuk, 2023; Gradoboev & Solskaya, 2022; Koba, 2021; Blakyta et al., 2021), a three-level economic security analysis is recommended: macro – the state's strategic independence and fiscal stability; meso – the resilience of individual sectors, especially energy and IT; micro – individual households, their financial situation and ability to withstand economic shocks. This structure allows us to assess economic security not only as a result of state policy, but also as a dimension of every person's life.

Table 1. Model of the Concept of Economic Security

Macro Level: State Economic Autonomy	**Meso Level: Sectoral Resilience**	**Micro Level: Individual and Household Security**
Assessment of national economic security	**Assessment of specific economic sectors' security**	**Assessment of individual citizens' or families' security**
MOST ATTENTION GIVEN TO:		
– Fiscal stability (budget deficit control, debt management) – Monetary policy (inflation control, currency stability) – Resource control (energy, food and natural resource self-sufficiency) – Economic diplomacy (reducing dependency on external suppliers or markets)	– Energy sector (import dependency, infrastructure vulnerability) – Information technologies (cybersecurity) – Healthcare (supply chains, medicine independence) – Agriculture and food production	– Personal or family income and its sustainability – Debt levels and savings opportunities – Ability to obtain essential goods and services (housing, healthcare, food) – Subjective sense of security (perceived threat of job loss, living standards) – Level of financial literacy

Source: compiled by the author

Koba (2021) argues that at the macro level, the most important thing is to ensure strategic independence – i.e., that the country can function even during a global crisis or supply chain disruptions. For example, the LNG terminal in Lithuania is considered a macro security solution that allows for reducing energy dependence on unfriendly sources. At the meso level, the resilience of individual sectors to crises is assessed – whether they can continue to operate in the face of challenges, whether they have alternative supply channels, or whether they depend on one country/region. For example, if IT infrastructure (servers, cloud computing) is dependent on foreign countries, this may become a risk to national security. The meso level also allows for the assessment of sectoral policies: whether they contribute to long-term sustainability, or whether they promote innovation and self-reliance. Even with stable macro indicators, economic security may be low at the micro level – for example, when households are unable to withstand unexpected expenses, are under debt pressure, or do not have social security. Therefore, the micro level becomes extremely important in assessing the issues of social inequality, exclusion and long-term poverty. Three-level analysis model allows combining different aspects of economic security into a single system, helping to form a holistic security policy in which both state sovereignty and the well-being of each citizen are equally important.

In Lithuania, the concept of economic security has expanded substantially since the 2008 global financial crisis, when it became clear that macroeconomic growth and budgetary discipline do not guarantee either public satisfaction or long-term trust in institutions. Crises have exposed structural weaknesses in social resilience, especially among the most vulnerable groups in society. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted these challenges – supply chains have been disrupted, energy insecurity has increased, and communication of economic decisions has become a key factor in trust.

In 2022, the war launched by Russia in Ukraine again moved the issue of economic security to the forefront of the political agenda – this time in the forms of energy independence, strategic reserves, control of the information space and social stability. As Persaud (2022) notes, the feeling of economic security of society increasingly depends not on GDP growth, but on trust in institutions, price predictability and transparency of communication. This view is also confirmed by Matonytė, Gajauskaitė and Jasinavičius (2024), whose research shows that the economic insecurity experienced by young people is often associated not with actual income or the situation on the labour market, but with the uncertainty of information, uncertainty about the future and a crisis of public authority credibility.

In Lithuania, economic security is understood more and more broadly today as a complex system that includes not only financial stability, but also the maintenance of social trust, the quality of communication, the accountability of institutions and the ability of residents to navigate in information chaos. This allows us to talk about a new dimension of security–discursive economic security, in which the public narrative becomes no less important than real economic measures. It is important

to mention that the modern concept of economic security also includes an emotional component – even with good indicators, people may feel insecure. This means that economic security is not only an objective condition, but also the result of perception and trust. Education, as an institute of social sustainability, is one of the most important factors in the formation of long-term trust, and Kazlauskaitė-Markelienė and Petrauskaitė (2011) highlight the importance of solidarity and social awareness as the opposite of economic and political egocentrism. In this authors' view, the sustainability of economic security is impossible without cultural capital and a collective understanding that resilience is a community, not an individual project.

A study by Matonytė, Gajauskaitė, and Jasinavičius (2024) shows that perceptions of economic insecurity often stem from emotional reactions to uncertainty, especially among young people, where hybrid threats (e.g., price spikes, job instability, inflation narratives in the media) trigger a sense of loss of control. This confirms the need to combine both economic indicators and subjective experience research in the analysis of economic security.

Table 2. Comparison of Concepts of Economic Security

Author	Perspective	Concept of Economic Security	Key Focus Area
Smith, E. (2020)	Neorealism	Economic security is the state's ability to control strategic resources and protect markets from external threats.	Sovereignty, national interests, and resource geopolitics.
Bilgin, P. (2023)	Critical Theory	Economic security is a guarantee of human rights and dignity, grounded in social justice.	Social equality, reducing exclusion, and human rights.
Persaud, R. B. (2022)	Human Security Theory	Economic security is an individual's ability to live free from poverty, access basic services, and exercise economic choice.	Dignity, everyday security, and people-centred analysis.
Blakyta et al. (2021), Koba, O. (2021)	Complex Analysis	Economic security is a multi-level (macro, meso, micro) balance between strategic stability and individual well-being.	Sectoral responsibility, fiscal autonomy, household stability.
Kazlauskaitė-Markelienė, R. & Petrauskaitė, A. (2011)	Educational-Cultural	Economic security is inseparable from education and civic awareness – it depends on risk perception and responsible action.	Trust, education, critical thinking, and social resilience.

Source: compiled by the author

Concepts of economic security in various theoretical contexts reveal that it is not a homogeneous, "technical" concept - it depends on the analytical point of view, the chosen level (state or individual), and the political-cultural value system.

The five concepts of economic security presented in Table 2 recognise that economic security encompasses more than just financial stability. The concepts shift the focus of analysis: from the state (Smith) → sector ((Blakyta; Koba) → individual (Bilgin) → society (Kazlauskaitė-Markelienė and Petrauskaitė). The interpretation of the source of risk also varies for some, it is external threats, for others, social exclusion or cultural fragmentation. Thus, the need for an interdisciplinary assessment that would connect political science, sociology, economics and educationology becomes apparent.

Finally, economic security in the modern world is not only an objective outcome of politics or a set of economic indicators – it is also a product of social imagination, based on how individuals and communities perceive risks, threats and their options to act. As McDonald (2021) argues, security "is not just about protection from threat – it is also about giving meaning to uncertainty". In other words, people respond not so much to the risk itself, but to how it is named, interpreted and broadcast through the media or political discourse. In this way, economic security becomes a dynamic, constantly changing construction that operates in social space. Trust in institutions, emotional background, tone of information and symbolic power – all of these become both expressions of security and its shaper.

This constructivist perspective allows us to understand economic security as a constantly rewritten narrative that is sensitive to historical context, communication tools, and collective memory. For example, what was considered a security guarantee in one era (e.g., global trade) may be considered a threat in another (e.g., dependence on Chinese or Russian supply chains). In times of contemporary economic shocks (pandemics, inflationary shocks, wars), it becomes evident that economic security requires not only political action but also ongoing discursive management, empathy in communication, inter-institutional cooperation, and citizen empowerment. Therefore, an interdisciplinary assessment – encompassing economics, communication, cultural studies, and public policy – becomes a necessity. Economic security cannot be ensured by regulating the budget or laws alone; it must be understood, felt, and made meaningful in society as the result of shared responsibility.

Contemporary Threats to Economic Security. The modern landscape of economic security is characterized not only by its multidimensional nature, but also by a fundamentally transformed structure of threats. While in the late 20th century economic threats were primarily associated with financial crises and unemployment levels, the 21st-cen-

tury spectrum of risks has significantly expanded. It now includes geopolitical upheavals, technological dependencies, climate-related risks, energy insecurity, information crises, and even psychological uncertainty (Bilgin, 2023). Economic security threats are no longer limited to shifts in economic indicators or cash flows, they have become structural, long-term, and often difficult to predict. Energy dependency, inflation, climate change, and declining trust in institutions have all emerged as new dimensions of insecurity.

Energy vulnerability, particularly following Russia's 2022 aggression against Ukraine, has underscored the risks of dependence on a single supplier and prompted public debate about energy security as a foundation of economic security. Strojny et al. (2023) observe that "the shock effect of the energy crisis was felt not only in industry but also in households, threatening the availability of essential services." Inflation represents another major threat, affecting all levels of the economy but disproportionately impacting low-income populations. Koundouri and Dellis (2023) emphasize that inflation hits the most vulnerable the hardest, reducing their purchasing power and exacerbating social inequality.

Changes in the labour market driven by automation and the platform economy are reshaping employment structures and generating new forms of insecurity. Bilgin (2023) notes that while new forms of work are more flexible, they are also more fragmented. Workers often lack both social protections and stable incomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed yet another domain of risk — the impact of health crises on the economy. According to Pisani-Ferry (2024), the pandemic exposed how even the strongest economies become vulnerable when supply chains break down, mobility declines, and trust in institutions deteriorates. This has broadened the concept of economic security to include societal resilience and adaptability.

Technological security has also become critical both in terms of infrastructure vulnerability to cyberattacks and dependence on third-party IT solutions. Bilgin (2023) argues that contemporary economic power is inseparable from control over data and digital sovereignty.

Climate change is likewise closely tied to economic security. McDonald (2021) states that climate instability is already disrupting logistical routes, reducing resource availability, and increasing infrastructure costs. Extreme events such as droughts and floods impact both production and distribution. The economic consequences of climate change, particularly concerning agriculture, water resources, energy, and migration, are evolving into systemic and long-term threats. Barry (2012) stresses that "economic security policy must be aligned with ecological sustainability principles, or it will ultimately become a destabilizing force itself."

Equally important is the issue of public trust. According to Fehér (2020), economic security crises often begin not with real losses, but with psychological insecurity — when individuals no longer believe in the effectiveness of systems. Information crises and manipulative communication whether spreading false threats or distorting reality undermine not only political stability, but also rational economic decision-making. Büyükbay (2025) notes that news dissemination in times of crisis becomes not merely a factual report but an act of shaping emotions, fear, and trust.



Figure 1. Contemporary Economic Security Threats: Typological Breakdown
Source: compiled by the author

Contemporary threats to economic security are marked by complexity and interdependence, necessitating an interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach to analysis. Researchers increasingly discuss the phenomena of "risk clustering" and "threat spillover," where vulnerabilities in one domain trigger destabilization in another (Mishchuk, 2023; Blakyta et al., 2021). Within this framework, six main categories of threats can be identified:

Geopolitical Tensions – including wars, sanctions regimes, and dependence on authoritarian energy suppliers – generate economic insecurity both directly and symbolically. Their effects include investment instability, external pressure on economies, and inflationary surges.

- *Energy Security* – understood as the reliable supply of physical resources, price predictability, and resistance to manipulation in supply chains.
- *Health Crises* – exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which revealed how quickly a health emergency can escalate into economic collapse through disrupted supply chains, reduced consumption, and rising unemployment. Gereffi (2020) notes that "the pandemic became a litmus test for economic dependence on social infrastructure." As a result, health crises have become a structural source of risk within the economic security discourse.
- *Cybersecurity and Digital Infrastructure* – economic security in today's society is inseparable from the reliability of digital infrastructure. Cyberattacks targeting financial sectors, energy systems, or public services can have real economic consequences. Bilgin (2023) emphasizes that "data sovereignty has become a component of geopolitical power." Dependency on external digital service providers introduces structural vulnerabilities.
- *Long-term Environmental Threats* – including droughts, floods, agricultural yield reductions, and environmentally driven migration. Barry (2012) argues that "ecological unsustainability ultimately triggers economic imbalances that no longer align with free-market logic or social policy goals." Consequently, climate challenges are increasingly integrated into national security strategies.
- *Information Instability and Discursive Threats* – encompassing disinformation, manipulative narratives, and emotionally charged crisis rhetoric, which can provoke panic, obstruct rational decision-making, reduce trust in institutions, and trigger behavioural volatility (Büyükbay, 2025). Information instability constitutes an invisible yet effective form of threat that is particularly difficult to manage.

The spectrum of economic security threats is expanding and demands systematic, coordinated policy responses aimed at fostering resilience and social justice. Today, economic security can no longer be measured by budget deficits or GDP growth alone, since it encompasses an entire ecosystem of risks spanning the physical, social, technological, ecological, and informational spheres. Thorough analysis of these threats is essential not only for academic reflection, but also for shaping public policy and delineating media responsibility.

Indicators and Metrics of Economic Security. Measuring economic security remains one of the most complex challenges in both theoretical and practical political economy. Although economic security is often presented as an aspirational goal, its objective and standardized assessment remains problematic. The concept encompasses a wide range of economic, social, energy-related, and even psychological factors, making a single universal measurement tool elusive. This section reviews commonly used criteria for evaluating economic security, their advantages and limitations, and proposes alternative methods reflecting contemporary challenges.

Economic security analyses are typically based on indicators grouped into several categories (see Table 3):

Table 3. Indicators and Metrics of Economic Security

Indicator Group	Indicators
Macroeconomic	GDP per capita, inflation rate, unemployment rate, current account balance
Fiscal and Financial	Government debt-to-GDP ratio, foreign reserves, credit ratings
International Trade	Export/import ratio, FDI flows, supply chain dependence
Social	Poverty rate, Gini coefficient, access to healthcare, education levels
Energy and Environmental	Share of energy imports, use of renewable energy, CO_2 emissions per capita
Institutional	Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Rule of Law Index, Government Effectiveness, Political Stability and Violence Risk

Source: compiled by the author

The classical group of economic indicators associated with a nation's economic wellbeing includes GDP per capita, inflation levels, employment data, public debt, and the trade balance. While these reflect macroeconomic stability, they do not necessarily show whether citizens feel economically secure. As Pisani-Ferry et al. (2024) argue, evaluating economic security must go beyond GDP, it must consider income distribution and whether basic needs can be met. For example, Galor and Zeira (1993) demonstrate in their model that income inequality can have long-term negative effects on growth, especially when capital market imperfections restrict investment in human capital. Even with growing GDP, inequality may dampen overall economic security. Empirical studies show that income distribution directly affects people's ability to meet basic needs. For instance, research on child well-being highlights that family income is a critical factor in ensuring children's health, nutrition, and education (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). This under-

scores that economic security evaluation should cover not only general economic growth but also its distribution across different social groups. Economic security assessments must also account for subjective perceptions. After all, economic security involves people's ability to consistently meet their needs, a function of not just actual income but its stability and predictability.

In scholarly literature, fiscal and financial indicators are considered core components of economic security, especially during crises. Researchers analyse both quantitative macro-level data (deficit, debt, reserves) and qualitative dimensions (policy stability, regulatory quality). The influential study by Reinhart and Rogoff (2010), analyzing centuries of sovereign debt dynamics, found that "when government debt exceeds 90% of GDP, long-term growth slows significantly and financial instability risks increase." Stiglitz et al. (2009) advocate for a broader evaluation of fiscal security, including the efficiency of public investment and the sustainability of policy frameworks. International trade indicators play a crucial role in evaluating national economic security. Trade openness, structure, and dependency on external flows can determine both growth potential and vulnerability to global crises. As Hausmann & Hidalgo (2011) point out, "high import dependence or limited export diversification increases countries' vulnerability to global shocks."

A more advanced method for assessing economic security is the use of socio-economic security indices, which integrate not only traditional macroeconomic metrics, but also social and quality-of-life indicators such as the Gini coefficient, poverty rate, access to education, housing conditions, and social protection coverage. These comprehensive tools provide a deeper understanding of how economic changes impact various segments of society, and how economic benefits are distributed. As Bilgin (2023) asserts, "only in societies where income distribution is not distorted and effective social safety nets exist, can we speak of sustainable economic security." This means that since GDP growth or inflation control alone are not enough, it is crucial to ensure that the gains of growth are distributed fairly and that mechanisms are in place to shield vulnerable groups from economic shocks.

An important metric in assessing economic security is *energy security*, which includes dependence on energy imports, price stability, and diversification. According to Strojny et al. (2023), energy security has become a cornerstone indicator of economic security both in terms of price stability and infrastructural control. For this reason, policymakers must give special attention to strengthening energy security by diversifying supply sources, modernizing infrastructure, and transitioning to sustainable energy sources.

Institutional strength and the quality of institutional functioning are also crucial elements for ensuring long-term economic security. Stable, effective, and transparent institutions enhance not only investment attractiveness but also public trust, the predictability of government actions, and resilience to crises. As noted by Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), countries with strong institutions tend to exhibit greater resistance to economic shocks, faster growth, and higher living standards. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), compiled annually by Transparency International, measures perceived levels of public sector corruption. The Rule of Law Index is calculated based on the independence of the judiciary, enforcement effectiveness, and quality of legal proceedings. The Government Effectiveness Index evaluates the state's ability to formulate and implement policy, the quality of public services, and independence from political pressure. Corruption distorts budgetary spending, weakens trust in institutions, and undermines fiscal stability (Mauro, 1995). Rule of law ensures a stable environment for business, protection from arbitrary state interference, and the safeguarding of property rights (La Porta et al., 1999). Countries with low political instability are more attractive to investors and less susceptible to domestic crises. International organizations such as the World Bank, OECD, and UNDP use institutional indicators as key components in assessing national security and sustainable development.

Economic security is the state's ability to ensure stable and sustainable economic development by safeguarding vital resources, strategic sectors, and by pre-empting potential economic threats. This is a multidimensional phenomenon, and its assessment requires complex methodologies. One of the most commonly used approaches is indicator analysis. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, resilience indicators have gained popularity as a means of assessment. Economic security is often evaluated using macroeconomic indicators such as GDP, inflation rate, unemployment rate, government debt, and trade balance. These allow analysts to assess a country's resilience to external and internal economic shocks.

The use of composite indices allows for the integration of multiple indicators into a single aggregated measure. For instance, Kharazishvili et al. (2020) proposed a comprehensive economic security index that includes five core components: financial stability, production potential, innovation capacity, resource availability, and the socio-economic environment. This approach enables monitoring the dynamics of economic security and facilitates comparisons across countries and time periods.

The Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), developed by the World Economic Forum (WEF), is one of the most comprehensive international measures for assessing national competitiveness. While its primary aim is to identify factors affecting productivity and long-term growth, it also integrates critical components of economic security, such as macroeconomic stability, financial system efficiency, and innovation potential. In the context of the GCI, macroeconomic stability encompasses control of inflation, fiscal balance, and debt sustainability. A stable macroeconomic environment

is essential for attracting both domestic and foreign investment, for maintaining effective social policy, and for guaranteeing long-term economic security. As Sala-i-Martín and Artadi (2004) write, "An economy cannot grow if the macroeconomic environment is unstable or unfavourable" (p. 18). Another key factor is the efficiency of the financial system, which is assessed based on market depth, access to capital for businesses, and the quality of regulation. A stable and accessible financial system promotes capital mobility and reduces economic vulnerability. The GCI also evaluates countries' innovation capacity, including investment in R&D, collaboration between universities and industry, and the number of patents. Innovation is regarded as a key driver of competitiveness and long-term security. While the GCI does not directly assess economic security, its structure clearly indicates that security is inseparable from competitiveness.

One of the methods for assessing economic security is the Human Security Model introduced in the 1994 Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This model marked a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of security from state-centred defence to the protection of human well-being. According to UNDP (1994), security should be defined not only in terms of military protection but also as freedom from fear and want. Economic security is one of the seven dimensions of human security and encompasses income, employment opportunities, access to essential resources, and social protection. Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy (2007) argue that economic security forms the foundation of peace and human dignity, and that its absence often correlates with violence, inequality, and migration. As stated, "*Economic insecurity can be both a cause and a consequence of violent conflict*" (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007, p. 45).

In democratic societies, where political decisions are shaped by public sentiment, the neglect of subjective security can lead to unexpected political changes (e.g., the rise of populism or a decline in trust in institutions). Osberg (2010) argues that it is essential to combine objective and subjective data, since only then is it possible to create a holistic model of well-being: such an approach would reveal the true level of economic security in a crisis-prone modern society. While all of the previously discussed indicators are important, they do not capture one critical dimension - people's subjective sense of security. This is often referred to as the "*security paradox*" a situation where objective data shows improvement, but people remain sceptical about the economic future (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). This paradox is particularly visible during periods of economic growth that coincide with rising social inequality, when society experiences information overload, heightened risk communication, and the lingering psychological effects of past crises (e.g., post-COVID-19). As Baldwin (2018) points out, "*the feeling of security depends not only on facts but also on interpretation fear is often stronger than risk*." Osberg (2010) adds that objective risks (such as unemployment, illness, widowhood, or old age) are only one side of the coin: "*when people don't know whether they will survive job loss, even low unemployment statistics fail to provide a real sense of security*." The subjective feeling of security also depends on trust in the state's protection systems, political stability, the overall economic climate, public awareness, media influence, and past crisis experiences (e.g., COVID-19). Canada's Index of Economic Well-being (IEWB) shows that even when unemployment was falling, anxiety about job loss remained high; income inequality lowered expectations for the future and increased subjective insecurity; and better health or pension coverage did not necessarily correlate with a stronger sense of safety (cf. Osberg, 2010). Survey data indicates that even during periods of economic expansion, 30–40% of people report feeling financially insecure (Eurobarometer, 2022). Young people often feel less secure than the actually "*vulnerable*" social groups. Increasingly, we see cases where the "*economic optimism*" index diverges from macroeconomic trends. Inglehart and Norris (2016) analyse the relationship between objective security and cultural values, revealing that dissatisfaction may arise from a lack of identity, cultural stability, or a sense of social justice even when the economy is strong. Bauman (2007) underscores that in postmodern society, individuals live in a constant state of risk awareness, and economic insecurity becomes an existential condition.

Therefore, integrating subjectivity into economic security assessment models is essential. Economic security cannot be measured by numbers alone it is also necessary to understand how people feel. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2020) emphasizes the importance of social protection in ensuring economic security: "*Guaranteeing at least a basic level of income security to all, including workers in all types of employment, requires sustained investments in and effective coordination between social protection systems*." This indicates that ensuring economic security requires not only financial instruments but also a systemic approach that considers people's needs and emotions. The ILO (2020) also highlights the importance of job quality: "*The report highlights the persistence of significant deficiencies in the quality of work, including high rates of informality and working poverty... pronounced inequalities prevail in labour markets.*" Therefore, the evaluation of economic security should consider not only the number of jobs, but also their quality and their impact on workers' overall well-being. New synthetic indicators are currently being developed that combine objective economic data, public opinion surveys on financial security, institutional trust, expectations for the future, and media analysis (e.g., monitoring the sentiment of economic narratives).

Assessing economic security should encompass not only quantitative indicators, but also people's subjective feelings and experiences. For this reason, it becomes increasingly relevant to explore not just the content of economic security,

but also how it is represented and articulated in public discourse, especially in the media. The media are one of the most powerful platforms for constructing social reality, and the narratives they produce shape collective public perception. As Piper (2021) states, media representations during times of crisis become central sources of collective emotions and reactions. This aspect is especially important in democratic states, where citizens' trust in public institutions, their choices in political processes, and social stability are partly determined by the realities shaped by the information environment. Matonytė et al. (2024) emphasize that media narratives not only reflect but also shape public reality. Preßl (2021) notes that media analysis has become "*an essential component in evaluating how society interprets economic signals and threats.*" Similarly, Büyükbay (2024) highlights the media's role in shaping "*collective risk perception*." Therefore, analyzing economic security in public discourse not only allows us to measure social resilience, but also to develop effective communication strategies that strengthen institutional trust, reduce panic, and encourage citizen engagement in crisis management.

Philosophical Approaches to Economic Security. Although the concept of economic security has already been presented in a general context, it is necessary to separately analyse how different philosophical directions conceptualise this concept. This subsection focuses on comparing different philosophical perspectives – how they explain the assumptions, sources, aspirations and policy goals of economic security. This reflects different value positions on what constitutes "*security*", "*threat*", or "*risk*" in economics. Each of these concepts answers different questions and raises different priorities for public policy makers. This approach allows not only to understand the theoretical dispute between paradigms, but also to choose a research position when analysing media discourses.

One of the dominant historical interpretations of economic security is based on the liberal paradigm, which is based on the idea that the market, competition and free trade by themselves ensure state stability. State intervention is treated as an exception, necessary only to ensure efficient market activity. According to this logic, the more economic exchanges take place, the more the probability of conflicts decreases, as countries become interdependent. As Barbieri (2002) states, from the perspective of the liberal paradigm, economic security is not ensured through control or isolation, but through integration, transparency and investment openness. Liberalism in the analysis of economic security is based on the fundamental assumption that free markets, open trade channels, institutional integration and international cooperation are key elements in achieving stability and security. Unlike proponents of the realist or neorealist paradigms, liberals treat economic security not as state control of resources, but as effective involvement in the global market and trust in international institutions (Keohane & Nye, 2017). According to Barbieri (2002), "*economic interdependence reduces the risk of conflict and creates a structural incentive for security*", which is especially relevant in the modern era of globalisation, where countries' economic relations are becoming not only an instrument of profit but also of security. The liberal paradigm also emphasises the role of institutions – from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to the mechanisms of the European Union – as guarantors that reduce transaction risks and increase predictability (Baldwin, 2018). Liberal analysis of economic security often emphasises the dimension of human security, that is, the ability to ensure personal dignity, access to services, financial stability and social protection through the functioning of the market. As Higgott and Watson (2008) point out, liberalism is not limited to economics – it offers a normative vision in which economic security is achieved through international regulation, efficient markets and human mobility. However, liberalism faces challenges in the contemporary debate. In 2008, the financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russian aggression have shown that excessive dependence on the global market without internal protection mechanisms can become a threat. Therefore, this paradigm is often supplemented today by the concept of resilience, in which the market still plays an important role, but at the same time, a balance between national security and strategic autonomy is necessary (Gereffi, 2020).

Neorealism, as a theoretical paradigm of international relations, is based on the basic assumption that the state is the main actor seeking survival in an anarchic international system (Waltz, 2010). According to this model, economic security is the ability to control key strategic sectors (e.g., energy, defence industry), ensure the availability of resources and limit dependence on unpredictable partners. According to Kirshner (2020), "*economic security refers to the ability of a state to act independently of the economic decisions of other states, while maintaining control both nationally and transnationally*". This paradigm pays special attention to the control of energy, raw materials, technology and infrastructure, which are considered strategic elements. Some authors, such as Cohen (2017), argue that economic security becomes a geopolitical weapon when countries use sanctions, investment controls and trade policies to ensure national interests. The neorealist tradition also emphasises the importance of self-sufficiency and resilience. According to Mearsheimer (2001), "*dependence on global systems, even if they are economically efficient, can become a source of national vulnerability*". Therefore, states, acting according to the logic of neorealism, often choose policies of economic nationalism or strategic autonomy, limiting the influence of foreign capital in the most sensitive sectors. Persaud (2022) argues that the degree of economic sovereignty of a state is directly related to its ability to protect the well-being of its population in the event of a crisis. The neorealist paradigm emphasises the role of the state and strategic autonomy. Economic security is considered a matter of resource control, protection of domestic production and geopolitical balance (Smith, 2020;

Zdanavičius & Statkus, 2020). Smith (2020) and Zdanavičius & Statkus (2020) emphasise that energy or technological dependence is not only an economic but also a security threat. The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine have only further strengthened this view. Countries are reviewing their dependence on external supply chains, investing in domestic production, energy independence, and control of critical technologies, which is consistent with neorealist priorities (Blackwill & Harris, 2016). A weakness of this paradigm is that the state can become protectionist, closed to other states.

The critical theoretical approach, based on neo-Marxist and post-structuralist thought, holds that economic security cannot be assessed without an analysis of power structures. Its representatives emphasise social exclusion, class inequalities, gender disproportion and the insecurity of marginalised groups. Critical theory in the analysis of economic security goes beyond the narrow framework of economic indicators and seeks to understand the deeper structural forms of power that determine economic inequality, marginalisation and social vulnerability. Its origins lie in the Frankfurt School, but in modern economic analysis, critical theory has transformed into a normative instrument that allows us to rethink what it means to be "*secure*" in a society where economic resources are distributed unevenly. Bilgin (2023) notes that "*economic security is not just a statistical indicator – it is also the ability to live with dignity, without the constant threat of being excluded from the system*". The critical paradigm raises issues of inequality, marginalisation and social justice. Bilgin (2023) argues that "*economic security is part of human rights*" – and therefore it must be assessed through the prism of opportunities, dignity and social cohesion. According to Horkheimer (1972), "*critical theory seeks not only to explain the world, but also to change it*" – this is especially important in a context where economic security is related to people's dignity, social protection and the possibility of living without poverty. In this view, the lack of economic security is seen as a systemic form of violence, not just a technical problem.

Unlike traditional paradigms, the critical approach focuses on the analysis of inequality and power. Economic security is understood here as a question of ensuring human rights, and the main goal is to guarantee a dignified existence for all. Walker (2002) notes in his work that the concept of "*security*", dominant in the classical IR (International Relations) literature, is "*too state-centric*" and ignores the everyday economic traumas experienced by socially excluded people. Therefore, critical analysis suggests expanding the category of security to "*everyday security*", focused on ensuring housing, food, education and access to services. Fehér's (2020) study on Eastern Europe shows that discursive narratives about the crisis often hide deep structural inequalities that political and economic institutions support. His work argues that media rhetoric about "*resilience*" often acts as an ideological veil to cover up deepening inequalities. A critical theoretical approach requires fundamental structural changes and is more difficult to integrate into traditional politics, which is its weakness. An analysis of the impact of neoliberal policies is provided by Fraser (2020), who argues that the exclusion of unpaid work, the care crisis and women's vulnerability from economic accounting threatens social stability. This opens cross-disciplinary connections between critical and feminist theory.

