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**Representation of Estonia Defence Forces military exercise *Sii*  
2018 in the English language written media  
BA thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse aspects of the English language media coverage of the largest military exercise in Estonia *Siil (Hedgehog)*, based on the coverage of *Siil 2018*. Since exercise *Siil* aims to test the combat readiness of Estonian Defence Forces and the ability to respond to different threat scenarios in an international framework in cooperation with the allies, it is interesting, from an imagological perspective, to see how it is represented in the English language media.

This thesis consists of an introduction, literature review, analysis of the chosen corpus of articles and a conclusion. The introduction discusses the military exercise *Siil* and its importance as well as it briefly explains the effects of media. The literature review gives an overview of the term *imagology* and previous research done in this field. The empirical part includes the analysis of the relevant aspects from the corpus of articles using qualitative content analysis. The conclusion summarizes the main findings.

## INTRODUCTION

Watching the news on TV or reading about them online is part of almost every person's daily life. According to Ball-Rokeach and DeFlaur (1976: 6), we are dependent on the media because we want to understand the world we live in, we want to feel relevant in it as well as we want to escape our own reality by consuming mass media. It can be said that the greater the need in such situations, the greater the chance that the information received will change the person's feelings and behaviour. Dijk (1995: 10-11) emphasizes that even though the media does not have the power to control people's actions, it can control the readers' minds indirectly, to certain lengths. It is especially problematic when people do not realize the power that the media holds. When the readers do not doubt the information received, they might believe that their opinion just changed throughout the years (which can be the case), but this can also happen when everything the media projects is taken as the only truth. Curran and Gurevitch (2005: 3) state that since society is built on values, norms, and institutions, a person's way of thinking determines their fate, and from it comes the need to influence people's opinions and to fluctuate their minds. Dijk (1995: 13) further elaborates how people also have the freedom to choose what and how much they consume. It is also important to note that some people will not change opinions based on what more powerful desire. Therefore, this can also backlash, meaning that mistrust, rejection, and criticism can arise towards more powerful people, the media, and journalists for example.

As opinions are based or influenced by the information we consume, it is necessary to look into a field of imagology. Imagology studies for example how nationalities are represented from a comparative point of view as well as tries to understand and analyse how prejudices and stereotypes emerge and what is their function (Doorslaer 2019: 57). Thus, imagology could be a suitable field of study in order to analyse and understand the representation of aspects of different cultural or political phenomena in the media.

The main purpose of Estonian national defence is to prevent possible aggression on Estonia (whether it is a military or other kind of attack) and to ensure that, if necessary, Estonia can successfully defend itself. International action is just as important because it intends to ensure that, in the event of a crisis or armed conflict, there is unified situational awareness between the Member States of the European Union and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). The international course of action includes the prevention of tensions, encouraging appropriate conditions along with reduction. In international activities, Estonia is provided with the favourable conditions that help us effectively implement NATO collective defence or international crisis management. (Kaitseministeerium 2021) <sup>1</sup>

*Siil* (Hedgehog) is the largest military exercise of the Estonian Defence Forces, and it takes place every three to four years. Its main focus is territorial defence, and it covers the whole of Estonia. In essence, *Siil* is a cooperation exercise in which the Estonian Defence Forces and allies participate. During the military exercise, the individual units (like infantry, communications, reconnaissance, and combat support) practice things they have learned. For example, the infantry units fight, reconnaissance units gain information behind the enemy's lines, communications units establish and maintain tactical communication networks, and so on. *Siil* looks to mimic a realistic armed conflict, in which all the individual units have to act as one big coherent system. (Eesti Kaitseväge 2021)<sup>2</sup>

*Siil* usually begins in May, and it lasts two to three weeks. The first large-scale exercise *Siil* took place in 2008, and at that time, it was the largest reserve training assembly held in Estonia after its independence. The next two exercises were held in 2015 and 2018. The next *Siil* will take place in 2022 in the middle of May and lasts until the beginning of June. In 2018 more than 15,000 conscripts, members of the Defence Forces, reservists, Women's voluntary defence organization, and allied soldiers took part in this large-scale

