The London School of Economics and Political Science

Our Jews, Our Israel!

Origins of the Foreign Policy of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary Towards Israel

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Abstract

This thesis analyses three Central European countries – Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary - and their relations with Israel. I chose these three Central European countries because they share the same geopolitical space and historical experience. These three Central European countries and Israel are geographically distant, face different geopolitical threats, and have only a few policy issues in common. Nonetheless, 'the question of Israel' has been very much present in the foreign policies of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

Building on constructivism and IR scholarship that engages with memory studies, this thesis explores the process of national identity re-formation and its impact on the formulation of national interest. Specifically, it focuses on: a) past legacies, institutionalized in collective memory and expressed in narratives, which linger over and constrain policy choices; b) the role of decision-makers with a special focus on their role in national identity re-formation in times when a policy is in transition and when a new regime must establish its legitimacy.

I look at the historical roots of the relations of the three Central European countries with Israel. I do so by analysing the *role of the Jewish question* in the nation-building process of Polish, Czech, and Hungarian nations. Further, I argue that as the three former Communist countries started to re-define their relations with Israel, *the legacy of the Jewish question* has had a significant impact on the formulation of their foreign policies towards the Jewish state.

Acknowledgment

Acronyms

ČSSR: Czechoslovak Socialist Republic *(Československá socialistická republika)*

EU: European Union

G-to-G: Government to Government [meetings]

HDF: Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*)

IR: International Relations

MP: Member of Parliament

MFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MOD: Ministry of Defence

NGO: Non-governmental organization

PiS: Law and Justice Party *(Prawo i Sprawiedliwość)*

PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization

R&D: Research and Development

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UNGA: United Nations General Assembly

US: United States of America

USD: US Dollar

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyses three Central European countries – Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary - and their relations with Israel. The topic, rather overlooked by students both of politics and by foreign policy experts, recently became a hotly debated issue. The diplomatic spat between Poland and Israel over the role of Poles in the Holocaust which led to the cancellation of the Visegrad Group[1] meeting with Israel in Jerusalem in February 2019, the Czech 2012 vote in the United Nations General Assembly on upgrade of the Palestinian status, which the Czech Republic was the only European Union (EU) country to vote against, and the deepening of Hungarian-Israeli relations despite the anti-Soros campaign which evoked old anti-Semitic stereotypes, these are actions which have raised an interest in the foreign policy of those three countries towards Israel. These three examples show that, notwithstanding the fact that Central European countries and Israel are geographically distant, face different geopolitical threats, and have only a few policy issues in common, the 'question of Israel' has been very much present in the foreign policies of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. This thesis explores this uncharted territory.

In this landscape, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was a moment of a major rupture. Distribution of power changed, old identities and interests were questioned, and established patterns of behaviour became contentious. At this moment of crisis, when 'things were up for grabs,' the restoration of relations with Israel was a foreign policy priority for the three Central European countries.[2] Since 1989, the Czech Republic and Poland in particular have considered their relations with Israel strategic, and their political leaders have often spoken about 'special relationships' with Israel. It is even more interesting, considering the fact that the region of the Middle East was not a priority for the three Central European countries; they did not carry the burden of a colonial past nor was the Middle East economically or strategically crucial for them. Therefore, in this thesis, I aim to answer the following question:

What role did Israel play in the re-formation of the national identities of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary after 1989?

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[1] The Visegrad Group was formed in 1991 as a platform for consultations and cooperation among three Central European countries – Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, the Czech Republic and Slovakia became independent members, and the Visegrad Three became the Visegrad Four/V4.
[2] Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, together with other countries of the Eastern bloc (except Romania), broke off diplomatic relations with Israel in 1967 in response to the Six Day War.

A realist would argue that an interest in good relations with Israel logically stemmed from the new post-1989 balance of power and was linked to the interest of the three post-Communist countries in joining the Western economic and defence institutions, particularly the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Further, it could be argued that the extensive diplomatic relations with Israel, built by the three countries since 1989, were initially driven by mutual economic interest. In addition to the export/import exchange, Israel's 'start-up' mentality and its developed high-tech sector were regarded as positive models for transforming the economies of all three Central European countries.

However, the realist hypothesis, based on material and rationalist factors, becomes challenged when looking at the timing and perseverance of those relations. The renewal of relations with Israel became one of the first foreign policy initiatives of Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. It took place in late 1989 and early 1990, a long time before NATO membership became a priority for these countries. Further, Israel remained a very special case, especially for the Czech Republic and Poland, even after both countries had joined NATO, and even at times, when their strong Atlanticism weakened. Trade relations, tourism, and security cooperation have played an important role in the bilateral relations. Yet, they have not been significant enough to explain the importance and intensity of the relations with Israel, especially when compared with the level of economic and security cooperation within the EU countries.

The openly displayed warm relations of these three countries with Israel at a time when Israel's diplomatic position within some fora of global governance, including the EU, have been deteriorating is such an interesting fact that we need more than partial explanations. While a growing number of EU member states have been criticising Israel's rightward turn, and while the EU has rejected the continuing occupation of the West Bank and Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and domestic development in Israel did not have major negative impact on relations of the three Central European countries with Israel.

In view of these facts, in order to explain both a certain urgency in the restoration of relations with Israel, and the importance of Israel in the foreign policies of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, I undertake a different type of analysis. I will argue that rather than material incentives, it has been an identity of the three Central European countries which mostly defined their positions towards Israel. I will argue that Israel represents an exemplary case of why identity matters in the formulation of foreign policy.

An Overview of the Argument

Building on constructivism and IR scholarship that engages with memory studies, this thesis explores the sources of national interest. It analyses the influence of national identity on the formulation of national

interest. More specifically, it looks at the role of the past in national identity formation. The thesis shows that in 1989, when Polish, Czech, and Hungarian national identities started to be re-formulated and their international positions re-built, the three Central European countries were not starting with a *tabula rasa*. While re-constructing their national identities and re-formulating their national interests, the past was a crucial factor. As Clunan states, "*especially* in times of change [...] deciding whether to discard or salvage the past is at the heart of any political effort to create new institutions [emphasis in original]" (Clunan 2009, 19). It was during this time of lack of stability, when national self-images were questioned, that the past became a crucial point of reference. Traumatic events and memories of being victims, of being occupied by foreign powers, and of being witnesses to the worst European genocide, became important drivers of foreign policy formation with the goal of 'never again.' At the same time, idealized positive aspects of the past - the fight against oppression, the multicultural past of a region – became central to the rebuilding of the self-esteem of those nations.

During this process of identity re-construction, Israel played an important role. By renewing relations with Israel, the three former Communist states confirmed their return and belonging to the democratic West. Having good relations with the Jewish state[3] was understood as a way of coming to terms with their past, be it anti-Zionism of the Communist regime or anti-Semitism of the pre-WWII era. By keeping close links with Israel, the three countries revived the long tradition of co-existence with the Jews, which was interrupted by Nazis and distorted by Communists.

In this thesis, I argue that establishing strong relations with Israel was part and parcel of identity re-construction of the three Central European countries which included, first, an attempt to leave the Communist past and to become part of the West, and second, to come to terms with the difficult past. In other words, in this thesis, I show that when re-defining their relations with Israel following the regime change in 1989, the treatment of Jews during both the Nazi and the Communist dictatorships coupled with the long history of co-existence with the Jewish minority, have formed and long continued to shape national identities of Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians, with a direct impact on their foreign policies towards Israel. Feelings of cultural closeness with the Jews, bad consciousness about the fate of Jews in Europe during WWII, and an effort to rectify mistakes of the Communist regime, all played a role when the foreign policy towards Israel was re-formulated.

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[3] I use the term "the Jewish State" as synonymous to Israel. I am aware that "the Jewish state" is a contested concept. However, building on Gavison, the term implies the following: it is "a state with a large Jewish majority; a state in which the Jewish people exercises political self-determination, and a state inspired by Jewish religious law" (Gavison 1999, 53).

Therefore, to answer my research question, I take a broad perspective and look at the historical roots of the relations of the three Central European countries with Israel. I do so by analysing the *role of the Jewish question* in the nation-building process of Polish, Czech, and Hungarian nations. I also analyse the meaning of Jews during important historical moments which became formative events for those three nations. I argue that when the three former Communist countries started to re-define their relations with Israel, *the legacy of the Jewish question* had a significant impact on decision-makers when they formulated foreign policies towards the Jewish state. For instance, in the case of Poland, rebuilding relations with Israel was, among others, part of an attempt to improve the image of Poland which had been perceived by the world as anti-Semitic country. Because of this, when analysing the post-1989 foreign policies of the three Central European states towards Israel, I look at how the past framed their national identities. I examine how the past was remembered and forgotten and what role the past played in the re-construction of the post-1989 national identities of the Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

I answer my research questions by focusing on major, chronologically ordered narratives. First, I focus on narratives related to the Jewish question and second, I analyse narratives related to Israel. I show that certain persistent approaches related to Jews are also mirrored in narratives related to Israel. These narratives, presented in historical sequences, are compared across the three countries under examination, which illuminates differences and similarities among those countries.

Further, I examine in this thesis the role of decision-makers in the process of the re-construction of national identity following the major changes in 1989. In this moment of crisis, when old ideas, values, and settled social facts were questioned and an idea of a state needed to be restored, decision-makers had a unique chance to influence the process of national identity re-construction. However, as I show, the past limited the agency of decision-makers over the process of national identity re-construction. This thesis does not analyse in a great detail the position of the general public. Being about foreign policy formation, it instead focuses on elites, especially the decision-makers, who formulate the foreign policy of a state.

Brief Definitions of the Jewish Question and anti-Semitism

Two terms need to be specified from the start, the 'Jewish question' and 'anti-Semitism.' The term Jewish question has its roots in the early Enlightenment period and was commonly used in Central and Western Europe when referring to the status and treatment of the Jewish minority within society. It was related to debates about the social, political, and legal status of the Jews. It was a neutral term which, however, became a euphemism which "referred to the "problem" that the anomalous persistence of the Jews as a people posed to the new nation-states and the rising political nationalism" (Dawidowicz 1975, xxxvi). In the second half of the

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19th century, the term was adopted by nascent anti-Semitic movements which started to consider the singularity of Jews as a major obstacle to the cohesion and strength of European nation-states. This tendency culminated with Nazism and its implementation of the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question.' However, the Holocaust did not mean an end to the Jewish question. In Central Europe, it remained part of the politics. It kept some old forms and after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, it was augmented by new features.

In light of this background, for the purpose of this thesis, when referring to the Jewish question, I refer to issues related to the acceptance of Jews in the Polish, Czech, and Hungarian societies as formulated by elites, first and foremost the decision-makers.

Concerning anti-Semitism, there are ongoing debates about the exact definition of the term. Does it cover all possible forms of hatred towards Jews, or should we differentiate, for example, religious/Christian anti-Semitism, modern/racial anti-Semitism, and new anti-Semitism[4] (cf. Laqueur 2006; Wistrich 1991)? I define anti-Semitism as an ideology which treats Jews, either individually or collectively, as a hated 'other.' Societal condition and events allowed this hatred to develop overtimes. Those conditions have changes, and the events are long gone, but prejudices against Jews have remained. In this thesis when using the term anti-Semitism, I refer to a 'culture of hatred' which, regardless of its source, leads to the dehumanization of Jews.

Being often used, yet contested, I defined these two terms in the beginning of the thesis. Other terms, such as identity, will be analysed in more depth in Chapter 1.

The Contribution of the Thesis

This thesis provides a theoretically informed examination of the formation of a state's foreign policy. Building on constructivism and memory studies, it aims to deepen our understanding of the process through which national identity forms national interest. While analysing the process of identity re-formation and its impact on the formulation of national interest, this thesis focuses on: a) past legacies, institutionalized in collective memory and expressed in narratives, which linger over and constrain policy choices; b) the role of decision-makers with a special focus on their role in times when a policy is in transition and when a new regime must establish its legitimacy. This thesis focuses especially on a moment of major crisis, when old policies are challenged. The relations of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary with Israel offer a good case study for an understanding how national interest is formed following a major rupture, in this case, represented by the end of the Cold War.

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[4] Manifested as the criticism of Zionism and the State of Israel.

This thesis adds to the constructivist debate about the process of identity formation of a state. I include the past as a crucial factor influencing the formation of social structures, such as identity and interest. I show how the past bounds the limits of possible and how, especially in a time of major crisis, the past serves as available heuristic for decision-makers. Further, by adding the agency of decision-makers into the analysis of identity formation, my aim is to contribute to the constructivist structure vs. agent debate. I will examine how the past limits decision-makers and how, on the other hand, decision-makers shape the meaning of the past.

Empirically, by investigating the roots of the foreign policy of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary towards Israel, this thesis wants to fill some missing empirical knowledge too. Although relations of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary towards the U.S., European countries and the EU, and Russia have been studied by many scholars of International Relations (e.g. Longhurst and Zaborowski 2007; Kuzniar 2009; Zając 2016; Cabada and Waisová 2011; Kořan 2016; Terényi 2009; Magyarics 2013), comprehensive research on the foreign policies of those three countries towards Israel in the post-1989 period has been almost non-existent. A few papers do offer an English-speaking audience some insight into the issue (Čejka 2017; Gazdik and Rózsa 2013; Dyduch 2012). In particular, Joanna Dyduch has been writing rather extensively on Polish-Israel relations (Dyduch 2010, 2007). However, this literature, not being based on IR theoretical literature, offers useful descriptive insights but not a theoretically informed analysis. Furthermore, there does not exist a comprehensive study which looks at the topic comparatively, analysing the foreign policies of all three Central European countries towards Israel. Thus, this thesis offers to English-speaking audience the first comparative study of the three Central European states and their relations with Israel.

By analysing and assessing the Polish, Czech, and Hungarian foreign policy towards Israel, this thesis offers insight into the national identities of those countries. In my analysis of the role of the Jewish question in the nation-building process of Polish, Czech, and Hungarian nations, and while examining the role of Israel in identity re-construction of those three nations following the regime change in 1989, I present a descriptive argument (Gerring 2012) which is an important foundation for my research. By providing a thick description, I delineate the context of actions, the meaning of events and their evolution, and the intentions of actors (Denzin 2001). It brings to the fore key historical elements underlying the identity of those nations. A thick description, being crucial for theoretical analysis, thus invites us to understand the character of those countries more fully and the way that character manifests itself in the formation of their foreign policies.

This thesis is largely built on a wide array of original interviews with stakeholders, mostly diplomats and politicians, but also foreign policy experts and historians (more in the next section). It allows the reader to develop a very clear and almost intimate picture of the way of thinking of elites from those three countries.

Last but not least, by better understanding the character of the foreign policy position of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary towards Israel, this thesis adds to our understanding of the EU member states' attitude towards Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an aspect of foreign affairs which remains important on the EU's foreign-policy agenda.

Methodology

Why these three countries? This thesis relies on the comparison of three case studies. I chose Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary because they share the same geopolitical space and historical experience. Being part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or, as in the case of Poland, having a large part of its territory controlled by Russia and Germany, became independent only after World War I (WWI). During the interwar era, this part of Europe, also called *Mitteleuropa,* was characterized by a mixture of religions, languages, ethnic groups, and fluctuating borders (Rupnik 1990). Central European Jews were one of the most prominent minorities, often representing the archetypal 'Other.' At the same time, Central Europe was a region where influential Jewish religious movements and figures were born, where key Zionist ideas were engendered, where Yiddish and Hebrew cultures prospered, and where Jews contributed to European culture and sciences. World War II (WWII) destroyed Central European Jewry. The Holocaust and the post-war mass expulsion of minorities led to the creation of largely homogeneous nation states in Central Europe. Shortly after the defeat of Nazism, the Soviet-sponsored Communist dictatorship monopolized power for forty years, and Central European countries became part of the Soviet Bloc. The end of the Cold War in 1989 opened a new chapter for Central European countries. In 1991, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland formed the Visegrad Group, a club of three, and after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1992, a club of four countries, which shared particular geostrategic goals, mainly integration into the Western security and political-economic structures. This group became exclusive and its refusal to expand can be explained, at least partially, by the feeling of common historical, intellectual, and cultural affinities shared among the four, but not shared by other countries in the region, be they the Baltic or the Balkan countries.

In this thesis, I will analyse the differences and similarities among these three countries which define their stance towards Israel. I will review the history of the Jewish question which, in each of those countries, unfolded against a similar backdrop of major Central European historical events, yet bear unique features reflecting national particularities. I will show that the pro-Israeli policies promoted by the post-1989 elites in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary stemmed from similar experiences, yet have been often rationalised differently, taking into account domestic needs. I will especially focus on impact of domestic conflicts involved in the formation of historical policies and impact of those conflicts on the relations of the three countries with

Israel. I am aware that some IR scholars may find the basic story of foreign policy formation towards Israel across the three cases very similar. But the three cases feature substantive differences notwithstanding their superficial similarities. Nonetheless, by engaging with historical social science, I will be able to offer context-bound generalizations about the processes of national identity formation.

Slovakia, the fourth member of the V4, was another country that could have been added to the analysis. However, Slovakia was, until WWI and for almost one thousand years, a part of the Kingdom of Hungary, and from 1918 to 1992 part of Czechoslovakia (with an exception of WWII when the Slovak State was a client state of Nazi Germany). Therefore, to analyse genuine Slovak position towards the Jewish question and Israel would be methodologically rather complicated. Furthermore, due to the word limit, I had to choose between historical depth and geographical breadth. Therefore, I decided to focus on Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, leaving Slovakia for my next research. At the same time, Slovakia is naturally discussed when I study Czechoslovakia. Notwithstanding the Czech dominance in the state, Slovak decision-makers played an important role in both pre-WWII democratic and post-1948 Communist Czechoslovakia.

Why post-1989? In my analysis of relations of the three Central European countries with Israel, I especially focus on the post-1989 period. The end of the Cold War represented a moment of major crisis when the former Communist countries of Central Europe, after decades of German and Soviet occupation, were finally independent. It was a moment when new democratic regimes were installed, and with them, the process of formation of a post-Communist identity and accompanying policies started for those nations. Analysing the post-Communist era provides an opportunity to understand foreign-policy formation following a major change, when an old regime is removed and a new one is built.

Sources: In my analysis of the role of the Jewish question in the nation-building process of Polish, Czech, and Hungarian nations, I present a comprehensive account of actions, events, and actors during a period which stretches back several centuries. To provide this, I made extensive use of both primary and secondary sources, i.e. books and other publications, often based on original archival research, published in English, Czech, and Polish. As I do not read Hungarian, I did not utilize secondary sources in Hungarian. However, I did use interpreters for the translation of important primary sources, mainly visual material, presented in this thesis. Analysing extensive material written before and after 1989, by scholars with and without direct experience of examined events, compelled me to take into account various, often conflicting, views, As a result, while presenting a description of the past which would become an important source for the formation of the post-Communist identity of those three nations, I was able to identify various post-1989 narratives.

Importantly, with only a limited amount of available secondary material which analyses the legacy of the Jewish question on the post post-1989 foreign policy of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary towards Israel, I build this empirical component from scratch. I followed two paths of investigation: personal interviews and the analysis of the speeches by key decision-makers. The thesis draws on insights from 102 semi-structured qualitative interviews. The richness of the collected material enables me to present in this thesis not only a full scale of views but often also a personalized way through which individual decision-makers rationalise relations with Israel. Some of the interviews I conducted turned almost into a confession about the family history of victimhood and heroism which further underlined the importance of identity and its impact on formulating policies. I chose interviewees who would provide a wide variety of experience and observation. These helped me to detect key narratives related to Israel and their practical impact. By interviewing a range of actors, some with long institutional memory and some with only limited experience, I tried to develop as broad a perspective on the issue as possible. The interviews took place from 2016 to 2018. I interviewed officials in Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. They can be divided into three groups.

The primary group consists of decision-makers, diplomats, and officials who were involved in foreign policy from each of the three states. The decision-makers were mostly former and current Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and Members of Parliament from different political parties. The diplomats were primarily former and current ambassadors to Israel, supplemented by a smaller number of diplomats who served at Embassies in the U.S., the EU, and Arab countries in the Middle East. Middle-and high-ranking officials were from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Political Directors, Heads of the Department of the Middle East, advisors to Ministers, and desk-officers, together with a smaller number from the Ministry of Defence. Most of the interviewees only started to work in the realm of foreign policy after 1989. In a few cases, however, these people had had experience with being in senior positions under both communist and democratic regimes.

The second group consists of experts on foreign policy, with a special focus on Israel, and of historians. These people work mostly in think-tanks and academia respectively. I also interviewed journalists, most of whom work for influential public broadcasters and large newspapers, who were covering Israel and the Middle East. Being important opinion-makers, their views were relevant as they helped to shape narratives regarding Israel and the Jewish question.

The third group, used mainly for triangulation purposes, is a group of Israeli diplomats and former politicians, and representatives of Jewish organizations in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. I interviewed Israeli Ambassadors serving in Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest and also former Israeli diplomats and politicians who were involved in the renewal of diplomatic relations with the three post-Communist countries in the early

1990s. Representatives of Jewish organizations were interviewed mostly in regard of the Jewish question and anti-Semitism in those three countries.

Most of the interviews were conducted in person. Only a few took place via Skype. Each interview lasted approximately an hour. Many of them were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. However, in Hungary, current diplomats and officials refused to be recorded, so instead, I took notes which I transcribed on the same day that the interview took place. Some of the Czech interviews were conducted in a very informal way as I know personally those interviewed persons. In such cases, I preferred to take notes rather than using a recorder. Interviews were generally conducted in Czech and English. Interviews in English, Hebrew, and Polish were transcribed in English. Czech interviews were transcribed in Czech and I translated only quotes which I use in the thesis into English. Interviews with Polish, Hungarian, and Israeli interviewees were conducted primarily in English. When quoting them, I have altered the English only in rare cases when the original speech was unintelligible. Otherwise, I try to keep the language as authentic as possible.

In relation to identification of interviewees, I used purposive sampling in combination with a snowball technique. In each of the three countries, I primarily approached heads of departments of the Middle East at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, former and current diplomats serving in Israel, politicians involved in foreign policy, and foreign-policy experts with a focus on Israel. In Israel, I primarily contacted former diplomats serving in at least one of the three Central European countries. Many interviewees recommended additional people for possible interviews which enabled me to expand on all three sampling groups.

Interviewees were informed, orally, about the purpose and possible uses of the research. In most cases, the quotes are fully credited. However, some interviewees asked for anonymity. In those cases, interviews are referenced as 'Diplomat/Official/Expert X.'

Speeches and press conferences of senior politicians serve as another important source for the analysis of narratives. I used official governmental websites or high quality media sources, extracting official statements made during state visits to or from Israel, official historical commemorations of WWII and the Holocaust, or openings of museums and memorials.

In addition, I worked with primary data. In the analysis of the voting pattern of the three Central European countries, I used data on UN General Assembly voting as recorded in United Nations Bibliographic Information System database. Moreover, data related to bilateral trade exchange are from the United Nations Statistical Division's COMTRADE database.

The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 1 discusses the key theoretical terms on which this research is built and presents the analytical framework used in the empirical analysis. Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the role of the Jewish question in the nation-building process of Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians, focusing on the formative historical events of those three nations. This chapter is divided chronologically, covering the development from the pre-nationalist period to the end of the Cold War. Chapter 3 discusses the Polish, Czechoslovak, and Hungarian relations with Israel under Communist rule. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are devoted to the Polish, Czech, and Hungarian relations with Israel from 1989 until today. Specifically, the chapters focus on major narratives concerning Israel, on actors who formulate those narratives, and they look at impact of those narratives on bilateral relations with Israel. The chapters also map the role of the politics of memory and its effect on attitudes towards Israel. Finally, a Concluding chapter compares the findings from the different chapters, and draws final conclusions, and contextualizes them in the literature.

CHAPTER 1: THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY – THE ROLE OF THE PAST AND THE AGENCY OF DECISION-MAKERS

Why do states do what they do in international politics? What are the main factors which determine the behaviour of a state? What role does national identity play in the formation of a state's national interest? What role does history play in the formulation of a state's foreign policy? These are questions which have been at the core of the discipline of International Relations (IR). Over the years, IR scholars strove to identify the formative forces culminating in state behaviour. Their findings promised to have great practical utility, yet, so far, state behaviour has proven to be too elusive for a single, clear, and definitive answer explaining it. I am to contribute to the debate about the sources of state behaviour by focusing on the role of national identity and history in the formulation of national interest. My theoretical framework builds on constructivism but by including the memory studies, it speaks to fields beyond the IR scholarships.

In this chapter, I analyse the sources of national identity and the processes through which it is formed and re-formed. I focus on two issues in particular: first, *the past,* reflected in narratives, as a source of national identity and second, *decision-makers* and their agency in the process of national identity re-formation. I discuss how the past constitutes and constrains decision-makers' choices and how, by shaping narratives, politicians assign meaning to the past. As will become clear, the past is a source of stability and bounds the limits of possible, yet, decision-makers actively attempt to re-define those limits. It is especially in a time of crisis, in a time of major political shifts, that the agency of decision-makers over the process of national identity formation strengthens.

I first look at the sources of state behaviour according to some theories of IR, with a special focus on constructivism which considers national identity to be an important basis of national interest.

1.1. IR Theory & State Behaviour

The most prominent theory of IR which has attempted to develop a concise explanation of state behaviour is structural realism/neorealism. Structural realism is based on the assumption that international politics takes place in a system (Kaplan 1957) and within this system, the states are functionally alike (Waltz 1979). While domestically the system is characterized by the rule of law, world politics is decentralized and anarchical and therefore every unit must fight for its self-preservation. The behaviour of a state is defined by its will to survive

in the anarchical environment and to protect its sovereignty. In the hierarchy of the interests of a state, the interest to survive is at the apex. Neorealism is thus built on the assumption that states – the essential units in the system – all have one characteristic based on their self-interest. This interest defines the identity of a state, which in the neorealist view is primordial, natural, relatively stable, exogenous, and given to a state prior to its entering into interaction with other states (Ringmar 1996, 441). It is the material capability of states which defines their position in the anarchic realm of international politics. According to neorealism, "The ideas and preferences entailed in national identities are governed by the material constraints elites face in a given situation," and a change in the material situation of a state brings a corresponding shift in how the national identity is formulated (Clunan 2009, 4). Neorealists treat non-material factors as epiphenomenal. Because neorealism is a systemic theory which treats the state as undifferentiated black box whose behaviour is the result of interactions among the independent units within the system and whose identity is given, neorealism ultimately cannot account for differences of behaviour among the units. In order to maintain ability to generalize the nature of states, neorealism does not take the role of the domestic realm in foreign policy actions into consideration. By situating the interest of the state outside of social identities, neorealism cannot shed light on the motives which lead a state to certain behaviours.

Interestingly, Walter Morgenthau, one of the central theoreticians of realism and the precursor of neo-realism, provides a more nuanced view of the sources of state behaviour. In his analysis of national interest he claims that "a rational order must be established among the values which make up the national interest" (Morgenthau 1952, 976). Clearly, he recognizes that the national interest is the result of a negotiation between potentially divergent interests. National interest, therefore, cannot be considered something which is defined by a system in which states operate, but rather, as a "fluid concept" (Lebow 2003, 245). Furthermore, opening up the black box of the state, Morgenthau also takes into consideration an immaterial aspect of his theory, the role of the charismatic leader (Morgenthau 1985). It is the role of a statesman to choose among antagonistic interests in order to create a rational order among them. And in this process of choice, politicians rely on wisdom rooted in values. In this way, Morgenthau brings "the human factor back into politics" thus standing against the "systemic outlook on the world" which puts aside the role of the human (Rösch 2013, 11, 13). For this reason Morgenthau work opens a path to constructivism even though chronologically it was neorealism which first built on his teaching.

Some scholars, particularly those with rationalist preferences, building on the ideas of German Romanticism of Fichte and Herder, locate the source of identity in primordial ties such as common language, religion, race, ethnicity, common ancestry, and/or territory. According to these approaches, national interest is defined by

these primordial ties which create a fixed national identity. According to the primordialist conception, national identity is given by birth and a sense of nationhood exists among people with shared ancestral origin.

By contrast, social constructivism, while criticizing positivist approaches in IR for treating state interests and identities as exogenous, builds its analysis of international relations on the opposite premise by claiming that identity matters and that, rather than given and fixed, is formed socially and is fluid. Constructivism argues that a comprehensive understanding of the national interest is impossible without an analysis of the identities of societies/nations from which their interest stems. In other words, according to the basic constructivist premise, without first knowing what we are, we cannot define what we want (Guzzini 2018). Ilya Prizel claims that national identity serves as a primary link between a polity and the world. National identity is vital in forming a polity's perception of the external environment and is "an extremely important, if not a driving, force behind the formation of its foreign policy because national identity helps to define the parameters of what a polity considers its national interests at home and abroad" (Prizel 1998, 14, 19). In a similar vein, Ted Hopf adds that identities serve as anchors for both individuals and societies which help to make both international and domestic politics at least minimally predictable. Intersubjective and to some extent stable, identities are necessary, and without them, the world would be in chaos. Identities define who we are to ourselves and to others, and who others are to us. "In telling you who you are, identities strongly imply a particular set of interests or preferences [...] and consequent actions" (Hopf 1998, 174–75).

Social constructivism thus argues that not only material factors but also social structures, like identity, shape the interests of a state. Assuming that identity is neither fixed nor natural, social constructivism puts the process of identity formation in the centre of its inquiry. Social constructivism uses the insight of the social psychologist George Herbert Mead that identity has two dimensions, internal/personal 'I' and external/social 'Me' (Mead 1934), but focuses most strongly on the 'Me' dimension (Berenskoetter 2014, 266). Alexander Wendt, whose 1992 article, "Anarchy is what states make of it," put the issue of collective identity into the mainstream of IR debate, views a state's identity as "the product of how an other views the self, with the self taking on the identity of itself projected by the other" (Clunan 2009, 6). In this understanding, the identity of the Self is defined by the Other. This reasoning, which understands the identity as a product of the interaction between Self and the Other, considers national identity to be the result of an interaction of a state with, or against, another state(s). Wendt understands world politics "as a *social* realm whose features ultimately are determined through the communicating and the interaction of its units" [italic in original] (Ringmar 1997, 291). In this situation, "[t]he Self and the Other are mutually necessary," and national interest is informed by "a particular construction of self-identity in relation to the conceived identity of others." (Hopf

2002, 4–5; Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 52). Later in this chapter, I discuss the role of the Other in a state's identity formation in more detail.

Constructivism accepts that 'there is a real world' but claims that that world is not solely determined by physical reality. Interests, identities, and the behaviour of political actors are socially constructed by "collective meanings, interpretations and assumptions about the world" (Adler 1997, 324). However, this position brings an agent-structure problem to the fore in constructivist debates. How do we explain human action? Are human beings purposeful and intentional actors who, based on their motivations, reproduce and transform society? Or is it the society with its pre-made social structures and forces which forms and explains individual behaviour and cognition (Wendt 1987, 337–38; Adler 1997, 324)? Is the (pre-structured) world forming us, or are we shaping (structures of) the world?

Approaches towards this ontological-epistemological, but also methodological question vary. Wendt suggests that in order to study world politics we cannot limit our inquiry to one of the units, but that we need to theorize about both structures and agents and the interrelationship between them. He claims that his theory "conceptualizes agents and structures as mutually constitutive yet ontologically distinct entities. Each is in some sense an effect of the other; they are 'co-determined.' Social structures are the result of the intended and unintended consequences of human action, just as those actions presuppose or are mediated by an irreducible structural context" (Wendt 1987, 360).

However, in his attempt to develop a structuralist theory "more *Salonfähig* for the mainstream to which his theory is offered" (Neumann 1996, 163), Wendt focuses primarily on the intersubjectively constituted identities and interests of units constituting the system. Following the intersubjectivist logic, it is the external environment which "acts automatically to produce an identity for the self, with almost no action or agency on the part of the self" (Clunan 2009, 24). Wendt's theory thus privileges the systemic approach embraced by neo-realism, the approach it aimed to challenge. As a result, for understanding how each unit in the system – a 'state' or a 'nation' - forms its identity, Wendt's approach is also limited. As Erik Ringmar pointed out, Wendt does not provide a "convincing theory of action"(Ringmar 1997, 304). According to Wendt, states follow a certain script based on the socially recognized role which they adopt (Wendt 1999, 227) without explaining what determines their choice of that particular role. Ringmar adds that Wendt's focus is "fundamentally one-sided: the problem of identity formation is constantly seen from the perspective of the system and never as a problem each state and each statesman has to grapple with. He can tell us why a certain identity is recognized, but not *what that identity is* [italic in original]" (Ringmar 1997, 304). Wendt's theory also treats a state as a black box and by not taking into consideration the role of internal forces in identity formation, and by focusing

instead on the role of the international system, it treats a state as pure and unblemished, unencumbered by any pre-existing identity.

Furthermore, Wendt and other constructivist accounts, "tend to focus on present situations," on periods of "settled social facts" (Clunan 2009, 6; Mattern 2005, 10). To explain not simply a "reproductive logic" but also a "transformational logic" of a society (Ruggie 1986, 297) is difficult for any structuralist theory. As Ringmar observes, Wendt's understanding of relationships between agents (states) and structures is very mechanistic. "Wendt's structures produce agents which produce structures which produce agents, but nowhere in this ever-continuing oscillation is there a space for anything *new* and *unexpected* to appear [italic in original]" (Ringmar 1997, 297). Janice Bially Mattern adds that Wendt, "in a near-repudiation of the logic of his own constructivist apparatus has argued that identities *can* survive crises because they are extricable at some level from the process from whence they are constituted [italic in original]." Clearly, by suggesting that identities are social constructions but not "all the way down," Wendt does not help to explain the process of identity change in a time when disorder is replaced by order (Mattern 2005, 11).

In my analysis of national identity, I would like to contribute to the question of change and agency, two issues to which constructivism does not offer satisfying answers. I do so by looking at the sources of national identity and the mechanisms through which it is re-built. More specifically, I look at how national identity is *re-*constructed in a moment of crisis when an old political system is replaced by a new one. I consider the identity of a nation as subject to change. Responding to both external and internal circumstance, a nation develops new tendencies and goals and redefines its Self (Parekh 1995, 263–64). This re-creation can be rapid, as in moments of major political raptures, or slow, as in periods of settled social facts. In either case, however, it never occurs in a historical vacuum. The past sets certain limits to the possible alterations of national identity. The past bounds the limits of the possible.

The structure-agency debate is particularly relevant for a study of the process of identity re-formation. For this reason, I focus on decision-makers, primary agents in this process. As Prizel writes, "[w]hen the custodian of a national identity changes, so do perceptions of the past and, consequently, the parameters of national interest" (Prizel 1998, 35). I argue that history puts certain limits on decision-makers' role in national identity re-formation, yet, at the same time, decision-makers have agency in this process. Political leaders are important actors in persuading others that a given domestic or foreign policy direction must be altered or kept by evoking both practical (what is possible to do) and normative (what should be done) aspects of the policy. In doing so, they "seek a political grip on the constitutive elements of collective identity" (Cruz 2000, 277). Consuelo Cruz points out that "political leaders and entrepreneurs aim to (re)cast a particular agenda as most

appropriate to a given collective reality or to recast reality itself by establishing a (new) credible balance between the known and the unknown. In the former instance, they aim to establish the facts and weave them into a whole that is likely to be accepted as both "realistic" and "just." In the later, they aim to reshape the collectivity's intersubjective "realism" and its sense of viable justice – in short, to redefine the limits of the possible" (Cruz 2000, 278).

In my contribution to the constructivist literature, I look at internal sources of identity formation and examine the transformative logic of a society. By studying the role of decision-makers and by analysing the agency on the part of the Self, I am opening the black box of a state. I examine how decision-makers influence the formation of national identity and thus national interest. In particular, I am looking at the role of decision-makers in a moment of a major rupture when the socio-economic pillars of a society are rebuilt and national interests are re-defined. I analyse the sources of both change and stability in this process, and I look acutely at how the past constrains and constitutes the foreign-policy choices of decision-makers.

In the following sections, I analyse the process of national identity formation by examining the dynamic between decision-makers, important actors in the process of national identity formation, and the past which sets certain boundaries to the kinds of policies that are possible but which decision-makers also shape and construct. Before I do so, however, I begin my discussion defining the term 'national identity' and with examining two related subthemes: first, the relationship between history and IR, and second, the relationship between history and memory.

1.2. Constructivist Definition of National Identity

To the constructivist paradigm, identity is central (Lebow 2016, 1). However, a lack of clarity of the concept of national identity often complicates constructivist debates. Moreover, being distinct from personal identity, as it refers to a community, or polity, which is territorially organized, the term itself carries an ideological baggage. "It refers to a homogenous and collectively self-conscious ethno-cultural unit, a spiritual whole that shapes the substance and identity of its members" (Parekh 1995, 255) Defining identity against rationalist paradigm, the main characteristics of identity, according constructivism, are its intersubjectivity and fluidity. Katzenstein *et al*. define identity as "the images of individuality and distinctiveness (selfhood) held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant 'others'" (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 59). In the constructivist understanding, identity is thus tied not to inherited markers, but to "the civic and political commonalities that bind a national group together" (Cruz 2000, 279). In his broad

definition, Bhikhu Parekh looks at national identity which, according to him, includes "the central organizing principles of the polity, its structural tendencies, characteristic ways of thinking and living, the ideals that inspire its people, the values they profess and to which its leaders tend to appeal, the kind of character they admire and cherish, their propensities to act in specific ways, their deepest fears, ambitions, anxieties, collective memories, traumatic historical experiences, dominant myths and collective self-understanding" (Parekh 1995, 257). Barrington Moore looks at a further aspect of national identity when he defines it as "membership in a group that can save an individual from the anxieties of carving out his own place in the world, especially when the realistic chances of doing so are tiny" (Moore 1978, 488).

Reflecting the basic constructivist premises, I define national identity as a quality which defines the distinctiveness of the collective Self of a nation. Part of the process of national identity re-formation is the identification of the in-group and its differentiation from the out-groups. I will argue that under certain conditions, some members of the in-group may become part of the out-group(s). Members of the in-group acknowledge commonalities such as having common past and shared destiny. National identity specifies certain rules, norms, attributes, and aspirations for a nation. Seen as natural, national identity is actually actively constructed, among others by decision-makers, and transmitted via symbols, language, culture, and of course, the nation's experiences through time. National identity is not permanent but is a temporary quality which evolves.

1.3. History and IR

By including historical writing into the analysis of identity formation, I am facing the question of how to reconcile schism between IR and history, between, on the one hand, the aspiration of a political scientist to build and test theory and, on the other, of a historian, whose aspiration is evidence-based and context-bound description. The aim of social scientists is to systematize our knowledge and, in some cases, to establish law-like generalizations. Theories of IR often tend to be static, a-temporal and a-cultural, to be applicable regardless of temporal (historical) and cultural factors and be able to explain past, current, as well as future events. Mainstream IR theories have the tendency to see international relations as "repetitive, timeless, and cyclical" (Elman and Elman 2008, 359). History, on the other hand, aims to tell what happened and strongly resists ahistorical generalisations. It is fundamentally narrative in character (Ringmar 1997, 305). The social sciences and history thus seems to be incompatible. As George Lawson summarized, the main distinctions between IR and history are: "Methods (a focus on secondary sources versus primary sources); aims (identification of regularities, mechanisms and continuities versus the highlighting of contingency, ambiguity

and change); orientation (nomothetic versus idiographic); sensibility (parsimony versus complexity); scope conditions (analytic versus temporal/spatial); notions of causation (transhistorical versus context-specific); levels of analysis (structure versus unit level) and so on" (Lawson 2012, 2).

However, the approaches of political science and history are not mutually exclusive and this has been broadly recognised in IR (for example: Ingram 1997; Lawson 2012). Still, despite the historical turn in IR, accompanied by the rise of the popularity of constructivism, the dominant influence of positivism in IR is palpable and manifests itself in the preference for nomothetic explanations, "if, then" generalizations, categorization of events, and a search for regularities. Hopf warns against this approach rather strongly by claiming that "[t]heorizing is a form of interpretation and it destroys meaning. As soon as we begin to impose categories on evidence, that evidence stops meaning what it meant in its earlier context. For a work on identity, it is absolutely imperative that meanings remain what they mean and do not become what the researcher needs to test a hypothesis" (Hopf 2002, 25).

By approaching my question from the perspective of social science, yet at the same time trying to *historicize* the process of identity formation, I am aware of possible ontological-epistemological, as well as methodological traps. Recognizing these caveats, I aim to link history to social science, to broaden the constructivist understanding of the process of identity formation by studying the influence of the past legacies (structure) on decision-makers (agent) and vice-versa. I hope to do so by retaining sensitivity towards the specificity of my case studies, while at the same time, offering more than a mere context-dependent contribution to a general theory of identity.

1.4. History and Memory

"*History is not about the past; it is about arguments we have about the past. And because it is about arguments that we have, it is about us*." Ira Berlin, *The Long Emancipation,* 2015

A scholar of identity cannot avoid the question of the relationship between history and memory. Until the era of postmodernity, there was a belief that history and memory were epistemologically and ontologically distinct disciplines (Yerushalmi 1996). Traditionally, historiography was considered to have the more proper attitude towards the past as it was searching for the truth, something considered elusive but identifiable. However, more recent approaches within historiography have challenged this understanding of the relationship between history and memory. According to Eric Hobsbawm, there is a tension between history and memory, as history is torn between its commitment to universality and claims made by particular identities which are supported

by the narrative of memory (Hobsbawm 1994). To stress the near impossibility of a clear separation between memory and history, Hobsbawm called it a "twilight zone," a "no man's land of time" (Hobsbawm 1987, 3).

The rise of constructivism and the influence of postmodernism on the social sciences further challenged the study of strictly fact-based history. Historiography came to be seen as a discipline which, rather than uncovering truths, constructed them. Postmodern philosophers, as Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins note, "argued forcefully [...] that history is written by people in the present for particular purposes, and the selection and interpretation of "sources" are always arbitrary. If "experience," moreover, is always embedded in and occurs through narrative frames, then there is no primal, unmediated experience that can be recovered. The distinction between history and memory in such accounts is a matter of disciplinary power rather than of epistemological privilege" (Olick and Robbins 1998, 110). The focus on social practices challenged the idea of history being objective and instead drew attention to the linguistic limits of history writing. As Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth say, historians have ceased being seen as standing above and beyond the processes they analyse. With the growing impact of Foucault, history is now widely "deemed ideological and more or less political." Studies of scholars such as White, Ricoeur, Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida have contributed to a situation in which "the distinctions between history, memory and myth are now seen as overlapping and supplementary. [...] The recognition of the role of narration poses new problems along the science-art axis" (Pakier and Stråth 2013, 4–5).

Rather than following the postmodern pattern which considers memory to be identical with history, or the more neo-positivist thinking which, seeing memory as unreliable, juxtaposes it in opposition to history, my position is to recognize that history and memory are mutually dependent, yet distinguishable, albeit in an ideal-typical form (Bell 2006, 27). Memory is often reductive, informed by present needs, and imbued with a moral message. Yet, it has its roots in history which, reflected in narratives, can be traced, among several ways, through the politics of memory (discussed later in more detail) and various forms of commemoration.

1.5. Sources of Identity

In this section, I look at the main sources of national identity: memory, with a special focus on collective memory, and narratives, through which collective memories are articulated; the Other; and the past.

Identity and Memory

Identity and memory, though not identical, are inexorably linked. A collective Self, a group identity, is produced, shaped, and supported by memory. As Olick and Robbins observe, "[m]emory is a central, if not the

central, medium through which identities are constituted (Olick and Robbins 1998, 133). Communal memories, according to Duncan Bell, "act as subtle, yet powerful mechanisms for generating and sustaining social solidarity" (Bell 2006, 5). The 'we-feeling,' the sense of sameness, is sustained by remembering. Hence, as Robert N. Bellah *et al*. claim, "[c]ommunities have a history – in an important sense they are constituted by their past – and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a 'community of memory,' one that does not forget its past (Bellah *et al.* 1996, 153).

According to Richard Ned Lebow, "Memory mediates between the present and the past. It lays the past to rest or keeps it alive; it binds communities together, or keeps them from forming or tears them apart" (Lebow 2006, 8). Felix Berenskoetter adds that memory, "serves as a temporal orientation device that makes the past meaningful by providing a sense of 'where' we come from and what 'we' have been through" (Berenskoetter 2014, 270). Thomas Berger adds that memories "provide the collectivity with an identity and a common myth of origin. They endow it with emotional and normative underpinning" (Berger 2002, 80).

There are two basic approaches to the function of memory in the formation of group identity. Primordialists claim that identity and memory are fixed and their sources are primordial ties. According to this school of thought, memory is passed intergenerationally. Constructivists, on the other hand, assert that identity and memory are not given, but formed. Not just, for example, ethnicity, but also the past is constructed by contemporaries. Clearly then, the past is often used instrumentally, in order to promote the interests of a specific group. As my analysis of identity is founded on constructivist scholarship which focuses on its intersubjectivity, I examine constructed elements of memory.

As the concept of memory gained popularity among political scientists, critics started to draw attention also to problems. The term was criticized as being too vague, conflating various phenomena, and poorly replacing older terms such as, for example, myth, political tradition, stereotype, ideology etc. Being theoretically and methodologically so problematic, it has been argued that the concept has no explanatory value and therefore is useless (cf. Bell 2006, 25–26). Bell, a prolific author of studies on memory, warns against overstretching the concept: "The danger of 'memory' lies in its very seductiveness, and consequently in the sloppy employment of the term, in the relapse into gnomic metaphor and supine idealism, tempered sometimes with a strong dose of mysticism. Memory is a concept that is readily employed to represent a whole host of different social practices, cognitive processes and representational strategies and what gets submerged, flattened out, is the nuance, texture and often-contradictory forces and tensions of history and politics" (Bell 2003, 71). To overcome certain confusions related to the term and to conceptualize it more precisely in order to strengthen its explanatory value, I now analyse the term 'collective memory' and its impact on national identity formation.

Collective Memory

Collective memory is important for the formation of national identity, of the Self of a nation. Reproduced through language, rituals, and symbols, a memory act is "a powerful cohesive force, binding the disparate members of a nation together: it demarcates the boundary between Them and Us, delineating the national Self from the foreign, alien Other" (Bell 2003, 70). Through the process of curating collective memory, a group of individuals harmonizes memories which contribute to the 'we-feeling.' As Richard Terdiman puts it: "Memory stabilizes subjects and constitutes the present. It is the name we give to the faculty that sustains continuity in collective and in individual experience" (Terdiman 1993, 8).

The term collective memory first appeared in the academic literature in the work of Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist and a student of Durkheim. In his opposition to psychology and specifically to Sigmund Freud, Halbwachs argues that individual memory is socially determined. Halbwachs admits that only individuals can remember, but they do so together, as part of a collective. Outside of the group context, an individual is not able to remember in any coherent manner. And it is this group membership which is the source of memory and of remembering and forgetting (Halbwachs 1992). As Lebow sums up, for Halbwachs, "Memory was "created" through communications with other members of society and this was a heavily stylized reflection of the dominant discourses of society" (Lebow 2006, 8). Halbwachs defines collective memory as "[t]he active past that forms our identities" (in: Olick and Robbins 1998, 111).

The term collective memory has been seen as problematic. First, the criticism has been that the term adopts an intrinsically individual-level phenomenon - memory - and brings it to the collective level (Olick 1999, 334; Bernhard 2018). Olick points out that collective memory, as understood by Halbwachs, "indicates at least two distinct, and not obviously complementary, sorts of phenomena: socially framed individual memories and collective commemorative representations and mnemonic traces." Olick adds that this leaves the link between the individual (subjective) and collective (intersubjective) levels of memory unclear (Olick 1999, 336). In order to deal with this dilemma, I primarily focus on the intersubjective part of memory. I am well aware that without the participation of individuals, there would be no collective memory, and therefore, that the two are interlinked and cannot be clearly separated. However, since I am interested in the social context of our understanding of the past, I avoid discussion of the individual component, and when studying collective memory, I examine features that are genuinely collective, mostly community/collective narratives. Second, some critics consider the term over-general and prefer more particular terms such as historical memory, official memory, vernacular memory, cultural memory, etc. However, in my analysis of memory, I am interested in the multiple ways in which individual and intersubjective levels of memory interact. Therefore, to allow

myself an inquiry which includes a variety of forms through which groups are formed and shaped by the past, I use the wider, more general definition of the term collective memory.

