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EU Member States' attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

A case study of the Czech Republic

Master's Thesis

Olomouc 2023

Declaration of authenticity

I hereby declare that this Master's Thesis on the topic of EU Member States' attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: A case study of the Czech Republic is my original work and I have acknowledged all sources used. I further declare that the text of this thesis including footnotes has 225 858 characters with spaces.

In Olomouc on the 20 December 2023

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List of Abbreviations

ČTK	Czech News Agency
EC	European Communities
EPC	European Political Cooperation
EU BAM RAFAH	The European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point
EU	European Union
EUPOL COPPS	The European Union Police and Rule of Law Mission for the Occupied Palestinian Territory
LoA	Logic of Appropriateness
LoC	Logic of Consequences
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most complicated and divisive conflicts of our time, with roots in ancient history. It is a conflict between two parties, both claiming the same territory. A peaceful solution to this conflict is nowhere in sight and, despite numerous efforts to mediate peace negotiations by third parties, the desired peace has not been achieved. Today, peace seems further away than ever. Israel is headed by the most right-wing and religious government in its history. Coalition government is composed of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, two ultra-Orthodox parties and three far-right parties. The government presented its program to the Knesset in December 2020, which included a declaration that "*the Jewish people have an exclusive and indisputable right to all parts of the Land of Israel*"¹ and listed „*advancing and developing settlements*"² in occupied territories as one of its priorities. The Israeli government also voted to limit judicial oversight of the government in May 2023 after a delay caused by nationwide protests. A survey conducted by The Israel Democracy Institute in July 2023 found that 58% of Israelis believe that Israel is in a "*state of emergency*" due to a serious internal crisis, and that the State of Israel is on the verge of economic, social and political collapse.³

In addition, the situation in the Palestinian territories also appears to be critical. There is disunity between the two dominant movements, Fatah and Hamas, with Fatah controlling the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas ruling the Gaza Strip. In addition, Hamas is a militant religious group inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood and is considered a terrorist organisation by the European Union because of its armed opposition to Israel, which includes suicide bombings and rocket attacks. Based on the results of a survey conducted by Arab News and YouGov, 75% of Palestinians do not believe that the current Palestinian leadership is capable of successfully negotiating a peace deal with Israel and 86% of Palestinians said they do not believe that the current Israeli government under Benjamin Netanyahu is serious about signing a peace deal with Palestinians.⁴

¹ FREEDOM HOUSE. Israel. *freedomhouse.org* [online]. 2023 [viewed 14 November 2023]. Available from: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/israel/freedom-world/2023>

² AP. Netanyahu gov't says West Bank settlement expansion top priority. *aljazeera.com* [online]. 28 December 2022 [viewed 15 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/28/netanyahu-govt-says-west-bank-settlement-expansion-top-priority>

³ HERMANN, T. and ANABI O. A majority of Israelis think that Israel is currently in a state of emergency. *en.idi.org.il* [online]. 7 August 2023 [viewed 15 November 2023]. Available from: <https://en.idi.org.il/articles/50449>

⁴ ARAB NEWS and YOUNGOV. Prospects, Peace and Politics: Where do Palestinians stand? *arabnews.pk* [online]. 2023 [viewed 15 November 2023]. Available from: https://www.arabnews.pk/sites/default/files/anyg_nakba75_report_4.pdf

When we have all the information about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is very difficult to 'pick' one side to support. It is not possible to label one side 'good' and the other 'bad'. Yet, in the European Union, we can find countries that almost uncritically support one side or the other. All EU Member States agree on the necessity to create two viable states that will exist side by side in peace, but the EU is not united on the minor points.

The main aim of my thesis is to define the factors that lead member states to support one side or the other in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, using the Czech Republic as a case study. In order to fulfill this goal, I set two research questions.

Although the European Union as a whole tries to take a balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is evident (for example in the UN vote) that individual member states differ in their positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, my first research question will be: To what extent does the EU influence the positions of the Member States on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

In the practical part I will analyse the attitudes of a selected member state towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since it is not possible to examine in depth the attitudes of each Member State towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the framework of a thesis, I have chosen as a case study a country that has a unique relationship with Israel - the Czech Republic. Within the analysis I will try to find an answer to the second research question - which logic - logic of appropriateness (LoA) or logic of consequences (LoC) - is dominant in the formation of the Czech Republic's attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. My theoretical concept will therefore be two theories of the representatives of sociological institutionalism, J. G. March and J. P. Olsen. The authors identified two logics - the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences - through which they seek to explain the logic of actors' behaviour. The logic of consequences argues that behaviour is the result of rational decision and calculation by the actor. Logic of appropriateness sees behaviour as guided by rules and exemplary behaviours.⁵ I believe that this country in particular will serve as an ideal case study that will provide insight into the factors that contribute to the formation of EU countries' attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The findings will then be applicable to other countries with strongly pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian attitudes.

⁵ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. The Logic of Appropriateness. ARENA Working Papers [online]. 2004, 9 [viewed 12 July 2023], p.2. Available from: https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2004/04_09.html

My Master's thesis will be divided into seven chapters. In the first chapter I will present the theory that I will use in the practical part. I will define the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences and state what the relationship between these logics is. In the next chapter, I will give an overview of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I consider the chapter devoted to history to be important because it will help us understand the current situation in the region and the reasons why the parties in the conflict behave the way they do, while also showing us that no side is without fault. Then, in the following chapter, I will look at the nature of the European Union's foreign policy and its relationship with the national foreign policies of the member states. I will also focus on what factors shape foreign policy. In the next chapter I will focus on the European Union's attitudes and role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I will explore how the EU as a whole approaches the conflict when there is no consensus within the Union on the issue. In the following chapter, I will focus on the Czech Republic. Before analysing its attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I find it necessary to first describe the relations between the Czech Republic and Israel and Palestine over the years. In the next chapter, I will focus on the specific reasons that lead the Czech Republic and its leaders to adopt pro-Israeli positions. The last chapter will be an analysis of the attitudes of Czech political leaders towards Israel in the time period from December 2017 to October 2023.

The logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences, stemming from the international relations theories of rationalism and constructivism, were first introduced by March, J. G. and J. Olsen in their article *The International Dynamics of International Political Orders*⁶ in 1998. Later, in 2004, the authors elaborated on the LoA in the article *The Logic of Appropriateness*.⁷ LoA and LoC have become a frequently used theory for research papers analysing the actions of states in international relations because they represent a comprehensible and easily applicable theory.

Logics were used, for example, in *Slovakia in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Trapped between the Logic of Consequences and Appropriateness*⁸ from Kříž and Urbanovská, *Battle of*

⁶ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders. *International Organization* [online]. 1998, 52(4) [viewed 12 July 2023]. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601363>

⁷ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. The Logic of Appropriateness. *ARENA Working Papers* [online]. 2004, 4(9). [viewed 12 July 2023]. Available from: https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2004/04_09.html

⁸ KŘÍŽ, Z. and J. URBANOVSKÁ. Slovakia in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Trapped between the Logic of Consequences and Appropriateness. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* [online]. 2013, 26(3) [viewed 11 July 2023]. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2013.812478>

*Two Logics: Appropriateness And Consequentiality in Russian Interventions in Georgia*⁹ from Nalbandov or *The Strategic Context of the British Referenda on Continued Membership in the EC/EU: An Analysis of the Political Elite's Motivation*¹⁰ from Meislová.

LoA and LoC have not yet been applied to the Czech Republic's relationship to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but the relationship itself, given its uniqueness, has been addressed by several authors. The Czech Republic's relations with Israel and Palestine are mapped by Marek Čejka in the chapter of *Israel and Palestine: Past, Present, and the Direction of the Middle East Conflict*¹¹, focusing both on the historical context of both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and on the current relations. Furthermore, in his article *The Narrative of the Czech-Israeli Strategic Relations in the European Context*¹², Marek Čejka provides insight into how Czech political leaders view Israel and how it affects the current high standard of relations. He argues that the historical ties and the significant role of Czechoslovak leaders are particularly important. The issue was also explored by Irena Kalhousová (2015) in her article *Relations between Israel and the Czech Republic: From Sentiment to Pragmatism?*¹³ Kalhousová extends the reasons related to history to other, more pragmatic reasons, such as economic cooperation or a common goal - the fight against terrorism. In 2016, she contributed to the topic by publishing her dissertation *'Our Jews, Our Israel!' Origins of the Foreign Policy of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary Towards Israel*, which compares three V4 countries that share the same geopolitical space and have similar historical experience - Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic - and analyses the differences/similarities among these countries that shape their attitude towards Israel. Czech attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were also analysed by Daniel, J. and Záhora, J. in their article *The Czech Debate on Israeli Annexation*

⁹ NALBANDOV, R. Battle of Two Logics: Appropriateness And Consequentiality in Russian Interventions in Georgia. *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* [online]. 2009, 3(1) [viewed 11 July 2023]. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26586967_Battle_of_Two_Logics_Appropriateness_And_Consequentiality_in_Russian_Interventions_in_Georgia

¹⁰ MEISLOVÁ, M. The Strategic Context of the British Referenda on Continued Membership in the EC/EU: An Analysis of the Political Elite's Motivation. *Mezinárodní vztahy* [online]. 2017, 52(2) [viewed 20 October 2023]. Available from: <https://cjr.iir.cz/index.php/cjr/article/view/199/171>

¹¹ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina: Minulost, současnost a směřování blízkovýchodního konfliktu*. 4th ed. Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2015, pp. 260-273

¹² ČEJKA, M. The Narrative of the Czech-Israeli Strategic Relations in the European Context. *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* [online]. 2017, 11(4) [viewed 5 November 2023]. Available from: <https://cejiss.org/the-narrative-of-the-czech-israeli-strategic-relations-in-the-european-context-0>

¹³ KALHOUSOVÁ, I. Relations between Israel and the Czech Republic: From Sentiment to Pragmatism? *Strategic Assessment* [online]. 2015, 18(3) [viewed 11 September 2023], pp. 93-104. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327121316_Relations_between_Israel_and_the_Czech_Republic_From_Sentiment_to_Pragmatism

*Plans: Plus ça change...*¹⁴ They specifically discuss the reaction of the Czech political scene to the criticism of the three former foreign ministers towards the 2020 Peace to Prosperity plan and generalise this situation to the Czech Republic's overall policy towards Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A more detailed analysis of the Czech Republic's current stances on Israel and Palestine is provided by Daniel, J. a Hussein, C. (2021) in the paper *Strategic Navel-Gazing: The Czech Debate on Israel/Palestine and Its Dead-Ends*.¹⁵

Although the topic has garnered interest from several authors, it has not been sufficiently explored yet, leaving room for further expansion of existing knowledge. The contribution of my thesis is especially the application of the theory to the Czech Republic's relationship to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which will be helpful in explaining the pro-Israeli attitudes of Czech leaders. I think that now - in the context of the war in the Middle East more than ever before - it is necessary to discuss why some countries take a solely pro-Israeli or, on the contrary, pro-Palestinian stance and whether the fact that some countries uncritically support one side in the conflict has a negative effect on achieving peace.

¹⁴ DANIEL, J. and J. ZÁHORA. The Czech Debate on Israeli Annexation Plans: Plus ça change ... *cz.boell.org* [online]. 9 July 2020 [viewed 5 October 2023]. Available from: <https://cz.boell.org/en/2020/07/09/czech-debate-israeli-annexation-plans-plus-ca-change>

¹⁵ DANIEL, J. and C. HUSSEIN. Strategic Navel-Gazing: The Czech Debate on Israel/Palestine and Its Dead-Ends. In: DITRYCH, O. and KIZEKOVÁ, A. (eds.). *České zájmy 2021: Analýzy ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2022, pp. 70-83.

1 Logic of Consequences and Logic of Appropriateness

March and Olsen, representatives of sociological institutionalism, distinguish between the way rationalism and constructivism conceive of the actor, the shaping of his preferences and interests, and his actions. “*On the one side are those who see action as driven by a logic of anticipated consequences and prior preferences. On the other side are those who see action as driven by a logic of appropriateness and senses of identity.*”¹⁶ In line with the main premises of rationalism and constructivism, they differentiate between the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness. The two concepts are trying to explain the logic of action of the actors and thereby can help to understand and predict their behaviour. Logics are elementary components of every meaningful action. In the words of Schulz, action without either logic “*is random and appears senseless (without ‘rhyme or reason’), while action shaped by the logics takes on direction and meaning.*”¹⁷ Action can follow mainly one or the other of these logics but it is often a mix of the two.¹⁸

These logics are the perspectives on how action is to be interpreted. Different decision-making processes of actors underlie each logic. There is a crucial difference in how scholars committed to one of the logics see the actor. Scholars aligned with a consequentialist position perceive the actor within an international system as interacting autonomous entities driven by egoistic and self-interested motives, seeking to maximize their gains.¹⁹ In this interpretation, “*preferences are usually taken as given, and expectations of consequences are taken as determined by the state of the external world and the biases (if any) of the individual.*”²⁰ Conversely, scholars aligned with an identity position perceive actors as “*acting in accordance with rules and practices that are socially constructed, publicly known, anticipated, and accepted.*”²¹ They depict an international society as a community where actors adhere to shared rules, engage in specific roles, and possess distinctive sociocultural ties.²²

¹⁶ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders. *International Organization* [online]. 1998, 52(4) [viewed 12 July 2023], p. 949. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601363>

¹⁷ SCHULZ, M. Logic of Consequences and Logic of Appropriateness. *University of British Columbia* [online]. 2014 [viewed 9 November 2023], p. 3. Available from: https://www.martinshub.org/Download/LoC_LoA_PrePub.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. The Institutional Dynamics..., p. 952.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

1.1 Logic of Consequences

Simply put, if an action is led by the logic of consequences, we can assume that it will be the result of a rational choice. When making decisions, actors should be aware of their capabilities, consider several options for action, should calculate the costs and benefits and act in a manner that maximizes their gains.²³ When considering the costs and benefits of a given behaviour, actors estimate the likelihood that the chosen action will lead to the desired outcome. If actors conclude that the benefits of their action are so high that they outweigh the costs, they decide to act. If the losses exceed the gains, they will refrain from acting.²⁴ If the cooperation with the other actors can maximalise benefits, coordinated actions are expected.²⁵

According to March and Olsen, “*From this perspective, history is seen as the consequence of the interaction of willful actors and is fully understood when it is related to expectations of its consequences and to the interests (preferences) and resources of the actors*”²⁶ To explain individual action, we must identify consequential reasons for them. Foreign policy can be explained and understood by interpretation of the outcomes expected from it.²⁷ Interpreting action by using only the logic of consequences do not describe an actual human behaviour and seems to ignore the essential role of identities, rules and institutions shaping the behaviour.²⁸ Applying the LoA to how states shape their attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one could argue that pro-Israeli countries choose to support Israel because it has the potential to benefit their trade or technological cooperation.

1.2 Logic of Appropriateness

According to the logic of appropriateness, stemming from constructivist ideas, action is seen as “*driven by rules of appropriate or exemplary behaviour... Rules are followed because they are considered as natural, rightful, expected and legitimate*”.²⁹ Rules can be understood as relatively fixed responses to specific situations. The term 'rules' encompasses various forms

²³ NALBANDOV, R. Battle of Two Logics: Appropriateness And Consequentiality in Russian Interventions in Georgia. *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* [online]. 2009, 3(1) [viewed 11 July 2023], p. 24. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26586967_Battle_of_Two_Logics_Appropriateness_And_Consequentiality_in_Russian_Interventions_in_Georgia

²⁴ KRÍŽ, Z. and J. URBANOVSKÁ. Slovakia in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Trapped between the Logic of Consequences and Appropriateness. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* [online]. 2013, 26(3) [viewed 11 July 2023], p. 373. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2013.812478>

²⁵ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. *The Institutional Dynamics...*, p. 949.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 950.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 951.

²⁹ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. The Logic of Appropriateness. *ARENA Working Papers* [online]. 2004, 9 [viewed 12 July 2023], p. 2. Available from: https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2004/04_09.html

of action programming, including intuition, habit, experience, roles, norms or laws.³⁰ Actors endeavour to fulfill the obligations associated with a role, identity, or membership in an institution. They engage in actions that they perceive as appropriate for themselves within a given situation.³¹ What guides and directs behaviour are the components of social structure - norms of behaviour, social institutions, and the values, roles and rules they embody.³² Guided by rules can have a various meanings, such as automatically following a familiar routine, conforming with a norm, obeying a law or fulfilling an obligation.³³

Act according to the rules is a complicated cognitive process, which involves thoughtful and reasoning behaviour. Actors can in one situation face diverse and conflicting rules and norms, all of which require different ways of acting. Most important political decisions are difficult because the actor may act in two or more contradictory ways, from which they must choose which rules or norms to follow and which obligations to fulfil at the expense of others in a given situation.³⁴ Unlike most conceptions of rationality, the processes of reasoning are not primarily connected to the anticipation of future consequences and the intention to achieve the greatest possible benefit.³⁵ As stated by Finnemore and Sikkink, actors may ask themselves “*What kind of situation is this?*” and “*What am I supposed to do now?*” rather than “*How do I get what I want?*”³⁶ Logic of appropriateness is found on normative beliefs which make behaviour and acts appropriate under certain conditions and inappropriate under others. What is appropriate and what is inappropriate is set by actors alone or under institutional settings that create norms and standards for all the members.³⁷

States have their own social identities that affect their actions in international scene. Therefore, the logic of appropriateness leads the states to derive actions from given identities, which are fixed and rigid. States may act by their own sense of appropriateness, which might differ from the other states.³⁸ According to March and Olsen, appropriateness need not consider consequences, but includes cognitive and ethical dimensions, goals and aspirations. “*As a*

³⁰ SCHULZ, M. Logic of Consequences and..., p. 2.

³¹ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. The Logic of..., p. 2.

³² FINNEMORE, M. and K. SIKKINK. International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International Organization* [online]. 1998, 52(4) [viewed 15 July 2023], p. 913. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601361>

³³ SCHULZ, M. Logic of Consequences and..., p. 2.

³⁴ FINNEMORE, M. and K. SIKKINK. International Norm Dynamics..., p. 914.

³⁵ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. The Logic of..., p.4.

³⁶ FINNEMORE, M. and K. SIKKINK. International Norm Dynamics..., p. 914.

³⁷ NALBANDOV, R. Battle of Two..., p. 25.

³⁸ Ibid.

*cognitive matter, appropriate action is action that is essential to a particular conception of self. As an ethical matter, appropriate action is action that is virtuous.”*³⁹

1.3 The Relationship between the LoC and LoA

As I mentioned before, the LoC and the LoA are present in every meaningful action. Action can be explained by one of the logics, but more often is a mix of both.⁴⁰ According to March and Olsen, political action cannot be explained using only the LoC nor LoA. Every action probably involves elements of each, because actors are guided both by their interests, by which they estimate the expected consequences, and by the rules embedded in their identities and political institutions.⁴¹

March and Olsen present four main interpretations of the relationship between the two logics. The first one presumes that a clear logic dominates an unclear logic. Actors can follow either logic, but the one that is more evident in a given situation prevails. When preferences and consequences are clear and identities or the rules are unclear, a LoC tends to be more important. On the contrary, if identities or rules are clearly defined and preferences are not, the LoA is more important. A key aspect of the second interpretation is that it distinguishes major decisions from minor ones that serve only as a refinement of major ones. One logic guides action on important decisions and has a dominant influence on the actor's actions, while the other serves to make refinements and guides action on less fundamental issues. There are two versions of which is dominant, and which is used only as a supplement to the dominant logic. The first one says that rules are weak causes of behaviour and regards personal interests and known consequences as strong causes. The second version, on the other hand, argues that only after the important issues are resolved by rules can the remaining less important issues be resolved by rational calculation of alternatives. A third interpretation understands the relationship between the logics as developing. According to this interpretation, action can primarily be governed by one logic, but over time it changes to the other one. For example, the actors enter new relationships for instrumental reasons, thus they are guided by the logic of consequences, but in the relationship develop identity and rules and shift towards rule-based action. The last interpretation claims that each of these logics is a 'special case' of the other. Scholars who advocate this interpretation believe that all action is explicable by one logic and the elements of the other are merely included in it.⁴²

³⁹ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. *The Institutional Dynamics...*, p. 951.

⁴⁰ SCHULZ, M. *Logic of Consequences and...*, p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 952.

⁴² *Ibid.*

The critics point out to the difficulty of clearly distinguishing the rational LoC and a constructivist LoA. According to them, how the consequences are being calculated is often not obvious and it's not easily separable from the understanding of legal or moral norms. As stated by Hurrell and Macdonald, it is helpful to explain behaviour of actors using these logics, but *“over time the obviousness of certain sorts of norms (for example against military conquest) becomes such an accepted part of the international political landscape that it becomes part of how actors routinely calculate consequences.”*⁴³ March and Olsen argue that, despite the interconnections between these two logics, they remain distinct enough to be considered separate explanatory frameworks as they *“involve different explanations for action and different bases for institutional change”*.⁴⁴

⁴³ HURRELL, A. and T. MACDONALD. Ethics and Norms in International Relations. In: CARLSNAES, W., RISSE, T. and B.A. SIMMONS (eds.) *Handbook of International Relations*. California: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012, p. 71.

⁴⁴ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. *The Institutional Dynamics...*, p. 954.

2 The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a long-standing dispute between the State of Israel and Palestine. The conflict has its roots in the ancient past, but the real development of the dispute can only be said to have taken place after the First World War, with a massive multiplication of the conflict after 1948 and 1967.⁴⁵ It is one of the most complicated and controversial conflicts of our time, which causes many contradictions between people with different opinions and is even a topic of passionate debate among the people in democratic countries in the western world, especially in Europe and the US. Despite a great deal of attention from society, the media and, above all, political leaders, this conflict has not yet had a clear solution. In recent decades, an international consensus has emerged for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet peace seems to be out of sight and many people do not believe that a two-state solution is achievable.

In this chapter, I will discuss the history of the Middle East conflict. I will shortly describe the historical context prior to the creation of the State of Israel, with an emphasis on the United Nation Partition Plan for Palestine that preceded its creation. I will then describe the beginning and course of The First Arab-Israeli War. In the next subchapter, I will focus on the Six-Day War, through which Israel gained significantly more territory than it was allotted in the United Nation Partition Plan and strengthened its position in the region. I will continue with the First Intifada, which broke out in 1987, and explain what its causes were. I will also devote space to the most important peace initiative of this period, the so-called Oslo negotiations, which resulted in the Oslo Accords. I end this historical insight into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the 2000s, when the second intifada broke out and Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections.

2.1 Before the Creation of the State of Israel

The territory of present-day Israel and Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1517 to 1917. The country functioned as centralised system of government and was headed by an Ottoman sultan (caliph). In the 17th and 18th centuries, larger numbers of Jews began to arrive in the country.⁴⁶ After the World War I the Ottoman Empire fell and the territory of present-day Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan passed into the administration of the

⁴⁵ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina: Minulost, součastnost a směřování blízkovýchodního konfliktu*. 4th ed. Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2015, p. 9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

United Kingdom. Thus, in 1920, the British Mandate of Palestine was established. Already by this time the first Arab-Jewish tensions had begun and both sides began to claim Palestine.⁴⁷

2.1.1 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine

After the Second World War, the ban on immigration to Palestine that had been imposed before the war persisted. The situation led to open conflict on all fronts. The Jews fought against the English to force the possibility of free immigration. The Arabs fought against the expansion of Jewish settlements. The English fought to strengthen their influence.⁴⁸ As the chaos continued, the English were losing control over the area. In addition, the UK faced major economic problems after the war, which was further reinforced by the harsh winter between 1946-1947. For these reasons, the British decided in February 1947 to submit the question of Palestine to the United Nations.⁴⁹ The UN General Assembly met in April 1947 and set up a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to investigate and draw up recommendations. The Committee was composed of eleven states, including the then Czechoslovakia.

