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Estonia's comprehensive approach to national defence: origins and dilemmas

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Abstract: This study aimed to offer an in-depth insight into intellectual dilemmas associated with a comprehensive approach to national defence using Estonia as an example to demonstrate that comprehensive approach in itself may not be enough to feel safe and secure. The authors focused on two specific theoretical questions. First, how security threats are determined in Estonia, including the impact of such a phenomenon as macro-securitization? Second, how various levels of comprehensive approach relate to each other in the way that a shared security culture will be created? In this way, the aim of this article was not only to shake the foundations of national defence in Estonia but also to contribute to the improvement of the current model to ensure that it actually works in practice.

Keywords: Comprehensive security; Estonia; resilience.

1 Introduction

Next to the promotion of international security cooperation, a comprehensive approach to national defence,¹ based on resilience and deterrence, is regarded as one of the essential foundations of Estonia's defence policy. Since Estonia's national defence strategy stipulates that national defence can no longer be limited to military defence alone, military forces shall be combined with non-military capabilities. National defence and the corresponding preparations are considered to be the tasks of many different institutions and people from the public and private sectors, including civil society (National Defence Strategy, 2011, 2017).

The emergence of Estonia's comprehensive approach is perhaps best visible when comparing the last two National Security Concepts where the concurrence of security areas with ministerial division of responsibilities has been replaced by a wide task-based approach (National Security Concept 2010, 2017). The 2017 National Security Concept also introduces for the first time the concept of resilience which surfaces prominently throughout the document and is elaborated in a separate sub-chapter (National Security Concept 2017).

The two key concepts that the security and defence policy documents of Estonia rely on are whole of government and whole of society (National Security Concept 2017, 2), bringing together the two essential elements of the comprehensive approach paradigm and the idea of resilience. It is important to realize that these new conceptual imports are relatively well received by the society. The idea that national defence should be a joint task of the entire society is also highly supported in Estonia – according to the recent public opinion survey from March 2018; 78% of the respondents approve this view and only 6% oppose it (Kivirähk, 2018). Therefore, the expectations of Estonians are running high with regard to comprehensive national defence model, thereby demonstrating also the volitional resilience of the bulk of the population. As will be argued, such a high support for national defence can be read as a result of securitization. Thus,

¹ Hereby terminologically referring to the most commonly used explanation of comprehensive approach as a “coordination or interaction between various actors and organisations with the aim of generating coherent policy and action during periods of crises or disaster or in a post-conflict environment” (see, e.g. Hull, 2011, p. 5).

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to quote the national defence strategy of Estonia (see National Defence^{1/4}, 2011), there is some widely shared belief in the claim that “only a comprehensive approach to defence can guarantee a country’s security”.

In this light, one may ask whether the comprehensive national defence model can really provide sufficiently high resilience level, how this mechanism would work in practice and can it be tested before the actual crisis. Furthermore, since the same recent public survey also indicates that a majority of respondents in Estonia have no understanding of how to act in the case of a possible crisis and how to contribute to national defence (i.e. about 64% of respondents are certainly not or rather not informed about the possibilities of what to do for defending Estonia and 8% do not know the answer; see Kivirähk, 2018), there is all the more reason to ask whether it only reflects the early stage of an introduction of a new approach or if the path Estonia is taking here is indeed the convincing one, as similarly to deterrence capabilities, also resilience needs to be visibly efficient to the opponent to avoid testing its reliability.

This article aims to analyze the critical aspects and variables of the comprehensive approach to national defence and resilience. Estonia is used as an example to demonstrate that comprehensive approach as such may not be enough to feel safe and secure if not implemented sufficiently sophisticated and constantly updated based on changing security needs. Issues related to the practical choices about the national defence model of Estonia have seen coverage from several Estonian experts, e.g. the former head of the National Defence Committee of the Estonian Parliament, Mati Raidma, and military experts Leo Kunnas and Marek Miil.² In comparison with these articles, this study attempts setting practical aspects of the country’s national defence model within a broader framework of resilience, comprehensive approach and securitization theories. To some extent, the current study revisits the perspectives and topics treated by the study published by the experts of the International Centre for Defence Studies in 2014 (see Jermalavičius et al. 2014). The main addition to the existing studies this article offers is the use of securitization theory of Copenhagen School to analyze how successful has the implementation of the comprehensive model in Estonia been in terms of contributing to higher resilience.

The article focuses on the following axes: the conceptual dilemmas associated with resilience and the comprehensive approach, in reference to the inputs brought by Barry Buzan in security studies and the securitization approach, connected to the “Copenhagen School” of security studies. What should be kept in mind when opting for the comprehensive approach to national defence developed for crisis management for the purposes of defence of a small country used to follow the total defence logic? In this way, the broader aim of this article was to critically examine the foundations of the national defence model in Estonia and thereby to contribute to the improvement of the current model.

The article is structured as follows: intellectual roots of the comprehensive approach to national defence are introduced in Section 1; conceptual dilemmas associated with a comprehensive approach in the light of the securitization approach to security studies are discussed in Section 2; the key elements of the comprehensive defence model in Estonia are reviewed in Section 3; whether there are conceptual problems and dilemmas to the case of Estonia and some suggestions to improve the current model are discussed in Section 4.