Collective memory is not a thing, it is not a property. It is not "an unchanging vessel for carrying the past into the present" (Olick and Robbins 1998, 122). Instead, it is a process. In the following paragraphs, I will look at the dynamic of this process and also at practices and sites of collective memory.

Being a social and cultural construct, collective memory is, first and foremost, contested. Rather than being a unitary collective mental act (Müller 2002, 7), it is the "intersubjective outcome of a series of ongoing intellectual and political negotiations" (Berger 2002, 83). Collective memory formation rarely originates in harmony. Rather, it is the result of conflict between various memory entrepreneurs, prominent among whom are decision-makers who, through the shaping of collective memory, pursue their own goals. A second important characteristic of collective memory is that it is a reflection of power. Various mnemonic narratives which represent the socio-economic and political goals of distinct elites compete for a dominant position. In other words, as Lebow observes,, "the construction of memory is infused by politics" (Lebow 2006, 4). Thus, when political debate becomes constrained, the mnemonic narrative "might take on more or less hegemonic proportions with a corresponding impact on the recollections" (Pakier and Stråth 2013, 7). Third, collective memory is not durable. It is contestable and negotiated; it evolves. Especially in a time of major rupture, when a new state power is installed, collective memory goes through a major process of renegotiation. Fourthly, through memory, the past is not preserved. Rather, it is reconstructed in accordance with present needs. Even though an image of a past can be based on the real historical event, it strongly reflects the interests of contemporaries. The collective memory, as summed up by Fogu and Kansteiner, "arises from a peculiar interplay of consensus and conflict, and it is always mediated. [...] It is as much a result of conscious manipulation as unconscious absorption" (Fogu and Kansteiner 2006, 285).

Because it is in the hands of decision-makers, collective memory becomes not only an important tool for bolstering the regime's legitimacy and for mobilizing mass support, but also for the delegitimization and interrogation of the old regime (Evans 2003). It also aids the search for a "usable past" (Bell 2006, 6). Furthermore, collective memory has other important functions during a conflict. It can justify the conflict's outbreak, it helps a group construct positive images of itself and its cause and, at the same time, it can be used to delegitimize and demonize the opponent. It also helps the group to strengthen the feeling of victimhood – of suffering at the hands of the opponent (Bar-Tal 2013, 148–49).

Collective memory, as narratives exemplify, is constructed by means of two complementary practices: remembering and forgetting. The tradition of remembering reflects an old Jewish cabbalistic aphorism: "Forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of redemption."[5] Hence a famous aphorism by George Santayana related to Nazism is that those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it. On the other hand, there is a strong call to forget. This argument was presented famously by Friedrich Nitzsche who asserted that for a meaningful and good life, forgetting is essential. "Forgetting belongs to all actions […]. The past has to be forgotten if it is not to become the gravedigger of the present" (Nietzsche 1997, 62). Since the past is rarely elevating and is often a burden, there is a need to escape the chain of history. In his dialectic of remembering and forgetting, Ernest Renan, for example, stressed that nationalism must simultaneously have a sense of its historicity, but at the same time amnesia related to its often violent births (Renan 1882; in: Bell 2003, 76). Concerted forgetting, or in other words, collective amnesia, often needs to happen after a very traumatic event. As I discuss in the empirical chapters, the trauma of WWII and the Holocaust led to collective amnesia in Central European countries. When analysing post-1945 Germany, Michael Geyger and Michael Latham described this state of amnesia as a "permanent numbing of body and soul." This description could be applied to the populations of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary in the post-WWII period. "Instead of sorrow and mourning as an expression of the reaction to mass death," there was an exclusion and a quarantine of the dead and of the experience of death among the survivors" (Geyer and Latham 1997, 10).

Indeed, dramatic or tragic experience is often a formative factor of collective memory. The dramas of WWII became the most formative experiences for generations of today's Europeans. In the formation of the post-WWII collective memory of nations and states who suffered terribly, as well as of those who were spared the worst atrocities, wartime roles became seriously contested topics. "Coming to terms with the past," as Theodor Adorno observes, becomes a part of the reconstruction of self-consciousness. The failure to "work through" the past can, Adorno warns, contribute to problematic tendencies, such as fascism, in societies (Adorno 1986). However, political elites tend to keep controversial questions out of public debate. They are often engaged in conspiracies of silence (Lebow 2006, 27; Pakier and Stråth 2013, 7; Fivush 2010). After WWII, European countries constructed their memories in such a way that they could leave the conflict behind by "sweeping the past under the rug, where it remained ominously present but blessedly out of sight" (Lebow 2006, 23). However, as Iwona Irvin Zarecka observed, rather than forgetting, we most often use the process of the "displacement [or replacement] of one version of the past by another" (Zarecka 1994, 117–18). As an example, she describes memorial in Auschwitz where the victims were referred to by their country of origin during

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[5] These words are inscribed at the exit of the Yad Vashem museum, Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, in Jerusalem.

Communist time and the information that they were Jewish was missing from the tablets commemorating the people who perished there. Nonetheless, Berenskoetter adds that "blocked memories, or unarticulated experiences, still matter for the historical sense of Self, and are only seemingly absent from the narrative: they are present as silences" (Berenskoetter 2014, 271).

The perceived origins of collective memory are based both in communication about the meaning of the past and in "the society and its inventory of signs and symbols" (Fogu and Kansteiner 2006, 291). Collective memory is located in social practices, monuments, and official histories as taught in schools and represented in culture. Historian Amos Funkelstein, in a rather broad understanding of the term, characterizes collective memory as "a system of signs, symbols, and practices: memorial dates, names of places, monuments and victory arches, museum and texts, customs and manners, stereotype images […]" (Funkenstein 1993, 6). Calendars, which can function as important maps of temporal structure, can also be used both to encourage and to constrain the memories of national collectives (Zerubavel 1981). For example, in a symbolic declaration of a new beginning, in 1991 Czechoslovakia moved the Victory Day, a holiday that commemorates the surrender of Nazi Germany in 1945, from 9 May to 8 May. While 9 May was an official day of celebration in the USSR and the Soviet Bloc, and it was indeed the day when the Red Army arrived in Prague, Germany, however, surrendered on 8 May.

There exists an essential link between collective memory and nationalism. More specifically, memories and myth are important factors which empower nationalism. It is not within the scope of this text to properly analyse the phenomenon of nationalism or to comprehensively define the term (cf. Smith 1998). Rather, I focus on the role of memory in the process of national self-definition. I treat the term 'nation' as "the idea that nations are real entities, grounded in history and social life, that they represent the major social and political actors in the modern world" (Smith 1998, 2).

A scholar of nationalism, Anthony D. Smith, claims that history is the primary raw material for constructing ethnicity, and that without memory, there is no identity, and that without identity, there is no nation (Smith 1986, 1996, 383). Immanuel Wallerstein adds that "[t]he temporal dimension of pastness is central and inherent in the concept of peoplehood" (Wallerstein 1991, 78). One of the prominent scholars of nationalism, Benedict Anderson, shows how interest in the past has made it possible "to think the nation." In a constructivist vein, Anderson argues that the spread of print literacy became a building block in the formation of national consciousness. Through print, through books and newspapers, dispersed group of people learned about their shared history and started to form 'imagined national communities' (Anderson 1991). And indeed, for Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians, nations with long histories whose existence was repeatedly threatened by

more powerful neighbours, the past, often idealized, became an important connection when other symbols of the nation – like territory, language, or culture - were exposed to pressures from their neighbours. In conformance with this premise, Polish, Czech, and Hungarian leaders of the 18th and 19th centuries often referred to 'pastness' when constructing the idea of those three nations.

There has been a trend to nationalize collective memory by means of "the assimilation of symbols, metaphors, and tropes" (Bartelson 2006, 47) and to make the nation-state the "primary form of organizing" collective identity (Olick and Robbins 1998, 123). As Bartelson added, "from the late 17th century onward, memory was leashed to the state [a nation] and territorialized accordingly" (Bartelson 2006; in: Neumann 2018, 19). As a result, the ability to cultivate, shape, and promote the collective memory of a nation became the prerogative and privilege of political authority.

Therefore, to study collective memory means to study a process which reflects power, is contested, and is constantly renegotiated. In this process, both remembering and forgetting play important roles. Formed and shaped by memory entrepreneurs according to their present needs and goals, collective memory is an important driving force for nationalism. After characterizing collective memory, I now examine narratives through which collective memories are articulated.

Narratives

In this section, I first analyse the term, 'narrative.' Second I examine the link between narrative and collective memory. Third, I look at narratives as a tool decision-makers use to construct collective memory and thereby national identity.

The narrative studies with roots in political psychology understand narrative (a story) as a link between the individual with and social reality. In such a conception, narrative is defined as "the sensible organization of thought through language, internalized or externalized, which serves to create a sense of personal coherence and collective solidarity and to legitimize collective beliefs, emotion, and action" (Hammack and Pilecki 2012, 78). According to Hayden White, people have a natural impulse to narrate, and narrative, rather than being "one code among many" is "a meta code" arising between our experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience and endow it with meaning (White 2009, 1–2). Robyn Fivush claims that "narratives provide a sequential organization that specifies the unfolding of an event along temporal lines, but even more so, narratives provide an explanatory and evaluative framework for understanding how and why events unfold as they do" (Fivush 2010, 89). The purpose of narratives is to reduce the anxiety caused by uncertainty, or to "generate 'concordance in discordance' (order in chaos)" (Ricoeur 1985; in: Lawson 2012, 16).

Narratives are important not only at the level of individual psychology but also at the social level. Just as individuals come into being through stories told by them and about them, so a state makes a sense of its collective Self through narratives (Ringmar 1996, 452). Called a biographical narrative (Berenskoetter 2014), a root/collective narrative (Hammack and Pilecki 2012), a constitutive narrative (Bellah et al. 1996), or a meta code (White 2009), the function of a national narrative is to provide a community with a master narrative, "[w]hich guides and legitimizes courses of action and provides ontological security" (Berenskoetter 2014, 279). This theoretical approach follows the work of Anderson who argues that collectives become aware of their collective Self through constructed stories which often anchor their existence in a historical past. "Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 1991, 6). Therefore, as Bell observes, Anderson is not trying to identify the moment or circumstances which led to the creation of a nation. Instead, looking at processes, he "focuses on the necessity for the discursive construction of political (and national) communities" (Bell 2003, 68–69).

Because it is anchored in the collective memory which is constructed through remembering and forgetting, national narrative is also selective. It is a story which simplifies and leaves some stories out. This process of storytelling entails "not only acts of selection but also creative acts of interpretation and fusion" (Berenskoetter 2014, 269). Similarly, H.H.H.E. Loofs claims that "[e]very biography is an abstraction and, as such, a piece of art" (Loofs 1974; in: Berenskoetter 2014, 269). White, when addressing the role of narrative in historical research claims that the process through which historians mediate between their fields of inquiry and their audience is a kind of "poetic act," (White 2009, x, 5). The storytelling of decision-makers is likewise characterized by selectiveness, an attempt to frame the story normatively, and in some cases, there is also an apparent sense for an aesthetic impact.

However, national narrative cannot be "wholly fictive" (Giddens 1991, 54). In order to be considered legitimate, the narrative must be seen as both 'achievable' and 'normatively desirable' (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2014, 8). It follows that, national narrative must be anchored in beliefs about collective memory. In other words, a narrative is a mechanism through which collective memory is institutionalized into a coherent story (Hammack and Pilecki 2012, 85). However, through narratives, the official collective memory can be not only reinforced but also challenged. Narrative studies have shown that narrative can become a tool for social and political transformation. Competing stories, often put forth by ethnic, religious, sexual, and other minorities can become an instruments through which national narrative is disrupted (cf. Hammack and Pilecki 2012, 92–93).

Another important characteristic of a narrative is that selective stories are temporally ordered, and they are not static. In his study of narrative plotlines, Eviatar Zerubavel points out that narratives are often associated with the idea of progress marked by changes in historical trajectories (Zerubavel 2004, 11–36). In this mnemonic process, the past is classified into historical periods, usually divided by significant historical breaks or ruptures. The moment of a historical break is sometimes symbolically called "year zero" in order to stress that a given event was an "historical point of departure," a dramatic break between the periods. The new period is then perceived as a new beginning, which "usually presupposes the death of some prior entity" (Zerubavel 2004, 82–100), echoing the process of remembering and forgetting mentioned earlier.

In the above discussion, I have focused on the link between collective memory/identity and narrative. Yet, narrative is also an important mechanism used by decision-makers. Through narratives, decision-makers promote ideas which best serve their political goals. As Lebow comments, "State autobiographies are in the first instance a response to political needs" (Lebow 2016, 131–32). Consequently, politicians compete for influence over the process of narrative formation. The process thus reflects power relationships. As Foucault puts it, "[m]emory is actually a very important factor in struggle. […] [i]f one controls peoples' memory, one controls their dynamism" (Foucault 1977, 25).

Authors of narratives choose stories that help them to promote their goals. Contestation over the national narrative takes place in times of crisis, in times when political reality is re-organized. When a particular setting prevails, sooner or later it generates another conflict between political leaders. As a result, disputation about the national narrative, about national identity, and its resulting re-creation is an ongoing process.[6] Importantly, however, this contestation, or the promotion of an alternative national narrative, is bounded. As much as political leaders may try to redefine the limits of the possible, they are not free from the constraints of the dominant descriptive and prescriptive frames of national identity. Proposed policies must be situated in a "collective field of imaginable possibilities" (Cruz 2000, 277) which a nation holds about its Self and the world. Thus, in order to appear credible, a (new) narrative must be embedded in a familiar framework of collectively shared symbols, worldviews, stories, and myths.

States have a tendency to "homogenize" their national identity at the expense of "strangers" (Huysmans 1998). This can lead to a "securitization of national remembrance." A part of this effort can be an attempt to silence the other's mnemonic narratives which are regarded as endangering "our" identity, "our" existence and thus "us" (Mälksoo 2015). Often, one motivation behind this endeavour is shame over past behaviour and an

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[6] The fact that a predominantly pro-Israeli policy in the three Central European states is rarely contested makes it, therefore, a rather interesting case.

attempt to forget. In some cases, states set a legal frame delineating how a particular story can be told and which parts must be forgotten. The limitation of historical discourse through law is an example of the "ultimate securitization, because it 'ontologises' a particular story, making it an unchanging part of the state's self-definition" (Mälksoo 2015). At the same time, however, it often leads to mnemonic confrontations between communities within a state and between states at the international level.

The individuals and groups, domestic as well as foreign, who question a key national narrative often face stiff opposition from state authorities and from dominant elite groups. Especially in societies in which national honour and patriotism are tantamount to sacred causes, any challenge to the national narrative is understood as an attack against the collective's good name and self-worth. To challenge the founding myth and the practices which sustain it often means to begin a painful process of the recognition of "doing harm to others" (Zarecka 1994, 96). To start such a process, some "element of empathy with the Other" is necessary (Zarecka 1994, 96).[7] During the process, the once silenced narrative of victim groups comes to be heard and it ultimately challenges the dominant narrative of the national identity. Because of this challenge, the process of coming to terms with its past is always disturbing and faces negative reactions from those employing the dominant and well-entrenched practices which form a collective memory.

Therefore, collective memory is articulated through narratives by decision-makers. However, narrative, being an expression of collective memory is grounded in familiar, collectively shared worldviews and stories about the national Self and the world, and it is also bounded. A national narrative is contested and reflects power-relationships. Authors who challenge the currently dominant national narrative by presenting an alternative version often face opposition. After examining the role of narratives in national identity formation, I now turn to the role of the Other.

The Other & Identity Formation

In their analysis of identity, many scholars explore what makes a polity distinct from others and where to locate difference and the Other. In his study of identity, William Connolly summarizes his thesis very succinctly: "Identity requires a difference in order to be, and it converts differences into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty" (Connolly 1991, xiv). The approach focused on 'difference' has a very long tradition in political science and important concepts in Western political thinking, for example national sovereignty, theorized by influential thinkers like Grotius, Hobbes, and German philosophers of the 19th century (Herder,

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[7] Pakier and Stråth further observe that "the solidarity is with the victims of yesterday, instead of the victims of today." As an example they mention that for European political leaders it is safe to condemn the Holocaust, but there exists a conspicuous silence over the massacres of Muslims in Srebrenica (Pakier and Stråth 2013, 8–9).

Clausewitz, Treitschke, Schmitt) were built on the binary of "us" and "them". Similarly, concepts like "Western," "Christian," "European," or "Civilized" are dividing concepts defining those who belong to "us" and those who do not.

As early as 1861, John Stuart Mill wrote: "A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a Nationality if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and others – which make them cooperate with each other more willingly than with other people [...]"(Mill, in: Robson 1974, 546). As Lebow observed, it is a well-entrenched view in Western thinking that the creation of the Other is important for the formation of a state and national solidarity (Lebow 2012, chap. 3). Immanuel Kant founds his premise on the observation that antagonism among human beings is natural and evolves from the need for protection which makes people gather in state units and respect the rule of law. But states, like individuals, have a natural inclination towards a constant state of war (Kant 1784, in: Reiss 1991). As Lebow summarized, Kant recognizes that order at home is maintained by being in conflict abroad, or in other words that ""we" is maintained at the expense of "them"" (Lebow 2012, 79). Hegel also claims that external conflict is essential for the formation of collective identity and helps nations to become aware of themselves (Hegel 1820, in Lebow 2012, 79). Even in recent times, the analysis of international relations by building on an "us" and "them" binary finds its adherents, as manifested in Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington 1993).

In the extreme version of Western political thinking, embodied by the Nazi ideologue Carl Schmitt, a struggle between "us" and "them" is vital for the formation of a political community. A political community exists "wherever a group of people are willing to engage in political life by distinguishing themselves from outsiders through the drawing of a friend-enemy distinction" (Schmitt 1932, ed. 2007, 38, 43–44; in: Vinx 2016). It relates not only to external enemies but also to those who truly do not belong to the political nation. According to Schmitt, "a sovereign dictator must homogenize the community by appeal to a clear friend-enemy distinction" and he must suppress, eliminate, or expel the *internal enemies* who do not endorse that distinction [italic by the author] (Schmitt 1932, ed. 2007, 35, 46–48; in: Vinx 2016). Hannah Arendt, in her study of totalitarianism, gives an example of the mechanism by which a totalitarian regime creates an 'objective enemy' of a state. Such an enemy "is never an individual whose dangerous thoughts must be provoked or whose past justifies suspicion, but a "carrier of tendencies" like the carrier of a disease. Practically speaking, the totalitarian ruler proceeds like a man who persistently insults another man until everybody knows that the latter is his enemy, that that he can, with some plausibility, go and kill him in self-defense" (Arendt 1973, 423–24).

In my analysis, rather than examining in details the role of the external Other, of other states, I focus mostly on the role of the internal Other, which in some moments of history can turn into the internal

enemy. Through the interaction with the internal Other, the majority defines its characteristics and its cultural boundaries. The internal Other helps to form "us," the identity of a nation. Being bound up with the majority through this intimate relationship, the internal Other may turn into the internal enemy when the majority fears to be under the threat from within. This situation becomes acute mostly in times of conflict when the majority is under attack, usually from the external Other, or/and during major political changes when the national self-images are questioned and re-constructed. The Jews, a significant ethnic and religious minority of Central Europe living among dominantly Slavic, German and Magyar nations of mostly Christian faith, represented a perfect example of the internal Other.

The concept of "us" and "them" has been applied in many important studies which explain how the practice of differentiation and discrimination vis-à-vis both the external and internal Other has been used by governments in attempts to formulate a particular idea of Self (Neumann 1999; Weldes 1999). Michel Foucault observed that in order to keep order and to strengthen identity, states tend to turn otherness into deviance, into evil (Foucault 1973). In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains how the East became an embodiment of the West's other (Said 1979). Iver Neumann, while concurring with the assertion that identity is inconceivable without difference, explains how Russia became the constitutive Other for the countries of Central Europe. Neumann adds that after the fall of Communism, with the former dissidents installed in decision-making positions, the official foreign policies of those countries towards Russia reflected Russia's role as Other in the identities of Central European countries (Neumann 1993).

On the other hand, some scholars do not rule out the possibility of overcoming this dichotomy. Thinkers like Kant and Hegel envisaged that after a period of conflict, the dichotomy between "us" and "other" could be overcome through the recognition of shared humanity. For Nietzsche and Habermas, the power of dialogue could help to transcend this binary (Lebow 2012, 78, 82). Also the constructivist literature considers the possibility of a transformation of relations between "us" and "them." Wendt considers that "[c]onceptions of self and interest tend to "mirror" the practices of a significant other over time. This principle of identity-formation is captured by the symbolic interactive notion of the "looking-glass self," which asserts that the self is a reflection of an actor's socialization" (Wendt 1992, 404). In his later work, Wendt is more specific about the interdependence between the Self and the Other when claiming that: "[w]hen "intimacy" is high role identities might not be just a matter of choice that can be easily discarded, but positions forced on actors by the representations of significant Other" (Wendt 1999, 228). Wendt then continues by saying that "[c]ollective identity takes the relationship between Self an Other to its logical conclusion, identification. Identification is a cognitive process in which the Self-Other distinction becomes blurred and at the limit transcended altogether.

Self is "categorized" *as* Other [italic in original]" (Wendt 1999, 229). However, Wendt adds that this identification is rarely total and is usually issue-specific.

Recognizing the logic of the mutual need of Self and Other, in his study of the mutual construction of Soviets and non-Soviets Hopf asks a question which has clear empirical impact: "What is the Self to do with the difference he necessarily discovers in the Other?" (Hopf 2002, 7). Hopf warns against an attempt to theorize "a single modal relationship between Self and Other, whether conflict, dominance, or accommodation" by suggesting that interaction can result in considering the Other as the most dangerous Other, the most closest Other, or the irrelevant Other (Hopf 2002, 9, 286). In Wendt's spirit, Hopf approaches the relationship between Self and Other from the perspective that the Self tries to assimilate the difference of an Other in order to make it familiar and thereby to prevent its own destabilization. Giving the example of Catholic Self and Protestant Other, Hopf shows that the gravest threat to Self presents an Other that is seen as a plausible replacement, as an alternative identity.

The empirical chapters of this thesis show that during the formation era, 'othering' was an important mechanism by which the identities of the nations of Central Europe were formed. I present concrete examples of "us" and "them" relations, where the internal Other, represented by Jews, had an important role in identity formation. During some periods of history, the Jews were seen in accordance with Schmitt's understanding of the role of the internal Other. Yet, there were periods when the majority not only encouraged itself to assimilate the difference of the internal Other, but also, up to a certain level, started to identify with it. After discussion of the role of the Other in identity formation, I now examine the past as another source of national identity. Especially, I examine the relationship between the past and decision-makers.

The Past, Decision-Makers & Identity Formation

Our identity is linked to our past. As various studies show, the interpretation of history, a reference to the past, forms an important building block of national identity (Berenskoetter 2014; Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2014; Clunan 2009; Roberts 2006; Mattern 2005; Hansen and Wæver 2001; Ringmar 1996; Weldes 1996). There are moments when the issue of national identity and collective memory become of prime importance. Especially in a time of crisis, in a time of radical change when an old regime is being replaced, the transition period is characterized by the evocation of the past. In a moment when the collective Self is challenged, the security of the idea of a state must be restored and a new regime must gain legitimacy. It is in such a time of uncertainty, "where identity is problematized, [that] memory is valorized" (Megill 1998, 40).

In other words, in times when national identity is questioned, the politics of memory becomes central. As Maria Mälksoo notes, a state aims not only for physical security, that is "the security of its 'body' (e.g. territory, people, sovereign institutions), but also "the security of its 'idea' (i.e. the biographical self-narrative of a state, including its historical memory, and the recognition of other states to its being as such)" (Mälksoo 2015, 224). Crises and major political shifts trigger the politics of memory which becomes an important tool for securing the idea of a state. The end of the Cold War was such a moment. It caused a major crisis in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, where the old Communist regime was replaced by a new system. It was a time when collective identities were re-formulated and collective memory re-examined. These moments of crisis provide a strategic opportunity for strengthening the agency of decision-makers over the process of identity formation.

In this section, I discuss how, on the one hand, the past influences a decision-maker and how, on the other hand, a decision-maker shapes the meaning of the past. I am approaching this perennial structure vs. agent question from an 'instrumentalist,' actor-centred viewpoint. I argue that political actors are endowed with a significant ability to shape the meaning of the past and thus national identity. However, their initiatives must fit 'imaginable possibilities' (Cruz 2000) which are embedded in historically rooted and collectively shared worldviews and stories about the Self and the world. Decision-makers, being important mnemonic actors, tend to treat the past instrumentally and to shape and manipulate it in order to promote their goals and legitimize their efforts. Yet, in order to be seen as credible, their construction of the past must resonate with the visions of the targeted audience. The past must be seen as valid, as authentic and natural. Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard add that it is not easy to specify the line "between credible and incredible visions of the past," yet once that line crossed, the message of decision-makers fails and their legitimacy weakens (Bernhard and Kubik 2014, 3).

In order to understand the link between the past and decision-makers as a two-way relationship, it is necessary to sequence it. In this section, I look first at the role of the past (structure) and its influence over decision-makers (agents) before focusing on how decision-makers attempt to manipulate the past.

In their overview of the academic debate on the limits of the malleability of the past for present purposes, Olick and Robbins mention various examples in which structure limits choice. Following Michael Schudson, they mention three factors: "The structure of available pasts presents only some pasts and poses limits to the degree to which they can be changed, while placing other pasts beyond our perceptual reach; the structure of individual choice makes some pasts unavoidable and others impossible to face; and the structure of social conflict over the past means that we are not always the ones deciding which pasts to remember and which to

forget" (Schudson 1989 in: Olick and Robbins 1998, 128). Using historical institutionalism and looking at institutional factors, many studies show the persistence of the past (Thelen 1999; Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2004; Capoccia 2015). Through the process of path dependency, old pasts often endure even after a critical juncture when a new institutional arrangement has been installed. 'New pasts' emerge, often without completely eliminating the old ones. Lastly, and related to the issue of collective memory, Halbwachs talks about "how memories become generalized over time into an "imago," a generalized memory trace thus creating inertia (Olick and Robbins 1998, 129).

Olick and Robbins identify three ideal types of mnemonic persistence through which the past limits choice: first, instrumental persistence when actors self-consciously promote a particular version of the past, as in the orthodoxy of heritage movements; second, cultural persistence when a particular past remains relevant for present cultural formations through, for example, a canon; third, inertial persistence when a particular version of the past is reproduced by force of habit, routine, or custom (Olick and Robbins 1998, 129). Having briefly outlined examples of socially transmitted and historically embedded constraints on the malleability of the past, I now turn to ways in which the past influences the behaviour of decision-makers.

On the one hand, as Ernest May recognized, decision-makers often use history badly, interpret the past in a misleading way, and in order to avoid cognitive dissonance, shun information that challenges their image of reality (May 1973, xi). Robert Jervis adds that learning from the past is "superficial, overgeneralized, and based on *post hoc ergo propter hoc* reasoning" (Jervis 1976, 228). Yet, on the other hand, even if their analytical reasoning often lacks accuracy, it is important to take history into account when analysing the process through which decisions about foreign policy are made. The past is an important source for decision-makers who draw inferences from it. In his analysis focused on the role of memory, Jan-Werner Müller writes: "[m]emory as the base of legitimacy could [...] be understood as a kind of 'structural power,' that is, the power to define what is put on the political agenda, in what terms political issues are framed, and which conflicts get avoided" (Müller 2002, 26).

Some scholars argue against the logic that the past influences decision-making. Instead, they claim that history is used predominantly in order to reinforce already established positions and to dignify a policy decision already taken. Stanley Hoffmann says that historical cases are often invoked in order to reinforce already existing tendencies (Hoffmann 1968, 135). When analysing the attitude of U.S. decision-makers to history, he agrees with John Fairbank that history is used as a "grab bag from which each advocate pulls out a 'lesson' to prove his point" (Fairbank 1966 in: Hoffmann 1968, 135). A.J.P. Taylor also mentions that "men use the past to prop up their own prejudices" (Taylor 1966, 6 in: Jervis 1976 217).

While I am aware that it is not always easy to prove a clear link between the past and its impact on decision-makers, I argue that the past is much more than just a "grab bag." Instead, the past becomes an important source which often prescribes policies and constraints decision-makers. This happens in a number of ways.

First, as Robert Jervis notes, past events affect the perceptions of decision-makers; they "provide the statesman with a range of imaginable situations and allow him to detect patterns and causal links that can help him understand his world" (Jervis 1976, 217). May and Yaacov Vertzberger suggest that the attention to history has an important function during information processing and decision-making. By intuitively believing in a law of history, by assuming that the future will in some way resemble the past, by "being influenced by beliefs about what history teaches or portends" (May 1973, ix), history helps decision-makers to "define the situation, determine strategy, justify strategy, and [it] circumscribes their role and status in the international system" (Vertzberger 1986, 225). Decision-makers thus act in conformity with contours set by the past.

Second, the most powerful cognitive tool which builds on knowledge of the past is *analogy* (Jervis 1976, 218). By comparing the current situation with the past, an historical event can influence the choice of policy. Yuen Foong Khong claims that historical analogies help decision-makers to "define the nature of the situation, assess the stakes, provide prescriptions, evaluate alternative options by predicting their chances of success, evaluate their moral rightness, and warn about dangers associated with the options" (Khong 1992, 10, 20–21). As Jervis says, "Analogies provide a useful shortcut to rationality" (Jervis 1976, 220). For Hoffmann, by employing analogies, by "reasoning in terms of precedents" decision-makers often come to wrong conclusions because "analogical reasoning singles out, in the two complex events being compared, features that are common to both, and suggests that since they were essential in the first case they must be decisive in the second" (Hoffmann 1968, 135). Of course, the imprudent evocation of past events can complicate decision-making. The lessons of the past can nonetheless influence the perceptions of the decision-makers because once an analogy is embraced, it becomes fixed and acquires a strength of its own.

Khong emphasises the so-called "generational analogy," a significant historical moment experienced by an entire generation (e.g. Munich, Trianon). When generational lessons are strongly attached to personal experiences, this mutually reinforcing mechanism creates a strong schema, or personal theory, about the world (Khong 1992, 33).

Third, *association* is another important cognitive operation employing the past. Vertzberger defines association as "images of historical events [that] feed the individual's or the collective's associative systems" (Vertzberger 1986, 225).   Being less specific than analogies about the effect on present or future, association

nonetheless influences decision-makers' views of present events by providing background information against which the present is understood. For example, it is the lingering presence of the shadow of the Holocaust, of the feeling of guilt about what happened to Jewish citizens of those countries which, to some extent, defines the position of Central European politicians towards Israel today.

The past is also an important *source of self-identification and self-perception.* Nations learn about their role, status, aspirations, and uniqueness from history. History, according to Vertzverger, is a source of some "national central beliefs about the nature of the world and the nation's role" (Vertzberger 1986, 228). Clunan considers "a country's past international status and purpose" to be two pillars of national identity which have an effect on present-day national self-image. These two pillars "set standards that shape how individuals verify the fit of a proposed identity and its attendant identity management strategy and affect whether it appears 'natural'" (Clunan 2009, 38). Marcussen *et al.* specifically add that proposed "new vision of political order and the nation-state need to *resonate* with pre-existing collective identities embedded in political institutions, symbols, and myth in order to constitute a legitimate political discourse [italic in original]" (Marcussen et al. 1999, 615, 617).

The main sources for historical lessons are major historical moments, e.g. wars, revolutions, and crucial political events. Jervis claims that the last major war and the experiences associated with the pre-war diplomacy, the course of the war, the formation of alliances, and the way the war ended, have a deep influence on peoples' perceptions (Jervis 1976, 267). To understand which historical event is invoked by decision-makers, Khong builds on the work of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky who talk about the "availability heuristic" which suggests that first, more recent events are more likely to be recalled and second, past events which seem to be most representative of, or the most similar to present events will be used for analogies. However, as was already pointed out, these analogies are often made very superficially, based only on very "surface commonalities" . Information which does not fit the schema is either ignored or underrated. As a result, even when confronted with contradictory evidence, existing schemas have a strong tendency to persevere (Khong 1992, 39).

Therefore, the past constraints decision-makers in various ways. The past is persistent and there are limits to its malleability. The decision-makers themselves are encumbered by the past as they respond strategically to the changing environment. However, I argue that decision-makers also play an important role in giving meaning to the past. As Kubik and Bernhard state, by presenting their version of the past, decision-makers "contribute to the solidification of a body of interpretations that this version represents" (Bernhard and Kubik 2014, 3). In the last section, I focus on the role of decision-makers in this solidification. I do so by discussing

the 'politics of memory' through which decision-makers influence the process of the re-formation of collective memory.

Politics of Memory – The Institutionalization of Narratives

An important mechanism through which the institutionalization of the past occurs in the public sphere is the politics of memory.[8] This is a practice through which decision-makers organize and shape collective memory. It involves the political process of "mnemonic battles" (Zerubavel 2004, 2) among entire groups over collective memory. Calling it a process of "mnemonic socialization," Zerubavel points to the fact that "[f]ar from being a strictly spontaneous act, remembering is also governed by unmistakably social *norms of remembrance* that tell us what we should remember and what we should essentially forget [italic in original]" (Zerubavel 2004, 5). To "engineer social forgetting" (Zarecka 1994, 127), to paint a morally comfortable version of the past, is thus a common practice in the politics of memory and in any construction of collective memory.

These mnemonic battles over remembering and forgetting are fought over museums, school curricula, official commemorations, and in other public forums. Part of this effort, as Pierre Nora states, is, for example, the emergence of temporal and topographical memory sites, such as the introduction of new official holidays and the building of monuments (Nora 1989, 7). Of course, the politics of memory often involves not only erecting new memory sites, but also removing old ones. As Neumann succinctly pointed out, new regimes "may be socially creative by being materially destructive" (Neumann 2018, 5). In his study of monuments, Neumann argues that "[b]y attempting to turn past into present and space into place, monuments constitute an identity in time and space for a certain polity […] Monuments are material artefacts that invite mnemonic techniques and practices that are constitutive of polities and, since the Self has a constitutive outside, also of that polity's relations with other polities" (Neumann 2018, 6).

The extent of the openness and sophistication of the politics of memory, of debates about controversial past events, varies from a country to country. For example, the enormity of Nazi crimes and international pressure contributed to Germany's effort to come to terms with its past *(Vergangenheitsbewältigung)* and since the 1960s, that effort has become a continuing pattern of Germany's politics of memory. In many countries, the collective memory has come to be regulated by legislation (securitization of the memory), subjecting a certain interpretation of historical events, like the Holocaust, slavery, or the Armenian genocide, to penal sanction (Pakier and Stråth 2013, 9–11). In Hungary and Poland after 1989, after decades of suppression and

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[8] In some languages, it is common to call it a 'historical policy', for example *polityka historyczna* in Polish, *Geschichtspolitik* in German.

manipulation under Communism, politics of memory, as museum exemplify, became an integral part of the domestic political struggle through which decision-makers were promoting their policies.

Political leaders, being important memory entrepreneurs, often use the politics of memory strategically. By engaging in mnemonic actions, they try to strengthen their position and to enforce their political goals and visions. In other words, decision-makers try to win the support of the electorate through their involvement in mnemonic practices. Furthermore, as Kubik and Bernhard observe, political leaders take another consideration into account when they advocate their political positions - a semiotic consideration. They consider "what kinds of meanings" will be attached to their decisions by their target groups. In order to influence the response of a target group, decision-makers may become involved in the manipulation of mnemonic practices. In effect, the politics of memory reflects not only pragmatic "realpolitik manoeuvres" but also the effective formulation, interpretation, and manipulation of the past (Bernhard and Kubik 2014, 5).

In their study of the strategies of political leaders and their involvement in the politics of memory, Kubik and Bernhard offer a typology of mnemonic actors and their main strategies. The first type, mnemonic warriors, "[t]end to espouse a single, unidirectional, mythologised vision of time. [...] The meaning of events is often determined by their relation to some "paradise lost" or - negatively - to an "aberrant past." Mnemonic warriors see the relation with alternative visions of history as "us" vs "them." "Memory is non-negotiable, as there is only one "true" vision of the past." The promotion of this one "true" vision of the past is an important part of the legitimization of their claim to power. Any attempt to promote an alternative narrative is thus met with official opposition from the authorities. Mnemonic pluralists, on the other hand, accept not only that "they" have their own version of history, but believe that others are entitled to have their own story of the past. Mnemonic pluralists are ready to engage in dialogue with "them" in order to look for the truth, for some common mnemonic fundamentals. Pluralists admit that there is more than one acceptable version of the past, and when in power, they look for a way to "institutionalize a frame" for the coexistence of various interpretations of the past. Last, mnemonic abnegators are not interested in memory politics. They do not consider it to be salient for their political agenda. Usually, this happens in a time of mnemonic equilibrium. However, when this equilibrium becomes challenged by a counter-narrative, disengagement from the politics of memory and the avoidance of mnemonic contests may no longer be options (Bernhard and Kubik 2014, 4–8).

As will be discussed in the following empirical chapters, since 1989, the politics of memory has become an important and often conflicted part of national identity rebuilding, especially in Poland and Hungary. Decision-makers from central and left political parties in Poland and Hungary can broadly be considered

mnemonic pluralists and, eventually, abnegators. On the other hand, leaders of nationalist parties from the Law and Justice Party in Poland and Fidesz in Hungary, have represented a clear example of mnemonic warriors. Especially for nationalist politicians, the politics of memory became important for shaping the collective memory with a direct impact on the process of national identity re-construction.

Conclusion

Taking a constructivist perspective, in this chapter I argued that an important determinant of a state's behaviour is the identity of a nation. I showed that the characteristics of national identity define the parameters of national interest. I argued that national identity is a quality which defines the distinctiveness of the collective Self of a nation and specifies its main attributes. This quality is not permanent but evolves.

In my analysis of the process of national identity formation, I focused on its main sources: the collective memory, expressed in narratives, the Other, and the past, whose meaning is shaped by decision-makers but which bounds the limits of possible. Through collective memory people harmonize their individual memories into we-feeling. Being a social construct, collective memory is contested and reflects the power and interests of memory entrepreneurs. Through relations with the Other, a nation recognizes its distinctiveness and identifies a national 'Self.' The past predefines the main narratives, prescribes policies, and, due to mnemonic persistence, is a source of stability. Historically rooted and collectively shared perceptions about both the national Self and the world limit decision-makers in their attempts to re-shape the constitutive elements of national identity.

Further, I argued that decision-makers do have agency in the process of national identity formation. By being important memory entrepreneurs, decision-makers have an important role in giving meaning to the past. They do so by shaping and manipulating collective memory which is articulated through narratives and institutionalized in the public sphere through the politics of memory, two important mechanisms decision-makers use in their attempts to re-define the limits of the possible. I argued that especially in a time of crisis, during moments of major political changes, when the national Self is questioned, the role of decision-makers in the process of identity re-construction expands. In moments of crisis, when the idea of a state must be secured, the politics of memory helps a nation to construct positive images of itself and to define its causes; it becomes central. These moments of crisis provide decision-makers with a strategic opportunity for strengthening their agency over the process of identity re-formation.

Based on the analytical framework presented in this chapter, when analysing the formation of the national interest in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary vis-à-vis Israel, I focus on the following. In Chapter 2, I examine the role of the significant Other, the Jews, in developing the national self-image of those three nations. In Chapter 3, I analyse how Jews, being the internal Other, and Israel, being an external Other, have defined the positions of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland towards the Jewish state. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I discuss the formation of the national interests of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, with a special focus on Israel, following the end of Communism. I look at the role of the past and decision-makers in this process.

CHAPTER 2: THE ROLE OF THE JEWISH QUESTION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POLAND, THE CZECH LANDS, AND HUNGARY

Introduction

This chapter is about the role of the Jewish question in the history of Poland, the Czech Lands, and Hungary. Specifically, by focusing on the meaning of Jews in Polish, Czech and Hungarian society, I look at the role of the Jewish question in the process of the construction of the national identity of those three nations. In Poland, the Czech Lands, and Hungary, Jews were casted more often than not in a position of the internal Other. In moments when national existence was cast in doubt, Jews and their status served as a litmus test. Their exclusion or inclusion to some extent defined the contours of a nation and its character. To illuminate this process, I look at the meaning of Jews during important historical moments when an idea of a nation and/or a state was tested, re-examined, and re-formulated and national identity re-constructed.

While examining the role of Jews in the formation of national identity, I especially focus on collective memory. I look at how the Jewish question was 'curated' by various memory entrepreneurs in their attempt to shape the collective memory of those three nations. I do so by looking at narratives through which the meaning of Jews in Polish, Czech, and Hungarian society was articulated. I identify the main actors behind those narratives and study their interests and motivations when constructing the meaning of Jews.

In this chapter, I look at key historical events which, due to their importance, became part of collective memory of those three nations and influenced the choice of policy. This will become important for the following chapters where I look not only at how decision-makers shaped the collective memory, but also at how historical legacies influenced political decisions related to the Jews and Israel.

Before I discuss the structure of this historical section, I would like to mention what this chapter is not about. It is not about the history of Jews in Central Europe. I look at how Jews were treated by Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians, but I do so selectively in order to show how dominant narratives about the meaning of Jews were translated into practical policies. Furthermore, in this chapter, I mention Jewish responses, initiatives, and narratives only when relevant to the development of the Jewish question in those three countries. Being interested in the meaning of Jews as constructed by Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians, I am not focusing on the agency of Jews in this process.

This chapter is divided as follows. In the first part, I look at the meaning of Jews in the pre-nationalist era. The pre-nationalist period is included in order to look at the origin of certain narratives about Jews which became long-lasting and kept influencing the Jewish question even in the modern period. Parts two to six are divided chronologically. I look at how the Jewish question participated in the construction of the national identity of Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians in the time of early nationalism (early 19th century), matured nationalism (late 19th century), and extreme nationalism (first half of the 20th century). I look at how the meaning of Jews informed positions of Polish, Czech, and Hungarian decision-makers during WWII with a special focus on their stance towards the Holocaust. Lastly, I analyse the role of the Jewish question during the Communist dictatorship.

2.1. The Meaning of a Jew in the Pre-Modern Era

In medieval Central Europe, the protection and status of Jews were linked to their usefulness to the Crown, to their services to the royal treasury. The Crown collected Jewish taxes, regulated Jewish affairs, and provided protection to Jews, for example, by shielding the Jews from the blood libel slander - the accusation that Jews use Christian blood for religious rituals - which was quite widespread in medieval times.

The meaning of Jews in pre-modern Central Europe was defined mostly by two major factors, religious and social. Religiously, the Church kept them separate from the community of Christians. They were considered a pariah group, Christ-killers, who, based on the position formulated by St. Augustine in the 5th century, must "be tolerated in an inferior position in order to demonstrate the truth of Christianity" (Polonsky 2009a, 17). Socially, the most powerful strata of the society, the nobility, needed the Jews and protected them. As the nobility was forbidden by law to be engaged in commerce, Jewish bankers, traders, and moneylenders became vital for the noble estate which profited from these activities. Further, Jews served as doctors and scholars in their courts. Yet, the employment of the Jews by the nobility could be described as 'a marriage of convenience' and did not evolve into respect or recognition (Polonsky 2009a, 35). A clear line was drawn between non-Jews (us) and Jews (them). For example, whereas Polish noble ideals cherished physical strength, rural life, chivalry, honour, liberty, and courage, Jewish qualities were depicted to be quite the opposite. The typical Jew was portrayed as being urban, unrooted, shrewd, disloyal, and a coward (Hoffman 2007, 38–39).

In **Poland**, a permanent Jewish presence was established by the end of the 13th century. Pre-modern Poland was a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state. Without a homogenous polity, Jews were accepted. They were considered foreigners and were held separate, but they were "not yet seen as a foreign body within a united

body politic" (Hoffman 2007, 63). This relative tolerance of Jews started to change, however, during the 17th century. A combination of the weakening of the Crown and the strengthening of Catholicism lay behind the change of the attitude. The weakness of the Polish state encouraged the foreign invasions by Protestant Sweden and Orthodox Russia. An invasion of two non-Catholic forces, together with Counter-Reformation, contributed to the emergence of the idea of the fusion of the Polish nation and Christianity. The coalescence of the two was demonstrated by the crowning of the Virgin Mary as a queen of Poland after the victory over the Swedes in 1655 (Michlic 2006, 33). The myth that the Polish nation had a special role as the ramparts of Christianity took root (Polonsky 2009a, 179). The exclusiveness and intolerance which began to develop during the 17th century would become intrinsic characteristic of modern Polish nationalism (Teter 2003, 265). With its rise, the meaning of Jews, who in the pre-nationalist era were mostly seen as separate, yet tolerated, was brought into question.

The first notes about the presence of Jews in **the Czech Lands**[9] date back to the early tenth century when Prague, an important and prosperous crossroad connecting Eastern and Western trade routes, attracted Jewish merchants (Rothkirchen 2005, 8). It was under the rule of Emperor Rudolf II (1576-1612) when the Jewish life in the Czech Lands flourished. Rudolf II issued a charter which granted religious freedoms unparalleled in other parts of Europe at that time. Medieval Prague gave birth to a legend, according to which Rabbi Löw was the creator of Golem, a being made out of clay from the banks of the Vltava River and given the task of protecting the Prague Jewish ghetto from attacks. The story has it that Golem's body rests in the attic of the Old-New Synagogue, built in 1270, which is today the oldest active synagogue in Europe. As will be discussed later, the story of Golem, which was originally part of Jewish folklore, would in the 19th century become part of the Czech national narrative.

This relatively calm period ended with the rebellion of the Protestant estates in Bohemia and Moravia against the fiercely Catholic Emperor, Ferdinand II (1578-1637). The rebellion ended in 1620 with the Battle of White Mountain which became a formative event in the history of the Czech Lands. After the defeat, the process of recatholicization of the Czech Lands under the Habsburgs' dominion commenced. During this period of recatholicization, religious fervour diminished among the people of Bohemia. Later, this stance would turn to strong secularism. Furthermore, the persecution of Protestants, and their status as a fragile minority dependent on the religious tolerance of the Catholic Habsburg power, somehow linked Czech Protestantism to Judaism. The shared destiny of those two minorities, it will be recalled, would become the root of a political

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[9] Historical regions of Bohemia, Moravia, and Czech Silesia. A principality of the Holy Roman Empire during the Early and High Middle Ages. In 1526 Bohemian crown lands became part of the larger Habsburg Monarchy.

alliance between Jews and Protestants throughout the mid-19th century and up to the interwar period (Wein 2015b, 17).

To usher modernity into the Habsburg Empire of the late 18th century empire, Emperor Joseph II (1764-1790) introduced a series of economic, social, and cultural reforms. The Edict(s) of Tolerance *(Toleranzpatent)* issued in stages for Jews of the Habsburg Empire between 1781-9 were a part of this reform legislation. Jews could now reside in towns, enter guilds, and participate in all forms of commerce, artisan craft, and even agriculture. However, the aim of the Edicts was not to extend Jewish privileges but, to quote from the Emperor's memorandum from 1781, "in those places where they [the Jews] already exist and to the extent that they are already tolerated – to make them useful to the state" (in: Kieval 2010). As Hannah Arendt aptly observed, making the 'usefulness' of Jews a key 'condition of modernity' and a determinant of their acceptance by the state would later render the position of Jews in European societies very vulnerable (Arendt 1973). Together with the economic emancipation, Jews also became subject to major educational reform. They were encouraged to establish schools under government supervision in which students would learn German and other civil subjects. Moreover, schools of higher education and universities opened their doors to Jewish students. The Jews thus became acculturated predominantly to German culture, which as discussed in the next section, would irritate Czech nationalists and would have a strong impact on the meaning of Jews in Czech society.