As a result of the deliberations of this commission, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the partition of Palestine on 29 November 1947. As shown in Figure 1, the document divided Palestine into eight parts. Three of them were to belong to the Jewish state, three to the Arab state, the seventh part was to be the city of Jaffa (now part of Tel Aviv), which was to form an Arab enclave in Jewish territory, and the eighth part was to be Jerusalem. Because of its specific ethnic and religious role, Jerusalem was to be a neutral territory for both sides under the administration of the United Nations.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ KALČÁK, F. Izrael versus Palestina. V čem spočívá stoletý mocenský konflikt? *cnn.iprima.cz* [online]. 19 May 2021 [viewed 8 May 2023]. Available from: <https://cnn.iprima.cz/prehledne-izrael-versus-palestina-v-cem-spociva-stalety-mocensky-konflikt-25539>

⁴⁸ KRUPP, M. *Dějiny státu Izrael: Od založení do dneška 1948 - 2012*. 1st ed. Praha: Vyšehrad, 2013, p. 13

⁴⁹ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 65.

⁵⁰ Resolution Adopted on the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, No. 181, New York, 29 November 1947.

Figure 1 Land Ownership in Palestine in 1948



Source: Passia

The General Assembly voted in favour of the partition by a vote of 33 to 13 with ten abstentions. The Muslim countries together with India, Yugoslavia and Greece voted against. The United States and the Soviet Union voted for the partition of Palestine, as did South America and the Eastern Bloc states or France. Great Britain abstained.

2.2 The First Arab-Israeli War

Two states were to be created according to the Resolution 181. The majority of Jews accepted the plan, and on 14 May 1948, Israel was created. On the following day, a newly established state was recognised by the United States and subsequently by the Soviet Union along with its Eastern European satellites and other countries. However, the UN plan was rejected by the Arabs, led by the Arab League. Neither the Palestinian population nor the surrounding Arab states agreed to the creation of a state in Palestine. Moreover, they argued

that, according to the UN plan, the Jewish minority was to receive territories that were much larger than their share of the total population. According to the resolution, approximately 55 percent of the territory was to belong to the Jewish state. Of the nearly two million inhabitants of Palestine in 1947, Jews constituted only a third, and the difference in land ownership was even greater.⁵¹

The day after the proclamation of the state of Israel, five Arab armies (Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan) entered Palestine and the first Arab-Israeli war began. The war had two phases. The first lasted from 14 May 1948 to 11 June 1948 and ended with a UN-mediated ceasefire that lasted less than a month. The second phase lasted from 6 July to 19 July 1949. This phase resulted in the final defeat of the attacking Arab armies.⁵² Over 700,000 Arabs left the country during the war and Israel gained territory up to 21% larger than it was originally allocated in the UNSCOP plan.⁵³ The control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem was acquired by Jordan as a result of the war. The Gaza Strip remained under Egyptian influence. The originally intended Arab state was thus divided between Jordan, Israel and Egypt. Figure 2 shows the difference between the territory that was allocated to Israel in the UN plan and the territory that Israel gained in the first Arab-Israeli war. Israelis refer to this war as the Israeli War of Independence. The Jewish State proved its viability and strengthened its position in the Middle East, which for the Jews is an event of major importance. To the Arabs, on the other hand, the first Israeli-Arab war and its aftermath became known as the “catastrophe” (al-Nakba). As a result of the war, thousands of Palestinians have had to flee their homes, creating a refugee crisis that remains unresolved to this day.⁵⁴ Of the original more than one million Arabs who lived in Palestine before the 1947 war, 133,000 remained in Israel in 1949.⁵⁵

The 1949 armistice did not resolve the issues related to the proclamation of the new state. The Arab states did not recognise the existence of the state of Israel and the conflict continued. The matter of Palestinian refugees has not been resolved. Third parties were also involved in the resolution of the conflict. The United States and the United Nations for example have sought to initiate cooperation between Israel and the Arab states through development programs such as the sharing of Jordan River water for irrigation. Their efforts were not

⁵¹ KEJLOVÁ, T. Před 70 lety Arabové odmítli plán na vznik Izraele a Palestiny, důležitou roli sehrálo Československo. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 29 November 2017 [viewed 13 July 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/svet/2313490-pred-70-lety-arabove-odmitli-vznik-izraele-a-palestiny-dulezitou-rolu-sehralo>

⁵² ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 78.

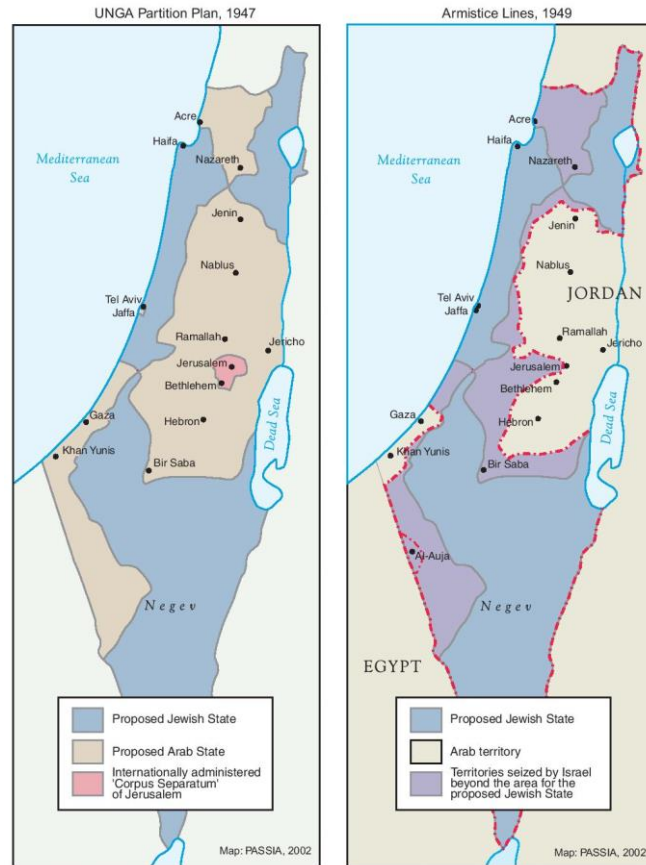
⁵³ KEJLOVÁ, T. Před 70 lety Arabové...

⁵⁴ BICKERTON, I. J. and C. L. KLAUSNER. *A history of the Arab-Israeli conflict*. 5th ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2007, p. 102.

⁵⁵ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 84.

successful. In the words of Bickerton, “*the history of the first decade of Israel’s existence, in addition to being the story of how the new Jewish state consolidated its internal structure, is also very much of the story of how the Western powers lost control of the events in the region.*”⁵⁶

Figure 2 UN Partition Plan x The Armistice Lines after the First Arab-Israeli War



Source: PASSIA

2.3 Six-Day War

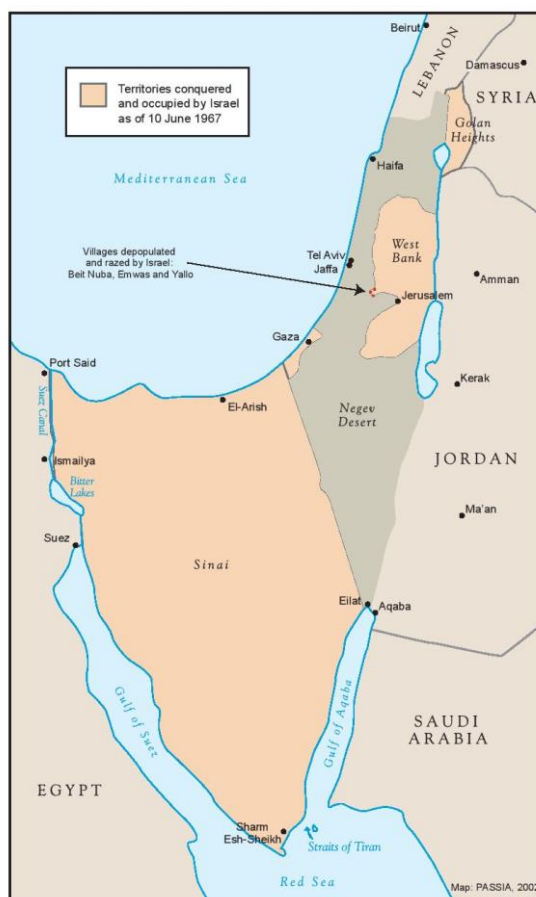
During the 1950s and 1960s, Israel faced a challenging position in the region with no allies among its neighbouring countries. In the second half of the 1960s, Israel felt a threatened by the activities of Arab states. From the Golan Heights, it was shelled by the Syrian army. Egypt, in turn, began to increase the concentration of its army in the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt was eventually joined by Jordan and Iraq. As tensions escalated in the region, "*it was becoming clear that another Arab-Israeli war was inevitable. But the question remained who would attack first.*"⁵⁷ Eventually it was Israel that attacked first. The war broke out on the 5th June 1967 by Israeli air attack. The warplanes managed to destroy much of the Syrian, Egyptian, Iraqi and

⁵⁶ BICKERTON, I. J. and C. L. KLAUSNER. *A history of...*, p. 108.

⁵⁷ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 113.

Jordanian air forces. Battles with Jordan in the West Bank ensued.⁵⁸ Israel captured the entire West Bank, including the Arab part of Jerusalem and major Arab cities including Ramallah and Bethlehem. It went on to defeat the Egyptian army, thus capturing the Gaza Strip and the entire Sinai Peninsula. In the north, it gained the Golan Heights from Syria. All territories that Israel acquired are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Israeli Territories after the Six-Day War



Source: PASSIA

The importance of the air force and the cohesion of the Israeli civil army is considered by Bickerton to be a significant factor in the Israeli victory.⁵⁹ The war lasted only six days and resulted in Israel gaining three times larger territory than it had previously held. Victory in the war was greeted with great enthusiasm by Jews all over the world. Israel finally did not feel like a small country surrounded by enemies who wished to destroy it, but felt strong, self-sufficient and powerful. The consequence of this enthusiasm was a massive immigration of Jews to Israel. However, some Jews correctly suspected that the conquered territories would

⁵⁸ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 113.

⁵⁹ BICKERTON, I. J. and C. L. KLAUSNER. *A history of...*, p. 147

not only bring benefits to Israel. The Six-Day War significantly contributed to future disputes between Israel and Palestine.⁶⁰ After Israel captured the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, it started building Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. The settlements are to this day considered one of the main obstacles to peace because they disrupt the continuity of Palestinian land, displace Palestinians, and make the future establishment of a viable Palestinian state impossible. Today, around 700 000 Israelis live in settlements in the West Bank.⁶¹ Jewish settlements are also located in the territory of East Jerusalem, which significantly complicates the Palestinians' demand that East Jerusalem become the future capital of a Palestinian state.

Moreover, as Bickerton notes, Palestinian nationalism was still nascent before 1967, when Palestinians lived under Arab rule. But "*it grew into an authentic manifestation of the desire of Palestinian Arabs for self-determination as the years passed.*"⁶² As a result, a number of Palestinian groups representing the interests of the Palestinians emerged. The PLO⁶³ played a leading role. The PLO, with its new chairman Arafat, gradually became more pragmatic, and the core of the organisation began to move away from terrorist methods in the 1970s. In 1974, the PLO even became the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people at the Arab Summit in Rabat, Morocco. Some factions of the PLO did not move away from radical practices, giving Israel an excuse not to negotiate with the PLO as a whole.⁶⁴ After the PLO was expelled from Jordan in 1970, it relocated to Lebanon. It was Lebanon that became the battleground of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the 1970s. Palestinian attacks from its territory have led to harsh Israeli retaliation. Israel's first military operation in Lebanon occurred in 1978, when Israeli forces invaded southern Lebanon up to the Litani River.

The situation calmed down following a Security Council resolution but escalated again in 1981 after more attacks on Israel by PLO factions. Israeli politicians called for military action against the PLO in south Lebanon. The pretext for the attack was the assassination of an Israeli diplomat in London on 3 June 1982.⁶⁵ The response to the assassination was a military operation called 'Peace for Galilee', the aim of which was to force the PLO to withdraw from Beirut and,

⁶⁰ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 115.

⁶¹ BEAUCHAMP, Z. What are settlements, and why are they such a big deal? *vox.com* [online]. 9 November 2023 [viewed 10 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/18080052/israel-settlements-west-bank>

⁶² BICKERTON, I. J. and C. L. KLAUSNER. *A history of...*, p. 147.

⁶³ The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in the early 1960s. It gradually became the largest Palestinian exile organisation and umbrellaed many smaller Palestinian fractions. In 1968, it was joined by Fatah, whose chairman was Mohammed Yasser Abd al-Raouf Qudqa al-Husseini, known as Arafat. In 1969, Arafat was elected chairman of the PLO.

⁶⁴ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 148.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

if possible, from the whole of Lebanon.⁶⁶ After the weeks of bombardment of Beirut, the international community stepped in to resolve the conflict. As part of the ceasefire agreement, a multinational peacekeeping force with American, Italian, and French troops arrived in Lebanon in August 1982 to oversee the peaceful withdrawal of Arafat's PLO from Beirut and to ensure the safety of Palestinian civilians. The war was officially ended on September 1.⁶⁷

2.4 First Intifada

"Intifada" is the Arabic word for uprising. The Palestinians have risen up against Israel a total of two times. The first time in 1987, twenty years after the Six-Day War. The revolt began as an expression of Palestinian dissent in the occupied territories against twenty years of occupation. It manifested as a series of civil unrest in the form of demonstrations, the building of barricades, and the throwing of stones and firebombs at Israeli soldiers.⁶⁸ The main causes of the uprisings included increasing unemployment, restricted movement between Palestinian enclaves and limited access to water sources. However, it was the construction of Jewish settlements that complicated life for Palestinians the most. The first settlements were built in areas of relatively low Palestinian settlement. In the 1980s, when the number of settlers increased to 5 960 per year, there was an increase in negative perceptions of this construction among Palestinians.⁶⁹

Israel was not prepared for the uprising and reacted harshly. The lack of a police force was made up for by an army that was not trained for riot control and reacted disproportionately⁷⁰, earning global criticism, even from Jews in the United States. In the first six weeks, 38 Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli forces.⁷¹ Several Israeli soldiers were tried by military courts for their cruel behaviour. However, some Jewish settlers demanded a more severe response and formed their own armed militias.⁷² The date of the end of the first intifada cannot be clearly defined. However, the date of the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 is often cited. As Kruppa notes, "*the first intifada*) was too weak to bring the Israeli state to real concessions. But it brought new realities. For example, that most Israelis, except settlers, no longer travelled

⁶⁶ KRUPP, M. *Dějiny státu Izrael...*, p. 114.

⁶⁷ KEJLOVÁ, T. Dvě invaze, jedna občanská válka. Sýrie a Izrael okupovaly Libanon celé dekády, masakrům nebránily. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 13 April 2020 [viewed 18 July 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/svet/3075110-dve-invaze-jedna-obcanska-valka-syrie-a-izrael-okupovaly-libanon-cele-dekady-masakrum>

⁶⁸ CHAPMAN, C. *Čí je země zaslíbená?: pokračující krize mezi Izraelem a Palestinci*. 1st ed. Praha: Volvox Globator, 2003, p. 33.

⁶⁹ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 169.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 171.

⁷¹ BICKERTON, I. J. and C. L. KLAUSNER. *A history of...*, p. 219.

⁷² ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 171.

to the occupied territories, and it was clear that there could be no return to the pre-intifada status quo."⁷³

2.5 Oslo Accords

The 1990s were marked by peace negotiations. The most important were the Oslo negotiations, which resulted in the Oslo Accords. In March 1993, secret negotiations⁷⁴ between Israel and the representatives of the PLO began in Oslo. A group of intellectuals and a few progressive Labour Party functionaries negotiated for the Israeli side, who held the view that the PLO was the most moderate party among the Palestinians. Top politicians were involved in the talks afterwards. These negotiations led to a historic meeting between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on the Israeli side and Yasser Arafat for the Palestinians on the other. The meeting took place on September 13, 1993. The statesmen shook hands in front of the White House, assisted by Bill Clinton, and signed the Oslo Accords.

Before signing of Oslo I, both sides signed a 'Letter of Mutual Recognition' in which the PLO agreed to recognize the state of Israel and the Israelis acknowledged the PLO's role as a representative of the Palestinian people. Throughout the negotiations, Israel did not officially acknowledge the Palestinians' right to establish their own state, a stance that was criticized by Arafat's critics as a significant mistake.⁷⁵ In addition to this, Oslo I introduced the 'Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements', which established the Palestinian Legislative Council and set the parameters for the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza over a five-year period.⁷⁶ The topics of future negotiations were to include other regions that would come under Palestinian authority, the future of the refugees, the question of the Jewish settlements, the question of Jerusalem and the redistribution of water resources.⁷⁷ The following months were relatively calm, although a large number of unresolved issues caused disagreements and both sides accused each other of not respecting the commitments embodied in the Oslo I. A relatively peaceful period was shattered by the massacre committed by Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron on 25 February 1994. This American-Jewish extremist shot dead 29 Muslim worshippers and wounded more than hundred

⁷³ KRUPP, M. *Dějiny státu Izrael...*, p. 133.

⁷⁴ The Israelis were initially unwilling to negotiate with the PLO leadership. The Palestinians were acceptable to them only within the framework of a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation.

⁷⁵ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 188.

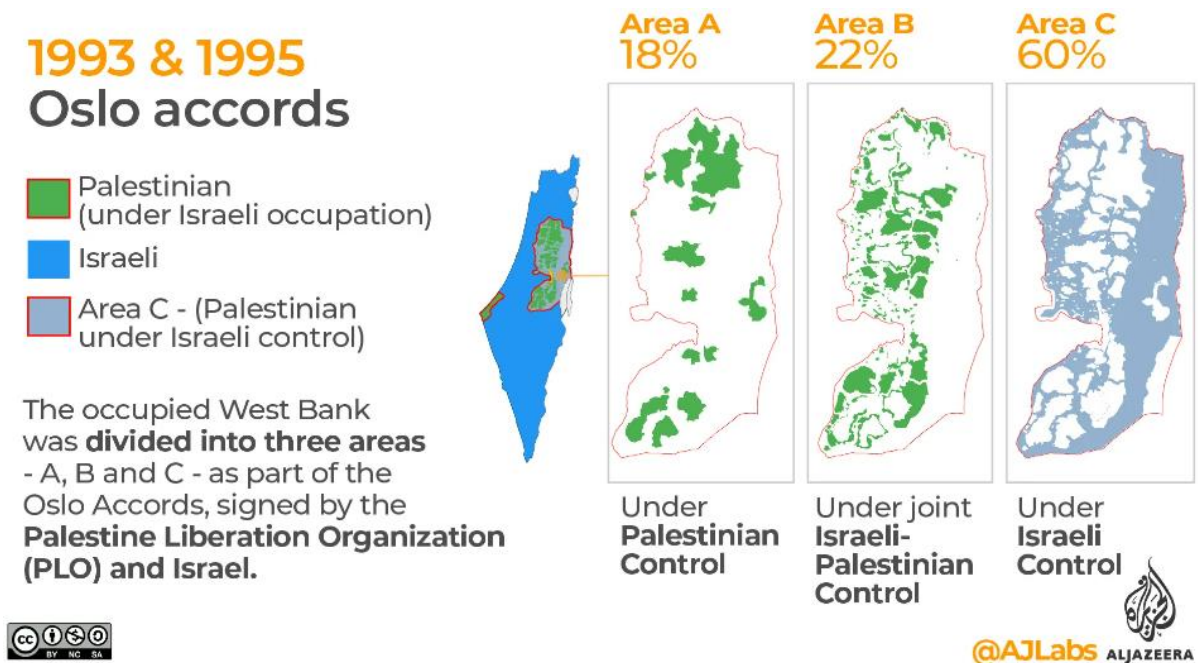
⁷⁶ Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (Oslo Accords), Washington, D.C., 1993

⁷⁷ CHAPMAN, C. *Čí je země...*, s. 35.

people. This event gave Palestinian radical groups, especially Hamas, the excuse to unleash another wave of violence. Hamas adopted a new strategy for fighting Israel: suicide attacks.⁷⁸

Oslo II was signed in 1995. It contained provisions for the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from six cities in the West Bank and about 450 towns. As you can see in the Figure 4, the West Bank was divided into three zones. Area A was to be exclusively administered by the Palestinian Authority. Area B was to be a jointly controlled area in which the Palestinians would exercise civil and police authority but Israel would retain authority over security issues. Area C was to remain under full Israeli civil and security administration. In this area were included the most controversial areas such as the Jewish settlements and military areas. In addition, the agreement set a timetable for elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council.⁷⁹

Figure 4 West Bank areas in the Oslo II Accord



Source: Al Jazeera

Despite the shift in the peace negotiations, many on both sides have criticized the agreement. Palestinians were suspicious of the gradual transfer of land. They were concerned that Israel would continue to occupy large parts of the West Bank. They were also concerned that Israel would provide long-term protection to Jewish settlers and never fully withdraw to allow the establishment of a Palestinian state.⁸⁰ Protests were also raised on the Israeli side. It

⁷⁸ ČEJKA, M. *Israel a Palestina...*, p. 192.

⁷⁹ Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II), Washington, D.C., 28 September 1995.

⁸⁰ BICKERTON, I. J. and C. L. KLAUSNER. *A history of...*, p. 278.

was mainly the Israeli opposition and the radical right that were opposed to any compromise with the Palestinians.⁸¹ The transfer of parts of the territories to Palestinians was seen as a betrayal by religious settlers.⁸² A turning point for the peace negotiations was the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995. He was shot dead by a Jewish extremist in the centre of Tel Aviv during a rally in support of the peace process. The attacker “*said that he was acting on God’s orders to prevent the land of Israel from being turned over to the Palestinians*”.⁸³

2.6 After the Peace Process in Oslo

After Rabin's murder, the peace process slowed down. Although several important agreements between Israelis and Palestinians, none had the same impact as the Oslo Accords. The deceleration of the peace process was mainly caused by the victory of the former opposition party, Likud, in the 1996 elections and by the strengthening of Arafat's opposition, particularly Hamas.⁸⁴ Eventually, the peace process came to a halt in 2000 after the failure of the Camp David summit, where a final agreement was to be reached. In addition, a second intifada broke out in August 2000. The Second Intifada, which is a series of Israeli-Palestinian violence that broke out in Jerusalem, is characterised by both more violence than the First Intifada and more casualties on both sides. There were several reasons for the outbreak of the Second Intifada. Violence continued, the Camp David agreement failed, Jewish settlements expanded, the Palestinian economy collapsed. However, the final trigger for the violence was the visit of Ariel Sharon, the then opposition leader, to the Al-Aqsa compound on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.⁸⁵ Unlike the first intifada, in which Palestinian protesters threw rocks and firebombs at Israeli soldiers, Palestinian tactics in the second intifada focused on suicide bombings, sniper fire and rocket attacks. The most brutal violence was usually organized by radical Islamist movements Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The conflict ended in 2005, with approximately 1 000 Israelis and 3 200 Palestinians killed.⁸⁶

The year 2005 was marked by another event - Israel's unilateral disengagement plan based on the proposal of then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. With the implementation of the plan, IDF installations and forces were removed and over 9000 Israeli citizens living in 25 settlements

⁸¹ KRUPP, M. *Dějiny státu Izrael...*, p. 151.

⁸² ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 195.

⁸³ BICKERTON, I. J. and C. L. KLAUSNER. *A history of...*, p. 278.

⁸⁴ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 197.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁸⁶ BEAUCHAMP, Z. What were the intifadas? *vox.com* [online]. 14 May 2018 [viewed 20 July 2023]. Available from: <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/18080066/israel-palestine-intifadas-first-second>

in Gaza and northern Samaria in the West Bank were evicted.⁸⁷ In January 2006, elections were held for the Palestinian Legislative Council, resulting in the victory of the radical Islamist movement Hamas. Fatah, which had been the dominant Palestinian movement until then, took the defeat badly. The most problematic issue was who would control the security forces. After Hamas took over the government, there were several shoot-outs between Palestinian security forces and Hamas gunmen. The greatest tensions were in the Gaza Strip, where fighting resembling a civil war took place in late 2006-2007. A brief period of peace followed before the Gaza conflict flared up again, culminating in the Hamas takeover of Gaza in June 2007. This led to a dual-rule situation in Palestine, with the Gaza Strip coming under the full control of Hamas, while Fatah managed to maintain its dominance in the West Bank.⁸⁸ Palestine remains largely divided and controlled by two governments, which also complicates a future two-state solution. At the same time, Hamas, which is on the terrorist lists of several entities and countries, including the EU, the US and Canada, poses a major security threat to Israel.