Feminist economic security theory offers a radically different view of security, not as an instrument of state power or a macroeconomic condition, but as the security of everyday life and care systems. This approach criticises the traditional security discourse, which ignores unpaid care work, social vulnerability within the family, and the impact of gender inequality on economic stability. As Elson (1999) points out, economic policies often assume a "*neutral market*", but in reality, their effects are deeply gender asymmetric. For example, the reduction of the public sector, the privatisation of care services and flexible work models have a disproportionate impact on women. Feminist theory raises the question of how the concept of economic security reflects (or ignores) the situation of women and the significance of unpaid work. It shows that official economic statistics often overlook invisible work; work which is essential for the functioning of society. Economic security in feminist analysis means both economic autonomy and protection from dependency relations. Feminist theory also emphasises the economic challenges of the family and the vulnerability of women in times of crisis. According to Tickner (1992), economic security policies often ignore the unpaid care work that is essential for the functioning of society. This theory highlights invisible work (caregiving, child-rearing), the importance of which is often ignored in economic statistics. Young (2008) emphasises that households often become centres of the "*invisible economy*", and the family burden, especially for women, is a structural barrier to full participation in the economic system. A feminist approach requires rethinking these structures and incorporating them into policymaking. Tickner (1992) argues that "*security must be reinterpreted through the prism of human experience, not state defence*". She proposes the so-called gender-sensitive security paradigm, in which women's experiences become the centre of analytical significance. In this way, feminist analysis expands the category of security to include the dimensions of essential access to basic services, decent work, and emotional and social stability. Women often experience greater insecurity during crises, and their work is inadequately valued or excluded from decision-making processes (Tickner, 1992). A feminist approach requires a reconceptualisation of the economy as a social process in which informal, unpaid work is essential for the functioning of society. In contemporary academic debate, feminist authors such as True (2012) emphasise that gender inequality is not only a moral but also an economic issue, and that investments in care infrastructure (childcare, elderly

care, social guarantees) are necessary conditions for economic security. Furthermore, feminist analysis is often integrated with the human security paradigm, which focuses on the guarantee of individual dignity, integrity and opportunities, not just physical protection from threats. Analyses by authors such as Robinson (2015) suggest that economic security should be measured both in terms of GDP and to what degree people can live free from exploitation and with the right to full participation in society. This theory is appreciated for its emphasis on gender equality and social visibility but is often dismissed as "*uneconomic*" in traditional analyses.

The ecological perspective links economic security to long-term sustainability: if economic activity disrupts the ecological balance, it eventually becomes unsafe for society itself (Barry, 2012). According to Barry (2012), economic security should be measured not only by GDP growth, but also by the ability to maintain ecological balance, social cohesion and intergenerational justice. In this way, economic security cannot be assessed without an analysis of climate change, resource depletion and environmental risks. Ecological crises – climate change, biodiversity loss, and overexploitation of resources – already pose direct threats to the economy: disrupt agriculture, pose risks to energy supply, and cause waves of migration. According to Dalby (2009), "*economic security must be integrated with climate policy – otherwise it becomes artificially separated from real systemic risks*". Barry (2012) and other authors emphasise that economic security must be long-term and sustainable, which means responsible use of resources, transition to renewable energy and climate change management. This concept links security with environmental awareness – if economic development destroys ecological foundations, it becomes a threat to itself. The ecological perspective of economic security is difficult to reconcile with rapid growth or short-term political ambitions. An ecological approach requires rethinking development strategies – instead of the growth paradigm, a green economy, circular production, carbon emissions reduction and renewable energy are proposed. Raworth (2017) proposes the so-called "*circular security zone*" in the "*circular economy*" model, where it is necessary to ensure basic social conditions for people without overspending the planet. Adger et al. (2013) analyse the impact of climate change on security and note that "*the ability of people to adapt is no less important than physical infrastructure*"; therefore, social inequality, health disparities and lack of education become factors that multiply vulnerability in the context of the climate crisis.

Table 4 compares the five main theoretical paradigms of economic security in terms of their sources of security, identified threats, and policy responses.

Table 4. Economic Security Paradigms: Theoretical Comparison

Perspective	Source of Security	Source of Threat	Political Response
Liberalism	Market integration, interdependence	Protectionism, market disruptions	Institutional regulation, trade liberalisation
Neorealism	State power, autonomy, and resource control	External dominance, dependency	Strategic autonomy, protection of national sectors
Critical Theory	Social justice, reducing inequality	Economic exclusion, marginalisation	Strengthening social policies, inclusion
Feminism Paradigm	Recognition of care work, gender equality	Unpaid labour, family vulnerability	Gender policy, family support models
Ecological approach	Environmental sustainability, ecological balance	Environmental degradation, climate crisis	Promotion of green investments, transition to sustainability.

Source: compiled by the author

The table above provides a consistent assessment of how different theoretical paradigms interpret the concept of economic security, identify threats, and formulate policy responses. The liberal paradigm bases security on market logic and interdependence but becomes vulnerable to disruptions in the global market. Neorealism emphasises the role of the state and strategic autonomy, believing that external dependence poses the main threat to national security. Critical theory draws attention to social structure, inequality, and marginalised groups, proposing to ensure security through strengthening social cohesion. Meanwhile, the feminist paradigm expands the field of security to everyday life – family, invisible work, emotional vulnerability – and proposes gender-sensitive policy measures. The ecological approach views economic security as inseparable from long-term environmental stability and climate sustainability, therefore emphasising green investments and transformative policies. This theoretical map makes it clear that economic security is a multifaceted phenomenon that requires a comprehensive approach. Different paradigms complement each other and together shape the contemporary political economy discussion about what determines the security of a state, society, or individual against the backdrop of economic turmoil.

Economic Security in National Policy. Economic security in Lithuania's national policy has become an integral element of the entire security architecture. While traditionally, security was associated with military and geopolitical

dimensions, increasing emphasis is now placed on the fact that without a stable economic environment, long-term national resilience becomes impossible. Inglehart and Norris (2016) argue that economic security is a multidimensional phenomenon requiring an integrated approach that includes both objective indicators and subjective experiences. Economic security involves the ability to protect vital economic sectors from internal and external threats, to ensure public welfare, maintain functional infrastructure, and create a reliable system of economic governance. These aspects are comprehensively analysed by Kharazishvili et al. (2020), who evaluate sustainable development using indicators of economic vulnerability and human development. Research shows that countries with higher social protection and lower income inequality tend to be more resilient to crisis situations. The evaluation of economic security must therefore be based on both national and international indicators, including GDP dynamics, trade balance, employment levels, and public debt. In today's geopolitical context, economic security is gaining increasing significance as a means of strengthening state autonomy, resisting external manipulation, and preserving national cohesion.

Economic security is a core component of Lithuania's national security policy, as outlined in various strategic documents. These documents emphasize the importance of economic stability, energy security, infrastructure development, and resilience to external threats. In Lithuania's National Security Strategy (2017), economic security is identified as one of the key components alongside defence, information security, and internal stability. The strategy underscores that "*the sustainability of state development economic, energy, environmental, information, cyber, and social security is a primary national security interest*." Economic security encompasses not only economic growth, but also resilience to external threats such as economic coercion, blockades, and the takeover of strategic sectors. This means that the state must ensure the protection of strategic industries, enterprises, and infrastructure, and implement measures to prevent economic actors that do not meet national security interests from acquiring critical assets such as land. Additionally, economic security is closely tied to energy independence. The strategy notes the necessity of maintaining mandatory energy reserves, strengthening regional cooperation, and ensuring the operational capacity of energy companies under emergency conditions.

Since the shift in the geopolitical situation in 2014, especially following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, there has been a growing recognition of the need to strengthen not only military but also economic resilience. As Genys, Krikštolaitis, and Pažėraitė (2024) observe, Lithuanian strategic documents increasingly emphasize "*not only energy independence, but also the psychological preparedness and social stability of the population*." The state's vision for economic security is reflected in how it sets its strategic priorities. Vilpišauskas (2024) writes that "*in Lithuanian politics, economic security is no longer equated solely with economic growth: it is becoming a comprehensive concept that connects infrastructure protection, information security, social cohesion, and access to critical resources*."

The State Security Department's report, Assessment of Threats to National Security (2024), analyses risks, including economic ones, that could impact national security. The document emphasizes that economic pressure and dependence on external supply chains may be used as tools to influence state decision-making. It also notes that economic threats, such as reliance on a single supplier or investor, can be leveraged to exert political pressure. Therefore, it is important to diversify both supply chains and sources of investment.

Energy independence has been one of Lithuania's key economic security goals for more than a decade. Detachment from Russian gas and electricity imports, the construction of the LNG terminal in Klaipėda, and the NordBalt interconnection with Sweden have not only diversified energy sources but also symbolized a strategic drive toward autonomy. As Zdanavičius and Statkus (2020) observe, "*energy independence policy in Lithuania has become a symbolic security doctrine that affirms a vision of national sovereignty*." These projects have strengthened the country's energy security, boosted competitiveness, and deepened integration with the EU's energy markets. The National Energy Independence Strategy (2024) highlights that since the restoration of independence, Lithuania has pursued a consistent policy of energy security and has freed itself from near-total dependence on energy imports from the Russian Federation. Major shifts since 2021 have occurred in the renewable energy sector - electricity generation from renewables has increased by approximately 80%. As a result, by February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, Lithuania was among the first countries in Europe able to completely cease importing electricity, gas, and oil from the Russian Federation without jeopardizing energy supply security.

The Klaipėda LNG terminal, operational since 2014, has become a strategic instrument in reducing dependency on Russian gas supplies. This decision aligned with EU regulations on gas supply security, enhanced price regulation capabilities, and ensured a reliable supply chain (Burbulytė-Tsiskarishvili, 2015). Also significant is the NordBalt electricity interconnection with Sweden, completed in 2015. This connection not only improved electricity supply security but also encouraged market competition and accelerated the Baltic states' synchronization with Western European energy networks.

A key area of focus within the discourse on economic security is the protection of critical infrastructure — namely, the continuity and resilience of energy, transport, water supply, telecommunications, financial, and information tech-

nology systems. According to Bankauskaitė and Šlekys (2023), "*critical infrastructure becomes a target not only in cases of physical threat, but also through cyberattacks, information disruptions, and supply chain vulnerabilities*." The importance of critical infrastructure has grown significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of the war in Ukraine. There is now a pressing need to develop fast-response indicators of economic security that encompass the resilience of infrastructure to external shocks.

Economic security cannot be ensured without public participation and trust in state institutions. Navickienė, Valackienė, and Činčikaitė (2023) propose viewing social resilience as the ability to maintain functionality despite economic, political, or informational disruptions. Data from 2022–2023 shows increasing fluctuations in public trust in institutions, particularly during periods of inflation and energy challenges. A representative public survey commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior in September October 2023 revealed varying levels of trust in national and municipal institutions. For example, trust in the police was at 72%, armed forces 77%, President's office 68%, and Government 36%. The diagram (Figure 2) illustrates the changes in public trust in key institutions (police, military, presidency, and government) in 2022 and 2023, considering economic and energy-related challenges. As seen in the chart, a modest decline in trust was recorded across all institutions in 2023. The most significant drop was in trust toward the Government — from 48% to 36% — likely linked to rising energy prices, the impact of inflation on purchasing power, and ongoing debates about energy security and financial compensation measures. Trust in the military and police remained high, which may be attributed to the broader context of external security threats (e.g., Russia's war in Ukraine). Trust in the President's office remained relatively stable.

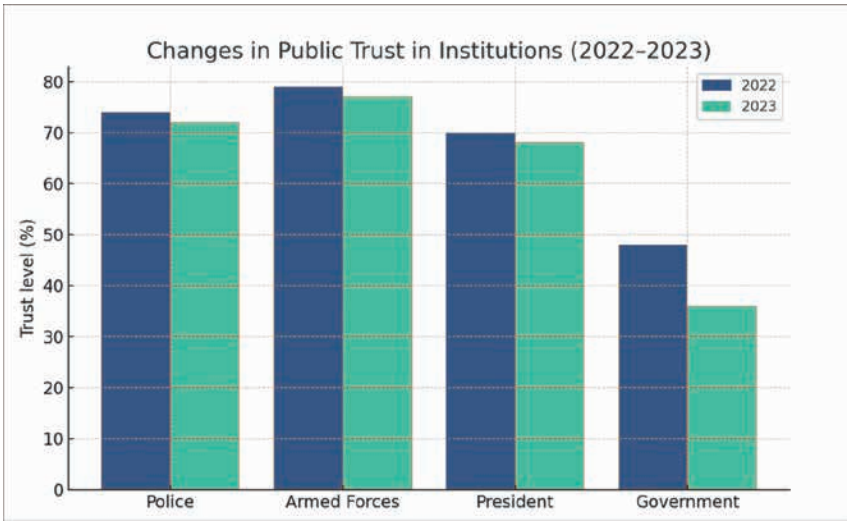


Figure 2. Lithuanian Citizens' Trust Changes in the Main Institutions (Police, Armed Forces, President and the Government) from 2022 to 2023
Source: 2022 Eurobarometer

The 2022 Eurobarometer survey showed that 69% of Lithuanians trusted the European Union, compared to only 36% who trusted their national government. This reflects greater confidence in EU institutions than in domestic ones. Inflation remained one of the top concerns among Lithuanian citizens. In 2023, 52% of respondents identified inflation and rising prices as the country's most important issue, and 62% cited it as their biggest personal concern. A March 2023 survey revealed a four-point drop in trust in the police and a three-point drop in trust in the government compared to the previous month. Trust in institutions responsible for economic policy has become a key variable, influencing not only stability but also the public's ability to adapt to changing conditions.

Modern economic security discourse increasingly incorporates the dimension of information security. Disinformation about economic processes can incite panic, disrupt consumer behaviour, and influence market dynamics. If we consider information control as one of the more subtle components of economic security, it becomes clear that psychological safety and economic rationality are inseparable. Analyzing the role of economic security in Lithuanian national policy reveals that this dimension is clearly embedded as a core element of national security. Economic security includes not only economic growth but also resilience to external threats, protection of critical sectors, control of strategic resources, and public trust in state institutions. Lithuanian strategic security documents explicitly frame economic security as a priority area. This is evident in the country's pursuit of energy independence, reinforcement of infrastructure resilience, control over strategic investments, and efforts to diversify supply chains. As Bayramov and Neuman (2024) note, such measures are not only economic but also political responses to growing external pressure, and they reinforce the state's capacity for autonomous decision-making.

As the geopolitical situation evolves, especially since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Lithuania's political discourse increasingly emphasizes the need to strengthen not only military, but also economic and informational resilience. Informational threats, disinformation, and the manipulation of economic data have become significant risks, and analyzing them has become an inseparable part of understanding economic security. This aligns with the modern perspective on economic communication as both a political and symbolic process, as discussed by Uhde (2024) in his analysis of discourse structures in Central Europe. Lithuania's economic security architecture is increasingly based on an integrated approach that includes institutional reforms, societal resilience, information control, and the management of critical resources. In summary, the strengthening of economic security in Lithuania is not limited to financial or technical measures — it encompasses strategic thinking, openness to civic engagement, and the ability to identify risks not only in numerical data but also in discourse, public space, and everyday citizen experience.

The Theory of Media Power and Discourse Analysis

Discourse Theory (Foucault, Fairclough, and others). Discourse theory, as developed by thinkers like Michel Foucault and Norman Fairclough, provides a framework for analyzing how language, knowledge, and power relations shape social reality, including the very concept of economic security.

Foucault emphasized that discourses are not merely linguistic structures, but mechanisms of power that define what is considered "*true*" or "*acceptable*" in each era. He argued that discourses produce knowledge, which in turn reinforces power structures by determining who is authorized to speak, what can be said, and how it is interpreted. This interplay of power and knowledge what Foucault called "*power/knowledge*" suggests that knowledge is never neutral but always intertwined with practices of power. He famously wrote: "*There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations*" (Foucault, 1980, p. 113). This means that knowledge and power are inextricably linked, and discourses not only reflect but actively shape social reality. Thus, the concept of economic security in public discourse is not simply an objective reality, but is constructed through political rhetoric, expert knowledge, media narratives, and institutional communication. Foucault noted that "*truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power*" (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). Accordingly, what is perceived as "truth" about economic security is formed through discourse and power structures. In this sense, discourse both mirrors and produces social reality by instituting certain norms and values that can serve to maintain authority or suppress dissent.

Other scholars also highlight Foucault's contributions to discourse analysis. For example, Tellmann, in her article "*Foucault and the Invisible Economy*" (Foucault Studies, 2009), examines how Foucault incorporated concepts of power, knowledge, and the subject into the discourse of economics. She points out that Foucault was interested not only in classical political economy, but also in how economic knowledge became "*invisible*" i.e., naturalized and unquestioned. This "*invisible economy*" concerns not just what economics does, but how it operates as a rationality that structures state interventions, social order, and individual behaviour. Tellmann argues that Foucault's perspective enables us to treat discourses on economic security as products of specific rationality regimes, which shape not only policy directions but also how we perceive risks, crises, and even "*normalcy*". Economic security, in this view, is not a neutral administrative goal, but a discursively constructed objective shaped by temporal, institutional, and epistemic factors. Tellmann shows that discourses on economic stability or crisis cannot be divorced from the power relations that produce them, for example, when central banks, the IMF, or governments define what constitutes "*responsible*" fiscal policy or "*sustainable*" growth, they are not merely reflecting reality but actively producing it. This approach is especially relevant to current discussions of economic security, where public discourse does not simply present facts (e.g., inflation or deficit figures) but also constructs collective perceptions, values, and emotional responses. Foucault's theoretical tools thus help reveal not only what we say about the economy, but how and why we say it - what kinds of discursive knowledge become dominant, and which are marginalized.

Fairclough, one of the leading figures in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), argues that language is not merely a medium for information exchange but a powerful social mechanism for embedding and sustaining ideologies and social inequalities. His three-tiered model of analysis text, discourse practice, and social practice, demonstrates how discourse functions across linguistic, institutional, and societal levels. In this framework, discourse analysis of economic security helps us understand how state institutions, the media, or international organizations represent risks, economic priorities, or policy decisions as neutral, self-evident truths, while marginalizing alternative narratives or solutions. For example, during times of economic crisis, austerity policies may be presented as inevitable, masking their ideological basis behind a veneer of rational governance. This kind of linguistic neutralization where political decisions are reframed as technical necessities, is a key focus of Fairclough's critique.

When compared to Foucault's theoretical principles, both parallels and distinctions become evident. Both Foucault and Fairclough acknowledge the significance of discourse within power structures, but Foucault focuses on the genealogy

of discourses examining how "regimes of truth" emerge across historical periods, and how knowledge and power are woven into social practices. From his perspective, discourses are technologies of power that shape subjectivities and regulate behaviour. The concept of economic security, through Foucault's lens, is not an objective fact but a discursively constructed phenomenon, operating through expert knowledge, political rhetoric, and institutional linguistic practices. Fairclough, by contrast, places emphasis not only on the historical context of discourse, but also on its concrete linguistic structure and its role in reinforcing social inequality. His method allows for the identification of how ideological meanings are embedded through grammatical structures, metaphors, and semantic patterns. Thus, CDA proves especially useful in analyzing economic security discourses, particularly in understanding how certain economic risks (e.g., inflation, unemployment, migration) are presented as existential threats and what kinds of social actions such narratives stimulate or restrict.

Laclau and Mouffe, in their seminal work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), developed a poststructuralist theory of discourse, building on Foucault's insights into discourse and power and Derrida's ideas of deconstruction. Their theory emphasizes that social reality lacks any essential or stable foundation, it is discursively constructed through hegemonic struggles between competing systems of meaning. Concepts like "*the people*," "*the nation,"* "*economic security,"* or even "*democracy*" are not seen as objective or universal entities but as political constructs whose meanings change depending on hegemonic discourse. Laclau and Mouffe argue that hegemony operates through discursive fixation meanings, initially fluid and ambiguous, become "*stabilized*" (i.e., collectively accepted) through institutional mechanisms, media, and political articulation. This means that the societal understanding of economic security may become dominant through the acceptance of discourses while marginalizing alternative meanings. In comparison with Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist discourse theory shares the notion that there is no pre-given "*truth*" or "*reality*" everything is constructed within discourse. However, unlike Foucault, who focuses on the genealogy of discourses and the micro-analytics of power, Laclau and Mouffe emphasize political articulation as the core principle of discursive functioning. Their model is overtly politicized: hegemony is viewed as a discursive process through which certain forces consolidate their interpretations as "*natural*." Fairclough, meanwhile, maintains a closer connection to empirical methods of language analysis and the intention of social critique. His CDA theory, unlike Laclau and Mouffe's more abstract model, seeks to uncover how everyday language use reproduces ideologies as social "*normality*." Though all three approaches (Foucault, Fairclough, Laclau & Mouffe) recognize discourse as central to shaping social reality, they differ in emphasis: Foucault focuses on the relationship between knowledge and power, Fairclough on the reproduction of ideology through language, and Laclau & Mouffe on political struggles over meaning that establish hegemonic discourses. This theoretical foundation enables a deeper understanding of the structure and dynamics of economic security discourses, revealing how specific threats, protective strategies, or institutional priorities are established in the public sphere.

Glynos and Howarth (2007) expanded Laclau and Mouffe's theory through what they call the logics of critical explanation, which consists of social, political, and phantasmatic logics. They emphasize that analyzing hegemonic discourses requires not only identifying which meanings dominate, but also how those meanings become accepted, persuasive, and legitimized. This allows for a better understanding of how economic security becomes embedded in public consciousness as a logic of necessity, as if there were no alternatives. Norval (2000), in turn, stresses the methodological challenges of discourse theory, suggesting an examination of how hegemonic narratives evolve when classical binary oppositions (e.g., security/insecurity, state/market) are transcended. Her perspective reveals how economic security discourses can be dynamic, unstable, and reconstructable depending on political developments, crises, or media narratives.

Van Dijk is one of the leading figures in critical discourse analysis who developed the so-called socio-cognitive model. This approach combines discourse analysis with principles of social psychology, examining how discourse's structure and solidify social relations, power, and ideology. According to Van Dijk (2017), "*discourses do not merely reflect social reality, but actively construct it by shaping cognitive models' mental representations people create as they interpret texts and language*" (p. 83). This implies that public discourses on economic security not only describe reality but also shape its interpretations, embedding viewpoints as dominant. Van Dijk pays special attention to the role of media, which, he argues, "*functions as a discourse control institution that can selectively produce, transform, or disseminate knowledge to match the interests of certain social groups*" (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). In the context of economic security discourses, this becomes evident through the portrayal of issues like inflation, migration, or energy crises as unavoidable threats, while alternative interpretations are neutralized. Van Dijk emphasizes that "*ideologies function as control mechanisms that prevent the development of alternative forms of knowledge*" (2006, p. 372). Unlike Fairclough, who highlights grammatical structures and institutional mechanisms, Van Dijk's analysis relies more on the mental models of social groups formed through repeated narrative exposure. This helps explain why certain discursive figures such as "*external threats*" or "*economic instability*" become deeply entrenched in public consciousness. Van Dijk's theoretical model offers analytical tools to examine how media and political leaders articulate economic security narratives in ways that legitimize specific political choices and reinforce worldviews. This perspective is essential to understanding not only the words used in discussing economic security, but also why these forms of language become dominant.

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), developed by Ruth Wodak, stands out among CDA frameworks by systematically integrating textual analysis, social context, and historical analysis to understand how discourses evolve over time and how they relate to political power, ideology, and identity. According to Wodak, "*discourses are dynamic: they are created and transformed across historical periods and political situations*" (Wodak, 2001, p. 64). She also emphasizes that discourse analysis must be multi-layered, encompassing textual structures, intertextuality, context, and the functions of discourse. DHA allows us to identify how various discourses on economic security emerge in response to specific events such as crises, military conflicts, or waves of migration. This approach uncovers not only which words are used but also how those words gain meaning within historical circumstances. Wodak argues that "*there is no discourse without context; and no meaningful analysis without an understanding of the socio-political environment in which the discourse functions*" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 20). In the context of economic security, this means that texts concerning crises, price surges, or energy independence must be analysed with reference to the prevailing values, political climate, and collective memory of the time. Furthermore, Wodak highlights that discourses often serve to legitimize decisions, for example, financial policies or security reforms by constructing threats and presenting them as unavoidable. She writes that "*one of the primary goals of political discourse is to legitimize specific actions, which is achieved through discursive mechanisms that establish normative views*" (Wodak, 2015, p. 39). Therefore, DHA is particularly valuable in analyzing how public opinion about economic security is shaped through discourse and how perceptions of "*threats*" are constructed. It also enables the examination of shifts in political communication, especially in relation to globalization and the formation of transnational narratives. From this perspective, Wodak's method allows researchers to trace how local discourses on economic security intersect with international narratives, for instance, those reflected in EU policy frameworks or NATO communications.

The German scholar Siegfried Jäger extended Foucault's discourse theory by integrating the concept of the "*dispositif*" into CDA methodology. Jäger maintains that discourses are inseparable from power mechanisms and institutional structures that shape not only public opinion, but also social relations and the boundaries of knowledge. According to him, "*discourses do not operate solely on the linguistic plane. They materialize through institutional practices, norms, laws, and even architecture*" (Jäger, 2001, p. 72). He argues that every discourse functions as a combination of knowledge and power, encompassing not only textual but also social and material components, which he refers to as a "*discursive dispositif*." From this perspective, discourse cannot be separated from the context in which it operates: "*Discourses are constructed by institutional conditions that determine what can be said, what remains unsaid, and what is assumed to be self-evident*" (Jäger & Maier, 2016, p. 37). This viewpoint enables researchers to explore how linguistic statements become normative assumptions, supported by the state, media, or educational institutions. A key contribution of Jäger is his emphasis on media discourse analysis - he believes that media is the primary channel through which discourses circulate and gain hegemonic status in society. Therefore, when analyzing discourses of economic or national security, one must include not only textual analysis, but also structural context to understand how and why certain discourses become dominant and what configurations of power they support or challenge.

Joanna Thornborrow is a prominent researcher in the field of language and power, particularly in institutional contexts such as media, politics, and public debate. In her book *Power Talk: Language and Interaction in Institutional Discourse* (2002), she argues that discursive formats — such as television debates, interviews, or press conferences are not just channels of communication but structures in which authority is embedded, and power relations are formed. According to Thornborrow, "*institutional discourses define who may speak, how to speak, and what to say, which means that language becomes not only a medium of communication, but also a tool of control*" (Thornborrow, 2002, p. 5). She demonstrates how linguistic choices such as modality, question formation, and intonation affect participants' positioning and their ability to participate in power structures. For example, media debates often show asymmetrical linguistic behaviour between politicians and journalists, reflecting and reinforcing institutionalized authority. Moreover, Thornborrow emphasizes that public discourse analysis must consider not only textual content but also the structure of interaction who initiates the conversation, who has the right to close topics, how time is managed, and what social etiquette governs discourse. This is especially important in the analysis of economic security narratives, where the media format itself can contribute to the normalization or marginalization of certain narratives. Thornborrow also shows how institutional discourses construct identities both of citizens and of institutions, which is highly relevant in examining public trust and the dynamics of political legitimacy.

Table 5 below summarizes the main authors of discourse theory - Michel Foucault, Norman Fairclough, Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, Teun A. van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Siegfried Jäger, and Joanna Thornborrow - alongside their analytical approaches and focal points.

Table 5. Comparison of Discourse Theory

Author	Approach	Key Concepts	Focus	Citation
Michel Foucault	Genealogical/ archaeological	Power/Knowledge, Dispositif, Discourse	How discourses shape truth and knowledge through power	Foucault (1980)
Norman Fairclough	Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)	Textual, Discursive, Social practice levels	Language as social practice reproducing ideology	Fairclough (2013)
Teun A. van Dijk	Socio-cognitive CDA	Mental models, Ideological structures, Framing	Media discourse shaping public cognition	van Dijk (1993, 2006)
Ruth Wodak	Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)	Context, History, Intertextuality	Change of ideologies over time and across contexts	Wodak (2015)
Siegfried Jäger	Foucauldian CDA	Dispositif, Discourse-materialism	Power/knowledge in institutional discourses	Jäger (2001)
Joanna Thornborrow	Institutional discourse	Authority, Interaction, Roles	How language constructs authority in institutions	Thornborrow (2002)
Laclau & Mouffe	Post-structuralist discourse theory	Hegemony, Articulation, Antagonism	Political construction of meaning and identities	Laclau & Mouffe (1985)

Source: compiled by the author

Theoretical models of discourse analysis represent distinct but complementary perspectives on how language shapes social reality, establishes power relations, and operates within ideological domains. Michel Foucault analyses discourse through a genealogical and dispositive lens, emphasizing the interplay between knowledge and power and the formation of subjects. His approach is rooted in the principle of historically contingent emergence of discourses, where truth is viewed as an effect of power. Norman Fairclough develops critical discourse analysis (CDA), focusing on language as a form of social practice. He distinguishes three levels of analysis: textual, discursive practice, and social practice. This demonstrates how language sustains ideologies and reproduces social inequality. In the poststructuralist theory of hegemony developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, discourse is conceptualized as a contested field of meanings, with social reality viewed as a temporary discursive fixation lacking essential foundations. Teun A. van Dijk emphasizes the cognitive mechanisms through which discourse affects audiences via the media. He highlights the role of mental models in shaping ideological attitudes. Ruth Wodak, in her discourse-historical approach (DHA), proposes analyzing language through historical and socio-political lenses, particularly emphasizing long-term transformations in power relations. Siegfried Jäger, drawing on Foucault's notion of the dispositive, extends discourse analysis by stressing that discourses are embedded within institutional structures, which not only linguistically but also materially sustain regimes of power. Joanna Thornborrow, for her part, focuses on how authority and power are constructed through language in institutional contexts (especially in the media and political discourse), employing tools such as dialogic structure, intonation, time management, and linguistic hierarchies.