The *Encyclopedia Judaica* links the arrival of Jews in the Danube region, today known as **Hungary**, with the arrival of the Roman legions. Considering the existence of Jewish gravestones from the third century CE, it is highly possible that the first Jews settled in the land long before the Hungarian tribes conquered it at the end of the 9th century (Kramer 2000, 1). Religious tolerance during the 160-years of the Turkish occupation[10] brought to Hungary Jewish immigrants who were fleeing persecutions in some Christian countries of Europe (Molnár 2001, 182). With the end of the Ottoman occupation in 1686, the Jewish population of Hungary declined, since most of the Jews left with the retreating Turkish army (Herczl 1993, 4). In order to restore the land and population of Hungary decimated by years of war, the victorious Habsburgs started to transfer tens of thousands of people from other parts of the Monarchy to Hungary, among them Jews from Moravia, later augmented by Jews from Galicia, who formed the nucleus of a renewed Jewish community in Hungary. Considerable development of Hungarian Jewry started with the emancipation. The Edict of Toleration, issued for Hungarian Jews in 1783, cancelled most of the oppressive decrees which had limited Jewish life. It was not only the emancipation but especially the massive immigration which contributed to the fact that no other

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[10] In 1526, the Turkish army, led by Sultan Suleiman II, defeated the Hungarian army in the battle of Mohacs.

ethnic group in Hungary underwent such a dramatic increase in numbers and a change in its character as Jews. As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, the Jewish emancipation and immigration, especially of orthodox, poor, Yiddish-speaking Jews from Galicia, was resisted by some Hungarians. But importantly, the readiness of Jews to culturally assimilate contributed to the fact that Hungarian liberal elites, influenced by the Enlightenment, were mostly supportive of the emancipation of the Hungarian Jews.

2.2. Early Nationalism and the Meaning of a Jew: 'Ours or Alien'?

Since the late 18th century, the idea of modern nationalism was spreading throughout Central Europe. Together with the Enlightenment, the rise of nationalism led to the change of narrative regarding the role of Jews in Central European societies. Increasingly, the social separation of Jews came to be seen as problematic, and consequently, at the end of the 18th century, the question of how to incorporate the Jewish minority into the Polish, the Czech, and the Hungarian nation became one of the key issues on the national agenda.

Poland: The Jews Must Be Civilized

Since 1772, when the Polish territory was first partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with a long history of political independence, had remained subjugated. The loss of national sovereignty which followed the Third Partition in 1795, and the oppression from the ruling powers, were accompanied by a fervent struggle for nation-building and the endeavour to free Poland from foreign rule. Thus, ever since the partition of Poland, the meaning of a Jew in Poland developed against the backdrop of lost sovereignty. An obsolete feudal structure with medieval privileges, abandoned in the larger part of Europe, remained almost untouched in the Poland of the first half of the 19th century (Eisenbach 1991, 67–77, 129). Owing to their mostly aristocratic origin, the Polish elites believed that true "Polishness" embodied values which those noblemen cherished. "Catholicism, conservatism, traditionalism, and the idyllic rural life were considered to be the key markers of Polish national (cultural) identity" (Michlic 2006, 45). Building on this perception, these nobles saw trends like urbanization and capitalism as contrary to their vision of ideal Polishness. This, of course, predetermined their view of the Jewish bourgeoisie.

The dominant question concerning the Jews among the Polish elites was whether "equal rights should be granted to Jews as a precondition of internal reform and assimilation or, conversely, whether Jews needed to demonstrate a certain degree of acculturation in order to 'deserve' equal rights" (Weeks 2006, 22). As the term 'assimilation' was not yet used, the social reformers and their critics often talked about the need 'to civilize' the Jews, in a sense to raise their cultural level that of the Poles (Eisenbach 1991, 93). On the one hand, the

conservative view considered Jews a separate nation which presented a threat to the development of the Polish nation. Adam Czartoryski, who headed the Polish commission to study the Jewish question, held this view. His opinion was that the "Israelites are not natural inhabitants of our land; they are newcomers, foreigners, aliens [...] As a foreign nation the Jews thus have no right to citizenship" and before they are "civilized," they should not be granted equal rights (in: Weeks 2006, 23). On the other hand, the inclusive perspective demanded the full assimilation of Jews. According to one reformist, Stanisław Staszic, the ethnocultural exclusivity of Jews, underlined by their independent internal institutions, was not permissible. The idea of a nation within a nation was not acceptable. Instead, the homogenization of society was a goal. Complete Polonization and the disappearance of the national distinctiveness of Jews was thus understood to be most desirable (Michlic 2006, 41).

Further, the meaning of Jews in Polish society was related to their economic role and the urban question. Modernization progressed rather slowly in Poland during the first half of the 19th century. The traditional aristocratic disdain for commerce contributed to the fact that ethnic Poles became engaged in industrialization with more hesitancy than other minorities, especially Jews. The Jews thus played an important role in the industrial revolution in Poland.[11] Moreover, in the Russian-controlled Kingdom of Poland, over 90 per cent of Jews lived in cities, constituting 46.5 per cent of the urban population, with Warsaw being over 30 per cent Jewish (Michlic 2006, 48). Most of the Jews in the cities were poor unskilled workers, small shopkeepers, and artisans. Wealthy Jews, mostly bankers and industrialists, constituted a small fraction of the urban Jewish population. From this group, however, a growing number of acculturated Jews who spoke Polish and participated in the Polish social life, emerged. During the 19th century, the growing Jewish intelligentsia, consisting of doctors, teachers, writers, publishers, artists, and university graduates, further boosted the urban middle class (Eisenbach 1991, 209–21, 270–71). In the eyes of conservative nationalists, this demographic reality, combined with their distaste for modernity and capitalism, validated the perception that ethnic Poles were being overshadowed by Jewish dominance.

The Polish uprisings in November 1830 and January 1863 against the Russian oppression gave a new impetus to Polish nationalism and brought a new dynamic to Polish-Jewish relations. By participating in the rebellion, Jews became for the first time active participants in Polish politics. In this short period of time, proclamations were made about Polish-Jewish brotherhood and a common struggle against the Russian occupation and

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[11] Railways, metal-working industry, textile industry, and banking were sectors in which Jews played a prominent role.

oppression.[12] The active participation of Jews, often from acculturated, well-off families, in protests during which they were killed by Russian bullets, was celebrated in the press, and poems were written about 'moral revolution' and the 'unbreakable knot' between Poles and Jews. (Hoffman 2007, 122; Weeks 2006, 45). Jews started to be called 'Israelite Poles,' 'Polish Jews,' 'Children of Poland,' or 'Brother Poles of the Mosaic Confession' (Weeks 2006, 45, 49). It was probably the last time Jews were considered part of the Polish national movement. After this uprising was crushed by the Russian authorities, Polish hopes for national independence were destroyed and the memory of brotherhood with Jews faded. Instead, the narrative of freedom fighters and martyrdom developed among Poles.

The Czech Lands: The Jews Are Foreign

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Czech Lands were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire with Prague being merely a provincial capital. The German language and the German culture were dominant among elites in the Czech Lands following the Battle of White Mountain. German settlers who had been coming to the Czech Lands since the medieval times settled not only in the border areas, since the end of WWI called the Sudetenland, but also in big cities. However, in the late 18th century, major socio-economic changes started to take place in the Czech Lands. As a result of educational reforms and modernization introduced by Maria Theresa and Joseph II, the sons of Czech-speaking peasants became to be accepted into the state civil service, started to teach at secondary schools, became journalists and editors, and joined professions (Kieval 2000, 119). This first generation of educated Czechs formed the core of the Czech middle class which became the main driving force behind the Czech national movement which quickly started to gain strength. Being driven mostly by the rising middle class, the Czech national movement differed from the Polish and Hungarian movements where the nobility played the key role.

Together with the rise of the national movement, the 19th century was the time when Czech society was transformed from a post-feudal to a modern one. The liberal-capitalist economy replaced the pre-modern model. The estate privileges were slowly removed, and lower classes became emancipated. This development was accompanied by a demographic shift as Czechs started to migrate from villages to cities, bringing Czech culture with them and thus slowly changing the character of cities where German culture had been dominant. Consequently, in contrast to Hungary and partially also to Poland, where Jews had developed a dominant position in commerce, the Czech modernization and industrialization were not driven mostly by Jews and Germans, but importantly by Czechs.

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[12] This sentiment was embodied by the epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*, written in 1834 by the Polish national romantic writer Adam Mickiewicz. The main character, the Jewish innkeeper Jankiel, was depicted as an honourable man who was a true patriot.

In the process of delineating the boundaries of the Czech national community, a German became the Other. František Palacký (1798-1876), a historian and politician, in his magisterial 1848 work, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a na Moravě* (History of the Czech nation in Bohemia and Moravia), introduced the idea that Czechs were defined in opposition to Germanness. It was the Czech Protestant past, represented by the Hussite uprising, which formed the core of Czech national history (Palacký 1848). Palacký's concept of the Czech past became very influential, and during the 19th century it became a part of the Czech national narrative. As a result, from its inception, the modern Czech national movement considered German culture and the German national movement to be its nemesis.

Against a backdrop of general emancipation and modernization, Jews were integrated into society. While in Germany, Austria, and Hungary one dominant culture existed which the emancipated Jews adopted, in the Czech Lands, Czech and German cultures competed. Czech nationalists introduced a new narrative to the Czech Lands, yet, its political and cultural contours were, in the first half of the 19th century, only vaguely defined. In the first decades of the Czech national revival, the Jews of the Czech Lands opted for German Habsburg allegiance as it was the power in Vienna through which their socio-economic development in the Czech Lands was secured (Mendelsohn 1987, 133). The preference for the German acculturation was also encouraged by the refusal of Czech intellectuals to include Jews in the nascent Czech national movement. The position of the Czech nationalists of the 19th century is epitomized by Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821-1856), a leading journalist of the time. Borovský did not hide his contempt for the idea of "interrelationship between Czechs and Jews" (Rothkirchen 2005, 13). Borovský's position reflected Herder's concept of organic nationalism which understood a nation to be a group which was distinguished from other nations through a distinct culture, history, and language. In Borovský's view, the Jews, having their own traditions, language, and religion, formed a separate, Semitic nation. To those Jews who were ready to abandon the Jewish culture, Borovský recommended adoption of the German language which already was the second mother tongue of many European Jews.

Hungary: The Jews are Magyars of the Jewish Faith

At the turn of the 19th century, Hungary was mostly feudal with a pre-modern economy based on agriculture. Hungarian industrial development lagged behind other parts of the Habsburg Lands (Cartledge 2011, 159–60). Jewish emigration to Hungary remained largely unhindered during the first half of the 19th century, and as a result of both the migration and natural increase, Hungarian Jewry grew substantially. Settling mostly in towns and competing successfully with burghers (mostly of German origin), Jews, through their international links, supplied "much of the financial support for nascent industrial activity [in Hungary] as it began to emerge"

(Cartledge 2011, 160). Jews became a driving force behind the process of the modernization of the Hungarian economy.

Table 1: *The Jewish Population in Hungary, 1735-1910*

Year	Jewish Population	Per Cent of Total	Migration
1735	12,219	0.7	
1785-87	80,775	1.3	60,000
1805	126,620	1.8	20,000
1827	250,000	3.0	45,000
1842	340,000	3.0	
1850	400,000	4.3	
1857	450,000	3.7	
1869	524,279	4.0	
1880	624,826	4.5	
1890	707,961	4.7	
1900	831,162	4.9	
1910	911,227	5.0	

Source: Michael K. Silber, in: Yivo Encyclopedia
http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hungary/Hungary_before_1918

Great landowners/aristocrats were open to Jews and Jewish immigration as they appreciated their entrepreneurship and economic utility. Without a significant local middle class, the Jews played an important economic function, including the money management and management of large estates (Janos 1989, 336). Importantly, it was a time when the economic interests of aristocrats and Jews did not clash, but instead complemented each other. However, Hungarian aristocrats were not promoters of Jewish emancipation. They envisioned a feudal solution by advocating "the bestowal of corporate rights, and the recognition of the Jews as a separate estate" (Janos 1982, 81).

The main proponents of Jewish emancipation were liberal nationalists. As in Poland, without an indigenous middle class, the nationalist agenda in Hungary was promoted by the gentry. Being aware of the socio-economic and political backwardness of their homeland, Hungarian nationalists were ready to introduce broad reforms in order to build a post-feudal society (Janos 1989). A part of this process was the formulation of a concept of the nation. A modern Hungarian nation, as envisioned by the liberal nationalists, "implied a certain hierarchy between Magyars and non-Magyars"[13] (Laczó 2014, 424). Based on inclusive and liberal ideas of

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[13] In the pre-Trianon era (until 1920), "Magyar" indicated an ethnic group and "Hungary" a political entity. After the Trianon Treaty, this term lost its delineation (Kramer 2000, 32).

nationalism, such a concept of nation assumed the national assimilation of minorities in exchange for political rights. However, the liberal politicians and reformers of that time, among them two key men of the Age of Reform, Kossuth Lajos[14] (1802-1894) and Szécheneyi István (1791-1860), had rather intricate positions on Jewish emancipation. Kossuth, recognizing the Jews mostly as a religious community, demanded the reformation of the Jewish religion, especial of those parts related to national elements (Laczó 2014, 425). Szécheneyi, probably the most active reformer of the first half of the 19th century, repeatedly warned against rapid emancipation of the Jews on the pretext that Hungarians were not powerful enough to assimilate "a more intelligent and diligent element," and that interests of the nation must have priority over liberalism (Szécheneyi, in: Laczó 2014, 426). Notwithstanding the caveats, the Jews embraced the idea of 'Magyarization' and a strong bond between Hungarian liberals and Jews started to develop.

2.3. Nationalism and the Jewish Question in the late 19th Century

In the second half of the 19th century, Central Europe experienced major socio-economic changes. Modernization of economy and urbanization undermined feudal structures, still prevalent mostly in Poland and Hungary, and gave rise to classes. Socio-economic changes, combined with nationalism, reached its maturity at the turn of the century, and put the Jewish question in the spotlight of domestic politics. The liberal voices arguing for acculturation and assimilation of Jews were increasingly overshadowed by those who called for the exclusion of the Jews based on their 'otherness.' When analysing early anti-Semitism, Arendt states that "anti-Jewish feeling acquires political relevance only when it can combine with a major political issue, or when Jewish group interests come into open conflict with those of a major class in society" (Arendt 1973, 28). This kind of situation happened at the turn of the 19th century. In this section, I look at narratives concerning the Jewish question which evolved at a time when Polish, Czech, and Hungarian nationalism matured, and the national identities were re-constructed.

Poland: From an 'Alien' to an 'Enemy' - The Rise of Polish Ethno-Nationalism

During the second half of the 19th century, belated industrialization and urbanization finally reached Poland and post-feudal society started to develop. The old feudal estates were finally replaced by classes. The modernization of the Polish territory had a direct impact on the Jews. On the one hand, building on their knowledge (literacy) and expertise (commerce and urban lifestyle), the Jews became important promoters of industrialization and modernization in Poland. At the same time, however, due to their largely unsuccessful

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[14] In this thesis I respect the Hungarian tradition of putting family names first and first names second in both text and speech.

integration, the Jews remained easily identifiable both culturally and socially. The high presence of Jews among both major industrialists and poor city dwellers did not go, of course, unnoticed.

Table 2: *The Jewish Population in Russian-Controlled (until 1918) Polish territory*

Year	Total Population	Jewish Population	Per Cent of Total
1816	2,732,324	212,944	7.79
1827	4,032,335	377,754	9.36
1834	4,059,517	410,062	10.10
1856	4,696,929	571,678	12.17
1865	5,336,112	719,112	13.47
1883	7,414,656	1,077,000	14.52
1889	8,255,968	1,176,176	14.25
1897	8,761,476	1,270,575	14.50
1921	10,521,775	1,499,635	14.25

Source: Gausnet 1998, 31, in: Yivo Encyclopedia
http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Poland/Poland_from_1795_to_1939#id0eviai

Matured Polish nationalism, together with dramatic socio-economic changes, activated the question of national identity. In this time of changes, the idea of a mono-ethnic state, rather than a multinational empire, became seen as the preferred form of government in Poland. These preferences, combined with the fact that Jews occupied the middle-class professions, raised a question about the potentially harmful impact of Jews on Polish national development.

A narrative about the Jew who is considered to be a harmful alien started to be promoted by new ethno-nationalist thinkers. In 1883, the first openly anti-Semitic journal, *Rola,* started to be published. Its editor, Jan Jeleński (1845-1909), a conservative Catholic from a family of pauperized nobility, disseminated the myth of the Jew who is alien and harmful to the Polish nation. The journal cast doubts on the intentions of assimilated Jews by claiming that rather than Jews being Polonized, Poland was becoming Judaized through the growing influence of acculturated Jews over the Polish economy and culture. By adopting Jewish characteristics, the Polish nation was losing its soul and virtues (Weeks 2006, 93). Jeleński suggested the isolation of Jews through economic boycott, which would encourage their emigration. He promoted slogans like "Do not buy at Jewish shops" and "Bread for our own people" (Michlic 2006, 54–55).

The anti-Semitic ideas promoted by Jeleński's *Rola* became part of the political program of one of the first major nationalist parties in Poland. The strongly ethno-nationalist National Democratic Party, *Endecja*, was

formed by Roman Dmowski (1864-1939) in 1897. Under the strong influence of Social Darwinism, Dmowski believed that if Poland was to survive as a nation, it should stop the naive struggle for universal freedom and instead the Poles should pursue a policy of ruthless "national egotism," a term used by the party's chief ideologist, Zygmunt Balicki (1858-1916) (Polonsky 2009b, 96). As other national movements did, *Endecja* defined Polish identity against the Other, by defining first who its rivals were. Whereas Russia was the main external enemy, the Jews became the main internal enemy of the Polish nation. Crucially, *Endecja* "specifically excluded the Jews *as Jews* (even if acculturated and Polish-speaking) from the Polish nation [emphasis in original]" (Weeks 2006, 115). The party manifesto from 1903 underlined this position by saying, "the future healthy development of the Polish nation was contingent upon reducing "Jewish influence," isolating and weakening the Jews economically, and encouraging their departure from Poland" (in: Weeks 2006, 116). This representation of Jews was embodied in the slogan "Judeo-Polonia" which warned against the harmful influence of Jews over the Polish nation. In the pre-WWI Poland, the anti-Semitic narrative became almost universally accepted by Polish society, including the educated elites (Weeks 2006, 161). The ability of *Endecja* to gain mass support could be explained by the fact that it included in its ideology dominant Polish values, as defined by conservative, traditionalist, and Catholic groups (Toruńczyk 1983, 22). The Jews were no longer a tolerated Other, but "the internal enemy, the serpent within" (Hoffman 2007, 192).

A new area of a rivalry between Jews and Poles opened in 1905 following the political reforms introduced by the Russian Empire which granted franchise for the male population and eased censorship. Many Poles observed with astonishment, often accompanied with defiance, the Jewish political awakening. Daily press in Yiddish, moribund before 1905, flourished, and large numbers of young Jews, unwilling to give up their Jewish identity, became attracted to the ideals of Zionism and socialism (Bund), both of which represented Jewish answers to the rise of nationalism in Poland. The 'Jewish politics,' this visible sign of a Jewish collective action, served as grist for the mill of the ethno-nationalist *Endecja*. Even the progressives, supporters of the narrative which called for the integration of Jews, mostly represented by the Polish Socialist Party, founded in 1892 by Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935), were exasperated by Jewish political aspirations, separateness, and demands for cultural autonomy.

The Czech Lands: Are the Jews German, or can they be Czech? In Search of an Idea of the Nation
In the mid-19th century, as Czech nationalism matured, the Jewish question became an important topic for Czech nationalist. The Jewish loyalty to German culture became a source of Czech nationalists' animosity against Jews. If the first generation of Czech nationalists had stressed Jewish otherness and urged the exclusion of Jews from the nationalist movement, the later generations complained about the unwillingness of

Jews to assimilate to Czech culture. In the liberal spirit of the time, full assimilation of the Jews to Czech culture and the disappearance of Jewish collective traits became conditions for their emancipation.

In the time of the Czech-German nationalist struggle, schools became a prime battlefield. For Czech nationalists, German schools epitomized the 'German element' through which German cultural influence had been maintained over regions with a Czech majority. In this atmosphere, Czech Jews found themselves in a rather precarious situation. It was through the German-Jewish primary schools and German institutions of higher education that the Jews of the Czech Lands had become emancipated. However, under the influence of Czech nationalism and a new generation of Czech Jews, who refused the pro-German inclination which they found both anachronistic and harmful to Czech-Jewish coexistence, the demise of the German-Jewish primary schools was rather quick.[15] With the closure of the German-Jewish schools, the transformation of Czech Jewry started, and with it came a change in both national orientation and language preference (cf. Kieval 1988, 40–58).

As part of the Czech-German national struggle, the Czech national movement was looking for a usable past which would give legitimacy to its aspirations. Importantly, the Czechs searched for 'proofs' which would, on the one hand, strengthen their claim to Bohemia and, on the other, challenge the German narrative concerning theirs. In this process, Czech memory entrepreneurs discovered Jewish Prague. In order to add antiquity and thereby legitimacy to the Czech national aspiration, old Jewish legends became part of Czech folk culture. The most prominent among them was the story of Rabbi Löw and his Golem. The story was supposed to prove that Czechs and Jews lived in the city before the Germans came. Consequently, Czechs and the Czech Jews started to share the same myths. This nexus was epitomized by the New City Hall constructed in 1912, which was embellished with figures with a strong connection to the story of Prague, one among them being Rabbi Löw (Kieval 2000, 109–10).

However, at the end of the 19th century, a sense of optimism about Jewish inclusion in the Czech national movement was challenged due to two factors. First, in 1867, the Habsburg Empire became a Dual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, geographically divided between Cisleithenian Austria (which included the Czech Lands) and Transleithenian Hungary (which included Slovakia). Yet, the Czech national aspirations were not met by an Austro-Hungarian compromise, which led to the radicalization of the Czech nationalist movement. Second, a factor which had a direct impact on Central European Jewry, including Czech Jewry, was the crisis of liberalism. The liberal parties which dominated the German and Austrian politics of the 1860s and 1870s were replaced by more conservative ones which refused the liberal definitions of nation and national community and instead

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[15] In 1884 there were 114 German-Jewish primary schools in Bohemia. In 1910 there were only 5 (Kieval 1988, 54).

preferred a more exclusive version based on ethnicity. Consequently, whereas throughout the 19th century, Czech nationalists addressed the Jewish question mostly in the context of the Czech-German nationalist struggle, in the last decades of the 19th century the narrative about the character of the Czech nation changed, which led to the rise of anti-Semitism independent of Czech-German strife (Frankl 2007, 58). Radicalized Czech nationalists depicted a Jew not only as an external enemy, as a representative of Germans, but also as an internal enemy, as ethnically and nationally unassimilated, a different Other which was weakening the Czech nation.

The Czech anti-Semitic narrative was fuelled from various sources. First, similarly as in Poland, a Jew became an enemy of the socio-economic development of the Czech nation. According to this narrative, the Czechs needed to build the national economy free from Jewish influence. Economic anti-Semitism did not remain only verbal but translated into one of the most successful programs of radical Czech nationalists. Under the slogan, *svůj k svému* (each to his own) Czechs were encouraged to boycott internal enemies, mostly the Jews and German-speaking Christians.

The second source of the anti-Semitic narrative was Catholic anti-Semitism. The Catholic Church stood against what it considered to be symbols of the corruption of modern society – secularization, materialism, and also the ideologies of liberalism, socialism, and Communism. Adapting to their narratives conspiracy theories, Catholic politicians and activists blamed Jews, Freemasons, liberals, and socialists for infecting healthy Catholic nations with the virus of liberalism which contributed to their degeneration (Frankl 2007, 129). Seeing Jews as acolytes of modernity and a source of the misery of Christian societies, the Catholic Church built on its own long-standing tradition of anti-Judaism.

Third, political anti-Semitism in the Czech Lands rose against the backdrop of electoral and political changes in Vienna. In 1886, the Cisleithenian political system was partially democratized by the introduction of the fifths electoral curia based on universal male suffrage. This electoral transformation weakened the traditional elite parties and gave a boost to the mass parties and new populist movements. Generally, with democratization, the Austrian and German politics of the end of the 19th century became instantly radicalized and anti-Semitism became a popular political tool for the mobilization of voters, especially newly enfranchised men of the lower classes. In the atmosphere of the political mobilization, radicalization, and diversification of the Czech political scene, anti-Semitism became a unifying topic for anti-liberal, national, and with the rise of socialism, anti-socialist groups represented by Catholics, radicals, and nationalists.

The *fin-de-siècle* Czech Lands, characterized by boisterous Czech nationalism, also became affected by the blood-libel accusation. The most notorious case took place in 1899 when a 19-year old girl, Anežka Hrůzová, was found dead in the Bohemian town of Polná. Information that only a small amount of blood was found at the crime scene, together with the fact that the murder took place in the Pesach season when Jews bake *matzot*, the traditional unleavened bread, led to the revival of the blood-libel accusation. A Jewish vagabond Leopold Hilsner was arrested and charged. The trial became the prime news of the time and most of the press, including the Catholic and liberal newspapers, fully supported the notion that the girl was murdered for ritual purposes (Kieval 1988, 73). Hilsner was sentenced first to death, and after an appeal, to life in prison. He was pardoned by the Habsburg Emperor only in 1918.

How is it possible to explain the popularity of the centuries-old canard in a society which proudly considered itself to be on a high level of socio-economic development? Kieval explains that in the language of Czech nationalism, a Jew (as well as a German) "occupied the categories of *cizinec* (foreigner) and *nepřítel* (enemy)" who stood in opposition to 'self' or 'native.' This rhetorical structure provided a set of categories under which perpetrators of ritualized violence were both foreigners and enemies, and their victims, young Czech girls, became the personification of 'self,' of the nation (Kieval 2000, 190).

It was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937), a sociologist, politician, and professor at the Czech part of the Charles University,[16] who became the most important face of progressives who denounced the ritual murder accusation. Known for his anti-clerical stance, he considered blood libel a part of clerical propaganda and anti-Semitism a program behind which clericalism hid its struggle against modern science, philosophy, and free-thinking (Masaryk, 1900, in: M. Pojar 2016, 122). Masaryk considered this superstitious belief in ritual murder to be an infection which morally corrupted the Czech nation and made it uncivilized. After publishing a series of articles in the Czech and Austrian press condemning the trial and especially the atmosphere in which it took place, Masaryk became a pariah. He was attacked by the Church and Czech nationalists, and students protested against his presence at the university.

A fighter against blood libel and a critic of economic anti-Semitism, Masaryk was, however far from unequivocally positive on the Jewish question. Building on his anti-clericalism, he was critical of the nature of Judaism. He attributed to Jews some negative collective characteristics which they allegedly developed while living in ghettos. Masaryk claimed that in order to achieve moral regeneration, Jews needed the national revival - not necessarily by leaving for Palestine, but, inspired by Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg), by

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[16] As part of the nationalist struggle, in 1882 Charles University of Prague was divided into Czech and German branches.

transforming their culture. When addressing the issue of Zionism, Masaryk stated, "The idea of colonizing their homeland is certainly very close to the Jews, and this is justified. [...] Nevertheless, I see Zionism mainly from a moral perspective; a progressive Jew is aware of his complicity in the shortcomings of former cultural activities. He wants revival... To change the local milieu is not enough. It must be an internal revival..." (in: Weltsch 1931, 68). In Masaryk's eyes, there was a clear link between the Czech and Jewish nations in their need for emancipation and regeneration 'from within.' As I discuss in more details later in this chapter, through his intellectual and political influence, Masaryk was crucial for the construction of the meaning of Jews in modern Czech society.

Hungary: The Jews are Ours, But... - The Golden Era

In 1867, the *Ausgleich* Compromise transformed the Habsburg Empire into the Dual Monarchy of Austria and Hungary. In the post-*Ausgleich* era, modernization of the Hungarian economy and cultural Magyarization became two of the most important issues for the Hungarian liberal nationalism of the noble elite who became the dominant political force of the period. And for both goals, Jews became useful allies. First, the Jews became the main bearers of economic modernization. The feudal structure of Hungarian society, together with its general antipathy towards entrepreneurship, left Hungary without a commercially oriented indigenous middle class. In this situation, Hungarian elites turned to Jews who were both commercially innovative and loyal to the Hungarian state (Kramer 2000, 7; Mendelsohn 1987, 89). In the second half of the 19th century, Hungary's agrarian economy was transformed and it was the Jews who became the pioneers in new economic sectors such as textiles, the sugar industry, and heavy industries. In hardly any other European country were Jews so dominant in the creation of the modern economy.[17] Furthermore, the Jews started to form the nucleus of an Hungarian middle class. Held in contempt by the impoverished nobility, the urbanized Jews came to dominate the liberal professions. The noteworthy presence of Jews in both the economy and the culture of Budapest led Karl Lueger (1844-1910), the anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna, to refer to Budapest as "Judapest" (Wistrich 1994, 131).

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[17] By 1900, Budapest became an important financial centre, the sixth largest city in Europe and one of the fastest-growing capital cities in Europe. In commerce and banking, share of Jews was more than 50 percent.

Table 3: *Percentage of Jews in the Liberal Professions in Hungary in 1930*

Occupation	Jews as a percentage	Occupation	Jews as a percentage
Doctors	55.2	Bank clerks	59.4
Attorneys	49.2	Officials	19.2
Engineers	30.4	Scientists, writers	31.7
Merchants	45.7	Painters	14.7
Agents	75.1	Musicians	25.0
Accountants	59.5	Actors	26.7

Source: Kádár and Vági 2004, 11

Second, until the Trianon treaty in 1920, Hungary was a multi-ethnic country in which Magyars formed a minority.[18] Thanks to this multi-ethnic character, Hungarian nationalism could not be ethnically restrictive. Only when counting the Jews as part of the Hungarian nation, Hungarian hegemony over ethnic minorities in Greater Hungary was held (Wistrich 1994, 120). Against the backdrop of increased demands for self-determination by national minorities, a demand rejected by Hungarian nationalists, assimilation and Magyarization became enforced. Hungarian Jews not only willingly assimilated but they also became active agents of Magyarization, especially in the borderlands where non-Magyar ethnic groups dominated. Multinational Hungary was also multi-denominational. Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Catholicism, and a number of Protestant denominations co-existed along with Judaism. Therefore, Hungarian liberal reformists had had the secularization of public institutions on their agenda already since the beginning of their struggle against Habsburg Catholicism (Karady 1993, 75). The traditional Christian anti-Judaism which imbued strongly Polish nationalism was not influential in the Hungarian national identity in the post-*Ausgleich* era (Ibid.)

Support of the state for the Jewish involvement in the economy and the continuing Jewish immigration from the East was, however, not extended by all strata of Hungarian society. Those who felt displaced in the capitalist economy and those who refused liberal values started to despise the Jews who became identified with these two phenomena in Hungary. Among the antagonists to the Jewish emancipation were impoverished gentry, sections of the Catholic Church, artisans, and the German minority, the Swabians. Kramer says, "the threat posed by the highly assimilated Hungarian-Jewish plutocrat and the impoverished Orthodox pedlar from Galicia merged to become the bipolar elements for a unitary Jewish menace" (Kramer 2000, 13). The economic prejudice (Jews exploited their economic power) dovetailed with the traditional religious one (Jews killed Jesus), and groups with otherwise conflicting ideologies thus found a common enemy.

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[18] In the census of 1910, 910 000 Jews represented five percent of the population of multi-national state. Magyars numbered about 49 percent and only with Jews they formed a majority.

A political representative of the opponents of Jewish emancipation and immigration, and a man who brought a narrative of political anti-Semitism to Hungary, was Istóczy Gyözö (1842-1915), a backbench member of the governing Liberal Party. He claimed that Jews, even assimilated and baptized, remained a closed caste, a distinct nation and race. Involved in usury and corruption, their ultimate perennial aspiration was to dominate the host society and to corrupt its Christian morality and nationalist endeavour (Handler 1980, 29–30).

An important test of the state's ability to repulse popular anti-Semitism came in 1882, during the notorious blood libel accusation of Tiszaeszlár. The medieval-Christian superstition that Jews were using Christin blood for the baking of *matzo,* the unleavened bread used during Pesach, was revived after a fourteen-year-old Christian girl disappeared in the city of Tiszaezslár (cf. Herczl 1993, 8–17). In the following trial, a liberal politician and lawyer Eötvös Károly, achieved the full exoneration of the defendants. Yet, after an incitement campaign run by the Catholic press, Istóczy, and other anti-Semitic members of the Parliament, violence against Jews and their property erupted not only in Pozsony (Bratislava), but also in Budapest and in the countryside. The Tiszaeszlár blood libel was a clear warning that notwithstanding the emancipation process, pre-modern Jew-hatred was enduring. It was newly augmented by the modern anti-Semitic accusation about 'Jewish' capitalism and liberalism undermining the Christian order and Magyar national spirit. However, in the same period that Paris was convicting and degrading Alfred Dreyfus, Vienna had its first openly anti-Semitic mayor Karl Lueger, and Prague its Hilsner Affair, Hungary staged a fair trial after the Tiszaezslár blood libel and suppressed the anti-Semitic violence.

Yet, following the Tiszaezslár blood libel, the Jewish question remained on the agenda. It was the People's Party, formed during the 1890s, which became a standard-bearer of anti-Semitic narrative in Hungary in the last decades of Dual Monarchy. It was supported by the Catholic Church, the pro-Habsburg aristocracy, and the great landowners. The party stood against liberalism. It was seen to be a quintessentially Jewish idea, promoted by the liberal (meaning Jewish) press and spreading un-Magyar and un-Christian values like cosmopolitanism, materialism, and intellectual realism, which Hungarian conservative circles resented (Katzburg 1981, 21). With little over 30 seats in the Lower House of the Parliament after the elections of 1906, the People's Party had only limited political power in the pre-WWI era. Importantly, however, it set a tone for the anti-Semitic narrative of the 1920s and 1930s and it provided a base for various anti-Semitic groups which would proliferate in the interwar era.

2.4. World War I and the Interwar Era

WWI led to dramatic changes in Central Europe. Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed and independent Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were established. In this moment of major changes, when the national identity of those three nations was being re-defined, the Jewish question became an important topic of domestic politics. While in Poland and Hungary the attitude towards the Jews deteriorated and state anti-Semitism became a norm, in Czechoslovakia the Czech-Jewish symbiosis prevailed.

Poland: Jews Must Leave

After 123 years without statehood, the independent Polish Second Republic was established in 1918. It was an important moment for the study of the Jewish question in Poland because, after a long period of foreign rule, Poles finally obtained control over their state and became the main agents of domestic political development.

The effectiveness of Polish governments in the interwar era was curbed by political instability. Political life in Poland was imbued with an ideological struggle between Dmowski's *Endecja* and the followers of Piłsudski which sometimes turned violent. Political stability was further adversely affected by a difficult economic situation. Inflation was skyrocketing, especially following the Great Depression of 1929. With massive population growth, from 27 to 35 million between 1921 and 1939, and limited possibilities for emigration due to changes in the U.S. immigration policies, the social-economic situation of interwar Poland remained tense. The scapegoating of the Jews seemed attractive. In *Endecja's* narrative, the Jews were the main domestic obstacle to the prosperity of the Polish nation. In the late 1930s, this narrative was also adopted by Piłsudski's followers, who saw the solution to the labour and housing problem in Jewish emigration (Michlic 2006, 94).

As the state started to dominate the economy, it tried to exclude Jews from their former established economic positions. As Arendt explained, government's effort to encourage the local middle class included the economic liquidation of Jews partly as a concession to the public mood and partly because the Jewish position was an inheritance from the feudal order (Arendt 1973, 29). After the idea of the integration of Jews in Polish culture was almost universally refused, the large numbers of Jews present in the middle-class professions and intelligentsia became seen as harmful. Jewish professionals became exposed to widespread discrimination. The *Numerus clausus* which put a restriction on the number of Jews admitted to universities, was never officially legislated, but starting in 1937 some universities adopted it individually. The Jews were often forced to sit on so-called 'ghetto benches.' As a result, the number of Jewish students at universities declined significantly. [19]

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[19] The number of Jewish students at universities declined from 24.6 per cent in 1921 and 1922 to 8.2 per cent in 1938 and 1939 (Mendelsohn 1987, 42).

Before WWII, the Jewish question became one of the major political tropes which politicians used to energize and get support from both the impoverished Polish masses and the emerging ethnic Polish middle class. The policy towards Jews was unequivocal: Poland must seek economic self-sufficiency, in other words, it must minimize the Jewish presence in the economy, and promote Jewish emigration. The 1936 plan of a right-wing Zionist, Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880-1940), to 'evacuate' a large number of Jews mainly from Poland to Palestine was enthusiastically endorsed by the autocratic Polish government (Polonsky 2012, 90). To encourage it, the government tried to persuade Great Britain to alter its anti-Jewish emigration policy in Palestine. However, as the possibility of a massive Jewish emigration became unrealistic, *Endecja* promoted policies under which the Polish state would expose the Jews to such pressure that they would find a way to leave the country. Its deputies in the Sejm proposed a law which would deprive Jews of civil and political rights, including the ability to possess immovable property and to work in the liberal professions (Polonsky 2012, 91). Escalated political anti-Semitism contributed to a wave of anti-Jewish violence which engulfed independent Poland between 1935 and 1937.

The ethno-nationalist narrative was not embraced by the political elites alone. It also came to be endorsed by the Catholic Church. While in the past its anti-Jewish stance was mostly based on traditional anti-Judaism, in the interwar era the Church adopted political anti-Semitism. A position of the Church was well illustrated by a letter from May 1936 by Cardinal August Hlond (1881-1948), the Primate of Poland since 1926, in which he stated: "It is a fact that Jews oppose the Catholic Church, are steeped in free thinking, and represent the avant-garde of the atheist movement, the Bolshevik movement, and subversive action. The Jews have a disastrous effect on morality [...]"('Glos Prymasa Polski,' Rycerz Niepokalanej, in: Michlic 2006, 88–89).

There were also external factors which had a direct effect on the Jewish question in Poland. In the interwar era, Polish foreign policy was driven by the fear of Soviet Bolshevism. The war between Poland and Soviet Russia (1919-1921) resonated very vividly among Poles. The Soviet invasion of Poland in 1920 was accompanied by the outburst of anti-Jewish violence in the territory of the former Kingdom of Poland under the pretext that Jews were agents of the Bolsheviks. The accusation of Judeo-Bolshevism and Judeo-Communism, or Żydokomuna, became a popular trope of the anti-Jewish propaganda. A strong anti-Soviet sentiment influenced the Polish evaluation of the threat coming from Hitler's Germany. The German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact of 1934 contributed to closer relations between the two countries which resulted in greater exposure of Poland to German-Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda (Polonsky 2012, 80). It gave another boost to the ethno-nationalist anti-Jewish arguments of *Endecja*.

To conclude, in the interwar era the Polish state did not develop an openly fascist party, and unlike Hungary, Poland did not adopt anti-Jewish legislation (except the law from 1936 restricting ritual slaughter which was never fully implemented). However, the Jewish question became an important mobilizing trope in the political struggle between the moderate and extreme right-wing parties. The myth of the Jew as *the* enemy of the Polish nation, as the cause of its socio-economic hardship, and as the polluter of the organic Polish body took shape. This led to the legitimization of violence against Jews. The plunder of Jewish property was soon followed by physical assaults and even murders. The attacks against Jews were justified as national self-defence against ungrateful guests who turned into a sinister enemy of the Polish host. When Hitler entered Poland in September 1939, he thus found, on the one hand, disillusioned and often impoverished Jews separated from the Polish majority and, on the other hand, a Polish society which had been attached to the idea of a Poland free from Jews.

Czechoslovakia: A Country Where the "Jewish Question Did Not Exist"

Czechoslovakia was established in October 1918 and Masaryk became its first president. With 13.5 million people, Czechoslovakia became the 13th largest European country, incorporating Bohemia, Moravia, part of Silesia, Slovakia, and Subcarpathian Ruthenia.[20] Inheriting about three-quarters of the Monarchy's industry, most of it being located in Bohemia, Czechoslovakia was among the ten most industrialized states in the world. Czechoslovakia was a multinational state, and from its foundation, the country struggled with the dilemma of how a nation-state of Czechs and Slovaks should deal with other minorities.[21] Its size, population, and even its wealth would become the country's Achilles' heel.

It was Masaryk who set a positive precedent for relations between Czechs and Jews. As discussed before, Masaryk's involvement in the Hilsner Affair gained him popularity not only among Czech Jews but also among American Jews. Masaryk utilized his reputation and contacts during WWI when American Jewish leaders, among them Supreme Court Judge Louis Brandeis, but also Nahum Sokolow, a leader of the Zionist Organization, helped him to get access to President Woodrow Wilson to whom Masaryk presented the idea of an independent Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, thanks to Masaryk's reputation as both a democrat and a champion of Jewish national rights, "the 'myth' of the exceptional Czechoslovak democracy - closely linked to its treatment of Jews – was born" (Láníček 2013, 5). This myth, carefully cultivated, remained an important foreign policy asset of interwar Czechoslovakia.

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[20] For the rest of this chapter, I keep focusing on the Jewish question in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia. The situation in Slovakia and Ruthenia was often very different and it is not within the scope of this thesis to analyse it.
[21] Nearly a quarter of the Czechoslovak population, 3.1 million people, were German-speakers who were mostly concentrated in the German-speaking belt of Bohemia on the borders with Austria and Germany. Other ethnic groups were Hungarians, Poles, Jews, Ruthenes, and Gypsies.

The Czechoslovak Constitution of 1920 guaranteed minority rights, and it gave Jews the option of declaring Jewish nationality in the census irrespective of mother tongue or religion. This was an unprecedented decision, as for the first time in European history, "an industrialized parliamentary democracy with a fairly long tradition of Jewish emancipation recognized the claim to Jewish national distinctiveness" (Kieval 2000, 213). Granting the Jews the same rights as other minorities, mainly Germans and Hungarians, the decision reflected Masaryk's long-term sympathy to Zionism. Yet, it was also a very pragmatic political decision. By allowing Jews, including those who spoke German and Hungarian, to register as Jewish nationals, Czechoslovakia hoped to weaken the German and Hungarian minorities. However, granting Jews minority status singled them out as a distinct group, separated from the Czecho-Slovak nation (Frankl and Szabó 2015, 114). After the demise of Czechoslovakia, during WWII, and in the post-WWII period, this status would significantly complicate the position of Jews in Czech society. However, in the interwar era, no other country in Central Europe provided more favourable conditions for Jewish life than Czechoslovakia. The liberal position towards Jews did not require that they become "Czechs of the Jewish persuasion," which was the case for example in France, Germany, or Hungary. Instead, the national distinctiveness of Jews was recognized (Mendelsohn 1987, 149).

The foundation of Czechoslovakia was not free from violence and anti-Semitic outbursts. At the moment when the idea of the Czech nation was under pressure while the newly established nation-state of Czechs and Slovaks was formed and its character and identity defined, the position of Jews was not clear. Yet, with the stabilization of the political system in Czechoslovakia, the anti-Jewish violence stopped. Importantly, anti-Semitism in public discourse became politically unacceptable and the programs of mainstream political parties were free of anti-Semitism. However, it did not disappear entirely. Anti-Semitism was present among anti-system parties which often represented minorities. In their opposition to Czechoslovakism, they blamed Jewish influence for keeping the "ruling nation" in power (Frankl and Szabó 2015, 285). But as long as Czechoslovakia kept its democratic character, anti-Semitic voices were rather marginal. In 1924, when Polish Jewish daily *Haint* asked Masaryk about the Jewish question, he answered: "The Jewish question [in Czechoslovakia] does not exist. Jews live here as fully equal and they are, I think, satisfied. Anti-Semitism as a political program can hardly succeed. Some tried but failed immediately. The Czech nation is distant from racial hatred" (in: Pojar 2016, 195).

Czechoslovakia, having only marginal anti-Semitism, was an exception in interwar Central Europe, where state anti-Semitism became the norm. This can be explained by a set of factors. First, with the establishment of Czechoslovakia, Czech national ambitions were satisfied. Second, economic prosperity weakened the potential appeal of the extreme right. Third, the moderate left wing, a traditional opponent of anti-Semitism, supported

by a solid middle class and organized workers, played an important role in Czech interwar politics. Other factors were linked to the historical development in the Czech Lands. Hussite tradition and dislike of the Catholic Church contributed to an extensive secularization of the Czech population and the anti-clerical stance of the Czech intelligentsia. Among the Protestant elite, philosemitism was rather widespread. Lastly, in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, the small number of Jews and their high level of acculturation and secularization made the Jewish question a less salient topic compared with, for example, Poland (Mendelsohn 1987, 139; M. Pojar 2016, 177). A combination of strong integration, secularization, intermarriage[22] (a good barometer for acceptance of Jews by the non-Jewish society), and a low birth-rate contributed to the fact that the number of Czech Jews actually declined steadily in the 20th century.

Table 4: *Jewry in Bohemia and Moravia According to Religion*

Year	Region	Number of Jews/ % of total population	Region	Number of Jews/ % of total population
1910	Bohemia	85.927/1.27	Moravia	41.255/1.57
1921	Bohemia	79.777/1.19	Moravia	37.989/1.43
1930	Bohemia	76.301/1.07	Moravia	34.632/1.22

Source: Láníček 2013, 9

The Czech political elites showed an open support to the Zionist movement. The strongest boost to the Zionist endeavour came in 1927 when Masaryk visited Palestine. In addition to visiting Christian and Muslim sites, Masaryk visited the Jewish settlements – the Yishuv, the first world statesman to do so. Masaryk's visit of Palestine became iconic and became an important part of the narrative, promoted by Czechs, Czech Jews, as well as Israelis, about a historical link between Czechs and Israelis.

It was in this milieu of liberal interwar Czechoslovakia, that symbiosis between liberal German culture and Jews reached its peak. Emancipated, educated, and economically entrenched in the middle and upper-middle class, German-speaking Jews of the Czech Lands, mostly concentrated in Prague, contributed significantly to the cultural and scientific life of interwar Europe. At the crossroads of Czech, German, and Jewish cultures, famous Prague German-Jews flourished and produced such literary luminaries as Franz Kafka (1883-1924) and Franz Werfel (1890-1945). Furthermore, the composer and conductor Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), and the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigismund Schlomo Freud (1856-1939), were born to Jewish families in the Czech Lands, who,

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[22] Intermarriage rose from 9.8 percent in 1911 to 16.4 in 1922, to 40.1 in 1925 and in 1930, it reached 43.6 percent (Kieval 1988, 196).

just by choosing typical German names for their sons (Freud would later change his first name from the archaic-sounding Sigismund to Sigmund), and by supporting their academic education in Vienna and in German universities in Prague, epitomized the ideal 'outcome' of the emancipation which had started with the Edict of Tolerance. They were the last generation of that kind. Educated before WWI, they were the bearers of German liberal thinking within multi-ethnic Central Europe. Amidst the horrors of WWII, this tradition abruptly ended and was never renewed.

To conclude, the democratic and liberal character of the First Republic was favourable to the meaning of Jews in Czech society. Jews could assimilate, but those who preferred to keep their Jewish national identity were not excluded from the Czecho-Slovak national community. In the collective memory of both Czechs and Czech Jews, there has been some tendency to idealize interwar Czechoslovakia, a tendency which could be justified considering the mostly dire political reality in the neighbouring countries. As a result, the myth of the First Republic being an island of democracy in Central Europe where Czechs and Jews not only co-existed but to a large extent merged, has remained strongly present in the Czech and Czech-Jewish collective memory.

Hungary: From Inclusion to Exclusion

WWI became a watershed moment which made anti-Semitism a dominant political force in Hungary. There were two main reasons behind this turn. First, with the growing disillusionment caused by war losses, Magyars started to blame minorities, and primarily Jews, for undermining their spirit and national principles. Furthermore, as the economic situation worsened, the Jewish businessmen became the prime target of hostility. Second, as the Russian invasion of Galicia and the Carpathians progressed, thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews fled particularly to Budapest (as well as to Prague and Vienna). In the moment of crisis, "the scapegoat syndrome, via a chauvinistic focus on the bipolar Jewish "threat" – profiteering plutocrat and parasitic Chassid - was off and running" (Kramer 2000, 31).

The interwar era in Hungary was characterized by the weakening of democracy, the demise of liberalism, and the rise of right-wing nationalism. Concomitantly, the era of Jewish emancipation came to an end. It was a short rule by Kun Béla (1886-1938) which had a devastating impact on the meaning of Jews in Hungarian society. The son of a Protestant mother and a Jewish father, Kun was a former Russian prisoner of war who 'converted' to radical Bolshevism while in prison. He returned to Hungary in 1918 and formed the Communist Party. After taking power, Kun instigated the so-called Red Terror. Violence became common, tragically, however, the majority of the Soviet Commissars who were behind the violence and oppression were of Jewish origin (Katzburg 1981, 34). In this way, notwithstanding the official rejection of Bolshevik ideology by Hungarian Jewish organizations, a narrative which identified Hungarian Jews with the Communist dictatorship,

and the perception of Hungarian Jews as being acolytes of Communist ideology became firmly embedded in the Hungarian collective memory (Kramer 2000, 46).