2.7 Summary

One of the most important milestones in the Israeli-Palestinian (formerly Arab-Israeli) conflict is 1948, when Palestine was partitioned and the state of Israel was created, following a proposal by the Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). This was followed by the first Arab-Israeli War, in which Israel defeated the armies of five Arab countries and gained far more territory than it had originally been allotted. This war resulted in the displacement of a large number of Palestinians from their homes, leading to a refugee crisis. In 1967, the territory was marked by another war, the Six-Day War, which resulted in Israel's victory and the expansion of its former territory. However, the acquired territories did not only bring benefits to Israel. Future disputes between Israel and Palestine were to a significant extent caused by the results of the Six-Day War. After Israel acquired the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, it began building Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, which are still considered one of the main obstacles to peace.

Two uprisings, known as the Intifadas, occurred during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The first intifada, which began in 1987, consisted of civil unrest in the form of demonstrations, the building of barricades and the throwing of stones and firebombs at Israeli soldiers. The end of the First Intifada is referred to as the date of the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

⁸⁷ JOFFRE, T. On this day in 2005: Israel completes disengagement from the Gaza Strip. *jpost.com* [online]. 13 September 2021 [viewed 10 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/on-this-day-in-2005-israel-completes-disengagement-from-the-gaza-strip-679288>

⁸⁸ ČEJKA, M. . *Izrael a Palestina...*, pp. 281-283.

Negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian side in Oslo are considered the most important peace negotiations in the 1990s, but they did not bring the desired peace. In August 2000, the Second Intifada broke out, lasting until 2005 and bringing much more violence and casualties than the first. The tactics of the Palestinians changed during the Second Intifada. They included suicide attacks, rocket attacks and sniper fire. The region is also marked by the victory of the radical Islamist movement Hamas in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, which ousted Fatah from Gaza in 2007. Palestine remains divided to this day, with the PLO governing the West Bank and Hamas controlling the Gaza Strip.

In any conflict, and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict especially, it is important to know the history, because it allows us to understand what leads the parties to the conflict to act the way they do. It also shows us that conflict cannot be simplified as a fight between good and evil. Both sides have strong arguments to defend their right to exist, but both sides have also committed mistakes and violence against each other.

The following chapter will describe the European Union's foreign policy, including its formation, and define the factors that contribute to the formation of national foreign policies of the Member States.

3 The Foreign Policy of the European Union

The foundations of the EU's current foreign policy were laid by European political cooperation, established in 1970 by the Davignon report. One of the greatest achievements of this platform is the adoption of the above-mentioned Venice Declaration (1980), the first document expressing the EU's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since then, EU foreign policy has evolved and the Lisbon Treaty shaped it into its current form. In the next chapter, I will first explain what EU foreign policy consists of and how it works. I will then define the relationship between EU foreign policy and national foreign policies. I give special emphasis to the unanimity voting system in the CFSP, as this is what I consider to be one of the current challenges of EU foreign policy. Since foreign policy is an area where Member States often differ in their positions, in the following subsection I will outline the main reasons that lead to these differences. In the last subchapter, I will focus on the attitudes of member states towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself and introduce the reader to the issues that I will address in more detail in the following chapters.

3.1 The Nature of the European Union's Foreign Policy

EU foreign policy is “*multifaceted (consisting of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Common security and defence policy (CSDP), external action and external dimension of internal policies), multi-method (combining an intergovernmental and a Community method) and multilevel (entailing the national, European and international levels)*”.⁸⁹

The EU's foreign policy contains of four related facets: the CFSP, of which the CSDP is a part, then external action and finally the external dimension of internal policies. In this chapter I will focus in particular on the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The CFSP, which was originally established as a second, intergovernmental pillar in the Maastricht Treaty, is regulated in Title V, Articles 21-46 of the Treaty on European Union. The CFSP is the main platform for the development and implementation of the political and diplomatic dimension of EU foreign policy. CFSP provides the platform to “*not only position the EU with regard to foreign policy issues, but also to actively pursue the EU's foreign policy interests and contribute to mediation efforts and other international diplomatic initiatives.*”⁹⁰ The EU's Foreign and Security Policy enables the Union to speak and act with unity on global issues. It has special features because it is conceived as intergovernmental. The key institutions in the CFSP are the European Council

⁸⁹ KEUKELEIRE, S. and T. DELREUX. *The Foreign Policy of the European Union*. 3rd ed. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, p. 11.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

and the Council of the EU. European Council sets the CFSP, considering the EU's strategic interests and defence implications. The Council defines and implements CFSP based on guidelines set by the European Council. With a few exceptions, as set out in Article 31 TEU, Member States decide unanimously on CFSP issues and on the Union's foreign and security policy line. Given the dominant position of the European Council and the Council and the unanimous vote, Member States retain control in this area.

The adoption of a legislative act is excluded in the area of CFSP. The EU conduct the CFSP by (a) defining the general guidelines, (b) adopting decisions defining (i) actions to be undertaken by the Union, (ii) positions to be taken by the Union, (iii) arrangements for the implementation of the decisions referred to in points and by (c) strengthening systematic cooperation between the Member States in the conduct of policy.⁹¹ The common foreign and security policy is put into effect by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and by Member States. The European Commission and the European Parliament have only a limited role in the CFSP.⁹² The Common Security and Defence Policy is, according to the Treaty, an integral part of the CFSP. It provides the EU with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets.

Provisions on the Union's external action can be found in Part Five of the TFEU. The EU's external action includes the common commercial policy, cooperation with third countries and humanitarian aid, restrictive measures and international agreements. Decisions in this area are taken using the Community method, involving the Council, European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Court of Justice, and are taken by majority voting. The final facet of EU foreign policy concerns the external dimension of the EU's internal policies. Most of the EU's internal policies also have an external dimension. In this group we can include, for example external dimension of EU immigration and asylum policy, the external dimension of EU counter-terrorism policy or for example external dimension of the EU energy policy.

⁹¹ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, 26 October 2012, Article 25.

⁹² European Commission does not have the right of initiative, nor does it exercise significant executive powers in CFSP. As states in Article. 30 TEU, it can only support the High Representative on CFSP questions or initiatives referred to the Council. To achieve coordination between the CFSP and the Commission's areas of EU external action, the High Representative is simultaneously the Vice-President of the Commission, ensuring coherence across the EU's external action. The role of the European Parliament is stated in the article 36 of the TEU - European Parliament must be informed and consulted on CDSP issues and its views have to be taken into consideration.

3.2 Foreign Policy of the EU and the National Foreign Policies

The relationship of Member States to the CFSP is determined directly by the Treaty on European Union. The member states should “*support the Union’s external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity*” and “*refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations.*”⁹³ Alongside the EU's common foreign policy, each Member State has its own foreign policy. The EU has a major influence on the foreign policy of the Member States through the processes of Europeanisation. This process can be seen, for example, in how the content of national policies is changing as a result of consultation, coordination and joint policy-making at EU level. To some extent, Member States take into account the EU's common position when determining national positions. Europeanisation also leads to states developing foreign policy on issues or countries on which they previously had no policy.⁹⁴

The EU's common foreign policy is a very sensitive issue among Member States. Member States retain a considerable degree of control in this area, mainly through unanimous voting. Foreign policy, including defence, is one of the areas closely linked to national sovereignty, which is why most Member States do not want to abandon unanimity in this area. However, attempts to change this rule can be observed nowadays. In May 2023, nine EU members, the so-called Group of Friends⁹⁵, came up with a proposal to switch to a qualified majority system for decision-making on major foreign and defence policy issues. The aim was to speed up decision-making in these areas, particularly in the context of the war in Ukraine, and to prevent the activities of countries that often block common action by the Union.⁹⁶ One of the biggest risks of unanimity is that it offers an easy way for third countries to gain influence over EU foreign policy decisions. All it has to do is convince one member state to use its veto.⁹⁷ Joseph Borrell, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is also in favour of moving from unanimity to qualified majority voting. He argues, among other things, that decisions made in foreign policy are often binary in nature - for example, the

⁹³ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, 26 October 2012, Article 24/3.

⁹⁴ KEUKELEIRE, S. and T. DELREUX. *The Foreign Policy...*, p. 18.

⁹⁵ Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain.

⁹⁶ EURACTIV.sk and TASR. Deväť členov Únie žiada zmeny v rozhodovaní o zahraničnej a obrannej politike. *euractiv.sk* [online]. 14 June 2023 [viewed 2 November 2023]. Available from: <https://euractiv.sk/section/obrana-a-zahranicje/news/devat-clenov-unie-ziada-zmeny-v-rozhodovani-o-zahranicnej-a-obrannej-politike/>

⁹⁷ KAČMÁR, R. S vetom či bez veta? Zmena v rozhodovaní by EÚ mohla pomôcť na globálnej scéne, no nie je všeliakom. *dennikn.sk* [online]. 30 June 2021 [viewed 6 November 2023]. Available from: <https://dennikn.sk/2449839/s-vetom-ci-bez-veta-zmena-v-rozhodovani-by-eu-mohla-pomoc-na-globalnej-scene-no-nie-je-vseliakom/>

decision on whether or not the EU will recognise a government or whether or not to launch a crisis management operation. Unanimity therefore often leads to blockages in decisions and paralysis of EU foreign policy.⁹⁸ Such a situation occurred, for example, in the vote on sanctions against Belarus in 2021, when sanctions were blocked by Cyprus, or the declaration of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the same year, when unity was disrupted by Hungary. However, modifying the voting rules would also require unanimity and there is no consensus among Member States on this issue. Nor can the countries that use the veto be expected to vote in favour of changing the rules. Especially the smaller Member States fear being outvoted by the larger ones and thus having their sovereignty threatened.

3.3 Factors Influencing the EU's Foreign Policy

The EU sometimes struggles to take decisions on foreign policy due to divisions among member states. This diversity is the result of several factors, such as the different interests of the Member States, the identity of each Member State, but also the diversity in power. Keukeleire explains that there is considerable diversity among the 27 EU states in terms of power and capabilities, pointing out that a member state "*that has nuclear weapons, hundreds of combat-capable aircraft ,....., veto power in UN Security Council, an extensive diplomatic network and a major share in the world economy behaves in the different way in international relations and reacts differently to international crisis*"⁹⁹ than countries that do not have the mentioned components. Lehne describes other factors that distinguish the largest and most powerful Member States from others in foreign policy. These Member States are able, because of their weight, to act independently and are less dependent on multilateral institutions; the EU is for them only one of several multilateral institutions where they can cooperate in foreign policy and, at the same time, these countries are involved in policy-making on a much broader scale than other countries.¹⁰⁰ These states therefore have different ambitions in the field of foreign policy and are placed under higher expectations both within the country and in third countries.

Another factor is the different interests of the Member States. There are only a limited number of common interests shared by all Member States, including maintaining peace in Europe, combating terrorism, addressing the challenges of global warming, as well as tackling

⁹⁸ BORRELL, J. When member states are divided, how do we ensure Europe is able to act? *eeas.europa.eu* [online]. 2 October 2020 [viewed 6 November 2023]. Available from: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/when-member-states-are-divided-how-do-we-ensure-europe-able-act-0_en

⁹⁹ KEUKELEIRE, S. and T. DELREUX. *The Foreign Policy...*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁰ LAHNE, S. The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy. *Carnegie Europe* [online]. 21 February 2013 [viewed 15 October 2023], pp. 1-8. Available from: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/eu_big_three1.pdf

transnational threats such as organised crime and illegal migration. It is evident that no matter how powerful a state is, it cannot fight these challenges alone and a common European response is undoubtedly more effective.¹⁰¹ On the other side are divergent and irreconcilable interests, which contribute to Member States not being able to find a consensus on a certain issue. One group of states aims to promote democracy and human rights in third countries (e.g. in Russia, Azerbaijan), others are more interested in economic cooperation and energy contracts.¹⁰²

An integral element of member states' foreign policy-making is their identity, which is shaped by their worldview and role conception. A worldview, or a state's idea of what the world is or should be, is influenced by a number of factors, such as historical experience or geographic location, as well as cultural and linguistic ties. An example is the Czech Republic's relationship with Israel, which is largely influenced by the historical experience and historical ties between the two countries. Worldview also provides answers to how a state views fundamental issues such as the use of violence in international relations or the importance of values such as human rights and democracy versus economic gain.¹⁰³

A role conception is “*a set of norms expressing expected foreign policy behaviour and action orientation. It can be thought of as a ‘road map’ that foreign policy-makers rely on to simplify and facilitate an understanding of a complex political reality*”.¹⁰⁴ Role conceptions are self-defined by policymakers and more generally, by a nation or population. It is their “image” of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment. In essence, national role conceptions represent a crucial element of the overall intellectual setting within which daily decisions on foreign policy are formulated.¹⁰⁵ Role conception define for example whether a member state sees itself as a promoter of human rights and rule of law, a partner of the US, the supporter of Israel or the supporter of Arab countries.¹⁰⁶

3.4 Disunity among EU Member States on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Disagreements between Member States on foreign policy often lead to reduced EU efficiency in this area and to unsatisfactory results in terms of the EU's ability to speak with one voice on the international scene. One of the areas where we can observe a long-standing

¹⁰¹ CAMERON, F. *An Introduction to European Foreign Policy*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2012, p. 2

¹⁰² KEUKELEIRE, S. and T. DELREUX. *The Foreign Policy...*, p. 24-25.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ AGGESTAM, L. Role Conceptions and the Politics of Identity in Foreign Policy. *ARENA Working Papers* [online]. 1999, 99(8) [viewed 5 November 2023]. Available from: https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/1994-2000/1999/wp99_8.htm

¹⁰⁵ HOLSTI, K.J. National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy. *International Studies Quarterly* [online]. 1970, 14(3) [viewed 6 November 2023], p. 246. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3013584>

¹⁰⁶ KEUKELEIRE, S. and T. DELREUX. *The Foreign Policy...*, 2022, p. 26.

divergence in attitudes among member states is the Middle East Peace Process. It is this disunity that is one of the reasons why the EU is unable to play as stronger role in this conflict and prevents the EU from becoming more actively involved in the peace process. A good example of inconsistency is the voting of Member States in the UN. For example, in the voting of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19 on upgrading Palestine's status in the Assembly to non-member observer state in 2012, fourteen Member States voted in favour, thirteen Member States abstained, and only one Member State - the Czech Republic - voted against.¹⁰⁷ A more recent example is the UN General Assembly vote in October on a resolution calling for an 'immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce'¹⁰⁸ in Gaza.¹⁰⁹

Despite the fact that all member states share a common goal - a two-state solution and a lasting peace in the Middle East - there is no consensus on partial issues. The above-mentioned factors such as states' interests and their identity are clues to explain the different attitudes of the member states towards the Middle East Peace Process. Even the two largest and most powerful EU countries do not always agree on the Israeli-Palestinian position. Germany has often acted as a supporter of Israel and it's pro-Israel stance has deep roots. The rapprochement between the two countries took place after the Second World War and was initiated by West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. The exceptional relations between Germany and Israel are often explained in terms of historical experience, with Germany taking support for Israel as a special responsibility for the Holocaust. *"The genocide of European Jews and other groups during the Nazi era has influenced Germany's existence today, influencing German policy-making and shaping its worldview."*¹¹⁰ Germany's commitment to Israel is not just a political goal but part of German identity.

The Middle East is also an important topic in France, with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself often described as "une passion française". This is due to the presence of Jewish and Muslim communities in France, the large French-speaking community in Israel, but also to

¹⁰⁷ UNITED NATIONS. Status of Palestine in the United Nations: resolution/adopted by the General Assembly. *digitallibrary.un.org*[online]. 2012 [viewed 7 November 2023]. Available from: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/738624>

¹⁰⁸ UNITED NATIONS. UN General Assembly adopts Gaza resolution calling for immediate and sustained 'humanitarian truce'. *news.un.org*[online]. 26 October 2023 [viewed 7 November 2023]. Available from: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142847>

¹⁰⁹ Four countries (Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary) voted against, 8 countries voted in favour (Belgium, France, Liechtenstein, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, Portugal, Switzerland) and 15 countries abstained.

¹¹⁰ GLUCROFT, W.N. Germany's unique relationship with Israel. *dw.com*[online]. 15 October 2023 [viewed 7 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.dw.com/en/israel-and-germanys-reason-of-state-its-complicated/a-67094861>

France's colonial history and the legacy of the Second World War.¹¹¹ The French position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is often portrayed as pro-Palestinian. This is because it is based on a clear condemnation of the Israeli occupation and settlement building in the occupied territories and recognition of the Palestinian right to self-determination. Relations with Israel have fluctuated over time, but in recent years relations have been friendly, based mainly on bilateral cooperation.¹¹²

Among the smaller countries, the Czech Republic, often described as Israel's biggest ally in the EU, has been active in supporting Israel. Hungary has also become an ally of Israel in recent years. This is evidenced by the planned relocation of the Hungarian embassy to Jerusalem, which Hungary announced in March 2023, Hungary's voting record at the UN and the EU, as well as the positive relations between Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Austria is also described as an ally of Israel. In recent years, the ruling Österreichische Volkspartei has strongly sided with Israel. As in the case of Germany, the roots of Austria's pro-Israeli attitudes must be sought in the post-World War II period. As Jan Daniel told for Seznam Zprávy, Austria also feels that it must "*make amends for its historical guilt and protect the Jewish state*".¹¹³

On the contrary, the countries considered most critical of Israel are Ireland, Spain and, until recently, Sweden. Few people know that Ireland in particular has been considered the least friendly country towards Israel for decades. Ireland only recognised Israel in 1963 and established an embassy in Tel Aviv in 1996. Furthermore, Ireland was one of the first European countries to call for the creation of a Palestinian state in 1980, and it has persistently addressed the issue of Palestinian refugees.¹¹⁴ In 2021, the Irish parliament condemned the construction of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, describing it as a "de facto annexation".¹¹⁵ Many Irish view Israel as a colonial state. Ireland's sympathy for the Palestinians is very much tied to its

¹¹¹ VOLTOLINI, B. France and the Israeli occupation: Talking the talk, but not walking the walk? *Global Affairs* [online]. 2018, 4(1) [viewed 8 November 2023], p.51. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23340460.2018.1507286>

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ KŘOVÁKOVÁ, K. Válka dělí Evropu, část zemí drží s Izraelem, další straní Palestincům. *seznamzpravy.cz* [online]. 5 November 2023 [viewed 8 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/zahraniceni-rozdelena-eu-proc-nektere-staty-strani-izraeli-a-jine-palestincum-239167>

¹¹⁴ SAVAGE, S. Why is Ireland the Most Anti-Israel Country in Europe? *jns.org* [online]. 6 February 2018 [viewed 9 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.jns.org/why-is-ireland-the-most-anti-israel-country-in-europe/>

¹¹⁵ O'HALLORAN, M and E. O'RIORDAN. Ireland becomes first EU country to declare Israel is involved in 'de facto annexation'. *irishtimes.com* [online]. 27 May 2021 [viewed 9 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/oireachtas/ireland-becomes-first-eu-country-to-declare-israel-is-involved-in-de-facto-annexation-1.4576250>

own historical experience with the United Kingdom.¹¹⁶ The Irish associate the Palestinian struggle with the Irish struggle for independence from Britain. There is also a significant role played by Christian humanitarianism, which places emphasis on the human rights situation of the Palestinians.¹¹⁷

Sweden also has a specific relation towards Palestine. Swedish support for Palestine began with Olof Palme, Sweden's Social Democratic prime minister from 1969 to 1976 and from 1982 to 1986. Palme was the “*main exponent of Sweden's foreign policy of non-alignment and Sweden as a moral superpower, which included support for national liberation movements*”.¹¹⁸ In 1974, he was the first leader of a Western democracy to meet Yasser Arafat. From that moment forward, Sweden's pro-Palestinian stance has remained more or less constant.¹¹⁹ In 2014, Sweden became the first European country to recognise Palestine as a state. Sweden hoped that this decision would “*facilitate a peace agreement by moderating the inequality between the parties and supporting moderate Palestinian forces*”.¹²⁰ However, nowadays we can see that the mood in Sweden is changing. The changes in policy towards Israel and Palestine are the result of the new Swedish government elected in 2022. Two of the three parties in Sweden's current right-wing governing coalition (the Liberals and the Christian Democrats) as well as a third party outside the coalition (the populist Sweden Democrats) support steps to improve Sweden's relations with Israel.¹²¹

3.5 Summary

The Foreign policy of the EU is made up of the CFSP, including CSDP, external action and the external dimensions of internal policies. The CFSP is the platform for the development and implementation of the political and diplomatic dimension of EU foreign policy. It is defined and implemented by the European Council and the Council acting unanimously, unless the Treaties state otherwise. The EU external action includes the common commercial policy, cooperation with third countries and humanitarian aid, restrictive measures and international agreements. Decisions in these areas are taken by majority vote. The final component of EU

¹¹⁶ SPECIA, M. Tracing the Deep Roots of Ireland's Support for Palestinians. *nytimes.com* [online]. 2 December 2023 [viewed 2 December 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/02/world/europe/ireland-palestinians-support.html>

¹¹⁷ KŘOVÁKOVÁ, K. Válka dělí Evropu...

¹¹⁸ POPE, H. and others. Three European Views of the Gaza War. *jsribune.com* [online]. October 2023 [viewed 10 November 2023]. Available from: <https://jsribune.com/three-european-views-of-the-gaza-war/>

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SWEDEN. Sweden recognises Palestine and increases aid. *un.org* [online]. 30 October 2014 [viewed 9 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-203405/>

¹²¹ POPE, H. and others. Three European Views...

foreign policy is the external dimension of the EU's internal policies. This includes, for example, migration and asylum policy.

Divergences between Member States on various foreign policy issues are paralysing the EU's capacity for action in the field of foreign policy. One solution that is on the table is to change the voting rules in foreign policy from unanimity to qualified majority. However, the problem is to enforce this change, given that unanimity is required for such a change to take place and it is clear that the states that currently use the veto in foreign policy will vote against it. One of the areas where there has long been no consensus between Member States is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Among the pro-Israel countries we can count the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria and Germany. On the other hand, countries critical of Israel and more pro-Palestinian are Ireland, Spain, Sweden and France. The attitudes of Member States towards this issue are shaped by the interests of the country, its identity and its worldview, where history very often plays a significant role. The position of the European Union as a whole on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as its role in the conflict, will be described in the next chapter.

4 EU Role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The objective of the following chapter is to examine the position of the EU as a whole on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its role in the efforts to resolve the conflict. The findings of this chapter will be helpful in answering the question to what extent the EU influences the attitudes of Member States towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In order to confirm or deny the claim that EU states differ on the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and often diverge from the EU position in practice, it is necessary to define a common EU position.

I will first introduce readers to the EC (and later the EU) position on the Arab-Israeli (and later Israeli-Palestinian) conflict since the initial years of the existence of the State of Israel and to the first declarations that expressed a common European position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the greatest focus on the Venice Declaration of 1980. The Venice Declaration remains one of the fundamental documents in which the EU has expressed its position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I will then present the EU's current position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process of 2014. In the next sub-chapter, I will describe the initiatives that have been undertaken to help bring about a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine and that the EU has been involved in, namely the Road Map for Peace from 2002 and the recent initiative launched in 2023 - the Peace Day Effort. Finally, I will present two EU civilian missions operating in the Palestinian territories, namely EUPOL COPPS and EU BAM RAFAH.