All these authors agree that discourse is not merely a linguistic phenomenon - it both reflects and reinforces power structures, functions as an ideological system, and affects social action. What differs are their respective theoretical emphases, ranging from historical layers to structural and cognitive perspectives. These theories help reveal how economic security discourses are formed, whose interests they serve, what they exclude, and how they shape public perception, emotion, and political decision-making.

Considering the empirical goal of this study is to analyse the content and discourse of economic security narratives in Lithuanian media from 2020 to 2024, focusing on thematic, emotional, semantic, and visual narrative types in both public and commercial media. The most suitable theoretical approach is critical discourse analysis (CDA), as developed by Norman Fairclough. Its multi-layered methodology enables analysis not only of texts (both linguistic and visual), but also of the social practices that produce them (e.g., editorial policy, media market) and the broader socio-political context. For additional contextual analysis, Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach (DHA) is useful, particularly in situating media discourse within political and economic events and crises that have unfolded since 2020. Teun A. van Dijk's cognitive model may also be employed to uncover how narratives influence collective memory and public opinion.

Media as a Producer of Ideology. Contemporary media play a vital role not only in the dissemination of information, but also in the formation of ideologies, acting as channels of power structures. They can be analysed as spaces in which dominant discourses are created, circulated, and legitimized, influencing collective social perceptions and po-

litical decisions. By applying critical discourse analysis (CDA) and poststructuralist approaches, it becomes possible to reveal how media, through linguistic and visual formats, structure social reality by defining what is considered normal, acceptable, or threatening.

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Recent studies confirm that social media platforms (such as Twitter (now X), Facebook, and TikTok) are not neutral arenas for information dissemination, but actively participate in shaping, reinforcing, and polarizing ideological positions. A study conducted by Loru et al. (2024) revealed that users tend to form ideologically homogeneous communities, also known as "*echo chambers,"* in which information circulates through filters that reinforce pre-existing beliefs. The study found that "*the architecture of debate on social networks not only fails to prevent polarization, but it also structurally amplifies it through algorithmic content selection that aligns with the user's prior interactions and ideological preferences*" (Loru et al., 2024). This polarization is shaped not so much by individual ideological actors but by collective clusters of opinion that gradually solidify into shared narratives, such as anti-vaccine sentiment, anti-immigration rhetoric, Euroscepticism, or ultraliberal messaging.

Modern platform algorithms, based on machine learning principles, not only personalize user feeds but segment audiences based on behaviour. This means that different users are shown different "*realities*" that not only inform but ideologically mobilize. Pariser (2011) coined the term "*filter bubble*" to describe this phenomenon, in which users are exposed only to content that confirms their beliefs. As José van Dijck (2013) notes, platforms do not merely mediate information flows; they actively shape social meaning through technological, political, and economic logics.

Beyond the rational dissemination of information, social networks also reinforce ideologies through emotional impact — using memes, narrative fragments, and messages filled with outrage, fear, or irony. This process is fast, fragmented, and visually oriented, often surpassing the ideological effectiveness of traditional media formats. Research by Törnberg and Törnberg (2024) showed that visual and emotional elements enhance the spread of ideological messages because users on social media react more to narrative identities than to reasoned arguments.

Thus, contemporary social networks function as a new kind of ideological infrastructure. They consolidate like-minded users into virtual ideological clusters, amplify polarization through algorithmic content filtering, develop ideological identity through memes, emotional narratives, and selective information flows, and erode the shared information environment by replacing it with a fragmented and conflict-driven space. This dynamic presents serious challenges to democracy, the public sphere, and critical civic engagement.

Liu et al. (2023) proposed a novel methodological model designed to analyse how different media outlets interpret and present the same event through cross-article comparison. Their study reveals that even the largest and most prestigious media organizations, often regarded as "*objective*" or "*neutral*," are not immune to ideological bias, which manifests not only in tone but also in the selection and omission of factual content. As they write, "*objectivity in journalism is more of a strategic stance than a neutral position — journalists choose what to consider important and thereby shape the interpretive field*" (Liu et al., 2023, p. 5). The researchers' model uses automated textual analysis to determine which news agencies report on a specific event, what factual details are included or omitted, and how stylistic choices (such as vocabulary, framing, and emotional charge) differ across sources. For example, when several articles cover the same mass protest, one outlet may highlight violence and police response, another may focus on the protesters' legal demands and constitutional rights to assemble, while a third may ignore the event altogether. Liu et al. emphasize that these mechanisms of bias formation are systemic rather than accidental editorial choices. This means that agenda-setting becomes the primary form of ideological influence, while framing determines how an event is interpreted. Differences between editorial lines can be strategically managed through alignment with specific interest groups. Their research underscores that the concept of a "*neutral media*" is often a myth, as "*different media platforms systematically construct different realities, reflecting not just editorial taste but ideological orientation*" (Liu et al., 2023, p. 8). This raises fundamental questions for democratic society: do citizens receive a full, pluralistic spectrum of information, or merely ideologically filtered versions? Such analyses become especially important during election periods, international crises, or pandemics when disinformation and propaganda tactics are most pervasive.

Brooks and Porter (2020) presented a mathematical-informational model for analyzing how media content, particularly journalism, affects ideological dynamics in social media. Their research demonstrates that traditional media continue to exert long-term ideological influence even after publication, through user interactions, sharing, and reinterpretation. Their model simulates the flow of content through user networks, tracking how quickly information spreads, which ideological clusters (e.g., conservative, progressive) it reaches, and how the content's nature influences the views of those clusters. They write, "*the structure of social networks enables information to function not as a neutral flow but as an ideological activator, capable of reinforcing or transforming existing positions*" (Brooks & Porter, 2020, p. 3). One of their key findings is that content with a clear ideological charge, even if seemingly neutral, can, through social interaction, strengthen extreme views. For example, an article about immigration policy published in mainstream media may be interpreted by one group as justification for stricter control, and by another as evidence of a humanitarian crisis. This means that the influence of media content does not end at the point of publication, it continues through social reinterpretation, in which audiences not only consume but actively reconstruct messages based on their ideological expectations. "*Content becomes ideological only when it resonates with social interpretive mechanisms, and these mechanisms are heavily structured by network topology and user attitudes*" (ibid., p. 7). Their model also demonstrates that when media content is shared predominantly within specific ideological communities, a resonance effect emerges in which the information is rarely challenged because it affirms the dominant narrative. Criticism does not occur based on information, but along the lines of identity-based polarization. This poses a challenge to the public sphere in democratic societies, as opportunities for cross-ideological dialogue diminish, and media content becomes an instrument not of informing but of mobilizing. The study also highlights the role of social media algorithms, which do not just optimize for engagement but inadvertently create ideological bubble ecosystems. When a certain type of content becomes popular within an ideological group, algorithms automatically amplify it within that audience, largely ignoring opposing viewpoints. "*Our findings show that traditional media content, once entering social networks, often acquires a second life, no longer as a vehicle of objective reporting, but as a marker of ideological identity*" (ibid., p. 6). Brooks and Porter make an important contribution to contemporary communication studies by integrating data science and ideological analysis. They show that the influence of media content is not just a matter of what is said, but also a function of structural dissemination.

Representatives of discourse theory also provide extensive insight into how media operate as producers of ideology. In his CDA model, Fairclough emphasizes that language is a form of social practice that maintains ideologies. He outlines three levels of analysis: textual, discursive, and social (Fairclough, 2013). From this perspective, media are not merely objects of textual analysis, but institutional entities that shape and sustain dominant viewpoints. For instance, narratives about economic security may be articulated as rational policy frameworks, while silencing alternative perspectives and marginalizing social movements. In doing so, media not only shape public opinion, but also reinforce ideological regimes.

Van Dijk (1993, 2006) argues that the media function as ideological institutions that structure audience cognition through discourse. He highlights that media discourses construct mental models, i.e., representations of social reality, which determine how people interpret the world. This is particularly relevant to economic security, where media narratives can shape perceptions of threat, stability, or crisis. His research shows that ideological structures are often embedded through the use of stereotypes, semantic framing, and selective topic inclusion.

Wodak's discourse-historical approach (DHA) allows for the analysis of how ideological discourses evolve over time and function across various social and political contexts (Wodak, 2015). She emphasizes that media texts must be analysed not only as linguistic units, but as products of historical processes. From her perspective, political and economic changes directly shape media discourse, which in turn influences societal attitudes. Discourse analysis thus becomes a method for deciphering the ideological structures underlying dominant topics, symbols, and narratives in the public sphere.

A theoretical comparison can be made between the perspectives of Fairclough, Van Dijk, and Wodak. Fairclough stresses the social function of language and its capacity to maintain structural power relations. Van Dijk focuses more on cognitive processes, and how they shape ideological models within media discourses. Wodak extends the analysis to the historical dimension, demonstrating how discourses not only structure the present but also draw on narratives from the past. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive understanding of how media function as centres of ideological production. Fairclough contributes the structural angle, Van Dijk provides a psychological lens, and Wodak brings in historical depth. This combined perspective enables a critical understanding of how ideologies are not merely communicated but actively constructed through discourse. It encompasses not only content analysis (language, semantics, visuality), but also structural considerations such as who speaks, in what context, and to what end. Media thus become part of an ideological field in which hegemonic meanings are contested, and discourse serves as the primary instrument in this struggle.

Jäger builds on Foucault's concept of the dispositive and proposes analyzing discourse as a network of power and knowledge that operates through institutional channels such as media (Jäger, 2001). In his view, media are not only sites of discourse but also spaces of materialization, where language becomes institutional practice. Jäger stresses that analysis must include not only the text, but also the structure that produces and distributes it. This includes editorial decisions, ownership interests, and political context. Thornborrow studies how discourse functions in institutional formats, especially in political debates and the media. She argues that language becomes a tool not only for communication, but also for the construction of authority. As she writes, "*institutional discourse defines who may speak, how, and about what*" (Thornborrow, 2002, p. 5). This means that media narratives determine not just content but also hierarchies — who is considered an expert, whose voice is heard, and whose is silenced. Both authors agree that language is not neutral and is tied to power, but while Jäger concentrates on the system that materializes discourse, Thornborrow focuses on the linguistic performance within specific institutional formats, such as debates.

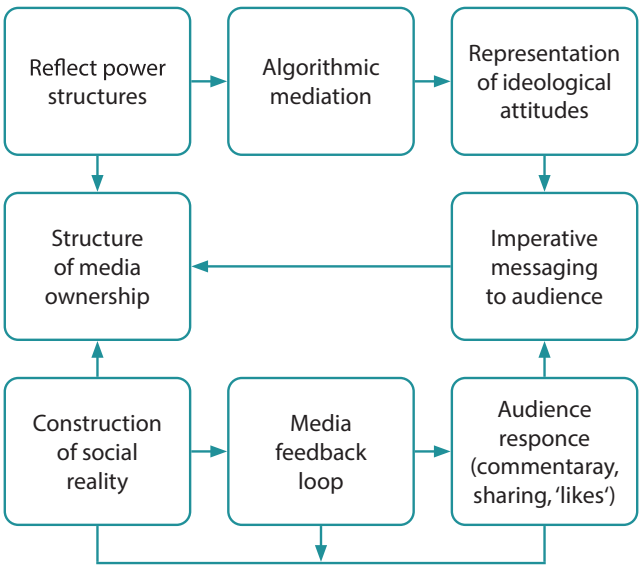


Figure 3. The Role of Media in Constructing Ideology: Interaction between Power, Content, and Audience

Source: compiled by the author

Figure 3 illustrates the operational mechanism through which media participate in the formation of ideology. It highlights eight key components, including the reflection of power structures, algorithmic mediation, imperative messaging, audience reactions, and the influence of media ownership. These elements are presented in a cyclical sche-

matic that reveals how media, through content selection and feedback loops, shape social reality and exert ideological influence. Both traditional and digital media function as powerful instruments in the production of ideology. They do not merely transmit information but also shape societal perspectives, values, and political attitudes. Understanding the role of media in the formation of ideology is essential for critically evaluating received information and maintaining informational literacy.

Typology of Media Outlets: Public versus Commercial. Media systems are classified according to principles of financing, governance, editorial independence, and public accountability. One of the most theoretically and practically significant distinctions concerning ideological dissemination and discourse structure lies in the division between public and commercial media.

Public service media are structurally and normatively oriented toward representing the interests of society. Their primary aim is to provide information that promotes civic awareness, democratic participation, and cultural diversity. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), public media are more inclined to uphold professional journalistic standards and are less susceptible to political instrumentalization, especially in contexts where independent regulatory mechanisms exist. As they state, "*the strength of public media lies in their institutionalized commitment to reflect societal diversity and to provide information that does not serve merely commercial interests*" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 152). Jakubowicz (2011) argues that public media constitute a "*normative form of democratic communication*" that is oriented toward balancing interests and decentralizing power. This type of media system is characterized by a "*positive commitment to the public*," which is not driven by market logic but rather by a social contract (Jakubowicz, 2011).

Commercial media, in contrast, are profit-driven, and their editorial decisions often reflect the interests of advertisers, owners, or targeted market segments. Their funding model is based on advertising, subscriptions, marketing strategies, and the commercialization of audience data. McChesney (2008) warns that commercial media are particularly vulnerable to "*commercial bias*" - the tendency to present information that supports the status quo and avoids controversial topics that might reduce advertising revenue or alienate consumers. He observes that "*market logic pushes media to appease rather than to critique, and this distorts their ability to function as a public sphere*" (McChesney, 2008, p. 64). Doyle (2013) adds that commercial media often "*prioritize profitable topics*" over socially significant ones because they operate as market players rather than public intermediaries. This is further elaborated in Table 6, which outlines the structural differences.

Table 6. Structural Differences between Public and Commercial Media

Criterion	Public Media	Commercial Media
Funding	Public taxes, licenses, subsidies	Advertising, subscriptions, sponsors
Editorial Independence	Normatively established, but changing	Depends on ownership structures
Content	Representation of public interest	Monetization of audience attention
Main Function	Democratic participation, education	Profit seeking, market segmentation

Source: compiled by the author

Public and commercial media differ not only in legal-institutional structure, but also in how they construct discourse types, shape public opinion, and reproduce ideological frameworks. According to Curran (2012), public media have a distinct potential to promote ideological pluralism because they are obliged to represent societal diversity, include minority voices, and encourage reflective discourse. In contrast, commercial media, driven by market logic, tend to create a more homogeneous, consumerist, and mainstream ideological environment. As Curran notes, "*commercial media, being dependent on advertising and mass appeal, tend to privilege a depoliticized and individualistic version of reality*" (Curran, 2012, p. 147).

Jin (2015), however, analyses the contemporary platform-based media ecosystem, where the traditional distinctions between public and commercial media are increasingly blurred. Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram no longer conform to the classical definitions of either public or commercial media. They operate as infrastructures in which any entity be governmental, individual, or corporate can disseminate content. Yet the logic of dissemination is governed by algorithmic rules. "*The platform economy transforms the circulation of ideological power: not journalists, but algorithms and data logic determine what is visible, heard, and legitimized*" (Jin, 2015, p. 92). This dynamic implies that the ideological potential of content today is no longer solely the result of editorial intent, but also of technological architecture. According to Couldry and Mejias (2019), platforms create a new type of "*data dispositif*" in which power circulates through surveillance, personalization, and behavioural modelling of users. Moreover, due to platformization, there is a growing presence of self-representational ideologies disseminated by influencers, bloggers, and alternative media channels. This contributes to what is known as ideological fragmentation, where the idea of a shared public

sphere is in decline. As Sunstein (2018) argues, it becomes increasingly difficult for different social groups to engage in mutual understanding when they consume entirely different narrative constructions of reality. This situation poses a new challenge for democracy: when discourse is not only ideologically biased, but also structured by unequal access to visibility, based on user behaviour and the commercial potential of content.

In the last decade, the traditional typology distinguishing public and commercial media has undergone a fundamental transformation due to the rise of digital platforms particularly YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. These platforms no longer conform to classical definitions, as they do not produce content themselves but act as intermediaries. Their algorithms, technical infrastructures, and business models exert direct influence on what is deemed visible, authoritative, and ideologically acceptable. "*Platforms are reshaping the media ecosystem by erasing the boundaries between public and commercial functions. They present themselves as neutral channels but act as powerful editors of media content*" (Van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018, p. 3). Although platforms like YouTube and Facebook are frequently used for public purposes, for example, government communication, education, or journalism they are not subject to normative obligations to ensure information quality, representativeness, or pluralism in the way public media are. As Couldry and Mejias (2019) put it, "*Facebook functions as a public sphere without public responsibility*."

Unlike traditional editorial offices in public or commercial media, platforms "*edit*" content algorithmically, according to user behaviour, click history, and advertising value. This leads to the prioritization of content based on commercial rather than civic logic. According to Napoli (2019), in the contemporary platform ecosystem, algorithms have become the new editors. They decide what content to show based not on journalistic criteria but on predicted user interaction and advertising revenue. This results in a system where emotionally charged, polarizing content is prioritized, while informative or socially valuable content is often suppressed. Napoli states, "*algorithmic curation systems are structurally biased toward content that provokes engagement rather than reflection*" (Napoli, 2019, p. 63). This shift in editorial power encourages the development of clickbait culture, in which headlines are exaggerated, and content quality is secondary. According to Tandoc (2018), clickbait journalism is often characterized by "*emotional charge, fragmented information, and diminishing source credibility*," which further distorts the information environment. Moreover, algorithm-based platforms do not simply highlight sensationalist content, they also accelerate the spread of disinformation. Just a few minutes of intense user activity can cause false information to go viral. A study by Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018) published in *science* demonstrated that false news spreads faster and more widely than the truth on social networks, primarily because it appeals more to emotions - especially fear and outrage. Furthermore, algorithmic systems make visibility decisions in opaque ways: there are no clear accountability or transparency mechanisms that explain how or why some content becomes more visible than others. As Bucher (2018) argues, algorithmic visibility is a form of social power that shapes the boundaries of knowledge. Napoli's (2019) analysis reveals a profound structural change: editorial authority has shifted from journalistic institutions to algorithms that are not accountable for public information but operate according to commercial principles. As a result, the logic of platform-based media promotes content that is emotionally resonant but informationally unreliable, posing challenges not only for media quality but also for democratic processes.

On platforms, content creators including influencers, vloggers, bloggers, and even independent journalists are increasingly adopting a self-branding model. Their activity is oriented toward constantly maintaining audience attention, increasing likes, followers, and views. Content is developed not according to editorial ethics or public interest principles, but based on data analysis: what worked before, what algorithms promoted, what the audience shared. According to Marwick (2015), platform-based media "*encourage the ongoing commercialization of the self as a strategy of identity*," where personality becomes a product. "*Influencers aim to be seen not just as sources of information but as consumer-attractive brands whose content increasingly aligns with market demands rather than public sphere expectations*" (Marwick, 2015, p. 140). This logic transforms the traditional journalistic model. While content becomes individualized, it remains dependent on algorithms. In other words, even when creators act independently, their visibility is determined not by professionalism or quality but by the structure of platform algorithms. This produces a hybrid regime in which public functions such as informing, criticizing, or explaining merge with the production of commercial value through visibility and monetization. According to Abidin (2018), this platform logic produces a new type of public actor, the "*micro-celebrity journalist*", who lacks traditional editorial protection but still performs an informational function for the masses. This figure navigates constantly between transparency, charisma, and profitability. "*Content creation on platforms increasingly prioritizes emotional resonance and marketing potential over informativeness*" (Abidin, 2018, p. 8). This approach fundamentally changes the media ecosystem. Journalism becomes decentralized, editorial filters weaken, and responsibility for the impact of content is often shifted to the audience. On the one hand, this broadens the range of voices in the media. On the other, it fragments the public sphere into personal channels where critical discourse frequently loses out to self-promotion and algorithmic visibility.

Table 7. Media Typology

Criterion	Public Media	Commercial Media	Platforms (YouTube, Facebook)
Content	Public interest	Audience profitability	Mixed (audience + algorithms)
Editing	Professional	Profit-dependent	Algorithmic, automatic
Accountability	Normative	Commercial	Limited, self-regulated
Ideological Impact	Pluralistic	Possible bias	Indirect, fragmented, personalized

Source: compiled by the author

Table 7 compares the three main models of media - public, commercial, and platform-based. They are compared according to four key criteria: content orientation, editorial governance, type of accountability, and form of ideological influence. Content orientation reflects the principles by which media content is shaped, whether oriented toward public interest (public media), market profitability (commercial media), or a hybrid, personalized model shaped by algorithms (platforms). Editorial governance indicates who controls content selection and distribution, either professional editors, economic interests, or automated algorithms. Accountability concerns whether an institution is answerable to the public for the consequences of its content. Public media operate based on normative responsibility; platforms rely solely on self-regulation. The ideological influence dimension analyses how each system shapes discourse. Public media tend to support pluralism, commercial media often reflect elite interests, while platforms fragment discourse through personalization. The table demonstrates that platforms introduce a hybrid model in which the traditional boundary between public and commercial functions disappears. Their ideological influence is indirect yet systemic, it is shaped by algorithmic mechanisms and patterns of user interaction.

The analysis of the typology of public and commercial media is closely linked to the aim of the monograph and its second objective. The study of different media models, both public and commercial, makes it possible to reveal how various institution's structure economic security discourses and what semantic and ideological directions they produce. Public media, oriented toward representing the public interest and upholding normative objectivity, more frequently support pluralistic and critical representations of economic threats. Commercial media, which operate according to market logic, often encourage more emotionally charged and polarizing narratives that reinforce a sense of insecurity and promote a consumer-driven perception of risk. This distinction is particularly significant for fulfilling the second objective of the monograph, which is to develop the theoretical foundation of media power and the methodology of discourse analysis based on Foucault's concept of power and knowledge and on the principles of critical discourse analysis. Typological media analysis allows for the empirical validation of the thesis that media, operating within different structural environments, implement different mechanisms of ideological influence. Public media aim to support democratic information, while commercial media tend to contribute to the strengthening of ideological frameworks grounded in market values. Moreover, this subsection contributes to establishing the relevance of the monograph by showing that economic security narratives are not accidental but are shaped by structurally determined communicative logics that influence public trust in institutions, emotional stability, and civic engagement in different ways. Understanding the differences in discourse between public and commercial media makes it possible to more precisely analyse the channels and forms through which the concept of economic security is communicated in the public sphere, thereby contributing to the achievement of the theoretical and practical objectives of the monograph.

Discourse Analysis Methods (Critical, Semantic, Quantitative). The study of economic security discourses requires methodological flexibility and a multi-level analytical perspective. In this context, discourse is understood not only as linguistic expression but also as a form of social practice through which public understanding of threats, trust in institutions, and perceptions of national security are shaped. Therefore, it is essential to examine not only the textual content, that is, vocabulary, syntax, metaphors, and narrative structures, but also the broader discursive context, including power relations, ideological frames, audience reception, and the logic of media dissemination. This section outlines three analytical methods: critical discourse analysis (CDA), semantic analysis, and quantitative discourse analysis. They will be applied to systematically examine how narratives of economic security are constructed in Lithuanian public and commercial media. The selection of these methods is based not only on their theoretical suitability but also on their capacity to integrate qualitative and quantitative dimensions through the principle of triangulation. Critical discourse analysis enables the identification of how social power structures are embedded in language, what ideological narratives dominate, and how these relate to broader political and economic contexts. Semantic analysis reveals deeper structures of meaning, including metaphors, oppositions, and semantic fields that shape conceptions of threat and security. Quantitative analysis provides an objective evaluation of the most frequently occurring themes, word usage patterns, topic distributions, and structural dynamics of discourse over time. By applying these methods together, the study aims not only to identify how economic security is discussed but also to uncover why certain forms of language

become entrenched in specific media environments, for example, how editorial, political, or technological structures (such as algorithmic filters) contribute to the dominance of particular discursive forms. This integrated methodological approach allows for a well-founded assessment of the media's role as a producer of ideology and supports the overall aim of the monograph: to reconstruct the logic of economic security discourse in contemporary Lithuania.

Critical Discourse Analysis is based on a poststructuralist conception of language, where discourse is not seen as a neutral reflection of reality but as an active mechanism for constructing social reality. One of the core theoretical foundations of CDA is Michel Foucault's concept of power and knowledge, which asserts that knowledge always functions within and through power structures (Foucault, 1980). In this view, language operates not only as a means of communication but also as a tool of discipline and normalization, through which truths, subjectivities, and social roles are produced. According to Fairclough (2013), CDA analyses discourse as a dialectical relationship between three dimensions: the textual level (wording, syntax, stylistic choices), discourse practice (production, distribution, and consumption of text), and social practice (the wider ideological, institutional, and cultural context). This triadic model enables the study of discourse as a dynamic process in which meanings are shaped by institutional powers but can also serve as instruments of resistance. As Fairclough notes, "*discourse analysis must be oriented toward examining how language functions within fields of power, how it shapes subjects, and how it legitimates institutional actions*" (Fairclough, 2013, p. 45). In this monograph, CDA will be used to evaluate how media discourses contribute to the formation of narratives about fear, risk, or trust, and to reveal the institutional and ideological forces behind them. The analysis will focus on how media texts represent economic threats (such as inflation, energy dependency, or geopolitical challenges), and what semantic strategies (including polarized oppositions, metaphorical framings, and nominalizations) are used to consolidate worldviews. This analysis will be supplemented by Jäger's dispositif analysis method (Jäger, 2001), which extends Foucault's theory into the field of media studies. Jäger argues that in order to analyse discourse in modern societies, one must consider its material form, i.e., media platforms, ownership structures, editorial policy, design, visual communication, and other conditions that determine which discourses become possible or dominant. In other words, the dispositif includes not only linguistic elements but also social, technical, and economic mechanisms that sustain discursive circulation. "*Discourse is not merely text or speech. It materializes through institutions, technologies, media, and visual codes. Only through the interaction of these elements does discourse become effective*" (Jäger, 2001, p. 45). The critical analysis in this study also draws on Wodak's (2015) discourse-historical approach, which emphasizes that the meanings of discourse inevitably change over time and context. Researchers must therefore reconstruct the historical and political background of the narratives. As Wodak writes, "*discourse-historical analysis seeks to understand not only what a text means, but why it means what it does in a specific time and space*" (Wodak, 2015, p. 31). This is particularly important in examining how economic security discourses have evolved in response to geopolitical crises, energy shocks, and the COVID-19 pandemic. CDA will serve as the main qualitative method in this study, providing the tools to reconstruct the ideological logic of media discourse, reveal embedded power relations, and uncover how language constructs our collective understanding of economic security.

Semantic Discourse Analysis allows us to identify how language shapes models of world perception, evaluative judgments, interpretations of threat, and ideological frames of opposition. This method focuses on the analysis of meaning structures, including word semantics, connotative fields, metaphorical patterns, evaluative vocabulary, and recurring oppositions that serve to construct symbolic boundaries between "*us*" and "*them*," between security and threat, between order and chaos. Semantic clusters often structure discourse in such a way that they become invisible ideological assumptions, presenting social phenomena not as neutral facts but as normative choices. As Wodak (2015) notes, metaphors in discourse are not merely rhetorical or aesthetic devices, they "*structurally determine the perception of the world*" and function as cognitive models that help audiences quickly grasp complex situations, while simultaneously limiting alternative modes of interpretation. In this monograph, semantic analysis will be used to identify:

- evaluative vocabulary (appraisal language) - adjectives, nouns, and verbs carrying strong positive or negative semantic weight (e.g., "aggressive attack," "meticulous control," "weak policy");
- metaphors that conceptualize abstract processes through concrete, often militarized or naturalized imagery (e.g., "economic front," "wave of inflation," "financial storm"). As Wodak notes, "metaphors are not simply stylistic elements, they fundamentally shape worldviews" (Wodak, 2015, p. 31);
- semantic oppositions - binary structures of meaning (e.g., "stability / chaos," "progress/disorder") commonly used in political discourse to legitimize decisions or delegitimize others.

According to Musolff (2016), one of the most powerful ideological devices in discourse is the scenario-based metaphor, in which a metaphor operates as a mini-narrative. For example, migration processes may be portrayed as a "*flood*," or an economic crisis as a "*disease*" or "*war*," thus invoking implicit agents, causes, and outcomes. Such metaphors not only trigger emotional evaluation (such as fear or outrage), but also restrict the range of political responses. If an economic

crisis is a "*war,"* then policy responses are framed as "*defence*," "*mobilization*," "*sacrifice*," or "*battle*," eliminating space for nuanced debate. This is especially relevant for analyzing how media portrayals of economic security evolve during times of crisis. Semantic analysis also helps identify discourse nodes, i.e., points where multiple meanings converge. For instance, when economic terminology acquires geopolitical significance e.g., when "*energy independence*" is presented as a matter of national security), or when a social issue is reframed as a moral threat (e.g., "*unemployment as a threat to order*"). Semantic analysis in this study will aim to identify not only isolated words or phrases but also broader ideological meaning structures that, through metaphors, evaluations, and oppositions, give shape and emotional impact to discourses of economic security.

Quantitative Discourse Analysis is a method that enables the systematic and objective examination of large corpora of texts to identify recurring discourse patterns, dominant themes, and their temporal dynamics. This method is especially useful when analyzing media texts, as it makes it possible to determine how frequently and in what context certain topics or concepts are mentioned, and how they change depending on social or political events. According to Aranda et al. (2021), digital content analysis allows for "*the combination of quantitative systematicity and qualitative interpretive depth*" in discourse research, providing the means not only to measure features of the content but also to interpret their meanings and contexts. This analysis focuses on quantitatively assessing content such as word frequency, repetition of common themes, and the statistical structure of thematic fields. It enables the identification of dominant discourses (the most frequent words and topics), the observation of thematic dynamics over time (for example, the salience of economic security before and after moments of crisis), and the visualization of discourse structures using network or word-cloud models. This method is particularly valuable when the research objective is to detect systemic patterns within a large body of texts. The quantitative method in this study will be applied to a corpus of texts from LRT, Delfi, and 15min, using word frequency analysis, semantic networks, and topic mapping.

