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Enemy image? A comparative analysis of the Russian federation's role and position in the leading national security documents of Estonia and the Czech Republic

Monika Gabriela Bartoszewicz[a] and Michaela Prucková[b]

[a]Department of Technology and Safety, UiT the Arctic University of Norway, Tromso, Norway; [b]Department of Political Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

ABSTRACT

States are security-seekers vis-a-vis 'significant others' who are cast as enemies in the international system. Usually, the study of the enemy image is connected with relative equilibrium concerning power capabilities. Less attention was given to a situation of a decisive power imbalance. Thus, a question arises whether such a situation will lead to a uniform enemy image? Concomitantly, what is the impact of the enemy image on security-related behaviour and policy preferences? To shed light on this problem, we analyse the strategic security documents of the Czech Republic and the Republic of Estonia to explore how they project the Russian Federation into their security discourses. By engaging the broader question of the discursive construction of the enemy in the national security documents, we seek to contribute to how vernacular perspectives feed into the regional dynamic of Central Eastern Europe understood either as an EU region or as NATO's Eastern Flank.

KEYWORDS

Enemy image; strategic documents; security policy; the Czech Republic; Estonia; Russian federation

Introduction

Even before the 2022 invasion on Ukraine, it was acknowledged that for the states on Europe's eastern borders, the Russian Federation (the RF, or Russia) epitomises a primary security threat (Bartoszewicz 2021; Pezard et al. 2018) and therefore performs the symbolic and functional role of an enemy. Bachleitner (2021) shows that states are not only spatial but also temporal security seekers vis-a-vis a 'significant historical other' from their past. However, a question arises whether it is indeed the case that collective memory of a former foe leads to contemporary enemy image projection, and if so, whether such projection leads to a uniform enemy image in these states.

To this end, we conduct two case studies, focusing on Russia's role and position in the leading national security documents of the Czech Republic and Estonia. The comparative perspective adds greater analytical diversity via a deductive approach (Sodaro and Collinwood 2004). Against 'the problem of selection bias', as Landman (2002, 81) puts it, our cases are two European countries that share similar historical experiences, a method which has been used by other scholars (Kazharski and Makarychev 2021). In our analysis, the dependent variable is the centre of attention, as we focus on the question of the RF's role and image in the two countries' leading national security documents.

At the international system level, states might be considered unitary actors, but as Herrmann and Fischerkeller (1995, 427) notice, they are not anthropomorfic entities. Our explorative work is based

CONTACT Monika Gabriela Bartoszewicz monika.bartoszewicz@uit.no Department of Technology and Safety, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromso, Norway

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on the premise that national documents reflect the state's mentality as the document is not a product of an individual but rather a tangible result of invisible human interactions. Thus, it can be argued that strategic security documents reflect the collective attitudes of decision-makers and offer insights into the undertows of the national security discourse. This angle anchors our inquiry in the social constructivist paradigm and at the same time offers a fresh perspective diverging from the more popular scholarship on othering, societal debates or foreign policy preferences. For instance, even an excellent Yarhi-Milo's (2014) work on determining another country's foreign policy plans looks into indicators such as capabilities, behaviours or strategic military doctrine, awhile discounting the strategic security documents. This begs another question: Is there coherence between the written security policy guideline and actual policymaking?

The leading national security documents at the centre of attention of this paper are the *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic* (Strategy), adopted in (2015), and the *National Security Concept of Estonia* (Concept), adopted in (2017). Since these documents represent the highest expression of security policy objectives and the aims of the states, they as a consequence decisively form the policy of the state (Frank and Melville 1988). Despite their similarities, both states exhibit significant differences in how they refer to the Russian Federation in their strategic documents. By engaging the broader question of the discursive construction of the enemy in the national security documents, we seek to contribute to how vernacular perspectives feed into the regional dynamic of Central-Eastern Europe, as understood as an EU region or as NATO's Eastern Flank.