2 The intellectual roots of the “comprehensive approach”: the holistic nature of security

A comprehensive approach to national defence can be traced back to Barry Buzan’s input to the study of security throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The conceptual analysis of security had been until then relatively limited and only few attempts had been made to define the concept of national security before Buzan came up with the idea to use security as a central concept for international studies (see Stone, 2009). Fundamentally, Buzan proposed to define security in a holistic way by outlining five domains of security as inseparable from one another. To quote Barry Buzan himself, two approaches – realistic and idealistic – dominated in the way of thinking about national security before 1980s and there was no coherent school of thought. Although realists considered security as a derivative of power, “*an actor with enough power to reach a dominating position would acquire security as a result*”, idealists by contrast described it as a consequence of peace stating that “*a lasting peace would provide security for all*” (Buzan, 1991a).

² See, for example, Raidma (2014), Kunnas (2018), Miil (2014), etc.

Against this backdrop, Barry Buzan, in his book “People, States and Fear” (Buzan, 1983; Buzan, 1991a) laid the groundwork for an alternative view on security, arguing that the concept of security lies between power and peace, “*incorporating most of their insights, and adding more of its own*” (see Buzan 1991a, p. 26). In this way, Buzan was the first theorist in this field who suggested an integrated approach to security by differentiating between levels of security (individuals, states and international systems) and various sectors of security (military, political, economic, societal and environmental). This marks also an intellectual birth of comprehensive approach to security. Buzan stated that,

“Military security concerns the two-level interplay of the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states, and states’ perceptions of each other’s intentions. Political security concerns the organizational stability of states, systems of government, and the ideologies that give them legitimacy. Economic security concerns access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. Societal security concerns the ability of societies to reproduce their traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom within acceptable conditions for evolution. Environmental security concerns the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend. These five sectors do not operate in isolation from each other. Each defines a focal point within the security problematique, and a way of ordering priorities, but all are woven together in a strong web of linkages” (Buzan, 1991b, p. 433).

In this way, one can witness how security is a phenomenon penetrating the whole spectrum of life and how it simultaneously becomes “sectorialized”: for example, whereas state is threatened in a military sector, ecosystem and endangered species are main reference objects in the environmental sector or identity in the societal sector.

However, next to the comprehensive approach, drawing on Buzan’s works and his direct contribution, the concept of securitization has also been developed by the members of what became to be known as the Copenhagen School, such as Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, Thierry Balzacq and others. The end of the Cold War opened an intensification of debates on the referent objects of security: security increasingly drifted away from a purely statist conception – security meant as the security of the state – towards a view of security as that of the individual. Through these incentives, the securitization theory is directly linked to a comprehensive approach to national defence, as it differentiates between various sectors (military, political, economic, societal and environmental sector) and specific threats that are attributable to each and every sector. This approach makes it clear that existential threats are actually subjective, referring to the contextual nature of both security and security threats (see Eroukhmanoff, 2018). The mechanisms behind the securitization theory were summed up well, for example, by Rita Taureck who asserted that “*by stating that a particular reference object is threatened in its existence, a securitizing actor claims a right to extraordinary measures to ensure the reference object’s survival. The issue is then moved out of the sphere of normal politics into the realm of emergency politics, where it can be dealt without the normal rules and regulations of policy-making. For security this means that it no longer has any given (pre-existing) meaning but that it can be anything a securitizing actor says it is*” (Taureck, 2006, p. 3). In this way, security is the speech act through which security is constructed (Wæver, 1995, pp. 55–56), a discursive practice which labels security to the issues that are considered to be of supreme priority and, thereby, legitimizes an agent’s claim to apply extraordinary measures (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26). The process is successful when a target audience accepts such a construction and supports extraordinary measures to address the threats (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 34). As will be argued, the Estonian take on comprehensive approach and resilience along the lines of total defence brings along a tendency to securitize a layer of questions related to civil society and to see it as a mere support mechanism for the purposes of defence. However, it removes these issues from the ordinary political debate. Here, Wæver’s securitization theory allows to critically examine this phenomenon. It allows to see that comprehensive approach to security has an in-built tendency to securitize the whole spectrum of public policies subsuming them under the heading of comprehensive security.

Several authors have stated that, in this way, the securitization theory shifts the focus of security studies to the intersubjective level: “*security is a social and intersubjective construction*” (Taureck, 2006), “*threats are not separable from the intersubjective representations in which communities come to know them*” (Balzacq, 2011, p. 214), “*there is no distinction made between a “real threat” and a “perceived threat”, there is only an intersubjective understanding of a threat*” (Hjalmarsson, 2013, p. 3), to quote some of them. The foundations of theoretical studies of Barry Buzan and the Copenhagen School are also to be found in the practice of international relations. Accordingly, the authors of this study aimed at illustrating that the first stepping stones of a comprehensive approach to security could be found in the growing realization through international practice about the holistic nature of security, including military, diplomatic, statehood, human security, environmental aspects and social aspects. Two examples are particularly noteworthy in