The combination of the methods discussed enables a triangulation effect. Analyzing discourse from multiple perspectives, thereby ensuring the reliability of interpretation and theoretical depth. Critical analysis reveals the ideological structure, semantic analysis identifies clusters of constructed meaning, and quantitative analysis captures systematic patterns of frequency and recurrence. The chapter "*The Theory of Media Power and Discourse Analysis*" provides the theoretical and methodological foundation for the study of economic security discourses, closely linking media analysis to the concepts of power and ideology. Drawing on the insights of Foucault, Fairclough, Van Dijk, Wodak, Jäger, and others, the chapter establishes that media are not neutral instruments of knowledge dissemination but ideological institutions that structure discourse, legitimize specific power configurations, and shape social reality. The theoretical approaches such as critical, genealogical, cognitive, and dispositive allow economic security narratives to be viewed as discursive constructs formed not only at the textual level but also within institutional and political structures. The section on media typology (public vs commercial and platform-based) is directly linked to the goal of the monograph, i.e., to examine how different media forms construct economic security discourses as well as to the second research objective, which is to establish the theoretical and methodological framework for discourse analysis by drawing on Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge and the principles of critical discourse analysis. This analysis demonstrated that different media structures shape distinct models of ideological influence: public media are more likely to support a pluralistic agenda, commercial media tend to promote market-based selection of narratives, while platform media transform classical typology through algorithmic and personalization logics. The methodological model of discourse analysis (critical, semantic, and quantitative) has been developed in such a way as to enable the empirical study of what kinds of narratives about economic security prevail in public and commercial media texts, what emotions they generate, and what semantic and visual strategies they are based on. This methodological framework is directly oriented toward the third chapter, which will present empirical analysis of the media based on material from LRT, Delfi, and 15min from the period 2020 to 2024. That chapter will serve as a field for the practical verification of the theoretical insights discussed here, allowing for an examination of how discourse theory and media typology manifest in specific examples of communication.

The Discourse of Economic Security in Lithuanian Media (2020–2024)

Typology of Economic Security Narratives in the 2020–2024 Period. The typology of narratives was refined based on the previously discussed methodology of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, Jäger, Wodak), which enables the identification of ideological elements in discourse that relate to power relations, the production of knowledge, and the maintenance of social order. Each narrative was analysed as a textual-social construct, possessing semantic, pragmatic, and institutional structure. Through semantic analysis, evaluative elements were identified (e.g., "*crisis*", "*resilience*", and others; see Table 8), along with metaphorical models (e.g., "*economic salad*", "*poverty epidemic*"; see Table 9), and oppositional structures ("*us / them*", "*stability / chaos*"), which help to reveal how media shape the architecture of meaning in the world. A quantitative discourse analysis method was also employed to identify dominant thematic

fields, word frequencies, and fluctuations in topic intensity during periods of crisis (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the energy shock). This methodological integration made it possible to systematically classify the narratives, disclose their functional differences, and determine how media typology influences discourse structure. The presented typology of narratives is not merely descriptive, but is an empirically grounded methodological output. It forms the conceptual foundation for further analysis, which will examine how specific narratives are distributed across various media platforms and their ideological impact on society.

Table 8. Evaluative Elements in Lithuanian Media Narratives (2020–2024)

Evaluation Elements	Citations
Crisis	**LRT:** "*Egg crisis in the US: twelve-egg carton costs up to ten dollars.*" **Delfi:** "*Crises may be economic, financial, political. A pandemic or war is also a crisis.*" **15min:** "*Financial crisis (economic crisis) is a situation where financial institutions or assets rapidly lose value.*"
Resilience	**LRT:** "*Resilience is an integral part of the ongoing transformation in the energy sector.*" **Delfi:** "*Resilience ensures the design of information systems that allow quick recovery after incidents.*"
Aggression	**LRT:** "*Russia's aggression against Ukraine has caused major geopolitical instability in the region.*" **Delfi:** "*Economic aggression manifests in trade restrictions and sanctions that pressure national economies.*" **15min:** "*Cyber aggression is becoming more frequent, with states using technology to disrupt other countries' infrastructure.*"
Threat	**15min**: "*The Russian military threat. The growth of Russia's military power will depend on the course of the war in Ukraine.*"; "*Ieva Voveris faces the risk of losing Lithuanian citizenship: she reveals what steps she will take next.*" **Delfi**: "*There is no need to instil fear or panic, but it must be stated honestly that a threat does exist,*" said the First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, former Minister of National Defence, and Social Democrat Juozas Olekas.
Stability	**Delfi**: "*Stability and intense competition in the economy: the minimum wage raises concern.*" "*When the new Government took office at the end of last year, it declared that its primary goal would be to establish political stability.*" **15min**: "*Lithuania's financial stability situation improved over the past year.*" **LRT**: "Economic stability is an important factor in ensuring the well-being of the population and social cohesion." "*Political stability enables the government to implement reforms more effectively and ensure the country's long-term development.*" "*Climate stability is essential for avoiding extreme weather conditions and their negative impact on the environment and the economy.* "
Independence	**15min**: "*Having delivered energy independence to Lithuania, Independence became a source of inspiration and a model for the entire region.*" **LRT**: "*When Lithuania restored its independence on March 11, 1990, this was inseparable from economic reforms, as they paved the way for the introduction of a market economy.*" "*Lithuania aims to use 100 percent renewable energy by 2050, with a national priority of reducing dependence on Russian energy sources.*" "*Economic independence means higher wages than in Germany.*"
Security	**15min**: "*Cybersecurity is an area where each individual's actions influence overall security. Even a single person's carelessness or a data leak can lead hackers to access even more sensitive information.*" **Delfi**: "*A new challenge for Lithuania's security arises due to the presence of U.S. troops: Kasčiūnas urges preparedness.*" **LRT**: "*Cybersecurity is becoming increasingly important as more aspects of our lives shift into the digital realm.*" "*Psychological safety in the workplace fosters employee creativity and innovation.*"
Risk	**LRT**: "*Banking and investment are inherently risky enterprises.*" **Delfi**: "*By responsibly diversifying one's investments, both short-term and long-term risks can be managed.*" **15min**: "*Short-term investment should involve lower risk.*"

Evaluation Elements	Citations
Trust	**LRT**: "*Customer trust is a significant asset for electronic money and payment institutions.*" "*If we have a growing economy, we will have strong defence, and we will be protected not only by collected taxes but also by investor confidence.*" **15min**: "*This indicates that investors are satisfied and that their confidence in the platform is increasing due to its stability and the monthly interest payments.*"
Investment	**LRT**: "*Initial investments made with small amounts help individuals learn from mistakes and assess their own acceptable level of risk.*" **Delfi**: "*Postponed or even cancelled investments can reinforce the trend of economic slowdown.*" **15min**: "*Nearly half (47 percent) of the population report lacking sufficient savings, and one-third say that a lack of knowledge has held them back from starting to invest.*"

Source: compiled by the author

Table 9. Metaphorical Models in Lithuanian Media Texts (2020–2024)

Metaphor	Citations
Economy as an organism	**Delfi**: "*Lithuania's economy is currently ailing, observes Akmenės cementas CEO Artūras Zaremba, referring to cement sales as an indicator.*"
The engine of the economy	**Delfi**: "*Transport and logistics represent a highly significant economic driver, generating approximately 11 percent of Lithuania's gross domestic product.*"
Poverty as an epidemic	**Delfi** (Raimonda Mikučionytė): "*The poverty epidemic is spreading.*"
Tax burden	**Delfi** (Reda Simonaitytė-Mikulė): *"(...) the tax burden does not constrain economic activity, distort incentives, or encourage the shadow economy.*"
Foundation of the economy	**Delfi** (Robertas Dargis): *"(...) people's creativity and entrepreneurial spirit are the foundation of a nation's economy.*"
Progress as an uncontrollable tiger	**Delfi** (Tomas Kačerauskas): "*Progress is a tiger on whose back we are rushing headlong into the unknown; we cannot stop, because the tiger would devour us.*"
Energy dependency as being tied to a pipeline	**Delfi** (Andrius Kubilius): "*In the energy sector, we were once tied to Greater Moscow by two cables and a single pipeline—and we still are to this day.*"
Earth as a silent creditor	**Delfi** (Ieva Budraitė): "*The Earth is like a silent creditor. It does not issue paper invoices, but it sends signals.*"

Source: compiled by the author

The accompanying pie chart (see Figure 4) visualizes the distribution of the main economic security narratives in Lithuanian media (LRT, Delfi, 15min) during the 2020–2024 period. It clearly shows that the threat narrative is dominant, while the narratives of stability, individual responsibility, enemy identification, and sustainability all play additional yet significant roles in public communication. These narratives structure how society understands economic threats, the responsibility of the state, the effectiveness of individuals, and the geopolitical context. They serve not only an informative function but also emotional and ideological framing functions, often conveyed through metaphors (as in Table 9), dichotomies, and evaluative language (as seen in Table 8).

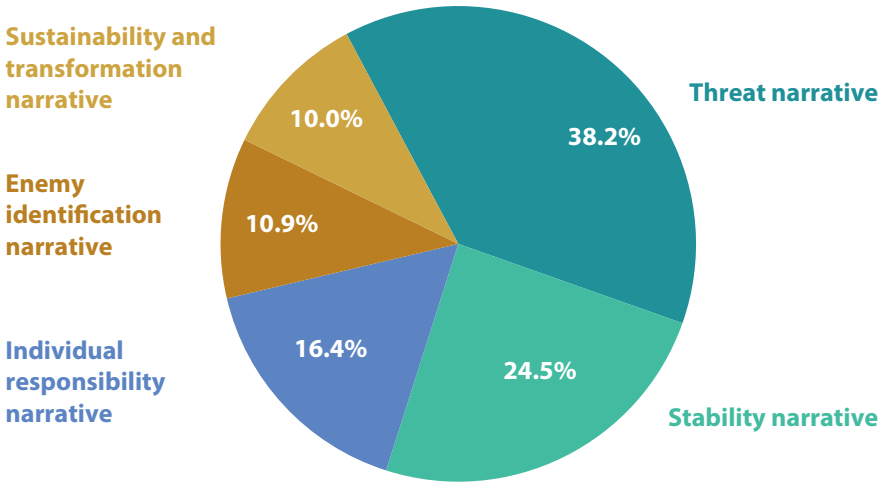


Figure 4. Distribution of Five Main Economic Security Narratives in Lithuanian Media (LRT, Delfi, 15min) during 2020–2024

Source: compiled by the author

The economic security narrative chart was developed by conducting both qualitative and quantitative content analysis of media coverage, following these methodological steps:

Source selection: The analysis focused on three major Lithuanian news portals: LRT.lt (a public broadcaster forming the official discourse), Delfi.lt (one of the most popular commercial news sites), and 15min.lt (a source known for investigative journalism and analysis). The examined articles were published between 2020 and 2024 and addressed economic security topics such as inflation, state support, energy, pandemic consequences, national finances, and the war in Ukraine.

Thematic coding framework: Based on media studies and discourse analysis principles, a typology of narratives was established. Each narrative was defined according to recurring semantic and rhetorical motifs. For instance, the threat narrative emphasizes crisis, danger, external pressure, and economic disruptions.

Article analysis: Each article was coded by its dominant narrative. The coding was performed by the author of the monograph following a consistent coding manual. If multiple narratives appeared in a single article, the one most prominent in volume and tone was recorded.

Data processing: The frequency of each narrative was tallied and converted into a percentage of the total number of analysed texts. The resulting numerical distribution is presented in the form of a pie chart. One limitation is that the data reflect an approximate distribution based on human interpretation rather than automated analysis.

The visualization is based on a total of 112 articles drawn from the three Lithuanian media outlets (LRT, Delfi, and 15min), published between 2020 and 2024. Their distribution across the narratives is presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Distribution of Economic Security Narratives across 112 Articles (Three Portals: LRT, Delfi, and 15min)

Type of Narrative	Number of Articles	Percentage (%)
Threat narrative	43	38.4
Stability narrative	27	24.1
Individual responsibility narrative	18	16.1
Enemy identification narrative	12	10.7
Sustainability and transformation narrative	12	10.7

Source: compiled by the author

Based on the texts published in Lithuanian media (LRT, Delfi, and 15min) between 2020 and 2024, five dominant types of economic security narratives can be distinguished: the threat narrative, the stability narrative, the individual responsibility narrative, the enemy identification narrative, and the sustainability and transformation narrative. These will be described in more detail below.

The topic of economic security in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 is frequently developed through the threat narrative, where emphasis is placed on uncertainty, external risks, and internal vulnerabilities (see Table 11). This narrative is grounded in both quantitative economic indicators (such as inflation rates, GDP changes, and energy prices) and metaphor-rich language that helps convey the complexity and danger of economic challenges.

All three portals - LRT, Delfi, and 15min, regularly highlight the uncertainty of the economic situation. This discourse element is especially prominent in discussions of inflation, energy prices, and the reliability of forecasts. LRT articles often underscore economic uncertainty related to projections, inflation dynamics, and energy market volatility. Uncertainty is framed as a persistent background condition that complicates rational decision-making. For example, one article states: "*Inflation in Lithuania remains one of the highest in the European Union, and the pace of decline is slow. This raises concerns among both residents and businesses*" (LRT.lt, June 15, 2023). A similar message appears in the context of energy: "*Fluctuating energy prices and geopolitical tensions affect economic stability, making it increasingly difficult to predict the future*" (LRT.lt, September 10, 2022). These formulations show that the media do more than convey facts — they cultivate an emotional framing in which the economic future is perceived as unreliable and unpredictable. Delfi echoes this tone: "*Economic forecasts are unprecedented — no one can say with certainty what awaits us in three months*" (Delfi.lt, October 1, 2022). 15min conveys uncertainty through expressions such as "*economic storm*" or "*inflation front,"* which reinforce the idea that economic processes are difficult to foresee and potentially dangerous.

A second key focus is external risks. This aspect is closely associated with geopolitical tension (especially in the context of the war in Ukraine), supply chain disruptions, energy dependency, and global price surges. For example, an LRT article from March 5, 2022, states: "*Russia's war in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on Moscow have triggered shocks in the global economy that directly affect Lithuania*." This quote suggests that external factors not only threaten but also significantly limit the country's sovereign ability to manage its economic processes. 15min also examines the raw materials crisis, the impact of the pandemic on supply chains, and reliance on imports: "*The global raw materials crisis has impacted Lithuania's entire manufacturing sector - energy costs and logistics prices have risen like an avalanche*" (15min.lt, November 10, 2022).

The third focal point is internal vulnerability, frequently connected to social inequality, the financial fragility of small businesses, and structural instability. According to LRT: "*Rising social exclusion and income inequality in Lithuania could lead to long-term economic and social challenges*" (LRT.lt, January 12, 2023). Another publication emphasizes the vulnerability of the business sector: "*Small and medium enterprises are facing financial difficulties due to increasing costs and an uncertain market environment*" (LRT.lt, October 8, 2022). Delfi presents a similar view: "*Small and medium enterprises are encountering financial challenges caused by rising expenses and a volatile market*" (Delfi.lt, October 8, 2022). 15min adds: "*Start-ups in regional areas are left to fend for themselves, municipalities lack the financial and human resources to support them*" (15min.lt, April 5, 2023). These quotes illustrate how economic insecurity is articulated not only through external crises but also through domestic constraints, particularly a fragile system that is highly sensitive to external shocks.

In Lithuanian media discourse, economic security is not presented as a stable or neutral phenomenon. On the contrary, it is framed through a logic of threat, where constant tension between risk and vulnerability prevails. This structure of discourse serves not only to inform but also to shape public perception of economic reality, encouraging caution, anxiety, and a heightened need for security. The three major Lithuanian news portals LRT, Delfi, and 15min systematically construct the threat narrative in their coverage of economic security, relying on shared semantic frames. All three emphasize uncertainty, external risks, and internal fragility. Within this rhetoric, metaphors such as "*storm*", "*front*", and "*blow*" dominate, along with expert assessments imbued with emotional intensity.

The dominant threat narrative is actively constructed through metaphorical models. These metaphors portray economic processes as physical, menacing, or even militarized phenomena that shape not only informational but also emotional and political discourse. The study identified three main metaphorical categories: those of physical force, natural disasters, and military conflict. In the analysis of media texts, the most frequently recurring metaphors were "*crisis blow*", "*inflation front*", and "*economic storm*". All of these metaphors depict economic processes as forceful, threatening, and at times militarized. For example, economist Mauricas stated: "*The conflict between Ukraine and Russia continues, the energy war between Russia and the EU is ongoing, and now a third front has opened in the food sector*" (Delfi, June 25, 2022). This reveals how economic threats are framed as a multifront conflict in which defence and strategic action are necessary. Military metaphors are also found in LRT's language choices, such as the use of terms like "*stockpile plan*", "*strategic reserve*", and "*defence plan*". In LRT's publications, economic decisions are described using military terminology. For instance, when discussing energy security, concepts such as "*strategic reserves*" and "*defence plans*" are employed, suggesting that economic actions are part of a broader defence strategy. This strengthens the perception that economic challenges require not only financial, but also strategic and defensive responses. Although the word "*front*" is not always stated explicitly, military semantics reinforce the intersection between economic and national security. In his article titled "*Lithuania's Eastern Border or the Eastern Front of a Civilizational War?*" (LRT, August 14, 2023), Vytautas Bruveris describes Lithuania's eastern frontier as a "*civilizational border*" which "*has long ceased to be just a metaphor*". This metaphor conveys the geopolitical tension between democratic and authoritarian regimes, emphasizing that economic and security challenges are inseparable from a broader civilizational conflict. Bruveris argues that "*the world is once again returning to a confrontation between two major camps*" and that "*the war in Ukraine is only one of its fronts, with several*

more likely to emerge and ignite in the near future". While military metaphors are most clearly expressed in Delfi, their implications are present in other media sources as well.

The metaphor of the "*economic storm*", a natural disaster metaphor, is widely used across all three portals. It portrays the economic situation as an uncontrollable natural phenomenon that approaches, strikes, or destroys. Delfi writes in its analysis: "*Europe's energy crisis may continue until the end of 2023, as the region grapples with strong demand and insufficient supply*" (Delfi, September 27, 2022). LRT presents a hyperbolic metaphorical form: "*This is a perfect storm*," says the head of the National Bank of Ukraine about the war's impact on the economy (LRT, June 15, 2023). Also: "The last rays of sun before the storm" (LRT, July 25, 2020), here the sense of an approaching economic crisis is conveyed. Articles in 15min are dominated by visual imagery such as: "*Threatening clouds of economic storm are gathering over Turkey's economy*" (15min, May 15, 2022). Storm metaphors function in two ways: they convey a sense of inevitability and at the same time dehumanize the phenomenon, it is presented as an external, "*natural*" factor whose impact can only be endured but is difficult to control. These metaphors create an atmosphere of instability, prompting either preparedness or passive waiting. Similarly, the metaphor "*economic storm*" is used in the context of the energy crisis: "*Europe's energy crisis may continue until the end of 2023, as the region grapples with strong demand and insufficient supply*" (Delfi, September 27, 2022). This metaphor constructs a sense of instability, evoking the image of a looming disaster that is hard to predict or manage. Meanwhile, the phrase "*crisis blow*" conveys economic threat as a sudden and physical impact. For example: "*The energy crisis, hitting hard, will affect investment flows*" (Delfi, September 27, 2022). The metaphor "*crisis blow*", a metaphor of physical impact, is most found in Delfi and 15min. For instance, Delfi writes: "*The energy crisis, hitting hard, will affect investment flows*" (Delfi, September 27, 2022). 15min publishes a comment from the International Monetary Fund: "*The crisis blow to Lithuania was softer compared to other countries*" (15min, June 10, 2021). On the LRT portal, this metaphor takes an even more emotional form: "*The rise in interest rates is a punch to the gut for households and businesses*" (LRT, April 12, 2023). These metaphors create an image of the crisis as a bodily injury, not just a destabilizing economic phenomenon but a personal ordeal that heightens the perception of threat and strengthens emotional reaction.

In all three portals Delfi, LRT, and 15min the discourse on economic security is shaped through metaphors that depict crises as physical forces, natural disasters, or military conflicts. These metaphors not only convey the complexity of economic processes but also intensify the emotional tone of the discourse. They mobilize the audience, frame political responsibility, and heighten the perception of threat. This type of discourse aligns with George Lakoff's (2014) assertion that metaphors "*structure how we think, act, and what we consider to be reality,*" and with Buzan's (1991) concept in security studies that threat is not merely an objective phenomenon but also a linguistic and political construction. Although the articles often rely on experts and statistical indicators, the emotional intensity arises from language, metaphorical imagery constructs a reality in which economic security is constantly on the edge of threat. This not only amplifies the individual sense of insecurity but also reinforces the collective impression that the state or society is being affected by forces that are difficult to control. In this way, the threat narrative serves not only a representational but also a performative function, it does not merely describe but also mobilizes, calls for reaction, urges caution, and prepares for the worst (see Table 11). At the same time, the media becomes not just a channel for transmitting information but an active producer of the discourse of economic insecurity.

Table 11. Structural Features of the Threat Narrative in Lithuanian Media (2020–2024)

Structural Features	Description
Core theme	Uncertainty due to inflation, the energy crisis, and geopolitical tensions. Risk frames dominate across all portals.
Actors	Citizens and businesses (victims), the government (reactive or weak), external factors (e.g., Russia, consequences of war) as sources of threat.
Plot	Crises are presented as inevitable or already occurring, pressuring the state and society to respond.
Temporal dimension	The discourse is based on constant tension: past shocks (COVID, war), current instability, and uncertainty about the future.
Value judgement	Economic challenges are portrayed as dangerous and destabilizing, posing an existential threat.
Metaphors / rhetorical devices	Military ("*inflation front*"), natural ("*economic storm*"), and physical ("*crisis blow*") metaphors are most common in LRT, Delfi, and 15min publications.
Implied solution	Although few explicit proposals are given, the texts imply the necessity to prepare, strengthen reserves, and pursue energy independence.

Source: compiled by the author

The discourse of economic security in Lithuanian media, especially on the LRT portal, during the period 2020 to 2024 is shaped not only by the rhetoric of threat. Alongside it, a stability narrative also emerges which aims to highlight the state's ability to respond to economic challenges in a responsible manner. This narrative is constructed through specific vocabulary such as "*state reserve*", "*support package*", and "*responsible governance*". Functionally, it serves as a means of reinforcing public trust and is intended to reassure the audience during times of crisis (see Table 12). A 15min article on medical aid to Ukraine states: "*Assistance to Ukrainians is being sent both from the state reserve and from the available resources of the Ministry of Health*" (15min.lt, February 28, 2022). This quote reveals that the state reserve is an important tool for delivering urgent assistance during crises and underscores the state's preparedness and responsible resource management. Discussions about the importance of reserves and shortcomings in their administration emphasize the need to integrate this topic into national security strategies and to strengthen the state's readiness for future crises. The stability narrative in Lithuanian media, particularly in LRT and 15min, during the 2020 to 2024 period, was shaped through an emphasis on the state's preparedness and its capacity for responsible response to crises. The concept of the state reserve became one of the central pillars of this narrative, both in the context of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The publications operate as platforms for public policy critique and recommendation, encouraging a review and enhancement of the mechanisms used to manage state reserves. In discourse, the reserve becomes a symbol of state responsibility, preparedness, and protection of the population.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the media frequently addressed topics related to state support for businesses and residents. For example, an LRT commentary states, "*Business requests have already been heard by many governments. More generous or more modest, better or worse-prepared support plans for businesses are being developed, and there is wide discussion about the quality of these plans*" (LRT.lt, April 15, 2020). This text reflects the efforts of the public sector to respond systematically to challenges by communicating the activity of institutions, their ability to plan, and to consider the most effective interventions. A Delfi publication on state support for businesses during the pandemic states, "*The funds foreseen in the first business support package are gradually reaching businesses*" (Delfi.lt, February 21, 2021). This quote illustrates how the term "*support package*" is used to describe the financial assistance provided by the state to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. An analysis of media discourse during the COVID-19 period shows that the term "*support package*" became a key element of the stability narrative, conveying the state's capacity to respond to economic challenges. Both LRT and Delfi publications demonstrate consistent communication about the public sector's efforts to ensure systematic support for businesses and the population. This kind of vocabulary affirms the values of institutional responsibility, planning, and solidarity, reinforcing trust in the decisions made by the state in times of crisis.

In LRT publications, the rhetoric of "*responsible governance*" is used when discussing the state budget and fiscal policy. This rhetoric emphasizes the efforts of government institutions to ensure financial stability, social justice, and economic growth. LRT articles often stress that the state budget is planned responsibly to maintain fiscal discipline and ensure sustainable economic growth. For example, a 2022 article on the budget proposal states, "*The government emphasizes that the budget proposal has been prepared in accordance with the principles of fiscal discipline in order to ensure sustainable management of public finances*" (LRT.lt, October 15, 2022). This quote reflects the government's aim to manage public finances responsibly, in accordance with established fiscal rules and with a view to long-term economic stability. LRT publications also emphasize that responsible financial management includes reducing social exclusion. For instance, a 2021 article on social policy measures states, "*The government seeks to ensure social justice, which is why the budget allocates more funds for social benefits and support to vulnerable groups*" (LRT.lt, September 10, 2021). This citation shows that responsible governance is not limited to fiscal discipline but also includes ensuring social welfare through appropriate distribution of financial resources. In LRT publications, the rhetoric of responsible governance is also used in reference to the government's response to economic challenges such as the pandemic or inflation. For example, a 2020 article on economic stimulus measures states, "*The government is taking responsible actions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the economy, including support packages for businesses and residents*" (LRT.lt, April 20, 2020). This quote highlights that responsible governance includes the ability to respond quickly and effectively to unexpected economic challenges to protect the country's economy and the wellbeing of its population. In a 15min article on the European Commission's assessment, it is stated that Lithuania's budget proposal essentially aligns with the Council of the European Union's recommendations, emphasizing responsible management of public finances: "*Also taking into account the risks, the responsible management of public finances, the relevance of the measures to address the consequences of COVID-19, and their necessity are emphasized*" (15min.lt, November 19, 2020).

The quote reflects the efforts of government institutions to manage public finances responsibly, in accordance with established fiscal rules and with the goal of ensuring long-term economic stability. A Delfi publication on the role of municipal auditors highlights their responsibility for ensuring the transparency and efficiency of financial operations: "*The municipal auditor is one of the key public servants responsible for ensuring the transparency and efficiency of a municipality's financial operations*" (Delfi.lt, November 27, 2024). This demonstrates that responsible governance involves not only

fiscal discipline, but also adherence to the principles of transparency and efficiency in public financial management. A Delfi article on financial management within couples emphasizes the responsibility of both partners for the shared budget and financial decisions: "*Both partners must feel a sense of financial responsibility. Regardless of how much each contributes to the family's financial wellbeing, both should feel equally valued and equally important in making financial decisions*" (Delfi.lt, March 28, 2023). Across all three portals Delfi, LRT, and 15min the rhetoric of "*responsible governance*" is used as a tool to highlight the efforts of government institutions to ensure financial stability, social justice, and the ability to respond to economic challenges. This rhetoric helps build trust in institutions and reinforces the stability narrative in the public sphere.

An analysis of publications from Delfi, LRT, and 15min between 2020 and 2024 reveals a consistent development of the rhetoric of "*responsible governance*," which functions as one of the primary forms of the stability narrative. This rhetoric is employed in discussions of state budget planning, social policy, the transparency of public finances, and responses to economic challenges such as the pandemic, inflation, or crises. The government's efforts are portrayed as rational, socially sensitive, and oriented toward long-term stability, thereby reinforcing public trust in institutions. In discourse, the concept of responsible governance becomes not only a technical but also a value-based category, affirming the state's credibility and fostering a sense of security among citizens.

Table 12. Structural Elements of the Stability Narrative (LRT, Delfi, 15min, 2020–2024)

Structural Features	Description
Core theme	Economic security is framed through state institutions' preparedness, responsible budgeting, support packages, and reserve management.
Actors	The state (as actor), citizens and businesses (as recipients), experts (as guarantors and commentators).
Plot	The state undertakes planned and considered actions: it develops strategies, allocates support, and manages resources.
Temporal dimension	Emphasis is placed on the state's consistent response and preparedness - stability is presented as a long-term goal.
Value judgments	Responsible governance, budgetary discipline, social justice, and solidarity are presented as positively valued principles.
Metaphors / rhetorical devices	"*State reserve*", "*support package*", "*responsible budget*", "*resource allocation*" - administrative and reassuring vocabulary.
Implied solution	It is communicated that through support, strategies, and institutional responsibility, economic stability and public trust can be ensured.

Source: compiled by the author

Between 2020 and 2024, the stability narrative in Lithuanian media (especially LRT, Delfi, and 15min) is shaped by emphasizing the state's preparedness and responsible response to crises. The core theme of the discourse is linked to economic security based on reserve management, support packages, fiscal discipline, and responsible budget planning. In this narrative, the main actor is the state, which acts in a planned and consistent manner, while the rhetoric is reassuring, highlighting competence and solidarity. This type of discourse reinforces citizens' trust in institutions and positions the state as a guarantor of security in the face of economic challenges.

The narrative of individual responsibility most frequently appears in commercial media. Citizens are encouraged to take responsibility for their own financial security with messages such as "*be prepared*", "*manage your budget*", and "*learn to invest*". This narrative reinforces the positions of neoliberal ideology. As Brown (2015) notes, under neoliberal conditions, citizens are encouraged to take responsibility for their economic security, while public discourse shifts the burden of ensuring security from the state to the individual. This is also evident in media discourse, where advice on saving and budget planning (LRT.lt, 2023-01-05; Delfi.lt, August 9, 2022) serves not only as informational guidance but also as moral norms of behaviour (Rose, 2022). A quote from Delfi (August 9, 2022) states, "*Saving should not happen only during a crisis, but always. You must live within your means, because an economic shock can hit at any time*." This type of phrasing not only informs but also moralizes - frugality is presented as a civic duty. This aligns with Brown's (2015) argument that neoliberalism individualizes systemic problems, making the consequences of crises appear as the result of personal irresponsibility.