Our aim is to understand the dynamic of enemy image construction and its variation vis a vis power imbalances and policy praxis. Consequently, the paper begins with the exploration of how Russia is perceived in the two states according to the public reports published by their intelligence agencies. We thus treat the Estonian and Czech security discourse as intertextual, produced in tight nexus with the input of the state's 'eyes and ears' as per a structural and systemic approach (Skocpol 1979). Secondly, we take stock of how the enemy image is constructed in the official security documents of both countries in order to explore what these images might look like and how they might differ. This allows for a comparative analysis of the key security documents in terms of direct and indirect references to the Russian Federation, which allows for elaboration on the strategic positioning of Russia via interpretive content analysis (Ahuvia 2001; Ginger 2006) focusing on the frequency of mentions, indirect innuendos and the choice of adjectives in terms of their denotations and connotations (i.e. basic meanings of the word versus something suggested by the word in addition to its simple meaning).

Imagining the enemy

To develop our argument, we turn to the 'enemy image' concept which moves away from the rationalist utility-maximising model of the state that focuses on large, structural drivers (Dodge 2012) into the cognitive realm. The enemy image implies a negative portrayal of adversaries. Identifying the enemy is deeply connected to the notions of 'self' and 'the other', which creates a dichotomy endowed with a sense of threat. However, the enemy should not be conflated with the concept of the 'other' especially that unlike the latter (Bartoszewicz 2014; Diez 2004, Prozorov 2011; Mouffe 1993; Neumann 1996; Wæver 1993), the former has not received an equal measure of scholarly attention in the post-Cold War world. While the concept of the 'enemy image' was neglected after the end of the Cold War, now with the arrival of a hot one, it is more timely than ever.

> The enemy symbolizes the antithesis of core values and beliefs regarding human needs, such as belongingness and security, as well as attitudes toward authority. He is a part of the polarized world which all men create, and reflects man's two-sided prism of beliefs and disbeliefs - that which is accepted as true and good and which is rejected as false and evil. There are, in other words, cognitive processes of adjustment, balance and strain for congruence which tend to cause and sustain ideas of enemies. (Finlay, Holsti, and Fagan 1967, 7)

Thus, the enemy image that conveys very simplified beliefs about individual characteristics on the basis of ascribed group belonging, and as Petersson (2009) demonstrates, it has more far-reaching implications than the more commonly encountered negative stereotypes of strangers. So far, the emergence and salience of this phenomenon has been scrutinised in movies (Burke 2017) and newspapers (Mandelzis 2003; Ottosen 1995) – since media representations are closely linked to policy and the media play a vital role akin to negative political advertising (Bahador 2015; Muižnieks 2008; Osipian 2015) – in social networks (Zheltukhina, Krasavsky, and Ponomarenko 2016), and as an inseparable element contributing to the formation of national identity (Kryvda and Storozhuk 2020). We explore this concept through the textual lens of official government security-oriented documents via empirically-driven comparative analysis of how Russia features as an enemy trope in the political discourse of the Czech Republic (Czechia) and the Republic of Estonia (Estonia).

In our study, the enemy image refers to a belief held by a state that 'its security and basic values are directly and seriously threatened' (Luostarinen 1989, 125). Ottosen (1995, 98) links the national processes of defining other nations or states as 'the other' to Carl Schmitt, who considers the friend-enemy distinction is the ultimate, defining distinction of politics to which every political action and motive can be reduced (Schmitt 2008, 26). As such, projections of enemy images are a substantial part of politics. In addition to biological and psychological explanations (Eckhardt 1991; Fromm 1955; Keen 1991), there are also strategic and functional dimensions of this concept as enemy image is frequently used to fuel various mobilisation efforts (Gerő et al. 2017). Specifically, in political science, enmification of countries (Jung et al. 2002) can emerge when two actors compete for the same goal. In such a scenario, their interactions may escalate into the perception of each other as national enemies (Holt 1989), which is dangerous for the stability and security of international relations (Frank and Melville 1988) as it is believed to be a prerequisite in preparedness for war (Oppenheimer 2006). Consequently, the explanations of this dynamic can be sought in the events and tensions between the actors or in the internal situation determining the image formation.