this context. The first example is the period of detente and rapprochement that dominated in the international politics in the 1970s during the Cold War in the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The process covered various “soft” topics such as trade and industrial cooperation, science and technology, environment, disarmament measures and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Conference on^{1/4}, 1975). In this way, the CSCE which is the predecessor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was the first security organization that essentially adopted a concept of comprehensive security (OSCE, 2009), although formally the term was recognized by the OSCE only in the 1990s.³ The second example concerns the practice of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which seems to play an at least equally important role in this respect. In principle, the basic logic of the organization's civil–military cooperation (CIMIC)⁴ doctrine after the Second World War (WW II) could serve as a predecessor of today's comprehensive approach to national defence, although the original meaning of CIMIC was not related to national defence but to the implementation of peace-keeping missions and external missions. Furthermore, terms such as *effects-based operations/effect-based approach to operations* (EBOs/EBAOs) and *operational net assessment* (ONA) were prevailing in the operational environment of the organization particularly in the 1970s (Smith, 2006). Both terms relay on methods applied by a comprehensive approach to national defence, referring particularly to DIME that consists of diplomatic, informational, military and economic dimension (see McDonnell, 2009).

3 Conceptual dilemmas of the comprehensive approach and resilience: insights from securitization

Before reaching conceptual dilemmas of the comprehensive approach, resilience and the securitization theory, the authors would like to point out that the following discussion is, in principle, informed by three assumptions. First, security should not be idealized; second, security should not be constituted in oppositional terms; and third, security is contextual. This background is outlined to help readers to understand the way the authors approach this complex topic.

The idea that security should not be idealized draws mainly on the works of the theorists of the Copenhagen School who stated that security is not something positive and desirable, but negative and should be usually best avoided because securitization could be a dangerous move (see, e.g. Wæver, 1995; Buzan et al. 1998). From an alternative, pre-constructivist rationalist's point of view, securitization can be taken as a morally negative process because it ignores “objective reality” (Floyd, 2011). Overall, although this approach has also come in for some criticism in the past, one should still bear in mind that if some issues are labelled as security threats, this could potentially lead, for example, to a downfall of democratic processes or regular political procedures which in its essence is negative.

The view that security should better not be constituted in oppositional terms – by designating what security is and what it is not, or from which security threats one needs to be protected – is directly linked to the negative side of securitization. An alternative would be to conceptualize security in terms of achievable normative goals or core values that need to be protected.

A view that security is contextual means that security threats can be properly understood only when seen in a specific context. On the one hand, as has been said, the scope of security studies agenda has without any doubt both significantly deepened and widened over the past decades, particularly after the end of the Cold War. There is an enormous amount of literature on different concepts of security, referring not only to the main schools of thought in international relations such as realists, neoliberals and constructivists but also to various specific concepts such as human security and environmental security. This definitely widens the scope of potential factors that should be taken

³ For example, in the *Bonn Document* from 1990, the countries confirmed their intention “to shape a new order of peace, stability and prosperity in Europe based on the comprehensive and balanced concept set out in the Helsinki Final Act and the subsequent documents of the CSCE” (OSCE, 2009, p. 4). For further information, see Ortiz (2008).

⁴ In NATO documents, CIMIC is defined as “the co-ordination and co-operation, in support of the mission, between the NATO Commander and civil actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organisations and agencies” (see NATO, 2002).

into account when evaluating different approaches to national defence. On the other hand, as Sulovic (2010) pointed out, securitization can be properly understood only in a specific context in which security takes place.⁵ In this regard, the debate on whether the current comprehensive approach to national defence is the “best choice” for Estonia shall not only be based on theoretical concepts but also include historical, political, cultural and identity-based nuances to identify country-specific characteristics.

Therefore, the multifaceted nature of security, security threats and securitization brings us to a wide range of fundamental questions. Taking just one example of a wide scope of potential dilemmas, David A Baldwin (1997) argued that security needs to be specified “*with respect to the actor whose values are to be secured, the values concerned, the degree of security, the kinds of threats, the means for coping with such threats, the costs of doing so, and the relevant time period*” (see Baldwin, 1997. p. 17). As it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed overview of the academic literature in this respect, the authors of this article focused on two specific theoretical questions. First, how security threats are determined, including the impact of such a phenomenon as macro-securitization? Second, how various levels of comprehensive approach relate to each other in the way that a shared security culture will be created?

The first question of whether something should be labelled as a security threat or not is linked to both differentiation between various sectors of security (military, economic, environmental, etc.) and various levels of security (individuals, states or international systems). Many theorists and schools of thought have tried answering that question, for example, arguing that it is about a matter of discourse, a political choice, survival, etc. There are many examples to illustrate the complexity of the topic. For example, military threats are often declared of being more important than economic, environmental and other threats in security studies (see, e.g. Chipman, 1991), although currently the threat to use military force is much rarer than the threats in other sectors. At the same time, Mohammed Ayoob (1991) argued that developing countries are mostly threatened not only by economic and societal threats but also by weak states in terms of internal threats instead of external threats. Next to that, identity is considered not to be a static, unchanged entity, but a process: an individual can have more identities that are not contradictory, etc. (see McSweeney, 1998, p. 138). Furthermore, Glover (2011) argued that different threats are privileged by different communities, etc.