In reaction to the rise of the Bolshevik regime, anti-Communist groups started to form. Composed mainly of former soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army and civil servants who lost their jobs after the war, these groups formed the nucleus of Hungarian fascism. Admiral Horthy Miklós (1868-1957), a future Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary, who would hold that post from 1920 till 1944, became their leader. As he seized power, the counter-revolution, or so-called White Terror, inundated the country. The main ideological underpinnings of the new leadership were virulent nationalism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Communism combined with "parochial conservatism and reactionary clericalism" (Lendvai 1971, 310). The counter-revolution, both in narrative and action, targeted alleged Judeo-Bolshevik enemies who conspired against true Hungary. The counter-revolutionaries proclaimed a new era of national regeneration which rejected not only Communism and Socialism but also discredited pre-1914 liberalism. The prime target of the counter-revolutionary terror, during which between five and six thousand people were murdered, became Jews (Kramer 2000, 49). This was rationalized by the simultaneous accusation that Jews were Communist revolutionaries who back-stabbed Hungary in the war.

The real turning point in the Magyar-Jewish relations was the Treaty of Trianon, signed by the victorious powers in 1920. It made Hungary the most punished country in Europe for its participation in WWI. Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory, three-fifths of its population in total, and one-third of its ethnic Magyars. Economic losses, especially in industrial and agricultural resources, were enormous. From 18 million people, post-Trianon Hungary was a country of 8 million inhabitants. From a multi-ethnic empire it became a small, landlocked country. It also became an ethnically homogenous country, with only a small minority of about half a million ethnic Germans (the Swabes). In the Hungarian collective memory, the loss of territory and population became seen as a "devastating blow to the national pride" (Herczl 1993, 23), and a "terrible national humiliation" (Mendelsohn 1987, 85).

In this period of major crisis, Hungarian collective identity was reformulated. Against the backdrop of the trauma of Trianon, a new narrative that warned against the "death of the nation" started to dominate the public debate. The absorption of non-Magyar races, and with it the politics of assimilation and integration lost its appeal. Instead, an ethnocentric concept of the nation prevailed. Allegedly scientific racism based on Social Darwinism, along with the celebration of a mythological heroic and romantic past, found their way into Hungarian nationalism (Katzburg 1985, 6). Furthermore, an important part of post-Trianon Hungarian identity became "Christian ethnicity" (Karady 1993, 81). Hungary started to define itself as a bulwark of Christianity

ready to stand against Judaism, a symbol of the dangerous Other. Last but not least, modernization, an important part of post-*Ausgleich* nation building, characterized by liberalism, capitalism, urbanization, and cosmopolitanism, came to be presented as a Jewish endeavour serving the Jewish interests. As such, it was refused by antimodernist groups as alien and destructive to Hungarian nature and culture (A. Kovács 2011, 9–10).

After Trianon, the Jews started to be seen as the main domestic obstacle to the prosperity of Hungarians, especially impoverished gentry and state bureaucrats who lost the territory, estates, and jobs. There were about 350 thousand ethnic Magyar refugees who, in now diminished Hungary, started their lives from scratch. If until now the Jews and Gentiles were mostly involved in different job sectors, in the 1920s large numbers of ethnic Magyars became interested in the liberal professions and entrepreneurship. Since Jews dominated these profession, they started to be perceived as the main obstruction to the economic wellbeing of the growing Magyar middle-class. As Karady notes, "from indispensable partners, they [the Jews] hanged almost overnight into superfluous aliens" (Karady 1993, 81).

The institutionalization of the anti-Jewish narrative and a portent of events to come was the *Numerus Clausus* Act adopted in 1920. Being the first anti-Jewish legislation adopted in 20th century Europe, "Jews were once again officially classified as aliens, an "other" able to be legally distinguished – and hence treated differently – from the "normal" (innate) citizens of the nation" (Kramer 2000, 56).[23] After the economic collapse of 1929, which struck both the agricultural and industrial sectors of the Hungarian economy, the right-nationalist movement in Hungary envisioned the elimination of Jewish influence as the panacea for most of the problems the Hungarian nation was facing. The National Program of the Hungarian Government from 1932 included an ominous clause: "We desire to secure our own national civilization based on our own special racial peculiarities and upon Christian moral principles" (Paragraph no. 83, in: Mendelsohn 1987, 114).

To conclude, it was a triple combination of racial, anti-modern and anti-liberal nationalism, Christian anti-Judaism, and the lost status of Jews in Hungarian society that ended the era of the Jewish emancipation in Hungary. In a time of the national humiliation, political upheaval, and economic instability, Jews became the Other, a useful scapegoat for dreary reality. As Karady summarizes: "Jews could be regarded as guilty either because they personified the 'Judeo-Bolshevik' menace, or because they were 'plutocratic bloodsuckers of the working people,' and were collectively charged with having caused the national disaster as a result of their redefinition as suspicious aliens but also as privileged allies of the fallen liberal elite" (Karady 1993, 83). As a

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[23] The legislation led to a decline in the number of Jewish students. In 1931/2, 14.1 percent of freshman students were Jews. In 1936/7 this number had declined to 6.1 percent in in 1937/8 to 4.6 percent (Klein 1966, 87) .

result of this ideological somersault, from a country where nationalism was inclusive and defined mostly culturally, the Hungary of the interwar era became "vanguard of anti-Semitism in Europe" (Personal Interview, Miller 2017).

2.5. World War II and the Meaning of a Jew

WWII represented a watershed for Central Europe. Under the pressure of Nazi Germany, WWI borders were redrawn, and interwar regimes collapsed. National existence of Poles and Czechs was threatened by Nazi occupation. In this moment of existential crisis, when devastating war engulfed large parts of Europe, attitude of the three Central European societies towards the Jews became an ultimate test of the character of those nations. While during the interwar years the Jews of Czechoslovakia were considered part of the national community, under the new existential threat the Czechs also began to exclude the Jews. Consequently, during WWII, the Czech, similarly as the Polish and the Hungarian Jews, were seen as others, as not part the nation.

Poland: Who Is the Victim Here?

During WWII, the Polish nation and the Polish territory were exposed to Nazi and Soviet terror on a scale hardly seen in any other part of Europe. Three million ethnic Poles were murdered. Warsaw was razed to its foundations, other cities were significantly damaged, and large parts of Polish industry were destroyed. The majority of Polish Jewry, around three million people, perished in the Holocaust.

In the following paragraphs, I look closely at narratives and policies of the Polish underground and of the Polish government-in-exile which defined the Polish approach to the Polish Jews during WWII. Importantly, the dominant approach among the Polish leaders was that the Polish Jews were "outside the universe of Polish national obligations [...] and their suffering was not considered part of the unfolding tragedy of Poland" (Michlic 2006, 132). The Polish government saw itself "as the defender first and foremost of the welfare and interests of the ethnic Polish community" (Engel 1993, 24–25). Because of this, in 1940 when the Polish underground prepared the 'Ten Commandments,' a set of rules about how a true patriotic Pole should behave under the occupation, it exhorted to solidarity and forbade denouncing Poles to Germans, without, however, mentioning the Jews.

Documents presented in a study by Gutman and Krakowski indicated that the Polish government-in-exile was meticulously informed by the Polish underground movement about the physical annihilation of the Jews. In a bulletin of the Home Army from September 1942, we read: "This mass murder [of Jews] has no precedent in

the history of the world. All historically recorded atrocities pale by comparison (in: Gutman and Krakowski 1988, 74). During the debate in the National Council on the condemnation of the extermination of Jews in Poland in late November 1942, the Minister of Interior-in-exile, Mikołajczyk, delivered a speech in which he said: "At the moment at which the Poles and the Jews are victims of the same murders, we have the right to demand from those few Jews who live in the world beyond the Nazi reach, that they refrain from spreading stories which are not true and which do irreparable damage to Poland" (in: Gutman and Krakowski 1988, 92). Two important points, mentioned by Mikołajczyk - that Polish and Jewish victimhood were equal and that questioning Polish behaviour during the war was intended to cause damage to the Polish nation - would remain two central topics in the Polish national narrative until today.

Well informed about the Nazi atrocities, the government-in-exile did very little to assist Jewish citizens in Poland. It took the government-in-exile three years to respond by establishing the Council for Aiding Jews, Żegota, at the end of 1942 and the Council for Rescuing the Jewish Population in Poland in April 1944. Both these initiatives, limited in scope and badly underfunded, came too late for the majority of Polish Jews who by then were already murdered (Gutman and Krakowski 1988, 300–308). Even in the periods when the extermination of Jews reached a peak, the prevailing approach was to wait passively and to prepare for action only when the Nazi extermination would start to target the ethnic Poles. The dilatory attitude of the government-in-exile towards the ongoing genocide of Polish Jews can be at least partially explained by the prevalent mood in Poland. A common attitude of Poles toward the extermination of Jews was succinctly summarized by General Skroczyński, a regional Home Army commander, who wrote in his report from December 1943: "There is certain a sympathy for the Jews. It is better, however, that they are no longer here and no one desires to see them return after the war" (in: Zimmerman 2015, 362).

During the war, the Polish approach to the Jewish question developed not only from an ethno-nationalist narrative but also from the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism. This myth intensified over the course of war following the lack of success of Polish diplomacy regarding the post-war status of the Polish eastern territories which the Soviet forces had occupied in 1939. With the progress of the Red Army, it soon became clear that the liberation of Polish territory would come from the East. Since the Poles saw Germans and Soviets as equal enemies of Poland, the positive reception of the Soviet Army in 1939 by the Jews living in the eastern part of Poland served as a strong pretext for the accusation that Jews were agents of the Bolsheviks.[24]

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[24] The impact of this perception was demonstrated by Jan T. Gross who claimed that the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism was one of the main causes of the massacre in Jedwabne in the summer of 1941 (Gross 2002). More than 300 hundred Jews who the locals drove into a barn and burned alive were forced to carry with them a statue of Lenin.

Of course, thousands of Poles risked their lives to rescue Jews, as is well documented in Yad Vashem where Poland, with 6863 individuals, has the highest representation in the group the Righteous Among Nations (Yad Vashem 2018a). Yet, anti-Jewish prejudices promoted by ethno-nationalist and Judeo-Bolshevism narratives led to a situation in which activities focused on helping Jews were not positively accepted. Massive participation of Poles in the underground activities which were punishable by death suggests that rather than fear, it was a lack of solidarity, indifference, and often hatred that complicated and prevented the rescue activities. Helping Jews was considered a deviant behaviour (Gross 2002) and Polish rescuers of Jews would have expected a negative reaction from their neighbours (Michlic 2006, 191; Gross 2007, intro). Passive, or often even negative, Polish attitudes had an impact on the fate of tens of thousands of Jews who managed to escape from ghettos, deportations, or camps (cf. Grabowski 2013).

The period of WWII which brought an abrupt end to the millennium-long history of Jews in Poland, became the most contentious topic in Polish-Jewish relations. The main question remains unresolved: Could the Polish nation have done more to help the Polish Jews confront the Nazi extermination?

The Polish instinct has been to refuse any kind of insinuation that collectively Poles bear responsibility for the fate of their Jewish neighbours under the Nazi occupation. To suggest otherwise has been understood to be example of virulent anti-Polish propaganda. The dominant Polish narrative, built since the end of WWII, claimed that Polish people were largely powerless to stop the carnage of the Jews since the Polish nation was no less a victim of the Nazi terror than the Jews. The Polish nation was also predestined to annihilation and the Polish state was systematically destroyed by the Nazis. A claim that Polish inaction contributed to the annihilation of Jews was considered a vile attempt to distort the facts. A complimentary narrative further stressed that the Polish underground movement, *Armia Krajowa* (The Home Army), which with its 350 thousand members represented the largest resistance movement in Nazi-occupied Europe, heroically fought against much more powerful Nazi and later Bolshevik enemy. It was the Polish government-in-exile which spared no effort to inform the Allies about the mass murder of Jews and by establishing Żegota, assisted Jews and helped to hide them. Any help to Jews was punished by death and yet, there were many Poles who were ready to risk their lives and hid and helped the Jews. Admittedly, there were Poles, so-called *szmalcowniki*, the blackmailers and Nazi informers, who took advantage of the misfortunes of Jews to enrich themselves. But those were few and their actions were severely punished.

The Institute of National Remembrance, founded in 1998, started to investigate the Jedwabne massacre. Following its inquiry it became apparent that assaults against Jews during 1941 were widespread in the eastern part of Poland which could have led to thousands of victims (Machcewicz and Persak 2002).

The Jewish understanding of the events was often in an opposition to this Polish view. Based on the testimonies provided by Jewish survivors, Poles could best be seen as indifferent but more often as complicit in Jewish suffering. There were some 'good Christians' who sympathized with the Jewish plight and even tried to help. But in the Jewish collective memory there prevailed a picture of Jews who were confronted with unfriendly individuals who, for little money were ready to denounce them to Germans and who did not hide their joy over the fact that finally, the Jews were about to disappear.

Czechoslovakia: Jews are not Czechs

Against the backdrop of the developments in Europe, in a country where 'the Jewish question did not exist,' in the late 1930s it became an important political issue. After the Nazi victory in Germany in 1933, Czechoslovakia became a primary destination, second only to France, for German refugees. Among them, many were Jews. Prague, with its bilingual Czech-German liberal *Kultur* became a safe haven for opponents of Nazism and the Czechoslovak capital became the centre of the anti-fascist movement.

The occupation of the demilitarized Rhineland by German troops in March 1936 and the inability of France and Britain to respond to this blatant violation of international treaties startled Czech politicians. As Germany intensified its campaign against the anti-Nazi activities of German émigrés in Prague, Czech authorities started to take the Nazi threats seriously. The border controls were strengthened and the life of refugees became more restricted. Immigration of Romania Jews to the eastern part of Czechoslovakia following the rise fascism in Romania and, finally, *Anschluss* in March 1938 led to a change in the public discourse about the absorption capacity of Czechoslovakia, especially related to Jews (Wein 2015b, 116–17). Czechoslovakia closed its borders, and the majority of those who applied for emigration were refused.

Nazism in Czechoslovakia found its main adherents among Sudeten Germans who were exposed to the Nazi propaganda machine. Among them, the popularity of irredentism started to grow. The Sudeten German Party of Konrad Henlein (1898-1945), heavily funded by Germany, became the main pro-Nazi force in Czechoslovakia. Following the *Anschluss,* membership in the Henlein Party grew further to one million, roughly one-third of the German-speaking population of Czechoslovakia. It became one of the largest fascist parties in Europe. Meanwhile, in the Sudetenland, the life of non-Nazi Germans, and of course Jews, became unbearable. Being exposed to insults and physical attacks by Henleinists, many of them decided to move to the Czech-speaking parts of Bohemia, thus adding to the already problematic refugee situation. Under pressure from Hitler who raised his demand for the Sudetenland under the pretext of the liberation of *Volksdeutche* community from the oppression of Czechoslovakia, Paris and London started to negotiate with Berlin about "peace in our time."

The result of this negotiation, the Munich Agreement signed on September 29, 1938, led to the demise of the First Republic. One-third of Bohemia and Moravia were ceded to Germany, Hungary received part of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, and Poland was granted a part of Southeast Silesia. Over 4.5 million citizens, one-third of the population, including a sizable number Czech and Slovak speakers, were suddenly living beyond the borders of the state. Hitler's interest in the Sudetenland was not only the liberation of the *Volksdeutche* but also, if not mostly, the strategic importance of the Sudetenland. By paralyzing Czechoslovak economic and defence strength, Hitler removed an important obstacle to his march to the East and his war ambitions were boosted.

In the Czech collective memory, Munich became a synonym for the national tragedy. In Czech historiography, the Munich Agreement became known as "a dictate," "a disaster," "a humiliation," or simply, "the betrayal." What Trianon was for Hungarians Munich became for Czechs. And indeed, following the Munich Agreement, Czech society underwent rapid changes not very different from the changes Hungarian society had experienced only a few years earlier with direct effect on the Jewish question.

With the end of the First Republic, Czech national identity began to be re-constructed. During this process, values and historical constructs on which the previous regime was built were abandoned. For example, instead of the Hussite tradition and the Reformation as foundational tradition of the Czech nation, the Catholic past was accented. Conservative, right-wing traditionalist and Catholic voices overshadowed the democratic liberal narrative. Marginalized during the First Republic, anti-liberals saw in Munich a "just" punishment for the democratic regime during which so-called traditional values declined or were devaluated (Soukupová 2016a, 20–21). Not only anti-liberals but also some liberal elites embraced the idea of 'national egoism' which refused the universalism and international orientation of the First Republic and instead called for pragmatism and focus on the survival of the nation. The main objective became "to safeguard the Czech nation and thus to avoid turning the tragedy of the state into the tragedy of the nation" (Rothkirchen 2005, 93). Thus, searching for national unity at a moment when the existence of the Czech nation was under the threat, the question of who is "in" and who is "out" of the national community returned. After Munich, imitating the nationalist discourse of European fascist movements and reviving some of the debates of the 19th century, the Czech nation became defined very exclusively and ethnically. Under the new definition, there was no place for minorities in the Czech nation (Soukupová 2016a, 29–32). In this period of national and economic crises, in the Czech-speaking parts of Bohemia dormant narratives about Jews were revived. Jews were again seen as parasites and imposters, disloyal to the Czech nation. Furthermore, the Czech turn to an anti-Jewish stance

was astutely backed by Nazi propaganda which, following the Munich agreement, increased its influence over Czech politics.[25]

Only a few months after the Munich Agreement, Jews were purged from public administration, professional organizations, sports clubs, universities, and theatres and operas. Jewish doctors were sacked from public hospitals. Regular anti-Semitic diatribes appeared in the Czech press (Wein 2015b, 187–88). In this way, even before Germany occupied the rest of the Czech Lands and established the so-called *Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren* in March 1939, a significant part of the Czech elites and wider society went through a radical transformation, an important part of which was alienation from the Jews.

When the Wehrmacht marched into Prague, there were about 118 thousand Jews living in the territory that became the Protectorate. 'Jewish Affairs' were put under the jurisdiction of various German authorities, important among them being the Central Office for Jewish Emigration founded in July 1939 by Adolf Eichmann. The *Endlösung* in the Protectorate escalated with the appointment of Reinhard Heydrich as the *Reichsprotektor* in September 1941 when transports to the East commenced. Apart from a few direct trains to ghettos in Nazi-occupied Poland, most of the Czech Jews were sent first to *Terezín/Theresienstadt,* a city in north Bohemia which was turned into a Jewish ghetto. It served as a transit camp, and from there, transports left for Nazi annihilation camps in Poland, predominantly Auschwitz. By 1945, an estimated 80 thousand Czech Jews would become victims of the Nazi genocide.

The Czech Protectorate government, whose independence was largely curbed, hoped to participate in Jewish affairs. Its interest was largely pragmatic. By adopting decrees which excluded Jews from the economy, it aimed to solve the problem of unemployment which had become massive following the Munich agreement (Rothkirchen 2005, 143). Even more importantly, the government wanted to prevent the transfer of Jewish property into German hands.[26] There was a hope that Czechs, rather than Germans, would aryanize Jewish property. Yet, the Czech puppet government was soon reminded who was master in the land. In June 1939, the *Reichsprotektor* issued a decree which took jurisdiction over Jewish property into his office. The first month of the Protectorate showed, however, that in a moment of crisis and under duress, the Czech authorities were ready to treat the Jews as the Other. In order to safeguard the interests of Czechs, Jews could be thrown out of their jobs, excluded from the national economy and public life, and their property could be seized.

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[25] For example, the main Nazi propaganda organ, *Der Stürmer*, devoted an entire issue to the Jews of Czecho-Slovakia (Rothkirchen 2005, 87).

[26] Approximately one-third of all of the industrial and banking capital in Czechoslovakia was in Jewish hands. Among others, huge coal mines, metallurgical factories, timber and textile factories, and banking houses were owned by Rothschild, Gutmann, Petchek, and other important Jewish entrepreneurs (Rothkirchen 2005, 105).

The construction of the image of a Jew among the Czech elites during WWII was mostly influenced by three sources – the Nazi propaganda, the Czech underground movement, and the government-in-exile in London. Nazi propaganda, adopted by Czech collaborators in the Protectorate, was largely built on a diatribe against Jews and their allegedly destructive influence on the Czech nation. The First Republic was condemned as being the creation of the Jews, Jews were held responsible for tense relations between Czechs and Germans which led to the Munich Agreement, and in the condemnation of the alliance of Beneš's Czechoslovakia with the USSR, the motif of Judeobolshevism was also present (Láníček 2013, 21). Furthermore, in order discredit the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London, Nazi propaganda described it as a body which worked for Jewish interests and was financed and led by Jews (Láníček 2013, 22; Rothkirchen 2005, 121).

The second source which affected the Jewish question was the Czech underground. After the arrest and exile of the first generation of leaders of the underground, mostly pro-Beneš[27] politicians and soldiers, a new, more radical generation emerged after 1940. Being exposed to German brutality, the underground aimed not only to defeat Nazism but also to eliminate the German element in Czechoslovakia totally (Láníček 2013, 25). Because they were once again under the threat of Germanization, the 19th-century narrative which saw a Jew as a Germaniser who did not adhere to Czech culture and who refused the opportunity to become a Czech returned. Resentment, especially towards German-speaking Jews, dramatically increased. From a few reports sent by the underground to the government-in-exile in London, reports which touched on the Jewish question, two dominant stereotypes are noticeable – an alleged lack of loyalty of Jews and economic anti-Semitism. In one report from Protectorate sent by the resistance in 1943 we read:

> "Much apprehension [exists] that the Czechoslovak government will upon its return to the country bring back all the Jewish émigrés and will return them to their erstwhile and, possibly, even better positions. To our own [native] Jews, people are extending help wherever they can, prompted by sheer humanitarian motives. Otherwise, they do not wish their return. They feel alienated from them and are pleased not to encounter them anymore. It is not forgotten that with few exceptions Jews have not assimilated and that they sided with the Germans whenever this was advantageous to them, causing damage to the Czech people [...] It should be taken into consideration that after the war anti-Semitism will grow substantially, and that all those who will try to ease and assist the return of the Jews will meet with opposition" (in: Rothkirchen 2005, 184).

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[27] Edvard Beneš (1884-1948) was the 1st Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs (1918-35). In 1935, after Masaryk's retirement, he became President. During WWII he led the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London. After the liberation, he became President of Czechoslovakia and stayed in the office until the Communist coup in 1948.

The third important source of the construction of approaches to the Jewish question during WWII was the government-in-exile under Beneš. The view of Jews and their future position in liberated Czechoslovakia was strongly influenced by resentment towards minorities. 'Unruly' minorities, backed in their incitements and anti-state activities by revanchist Germany and Hungary, were seen as the gravediggers of the First Republic. In order to prevent the repetition of Munich, the idea that liberated Czechoslovakia would need to be as homogenous as possible, with a special accent on its Slavonic character, became a key part of the strategy of the government-in-exile. Because of the government's refusal to grant any special privileges to minorities, Jews were offered two paths: assimilation or emigration. Consequently, during WWII, Beneš became a staunch promoter of Zionism. Yet, this time, rather than supporting the idea of cultural Zionism, promoted by Masaryk, Beneš supported practical Zionism which called for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and Jewish emigration. During WWII, the Czech and Polish approaches to the Jewish question became very close.

An important vehicle by which a war and post-war narrative concerning the Jews was constructed was the BBC broadcast in Czech through which the government-in-exile addressed people in the Protectorate. As the analysis of Kubátová and Láníček shows, the broadcast formulated basic theses which after the war would become part of the national narrative. First, the Nazi crimes against Jews were juxtaposed to crimes committed against Czechs. The Final Solution of the Jewish question was seen as "a rehearsal" for the planned solution of the Czech question. Second, in the spirit of the myth of a democratic nation and accenting the tradition of Masaryk, it was stressed that both the Czech intelligentsia and ordinary people "became possessed with disgust for anti-Semitism and cast out the degrading, uncultured, barbarous, biological racial teaching from their emotional background." Finally, the Czech (and Slovak) collaboration with Nazis was, notwithstanding information it received from the Protectorate which proved otherwise, withheld from the government-in-exile. The government systematically whitewashed the record of people in the Protectorate (and even more so in Slovakia) in order not to harm the reputation of Czechs and Slovaks (Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 132–38).

To conclude, the Jewish question in Bohemia and Moravia underwent a dramatic change in a short period of time. Whereas in the liberal and democratic Czechoslovakia of the First Republic Jews were seen as part of the national community, after the late 1930s, Jews started to be excluded. Historiography often considers the Czech nation and Czech nationalism as unique, as not typically Central-European in its treatment of Jews.[28] However, as a younger generation of students of history and nationalism observes, in the moment of crisis, when the idea of the Czech nation was under threat, the response of Czech leaders fitted nicely into the

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[28] For example works by Hillel J. Kieval, Ezra Mendelsohn, Howard M. Sachar.

context of Central Europe.[29] WWII showed that indeed, fascism and virulent anti-Semitism found only limited support among Czechs (Láníček 2013, 17). The Nazi genocide of Jews was not accompanied by Czech brutality against their Jewish neighbours. Yet, neither did here exist an organized attempt to save them. Instead, the Holocaust was mostly accepted with passivity.[30] Neither the underground nor the government-in-exile considered the protection of the Jewish citizens of the Protectorate as a Czech national interest.

Hungary - From Exclusion to Annihilation

The foreign policy success of the Third Reich, the deepening of economic cooperation between Germany and Hungary, and the financial and ideological support of Hungarian Nazis boosted the ultra-Right in Hungary at the expense of conservative Horthyists who, in response, adjusted not only domestic and foreign policy but also an anti-Jewish agenda to Nazi demands (Kramer 2000, 69). The First and Second Jewish Laws, issued in 1938, eliminated Jewish economic and cultural power and limited political and civil rights of the Jews. After the signing of the Tripartite Pact in November 1940[31] which aligned Hungary with the Axis powers, the emulation of the Third Reich's anti-Jewish policies followed. The Third Jewish Law of 1941 became a Hungarian version of the Nuremberg Laws which aimed to segregate the Jews physically from the Hungarian population. As a result of these legislative acts, in less than a generation, from 1918 to 1941, the Hungarian Jews, once equal partners of the Magyars in the nation-building process, came to be perceived first as "financial oligopolists (First Jewish Law, 1938)," then as "economic and ethnic opponents (Second Jewish Law, 1939)," and finally to be demonized as "racial enemies, ethnic polluters, and sexual predators" (Third Jewish Law, 1941) (Kramer 2000, 79).

The fact that Hungary became an ally of Nazi Germany and avoided occupation until 1944 had a direct impact on the fate of Jews. Jewish males of military age and younger were conscripted into labour battalions. During the eastern-front campaign against the Soviet Union, over 50 thousand of them were sent to the front. Being unarmed, the majority of them lost their lives. And yet, the survival rates in those battalions were much higher than among those who were deported to the Nazi concentration camps (Kenez 2006, 154). Furthermore, until 1944, the Jews with Hungarian citizenship lived under the protection of the Hungarian state. They did not have to wear special insignia, kept the right of domicile, and were protected against the deportations to Nazi extermination camps.

Germany's capitulation at Stalingrad and the concomitant defeat of the Second Hungarian Army at Voronezh shook Hungarian trust in Nazi Germany and led to a negotiation between Hungary and the Allies about a

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[29] For example works by Michal Frankl, Hana Kubátová, Jan Láníček, Martin Wein.
[30] In the database of Yad Vashem there are 118 Czechs among the Righteous Among Nations (Yad Vashem 2018a).
[31] Signed in September 1940 by Germany, Italy, and Japan.

possible armistice. This led to Nazi Germany's invasion of Hungary on March 19, 1944. Historians disagree about whether the decision to occupy Hungary was primarily driven by political-military factors (Braham 1981, 362), or whether the main driving force behind it was the implementation of the *Endlösung* (Ránki 1985, 83). Yet, from the moment the Wehrmacht crossed the Hungarian border, the liquidation of Hungarian Jewry begun under the supervision of Adolf Eichmann. Coming to Budapest with only 200 co-workers, Eichmann had to be certain of the willingness of the Hungarian military, bureaucracy, and society to execute the *Endlösung* (Kramer 2000, 128). And indeed, with the active assistance of the collaborative Hungarian government, and with a population which reacted "with apathetic resignation" (Cartledge 2011, 397), the ghettoization and deportation of Hungarian Jewry conducted by the Hungarian gendarmerie started. By mid-July, only three months after Eichmann opened his office in Budapest, Hungarian Jewry from the provinces, about 458 thousand people, were robbed, isolated, and "subjected to the most barbaric and speedy deportation and extermination program of the war" (Braham 2000, 413–14). They were deported mostly to Auschwitz where the majority of them were immediately sent to gas chambers (cf. Kádár and Vági 2004, xxii-xxiii).

International pressure, the Allied landing in Normandy together with the Allied bombing of Budapest which brought German defeat closer, and more information about the real nature of the "relocation" of Jews to the East, were all factors which contributed to stopping the deportation of the rest of Hungarian Jewry (Kramer 2000, 133). Horthy, who was silent when mostly Orthodox Jews from the provinces were deported, now played an active role in the protection of Budapest Jewry. He dismissed politicians who were the main executers of the Final Solution and even threatened the Germans that any attempts to renew the deportations would be resisted by force if needed (Kramer 2000, 133). Eichmann and his *Sonderkommando* left Budapest in late August 1944. Yet, after a coup orchestrated by Germany, Horthy stepped down in October 1944 (cf. Cartledge 2011, 402–7) and the Nazi Arrow Cross Party was elevated to power. Terror against the Jews remaining in Budapest commenced. Before the Red Army, which crossed Hungarian borders in September 1944, reached Budapest six month later, thousands of Jews were murdered by Arrow Cross's henchmen, often along the banks of the Danube river, or were sent to Austria in Death Marches (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum n.d.).

The role and responsibility of Hungary's government during WWII regarding its Jewish population remains a matter of high contention in the Hungarian collective memory. On the one hand, the issuing of exclusionary legislation which provided the 'legal base' for the persecution and impoverishment of Jews, the anti-Semitic incitement in the press, and the unimpeded agitation of the extreme Right were facts which went unopposed by the Horthy regime and which set a hostile tone regarding the Jewish question in Hungary during the 1930s

and 1940s. As Ranki summarizes, Horthy's era was characterized by "[t]he long decades of the political and social ethos of Jew-hatred, propagated and condoned by the regime" (Ranki 1999, 143). The anti-Semitic narrative and policies prepared the scene for the *Endlösung* which passed with either eager assistance or passive approval by Hungarians. In her report from the Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem, Arendt noted: "[c]onscience was indeed set at rest when he [Eichmann] saw the zeal and eagerness with which 'good society' everywhere reacted as he did. He did not need to 'close his ears to the voice of conscience,' as the judgment has it, not because he had none, but because his conscience spoke with a 'respectable voice' with the voice of respectable society around him" (Arendt 2006, 111–12). Hungarian society fitted well to Arend's description.

On the other hand, some argued that anti-Semitism sanctioned by the regime was part of a shrewd and successful tactic which helped to save at least part of Hungarian Jewry, that the aim of the anti-Semitic legislation was to placate both Hitler and Hungarian Nazis and that it was a "lesser evil" compared to the Final Solution (Karady 1993, 84). Some apologists of the Horthy era would even claim that the aim was to protect Hungarian Jews from both German and Hungarian Nazis (cf. Ranki 1999, 139). It is not the aim of this text to add more arguments to the perennial and ambiguous questions concerning the role of Horthy, Hungarian governments, and the Hungarian population in the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry (cf. Braham 2000). The fact was that while Hungarian Jews from the provinces were deported with the active help of local collaborators, part of Budapest's Jewry largely avoided the Final Solution due to the actions of the Hungarian government. Yet, it did not avoid the expropriation, stripping of human and socio-economic rights, humiliation, and sometimes death which took place under the auspices of the Hungarian authorities before the arrival of the Red Army. Importantly, both narratives – one about Hungary being the saviour of (Budapest) Jews during the Holocaust and a second, which recognized the role of Hungary in the extermination of a large part of Hungarian Jewry – co-existed, and, as will be discussed later, often competed bitterly in the Hungarian collective memory.

2.6. The Aftermath of World War II and the Cold War

WWII changed Central and Eastern Europe beyond recognition. Populations were decimated, borders moved, and whole cities and industries destroyed. The Red Army, and with it the Soviet Union, became the main 'liberator' of Budapest, Prague, and what was left of Warsaw, which placed Central Europe in the Soviet orbit. With the end of the worst carnage Central and Eastern Europe had ever experienced, an effort to create "a convincing popular narrative linking the "acceptable" past with the reconstructed post-war state" commenced (Wingfield 2000, 246). In an attempt to "adjust the past to fit the present", political elites started to manipulate

the collective memory through organized forgetting and remembering (Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 128). This process was, of course, not limited to the region of Central and Eastern Europe alone.

To overcome the collective trauma, the narrative of victimization, of shared suffering, became the most acceptable story for the majority of European nations in the post-war years. First, in order to comfort both individual and national consciousness, the responsibility for war crimes and suffering was put on Germany. 'They' did it; the Germans came to be considered the main and only culprits. And if 'they' were perpetrators, 'we' were victims. In the next step, the "Resistance" myth emerged (Judt 2002, 163). As Lebow noted, countries with a record of collaboration, like France and Hungary, emphasized the importance of their resistance movements. The glorification of resistance, as the "dominant frame of reference for wartime histories, commemoration, and public memory," became a dominant narrative in Poland, Norway, and Yugoslavia as well. Neutral countries, especially Switzerland, consolidated neutrality as the main pillar of their national identity by stressing their positive role in helping refugees while silencing their role in financing the Nazi Germany war effort and in turning away Jewish refugees. Even countries directly responsible for the war, Germany (both West and East) and Italy, and the Soviet Union, responsible for war atrocities in Eastern Europe, presented themselves as victims of WWII. As Lebow succinctly summed up, "Everyone blamed the Germans […], the Germans blamed the Nazis, and the Nazis blamed Hitler" (Lebow 2006, 20–21).

On the eastern side of the Iron Curtain, the mnemopolitics of Central European countries were manipulated by the Soviet power for forty years. Collective memories and national myths were constructed in order to serve the Communist regimes. Using the method of organized forgetting, problematic and conflicting moments of the past were banned, and a usable past was reinvented. As a result, the nations under Communist dictatorship failed to work through and to assess their response to the Nazi occupation and to their treatment of Jews during the war. Instead, the Communist anti-fascist resistance was inflated, and this included concealing the ethnic or religious background of the victims of WWII. In the post-war discourse, the Jewish victims of the Holocaust "were assimilated into universal groups of the persecuted civilian population or anti-fascists" (Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 132). Another example of the Communist mnemopolitics, as Judt said, was an effort to de-emphasize the fact that the social revolution, completed by the Communists in the post-war years and included the removal of old elites and "dispossessing a large segment of the (Jewish) urban bourgeoisie," had already started in Central and Eastern Europe during Nazi occupation. But of course, any continuity between Nazism and the Communist era was denied (Judt 2002, 172). Yet, the unwillingness of the Communist regimes to rehabilitate the victims of Nazism and especially to return property often stolen from them by their fellow-countrymen would return to the agenda after 1989. Furthermore, although the

Communist regimes suppressed national identities and local histories and tried to expunge old allegiances from the collective memory of the Central European nations, the traditions of nationalism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism would re-emerge shortly after 1989.

In the last part of this chapter, I look more closely at the Jewish question in post-WWII Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. I analyse in particular how the Jewish question was manipulated through narratives constructed by the Communist authorities.

Poland

At the end of WWII, about 300 thousand Polish Jews, mostly individuals who were deported to the USSR during the war, started to be repatriated to Poland (Lendvai 1971, 23; Checinski 1982, 7). These people constituted the possibility of a revival of the Jewish community in Poland. Before the Communist dictatorship was installed, the Jewish question in Poland was largely influenced by the narrative which was built on economic anti-Semitism. The three million Jews who had perished left behind them a great amount of property which became a source of wealth for Poles. A new social group, those who took over Jewish property and entered the social space the Jews had vacated, was born. As Lendvai says: "The grave of the Jewish middle class became the cradle of a new Gentile middle class in East Europe [...] These profiteers were the most demoralized, greedy, and unscrupulous elements [...] A lumpenproletariat which turned overnight into a lumpenbourgeoisie" (Lendvai 1971, 68). Knowing about the origin of their newly gained wealth, people who enriched themselves hated the idea of Jews coming back and reclaiming their property. 'Why did my Jew come back?' was a widely shared complaint of Poles who were confronted with the original owner of the property they now considered their own. Also, physical violence became widespread. A pogrom took place in Kraków in August 1945, followed by Kielce in July 1946.

Further, the post-WWII Jewish question in Poland was dominated by the narrative of Judeo-Communism, or Żydokomuna. For the first time in the history of Central and Eastern Europe, Jews were in a position of power because the Polish Workers' Party, supported by the USSR, looked for cadres loyal to the Party and relatively highly educated Jews became ideal candidates.[32] For Poles, this symbolized the victory of the Judeo-Communist takeover. While public outrage was aimed at 'court Jews,' individual Jews in positions of power, it also targeted Jews as a group. Based on the old myth that Jews were alien and anti-Polish, a post-WWII Jew was a Communist and an agent of the Soviet oppressors.

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[32] Prominent Communists of Jewish origin were Jakub Berman, Stalin's man in Poland, who was in charge of the Ministry of Public Security, Hilary Minc, a Minister of Industry and a member of the Politburo, Roman Zambrowski, a member of the Politburo, and Józef Różański, the brutal head of the investigators of the secret police.

By 1948, the Communist Polish United Workers' Party gained firm control over the country, and Poland became a Communist dictatorship. To gain legitimacy in the eyes of the population became a prime concern of the Polish Communists. In contrast to Hungary or Czechoslovakia, the Communists in Poland could not present themselves as the main liberators since it was the Home Army which had borne the heavy burden of the fight against the Nazis. The Polish population, traumatized by the war experience and the following civil war during which the Soviet-sponsored Communist institutions, mostly the security services, unleashed a brutal campaign against the institutions connected with the Polish government-in-exile, saw Communism not as an indigenous movement, but as the symbol of yet another Russian-Soviet oppression. To strengthen its position, the Communist Party started to stress Polish patriotism and national unity in its propaganda. As part of it, a campaign to promote genuine Polishness began. Jews, seen as undesirable elements, started to be downgraded or purged from their positions within the Party and bureaucracy. During Communism, social mobility was mostly achieved through the dismissal of the old cadres. With a group of new claimants who were eager to obtain their share of power, old Jewish comrades became replaceable.

Following Khrushchev's 'secret speech' in 1956 during which Stalin's atrocities were disclosed and Stalinism condemned, the Polish Communists started to ponder their own past. Two main competing factions crystallized within the Party. Natolin promoted conservatism, ethnic nationalism, anti-intellectualism, and authoritarianism. Its advocates wanted to discredit the old party leadership and to install new, strongly pro-Soviet cadres formed from the middle and lower party ranks. In contrast, Pulawska advocated reforms, less dependency on Moscow, and did not hide its ideological disillusionment with the Soviet Union. Together with ethnic Poles, this group attracted party leaders of Jewish origin. For that reason, it was called by its adversaries 'the Jews.' Starting in 1956, these two groups fought for influence over the party apparatus. In this struggle, the anti-Semitic narrative became one of the strongest weapons for the Natolin group (Michlic 2006, 237).

During the 1960s, the followers of Natolin's approach played a significant role in the Party. Its strongly authoritarian and ethno-nationalist course was further strengthened by a group formed within the Ministry of Interior Affairs under the notorious Mieczysław Moczar (1913-1986). Under the pretext of the fight against revisionism, Jews came to be watched as potential enemies of the state. Under the auspices of Moczar's ministry, a card index of Polish Jews in important positions started to be prepared. Jews who survived previous purges started to be quietly removed from the administration and also from the civilian and military security apparatuses under the pretext of their questionable "national allegiance" (Schatz 1991, 290). During the 1960s, the image of a Jew as an enemy started to be constructed using political categories. A Jew became a revisionist and a conspirator who wanted to weaken the Party by questioning its ideological foundations. More often, however,

the term 'Jew' was replaced by the term 'Zionist.' Zionism, being in an alliance with American imperialism and West-German revanchism, was now portrayed as an ideology which aimed to destroy Communism. A Zionist was an ideological enemy, a national nihilist, or a person who was not loyal to the party/state/nation. Using this construct, any person considered to be anti-regime could be labelled a Zionist. To call Jews 'agents of Zionism' proved to be a very handy instrument. It enabled the Party to name putative enemies and at the same to avoid the accusation of traditional anti-Semitism.

Following the Six Day War in 1967, Poland joined other Communist satellite countries,[33] gave its full support to the Arab countries, and cut off diplomatic relations with Israel. In June 1967, the First Secretary of the Party, Władysław Gomułka, delivered a speech which was largely devoted to the history of Israel and its support of the British–American imperialists against the progressive Arab forces. Moreover, as Stola notes, he gave the conflict in the Middle East a Polish dimension by claiming: "Israel's aggression in the Arab countries met with applause in the Zionist circles of Jews – Polish citizens. The authorities treat all citizens equally regardless of their ethnicity, but we do not want a fifth column to emerge in our country. We cannot remain indifferent towards people […] who support the aggressor." (in: Stola 2000b, 1).[34]

Gomułka's speech was a signal to Moczar, who unleashed "the biggest anti-Semitic campaign since the fall of the Third Reich" (Stola 2000a). The Ministry of the Interior constructed a new anti-Semitic narrative based on the old myth of a Jew. In 'the guise of a Zionist,' a Jew became an incarnation of the enemy who was empowered through his international connections (Lendvai 1971, 7). In March 1968, following student protests against the Party's conservative cultural policy, which were supported by Polish intellectuals, the Communist regime felt itself under threat. In this moment of domestic crisis, the regime needed to identify an internal enemy who could be blamed for both initiating the protests and for Party policies which led to the discontent. The regime unleashed a nationalist, anti-liberal, and anti-Semitic campaign. Propaganda in the media warned vigorously against the Zionist conspiracy. Poland became flooded with brochures "proving" that Zionists and revisionists were trying to undermine the state (Schatz 1991, 304). Media stressed the Jewish origin of the leaders of the student protests and presented them as Jewish conspirators acting in the name of foreign interests and having a destructive influence on Polish youth (Michlic 2006, 250–51). At the same time, based on the popular stereotype of Judeo-Communism, the Jews were blamed for being overly zealous Communists

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[33] With the exception of Romania.
[34] But not only Jews applauded the outcome. Following the defeat of the Arab countries, Soviet allies, in the Six-Day-War, spontaneous joy erupted in Poland. A popular saying of the time was: "Our Polish Jews have thrashed the Russian Arabs"(Checinski 1982, 212).

who were responsible for atrocities committed during the Stalinist period. Jews were portrayed as being the dark side of Communism, responsible for whatever was wrong with it (Stola 2006, 192).

Harassment and purges of Poles with Jewish roots unfolded in places where Jews had found a refuge following the previous purges in the Party and in administrative structures. Jewish employees in cultural, scientific, publishing, and media institutions started to be fired. Some were confronted with slogans like 'Judases go home,' 'Go to Palestine,' or 'Stop eating our bread.' By the end of 1970, twenty thousand Polish Jews had been forced to leave the country. The Polish state facilitated the emigration which was conducted with humiliating stipulations.[35] Following the emigration wave in the 1950s, this was the last Jewish exodus from Poland. After these people left, the once mighty Polish Jewry shrank to five thousand people.

The anti-Semitic campaign served various purposes for the Polish Communist regime. In the late 1960s, Poland was affected by domestic political instability, an economic crisis, and the Prague Spring, which was having an impact across the Soviet bloc. At a time when the regime had to placate a population dissatisfied with the socio-economic conditions and cultural policies of the Party, Polish Communist leaders used the well-tested trope of the Jew who was responsible for all problems.

The Polish collective memory concerning WWII was also carefully built during the Communist era. On the one hand, the scale of the atrocities against the Jews which took place on Polish territory made it impossible for the authorities to completely ignore the particularity of Jewish victimhood. Accepting this reality, the Party allowed the commemoration of the Jewish martyrdom during WWII. An impressive Ghetto Heroes Monument commemorating the uprising in the Jewish ghetto had already been unveiled in Warsaw in 1948, at a time when large parts of the city were still in ruins. The Treblinka memorial park was built between 1959 and 1963. In Auschwitz, however, discrepancies between the Polish and Jewish collective memories were manifested openly. In Auschwitz, the Communist authorities promoted the narrative of Polish victimhood during WWII while suppressing information about the special significance of the place in the Jewish genocide.

Additionally, a myth of Polish suffering and bravery in the fight against fascism was constructed. To protect that myth, any attempts to identify Poles with perpetrators rather than with victims were considered heretical. Historical literature, novels, memoirs, or movies about the wartime suffering of the Polish Jews, published in the West, thus caused outrage in Poland. They were often seen as an attempt to slander the Polish nation and to

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[35] The emigrants were forced to renounce Polish citizenship, they lost pensions, and could take only five dollars with them, they had to pay for their children's studies, and instead of a passport, they were forced to obtain a travel document valid only for a one-way trip to Israel (Schatz 1991, 311; Checinski 1982, 254). Only a quarter of the emigrants stayed in Israel. The majority of those 'Zionists' went to the U.S. and Western European countries (Stola 2000b, 6).

belittle both the Polish war suffering and the Polish effort to assist the Jews. For example, Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* or Leon Uris's *Exodus* were attacked by the Polish press as being anti-Polish propaganda (Checinski 1982, 170). Similarly, a popular series by Gerald Green *Holocaust* and Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* were considered anti-Polish.

However, the Communist anti-Semitic narrative had its opponents. Among the younger generation, liberals, and the progressive Catholic intelligentsia which formed the core of the opposition to the Communist dictatorship in Poland, resistance towards anti-Jewish politics started to grow. These groups began to understand the extent of the manipulation to which Polish society had been exposed during 1968 (Polonsky 1990, 8–9). The major breakthrough in the debate about Polish-Jewish relations took place in the 1980s. In 1987, the Catholic weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny,* published an article by Jan Błoński, "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto." After many years of silence, finally a Polish voice accepted moral responsibility for the mass murder of the Jews (Polonsky 1990, Introduction). To quote from Błoński: "[i]f only we had behaved more humanely in the past, had been wiser, more generous, then genocide would perhaps have been 'less imaginable,' would probably have been considerably more difficult to carry out, and almost certainly would have met with much greater resistance than it did. To put it differently, it would not have met with the indifference and moral turpitude of the society in whose full view it took place" (Błoński 1990, 46). The article sparked a very emotional debate among Polish intellectuals about Polish anti-Semitism and moral responsibility. For many of those who disagreed, Błoński slandered the Polish nation. However, it was the beginning of an important debate which would fully enter the public space only after the end of the Communist dictatorship.

Czechoslovakia
The main goal of the post-war political elites was "to legitimate the new "purer" post-war Czechoslovak nation-state," the Czechoslovak state without minorities (Wingfield 2000, 246). In order to explain both the internal conflict of the late 1930s and events of WWII, two categories of people were constructed: enemies of the nation/traitors and true patriots (Čapková 2015, 81). With almost no exceptions, Germans were called the fifth column and labelled as collaborators and traitors. They were the Other, separated from Czechs who were true patriots and victims of Nazism. The construction of a German as the enemy of the Czechoslovak nation helped to unify a bitterly divided nation. "By wrapping the Second World War experience in an easily recognizable narrative, painful questions about local collaboration were sidetracked" (Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 129).

Vilification of Germans and symbols of German culture, together with the appropriation of German property and space became an important part of the 'Czechicization,' of the national affirmation, of post-war

Czechoslovakia. The expulsion of three million Germans between 1945 and 1946, often under very brutal conditions (cf. Prauser and Rees 2004, 11–21), was defended, or celebrated, as the "redress of the battle of White Mountain of 1620," when the Catholic Hapsburgs defeated the protestant Czechs (Wingfield 2000, 254), and as "a removal of the foreign element from the body of the state which was necessary for its stability and security" (Soukupová 2016b, 12).

In this post-war atmosphere, Czech-Jewish relations were re-defined. In 1945, there were about 25 thousand Jewish survivors in Bohemia and Moravia and 30 thousand Jews in Slovakia – 15 per cent of the pre-war Jewish population (Láníček 2013, 146). The position of the government, already formulated in exile in London during WWII, was clear – Jews would be equal citizens in the Republic; however, no special national rights for the Jewish minority would be recognized. Jews were expected to assimilate fully - nationally, culturally, and also linguistically.