Czechia and Estonia share similar historical experiences regarding Russia (Brüggemann and Kasekamp 2008; Hakauf 2011; Piotrowski 2018; Runnel, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, and Reinsalu 2009; Sierzputowski 2019; Stoneman 2015), coupled with occasional recent confrontational episodes with Russia (e.g. the Bronze Soldier incident in Estonia and the munitions explosion in Czech Vrbětice). Estonia believed itself to be a victim of Russia's cyber capabilities unleashed vengefully after the relocation of the Bronze Soldier. However, despite many accusations and clues, these cyber campaign was never officially attributed to the RF. The involved culprits were labelled as 'patriotic hackers' who were supposed to have acted autonomously (Dong 2019, 47). On the other hand, Czech-Russian ties are strained in other areas. Czechia remained a favourite place for Russian spies (Schindler 2017) as a base to obtain security-related information about NATO and the EU. For example, there was an equal number of Russian diplomats in Czechia as in the United Kingdom. In 2017, there were 140 Russian diplomats in Czechia, a large number for such a small country. The Czech counterintelligence agency acknowledged in 2020 that the activities of Russian intelligence operatives were concealed 'under diplomatic cover' (Bezpečnostní informační služba 2020, 9). In 2014, the US security agencies assumed there were up to 400 Russian spies located in Czechia (Baret 2014). In 2018, Czechia expelled three Russian diplomats in reaction to the murder attempt of a former Russian spy, Sergej Skripal, in the United Kingdom (Kopecký 2018). A year later, in 2019, Russia debated a law that would have recognised the Soviet troops in the occupation of 1968 as war veterans (ČT24 2019), which resulted in a minor diplomatic dispute. Finally, in the same year, a monument to Marshal Koněv became a point of contention, as the RF did not want the Czechs to move the statue of a Russian war hero situated in Prague. The whole affair was eerily similar to the 2007 incident in Estonia. Only this time, no cyber attacks occurred, even though Czech agencies prepared for this scenario (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic 2020). Due to these similar negative historical experiences, we take the former as a constant and allow for a variance in the latter, i.e. the role and position of the Russian Federation vis-a-vis the two selected cases.

Undoubtedly, images of other, external actors are complex constructs that are but an element of a wider meaning system (Szalay and Mir-Djahali 1991) that helps to organise and simplify the political environment of the state on the basis of mirrored value-guided attributions (Sande et al. 1989). Building on this notion, Cottam (2000) observes that imagining other states to be enemies or allies is merely a cognitive device that simultaneously serves as an information filter. Frank and Melville (1988) notice that enemy images are by no means monolithic, and thus interpreting the enemy image helps to illuminate patterns of how the feedback between image creation and strategic discourses influence state policy. The motives of the enemy are judged to be evil – but will the perceptions always be the same? There are scant premises to assume uniformity, hence the need to look within the image construction and explore the variance. In this regard, our study is meant to introduce empirical information on subjective images as they vary across the broad spectrum of state actors.

Furthermore, since the enemy images derive from selective perception and biased attribution, for analytical purposes they can be categorised into ideal types (Ottosen 1995, 99). While capturing the mechanisms and dynamics of social reality, by their nature archetypes offer certain simplified versions of the real world. Indeed, Herrmann and Fischerkeller (1995, 415) theorise that these archetypical enemy images can be used to predict how state actors will perceive and define strategic situations. They define the images as a 'cognitive construction or mental representation of another actor in the political world' (Herrmann and Fischerkeller 1995, 415). When it comes to strategic security choices, power imbalances and situational contexts notwithstanding, possible policy options are rarely reduced to one default position. For this reason, the image of the other actor is a pivotal help in navigating the policy waters. Cottam (2000) posits that state interactions are largely determined on the basis of the characteristic associated with the image, hence the question of the impact of the enemy image on behaviour and policy preferences.

We proceed from the observation that central to the enemy image in its ideal-typical form is the judgment concerning the threat (or opportunity) that a given external actor represents. Unsurprisingly, societal debates on enmification and perceptions of threat have received the lion's share of scholarly attention; therefore, the enemy image has been well-articulated and well-studied (Herrmann and Fischerkeller 1995, 423–424) in the context of the strategic behaviours it provokes. Secondly, the study of the enemy image is also connected with the relative power capabilities of the concerned actors. It is usually assumed that for the functional enemy image to emerge, both actors will be on par when it comes to power distribution, i.e. that both actors are roughly comparable in capability and not too distinct in terms of cultural sophistication (Cottam 2000). This is not the case here: Russia is undoubtedly much stronger than either Estonia or the Czech Republic, regardless of the metric. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, Herrmann and Fischerkeller (1995, 425) claim that the enemy image is directly related to the consequent security strategy, which will range from direct attack (should the other state be considered much weaker), to containment in the case of a power balance, to appeasement if 'the other' is believed to be much stronger. Can we, however, unequivocally argue that this is always the case? Secondly, the above review of the enemy image literature reveals that the majority of studies concerning state actors focus on the great powers, usually the mutual enemy image dynamic of the Cold War-era bipolar system (Silverstein 1989). Contrarily, we are looking into a situation of decisive power imbalance, and we are interested in the weaker actors' strategic perspectives, thus contributing to the existing repository of knowledge.