Various levels of security add another dimension to this discussion, since there could be many answers to the question “security for whom?”: to “*the individual (some, most, or all individuals), the state (some, most, or all states), the international system (some, most, or all international systems), etc*”, to quote David A Baldwin (1997), again. A relatively innovative approach is suggested by Cecilia Hull (see Hull, 2011), suggesting that one should talk about comprehensive approaches rather than a single comprehensive approach, because there are many interpretations of what exactly means to act comprehensively and of how the comprehensive approach can be implemented. She identified three levels on which comprehensive approach can be implemented and classified comprehensive approaches accordingly: 1) national approaches, referring to a comprehensive approach within a state or states to generate coherence between different governmental agencies and departments; 2) intra-agency approaches within larger organizations consisting of different departments, units and offices; and 3) inter-agency approaches within the system of national and international actors and organizations which are engaged in multilateral peace support or crisis management operations (Hull, 2011). Cecilia Hull concluded that no uniform understanding of comprehensive approach exists and there are different approaches because of different functions, different resources and varying goals and ambitions.

Furthermore, the first dilemma becomes even more complicated when the phenomenon of macro-securitization is added to the discussion, arguing that security issues, agendas and relationships are framed on a system-wide basis due to globalization and a “*belief in a universalist ideology*” and that some states (referring to the US) need securitization “*as a part of their day-to-day functioning*” (see Buzan, 2006). Buzan (2006) named the Cold War as an example of macro-securitization, arguing that it has structured the mainstream security dynamics of interstate society for decades. Kennedy-Pipe and Rengger (2006) developed this idea even further by stating that dramatic events (e.g. 9/11, but also the Cold War) have changed nothing fundamental in the world politics, but changed the belief that something has changed, etc.

The second dilemma about different levels of comprehensive approach brings us to a much broader discussion whether the adoption of such an approach could lead to the rapprochement of different national security cultures and to a shared security culture, for example, in Europe. The integrated or ‘comprehensive approach to conflicts and crises’ that the European Union (EU) has been promoting (European Council 2016, 9-10) certainly has made its impact

⁵ This is also the main point of the members of the so-called second generation of securitization theorists.

on national security policies. Several studies have investigated this phenomenon. For example, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998) argued that the Western Europe is the most obvious example of a security community, referring to multilateralism, unfortified border, change in military planning, discourse and language of community; however, they also noted that some elements of security community are also to be found in Southeast Asia and South America. A study by Markus Schmid (2007) demonstrated that there is a tendency towards convergence of national security cultures in Europe, based on the examples of Germany, the UK, Switzerland, etc. The aim “to ensure a culture of coordination” has been declared also by the European Council (2003) when developing comprehensiveness in security policies. In this light, interactions between various levels of security and comprehensive approaches – for example, as Cecilia Hull described them – as well as wider impact of these interactions should definitely not be underestimated when discussing fundamental dilemmas related to security and security threats.

4 Key elements of the comprehensive defence model in Estonia

In the Estonian case, the comprehensive approach was first welcomed as part of a postmodern European security thinking rising into prominence at the time when the active integration with NATO and EU started. In that period, it was seen as a replacement for the traditional territorial defence model. Starting from 2008 at the time of the August War, events in Georgia territorial defence models started to gain growing importance. It was however realized only in 2014 with the Crimean annexation and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine that those two concepts are not competing with each other. Instead, comprehensive approach might be taken as a necessary addition to the territorial defence model to gain higher value in terms of resilience and deterrence.

Estonia's comprehensive approach to national defence follows directly the main idea of comprehensive approach, prioritizing the need for coordination and interaction between various ministries and organizations with the aim to generate coherent action in times of crisis. However, as the study of the Estonian National Defence College (Veebel 2017a) shows, integrity and coordination are more visible at the ministerial level and among political leadership, while at the specialist level “silo tower” separating effect appears where even sharing of crisis scenario descriptions and response assets or combining financial resources is not an everyday practice.

In particular, the comprehensiveness of defence policy can be grasped when the scope of coordination of adjacent but nevertheless distinct fields is considered. For example, according to the National Defence Development Plan 2013–2022, national defence is ensured by the combination of military and non-military capabilities, resources and activities from private and public sectors and civil society in general. Alongside military defence, five additional areas are developed, such as support of the civilian sector for military defence, international activities, domestic and internal security, maintenance of continuous operations of the state and society by ensuring vital services and, last but not least, strategic communication and psychological defence. For example, a mobilization information system is created and contracts are concluded with the private sector on stockpiles and services that would support the activities of the Estonian defence forces in the case of mobilization; regular exercises take place to train the use of civilian resources; network of embassies and representations of strategic value to national defence and security policy is developed; the capabilities of the police and border guard and the rescue board are developed for ensuring the security; additional electronic capabilities and control systems are developed, the communication links necessary for the functioning of society are strengthened, the capability to repair strategically important railway and highway links is guaranteed and the medical readiness in time of crisis is strengthened; academic expertise in the area of psychological defence is developed, psychological defence courses are organized, the capability of government offices to identify hostile propaganda activity is developed and readiness for crises with greater communication needs is improved (Estonian national defence^{1/4}, 2018).