The narrative of individual responsibility is grounded in rhetoric that promotes financial literacy, saving, moderation in consumption, the ability to plan personal budgets, and adaptation to changing economic conditions. In the media, this narrative is often conveyed in the form of advice on how to behave during inflation, crises, or energy price spikes. For example, Delfi publishes texts urging people to reassess their expenses: "*Saving should not happen only during a crisis,*

but always. You must live within your means, because an economic shock can strike at any time" (Delfi.lt, August 9, 2022). This quote clearly reveals a moral stance; frugality is presented here as a daily habit rather than a temporary strategy for times of crisis. In this way, financial caution is established as a norm of life, not an exception. On the LRT portal, the structure of practical advice also dominates, though it is more closely tied to family responsibility and a culture of planning. In the quote "*It is important to anticipate your essential expenses and have a financial reserve for unexpected events*" (LRT.lt, January 5, 2023), the emphasis is on preparation in advance. This corresponds to the state's promotion of preventive behaviour and a rhetoric of self-reliance. Here, security is created through individual measures rather than through state mechanisms. Rose (2022) refers to this position as self-governance through competence, the individual is trained to become "*their own manager*," responsible for managing risk. A quote from 15min (April 3, 2023) states, "*Even if the state provides assistance, the decision of how to manage money, i.e., how much to spend, how much to invest is the individual's responsibility*." In this narrative, the main actor is the citizen or the family, and their success or failure is presented as the outcome of responsible or irresponsible actions. This type of narrative reinforces a liberal discourse of responsibility in which economic security partly depends on the individual's capabilities. The quote presents the crisis as a formative situation responsibility is not to be delegated externally. This aligns with Lorey's (2015) argument that "*uncertainty is institutionalized*," and citizens are constantly encouraged to be prepared and to manage themselves, even when support is available.

In the context of the individual responsibility narrative, advice discourse in the media functions as both a pedagogical and normative tool. It conveys not only information but also shapes behavioural models. Journalistic texts become platforms of practical knowledge that encourage citizens to behave in an economically "*correct*" way, to adapt to changing conditions, and to take responsibility for their financial security. LRT also frequently emphasizes the relationship between the state and the citizen as a partnership, where responsibility is shared but the citizen is expected to take the first steps. In 15min publications, advice discourse is often connected to investigative journalism or interview formats, where personal experiences are presented: family stories, the situations of small business owners, and their strategies for adaptation. These texts foster identification with the reader and imply that even when support or systemic assistance is available, decision-making is an individual act that requires preparation. The overall function of these texts is not only to inform about the economic situation but also to establish a normative behavioural model. They convey the idea that every person should have a personal "*economic security plan*" to survive a crisis independently of the actions of state institutions. This form of discourse transforms the citizen from a passive recipient of support into an active builder of economic stability. A quote from Delfi (March 28, 2023) states, "*Both partners must feel a sense of financial responsibility. [...] You should feel equally valued and important in making financial decisions.*" Here, budget planning is understood not only as a technical task but also as a value-driven process that reflects proper social behaviour such as equality, transparency, and responsibility. This is equated with normative citizenship, which becomes "*visible*" through financial practices.

The media contains lexical structures such as "*personal financial discipline*," "*responsible consumption*," and "*lessons of the crisis*," which imply that economic crises are also a kind of moral lesson or test for the individual. This vocabulary indirectly shifts responsibility from systemic causes to individual behaviour. In some cases, the narrative of individual responsibility takes on emotional tones. For example, Delfi presents stories about people who "*failed to manage their debts*" or who "*made changes in time and avoided financial difficulties*." In this way, the narrative becomes moralizing, encouraging identification with the "*responsible citizen*." A quote from Delfi (December 1, 2022) states, "*Tomas decided to give up his car and switched to public transport - this way he saved EUR 150 in one month*." Through personalized stories, the media conveys models that the audience can imitate. This tactic reinforces the performative function of the media (Couldry and Hepp, 2018), where the goal is not only to provide information but also to shape behavioural algorithms.

The narrative of individual responsibility in Lithuanian media is often reinforced through metaphors that not only vividly convey financial behaviour norms but also enable moral judgment. For example, Delfi states, "*The family budget circuit breaker must be switched on before the crisis begins - one must know their priority expenses in advance and have a financial reserve*" (Delfi.lt, April 7, 2023). The metaphor "*family budget circuit breaker*" conveys the preventive function of financial planning: the budget here acts as a protective system meant to withstand economic shocks, much like an electrical fuse protects against overload. In an LRT publication, another metaphor emphasizes personal responsibility: "*Having a financial backbone means knowing your spending limits and sticking to them even under inflationary pressure*" (LRT.lt, May 1, 2023). The metaphor "*financial backbone*" implies that economic stability is an internal support system, whose strength depends on a person's self-control and skills. Meanwhile, another frequently used metaphor in Delfi - "*live within your means*" - is presented as a moral imperative: "*If you want to avoid debt, live within your means and do not treat loans as a solution to excessive desire*" (Delfi.lt, December 9, 2022). This metaphor reduces economic challenges to individual choice, and financial behaviour to moral conduct. In this way, the media not only informs the public about the economic situation but also instils behavioural norms that reinforce a neoliberal discourse of responsibility in which the citizen becomes the central subject of economic security.

Table 13. Structural Elements of the Individual Responsibility Narrative (LRT, Delfi, 15min, 2020–2024)

Structural Features	Description
Core theme	Economic security as a result of personal behaviour and financial literacy.
Actors	Citizen, family, small business (as decision-makers), experts (as advisers).
Plot	The individual must plan, save, consume responsibly, and prepare for unexpected situations.
Temporal dimension	Present actions determine the future — it is important to learn from past mistakes.
Value judgments	Frugality, responsibility, thoughtful planning, preparedness.
Metaphors / rhetorical devices	*"Live within your means"*, *"financial backbone"*, *"family budget circuit breaker"*.
Implied solution	State support is important, but the citizen's decisions determine their level of security.

Source: compiled by the author

The narrative of individual responsibility in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 (especially in Delfi, LRT, and 15min) emphasizes the citizen's duty to ensure their own financial security through self-regulation, financial literacy, and responsible behaviour. The structural elements of this narrative deliver a clear message: the main actor is the individual or the family, and the action involves controlling expenses, saving, and preparing for uncertainty. This discourse logic, grounded in the principles of neoliberal ideology, shifts the responsibility for risk management from the state to the individual, while behavioural norms are presented as moral values (such as "*live within your means*" and "*have a financial backbone*"). The media thus becomes not only a source of information, but also a pedagogical platform that promotes a model of responsible financial conduct.

The enemy identification narrative, whereby the economic threat is personified. It is associated with Russia, China, global corporations, and at times with "*non-transparent business interests*." This narrative mobilizes the public through a "*we versus them*" dichotomy, activating a discourse of national unity. In the article "*Vytautas Bruveris: Lithuania's Eastern Border or the Eastern Front of a Civilizational War*" (LRT, August 14, 2023), the enemy identification narrative is expressed clearly. The quote states, "*Lithuania's eastern border is not just a physical boundary of the state but a line of civilizational confrontation. It is a front where the forces of democracy and authoritarianism clash*" (LRT.lt, August 14, 2023). This quote conveys the metaphor of the "*front*," which symbolizes a distinct value-based and geopolitical division: "*we*" as democracy and "*them*" as authoritarianism. According to Buzan (1991), such constructions allow the discourse of national security to shift into the realm of existential conflict, in which the opposing side becomes a threat to identity. This type of narrative strengthens the figure of the framed enemy, or securitized other, as the primary source of instability.

Between 2020 and 2024, the enemy identification narrative became increasingly prominent in Lithuanian media, especially in the portals Delfi, LRT, and 15min. It aims to highlight threats to national security arising from external actors, particularly Russia. This narrative is constructed through the analysis of symbols and information attacks, with an emphasis on their impact on Lithuanian society. The media frequently discusses the meaning of the Saint George ribbon and its use as a propaganda tool. For example, the LRT publication titled "*The Saint George Ribbon as a Symbol of Kremlin Propaganda*" (LRT.lt, May 9, 2022) examines how this symbol is used to spread pro-Russian sentiment and reinforce Kremlin narratives. The article emphasizes that the ribbon has become not only a symbol of victory in the Second World War, but also an instrument employed in political propaganda. This reflects a media tendency to identify certain symbols as threats to national security, and to encourage public alertness to potential information attacks. On the LRT portal, information attacks are frequently emphasized. One article state, "*Russian propaganda seeks to influence Russian-speaking residents of Lithuania by spreading disinformation and fuelling distrust in the state*" (LRT.lt, November 15, 2022). This highlights the systematic effort by a hostile state to act not only from the outside but also from within the country by dividing society and weakening trust in institutions. In a 15min article on Russia's war economy, it is stated, "*Due to the increasing structural militarization of Russia's economy, any efforts to end the war in Ukraine become much more difficult*" (15min.lt, May 3, 2024), and "*Russia will not stop. Its economy is becoming increasingly dependent on war*" (15min.lt, May 3, 2024). These quotes reveal that Russia's economy is increasingly oriented toward the military sector, indicating a long-term and systematic readiness to continue aggression. These kinds of formulations not only inform the public but also reinforce the image of a long-term threat. War is presented as a systemic phenomenon, and Russia becomes the embodiment of a hostile and destabilizing force. Additionally, in the LRT article "*Russia's Information Attacks: How to Recognize and Protect Yourself*" (LRT.lt, March 22, 2023), it is emphasized that "*disinformation campaigns often target emotions in order to provoke fear, anger, or distrust.*" This shows that information attacks are carefully planned

and directed at the emotional climate of the public in order to destabilize the internal cohesion of the country. A 15min analysis titled "*The Militarization of Russia's Economy: A Threat to Regional Stability*" (15min.lt, April 18, 2024) states, "*The expansion of the war industry in Russia not only strengthens its military capabilities, but also becomes a key part of the economy, supported by state subsidies and propaganda rhetoric*." This analysis emphasizes that militarization is not only a military strategy but also an economic one that enhances Russia's ability to pursue aggressive policies. The quotations from LRT and 15min show that Russia's information attacks and the militarization of its economy are interrelated phenomena that pose a threat not only to Ukraine, but also to regional stability and Lithuanian national security. Information attacks aim to divide society from within, while economic militarization signals a long-term commitment to continued aggression.

The publications mentioned above demonstrate how the media constructs the enemy identification narrative through different discursive channels. These range from symbolic language such as ribbons, borders, and fronts to the analysis of economic and informational actions. In this narrative, the enemy is framed as an existential threat that demands mobilization, resilience, and value-based unity. This aligns with Buzan's (1991) concept of security, where a threat is not merely an objective phenomenon but is also discursively constructed, often through moral and cultural boundaries. Scholars such as Brown (2015) and Rose (2022) analyse how, under neoliberal conditions, citizens are encouraged to take responsibility for their own economic security, while public discourse shifts the burden of security from the state to the individual. This tendency is also evident in the enemy identification narrative, where the emphasis on threat encourages citizens to remain vigilant and to take responsibility for their own informational security.

Metaphors play an important role in shaping public perception of threats and encouraging vigilance against information attacks. The metaphor "*information war*" is used to describe systematic disinformation campaigns directed at Lithuanian society. The concept of information war is becoming increasingly integrated into the enemy identification narrative in Lithuanian media. It is not merely an additional semantic layer, but a significant component of the security discourse that structures how citizens perceive threats. The informational threat goes beyond traditional boundaries of military conflict and operates not through physical violence, but through symbolic power — information, meanings, and emotional resonance. For example, an LRT article titled "*Russia's Information Attacks: How to Recognize and Protect Yourself*" (LRT.lt, March 22, 2023) states, "*Disinformation campaigns often target emotions in order to provoke fear, anger, or distrust.*" This quote highlights that information attacks are carefully planned and aimed at the emotional background of society in order to destabilize the country's internal cohesion. The concept of information war is becoming more deeply embedded in the enemy identification narrative. The LRT portal states, "*Russian propaganda seeks to influence Russian-speaking residents of Lithuania by spreading disinformation and encouraging distrust in the state*" (LRT.lt, November 15, 2022). This quote underscores a systematic tactic of informational influence aimed at dividing society. Here, the "*enemy*" is no longer just a physical aggressor but becomes a communicative and discursive construct. This narrative implies that the struggle for security takes place not only on the battlefield, but also within the informational space. In an analytical commentary published by 15min, it is written, "*The term 'information war' is being used more frequently when referring to the Kremlin's strategic aim to influence Western societies not through military means but through symbolic language, narratives, and emotions*" (15min.lt, February 11, 2023). This statement shows that the logic of information war is based on a narrative structure — it is a discursive intervention through which a hostile actor seeks to shape perceptions, attitudes, and collective self-awareness. In this way, an information attack becomes a structured communication campaign aimed at fragmenting society, increasing distrust in institutions, and weakening value-based cohesion. According to security studies (Buzan et al., 1998; Hansen, 2013), such narratives can be interpreted as securitization, meaning the framing of certain phenomena as threats that legitimize exceptional state measures. The metaphor of information war enables state institutions to justify communicative responses as necessary: strengthening society's resilience to disinformation, controlling the informational environment, and developing media literacy strategies. This also raises the question of the role of the media — it becomes not only a means of informing the public but also a battlefield where frames of collective identity and threat perception are formed. The concept of information war in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 is transforming into an autonomous narrative model through which the image of the enemy is structured via symbolic rather than physical confrontation. This form of discourse is especially prominent in the portals LRT and 15min, which not only report facts but also actively participate in shaping the narrative.

The enemy identification narrative in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 develops not only through external threats but also through internal ones. One of the most significant structural elements of this narrative is the metaphor of the "*internal enemy*," which functions as a tool of social stigmatization. It enables political and institutional actors to define the boundaries of loyalty within the state. This metaphor is most often associated with individuals or groups who are critical of the state, who question national security policies, or who are ideologically linked in some way to hostile states. For example, in a Delfi article on informational threats, it is stated, "*Disinformation campaigns often target emotions in order to provoke fear, anger, or distrust*" (Delfi, December 4, 2022). This quote suggests that information

attacks can be directed at groups within the country, aiming to destabilize them and frame them as the internal enemy. In an article on the LRT portal titled "*Russian propaganda seeks to influence Russian-speaking residents of Lithuania,*" it is stated, "*By spreading disinformation and encouraging distrust in the state, propaganda targets the very core of society*" (LRT.lt, November 15, 2022). It is implied that the internal enemy can be associated with civil society itself, or with parts of it that become either targets or even channels of information warfare. In Delfi commentaries, political scientist Kasčiūnas notes that "*Some public figures, while manipulating rhetoric about supposed independence, in fact repeat hostile propaganda clichés*" (Delfi.lt, February 14, 2023). Statements like these show that the internal enemy is discursively constructed, not only as an active agent of threat, but also as a rhetorical symbol of opposition. A 15min publication examining the consequences of Russia's information war states, "*Information attacks target not only state institutions, but also public opinion leaders, aiming to undermine trust in democracy*" (15min.lt, April 21, 2023). This quote shows that the internal enemy can also be identified among opinion leaders who, either indirectly or unintentionally, become vectors for the spread of disinformation. From a theoretical perspective, the concept of the internal enemy is linked to Foucault's (1977) analysis of power, where power operates not only through prohibitions but also through constant surveillance, classification, and normalization. This metaphor creates new social boundaries between "*loyal citizens*" and those whose loyalty is seen as questionable. As noted by security theorists (Buzan et al., 1998), threat is socially constructed through linguistic acts, and the internal enemy becomes a rational basis for implementing security measures even in democratic societies. The narrative of the internal enemy in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 functions as a mechanism for articulating threat. It creates new boundaries of loyalty, encourages self-monitoring, and reinforces the legitimacy of state control. This is a narrative that, by drawing on the logic of information warfare, defines not only the country's relationship with external forces, but also reconstructs the roles of citizens within the architecture of national security.

The metaphor-term "*fifth column*" is used not only in historical or military analyses, but also in contemporary media discourse to describe an internal threat arising from ideological or informational ties to hostile states. In a 15min publication on informational threats (15min.lt, May 3, 2024), it is stated, "*The expansion of the war industry in Russia not only strengthens its military capabilities, but also becomes an important part of the economy, supported by state subsidies and propaganda rhetoric."* This quote suggests that the war economy is not limited to physical fronts, it also operates through informational dissemination, shaping opinions and exerting influence within other countries. In this context, the "*fifth column*" becomes not only a symbolic, but also a practical tool. It may refer to individuals, organizations, or even social media channels that contribute to the destabilization of the informational environment. The Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament, Skvernelis, publicly declared a potential internal threat: "*There is a certain fifth column forming in the Seimas. We see it in the way votes are cast*" (Delfi, November 22, 2023). This quote demonstrates how the political elite employs the narrative of the internal enemy to delegitimize opposition forces and reinforce a polarized political climate. Similarly, in opinion journalism, the term is used to describe pro-Kremlin movements in Lithuania. A Delfi article titled "*Worshippers of Greater Russia in Lithuania*" discusses: "*They worship Putin, Russia, and glorify the imperial project. This is an ideological fifth column*" (Delfi, May 16, 2023). The 15min portal also emphasizes that the war economy in Russia is inseparable from the dimension of information warfare: "*Russia will not stop. Its economy is increasingly dependent on war*" (15min, May 3, 2024). Propaganda rhetoric, supported by state subsidies, also functions as a mechanism of informational influence over other states, fostering what is called the "*fifth column*." In the article "*The Culture of Freedom of Conscience*," Ignas Dilys observes, "*The widely echoed warning about the 'fifth column' encourages vigilant citizens to look out for individuals with hostile intentions*" (Delfi, November 23, 2023). This wording illustrates how threat becomes personalized and every day, encouraging self-surveillance and an atmosphere of collective vigilance. The term "*fifth column*" has become a multi-layered symbol in Lithuania's public sphere, used to identify political, cultural, and ideological opponents. This narrative functions as a discursive technology that strengthens national identity through oppositional contrast and legitimizes the actions of security institutions within domestic space. By using this term, the media acts as an intermediary of political discourse, reinforcing the boundary between "*loyal citizens*" and "*hostile agents*." This kind of narrative mobilizes society, shapes the perception of threat, and reinforces a clear dichotomy between "*us*" and "*them*" even within the borders of the state.

Table 14. Structural Elements of the Enemy Identification Narrative (LRT, Delfi, 15min, 2020–2024)

Structural Features	Description
Core theme	National security threats arising from external sources (Russia) and internal (pro-Russian) actors.
Actors	Enemy (Russia, pro-Russian actors), victim (Lithuania, its citizens), defenders (state institutions, media).
Plot	The enemy uses information attacks and symbols to divide society. The state and media identify and neutralize threats.
Temporal dimension	A constant threat that requires vigilance and response.
Value judgment	Patriotism, loyalty to the state, resilience to propaganda.
Metaphors and rhetorical devices	*"Information war", "internal enemy", "fifth column".*
Implied solution	Strengthen societal resilience, promote critical thinking, encourage loyalty to the state.

Source: compiled by the author

Between 2020 and 2024, the enemy identification narrative in Lithuanian media (LRT, Delfi, 15min) took on a highly distinct form, structured through clear elements: a thematic core (external and internal threat), actors (the enemy as Russia and the "*fifth column*"; defenders as the state and citizens), a plot (the enemy acts through information warfare), metaphors ("*front*", "*information war*", "*internal enemy*"), and an implied solution (vigilance, resilience, unity). In this discourse, threat is not limited to physical danger, it is constructed through symbolic, informational, and emotional dimensions. Metaphors mobilize society, reinforce the "*us versus them*" dichotomy, and justify security policy measures. Using this narrative, the media becomes not only a disseminator of information, but also a strategic actor in security communication, shaping citizen identity and the boundaries of responsibility.

The sustainability and transformation narrative most often appears in environmental or innovation-related contexts. In the content of LRT, Delfi, and 15min, this discourse is constructed through an emphasis on strengthening ecological, economic, and technological resilience. What distinguishes this narrative is its framing of threat as opportunity. It not only informs about challenges but also mobilizes society toward change. For example, the LRT portal writes, "*By 2050, Lithuania aims to use 100 percent renewable energy, and the country's priority is to reduce its dependence on Russian energy sources*" (LRT.lt, June 1, 2023). The quote emphasizes a systemic and value-driven transition from traditional energy models to renewable solutions. A Delfi article highlights, "*The transformation toward a green economy is not only a climate goal. It is also an economic opportunity for Lithuania to become an innovative, high value-added country*" (Delfi.lt, March 16, 2023). Meanwhile, a 15min publication states, "*Technological innovation and sustainable energy will help not only to reduce CO2, but also to create jobs in the regions*" (15min.lt, May 8, 2023). Statements like this shape a narrative in which challenges become not just threats, but also opportunities for breakthrough, encouraging the modernization of the state. In this discourse, sustainability is associated with progress, technology, social cohesion, and energy independence.

A Delfi article states, "*Sustainability today is no longer a luxury but a necessity, and resilience includes the ability not only to withstand shocks but also to recover and adapt*" (Delfi.lt, August 30, 2023). This shows that the concept of sustainability in contemporary discourse has expanded and now encompasses a broader transformation paradigm. The sustainability and transformation narrative in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 is grounded not only in the promise of ensuring environmental balance, but also in a value-driven and strategic shift within social structures. A Delfi article emphasizes, "*Sustainability today is no longer a luxury but a necessity, and resilience includes the ability not only to withstand shocks but also to recover and adapt*" (Delfi.lt, August 30, 2023). This phrasing implies that sustainability is no longer just an environmental goal. It is an integral strategy for social resilience. The LRT portal writes, "*By 2050, Lithuania aims to use 100 percent renewable energy, and the country's priority is to reduce its dependence on Russian energy sources*" (LRT.lt, June 1, 2023). This quote reflects not only technological transformation, but also the geopolitical aspect of sustainability strengthening independence from external threats. A 15min article on the circular economy states, "*Investments in circular economy solutions represent not only ecological progress but also the strengthening of economic resilience*" (15min.lt, April 19, 2023). Sustainability becomes inseparable from economic logic. It is viewed as a long-term investment in the capacity to adapt to crises. As noted by Beck (1992), the society of late modernity becomes a risk society, which means that the ability to adapt and maintain stability becomes a central goal of political and social order. According to Stirling (2015), the narrative of transformative sustainability is not merely about adaptation. It also involves structural change that alters the distribution of economic and political power. This is especially relevant in discourses on energy, transport, and climate change, where the shift in rhetoric emphasizes active transformation rather

than passive adjustment. Therefore, the discourse in the media is strengthening in a direction where sustainability is presented as a synthesis of national responsibility, technological innovation, and social justice.

A 15min analysis states, "*A ship carrying liquefied natural gas is not only an energy commodity, but also a symbol, a sign of independence and strength for the Baltic States*" (15min.lt, May 15, 2022). This quote assigns symbolic meaning to energy transformation. It is no longer just an infrastructural choice, but one of identity. The LNG ship becomes not only a practical tool for independence from Russian energy, but also a cultural and geopolitical sign. An LRT article also emphasizes symbolic meaning: "*The LNG terminal has become an icon of Lithuania's energy sovereignty, demonstrating that the country can choose its own path*" (LRT.lt, February 1, 2023). Formulations like these allow energy infrastructure to be interpreted as a national symbol, one that reinforces meanings of identity, autonomy, and resilience. According to Buzan (1991), the security of a state becomes inseparable from factors of identity when infrastructural decisions take on existential meaning. This is confirmed by Wrobel (2015), who stresses that energy independence in Central and Eastern Europe is tied to historical trauma and the fear of political domination. For this reason, LNG terminals, wind turbines, and solar parks are described in the media not only as technological solutions, but also as symbols of resistance, independence, and value-driven choice. A Delfi article (April 4, 2023) notes, "*Solar power stations in villages have become a source of community pride. They represent progress and responsibility*." Here, sustainability infrastructure acquires a local identity dimension. It contributes not only to economic security, but also to communal value. In this way, transformation moves beyond an engineering phenomenon and enters the symbolic and cultural domain, establishing energy as part of a discourse where politics, economics, and national self-understanding intersect.

The role of digitalization in strengthening resilience is becoming increasingly important both in media discourse and in academic research. As noted by LRT, "*the resilience of the future will depend on our ability to manage data, optimize systems, and create digital connections*" (LRT.lt, February 12, 2024). This quote highlights that digital technologies and data management are essential components for ensuring the resilience of organizations and societies. Academic literature also emphasizes the importance of digitalization in the context of resilience. Verhoef et al. (2021) argue that digital transformation increases the flexibility of organizations and their ability to adapt to changing conditions, which is a necessary part of resilience. They emphasize that digital transformation allows organizations to respond quickly to external disruptions and to maintain operational continuity. Furthermore, Grigorescu et al. (2023), in their study on regional digital resilience, highlight the role of higher education institutions in fostering innovation and knowledge transfer, which contributes to regions' ability to adapt to digital challenges. They propose the quadruple helix model in which universities, businesses, government institutions, and society collaborate to strengthen digital resilience. Gomber et al. (2018) also emphasize that advanced analytics and digital learning technologies provide insights that help to anticipate risks, develop mitigation strategies, and maintain a high level of resilience. They note that technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence improve risk management and resilience, particularly in the financial services sector. Both media and academic literature stress that digitalization and data management are key factors in enhancing the resilience of organizations and societies. By integrating advanced technologies and promoting collaboration across various sectors, it is possible to build a sustainable and resilient digital infrastructure capable of adapting to changing challenges.

This narrative is often based on metaphorical structures that not only convey informational content but also shape value-based attitudes and mobilize society to take action. Metaphors help the audience understand complex processes related to climate change, energy security, and the green economy, and encourage engagement with the discourse of sustainability (Lakoff, 2014). First, the metaphor "*Green Deal*" (see Table 14) is frequently used to describe the European Union's sustainability strategy. The LRT portal states, "*The European Green Deal is our new growth strategy that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stimulate economic growth*" (LRT.lt, October 10, 2021). This phrase expresses a strategic plan focused on environmental protection and systemic change. The metaphor constructs the pursuit of sustainability as a shared and inevitable process aimed at long-term wellbeing. Second, "*sustainable future*" is a metaphor that provides a moral direction for contemporary decisions by emphasizing responsibility toward future generations. As stated on the Delfi portal, "*Investments in renewable energy sources are essential to ensure a sustainable future for our children*" (Delfi.lt, April 3, 2023). This metaphor functions as a moral argument that appeals to collective responsibility and long-term vision. Third, the metaphor "*energy independence*" is often associated with geopolitical security and identity-related meanings. The 15min portal notes, "*The LNG terminal has become a symbol of Lithuania's energy independence, allowing the country to ensure its energy security*" (15min.lt, May 15, 2022). This rhetorical device not only communicates infrastructural developments but also frames them as strategic actions with symbolic meaning. Fourth, the phrase "*transition to a green economy*" emphasizes the need to transform the economic model. The LRT portal states, "*The transition to a green economy is necessary to reduce the impact of climate change and promote sustainable growth*" (LRT.lt, September 12, 2022). Here, the metaphor is functionalized as a future-oriented process that implies moving away from fossil fuels toward renewable solutions. These metaphors serve not only a representational, but also a performative function. They

do not merely transmit information, but also mobilize, encourage adaptation, and invite engagement with sustainability actions (Couldry and Hepp, 2018; Lakoff, 2014). This shows that the media is becoming an active agent in shaping the discourse of sustainability, reinforcing the map of transformation and ecological awareness in the public sphere.

Table 15. Structural Elements of the Sustainability and Transformation Narrative (LRT, Delfi, 15min, 2020 to 2024)

Structural Features	Description
Core theme	Ecological, economic, and social sustainability as a necessary condition for transformation.
Actors	The state, European Union institutions, businesses, the consumer, nongovernmental organizations.
Plot	Green reforms are implemented, there is a transition to renewable energy, and sustainable practices are introduced.
Temporal dimension	Transformation as a long-term process oriented toward the future.
Value judgment	Sustainability, responsibility, innovation, cooperation, focus on future generations.
Metaphors and rhetorical devices	*"Green deal"*, *"sustainable future"*, *"energy independence"*, *"transition to a green economy"*.
Implied solution	The state and citizens must invest in sustainability and adapt to change.

Source: compiled by the author

The sustainability and transformation narrative in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 is shaped as a strategic discourse that encompasses ecological, economic, and social change. This narrative is characterized by its orientation toward building a long-term vision of the future, where the main actors are the state, European Union institutions, businesses, consumers, and non-governmental organizations who act as co-creators. Through rhetorical devices such as "*green deal*" and "*energy independence*" (see Table 15), a positive and mobilizing model of action is expressed. In the media, it is often presented as an opportunity for change rather than simply as a response to crisis. The value foundation of this narrative includes responsibility, innovation, cooperation, and care for future generations, which enhances its normative power. The sustainability narrative functions not only on the informational level, but also on ideological and cultural levels, encouraging societal transformation through value based and strategic thinking.

In Lithuanian media (LRT, Delfi, 15min) during the period from 2020 to 2024, the articulated discourse of economic security is structured into five main narratives: threat, stability, individual responsibility, enemy identification, and sustainability and transformation. Each of these has a specific semantic, pragmatic, and ideological structure that reflects not only an informational function, but also the shaping of public opinion, emotional climate, and political mobilization. The dominant threat narrative conveys economic insecurity through an emphasis on uncertainty, external risks, and internal vulnerability. These are reinforced by metaphorical structures such as "*economic storm*," "*inflation front*," and "*crisis blow*." The narrative intensifies public anxiety and raises expectations for state intervention. The stability narrative, by contrast, highlights the state's capacity to respond to crises through support packages, the state reserve, or responsible governance. Within this discourse, the media plays a role in reinforcing trust and legitimizing state authority. The narrative of individual responsibility is connected to the expansion of neoliberal ideology. In this framework, the citizen is portrayed as an autonomous subject of economic security who must live within their means, have a financial backbone, or activate the budget circuit breaker. In this way, responsibility for security is shifted from the state to the individual. The enemy identification narrative creates a clear dichotomy of 'us' versus 'them', where the enemy — Russia or internal pro-Russian actors — is framed through metaphors of information war, the internal enemy, or the fifth column. This narrative strengthens national solidarity and legitimizes state security policies. The sustainability and transformation narrative stands out as a positive and normative model of discourse. It emphasizes ecological, economic, and technological resilience as well as the opportunities of a transitional period, inviting society not only to adapt to change, but also to shape it actively. Metaphors such as green deal, sustainable future, and energy independence reinforce the mobilizing power of the discourse. The findings of this research show that the media does not merely transmit information, it also actively shapes the ideological logic of the economic security discourse from signalling threat to encouraging transformation.