Leading national security documents: an overview

Given the similarities of the 'Russian experience' in historical perspective, it is not surprising that both countries repeatedly frame the RF as a threat actor or aggressive actor in their public counter-intelligence services reports. The Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (EFIS 2021) and the Estonian Internal Security Service (KaPo) pay close attention to Russia's behaviour. KaPo's public reports, called the 'Annual Review', date back to 1998 and are usually published at the beginning of the year

they cover. Therefore, they mix analysis of previous events and the current security environment with predictions of what might happen during that year. The 2016 report mentions the RF 150 times; 154 times in 2017; 203 times in 2018; and 157 times in the joint report for 2019 and 2020 (KaPo 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020). According to KaPo, the RF's intelligence agents are active on the ground, carrying out 'espionage against Estonia' and recruiting 'ordinary people and criminals for secret collaborations' (KaPo 2016). The influence of Russian 'government-controlled media' was accentuated in the 2017 report, along with a statement that the 'most likely and serious threat to constitutional order continues to arise from Russia's aggressive foreign-policy objectives' (KaPo 2017, 4–5).

In Czechia, the act on the intelligence services of the Czech Republic defines three actors – the Security Information Service (BIS), the Office for Foreign Relations and Information (ÚZSI), and Military Intelligence (VZ). Unlike their Estonian counterparts, the Czech agencies publish their reports retrospectively, and are therefore based mainly on analysis of recent past events. While established in 1994, BIS's annual reports date to 1996, when the first public report was published. In the BIS annual report for 2015, Russia is mentioned 30 times; 49 times in 2016; 40 times in 2017; 40 times in 2018; and 41 times in 2019 (Bezpečnostní informační služba 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020). The reports repeatedly stress the Russian intelligence agencies' activity on the ground, which is, along with China's activity, the most significant for state security. It should be taken into consideration that the Czech reports tend to be much shorter than those from Estonia.

The National Security Concept of Estonia ('Eesti julgeolekupoliitika alused') represents the basic Estonian framework of security policies.[1] Its existence and form are based on the National Defence Act passed in 2015, being in force since 2016. The document sets up the way of responding to security threats. Therefore, it provides the country's security policy with objectives, principles, and directions. The current version replaced the Concept from 2010 (Concept 2017, 2). As opposed to the leading Czech security document, the Concept is not based on addressing threats; it primarily addresses the measures through which security can be strengthened – e.g. diplomacy, military defence, law enforcement, crisis management, cyber and economic security.

In the 22-page text, there is a grand total of 13 mentions of Russia.[2] In all of them, the RF is seen as a dangerous actor, a source of security problems that 'has become more aggressive in the past decade' (Concept 2017, 10). In addition to direct mentions, the document is interspersed with several innuendoes that refer to Russia without naming it. For instance, the reference to the increasing 'violations in cyberspace', attacks launched by individuals or groups that are 'too often supported and directed by states' (Concept 2017, 5). This appears to refer to the 2007 DDoS campaign. The RF is also alluded to in a paragraph referring to Estonian responsibility 'for guarding the European Union's border' and 'maintaining the reliability of the Schengen area'. However, despite the numerous side references to Russia, the number of direct mentions in the Concept is sufficient for the primary analysis.

Starting with European security, the Concept frames Russian military activity as increasing in terms of intensity and aggression, being 'interested in restoring its position as a great power' for which it will not hesitate to come 'into a sharp opposition' with the Western and the Euro-Atlantic countries (Concept 2017, 4). The Concept recognises Western values (democracy, the market economy, the rule of law, human rights) are in decline; thus, the threats coming from the neighbouring actor are grave and must be clearly identified. As for specific threats, the Concept mentions Russian airspace violations, offensive military exercises, and nuclear threats.