Not only the German-speaking Jews but also Czech-speaking Jews faced obstacles when reintegrating into society (cf. Čapková 2015). And in both cases, a material claim of Czech owners against original Jewish owners was, in fact, hidden behind the defence of Czechicization. Although during the war most of the spoils were redistributed among ethnic Germans, with the end of the war new opportunities arose for Czechs. And indeed, after the war, as in Poland and Hungary, Jewish survivors often faced hostility from Czech aryanizators and even from former friends to whom they had entrusted their property before the deportations (Soukupová 2016b, 44–46). The restitution of Jewish property was slowed down due to administrative obstacles, often under the pretext of the original owner's lack of loyalty.

The Communist Dictatorship and the Jewish Question

In the election of 1946, the Czechoslovak Communist Party won forty per cent of the vote in the Czech Lands[36] and occupied key positions in the government, the police, and the army. The coup in February 1948 and the installation of the Communist dictatorship completed the Communists' monopolization of the power. The Jews of Czechoslovakia expressed feelings concerning their future under the Communist dictatorship rather clearly. Immediately following the war, only a handful of Czech Jews left the country. However, from 1948 until 1950, when the Communist regime closed the border, more than fifty per cent of Jews emigrated, with 13 thousand Jews remaining in Slovakia and only 5 thousand in the Czech Lands.[37]

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[36] In Slovakia, the Democratic Party won and the Communist Party was only second strongest.
[37] Encyclopedia Judaica 2007, 5:359; Rataj 2003, 27.

The Communist approach towards Zionism became a litmus test for attitudes towards Jews. In the Communist orthodoxy, Zionism was an example of bourgeois nationalism which was an ideological enemy of Communist internationalism. Following this line of thought, the Czech Communists did not support the idea of the creation of a Jewish nation-state. However, it was not up to the Czech Communists to formulate important foreign-policy decisions. Moscow informed other Communist Parties about Stalin's decision to support the partition of Palestine, and the Czech Communists followed suit. Suddenly, the Communist narrative presented Zionism as a progressive force, and the Jewish state was considered an important member of the anti-fascist, democratic front. Czechoslovak Communist politicians provided Israel with full diplomatic support. The Communist Bloc's support of Zionism and the Jewish state was, however, short-lived. Losing hope that Israel would be a Soviet ally in the struggle against the capitalist West, the Communist Bloc renewed its anti-Zionist posture. The Communist narrative now looked back at Zionism's roots and declared it a reactionary, nationalist-chauvinistic, and racist movement, and Israel became an imperialist state which was in a struggle with Arab workers.

The impact on the position of Czech Jews following this change was overwhelming. The Czechoslovak Communist Party went through a process of consolidation which was characterized by a series of purges. Actively assisted by Soviet advisors, and preparing against the backdrop of the anti-Semitic wave in the Stalinist Soviet Union which culminated in the preparation of the Doctor's plot, the Czechoslovak Communist Party organized its major show trial against 'traitors' within its own ranks. The Slánský trial took place in November 1952. Fourteen high-profile Communists were the main defendants, with the former Party General Secretary, Rudolf Slánský (1901-1952), the alleged head of the so-called conspiratorial plotters against socialist Czechoslovakia. The Slánský trial was 'openly anti-Semitic in its character' (Tigrid 2013, 53) and was accompanied by "the terror [...] which raged with a fury unprecedented anywhere else" (Lendvai 1971, 248). Eleven of the fourteen defendants, including Slánský, were of 'Jewish origin,' which was repeatedly stressed during the trial. The defendants were accused of forming a pro-Zionist network within the Party in the service of Tito's Yugoslavia, Israel, and the reactionary West, with the aim of sabotaging the national economy and the Communist system. According to a prosecutor, it was the Jewish-bourgeois origin of the defendants which made them incapable of truly absorbing socialist values and which kept them alien to the Czechoslovak people (Blumenthal 2009, 13). Indicted for Zionism, Titoism, Trotskyism, and for being bourgeois nationals, and called nationalist traitors and enemies of the Czechoslovak people, eleven of the defendants, including Slánský, were hanged. Three were sentenced to life prison.

At least two classical anti-Semitic tropes appeared during the trial. First, the Jews, forming a separate nation, were not loyal to the Czechs (and they were Germanizers); second, the Jews were an economic enemy according to the economic anti-Semitism hidden in the Marxist phraseology. The media, which provided broad coverage of the trial, emphasized "the image of the Jew as a non-Czech or non-Slovak" (Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 195). The original German-sounding names of some of the defendants were mentioned. They were described as people without roots, as cosmopolitans – another code word for Jews. Accenting the middle and upper middle-class background of some of the Jewish defendants, the media accused them of being agents of the bourgeoisie who served capitalist interests and U.S. imperialism.

With the Slánský trial, Zionism became a construct, an umbrella term, for the fight against anti-Communist forces – fascism, imperialism, and bourgeois nationalism. The hate campaign against alleged Zionists, against the hidden enemy, gained momentum in the Czechoslovakia of the 1950s. Jews were purged from the Party, state administration, and the press. Individual persons of Jewish origin were treated as potential Zionists, as not fully reliable elements. Furthermore, the State Secret Police created a category of potential Zionists and cosmopolitans and put the Jewish community under a complex system of surveillance (Labendz 2014).

What explains the success of this campaign in a country where anti-Semitism was historically a minor problem? When the Communist regime needed to construct an enemy of the nation which was, on the one hand, well known to the people, to "us" and, on the other, not one of "us," the image of a Jew-Zionist became very expedient. After all, it was part of the Czech political tradition to consider a Zionist as outside of the Czech national collective. During the First Republic, however, "being a Zionist was a matter of choice" (Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 172) and Zionists were granted equal rights. This approach changed with the disintegration of inter-war Czechoslovakia and in a narrowly defined idea of the Czech national group, a Zionist was considered disloyal, non-Czech element. This being so, the Communist narrative could present a Jew-Zionist as an enemy who, by not being a true Czech, by being loyal to the reactionary Zionist movement, sought to undermine both the socialist system and the nation from within.

It was under the Communist dictatorship that the Czech collective memory related to WWII was constructed. As Frankl notes, post-WWII non-Communist and Communist narratives both shared important elements: "Both conceptualize the Nazi policy in the occupied Bohemian Lands as "Germanization" [... and] the persecution of Jews and Roma, therefore, played no functional role in these master narratives and was hardly mentioned" (Frankl 2013, 172–73). Jewish victims who formed a large majority, some three-fourths, of the 360 thousand Czechoslovak victims of WWII became simply part of the statistic. Murdered Jews were "nationalized" and "assimilated" into universal groups. Jewish victims of the Holocaust became Czechoslovak victims of fascism.

As Kubátová and Láníček comment, "Murdered Jews increased the number of 'Czechoslovak' wartime victims of the German, Hungarian and Slovak clero-fascist regimes, and thus, reinforced the national victimology" (Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 240).

The Communist anti-fascist resistance and the suffering of the Czech nation at the hands of Nazis became the two focal points of the Communist narrative. The Holocaust was separate, something Jewish, not closely linked to the Czech and Slovak experience of the war. Two tragic events of WWII illustrate these shared narratives – first, the destruction of the Czech village of Lidice in June 1942 in an act of revenge for the assassination of Heydrich by Czechoslovak parashooters, and second, the murder of four thousand Jewish prisoners during the liquidation of the "Terezín Family Camp" in Auschwitz-Birkenau in March 1944, which became the worst mass-murder of Czechoslovak citizens in all of WWII. Although Lidice became a defining moment, a focal point of the commemoration of the war mentioned in every Czech history textbook, the story of Terezín was almost forgotten (Frankl 2013, 165).

De-Stalinization, Prague Spring, and Normalization

The death of Stalin in 1953 and the process of de-Stalinization brought alternative narratives into the public space. With the liberalization of the system, political prisoners started to be released and topics which had been taboo started to be (re)discovered and re-formulated. Important among them were Jewish themes, especially the Holocaust, and the Czechoslovak relations with Zionism/Israel.

The change was felt the most in culture and in literature. During the 1960s, books on the Holocaust, by both domestic and international authors, started to be published. Movies with Jewish themes and the Holocaust became highlights of the so-called Czechoslovak New Wave. It was an international literary conference on Franz Kafka convened in May 1963 in Liblice Castle, north of Prague, that was considered "a starting shot of the Communist reform movement in Czechoslovakia that would eventually peak in the Prague Spring" (Wein 2015a, 170). The main organizer was a professor of German literature, Eduard Goldstücker (1913-2000), a Slovak Jew who had spent WWII in Britain where he worked for the government-in-exile, and who, in 1948, became the first Czechoslovak ambassador to Israel. Sentenced to life imprisonment during the anti-Zionist purges, he was rehabilitated in 1956. As he mentions in his memoirs, the importance of the conference "stemmed from the fact that it debated Kafka's works that had been rejected by the Communist watchdog for their decadence, and in this way helped to undermine Communist control over the cultural sphere" (in: Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 214).

Further, the Six-Day War of June 1967 strongly highlighted the dissatisfaction of pro-reform intellectuals and the general public with the Communist regime. Czechoslovakia was among the first countries which, together with the USSR, cut off relations with Israel after the Six-Day War. In virulent speeches, Communist leaders condemned Israel's 'imperialist' aggression against friendly Arab countries. During the commemoration event in Lidice in June 1967, of all places, President Novotný did not hesitate to indirectly compare Israel to Nazi Germany (Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 214). Against the backdrop of the anti-Israeli campaign, the anti-Zionist narrative was revived.

In the liberal atmosphere of Czechoslovakia in 1967, the regime's anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist campaigns led to public protests. First, during the Czechoslovak Writers' Congress of June 1967, prominent Czechoslovak Communist and non-Communist writers delivered speeches in which the anti-Israeli policies of the regime were sharply condemned. Pavel Kohout (1928), a prominent playwright and a reformed Communist, delivered a speech in which he articulated a narrative concerning the Czech-Israeli link which would re-appear after 1989. In his speech, he compared the fate of pre-Munich Czechoslovakia with the situation in Israel:

> In a certain part of the world a state structure emerged. It emerged on the historical territory of a small nation, which was oppressed and forcibly assimilated by its neighbour for centuries. [...] It received fixed borders and was recognized diplomatically. Yet it did not stop being a thorn in the eye of its neighbours which started to reclaim its territory after some time. The excuse for escalation was especially the fact that in the new state a strong minority of the neighbouring nation remained, the rights of which were supposedly oppressed. [...] The attempts of the small country to reconstitute order in its territory and to liquidate terrorists were called genocide by the strong neighbour, and were used as an excuse for ultimate demands: either you capitulate by a certain date, or you will be crushed on that date. So far history. You surely noticed that this was really history. [However] I did not talk about the Arabs-versus-Israeli duel, but about Germany versus Czechoslovakia. [...] If in 1938 the Czechs instead of capitulating had fired the first shot, could they then be regarded as the aggressor? [...] Has the citizen of the country that went through the betrayal of Munich the right to ask whether one is allowed to juggle with the definition of aggression as one-sidedly as our press has done? (Kohout 1967; quoted in: Wein 2015a, 171).

The fact that Czechoslovakia capitulated to Nazi Germany while Israel, in a pre-emptive strike, attacked the Arab countries and won, brought the Jewish state the admiration of many Czechs. This sentiment would last for decades. Grassroots initiatives called for the renewal of diplomatic relations with Israel. For example, university students at Charles University in Prague initiated a petition calling for the resumption of relations, collecting more than 13 thousand signatures (Lendvai 1971, 267). During the 1st of May celebration in 1968, a huge placard, "Let Israel Live" (Nechte Israel žít), appeared.

Figure 1: *Prague, May 1, 1968* [Archive of Martin Šmok, author unknown]

Indeed, the criticism of the Communist regime's policies towards Israel and Jews became part of the liberalization movement. It was almost as if in this short moment of freedom and free speech, the spirit of the First Republic, a time when support for Zionism and the 'non-existence' of the Jewish question were norms, inspired the pro-reform voices. This, however, ended abruptly with the largest military action in Europe since the end of WWII, when five members of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia on August 21st, 1968.[38]

Following the Soviet-led invasion, the 'normalization' process started, and post-1967 Communist Czechoslovakia became, alongside the USSR, the most anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli country of the Eastern Bloc. The Party reformists were replaced by conservatives who, with the assistance of their Soviet patrons, constructed a narrative explaining the events of the Prague spring. As Bren points out, ""Zionist conspiracies" (as they were called) thereby played a part in the public retelling of the Prague Spring" (Bren 2010, 69). In

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[38] The invaders were the USSR, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and East Germany, whose army did not cross but stayed on alert along the western borders of Czechoslovakia.

December 1970, the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CPC) adopted a resolution, "Lessons from the Evolution of the Crisis in the Party and Society after the 13th Congress of the CPC." It stated: "Considerable influence in the fight against socialism in the ČSSR [Czechoslovak Socialist Republic] was exerted by forces engaging from the position of Zionism, one of the instruments of international imperialism and anti-communism. The leading representatives in our countries were F. Kriegel, J. Pelikán, A. Lustig, E. Goldstücker, A.J. Liehm, E. Löbl, K. Winter, and many others" (in: Šmok 2017, 9). The document singled out Jews with German names. The Secret Police renewed its surveillance program, and under the massive operation *Pavouk* (Spider), people with at least one Jewish parent were registered. Šmok, in his research on Jewish communities during the normalization, observed: "Harassment, repeated problems with the authorities, regular summonses to appear before the STB [the Secret Police] for questioning all became an integral feature of the existence of anyone taking part in the life of a Jewish community (Šmok 2017, 19). Being aware of the fact that some of those who remained active Jews became informants of the Secret Police, the majority of Czech Jews avoided any links with Jewish communities.

To conclude, during the Communist dictatorship, the Jewish question continued to be astutely manipulated by the regime. A Zionist, a code word for a Jew, was presented as being both an internal and an external enemy. In the more liberal era of the Prague Spring, pro-reform voices started to openly criticize the anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli policies of Communist Czechoslovakia. However, during the normalization, the anti-Zionist narrative returned, and anti-Semitism and the anti-Israeli stance continued to characterize the Czechoslovak Communist regime until the late 1980s.

Hungary

Hungarian Jewry, with more than 700 thousand people in pre-war Europe[39] the third largest group after the USSR and Poland, shrank to approximately 200 thousand survivors after WWII (cf. A. Kovács 2010, 38–39). Yet, with the majority of Central and Eastern European Jewry murdered, Hungary became the only Central European country with a significant Jewish presence, especially following the mass migration of Polish Jewry during the 1950s and the late 1960s.

After the war, the Hungarian population started to deal with the questions of responsibility and victimhood. Hungary was generously rewarded for its alliance with Hitler by means of territorial gains and an economic wartime boom. Civilian losses among ethnic Hungarians were minimal, especially compared to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The organized resistance movement against the Nazi occupation was negligible.

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[39] In 1941, 725 thousand Jews were registered as residents of greater Hungary, forming 5 percent of the population (Lendvai 1971, 309).

And yet, on the basis of losses suffered by Hungarian soldiers on the eastern front and damage to Hungarian cities, including Budapest, caused by battles during the last months of the war, Hungarians identified themselves "as the last victim rather than the last ally of Nazi Germany" (Braham 2000, 417). Hungarians refused the idea that their Jewish neighbours were exposed to incomparably more severe conditions or that they were in any way responsible for the fact that the majority of the Hungarian victims of WWII were Jews. Instead, a narrative of German responsibility for the destruction of Hungarian Jewry evolved (Kenez 2006, 150, 152).

Further, Jews and non-Jews reacted differently to the Red Army's expulsion of German soldiers from Hungary. Traditional contempt for Slavs in general and Russians in particular, combined with Horthy's anti-Soviet propaganda had, of course, an impact on how Hungarians saw the arrival of the Soviet 'liberators.' For ethnic Hungarians "the events could be characterized as conquest by a hostile, foreign army" (Kenez 2006, 38). And indeed, the realities confirmed Hungarian concerns about the character of Soviet soldiers. They were confronted with the brutality inflicted by the occupying army against the Hungarian population including mass rapes, mass arrests, and looting (Kenez 2006, 39). Consequently, the fact that the Soviet Union and the Red Army were the main patrons of the Hungarian Communist Party rendered the Party unpopular among many Hungarians (Kenez 2006, 155). For the Jews, however, the Soviets were liberators. By liberating Budapest, the Red Army saved the rest of Hungarian Jewry from the Final Solution and from Arrow Cross terror. As an Hungarian Jewish survivor recalled, "I and other surviving Jews had to accept it: we were saved from certain death by Soviet soldiers and no one else. This experience, however, separates rather than unites us with the rest [...]" (in: Kovács 1985, 209). What became for the Jews the year of liberation became in the Hungarian collective memory the year of occupation. And these two narratives never reconciled (Personal Interview, Miller 2017).

Similarly as in Poland and Czechoslovakia, economic anti-Semitism largely influenced the Jewish question in Hungary in the turbulent period shortly after the war. As in other parts of Europe where the deportations of Jews had led to the enrichment of many who had seized Jewish property, the Hungarian Jewish returnees faced hostility. In Hungary, it became known as "cushions and quilts antisemitism" (Reuveni 1989, 41). A lack of interest in returning the property to its pre-war owners was endorsed by political leaders. The post-war governments did not offer any compensations to survivors (Várdy 1986, 148). The situation of the survivors was captured in a joke popular after the war among the Jews: A Jew who survived the camps runs into a Christian friend. "How are you?" the friend asks. "Don't even ask," the Jew replies. "I have returned from the camp, and now I have nothing, except the clothes you are wearing" (Kenez 2006, 158).

Further, similarly as in Poland, the post-WWII Jewish question in Hungary was dominated by the narrative of Judeo-Communism, or Żydokomuna. Ever since the White Terror of 1920s, Hungarians had been exposed to propaganda which claimed that the Communist Party and the Jews were inseparably linked. And indeed, the Communist Party, illegal till 1945 and having a good record in fighting fascism, seemed to be a natural choice for many Hungarian Jews who looked for protection against Hungarian anti-Semites after WWII.[40] At the same time, the rapidly rising Communists needed reliable and competent adherents, not involved with Horthy's regime. Well educated Jews became ideal candidates. Many Jews joined the Party and often quickly rose to positions of power. In no other Communist Party and political police had Jews played such a prominent role as in post-WWII Hungary.[41] The pre-WWII image of a "Jew as capitalist" was thus transformed and a new image of a "Jew as Communist" was constructed (Goldstein 1995, 6). Consequently, post-war anti-Semitism became directed against "the new Jew" who was "tough, unforgiving, revengeful" and who had political authority (Gati 1986, 101).

During 1946, the above-mentioned factors, combined with traditional anti-Semitic tropes including blood libel, led to a series of violent attacks against Hungarian Jews and their property. Pogroms in Miskolc and Kunmadaras left at least two Jews dead (cf. Kenez 2006, 159–61).

The Communist Dictatorship

In 1948, after applying a so-called salami-tactic for the liquidation of its opponents, the Communist Party under Rákosi Mátyás imposed totalitarian rule over Hungary. Notwithstanding the presence of a large number of Jews in the leadership of the Party, the Jewish question in Hungary was defined by similar factors as in other Communist countries. First, the Hungarian Communists promoted anti-Zionist narrative. Molnár Erik, a Communist historian and theoretician, wrote in a 1946 Party journal: "[i]n Hungary, there is a reactionary and a progressive solution to the Jewish problem. The reactionary solution is Zionism, which will remain reactionary even if it writes socialism on its banner. [...] Its ambition to restore the lost national identity of the Hungarian Jews means turning against social development in Hungary and as such is a reactionary objective. The progressive solution to the Jewish problem in Hungary today is the complete assimilation of the Jews into the society" (in: A. Kovács 2011, 3).

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[40] However, as Gati shows, the 'average Jew' was not so impressed by the Communist Party and in the election of 1945, in the Budapest districts with large numbers of Jewish citizens, the Social Democratic Party and the liberal, Western-oriented, bourgeois small Citizen's Democratic Party attracted Jewish votes (Gati 1986, 105–6).
[41] The Communist leadership was dominated by the quartet of Jews –Rákosi Mátyás (1892-1971), the Party leader, Farkas Miháli (1904-1965), responsible for the army and the police, Révai József (1898-1959), the Party ideologue, and Gerő Ernő (1898-1980) who was responsible for the economy.

Second, with the consolidation of power, purges took place within the Communist Party, often targeting pre-war Communists, many of them of Jewish descent. The accusation of a "Zionist conspiracy" appeared during the Rajk's trial, in 1946,[42] (Lendvai 1971, 308) when the original Jewish-sounding names of the Jewish defendants and their participation in the pre-war Zionist movements were presented in the indictment (A. Kovács 2017a, 7). However, the Hungarian Communist leaders were in a more complex situation when launching the anti-Semitic/anti-Zionist campaign than, for example, Czechoslovak Communists. First of all, a high percentage of the members of the Party, including Rákosi, had Jewish roots so they had too much to lose from such a campaign. Second, because of its role during WWII, Hungary was more reluctant than Czechoslovakia to unleash an open anti-Semitic campaign (Personal Interview, Máthé 2017). As a result, Hungary avoided an anti-Semitic Slánský's style show trial.

During the Stalinist era, under Rákosi's dictatorship (1948-1956), the Hungarian collective memory related to WWII was constructed. A study of the Jewish persecution in Hungary was suppressed, and with it issues of responsibility and collaboration. While supressing the memory of the Holocaust, the Party promoted its own narrative of WWII events. WWII was a struggle of the "good" forces – the Communist Parties – against the "evil" forces – all other players, i.e. "the conscious or unconscious representatives of the exploiting classes" (A. Kovács 2010, 46). The Jewish origin of the majority of the victims of the Holocaust was concealed. Instead, the victimhood of Communists was stressed (cf. A. Kovács 2010, 46).

The Kádár Era

In 1956, Hungarians started an anti-regime revolt which became one of the biggest uprisings against the Soviet regime in the Eastern bloc during the Cold War. It was crushed only after the Soviets sent a large military force to Hungary. The era of Kádár János (1912-1989) who led Hungary from 1956 until his retirement in 1988, humorously called 'goulash' Communism, was considerably more relaxed than the Stalin-style dictatorship of Rákosi. After the 1956 uprising, the Soviets allowed the Hungarian Communist leadership a certain level of freedom on the condition that it would not undermine basic dogmas. Consequently, Hungary became known as 'the happiest barrack in the socialist camp.'

During the Kádár era, Hungarian Jews were protected from open, state-sponsored anti-Semitism. To a large degree, the Party's approach towards anti-Semitism was motivated by its survival instinct. The Party presented itself as the main bulwark against Horthy style fascism. It put forward a strong condemnation of ethnocentric nationalism, which, in the case of Hungary, included anti-Semitic traits. Moreover, after the experience of the

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[42] László Rajk (1909-49), Minister of Interior and Foreign Minister, member of the Politburo. Of the seven defenders in the trial, three were of Jewish origin. Rajk and two other defendants of Jewish origin were sentenced to death.

1956 uprising, the Party could not ignore the mobilizing, anti-Communist force of Hungarian nationalism. To ward off this threat, nationalism and concomitant anti-Semitism were seen as part of the 'reactionary' anti-Communist forces. As A. Kovács notes, "obviously fearing that anti-Semitism and anti-Communism might become intertwined [...] it [the Party] placed a strict condition on protection against anti-Semitism" (A. Kovács 2010, 51).

However, in Kádár's Hungary, Zionism was also seen as a hostile ideology. In the Communist narrative, Zionism was depicted as a subversive, reactionary ideology, hostile to socialism. In a governmental document, compiled following the Six Day War in 1967, when the fight against Zionism intensified, we read: "Zionism is characterised by anti-Communism – hostility to the Soviet Union, subservience to international imperialism, the praising of capitalist Israel, an emphasis on Jewish superiority, and the enticement of Jews to Israel [...]. Zionism's main base was the Israeli Embassy [...]" (A. Kovács 2017a, 279). Moreover, at a time when Zionist organizations did not exist in Hungary, Zionism became a codename for Jewish activities seen by the regime as suspicious. In a report on the "Operational Situation of the Jewish Denomination" of the Ministry of the Interior, among Jewish 'peculiarities' are listed anti-national cosmopolitanism, solidarity, and cohesion, links with the West via family ties, a strong presence in elite professions and commerce, proclivity to conspiracy, and an avoidance of contacts with Christians (Ministry of Interior, 1961, in: A. Kovács 2017a, 295). From these documents, it is obvious that the Zionist label was imbued with old anti-Semitic stereotypes about the Jewish character combined with Communist anti-Western propaganda. It presented a Zionist, a code word for a Jew, as being both an internal other and an external enemy.

However, the character of the regime, which permitted a certain level of freedom both in the economy and in intellectual life, together with the hundred-thousand strong Jewish community, contributed to the fact that Jewish life in Budapest during the Kádár era was much richer than was the case in Poland or Czechoslovakia. Hungary hosted the only rabbinical seminary in the Communist world. The Jewish library and synagogues remained open (Lendvai 1971, 321). Importantly, Hungarian scholars and artists, often of Jewish descent, were able to publish works related to the Holocaust. This was a privilege their peers in the Soviet Bloc did not have (Braham 1994, 148). Furthermore, the post-war generation of Hungarian Jews gave up political ambitions and instead took advantage of the possibility of upward mobility. In a time when only a minority of Hungarians had a university education, about seventy per cent of Jews obtained a university degree, and many of them became a part of the intellectual elite (A. Kovács 2011, 4, 2017b).

To conclude, during the more than three decades of the Kádár regime, official anti-Semitism was prohibited and the Party honoured the assimilation contract. The Hungarian Jews, most of them fully assimilated, might

have thought that old anti-Jewish prejudices had passed into oblivion. However, maintaining suspicion of Zionists by manipulating the Jewish question according to their political needs, the Communists kept anti-Semitism available for use on the political agenda (A. Kovács 2013, 18). Moreover, by manipulating the collective memory of the war events, by limiting open discussion of the role of Hungary during WWII, Hungarians were prevented from coming to terms with the Jewish question. Only with the end of Communism did these issues come to light, and they became extremely divisive when Hungarians started to formulate their post-Communist national identity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the role of the Jewish question in the process of the construction of the national identity in Poland, the Czech Lands/Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. I analysed how stereotypes about the Jews - economic, religious, and those inspired by various theories of nationalism - influenced the meaning of the Jews in the Polish, Czech, and Hungarian societies. In Poland, whenever the Jewish question became a topic, the Polish national elites formulated two competing narratives – one more inclusive and the other more exclusive vis-à-vis the Jews. However, the exclusivist approach always prevailed. Regularly, during crisis, at moments when the existence of the Polish nation was under threat, Polish Jews were seen not only as the Other, as not part of the nation, but also as the enemy. In the Czech Lands, the meaning of Jews was often influenced by the struggle with German nationalism. At times when Czechs did not feel oppressed, Czech nationalism was inclusive towards Jews. At other times, when the existence of the Czech nation was questioned or even threatened, the Jews became the Other, the foreign element. In Hungary, at first the Jews were part of Hungarian nation building. Then, following Hungary's defeat in WWI, Hungarian nationalism became based on ethnicity, and the Hungarian Jews came to be seen first as opponents and then as enemies of the Hungarian nation. During the Communist dictatorship, all three regimes used the Jewish question astutely, and under the pretext of anti-Zionism, anti-Jewish stereotypes were kept alive and anti-Semitism was used for political goals.

Over the course of the long history of Jews in Central Europe, there were times when Jews were accepted. During times when Poland, the Czech Lands, and Hungary were multi-ethnic societies, there were moments, so-called 'golden times,' of co-existence. As I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, these periods, often idealized, would be recalled during the re-construction of the national identities of Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians in the post-Communist period.

Following the end of WWII, the Jewish question continued to be instrumental in the shaping of the collective memory of Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians. In all three countries, debates about Polish/Czech/Hungarian responsibility for the extermination of Jews during WWII were stifled during the Cold War and instead, the myth of victimhood and, especially in the case of Poland and Czechoslovakia, of resistance, was cultivated. The particularity of Jewish suffering during WWII was denied, and the Jewish victims became nationalized into a universal group of the victims of WWII.

In this chapter, I identified the key narratives concerning the Jews. As I will discuss in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, after 1989, when the national identities of the three Central European countries started to be re-defined following the end of the Cold War, certain narratives and images, both positive and negative, about 'the Jew' endured, and continued shaping the foreign policy of Poland, Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic and Hungary towards Israel. Furthermore, I will show that it was during the process of identity re-construction when the politics of memory started to play an important role. Various memory entrepreneurs would try to shape the collective memory by evoking, suppressing, or re-interpreting the legacy of events discussed in this chapter.

Before I do so, I discuss the relations between Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary and Israel during the Cold War.

CHAPTER 3: RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL DURING THE COLD WAR

In this chapter I examine Polish, Czechoslovak, and Hungarian bilateral relation with Israel. I briefly discuss the character of those relations when the three countries had had a chance to formulate their policies towards Israel independently, before the Soviet Union took a strong anti-Israeli stance. Yet, as I show in this chapter, even when relations of the Eastern Bloc with Israel were dictated by Moscow, the dynamic of those relations in the three countries differed. While Hungary was careful in endorsing the anti-Israel diatribes and Poland limited the criticism of the Jewish state to moments when the relations between USSR and Israel deteriorated, Czechoslovakia was one of the most anti-Israeli countries of the Eastern Bloc.

3.1. Polish-Israeli Relations from the Yishuv Era to the End of Communism

In the inter-war period, the ethno-nationalist political elites in Poland supported Jewish emigration to Palestine. In 1917, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Skrzyńsky, gave support to the Balfour declaration and the possibility of Jewish emigration to Palestine became one of the main topics for Polish diplomats in Britain (Kozłowski 2004, 3). Together with its diplomatic support, Poland also provided military training to Jewish military groups from the Yishuv. Members of the Jewish paramilitary organization Haganah, a core organization of the future Israeli Defence Forces, but also fighters of a splinter right-wing group, Irgun, had been trained in Poland by the Polish officers before WWII. Poland also became the main source of weapons for the Jewish paramilitary groups, and, furthermore, the Polish government discretely supported illegal Jewish emigration from Poland to Palestine organized between 1938 and 1939 by Jabotinsky (Kozłowski 2004, 4–5).

Following the end of WWII, Polish ethno-nationalism and geopolitics dominated Polish relations with the Yishuv/Israel. After WWII, Poland was open to the idea of Jewish emigration to Palestine, to the place of Jewish ethno-national affinity. In November 1947, during the debate in the UN about the division of Palestine, the Polish representative, Ksawery Pruszyński, emotionally supported the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine by stating that "the Jewish nation has the right to the land from which it was expelled" (in: Kozłowski 2004, 7). He further added that Poland "had an historical interest in the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine" (in: Szaynok 2009, 18).

Until the creation of the State of Israel, Poland supported illegal Jewish emigration to Palestine. This support required close relations with Czechoslovakia, which became the transit country for the majority of Jews leaving Poland. The Polish government allowed the Haganah to form and train groups of Jewish volunteers in Poland

and opened its ports for the material assistance of the Yishuv and later Israel (Szaynok 2009, 18–19). It also provided full diplomatic support to Jewish diplomacy in the UN by being among those countries which supported the division of Palestine in the vote on November 29, 1947 (Eban 1977, 91). Poland was among the first countries to recognize Israel *de jure* and the Polish government established diplomatic relations with Israel on May 19, 1948.

After 1948, in the context of the Cold War, Polish relations with Israel started to change. Communist Poland became a part of the Soviet Bloc, whose policy towards Israel was defined chiefly by Moscow's role in the Middle East.[43] The Soviet hope that Israel would help to undermine the British influence in the Middle East was soon dashed. As a result, Moscow started to support Egypt and Syria in their struggle against the Jewish state.

Beginning in the early 1950s, Poland's position towards Israel started to be defined by a simple syllogism: 'the Jews are Zionists, Zionists are enemies, Zionism equals Israel, Israel is an enemy'. The position of the Communist party towards Zionism was presented in an article by Michael Miroski, published in 1953 in an ideological and political magazine, *Nowe Drogi*: "Zionism and its organizations are agents of American imperialism, and they act under its order and in its interest [...] They spread nationalism and cosmopolitanism, and are involved in espionage and sabotage, including killing [...]" (in: Kozłowski 2004, 9). As a result, economic relations between the countries deteriorated, and the emigration of Polish Jews to Israel was halted. The Israeli Embassy started to be considered a centre for defunct Polish Zionist organizations described as imperialist and bourgeois (Abadi 2005, 865). Yet, the death of Stalin and the following short period of a thaw led to a renewal of Jewish emigration. No substantial improvement of relations happened, however, due to the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956, which the Communist Bloc denounced as imperialist aggression against the Arabs.

Similarly, during the 1960s, Polish relations with Israel were influenced by the Cold War dynamic. Unexpectedly, Polish-Israel relations improved at the beginning of the decade. In 1962 chargés d'affaires in both Tel Aviv and Warsaw were replaced by Ambassadors.[44] Two years later, in an important gesture, Israel recognized the Polish-German Oder-Nisse border as inviolable (Dyduch 2007, 160). The normalization of relations culminated in a first, yet unofficial, meeting in 1966 between the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abba Eban, and his Polish counterpart in Poland, Adam Rapacki. Despite the protests of the Arab countries, during Eban's visit, Israel was even allowed to organize a meeting in Warsaw of all of its ambassadors who were stationed in the countries of the Socialist Bloc. The improvement of relations enabled political visits, as well as economic,

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[43] Abadi offers a more detailed analysis of Polish-Israeli relations during the Cold War in which he shows that these relations sometimes had their own dynamic, not completely dependent on Moscow (cf. Abadi 2005).
[44] The level of diplomatic relations between other countries of the Communist Bloc and Israel, with the exception of the USSR, remained at the level of legations before they were cut off following the Six Day War (Govrin 1978, 182).

cultural, and scientific exchange "on a scale unknown by the other countries of the Soviet Bloc" (Govrin 1978, 182). Furthermore, Polish Jews were again allowed to emigrate. However, the improvement in relations was not given too much publicity, probably out for concern about the reactions of Moscow and the Arab world (Abadi 2005, 867–69).

The Six Day War of 1967 restrained relations between Israel and Poland for many years. Poland decided to cut off diplomatic relations with Israel on June 12th, three days after the Soviet Union did so. Could Poland have resisted similarly as Romania did? In his analysis of the events, Stanowski argues that Gomulka was concerned that if Warsaw did not side with Moscow, the German Democratic Republic would reconsider the recognition of its borders with Poland (cited in: Kozłowski 2004, 13). Kozłowski added that it was Moczar who influenced Gomulka in his decision to cut off the relations (Kozłowski 2004, 13). Even though we may never know whether pressure from Moscow or domestic factors primarily determined the Polish stance, the severance of relations with Israel aligned with the anti-Zionist campaign arranged by the Ministry of the Interior under Moczar's leadership. The scandal that erupted during the departure of the Israeli Ambassador and his staff from Warsaw illustrates the atmosphere in Poland in that time very well. At the airport, the Israelis were met by a 'spontaneous' crowd of outraged (and drunken) Poles carrying posters bearing the slogan 'Away with Israeli fascists,' who physically attacked the Israeli diplomats. The whole event was organized by the Ministry of the Interior (Kozłowski 2004, 14; Dyduch 2007, 161).

The termination of relations with Israel and a strong anti-Semitic campaign unleashed by the Communist regime have had an enormously negative impact on the Polish reputation in Israel and worldwide. The image of Poland as being inherently anti-Semitic strengthened further among the world Jewry.

The 1970s were not too eventful regarding relations between Poland and Israel. Mutual relations were frozen, and in 1975, the Polish position was confirmed during the vote in the UN when Resolution 3379, which equated Zionism and racism and which Poland supported. Yet, shortly thereafter, some cracks started to appear in Poland's isolation of Israel. The reasons for these changes were both internal and external. Domestically, the early 1980s in Poland were characterized by mass protests against the Communist regime under the banner of Solidarity. Concomitantly, the centrally planned Polish economy was hit by a serious crisis. To alleviate the economic and financial crisis, the Polish government, under the leadership of General Jaruzelski, asked the West, including the European Community and the U.S., for aid (Sjursen 2002). At the same time, however, in order to suppress the protests, the government imposed martial law in December 1981 which maintained it until summer 1983. The imposition of martial law was met by a hostile reaction from the Western countries, and loans to Poland came under threat. Needing Western aid, the Polish government

started to look for ways to ameliorate its reputation. Contacts with Israel and the improvement of relations with the Jewish diaspora, especially in the U.S., became one of the government's options (Kozłowski 2004, 19). In order to further this new initiative, Moczar was removed from his position. Furthermore, the Nozyk Synagogue, the only surviving pre-war prayer house in Warsaw, was renovated, and the Polish state started to provide a salary to a Rabbi (Personal Interview, Piszewski 2016).

On the international level, in the late 1970s, the Soviet Union began a reconsideration of its role in the Middle East, part of which was an attempt to improve relations with Israel. With Gorbachev's rise to power in 1985, the whole dynamics of the Cold War began to change, and consequently, the countries of the Communist Bloc became more daring in promoting slightly independent foreign policies.

The Polish-Israeli thaw began in the late 1970s, when Polish officials started to meet with their Israeli counterparts (cf. Palzur 2009, 56–57). In an interview in 1978, Edward Gierek, the First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, expressed the position of the Party towards Israel, evoking a long history of Polish-Jewish relations: "We never had hostile intentions towards the Jewish people. [...] Jews like other nations have the right to have an independent state. I feel that our attitude towards history, to all that we endured in common, constitutes the best proof of, and attests to our attitude towards the Jewish people" (in: Govrin 2011, 190). Yosef Govrin, an Israeli diplomat involved in relations with Poland during the 1980s, recalls that Poland's political orientation was driven by several factors. First, because they believed that Israel had a "sizable influence on public opinion in the West, and in the U.S. in particular," Polish representatives repeatedly asked Israeli leaders to help improve Poland's image abroad and to promote its interests in the West. Second, facing a severe economic crisis, Poland hoped that if it improved its links with Israel and American Jews, the U.S. would be willing to reconsider its trade agreement with Poland which had been frozen in 1982. Third, in the 1980s Moscow was not an important obstacle to the normalization of relations with Israel. Instead, Poland was concerned about the response of the Arab countries, especially Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria, with which it had important military and construction contracts (Govrin 2011, 212–13).

One of the important litmus tests for Polish attitudes towards Polish Jews, world Jewry, and Israel were anniversaries related to the Holocaust. For the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1983, the Polish Communist regime decided to organize big celebrations with international participation. This was supposed to be the first major international event taking place in Poland since the declaration of martial law. It provided the Polish authorities with a perfect opportunity for "refurbishing of Poland's international image" and for a "new opening toward Jews" (Graham 1983). After many years during which the history of the Jews in Poland had been neglected, the National Museum started to plan an exhibit presenting the 1000 years of

Polish-Jewish culture (Graham 1983). To attract U.S. Jewry to Poland, the Polish state travel agency, Orbis, offered them a package tour, "Grand Jewish pilgrimage," using the slogan, "because we will never forget" (Graham 1983). Because the two states did not have diplomatic relations, Israeli representatives were not invited to Poland. Nonetheless, tens of Israelis, including high profile politicians, were allowed to arrive unofficially. In the end, the whole event had to be scaled down because many Jewish organizations and individuals, including survivors who lived in Poland,[45] did not want to be a part of this charade organized by the Communist regime. Moreover, the whole event became further politicised after an ambassador of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Fuad Yassen, stated that "The Jewish people were victims of Nazism and the Palestinian people are victims of the New Nazis-Zionists and Israel," but nevertheless was allowed to attend the wreath-laying ceremony at the ghetto memorial (Abadi 2005, 878). The 45th commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1988 illustrated the change in Polish-Israeli relations. Despite protests by the PLO and Arab states, the Polish authorities invited a delegation of Israeli ministers and legislators. Led by Vice-Premier Yitzhak Navon, more than 1.500 Israelis arrived in Poland for this occasion (Diehl 1988).

The Polish-Israeli relations also progressed on the diplomatic level. In 1986, Poland and Israel opened "an interest section," a lower level of diplomatic representation. Poland thus became the first country of the Communist Bloc to renew diplomatic relations with Israel after 1967. Bilateral contacts grew in various fields, including commerce, tourism, culture, and education. Direct flights from Tel Aviv to Warsaw, operated by EL AL and LOT, were introduced. Polish and Israeli ministers made official visits (Govrin 2011, 217).

The shift in the approach to Israel and Zionism was, however, not the result of a major ideational or ideological change among the Polish nomenklatura. Communist Poland never repudiated the anti-Semitic policies of 1968,[46] and the victims were offered neither apology nor compensation. Moreover, the anti-Semitic ploy continued to be used. For example, in an attempt to weaken the Solidarity movement, the regime pointed to the Jewish background of some of its activists (Gebert 1991, 725). The government also tolerated, and probably even supported, the existence of the Grunwald Patriotic Union, an association of nationalist groups established in 1981, which claimed allegiance to ideas promoted by *Endecja*. It distributed anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist literature and tracked Jews in the Solidarity movement (Gebert 1991, 724–25). Clearly, the effort to

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[45] One of the most prominent non-participants was Marek Edelman, a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and an activist in Solidarity. When asked why he refused to participate in the celebrations he responded: "Forty years ago we did not fight merely to survive - we fought for life in dignity and freedom. To celebrate our anniversary here, where enslavement and humiliation are now the lot of the whole society, where words and gestures have become nothing but lies, would betray the spirit of our struggle" (in: Graham 1983a).

[46] However, a discussion about the need to revise the narrative of 1968 did take place among in the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party (Stola 2016).

improve relations with Israel and world Jewry was motivated by sheer pragmatism. It was a tool by means of Poland hoped to improve its image and to gain access to foreign currency.

To conclude, during the Communist era, Polish-Israel relations largely reflected the Cold War dynamic. Yet, as Stola states, "Poland was probably the most pro-Israeli country in the Soviet Bloc." If in the 1980s, the motivation for this very was pragmatic, it is not clear why this was also the case in the preceding years. Stola speculated that one of the reasons could be that a number of key party leaders had Jewish roots and had relatives in Israel. During times when relations between the Soviet Bloc and Israel were quite good, for example in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Poland and Israel had relatively strong economic and diplomatic relations, and Jewish emigration from Poland to Israel went unhindered. During times when the relations between the USSR and Israel were strained, Poland was at least less hostile, than other countries of the Communist Bloc (Stola 2016). However, only after the political changes of 1989 could Polish-Israel relations be normalized.

3.2. Czechoslovak-Israeli Relations from the Yishuv Era to the End of Communism

Czechoslovak political leaders were open in their support of the idea of Zionism and the Jewish settlement in Palestine. President T.G. Masaryk's visit to the Yishuv in 1927 and President Beneš's endorsement of the establishment of the Jewish state expressed during WWII set the tone for the Czechoslovak post-war stance. Popular Democratic Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1940 to 1948, Jan Masaryk (1886-1948), the son of T.G. Masaryk, played an important role in Czechoslovak diplomatic support for the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine. When explaining the Czechoslovak support of practical Zionism, Masaryk stated that the creation of the Jewish state was the obligation the world owed to the Jews: "The Jews have been specially singled out and became the chosen people in the worst possible sense of the word. [...] To them and their fellow victims all over the world you and I owe a tremendous debt" (in: Kubátová and Láníček 2018, 176). As will be discussed later, Masaryk's narrative has returned to Czech foreign policy following the end of the Communist dictatorship in 1989. However, the Communist Party also endorsed the idea. It was a time when the Soviet Union had not yet taken a clear stance on the issue, and as a result, the countries which were about to become Moscow's satellites had room to manoeuvre. Czechoslovakia was a member of UNSCOP – a special UN committee which prepared a plan for Palestine, and its delegate supported a recommendation which called for partition. In November 1947, Czechoslovakia also voted in favour of UN Resolution 181 which ended the British mandate and created independent Arab and Jewish states in Palestine. In May 1948, when the

Communist Party had already monopolized power, Czechoslovakia became one of the first countries to recognize the State of Israel *de jure*.

Furthermore, Czechoslovakia became a transit country for about 200 thousand Polish Jews who were facing widespread hostilities and even physical threats after their return home. Many of them wanted to leave, mostly to settle in Palestine. In spite of diplomatic pressure from Britain, which tried to retain a restrictive policy towards Jewish emigration to Palestine, Czechoslovak authorities kept the borders open.

It was not only open borders and diplomatic support which Czechoslovakia provided to Israel. As the security situation in Palestine deteriorated following the negative position of Arabs on the idea of the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine, it became clear that its future would be decided on battlefields. In such a situation, the purchase of weapons became a priority for the Jewish leaders in the Yishuv/Israel. The purchase was however complicated by the fact that since 1947 a sale of weapons to Palestine had been under UN embargo. In a search of potential sellers, David Ben Gurion (1886-1973), the leader of the Yishuv and the first Israeli Prime Minister, sent an emissary to Czechoslovakia which was known for its extensive military industry. And indeed, Czechoslovak officials were interested. They were motivated more than by a traditional pro-Zionist stance. The Communists were attracted by the idea that by supporting the Jews in Palestine, they were contributing to the defeat of the British and their Arab allies in the Middle East. The main motivation, however, was financial. Because a decision by Moscow had excluded Czechoslovakia from the Marshall Plan, Czechoslovakia was in great need of foreign currency. The ability of the Yishuv/Israel to pay for weapons in cash, together with the prospect that Israel and Jewish businessmen and bankers mostly from the U.S., would further help Czechoslovakia to obtain financial loans, played an important role in the decision to sell of Czechoslovak weapons to Israel (Dufek, Kaplan, and Šlosar 1993, 46–47).

Between 1948 and 1949, Czechoslovakia sold rifles, machine guns, ammunition, and the fighter aircraft Avia and Spitfire to the Yishuv/Israel.[47] To speed up the delivery of weapons to Israel where a full-scale war commenced following the proclamation of the State of Israel in May 1948, and to better avoid obstacles related to the embargo, an air-lift was begun. Czechoslovakia provided an airfield near the town of Žatec, in western Bohemia, and pilots and other specialists, often volunteers and former soldiers from the U.S., U.K. Poland, South Africa and other countries, transported dismantled aircraft, arms, ammunition, and personnel to airfields in Israel. Czechoslovak technicians assisted in both dismantling and assembling the aircraft. In parallel, Czechoslovakia trained Israeli military pilots and ground crew specialists who would form the core of the Israeli

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[47] The Avia S-199 was a post-war version of the German Messerschmitt Bf109; Spitfire aircrafts were given to Czechoslovakia by Britain during WWII.

Air Force.[48] Further, Jewish volunteers recruited in Czechoslovakia by Haganah, who were about to join the war against the Arabs, were trained by Czechoslovak army officers.

Czechoslovak military assistance to Israel played an important role in the outcome of the first Arab-Israeli war (Govrin 2011, 50). Avia aircraft were involved in a battle which stopped the Egyptian army only 30km from Tel Aviv (Zídek and Sieber 2009, 129). The Žatec airport served as a base for B-17Gs, massive planes converted into provisional bomber aircraft and equipped with bombs provided by the Czechoslovak army, which were used in attacks against Cairo (Dufek, Kaplan, and Šlosar 1993, 126–27). Czechoslovak arms also helped to break the Arab blockade of Jerusalem which was recognized by Ben Gurion, who in his telegram to Haganah's representatives in Europe, wrote: "The equipment [from Czechoslovakia] came just on time and saved Jerusalem" (in: Yegar 1997, 92).

Due to the lack of discretion by foreign volunteers, the secret operation soon became public. Furthermore, Czechoslovak air force officials who emigrated to the West following the Communist coup revealed the ongoing operation. Czechoslovakia was thus under the growing pressure by Britain, which also broke the embargo by providing weapons to the Arabs, and the U.S. Naturally, Arab countries also demanded that military assistance to Israel be stopped. Nonetheless, Czechoslovakia did not yield to the pressure and continued its assistance to Israel even following the Communist coup.