4.1 Development of EC/EU Policy on the Middle East conflict

The European Union initially maintained a neutral position on the conflict between Israel and Palestine after the creation of Israel. This was mainly due to divided positions within the European Union. In the early years of Israel's existence, France was its important ally and was seen by other countries as closest European partner of Israel. On the other hand, the Israelis felt a certain aversion to Germany and Britain. In Germany's case, of course, the reason was the Holocaust. In the case of Great Britain, it was its opposition to the creation of Israel and its refusal of entry to refugees and immigrants in the 1945 - 1948.¹²² Until the 1970s, the EU did not act as a single entity on foreign policy issues. Foreign policy cooperation was launched by the 1970 Davignon Report, advocating across-the-board policy coordination as a European Community on vital issues of international stability and security. The Davignon Report created European Political Cooperation (EPC). The aim of the EPC was to unify national positions on

¹²² YACOBI, H. and D. NEWMAN. The EU and the Israel–Palestine conflict. In: DIEZ, T. (ed). *The European Union and Border Conflicts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 180-181.

foreign policy issues, but it was not always possible to reach a consensus. For instance, when the first Israeli-Palestinian war broke out in 1973, the reactions of EC member states were mixed. According to Levi, member states at the time could be divided into three blocks - the pro-Arab block, where France and Italy belonged, the neutral block - Belgium, Ireland and probably the UK, and a pro-Israeli block with the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany.¹²³

The first document that expresses a common European position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and outlines a common approach to the steps to be taken towards a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Venice Declaration of June 1980. In the Venice Declaration the then nine EC member states recognised "*the right to existence and to security of all the states in the region, including Israel, and justice for all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.*"¹²⁴ The Venice Declaration called for recognition of the right of the Palestinians to self-government and the right of the PLO to join peace initiatives. Member States also recognised the special importance of Jerusalem and stressed that they will not accept any unilateral initiative aimed at changing the status of the city and that access to the holy places should be guaranteed for everyone. The nine member states in the Venice Declaration also stressed that Israel must end the occupation, which has been ongoing since 1967, and expressed their concern that the building of Jewish settlements on the occupied territories constitutes an obstacle to the peace process and consider it illegal under international law. Venice Declaration was rejected by Israel and practically ignored by the United States. Israel's relations with the EC were at their lowest point in the post-Venice Declaration period. Yet its major principles were later adopted in the Oslo Accords signed in 1993.¹²⁵ On the basis of this declaration, it can be said that the differences between the attitudes of the states narrowed. The Dutch, Danes and Germans, who had been more sympathetic to Israel, moved closer to the pro-Palestinian position of the French and Irish. The European consensus thus leaned towards the French position.¹²⁶

For the rest of the 1980s, the EC's role in the Middle East conflict was virtually non-existent. As Levi pointed out, despite the fact that 70% of Israelis are originally from European countries and Israel shares the same social, political and moral values as Europe, there was a negative attitude in Israel towards the EU's role in the conflict especially during the years of

¹²³ LEVI, I. The EU Policy in the Middle East: Problematic Nature and Potential Role (Dissertation). *Universität Hamburg* [online]. 2005 [viewed 11 July 2023], p. 47. Available from: <https://ediss.sub.uni-hamburg.de/bitstream/ediss/1299/1/Dissertation.pdf>

¹²⁴ Venice Declaration from 13 June 1980.

¹²⁵ HOLLIS, R. The basic stakes and strategy of the EU and Member States. In: AYMAT, E. B. (ed.). *European Involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Paris: Institute for Security Studies, 2010, p. 35.

¹²⁶ LEVI, I. The EU Policy in the..., p. 54.

Peres followed by the Netanyahu government (1995-1999). When Israel was in danger, it accepted American or even individual European states' involvement, while rejecting a similar role for the EU.¹²⁷ Therefore, when the peace talks restarted in 1999, the EU was not invited and the role of mediator was traditionally taken by the United States. The EU was therefore not involved in the attempt to establish peace between Israel and Palestine at the Camp David Summit, nor was the EU able to influence the outbreak of the second intifada. Nevertheless, in 1999 the EU formulated another declaration - the Berlin Declaration. The Berlin Declaration included "*an explicit commitment to the creation of a Palestinian state and to the recognition of a Palestinian state, when appropriate.*"¹²⁸

When the second intifada began in 2000, it meant the collapse of peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine. The European Union and its Member States watched this development with concern because "*the breakdown of the peace process symbolised the end of a decade of optimism in the Middle East.*"¹²⁹ At the height of the second intifada in 2002, EU member states formulated their positions in another declaration. In the Seville Declaration of 2002, the EU presented an expected solution to the conflict. The declaration began by condemning the terrorist attacks against Israel and expressing the belief that peace "*can be achieved through negotiations and only through negotiations.*"¹³⁰ The aim, according to the declaration, is to end the occupation and establish a democratic, viable and sovereign Palestinian state on the basis of the 1967 borders. The end result should be the establishment two states of living side by side within secure and recognised borders.¹³¹

4.2 Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process of 2014

The most comprehensive and most relevant document, which is the main source for the EU's current position on the conflict, is the Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process of 2014.¹³² This document, but also the specific words, formulations or order of paragraphs, is the result of extensive negotiations and consensus among Member States.

In this document, the European Union condemned the violence perpetrated by the Islamist movement Hamas and recognised Israel's right to defend itself against attacks, but

¹²⁷ LEVI, I. The EU Policy in the..., p. 105.

¹²⁸ EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION. Middle East Peace Process. *eeas.europa.eu* [online]. 3 August 2021 [viewed 20 July 2017]. Available from: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/middle-east-peace-process_en#5683

¹²⁹ LEVI, I. The EU Policy in the..., p. 76.

¹³⁰ Declaration on the Middle East, Sevilla, 21 June 2002.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process: Foreign Affairs Council meeting, 22 July 2014, Brussels.

pointed out that Israel's military operations must be proportionate and in accordance with international humanitarian law. It reiterated its conviction that a two-state solution was inevitable. The only solution to the conflict is an agreement that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and that “*ends all claims and that fulfils the aspirations of both parties*”¹³³. A one-state solution would be incapable of this.

The EU has stated that a lasting solution should be achieved on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap and the agreements previously reached by the parties. It further committed to cooperate with the US and other partners to resume the peace process on the basis of a number of criteria. The criteria relate to borders, which should be based on the agreement of both sides on the basis of the 4 June 1967 lines - i.e. before the Six-Day War, a just and realistic solution to the refugee issue, the fulfilment of the ambitions of both sides on Jerusalem, and security arrangements. The EU further called on Israel to halt the continued settlement activity in the occupied territories, including in East Jerusalem, which threatens the viability of the two-state solution and to put an end to settler violence.¹³⁴

The EU remains almost unchanged in these positions and repeats them in other declarations and statements, usually issued when tensions escalate in the region. An example is the Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process from 18 January 2016, where the EU reiterated its commitment to achieving a two-state solution “*that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict.*”¹³⁵ The European Union repeated its condemnation of Israel's settlement policy and recalled that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to both peace and the two-state solution.¹³⁶ The same positions are expressed in the “Statement of the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the latest developments” from March 2023. The EU and its Member States called on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to de-escalate tensions and repeatedly pointed out the illegality of Jewish settlements. The Union called on

¹³³ Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process: Foreign Affairs Council meeting, 22 July 2014, Brussels.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, 18 January 2016, Brussels.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Israel to halt settlement expansion and prevent settler violence and strongly condemns terrorist attacks.¹³⁷

4.3 The Changing Attitudes within the European Union

After 11 September 2001, the EU has found itself in a difficult situation. Terrorism became a major issue, especially in the US. Although the EU's attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had not changed, it has begun to be criticised by Israel, the US and even within its own institutions for being an accomplice of the Palestinians.¹³⁸ Although the EU is still described by many as pro-Palestinian, some writers suggest that the attitudes of EU member states have been changing in recent years. An example is Benjamin Haddad's article in the American magazine *Foreign Policy*.¹³⁹ The article was published at the time of the armed clashes between Israel and Palestine, in particular the radical organisation Hamas, which erupted in May 2021. European leaders - notably Austria, Germany and France - have expressed support for Israel and condemned the terrorist attacks by Hamas. The Prime Minister of Israel has appreciated their support. After decades of cold relations between EU states and Israel, it seems that the mood is changing. For instance, Israel has had very good relations with Hungary in recent years. Hungary was the first EU country to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Because of the controversial judicial reforms, there are even discussions about whether Israel is turning into Hungary and people are comparing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orbán.¹⁴⁰

But it is not only Hungary and its Prime Minister Orbán who maintain positive relations with Israel. More European states seem to be leaning in this direction. This shift can be attributed to a combination of economic, geopolitical, and European domestic reasons. One factor is the changing nature of the Middle East. Despite ongoing violent clashes in the region, there is a noticeable departure from the previous European diplomatic consensus that viewed the Israeli-Palestinian issue as the key to resolve all tensions in the region—a perspective held by Europeans during the 2000s. Priorities in the Middle East have changed for

¹³⁷ COUNCIL OF THE EU. Israel/Palestine: Statement of the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the latest developments. *consilium.europa.eu* [online]. 8 March 2023 [viewed 5 August 2023]. Available from: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/03/08/israel-palestine-statement-of-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-latest-developments/>

¹³⁸ LEVI, I. *The EU Policy in the...*, p. 77.

¹³⁹ HADDAD, B. How Europe Became Pro-Israel. *foreignpolicy.com* [online]. 20 May 2021 [viewed 20 July 2023]. Available from: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/20/how-europe-became-pro-israel/>

¹⁴⁰ BECK, E. What does it actually mean when people warn Israel is 'turning into Hungary'?. *israelhayom.com* [online]. 15 February 2023 [viewed 11 July 2023]. Available from: <https://www.israelhayom.com/2023/02/15/what-does-it-actually-mean-when-people-warn-israel-is-turning-into-hungary/>

European leaders, whether because of the Arab Spring or the civil war in Syria, the effects of which have also been felt in Europe - notably through increased migration. Another reason is Israel's economic and technological achievements, which are also attracting European countries. Israel was the first non-European country to join several EU scientific bodies, such as the Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development and the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, known as CERN. It is also part of the EU's global navigation system Galileo. The third reason for the rapprochement between EU countries and Israel is the common goal of combating terrorism. The fight against terrorism is one of the EU's key objectives, and Europeans see Israel as a country that is struggling with similar challenges.¹⁴¹ The French politician Aurore Bergé made a similar point when she said: "*We have a common front with Israel: the struggle against Islamist terrorism. More than ever, it's what brings us closer and what explains the diplomatic shift in Europe.*"¹⁴²

4.4 The European Union as Mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The European Union has a long-standing and well-established ties with the both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is Israel's major trading partner and the largest donor to the Palestinians. Despite these facts, the EU does not play a leading role as a mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Commonly cited reasons for this are the dominance of the US as a mediator, the EU's internal inconsistencies, negative Israeli perceptions of the EU, and sometimes negative Palestinian perceptions of the EU.¹⁴³ For instance, when the Madrid Peace Conference was held in 1991, the US and the USSR played the role of mediators, with Europe providing only a venue for peace talks. Similarly, at the Oslo peace conference in 1993, the EU played only a secondary and limited role.¹⁴⁴ As I mentioned before, The EU was also not involved in the attempt to establish peace between Israel and Palestine at the Camp David Summit in 2000. However, two years later, in 2002, the EU took on a more prominent role in mediation.

4.4.1 Road Map for Peace

In 2002, a plan to renew the peace process emerged. The proposal was authored by the United States of America in cooperation with the European Union, Russia and the United

¹⁴¹ HADDAD, B. How Europe Became...

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ ELGSTRÖM, O. and others. Perceptions of the EU's Role in the Ukraine-Russia and the Israel-Palestine Conflicts: A Biased Mediator? *International Negotiation* [online]. 2018, 23(5) [24 November 2023], p. 307. Available from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324614489_Perceptions_of_the_EU's_Role_in_the_Ukraine-Russia_and_the_Israel-Palestine_Conflicts_A_Biased_Mediator

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Nations - the four parties are forming the so-called Quartet. The plan is called the 'Road Map for Peace' and its aim was to establish peace between Israel and Palestine by 2005. The plan was to be implemented in three phases. In the first phase, the violence would stop, Israel would withdraw from the occupied territories, and the Palestinian side would recognise Israel's right to exist. Palestinian institutions would be built, and free elections would be held. In the second phase, a provisional Palestinian state with provisional borders and a constitution was to be established. The third phase was meant to lead to an end to the conflict. The permanent borders of the Palestinian state would be established, the status of Jerusalem and the question of refugees would be resolved and international recognition of the two states would be secured.¹⁴⁵ The Road map raised concerns amongst Israeli leaders. The Israeli government has stated that no negotiations can take place until Palestinian terror networks are dissolved, incitement against Israel is ended and a new Palestinian leadership is established. The Palestinian Authority supported the roadmap, although the plan was strongly rejected by Hamas.¹⁴⁶

The Quartet's plan was never implemented. One of the main reasons was the very tight schedule. Complicated issues such as the status of Jerusalem or the refugee problem could not be resolved in several decades, so it was unlikely that they could be resolved in three years. Another reason for the failure was the continuing violence on both sides. Nevertheless, Roadmap for Peace achieved some minor successes. The Palestinians established a new prime minister, an interim Palestinian constitution was approved, and the Palestinian security forces were partially reformed.¹⁴⁷

4.4.2 Peace Day Effort

In 2023, the EU, Saudi Arabia, the Arab League in cooperation with Egypt and Jordan, has launched an effort to reinvigorate peace process between Israel and Palestine. The initiative is called the Peace Day Effort for Middle East Peace. According to joint press statement, the effort “*seeks to produce a “Peace Supporting Package” that will maximize peace dividends for the Palestinians and Israelis once they reach a peace agreement*”.¹⁴⁸ In other words, the

¹⁴⁵ BUREAU OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS. Roadmap for Peace in the Middle East: Israeli/Palestinian Reciprocal Action, Quartet Support. *state.gov*[online]. 16 July 2003 [viewed 25 July 2023]. Available from: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ei/rls/22520.htm>

¹⁴⁶ CIE. Quartet Issues Roadmap for Peace. *israeled.org* [online]. 2023 [viewed 25 July 2023]. Available from: <https://israeled.org/quartet-issues-roadmap-peace/>

¹⁴⁷ ČEJKA, M. . *Izrael a Palestina*....p. 235

¹⁴⁸ EEAS PRESS TEAM. MEPP: The European Union, Saudi Arabia, the Arab League, in cooperation with Egypt and Jordan, launch the Peace Day Effort for Middle East Peace, and invite the world to join. *eeas.europa.eu*[online]. 18 September 2023 [viewed 10 November 2023]. Available from: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/mepp-european-union-saudi-arabia-arab-league-cooperation-egypt-and-jordan-launch-peace-day-effort_en

proposal is to provide Israel and Palestine with cooperation and financial aid, subject to the condition that a final status agreement is reached.

The first meeting on the initiative took place in September 2023 with the participation of nearly fifty foreign ministers from Europe and the Middle East. The participants agreed to set up three working groups in charge of developing the Peace Support Package: the Political and Security Working Group, the Economic and Environmental Working Group and the Human Dimension Working Group. Progress will be reviewed every three months. A few weeks after the initiative was launched, the war between Israel and Hamas broke out. At the moment, given that the war is still ongoing, it is unclear how the Peace Day Effort will continue. However, the European Union continues to declare its commitment to contribute to the revival of the peace process on the basis of a two-state solution, including through the Peace Day Effort.¹⁴⁹

4.5 EU Civilian Missions in Palestine

The EU is the largest donor to the Palestinians. According to official EU website, the combined contribution of the European Commission and EU member states in recent years has reached almost 1 billion euro per year, in political, economic, development and humanitarian assistance.¹⁵⁰ In addition to financial support or projects to enhance infrastructure, education and human development, the EU also provides support to the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel through civilian missions.

One of the EU's priorities is to strengthen the Palestinian Authority through institution building and governance work. Given the need to develop a modern police force in the Territories, EU Member States decided in 2006 to deploy the EU Police and Rule of Law Mission for the occupied Palestinian territory (EUPOL COPPS) under the CSDP. Initially established as a purely police mission, in 2008 its mandate was expanded to include support for capacity building in Palestinian institutions in the field of criminal justice. EUPOL COPPS assists the Palestinian Authority in institution building aimed at security and justice sector reforms. Its tasks are to support the reform and development of the Palestinian civil police, to strengthen and support the Palestinian criminal justice system, to improve cooperation between the prosecution and the police and to coordinate and facilitate external donor assistance to the Palestinian Civil Police.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ European Council conclusions on Middle East, 26 October 2023, Brussels.

¹⁵⁰ EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION. Middle East Peace Process. *eeas.europa.eu* [online]. 3 August 2021 [viewed 20 July 2017]. Available from: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/middle-east-peace-process_en#5683

¹⁵¹ EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION. EUPOL COPPS: EU Police and Rule of Law Mission for the occupied Palestinian territory - Civilian mission. *eeas.europa.eu* [online]. 30 November 2020 [viewed 21 July

The European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EU BAM RAFAH) was launched in 2005 when Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip. The governments of the Palestinian Authority and Israel subsequently concluded an Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA), the aim of which was to facilitate the free movement of persons and goods within and from the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This included the opening of an international border crossing on the Gaza-Egypt border. The EU's role as a third party was to contribute to securing the proper functioning of the crossing point and to assist to help build trust between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. To these ends, EU Member States deployed the EU BAM RAFAH mission. EU BAM RAFAH focuses on enhancing the capacities of personnel from the General Administration for Borders and Crossings on border related issues such as cross-border crime, risk analysis and information exchange. Another aim of the mission is to strengthen cooperation among the Palestinian Agencies involved in border control, including Border Police, Customs and Judicial. For these purposes, it provides expertise in border management, customs, and border police operations, provides technical equipment and organises training sessions.¹⁵²

4.6 Summary

Initially, during the early years of Israel's existence, the European Community remained uninvolved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and maintained a neutral stance, largely due to a lack of unity among its member states. The first document to express a common European position on the conflict was the Venice Declaration of 1980. In the Venice Declaration, EC member states expressed the right to existence and security of all states in the region, including Israel, and justice for all the people, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The Venice Declaration is significant because its main principles were later adopted in the Oslo Accords. The European Union subsequently adopted two further declarations - the Berlin Declaration (1999) and the Seville Declaration (2002). Today, the EU is actively advocating for a two-state solution that meets the security requirements of both Israel and Palestine, satisfies Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, terminates the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues with a view to ending the conflict.

2023]. Available from: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eupol-coppspalestinian-territories/eupol-copps-eu-police-and-rule-law-mission-occupied-palestinian-territory-civilian-mission_und_en?s=338

¹⁵² EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION. EU BAM RAFAH: European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point - Civilian mission. *eeas.europa.eu* [online]. 30 November 2020 [viewed 21 July 2023]. Available from: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eubam-rafah/eu-bam-rafah-european-union-border-assistance-mission-rafah-crossing-point-civilian_en

The EU is not the principal mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although it has participated in various initiatives with the goal of achieving a lasting solution. These include the 2002 Road Map for Peace and the ongoing initiative to reinvigorate the peace process between Israel and Palestine - the Peace Day Effort. Furthermore, the EU supports the peace process through two civil missions in Palestinian territories.

The EU's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is limited, mainly because of the considerable disunity between Member States that can be observed from the creation of Israel to the present day. Nevertheless, the EU has long supported a two-state solution and has formulated a clear and unchanging position on the fundamental points of the conflict, to which it has long been committed. The EU also declares its commitment to contribute to the revival of the peace process.

In the next section of my thesis, I will analyse the positions of a long-standing pro-Israel country, the Czech Republic, on Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This case study will serve as a guide to answer the question of why some Member States are pro-Israeli and others pro-Palestinian in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

5 Relations of the Czech Republic with Israel and Palestine

The Czech Republic has been considered an ally of Israel and one of the most Israel-friendly countries in the European Union. Czech political leaders have repeatedly supported Israel when faced with criticism from other countries. Diplomats, both Czech and Israeli „consider the mutual relations to be strong and friendly; the Czech diplomats would not hesitate to call them special.”¹⁵³ Before I can explain what reasons and causes lead the Czech Republic to take a pro-Israeli stance, I find it necessary to first describe in a few pages this country's attitudes towards Israel, towards Palestine and, of course, towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself. The basis of this chapter is to describe the historical context, which is still crucial in explaining the Czech Republic's attitudes towards Israel and Palestine.

The cornerstone of Czech-Israeli relations can be found even before the establishment of Czechoslovakia and the State of Israel in the person of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk. Masaryk was known for his support of Zionism and gained popularity among Jews worldwide after the Hilsner Affair (1899-1900), when he stood up for the unjustly convicted Jewish man Leopold Hilsner. His support for Zionism continued during his presidency, and in 1927 he was the first president to visit the territory of the future State of Israel. There is no doubt that his relationship with the Jews and the Zionist movement is one of the factors behind the positive view many Czechs (and Slovaks) have of Jews and Israel. Thomas G. Masaryk's son, Ján Masaryk, who became Czechoslovakia's Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1940, also contributed to the positive attitudes. Ján Masaryk was active in the United Nations on the issue of the resolution of the Arab-Jewish conflict. Czechoslovakia was one of the eleven states that formed The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which presented a Plan for the Partition of the Territory of Palestine, intended to create two states. Jan Masaryk expressed his full support for the UNSCOP plan¹⁵⁴ and Czechoslovakia recognized the newly established state of Israel on May 19, 1948, less than a week after its creation.

It is also important to mention the role the country played during the First Arab-Israeli War (1948-1949). Czechoslovakia provided military assistance to Israel in the form of selling military equipment and providing training to members of the Israeli army. Despite the international embargo, Czechoslovakia supplied Israel with approximately 39 500 rifles, 5 635

¹⁵³ KALHOUSOVÁ, I. Relations between Israel and the Czech Republic: From Sentiment to Pragmatism? *Strategic Assessment* [online]. 2015, 18(3) [viewed 11 September 2023], p. 93. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327121316_Relations_between_Israel_and_the_Czech_Republic_From_Sentiment_to_Pragmatism

¹⁵⁴ JANKECH, J. Ako sa zrodil štát Izrael? *sme.sk* [online]. 14 May 2018 [viewed 24 September 2023]. Available from: <https://historickarevue.sme.sk/c/22528637/ako-sa-zrodil-stat-izrael.html>

light machine guns, 200 heavy machine guns, 76 million rounds of ammunition¹⁵⁵, as well as Avia S-199 and Spitfire combat aircraft.¹⁵⁶ Israeli pilots, including the future President of Israel Ezer Weizmann, and military technicians were trained on Czechoslovak territory. However, it should be noted here that in February 1948 a communist coup took place in Czechoslovakia. After this coup, Czechoslovakia joined the Soviet bloc and from that moment on, it adapted its foreign policy to the USSR. It is therefore evident that Czechoslovakia could only provide arms to Israel with the consent of the Soviet Union. Therefore, when we talk about the supply of arms during the first Arab-Israeli war, we cannot consider it as an expression of sympathy and friendly aid to Israel, because Czechoslovakia at that time was already representing the interests of the Soviet Union. Moreover, Israel had to pay for the weapons. Yet it is this assistance that many refer to when explaining the friendly relations between the Czech Republic and Israel. Israel still feels grateful for Czechoslovak help during the Israeli War of Independence, and the people of the Czech Republic regard the arms supplies as 'their share in the creation of Israel'.¹⁵⁷

5.1 A Turning Point in Relations with Israel

In 1950, relations between Israel and Czechoslovakia began to cool. Initially, Stalin's Soviet Union supported the creation of the State of Israel, but once it became clear that Israel was leaning towards the Western bloc rather than the Soviet Union, the USSR, along with the entire Eastern bloc, including Czechoslovakia, reconsidered its attitude towards Israel.¹⁵⁸ The radical change in the Soviet Union's attitude towards Israel is reflected in the fabricated 1952 trial of the 'Rudolf Slansky Anti-State Conspiracy Centre', in which fourteen people were indicted, eleven of whom were Jewish. Among the 'crimes' the defendants were alleged to be guilty of were Zionism or collaboration with Zionist centres.¹⁵⁹ The staged trial ended with eleven defendants being sentenced to death and three to life imprisonment. In response, Israel

¹⁵⁵ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 81.

¹⁵⁶ KALHOUSOVÁ, I. *Relations between...*, p. 95.

¹⁵⁷ ČEJKA, M. The Narrative of the Czech-Israeli Strategic Relations in the European Context. *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* [online]. 2017, 11(4) [viewed 5 November 2023], pp. 28-29. Available from: <https://cejiss.org/the-narrative-of-the-czech-israeli-strategic-relations-in-the-european-context-0>

¹⁵⁸ ČEJKA, M. Česko-izraelské vztahy během komunismu: od dodávek zbraní po přerušení diplomatických styků. *A2larm.cz* [online]. 8 August 2020 [viewed 25 September 2023]. Available from: <https://a2larm.cz/2020/08/cesko-izraelske-vztahy-behem-komunismu-od-dodavek-zbrani-po-preruseni-diplomatickych-styku/>

¹⁵⁹ DRDA, A. and M. BERNATT-RESZCZYŃSKÁ. Jedenáct špagátů pro „protistátní spiklenecké centrum kolem Rudolfa Slánského“. *Paměť národa* [online]. 21 November 2022 [viewed 25 September 2023]. Available from: <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/cs/magazin/stalo-se/proces-s-protistatnim-spikleneckym-centrem-rudolfa-slanskeho>

recalled its ambassador. Czechoslovakia had done so a year before. However, diplomatic relations were not formally severed until after the outbreak of the Six-Day War.