Another threat related to Russia's behaviour is the 'weakening of the ties' that keep the EU members together. According to Estonia, this weakening could Russia's embolden confidence, leading to even more aggressive power politics (Concept 2017, 5). Threats regarding the global energy market and energy supply between the EU and the RF are discussed, too, being a possible influencer of the Estonian economy and economic security. As for bilateral relations, Estonia sees itself as occupying a negotiator position due to its geographic position and border-sharing. As Estonia puts it, it will 'cooperate with Russia on a practical level', trying to keep the dialogue open in its own interest as well that of the EU and NATO (Concept 2017, 10).

The main security policy conceptual document of Czechia is the Security Strategy of the Czech Republic ('Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky'), currently in force since 2015 (when the Strategy from 2011 was updated). Since the Czech Strategy is now eight years old, some recent threats and risks are missing. On the other hand, it is supposed to be a longitudinal document that does not have to be updated with every incident and international event. Its principal *raison d'être* is to articulate the nation's fundamental security aims and describe the main threats to them. The security aims are divided into three groups: vital, strategic, and other important interests (Strategy 2015, 7). Based on this approach and design, Czechia's Strategy is a very general document that does not identify specific actors or events. In stark contrast to its Estonian counterpart, no name-and-shame policy is present, so the document can be seen as a little vague and detached. However, indirect references are there to be deciphered by the careful reader.

According to the Strategy, the security environment in Europe is increasingly unpredictable. Without any specific reference, the document warns against a 'direct threat to the territory of some NATO and EU member states', especially those on the margins (Strategy 2015, 8). Given its geographic location and geographical predisposition, and the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where Russian troops have taken control of Crimea, claiming to fulfil the popular will to become part of the RF, Russia can be indicated as the suggested culprit. What can be undoubtedly connected to Russia are the warnings of the 'power aspirations of some states', which 'stopped respecting international arrangements and basic principles of international law' (Strategy 2015, 8). The ongoing territorial conflict between the RF and Ukraine that erupted in early 2014 is an obvious example of this phenomenon.

In this context, the Strategy marks the 'weakening of the cooperative security mechanisms' as a threat (Strategy 2015, 11). It further enumerates the conventional, non-conventional, and non-military tools that can be used to support this weakening – propaganda, disinformation actions led by foreign intelligence entities, cyber attacks, political and economic pressure, and deployment of unidentified armed forces. The 'threat of instability and regional conflicts in and around the Euro-Atlantic area' is also described (Strategy 2015, 11). Another anticipated threat is the 'interruption of supplies of strategic raw materials or energy' (Strategy 2015, 12). Unlike the Concept, which attributes the danger of possible interruptions of this kind to EU-RF relations, the Strategy is limited to acknowledging that 'ensuring energy and raw material security is becoming increasingly important'.

Divergent security narratives

The first thing that strikes the reader of the Czech document is how carefully worded it is to ensure obscurity regarding the identity of potential enemies. While the strategy acknowledges vulnerability 'in the border regions of Europe' (Strategy 2015, 6), there is no hint as to whether this refers to the eastern or any other border. Similar abstruseness is noticeable when the document discusses potential direct threats only with regard to 'the territory of some NATO and EU member states' (Strategy 2015, 8) without any further specification of whether the state in question is Greece or rather Latvia. More importantly, the word 'ambiguous' is used not only with respect to identifying threats, but a similar ambiguity characterises the discussion of potential remedies and tools that can be used for alleviating the risks. For instance, the Strategy (2015, 8) indicates that good relations with neighbouring countries are the primary tool for threat elimination without ever specifying which countries are pertinent in this regard.

Whereas Czechia is careful and somewhat bashful if not hesitant, Estonia is very precise in terms of language and confident of its diagnosis, and thus does not employ any vaguely diplomatic manoeuvres. Where Czechia chooses a cautious writing style, avoiding naming particular threat actors or events, Estonia, in contrast, chooses a name-and-shame policy approach towards the RF, even though its Concept makes clear that 'Estonia's security policy is not directed against any other state' (Concept 2017, 2). Simultaneously, the Concept states

candidly that 'Estonia will defend itself in any case, no matter how overwhelming the opponent might be' (Concept, 2017, 3), and a quick look at the map is enough to understand that there is only one potential enemy with an overwhelming power disparity. This impression is further reinforced by a declaration that 'if the state temporarily loses control over a part of its territory, Estonian citizens will engage in organised resistance in that area' (Concept 2017, 3). Again, even though Russia is not named per se, there is no doubt that a possible territorial dispute might come only from one direction. Indeed, Russia's 'increased military activity and aggressive behaviour' (Concept 2017, 4) is presented as threatening not only to Estonia but the whole of European security.