In Estonia, the division of responsibilities between various ministries is the following: the Ministry of Defence is responsible for the development of military defence and support of the civilian sector for military defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for international activities, the Ministry of the Interior for domestic and internal security and the maintenance of continuous operations of the state and society, and the Government Office is responsible for strategic communication and psychological defence (Loik, Hämäläinen and Veebel 2016). These tasks remain the same also in the new defence strategy (National Defence^{1/4}, 2017). However, compared with the earlier practice where coordination of

integrated defence was the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence to coordinate, by the adoption of the new National Defence Act in 2015 (Riigi Teataja 2016), this task has been given to the Estonia's state chancellery who has coordinated the adoption of the new strategic concept and implemented shared coordination and cooperation practices at the ministerial level. The chancellery is also the main provider of policy content for and advice to the Government Security Commission of Estonia, the highest body responsible for guiding security policy in Estonia. It is worth mentioning that instead of three separate laws regulating defence sector in times of peace and war and the international cooperation, following comprehensive approach logic the new national defence law amalgamates these regulatory spheres into one body.

5 Comprehensive of what? The formula of the Estonian approach and “macro-securitization”

At first glance, the ideological background seems to support the application of the comprehensive approach to national defence in Estonia. Estonia had some knowledge in deploying military, societal and economic resources with the aim to prevent or divert security threats and attacks already before the terms *comprehensive approach to defence* and *a broad security concepts* first appeared in the national defence strategy documents in the early 2010s.⁶ This makes Estonia a follower of the Nordic countries such as Finland, Sweden and Norway whose post-WW II security policies had been designed along the logic of total (territorial) defence. Already after the restoration of independence in the early 1990s, the formation of the national defence forces followed the concepts of total defence and territorial defence stating that national defence forces should be developed in a way to offer military support and help civilian authorities in the event of technical accidents, natural emergencies, epidemics, disasters, etc. The term *total defence* was later on specified in the Military Defence Strategy (2001) stating that total defence is the permanent psychological, physical, economic and other types of readiness of the state and municipal institutions, defence forces and the whole society to manage crises (Jermalavičius et al. 2014, p. 47). Both concepts have similar features: the main idea behind both total defence and integrated/comprehensive defence is the mobilization of resources of the whole society to defend the state in times of crisis and war.

However, conceptually, it is somewhat questionable whether the concept of total defence in its essence should be directly attributed to the comprehensive approach to national defence because the overall context of both approaches has changed in the meanwhile.⁷ As the authors saw it, Estonian total defence concept in practice relates more to total societal efforts in support of the military in cases of war than to a truly inter-agency approach. Furthermore, the concept of integrated/comprehensive defence seems to extend the domains of activity of total defence (see Jermalavičius et al. 2014, p. 56), meaning that in theory there is a qualitative difference between the two concepts.

However, such a qualitative difference is mostly not recognized in discussions on comprehensive approach to national defence in Estonia. Next to that, the country-specific context blurs the picture even further: although in the Scandinavian countries the term *total defence* is by large used with reference to the mobilization of all resources to defend the state/society from all threats that can damage it, in Estonia it is mainly used in the context of defence forces and military threats (see Jermalavičius et al. 2014, p. 85). Therefore, the difference is made at a practical level, but not in ideological terms in Estonia.

At this juncture, it is vital to appreciate both the conceptual and practical problems that follow from this confusion. First, it is vital to understand its origins. To do this, it is relevant to see that what is conventionally called comprehensive approach diverges in Estonia into two parallel concepts of *comprehensive security* and *integrated defence*.⁸ In formal terms, the distinction follows the delineation of national security strategy from the military one. Still, this distinction between the documents does not have to bring along a divergence in terms. Of course, the conceptual distinction has

⁶ Hereby referring to the National Security Concept of Estonia (2010) and the National Defence Strategy (2011).

⁷ In principle, it has been mainly disputed that total defence approach which is limited to the duration of the “hot conflict” only is not appropriate for the comprehensive approach for a permanent implementation.

⁸ Comprehensive security is a literal translation of the term ‘*avar julgeolek*’ and integrated defence is a literal translation of the term ‘*lai riigikaitse*’.

its merits as it allows to distinguish between a wider (soft) security aspect and a more specific (hard) security domain. Nevertheless, apart from that apparent conceptual rationality, there is nowhere to be found an articulated rationale for such a distinction. At the same time, curiously but with a strong practical rationale pointing to the phenomenon of path dependence, the division of these two terms allows Estonia to stay in its well-trodden path of total defence. This is substantiated by the way that the stakeholders of defence policy tend to define the new concept. They do it by attributing the comprehensive approach, the meaning of total defence (Andžans and Veebel 2017). In addition, the conceptual division that delineates 'integrated defence' from 'comprehensive security' provides a handy tool for accomplishing that. On the positive side, this conceptual division may be taken as a sign of a smooth transformation process. At the same time, however, it has created some confusion.

Now, this confusion may appear as a relatively small issue, but it can cause a plethora of practical problems. Therefore, despite the salience of new terminology, the policy decisions as also reflected in the more practical policy papers appear still to dedicate and orient Estonia's efforts to total defence and manoeuvre warfare.