Emotional and Semantic Analysis of the Narratives in the Discourse of Economic Security. The discourse of economic security in Lithuanian media is shaped not only through actual economic indicators, but also through emotionally charged linguistic choices that mobilize the audience, reinforce the perception of threat, or conversely, create

a sense of stability. This analysis draws on the insights of Lakoff (2014), Buzan et al. (1998), which emphasize that metaphors and discursive frames are not merely stylistic elements. They structure how the audience perceives reality.

The discourse of economic security in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 is marked by a high density of emotional and semantic markers, especially in topics such as energy dependency, inflation management, military threat, and geopolitical stability. Narrative analysis applied to texts from Delfi, LRT, and 15min reveals a clear correlation between geopolitical events such as the start of the war in Ukraine and the intensification of emotional rhetoric. Emotional analysis shows that dominant emotions include fear, indignation, and patriotism. Delfi and LRT more often employ constructive emotional framing such as strength and unity, while 15min more frequently uses rhetoric of crisis or uncertainty. The semantic map generated using the method of latent semantic analysis allows for the identification of key concepts such as security, aggression, energy independence, NATO, and threat. Semantic associations between economy and defence intensified after 2022, indicating a militarization of the discourse. These findings confirm data from studies on information warfare in the Baltic region, which emphasize that emotional articulation is a strategic media tool used to strengthen trust in national institutions and to promote social cohesion (Cook, 2021).

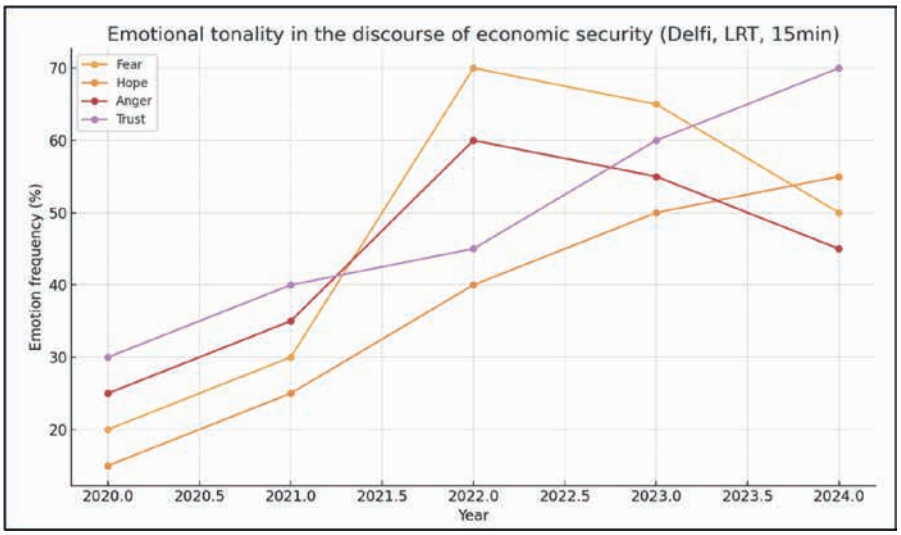


Figure 6. Changes in the Frequency of Emotions in the Discourse of Economic Security in Lithuanian Media (Delfi, LRT, 15min) during the period 2020 to 2024

Source: created using the Python programming language and its Matplotlib visualization library

The chart (see Figure 6) reveals changes in the frequency of emotions in the discourse of economic security in Lithuanian media (Delfi, LRT, 15min) during the period from 2020 to 2024:

- The intensity of fear and anxiety spiked sharply in 2022, associated with the start of the war in Ukraine, but later decreased.
- Trust and hope increased steadily, especially after 2022, indicating a stabilization and more constructive tone in the discourse.
- Anger rose in 2022 but began to decline as the discourse took on a less confrontational nature.

Public communication in contemporary society is inseparable from emotion. The media not only informs but also shapes the emotional climate of society, influencing collective perceptions of threats, political decisions, or social change. According to media studies theorist Gross (2002), emotions can be deliberately regulated or triggered by specific communicative means, especially in the media, where selectively chosen events and their interpretations dominate. Wahl Jorgensen (2020) states, "*The media functions as an emotional infrastructure in which fear is not only reflected but also produced*" (p. 14). Media content, using strong linguistic emphasis, not only conveys information, but also shapes the collective emotional climate.

The media frequently uses constructions that express fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. For example, phrases such as "*inflation front*" (15min, September 27, 2023), "*crisis blow*" (Delfi, September 27, 2022), and "*threatening storm clouds*" (15min, February 17, 2022) portray economic processes as threatening, inevitable, and personally impactful. This creates an emotional atmosphere in which rational evaluation gives way to a desire for security. These texts are often structured in a way that builds emotional tension to a climax, after which a possible solution is presented such as state intervention, a support package, or citizen responsibility. This structure is typical of crisis communication and functions as a symbol of emotional release and hope. One of the clearest examples is a Delfi.lt project on mental health, which states, "*The*

invisible pandemic: a life shattering disorder is hitting harder and harder, the numbers have already reached unprecedented heights" (Delfi.lt, April 28, 2022). The quotes use hyperboles such as "*hitting harder and harder*" and "*unprecedented heights*" that generate a strong emotional reaction. This stylistic approach aligns with the concept of emotional framing described by O'Neill and Nicholson Cole (2009), where information is framed to evoke fear, insecurity, or even guilt. A similar effect is created by 15min.lt messages about the threat of war. One article state, "*Anxiety index survey: 77 percent of Lithuanians feel a direct threat of war even in Lithuania*" (15min.lt, March 14, 2023). Here, the use of a statistical figure (77 percent) acts as numerical dramatization which, according to Wahl Jorgensen (2020), becomes an effective tool for amplifying fear when subjective emotions are supported by supposed objectivity. Another quote from LRT.lt shows how the media conveys institutional assessments: "*Security experts warn that Lithuania faces cyberattacks and must prepare for the worst-case scenario*" (LRT.lt, October 21, 2022). This type of rhetoric such as "*could face*" and "*worst case scenario*" matches the models of risk communication described by Beck (1992), where a persistent sense of insecurity is cultivated in society, even when the actual threat is difficult to define or remains hypothetical. The media constructs the discourse of fear not only with words but also visually. These texts are often accompanied by alarming images such as military equipment, grieving people, or fans wearing masks. Coleman (2012) argues that such visual language strengthens the narrative and affects the reader's emotional experience rather than rational thinking. The expression of fear in the media is not accidental. It is a deliberately applied strategy of emotional engagement. The media, especially Delfi and 15min, use alarming headlines, exaggerated vocabulary, and emotional framing to create tension as a means of retaining audience attention (Wahl Jorgensen, 2020). This mode of expression reflects a deeper paradox of the information society: the more information we have, the more intense the emotional responses to it become.

Anxiety is often linked not to a specific threat but to uncertainty, unpredictability, and the unknown. The portal 15min frequently uses rhetorical questions such as "*Will small businesses survive?"* and "*What awaits the healthcare system?*" thereby implying unresolved issues. According to Beck's theory of the risk society (1992), such phrases reflect structural anxiety that arises not from isolated events, but from ongoing systemic instability. Anxiety emerges as the dominant emotion in 2020 when both health and economic threats were being articulated due to the danger of COVID-19. In public space, anxiety is a unique emotional state tied not so much to a direct threat but to constant uncertainty, waiting, and doubt. Beck's theory emphasizes that the structure of modern society is based on the continuous communication of risks which creates not fear, but rather an atmosphere of anxiety since threats are often invisible, dispersed, and never fully resolved. On the 15min portal, this emotion is frequently conveyed through interrogative constructions that do not offer answers but instead generate further tension. For example, in a 2022 article about inflation, the question is posed, "*Will Lithuania cope with record prices?*" (15min.lt, October 17, 2022). Such questions, although formally neutral, imply doubt and anxiety about the future. This is a typical strategy of what is known as problem framing, where journalistic discourse constructs an atmosphere of uncertainty (Entman, 1993). During the pandemic, anxiety became one of the dominant emotions. The LRT portal wrote, "*Coronavirus changes everything. Will we return to normal life?*" (LRT.lt, January 10, 2021). This example again demonstrates the recurring rhetorical structure, a question without a clear answer. Journalists here are not only conveying a fact about the impact of the virus, but also expressing emotional uncertainty, which, as noted by Wahl Jorgensen (2020), is an emotional companion of social change. Delfi also uses similar rhetoric. In an article about mental health, it states, "*Life after the pandemic: more questions than answers*" (Delfi.lt, March 22, 2023). This formula, questions without answers, reflects what sociologist Ahmed (2013) calls affective insecurity, where texts continually create a sense of waiting and instability, but never fill it with specific content. Another important detail is that the language of anxiety often uses words with vague but strongly negative connotations such as crisis, instability, uncertainty, pressure, tension. For instance, "*Pressure in the labour market is being felt across all sectors*" (15min.lt, September 4, 2023). Here the word 'pressure' conveys an intensifying but unspecified threat. The visual part of journalism also contributes to this effect. Articles about economic uncertainty are often accompanied by photos of empty offices, closed businesses, or worried individuals. According to Coleman (2012), such illustrations reinforce the tone of the narrative and heighten the affective impact of the text on the reader. The expression of anxiety in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 often appears not as a clearly defined threat, but as a rhetorical construction through questions, vague forecasts, and affective metaphors. In this way, the media shapes a long-term emotional background that influences both individual moods and collective public sentiment.

Unlike fear or anxiety, anger in public discourse often has a specific target or culprit. Sociologist of emotion Ahmed (2013) notes that "*anger is a directed emotion that shapes moral boundaries by identifying who has violated a norm and who must be condemned*" (p. 171). In Lithuanian media, expressions of anger are most commonly used in contexts of political or social dissatisfaction. This emotion is conveyed both through criticism of institutions and through quotations of reader voices. On the 15min portal in 2022, an investigation into possible misuse of public funds appeared under the headline, "'*Do they think we are idiots?' — readers outraged over parliamentary spending*" (15min.lt, June 3, 2022). This quote highlights an authentic expression of anger, and its expressiveness, with words like "*outraged*" and "*idiots*,"

allows the media to present emotional disappointment from readers as a socially significant signal. This strategy aligns with what is known as the politics of outrage (Wahl Jorgensen, 2019), in which media use expressions of anger as a tool to mobilize and engage audiences. The targets of anger are often government institutions or their actions. On the LRT portal, a headline reads, "*Teachers warn we are tired of being exploited*" (LRT.lt, September 1, 2023). Here, anger arises from a sense of social injustice and exploitation. As noted by Flam (2005), these themes often create the conditions for collective emotions in public space. The use of the verb "tired" indicates accumulated anger that has grown over time and finally erupts in public statements. An example from Delfi reads, "*After the scandal over doctors' salaries, the prime minister's words provoked even more anger: 'He is mocking us*" (Delfi.lt, January 16, 2023). In this case, the journalistic text conveys not only the presence of anger but also its escalation, as seen in the phrase "*even more anger*," emphasizing emotional intensification. This kind of emotional escalation, as noted by Papacharissi (2015), is typical of digital media, where the expression of anger is often used as a way to energize a message. Anger can also be expressed through irony, sarcasm, and an informal tone. In an article about strikes, the text states, "*For six months they promised a solution, now they offer patience - teachers respond: we have no patience left*" (15min.lt, February 28, 2024). The quote implies an emotional limit that, once crossed, transforms passive frustration into active resistance. This matches Jasper's (2011) concept of moral anger, where people become angry not only due to personal grievances but because their core values are violated. Between 2020 and 2024, anger in the media was not a random phenomenon - it was a strategically constructed emotion often directed at government institutions, injustice, and social inequality. The expression of anger not only gives voice to emotional reactions, but also enables collective action, public debate, and political engagement. The expression of anger varies depending on the editorial stance of the media outlet. Delfi and 15min often draw on opinions from social media or reader comments, quoting emotional statements such as "*People no longer trust the government*" or "*This is a mockery of taxpayers*." Meanwhile, LRT more often channels anger through editorial commentary or analytical articles, as in "*Inaction is the greatest danger in the face of crisis*" (LRT, February 18, 2022). This approach aligns with Habermas's theory of the public sphere (1991), which emphasizes the relationship between rational discourse and emotional indignation as a foundation for political activity.

Although fear, anger, or anxiety more frequently dominate the news stream, positive emotions, especially hope, also hold an important place in media discourse, particularly during times of crisis. According to Nabi (2002), hope encourages people not to react passively to threats, but to actively seek solutions, plan actions, and believe in recovery. On the LRT portal, positive expression is especially visible when discussing sustainable development and economic change. For example: "*The transition to a green economy is necessary to reduce the impact of climate change and to promote sustainable growth*" (LRT.lt, September 12, 2022). This quote reflects an orientation toward the future, optimism, and a long-term goal, which are characteristic semantic markers of hope (Averill et al., 2012). In this way, the media not only acknowledges the problem, such as the climate crisis, but also presents it as solvable, depending on human will and decision making. The discourse of hope is also observed in health-related topics. In a Delfi article about innovation, it is written: "*Scientists in Lithuania are developing a new cancer treatment method that could save thousands of lives*" (Delfi.lt, April 3, 2023). Such texts often convey hope as a rational expectation based on scientific progress. According to Feldman (1988), this is referred to as intellectual hope, where emotional belief is linked to technology, scientific advancement, or collective competence. On 15min, expressions of hope appear most clearly in contexts related to civic engagement and social initiative. For example: "*Despite the difficulties, Lithuanians are volunteering more actively and creating support networks. The pandemic has united them*" (15min.lt, November 10, 2021). This kind of positive message conveys not individual but collective hope — a narrative of community resilience which, as noted by Papacharissi (2015), shapes emotional public spaces based on care rather than solely anger or fear. Another notable case is media communication in the context of war. An LRT article on the reconstruction of Ukraine states: "*Despite the war, Ukraine is already planning a reconstruction strategy. There is belief in the future of democracy*" (LRT.lt, June 30, 2024). Here, hope is articulated as a response to upheaval — not a denial of the threat but a belief in renewal, similar to Frankl's (2004) principle of meaningful suffering. Visually, hope is often conveyed through bright, colourful, and optimistic images such as smiling people, scientists or activists working in green natural settings. This visual language complements the verbal discourse of hope and shapes an overall emotional tone that contributes to informational resilience.

Although the media is often accused of emotional negativity, LRT stands out through its expression of a more positive emotion — hope. Statements such as "*Lithuania withstood the first blow of the pandemic more strongly than its neighbours*" (LRT.lt, May 30, 2021) indicate a deliberate choice to spread optimism. According to Nabi (2002), hope in the media functions as a reinforcer of trust and resilience, especially during times of crisis. This emotion is essential not only for psychological well-being, but also for the political state of society. The expression of hope in Lithuanian media is not accidental. It is used when there is a need not only to inform but also to mobilize society to act and to believe in the future. This is particularly important in crisis contexts, where emotional exhaustion can be alleviated not through calm but through inspiration.

Trust is one of the main pillars of public communication, especially during times of crisis, war, or uncertainty. According to Giddens (1996), trust steps in where there is no possibility of individual control over the situation. It is the stability of action based on dependence on the system (p. 33). In the media, trust is often articulated through confidence in institutions, experts, professionals, or technological solutions. One of the clearest examples is a text published by LRT during the pandemic: "*Eighty-three percent of residents trust Lithuanian doctors. This shows that the health system managed the first wave*" (LRT.lt, May 10, 2021). This message strengthens the image of institutional trust, grounded in empirical data. According to Luhmann (2018), trust is based on the reliability of a functioning complex system. In this context, the media acts as a reflexive mirror of the system that legitimizes or delegitimizes its actors. A 2023 article on the 15min portal stated: "*Even in the context of war, Lithuanians maintain high trust in the army and NATO. This has been one of the most stable indicators since 2014*" (15min.lt, March 22, 2023). This formulation presents trust as a consistent and long-term value that symbolizes the stability of the relationship between citizens and the state. Here, trust is framed not as emotional satisfaction, but as a rational, historically grounded choice, what Misztal (2013) refers to as structural trust. Interestingly, trust can also be articulated through indirect signals. A Delfi publication wrote: "*Vaccination rates are increasing. People are increasingly relying not on rumours, but on doctors' recommendations*" (Delfi.lt, January 28, 2022). This quote shows a shift in the prestige of information sources — a movement from emotional noise to expertise. In this case, trust is presented as a sign of social maturity, connected to the growth of information literacy. The expression of trust is also evident in narratives about civic initiatives and solidarity. LRT reported: "*More and more residents are joining volunteer organizations. Trust in the community is growing*" (LRT.lt, December 14, 2023). Such messages create an emotional background of stability, which, as Putnam (2000) notes, strengthens social capital, people trust each other and thus become more active citizens. From 2020 to 2024, the expression of trust in the media served as an important emotional and political strategy. This made it possible not only to overcome fear, but also to restore a logic of action based on facts, reliability, and collective resilience. As the analysis shows, trust is formed through vocabulary such as stability, reliability, and based on data, expert opinions, and emotional narratives about community and the actions of state actors.

The presented emotional analysis shows that the expression of emotions in Lithuanian media from 2020 to 2024 is not accidental. It clearly correlates with each portal's communication strategy, audience profile, and editorial values. Delfi, which aims to attract a broad audience, more frequently employs dramatization, expressive language, and emotionally charged headlines. Emotions such as fear and anger are most often conveyed through strong metaphors, hyperbole, and the inclusion of emotional reader comments. This creates emotional intensity which, according to Wahl-Jorgensen (2020), becomes the main currency in the attention economy. Meanwhile, 15min stands out for its strategy of contextualizing problems. Emotions here are typically articulated through structural questions, a diversity of opinions, and a focus on causes and solutions. Anxiety, hope, and anger in this portal's discourse are more often linked to an analytical perspective rather than raw emotional charge. This corresponds to Papacharissi's (2015) concept of affective public spheres, where emotions in the media function not as chaotic outbursts, but as mediated reflections on social injustice, political decisions, or the state of society. LRT, as a public broadcaster, adheres to a more restrained and institutionalized model of emotional expression. Here, trust, hope, and rational concern dominate. These are communicated through expert commentary, analysis, and information reliability. The emotional tone is most often stabilized rather than escalated. This aligns with the mission of a public broadcaster to provide objective information that serves the public interest. According to Coleman (2012), such a strategy helps normalize crises and reduce psychological tension in society. These differences can also be interpreted through the theoretical lens of media ecology. Postman (2005) emphasized that each media form creates a distinctive infosphere, meaning not only the content of information but also the field of its delivery, emotional tone, and technological context. Delfi, as a commercial portal, generates an environment of rapid and affective information consumption. 15min, as a hybrid platform combining commercial aims with quality journalism, balances between analytical reporting and emotional relevance. LRT, as a public broadcaster, operates with consistent values and emotional moderation. The expression of emotions in Lithuanian media is strategically regulated. It serves not only to convey news but also to shape the collective emotional climate, which influences civic engagement, political trust, and even social resilience. The media is not only a disseminator of information but also an emotional architect, creating what might be called the affective landscape of society.

Economic issues in the media are more than just the transmission of information. They are constructed as fields of meaning where interpretations, values, fears, and expectations circulate. According to the principles of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013), the media gives meaning to economic phenomena through semantic structures such as dominant vocabularies, oppositions, and recurring narratives, the function of which is to shape the audience's perception of social reality.

An analysis of economic texts on the portals Delfi, 15min, and LRT reveals frequently recurring semantic fields related to representations of economic security, such as:

- Crisis and threat, uncertainty: "*Residents are waiting for a second wave of crisis*" (15min.lt, November 14, 2022), "*World Bank warns: inflation could rise up to 20 percent*" (Delfi.lt, 2022 09 18), "*No one can say what will happen*

in three months" (Delfi, October 1, 2022). These examples reflect the paradigm of risk communication (Beck, 1992), where the economy is portrayed as constantly vulnerable.

- Support and reserves: "*The government introduces a two-billion-euro business support package*" (LRT.lt, December 2, 2021). Such formulations present state actions as a guarantee of protection in the face of economic unrest. This rhetoric aligns with the welfare state protection narrative (Wodak, 2015);
- Responsibility and saving: "*Residents must prepare for harder times. Save and give up unnecessary expenses*" (Delfi.lt, January 9, 2023). This signals a discourse of individual responsibility.

Alongside semantic cores, opposing dichotomies appear that structure the discourse and help to ideologically frame information (van Dijk, 1998). The most common include:

- Security vs. insecurity: "*The Ministry of Finance reassures that reserves are sufficient*" (LRT.lt, March 12, 2023) vs. "*The energy crisis threatens mass bankruptcies*" (15min.lt, October 20, 2022). This is an emotional framing practice where alternative messages are created depending on the source.
- Responsible governance vs. chaos: "*The government has a clear plan*" (LRT.lt, April 6, 2021) vs. "*Uncertainty and wavering over decisions spark panic*" (Delfi.lt, 2022 07 01).
- State vs. citizen: "*Stricter sanctions will be applied for undeclared income*" (15min.lt, January 19, 2024) implies a discourse of control in which the citizen becomes a potential source of risk.

These oppositions shape not only the perspective on economic decisions but also legitimize or delegitimize specific actors or strategies. According to Hall (1997), discourse oppositions help interpret a phenomenon as normal or dangerous, honest or distorted.

The discourse of economic security in Lithuanian media constructs the citizen as both an emotional and moral actor. On one hand, the citizen is positioned as a potential victim, experiencing "*blows*" and suffering from the "*storm*." On the other hand, they are given responsibility to adapt, plan, save, and anticipate. The emotional burden here is linked to a sense of individual guilt and duty - if one fails to cope with the crisis, it implies a lack of responsibility.

Metaphors also play an important role in shaping emotional impact. In the three main groups (see Table 16), the most frequent metaphors identified are:

- military metaphors: inflation front, defence plan, strategic reserves, etc.
- natural disaster metaphors: economic storm, avalanche, blow, etc.
- physical impact metaphors: crisis blow, punch to the gut, disrupted balance, etc.

The use of metaphors strengthens the perception that economic insecurity is a physical, bodily, and personally affecting threat that not only informs but also mobilizes.

Table 16. Analysis of Economic Security Metaphors

Type of Metaphor	Examples from the Media	Function in Discourse
Military metaphors	"*The inflation front is approaching dangerous limits*" (Delfi.lt, July 4, 2022); "*Economic defence plan*" (LRT.lt, December 11, 2022); "*Strategic reserves*" (15min.lt, January 3, 2023)	Mobilizes; creates a logic of threat; justifies control measures
Natural disaster metaphors	"*An economic storm hit the markets*" (15min.lt, March 18, 2023); "*The inflation avalanche reached Lithuania*" (Delfi.lt, August 30, 2022); "*Price blow*" (LRT.lt, May 5, 2023)	Depoliticizes; presents crises as natural phenomena; weakens the discourse of responsibility
Physical impact metaphors	"*Crisis blow to the gut*" (15min.lt, September 22, 2023); "*Disturbed balance*" (Delfi.lt, February 10, 2024); "*The economy stumbles after a blow*" (Delfi.lt, February 10, 2024)	Strengthens emotional identification; creates the image of a physical threat; reinforces empathy

Source: compiled by the author

The analysis of economic discourse shows that the media not only reports facts, but also actively shapes meaning through semantic fields, oppositions, and narratives. The emotional and semantic analysis of economic security narratives reveals that media discourse functions not only as a channel of information, but also as a tool for emotional management. Through metaphors, semantic cores, and emotional rhetoric, the media constructs both the image of economic

insecurity and structures civic expectations. In this way, the media becomes a significant discursive space where collective economic self-understanding is shaped.

This part of the analysis presents a detailed thematic and emotional discourse study of the three main Lithuanian news portals: Delfi, LRT, and 15min. It provides empirical support for the media's role in emotional framing on the topic of economic security. Based on the principles of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, van Dijk), affective media theory (Papacharissi, Wahl Jorgensen), and media ecology (Postman), various emotional tones, semantic cores, discursive oppositions, and visual templates were identified. Changes in the frequency of emotions (see Figure 6) were revealed through quantitative analysis, supplemented by qualitative research on semantic fields. Each identified emotional component of discourse such as fear, anxiety, anger, trust, and hope were linked to a specific media strategy and communicative purpose.

This subsection identifies emotional strategies, semantic cores, metaphors, and narratives that support the role of the media as a builder of emotional architecture. These range from mobilizing fear-based discourse to narratives that promote hope and resilience. The subsection serves as an empirical bridge between theoretical models of media power presented in the earlier chapters, and their concrete manifestations in Lithuanian media practice.

Visual Representations of the Economic Security Discourse. The period from 2020 to 2024 in Lithuania was marked by an increased intensity of the economic security discourse in the media, driven by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war against Ukraine, and economic pressure from China. These challenges encouraged the media not only to inform, but also to shape the public perception of economic security through various visual means. Visual representations in the media are a key element of discourse that shape both the information itself and the emotional structure of the message. This aspect becomes particularly prominent during periods of crisis, conflict, or social uncertainty. As noted by Coleman (2012), visual content is not merely a supplement to textual information. It actively shapes emotional resonance, which influences how viewers interpret and evaluate what they see. In this context, it is essential to analyse how different media portals like Delfi, 15min, and LRT use visual strategies to convey themes of economic security, emotional tone, and narratives of institutional trust.

Studies of visual elements in communication increasingly fall under the scope of visual discourse analysis, an interdisciplinary method that makes it possible not only to describe the content of images, but also to reveal their symbolic, ideological, and affective potential (Machin, 2023; Rose, 2022). According to Pauwels (2006), visual narratives act as the core of discourse. They convey deeper collective meanings than individual textual units because they combine aesthetic, semantic, and emotional dimensions. This is especially relevant in economic security discourses, where visual material serves not only to illustrate but also to reinforce communication. Images help intensify the emotional weight of the message being conveyed. On the portals Delfi, 15min, and LRT, illustrations are often used with intense affective charge: empty store shelves, stern faces, military figures, or deserted cityscapes. Such visual rhetoric acts as a symbolic articulation of threat (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). According to Wahl-Jorgensen, the media functions as an emotional infrastructure where fear and uncertainty are not only reflected but actively constructed and transformed through symbolic signs and visual codes. One example is a 2023 visualization published by 15min.lt about inflation, which used the symbolic image of a "*price avalanche*": falling coins above empty human hands. This visual does not merely convey informational content, but also creates an emotional background tied to helplessness. Another example is the LRT article titled "*Is a recession coming?"* (LRT.lt, October 14, 2023), illustrated with an image of an empty supermarket shelf. This visual metaphor evokes associations with economic insecurity, and reinforces the impression that crisis is inevitable. See Figure 7.



Figure 7. Visual Motifs of the Economic Security Discourse in Lithuanian Media (simulated collage)

Source: Created with generative AI based on a ChatGPT prompt, May 5, 2025

According to Ahmed (2013), emotions "*stick to objects*" – empty store shelves become a sign of fear. The Delfi.lt article "*Inflation has emptied our pockets: what else can we still save?*" (Delfi.lt, January 4, 2023) features a photo of a worried elderly man standing at a checkout with only a few items in his hands (see Figure 10). This visual presents the face of economic pressure while simultaneously implying an emotional narrative of vulnerability. The image serves an affective function – it generates empathy and social concern, while also contributing to a climate of structural anxiety (Coleman, 2012). For example, in a Delfi article from 2022 about the energy crisis, a photo showed an elderly woman dressed in black sitting in the cold next to an unheated radiator (Delfi.lt, November 14, 2022). The image conveys not only factual content but also a strong emotional signal – economic insecurity becomes visually tangible through human suffering. This kind of imagery strengthens the written message about the need for action and mobilizes empathy and concern. Another Delfi.lt article from 2022 on the energy crisis was illustrated with a sombre image of an elderly woman sitting in darkness by candlelight (Delfi.lt, December 14, 2022). This visual choice (see Figure 7) not only complements information about rising energy costs, but also intensifies the emotional impact, the viewer experiences an empathetic reaction to social injustice. The visual codes communicate cold, loneliness, and injustice – emotional meanings that text alone cannot convey. In a 15min.lt article published on January 20, 2023, discussing the effects of inflation, an image features product price tags with red "*sale*" signs alongside a reference to the "*psychological blow*" to household budgets. This visual metaphor not only illustrates rising prices but also symbolizes aggressive economic pressure (see Figure 7). As Machin (2023) notes, such visuals employ "*commercial semiotics*" to create not just an informational message but also a physically felt impression.

One of the main features of visual militarization in Lithuanian media is that even neutral topics are illustrated with images that convey emotional tension or symbolic threat. For example, in the 15min article "*Is mobilization approaching? What the national defence plans reveal*" (15min.lt, December 1, 2022), the illustration shows a Lithuanian soldier with a serious expression standing near military equipment at a base. Although the text discusses preventive measures, the image implies military tension. This visual choice creates an emotional atmosphere aligned with the practice of "*symbolic threat articulation*" – where even neutral news is visually framed as dangerous (Papacharissi, 2015). Images not only intensify the emotional weight of the texts, but also shape how the audience perceives economic, military, or social threats. Visual language becomes part of affective discourse, where emotion is not a consequence but a deliberately constructed outcome. The analysis of visuals also reveals a militarized imagery, especially after 2022 when the war in Ukraine began. Images featuring NATO symbols, armed forces, or armoured vehicles have become common even in economic news related to security guarantees or budget allocations. Such visual codes strengthen collective identification and foster trust in state institutions (Buzan et al., 1998).