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<sup>1</sup> My translation

<sup>2</sup> My translation

exercise. It lasted for 13 days, from 2-14 May, and covered the whole of Estonia, culminating in South-Eastern Estonia and Northern Latvia. There were allies from 15 countries, including the UK, for example, and they all had assigned different roles. In addition to NATO partners, staff officers from Ukraine and Georgia also took part in the exercise as well as the Irish military, who was in an observatory role. Furthermore, US, French, British, and Polish air forces contributed to the exercise by various aircrafts. (Eesti Kaitsevägi 2022)<sup>3</sup>

Through the analysis of the representation of *Siil* I aim to see how the independent defence capabilities and the use of NATO resources as well as cooperation with allies is portrayed and what implications it might have in the context of the overall image of Estonia's defence capability. This thesis will concentrate on the representation of the 2018 exercise *Siil* because it was the largest exercise when comparing it to the previous years as well as it was covered in the English language media the most. The articles used for further research are from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), *The Defense Post*, *the National Interest*, *Joint Forces*, *National Guard* and *Medium*. This research aims to analyse the articles in order to understand what impression they leave of Estonia, more specifically the Defence Forces, and to study the imagological aspect of the *Siil*. In order to achieve the aim, some aspects of the method of qualitative content analysis were chosen.

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<sup>3</sup> My translation

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.1 Imagological perspective in media research**

Chew states (2006: 179-180) that throughout the years the meaning of the concept of imagology has changed quite significantly. He claims that imagology has changed its meaning from the study of 'image' and 'others' to 'national character' and now is mostly used for researching national stereotypes. According to Beller and Leerssen (2007: 11-12), "it is the aim of imagology to describe the origin, process, and function of national prejudices and stereotypes, to bring them to the surface, analyse them and make people rationally aware of them." Doorslaer (2019: 57) points out that imagology has been the field to study image-building and representation of texts over the past 20 years and since our viewpoints are significantly shaped by national and cultural categorizations. Hence, he stresses that imagology looks into cultural images, as well as stereotypes, from a comparative and transnational perspective. According to Beller (2007: 7), "imagology studies the origin and function of characteristics of other countries and peoples, as expressed textually, particularly in the way in which they are presented in works of literature, plays, poems, travel books, and essays".

Leerssen (2007: 27-28) states that imagology deals with a certain collection of characteristics. Therefore, he points out that when analysing the imagological aspect of a cultural phenomenon, it is important to understand what the nature of the text is, to whom it is for, which genre it is, who is the intended audience for the text, and what kind of vocabulary it uses to appeal to that particular audience. Doorslaer (2019: 58) further elaborates that in imagology the interaction between textual, contextual, and intertextual analysis is important. Leerssen (2016: 19-20) claims that the historical, political, and social state in which a representation of the national character i.e., ethnotype is portrayed is referred



to as context. Leerssen (2016: 21) further notes that the textual analysis aims to do research on the text itself to see how the national characteristics are represented and how they are seen by the target audience. To understand the national imagological aspect of a certain text, one must be able to comprehend and analyse the nationalization and its overall role. And whether the representation of a national stereotype is elevated, ironized, prevented, or left completely unaffected. (Leerssen 2016: 21)

Leerssen (2016: 16-19) also points out that imagology is based on a set of theoretical assumptions which include periods of stability in international relations that tend to deflate ethnotyping (which involves features that represent nations, and which are chosen and emphasised to distinguish a certain nation from others) in favour of characterological neutrality, whereas situations of tension tend to heighten ethnotyping. It is also important to analyse vocabulary that has been used to describe events, people, and countries because they can rhetorically determine a certain characteristic either positively or negatively (Leerssen 2016: 16-19).