This, in turn, has further implications that touch is not only the practical side of *how to cope* with the threat situations but also *the way threats are perceived and defined*. Till this day, the understanding prevails in Estonia's security community that sees the primary threat as conventional in its character (Veebel 2018b). Although this may be accurate and useful in the sense of being able to recognize what sort of attack would be truly existential, it tends to play down if not neglect a much more probable non-conventional threats (Lanoszka and Hunzeker 2016). This problem in threat perception may become positively detrimental when the pattern of, e.g., Russian attacks to its neighbours is taken into account. There is hardly any evidence of Russia's straightforward conventional military attacks while a plenty of proof of long and well premeditated and implemented instigation of political and other similar actions. In addition, these actions have clearly taken advantage of domestic ethnic, economic and social problems. Even so much so that the internal problems of a neighbour to Russia can be seen as a precondition for determining the probability of a such potential attack (Veebel 2017b). There are at least two reasons for Russia to favour such pattern. It helps first legitimize its pursuant actions to 'solve' the problems. Second, it is considerably more efficient way to avoid high costs and bring long-lasting effects.

There is also a clear, parallel to the, understanding of resilience in Estonia. In practice, it seems to mean two separate things to the military and the civilian side of the security community in Estonia. For the military, resilience is clearly attributed a meaning similar to total defence, whereby the support of society issues in the ability of the defence forces to make its inevitable retreats against an enemy before the effectuation of article 5 as long as possible. At the same time, in the civilian sense, resilience stands for a well-functioning society, a strong economy and widely shared well-being to name a few pointers (see National Strategic Concept 2017). Thus, seeing here the Estonian take of resilience in parallel to comprehensive approach, one can witness how the two interpretations direct focus to different aspects of security, military favouring the hard and the civilian side the soft interpretation.

The second fundamental dilemma relates to the way how security threats and crisis scenarios are identified in Estonia and whether there are indications of the phenomenon of "macro-securitization". Macro-securitization is taken to signify international related threat perceptions (e.g. EU and NATO majority perception), while local securitization refers to the immediate and individual security concerns of the state. In principle, two conflicting approaches could be found here. On the one hand, Estonia represents a typical nation state by defining the state, its people and its institutions as referent objects: to quote the National Security Concept of Estonia: "the goal of the Estonian security policy is to safeguard Estonia's independence and sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order and public safety" (National Security^{1/4}, 2010, p. 4). On the other hand, the country has also followed an overall trend from the end of twentieth century on to define the security of a sovereign state as broadly as possible. In this respect, the National Security Concept of Estonia also spells out a multitude of threats in four domains: foreign policy, defence, internal security and societal cohesion (see National Security^{1/4}, 2010). There has been a noticeable change with the new security concept setting out a list of threats that cut across sectors (National Security Concept of Estonia, 2017). Despite these significant steps in defining problems in a novel way, the actual coordination and cooperation practices between sectorial responsibilities have not been amalgamated. Although there have been laudable attempts at bringing 'hybrid' scenarios on table (SIIL 2018), in everyday practice, the sectorial thinking and acting still prevails. Or even when effort is made to extend the scenarios beyond the narrow sectorial borders, the communication strategy with the public hardly keeps in step.

In practice, such an approach makes the prioritization of security threats difficult which in turn makes it complicated to achieve a broad-based consensus in the society what are the country's main realistic combined risk scenarios, operational strategies as well as long-term financial priorities. The marks of it are visible in Estonia today, e.g. in recent years, the state has often communicated that large-scale exercises take place in the region both within the NATO framework and at the local level in Estonia, but in public communication they often remain "sectorialized", being either military-based exercises, exercises to train the elimination of pollution or to improve the functioning of strategic capabilities, etc. The fact that although Estonia has formally already for a decade implemented a comprehensive approach to national defence, but in real terms – as already mentioned – 64% of the respondents of the most recent public opinion survey on national defence in Estonia are certainly not or rather not informed about the possibilities of what to do for defending Estonia and 8% do not know the answer (see Kivirähk, 2018) speaks for the need to change situational awareness and readiness. The authors of this article saw many possibilities here, e.g. to develop country-specific realistic combined risk scenarios as soon as possible and to clearly communicate these scenarios also to the public to avoid situations where studies suggesting that "*Across multiple simulations using a wide range of expert participants playing both sides, the longest it has taken Russian forces to reach the outskirts of Tallinn and Riga is 60 hours*" to quote the research by the RAND Corporation (see Shlapak and Johnson, 2016) would give a reason for panic. Here, there appears to also exist a perceived conflict in the communication strategies. A message that presumably works well in alerting Estonia's allies to make them wish to invest more into Estonia's defence would be counterproductive in building assurance of the people of Estonia of the effectiveness of the existing and planned defence arrangements.