After the deterioration of relations with Israel, the Soviet Union focused on rapprochement with Arab countries sympathetic to the USSR and later support for the Palestine Liberation Organization. Other Eastern Bloc countries followed the same course. The anti-Israeli stance and support for the anti-Israeli fight of the Arab states became fully manifested in Czechoslovakia after the crushing of the Prague Spring and the Soviet occupation in 1968. In 1976, a permanent PLO mission was established in Prague and in 1983 it was upgraded to a diplomatic mission. After the Palestine National Council proclaimed the Declaration of Independence in November 1988 in Algiers, an embassy of the State of Palestine was established in Prague. Czechoslovakia supported the Arab states financially and militarily, supplying arms and training soldiers on its territory.¹⁶⁰

5.2 Renewed Support for Israel

Signs of a return to pre-communist attitudes can be observed since 1988. The Czechoslovak Foreign Minister “*announced his intention to send a delegation of consular officials and economists to Israel to explore the possibilities of developing mutual relations*”.¹⁶¹ The first trade agreements were signed, and Israeli tourist groups obtained permission to visit Czechoslovakia.¹⁶² The definitive breakthrough, however, came in 1989 after the Velvet Revolution, when Czechoslovakia was democratised. Václav Havel, a former dissident, leader of the Velvet Revolution and the first president of post-communist Czechoslovakia (and later of the Czech Republic), was particularly responsible for the re-improvement of relations with Israel. One of Havel's foreign policy priorities was to restore good relations with Israel. In February 1990, diplomatic relations between the countries were re-established, and in April of that year Havel was the first leader of a post-communist country to visit Israel.

As an example of the pro-Israeli attitudes of post-revolutionary Czechoslovakia, we can mention the permission of the transit of Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union to Israel through the territory of Czechoslovakia, despite the request of the Arabs not to allow it. Václav Havel also played a role in the repeal of UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 of 1975, which labelled Zionism as a form of racism.¹⁶³ Despite Havel's sympathy for Jews and the State of

¹⁶⁰ ČTK. Vztah Česka a Palestiny. Jak šel čas? *tyden.cz* [online]. 16 May 2018 [viewed 25 September 2023]. Available from: https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/domaci/vztah-ceska-a-palestiny-jak-sel-cas_480347.html

¹⁶¹ ČEJKA, M. Česko-izraelské vztahy během komunismu...

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, p. 267.

Israel, he was not just an uncritical supporter of Israel. Havel took an active interest in the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis, even working to make Czechoslovakia a venue for negotiations between the two sides in the 1990s.¹⁶⁴ Havel also met several times with PLO leader Yasser Arafat and sought to ensure that not only Israeli but also Palestinian intellectuals were invited to the Forum 2000 conferences.¹⁶⁵

Changes of governments and presidents in the following years did not lead to significant changes in the Czech Republic's attitudes towards Israel or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nevertheless, there have been certain moments worth mentioning. Although the Czech Republic maintains a balanced position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reality often differs from the official stance. Sympathy for the State of Israel is evident in statements and actions by Czech constitutional officials. For example, Miloš Zeman, who served as Prime Minister of the Czech Republic from 1998 to 2002 before later becoming President from 2013 to 2023, is known for his strongly pro-Israel stance, as evidenced by several of his statements and actions. In 2022, Miloš Zeman even received the Medal of the President of the State of Israel from Isaac Herzog for his "*unwavering support for the State of Israel, the people of Israel and the Jewish people, for his merits in cultivating the deep and long-standing friendship between Israel and the Czech Republic, and for his consistent and uncompromising work in domestic politics and on the international stage in the fight against anti-Israel and anti-Semitic hatred around the world.*"¹⁶⁶ At the governmental level, the ODS governments, namely those of Mirek Topolánek (2006-2009) and Petr Nečas (2010-2013), took a strong pro-Israeli stance. It was the government of Prime Minister Nečas that established the tradition of intergovernmental consultations between the State Israel and the Czech Republic. These were held for the first time in May 2012 in Prague and the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu led them on behalf of the Israelis. The Israeli prime minister appreciated the Czech position and said that "*Israel has no better friend in Europe than the Czech Republic*".¹⁶⁷ In 2012, the Czech Republic was the only EU state to join Israel in voting against Palestine's bid for Non-Member Observer State

¹⁶⁴ This role was eventually taken up by Norway.

¹⁶⁵ ČEJKA, M. Přátelství i adorace: Václav Havel, Česko(slovensko) a Izrael po roce 1989. *A2larm.cz* [online]. 15 August 2020 [viewed 25 September 2023]. Available from: <https://a2larm.cz/2020/08/pratelstvi-i-adorace-vaclav-havel-ceskoslovensko-a-izrael-po-roce-1989/>

¹⁶⁶ OVČÁČEK, J. Prezident republiky obdržel Medaili Prezidenta Státu Izrael. *mz.hrad.cz* [online]. 2022 [viewed 15 October 2023]. Available from: <http://mz.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/prezident-republiky-obdrzel-medaili-prezidenta-statu-izrael-16517/#from-list>

¹⁶⁷ GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Prime Minister: Israel is our key partner in the Middle East. *vlada.gov.cz* [online]. 17 May 2012 [viewed 1 October 2023]. Available from: <https://vlada.gov.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/prime-minister-israel-is-our-key-partner-in-the-middle-east-95617/>

Status in United Nations.¹⁶⁸ The Israeli Prime Minister even came to personally thank the Czech Republic for this step. The official statement of the Czech Foreign Ministry stated that granting Palestine non-member status could further delay the peace negotiations and that peace could only be achieved through direct negotiations.¹⁶⁹

At the present time, the relations between the Czech Republic and Israel are very positive. This statement is confirmed by the Czech Embassy in Tel Aviv, which states that *“nowadays the bilateral relationship is on top level, as evidenced by the high frequency of political contacts, increasing dynamics of economic exchange and the rich network of activities at non-governmental level.”*¹⁷⁰

5.3 Relations with Palestine after 1989

After Czechoslovakia resumed diplomatic relations with Israel, its official ties with Palestine diminished. The frequent visits of Palestinian representatives to Czechoslovakia also ceased. Yasser Arafat's last pre-planned visit was in 1990. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic was the first post-communist country to start providing development aid to the Palestinians.¹⁷¹ In the 1990s, Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic supported the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, under which the status of Palestinian diplomatic missions had to be preserved, and therefore the Palestinian embassy in Prague continued to operate. The Czech Republic was not represented in Palestine. The Czech embassy in Egypt, and later the embassy in Tel Aviv, handled relations with the Palestinians at this time. Relations deepened after Václav Havel's visit to Bethlehem in 1997, and in 2000 the Czech Republic was the first state from the former Soviet bloc to open a Representative Office in the West Bank in Ramallah. This move significantly improved relations between the two countries.¹⁷²

Relations between the countries deteriorated after the Czech Republic's vote at the UN in 2011, when the Czech Republic was one of five European Union countries to vote against

¹⁶⁸ UNITED NATIONS. General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Accord Palestine ‘Non-Member Observer State’ Status in United Nations. *press.un.org* [online]. 29 November 2012 [viewed 15 October 2023]. Available from: <https://press.un.org/en/2012/ga11317.doc.htm>

¹⁶⁹ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Prohlášení MZV k hlasování o palestinské státnosti ve VS OSN. *mzv.cz* [online]. 21.2.2013 [viewed 15 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.mzv.cz/vilnius/cz/zpravy_a_udalosti/prohlaseni_mzv_k_hlasovani_o_palestinske.html?force_format=mobile

¹⁷⁰ EMBASSY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN TEL AVIV. Bilateral Relations. *mzv.cz* [online]. 2023 [viewed 15 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.mzv.cz/telaviv/en/bilateral_relations/index.html

¹⁷¹ ČTK. Vztah Česka a Palestiny. Jak šel...

¹⁷² ČEJKA, M. *Izrael a Palestina...*, pp. 270-271.

Palestine's membership in UNESCO¹⁷³ and in 2012, when the Czech Republic was the only EU country to vote against Palestine's bid for Non-Member Observer State status in the UN.¹⁷⁴ Czech-Palestinian relations have been also disrupted by statements made by Czech politicians or by the long-discussed efforts of the Czech Republic to move its embassy to Jerusalem. Palestinian diplomacy has indicated that it would view the move of the Czech embassy as a step in violation of international law. The Palestinian Authority, together with the Arab League, also condemned the opening of Czech Republic's diplomatic office in Jerusalem in March 2021, which the Palestinian foreign ministry described as a "*blatant attack on the Palestinian people and their rights and the a flagrant violation of international law*"¹⁷⁵

In 2021, the Czech Republic voted against the establishment of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, whose role is to investigate all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of international human rights law committed during the fighting between Israel and Hamas in 2021. Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry Amal Jadou reacted that "*such negative votes reinforce the culture of impunity and give Israel better room to consolidate its occupation and perpetuate further crimes of apartheid and persecution which constitute crimes against humanity based on international law*"¹⁷⁶ and summoned the ambassadors of the countries, who voted against, including the Czech ambassador.¹⁷⁷ The Czech Republic despite these disagreements continues to maintain relations with the Palestinian side, but relations are mainly focused on cooperation in the areas of trade and economy and development cooperation. Former Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček described diplomatic talks between the Czech Republic and Palestine as "*purely work-related*".¹⁷⁸ Similarly, the current

¹⁷³ UNESCOPRESS. General Conference admits Palestine as UNESCO Member State. *un.org* [online]. 31 October 2011 [viewed 15 October 2023]. Available from: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-202965/>

¹⁷⁴ UNITED NATIONS. General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly...

¹⁷⁵ AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES. PA, Arab League condemn opening of Czech office in Jerusalem. *aljazeera.com* [online]. 13 March 2021 [viewed 20 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/13/pa-and-arab-league-condemn-opening-of-czech-jerusalem-office>

¹⁷⁶ Wafa. Palestine summons four ambassadors over negative votes at UNSC, WHO. *english.wafa.ps* [online]. 1 June 2021 [viewed 20 November 2023]. Available from: <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/124845>

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ HORÁK, J. Po návratu Lipavského z Izraele přijal Černínský palác velvyslance Palestiny v Praze. *zpravy.aktualne.cz* [online]. 24 October 2023 [viewed 27 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-svet/izrael-utok-hamasu-palestina-cesko-jan-lipavsky_2310190500_aur

Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský said that the Czech Republic has "*working contacts*" with Palestine.¹⁷⁹

5.4 Summary

The Czech Republic is known for its exceptionally good relations with Israel. The foundation for these relations was laid by Thomas G. Masaryk, who was a great supporter of Zionism. Considerable support for Israel was also evident after Israel's establishment, when Czechoslovakia provided military assistance to Israel in the first Arab-Israeli War. Czechoslovakia's attitudes began to shift significantly from 1950 under the influence of the Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia suspended diplomatic relations with Israel and its support turned towards the Arab countries and the PLO. After the Velvet Revolution, Václav Havel committed himself to restore relations with Israel, and he succeeded. The two countries re-established diplomatic relations, and Havel became the first leader of a post-communist country to visit Israel. Changes of governments and presidents in the following years have not led to significant changes in the Czech Republic's attitudes towards Israel, and the Czech Republic is currently one of Israel's closest allies.

After the Velvet Revolution, relations with Palestine began to decline. However, the Palestinian embassy in Prague continued to operate and in 2000 the Czech Republic was the first state from the former Soviet bloc to open a Representative Office in the West Bank in Ramallah. Nevertheless, Czech-Palestinian relations are undermined, for example, by the long-discussed efforts of the Czech Republic to move its embassy to Jerusalem or the anti-Palestinian voting at the UN. Czech officials refer to the current relations between the Czech Republic and Palestine as "working contacts"¹⁸⁰ and "purely work related".¹⁸¹ In the next chapter I will examine the reasons behind the Czech Republic's pro-Israeli attitudes.

¹⁷⁹ URBANOVÁ, A. Lipavský po útoku Hamásu: Nepřiměřenou reakci Izraele jsem nezaznamenal. Je to válečný konflikt. *irozhlas.cz* [online]. 19 October 2023 [viewed 21 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-svet/izrael-utok-hamasu-palestina-cesko-jan-lipavsky_2310190500_aur

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ HORÁK, J. Po návratu Lipavského z Izraele...

6 The Background of the Czech Republic's pro-Israeli stance

Now that I described the relations between the Czech Republic, Israel, and Palestine in Chapter 5, I can discuss the reasons that lead the Czech Republic to take a pro-Israeli stance. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, we can notice a renewed turn towards Israel since 1989, when communism collapsed and Czechoslovakia began to democratise. However, sympathy for Israel - especially among Czechoslovak dissidents - persisted even during communist Czechoslovakia. After the fall of the communist regime, many former dissidents became influential politicians, which meant that they were now free to speak publicly about their sympathies for Israel. Former dissidents who became prominent political figures include Alexandr Vondra, but most importantly the first post-communist president of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel. One of the reasons for public support for Israel after 1989 was the great unpopularity of the Soviet Union and the turn towards the West, which was often reflected in an uncritical view of the US and Western European countries.¹⁸²

Today, the Czech Republic is considered the most pro-Israel state in the European Union. Israeli officials refer to the Czech Republic as one of Israel's best friends.¹⁸³ Here the question logically arises as to what is behind these pro-Israeli attitudes of the Czech Republic. We can identify several reasons that could explain the pro-Israeli attitudes of Czech politicians. The core of Israeli-Czech relations lies in the historical ties, which I examine in the chapter 5. It was Thomas Garigue Masaryk who laid the foundations of Czech-Israeli relations. His legacy is still present in Israeli-Czech relations. In 2012, for example, Benjamin Netanyahu, on a visit to Prague, expressed his belief that Masaryk would be very proud of the Czech Republic's stance. He was referring to the Czech Republic's vote against Palestine becoming a non-member observer state of the United Nations.¹⁸⁴ A strong legacy was also left by Václav Havel, known for his admiration for Judaism, who was instrumental in the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia's relations with Israel after 1989.

Another factor is the value proximity with Israel rather than with Arab countries. The Czech Republic does not have a colonial past, so it has no special relations with the Arab

¹⁸² ČEJKA, M. Přátelství i adorace...

¹⁸³ ČTK. Nemáme na východní polokouli většího přítele, vzkázal Netanjahu Zemanovi. *idnes.cz* [online]. 27 November 2018 [viewed 15 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/zahranicni/zeman-netanjahu-cesky-dum-jeruzalem.A181127_165733_zahranicni_mesz or GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Prime Minister: Israel is our key partner in the Middle East. *vlada.gov.cz* [online]. 17 May 2012 [viewed 1 October 2023]. Available from: <https://vlada.gov.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/prime-minister-israel-is-our-key-partner-in-the-middle-east-95617/>

¹⁸⁴ WIRNITZER, J. Co je správné, nebývá populární, poděkoval Netanjahu v Praze Nečasovi. *idnes.cz* [online]. 2012 [viewed 20 November 2023]. Available from: https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/izraelsky-premier-netanjahu-v-praze.A121204_170738_domaci_jw

countries of the Middle East. Czechoslovakia was 'forced' to cooperate with Arab countries during communism, so Czechs do not feel a sentimental relationship with these countries stemming from that period.¹⁸⁵ According to Kalhousová, some Czech leaders may still be influenced by the communist past. *“Czech intellectuals are often quite conservative in their world view, less prone to adopt the postmodern and relativist positions of their Western colleagues. As such, many of them understand and respect the willingness of Israelis to use force when protecting the country’s security and sovereignty and refuse what is often hypocritical pacifism of their Western colleagues.”*¹⁸⁶ Czech politicians also feel a solidarity with Israel because they see historical parallels between the countries. They link Israel's fate to their own historical experience - the Munich Agreement. That is why they see support for Israel as something that is right and necessary.

The Czech Republic also maintains a trade partnership with Israel. The Israeli economy is comparable to advanced Western economies and is characterised by high technological efficiency of production. Although the Czech Republic is not one of Israel's largest trading partners, it significantly exceeds, for example, Poland, Austria or Slovakia¹⁸⁷, and, as we can see in the Table 1, trade between the Czech Republic and Israel is increasing annually.

Table 1 Trade with goods between CZ-IL

	2020	2021	2022
Import from the CZ (in K EUR)	646 111	806 914	1 003 948
Export to CZ (in K EUR)	172 646	199 377	258 822

Source: Czech Statistical Office

Science and research are also important areas of Czech-Israeli cooperation. Israel is one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world and science and research is one of the country's most developed sectors. Despite being a small country, it is an inspiration to many countries in areas such as research, development and innovation. Cooperation between the Czech Republic and Israel consists mainly in the exchange of information, joint research projects and the promotion of innovation in the fields of medicine and biotechnology.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ KALHOUSOVÁ, I. Relations between Israel and...

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ CZECH TRADE and MZV. Izrael. *businessinfo.cz* [online]. 13 July 2023 [viewed 20 October 2023]. Available from: <https://www.businessinfo.cz/navody/izrael-souhrna-teritorialni-informace/2#3-obchod-a-investice>

¹⁸⁸ EMBASSY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN TEL AVIV. Science and Research. *mzv.cz* [online]. 2023 [viewed 25 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.mzv.cz/telaviv/cz/veda_a_vyzkum/index.html

The Czech Republic also cooperates with Israel on security and counter-terrorism issues. The fight against terrorism is one of the main priorities of the European Union, as well as of the Member States themselves. Interest in increasing cooperation in these areas was declared, for example, by former Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka at the 2017 V4-Israel summit in Budapest.¹⁸⁹ At that time, government representatives also agreed to establish a working group on counter-terrorism.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. The Visegrad Group and Israel have discussed cooperation in the economy, migration, terrorism and the peace process. *vlada.cz* [online]. 19 July 2017 [viewed 12 October 2023]. Available from: <https://vlada.gov.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/the-visegrad-group-and-israel-have-discussed-cooperation-in-the-economy--migration--terrorism-and-the-peace-process-158516/>

¹⁹⁰ GOVERNMENT OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC. Krajiny V4 a Izrael založia spoločnú pracovnú skupinu pre boj proti terorizmu. *vlada.gov.sk* [online]. 19 July 2017 [viewed 16 September 2023]. Available from: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/krajiny-v4-a-izrael-zalozia-spolocnu-pracovnu-skupinu-pre-boj-proti-terorizmu/>

7 Analysis of the attitudes of Czech political leaders towards Israel and Palestine

In the following chapter, I will analyse the actions and statements of Czech political leaders in the period from December 2017 to October 2023. As the analysis is time limited, I used materials that fell within the time frame. For each representative, it is the period when he held the mandate. In addition to the time criterion, another criterion for the use of a statement in the analysis was its nature, that is, whether the statement would add new information and enrich the analysis. For the purpose of the analysis, I used materials of various forms - speeches of Czech representatives on different occasions, press releases, media interviews, internet articles and posts on social networks. Primarily, I tried to use official websites (the official website of President Miloš Zeman, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic) or interviews with officials in the media. In case the primary source could not be traced, I used the information from the media article.

The analysis will be carried out using theory of LoA and LoC, and I will try to answer the question which logic prevails among the Czech representatives. The analysis will be based on that political actors act according to the LoC or the LoA in shaping attitudes towards Israel and Palestine. Their actions can be explained using one of the logics, but more often by the combination of both. If we assume that Czech political leaders act on the basis of the logic of consequences in relation to Israel, this would mean that support for Israel is the result of a rational decision. The politicians had several options to choose from, but after calculating the gains and benefits, they decided to act pro-Israel. In practice, this means that, as we can see in the table 1, politicians take a pro-Israeli stance because they are aware of the benefits that Israel can bring to the Czech Republic, for example, in the areas of trade, science or technology. At the same time, actors perceive that supporting Palestine would not bring such benefits to the country. On the other hand, we can assume that political actors act according to the LoA. In this case, as states in Table 2, the common values or the historical ties override egoistic interests. The actors are not 'egoists' who support Israel only with the vision of potential benefits.

Table 2 Classification of aspects influencing the formation of attitudes based on LoA and LoC

Logic of consequences	Logic of appropriateness
Trade cooperation	Identification with Israel
Fight against terrorism	Historical ties
Technology cooperation	Part of the state's identity
Science and research cooperation	Common values
Cooperation in defence	Solidarity with Israel
Cooperation in healthcare	Personal belief
	Following a familiar routine

Source: Author

My aim will be to demonstrate the above-mentioned reasons for the Czech Republic's pro-Israel stance towards Israel on a selected time period and to find out which logic prevails in the formation of attitudes and what is the relationship between them.

I have chosen a time frame of December 2017 to October 2023. The reason for this is that in December 2017 a new government led by Andrej Babiš took office in the Czech Republic after the parliamentary elections, and in January 2018 Miloš Zeman won the presidential elections for the second time. The analysis will end with the date of October 2023. I decided to do so because of the current events between Israel and the Gaza Strip, which have provoked strong reactions from leaders all over the world, including the Czech Republic. I consider the attitudes and statements of Czech leaders on these events to be beneficial to my work.

In the analysis, the Czech Republic's relations with Israel will be analysed in particular. The main reason for this is the fact that although the Czech Republic also maintains relations with the Palestinian side, these relations are much less intense than with Israel. As I mention above, former Czech Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček, as well as the current Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský, described these relations as only 'work-related'. The second reason is that I work on the basis that the Czech Republic is a pro-Israeli country, and my aim is to use analysis to find out and demonstrate the reasons for the pro-Israeli attitudes of Czech actors. Moreover, as Fisher correctly notes: *“The official position of every country on the question of Palestine is essentially defined by its attitude toward Israel—the sole actor in control of the entirety of historical Palestine and the only party to the conflict that enjoys full recognition, as well as rights and obligations, under international law.”*¹⁹¹ After all, the Czech Republic is

¹⁹¹ FISCHER, L. Deciphering Germany's Pro-Israel Consensus. *Journal of Palestine Studies* [online]. 2019, 48(2) [viewed 11 November 2023], pp. 26-42. Available from: <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/234763>

considered a pro-Israel country because it has an almost uncritical attitude towards Israel. On the contrary, countries such as Spain or Ireland are considered pro-Palestinian mainly because of their strongly critical stance towards Israel.

My analysis will be divided into several parts. In the first part, I will focus on the acts and statements of the former President of the Czech Republic, Miloš Zeman, on Israel, Palestine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I believe that Miloš Zeman, who was the head of the republic for ten years, played a significant role in the field of Israeli-Czech relations. As of March 2023, Petr Pavel became President of the Czech Republic, but given the President's short time in office, I have chosen not to analyse his positions. If President Petr Pavel were included in the analysis, it would be reduced only to recent events, which is insufficient for a comprehensive analysis of his attitudes.

In the following sections of this thesis, the analysis will focus on government officials, as the government is the highest body of executive power and plays a key role in foreign policy. In particular, I will analyse the positions of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the last two Czech governments. The Prime Minister as the head of the highest executive body in the state and the Minister of Foreign Affairs as the head of diplomacy have a key role in foreign policy. I will proceed chronologically in my analysis. I will start with the government that led the country from December 2017 to December 2021, whose Prime Minister was Andrej Babiš and whose Minister of Foreign Affairs was Tomáš Petříček. Then my analysis will focus on the current government, which has been in office since December 2021. The prime minister of this government is Petr Fiala and the minister of foreign affairs is Jan Lipavský.

I will proceed with the analysis as follows. I will begin by first introducing the reader to each political leader, what his main activities towards Israel were in the period under analysis, and what his statements and attitudes towards Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were. I will then analyse the statements through the optic of the LoA and the LoC, supporting all of my conclusions with the specific statements of the politician on the basis of which I reached the given conclusion. As part of my analysis of each leader, I will include a table listing the factors (presented in Table 2) that influenced the formation of that leader's attitudes toward Israel during the period under analysis.