## **1.2 Previous research**

Most of the research done previously in the field of imagology includes stereotypes, national and cultural images, literary representation of national characters, ethnicity, and translation of such representations which have been interconnected with imagology. Joep Leerssen has researched the development and growth of cultural nationalism in Europe on the example of Irish national identity (see Leerssen 1986; 1996) and ethnicity in the European context (Leerssen 2016), whereas Luc van Doorslaer has connected translation studies with imagology from the point of view of Eurocentrism: how simple translational representations may play a role in the national image building (see van Doorslaer 2013;

2021) and the interconnections of national stereotyping, translation and image building (Eg. see van Doorslaer 2021). The abovementioned research exemplifies how the field of imagology has been prominent in making sense and theorising the representation of national images and stereotypes, providing researchers with different methods and novel angles.

According to Leerssen (2016: 14), the first imagological studies were based on the foreignness of the characters as well as characterizations which were found in different literary texts. Thus, he emphasises that in the earlier years it was just assumed that for example, English people would have a different personality, temperament, and behaviour than the Spanish people.

While studying imagology and how it is linked with ethnicity Leerssen (2016: 14) finds that people sort and understand the world according to their perceptions and beliefs, which in turn develop into stereotypes and prejudices. In his article, Leerssen discusses how most commonly people group certain characteristics and thus construct stereotypes by gender, ethnicity, and nationality. Leerssen (2016: 26) also notes that ethnicity is only one frame of reference among many others. Therefore, we have to keep in mind that representations of the national characters never function on their own. They interact with other frames, particularly social status, gender, and age and are thus intersectional. However, ethnicity as a frame is never absolute and never acts on its own, it operates on the junction of national character, gender, and personality type. (Leerssen 2016: 26)

On the other hand, Doorslaer (2019: 56) believes that imagology is a useful technique for subjects in translation studies which deal with textual changes. Doorslaer (2019: 59) discusses how in the 1970s and 1980s imagology used to be academic territory only for Western European researchers. But he addresses that in the last few years, the importance of a translation in the imagological approach has been acknowledged as a significant aspect. Doorslaer (2019: 62) finds that the descriptive and diachronic perspectives are shared by

translation studies and imagology. As well as he claims how the author's role in the discursive variety of representation is also one of the key shared traits in both of these fields. In his research, Doorslaer (2019: 61) also points out how several researchers before have demonstrated that journalistic sources have potential importance in the field of imagology. Interdisciplinary links between journalism studies and imagology are also possible when examining stereotypes and national representations because, in journalism, most of the time rumours and previous news articles are the basis for stereotypes. (Doorslaer 2019: 61)

That being said, Dyserinck (2003) has studied imagology from another perspective. Dyserinck (2003: 1) states in his article on ethnic identity problems that comparative imagology originates from a branch of comparative literary studies. Dyserinck (2003: 5-6) draws attention to the fact that every image of another country has a basic foundation in the image of one's own country. Thus, he argues that only from a neutral point of view could both of these standpoints be investigated. According to Dyserinck (2003: 7-8) in comparative imagology, 'nations' and 'people' are not constant, they are rather conceptual models. In this way, it is possible to see the expected from imagology – the human need for concepts of collective identity. Additionally, imagology should also look into the possibility of post-national identity models, which could lead us very close to similar occurrences in the European literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Dyserinck 2003: 7-8)

However, Moiseenko (2020: 464) claims that language is the most significant guide to the world of 'foreign' meanings, attitudes, and perspectives. As well as nowadays, imagology is also considered a field of social and humanitarian knowledge. Using imagological methodologies, her article illustrates the formation of a Russian image that exists in the context of a foreign-language cultural community. Moiseenko (2020: 465) also points out that since imagology is based on image, media representation is becoming one of the important information policies of the state. She believes that the media can promote the

image of a certain country and its leaders, thus it is necessary to look into it more thoroughly. By looking into the perception of Russia in the Spanish-speaking countries, Moiseenko (2020: 471) discovered that the image of Russia and Russians is not formed naturally. She found that the image of Russia is purposefully constructed to elicit emotional and mental responses, as well as the news itself, are purposefully framed, which can be seen by a deconstruction of stereotypes and the use of aggressive and conflictual terminology.