The deliberate semantic vagueness of the Czech Strategy leaves a lot of space for strategic manoeuvring. In this sense, the document is opportunistic as it does not lay out and then commit to one security strategy but rather is keen on a multi-vectoral policy whose direction can be chosen and amended as circumstances arise, balancing both 'the benefits of collective defense and security, as well as a commitment to contribute to common defence and security' (Strategy 2015, 6). It concludes with a statement that 'the security system of the Czech Republic needs to be perceived as an open system that continuously adapts to the current security situation' (Strategy 2015, 23). On the other hand, even the brief 'shopping list' of security threats in the document leaves no doubt that Czechia knows precisely what ought to be done and how, but simply cannot follow the route. The political and everyday reality – especially when it comes to the Czech-Russia relationship – goes almost against some parts of the text. For instance, the commitment 'to gradually increase the defense budget to 1.4% of GDP by 2020' (Strategy 2015, 3) is just a very opportunistic move trying to make a failure shine like success since in 2014 during the Wales Summit, the Allies pledged to increase their defence spending to two per cent of GDP by 2024.

In contrast to Czechia's opportunist stance, Estonia is very pragmatic in its approach. The Concept states matter-of-factly that 'being responsible for guarding the European Union's border, Estonia plays an important role in maintaining the reliability of the Schengen area' (Concept 2017, 5). While it is said plainly that Russia is the main enemy, there is no ideological tenaciousness involved. On the contrary, the Concept (2017, 10) makes it clear that Estonia wants to maintain good relationships with all its neighbours, and it will 'cooperate with Russia on a practical level as much as necessary and will keep the options for dialogue open. The development of democracy and the rule of law in Russia would serve Estonia's interests'.

Simultaneously, one would be mistaken to regard Estonia as a lone wolf that is not restricted by others in its security-seeking behaviour. On the contrary, the Concept mentions several international institutions from the UN to OSCE to NATO to the EU whose efficiency and activity are deemed to be 'in Estonia's interests' and 'help to cope with security issues' (Concept 2017, 9). Efforts to show unity with other relevant actors are present and frequently referred to in the Concept (2017 3, 9, 11, 12). In a way, Estonia sets a perfect example for Czechia. This is how a small, vulnerable state ought to behave in terms of reaching an international compromise in line with its security interests.

In the Czech case, if we talk about compromise, it is more of a domestic nature. The Strategy, written as a collaborative task guided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is a result of negotiations between the Parliament, government, and the wider security community of the Czech Republic, including 'the state and non-state spheres' (Strategy 2015, 4). We can expect these involved actors to differ in their goals and perceptions, which means that the purely political motives of some were confronted with expert views on the one hand and bureaucratic objectives on the other. However, the Strategy also recognises that 'the security policy of the Czech Republic is guided not only by specific interests but also by solidarity with allies in NATO and the EU' (Strategy 2015, 6) and thus cannot be separated from the Euro-Atlantic dimension of security. In fact, an entire chapter in the Strategy focuses on the 'collective dimension of defence and security'. However, while the document admits that 'it is often necessary to protect the security interests of the Czech Republic far beyond

the borders of allied states', let alone the Czech borders (Strategy 2015, 6), no particulars are provided.

The enemy images: invisibility cloak and a red flag

The first striking characteristic of the Czech enemy image is that it is barely there. The defining trait of the document's negative portrayal of Russia is that it remains invisible to a large extent. Since no direct mention of Russia or any specific Russia-related security incident appears in the Strategy, one could even think Russia is a non-issue in the Czech security dilemma (Holzer and Mareš 2019). The Strategy sounds very ardent and proactive. By the contents of the text, one can assume that Czechia is genuinely working hard and contributes to the region's increased security. The Strategy does not sound like a document written by a state that is exploited for espionage, treated as a gateway to the West, or allows foreign operations on its territory. Nevertheless, against the invisibility of the potential enemy, these things have happened. Therefore, we can conclude that the coherence and connection between how the enemy image is cast in the written security strategy and the state's security policy actually looks like it is missing in the case of Czechia.