7.1 Analysis of former President Miloš Zeman's attitudes towards Israel

Miloš Zeman was the President of the Czech Republic for ten years (from March 2013 to March 2023) and there is no doubt that during his mandate he significantly shaped Czech foreign policy. In my analysis, I will focus on his second term - from January 2018 to March

2023. Although the primary responsibility for foreign policy lies with the government as the supreme organ of the executive branch, the President of the Republic also plays an important role in this area. His role derives from *"the relatively significant and broadly interpreted powers in the Constitution, the high social legitimacy of the presidential office, and the historical legacy of active presidents in this area."*¹⁹²

The former Czech president is known for his pro-Israel stances. As I mention above, in 2022 he even received the President of the State of Israel Medal for his support of Israel. Since 2013, the then Czech President, Miloš Zeman, has been a great supporter of the relocation of the Czech embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Consistent support for the relocation of the embassy was also apparent in the analysed period, for example during the president's speech at a meeting with the heads of Czech embassies abroad in 2018 (*"...and since Donald Trump, with a slight delay of about four years, is copying my suggestions, I am very glad that he has decided to move his embassy to Jerusalem. And I would be glad if we did the same."*¹⁹³), in an interview with ČTK in 2020 (*"I have long sought and still seek to move our embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. I consider it a gesture of friendship towards the Israeli nation."*¹⁹⁴).

In 2018, Israel celebrated its 70th anniversary of independence. On this occasion, a reception was held in the Spanish Hall of Prague Castle under the auspices of President Miloš Zeman. This was the first time that a celebration of the establishment of a foreign state was held in the representative premises of the Castle and under the auspices of the President. This alone shows that Miloš Zeman has special ties to Israel. This was confirmed to the Czech daily Aktuálně.cz by the President's spokesman Jiří Ovčáček, when he said that *"the State of Israel is an important support and inspiration for us (for the Czech Republic). We are united by our common history. The Czechoslovakia stood at the foundation of Israel."*¹⁹⁵ Ovčáček also stressed that this was a personal decision of President Miloš Zeman and an expression of his extraordinary friendship towards Israel.¹⁹⁶ Miloš Zeman made a speech on the occasion, in

¹⁹² DOSTÁL, V. and V. BORČANY. Role prezidenta v zahraniční politice po zavedení přímé volby. *AMO.cz* [online]. 2018 [viewed 17 September 2023]. Available from: https://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/AMO_role-prezidenta-v-zahranicni-politice-po-zavedeni-prime-volby.pdf

¹⁹³ Projev prezidenta republiky při setkání s vedoucími zastupitelských úřadů ČR v zahraničí. *zemanmilos.cz* [online]. 29 August 2018 [viewed 18 September 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-vedoucim-zastupitelsk%C3%BDch-uradu-cr-v-zahranici-552555.htm>

¹⁹⁴ ČTK. Rozhovor prezidenta republiky pro ČTK. *zemanmilos.cz* [online]. 11 May 2020 [viewed 20 September 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/rozhovor-prezidenta-republiky-pro-ctk-905599.htm>

¹⁹⁵ PRCHAL, L. Izrael oslaví svůj vznik ve Španělském sále pod záštitou Zemana. Je to poprvé v historii, říká Hrad. *zpravy.aktualne.cz* [online]. 13 April 2018 [viewed 20 September 2023]. Available from: <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/izrael-oslavi-svuj-vznik-ve-spanelskem-sale-pod-zastitou-zem/r~439f0a043f1311e88560ac1f6b220ee8/>

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

which he addressed in particular the issue of moving the Czech Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He expressed his conviction that "*the time (for the embassy to be moved) has slowly come to fruition*" and expressed his criticism of European leaders for their approach to the proposal, stating that "*...some Europeans, and not only Europeans, are criticising this proposal. They call themselves moderates. I call them cowards.*"¹⁹⁷ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not attend the celebrations in person but sent a letter to the Czech President thanking him for his support of Israel and also mentioning the relationship of the first Czechoslovak President Masaryk to Israel.¹⁹⁸

In November of the same year, President Zeman accepted an invitation to visit Israel. At the very beginning of the visit, the President mentioned in his speech that Israel is his "*second homeland*"¹⁹⁹ and the composition of the delegation itself reflects "*the concrete, not just formal, friendship that exists between the countries*".²⁰⁰ During his visit, he was the first Czech statesman to address the Israeli parliament - the Knesset. This speech showed President Zeman's very strong affinity with Israel. As he himself said, he conceived the speech as "*a message of solidarity towards Israel and the Jewish people*".²⁰¹ He stressed that it is "*necessary to always show solidarity with Israel, because when we betray Israel, we betray ourselves*".²⁰²

During the meeting, the President repeatedly referred to the idea of a one-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In his opening speech to the media, he said he was "*inspired*" by President Rivlin's idea of one state with two nations.²⁰³ In an interview with the Israeli daily Israel Hayom, he later stated that he did not believe that "*there should be two independent states*" and that he "*shares President Rivlin's view, one state with two peoples*".²⁰⁴

As part of the programme of the state visit, the President also participated in a business forum during the signing ceremony of contracts and memoranda between Czech and Israeli

¹⁹⁷ Projev prezidenta republiky při recepci k 70. výročí nezávislosti Státu Izrael. *zemanmilos.cz* [online]. 25 April 2018 [viewed 20 September 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-recepci-k-70-v%C3%BDroci-nezavislosti-statu-izrael.htm>

¹⁹⁸ ČTK. Zeman na oslavách podpořil přesun ambasády do Jeruzaléma. V plánu je konzulát a České centrum. *lidovky.cz* [online]. 25 April 2018 [viewed 20 September 2023]. Available from: https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/zeman-na-oslavach-podporil-presun-ambasady-do-jeruzalema-v-planu-je-konzulat-a-ceske-centrum.A180425_193144_ln_domov_ele

¹⁹⁹ Pozdrav prezidenta republiky při setkání s médii u příležitosti státní návštěvy Izraele. *zemanmilos.cz* [online]. 26 November 2018 [viewed 21 September 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/pozdrav-prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-medii-u-prilezitosti-statni-navstevy-izraele--380675.htm>

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Projev prezidenta republiky v Knesetu. *zemanmilos.cz* [online]. 26 November 2018 [viewed 17 September 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-v-knesetu-864394.htm>

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Pozdrav prezidenta republiky při setkání s médii...

²⁰⁴ ISRAEL HAYOM. Rozhovor prezidenta republiky pro Israel HaYom. *miloszeman.cz* [online]. 23 November 2018 [viewed 20 September 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/rozhovor-prezidenta-republiky-pro-israel-hayom-903011.htm>

companies and institutions. In his speech on this occasion, the President noted that Israel is a technological power and agreements will be primarily oriented towards this area.²⁰⁵ He also mentioned that the Czech Republic has something to offer Israel beyond scientific and technical cooperation. *"I have Tatra Trucks in my materials, as I almost always do, and I think that best offroad all over the world can be very interesting for Israeli partners as well."*²⁰⁶

In 2020, the president welcomed Donald Trump's peace plan Peace to Prosperity and supported the idea of Jerusalem as the unified capital of the State of Israel.²⁰⁷ In this context, Miloš Zeman harshly criticized the European Union for its alleged anti-Israeli position (*"The EU's anti-Israel stance is influenced by cowardice, hesitation and an inferiority complex"*²⁰⁸).

In 2021, Israel has been successful in fighting the coronavirus, had enough vaccines and vaccinated the fastest in the world. In this context, in 2021, both Miloš Zeman and Andrej Babiš sent letters to Israel asking for help with vaccination and, in particular, for the provision of vaccines. The content of this letter includes, among other things, the sentence: *"Deepened cooperation in this area (vaccination) would only testify to the excellent Czech-Israeli relations. This has been confirmed recently, for example, by the fact that the Czech Republic is one of the few countries gradually strengthening its diplomatic presence in Jerusalem."*²⁰⁹

In July 2022, the President of the State of Israel Isaac Herzog visited the Czech Republic. During his visit, he met with President Miloš Zeman and Prime Minister Petr Fiala. On the occasion of the meeting with the Israeli President, Miloš Zeman said in his opening speech that there is *"an opportunity for further expansion of the already excellent cooperation in the field of defence, in the field of technology, where we recognise Israel's high level of technological maturity, and of course in many other areas."*²¹⁰ During the speech, the President stated that the Czech Republic fully supports Israel on the international level and apologised

²⁰⁵ Projev prezidenta republiky na podnikatelském fóru při ceremoniálu podpisu memorand mezi zástupci ČR a Státu Izrael. *zemanmilos.cz* [online]. 25 November 2018 [viewed 17 September 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-na-podnikatelskem-foru-pri-ceremonialu-podpisu-memorand-mezi-zastupci-cr-a-statu-izrael-99683.htm>

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ OVČÁČEK, J. Prezident republiky vítá mírový plán prezidenta USA. *mz.hrad.cz* [online]. 30 January 2020 [viewed 20 September 2023]. Available from: <http://mz.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/prezident-republiky-vita-mirovy-plan-prezidenta-usa-15267/#from-list>

²⁰⁸ Projev prezidenta republiky při zahájení výstavy Záhadné pouto. *zemanmilos.cz* [online]. 26 February 2020 [viewed 23 September 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-zahajeni-v%C3%BDstavy-zahadne-pouto-649534.htm>

²⁰⁹ ŠÍDLOVÁ, T. and M. MACHOVÁ. Vakcínová spolupráce v EU má své limity, psal Zeman do Izraele. *seznamzpravy.cz* [online]. 1 March 2021 [viewed 22 September 2023]. Available from:

<https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/vakcinova-spoluprace-v-eu-ma-sve-limity-psal-zeman-do-izraele-144227>

²¹⁰ Projev prezidenta republiky při tiskové konferenci u příležitosti setkání s izraelským prezidentem.

zemanmilos.cz [online]. 11 July 2022 [viewed 18 September 2023]. Available from:

<http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-tiskove-konferenci-u-prilezitosti-setkani-s-izraelsk%C3%BDm-prezidentem-117654.htm>

for the attitude of Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský towards the anti-Israeli Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.²¹¹ Specifically, this disagreement was sparked by the fact that the Czech Republic did not join the countries that voted against this report issued in May 2022, that states, that *“the continued occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory and discrimination against Palestinians are the key root causes of the recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict in the region.”*²¹² Here we see an example of the inconsistency between the position of the head of state and the government on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the strong position of the President of the Republic, who influences the foreign policy of the Czech Republic.

In October 2022, Israel held legislative elections in which Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party won. Miloš Zeman sent a congratulatory letter to Benjamin Netanyahu, in which he praised the level of cooperation between the Czech Republic and Israel, *“not only in the economic and political spheres, but also in the interpersonal approach”*²¹³ and expressed the view that relations between the countries are among the strongest in history and the belief that ties will be *“strengthened through joint efforts”*.²¹⁴

Analysis of Miloš Zeman's attitudes towards Israel on the basis of LoA and LoC

Table 3 Aspects that shape Miloš Zeman's attitude towards Israel

LoA	LoC
Personal belief	Trade cooperation
Solidarity with Israel	Technology cooperation
Identification with Israel	Cooperation in defence
Historical ties	Science and research cooperation
	Cooperation in healthcare

Source: Author

On the basis of the above-mentioned statements of Miloš Zeman, we can conclude that his attitudes towards Israel were mainly driven by the LoA. Miloš Zeman personally believed,

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel from 9 May 2022. Available from: <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F50%2F21&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

²¹³ OVČÁČEK, J. Prezident republiky zaslal gratulaci Benjaminu Netanyahuovi. mz.hrad.cz [online]. 2 November 2022 [viewed 23 September 2023]. Available from: <http://mz.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/prezident-republiky-zaslal-gratulaci-benjaminu-netanyahuovi-16675/#from-list>

²¹⁴ Ibid.

and still believes today, that support for Israel - both overall as well as in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - is the only correct stance. As stated in the Table 3, Miloš Zeman is led to this position mainly by the Czech Republic's common history with Israel (*"We are united by our common history. The Czechoslovakia stood at the foundation of Israel."*²¹⁵), solidarity with Israel (*"it is necessary to always show solidarity with Israel,..."*²¹⁶) and identification with Israel (*"...when we betray Israel, we betray ourselves"*²¹⁷ or *"if the Jews were almost exterminated in Europe, then the Czechs were facing the same thing when Nazi Germany won the war"*²¹⁸).

In the case of Miloš Zeman, one cannot forget his personal sympathies with Israel (*"please believe me that in my own country I belong to the greatest friends of Israel"*²¹⁹ or *"...because I'm a constant and long-standing friend of Israel"*²²⁰ or *"that's why I like Israel"*²²¹) as well as his anti-Arab attitudes (*"May Muslims live in their own countries. Not in Europe"*²²²), which may have contributed to his pro-Israeli stance.

During my analysis, I also encountered events that can be interpreted by to the LoC. The primary responsibility of Miloš Zeman, as the President of the Czech Republic, was to represent national interests. Therefore, his positions on Israel were influenced by trade relations between the Czech Republic and Israel (*"I have Tatra Trucks in my materials, as I almost always do, and I think that best offroad all over the world can be very interesting for Israeli partners as well."*²²³) or visions of cooperation in areas such as technology, science, research, or defence (*"I think there is also an opportunity for further expansion of the already excellent cooperation in the field of defence, in the field of technology, where we recognise Israel's high level of technological maturity, and of course in many other areas."*²²⁴). This is also confirmed by Miloš

²¹⁵ PRCHAL, L. Izrael oslaví svůj vznik ve Španělském...

²¹⁶ Projev prezidenta republiky v Knesetu...

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ JELÍNEK, T. Vážím si spolupráce s Izraelem, nesmírně si cením jeho odvahy, říká prezident Miloš Zeman.

lidovky.cz [online]. 1 December 2020 [viewed 23 September 2023]. Available from:

https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/vazim-si-spoluprace-s-izraelem-nesmirne-si-cenim-jeho-odvahy-rika-prezident-milos-zeman.A201130_174808_in_domov_sei

²¹⁹ Projev prezidenta republiky v Knesetu...

²²⁰ SOUKUP, J. Týden s prezidentem. barrandov.tv [online]. 22 March 2018 [viewed 24 September 2023].

Available from: <https://www.barrandov.tv/video/122610-tyden-s-prezidentem-22-3-2018>

²²¹ Projev prezidenta republiky při galavečeři AIPAC. zemanmilos.cz [online]. 5 June 2028 [viewed 24 September 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-galaveceri-aipac-784891.htm>

²²² ISRAEL HAYOM. Rozhovor prezidenta republiky...

²²³ Projev prezidenta republiky na podnikatelském fóru...

²²⁴ Projev prezidenta republiky při tiskové konferenci u příležitosti setkání s izraelským prezidentem.

zemanmilos.cz [online]. 11 July 2022 [viewed 18 September 2023]. Available from:

<http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-tiskove-konferenci-u-prilezitosti-setkani-s-izraelsk%C3%BDm-prezidentem-117654.htm>

Zeman's answer to the question of the Czech Press Agency (ČTK) why he was planning to pay a state visit to Israel: “...in the spirit of economic diplomacy, I am seeking to expand our cooperation with Israel. Because you know that Israel is not a small, insignificant country somewhere in the Middle East, but a technological power.”²²⁵ During the COVID 19 pandemic, President Zeman also expressed interest in cooperation in the field of vaccination (“Cooperation on coronavirus vaccines would only represent a logical and urgently needed extension of the common relations”²²⁶). In the context of cooperation on vaccines between Israel and the Czech Republic, speculations of 'vaccine diplomacy' have emerged. Miloš Zeman's letter itself may be interpreted by the LoC. It seems that President Miloš Zeman, as well as Andrej Babiš, may used the pro-Israeli stance in this case to their advantage when they asked Israel for help with vaccinations, citing the fact that “the Czech Republic is one of the few countries gradually strengthening its diplomatic presence in Jerusalem”.²²⁷ In the following subsections, where I will analyse the attitudes of government officials, we can note that although Miloš Zeman, as President of the Republic, should coordinate his foreign policy positions with the government, this was not always the case, and President Zeman often acted as a sovereign in his relations towards Israel.

7.2 Government of Andrej Babiš

Andrej Babiš (ANO) was Prime Minister of the Czech Republic from 2017 to 2021. His first government was formed on 13 December 2017, but failed to win the confidence of the Chamber of Deputies in January 2018 and ruled in resignation until June 2018. President Miloš Zeman subsequently appointed Andrej Babiš's second government, which was composed of ANO and ČSSD, with the support of the KSČM.

In the Policy Statement of the Government from January 2018, the government declares that it will “*build on the traditional friendship and strategic partnership with Israel*” and “*pursue a peaceful solution to the Palestinian issue in accordance with UNSC resolutions and international law.*”²²⁸

²²⁵ ČTK. Zeman: Otázka vedení ministerstva zahraničí je pro mě naprosto uzavřená. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 19 July 2018 [viewed 24 September 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/2541922-zeman-personalni-otazka-vedeni-ministerstva-zahranici-je-pro-me-naprosto-uzavrena>

²²⁶ ŠÍDLOVÁ, T. and M. MACHOVÁ. Vakcínová spolupráce v EU...

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Programové prohlášení vlády České republiky, January 2018, Praha.

7.2.1 Analysis of Former Prime Minister Andrej Babiš's Attitudes towards Israel

Andrej Babiš is the chairman of the political movement ANO and was Prime Minister of the Czech Republic from December 2017 to December 2021. Relations with Israel were positive during his government, as were his attitudes towards Israel. Unlike the President, he was reserved on sensitive political issues in the Middle East. In 2017, he disapproved of the US decision to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (“...*this idea of President Trump is not a good one because you can see the reactions. We are a small country, but the big ones should strive for peace and tranquillity.*”²²⁹) and the potential move of the Czech embassy to Jerusalem. He argued that “*the Union has a position on this and I think we (the Czech Republic) have to take it.*”²³⁰ He did not change his stance even in 2019, when he told reporters during a visit to Israel that the government was “*not really considering*” the relocation of the embassy because of the problem of resolving the Palestinian issue and the threat of Iran (“...*it's a global topic. There is the problem of resolving the Palestinian issue, there is of course the problem of the threat of Iran...it is a complicated issue overall*”²³¹). Today, Andrej Babiš is in opposition and strongly supports the relocation of the embassy.²³²

Few days after the formation of the government, on 19 December 2017, Andrej Babiš spoke to his Israeli counterpart by phone. According to a press release from the Government Office, the two statesmen discussed mutual cooperation and the deepening of Czech-Israeli relations. Andrej Babiš also invited Netanyahu to the Czech Republic to attend the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovakia, which was a “*significant supporter of the establishment of the State of Israel*” and recalled that “*the Czech Republic has historically above-standard relations with Israel*”.²³³

Andrej Babiš visited Israel three times during his mandate. Unlike Miloš Zeman, we can notice that Andrej Babiš was rather pragmatic about Czech-Israeli relations. We can see this,

²²⁹ POKORNÝ, J. Babiš: Jsem příznivcem většinového systému. Zásadní chybou bylo, že ho Havel nedovezl z USA. *irozhlas.cz* [online]. 8 December 2017 [viewed 26 September 2023]. Available from: https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/andrej-babis-rozhovor-premier-vlada-migrace_1712081818_pla?fbclid=IwAR3JfSfTQjgNANHvjicWYq_yHo0SfVtEVzPIBOu_VK2abE3hewjwRA2D8zo

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ ČTK. Babiš navštívil jeruzalémský památník Jad vašem. Zajímal se také o inovace. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 20 February 2019 [viewed 2 October 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/svet/2739851-babis-navstivil-jeruzalemsky-pamatnik-jad-vasem-zajimal-se-take-o-inovace>

²³² Tisková konference poslaneckého klubu hnutí ANO, 10 October 2023. Available from: <https://videoarchiv.psp.cz/playa.php?cast=3493>

²³³ GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Premier Babiš debated with premiers of Israel, Austria and Bulgaria, and discussed support for the Cabinet today. *vlada.gov.cz* [online]. 19 December 2017 [viewed 22 September 2023]. Available from: <https://vlada.gov.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/premier-babis-debated-with-premiers-of-israel--austria-and-bulgaria--and-discussed-support-for-the-cabinet-today-162381/>

for example, during Andrej Babiš's first visit to Israel in 2019. While Benjamin Netanyahu, in a media briefing after his talks with Andrej Babiš, praised Czech-Israeli relations and recalled the shared history, including President Masaryk and the military support for Israel in 1948, Andrej Babiš referred to Israel as a strategic partner of the Czech Republic in the Middle East, stressed the growing trade between the countries and the ambition to resume intergovernmental discussions. Furthermore, he declared his interest in deeper cooperation with Israel in the field of water management (“*We are particularly interested in water management, and we can offer you expert opinions when it comes to wastewater*”²³⁴) and in the field of healthcare (“*I have also asked if you could help us with the medical marijuana industry*”²³⁵).

A year later, Prime Minister Babiš visited Israel again, where the main item on the agenda was participation in the World Forum on the Holocaust. As part of the visit, he also held talks with then President Reuven Rivlin. Andrej Babiš highlighted “*an absolutely above-standard relations*”²³⁶ and noted that cooperation is based on concrete projects, for example in the use of medicinal cannabis or in the water management sector. He also highlighted cooperation in the healthcare.²³⁷

During the COVID 19 pandemic, communication between Andrej Babiš and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was frequent. This was largely due to Israel's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2021, which set an example for many countries, particularly in terms of the speed and effectiveness of vaccination. In contrast, the Czech Republic experienced a shortage of vaccine and a rapid increase in the number of infected people. In January 2021, Andrej Babiš discussed collaboration in the fight against covid 19 with Prime Minister Netanyahu during a phone call. He also acknowledged that “*we (the Czech Republic) have a lot to learn from Israel*”.²³⁸ In March of the same year, Andrej Babiš visited Israel.

²³⁴ ČTK. Babiš se v Izraeli setkal s Netanjahuem. Premiéři se dohodli na společném zasedání vlád v Praze. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 19 February 2019 [viewed 4 October 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/svet/2738171-babis-se-v-izraeli-setka-s-netanjahuem-prelomovy-summit-v4-se-nekona-kvuli-neucasti>

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ ČTK. Podle Babiše Česko s Izraelem pojí nadstandardní vztahy, spolupráce prý přináší konkrétní projekty. *lidovky.cz* [online]. 22 January 2020 [viewed 2 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.lidovky.cz/svet/podle-babise-cesko-s-izraelem-poji-nadstandardni-vztahy-spoluprace-pry-prinasi-konkretni-projekty.A200122_164858_In_zahranici_rkj

²³⁷ GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Prime Minister Andrej Babiš attends World Holocaust Forum in Jerusalem. *vlada.gov.cz* [online]. 23 January 2020 [viewed 6 October 2023]. Available from: <https://vlada.gov.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/prime-minister-andrej-babis-attends-world-holocaust-forum-in-jerusalem-179598/>

²³⁸ BABIŠ, A. *X post* [online]. 15 January 2021 [viewed 7 October 2023]. Available from: <https://twitter.com/andrejbabis/status/1350077991750139905>

As I mentioned before, the visit was preceded by a letter from Prime Minister Babiš to Prime Minister Netanyahu asking for help with vaccination (*"We would very much appreciate it if, in the case that the quantity of vaccines delivered to the State of Israel exceeds the demand among Israeli citizens, it would be possible to use the surplus in the Czech Republic"*²³⁹). The Prime Ministers of the countries discussed the vaccination of citizens and cooperation in vaccine development. Prime Minister Babiš appreciated the sharing of Israel's experience in the fight against the covid pandemic and the assistance to the Czech Republic by sending five thousand vaccines. Besides the Israeli Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš also held talks with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Andrej Babiš concluded his speech after his meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Prime Minister Orbán by expressing his opposition to the intention of the International Criminal Court to investigate crimes committed in the Palestinian territories and stressed that *"the Czech republic would never support anything which might threaten the integrity and independence of Israel"* and *"the Czech republic will always strongly oppose any form of aggression against Israel."*²⁴⁰ The other item of the visit was the opening of the Branch Office of the Czech Embassy in Jerusalem. The former Prime Minister described the opening of the embassy in Jerusalem as *"proof of our (Czech Republic's) friendship with Israel, of our traditional friendly relations."*²⁴¹

In May 2021, military clashes occurred between Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups. The immediate trigger was a court decision to evict several Palestinian families from East Jerusalem properties.²⁴² Andrej Babiš expressed his support for Israel at that time and clearly declared that the Czech Republic was on Israel's side.²⁴³ In support of Israel, an Israeli flag was hoisted in front of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.