Hence, it can be said that discussion and research conducted in the field of imagology is quite extensive and that the field provides multiple interesting perspectives to view the formation of cultural images as well as national stereotypes.

## 2. METHOD

The empirical part of this thesis is based on the analysis of a corpus of 6 articles (5 from the US newspapers and one from the UK) that covered the military exercise *Siil 2018*. I conducted a Google search while using different keywords in order to find as many articles as possible, some of these included: the 2018 military exercise *Siil*, exercise *Siil 2018* and Estonia's 2018 military exercise *Siil*. The articles and their headlines that were chosen for further research include – BBC "Estonian troops turn moose-sitters", The *Defense Post* "NATO kicks off battle-training phase of exercise 'Siil' in Estonia", the *National Interest* "Why Russia Felt Threatened By Estonia's Largest Ever Military Exercise With NATO", *Joint Forces* "Exercise Siil 2018 ~ Allies Defending Estonia", *National Guard* "Md. Guard exercises cyber awareness with Estonian comrades" and *Medium* "NATO's 'Hedgehog' learns to get rid of Russians." The articles are written during and after the 2018 exercise spanning the period of 7 May 2018 to 18 December 2019. When analysing the articles, different descriptive words, such as adjectives and adverbs were looked into as well as parts of the text that conveyed images related to the military exercise, Estonian defence Forces or Estonia in general. Descriptive words/sentences that were chosen for further analysis were based on the context (words that in any way described *Siil*/Estonia). In most cases, I looked into adjectives because they describe nouns: things, people, and places, thus providing an important source for the analysis of the image formation. The aim of the research was to analyse how Estonia's 2018 military exercise *Siil* is presented in the English written media and what may be the implications of such presentation.

Aspects of qualitative content analysis are used to research the information presented in the corpus of the articles. In most cases, qualitative content analysis is used to get a general overview of the text under study, to see the patterns and structures of the text, additionally

to the author's statements. This method is relatively flexible as it does not use a strict, fixed coding guide or measurement scales, thus, if necessary, it can be reviewed and changed during the analysis. This method is closely text-based, and it allows focusing on the main important meanings of the text (the intentions, and goals for example). Thus, textual data can come from various places - individual and pair interviews, diaries, various documents, and all kinds of media publications. According to the qualitative content analysis, all similar codes have to be divided into categories and their relationships need to be examined and grouped together on the basis of similarity. (Kalmus et al 2015) For this thesis, I used a cross-case analysis, in which I looked at several articles at the same time, gathered all the text parts (Eg. I mapped topics covered in all the articles), looked into them more thoroughly, and then lastly compared them to each other.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Overview of the publications and articles

The corpus of my study consists of the BBC, *the National Interest* (NI), *National Guard* (NG), *Medium* (M), the *Defense Post* (DP) and *Joint Forces* (JF). Since all the aforementioned news pages wrote about the 2018 military exercise *Siil*, they got chosen for further analysis. I used the page Similarweb in order to get a better overview of the online publications. The webpage offers a reliable, comprehensive, and detailed view of the digital world (Similarweb 2022). For example, the program analyses different brands, mobile apps, and industries as well as their popularity, performance, web page traffic, audience demographics, geography, engagement, etc. I looked into traffic and engagement in the last three months, geography and country targeting as well as audience demographics.

The BBC broadcasts information from all around the world on various topics. The BBC increases rapidly its audience every year (BBC Media Centre 2019). When the 2019 annual report was released, it stated that there had been an increase of 50 million over the last year, thus reaching a new high of 426m consumers a week. The article “Estonian troops turn moose-sitters” was under the category “News from Elsewhere” and even though the headline does not refer to Estonia’s military exercise, it still is a quite engaging headline that could draw a lot of attention. The article itself focuses on three aspects –moose related incident, Estonia’s military exercise *Siil* and how unfortunately hedgehog did not become Estonia’s national animal, which would have been very fitting. (BBC 2018)

The *National Interest* is an American bi-monthly magazine that focuses on international relations. In addition, it features many top military, defence, and national security content from a variety of experts (NI 2022). The main readership of the magazines

is the U.S and the primary age group is 25-34, with men predominating (Similarweb 2022). According to a 2022 report, the average traffic on the page consists of 4.5 – 6.5 million visits per month. The article “Why Russia Felt Threatened by Estonia’s Largest Ever Military Exercise With NATO” focused on *Siil*, the amount of money Estonia has spent on defence, and Russia’s military exercises compared to Estonia (NI 2019).