In its Strategy, Czechia does not acknowledge itself to be in any toxic relationship with any international or state entity. Which, of course, does not mean there is none. This takes us back to the detached and ambiguous style of writing when describing the security threats, aims and objectives. In a way, the Strategy surreptitiously points a finger at Russia hiding behind the 'some states' euphemism. We can read about the problem of the 'power aspirations of some states, which are increasingly ceasing to respect the international order and the basic principles of international law' (Strategy 2015, 8). Further, there are also 'growing ambitions of some actors, who are ready to use military force'. There are also some states who 'are seeking to revise the current international order' (Strategy 2015, 11) through a variety of means. An avid observer of international relations will know that there are not that many states who can perform this role of 'some states', especially when the range of threats is clarified as encompassing 'conventional and unconventional military means with non-military instruments (traditional and new media propaganda, intelligence disinformation, cyber-attacks, political and economic pressure, deployment of unidentified members of the armed forces'.

This implies that while Czechia knows Russia is not a friend, it maintains ties and hopes not to be stabbed in the back. The treacherous and recurring nature of this toxic relationship is perhaps best represented by the image of an abusive ex-husband that still can be seen in family photos or an alcoholic father whose problem everyone knows but no one talks about. Similarly, while Russia is repeatedly probing how far it can go by putting pressure on Czechia and using it to its benefit, the Strategy does not comment upon this as if in indifference. On the contrary, the indifferent approach helps to sustain this state of affairs. Consequently, when a toxic behaviour occurs, an indifferent (weak or absent) reaction follows as if Czechia knows that what has happened will happen again but hopes it will have the smallest harm and consequences – a sign of toxicity. At the same time, Russia knows it can do something again, precisely because of the indifferent reaction.

Where the Czech enemy is invisible, the Estonian adversary is simply unavoidable, if only for geographic reasons. Russia is 'on Estonia's border' and is seen as 'unpredictable, aggressive and provocative' (Concept 2017, 4). The word aggressive is used frequently to describe both Russia itself as well as its policies. Next to being a possible source of threat and offensive behaviour, the RF is also seen as a country lacking democracy and the rule of law. Such a deduction can be derived from various mentions in the Concept, especially when it says that the 'development of democracy and the rule of law in Russia would serve Estonia's interests' (Concept 2017, 4). Even though the Concept does not precisely frame Russia as a non-democratic country, the signs of inefficient democratic practices are present there. Also, the Ukrainian situation since 2014 and especially after February 2022 is a source of alarm for the Estonians, who are well aware that they could find themselves in the very same situation if it were not for their NATO and EU membership.

In contrast to Czechia, which seems not to be noticing the elephant in the room, Estonian documents make it clear that Russia is problematic, to say the least. In this regard, the Concept (2017, 4) portrays the RF as a great power already involved in conflicts and standing in sharp opposition to the West and the Euro-Atlantic collective security system. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a coherence between Estonian written and actual policy and state of affairs.

Discussion and conclusions

The shared history of enmity between Czechia and Estonia has unsurprisingly influenced their intelligence agencies to repeatedly perceive the Russian Federation as a threat. This study tentatively affirms that the memory of a former foe contributes to contemporary enemy image projection, thus answering the first research question positively. However, as we delve deeper, the situation becomes more complex.

Our conceptual overview of enmification suggested that apparent enmification should lead to similar, if not uniform, national security approaches. Although the Czech and Estonian national security documents were adopted two years apart, both aim for longitudinal perspective. The expressed perceptions of the security environment are firmly anchored in the international structures both countries share as well as their identical geopolitical and strategic orientations, coupled with occasional confrontational episodes with Russia. Hence, even though the documents differ by country and year of writing, the shared initial conditions – allies, collective security structures, threat perception – are undeniably evident upon careful analysis. However, the analysis also reveals differences in the style of the leading national security documents, indicating that even though enemy image projections are present, they do not lead to a uniform or archetypical enemy image, as proposed by Herrmann and Fischerkeller (1995).