However, as the position of Moscow towards Israel started to change, so did the position of the Czechoslovak Communist authorities and in a short period of time, the country which had been openly friendly towards Israel became one of the most hostile among the countries of the Communist Bloc. Beginning in 1950, Czechoslovakia closed its borders to Jewish emigration to Israel. In 1951, military aid to Israel was halted and the army officials involved started to be persecuted, or at least reprimanded. Materials documenting the operation were shredded (Dufek, Kaplan, and Šlosar 1993, 153). During the infamous Slánský trial, involvement in the military aid to Israel aided indictment. Moreover, in another trial, two Israeli citizens were indicted. Mordechai Oren was a member of the leftist Mapam and repeatedly travelled to Czechoslovakia and negotiated with Communist politicians about the support of Israel. Shimon Orenstein was a commercial attaché at the Israeli Embassy in Prague. Arrested in 1951, they were tortured and sentenced to life (Orenstein) and to 15 years (Oren) in prison. In 1952, the Israeli Ambassador was declared *persona non grata*. The Czechoslovak ideological somersault was sealed by the Egyptian-Czechoslovak arms deal of 1955. This historical deal upset the balance of power in the region as it provided Egypt with an enormous amount of

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[48] Among the participants in the training in Czechoslovakia was Ezer Weizmann who would become the 7th President of Israel.

modern military equipment produced not only in Czechoslovakia, which had the most developed heavy industry in the Eastern bloc, but also in the Soviet Union.[49] It was also very symbolic that a country which had assisted the Jewish state in its first war against Arabs now played a major role in building the army of Israel's main enemy. The delivery of tanks, MIG fighter planes, artillery guns, armoured vehicles, and other machinery worth almost 46 million pounds also became clear evidence of a growing closeness between the Soviet bloc and the Arab countries. Yet, before the Egyptians properly learned how to operate them, Israel destroyed many of those weapons during the Suez Crisis of 1956 which caused further deterioration in relations between Czechoslovakia and Israel.

The 1960s thaw did not lead to any major improvement in bilateral relations. Trade relations remained severed, diplomatic relations were kept at a lower level, and the Israeli Embassy in Prague remained under close surveillance by the secret police. The hostile Czechoslovak position towards Israel was manifested during the Eichmann Trial, which took place in 1961 in Jerusalem, when the authorities refused to assist Israel in collecting evidence against Eichmann in order to refrain from legitimizing the right of Israel "to act in the name of all Jews regardless of their citizenship" (Position of the Czechoslovak MFA, 1960 in: A. Kovács 2017a, 98). The Czechoslovak press, which gave the trial extensive coverage, suppressed references to the Jewish victims of the Nazi Final Solution and instead, Communist propaganda promoted narratives which claimed that there existed a link between the Vatican and Nazi criminals, a connection between Eichmann and high officials in West Germany, and a deal between Israel and West Germany, that in exchange for repatriation money, Israel would suppress information implicating leaders of West Germany in fascism (A. Kovács 2017a, 121–22).

Czechoslovakia, together with the USSR, was the first country of the Eastern Bloc to cut off relations with Israel following the Six Day War. In the Czechoslovak Communist propaganda the Israeli victory was described as an imperialist offensive against progressive Arab nations. After their defeat, Czechoslovakia showed a willingness to assist Egypt and Syria in rebuilding the Arab states' military, even for free or with reduced payments (Crhová 2005, 270–71). Open expressions of pro-Israeli positions among intellectuals and the public following the Six Day War, which became part of the Prague Spring protests against the regime, alarmed the Communist authorities. When the Prague Spring was crushed by the armies of the Warsaw Pact and pro-reform Communist leaders were replaced by hard-line apparatchiks loyal to Moscow, the regime unleashed a full-scale anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic campaign which was quite reminiscent of the atmosphere of the 1950s. In its hostility, anti-Israeli propaganda in Czechoslovakia surpassed even that in the Soviet Union (Govrin 2011, 52). Unlike many other countries of the Eastern Bloc which kept at least low-scale and indirect relations with

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[49] More about the role of the USSR in this deal in: Zídek and Sieber 2009, 54–59.

Israel, Czechoslovakia severed both diplomatic and economic links, prevented cultural or athletic contacts, forbade Jewish emigration, and did not issue visas to Israeli citizens. In the UN, Czechoslovakia supported Arab-sponsored resolutions, including the one in 1975 which equated Zionism with racism. At the same time, Czechoslovakia kept providing military and other aid to Arab countries and to the PLO. During the 1970s and 1980s, Czechoslovakia also trained members of various Palestinian terrorist factions (cf. Zídek and Sieber 2009, 234–59).

A change of the attitude came only in the late 1980s. Being aware of Polish and Hungarian talks with Israel, and knowing that Gorbachev did not oppose them, Czechoslovak Communist authorities became open to the idea of direct contacts with Israel. Yet, like Poland and Hungary, Czechoslovakia too was concerned about the possible reaction of Arab countries should relations with Israel improve. Arab markets were important to Czechoslovak companies, and moreover, Arab countries owed Czechoslovakia hundreds of millions of dollars. Czechoslovak leaders were concerned that Arabs would react negatively to the renewal of relations with Israel which could mean that markets would be lost together with the chance for the repayment of debts (Govrin 2011, 58, 71). Notwithstanding those concerns, the first meeting between Czechoslovak and Israeli Ministers of Foreign Affairs took place at the UN in 1988. Minister Bohuslav Chňoupek, in a talk with his Israeli counterpart, Shimon Peres, informed Peres that as part of economic reforms, Czechoslovakia was looking for cooperation with foreign companies, including those in Israel. He suggested that should Poland and Hungary renew diplomatic relations, Czechoslovakia might follow suit (Govrin 2011, 58–61). However, in the end, it was not the Communists who negotiated the renewal of bilateral relations with Israel, but a new generation of politicians who came to power following the Velvet Revolution in November 1989.

To conclude, the Czechoslovak position regarding Israel was characterized at first by a friendly stance, manifested in diplomatic and military support, which revolved into a completely opposite position during the Cold War. A country which, since its establishment, had carefully built its reputation as treating Jews well and as supporting the idea of Zionism, changed its position completely shortly after the Communist coup. Instead, virulent anti-Zionism combined in some periods with open anti-Semitism characterized the Czechoslovak Communist regime. It seemed as if the Communists wanted to prove that they were fully distancing themselves from the legacy of democratic Czechoslovakia. Yet, as I discuss in detail in the Chapter 5, the generation of politicians who came to power in 1989 would recognize and hail the legacy of democratic Czechoslovakia, which would contribute to a another major shift in the Czech position towards Israel.

3.3. Hungarian-Israeli Relations from the Yishuv Era to the End of Communism

Following the end of WWII, Hungary, not being a member of the UN until 1955, was not involved in the international diplomacy related to the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine. In 1948, however, both countries established diplomatic relations. One of the most important agenda items for Israel was the facilitation of emigration for Hungarian Jews. Yet, the mass migration of Jews was not in the interest of the post-war Hungarian government which was building the myth that in Hungary anti-Semitism did not exist. Government resistance, combined with their own high level of assimilation, kept Hungarian Jews, to Israel's consternation, in Hungary. Still, between 1945-1950, over 14 thousand Hungarian Jews emigrated to Israel (A. Kovács 2017a, 21).

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 brought a new dynamic into Hungary's relations with Israel which, following the Soviet-Israeli estrangement of the early 1950s, were rather chilly. Hungary found itself internationally isolated, and Kádár, Hungary's leader, hoped that an improvement of relations with Israel could strengthen Hungary's position. In this situation, diplomatic relations were elevated, and more than 4 thousand Jews were allowed to emigrate to Israel. In exchange, Israel was among the first countries to recognize Kádár's regime, and in the UN, it abstained on resolutions related to Hungary. Furthermore, Israel was ready to provide the economically stretched Hungarian government with compensation in hard currency for emigration permits for Hungarian Jews (A. Kovács 2017a, 26). Hungary's policy thus went against the foreign policy line of Moscow, which, following the Suez Crisis in 1956, severed relations with Israel and halted Jewish emigration (Bohus 2013, 68–69). However, the Hungarian-Israeli rapprochement was not long-lasting. The reality of the Cold War, including pressure from the Arab countries, contributed to the fact that Hungary's liberal stance towards Jewish emigration was reassessed, and in 1957 it was almost halted.

Next, the Eichmann Trial affected both the Jewish question in Hungary and Hungarian-Israeli relations. After Adolf Eichmann's capture in Argentina in 1960, Israel asked the governments of the Central-Eastern European countries in which the Holocaust took place to cooperate in gathering evidence for the trial. In Hungary, the trial caused a serious dilemma. First, ever since the early 1950s, Soviet anti-Zionist propaganda had rejected Israel's claim that it represented Jewish interests. This being the case, the whole Eastern Bloc had difficulty recognizing the authority of Israel which was suing Eichmann, the key figure of the Nazi *Endlösung* of the Jewish question in Europe, in the name of all the Jews. Second, the trial challenged the Communist representation of WWII. According to the Communist narrative, the main anti-fascist forces were Communism and the USSR, headed by Stalin. These defeated Nazism. Moreover, "anti-Fascism was instrumentalised to legitimize post-war Communist rule which was presented as the only guarantee against the resurgence of

Fascism" (Bohus 2013, 79). However, the trial in Jerusalem presented an alternative narrative. It was focused on Nazi Germany's atrocities against the Jews who were murdered not for what they did or thought, but for who they were. Of course, this narrative was uncomfortable for the Hungarian Communist authorities. When debating how to approach the trial and how it should be used for domestic propaganda, Kádár was clear that the Jewish aspect could not be accented. In a meeting of the Party's Political Committee in June 1960, he said: "It is not a good idea to turn these awful Fascist affairs into an exclusively Jewish matter. If we do act in this affair, the decisive thing should be that Eichmann murdered hundreds of thousands of Hungarian citizens. This is where the emphasis should be, rather than turning this affair into a Jewish question. [...] This is not a Jewish question, this is a question of Fascism and anti-Fascism" (in: A. Kovács 2017a, 79). Furthermore, in order to discredit both Zionism and West Germany, the Communist authorities wanted to show that during WWII some Hungarian Zionist leaders had cooperated with the Nazis, many of whom now lived unpunished in West Germany, in an attempt to save Jews.

Yet Hungary, together with Poland, did not fully follow the Soviet strategy with respect to the Eichmann Trial. In her analysis, Bohus argues that Hungarian Communist media were allowed to report on the trial quite openly, without much influence from the official propaganda. She adds that the large number of Jewish survivors living in Hungary, many of them journalists reporting from the trial, combined with the fact that an anti-fascist narrative was rather unfit for a country where anti-fascist resistance had been almost non-existent, contributed to the result that the regime did not coerce an ideological interpretation of the trial (Bohus 2013, 104–5).

Although the Eichmann Trial showed that Hungary was not readily willing to adopt Soviet anti-Zionist propaganda, the Six Day War of 1967 halted any potential improvement in Hungary-Israel relations. On June 12th, together with Poland, Hungary cut-off diplomatic relations with Israel, two days after the USSR and Czechoslovakia had done so. According to an official statement, the step was taken to protect relations with the Arab countries. However, strained relations with Romania, which the Hungarian government criticized for its poor treatment of its Hungarian minority, also led to the Hungarian decision to sever relations with Israel. Because Romania decided not to cut off relations with Israel, the only country of the Soviet Bloc to resist Moscow, it became a pariah. This suited the Hungarian authorities who now could more openly criticize the Romanian authorities for their treatment of their Hungarian minority (Bohus 2013, 170–72).

As in Poland and Czechoslovakia, many in Hungary opposed the official pro-Arab position of the regime following the Six Day War. They celebrated the defeat of the pro-Soviet Arab countries, primarily to express their anti-Communist stance. However, this public response was rather muted because Kádár's regime of the

late 1960s was politically and economically slightly more liberal that the regimes in the Soviet Bloc. This led to what Szalai calls "welfare dictatorship" which contributed to the depoliticisation of Hungarians (in: Bohus 2013, 182). Moreover, the regime's response to the Six Day War showed that Hungary was not willing to give its full support to the Arabs. Instead, Kádár's response was based on a double policy - on the one hand, the regime officially supported the Arab countries, on the other hand, the government tried to do very little to assist them. Indeed, from official documents it becomes clear that the Party leadership was very critical of the poor performance of the Arabs in the war against Israel, opposed radical Arab propaganda calling for the destruction of Israel, and sought to keep any military or other material assistance to the Arab countries minimal following their defeat in order not to pose a burden on the Hungarian economy (A. Kovács 2017a, Chapter 3).

Importantly, Kádár refused to fully endorse the anti-Israeli diatribe of other countries in the Eastern Bloc. His unwillingness to initiate a strong anti-Zionist campaign stemmed from the fear that such a campaign would boost Hungarian nationalist groups who were strong opponents of the Communist regime. Yet, as discussed in the previous section, anti-Zionism became a code word for the fight against alleged internal enemies and Israel, even though in a more restricted manner than in Poland and Czechoslovakia. For example, in his criticism of dissenting opinions in the Party with regard to its response to the Six Day War, at the Politburo meeting on June 13 1967 Kádár said: "A small section of the Party membership – and I hope I shall not be misunderstood - but a section that exists and is rather influential in a certain area - behaves in a non-Communist manner. And I don't want to make a racial thing out of this, and I understand that it is not sufficiently clear to everyone who the aggressor, the attacker is; it is possible to understand a certain anxiety, but this does not mean permission to challenge the position of the Party" (in: A. Kovács 2017a, 135). Kádár thus singled out Jews as being an unreliable element in the Party.

After 1967, bilateral relations between Hungary and Israel diminished significantly. However, even though political and economic relations withered, outside of the political sphere the connection between the two countries continued due to the personal links between Hungarian Jews and Israel. Also, the Hungarian Communists continued to support the Israeli Communist Party financially (in: Békés, Nagy, and Vékony 2015, 76–77).

It the 1980s, a very pragmatic issue caused the Hungarian approach toward Israel to change. Hungary was facing a severe economic crisis. Its foreign debt had risen dramatically, and even the interest on foreign loans was difficult to pay. To avoid state bankruptcy, Hungary sought membership in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The relative autonomy of Hungary's behaviour was possible because the USSR was

in the middle of a domestic political struggle following the death of Brezhnev in 1982. Furthermore, with the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979, the dynamic in the Middle East had changed. In this new environment, Hungary sought to improve relations with Israel, hoping that such a move would contribute to its own economic revitalization and to the improvement of relations with the West, and especially with the U.S. Building on the well-entrenched myth of 'Jewish power,' the Political Committee of the Party agreed that "We should seek the support of the Israeli partners towards accomplishing greater financial co-operation with our country in the United States and in the Western European countries" (in: A. Kovács 2017a, 196).

Consequently, relations developed in the economy, contacts between the Hungarian Communist Party and the Israeli Labour Party grew stronger, and more Israeli tourists were allowed to visit Hungary.[50] Nonetheless, the Communist authorities did not wish relations to expand to the political sphere, mainly out of concern for a negative reaction in the Arab countries. As Kovács László, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in the late 1980s, confirms, Syria, the PLO, Libya, and Algeria all responded with particular hostility to news of the improvement of Hungarian-Israeli relations. This movement led, for example, to the cancellation of Yasser Arafat's visit to Hungary. Yet, Kovács confirmed that apart from "oral blaming [...] there was no real countermeasure from the Arab countries" (Personal Interview, L. Kovács 2017). With the rise of Gorbachev to power in 1985, Hungary's opening to the West became even bolder. In 1987, being less concerned about the possible reaction of the USSR, Hungary started secret talks with Israel on expanding relations, including the possibility of diplomatic relations. Meetings between top Hungarian and Israeli politicians intensified (cf. Govrin 2011, 166–75), and Hungary started to plan the opening of an Interest Office in Israel. Together with Poland, Hungary thus joined the vanguard of the countries of the Soviet Bloc who favoured the idea of the renewing relations with Israel. Kovács displays this attitude towards the rapprochement with Israel when he says it fitted "in the whole opening towards the West, so I don't think that it was too early. I think it was just in time and it added to the growing international prestige of Hungary" (Personal Interview, L. Kovács 2017). And indeed, Hungary became the first Communist country to restore diplomatic relations with Israel. It did so three months before the Fall of Berlin Wall.

To conclude, the Hungarian relations with Israel did not deteriorate during the Cold War to such an extent as was the case of Czechoslovakia. A concern that the support of anti-Zionist rhetoric might strengthen anti-Communist nationalist groups, prevented the regime, grappling with its fascist past, from endorsing full-scale anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist campaigns such as those in Czechoslovakia and Poland. Furthermore, the less dictatorial character of the Hungarian Communist regime enabled the Hungarian Jews to maintain links with

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[50] In 1980, 1.079 Israeli visitors came to Hungary. In 1985, 13.200 visitors came (A. Kovács 2017a, 209).

their relatives in Israel. These conditions contributed to the fact that Hungary did not promote anti-Israeli policies as vociferously as some other countries of the Eastern Bloc. When the international political situation allowed, and Hungary started to open to the West, Israel became one of the first countries with which Hungarian Communists opened negotiation channels.

CHAPTER 4: POLAND AND ISRAEL SINCE 1989

Poland's policy is driven by history and geography perhaps to a greater degree than any other European state (Zając 2016, 11).

In February 1989, when its government started to negotiate with the opposition forces, Poland became the first of the Soviet satellites in Central Europe in which the monopoly of the Communist Party was disrupted. Shortly thereafter, with the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, post-Communist Poland started to seek its place in the new geopolitical order.

For post-Communist Poland, it was important to prove that it had become a normal, modern, and democratic country which was once again part of Western civilization. To undo some of the biggest mistakes of the Communist era, including those in foreign policy, was an important part of the transformation from dictatorship to democracy. Among Poland's goal was an opening to the West and the re-affirmation that after forty years of being, to use Milan Kundera's term, "*un Occidente kidnappé*" occupied by the Russians (Kundera 1984), it was now returning to Europe, to the West, where it always belonged.

In the search for a security arrangement which would provide a guarantee that Poland would not become a buffer zone between the West and the East, strong relations with the U.S. and Western Europe became essential. The U.S. in particular was seen as the only country which could guarantee the balance of power in Europe by being able to suppress any potential revisionist ambitions of both the USSR/Russia and Germany. As a result of these concerns, Polish membership in NATO became a clear goal. Ultimately, membership in the EU proved that Poland had successfully completed the transition from Communism to Democracy and had become a 'normal,' modern country.

The victory of the Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* - PiS) in the elections of 2015 led to a reassessment of values on which the Polish post-Communist identity was built. Under the PiS, the Polish government began to promote nationalism, conservative and Christian values, and anti-immigration policies. Poland started to fight cultural wars, while displaying an illiberal form of government close to that of Orbán's Hungary. The orientation of Poland's foreign policy became far less clear. Relations with the EU deteriorated following the dispute between Brussels and Warsaw over the rule of law. Relations with Berlin, built for almost three decades with utmost care, suffered after the government of the nationalist PiS started to accentuate

Germany's Nazi past as the main reference point defining German-Polish bilateral relations. Poland, a former poster child for the successful transition from Communism to Democracy, gradually became isolated.

I will now discuss the role of Israel in the process of the re-construction of Polish post-Communist identity, and examine the effect it has had on the definition of Polish foreign policy inters vis-à-vis Israel.

Polish Relations with Israel

The Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the State of Israel share history and common values that are the cornerstone of the unique ties between the two peoples, based on hundreds of years of common history. Both Governments are determined to enhance their Strategic Partnership based on longstanding friendship, shared values and mutual trust. As the global political, economic and security landscape becomes ever more complex, the joint contribution of Poland and Israel to reinforcing pillars of the international order based upon our shared values can be of high value. (Polish-Israeli Intergovernmental Consultations Joint Statement, Prime Minister's Office 2016)

Israel is a strategic partner. We do not have many strategic partners, but Israel is definitely our strategic partner. Witold Sobkow, Political Director, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Personal Interview, Sobkow 2016)

Poland relates to Israel as a country in which Poland has a special interest. [...] Israel is most important to us because of our common history. Lech Kaczyński, President of Poland, 2005-10 (The Jerusalem Post 2006)

There is no country in the world which has so much common with Israel. 1000 years of common history. Jacek Chodorowitz, Polish Ambassador to Israel, 2012-18 (Personal Interview, Chodorowitz 2017)

On February 27, 1990, in an official ceremony in Warsaw, Polish and Israeli Ministers of Foreign Affairs renewed diplomatic relations between the two countries. Notwithstanding the importance of this formal step, it was not 'day one' in the relations between Poland and Israel. The two countries, and especially the two nations, have had a long history of co-operation, co-existence, and also of distrust and animosity, against which backdrop the Polish approach towards Israel was built. The complexities of the long Polish-Jewish relations have been reflected in the Polish policy towards Israel and it is impossible to analyse the latter without taking into consideration the legacies of hundreds of years of the Jewish question in Poland. A Polish-Jewish BBC journalist who emigrated from Poland to Sweden in 1970 and who helped to organize aid to Solidarity and other oppositional groups, Eugeniusz Smolar, summed this up well when he said, 'Polish-Israeli and Polish-Jewish relations go hand to hand, it is a dual track' (Personal Interview, Smolar 2016).

In Polish foreign policy thinking, Israel came to play a special role. Although Israel was geographically distant, and despite the fact that Poland's eastern neighbourhood had primary strategic importance for Polish security,

Poland considered Israel to be a strategic partner. Bilateral relations between the countries have been carefully cultivated, a fact manifested in regular government-to-government meetings. Among the EU member states, Poland became part of the pro-Israeli block of countries. In the UN, Poland did not vote against Israeli interests. In this chapter, I analyse why a country which was engulfed with anti-Semitism before it lost its independence in 1939, built after 1989 close relations with Israel.

In the next sections of this chapter, I first identify the main narratives concerning Polish-Jewish relations and Israel. I show that some of these narratives were shared among the Polish political elites, yet on some issues, the narrative of the nationalist Right contradicted the narrative of the moderates. Next, I look at political leaders who represent those narratives. Finally, I discuss the institutionalization of those narratives in Polish-Jewish and Polish-Israel relations. I focus on memory politics, relations with the Jewish diaspora, and diplomatic and economic relations with Israel.

4.1. Narratives

As this thesis shows, during the process of the re-construction of the post-1989 collective identity of Poland, the Jewish question and Israel played important roles. In this part, I look at narratives related to the Jewish question and to Israel. I study their origins and points of view. I argue that narratives about Israel were not contested; rather, there existed a broad agreement between the Left and Right on the importance of good relations with the Jewish state. However, while a consensus concerning Israel existed, the Jewish question proved more contentious. In an attempt to shape the Polish collective memory, memory entrepreneurs of different political camps contested the meaning of the past, and battles about Polish-Jewish relations became part of day-to-day politics in Poland. This part is structured as follows: first, I examine a legacy of key historical events which resonated in the collective memory of the Polish post-Communist elites and which became important reference points in their narratives. I look particularly closely at WWII and the Communist era and at their impact on the Polish view of the Jewish question and Israel. Second, I examine the major narratives concerning Israel shared by both Left and Right political elites in Poland. Third, I focus on conflicting narratives concerning the legacy of the past as promoted by, on the one hand, the Left and liberals and, on the other, by the nationalist-conservative Right.

The Legacy of WWII and Communism

With the democratization of political life in Poland, issues hidden and suppressed during the Communist era suddenly reached the public space. For Polish society, the "explosion of social memory" became one of the key

aspects of the post-Communist transformation and "proved to be one of the most challenging processes that Polish society has had to face in the modern era" (Michlic 2010). The Polish response to the Nazi extermination of the Jews has been a topic which arouses especially intense passions among Poles.

As I discussed earlier, a strong national narrative of heroism and sacrifice became dominant. Accordingly, to this version of events, it was the Polish nation which suffered the most under the barbarity of the Nazi terror, and Poles heroically confronted their German occupiers. Any attention given to war time Jewish suffering, attention which intensified in the post-war period, thus was seen as diverting the public spotlight from the Polish predicament. Poles did not want to share their victimhood with the Jews. As Smolar observes, "many people would reject on an emotional level that we [the Poles] were also perpetrators"(Personal Interview, Smolar 2016).

According to Glowacka, the failure of Poles to "come to terms with its Jewish question and subsequently to mourn the disappearance of its Jews has doomed to failure the debate on forgiveness." It was "the repressed shame" and "buried memory" which hindered the debate about the Jewish question in Poland (Glowacka 2010, 256). Dariusz Stola, a historian and a director of POLIN, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, added that Poles insisted on innocence because it was all they had. "Poles lost the war. They lost a lot: family members, cities, libraries, churches, twenty per cent of their territory, and national independence. Little was left but their innocence. When you lose everything it's good to at least be innocent"(AP 2016).

A situation in which they became witnesses to the annihilation of their Jewish neighbours, post-war anti-Semitism, and the appropriation of Jewish property, inflicted deep wounds on the Polish collective psyche which manifested themselves in the construction of the Polish collective memory. "The Jewish stranger was eliminated through the obliteration of the memory of the victim. This has led to what we may describe as "pathological amnesia" about Jewish life and death."(Glowacka and Zylinska 2010, 4–5). The issue of responsibility for events during WWII remained a thorny topic in Poland. As I discuss later, it became an important part of the debate about the Polish national identity and was reflected in conflicting narratives about the Polish past.

Two events from the Communist era, directly linked, influenced the identity of Polish elites and their approach towards Jews and Israel – the Six Day War and the anti-Semitic campaign of the late 1960s unleashed by the Communist regime. In spite of the official anti-Israeli propaganda spread by the Communist authorities, Poles hailed the victory of Israel over the Arab armies in 1967. Well-remembered by the generation of Poles who experienced this era, the Six Day War had become one of the defining moments which resonated two decades later when Poland started to redefine its foreign policy. As Stanisław Krajewski, a Polish-Jewish philosopher

and mathematician and a co-chairman of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews recalled, even in the 1950s and 1960s "there was a strong pro-Israeli feeling among the intellectuals that Jews are building a new modern country under difficult conditions and that Jews deserve it. In the 1960s, Israel was good and Arabs were bad because they were pro-Russian" (Personal Interview, Krajewski 2016).

The anti-Jewish purges of 1968 were remembered vividly during the period when the Polish-Israeli relations were renewed. 'The last pogrom in Europe' as this anti-Semitic campaign was sometimes called, had been a source of a bad consciousness among the Polish elites. Bartosz Rydlinski, a young Polish political scientist, said, "Many Poles are ashamed of what happened in 1968. That we have lost so many Jewish neighbours, friends [...] it was very nasty to kick out the Jews because they were Jewish. It was an anti-Semitic action" (Personal Interview, Rydlinski 2016). Krzystof Śliwiński, a Polish diplomat, the first Special Envoy for Jewish affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1995-1999), a Catholic intellectual, and a member of Solidarity expressed a feeling of debt to the Polish-Jews expelled in the late 1960s. He recalled that the expelled Polish Jews provided enormous help to the Solidarity movement. "We expelled the Jews from Poland, but they have given us embassies in Stockholm, London, everywhere. Without the Polish-Jewish emigrants of 1968 we would never had the revolution – they were the biggest contribution to our freedom" (Personal Interview, Śliwiński 2016).

The generation of elites that came to power in 1989 was formed by experience in various oppositional groups, mainly the Solidarity and Catholic circles, such as the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia *(Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej)*. Stifled by Communist censorship, interest in the Jewish presence in Poland had been growing among the dissent groups beginning in 1970s. For example, the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia started to organize a week of Jewish culture (Personal Interview, Magdziak-Mizewska 2016). For the post-war generation, pluralist pre-WWII Poland, with its significant Jewish minority, was seen as culturally rich and intellectually interesting, while a dull, monolithic Communist regime embodied the opposite. This idea was present particularly in intellectual centres and among the anti-Communist opposition. Konstanty Gebert, a Polish-Jewish intellectual, a journalist, and a member of Solidarity, added that in the 1970s, those who called for the moral and intellectual revival of Poland considered Communist Poland inauthentic. "So what would a real Poland look like? Well, the last time we had a real Poland was the 2nd Republic [interwar era]. And what was the most immediately identifiable difference? That was Poland with the Jews." Jews thus became a symbol of idealized, mythologised, pluralistic, multi-ethnic Poland. And when Solidarity emerged in 1980, it considered itself the heir of everything Polish – "We are the people, they are Moscow's backers," and as the heir of everything Polish, "it included the Jewish heritage as well" (Personal Interview Gebert 2016). As Krajewski tells

us, the inclusion of Jews thus became a part of the anti-Communist position of many intellectuals (Personal Interview, Krajewski 2016).

However, in the search for a usable past, reference to an idealized, multi-ethnic Poland was not the only image continuing to resonate among the post-Communist Polish elites. Pulling in the opposite direction, the ethnic-nationalism, with its roots in *Endecja,* also attracted some of them. According to this idea, Polish society must be ethnically coherent and it must be based on Christian values.

After identifying past events and issues which strongly resonated in the collective memory of the Polish elites who came to power in 1989, I now look at their articulation in narratives related to Israel. First, I examine narratives shared by Polish Left and moderate Right elites.

Shared Narratives - Israel

In 1989, Polish elites started the process of the rebuilding the country. Renewing relations with countries from which Poland had been severed became one of the main tasks of the first post-Communist government, led by the former member of Solidarity, Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki (Govrin 2011, 220). Piotr Puchta, the first Representative of Poland in Israel in the 1980s and later the Head of the Middle Eastern Department at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "[...] in 1989, there was a general understanding among all political forces in Poland that in order to join the family of the democratic world, we need to build good relations with all the countries which were representing the same values, the same democratic tradition. And of course, Israel was considered a country that was in a family of free democratic states" (Personal Interview, Puchta 2016). According to this narrative, Israel, being seen as a modern, democratic country, thus became a natural ally of Poland in a region where democracy had been scarce. It came to be seen as an outpost of the West in the Middle East. As explained by a top official at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Israel is Western democracy in the Middle East. Israel is some kind of oasis with whom we share the same values" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 5 2016).

Polish elites understood that in order to be seen as a civilized country, they had to improve the image of Poland. Among the Jewish diaspora, and especially among American Jews of Polish origin, Poland's image was horribly bruised. As Marek Siwiec, Chief of the National Security Bureau 1997-2004 during the Kwaśniewski Presidency and Vice-President of the European Parliament 2007-09 recognized, "In 1989 we started more or less from zero, but with the Jewish diaspora, we started from minus five. [...] When Kwaśniewski took power, we had no doubts that without reaching normality with the Jewish community all over the world, we had no chance to show the modern aspiration of Poland" (Personal Interview, Siwiec 2016). Polish Ambassadors who

served in Israel in the 1990s and the 2000s recalled that it was mainly among American Jews that anti-Polonism and a conviction that Poles were anti-Semites was the strongest (Personal Interviews, Dowgiałło 2016; Piekarski 2016). To meet representatives of the American Jewish community to improve the image of Poland became an important part of the agenda of Polish representatives. President Alexander Kwaśniewski mentioned that under his leadership Poland pursued strong relations with American Jews, and being aware of "those anti-Semitic stereotypes which existed, they [the meetings] were a chance to say that Poland is different, that Poland is democratic and we can discuss openly all these things" (Personal Interview, Kwaśniewski 2016).

Similarly, in Israel, Poland's reputation was tarnished by its frequently inglorious past. As the Polish Ambassador to Israel, Jacek Chodorowicz (2012-2018), recognized, "[Poland] was seen solely as a country of the Holocaust" (Personal Interview, Chodorowitz 2017). To change the dominant Israeli narrative that Poland was a country where 'anti-Semitism is sucked with the mother's milk,' as the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, once proclaimed, has been one the main tasks of Polish diplomacy in Israel since 1989. Jan Wojciech Piekarsky, Polish Ambassador to Israel (2003-2006), complained that during the two decades when diplomatic relations were cut off and the Polish voice was not heard in Israel, it was "German foundations and organizations who organized different conferences on the Holocaust [...] and now you will not find many young Israelis who will talk about the German concentration camps. Nazi yes, but not German, but Polish yes. So they purposely used the time to relativize their responsibility for the war crimes" (Personal Interview Piekarski 2016). To overcome its anti-Semitic reputation, Poland reassessed its relations with the Jewish state. Maciej Kozłowski, Polish Ambassador to Israel (1999-2003) added that "There exist stereotypes against Poland among many Jews, and we wanted to get rid of this kind of a historical legacy, to prove that Poland is not anti-Semitic. The best way to do it was to establish the best possible relations with Israel" (Personal Interview Kozłowski 2016). In a similar vein, Polish Ambassador to Israel, Jan Dowgiałło (1990-1993), said that "For Poland, it was politically necessary to have good relations with Israel. It was one of the ways to lose the stigma of anti-Semitism" (Personal Interview, Dowgiałło 2016).

To further Poland's search for a place among democratic states, the Polish elites looked for a way to build strong links with the U.S. Influenced by an old and well-entrenched stereotype among Poles about 'Jewish power,' Polish elites tried to foster links with American Jewish organizations with the aim of strengthening Poland's position in Washington. Polish politicians and diplomats were very open about this. President Kwaśniewski acknowledged that for Poland, it was "strategically and tactically important to get support from this side [the U.S. Jewry in general and American-Jewish-Polish diaspora in particular]. And I did get it" (Personal Interview, Kwaśniewski 2016). A Polish diplomat confirmed that in its bid for NATO membership,

Poland gained "a most unexpected ally" by obtaining the support of American Jewish organizations, mostly the American Jewish Congress (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 3 2016). Poland aspired to become an important partner for the U.S. in Europe (cf. Zając 2016, 74–80), just as Israel was important for the U.S. in the Middle East. To accomplish this goal, good relations with Israel were considered important since they would improve and strengthen the Polish position in Washington. As Ambassador Kozłowski states, "Relations with the U.S. are very connected to the relations with Israel [...] we cherish special relations with the U.S. [...] and since Israel has a special relationship with the U.S., that was also a platform where our interests were common - to keep strong ties with the U.S. and to share our experience in keeping these ties. And we want to keep a strong presence of the U.S. in Europe which is also a vital interest for Israel (Personal Interview, Kozłowski 2016).

Polish elites appreciated Israel's success in building a modern economy in a region where natural resources were scarce and the political situation volatile. Poland, which had been dramatically changing the fabric of its economy in the last quarter century, considered Israel's knowledge-based economy an example to follow. As Puchta points out, "[o]f course from the very beginning we were looking at Israel as a nation that succeeded in a very short time to build a modern state. [...] So the idea was to study and to learn from Israeli experience, among others the experience in the field of hi-tech, cyber, research and development. [...] In these sectors, Israel has a lot to offer and this is what we needed in order to modernize the economy" (Personal Interview, Puchta 2016). Cooperation with Israel in high-tech was considered especially important for the Polish economy which had been struggling with the legacy of a heavy-industry-based economy inherited from Communist times.

Among the Polish political elites, there existed a certain level of identification with Israel which stemmed from two factors - first, from a notion that 'our Jews built Israel' and second, from the perception that both countries lived in difficult geopolitical situations. The notion that Israel was somehow Polish, that the Polish Jews were instrumental in the creation of Israel, and that Poland and Israel were connected because a great number of Jews living in Israel had Polish roots, resonated strongly among the Polish elites. "Israel never was and never will be a fully foreign country for Poland" claimed Ambassador Kozłowski (Personal Interview, Kozłowski 2016). Krajewski observed that "more educated Poles know that in the first Knesset [Israeli Parliament], so many Jews spoke Polish [...] and there is some kind of pride connected to it." (Personal Interview, Krajewski 2016). Sebastian Rejak, Special Envoy of Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs for Relations with the Jewish Diaspora (2013-2016) confirmed that "some people in Poland, among them many political leaders, tend to see, and there is some ground for this, Israel as a country that was built by Polish Jews.

Specifically, when Israel came into being, Polish Jews constituted a large proportion of Israelis. So there is this romantic feeling about Israel. This is not just a Jewish state, this is what the Polish Jews helped to build. There is some kind of a bond because 'our Jews' did it" (Personal Interview, Rejak 2016). The journalist Paweł Smoleński added that Poles think that "if you speak Polish on the street of Tel Aviv, everybody is going to understand you because Israel was created by the Polish Jews. Ben Gurion, Peres, even Golda Meir, never mind that she was born in Kiev, but it was somehow part of Poland" (Personal Interview, Smoleński 2016).

Second, because Poland existed in a complicated neighbourhood with neighbours who repeatedly occupied Polish territory, the Polish elites believed that they were uniquely equipped to understand the particular conditions of Israel's existence in the Middle East, and that they were able to better assess and recognize Israeli security needs than most of the countries west of the Polish borders. As Siwiec claims, "We know how difficult it is to fight for independence, sovereignty, freedom - and that is what the Israelis are doing" (Personal Interview, Siwiec 2016). This assessment was supported by Ambassador Chodorowitz, who admitted that "We have a better understanding of Israel than other EU countries" (Personal Interview, Chodorowitz 2017). The Head of the Maghreb-Mashreq Unit at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wieslaw Kuciel, explained that Poland adheres to European norms, "But maybe we understand the situation from a different angle and because of our experience and our historical sensibilities [we understand] the Israeli side" (Personal Interview, Kuciel 2016). As Gebert succinctly summarized, "There is more contemporary feeling that we are both democracies who must survive in a difficult neighbourhood and that we face complacent West that does not understand. I mean, [...] having experience with life in bad neighbourhoods, Poland understands the problems of national security a way Belgium does not" (Personal Interview, Gebert 2016).

For Polish elites, whose identity was often grounded in the Catholic faith, Israel had a special role as the Holy Land, as the place where Jesus lived and died, and where Christianity was born. Among the Christian pilgrims who came to visit Christian sites in Israel, Poles represented the third largest group (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014). The image of Israel as the Holy Land has influenced the foreign policy thinking of Polish foreign decision-makers. Probably the best example is Poland's reluctant attitude towards Palestinian diplomatic actions in UNESCO concerning Jerusalem and other sites important for Judaism. Poland viewed initiatives to register Biblical places as Palestinian heritage sites as attempts to challenge not only Jewish but also Christian links to the Holy Land. As a Polish diplomat commented on the issue, "You cannot argue with facts, it is even insulting" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 4 2016).

An important factor which influenced the Polish stance vis-a-vis Israel was the legacy of the Jewish question. Despite the rift over the interpretation of the past underlined by mnemonic battles, among some of the Polish

elites there exists a bad consciousness about the fate of the Polish Jews and even a feeling of guilt which has been mirrored in their attitudes towards Israel. As an Israeli diplomat serving in Warsaw observed, "I do not have any doubt that the roots of positive Polish-Israel relations are historical – a wish to clean themselves" (Personal Interview, Israeli Diplomat 2016). Agnieszka Magdziak-Mizewska, a member of the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia before 1989, and Ambassador to Israel (2006-2012), when recalling the early years of Polish-Israeli relations confirmed that "Ministers of our first government witnessed the year 1968. Some of them were born before WWII and they experienced the Holocaust. So yes, in the 1990s, relations with Israel were mostly about the moral obligation" (Personal Interview, Magdziak-Mizewska 2016). Smoleński was even more outspoken when claiming that Poland was "in a very specific situation, in some sense similar to Germany. Because of history, Poland as a state cannot be anti-Israeli." (Personal Interview, Smoleński 2016). Symbolically, in 1991, speaking to the Knesset during the first official visit a Polish President to Israel, President Lech Wałęsa stated, "Here in Israel, the birthplace of your culture and the birthplace of your resurrection, I ask for your forgiveness" (Wałęsa 1991).

After its victory in 2015, the PiS introduced a new narrative. Grounded in a nationalist, conservative, and Catholic identity, this political camp found Muslim presence in Europe a salient issue after the migration crisis of 2015-16. To prevent the "Islamization of Europe" became an important goal for Polish nationalists and some Catholic circles. According to their view, Poland had been the main defender of Christian values in Europe which was losing its identity under the pressure of secularism and Islam. The adherents of this view saw Israel as a partner in building a bulwark against Islam. As Gebert explains, "[Israel] is offered as an ally to resist the Muslim horde – Israel is an outpost of white Europe which is protecting us" (Personal Interview, Gebert 2016). Israel is considered an important ally with whom Poland and Europe share security interests. In 2016, during a meeting in Israel with his Israeli counterpart, Moshe Ya'alon, Polish Minister of National Defence, Antoni Macierewicz, said, "We are not naïve. The world is changing and therefore these [terrorist] threats are coming." He observed that Poland and Israel "share the same values, but also many objectives in the field of security" (Embassy of Poland in Israel 2016).

Furthermore, nationalist and conservative right-wing politicians in Poland, represented by the Kaczyński brothers and the PiS, recognized and even admired the ethno-centrist characteristic of Israel. To some extent, current Polish nationalists followed the *Endecja* tradition which warned against the presence of Jews in Poland but appreciated Jewish civilization and supported the creation of an independent Jewish state. As a Polish historian affiliated with the POLIN museum recalled, not only conservative nationalists but also some of the anti-Semites in today's Poland admired Israel as a perfect example of a successful ethnically oriented state.

"Look what Jews have achieved thanks to the fact that they are gathered at one territory and fighting Palestinians. Only because they are so solidified and unified they have achieved [this]. We should replicate that, to create such a coherent ethnic group" the nationalist-right narrative would insist (Personal Interview, Polish Historian 2016). A Polish diplomat confirmed that there has been an ideological closeness between the Polish and Israeli nationalist-conservative politicians. This link has been especially strong between Jarosław Kaczyński, co-founder and the leader of the PiS, and Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Prime minister from the Likud Party. "Both governments see each other eye to eye" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 1 2017). Another former Polish diplomat was rather sharp when commenting on the closeness between the current Polish and Israeli leaders: "Netanyahu, Trump, Kaczyński – their way of thinking is very similar. They build their position on dividing, on hatred of the other. They are of the same kind, they should be close to each other" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 2 2016).

To conclude the above section, following the end of Communism, Polish relations with Israel were framed by a complex set of narratives. Poland wanted to be seen as a modern, Western country with the aspiration of becoming a strategic partner of the U.S. in Europe; good relations with Israel furthered those aim and thus became an important part of Poland's post-Communist identity. Further, in its attempt to foster relations with the Jewish diaspora, especially in the U.S., and to improve Poland's reputation concerning anti-Semitism, good relations with the Jewish state became essential. A cultural closeness, stemming from the large number of Polish Jews who helped to establish the Jewish state and influenced its character, a long history of Polish-Jewish co-existence, and strong religious links to the Holy Land, all strengthened Poland's affinity with Israel. Finally, it was a bad consciousness about the fate of the Polish Jews which was reflected in friendly narratives about Israel. After the PiS came to power in 2015, a new narrative was introduced, portraying Israel as an important ally against the invasion of radical Islam from the Middle East.

In the next section, I look at conflicting narratives in Poland related to the Jewish question, narratives which affected relations with Israel.

Conflicting Narratives – The Jewish Question

In this section, I analyse two dominant narratives related to Polish-Jewish relations – the narrative of the Left and liberals and the narrative of the nationalist-conservative Right. I show that a major difference between these two narratives stems from their interpretation of the past.

The Left and liberal elites, in their aim to build modern Poland on civic, pluralistic, liberal values, were open to new interpretations of historical facts, free from the Communist and ethno-nationalist heroic narratives. Joined

by intellectuals and some representatives of the Church, they challenged the narrative which repressed collective guilt by stressing Polish innocence and cultivating the romantic self-image of Poles as the eternal victims of aggressive neighbours. Understanding that self-reflection and the ability to face the dark sides of Polish history did not threaten the national identity, but, actually was helping Poland build a new self-image as a reformed, modern country, this group of Poles was ready to admit that there were moments when some Poles acted less than heroically.

During the government of the social-democratic party, Democratic Left Alliance (2001-2005), both the publication of a book, *Neighbours,* written by the Polish-American sociologist, Jan Tomasz Gross, and the investigation of the Jedwabne massacre, conducted by the Institute of National Remembrance, influenced the debate on Polish-Jewish relations. Suddenly, Poles were confronted with a distinctly unheroic version of their past, particularly treatment of the Jewish minority during WWII. The debate about *Neighbours* represented an especially "important moment in the Polish interrogation of Poland's dark past [...] which resulted in a major inquiry into [...] the Polish national self-image and identity" (Michlic 2010, 26). Moderate elites recognized that acknowledging that Poles were capable of reprehensible behaviour towards their Jewish neighbours was important for the moral regeneration of the nation, self-reflection would be proof that Poland was a viable democracy, able to face its past. These elites reflected Zygmunt Bauman's words, "The choice is not between shame and pride. The choice is between the pride of morally purifying shame and the shame of morally devastating pride" (Bauman 1988, 297). Willingness to expose its dark past was also seen as important for the normalization of relations with Israel, the Jewish diaspora, and the remaining Polish Jews.

This era was best symbolized by the unveiling of a new monument at Jedwabne in 2001, when Polish President Kwaśniewski, a former member of the Polish United Workers Party (Communists) and post-1989 leader of its successor, Social Democracy, broke a taboo, asked for forgiveness, and recognized that at Jedwabne, during WWII Poles were responsible for a terrible crime against their Jewish neighbours. During the ceremony, Kwaśniewski said:

> "Today, Poland has the courage to face the truth of a nightmare that has begloomed one of the chapters of her history. We have become conscious of our responsibility for the way we think of the sinister episodes of the past. We have realised that the nation is ill-served by those who would have us deny that past. Such an attitude leads to moral self-destruction. We, the assembled, together with all in this country whose conscience is tender and with its lay and religious moral authorities, who have consolidated our adherence to basic values, now pay homage to the memory of those murdered here and express our deepest remorse for the vileness of this crime`s perpetrators.
>
> We articulate our pain and shame, express our determination to uncover the truth, and communicate our indomitable will for reconciliation and concord. On account of this crime, we should plead forgiveness

with the shadows of the departed and their families, with each of those then victimized. I express remorse today as a human being, as a citizen, and as the President of the Republic of Poland. I do so in my own name and on behalf of the Polish people who are appalled in their conscience at this crime, of those who believe they can take no pride in the greatness of Polish history without, at the same time, feeling pain and the shame for the evil that Poles have caused to others" (Kwaśniewski 2001).

Later, when pondering his Jedwabne speech, Kwaśniewski admitted he was aware of a lack of agreement among Poles concerning the issue and so, "when asking for forgiveness – there was a big discussion about a balanced sentence. Not concerning the forgiveness, that was obvious, but I said that I am speaking not on behalf of Poland or the Polish nation, but on behalf of the people who are so much moved, touched, by this crime which happened here in Jedwabne" (Personal Interview, Kwaśniewski 2016).

This narrative was, however, rejected by the nationalist-conservative Right. Instead, it built its own narrative of Polish history framed in the ethno-nationalist tradition of Poland. It refused the interpretation of the past which challenged the image of Poland as being the prime victim of both Nazism and Communism. For right-wing nationalists, the narrative which depicted Poles as victims and heroes had to be protected and any attempt to question the behaviour of Poles towards the Jews during WWII was seen as anti-Polish, as an attempt to slander the Polish nation and to belittle both the Polish war suffering and the Polish effort to assist the Jews.

In his comment, Gebert pointed out, "if you present yourself as a victim, it is next to impossible to admit that you might have done something wrong" (Gebert 2016). Instead, by focusing on Polish rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust, they emphasize, as Dyduch called them, "beautiful cards of common past" (Dyduch 2012). In 2007, on the occasion of the inauguration of the project 'Restoring Memory: Polish Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust,' President Lech Kaczyński, a founder of the PiS, expressed his hope that "all of the activities will contribute to preserving the memory of the character and deeds [of the Righteous] as a model of inter-fraternity, in the collective memory of our two nations: Polish and Jewish […]" (quoted in: Dyduch 2012, 8).

For the adherents of the Polish victimhood narrative, the Jedwabne apology was especially hard to accept. In an interview on the public TV in 2016, the Minister of Education for PiS, Anna Zalewska, cast doubt on the investigation by the Institute of National Remembrance by claiming that "Jedwabne is a historical fact that has led to many misunderstandings and very biased opinions." When a journalist responded that "Poles burned Jews in a barn", Zalewska countered by saying, "That is your opinion repeated after Mr Gross" (Ha'aretz and AP 2016). A Polish diplomat concurred with this view by saying that "Jedwabne is a symbol. It is used for a generalization of the Polish behaviour during the Holocaust. It gives the wrong picture. After all, Poland has the highest number of Righteous Among the Nations" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 1 2017).

Furthermore, building on the old anti-Semitic accusation of Judeo-Bolshevism, part of the nationalist narrative also claimed that any kind of Polish apology to Jews must be accompanied by a Jewish apology to Poles for the crimes of Bolshevism (Glowacka 2010, 260). This narrative had gained strength as Polish politics of memory became more focused on Soviet, than on Nazi occupation. Katyń replaced Auschwitz as the emblem of Polish martyrology[51] (Glowacka 2010, 268).