*National Guard* is a US Government site that features military news. It presents news about overseas operations, state partnership programs, guard news in general, and news that feature *National Guard* (NG 2022). The main readership is the U.S and the primary age group is 25-34, with men slightly predominating (Similarweb 2022). According to the 2022 report, the average page visit per month is somewhere around 161.5 – 203.0 thousand people. The article “Md. Guard exercises cyber awareness with Estonian comrades” focuses on the U.S and Estonia’s cooperation on cyber awareness testing as well as the article describes the military exercise *Siil*. (NG 2018)

*Medium* is an online publication platform that covers a variety of news (M 2022). Medium has between 85 and 100 million monthly active users, according to 2019 data, which demonstrates its vast readership and potential reach of content (M 2019). The primary age group is 25-34, with yet again men predominating quite highly (Similarweb 2022). The article “NATO’S “Hedgehog” learns to get rid of Russians” largely focuses on the scenario prepared by NATO and how it was implemented, as well as the article briefly describes the exercise *Siil*. (M 2018)

The *Defense Post* focuses on defence-related news, reports, and developments from the US and across the world. It covers a wide range of national defence, international security, and foreign policy issues with in-depth coverage, investigations, and analysis. The *Defense Post* also attempts to present key topics from a local or regional viewpoint. (DP



2022) The primary age group is again 25-34, with men predominating quite highly (Similarweb 2022). As of right now, the average monthly visit on the page consists of 233.3 – 482.9 thousand people. The article “NATO kicks off battle-training phase of exercise ‘Siil’ in Estonia” gives a detailed overview of *Siil* and elaborates on the fact that Estonia increases its defence spending, over the fear of Russia’s activities. (DP 2018)

*Joint Forces* features frontline reports, military exercises and deployments, news, NATO forces, defence expos, defence equipment, British Forces and so on (JF 2022). The primary age group is again 25-34, with men predominating quite highly (Similarweb 2022). As of right now, the average monthly visit on the page consists of 77.2 – 154.3 thousand people. The article “Exercise Siil 2018 ~ Allies defending Estonia” discusses the exercise in depth. Talking about the purpose of *Siil*, the three main phases – mobilization, collective training, and combat operations. (JF 2018)

In more detail, all the topics covered in the articles were about the participation of NATO member states (allies), the number of participants, and the coverage of the exercise (when and where it took place), thus informative in nature. Topics featured in most of the articles were about the aim of the exercise and its phases, that the 2018 military exercise *Siil* was the largest in Estonia’s history, combat readiness, the amount of money Estonia has allocated to the defence, but also about Estonia’s relationship with Russia. Topics that were mentioned only once in different articles were cyber awareness, how Estonian soldiers came upon a baby moose in the woods, and how some Estonian reservists did not show up to the exercise.

### **3.2 Participation of member states and cooperation relations**

Every article in my corpus mentioned the participation of NATO member states, but *National Guard* concentrated more on the aspect of how needed this cooperation is.

According to Estonia's Defence League cyber member „This training is **so valuable** to exercise our shared goals and values“ (NG 2018). This shows appreciation for such opportunities. Given the fact that Estonians work together with many countries (which emerges from all articles), good communication skills and language use is very much needed, especially in English. This gives the impression that working together with Estonians/Defence Forces is smooth as well as the language barrier is not a problem. According to the Maryland Guard cyber warfare operator „Our relationship goes **back at least** nine years, if not longer“ (NG 2018). This also indicates that over the years the willingness to cooperate has increased, meaning that the cooperation has built trust between allies and which in turn can also create a sense of belonging. Doing military exercises with allies also gives Estonian soldiers the confidence that they can count on support if the need ever arises. On the other hand, maybe relying too much on allied members does not show much independence on the Estonian side. The fact that every article mentions the participants and cooperation can also confirm that NATO members also want to show to other countries their cohesion in addition to teamwork, which makes NATO quite a dangerous organization for other countries in the case of potential war.