The prioritization of Estonia's security threats seems to be largely influenced by "macro-securitization". According to a recent survey from spring 2018 in Estonia, military or violent-related threats such as activities of the Islamic state, terrorist networks, North Korea's activities in building a nuclear weapon and military conflict in Syria are considered to be the main security threats to peace and security in the world (respectively, 56%, 53%, 44% and 40% of the respondents have considered these activities as a threat to the world; Figure 1). At the same time, these activities are not considered to be as relevant in terms of threats to Estonia – for example, only 4% of the survey respondents consider a terrorist attack very probable in Estonia, and 2% of the respondents consider a large-scale military attack by a foreign country against Estonia highly likely (see Kivirähk, 2018, p. 20–24). Relatively broad public acceptance of potential military and violent threats both in numbers and in public discussions – in Estonia, very few experts have dared to question the effectiveness of measures taken by the international community or individual states eliminating potential terrorists, combating the Islamic state, etc. – could be potentially interpreted as a sign of "macro-securitization": Estonians "choosing a side" and sending a clear signal that Estonia is "with the Western countries". At the same time, the country-specific threats, as people living in Estonia see them, lay somewhere else: the most likely security threat according to the survey from spring 2018 is an organized attack against state information systems (69% of the respondents consider it very or rather probable), a threat that a foreign state may interfere in Estonia's policy or economic in their own interests (59%) and an extensive marine pollution incident (48%; see Kivirähk, 2018, p. 23–24).

At first glance, this differentiation relates to the need to find a compromise between how the resources in Estonia are divided to combat various types of threats in the international arena and at the domestic level. With a limited range of resources, this will definitely be a difficult dilemma for a country such as Estonia. However, what could be even more challenging next to financial issues is the potential situation when security threats at the international level and domestic level contradict and the country has to eventually favour "macro-securitization" over local security, and what could be the outcome of this process with regard to the quality of democracy and the rule of law (Markus, Veebel and Lvova 2018).

In the case of Estonia, this could mostly concern country's threat assessment with regard to Russia: a situation where Russia may be considered as a reliable strategic partner at the international arena, but an enemy at the domestic level in Estonia. To illustrate this situation, we would not have to look far to find it. Russia has always been on the security agenda for Estonia; however, when the multilateral soft security paradigm started to dominate in the international arena in the early 2000s, territorial and total defence concepts were seen obsolete and stagnated and Russia was not perceived as an aggressive neighbour, but as a gradually developing peaceful strategic partner that needs assistance in modernization and democratization, also Estonia – being a member of the NATO and the EU – had to reformulate its security concept. It is certainly not negative that the reformulation of country's security concept during that period has raised domestic attention to the topics such as international missions, special mobile capabilities and specialization on niche capabilities in the framework of collective security organizations; however, the overall development has not

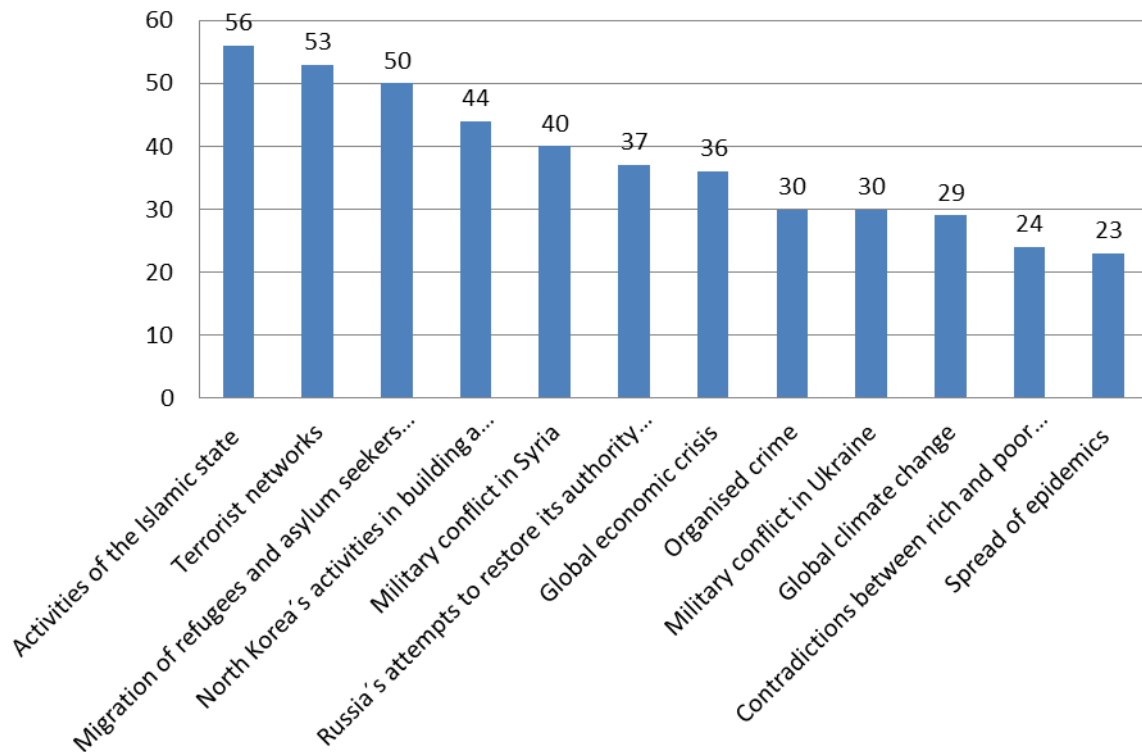


Figure 1: Threats to world security in spring 2018: How Estonia sees it. Results of the public opinion survey “Public opinion and national defence” from March 2018. Source: Kivirähk, 2018.

decreased the risks stemming from Russia from Estonia’s perspective, as also Russia’s aggressive behaviour towards Georgia and Ukraine in the past decade has clearly demonstrated (Veebel 2018). Furthermore, for a certain period, Estonia was somewhat confused about the situation, facing the need to develop various capabilities to locally confront political, economic and military pressure stemming from Russia, but at the international level agreeing that Russia is a peaceful strategic partner that needs assistance. As a result, Estonia basically continued in two parallel paths, relying on the internationally dominating view that there is no risk of conventional conflict at the regional level, but also developing national defence model based on the comprehensive approach at the local level.