²³⁹ ŠÍDLOVÁ, T. and M. MACHOVÁ and M. DOBIÁŠOVÁ. Babišův dopis do Izraele: Když u vás zbydou vakcíny, dejte nám je. *seznamzpravy.cz* [online]. 18 February 2021 [viewed 7 October 2023]. Available from: <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/babisuv-dopis-do-izraele-kdyz-u-vas-zbydou-vakciny-dejte-nam-je-142903>

²⁴⁰ ČT24. Brífink po jednání premiérů Babiše, Orbána a Netanjahua. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 11 March 2021 [viewed 6 October 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/3281516-babis-navstivi-izrael-jednat-bude-o-ockovani-proti-covidu-i-lecich>

²⁴¹ GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Prime Minister Babiš talks with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on vaccination and cooperation in vaccine production. *vlada.gov.cz* [online]. 11 March 2021 [viewed 29 October 2023]. Available from: <https://vlada.gov.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/prime-minister-babis-talks-with-israeli-prime-minister-netanyahu-on-vaccination-and-cooperation-in-vaccine-production-187259/>

²⁴² The court's decision sparked widespread protests. After several days of violence, Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups launched hundreds of rockets into Israeli territory. Israel responded with artillery bombardments and airstrikes. The fighting ended after eleven days with a ceasefire.

²⁴³ BABIŠ, A. *X post* [online]. 12 May 2021 [viewed 20 October 2023]. Available from: <https://twitter.com/AndrejBabis/status/1392362676173611014>

Analysis of Andrej Babiš's attitudes towards Israel on the basis of LoA and LoC

Table 4 Aspects that shape Andrej Babiš's attitude towards Israel

LoA	LoC
Derive actions from given identity	Trade cooperation
Following a familiar routine	Cooperation in healthcare
Historical ties	Cooperation in defence
	Cooperation in technology

Source: Author

On the basis of the above, I would argue that the LoC prevailed in shaping Andrej Babiš's attitudes towards Israel, as well as towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Andrej Babiš was known for his pragmatic approach to politics, which was also reflected in his attitude towards Israel. This means that his attitudes and acts were motivated by the expected benefits for the Czech Republic. Andrej Babiš has repeatedly referred to Israel as a strategic partner of the Czech Republic (“...*Israel is our strategic partner in the Middle East*”²⁴⁴ or “*Israel is our strategic partner and I had the opportunity to open a branch of our embassy in Jerusalem...*”²⁴⁵). The Cambridge Dictionary defines a strategic partnership as “*an arrangement between two companies or organizations to help each other or work together, to make it easier for each of them to achieve the things they want to achieve*”²⁴⁶. In the context of international relations “*the essence of the strategic partnership lies in cooperation between the states that share common objectives. Though security issues are central to strategic partnerships, the ambit of such partnerships can be quite broad, including trade, economy, technology, and so on.*”²⁴⁷ On the basis of these definitions, the very fact that Andrej Babiš repeatedly refers to Israel as a strategic partner shows us that positive relations towards Israel can be interpreted by LoC.

Specifically, as shown in Table 4, Andrej Babiš emphasised Czech-Israeli trade cooperation (“*As far as trade is concerned, it is going very well on both sides. That trade is constantly growing.*”²⁴⁸) and aimed to strengthen cooperation with Israel also in the field of

²⁴⁴ ČTK. Babiš navštívil jeruzalémský památník...

²⁴⁵ GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Prime Minister Babiš talks with Israeli...

²⁴⁶ CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY. Strategic partnership. dictionary. *cambridge.org* [online]. 2023 [viewed 29 October 2023]. Available from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/strategic-partnership>

²⁴⁷ KUMAR, R. Renu Gaur asked: IR theorists differentiate between 'alliance' and 'strategic partnership'. What is the difference and which one characterises the QUAD? *Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses* [online]. 1 November 2022 [viewed 29 October 2023]. Available from:

<https://www.idsa.in/askanexpert/IR-theorists-differentiate-between-alliance-and-strategic-partners>

²⁴⁸ ČTK. Babiš se v Izraeli setkal s Netanjahuem...

water management (“we are particularly interested in water management”²⁴⁹) and healthcare, especially in the field of medicinal cannabis (“I also asked you if you could help us with the medical marijuana industry”²⁵⁰), but also in the field of vaccination during the COVID 19 pandemic. (“cooperation on coronavirus vaccines, ..., would only represent a logical and urgently needed widening of common relations”²⁵¹ or “The reason I visited Israel is to learn from your practice...Israel has become a role model in the fight against COVID 19”²⁵²). Andrej Babiš also stressed Israel's technological advancement (“Israel is a technological power”²⁵³) and its achievements in the field of defence and security (“I am impressed by what Israel has achieved in the field of cybersecurity”²⁵⁴).

However, interpreting actions solely on the basis of the logic of consequences would ignore the essential role of identities that contribute to shaping behaviour. Andrej Babiš on several occasions stressed the “traditionally good relations”²⁵⁵, the “historically superior relations”²⁵⁶ and the “traditionally friendly relations”²⁵⁷ between the Czech Republic and Israel. Based on this, we could conclude that Andrej Babiš acted also on the basis of the LoA. Given the long tradition of positive Czech-Israeli relations, Andrej Babiš was expected to follow this tradition. This can be seen, for example, in his unequivocal support for Israel in 2021, when the conflict between Israel and Palestine broke out. In this case, Andrej Babiš followed the familiar routine and acted in accordance with the identity of the Czech Republic, to which support for Israel clearly belongs.

7.2.2 Analysis of former Minister of Foreign Affairs Tomáš Petříček's attitudes towards Israel

The position of Foreign Minister in Andrej Babiš's government was held by up to four MPs. In December 2017, Martin Stropnický became the Minister of Foreign Affairs, holding this position until June 2018, when he resigned and became the Czech Ambassador to Israel.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ ŠÍDLOVÁ, T. and M. MACHOVÁ and M. DOBIÁŠOVÁ. Babišův dopis do Izraele...

²⁵² ČT24. Brífink po jednání premiérů Babiše, Orbána...

²⁵³ ČT24. Brífink premiéra Andreje Babiše před odletem do Izraele. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 11 March 2021 [viewed 16 October 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/video/brifink-premiera-andreje-babise-pred-odletem-do-izraele-37400>

²⁵⁴ ČTK. Babiš se v Izraeli setkal s Netanjahuem...

²⁵⁵ BABIŠ, A. *X post* [online]. 9 June 2020 [viewed 20 October 2023]. Available from: https://twitter.com/AndrejBabis/status/1270200489410539520?s=19&fbclid=IwAR2Y-6PAxOhsYN3C_c8Vkez5qUnIOdwtqa_rN1Nd91Jswit3COnTtPCvHfo

²⁵⁶ EMBASSY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN TEL AVIV. Předseda vlády Andrej Babiš se v Jeruzalémě zúčastnil Světového fóra o holocaustu. *mzv.cz* [online]. 28 January 2020 [viewed 20 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.mzv.cz/telaviv/cz/kalendar_akci/predseda_vlady_andrej_babis_se_v.html

²⁵⁷ GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Prime Minister Babiš talks with Israeli...

Afterwards, Ján Hamáček was appointed in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He held the position from June 2018 to October 2018. Hamáček was subsequently replaced by Tomáš Petříček, who held the post until April 2021, when he was dismissed by the President of the Republic. The last foreign minister of this government was Jakub Kulháněk. He led Czech diplomacy from April 2021 until December 2021, when the government of Andrej Babiš was replaced by the new government of Petr Fiala. Given that Tomáš Petříček remained the head of the Ministry of foreign affairs for the longest time, I will focus my analysis on his positions. Tomáš Petříček is a member of the centre-left ČSSD party.

Tomáš Petříček was undoubtedly a minister whose aim was to maintain and further improve good relations with Israel. Nevertheless, during his mandate, he did not merely continue his uncritical support for Israel and its actions. In 2020, Petříček, together with two previous foreign ministers, Lubomír Zaorálek (ČSSD) and Karel Schwarzenberg (TOP 09), published a joint statement entitled "*What will happen to the Palestinians and Israeli democracy?*"²⁵⁸ criticising the initiative of US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The plan named Peace to Prosperity would permit Israel to extend sovereignty over all major settlements blocks in the West Bank, uphold Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital, and require the Palestinians to concede far more land to Israel than in past proposals. The plan also called for the creation of a Palestinian state with the capital in parts of East Jerusalem.²⁵⁹ The foreign ministers stated that the implementation of the plan would violate international law and preclude the existence of a viable Palestinian state in the future.²⁶⁰ The statement was met with heavy criticism, whether from President Miloš Zeman, Prime Minister Andrej Babiš or other representatives of the political scene. President Zeman expressed his strong disapproval of the article, which, in his view, undermines the Czech Republic's relations with both the State of Israel and the USA and is a denial of the Czech Republic's previous foreign policy towards Israel.²⁶¹ Prime Minister Andrej Babiš rejected the statement, saying that it was unacceptable that "*in such a fundamental matter as relations with*

²⁵⁸ PETŘÍČEK, T. and K. SCHWARZENBERG and L. ZAORÁLEK. Co bude s Palestinci a izraelskou demokracií? *novinky.cz* [online]. 23 May 2020 [viewed 20 October 2023]. Available from: <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-co-bude-s-palestinci-a-izraelskou-demokracii-40325164>

²⁵⁹ HINCKES, J. Trump Called His Middle East Peace Plan a 'Win Win.' Palestinians Disagree. *time.com* [online]. 28 January 2020 [viewed 20 October 2023]. Available from: <https://time.com/5773261/middle-east-peace-plan-details/>

²⁶⁰ PETŘÍČEK, T. and K. SCHWARZENBERG and L. ZAORÁLEK. Co bude s Palestinci...

²⁶¹ OVČÁČEK, J. *X post* [online]. 23 May 2020 [viewed 20 October 2023]. Available from: https://twitter.com/exPREZIDENTCR/status/1264183221761294336?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etw_eembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1264183221761294336%7Ctwgr%5Eff19c4989c15cfa1f50e57e3248ce30998bea58d%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.seznamzpravy.cz%2Fclanek%2Fo-skutecnych-pratelich-izraele-107572

Israel, individual members of the government should issue their own position, which has not been consulted at government level, but is perceived abroad as the position of the Czech Republic."²⁶² In an interview with iDNES.cz, Petříček argued that "*the article is based on a foreign policy concept*" and that it is important to him that the Czech Republic, "*as a traditional friend of Israel, has a balanced position*".²⁶³

However, the Czech Republic continued to support Israel at the international level during the period when Tomáš Petříček was Foreign Minister. In February 2020, for example, Tomáš Petříček, on behalf of the Czech Republic, stood up for Israel before The International Criminal Court in Hague and requested the opportunity to provide legal expertise.²⁶⁴ The court was deciding on its authority to investigate whether Israel had committed war crimes against Palestinians on their territory - in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The Czech Republic eventually provided legal expertise to the ICC that supported Israel and argued that the court did not have the jurisdiction to conduct such an investigation.²⁶⁵

Regarding the relocation of the Czech embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Tomáš Petříček said in an interview with E15, that the Czech Republic "*should respect international law and UN and EU resolutions that Jerusalem should be the capital of both Israel and the future state of Palestine*".²⁶⁶

In 2018, Petříček visited Israel and the Palestinian Territories. In Israel, he held talks with Regional Development Minister Tzachi Hanegbi and Opposition Leader Tzipi Livni. The statesmen agreed that Czech-Israeli relations are at the highest possible level. Minister Petříček described Israel as a strategic partner of the Czech Republic and highlighted the growing trade exchange.²⁶⁷ In Ramallah, Minister Petříček met with Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki.

²⁶² IDNES. Babiš odmítl kritiku Petříčka a Zaorálka vůči Izraeli. Ozval se i Zeman. *idnes.cz* [online]. 23 May 2020 [viewed 30 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/petrick-zaoralek-schwarzenberg-izrael-palestina-zapadni-breh-zeman-prohlaseni.A200523_155712_domaci_aug

²⁶³ VOKÁL, V. Podcenil jsem reakce na komentář o Izraeli, přiznává ministr Petříček. *idnes.cz* [online]. 29 May 2020 [viewed 30 October 2023]. Available from: https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/izrael-palestina-tomas-petrick-komentar-eu-podcenil.A200529_144417_domaci_vov

²⁶⁴ Submission of Observations Pursuant to Rule 103, 12 March 2020, Prague. Available from: https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CourtRecords/CR2020_00996.PDF?fbclid=IwAR0yDDDNmgI21THI7wyvuJw28eRor-dWeNYkB2WAFNUQjykJDTnHGSgXy9R4

²⁶⁵ Opinion in Accordance with Article 103 of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, 15 March 2020, London. Available from: https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CourtRecords/CR2020_01010.PDF?fbclid=IwAR05XYUEvk5ka8dmjF6XTyw8YEhkt2EKjreelu63czSqB4xHDDdshuvTis0

²⁶⁶ OTTO, P. Africe musíme pomáhat aktivněji, říká ministr zahraničí Tomáš Petříček. *e15.cz* [online]. 17 December 2018 [viewed 1 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.e15.cz/domaci/africe-musime-pomahat-aktivneji-rika-ministr-zahranici-tomas-petrick-1354653>

²⁶⁷ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Ministr Petříček navštívil Izrael a Palestinská autonomní území. *socdem.cz* [online]. 14 November 2018 [viewed 1 November 2023]. Available from: <https://socdem.cz/media/tiskove-zpravy/ministr-petrick-navstivil-izrael-a-palestinska-autonomni-uzemi/>

Tomáš Petříček said that the Czech Republic is trying to have good relations with both Israel and Palestine: "*We have a strategic partnership with Israel, but we are also active in Palestine through our humanitarian aid and development assistance.*"²⁶⁸ According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine, during the meeting, both sides "*affirmed the need to respect international references in order to solve the Israel-Palestinian conflict*" and emphasised "*the importance of the unity of the European Union's position and the commitment of Member States to its decisions and recommendations, particularly with regard to the status of the occupied city of Jerusalem and the implementation of the vision of a two-state solution.*"²⁶⁹

Analysis of Tomáš Petříček's attitudes towards Israel on the basis of LoA and LoC

Table 5 Aspects that shape Tomáš Petříček's attitude towards Israel

LoA	LoC
Historical ties	Trade cooperation
Derive actions from given identity	Cooperation in technology
Following a familiar routine	Cooperation in healthcare
	Cooperation in defence
	Science and research cooperation

Source: Author

As we can see, Tomáš Petříček was a diplomat who maintained relations with both sides of the conflict and, as he himself said, tried to balance the Czech Republic's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ("*for me it is important that the Czech Republic,...., has a balanced position, thanks to which we can also influence discussions in the European Union*"²⁷⁰). He was aware of the good relations between the Czech Republic and Israel, but he did not just follow uncritical support for Israel. We saw this most clearly in the joint statement of the three foreign ministers in 2020. It was an unusual step in Czech policy towards Israel, with Czech officials publicly criticising Israel.

²⁶⁸ ČTK. Petříček se v Izraeli s Netanjahuem nesetkal. Jeho návštěvu Zdi nářků kritizují Palestinci. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 14 November 2018 [viewed 1 November 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/svet/2652038-petricek-se-v-izraeli-s-netanjahuem-nesetkal-jeho-navstevu-zdi-narku-kritizuji>

²⁶⁹ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EXPATRIATES. Palestinian Foreign Minister Meets his Czech Counterpart. *mofa.pna.ps* [online]. 8 July 2019 [viewed 22 October 2023]. Available from: <http://www.mofa.pna.ps/en-us/mediaoffice/ministernews/palestinian-foreign-minister-meets-his-czech-counterpart>

²⁷⁰ VOKÁL, V. Podcenil jsem reakce na komentář o Izraeli...

We can explain former Foreign Minister Petříček's position, as stated in Table 5, on the basis of both LoC and LoA. On the one hand, the Foreign Minister repeatedly stressed the Czech Republic's historical ties with Israel (*“the former Czechoslovakia played a significant role in the establishment of the Jewish state”*²⁷¹) and long-term Czech support for Israel (*“we are a long-term partner of Israel in negotiations at international levels, both in the EU and the UN”*²⁷²). Based on these statements, we can argue that Tomáš Petříček's actions towards Israel were guided the LoA. For Petříček, the motive for holding positive attitudes towards Israel was the specific historical ties between the countries. At the same time, in relation to Israel, he derived his actions from the identity of the Czech Republic, which is fixed and rigid in relation to Israel. Theorists also talk about LoA if the actor follows a familiar routine, which in this case would mean that Tomáš Petříček sought positive relations with Israel, among other reasons, because of its long history and because he wanted to continue the tradition of positive relations.

Tomáš Petříček's attitudes were also greatly shaped by the LoC. In practice, this means that through his positive attitudes towards Israel, he sought to achieve specific goals, such as the development of trade relations (*“we have a growing trade with Israel, which exceeded USD 1.3 billion in 2017. This makes Israel our third most important export market outside Europe”*²⁷³), cooperation in the fields of security, health, science and innovation (*“ supporting Czech-Israeli cooperation in research and innovations is a priority of Czech diplomacy”*²⁷⁴). An argument for this claim is Petříček's statement in an interview with the Czech economic daily e15: *“it is crucial for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop cooperation with Israel in a number of areas such as security, healthcare, water management, science and innovation”*.²⁷⁵

7.3 Government of Petr Fiala

The government of Petr Fiala is the current government of the Czech Republic from 17 December 2021. The government is formed by the winning coalition SPOLU (composed of ODS, KDU-ČSL and TOP 09) with the second electoral coalition Piráti a Starostové (composed of Piráti and STAN).

²⁷¹ OTTO, P. Africe musíme pomáhat aktivněji...

²⁷² VOKÁL, V. Podcenil jsem reakce na komentář o Izraeli...

²⁷³ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Ministr Petříček navštívil Izrael...

²⁷⁴ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Ministr Petříček: podpora česko-izraelské spolupráce ve výzkumu a inovacích. socdem.cz [online]. 14 June 2019 [viewed 23 October 2023]. Available from: <https://socdem.cz/media/tiskove-zpravy/ministr-petricek-podpora-cesko-izraelske-spoluprace-ve-vyzkumu-a-inovacich/>

²⁷⁵ OTTO, P. Africe musíme pomáhat aktivněji...

In the Policy Statement of the Government from March 2023, the government commits to "*developing a strategic partnership with Israel, particularly in the areas of security, science, research and innovation.*" It also commits to promoting human rights and to renewing a 'Havel-style' foreign policy, including support for development and transformation cooperation.²⁷⁶

7.3.1 Analysis of Prime Minister Petr Fiala's attitudes towards Israel

Petr Fiala is the leader of the right-wing ODS party and is the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic since December 2021. The ODS party chairman's positive attitude towards Israel is not surprising, as the ODS party has long been pro-Israel, as evidenced, for example, by the above-standard relations of former governments headed by ODS Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek or Petr Nečas with Israel.

Petr Fiala's positive attitudes towards Israel have been known for a long time; in 2018, the ODS leader referred to Israel as an "*island of freedom in the Middle East*"²⁷⁷ and "*the only democratic state in the region, which is both civilisationally and culturally close to the Czech Republic*".²⁷⁸ The commitment to "*develop the traditional strategic partnership with Israel*" also appeared in the electoral programme of the SPOLU coalition.²⁷⁹ The current Prime Minister has long been a supporter of relocating the Czech embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and even considers it a desirable step.²⁸⁰ He also believes that "*every state has the right to determine what it considers to be its capital*".²⁸¹

In 2022, Petr Fiala met with President of Israel Isaac Herzog during his visit to the Czech Republic. The two statesmen discussed the possibilities of strengthening strategic partnership and cooperation in the field of defence, universities and mutual trade ("*Cooperation in defence, universities and mutual trade is a major topic*"²⁸²). During the meeting, Petr Fiala stressed that

²⁷⁶ Programové prohlášení vlády České republiky, March 2023, Praha.

²⁷⁷ DVORÁK, P. and HLOUŠKOVÁ, K. Izrael je jediný opravdu demokratický stát na Blízkém východě. *forum24.cz* [online]. 16 May 2018 [viewed 23 October 2023]. Available from: <https://www.forum24.cz/izrael-je-jediny-opravdu-demokraticky-stat-na-blizkem-vychode/>

²⁷⁸ FIALA, P. *Facebook post* [online]. 18 May 2021 [viewed 4 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/petr.fiala1964/posts/pfbid02CQkUwDVYV6f2LY2taybhu8Zi9E457bCXTenKFMcFDK8JtVmuYu611wCc5xQsbfmvl>

²⁷⁹ SPOLU. SPOLU pro bezpečnou zemi. *ods.cz* [online]. June 2021 [viewed 4 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.ods.cz/volby2021/spolu-pro-bezpecnou-zemi>

²⁸⁰ FIALA, P. *X post* [online]. 9 October 2023 [viewed 4 November 2023]. Available from: https://twitter.com/P_Fiala/status/1711396952439468232?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1711396952439468232%7Ctwtgr%5E02933cac876a7ca57beb06a94b47a50d50578de3%7Ctwtcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irozhlas.cz%2Fzpravy-domov%2Ffiala-podporuje-presun-ambasady-do-jeruzalema_2310091928_epo

²⁸¹ TOMÁNKOVÁ, T. Co na to premiér (10). *cnn.iprima.cz* [online]. 11 October 2023 [viewed 6 November 2023]. Available from: <https://cnn.iprima.cz/porady/co-na-to-premier/10-epizoda>

²⁸² GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Premiér Petr Fiala se setkal s prezidentem Izraele Jicchakem Herzogem. *vlada.gov.cz* [online]. 11 July 2022 [viewed 6 November 2023]. Available from:

“mutual relations between the Czech Republic and Israel have been excellent for a long time”.²⁸³

During the government of Petr Fiala, in October 2023, intergovernmental consultations between the Czech Republic and Israel were to be resumed. The talks were eventually cancelled after members of the terrorist movement Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October 2023 and the war between Israel and the Gaza Strip broke out. Since the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic has been very active in supporting Israel and on the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On the 25th of November, Petr Fiala visited Israel and met with both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli President Isaac Herzog. During his visit, he expressed the Czech Republic's unequivocal solidarity with Israel and stressed that the Czech Republic stands on Israel's side (“I assured our friends that the Czech Republic stands by Israel and will stand by it as long as necessary”²⁸⁴) and Israel has “every right to defend itself”²⁸⁵. Petr Fiala also stressed that the Czech Republic is ready to support Israel materially and diplomatically. With his visit, he confirmed that “the Czech Republic has stood unequivocally on the right side for a long time.”²⁸⁶

Analysis of Petr Fiala’s attitudes towards Israel on the basis of LoA and LoC

Table 6 Aspects that shape Petr Fiala's attitude towards Israel

LoA	LoC
Historical ties	Trade cooperation
Solidarity with Israel	Fight against terrorism
Personal belief	Science and research cooperation
Identification with Israel	Cooperation in defence

Source: Author

Based on the above, we can conclude that Petr Fiala's positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are guided mainly by the LoA. The Czech Prime Minister praises the Czech Republic's long-standing pro-Israel stance (“the position of the Czech Republic has long been, and I'm glad

<https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/premier-petr-fiala-se-setkal-s-prezidentem-izraele-jicchakem-herzogem-197889/>

²⁸³ *ibid.*

²⁸⁴ GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Prime Minister Fiala held talks in Israel with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Herzog. *vlada.gov.cz* [online]. 25 October 2023 [viewed 6 November 2023]. Available from: <https://vlada.gov.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/prime-minister-fiala-held-talks-in-israel-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-and-president-herzog-209565/>

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

for it, pro-Israeli..."²⁸⁷). In supporting Israel, he refers to the historical experience between the Czech Republic and Israel (*the position of the Czech Republic towards Israel has long been somewhat exceptional in Europe...This is also due to very specific historical relations*²⁸⁸ or "*Czech Republic stands with Israel, now and ever. And like 75 years ago, you can count on our voice and support*"²⁸⁹). Peter Fiala also identifies with Israel, repeatedly referring to it as the only democracy in the Middle East ("*Israel is a country that is a democracy, one of the few or the only one in the Middle East area, and that is also why we should support it*"²⁹⁰) and as a state that has been fighting for its existence and security for a long time ("*Israel has long sought to have the right to exist, to live in security, to live in peace.*"²⁹¹ or "...*a state that has been fighting for its existence for a long time. For nothing else, but for people to be able to live there in security.*"²⁹² Petr Fiala has long been of the opinion that the Czech Republic should "*stand unequivocally on Israel's side.*"²⁹³ and supporting Israel is "*the right thing to do, because when we support Israel, we support security in Europe and democracy.*"²⁹⁴ Based on his statements, Peter Fiala's actions are governed LoA and imply that the Prime Minister acts according to what he considers appropriate or morally right.