### **3.3 Coverage of the military exercise *Siil*: how it took place**

The place and time in which the 2018 military exercise *Siil* takes place is mentioned in every article but for example, the *Medium* highlights that the military exercise takes place on different types of terrain. „The **main** objective of *Hedgehog* is to practice Estonia's territorial defence both in terms of conventional warfare and other **less common** environments“ (M 2018). In this way, Estonia's ability to protect itself and its people in every possible way is stressed. *Medium* (2018) is further cited: „While the focus of the exercise is on the ground forces, the Navy and the Air Force will also be playing an **important** role.“ This conveys the impression that Estonia is prepared not only in one

scenario that takes place on the ground but also lets the readers know that different problematic situations in the air and sea are additionally covered. Thus, a sense of security is implied here: the soldiers are constantly developing themselves during various exercises in various places. *National Guard* also emphasizes how this year's (2018) *Siil* will focus on cyber-related situations, which also have not been covered that much in the previous years. In the *National Guard*, Maryland Guard cyber warfare operator is quoted: „These scenarios mirror **real** world ways attackers attempt to collect information. Obtaining such information in reality could allow an adversary to gain intelligence of the on-going military activities and **potentially** compromise planned missions“ (NG 2018). This conveys a sense that besides a physical war, Estonia knows how to protect itself from cyber wars which can be very harmful, especially regarding the functioning of society. From the above, we can conclude that Estonia's ability to be protected in every possible way is something all the outlets stress.

*Joint Forces* concentrates greatly on *Siil's* structure, that is its three phases (mobilization, collective training, and combat operations). During the second week, *Joint Forces* could apparently follow the military exercise and therefore the article is very descriptive and gives a very good overview of it:

At tactical level training, objectives included: conducting river crossing operations within a defensive frame; conducting regionally and timely limited counter-attacks; detecting and bypassing minefields; setting up a hasty defence in difficult terrain; controlling close air support and indirect fire support in support of ground forces; and conducting rearward and forward passage of line operations. (JF 2018)

This conveys that the exercise is well thought out as they cover different situations and scenarios as well as the fact that they have no problem with outsiders (news reporters) taking pictures and notes while they execute these activities. This shows confidence because Estonia does not keep a secret what exactly is happening during the exercise as well as it shows a wish to disseminate the information since most likely it would be easy to not let people who are not participating into the areas.

### 3.4 How the military exercise *Siil* 2018 was presented in the English language media

Five sources, with the exception of *Joint Forces*, used the following adjectives to describe the 2018 military exercise: “**largest**“, “**large-scale**“ or “**largest ever**“. These words indicate that the capabilities of the Estonian Defence Forces have developed over the years. Giving the image that Estonia is more powerful than ever. "This year’s iteration of the Estonian exercise, named SIIL/HEDGEHOG 2018, saw the **participation of well over 15,000 troops** including several thousand soldiers from NATO allies, including the British-led NATO enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Battle Group Estonia (BG EST)" (JF 2018). The same was stated in *National Guard* (2018) "With cooperation from 15 NATO allied forces, **over 15,000 personnel participated** in Exercise HEDGEHOG 2018," as well as in the *Defense Post* (2018) "NATO and partner troops began the second phase of a two-week exercise that **brings together more than 15,000 troops** from 19 NATO and partner countries, the largest in Estonia since it gained independence in 1991," and so on. Considering Estonia’s population and then the number of people who can participate in the exercise (which is not that much, as there are not many people in Estonia who have such an obligation) it can be said that the number of participants in *Siil* is indeed very large.