The narrative which stressed Polish victimhood and heroism has always been rejected by the Jewish narrative which accented suffering and betrayal. Following the Eichmann trial in 1961, Holocaust remembrance became an important part of the nation-building process in Israel. Used not only as a tool for connecting Israelis with their Jewish past in Europe, the Holocaust also became a symbol of the weakness and powerlessness of Jewry in the diaspora. This official narrative presented the State of Israel as the best guarantee of "never again": Because of a strong Israel, the Jews would never again be slaughtered, and any persecuted Jew would be able to find a refuge in the well-protected Jewish state. To build this national myth, Israel purposely started to shape the nation's memory of the Holocaust. In this process, Poland came to be used as a "natural setting for shaping the memory of the Holocaust" (Silber 2010, 224). 'Pilgrimages' of the Israeli youth and soldiers to Nazi concentration camps in Poland, which started in the 1960s and stopped following the Six Day War, were renewed in the late 1980s and became an important part of education about the Holocaust. The narrative which stressed the martyrdom of the Jewish nation has thus been in clear contradiction with the Polish nationalist narrative. As will be discussed later in connection with the Holocaust Law, the conflicting narratives have had an impact on the Polish-Israeli relations.

After analysing both shared and conflicting narratives concerning Israel and the Jewish question, I now turn to four main actors who formulated and promoted the above-mentioned narratives.

4.2. Decision-Makers

In this section, I present four personalities, important memory entrepreneurs, who influenced the process of forming the post-1989 Polish collective memory. They became promoters of narratives discussed in the previous section, through which they tried to promote and legitimize their policies. I present here leaders of the main political groups in Poland – the nationalist Right, the Left, and the liberal conservatives - which represent two main conflicting narratives. But first, I include Pope John Paul II who, by being a strong moral authority in Poland, had an impact on the construction of the Polish national identity.

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[51] In Katyń Forest, the Soviet Secret Police, NKVD, murdered and buried over 20 thousand Polish officers and members of the intelligentsia in 1940.

Pope John Paul II (1920-2005), born as Karol Wojtyła in the Polish town, Wadowice, became a key figure in the process of coming to terms with the Jewish question in Poland and, generally, in improving relations between Catholics and Jews. As one of the most respected and admired figures in Poland, his position as a moral authority was unmatched. He became the first pope to visit a Jewish prayer house. During this historic visit to the Great Synagogue in Rome in 1986, he called the Jews "our elder brothers." He also repeatedly condemned anti-Semitism. In 1993, when addressing the Polish people on the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, John Paul II said:

> "As Christians and Jews, following the example of the faith of Abraham, we are called to be a blessing to the world (cf. Gen. 12:2 ff.) [...] It is, therefore, necessary for us, Christians and Jews, to be first a blessing to one another. This will effectively occur if we are united in the face of the evils which are still threatening: indifference and prejudice, as well as displays of anti-Semitism" (quoted in: Bemporad, Pawlikowski, and Sievers 2000, 277).

In 1994, the Pope established diplomatic ties between the Vatican and Israel. Finally, the Catholic Church accepted Israel not just as a Holy Land, but also as the focus of a fully recognized nation, the state of Israel. In his Apostolic Letter from 1984, John Paul proclaimed:

> "For the Jewish people who live in the State of Israel and who preserve in that land such precious testimonies to their history and their faith, we must ask for the desired security and the due tranquillity that is the prerogative of every nation and condition of life and of progress for every society" (quoted in: Kessler 2010, 155).

During an official visit to Israel, John Paul publicly apologized for the persecution of Jews by Catholics. In a prayer which he first read and then placed into a crack in the Western Wall in Jerusalem we read:

> "God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations: we are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant" (La Stampa 2014).

The Pope's teaching resonated strongly among the Polish political elites. Ewa Junczyk Ziomecka, Secretary of State at the Chancellery of the President, Lech Kaczyńki (2008-2010), and Consul General of Poland in New York (2010-2015) remarked, "When I worked for the President [Lech Kaczyński] we were still under a big impression of John Paul II because he was like a role model for us in many subjects, including the Christian-Jewish and the Polish-Jewish relations. I remember each time I proposed the President any statement, we

quoted the Pope. The quote, for example, that anti-Semitism is a sin; that the Jews are our older brothers in faith; the prayer he placed in the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem asking for forgiveness" (Junczyk Ziomecka 2016). Also the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, admitted that when addressing the Poles on Christian-Jewish relations, he often quoted the Pope, "so they cannot argue with me," he added with a smile (Rabbi Schudrich 2016).

Lech Kaczyński (1949-2010), the Mayor of Warsaw (2002-2005) and President of Poland (2005-2010), killed in a plane crash near Smolensk in 2010, was one of the key figures of the Polish nationalist-conservative camp. He was very active in Polish-Jewish relations, supporting good feeling by hosting the first kindling of the Chanukah candles in the Presidential Palace (President.PL 2015). He wanted to shape the narrative about the Jewish past in Poland (Dyduch 2012, 7). As the Mayor of Warsaw, Lech Kaczyński was one of the key politicians who supported the construction of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews which would tell the true history of Polish-Jewish relations. However, he emphasized that "The truth is not the story of the Holocaust, which was the work of the Germans" (Biuletyn MSZ 2005b; quoted in: Dyduch 2012, 7). Instead of looking at the Jewish past in Poland from the perspective of its terrible end, he wished the focus be on the good moments of Polish-Jewish co-existence. In the same vein, to celebrate Polish heroism, he honoured the Poles who helped to save the Jews during the Holocaust.

Lech Kaczyński was also a staunch supporter of strong Polish-Israeli relations. As a Polish diplomat said, Kaczyński "loved Israel" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 2 2016). In 2005, during his visit to Israel, Kaczyński said that he was "one of those politicians who feel that, because of the past, both the good and the bad, it is important that Polish relations with the Jewish people and the State of Israel be the best" (Biuletyn MSZ 2005a; quoted in: Dyduch 2012, 7). He came to Israel again in 2006, in "a peculiar act of solidarity" (Dyduch 2012, 9) by being the first high-level European politician visiting Israel after the Lebanon-Israel war of 2006. During a meeting with top Israeli politicians, Kaczyński showed interest in sending more Polish soldiers to a peace-keeping UNIFIL mission in southern Lebanon and emphasized that Poland wanted "to be active in preserving peace." He further added that "Whoever says that Poland is Israel's best friend in Europe is telling the truth. It's only natural for us" (The Jerusalem Post 2006).

A similar view concerning Polish-Jewish relations and Israel was shared by Jarosław Kaczyński, the twin brother of Lech, who as a leader of the PiS became the most powerful politician in Poland after the election in 2015. In 2017, he called Israel an "outpost of our civilization," a "great country" which owes its existence to the "power of the spirit, the power of the mind, determination and courage" of its people (The Times of Israel 2017).

The position of the Left was strongly influenced by President **Alexander Kwaśniewski** (1954) who was in the office from 1995 to 2005. For the post-1989 Left, often formed of former Communists, the deeds of the Communist Party became particularly salient issues. As Kwaśniewski explained:

> "It was probably one of the biggest mistakes of the Polish Communist regime what happened to the Polish-Jewish and the Polish-Israeli relationships. Having such a history, having so many Polish Jews in Israel, having so close ties, it was difficult to understand why Gomulka, with Jewish wife who he apparently loved, decided in 1968 ... I was fourteen [years old] and I remember this atmosphere of 1968 ... this atmosphere that everybody could be a Jew and it was an accusation, this atmosphere was terrible. I cannot say anything about the 1970s because I was too young, but among leaders of the 1980s whom I knew quite well, there was this feeling of responsibility, of shame. Even before I was elected the President, it [this issue of Polish Jews] was important for me. When I was a Minister of Youth during the Communist time [1985-87], I started the Polish-Jewish exchange. We first organized the March of Living [in 1988]" (Personal Interview, Kwaśniewski 2016).

When addressing the issue of the Polish-Jewish relations, Kwaśniewski referred to good times but was also ready to recognize that some Poles caused harm to their Jewish neighbours. In his speech to the Knesset in May 2000 he said:

> "Poland and Israel are heirs to one of the most unusual chapters of human history - the over eight-hundred-year-old coexistence of the two nations. [...] Throughout centuries, Poles and Jews used to live on the same land, reaping the fruits of joint work. They were warmed by the same sun. It would take a long time to list the bright pages of Polish-Jewish history. Written on them are outstanding works of culture, a climate of tolerance unprecedented in that part of Europe, a great spiritual and religious development. Suffice it to say that at some time more than a half of all Jews lived on Polish soil. For eight hundred years, Poland was an important Jewish centre of science, Talmud studies and seminaries, arts, poetry, literature, philosophy and theology.
>
> The Forest of the World-Righteous at Yad Vashem, where every fourth tree bears a Polish name, testifies to Polish solidarity. But we must not allow those, who bringing disgrace upon the Polish people, were helping the criminals, including those who took part in the anti-Semitic excesses after the war. We are aware in Poland of the deadweight which our domestic anti-Semites have put on the present-day and the future of relationships between Poles and Jews.
>
> We rejoice at the revival of Jewish life in Poland. We see in it the triumph of life over death, of freedom over bondage, a return to the great Polish tradition of a multinational Republic" (Kwaśniewski 2000).

Concerning support for Israel he added that "Because of this common history and moral responsibility [...] we have to continue this relation, to support Israel, especially since Israel is a country with a lot of problems" (Personal Interview, Kwaśniewski 2016).

Donald Tusk (1957), Prime Minister of Poland (2007-2014) and the co-founder and chairman of the liberal-conservative Civic Platform, did not depart from the dominant Polish narratives concerning Israel. At a press conference with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert during his visit to Israel in 2008 Tusk said:

> "For the Polish people, in our history - and for me personally as well - the State of Israel's national sovereignty and your Independence Day is not just another Independence Day of some other country. All people in Poland remember the birth and development of the State of Israel. It is very satisfying for us, and we all remember well what a major part the citizens of Poland played in the establishment of the State of Israel, and in its strengthening and development" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008).

In the same speech, he assured his Israeli counterpart that Poland was an advocate of fairness in politics which also meant that in the EU, Warsaw was a "reliable and loyal adherent of your [Israel's] stance and aspiration for a better and fairer world order" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008).

Concerning the meaning of the past, Tusk was closer to the nationalist-right narrative when he rejected the Polish role in the Holocaust and instead focused on the 'glorious past.' In an interview for the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, he claimed:

> "The Polish people were not partners to the Holocaust carried out by the Germans on Polish soil. We want awareness of this fact to be made public as much as possible in the entire world, and especially in Israel [...] The relationship between Poland and the Jews is centuries old. Poland was the homeland of various peoples, including the Jews. There is no Polish culture without Jewish culture. We want Israelis, especially the young, to experience this side" (Ha'aretz 2008).

These examples of comments by leaders of the three main political groups in Poland show that there existed a consensus about special relations with Israel. While the Left was ready to discuss the dark moments of Polish-Jewish relations, it was more important for the moderate and nationalist Right to focus on the good moments of Polish-Jewish co-existence and on Polish heroism in saving Jews. The selected quotes from the three political leaders and the Pope clearly show that the long history of Polish-Jewish co-existence, WWII, and the Communist era, have remained an important reference point when addressing the issue of Israel and Polish-Jewish relations. Historical association have formed the positions of these leaders, with the events of the past as an important source of the self-identification. At the same time, however, each of them interpreted and presented the past in his own way, reflecting his ideology and his world-view. They all used the past to promote their policies.

4.3. Institutionalisation

After analysing key Polish narratives related to the Jewish question and Israel, in the last section of this chapter I examine how those narratives became translated into practical political steps. I first look at three topics closely related to the Jewish question which affect Polish-Israeli relations: anti-Semitism, the politics of memory, and relations with the Jewish diaspora. Second, I focus on Polish diplomatic, economic, and people-to-people relations with Israel.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism, a phenomenon which had long accompanied Jewish existence in Poland and which became a part of state policy in the 1930s and again in the late 1960s, returned once more to the public sphere in 1989. The new freedom of expression gave an opening to the publication of anti-Semitic literature, including *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, to anti-Semitism at football stadiums, and to graffiti like "Juden Raus", or "Gas the Jews." Public expression of anti-Semitism was not limited to verbal violence. Jewish sites like cemeteries and synagogues, often abandoned, and also the Jewish Historical Institute in the centre of Warsaw were vandalized (Gebert 1991). Anti-Semitism also penetrated the presidential campaign between Lech Wałęsa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki in 1990 when a rumour spread that Mazowiecki, a popular Prime Minister and a devout Roman Catholic, was of Jewish origin, which would make him unfit to be President. To prove his Polish pedigree, the Church provided evidence that the Mazowiecki family had been Christian for centuries. Wałęsa also contributed to the contentious atmosphere by saying that Jews in politics were hiding their origin, echoing "a popular stereotype about the Jewish conspiracy" (Engelberg 1990). To prove his credentials, he kept repeating "that he was a "hundred-per cent Pole," a Pole "for generations untold," and that he had "documents to prove it" (Gazeta Wyborcza, Oct. 23, 1990, quoted in: Gebert 1991, 740). However, when the political situation in Poland stabilized following the turbulent post-revolutionary months, Polish political elites attempted to improve the image of Poland and to get rid of the stigma of "Polish anti-Semitism" – of the claim that the level of hatred towards Jews among the Poles had been unprecedented.

In 2015, for the first time since the fall of Communism, one party gained a majority in the election and the Law and Justice Party was able to form a government without a coalition partner. It was the PiS approach towards anti-Semitism which raised doubts. On the one hand, the party leaders like Jarosław Kaczyński or President Andrzej Duda did not show any personal proclivity towards anti-Semitism. After all, Duda repeatedly condemned anti-Semitism and racism as not having a place in today's Poland (JTA 2016). On the other hand, the Polish government under the PiS had often been reluctant to condemn anti-Semitic acts which took place in Poland. Anti-Semitic slogans at football stadiums or the presence of activists of the National-Radical Camp

and All-Polish Youth at state ceremonies, in which they openly displayed neo-fascist insignia and chanted racist slogans, especially on Poland's Independence Day on November 11, often did not elicit official condemnations by the government. The authorities were also reluctant to condemn the burning of an effigy of an ultra-Orthodox Jew holding the EU flag during the demonstration against the acceptance of Muslim refugees in Wroclaw in 2015.[52] The priest from Białystok who warned against "the Jewish mob" during his sermon was not prosecuted, on the pretext that his comments had been "taken out of context" (Kruszewski 2016). Under the PiS government, right-wing radicalism became protected political speech in Poland. As Gebert explained, the government was not acting against anti-Semitism for a simple reason: "Kaczyński's nightmare is not called KOD[53] but it is 'Jobbik', forces to the right of his party, who can take votes away. And that is why he needs also anti-Semites within his party (Gebert 2016).

Politics of Memory

Over the last three decades, Poland has invested heavily in the construction of grand museums. Often housed in newly-constructed buildings, these museums finally brought topics suppressed or manipulated during the Communist era to the general public. In this way, the construction of museums dedicated to WWII, the Solidarity movement, or the history of the Jews in Poland contributed to debates about the meaning of the past. Yet, it was only with the victory of PiS in 2015 that the politics of memory, in Poland known as *polityka historyczna,* became a more important tool for promoting and legitimizing the Party's visions than it had been under previous governments. If the previous governments, with some exceptions like the Jedwabne debate, did not attach so much significance to the politics of memory, for the PiS government, memory became crucial. Leaders of PiS became active in mnemonic battles over the meaning of the past with the clear goal of promoting their idea of a strong nationalist Poland. In March 2016, President Duda said that the nation's new "historical policy offensive aims to create a new generation of patriots" (Gazeta 2016).

Norman Davies, a British historian of Poland and chairman of one of the advisory boards for the spectacular new Museum of WWII in Gdansk, has been concerned about the pressure to which the museum became exposed after the 2015 election. He regretfully remarked, "It's a part of the present government's attempt to rewrite history" (The New York Times 2017). Furthermore, the public media and film industry became employed in the promotion of the nationalist narrative about the Polish past. School curricula were changed and increased focus was placed on the heroic past and on the Catholic tradition of the Polish nation. As

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[52] Piotr Rybak, who burned the effigy, later explained that it was meant to represent George Soros. In 2017, he was sentenced to three month in prison (JTA 2017).
[53] Committee for Defending Democracy, a movement which was behind the largest anti-PiS government protests in Poland since 2015.

Smolar commented, "In a very Bolshevik manner, this government wants to build a new Polish man - a pedagogy of national pride. It is very much nationalistic in its orientation and the consequences are felt in schools and the military and the damage could be great" (Personal Interview, Smolar 2016).

The effort to use museums as a tool for the promotion of the nationalist narrative put the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which opened in 2013 on the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, into an awkward position. Its construction, promoted by politicians from both the Left and the Right, was seen as important because it presented the Jewish story in Poland as complex and rich, and not as narrowed down to the story of Polish anti-Semitism and the destruction of Jews during the Holocaust. Having been visited by more than one million visitors in the three years since the opening of its core exhibition in 2014, internationally recognized, running three thousand educational programs, POLIN became a visible part of the Polish cultural and educational landscape. However, with the launch of a 'historical policy offensive', historians affiliated with POLIN did not hide their concern about the future role of this institution. As an historian working in POLIN observed, the main question which people in the Museum were asking now was whether "the only story allowed would be that Polish-Jewish relations were some kind of an idyll, and the Poles were wonderful hosts of the Jewish nation, [...] avoiding all kinds of complexities". The same historian further added that the nationalist narrative promoted by the PiS government, being inspired by the tradition of *Endecja,* built on the idea that "in order to be Polish, one needs to be a 100 per cent ethnic Pole." His colleague added, "And if we [POLIN Museum] want to show the history of Poland as a history of heterogeneity, we will not fit into that picture" (Personal Interviews, Polish Historian 2016; Polish Lecturer 2016).

Against this backdrop, in order to accentuate Polish heroism and victimhood in saving the Jews during WWII, the PiS government started to promote the museum in Markowa, opened by Duda in 2016, dedicated to the Ulma family whose members, parents and six children, the youngest being only two years old, were slaughtered by the Nazis as a punishment for hiding Jews. And in order to protect the myth of Polish heroism, Jan T. Gross, the author of the book, *Neighbours,* which questioned Polish innocence during WWII, was attacked by the Polish authorities. He was accused of unpatriotic behaviour, and President Duda considered stripping him of Poland's highest honour the Order of Merit (The Guardian 2016). Furthermore, the government tried to discredit the work not only of foreign but also of Polish historians who challenged the right-wing narrative.[54]

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[54] For example, the work of the Canadian-Polish historian, Jan Grabowski, and of historians working for Holocaust Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences, was attacked.

The 'historical policy offensive' also had an impact on Polish cultural institutions. An official who worked in the Polish Institute in Tel Aviv, a major cultural institution financed by the Polish government, confirmed that under the government of PiS, the freedom of the Institute to choose themes and guests was curtailed. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs defined the topics which could be presented, with a special focus on historical policy. Biographies of artists and guests who were invited were checked by the Ministry in order "to make sure that they fit." An official further added that "They want us to stress the victimhood of the Polish nation. They do not understand that this is not only passé but that in Israel, you cannot compete with Jews about who is the bigger victim of WWII (Personal Interview, Polish Official 1 2017).

In an attempt to silence mnemonic narratives which were seen as endangering the martyrdom narrative of the nationalist Right, the PiS government tried to implement a legal frame delineating how the story of Polish behaviour during WWII could be told and which parts of it had to be omitted and thus forgotten. The 2018 Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, dubbed the Holocaust Law,[55] introduced a provision which made it illegal to claim that Poland or Poles were co-responsible for crimes committed by Nazi Germany. According to the bill, such claims would become punishable by jail. In his comment on the legislation, a Polish diplomat stated that "the point of it is to pay attention to unjust vilification of Poland by using a term like 'Polish concentration camps'" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 1 2017).

The attempt to preserve the good name of the Polish people through the Holocaust Law criminalized phrases such as "Polish Death camps," caused international outrage. Defined rather vaguely, historians feared that "it could be used to silence debate on any aspects of Polish history that strayed from its officially promoted martyrdom narrative" (Charnysh and Finkel 2018). The legislation caused the biggest crisis in relations between Poland and Israel in decades. Following its approval by the Polish Parliament's Upper House in January 2018, Israeli politicians and media responded tempestuously, accusing Poland of an attempt to distort the historical truth and to absolve Poles of any complicity in the Holocaust. Yair Lapid, the leader of the *Yesh Atid* party, whose family members perished in Nazi camps in Poland, wrote: "No one ever says the death camps were built by the Poles. The Germans built them. But they built them on Polish land, with Polish help, in the face of Polish silence.[...] Polish leaders put their friendship with Israel at risk when they try to negotiate the memory of the Holocaust" (Lapid 2018). Prime Minister Netanyahu issued a statement which read: "The law is baseless; I strongly oppose it. One cannot change history and the Holocaust cannot be denied" (Prime Minister's Office,

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[55] A key paragraph of the bill states: "Whoever claims, publicly and contrary to the facts, that the Polish Nation or the Republic of Poland is responsible or co-responsible for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich [...] or for other felonies that constitute crimes against peace, crimes against humanity or war crimes, or whoever otherwise grossly diminishes the responsibility of the true perpetrators of said crimes – shall be liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to 3 years" (The Times of Israel 2018a).

Israel 2018). Similarly, U.S. officials condemned the Holocaust Law and warned that it might lead to growing anti-Polish sentiments in Congress and have a possible impact on bilateral relations, including potential diplomatic sanctions (The Washington Post 2018a).

Polish leaders were surprised by this sharp condemnation from the international community and by the negative publicity which the Holocaust Law caused. However, nationalist media in Poland backed the government and decried an anti-Polish campaign orchestrated by foreign powers and Jews. Anti-Semitic rhetoric, which often targeted the Israeli Ambassador to Poland, swept across Poland (The Times of Israel 2018b). Yet, it soon became clear that for the both Polish and Israeli governments, mutual support in international fora was far too important to jeopardize with a Holocaust Law spat. Actually, it was Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu who yielded to Poland's Holocaust narrative by signing a Joint Declaration of the Prime Ministers of Israel and Poland in June 2018. The text absolved the Polish state and the Polish nation as a whole of participation in the atrocities committed against Jews during WWII. It further recognized that the Polish government-in-exile and the Polish underground systematically helped the Jews (Prime Minister's Office, Poland 2018). On the Polish side, the law was emended and offenses against it were decriminalized. To show their disagreement with the wording of the text, Yad Vashem historians responded by issuing their own joint statement which said: "A thorough review by Yad Vashem historians shows that the historical assertions, presented as unchallenged facts, in the joint statement contain grave errors and deceptions, and that the essence of the statute remains unchanged even after the repeal of the aforementioned sections, including the possibility of real harm to researchers, unimpeded research, and the historical memory of the Holocaust" (Yad Vashem 2018b). At present, the rift caused by the two conflicting narratives seems to have subsided. However, the Polish government's plan to build a Museum of the Warsaw Ghetto in the centre of Warsaw, a museum which will open in 2023 in commemoration of 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, may bring it back to the fore with a negative impact on the bilateral relations between Poland and Israel.

Jewish Diaspora

Since 1989, Polish politicians of both the Left and the Right have been fostering relations with the Jewish diaspora in general, and with the U.S. Jews in particular. In this section, I look at the institutionalization of Polish-Jewish affairs within key Polish political institutions. Further, I discuss three specific topics – crosses in Auschwitz, the return of Polish citizenship to Jews with Polish roots, and the restitution of Jewish property - which have been influencing relations between Poland with the Jewish diaspora and between Poland and Israel.

The importance of a Polish-Jewish rapprochement led then Polish authorities to create special office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The position of Special Envoy for Relations with the Jewish Diaspora was created in 1995 by Foreign Minister Władysław Bartoszewski. Bartoszewski's reputation gave this post a special status. As a former Auschwitz concentration camp prisoner, a fighter in the Polish resistance, and an active participant in the Council for Aid to Jews (Żegota), his reputation among the Jews of the diaspora was very high. At first aimed mainly at communication between Poland and U.S. Jewish organizations during the peak of negotiations about Polish NATO membership, negotiations in which, as already mentioned, the Jewish organizations played a supportive role, the agenda of the Special Envoy soon became broader. The first Special Envoy, Krzystof Śliwiński, recalled that in addition to being in contact with Jewish organizations, his office supported the creation of the POLIN Museum and Jewish studies in Poland. "I had access to the minister, to the parliament. It was open lobbying for improving Polish-Jewish-Israeli relations, for making them normal" (Personal Interview, Śliwiński 2016). Sebastian Rejak, the Special Envoy from 2013 to 2016, explained that his office dealt mainly with issues related to the past "because we are so preoccupied with history, and it still plays an important role in our identities – Polish and Jewish." Another issue was anti-Semitism, both past and present. Another was the education concerning both the Holocaust and the Jewish contribution to Polish culture and economy. Finally, there was the question of the restitution of Jewish property (Personal Interview, Rejak 2016). However, after the PiS came to power in 2015, the role of the office was scaled down, and Rejak, recognized among Jewish organizations for his insight and active approach (Personal Interview, Lieberman 2016), was relegated to another position before he left the Ministry for good.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not the only part of the government involved in the agenda concerning the Jewish diaspora. At the level of the Prime Minister and President, special positions for addressing the Jewish diaspora were also created. Magdziak-Mizewska, later an Ambassador to Israel, became an advisor on Polish-Jewish relations at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister beginning 1998. President Kachiński's under-Secretary of State (2006-2008) and later Secretary of State (2008-2010), Junczyk Ziomecka, was also charged with managing Polish-Jewish relations. As she adds, "I could talk in the name of the President about the Polish-Jewish relations" (Junczyk Ziomecka 2016). In 2007, Premier Tusk created the Prime Minister's Plenipotentiary for Intercultural Dialogue with authority over of "the implementation of tasks relating to relations with the Jewish Diaspora in the world and the cooperation with the State of Israel" (Prime Minister's Office, Poland 2011; quoted in: Dyduch 2012, 11). The function was entrusted to former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Władysław Bartoszewski.

Apart from the creation of offices across the Polish top political institutions under both Left and Right parties to deal with issues in Polish-Jewish relations, Polish governments tried to improve those relations by means of other practical steps. One very sensitive topic which complicated the improvement of the Polish name among the Jews of the diaspora was the issue of crosses in Auschwitz. Jewish organizations pressed the Polish government to remove Christian symbols from the place which represented the main symbol of the Nazi extermination of Jews in the Jewish collective memory. In the 1970s, a Carmelite convent was erected on the site of the camp, and in 1989, the convent was complemented by an 8-meter-high Papal Cross next to which Pope John Paul II served a mass in 1979. The Carmelites left in 1993, but hundreds of small crosses appeared. The government was willing to remove the small crosses, but the Church and radical nationalist voices refused to budge and instead openly criticized the Jews, often invoking traditional anti-Semitic language about Jews imposing their power over Poland. As Ambassador Piekarski recalled, the crosses in Auschwitz became the main topic in Poland's relations with the Jewish diaspora at that time. "We had a lot of delegations from the American Jewish Congress, the World Jewish Congress, and we at the Ministry [of Foreign Affairs] knew clearly that we had to solve this problem. It was not about if the Roman-Catholic Church was right or wrong, but it had a very negative impact on our vision of Poland as a new democracy not being able to solve this" (Personal Interview, Piekarski 2016). The small crosses were finally removed in May 1999.

To further the aim presenting 'new face' of the country, Polish elites decided to give citizenship back to the Polish Jews who had been expelled during the anti-Semitic purges of 1968. As Junczyk Ziomecka states, "... after the collapse of Communism we wanted to revive the relationship between former Polish citizens who left Poland and who lived in Israel. To offer them the citizenship was one of the very important processes that started with Kwaśniewski and then continued with Kaczyński - to make it a very easy bureaucratic process to regain the Polish citizenship because in 1968, it was illegally taken from them" (Personal Interview, Junczyk Ziomecka 2016). President Kwaśniewski, who, as discussed before, felt ashamed about the anti-Semitic policies of the pre-1989 Communist party, confirmed that there was a question about "what to do with this last wave of political anti-Semitism after 1968, and the decision of the State Council of Poland to eliminate thousands of Polish citizens of the Jewish origin. And one of my first decisions was to cancel this decision and to say to the Jewish community of the world that if you are interested in Polish citizenship, you can do it without any big formalities" (Personal Interivew, Kwaśniewski 2016). And indeed, the second and third post-war generation of Jews with Polish roots started to reclaim Polish citizenship, and as a Polish diplomat estimated, roughly thirty thousand Jews of Polish origin obtained Polish passports (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 6 2016).

Giving back Polish citizenship turned out to be far easier than returning Jewish property. A Polish diplomat estimated that about twenty per cent of the private property stolen in 20th century Poland was Jewish (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 1 2017). Poland remains the only country in Central Europe which has not yet passed comprehensive legislation concerning private property restitution. The issue of restitution has been very complicated and potentially costly not only because of the Jewish claim but also because Poles who were expelled from the eastern part of Poland (known as Kresy), which was annexed to the Soviet Union after WWII, and expelled Germans, lost their property as well. Politically, the compensation of Germans could become an especially explosive topic. Restitution and compensation became further complicated by the fact that so many Polish cities with a high concentration of Jewish property were damaged in the course of WWII. On top of that, much stolen Jewish property was seized and nationalized by the Communist regime and some became the property of Polish citizens, some of whom had stolen it in the midst of WWII and post-WWII chaos and looting. These conditions all contributed to the fact that the Polish state was very hesitant to enact a restitution law. In 1997, a law enabling the restitution of communal property was finally enacted, and the Jewish communities in Poland were thus able to reclaim some assets. However, as the Head of the Union of the Jewish Communities in Poland, Lesław Piszewski, admits, most of the claims were rejected by the state and the whole process has been very slow, especially since the PiS came to power (Personal Interview, Piszewski 2016).

As Polish diplomats and President Kwaśniewski recognized, the issue of restitution has continued to burden Polish-Jewish relations. American Jewish organizations raised the issue of restitution with the Polish authorities strongly, but Israel has been less vocal, as it did not want to jeopardize diplomatic relations with Poland. Yet, there have been exceptions. In 2011, during Prime Minister Netanyahu's first term, 'The Holocaust Era Asset Restitution Taskforce' was established and funded by the Israeli government with the aim of locating Holocaust victims and their heirs and their stolen property and assisting them in their restitution claims. Nevertheless, the project was scaled down in 2014. In Poland, the response to campaigns supporting the restitution of Jewish property has been quite harsh. After the end of Communism, a myth spread that Jews "would ask for 60 billion złoty [over 12.6 billion pounds] in compensation" which would ruin the Polish state (Personal Interview, Krajewski 2016). When the U.S. President, Trump, signed the 'Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today Act' in May 2018, an act which required the State Department to report to Congress on steps in a dozen European countries concerning the compensation of Holocaust survivors or their heirs whose assets had been seized under Nazi German and Communist rule, Warsaw interpreted itself as being the key target of the law. The Polish Foreign Minister, Jacek Czaputowicz, criticized the law because it preferred Jewish claimants to non-Jewish ones, allegedly creating tensions within Polish society (The Times of Israel 2018c). The right-wing media also criticized the law. The cover of the weekly magazine *wSieci* (the Network) showed Israeli

and American flags above the headline "Finish the madness; the subject could cost Poland tens of millions." The socially-conservative weekly, *Najwyższy Czas!* (High Time!), showed a picture of the U.S. Congress and Trump and the Star of David over the headline "The Holocaust industry is attacking Poland."

Figure 2: *Anti-Semitic Symbols in Polish Conservative Media* [Source: Twitter.com]

[Removed for copyright purposes]

Finally, I will look more closely at the consequences of specific narratives promoted by decision-maker as reflected in Polish-Israeli relations. I first examine diplomatic relations on a bilateral and international level; second, I discuss trade relations and defence cooperation; and third, I look at personal links between Poland and Israel.

Diplomacy

To mark a new chapter between Poland and Israel, the Polish government under Tadeusz Mazowiecki officially announced, in March 1990, that Poland was prepared to serve as a transit point for the Soviet Jews who were immigrating to Israel. The Soviet airline, Aeroflot, was bringing Soviet Jews to the airport in Warsaw where passengers were transferred both to Israeli EL AL and to Polish LOT planes. The transport of the Soviet Jews became very sensitive as Arab terrorist groups threatened retaliation against countries which participated in the air-lift. And indeed, security at the Warsaw airport and at Polish Embassies had to be strengthened following the killing of two Polish employees of a Polish trade mission in Beirut and a series of bomb threats received by Polish institutions (The New York Times 1990).

In 1991, Poland supported a UN resolution which repealed an earlier resolution which had stated that "Zionism is a form of racism." This earlier resolution had passed in 1975 when it gained the Polish vote. The Polish Diplomat, Pioter Puchta, who served in Israel in the late 1980s, explained that "Of course, Poland voted [in 1991] against the resolution [...]. It was clear to everybody that this resolution from 1975 was politically motivated. Everybody knew that we were [now] entering a completely different stage" (Personal Interview, Puchta 2016).

Since the renewal of Polish-Israeli relations in 1990, the diplomatic relations between the two countries have progressively strengthened. On the web page of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Israel we read: "In 2011, our political relations were upgraded to the highest possible level of government-to-government dialogue" (Embassy of Poland in Israel 2012). As part of this dialogue, Polish and Israeli ministers met in 2011 in Jerusalem, in 2013 in Warsaw, and in 2016 again in Jerusalem. As the Political Director of the Polish MFA, Sobkow, noted, this high level of cooperation was very rare and Poland had it, apart from Israel, only with important European countries (Personal Interview, Sobkow 2016). In addition to close diplomatic links, both countries cooperated closely on sensitive issues like intelligence and cybersecurity (Personal Interviews, Polish Diplomat 5 2016; Polish Diplomat 6 2016).

On the EU level, Poland oscillated between a pro-Israeli stance and a position which was looking for consensus among the EU countries. In 2006, the Polish-born Israeli Ambassador to Poland, Szewach Weiss, in an interview for the Polish daily *Rzeczpospolita* (Republic), called Poland Israel's "ambassador in the EU" (Rzeczpospolita 2006). And indeed, Poland opposed a pro-Palestinian narrative promoted mostly by southern and Scandinavian member states. Poland was, for example, against the inclusion of a censure regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza in the Council Conclusions (Mughrabi and Kolarska-Bobińska 2008, 30). Polish diplomats also confirmed that they were strongly against any attempts to boycott Israel, and that they refused to support a guideline calling for the labelling of products produced in the occupied Palestinian territories. At the same time, however, as confirmed by a Polish diplomat, "the EU consensus is important for us" (Polish Diplomat 1 2017).

This concern for EU consensus became especially apparent during the government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk. Poland adopted the European language by, for example, placing condition on upgrading Israel's relations with the EU. In an interview for the Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz,* in 2011, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Radosław Sikorski, acknowledged that Poland would like to see more cooperation between the EU and Israel, but "this depends on whether Israel restarts the peace process" (Ha'aretz and Primor 2011). In her evaluation of the Polish approach towards Israel under the Civic Platform, Dyduch claimed that in its desire to create "an image of almost idyllic cooperation" with Germany and France, Poland exercised "more and more restraint toward the declarations of support for Israel" (Dyduch 2012, 24). A Polish politician close to President Kwaśniewski was rather critical of both Tusk's and Sikorski's approach towards Israel, claiming that their policies were motivated by egoism as they were preparing the ground for Tusk and his bid for the Presidency of the European Council (Personal Interview, Polish Politician 2016). Although this trend could be also interpreted as a confirmation of the Europeanization of Polish foreign policy, the victory of the PiS put future

movement in that direction into question. Some Polish diplomats claimed that as Poland's disagreements with the EU increased, the EU mainstream affected its stance towards Israel less and less. A former Polish diplomat predicted that as Poland became more and more isolated in the EU, "there would be an even stronger incentive for closer relations with Israel – two pariahs will come closer" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 2 2016).

Polish diplomats confirmed that in international forums, mostly in the UN and its specialized agencies, Poland never voted against Israeli interests. Poland often joined the EU countries and abstained, but never voted against Israel. For example, in 2009, Poland, together with other members of the Visegrad Four, voted against the so-called Goldstone Report, the controversial UN inquiry into Israel's offensive in Gaza in 2008 which accused both the Israeli army and Palestinian militants of crimes against humanity.[56] In 2009, Poland supported Israel by boycotting the Durban Review Conference, so-called the Durban II,[57] during which the Iranian President, Ahmadinejad, called the government of Israel "a cruel and repressive racist regime" (The New York Times 2009). Poland, together with the Czech Republic, repeatedly voted against the Durban declarations in the UN because they were seen as anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic. With some hesitancy, in 2011, Poland under Tusk also decided to boycott Durban III. (cf. Dyduch 2012, 17–18). Recently, Poland abstained in the vote on the UN Resolution declaring the status of Jerusalem as Israel's capital "null and void". This highly politicised resolution, which was adopted in 2017 in reaction to President Trump's decision to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, was supported by most of the EU countries.

Polish votes in the UN on matters related to Israel and Palestine show a certain pattern. Since 1993, Poland's voting pattern on Palestinian issues seems to have been unrelated both to voting cycles in Poland and to developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the most part, Poland abstained on annual resolutions on Palestinian issues, both at times when the peace process progressed and at times of diplomatic stagnation and military conflict. However, when taking a stand on important issues, Poland voted closer to Israel and the U.S. than any other EU country, with the exception of Latvia, the Czech Republic, and Estonia. This is summarized in Figure 3.

According to the Polish foreign-policy narrative, on the international level Warsaw presented a "more balancing approach and attitude towards the Middle Eastern conflict [...] because of our experience and our

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[56] The author of the report, Richard Goldstone, later admitted that the report may have been inaccurate, and that Israel was not deliberately targeting civilians (The Guardian 2011).

[57] Durban I. took place in 2001 under the title the *World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance*. It was criticized for singling out Israel for discriminatory policies and for attempting to label Zionism a form of racism.

historical sensibilities with the Israeli side [...] and very good relations with Palestinians (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 6 2016). Lining up with pro-Israeli countries was not necessarily seen as pro-Israeli behaviour, but rather as an act balancing pro-Palestinian countries. Another diplomat added that Poland had a clear message for its Arab partners, "We know what it means to lose forty per cent of the territory and six million people." Germany and Soviet Russia also lost millions of people and "at the end, we all started together. Our message to all the partners in the southern neighbourhood is that you have to build the future not based on the history of violence. We are giving everybody ourselves as an example of how to find understanding with your neighbours" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 4 2016). In a Polish sense, to be balanced means, on the one hand, to soften European positions towards Israel and never vote in favour of an anti-Israeli resolution in the UN, and, on the other hand, to be pro-Palestinian in terms of support for the two-state solution. "But if pro-Palestinian means at the same time anti-Israeli, if there is an imbalance, so the Polish government will not be a part of that" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 3 2016).

Figure 3: *Similarity indexes (S3 and S2) with Israel, voting on important resolutions relating to the Palestinian conflict, average from 1993 to 2017*[58]
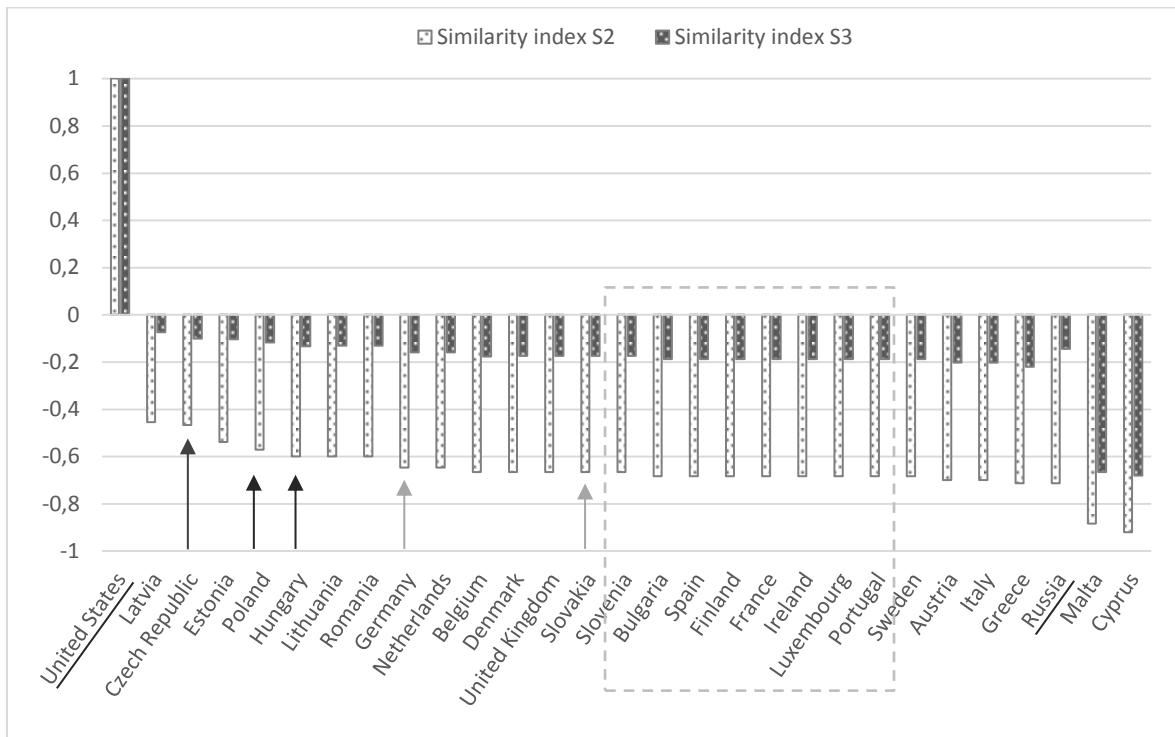
We (the author and Stela Rubínová) work with data on the UN General Assembly voting that is recorded in United Nations Bibliographic Information System database (UNBIS) (Library n.d.). We use a dataset created by Erik Voeten that contains voting records of individual countries as well as some information about the matter of the vote (Voeten 2013). In particular, the author categorizes votes according to topical categories, one of which is 'Votes related to the Palestinian conflict'. Moreover, using the categorization used by the U.S. State Department, he marks among those votes so-called 'Important votes' (Department Of State 2017).

The relevant time span for our analysis starts after the fall of Berlin Wall when the Visegrad countries were not more members of the Soviet bloc. For consistency, we start our inquiry only after the Czech Republic and Slovakia became separate states and, therefore, we focus on voting practices since the start of the 48th session in September 1993. This includes 1811 resolution votes, out of which 450 concerned the Palestinian conflict, out of which 69 were important.

S2 - Votes when both countries voted either yes or no.

S3 - Votes when countries voted either yes, no, or abstained.

Economy and Defence

Since 1989, the volume of trade between Poland and Israel has increased considerably, as is summarized in Table 5. Poland exports primarily food products, vehicles, and machinery to Israel. It imports primarily machinery, chemicals, and foodstuffs from Israel. Poland has become a popular destination for Israeli investors who have become very visible in Polish real estate, shopping malls, cinemas, and medical centres. Cinema City, one of the major multiplex operators in Poland (and Central Europe), and Super-Pharm, which operates over forty of drugstores in Poland, are the most visible Israeli enterprises in Poland. Also, tourism between the two countries has flourished. In addition to the 'Holocaust trips' of Israelis and the pilgrimages of Poles to the Holy Land, as Ambassador Chodorowitz proudly pointed out, "There were forty flights per week [from Israel] to seven different airports in Poland … Israelis do not go to Poland only to visit the camps but they go to the spa, concerts, shopping" (Personal Interview, Chodorowitz 2017).

Table 5: *The Evolution of Trade between Poland and Israel*[59]

	Exports to Israel in current $ mil.	*Share of total exports*	*Imports from Israel in current $ mil.*	*Share of total imports*
1989	21.2	0.14%	21.8	0.17%
1998	23.8	0.09%	130	0.28%
2007	214	0.16%	315	0.18%
2016	572	0.29%	322	0.14%

Poland takes its defence very seriously. It has invested heavily in the modernization of its armed forces, and Poland is among the five NATO member states who meet the obligation to spend at least two per cent of their GDP on defence. Poland has been actively involved in various international military missions, including those led by the U.S. in the Middle East. Israel has become one of the important sources of new technology for the Polish army (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 2 2016). Israeli military technology, appreciated by Poles as being efficient, tested, and often simpler than similar products produced by other countries, became an attractive option for the Polish army. Two important contracts between the two countries between 2003 and 2005 involved anti-tank missiles and remote-controlled surveillance systems. In 2007, the Israeli company,

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[59] The data are taken from the United Nations Statistical Division's COMTRADE database ('UN Comtrade | International Trade Statistics Database' n.d.).

Rafael, upgraded personal arms carriers used by Polish troops in Afghanistan. Poland also bought Israeli drones (Dyduch 2012, 20). Following the Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014, the modernization of the army became even more urgent and Poland started to focus on air defence systems. An important component of Polish air defences was the David's Sling missile interceptor, developed by Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, worth approximately 1 billion USD (Ynetnews 2018).

Poland has been more than a buyer of Israeli weapon systems. Through offset agreements, Polish companies have been involved in the production of weapons invented in Israel. Furthermore, Polish and Israeli soldiers, including special forces, have participated in joint military exercises (Personal Interview, Polish Official 2 2016). A former Polish diplomat also noted that Poland and Israel were "both recipients of U.S. military technology, which is another platform for cooperation – Polish pilots train on F16 [jet fighter] together with Israeli pilots" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 2 2016). Last but not least, officials from Poland and Israel have met regularly, twice a year, as part of the defence dialogue. There has also been regular contact between intelligence services in both countries (Personal Interview, Polish Official 2 2016).

The economic and defence cooperation between the two countries was not negatively affected by occasional political tensions between the governments of Poland and Israel. For example, in the midst of the storm over the Polish Holocaust Law in the summer of 2018, a delegation of a hundred businessmen led by the Minister of Entrepreneurship and Technology, Jadwiga Emilewicz, visited Israel aiming, as stated by the Minister, to "learn from the Israeli market about exports and global thinking" and to attract Israeli companies to open R&D centres in Poland (Globes 2018). Importantly, the issue of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel did not resonate and did not have significant support in Poland. Even among groups like liberal left students and trade unions, where BDS often found its supporters in many Western countries, the BDS movement was almost non-existent. This being the case, Polish foreign decision-makers were not pressed by Polish society to revise Poland's economic and defence links to Israel.

Personal Links

Polish-Israeli relations have been and continue to be characterized by a very high number of state visits by the highest representatives of both countries. Israeli politicians often visit Poland in order to take part in the Holocaust commemoration. The high frequency of visits may also reflect the fact that many of them have the Polish roots. As Table 6 shows, between 1990 and 2018, Israeli Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Ministers of Foreign Affairs visited Poland regularly, some of them repeatedly. On the Polish side, the number of visits to Israel is even higher. For example, President Lech Kaczyński visited Israel two times while President

Kwaśniewski came four times, once unofficially, which clearly indicates the importance of Israel on their presidential agenda.

Table 6: *Visits of Senior Political Representatives from Poland to Israel and from Israel to Poland (source: Polish Embassy, Israel, 2017)*

	Presidents	Prime Ministers
Poland	- Lech Wałęsa (Solidarity), 1991 - Aleksander Kwaśniewski (Soc-Dem), 1999, 2000, 2004, 2005 - Lech Kaczyński (PiS), 2006, 2008 - Bronisław Komorowski (PO), 2013 - Andrzej Duda (PiS), 2016, 2017	- Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz (Soc-Dem), 1997 - Jerzy Buzek (AWS),[60] 1999 - Donald Tusk (PO), 2008, 2011 - Beata Szydło (PiS), 2016
Israel	- Chaim Herzog, 1992 - Ezer Weizman, 2000 - Moshe Katsav, 2005 - Shimon Peres, 2008 - Reuven Rivlin, 2014, 2018	- Yitzhak Rabin (Labour), 1993 - Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud), 1998, 2010, 2013 - Ariel Sharon (Likud/Kadima), 2003, 2005
	Foreign Ministers	G-to-G meetings
Poland	- Krzysztof Skubiszewski (Indep.), 1992 - Władysław Bartoszewski (Indep.), 1995, 2000 - Anna Fotyga (PiS), 2007 - Radosław Sikorski (PO), 2009, 2011 - Grzegorz Schetyna (PO), 2015 - Witold Waszczykowski (PiS), 5.2016, 11.2016	- 2013 in Warsaw
Israel	- Moshe Arens (Likud), 1990 - Shimon Peres (Labour), 2001 - Silvan Shalom (Likud), 2004 - Avigdor Lieberman (Yisrael Beiteinu), 2012	- 2011, 2016 in Jerusalem

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[60] Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*) – a coalition of over 30 parties formed in 1996 with liberal, conservative, and Christian democratic ideology.

