

Europeanisation of the Czech Foreign Policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

A part of Jean Monnet Chair of Excellence Project

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Introduction

Aim of the presentation: to discuss the design of my research

Aim of the research:

- (1) to evaluate the level and form of impact Europeanisation has had on priorities and practices of the Czech foreign policy towards Israeli-Palestinian conflict and both parties
- (2) to evaluate the input of the Czech Republic in forming the common EU foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Theoretical Background

- Europeanisation = a process during which foreign policy formation or change takes place as a result of repeated interactions between Member States and EU institutions
- bi-directional and mutually constitutive process where the EU and national levels influence each other → two vertical dimensions of foreign policy
Europeanisation:
 - (1) top-down dimension – “downloading”
 - (2) bottom-up dimension – “uploading”+
 - (3) possible third dimension – “crossloading”

Research Design

Research questions:

1. How was the Czech foreign policy affected by EU's and EU Members' position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in case the Czech and EU's interests and objectives happen to be in mutual conflict?
2. Was the Czech foreign policy rather enabled, or limited by the EU/CFSP in its own approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
3. What was the Czech Republic's input in shaping of crucial EU's and EU Members' attitudes towards the conflict between Israel and Palestine? How were Czech national preferences reflected in the EU foreign policy outputs?

Research Design

Research procedure:

- comparing datasets connected to EU level and Czech level
- revealing changes at the national level caused by the impact of the EU level
- revealing changes at the EU level caused by the projection of Czech preferences and objectives

Dataset:

- (1) legislative, strategic and advocacy policy documents produced at European and Czech levels
- (2) public statements of policymakers and politicians (supplemented by secondary sources, i.e. FP yearbooks)

Methods: interpretative analysis of discourse, FPA and process-tracing

Czech position on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Israel

- exceptional, strategic, allied, friendly and almost uncritical relationship between Czechia and Israel, almost uncritical (common values, close trade ties)
- sympathy for Israel, admiration of its ability to "survive" in an unstable and dangerous Middle East
- Israel is a democratic state (should be supported) X undemocratic Palestine or the entire Middle East
- the pro-Israel position = a „traditional Czech“ position, not related to any ideological identity of former Czech governments (or former prime ministers, presidents or ministers of foreign affairs)

Czech position on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Palestine

- Palestinians have a right to have a free state
- development activities of Czechia in Palestine are needed
- Palestine is not democratic
- Palestinians should have their say in the solution of conflict
- sometimes Hamas labelled as „terrorist organisation“
- strongly critical voices are exceptional (president Zeman)

Czech position on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

- official Czech position – a two-state solution (president Zeman being an exception)
- necessity to solve the conflict peacefully, by direct negotiation between both parties
- both countries need to make compromises
- the result – „safe Israel“ and „democratic Palestine“
- Hamas needs to stop bombing Israel (majority opinion)

X

former Minister of FA Zaorálek: the peace proces will not resume until Israel stops building Jewish settlements in the West Bank (rare opinion!)

Czech position on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

- Czechia always sides with Israel regardless of the EU (or other EU Members´) position when it needs to choose between Israel and Palestine
- interpretation of the conflict: rocket attacks by the Palestinians (Hamas) are violence against Israel and Israeli people, a cause that provokes a legitimate Israeli defensive reaction = Israel has the right to defend itself

X

Israeli military interventions to the Gaza strip are described as „Israel’s military campaign“ or „military action“

Partial Conclusions

Downloading (research period 2004–2021)

- very limited influence of the EU on the **overall** Czech attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to Israel
- BUT visible influence of the EU in a few specific issues – Czechia prioritized (was willing to prioritize) the common European policy approach over national positions:

(1) possible transfer the Czech Embassy to Jerusalem

Minister of FA Stropnický (2017, 2018): *“We stick to the European line, ... we do not want to detach ourselves from the Union opinion. ... We do not want to dilute any EU or European positions.”*

(2) vote against the status of „observer state“ for Palestine in the UN

Minister of FA Schwarzenberg (2013): *“That was the discussion at the last ministerial council and Lady Ashton's proposal, which I joined, was that the whole European Union should abstain, but then a certain group of states (...) told us they would vote ‘yes’. (...) in such moments one should stick to one's friend [meaning Israel]. (...) someone also needs to show solidarity with Israel.”*

Partial Conclusions

plan to extend the research period until 08/2022 to include the new government and new Minister of FA Jan Lipavský to the research

Uploading

Will be examined in the following steps

Crossloading

Will be examined in the following steps

Sources of quotes

Ministr Stropnický poskytl rozhovor pro iDnes.cz (22. 12. 2017):

https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_stropnickeho_2017/x2017_12_22_ministr_stropnický_pro_idnes.html

Ministr Stropnický v pořadu Otázky Václava Moravce (25. 2. 2018):

https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_stropnickeho/x2018_02_25_ministr_stropnický_v_poradu_ovm.html

Prezidentský speciál - Karel Schwarzenberg (4. 1. 2013):

https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_schwarzenberga_5/x2012_12_20_prezidentsky_special_karel_schwarzenberg.html

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
AND ATTENTION!**