### 3.5 How Estonia demonstrates its combat readiness

In the BBC article, combat readiness is mentioned two times. The article features Juri Luik, Estonia’s former Defence Minister who was quoted as follows „Our task is to show our opponents that attacking us would be **so risky** that the costs of such a step would outweigh any **potential** gain“ (BBC 2018). Using such adjectives in such a manner gives a clear message that Estonia is ready to defend itself and will do it, if necessary. Another statement by Luik „Estonia, on NATO's eastern frontier with Russia, is **well defended**“ (BBC 2018). This gives an overall impression of Estonia, that it is resilient and ready for

any such situation, especially given the fact that over the years *Siil* has grown in terms of participants and technique. Additionally, it shows that Estonia is aware of its dangers and that the Defence Forces are strengthening and further developing themselves in the upcoming years.

At the first sight, the size of the military exercise may seem quite small, but given the fact that Estonia is also a relatively small country, the *National Interest* article has repeatedly emphasized the fact that this is a significant result for Estonia „Estonia’s large-scale *Siil* 2018 exercise is **not trivial**“ (NI 2019). This also goes together very well with the exercise’s slogan „every thorn counts.” It also gives a positive image to those who are at the forefront and make such important decisions about the Defence Forces. „For a country of fewer than 1.5 million people, these statistics and headlines are **indeed impressive**“ (NI 2019). This sentence makes it seem like Estonia has unified systems that work very well together because otherwise, Estonia would not be as successful militarily if people with leading roles would not make good decisions.

### **3.6 Estonia’s relationship with Russia**

The *National Interest* constantly mentions that Estonia is “**little**”, probably in order to really highlight its achievements and that Estonia, one of six alliance members, has reached NATO’s 2% requirement on defence spending. The 2% requirement means that every member of NATO has to devote at least 2% of their GDP to defence spending in order to maintain the alliance's military readiness (NATO 2022). According to *National Interest* „Estonia has been under pressure to increase its defence spending since the 2014 crisis in Ukraine owing to its proximity and **tumultuous** history with Russia“ (NI 2019). This gives the image that in recent years, Estonia has gotten more concerned about its big neighbour

country, especially since Estonia's relationship with Russia has never been exempt from problems in the first place.

The article from the *Defense Post* states that the Estonian Defence Forces' aim is protection against Russia. According to the *Defense Post* „The exercise comes as Estonia continues to increase its defence spending over **fears** of Russia's activities in Eastern Europe“ (DP 2018). In this article, it is clearly stated, that Estonia is afraid of Russia's activities, which can also be seen in Estonia's military activities and spending results.

### **3.7 The image of Estonian soldiers**

Even though these aspects were only mentioned in the BBC article, they still affect the overall image of the Estonian soldiers. The first part of the BBC article concentrates on how the soldiers tried to help a little baby moose: “With its mother **nowhere** to be seen, soldiers asked **environmental experts** what to do, and were advised that the animal's mother would probably come searching for it once night fell” (BBC 2018). The fact that the article gives space to such an incident is impressive as well as it makes Estonian troops look helpful and caring. However, it further states: “But things haven't gone **entirely** to plan, after **some 1,700 reservists failed to turn up for duty** (BBC 2018). Those without a reasonable excuse for their absence will now face misdemeanour charges.” People want to (and they do) rely on Defence Forces, but such incidents can make people wonder if they can count on our reservists in times of war or crisis.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to analyse how Estonia's 2018 military exercise *Siil* is presented in the English written media and what may be the implications of such presentation. The literature review provided the necessary background for imagology and its perspective in media research as well as previous studies. As it was found, previous research was quite extensive on the formation of cultural images and national stereotypes. The empirical part of the thesis consisted of an overview of the media publications and an analysis of the 6 articles. The articles (one from the U.K and five from the U.S) were analysed by using the cross-case research method which is part of qualitative content analysis. All the necessary text parts were gathered and grouped together based on similarity and then compared to each other. Adjectives, adverbs, and parts of the text that conveyed images related to the military exercise, Estonian defence Forces, or Estonia, in general, were looked into. Although adjectives were mostly analysed as they describe things, people, and places. Based on the similarities six subcategories were formed – participation of member states and cooperation relations; coverage of the military exercise *Siil*: how it took place; how the military exercise *Siil* was represented in the English language media; how Estonia demonstrates its combat readiness; Estonia's relationship with Russia; and the image of the Estonian soldiers.