To avoid similar situations in the future, mainly the role of the second component of Estonia’s comprehensive approach, referring to international activities should definitely not be underestimated. Based on the comprehensive approaches in the sense Cecilia Hull (2010) saw them, it is not so much about developing “a network of embassies and representations of strategic value to national defence and security policy” to quote the Estonia’s national defence concept, but about a much wider perspective: to be an active part of the “security culture”, to develop and improve the network’s capabilities to actively participate in the process of identifying security threats at the global arena and to recognize critical junctures on this path of identifying the global security threats.

At the same time, also the military community in Estonia could contribute to the increase in the visibility of local military competences at the international arena. There are basically two ways to accomplish this. First, to ensure that comprehensive approach really “works” at the national level, referring mostly to a situation where all the institutions involved are aware of their role and functions as well as interactions at both the local and international level, and second, to realistically evaluate country’s military capabilities and to honestly communicate it to its international partners. To illustrate this recommendation, a recent survey (Veebel, 2017) has shown that military units in Estonia tend to overestimate their capabilities in times of crisis and avoid proper testing in peacetime. Such an overestimation has no use for both planning local military operations in Estonia and ensuring that our partners in NATO are aware and clearly understood what we are doing and why we are doing it. There is really no need to wait until the “judgement day” to find out that comprehensive approach is not working in Estonia and something needs to be changed.

6 Conclusions

The current study aimed to offer an in-depth insight into intellectual dilemmas associated with a comprehensive approach to national defence, using Estonia as an example to demonstrate that comprehensive approach in itself may not be enough to feel safe and secure. The authors focused on two specific theoretical questions. First, how security threats are determined in Estonia, including the impact of such a phenomenon as macro-securitization? Second, how various levels of comprehensive approach relate to each other in the way that a shared security culture will be created? In this way, the aim of the article was not only to shake the foundations of the national defence in Estonia but also to contribute to the improvement of the current model to ensure that it actually works in practice.

The study reached the following conclusions. The first conceptual question deals with a question whether it is a good practice to equate comprehensive approach to total defence. In this vein, the article established that it is possible to point to a certain confusion existing in the Estonian security policy on both the conceptual and the practical planes. The conventional comprehensive approach diverges in Estonia into two parallel concepts of *comprehensive security* and *integrated defence*. A phenomenon of path dependence appears inasmuch as the division of these two terms allows Estonia to stay in its well-trodden path of total defence. Indeed, this is also the way that the stakeholders of defence policy tend to define the new concept of integrated defence.

Related partly to this confusion, the policy decisions dedicate and orient Estonia's efforts to total defence and manoeuvre warfare. This, in turn, has implications on *the way threats are perceived and defined* in Estonia. Namely, Estonia's security community sees the primary threat as conventional in its character and plays down a more probable hybrid threat, something that, e.g. Russia, has tended to favour in its policies in the former Soviet sphere (Sliwa, Veebel and Lebrun (2018).

This confusion and the ensuing implications have a parallel understanding of resilience in Estonia. It seems to stand for different things to the military and the civilian part of the Estonian security community. The military tends to interpret resilience along the logic of total defence, while in the civilian sense resilience stands rather for a well-functioning society, a strong economy and widely shared well-being. The Estonian take of resilience in parallel to comprehensive approach testifies how the two interpretations focus on different aspects of security, military favouring the hard and the civilian side the soft interpretation.

The second fundamental dilemma relates to the way how security threats are identified in Estonia and whether there are indications of the phenomenon of "macro-securitization". The dual approach Estonia is using now makes the prioritization of security threats difficult which in turn makes it complicated to achieve a broad-based consensus in the society what are the country's main realistic combined risk scenarios, operational strategies in such circumstances as well as long-term financial priorities. The authors suggested to develop country-specific realistic combined risk scenarios as soon as possible and to clearly communicate these scenarios to the public by replacing the current "sectorialized" approach with a wider approach, e.g. by including clear instructions or a wider context to public what to do in particular circumstances in association with various exercises, trainings, etc. Last but not least, a potential situation should be avoided when security threats at the international level and domestic level contradict and the country has to eventually favour "macro-securitization" over local security, and what could be the outcome of this process with regard to the quality of democracy and the rule of law. This needs, on the one hand, development of national structures that are capable of being an active part of the international "security culture" and mobilization of local military community mostly in terms of clearly identifying the roles and functions of all institutions in Estonia involved in the comprehensive national defence and realistically evaluating country's military capabilities and honestly communicating the results to Estonia's international partners.

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