An analysis of visual strategies across different media outlets reveals a clear direction in militarization narratives – images serve as a tool of communication through which the priority of national security is reinforced. In the Delfi article "*Defence funding increases: how much does security cost?*" (Delfi.lt, March 6, 2023), the featured image shows uniformed soldiers marching in front of Lithuanian and US flags. Although the topic concerns budget decisions, it is visually framed as a matter of strategic alliance reliability. In a 15min publication titled "*Energy independence – not only an economic but also a defence issue*" (15min.lt, May 9, 2023), a photograph shows armoured vehicles driving alongside a gas pipeline. This synthesis of infrastructure and military power conveys a security narrative on the visual level – as if economic assets must be physically defended. In the LRT article "*NATO brigade in Lithuania: a political signal or real protection?*" (LRT.lt, November 28, 2022), the image shows armoured transport at the Kėdainiai training ground marked with a NATO symbol. The image immediately suggests not only military readiness, but also a systemic vision of international cooperation in ensuring security. Another example is the Delfi photo feature "*Iron Wolf exercises: where the economy meets security*" (Delfi.lt, October 15, 2022), which includes images of soldiers near railway infrastructure – visually implying that even logistics is considered a strategic defence point. Finally, the LRT report "*Defence industry in Lithuania: can we become a regional hub?*" (LRT.lt, February 22, 2024) presents an image of an ammunition production line assembled under national symbols. In this way, even industrial economics is visually militarized, shaping a collective narrative of security through manufacturing capability and state preparedness. These visuals serve not only to inform but also to establish political meaning – they align with what Buzan et al. (1998) define as a "*securitization act*," where specific phenomena are framed as threats that justify extraordinary measures. Visual decisions become an integral part of this process, giving concrete form to abstract security concepts and mobilizing viewers for emotional support.



Figure 8. Visual Codes of Militarized Discourse in Lithuanian Media (2020–2024)
Source: Created with generative AI based on a ChatGPT prompt, June 10, 2025

The figure titled "*Visual Codes of Militarized Discourse in Lithuanian Media (2020 to 2024)"* (see Figure 8) illustrates the key affective and semantic directions that dominated the media when discussing economic security during times of crisis and geopolitical tension. Images showing armed soldiers, NATO symbols, armoured vehicles, or deserted spaces function not only as documentary tools, but also as ideological representations that activate emotional resonance and strengthen collective identity. As Barthes (1977) notes, photography is "*not objective truth, but a coded message that naturalizes ideology*" (p. 45). In Lithuanian media, such images often frame even economic news through a security lens. For example, a Delfi article on the defence budget includes an image of soldiers marching alongside US and Lithuanian flags, with the headline "*Defence funding is increasing: what is the cost of security?*" (Delfi.lt, March 6, 2023). Here, the image does not simply inform about budget decisions but instead constructs an impression of strategic alliance reliability and national strength. In an LRT publication titled "*NATO Brigade in Lithuania: Political Signal or Real Protection?*" (LRT.lt, November 28, 2022), the visual of an armoured vehicle at a military training ground supplements the text, which states, "*This presence sends a message to both partners and adversaries – Lithuania is not alone.*" This shows that visuals not only inform but also symbolically reinforce collective security and support from Western allies. A 15min article on energy independence features a soldier standing next to a gas pipeline ("*Energy independence is not only an economic but also a defence issue*," 15min.lt, May 9, 2023), and the text explicitly states, "*Energy has become a strategic asset whose protection is not only an economic but also a military necessity*." This case effectively reflects the securitization theory by Buzan et al. (1998), which explains that discourse can frame any issue as a threat that demands extraordinary protective measures. Emotional visual communication operates through the mechanism of identification. In a Delfi photo feature on the "*Iron Wolf*" military exercise ("*When the economy meets security*," Delfi.lt, October 15, 2022), soldiers are shown next to railway infrastructure. This montage symbolically illustrates that even transport infrastructure becomes a security object. It conveys what Papacharissi (2015) calls "*visual mobilization*," where an emotional image activates collective responsibility. In an LRT article about the defence industry ("*Can We Become a Regional Centre?"* LRT.lt, February 22, 2024), an ammunition assembly line is shown with Lithuanian national symbols. This type of visual rhetoric conveys not only economic development, but also the state's capacity for defence – the economy is visually militarized. These examples show that militarized visual codes in Lithuanian media serve a multi-layered function. They inform, mobilize, symbolically affirm threats, and justify state responses. In this way, the media not only shape public opinion, but also participate in constructing national identity, political loyalty, and emotional resilience.

In 2023, an article published on the LRT portal about controlling inflation was illustrated with a photograph showing a cabinet meeting, where the flags of the European Union and Lithuania are visible in the background (LRT.lt, June 22, 2023). Visually, this signals institutional stability, solidarity with the EU, and reliability, while simultaneously subduing the threat of crisis through the image of rational governance. According to van Leeuwen (2008), such images shape a discourse of authority, in which the state is portrayed as a competent force for managing threats. In another LRT.

lt publication about the increase in the Lithuanian Armed Forces budget (April 10, 2023), a photo was used showing the NATO flag, tanks, and Lithuanian soldiers standing in orderly formation. This image articulates defence readiness, trust in institutions, and a visual representation of the state's capacity to protect its citizens. As Barthes (1977) notes, this is not merely information but a myth that conveys collective codes of trust, strength, and identity. Another example comes from a 2023 article in 15min about public sentiment in the context of war threats ("*Lithuanians fear more than they hope*," March 20, 2023), which features a photograph of a column of war refugees at a border. Visually, this evokes associations with instability and vulnerability, which, according to Bradley (2021), is a characteristic of emotional visual communication, it is not words but images that embody the feeling of insecurity. This visual choice conveys the humanitarian aspect of the crisis and intensifies the emotional tone. These examples show that visual elements do not act as passive additions to content, but as active instruments of meaning-making. Visual analysis makes it possible to identify the underlying cultural codes and ideologies that shape collective understandings of economic security. As Perloff (2021) observes, in today's media environment visual narratives often become more powerful than textual ones, they shape identities, mobilize action, and structure political imagination. For this reason, visual elements have become an integral part of the discourse on economic security.

According to Barthes (1977), a photograph is not a document of truth but a cipher of cultural code that conveys ideological content. In the context of Lithuanian media, this code often aligns with the logic of national resilience, rational governance, and collective control. This is particularly evident on the LRT portal, where visual material is closely tied to institutional communication – illustrating conferences, expert consultations, and officials' speeches. Such images not only convey information but also function as a form of naturalized ideology, in which rationality and control are perceived as self-evident responses to crisis. For example, in the LRT article "The President: Lithuania must be prepared for prolonged tensions" (LRT.lt, February 18, 2023), the published photograph depicts President Nausėda next to the Lithuanian flag, speaking in front of the "*State Defence Council*" logo. This kind of visual symbolism conveys strategic stability. In the article "*Experts discussed threat management as the most important thing is to avoid panic*" (LRT.lt, October 20, 2022), an expert is shown a table, microphones, serious faces, and a discussion format. The photograph implies the dominance of rational discourse. In this context, the media not only transmits facts, but also visually reinforces an atmosphere of order, analysis, and competence. Another example, "*Defence and energy remain priorities in budget discussions*" (LRT.lt, November 7, 2023), shows the Minister of Finance speaking from a podium with numbers and graphs displayed on a screen. The visual context conveys expert rationality rather than an emotional reaction. These examples demonstrate that the LRT portal uses visuals as discourse stabilizers. In contrast to commercial media such as Delfi or 15min, where affective dramatization dominates, the public broadcaster constructs visual narratives based on structured institutional actions (see Figure 9). In this way, photographs become a "*cultural lexicon*" (Barthes, 1977), through which the state's rationality, strategic governance, and restoration of emotional balance are communicated. Clear differences in visual expression emerge across the portals. Delfi and 15min more often employ contrasting, emotional, and dramatic imagery such as emptiness, shock, or protests, whereas LRT prioritizes a more restrained visual style – official portraits, state institutions, and neutrally stylized graphics. These represent two opposing directions in media representation: affective dramatization and institutional rationality. The emotional scene, a stern or worried human face, conveys anxiety, anger, or fear. This reflects the tendency of commercial portals (Delfi, 15min) to rely on visual shock for emotional impact. Meanwhile, codes of institutional trust, such as a minister with a graph on screen or expert discussions, are characteristic of LRT's style. According to Barthes (1977), this constructs a "*naturalized myth of rationality*." Perloff (2021) notes that the public broadcaster is more likely to use stabilizing visual narratives, while commercial media images create what he calls a "*density of emotions*." This comparison reveals that the image is not a neutral medium. It shapes the viewer's relationship with the message, the perceived threat, and institutional actors. These differences reflect the principles of media ecology developed by Postman (2005), where each media environment creates its own information field, an informasphere, that regulates both the content of information and its emotional expression.

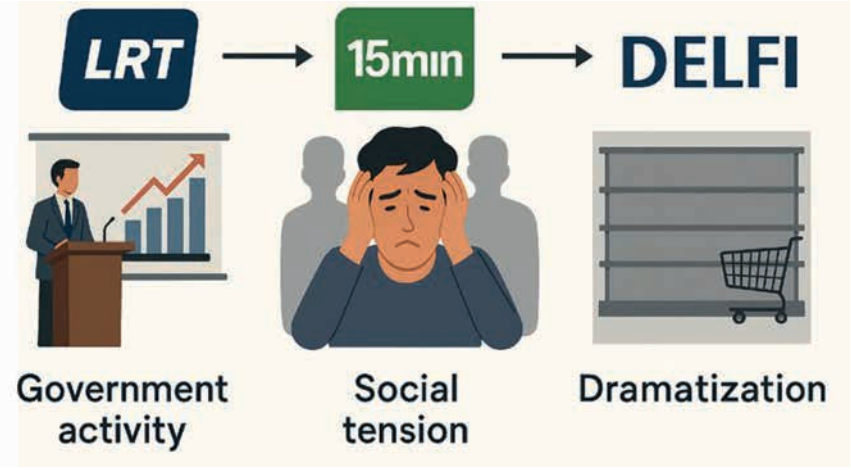


Figure 9. Distribution of Visual Representations in Lithuanian Media (2020–2024)
Source: Created with generative AI based on a ChatGPT prompt, June 10, 2025

The visual quote table (see Figure 10) presents examples of semantically significant excerpts from media content and contextualizes their visual representation by highlighting their affective impact. According to Barthes (1977), an image is inseparable from cultural code. It does not convey objective reality but instead delivers an ideological message. In this table, visual fragments become symbolic codes of fear, uncertainty, or trust. Pauwels (2006) notes that visual media enables the quoting of not only texts but also emotions. This is precisely what occurs when a textual quote is paired with a specific visual form. As Perloff (2021) argues, visual quotes amplify a message through a recognizable image that embeds emotional experience into collective memory.



Figure 10. Visual Quotations: Articulation of Emotional Narratives in the Media.
Source: Created with generative AI based on a ChatGPT prompt, May 5, 2025

The visual analysis of economic security discourse reveals that in Lithuanian media from 2020 to 2024, visual elements served not only as illustrations, but also as active tools for shaping semantic and emotional meaning. Visual codes, ranging from dramatized emotional portraits to images of institutional decision-making, functioned as cultural symbols that structured narratives of threat, trust, or vulnerability. On the portals Delfi and 15min, affective dramatization dominated, while LRT followed a line of visual rationality that reinforced the image of state stability and control. These tendencies indicate that visual codes are an integral part of the economic security discourse through which the media not only reflects but actively shapes public understanding of threats and possible responses. In this way, the third objective of the monograph has been fulfilled: an analysis of the discourse on economic security narratives in Lithuanian media has been conducted, highlighting their visual aspects and the differences between public and commercial media strategies.

This provides not only empirical support for theoretical reflections on media power but also allows for an assessment of how the media functions as an ideological filter that shapes collective risk imagination, public trust, and political stability.

The analysis of economic security discourse in Lithuanian media between 2020 and 2024 was based on the methodological framework of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, Wodak, Jäger), supplemented by quantitative data and semantic narrative analysis. The research revealed how the media outlets LRT, Delfi, and 15min construct the concept of economic security, the dominant ideological and emotional narratives within it, and how these are visually represented. A typology of five economic security narratives was developed, grounded in semantic, pragmatic, and institutional aspects of discourse. The identified narratives such as threat, stability, individual responsibility, enemy identification, and sustainability and transformation were classified according to thematic cores, dominant actors, plot structures, and value judgments. The threat narrative, which was the most frequent (43 articles out of 112, or 38.4 percent), is framed through themes of risk, vulnerability, and geopolitical tension. The stability narrative (24.1 percent) highlights the state's readiness to respond to economic challenges through support packages, the importance of strategic reserves, and responsible budget management. The individual responsibility narrative (16.1 percent) reflects the logic of neoliberal ideology, in which security is transferred to the realm of citizen competence. The enemy identification and sustainability narratives make up a smaller but significant part of the discourse; they shape representations of external enemies (such as Russia) and long-term systemic readiness for economic transformation. The emotional and semantic weight of the narratives was examined in detail. An analysis of evaluative elements (see Table 8) and metaphorical models (see Table 9) showed that economic security in the media is constructed through emotional vocabulary and visual imagery. The threat narrative features militarized metaphors ("*the front line of inflation*"), natural disaster metaphors ("*economic storm*"), and physical metaphors ("*crisis blow*") that generate a sense of insecurity and mobilize audiences. In contrast, the stability narrative is formed through calming language ("*state reserve*", "*support package*") that conveys the state's capacity to act systematically and with social responsibility. The individual responsibility narrative is dominated by moralizing metaphors ("*live within your means*", "*financial backbone*"), which imply that economic well-being depends on personal choices rather than structural decisions. The emotional coding of narratives operates as part of the ideological discourse, allowing the media not only to inform, but also to cultivate behavioural norms, incentives, and social responses. The visual analysis of economic security narratives demonstrates how visualizations function as a discursive tool, enhancing narrative credibility, the impression of objectivity, and emotional impact. This is accompanied by semantic analysis, which revealed that visual expression through colour, proportion, and symbols often reinforces and amplifies textual narratives, particularly in the context of threats or measures to ensure state stability. This analysis shows that the media functions not only as a transmitter of information, but also as a constructor of visual ideological discourse. In summary, economic security in Lithuanian media from 2020 to 2024 is not presented as a neutral or homogeneous discourse, but as a semantically and ideologically multifaceted phenomenon. Narratives of threat, responsibility, and trust are constructed through symbolic, emotional, and visual codes that not only convey information but also mobilize the audience, reinforce behavioural norms, and elevate expectations of the state. These narratives form the core of media discourse through which economic uncertainty, government agency, and the role of citizens in ensuring security are articulated.

The Impact of the Economic Security Discourse on Public Communication and Perceptions of Social Security

Economic Security Discourse as a Framing Tool in Public Communication. The discourse of economic security in the media functions as a tool for structuring information and meanings, it not only conveys economic issues but also frames how they are understood, what threats are highlighted, and which responses are considered legitimate. In public communication, discourse defines what can be spoken about, how it is labelled, and which semantic emphases are deemed legitimate. The discourse of economic security shapes a semantic and value-laden field in which economic problems, crises, and solutions acquire specific content, tone, and interpretative direction. Framing in this context is understood as a process through which social reality is structured via linguistic, symbolic, and visual means. As Entman (1993) notes, "*framing means selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation*" (p. 52). In this sense, the media not only transmits information, but structures the audience's worldview.

Two theoretical models are most often applied when analyzing political communication in the media: framing theory and discourse theory. Although these approaches are often interlinked in academic literature, Roslyng and Dindler (2023) examine how they differently conceptualize media power and political expression. Framing theory analyses how issues are interactively formed, how they are presented in media, and how they are interpreted in the political decision-making space. While some studies grounded in framing theory address aspects of structural or hegemonic power, its tendency to focus on overt interactions limits sensitivity to systemic exclusion. In contrast, discourse theory, based on a post-foundational understanding of politics, views media discourses as antagonistic, mutable, and open to transforma-

tion. It expands the understanding of media power by incorporating subversive positions outside hegemonic structures. It is argued that both framing and discourse theories carry theoretical and analytical implications in media research, and that theoretical sensitivity increases the analytical distinctiveness of these approaches (Roslyng & Dindler, 2023).

The framing function is reinforced by metaphors used in the media (e.g., "*economic storm*," "*inflation front*," "*crisis blow*"), which translate abstract economic processes into sensory, emotional, and visual contexts. These metaphors are not neutral - they frame economic challenges as natural disasters or battles requiring preparation, sacrifice, and victory. Lakoff (2014) asserts that metaphors are not merely stylistic devices but fundamental structures of political imagination, shaping how people understand the world and what kinds of decisions they expect.

Metaphors play a crucial role in structuring the discourse of economic security in the media. Analysis of the economic security discourse in Lithuanian media shows that natural disaster metaphors are widely used and significantly impact audience emotions and decision-making. For example, in a Delfi article titled "*Inflation Blow: How to Survive an Expensive Winter*" (December 15, 2021), inflation is depicted as an unexpected blow that, like a natural force, reduces consumers' purchasing power and creates a general sense of uncertainty. Similarly, the LRT.lt article "*Crisis Blow: State Budget Reform as a Response to Economic Instability*" (March 15, 2022) employs rhetoric that portrays the economic crisis as an uncontrollable force capable of "*striking*" the entire economy, emphasizing the need to respond quickly to economic challenges. Additionally, in the 15min.lt article "*Business Warnings: An Economic Storm is Coming - Prepare for Surprises*" (January 25, 2023), a storm metaphor is used, comparing market fluctuations to a natural storm and urging actors in the business sector to take urgent precautionary measures. Finally, the Delfi article *"Investment Storm: How Do Investors Respond to Uncertainty?"* (May 10, 2024) presents an analysis of the investment context, in which the term *"storm"* symbolizes the recurring economic fluctuations that shape investor anxiety and prompt calls to strengthen market resilience. The discourse of economic security frames economic conditions and shapes public perception: it determines which challenges are considered most significant, who is held responsible for them, and which values should prevail in decision-making.

In the article titled "*Investment Storm: How Investors React to Uncertainty?"* (May 10, 2024), the investment context is analysed, where the metaphor "*storm*" symbolizes the constantly rising economic fluctuations that generate investor anxiety and highlight the need to strengthen market resilience. The economic security discourse describes economic situations and shapes public perceptions: it defines which challenges are considered most important, who is responsible for them, and what values should dominate decision-making.

Scheufele (1999) defines framing as "*the process by which communicators, consciously or unconsciously, construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be interpreted by others in a particular manner*." This reveals the dual nature of framing as both a strategy of message construction and a model of information reception and interpretation. Scheufele distinguishes between media frames and audience frames, indicating that discourse structures are shaped both in production and reception. For instance, in the Delfi article "*Energy Price Spike: Businesses Seek Solutions*" (November 10, 2022), the frame of a "*spike*" conveys a sudden and unexpected rise in prices. This metaphor presents the increase in energy costs as a sudden and dangerous event that could have serious consequences for businesses. This is an example of media-level framing aimed at emphasizing the seriousness of the situation and prompting readers to reflect on potential consequences. Meanwhile, at the audience level, readers, depending on their experience and values, may interpret this information differently. For example, a business owner facing rising costs may perceive the "*spike*" as a threat to their business stability, while a regular consumer may see it as a sign of upcoming price increases and the need to save. This example illustrates how media framing and audience interpretations interact to shape public perceptions of economic security. Scheufele's model allows us to see that the media and the audience are not merely one-way transmitter and receiver of information, but rather interacting structural poles where framing works bidirectionally. Therefore, in analyzing the discourse of economic security, it is essential to consider both content formation and how it is received, reinterpreted, and integrated into broader societal meaning-making.

Iyengar's (1994) typology of episodic and thematic framing helps further explain how the media structures the discourse of economic security. Episodic framing presents issues as individual, isolated events or situations, whereas thematic framing treats them as part of broader, structural, and systemic phenomena. This distinction is relevant when analyzing the media's role in interpreting economic threats: episodic narratives often personalize the issue, eliciting emotional responses, but may obscure deeper causes. For instance, the Delfi.lt article "*Explained Why Services in Lithuania Are Getting More Expensive than Goods: Not Just Inflation to Blame*" (April 24, 2023) uses episodic framing, discussing isolated examples of service price increases, offering citizen observations, and referring to specific sectors (e.g., hair salons, car repair shops), while avoiding systemic analysis. In contrast, the LRT.lt article "*Lithuania Does Not Stand Out in Terms of Price Spikes, but Inflation Persists - Why*?" (September 14, 2023) applies a thematic frame: inflation is analysed at the macroeconomic level, comparing data across countries, evaluating fiscal policy, and including expert commentary on causal relationships. Such analysis allows the audience to reflect on deeper processes and thereby avoid emotional

oversimplification. Therefore, the difference between episodic and thematic framing directly affects how the audience interprets economic security issues, which is either as individual experiences or as systemic challenges.

Another important aspect is highlighted by Chong and Druckman (2007), who argue that the influence of framing on public opinion depends on context and competition between alternative frames. According to them, "*a frame in communication can be defined only with reference to a specific issue, event, or political actor*," meaning that framing is not a static phenomenon, it is a dynamic and interactive process taking place within ongoing discursive interaction (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 112). Various actors such as politicians, experts, journalists compete over which interpretation will become dominant, and audience reactions depend on the structure of this competition and its interaction with the audience's preexisting attitudes. This theoretical assumption is illustrated by the LRT.lt article "*Experts: Lithuania's Energy Security has Improved, but Prices and Risks Remain*" (April 21, 2023). Here, two competing frames coexist: on one hand, expert rhetoric constructs a frame of stability and progress, emphasizing the success of infrastructural decisions and diversification of supply sources ("*Lithuania avoided dependence on a single supplier*"); on the other hand, a frame of threat and uncertainty highlights high energy prices, long-term geopolitical tensions, and consumer vulnerability ("*risks remain, especially due to market fluctuations*"). These frames generate semantic tension in the same discursive space, requiring the audience to choose which interpretation to prioritize. Under such conditions, the framing of economic security becomes a political technology that shapes public evaluations, emotions, and strategies of action. As Chong and Druckman note, competing frames can "*cancel each other out or reinforce existing attitudes, depending on the audience's political orientation, information engagement, and trust in the information source*" (ibid.). This is particularly relevant in a democratic society, where public discourse acts as an ideological space, and frames serve to structure public imagination regarding threats, responsibility, and the legitimacy of decisions.

The historical foundation of the framing concept was developed by Goffman (1974), who in his classic work Frame Analysis defined frames as "*interpretive schemas that enable individuals or groups to identify and classify events and facts.*" According to Goffman, frames are essential units for organizing everyday social experience, they allow reality to be "*sorted*" into meaningful categories, providing order to social life and indicating what kind of action or evaluation a phenomenon requires. His theoretical basis became foundational for contemporary studies in communication, sociology, and cultural studies, examining how social actors construct meanings in various contexts. In today's media landscape, Goffman's (1974) frame theory remains relevant, especially in analyzing both textual and visual or symbolic elements of discourse. A strong example is the 15min.lt article "*Crisis Is Not the End: Another Shock May Be Coming - Where Might Prices Rise?"* (February 16, 2024), which includes a visual illustration of power lines against a dark sky with lightning effects. Such visual coding activates the natural threat frame, in which the economic phenomenon is presented as an uncontrollable force akin to a natural disaster. Applying Goffman's logic of interpretive schemas, this visual structure helps the audience perceive the topic as "*dangerous*" or "*unmanageable*" and primes an emotional response pattern in advance. These frames convey meaning and organize social experience, in Goffman's terms, allowing individuals or groups to "*place*" a phenomenon into a familiar category, from which behavioural strategies or value positions can be derived. In this case, the visual metaphor reinforces the textual rhetoric and serves as a rapid cognitive cue that structures the understanding of economic security problems through emotional interpretation.

This brings us back to Goffman's idea that an interpretive schema is not merely a passive filter but an active model of social action. These studies show that Goffman's theory remains vibrant, yet today it is interpreted in an expanded way. Frames are structures of cultural meaning and products of the media ecosystem, shaping both individual and collective worldviews.

Recent research reveals that even subtle differences in framing can have significant impacts on public opinion. According to Berk (2025), "*discourse frames, even when facts are identical, cause significant differences in respondents' opinions about the legitimacy of decisions.*" This is especially relevant when discussing economic security: the frames presented in the media not only inform but also establish emotional attitudes, moral positions, and political priorities. For example, in the LRT article "*Šimonytė: The State Budget had to be Drafted as if in Wartime*" (December 7, 2023), the financial decisions are contextualized through a crisis mobilization frame. This rhetorical frame, which compares budget planning to wartime governance, implies a logic of exceptional circumstances: the need for sacrifice, unity, and the suspension of normal processes. Such framing enhances the legitimacy of decisions, as it justifies even strict or unpopular measures by appealing to collective responsibility and survival logic. In contrast, in relation to the same budget, some commentators on Delfi used frames of inaction and fragmentation, emphasizing that the budget measures were inadequate for the scale of inflation or failed to address social injustice. Thus, with the same facts we have the budget draft and inflation indicators as different frames construct distinct evaluative contexts: for some, it represents necessity and responsibility; for others, political inertia and inefficiency. These examples clearly show that the discourse of economic security is not neutral but rather it is an ideologically and rhetorically structured field in which frames significantly influence how citizens assess the legitimacy, moral weight, and political effectiveness of decisions.

In addition to textual constructions, visual elements in the media also play a critical role in shaping the discourse of economic security. For instance, the illustration accompanying the LRT article "*Šimonytė: The State Budget had to be Drafted as if in Wartime*" (December 7, 2023) features the Prime Minister with a serious, focused expression, with national flags in the background and a neutral or dark colour palette - signalling seriousness, tension, and the weight of responsibility. The visual frame reinforces the textual one, the "*wartime*" metaphor is visually anchored. This allows the reader to associate budget decisions with survival, defence, or national stability. In this way, the mobilization security frame is activated, strengthening the sense of necessity and inevitability. Visual rhetoric can also be used to construct polemical or critical frames. In commercial media (e.g., Delfi or 15min), articles about budget deliberations often include illustrations showing lines of people at social services offices, empty wallets, or downward-trending graphs. These images reinforce frames of uncertainty, decline, or exclusion, which create a different emotional logic than the state's communication frames, clearly, they are visual tools meant to influence perception without direct evaluation. Visual elements in public communication function as additional (sometimes even primary) meaning structures, relying both on rational interpretation and rapid emotional reaction. In this way, the economic security discourse operates on a multi-layered level: through text, imagery, and emotional semiotics.

The impact of the economic security discourse can be asymmetrical: even when economic indicators are objectively improving, the tone of public communication may remain pessimistic, creating a distorted collective assessment of the economic situation. This disproportion between the actual situation and its discursive representation may be influenced by editorial choices, political agendas, market pressures, or algorithmic information logic. Asymmetric framing becomes particularly evident before elections or during budget negotiations, when the media intensifies communication about uncertainty, risk, and threat. For instance, even if Lithuania's GDP is growing and unemployment remains stable, some outlets feature headlines such as "*Price Collapse Continues: Can Residents Survive Another Winter?"* or "*Finance Ministry Playing with Fire*." Such framing operates on an emotional level, eroding trust in decision-makers and potentially provoking pessimistic public attitudes even when indicators are objectively favourable. This may create a feedback effect on the economy, it affects consumer behaviour, investor expectations, and institutional trust. If public communication is dominantly negative, people may start saving more, consuming less, and businesses may delay expansion plans, thus reinforcing a "*self-fulfilling crisis*" mechanism. In this way, the media, even without intent to manipulate, becomes an active structurer of economic behaviour. This phenomenon is known as negativity bias in media framing, the tendency to highlight negative aspects as more engaging to audiences. Over time, this can distort public opinion and limit rational decision-making at both voter and policymaker levels.

Wicke and Bolognesi's (2020) study showed that "*rhetorical constructions not only convey information but act as emotional keys, mobilizing particular public responses*" (p. 235). In the context of economic security, this effect is realized through metaphors ("*storm,"* "*crisis front*"), oppositions ("*us / them*," "*government / citizen*"), and other linguistic models that structure public communication not only semantically but also affectively. These rhetorical constructions create cognitive frames within which information is both interpreted and emotionally evaluated. Metaphors like "*storm*" or "*exploding inflation*" present economic processes as sudden, threatening, and uncontrollable events that endanger the community. Meanwhile, oppositional frames (e.g., "*the government isn't helping*," "*business is greedy*") not only define the distribution of responsibility but also embed evaluative hierarchies in which some groups are positioned as sources of the problem and others as victims. Emotional framing intensifies especially during times of crisis. For example, during the 2022 energy crisis, the media often used phrases like "*shock may strike in winter*" or "*Lithuanians' test - will we survive without gas?"* which not only informed about challenges but also mobilized emotions of anxiety, stress, and defensiveness. This creates an affective background in which decisions become more acceptable if they align with dominant emotional attitudes. Rhetorical frames are inseparable from political consequences, they can legitimize unpopular decisions ("*crisis justifies restrictions*"), reinforce polarization ("*we are responsible, they are dangerous*"), or encourage symbolic solidarity ("*we all need to tighten our belts*"). These linguistic models do not merely transmit information about the economic situation—they shape its emotional logic, determining how society perceives risk, institutional trust, and the legitimacy of action. In this way, the media becomes not only a producer of information but also of emotions, and frames act as both semantic and affective structures shaping the collective sense of security or its absence.