During the analysis, it was found that the cooperation between allies builds trust and assures Estonian soldiers that if the need ever arises, they can count on support, as the cooperation has been ongoing for many years. Additionally, it makes NATO quite a threatening organization for others because they work and evolve together which also increases their capability. Estonia is also prepared in every possible terrain, which includes the ground, the air, the sea, and even cyber-related instances. Estonia's ability to protect was

constantly stressed, which implied a sense of security. It was also emphasised how the Estonian Defence Forces have significantly developed over the years as the 2018 military exercise *Siil* was the largest exercise ever conducted. It gave the image that Estonia is the most powerful it has ever been. Additionally, it was found that Estonia would not be militarily as successful if it did not have unified systems and if those who are at the forefront of the Estonia Defence forces would not make good decisions. Furthermore, Estonian soldiers were shown as helpful and caring as they helped a baby moose in the forest. On the other hand, relying too much on allied members does not show much independence on the Estonian side, as well as it was found that in recent years Estonia has gotten more concerned about Russia's activities. Additionally, Estonian reservists were shown as disloyal because over half a thousand reservists did not show up to the exercise, which was compulsory.

It can be said, that for the most part Estonia and the Defence Forces are represented positively in the English written media. Estonia's defence capability was constantly mentioned as well-defended which in turn gave the impression that Estonia is very strong and prepared. The part where reservists did not show up to the military exercise can be seen as a negative image but from all of the articles, it was the only unpleasant representation. Additionally, being a member of NATO certainly contributed to this positive image as well as it undoubtedly helped to ensure that various media outlets will make news and reports of the military exercise. The implications of such presentation were due to the fact that Russia is one of the Estonian neighbours, which puts Estonia in a position where the country has to show its strength.

For further studies, the same research could be done, but in more depth. The corpus of this thesis is very small, thus, to get more reliable findings, a larger corpus with more articles should be looked into.



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## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Katriin Puhm

Representation of Estonia Defence Forces military exercise *Siil* 2018 in the English language written media

Eesti kaitseväge 2018. aasta sõjaväeõppuse Siili kujutamine ingliskeelses kirjutatud meedias  
Bakalaureusetöö

2022

Lehekülgede arv: 30

Annotatsioon:

Siinse bakalaureusetöö eesmärk on uurida kuidas kujutatakse Eesti Kaitseväge 2018. aasta sõjaväeõppust Siili ingliskeelses kirjutatud meedias.

Töö koosneb neljast osast: sissejuhatus, kirjanduse ülevaatest, empiirilise osast ja kokkuvõttest. Sissejuhatus räägib lühidalt meedia mõjust, suurõppusest Siil ning selle töö eesmärgist ja relevantsusest. Kirjanduse ülevaade seletab lahti imagoloogia mõiste ning annab ülevaate varasematest uurimustest selles valdkonnas. Empiiriline osa analüüsib kuut artiklit, millest üks on Suurbritannia meediaväljaanne ja viis on Ameerika Ühendriikide meediaväljaanded. Analüüsi osas kasutab autor horisontaalset analüüsi, mis on osa kvalitatiivset sisuanalüüsist.

Bakalaureusetööst selgub, et Eesti Kaitseväge 2018. aasta sõjaväeõppust Siil kujutatakse valdavalt positiivsel, ühe erandiga. BBC artiklist selgub, et õppusele ei ilmunud üle pooleteise tuhande reservväelase, mis annab omakorda reservväelastele negatiivse kuvandi. Olenemata sellest on üldine kuvand Siilile, Eestile ning Eesti Kaitsevägele pooldav.

Märksõnad: imagoloogia, kuvand, sõjaväeõppus Siil, USA meedia, UK meedia, Eesti Kaitseväge.

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