As we can see in the Table 6, the Prime Minister's attitudes towards Israel are also, although on the basis of the analysis to a lesser extent, driven by the LoC. In the period under analysis, for example, the Prime Minister declared his support for expanding cooperation in trade, defence, research and innovation.²⁹⁵ The fact that Petr Fiala's positions are guided by the LoC is reflected also in the fact that he is convinced that when the Czech Republic supports Israel, it also supports security in Europe and the protection of democracy. On this basis, we can conclude that support for Israel is, to some extent, also a rational decision that can have concrete positive consequences for the country and for the whole of Europe.

²⁸⁷ TOMÁNKOVÁ, T. Co na to premiér...

²⁸⁸ ČT24. K dosažení míru je nutné být silný, řekl ČT Fiala. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 26 October 2023 [viewed 7 November 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/svet/k-dosazeni-miru-je-nutne-byt-silny-rekl-ct-fiala-680>

²⁸⁹ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ISRAEL. PM Netanyahu meets with Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala. *gov.il* [online]. 25 October 2023 [viewed 7 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.gov.il/en/Departments/news/pm-netanyahu-meets-with-czech-pm-fiala-25-oct-2023>

²⁹⁰ TOMÁNKOVÁ, T. Co na to premiér...

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² ČT24. K dosažení míru je nutné...

²⁹³ TOMÁNKOVÁ, T. Co na to premiér...

²⁹⁴ ČT24. K dosažení míru je nutné...

²⁹⁵ GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Premiér Petr Fiala se setkal s prezidentem...

7.3.2 Analysis of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Lipavský's attitudes towards Israel

Jan Lipavský has been the Czech Foreign Minister since December 2021 and is a member of the centrist Pirate Party. Lipavský, as well as the Pirate Party as a whole, has taken a more critical stance towards Israel and sided with the 'European mainstream' in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Jan Lipavský also signed a letter in 2020 criticising the planned Israeli annexation of settlements on the West Bank. The alleged “*distant attitude towards Israel*”²⁹⁶ was one of the reasons why Miloš Zeman initially did not want to appoint Jan Lipavský as foreign minister.

On the issue of relocating the Czech embassy to Jerusalem, Lipavský takes a cautious stance and supports the EU's united position on the issue. The EU does not agree with embassy relocations and does not recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital, as the Palestinians also claim it. According to Lipavský, three fundamental conditions for the relocation are not met. Moving the embassy would be contrary to international law and UNSC resolutions, the move would be inconsistent with the EU's position, and the Czech Republic would draw attention to itself and jeopardise the safety of embassy employees.²⁹⁷ Jan Lipavský was criticised in 2021 for not joining the countries condemning the above-mentioned anti-Israeli Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.²⁹⁸ As I mentioned earlier, Miloš Zeman even apologised for this attitude during Isaac Herzog's state visit to Prague. The Czech Foreign Ministry responded to this criticism by stating that not joining in the condemnation of the Report does not mean that the Czech Republic agrees with it. The Czech Republic has reportedly already expressed its position by voting against²⁹⁹ the establishment of the Commission on 27 May 2021.³⁰⁰ In

²⁹⁶ OVČÁČEK, J. Stanovisko prezidenta republiky. *mz.hrad.cz* [online]. 10 December 2021 [viewed 15 November 2023]. Available from: <http://mz.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/stanovisko-prezidenta-republiky-16207/#from-list>

²⁹⁷ ČT24. Lipavský odmítá přesun velvyslanectví v Izraeli do Jeruzaléma. *ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 10 October 2023 [viewed 15 November 2023]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/lipavsky-odmita-presun-velvyslanectvi-v-izraeli-do-jeruzalema-960>

²⁹⁸ It was the Report issued in May 2022, that states, that “the continued occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory and discrimination against Palestinians are the key root causes of the recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict in the region.” Available from: <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F50%2F21&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

²⁹⁹ Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 27 May 2021, deciding to establish an Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. Available from: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/114/96/PDF/G2111496.pdf?OpenElement%20https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2FRES%2F30%2F1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

³⁰⁰ ČTK. Zeman se omluvil izraelskému prezidentovi za Lipavského. Jsme čitelní, říká ministr. *zpravy.aktualne.cz* [online]. 11 July 2022 [viewed 16 November 2023]. Available from:

November 2022, the Czech Republic voted against a resolution that accused the State of Israel of denying Palestinian Arabs the right to self-determination and denying Israel's historical connection to the Temple Mount. In this case, the Czech Republic, led by its head of diplomacy, Ján Lipavský, expressed unequivocal support for Israel.³⁰¹

In March 2023, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Kohen visited the Czech Republic. During the meeting, the ministers expressed their determination to further deepen the strategic partnership between the countries and to strengthen cooperation in the areas of trade, security, science, research and innovation.³⁰²

The exceptional relations between Israel and the Czech Republic were seen in October 2023 after the Hamas terror attack. Jan Lipavský was the first foreign politician and government official to visit Israel after the Hamas attack on 7 October. During the visit, he expressed the Czech Republic's unequivocal support and solidarity with Israel, acknowledged Israel's right to defend itself and condemned Hamas's terrorist acts. Jan Lipavský described the fact that it was the Czech leader who visited Israel first after the Hamas terrorist attack as “*very significant*”. In his view, this “*confirms the long-standing above-standard Czech-Israeli relations*”.³⁰³ In the context of this visit from the Israeli side, a parallel was drawn with 1948, when Czechoslovakia helped Israel in the first Arab-Israeli war.³⁰⁴

Analysis of Jan Lipavský's attitudes towards Israel on the basis of LoA and LoC

Table 7 Aspects that shape Jan Lipavský's attitude towards Israel

LoA	LoC
Following a familiar routine	Trade cooperation
Derive actions from given identity	Cooperation in defence
	Cooperation in technology and science

Source: Author

<https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/zeman-se-omluvil-izraelskemu-prezidentovi-herzogovi-za-posto/r~e0cafde600f811eda25a0cc47ab5f122/>

³⁰¹ KRÍŽOVÁ, I. Lipavský se pod tlakem přiklonil k Izraeli. Podle diplomatů tím odčinil své předchozí hříchy. *lidovky.cz* [online]. 14 October 2022 [viewed 6 November 2023]. Available from:

https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/ministr-zahranici-jan-lipavsky-pirati-izrael-osn-milos-zeman.A221114_193510_in_domov_lros

³⁰² MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Ministr Lipavský přivítal izraelského ministra zahraničí E. Kohena. *mzv.cz* [online]. 4 April 2023 [viewed 6 November 2023]. Available from: https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti_a_media/tiskove_zpravy/ministr_lipavsky_privital_izraelskeho.html

³⁰³ BASTLOVÁ, M. Reakce Babiše byla spíš k breku, říká Lipavský. *seznamzpravy.cz* [online]. 12 October 2023 [viewed 6 November 2023]. Available from: <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/audio-podcast-ptam-se-ja-lipavsky-popisuje-jak-cesko-pomuze-izraeli-238208>

³⁰⁴ CNN PRIMA NEWS. Setkání plné slz. Lipavský v Izraeli mluvil s vnučkou seniorky, kterou unesl Hamás. *cnn.iprima.cz* [online]. 10 October 2023 [viewed 12 November 2023]. Available from: <https://cnn.iprima.cz/lipavsky-se-setkal-s-vnuckou-seniorky-ktou-unesl-hamas-414428>

Jan Lipavský, as foreign minister, takes a pro-Israeli stance, yet he is one of the Czech politicians who take a slightly more balanced stance towards Israel and Palestine. This can be seen, for example, in his position on the relocation of the embassy to Jerusalem, where the Minister has consistently opposed it. Jan Lipavský is also a member of the Pirate Party, which has a long-standing position on European stances on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which are many times critical of Israel. However, it is clear from the above that the current Minister will not change the current tradition of positive Czech-Israeli relations.

As we can see in the Table 7, Jan Lipavský's acts towards Israel as the head of Czech diplomacy are shaped by both the LoA and the LoC. Based on my analysis, I believe the LoA prevails. Jan Lipavský was rather critical of Israel before his mandate, but after his appointment we can observe a change in attitudes (e.g. repeatedly emphasising Israel's right to self-defence and the absence of criticism of Israel's response to the Gaza attack). This can be explained by the fact that as a Czech official he is expected to act as an ally of Israel - after all, criticism of Israel was one of the problems with his appointment. This means that Jan Lipavský has adapted his attitudes towards Israel to the Czech traditional position as an ally of Israel. LoA has manifested itself here, for example, as following a 'familial routine'³⁰⁵ or 'fulfilling an obligation'³⁰⁶. Familiar routine in this case I understand as the traditional, almost uncritical support for Israel that is expected of government officials.

The pro-Israeli stance of the Foreign Minister can again also be interpreted on the basis of the LoC. This is evidenced, for example, by Jan Lipavský's meeting with Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, where the statesmen discussed deepening cooperation in the areas of trade, security, science, research and innovation.³⁰⁷

7.4 Discussion

On the basis of the analysis, it is clear that the Czech Republic is truly one of the pro-Israeli countries, uncritical of Israel. We can see this uncriticism for example in the fact that Czech leaders avoid making statements condemning the Israeli occupation and the construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. In the analysed time period, we can observe two cases when the Czech leaders deviated from the traditional pro-Israeli stance. In the first case, it is the joint statement by Tomáš Petříček, Lubomír Zaorálek and Karel Schwarzenberg, in which

³⁰⁵ FINNEMORE, M. and K. SIKKINK. International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. International Organization [online]. 1998, 52(4) [viewed 15 July 2023], p. 913. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601361>

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. Ministr Lipavský přivítal...

they criticised the initiative planned by Donald Trump named Peace to Prosperity. This critical statement provoked a great response across the Czech political scene. As I write above, the most critical voice was Miloš Zeman, who considered the statement to be damaging to relations with Israel. In the second case, Jan Lipavský was criticized for the Czech Republic's non-vote to condemn the anti-Israel report at the UN. On the basis of these examples, it can be argued that it is difficult to deviate from traditional pro-Israeli attitudes in the Czech Republic and present a more moderate position or to criticise Israel's actions. This claim is confirmed by the fact that Miloš Zeman initially refused to appoint Jan Lipavský as Minister of Foreign Affairs because of his alleged 'distant attitude' towards Israel. The very accusation of a hostile attitude was used to discredit the candidate for the post of foreign minister.

The case of the Czech Republic is also unique in that there is virtually a consensus across the political spectrum on Israel, and unlike other countries (e.g. Sweden), where attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict change depending on the government (right-wing parties are traditionally more pro-Israel, the left and centre less so), in the Czech Republic the attitude remains consistent. In general, right-wing political parties are more supportive of Israel, which can be seen in the Czech Republic in the example of Petr Fiala, but on the other hand, Czech support for Israel can also be seen in parties positioned elsewhere on the political spectrum. The government of Andrej Babiš, made up of ANO and ČSSD, has also been a clear supporter of Israel. However, on analysis, we can observe a difference in the heads of these two governments in the logic according to which the actors primarily act - in the case of Andrej Babiš it is the dominance of LoC, in the case of the leader of the ODS party, Petr Fiala, it is the dominance of LoA.

On the basis of my analysis, it can be seen that there are differences in attitudes between the representatives of the Czech political scene, and some appear more pro-Israeli than others. The most visible figure in relation to Israel has been Miloš Zeman. The former president of the Czech Republic has a very strong relationship with Israel and, in his own words, considers the defence of Israel his "*life's mission*"³⁰⁸. For Miloš Zeman, the logic of appropriateness prevailed, he saw himself as a defender of Israel, he was convinced that supporting Israel in every situation was appropriate, right. I dare to say that the fact that this politician was the head of the Czech Republic for ten years contributed significantly to the image of the Czech Republic as the most pro-Israeli country in the EU. Miloš Zeman had a strong role in foreign policy, was

³⁰⁸ Projev prezidenta republiky při setkání s pamětníky holokaustu. zemanmilos.cz [online]. 11 July 2022 [viewed 20 November 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-pametniky-holokaustu-127285.htm>

able to influence it, and his often bold statements resonated in the world. At the same time, he was the strongest voice in the republic on the issue of Israel and Palestine. The role of Miloš Zeman was partially taken over by Prime Minister Petr Fiala, who is also a strong supporter of Israel.

The intensity of pro-Israeli attitudes also varied in the period analysed according to the position held by the actors. Miloš Zeman, the President of the Republic, acted as a strong defender of Israel. This trend could also be observed in the case of Prime Minister Petr Fiala and, less intensely, in the case of Andrej Babiš. On the contrary, the foreign ministers, Tomáš Petříček and Jan Lipavský, took more cautious positions and tried to stick rather to common European positions - for example, in the case of the embassy relocation, or in the case of Tomáš Petříček's criticism of Donald Trump's Peace to Prosperity plan.

The research question of the analysis was to find out whether the logic of appropriateness or the logic of consequences prevails among Czech leaders in the formation of attitudes towards Israel and what is the relationship between these logics. Based on the analysis, we can argue that it is a combination of both logics, but I daresay that LoA outweighs LoC. A huge role is played by a common history that is so ingrained in the Czech consciousness and permanently present to such an extent that it has formed a kind of Czech identity as an advocate of Israel. Czech leaders feel a sense of belonging to Israel, they identify with this country. The attitude of the Czech political scene towards Israel does not evolve over time but remains consistent. Israel is still seen as the only democracy in the Middle East that has to struggle to survive - a stereotypical image that has persisted among a majority of politicians since the creation of the Israel in 1948. The Masaryk tradition and the reference to the delivery of military equipment during the First Arab-Israeli War in 1948 are ever-present in Israeli-Czech relations. On analysis, however, it can be noted that these historical facts are mainly pointed out by Israeli representatives, and this fact is less frequently mentioned by Czech politicians. In the case of the Czech Republic, the logic of appropriateness is smoothly linked to the logic of consequences. The LoC assumes that the attitudes and actions of actors are the result of a rational choice in which the actors have weighed all the benefits and risks of a given behaviour. Israel ranks among the most economically advanced states in the world and is a technological power. The actors are aware that if the Czech Republic continues to maintain good Czech-Israeli relations, trade will tend to increase and cooperation in other areas such as technology, research and healthcare will expand. It is clear that support for Israel can bring more benefits to the Czech Republic than support for Palestine. On the basis of the analysis, however, I concluded that the Czech Republic would be a strong supporter of Israel even if its good relations did not

bring such benefits, because support for Israel has become part of the identity of the Czech Republic and the benefits of cooperation with Israel are considered secondary.

Conclusion

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has since 1948 been marked by wars, violence, refugee crises, territorial changes and protests. The 1967 Six-Day War expanded Israel's territory and its outcome was welcomed by Israelis, but the subsequent occupation and settlement building in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have become one of the main obstacles to peace. The intifadas, particularly the second intifada between 2000 and 2005, brought an increase in violence, including suicide attacks and rocket fire, and put the militant organisation Hamas in the forefront. Despite several peace negotiations, including the promising Oslo Accords, a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians has not been achieved.

The main aim of my thesis was to define the factors that lead member states to support one side or the other in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, using the Czech Republic as a case study. In order to fulfill this goal, I set two research questions.

In order to answer my first question - to what extent does the EU influence the positions of the Member States on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – it was necessary to define EU foreign policy, the process of its creation, the relationship between EU foreign policy and the national foreign policies of the member states and, of course, the EU's attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The European Union's foreign policy is composed of four elements: the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), external action, and the external dimension of internal policies. The CFSP is responsible for formulating the EU's positions on foreign policy issues. It has special features because it is conceived as intergovernmental with the European Council and the Council of the EU, acting unanimously, playing the main role. The adoption of legislative acts is excluded. Member States retain control in this area because they consider foreign and security policy to be closely linked to their national sovereignty. Despite the intergovernmental nature and the exclusion of the adoption of legislative acts in the CFSP, Member States shall, according to Article 24/3 TEU shall “*support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall comply with the Union's action in this area*” and “*work together to enhance and develop their mutual political solidarity. They shall refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations*”.

The EU has long advocated that a two-state solution is necessary to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It stresses the need for an agreement to end the occupation and argues that

such a solution should meet the aspirations of both sides. In addition, the EU calls on Israel to halt settlements, underlining the threat that these settlements pose to the viability of a two-state solution.

The European Union undoubtedly influences Member States' attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example through the processes of Europeanisation, but its influence on Member States' attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is limited. Although the position of the European Union is the outcome of negotiations and compromises between Member States, in my thesis, I encountered positions of some Member States that deviate from the official EU stance. For instance, the Czech Republic and Hungary's attempts to relocate their embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and the Irish Parliament's labelling of the construction of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories as a 'de facto annexation'. In both cases, these steps do not reflect a unified position of the EU. The unbalanced attitudes of some Member States towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the stronger support for one of the parties to the conflict can be explained by the fact that a country's interests, identity, role conception and worldview play a major role in this conflict. In many instances, the decisive factor in shaping relationships between conflicting parties is the historical experience, like in the case of Germany, Ireland and Czech Republic.

The aforementioned factors are also reflected in the formulation of foreign policy of the Czech Republic. The Czech-Israeli relations were laid by Thomas G. Masaryk, who was a great supporter of Zionism. Czechoslovakia's strong support for Israel continued even after its establishment, when Czechoslovakia provided military assistance to Israel during the first Arab-Israeli War. However, Czechoslovakia's attitude had changed significantly since 1950 under the influence of the Soviet Union, and the Czech Republic was an ally of the Arab states until 1989. After the Velvet Revolution, Václav Havel managed to re-establish good relations with Israel, while relations with the Palestinian side declined. Changes of governments and presidents in the following years have not led to significant changes in the Czech Republic's attitudes towards Israel.

The evidence of the Czech Republic's pro-Israeli stance was also confirmed in the period under analysis. Examples of this include the unambiguous and unequivocal support expressed for Israel in the conflicts with the Palestinian side in 2021 and 2023, the lack of criticism for Donald Trump's Peace to Prosperity plan of 2020, which planned to annex Palestinian land³⁰⁹,

³⁰⁹ The plan was criticised in a joint statement by then Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček together with former foreign ministers Lubomír Zaorálek and Karel Schwarzenberg. This statement was strongly criticised by Czech political leaders, such as then-President Miloš Zeman and then-Prime Minister Andrej Babiš.

and the opposition to the formation of an Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, East Jerusalem, and Israel on May 28th, 2021. Based on my analysis, it is clear that some political leaders appeared more pro-Israeli than others. The most visible supporter of Israel was Miloš Zeman, who considers the defence of Israel his "*life's mission*"³¹⁰ The fact that was the president of the Czech Republic for ten years contributed significantly to the image of the Czech Republic as the most pro-Israeli country in the EU. The role of Miloš Zeman was partially taken over by Prime Minister Petr Fiala, who is also a strong supporter of Israel. On the contrary, the foreign ministers, Tomáš Petříček and Jan Lipavský, took more cautious positions and tried to stick rather to common European positions - for example, in the case of the embassy relocation, or in the case of Tomáš Petříček's criticism of Donald Trump's Peace to Prosperity plan.

Using the analysis, I also found the answer to the second research question, that is which logic - logic of appropriateness or logic of consequences - is dominant in the formation of the Czech Republic's attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is evident that the Czech Republic's representatives are guided by both the LoA and the LoC. My question, however, was which logic is dominant and what is the relationship between them. I came to the conclusion that the Czech leaders act dominantly according to the LoA in their relations with Israel. A significant factor contributing to the strong Czech-Israeli relations is the shared history deeply embedded in the Czech consciousness. These historical ties are so significant that they created a kind of Czech identity as a defender of Israel. It is noteworthy that the Czech political position towards Israel has remained constant and unwavering over time. Israel is still seen as the only democracy in the Middle East that has to struggle to survive - a stereotypical image that has persisted among a majority of politicians since the creation of the Israel state in 1948.

The LoC is also present. It is seamlessly linked to the LoA. Since Israel ranks among the most economically advanced states in the world and is a technological power, political leaders are aware that if the Czech Republic continues to maintain good Czech-Israeli relations, trade will tend to increase and cooperation in other areas such as technology, research and healthcare will expand. Therefore, when describing the relationship between LoA and LoC in the formation of the Czech Republic's attitudes towards Israel, we can use the fourth interpretation defined by March and Olsen, which is that "*each of these logics is a 'special*

³¹⁰ Projev prezidenta republiky při setkání s pamětníky holokaustu. zemanmilos.cz [online]. 11 July 2022 [viewed 20 November 2023]. Available from: <http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-pametniky-holokaustu-127285.htm>

case' of the other".³¹¹ Scholars who advocate this interpretation believe that all action is explicable by one logic and the elements of the other are merely included in it.³¹² Based on the analysis, I also concluded that the Czech Republic would likely be a strong supporter of Israel even if its good relations do not bring benefits in the form of trade or technological cooperation, because support for Israel has become part of the identity of the Czech Republic, and the benefits of cooperation with Israel are considered secondary.

The contribution of my thesis is a closer look at the question of the formation of EU member states' attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which I consider to be a unique and understudied topic. I focused my analysis on one country which, as has been confirmed during the period under analysis, has strongly pro-Israeli positions. What surprised me most during my research is that Czech political leaders do not allow any criticism of Israel. This was evident from the joint statement made by the foreign ministers, which ignited a contentious discussion within Czech society. This fact has made me think again about the idea I put forward in the introduction to my thesis. Can uncritical support for one side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict contribute to achieving peace, or conversely, can such support hinder the achievement of peace?

³¹¹ MARCH, J. and J.P. OLSEN. *The Institutional Dynamics...*, p. 953

³¹² *ibid.*

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Abstract

KIČINOVÁ, Dagmar. EU Member States' attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: A case study of the Czech Republic. [Master's Thesis]. Palacký University in Olomouc. Faculty of Law. Supervisor: Mgr. Petra Měšťánková, Ph.D. Olomouc: Palacký University, 2023, 90 p.

This master's thesis examines the attitudes of the EU and its Member States towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and analyses the attitudes of Czech political leaders towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness. The aim of the thesis is to define the factors that lead member states to support one side or the other in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, using the Czech Republic as a case study. The thesis also provides a historical overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, defines the European Union's foreign policy and names the factors that influence it. In addition, it also outlines the EU's position and role in the conflict and explains the extent to which the EU influences member states' attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Key words: Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Czech Republic, European Union, Foreign Policy of the EU, logic of consequences, logic of appropriateness.

Abstrakt

KIČINOVÁ, Dagmar. Postoje členských států EU k izraelsko-palestínskému konfliktu: Případová studia České republiky. [Diplomová práce]. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci. Právnická fakulta. Vedúci práce: Mgr. Petra Měšťánková, Ph.D. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2023, 90 s.

Táto diplomová práca sa zaoberá postojmi EU a jej členských štátov k izraelsko-palestínskému konfliktu a analyzuje postoje českých politických predstaviteľov k izraelsko-palestínskému konfliktu na základe teórie logiky výhodnosti a logiky vhodnosti. Cieľom práce je definovať faktory, ktoré vedú niektoré členské štáty k podpore jednej či druhej strany izraelsko-palestínskeho konfliktu, používajúc pri tom Českú republiku ako prípadovú štúdiu. Práca tiež poskytuje historický prehľad izraelsko-palestínskeho konfliktu, definuje zahraničnú politiku Európskej únie a menuje faktory, ktoré ju ovplyvňujú. Okrem toho tiež uvádza postoje a úlohu EU v danom konflikte a objasňuje, do akej miery EU ovplyvňuje postoje členských štátov k izraelsko-palestínskému konfliktu.

Kľúčové slová: izraelsko-palestínsky konflikt, Česká republika, Európska únia, zahraničná politika Európskej únie, logika výhodnosti, logika vhodnosti.