The discourse of economic security in the media functions as a powerful tool of public communication framing that not only delivers information, but also shapes societal understanding of the economic situation, potential threats, and preferred models of response. It acts as a cognitive schema that frames various economic phenomena through recurring semantic structures: uncertainty, crisis, threat, resilience, stability. These concepts become not just components of information but semantic anchors that establish certain problems as "*real threats*" or "*societal priorities*." Thus, discourse constructs not only the content of messages but also the modes of perception for the audience.

The discourse of economic security also includes normative content; it conveys not just what is happening but how things ought to be. For example, when discourse emphasizes "*responsible governance*," "*support packages*," or "*state*

reserves," it creates an image of the state as a caring and rational actor. This narrative is clearly embodied in the LRT article "*Navickas: The State Cannot Withdraw from the Economy - We Have Had and Will Continue to Have Our Role*" (September 2023) which stresses the active role of the state in stabilizing the market, providing financial assistance, and ensuring long-term security. This narrative reinforces the frame of state guardianship, in which the government is seen as the primary guarantor of economic order and citizen welfare. Simultaneously, when discourse includes appeals to "*citizen preparedness*," "*financial backbone*," "*responsible consumption*," or the importance of "*private savings*," it activates a frame of individual responsibility, portraying the citizen as an active co-creator of security. For example, in Delfi publications, rhetoric often encourages people to "*make smart financial decisions*," "*create personal budgets*," or "*avoid excessive consumption*," especially during periods of economic volatility. In this way, citizens are positioned as responsible subjects, security is not only granted to them but demanded through behaviour. Between these two frames, state responsibility and individual responsibility, social tensions emerge: how much should the state care for its citizens, and how much should individuals adapt? These discourse components often act as normative stances that define what is considered "*proper behaviour*" and what is seen as social risk. Thus, economic security communication is not merely informative but also regulatory. It shapes social expectations and the boundaries of political action.

Discourse frames also determine the rhythm of public communication. During crisis situations, narratives of threat prevail; rhetoric of stability strengthens during political cycles or efforts to justify decisions; while the individual responsibility frame is activated during economic austerity or reform periods. This discursive dynamic shows that public communication is not spontaneous, it depends on entrenched linguistic models, media logic, and ideological contexts. According to Entman (1993), "*the media tends to overrepresent threats during crises, and during periods of stability, it shifts to normalization and restoring political trust."* This is confirmed by Shumov's (2012) analysis of media responses to crises, which showed that media attention follows an emotional cycle-from shock and dramatization to rationalization and allocation of responsibility. During periods of economic decision-making, especially amid reforms or budget consolidation, public discourse often activates a neoliberal frame of individual responsibility, encouraging citizens to "*adapt*," "*be responsible*," or "*assume risks*" (O'Connor, 2017). Meanwhile, before elections or on national holidays, narratives of collective stability and "*social cohesion*" intensify this, according to Hallin (1989), is part of the so-called "*window of consensus discourse*," which helps maintain symbolic state power. These studies suggest that public communication about economic security is shaped through consistent discursive phases that reflect not only the logic of events but also institutionalized media templates of interpretation. Thus, the media not only reacts to economic developments but also structures the rhythm of their perception creating sequences, escalating, calming, legitimizing or delegitimizing decisions in a particular linguistic and emotional form.

The economic security discourse in the media shapes public understanding. It defines which challenges are considered most important, who is responsible for them, and what values should dominate in decision-making. The discourse of economic security is not merely a mode of information transmission - it is a normative, emotionally structured system in which the media and the audience jointly construct images of threats, responsibility, and desirable responses. The structure of discourse determines not only how economic situations are understood but also how individuals, politicians, and society as a whole respond to them.

The Ideological Impact of Discourse: From Information to Emotional Mobilization. The discourse of economic security in the media is not limited to the delivery of information, it also performs ideological and emotional functions by structuring not only how economic phenomena are spoken about, but also how they are evaluated, experienced, and which behaviours are considered normatively desirable. This discursive power is realized through frames, metaphors, moral oppositions, and emotional-semantic structures that not only shape meanings but also legitimize certain strategies of action. The ideological impact of discourse implies that language reinforces certain values, power relations, and worldviews that become "*natural*" or "*self-evident*" (Fairclough, 2013; Žižek, 2009). For instance, when the LRT portal published "*Šimonytė: the State Budget had to be Prepared as if for Wartime*" (December 7, 2023), a militarized frame is used that presents budget policy as a survival strategy allowing unpopular decisions to be justified through the rhetoric of "*necessity*" and "*unity*." In doing so, a model of state guardianship is conveyed, where citizens are urged to submit to the "*logic of economic warfare*." Conversely, the Delfi portal frequently employs moral oppositional frames, such as in the article "*The Government Does Not Help: Citizens Must Save Themselves from Inflation*" (2023-10-21), emphasizing the state's inadequate response and shifting responsibility to individuals. Thus, the discourse constructs not only factual content but also normative evaluations: who must act, who is to blame, and who is the victim. According to Fairclough (2003), language here functions as a tool of social control, not only reflecting reality but also modelling it through naturalized meanings. From Žižek's (2009) perspective, ideology operates as an "*unconscious fantasy*" that enables society to maintain stability even under structural instability the discourse of economic security becomes a kind of "*ideological glue*" that binds collective meanings and emotional resonance. In this way, economic communication becomes part of political imagination, shaping not only decision-making priorities but also what is considered "*realistic*," "*inevitable*," or "*morally acceptable*."

The dominant position of the threat narrative in discourse suggests that economic security is often perceived through the logic of crisis thinking-economic problems are portrayed as dangers that must be recognized, overcome, or endured. This logic is closely tied to the discursive concept of security, as defined by scholars of the Copenhagen School. As Buzan argues, security is not merely an objective condition but a "*socially constructed process*," in which a threat is named so that it can be "*securitized*," i.e., to justify extraordinary political measures (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998). In the discourse of economic security, this logic manifests through metaphors that enhance emotional impact—such as "*inflation front*," "*budget blow*," or "*market storm*," which not only visualize the situation but also create psychological intensity, mobilizing a collective response. For example, in the article "*Business Warnings: An Economic Storm is Approaching - Prepare for Surprises*" (15min, January 25, 2023), the metaphor of a natural disaster is used, creating an impression of an uncontrollable event and encouraging actors to remain vigilant, thus reinforcing a sense of impending crisis. In another case, LRT's article "*Energy Shock: How to Survive the Coming Winter?"* (November 20, 2022) describes inflation and rising energy prices with the "*shock*" metaphor, depicting it as a sudden and destructive phenomenon. These metaphors not only articulate the threat, but also stimulate social-emotional responses such as anxiety, insecurity, and a sense of urgency. Thus, the discourse becomes not only informative but also mobilizing, promoting a specific emotional discipline. According to Buzan et al. (1998), securitization allows a topic to be moved from "*normal politics*" into a "*state of emergency,"* where decisions are seen as necessary, and criticism is potentially deemed irresponsible. In the economic context, this can justify tax reforms, spending cuts, or strict fiscal policies through the threat narrative. The threat discourse functions as a rhetorical structure of security that transforms economic circumstances into a space of social mobilization, promoting collective preparedness, anxiety, or tolerance of uncertainty. As Buzan et al. (1998) note, security in discourse is often constructed as an emotional-political regime where extraordinary decisions are made.

This emotional tension created through discourse serves not only an informational but also a justificatory function, the media-entrenched background of uncertainty legitimizes certain political actions like economic restrictions, fiscal decisions, or state intervention in the market. When economic problems are presented as unexpected, unavoidable, and dangerous, it creates a foundation for the "*there is no alternative*" (TINA) rhetoric, in which proposed measures are treated as rational and necessary. The emotional level of discourse in this case functions as an instrument encouraging society to accept even unpopular decisions. For example, when the Delfi article "*Ministry of Finance: Budget Discipline is Necessary in the Face of Rising Inflation"* (December 2023) states that fiscal constraints are "*inevitable*," it establishes a predisposition that there are no alternatives, and that criticizing such decisions may be seen as irrational or even dangerous. This aligns with the notion of "*emotional securitization*" (Nyman, 2021), where images of threats evoke anxiety, fear, or even moral obligation, preparing the audience for the acceptance of policies. The communication of uncertainty becomes a precondition for the "*justification*" of political actions, as it creates a "*state of misfortune*" in which action is presented as a response to an extreme situation. The media often legitimizes not only the necessity of action but also the morality of the actors i. e. state decisions are portrayed as caring and responsible, while questioning them may be seen as antisocial or irresponsible behaviour. Thus, the media acts as an executor of symbolic power, normalizing specific modes of action and emotional responses. This mechanism is particularly evident in crisis communication, when public space is filled with rhetoric about the need to unite, sacrifice, and "*go through this ordeal together*" not as a choice, but as a moral imperative.

The ideological impact of discourse also manifests in mechanisms of responsibility shifting public media more frequently reinforce the image of state rationality and planning, whereas commercial media emphasize the ideology of individual responsibility, preparedness, and financial self-governance characteristic of the neoliberal state (Brown, 2015; Rose, 1999). This means that different discursive fields shape unequal distributions of responsibility: articles on public broadcaster LRT often emphasize the state's role in stabilizing the economy, for example, in "*The State is Ready to Cushion the Energy Price Shock*" (October 12, 2022), the metaphor of "*cushioning*" suggests an active, strategically thinking state actor. In contrast, Delfi and 15min narratives strongly highlight individual responsibility: for instance, in "*Expert Advice: How to Prepare for Financial Shocks*" (Delfi, November 4, 2023), the emphasis is on building savings, controlling consumption, and "*being ready for any situation*." This frame corresponds with the logic of neoliberal governance, in which citizens are treated as autonomous, calculating subjects responsible for their own financial security (Rose, 1999). Brown refers to this process as "*neoliberal subjectivation*," in which the citizen is re-educated into a quasi-entrepreneurial individual, where security becomes the result of personal investment, and failure. This is an indication of moral deficiency (Brown, 2015). Thus, discourse shapes a moral structure of responsibility, and the state becomes either a caretaker or a manager, and the citizen a disciplined risk manager. This ideological differentiation enables justification for both state intervention and its limitation, depending on the dominant media narrative.

The individual responsibility narrative, especially prominent in commercial media, adopts a moralizing tone: the citizen is framed as someone who "*must prepare*," "*save*," "*manage their risk*." This rhetorical narrative is grounded in normative values such as self-governance, responsibility, competence which serve as moral benchmarks for judging suc-

cess or failure in the face of economic shocks. Such discourse structure individualizes systemic threats and depoliticizes structural insecurity, transforming economic security into a matter of personal adaptability. This reflects the principles of neoliberal governance logic, in which security is treated as individual responsibility, and risk as a natural life aspect that must be learned to manage (Foucault, 2008; Martin, 2007). This logic allows systemic inequalities to be portrayed as the result of "*insufficient preparation*" or "*wrong choices*." For example, in the 15min article "*How to Prepare for the Coming Winter: 5 Tips from Financial Experts*" (October 5, 2023), readers are encouraged to "*draft a strict budget,*" "*cut unnecessary expenses*," and "*plan heating costs in advance*." This rhetorical frame does not problematize inflation, income inequality, or energy dependency as structural issues but redirects attention to the consumer's moral qualities whether they are rational, attentive, and disciplined enough. In this way, the discourse constructs the ideal of a "*responsible subject*," who must "*appropriately*" respond to challenges or else accept blame for failure. According to Isin (2004), such a governance form establishes the notion that those who fail to behave according to required norms are held accountable for their situation. This discursive strategy not only shifts responsibility away from political structures to individuals but also conceals the very conditions of inequality under which decisions are made. Such a discourse structure individualizes systemic threats and depoliticizes structural insecurity by turning economic security into a matter of personal capacity.

At the same time, the discourse strengthens collective identity boundaries, particularly through enemy-identification narratives: "*we*" (the state, society, consumer) versus "*they*" (Russia, China, global corporations, disinformation sources). This allows for discussions not only about economic but also cultural and value-based threats, mobilizing society both informationally and ideologically. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue, discourse shapes social reality through antagonism where collective identities are solidified only in opposition to what is defined as "*the other,*" "*the threat*," or "*a source of disorder*." These antagonistic boundaries are not "*accidental*", they are the condition for forming hegemony, where certain narratives become dominant while others are marginalized. This logic is evident in articles about energy security, where, for example, LRT texts often use formulations like "*disconnecting from Russian resources*" or "*independence from authoritarian regimes*." For instance, the 2023 LRT article "*Lithuania Abandons Russian Gas – A Value-Based Choice*" uses value-laden rhetoric linking energy decisions with political autonomy and moral positioning. This framing portrays energy independence not only as an economic but also as a civic and cultural act, mobilizing a "*us vs. them*" structure, where "*we*" are resilient, conscious, European. Thus, energy dependency becomes a moral-political issue. Similarly, the 15min article "*Is It Worth Buying a Cheap Chinese Inverter?*" (May 10, 2023) associates an economic decision with national security logic, implying that consumer choice has geopolitical consequences. In another 15min article, "*What's Behind Cheap Goods from China?"* (April 12, 2023), Chinese manufacturers are framed as a source of risk not only in terms of quality, but also in terms of geopolitical loyalty. Here, the consumer is encouraged to be both a rational economic agent and a responsible citizen who "*does not support authoritarian regimes*" through their purchases. In the structure of discourse, such narratives define who "*we"* are independent, intelligent, security-minded citizens and "*they*" are untrustworthy, manipulative, foreign subjects. A similar logic applies to the discourse of information security. In the Delfi article "*Front of the Disinformation War Against Lithuania: How Russia Manipulates Our Daily Lives*" (August 17, 2023), sources of disinformation are identified as aggressors, while media users are described as front-line defenders. This metaphorical language further reinforces a sense of collective involvement, where ensuring security becomes the responsibility of the entire society. This is a classic example of the "*discursive struggle for hegemony*" analysed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), the enemy is identified and symbolically fixed as a source of destabilization against which normative unity is mobilized. This symbolic antagonism reinforces collective identity and legitimizes not only economic but also cultural, political, and security-related decisions. These oppositions in discourse are often not rationally argued but instead rely on affective and symbolic codes: "*threat to values*," "*attack on our way of life*," "*informational invasion."* Such labels enable the stigmatization of "*the other*" and strengthen "our" identity as progressive, democratic, and resilient. In this way, hegemonic discourse creates a field of economic decisions, an emotional-political territory where resistance to alternatives is presented as patriotically and morally unacceptable. From the perspective of hegemony theory, as Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue, these are not neutral choices, hegemonic discourse defines the entire field of meaning, and through the construction of the "*enemy*," becomes a tool in both state and media power dynamics.

The discourse of economic security in the media does much more than merely provide information, it shapes public imagination, mobilizes emotions, structures moral judgments, and reinforces ideological norms. The analysis reveals that economic insecurity is represented not only through objective indicators, but also through symbolic, metaphorical, and affective imagery that allows the crisis to be articulated as a collective threat. Dominant narratives such as those of threats, enemies, individual responsibility, or state guardianship mobilize action or justify passivity, shape public expectations, and define the boundaries of acceptability. Crisis rhetoric operates as a tool of securitization, enabling the legitimization of "*extraordinary decisions,*" while emotional engagement becomes a basis for moral dichotomies: "*responsible citizen*" versus "*unprepared consumer*," "*our values*" versus "*external threats*." The discourse also constructs collective boundaries, "*us*" versus "*them*", through which both geopolitical (Russia, China), economic (global markets, cheap goods), and

informational (sources of disinformation) threats are recognized. Thus, the media acts not only as a transmitter of information, but also as a constructor of the social world, reinforcing hegemonic systems of meaning through language and imagery. The analysis of the economic security discourse reveals how public communication merges informational, ideological, and emotional components, transforming structural issues into moral questions of decision-making. This discourse both conveys and shapes reality also modelling citizens' reactions, expectations, boundaries of responsibility, and collective identity in the context of security challenges.

The Role of Economic Security Discourse in Shaping Public Perceptions of Security. The discourse of economic security does not merely frame media content or emotional reactions, it also performs a deeper function: shaping a collective perception of security, which becomes the foundation for public behaviour, political expectations, and social trust. This collective sense of security acts as a psychological and cultural filter through which society processes political decisions, evaluates institutional actions, and constructs logics of trust or distrust. For instance, recurring media frames such as "*uncontrolled prices*," "*energy pressure*," or "*inflation shock*" gradually operate not just as information, but as social norms people begin to perceive their everyday realities through these discursive filters, even when the objective situation may not match the level of panic. In this way, a generalized emotional climate is formed, where a sense of insecurity becomes normalized, and social mobilization is driven by fear rather than trust.

In contemporary security studies, collective security perception is not seen as an objective state but as a discursive construct, shaped by social, cultural, and communicative factors. Buzan et al. (1998) argue that "*security happens*" when a certain phenomenon is publicly articulated as an existential threat, and the audience accepts this as a legitimate concern. Security here is understood not as a factual condition but as a process enacted through language and institutional channels. Balzacq (2005) expands this notion by proposing a pragmatic theory of securitization, which emphasizes audience response. According to him, a threat becomes real not when it is named by a political actor, but when it is accepted by society through cultural meanings, emotional resonance, and media channels. Thus, the collective perception of security becomes the outcome of shared imagination, constructed not only by political actors but also by journalists, experts, and cultural institutions. Meanwhile, Wæver (1995) introduces the concept of desecuritization - the process by which issues are returned to the "realm of normal politics." This highlights the dynamic nature of collective security perceptions. They can intensify, diminish, or change depending on communication strategies and public discourse structures.

Critical security studies, particularly in the work of Browning and McDonald (2013), offer a broader conception of security, not just as a reaction to threats, but as the creation of conditions for safe living. Collective security perception here is considered an empathetic, ethically grounded process that should focus not only on protection but also on citizen empowerment. Gordonker and Weiss (1993) add another dimension, analyzing collective security on an international level by emphasizing mechanisms of solidarity, mutual responsibility, and trust. In their view, security depends not only on formal agreements but also on shared understandings of what constitutes a threat and who is responsible for responding.

Recent scholarly literature further enriches this concept with perspectives from emotional securitization and effect theory. Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2020) stress that emotions are not merely companions to security discourses but are core structural elements through which audiences accept or reject securitizing acts. Similarly, Bratton (2022) analyses post-pandemic security discourses as fields of emotional resonance, where security is articulated through feelings of uncertainty, hope, or guilt. Pantti's (2019) research on media's affective power shows how emotions become central engines of crisis communication narratives.

Discourse analysis as a method allows us to uncover how collective perceptions of security are formed by analyzing the performativity of language. Essentially, how linguistic acts reinforce hegemonic meaning frames, normalize certain emotional responses, and structure social reality through the symbolic field of dominant discourses. Thus, analysis focused on economic security discourse in the media reveals not only the informational content of reports but also the deeper structures that influence social trust, political attitudes, and societal resilience. These theoretical foundations allow us to understand that the perception of collective security is not merely a reaction to actual events, it is culturally and politically constructed through symbolic discourses, media rhetoric, emotional codes, and institutional communication. Discourse both conveys and creates security perceptions through symbolic codes, emotions, and normative evaluations. In doing so, it shapes the collective imagination, rendering security a culturally defined and dynamically changing phenomenon. This makes economic security discourse not only an issue of analytical policy but also an expression of public power.

Discourse impact is especially strong during times of crisis, when the interpretation of information becomes more important than the information itself. At such times, when institutions and politicians seek to secure public support for their decisions (e.g., budget cuts or subsidy allocations), the media becomes not just a channel but an active co-creator of those decisions. In this context, collective security perception does not merely reflect the environment, it also transforms it by motivating or suppressing social action and shaping expectations of what is "*normal*" versus what is a "*crisis*." Ultimately, shaping collective security perception is also a question of power relations. Who has the authority

to define what constitutes a threat, who is granted authorship in public discourse, and which institutions are seen as competent to "*ensure security*." Security perception in this context is not an objective fact but a discursive construct. How people imagine and feel security depends on how it is discussed in the public sphere, which metaphors are used, who is identified as a threat, and who as a protector (Buzan et al., 1998). For instance, when the media announces a budget as a "*wartime decision*" (LRT, December 7, 2023), it not only informs but also frames the situation as extraordinary, demanding unity and trust in the government. Such rhetoric activates the securitization mechanism, where the state becomes a "*provider of protection*," and the public - a "*vulnerable audience*" whose emotional state is regulated through language. Discourse determines which emotions are deemed appropriate (anxiety, hope, responsibility), which decisions are seen as justified (fiscal discipline, subsidies, control), and which criticisms are framed as dangerous or irresponsible. Thus, security perception becomes a product of public communication: it's not that "*the economy is worsening*," but that it is "*threatening*," "*unstable*," or "*requiring response*." These discourse constructions can either strengthen institutional trust or amplify a sense of insecurity, depending on the narrative direction and emotional tone.

Public communication discourses about economic security operate through semantic codes that define not only threats but also norms like what constitutes a "*strong economy*," a "*safe state*," or a "*resilient citizen*." These codes become reference points against which both personal situations and national policies are evaluated. When the media consistently conveys narratives about crises, instability, or external threats, audiences gradually accept these frames as a normalized interpretation of reality. According to Fairclough (2013), discourse functions as a "*form of social practice*" that creates and sustains hegemonic regimes of meaning, with language serving as a tool to normalize understandings of the world.

When the media consistently conveys narratives about crises, instability, or external threats, audiences eventually adopt these frames as standard interpretations of reality. Iyengar (1994) distinguishes between thematic and episodic framing strategies. The former structures a problem as systemic, while the latter frames it as an issue of individual responsibility. Both frames shape how economic security is interpreted: as a collective state task or a personal challenge for the citizen.

At the same time, an emotional level of perception also takes shape through repeated signals of threat, the audience learns to react not only rationally but also emotionally: anxiety, insecurity, and distrust become part of the collective atmosphere. According to Beck (1992), this is typical of the so-called "*risk society*," where the feeling of insecurity does not stem from objective conditions, but from the continuous symbolic uncertainty broadcast through the media, becoming part of everyday life. Here, the media performs a "*risk amplification*" function, it constantly reminds the public of dangers that are often immeasurable but become psychological states.

This is clearly visible in Lithuanian media discourses. For example, in the LRT article "*Energy Shock: How to Survive the Coming Winter?"* (November 20, 2022) not only is a natural disaster metaphor ("*shock*") used, but also survival semantics ("*how to survive*"), which creates an existential atmosphere of insecurity. Such language communicates more than just information about prices; it prepares the public emotionally for stress. As a result, the audience may begin to assess economic realities not by actual changes but by the dominant narratives in the discourse.

Similarly, the Delfi article "*Inflation and Crisis Deepen: Fewer Ways Out*" (February 10, 2023) persistently reinforces the idea of worsening conditions. Phrases like "*no solution*" or "*the government has no plan*" create an atmosphere of helplessness. These semantic structures diminish public trust in institutions. According to Beck (1992), this illustrates how risk becomes not only an economic but also a political crisis of confidence.

The opposite effect can be observed in articles where the media presents the state as prepared. For example, the LRT article "*The State is Ready to Cushion the Energy Price Shock*" (October 12, 2023) employs the metaphor of "*cushioning*", this conveys a sense of control, stability, and management. Such phrasing strengthens the impression of trust even under difficult circumstances. In this case, communication creates not an atmosphere of fear, but one of reliability, where the state appears as an active and capable actor.

Therefore, the emotional aspect of discourse becomes a key factor shaping not only the public's emotional climate but also its assessment of whether institutions are trustworthy. Not coincidentally, risk communication research emphasizes that the most important element is not the objective risk but how it is conveyed (Breakwell, 2000; Nyman, 2021). Thus, the media becomes not only a transmitter of information, but also a tool of emotional engineering, constructing collective states from anxiety to trust, from helplessness to mobilization.

The discourse of economic security also helps to standardize public imagination about security. Although individuals experience different risks, job loss for some, inflation or instability of the pension system for others, the public sphere presents these phenomena through shared symbolic narratives that create a collective horizon of problem interpretation. Discourse becomes both a channel of communication and a structural mechanism that organizes how society perceives reality. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse reflects the world and actively shapes it, producing "*dominant regimes of meaning*" through which people understand their situation. The construction of collective reality occurs through

recurring semantic forms. For example, phrases like "*living from pay cheque to pay cheque*," "*the working poor*," or "*we must prepare for a hard winter*" frequently appear in various Lithuanian media publications. In the Delfi.lt article "*The Story of an Unemployed Man: Everything Collapsed in a Month*" (October 15, 2023) an individual experience is linked to a broader narrative about the state's inability to protect its citizens, thereby creating a sense of collective insecurity. Wodak and Meyer (2009) point out that discourse "*encompasses structures of knowledge and power that allow certain narratives to dominate while others are marginalized*." Thus, the dominant frames of economic insecurity in public communication such as crises, uncontrolled inflation, or opaque government policies become inseparable from the collective imagination. Such imagination, according to Žižek (2008), is not a conscious reflection but a "*phantasmatic structure*" that helps people make sense of complex phenomena. For instance, the LRT article "*Inflation Weighs Not Only on Wallets but also on Mental Health*" (December 2, 2022) analyses how rising prices affect not only purchasing power, but also the psychological resilience of society. This analysis is based on the idea that economic security is conveyed not as a set of numbers, but as an emotional-social phenomenon. This allows different experiences like individual stress, job loss, business failure to be unified and transformed into a "*shared condition*" that must be addressed collectively by the state or society. Thus, the understanding of security becomes a culturally defined, discourse-structured phenomenon sustained through public communication.

The discourse of economic security in the public sphere functions both as an informational system and as a powerful tool for shaping social imagination. The discourse establishes collective narratives in which economic threats are not only identified but also given meaning through metaphors, emotional codes, and semantic structures. Through these discursive filters, the audience interprets current events, constructs its sense of security, levels of trust, and expectations toward the state. As evidenced by both theoretical sources (Fairclough, Buzan, Balzacq, Beck) and empirical examples from Lithuanian media, security in public communication is not an objective or static category, it is a dynamic and culturally mediated process. This discourse can strengthen trust in institutions and mobilize citizens or, conversely, foster distrust, apathy, and fear. In this way, the discourse shapes not only what society knows about the economy, but also what it feels, expects, and legitimizes. This makes it a key element of security culture in contemporary public communication.

Conclusions

The concept of economic security in scholarly literature is regarded as complex and multidimensional, encompassing not only economic but also social, political, and informational aspects. Different theoretical approaches allow for the phenomenon of economic security to be analysed from various perspectives and form the basis for defining it as a condition in which the state and society retain the capacity to respond to economic threats, preserve essential functions, and ensure their development in the long run. Assessing economic security involves various criteria, starting with classic macroeconomic indicators such as GDP, inflation, unemployment, or national debt and extending to more complex indexes incorporating social, energy, and institutional factors. Recently, increasing attention has been paid to subjective perceptions of security based on public trust in institutions, social resilience, the stability of the information space, and access to vital resources. In national policy, economic security has become a strategic priority closely linked to other dimensions of security such as military, energy, information, and social. In Lithuania's case, it is clearly identified in key political documents and associated with ensuring state independence, internal stability, and long-term development.

The developed theoretical foundation of media power, combining Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and the approaches of other discourse theorists as Laclau & Mouffe, Van Dijk, Wodak, and Jäger has revealed that the media is not a neutral channel of information transmission. Rather, the media functions as a structure of ideological production that articulates and reinforces hegemonic discourses on economic security. These discourses not only represent economic threats but also create normative judgments, shape a collective emotional field, and legitimize certain political decisions as rational or inevitable. The methodology of empirical analysis was based on a multi-layered discourse analysis model i.e., CDA, the discourse-historical approach (DHA), and Van Dijk's cognitive perspective, which enabled the study of how public and commercial media structure narratives of economic security. Different types of media play varying ideological roles: public media tends to support pluralism and reflexivity, while commercial media promotes polarization and a consumer-based perception of risk. In this way, the methodological model addresses the theoretical objective, providing a foundation for empirically identifying how perceptions of economic security are constructed through discourse.

An analysis of economic security narratives in Lithuanian media (LRT, Delfi, 15min) from 2020–2024 revealed five dominant narratives: threat, stability, individual responsibility, enemy identification, and sustainability. Quantitative analysis (112 articles) showed that the threat narrative constituted the largest share (38.4%), significantly dominating the others. The empirical data suggest that:

- Thematically, the discourse is dominated by topics of uncertainty, economic shocks, external threats, and internal vulnerabilities, especially in the context of energy, inflation, and geopolitical tensions.
- Emotionally, the discourse is infused with feelings of insecurity, anxiety, responsibility, and mobilization.
- Semantically, consistent oppositions were identified ("*crisis/stability*," "*us/them*," "*responsibility/dependency*"), which help articulate ideological conflicts and identities.
- Visually and rhetorically, narratives are constructed through metaphors (e.g., "*economic storm*," "*inflation front*," "*crisis blow*"), which facilitate political mobilization and serve as cognitive schemas for the media audience.

Public media (e.g., LRT) tends to articulate narratives of stability and state responsibility, while commercial media (Delfi, 15min) more frequently constructs a discourse of individual responsibility based on neoliberal ideology. The enemy identification narrative intensified especially after 2022, combining information threats, military metaphors, and images of civilizational clashes. This analysis demonstrates that media discourse on economic security is not neutral - it operates as an ideological mechanism shaping citizens' perceptions of security, responsibility, and threat. In this way, the media becomes an active shaper of economic and political imagination, and narratives become tools for structuring not only information but also emotional and social realities.

The discourse of economic security in the media functions as a powerful tool for structuring public communication, informing the public about economic developments and shaping the collective perception of societal security. This discourse operates through metaphors, frames, and emotional codes that reinforce not only cognitive, but also affective reactions to economic phenomena. Framing strategies such as threat narratives, individual responsibility, or state guardianship frames determine how society perceives risk, evaluates institutional decisions, and chooses behavioural strategies. Economic security in public communication is both an objective condition and a discursively constructed phenomenon that transforms structural problems into moral, ideological, and emotional judgments. Thus, discourse becomes a tool for shaping behavioural norms and collective identity, exerting a long-term influence on decision-making in democratic societies and security policy.

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