When comparing the content and wording of the documents, it becomes evident that despite the similarities in threat perceptions, the most striking difference lies in how the security policy is formulated. Estonia's National Security Concept adopts a precise and straightforward 'name-and-shame' policy approach towards the RF, explicitly naming it as the alleged threat actor while enumerating possible dangers. In contrast, the Security Strategy of the Czech Republic adopts a more cautious and diplomatic writing style, avoiding specific mention of Russia as a potential threat actor. Instead, it provides a general and non-specific description. This suggests that the differences in enemy images are reflected in the formulation of security policy. Estonia's approach is pragmatic and confrontational, while Czechia adopts a careful and opportunist stance, allowing room for strategic maneuvering if necessary. The feedback loop between image creation and strategic discourse necessitates a more nuanced understanding of the influence of enemy images on state policy, going beyond a simple yes/no answer.

We show that no single uniform enemy image emerges from these documents, as it is not only the style but also the view of Russia that varies dramatically between them. The Czech enemy is invisible to a large extent, which is exacerbated by the fact that Russia is not mentioned by name even once. On the contrary, the image is blurred by ambiguous references to 'some states', which are revisionist and increasingly hostile. The Estonian enemy is not hiding under an invisibility cloak. Here, a red flag is raised to indicate an enemy which is as unavoidable as it is unpredictable, aggressive and provocative. The Estonian security Concept frequently uses the word 'aggressive' to describe both Russia and Russian policies.

Therefore, we can conclude that the differences in enemy images are reflected in how security policy is formulated: Estonia chooses a name-and-shame policy approach towards the RF, which is precise and straightforward, yet very pragmatic, whereas Czechia chooses to use a careful and diplomatic writing style, avoiding naming particular threat actors or events. The carefully worded security Strategy ensures opacity regarding potentially hostile actors and at the same time grants ample space for strategic manoeuvring should the need arise.

This brings us to perhaps the most important ramification of the divergent enemy images. These documents indicate the position the state should take in the international arena. It is only natural that the security documents are not prepared outside of the societal, political, economic and geographic context of each country. However, we observe a lack of coherence and connection between how the enemy image is portrayed in the written security strategy and the actual policymaking in the case of Czechia. In contrast, congruity between the written and actual security policy behavior is palpable in Estonia. This implies that the theoretical dilemma of power disparity, often highlighted by existing literature, is less relevant than commonly assumed. Our study challenges the notion that appeasement is a default policy response in the face of inherent power imbalances. Even though Czechia is geographically insulated and seemingly less vulnerable, it takes a relatively less appeasing stance compared to Estonia, which directly faces its alleged enemy.

Furthermore, while Czech document is more circumspect than Estonian, neither can be called appeasing even in the broadest sense. However, this reluctance to pursue containment, at least in a latent form, might be subverted. It is worth noting that strategic repositioning can occur, potentially leading to a shift in enemy image and future strategy documents. As evidenced by the Czech government's recent public declaration of Russia's responsibility for explosions at ammunition depots resulting in some strong political statements regarding Russia's action to be an 'act of state terrorism' (iROZHLAS.cz 2021), new approaches may emerge. Such developments may result in different wording and expression styles in future strategy documents, resembling Estonia's more explicit depiction of the enemy image. Nevertheless, a provocative question arises: if leading national security documents do not directly translate into policy action, why do we have them at all? Are security strategies becoming obsolete in the dynamic 21st-century environment?

It is crucial to acknowledge that the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine has dramatically altered the situation, prompting both countries to initiate the process of preparing new Security Strategies. Until these new strategies are approved, the current documents remain valid and binding, shaping national security policies to some extent. They serve as the foundation for all other sector- or topic-based security documents. However, our study also reveals that national security can rely on outdated material, which cannot be entirely disregarded as it represents a system baseline. Despite the dynamic transformation of the international milieu, our research offers valuable insights that can be applied in various settings where two actors have a difficult history but are not officially engaged in war or open conflict

In conclusion, this exploratory inquiry provides valuable insights into the divergent enemy images and their impact on security policy formulation and behavior. It emphasizes the complex interplay between enemy image projection, security strategy, and actual policymaking, challenging traditional assumptions and highlighting the contextual nuances at play. By shedding light on the significance of enemy images and their potential implications, this study contributes to our understanding of navigating strategic policy choices in uncertain and challenging circumstances.

Notes

1. Along with the National Defence Strategy, National Defence Development Plan, and Military Defence Action Plan, all of which derive from the Concept.
2. We include all the derivatives into our analysis, i.e. 'Russia', 'Russia's', 'Russian'.

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