People-to-people contacts between Poland and Israel developed, and tourism between the two countries flourished. From 2013 to 2015 about 232 thousand Poles came to visit Israel; 465 thousand Israelis visited Poland (Israel Ministry of Tourism 2015). However, one type of tourism has been a source of frustration for Poles. The 'Holocaust trips' of Israelis to Poland have been problematic for Polish foreign-policy elites ever since the resumption of Polish-Israeli relations. Poles criticized those trips for contributing to the perpetuation of the stereotype that Poland is inherently hostile and dangerous to Jews. Polish Ambassadors who served in Israel confirmed that the programme of trips by Israeli youth and soldiers to Poland was one of the most challenging issues on their agenda. As one Polish diplomat commented, "35-40 thousand Israeli students are coming to Poland every year. We understand these trips are important for the building of national identity [of Israelis], but still, we do not want to be presented as a cemetery of the Jewish people" (Personal Interview, Polish Diplomat 6 2016). Junczyk Ziomecka added that "we suggested [...] not to show them just the camps and museums so the participants would leave with the feeling that they want never come back to visit Poland. But actually, they never visited Poland. They [were] visiting Nazi German islands on the Polish soil" (Personal Interview, Junczyk Ziomecka 2016). Ambassador Magdziak-Mizewska likened Israeli trips to Polish trips to the Holy Land. "Both groups are leaving without any knowledge about modern Poland or Israel" (Personal Interview, Magdziak-Mizewska 2016). To reduce misleading and harmful impressions, Polish officials now want to change the agenda of those trips from "five concentration camps and one shopping mall" (Personal Interview, Israeli Diplomat 2016) and to include more experience with modern Poland in them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the role of Israel and the Jewish question in the re-construction of post-1989 Polish national identity. I did so by examining existing narratives related to the Jewish question and Israel. I explained that Polish support of Israel existed on both the left and right of the political spectrum. However, the pro-Israeli narratives of moderates focused on issues different from the narratives of the right-wing nationalists. For moderates, an important part of their identity was their desire to belong to the West and to rectify the mistakes of the past. Therefore, when analysing narratives which were instrumental in constructing the meaning of Israel among the moderate political elites, two issues dominated: first, Israel was a democratic, modern, Western country which was still fighting for its independence and security in an unfriendly neighbourhood; second, Poland, had a special connection with Israel because of centuries-long Polish-Jewish co-existence during which some terrible things had happened to Polish Jews and because of the instrumental role played by Jews of Polish origin in the establishment of Israel. For the nationalist Right, the dominant issue was the recognition that Israel was a part of Western civilization which was under threat from non-Western

powers and ideas. Israel thus played an important role as a bulwark against radical Islam and terrorism. Furthermore, Polish nationalists admired Israel for being an assertive nation-state and a tough military power, one which should serve as an example for today's Poland.

From a theoretical perspective, I showed how both the moderate and nationalist Right narratives were embedded in the collective memory. As active memory entrepreneurs, however, the decision-makers also tried to organize and shape that memory. They became involved in strategic mnemonic battles in order to promote their policies. In these mnemonic battles, politicians of the nationalist Right, the true mnemonic warriors, became deeply invested in the politics of memory and dominated in the use of historical revisionism to suppress alternative interpretations of the past which did not fit their nationalist vision of Poland. Through an active politics of memory, the leaders of the nationalist Right were creating their own myth about the Polish nation declaring that in order to remain strong, Poland must be rooted in so-called traditional and Christian values.

When examining political actors in Poland, I not only analysed how they attempted to manipulate the meaning of the past, but I also showed that the past frequently framed the decision-makers. Events like the Holocaust, the anti-Semitic purges of 1968, and the centuries-long Polish-Jewish co-existence defined the generation of post-1989 Polish leaders, and to some extent determined their position towards the Jews and Israel. Also, experience with life under Communism served as the strongest source of self-identification for the generation which came to power in the 1990s.

It remains to be seen how sustainable the Polish stance towards Israel is. Polish 'special relations' towards Israel stem to some degree from the long history of Polish-Jewish co-existence and from a feeling of moral obligation towards and cultural closeness with the Jewish state. However, with the passing of time, Poles may feel less attached to events and issues related to the Jewish question. A new generation of Poles, who grew up in post-Communist times, may not feel any special sensitivity or moral responsibility for a small state in the Middle East. Positive sentiments towards Israel, so strongly present in the identity of the post-Communist Polish elites, may start to vanish.

The improvement of both Polish-Jewish and Polish-Israeli relations became an important part of the identity of many Polish moderates. However, ideological closeness between nationalist right-wing politicians in both Poland and Israel may contribute to certain disillusionment among those moderates. They admired Israel for being a state which was able to keep its democratic character in spite of challenges it faced. Should Israel

become a nationalist, nativist, and oriental state, moderate Polish political elites may become more alienated from it.

The politics of memory, which relativizes Polish responsibility for crimes committed against the Jews in the 20th century, and the PiS ambivalent approach to anti-Semitism, together raise the question of the extent to which the rule of the nationalist right-wing government might have a negative impact on Polish relations with Israel. However, the identity of the nationalist PiS government actually contributed to the pro-Israeli stance towards Israel. First, for the nationalist Right, Israel had an important role in the 'civilization battle' against (radical) Islam and terrorism. Second, the ethnic, nationalist Jewish state, which successfully fought for its independence, was able to flourish in an unfriendly environment, and built a prosperous knowledge-based economy, became an example to follow for Polish nationalists. Third, pragmatically, the pro-Israeli policy served well the government which promoted an ideological, nationalist policy, part of which was tolerance towards xenophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism and a concerted effort to relativize certain events in Polish history. Being strongly pro-Israeli could protect the PiS government from accusations that it was anti-Semitic and that through an attempt to criminalize those who conceded that Poles, too, were complicit in crimes against the Jews, it aimed to clean-up the past in order to strengthen its self-defensive, patriotic narrative. Yet, to serve as a 'fig leaf' of a government which acted benevolently against anti-Semitism and promoted narratives which contradicted the Israeli national narrative may not, in the long-term, suit Israel.

To conclude, the Polish pro-Israeli stance has had broad support among the Polish political elites. Both nations have been closely linked through the centuries-long Jewish presence in Poland. Israel was seen as an important ally of post-1989 Poland. However, the politics of memory promoted by the Polish nationalist Right may lead to the alienation of Israel. Similarly, the pro-Israeli affection among the Polish moderates may cool should the character of Israeli democracy change and should the Jewish state start to rely on the support of illiberal regimes rather than democracies in the future.

CHAPTER 5: THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND ISRAEL SINCE 1989

The Velvet Revolution of November 1989, which took place against the backdrop of dramatic geopolitical changes in Europe, led to a radical shift in Czechoslovak/Czech foreign policy.[61] In the search for its place in the new geopolitical order, Czechoslovakia, and since 1993 the Czech Republic, redefined its values and re-evaluated its diplomatic relations. The "return to Europe" became the motto for the Czech foreign policy, widely shared by political elites in the early 1990s. Especially thanks to the liberal and democratic credentials of Václav Havel and his high international reputation, the Czechs gained "immediate international recognition as one of the more 'advanced' nations of the former Eastern bloc whose natural home seemed clearly to lie in the West." This fitted nicely with Czechs' perceptions about themselves and their views of their own past (Heimann 2011, 212).

The post-1989 period was characterized by idealism and the ambitions of former dissidents who became very active in foreign-policy making – President Václav Havel (1936-2011) and Foreign Minister Jiří Dietnsbier (1937-2011) most notable among them. They called for the elimination of both the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and for their replacement with a new pan-European security framework. The geopolitical reality – the strength of the U.S.-led coalition in the Persian Gulf War in 1990/91 and the inability of Europeans, and specifically of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, to deal with the conflict in Yugoslavia - soon led to a re-evaluation of plans for a new pan-European security system. Instead, NATO membership became the most desired alternative (Šedivý 1995). Further, in a desire to rectify post-WWII mistakes, Havel, in a step which caused a domestic controversy, offered an apology to ethnic Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia. He further supported a restoration of relations with the Vatican and Israel which had been interrupted in 1950 and 1967 respectively.

Post-1989 Czech foreign-policy has been strongly influenced by a legacy of dissent. Many people who were instrumental in the creation of post-Communist Czech foreign policy had a dissident background and shared certain basic world-views (Waisová and Piknerová 2012). The dissident tradition, greatly influenced by Havel, brought an instinctive distance from authoritarian regimes, from the Communist ones in particular, to Czech foreign policy. Furthermore, the dissident tradition influenced Czech relations with the U.S. During the Cold War, two of the important sources of information about the world were the US-sponsored outlets, Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, which shaped dissidents' ideas about the world and about international

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[61] On 1 January 1993, Czechoslovakia split into two independent states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

relations (Heimann 2011, 310). A romantic vision of America, together with a strong belief that in critical moments, U.S. always stood on the right side of history, made former dissidents believe America was a moral power and the best guarantor of democracy and protector of human rights in the world. Hence the Czech government support of America's interventionist policies, including the Global War on Terrorism (Ditrych et al. 2013, 414). From a strong generation of dissidents rose a strong generation of Czech politicians, diplomats, and officials who shared a liberal-right world-view. As I will discuss in more detail, their strong Atlanticist and anti-Communist identities coalesced with their support for Israel.

Since the early 1990s, two major inclinations have existed among the Czech political elites. Pro-EU ideologists emphasized the importance of cooperation with the European states, mainly Germany, and wanted to see the Czech Republic well-integrated into the EU structures. Atlanticists, on the other hand, preferred a strong bond with the U.S. and NATO and wanted to cooperate with the EU on a more intergovernmental basis. Until the Czech accession to NATO (in 1999) and the EU (in 2004), these approaches had not been mutually exclusive. Later, however, the major political parties started to define themselves as either more-strongly pro-EU (Centre-Left Social Democrats - ČSSD), or as more-strongly pro-Atlanticist (economically liberal and socially conservative Civic Democrats - ODS). In addition, a third group was refusing Czech membership in NATO and the EU and had a clear pro-Russian inclination. Since the 1990s, this approach has been promoted by the Czech Communist Party. After the parliamentary elections in 2017, the far-right Freedom and Direct Democracy became ideologically close to this position.

I will now turn to the role of Israel in the process of the re-construction of Czech post-1989 identity and discuss the effect it has had on the definition of Czech foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel.

Czech Relations with Israel

Strategic partnership with Israel remains the Czech policy's salient bilateral priority in the region, epitomized by joint government meetings and cooperation in science and research, investment, defence, economy, and culture. The Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy (MFA 2015)

Above-standard relations with Israel became part of the [Czech] state identity. Pavel Seifter, Czech Ambassador to the U.K.,1997-2003 (Personal Interview, Seifter 2017)

"The Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy," a strategic document from 2015 delineating the foreign policy interests of the country, defined Israel as a strategic partner. In the EU, the Czech Republic has been considered a strong ally of Israel who speaks clearly against statements and policies which Prague deems

harmful to Israel's interests. In the UN, in some high-profile voting, the Czech Republic has been ready to stand against the majority by joining a handful of countries which voted together with Israel, as, for example, in 2012 during the vote on the upgrade of the status of Palestine. The Czech position towards Israel has been a consensual political issue and a constant of Czech foreign policy.

Israel is a small, rather a distant country in a region to which the Czechs have no direct links either geographically or historically. Czechs did not have a Middle-Eastern colonial past. Furthermore, the Czech Republic and Israel face rather different geopolitical threats. While Israel had been most seriously exposed to threats coming from the Muslim countries, for the Czech Republic, Russia has been the country most worrisomely challenging its geopolitical anchoring. Considering the fact that most of the Czech foreign-policy positions, e.g. the promotion of human rights, the level of European integration, the importance of the Visegrad Four, and even the intensity of trans-Atlantic relations[62] have been questioned by the political elites, the fact that there existed a broad consensus concerning Czech relations with Israel is in and of itself an interesting fact.

In this chapter, I first analyse the dominant narratives concerning the Czech approach toward Israel and the Jewish question. Second, I look at how major decision-makers contributed to the formation of the key narratives. Third, I discuss the level of institutionalisation of the Czech-Israeli relations with a special focus on diplomacy, economy, and personal links.

5.1. Narratives

In this section, I analyse the main Czech narratives related to Israel and the Jewish question. In the process of the re-construction of the post-1989 Czech national identity, neither the issue of Israel nor the Jewish question became contested, and instead, there existed a broad consensus among the Czech political elites concerning both. I demonstrate that in the process of the search for a post-1989 national identity, Israel played an important role. In this section, I look first at past events which had an impact on the collective memory of the post-1989 political elites. Second, I look at the existing narratives concerning Israel which were widely shared among the Czech political elites. Third, I discuss the recent rise of an alternative narrative which challenged a dominant pro-Israeli narrative.

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[62] See especially the debate about the deployment of the U.S. missile tracking radar in the Czech Republic between 2007 and 2009 (cf. Kalhousová 2016).

The Legacy of the Past

History of our [Czech] relations with the Jewish nation and the State of Israel proves that our bonds are not only related to some strategic thinking. Israel for us is not only a figure on the geopolitical chessboard. Jiří Dienstbier, Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1989-1992 (Dienstbier 2010)

On February 9, 1990, the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arens, and his Czechoslovak counterpart, Dienstbier signed an agreement about the renewal of diplomatic relations. However, the process of the renewal of links between the two countries did not start with a blank past. A long and complex historical legacy of Czech-Jewish and Czech-Israeli relations formed a backdrop against which the Czech position towards Israel was formed. The generation of political elites who came to power in 1989 was most strongly affected by the legacy of Communism. They grew up and lived their lives in Communism. With its demise, the new political elites, many of them with a dissident past, wanted to build a new Czechoslovakia. They wanted to remove the symbols of the Communist regime and to rectify its errors.

Among the most intense memories of the post-Communist elites were events connected to the Prague Spring and the following period of normalization. The severing of relations with Israel accompanied by virulent speeches condemning the Jewish state, the open support of the authoritarian Arab regimes, including military assistance, and the obsequious behaviour of the Czechoslovak Communist leaders towards some of the worst dictators in the Arab countries were still fresh in memory of those who re-defined Czech foreign policy in the 1990s. Daniel Kroupa, a philosopher, dissident, and signer of the Charter 77, and a high-profile politician during the 1990s recalled, "I observed the Six Day War with a tremendous admiration [and] also the next wars, I followed them very closely. Then there was the Olympic Games in Munich[63] [...] which led me and my friends to the unequivocal support of Israel" (Personal Interview, Kroupa 2018). When looking back at the year 1967, Jiří Dienstbier, a dissident and the first post-Communist Minister of Foreign Affairs, said, "The interruption of the diplomatic relations with Israel caused public debate. The public, outraged by the attack against Israel which was accompanied by calls for the driving of Jews to the sea, supported Israel. The Party leadership demanded that the Czechoslovak Writer's Congress of 1967 condemn Israeli "aggression." The Congress refused. [...] it was the first time somebody dared to criticize our subordinate (služebnou) foreign policy" (Dienstbier 2010). Michael Žantovský, a press secretary of President Havel and later Ambassador to the U.S., Israel, and the U.K., added an important observation: "The year 1967 [the Six Day War] represented a major historical pillar which, on the one hand, led to the interruption of relations with Israel and, on the other,

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[63] Palestinian terrorist group Black September massacred during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich 11 Israeli athletes.

triggered a remarkable expression of an open resistance against this position by liberal and pro-reform Communists, many of whom later joined the oppositional and dissident circles" (Personal Interview, Žantovský 2018).

A part of the collective memory of the post-1989 political elites was the anti-Semitic character of the Communist regime which manifested itself clearly during the political trials of the 1950s and which was also present during the normalization period after the Prague Spring. As Dienstbier recalled, "Stalin's anti-Semitism of the last years of his reign was reflected also in Gottwald's politics, which included the Slánský Trial […] the fact that the names of the defenders included an epithet "of Jewish origin" made people feel the repercussion of Auschwitz" (Dienstbier 2010).

The dissident generation was also aware of the devastation of the Jewish cultural heritage and of the ways Communists both manipulated knowledge about the Jewish presence, and also organized its passage out of memory.[64] While criticizing the woeful state of official Communist culture, they looked for inspiration in pre-Communist times. The multi-cultural character of the pre-WWII Czechoslovakia/Czech Lands came to be seen as emblematic of the period when Czech culture reached the European level. To quote Dienstbier again, "The meeting of the Czech, Jewish, and German culture created the atmosphere of Prague and the Czech lands; it was one of the most important components of the Central European cultural phenomenon. It would be impossible to imagine it without rabbi Löw, the Golem, without our fellow citizens Franz Kafka, Egon Ervín Kisch, Karel Poláček […]. Gustav Mahler, Sigmund Freud […] were also born in Bohemia and Moravia" (Dienstbier 2010).

After 1989, in the process of the re-discovery of ideas and topics that were suppressed by the Communists, Jewish topics became very popular. The Czech public started to learn about the Holocaust, Czech-Jewish pre-WWII culture, and also the Jewish religion. Czech bookstores started to offer books by Czech-Jewish authors whose works, with a short exception in the 1960s, had been forbidden. Furthermore, the translations of books by American-Jewish and Israeli authors became popular. In the 1990s, especially among the liberal elites, "Jewishness" became very attractive. It took on flavour of something a bit mysterious and enigmatic, yet posh and chic. With this came a sort of idealization of Czech-Jewish co-existence and a fetishization of its symbols. Importantly, however, the myths of Jewish Prague, like the Golem or Kafka, symbols which had been

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[64] The topic was addressed by the Charter 77 document under the title: "Criticism of the devastation of the Jewish cultural heritage in Czechoslovakia and the suppression of the role of Jews in Czechoslovak history" (April 5, 1989; 28/89).

suppressed during the Communist era, were revived and became once again important parts of the narrative of the Czech past.

After the Velvet Revolution, in a time of great uncertainty, the new regime had to establish itself. In an attempt to gain legitimacy, decision-makers tried to link the post-1989 Czechoslovakia with the Czechoslovakia of the pre-Communist era. The main reference point became the interwar Czechoslovakia of T.G. Masaryk. The myth of the First Republic, a golden age when democratic Czechoslovakia was one of the most advanced countries in the world, started to be cultivated after 1989. As Heimann observed, "The cultivation of stereotypes about the supposedly impeccable democratic credentials of the Czechs" was supposed to help Czechoslovakia gain "international recognition"(Heimann 2011, 312). And with the myth-making about the First Republic came a narrative about Czech-Jewish co-existence and Czech philosemitism. These were claimed to have stemmed from strong secularism, which limited power of Catholic anti-Semitism, a Hussite tradition of respect for Judaism, and Masaryk's moral stance against anti-Semitism. As Dienstbier noted, "Masaryk's fight against anti-Semitism during the Hilsner Affair fomented our understanding of the Jewish question in modern times. Our good traditions include the hospitality of Czechoslovakia which in the thirties offered refuge to people persecuted in Germany on racial grounds (like Leon Feuchtwanger) or in increasingly more fascistic Austria (like Bruno Kreisky)" (Dienstbier 2010).

In the search for positive moments in the history of Czechoslovakia, the story of Czechoslovak diplomatic and military aid to Israel became very useful. This event was taboo during the Communist era, but it was re-discovered after 1989 and became one of the key founding myths of Czech-Israeli relations. Ever since then, almost no official speech by either Czech or Israeli political leaders can occur without reference to it. If forty years of Communist diplomacy represented a shameful period, the diplomatic and military aid provided to the Yishuv/Israel became, according to the post-1989 narrative, a moment when the country was on the right side of history and when its political leaders proved to be courageous. For the Czechs whose collective memory had been traumatized by military defeats and the inability or unwillingness to defend itself, the military aid which significantly contributed to the victory of the Jewish state in its first war helped to boost confidence. As Pavel Seifter, a dissident and a signatory of Charter 77, and the Head of the Department of International Relations at Havel's presidential office (1993-1997) and Ambassador to the U.K. recognized, "After 1989, we were looking for heroes, for moments when we were able to hold our own in history. And the Czechoslovak aid to Israel, it was a true treasure" (Personal Interview, Seifter 2017). As Čejka observed, "In this mythology, the Czechs actually had a key influence on the 'rescue' of the Jewish state and laid down the 'historical bond' between the two countries" (Čejka 2017, 30). This sentiment was confirmed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Lubomír Zaorálek (2014-2017), who said the following about the Czechoslovak military aid: "It [the military aid] was impressive. Moreover, we were the only ones who in fact offered it, so we were this unique bridge which had been built and helped Israel to survive. Therefore, it was this act of the state we can be proud of and the meaning of which is invaluable"(Personal Interview, Zaorálek 2017).

For the post-1989 Czech political elites, Israel was more than just one among many foreign-policy topics they had to deal with. It was a source of positive narratives when, suddenly in a position of power, they started to re-define the Czech stance towards Israel.

Dominant Narratives

Renewal of relations with Israel was motivated emotionally. [...] We are friends of Israel. Of course, in some cases, we can criticize them. But in key questions, we are as a matter of principle allies of Israel. Karel Schwarzenberg, Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2007-09, 2010-13 (Personal Interview, Schwarzenberg 2018)

Our relations towards Israel were not seen as being transactional [vztah má dáti-dal] but it became a value-based and also a strategic-based choice. Alexandr Vondra, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2006-07, and Defence, 2010-12 (Personal Interview, Vondra 2017)

In the Czech foreign policy exists a long-term position towards the State of Israel. It is not about interest, it is about friendship. A Czech Diplomat (Czech Diplomat 7 2017)

Jewish identity is a part of the Czech identity [...] and because of that we simply have some special relation towards Israel, that's for sure. Jana Hybášková, European External Action Service (Personal Interview, Hybášková 2018)

During the turbulent period of the early 1990s, when the Czech Republic went through a process of transformation, it wanted to become a normal, modern country which was a part of the West. For former dissidents, now turned political elites, the foreign policy goal was to undo the biggest faults of the Communist regime (Personal Interview, Žantovský 2018) and to "normalize" relations which had been distorted during the Cold War. In his New-Year address in January 1990, President Havel expressed his wish to renew relations with Israel (and the Holy See). The renewal of relations with the Jewish state thus became a symbol of an independent Czech foreign policy. But, the new Czech(oslovak) foreign policy was built on more than opposition to Communist foreign policy. There was also an attempt to link it to the period before Czechoslovakia became a Communist country. In this process, Israel played an especially important role. It was seen as important to renew diplomatic relations with a country which Czechoslovakia supported before the Communist coup in 1948 and with which relations were strained during the Cold War.

As confirmed by people who served at the MFA in the early 1990s or who worked closely with President Havel, the question of the renewal of relations with Israel was not a matter of debate. There was consensus on the need to do so as soon as possible (Huňátová 2018; Schwarzenberg 2018; Seifter 2017; Žantovský 2018). As Schwarzenberg, who served as the Head of the Presidential Office from 1990 to 1992 argued, "we were all convinced that we have to rebuild our relations with Israel as quickly as possible – relations which were interrupted by Communists – that we have to rebuild alliance with our old ally. It was clear to all of us, but first of all to Havel" (Personal Interview, Schwarzenberg 2018). A younger diplomat who joined the MFA in the 2000s recalled that, "For Havel, the renewal of relations with Israel was a symbolic act. It was a part of our return to civilization. We renewed relations with other countries too, but Israel was more important, more fundamental" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 4 2018). When reflecting on Havel's New Year's speech from 1990, Alexandr Vondra, a dissident and later Minister of Foreign Affairs (2006-7) and Defence (2010-12), added that mentioning Israel and the Vatican enabled Havel not only to focus on the realistic political dimension of foreign policy but also to focus on the cultural and value-based dimension of it. And Israel and the Holy See were important symbols of both (Personal Interview, Vondra 2017).

Czech diplomats unequivocally rejected the suggestion Czech policy towards Israel was ever a part of trans-Atlantic relations. In other words, the Czechs did not see Israel as a useful mediator through which they could foster their relations with the U.S. Chronologically, the process of the renewal of relations with Israel started before Czechs even began to think about the possibility of joining NATO (Personal Interview, Žantovský 2018). Of course, from the Czech perspective, Israeli and American interests in the Middle Eastern region have often been very close, and both countries were seen as part of the same democratic bloc. Yet, in Czech foreign policy, relations with Israel have been treated independently of relations with the U.S. (Czech Diplomat 1 2017; Czech Diplomat 6 2017; Czech Diplomat 8 2017; Czech Official, MOD 2017). Furthermore, as Minister Zaorálek added, Israel saw itself as an "independent unit" promoting "Israeli politics." It did not belong to any pack or alliance. In this way, Israel itself contributed to the fact that relations with it have been characterized as a kind of "solo-partnership" (Personal Interview, Zaorálek 2017).

In the search for sources of a national identity free from Communist dogma, the legacy of the Jewish presence in the Czech lands came to the fore. Jana Hybášková, a fresh graduate of the Charles University who became the Head of the Middle Eastern Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in late 1990 recalled that shortly after the renewal of relations with Israel, it was not economy, trade, diplomacy, or consular affairs which complicated relations with Israel. Instead, it was the question of the future of the collections of Judaica at the Jewish Museum in Prague. There were pressures, from both private and state organizations, in both Israel and

America, to move those precious historical collections to Israel. Questions about identity, Hybášková noted, framed those negotiations. "Who are we? Who are Czech Jews? Are the Czech Jews first and foremost Czechs or Jews? Does Israel represent the Czech Jews? Does it speak in the name of the Czech Jews who perished during the Holocaust"? In the negotiations over the collections of Judaica, the Czech stance was "that Jews and Jewish history are part of the historical and cultural identity of Czechs just as they are part of the historical identity of Israel." She further noted that for people like Havel and Dienstbier, it was out of the question that objects linked to the Jewish legacy in Czechoslovakia/Czech Lands would be sent out of the country. She added that in the process of redefining a post-Communist identity, Czechs rediscovered their old and deep links with both Jews and Israel (Personal Interview, Hybášková 2018).

Consciousness and a feeling of responsibility for the tragic fate of Jews in Europe have been important factors influencing the Czech position towards Israel. Even though in the Czech collective memory the annihilation of the Czech Jews was the sole responsibility of the Nazis, and the passivity of the Czech institutions and population have not been considered as factors which enabled the Nazis to implement the Final Solution, a certain deep sense of responsibility for the Holocaust exists among the Czech political elites. Moshe Yegar, the Israel Ambassador serving in the Czech Republic in the 1990s, noticed this: "I came across [...] a certain sense of guilt for the killing of Jews during WWII and the feeling that Israel must be compensated for that. [...] the feeling was that it was a part of Czech history. Germans did it, but in our country" (Personal Interview, Yegar 2017). And indeed, Pavel Klucký, the Head of the Middle Eastern Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, admitted that "We recognize that a terrible injustice happened to Jews during the war and as such, we support their struggle for a state" (Personal Interview, Klucký 2017). Rather than discussing Czech responsibility for the Holocaust, the Czech elites would usually speak about our, meaning European, responsibility for the annihilation of European Jewry, concluding that all Europeans have a special responsibility to protect the Jewish state. With a growing number of the EU countries, including Germany, distancing themselves from Israel, some Czechs feel that they now carry the torch of responsibility for the protection of the Jewish state (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 5 2018).

The responsibility to protect the Jewish state has been linked to the awareness that thousands of Czech Jews, when escaping from the Nazi or Communist dictatorships, found a refuge in the Yishuv/Israel. When Minister Dienstbier talked about Israel he commented that "It is a homeland of people many of whom came from our country, [it is a country] where we have many personal and family friends" (Dienstbier 2010). As a result, Israel has not been considered just "a foreign country." Rather, building on the presence of Jews with roots in Czechoslovakia, some of whom played an important role after 1989 in linking the two countries together

diplomatically, culturally, and economically, Israel has been seen as a country with clear Czech traits which made the two countries close.

A certain level of identification with Israel existed among the Czech political elites. They saw certain similarities in the geopolitical situation of the Czech Republic and Israel. The Czechs consider themselves a small peace-loving nation "sandwiched" between two superpowers, the USSR/Russia and Germany, which have repeatedly threatened Czech interests and even existence. Similarly, Israel is seen as a small country which kept its democratic character while being surrounded by some very oppressive regimes and which was under constant threat from its neighbours, some of them were calling for its annihilation. As one Czech diplomat said, "We identify with them [Israelis]. As a small nation, we have trauma from being surrounded by enemies" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 1 2017). Vondra claimed that as a small nation surrounded by Russia and Germany, Czechs felt sympathy towards Israel, a country "in the sea of bigger hostile countries" (Personal Interview, Vondra 2017). Similarly, before a meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Czech Prime Minister, Petr Nečas, said in an interview for *The Jerusalem Post*: "We've got a full understanding of Israel's situation as a small, democratic country in a very dangerous region with very dangerous neighbours. We've got a special feeling for Israel's situation – that of a small nation surrounded by enemies. We remember our situation in the 1930s when small democratic Czechoslovakia had neighbours that wanted to destroy it or take a part of our territory" (The Jerusalem Post 2012).

And indeed, another source of Czech identification with the Israeli position was the trauma of the Munich Agreement of 1938. First, Munich formed important components of the Czech collective memory. The Czechs, being "sold" and abandoned by their allies had no option but to succumb to Nazi Germany. Influenced by this narrative about Munich, Czech decision-makers understood Israeli doubts and scepticism when its allies advised them to cede control over territory in order to reach a lasting peace. Czech diplomats recognized that the legacy of Munich consciously or subconsciously prevented them from joining those who saw a clear connection between the lack of peace in the Middle East and an Israeli presence in the West Bank. Having the Munich experience in mind, it was difficult for Czechs to support a policy that could injure Israel as Munich had injured Czechoslovakia.

Second, the Munich agreement revealed Czech helplessness. Czechoslovakia became a country living with the trauma of surrender, a trauma which the 20th century repeated and emphasized. The country surrendered first to the Nazi occupation and second to the armies of the Warsaw Pact during the Prague Spring in 1968. Israel, however, was not weak. Its resolve and its military were active and successful. And Czechs admired its ability to defend itself against powerful enemies. As Minister Vondra said, Israel, being exposed to attacks from its

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neighbours, "was able to defend itself" (Personal Interview, Vondra 2017). And the fact that in the first Arab-Israeli war the Czech arms contributed to the survival of Israel underlines the strength of the Czech national sympathy for Israel. It could be said that through Israel and its military victories, the Czech trauma of surrender was healed. As Dienstbier observed, "Israel became a proud alter-ego of the Czech defeatism"(Dienstbier 2010).

The Czech adopted narrative further stressed the importance of an alliance with Israel, because Israel was the only democracy in the Middle East. Some Czech diplomats recognized that Israeli democracy might not be perfect. However, taking into consideration the authoritarian character of its neighbourhood, Israel has been considered to be doing rather well. Kroupa summed it up, saying, "[m]ost fundamentally, unlike its neighbours, Israel is a democratic state, with all its pluses and minuses, and as such, in the Arab-Israeli conflicts it is necessary to stand behind Israel" (Personal Interview, Kroupa 2018).

In Czech foreign-policy thinking, to support and to have strong relations with Israel not only reflected value politics, but also constituted a strategic choice. Israel was seen as an important and reliable ally in the struggle between the West and radical Islam. September 11, terrorist attacks in European cities, the rise of the so-called Islamic State, these were examples of threats emanating from the Middle East that directly harmed the West. According to this narrative, Israel was on the front line of the battle between "us" – the West, and "them" – radical Islam. Already admiring Israel for its ability to defend itself, the Czechs saw Israel as a country which was not naïve and acted against its enemies with a necessary strength. And as we have a common enemy, the argument continued, the battle for Prague started in Jerusalem. In view of all of these things, it was in the Czech interest to stand behind Israel. This narrative was clearly articulated in the context of the migration crisis of 2015-16, when anti-Arab and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the Czech public space intensified. A Czech diplomat who served in the Arab countries observed, "The reverse side of [the Czech] racism against Arabs is an admiration of Israel" (Czech Diplomat 3 2018).

The Czech narrative also conceived of a strong link with Israel as useful for pragmatic reasons. The Czech political elites recognized Israeli technological success. The Czechs, whose economy had been overly dependent on the automotive industry and a cheap labour force, looked at successful "start-up story" of Israel with admiration. Czech politicians and diplomats, supported by businessmen, stressed that it was in the interest of the Czech Republic to learn from Israel's experiences and to emulate some of its achievements. Deeper cooperation with Israel in areas like cybersecurity, information technologies, and innovation was thus seen as very useful for the Czech Republic. As Minister Zaorálek stated, "[...] we cooperate extensively in

cybersecurity, where they [Israelis] excel, and it brought us some substantial results, some of which were even recognized in Europe" (Personal Interview, Zaorálek 2017).

As an explanation for the friendly Czech position towards Israel, Czech decision-makers would claim that the Czechs are more realistic and pragmatic in their assessment of the realities of the Middle East than many Western European countries are. The Communist experience made the Czechs suspicious of what they saw as the naïve positions of some Western Europeans. A veteran Czech journalist, Jakub Szántó, who has covered conflicts in the Middle East for Czech TV for the past fifteen years, including Israel and Palestine, said that "Having experience with Communist propaganda, we are better equipped to discern similar propaganda when being exposed to it. Journalists, especially less experienced ones from Western European countries, often fall for it and adopt a one-sided version of an otherwise complex story" (Personal Interview, Szántó 2018). Furthermore, a certain suspicious attitude towards leftist ideology contributed to the fact that the post-1989 elites did not adopt anti-Israeli positions coming mainly from the so-called New Left since the 1960s. Even the main Czech leftist Party, the Social-Democrats, did not adopt the anti-Israeli narrative of some of its sister parties in the West. Finally, not having a significant and politically active Muslim community, and not being burdened by colonial guilt, the anti-Israeli trends apparent in many countries west of the Czech borders have so far not been replicated in the Czech Republic (Personal Interview, T. Pojar 2017).

To conclude, in the time of major political shifts, the post-1989 Czech elites formulated a strong pro-Israeli narrative. This narrative reflected an attempt to link the post-1989 Czech Republic with the golden times of Czech-Jewish co-existence during the First Republic. They wished to distance themselves from the anti-Zionism of the Communist regime, acknowledging Israel as the protector of the West in the Middle East. This narrative further reflected the Czech elites' admiration for Israel and its military and economic successes. In the next section, I will look at narratives which challenged this dominant pro-Israeli stance.

Alternative Narratives

In the last several years, in the time of political stability, the Czech position towards Israel has become less fixed. Two basic approaches towards Israel became apparent: first, a strongly pro-Israel stance, and second, a stance closer to the position of the EU mainstream. As a former Czech Ambassador to Israel, Jiří Schneider, observes, "Czech diplomats have not yet decided if the main value is to keep the middle-ground position rather than to stand out, or if the main value is to promote what we consider to be the truth, no matter the cost. The second approach, which Saša [Alexandr Vondra] calls a Hussite stance, to stand against all if needed, is the one which is not based on the cost-benefit calculation. The first approach considers what is expedient" (Personal Interview, Schneider 2017).

According to the narrative promoting the pro-Israel stance, the Czech position helps to balance the anti-Israeli positions of the EU mainstream. Supporters of this narrative consider the anti-Israeli positions of some EU members, especially Sweden and Belgium, as being both biased and totally naïve and they contend that the more realistic Czech stance achieves balance, constituting an important counter weight. The clear and consistent pro-Israeli position, the narrative continues, has become an important asset of Czech foreign policy and "we are flattered to be seen as the most pro-Israeli country in the EU. It is one of the few issues where the Czech Republic has a clear profile, where we are pro-active" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 2 2017). Supporters of this narrative further add that the Czech stance is actually rational and pragmatic since the aim of the EU should be to cooperate with Israel and to reflect its point of view rather than to isolate it.

The pro-Israeli stance, promoted mostly by pro-Atlanticist politicians and diplomats influenced by a liberal-right world-view, has been challenged by the Social-Democratic Minister Zaorálek, who held the office from 2014 to 2017. He explained that his main goal was not a total reorientation of Czech foreign policy but, based on a critical and realistic appraisal of Havel's legacy, to move it in new directions (Personal Interview, Zaorálek 2017). Zaorálek surrounded himself with a younger cohort of co-workers, whose identity was influenced by Czech membership in the EU, rather than by the dissident tradition, and who were ideologically somewhat attracted to positions of traditional European leftist parties. Prominent among these younger officials was Petr Drulák (1972), a political scientist and a former head of the Institute of International Relations, who became the First Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the reassessment of Czech foreign policy, some of the traditional priorities came into question. Even as an academic Drulák had criticized Havel's understanding of human rights. In contra-distinction to Havel, Drulák called them only allegedly universal. Drulák claimed that Havel was under the strong influence of anti-Communism and Atlanticism and therefore set different standards for different types of authoritarian regimes. Havel, Drulák claimed, overlooked certain breaches of human rights, for example, among the allies in the Middle East and also in Western countries (Drulák 2010, 376). He was also critical of the Czech stance towards Israel. "[...] a lot of problems come from the prejudicial or ideological blindness of the decision-makers. Thus, the pro-Israel prejudice, as evident in statements of senior officials and in the UN voting, deprives the Czech foreign policy of its proclaimed impartiality in the Middle East" (Drulák 2010, 381). As the First Deputy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Drulák aimed "to Europeanize Czech foreign policy towards Israel" (Personal Interview, Drulák 2018).

Minister Zaorálek, in his remarks before the Israeli Council on Foreign Relations in 2014, delineated his vision, which reflected the ideas of his deputy, Drulák.

> "The government I represent does not intend to make any strategic changes to our previous policy toward the Middle East. We may, however, need to diversify our positions and tactical options, in light of changes on the ground as well as in the European foreign policy process. Consequently, we must be prepared to adopt a more nuanced approach as we pursue our shared vision of peace and security for Israel" (Zaorálek 2015, 88).

This alternative narrative was not necessarily anti-Israeli in its character; rather, it saw an important value in keeping the Czech Republic in the EU mainstream. Accordingly, it was not in the interest of Czech foreign policy to be seen as a spokesperson of Israel because "it is worthless for us" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 5 2018). Rather than breaking ranks, the Czechs should support EU initiatives regarding Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

However, this first serious challenge to the existing Czech position towards Israel ended without making any visible change in Czech foreign policy. As Drulák's ideological opponents noted, he had a hard time convincing diplomats at the Ministry. Furthermore, since the pro-Israel President, Miloš Zeman, and a pragmatic Social-Democratic Prime Minister, Bohuslav Sobotka, blocked Drulák's initiatives, the existing consensus in regard to Czech position towards Israel remained unchanged (Joch 2017; T. Pojar 2017; Vondra 2017; Žantovský 2018). As Drulák recognized, the Czech elites remained very pro-Israeli, and interest in Israel has continued to be present across the Czech civil service (Personal Interview, Drulák 2018). This being so, the attempt to shift the Czech stance was met either by passivity or by open resistance. With Drulák's departure, this alternative narrative lost its most vocal proponent. Nevertheless, it remained the most plausible challenge to the strong pro-Israeli approach.

Some diplomats admitted that by being "instinctively pro-Israeli" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 4 2018), Czechs sometimes became too isolated. Being seen as a voice of Israel, the Czech proposals were often not taken seriously. "When the EU is looking for a consensus, the Czechs, being seen as sitting at the far side of the table, are not part of the negotiation" which harmed their ability to balance the EU positions towards Israel (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 4 2018). Even the diplomats who were supporters of the Czech pro-Israeli stance stressed the importance of not being the only pro-Israeli voice among the EU states. Therefore, rather than taking a Hussite stance, rather than standing alone against the rest of the EU, it has become important for Czech diplomats to be part of the group of member states who are not anti-Israeli. Mainly, the German position has been of special concern to the Czech diplomats when they responded to EU initiatives, including those which involved Israel.

Another alternative narrative, presented mostly in the 1990s, was related to the possible response of the Arab countries. In the early 1990s, some diplomats worried that scaling down Czech so-called "special relations" with Arab countries, together with open support of Israel, would damage the Czech position in the Arab world. Yet, this concern proved unwarranted. Rather, close relations with Israel made the Czech Republic an interesting partner for the Arab countries. A Czech diplomat involved in Middle Eastern affairs said that "Arabs come to Prague to find out about what Israel and Jews [sic] think" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 6 2017). Similarly, Israelis were taking advantage of the fact that there has been a Palestinian Embassy in Prague and that Czechs have kept close contacts with Palestinian leaders. As a Czech diplomat responsible for the Middle Eastern agenda in the 1990s confirmed, "We organized numerous bilateral and trilateral meetings with Israelis and Palestinians, and Israelis were always grateful for this opportunity we created here in Prague" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 3 2018). Indeed, Prague, a city with remarkable architecture and also a safe place, became a popular venue for meetings and conferences that aimed to promote dialogue and cooperation among countries in the Middle East. As one Czech diplomat proudly declared, "we have a lot to offer [...] there already exists this tradition [of meetings] and we have to develop it further" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 6 2017). According to this narrative, Czech special relations with Israel, together with Czech long-term experience being involved in backstage diplomacy, made both Israelis and Arabs consider Prague an interesting (and safe) venue for mutual encounters.

After looking at narratives related to the Czech stance towards Israel, among which the most dominant has been the pro-Israel narrative, recently somewhat challenged by the middle-ground narrative reflecting the EU mainstream positions, I now turn to two politicians who influenced the dominant pro-Israel narratives and who formed the present Czech stance towards Israel.

5.2. Decision-Makers

In this section, I look at two Czech political leaders who influenced the process of the reconstruction of the post-1989 Czech collective memory concerning Israel, Václav Havel and Miloš Zeman. Havel's domestic and international credit contributed to the fact that his legacy has been present in Czech foreign policy for decades. Zeman's impact has been far more limited; importantly, however, he helped to define the pro-Israeli position of the Czech central-left.

Václav Havel (1936-2011), a playwright, dissident, and first president of democratic Czechoslovakia and of the Czech Republic, was the person who defined the Czech position towards Israel. In important speeches and articles, he touched upon the question of Israel and the Jews, and his comments made it clear that he had

been influenced by T. G. Masaryk, that he was inspired by the intellectual heritage of Czech-German-Jewish cultural symbiosis, and that he was dedicated to the task of rectifying mistakes made by the Communist regime regarding both Israel and Jews.

Havel's thinking was influenced by the legacy of Masaryk's stance against anti-Semitism. He wrote the following about Masaryk's legacy and its relevance for the modern Czech Republic:

> "As president, I appreciate the justice, humanity, and impartiality of my great predecessor, T. G. Masaryk, who boldly addressed the Hilsner Affair. [...] He risked his popularity, his movement and also the publishing of his magazine just for the sake of the truth. In his view, every nation, and especially a small nation, must have a moral idea for which the nation lives and which contributes to a better harmony of mankind. Masaryk wrote: "Anti-Semitism is, in my opinion, our pain, and only our pain. It harms us, disgraces us, makes us coarse …" As the president of a nation that had just gotten rid of its totalitarian regime, I would like to remind us of Masaryk's words: "A nation which itself is not morally strong cannot be saved just by politics" (Havel 2012).

Similarly to Masaryk, Havel saw certain similarities between Czechs and Jews:

> "I often think about what the Czechs and the Jews had in common in their respective histories. We were both small nations whose continuing existence was not a given. The eternal struggle for survival and a sense of uncertainty were reflected in the cultures of both nations and in their behaviour. Writers and philosophers took on the roles of politicians in both nations, and both nations have traditionally cultivated their respect for a book which kept their language and traditions alive. In particular, they both had respect for the book of books, the Bible. Czechs and Jews have always turned to the past; they looked to it for their strength and comfort, and they often mythologised it" (Havel 2012).

Havel was critical of the Communist regime's anti-Semitism, its anti-Israeli positions, and its support of Palestinians:

> "The state in which we lived until the fall of 1989 was not able, from the beginning of the dominion of Communism, to express itself in regard to the Jewish question, and it was only a certain Charter 77[65] document that attempted to address this issue in the Communist era. The Communist state supported anti-Semitism in the fifties after some major anti-Semitic trials, and the regime was involved in the Palestinian conflict in the sixties, seventies, and eighties. By doing these things, the regime was liquidating the Jewish problem from a position of strength rather than helping in the process of solving it" (Havel 2012).

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[65] Cf. footnote 61.

While receiving an honorary degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1990, Havel was very open about his affection for Kafka's work and his identification with the obscure and absurd world of Kafka's main characters:

> "I want to take this opportunity to confess my long and intimate affinity with one of the great sons of the Jewish people, the Prague writer, Franz Kafka. [...] I'm even secretly persuaded that if Kafka did not exist, and if I were a better writer than I am, I could have written his works myself. What I've just said may sound odd, but I'm sure you understand what I mean. All I'm really saying is that in Kafka, I have found a portion of my own experience of the world, of myself, and of my way of being in the world. [...] Yes, I admit that superficially I may appear to be the precise opposite of all those K.'s—Josef K., the surveyor K., and Franz K.[...] I would only add that, in my opinion, the hidden motor driving all my dogged efforts is precisely this innermost feeling of mine of being excluded, of belonging nowhere, a state of disinheritance, as it were, of fundamental non-belonging" (Havel 1990).

These short transcripts give a good picture of Havel's thinking and explain the sources of his sympathy towards Israel and Jews. He wanted to connect the post-1989 Czech Republic to the legacy of Masaryk whom he saw as a positive role model. He also recognized a link between the Czech nation and the Jewish nation in their historical struggle for survival. Interestingly, Havel mentioned the tendency of both nations to 'mythologicisation' their pasts, yet he himself "introduces a certain romanticizing of the two nations by referring to their relationships to the Bible" (Čejka 2017, 36), which may be a relationship more mythical than real, especially in the case of the Czechs, one of the most secular nations in the world. In his criticism of Communism, Havel mentioned not only its anti-Israeli stance but also its anti-Semitism and the attempt of the regime to erase the legacy of the Jewish presence which, as is obvious from his speech at the Hebrew University, was reflected in Havel's own personality.

From those excerpts, it is clear that for Havel, the Jewish question and Israel were closely linked. Masaryk's stance against Czech anti-Semites, Czech-Jewish co-existence, cultural symbiosis, and belief in the common experience of two small nations, Czechs and the Jews, together with disdain for anti-Semitism of the Communist regime, all of these were sources of Havel's sympathetic view of Israel. Havel, a politician who significantly influenced the political culture and identity of the post-Communist Czech(oslovak) Republic, was clearly influenced by past events. At the same time, however, by promoting specific narratives, he was part of the process that gave the past events a meaning.

Beginning in the early 1990s, to keep close and strong relations with Israel remained a stable part of Czech foreign policy. This agenda has been promoted by different generations of influential politicians, officials, and diplomats across the institutions of the Czech Republic. As a number of officials at the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs confirmed, there has always been a net of important individuals with strong voices across institutions who ensured the friendly Czech stance towards Israel. "It is part of their personal identity, and partially, it is rationally motivated – Israel is the only country in the region with which it is possible to have normal cooperation" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 2 2017). At first, this stance was promoted by elites with a dissident past. Later, a younger cohort of diplomats and officials, often those who had close personal relations to Havel and other leaders of the dissidents, joined this group. Most were also supporters of strong trans-Atlantic ties and shared a liberal-right world-view. They had gained their diplomatic experience during the time when the Czech Republic was negotiating its membership in NATO and the EU, and this experience, together with their links to Havel, ensured them an important influence over Czech diplomacy. Interestingly, some of the most influential diplomats from this group became Ambassadors to Israel.[66] Their eminence demonstrated the importance of the post for Czech diplomacy. Moreover, their influence and reputation ensured that the voices of Czech Ambassadors to Israel were heard not only in the offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but in other institutions as well. Among the top politicians, prime ministers and ministers from the central-right of the political spectrum promoted the pro-Israeli position of the Czech Republic most actively.[67]

Miloš Zeman (1944), a Social-Democratic Prime Minister from 1998-2002 and President since 2013, set the pro-Israeli narrative of the central-left. Minister Vondra admitted that during the early 1990s, the pro-Israeli narrative promoted by the central-right pro-Atlanticist political elites was criticized by the leftist opposition. The main argument against the Czech stance was an alleged loss of economic opportunities in the Muslim world, especially in those countries with which Communist Czechoslovakia had had close economic links. However, this criticism from the central-left more or less ended with the rise of Zeman [early 1990s] and his Social-Democratic government (Personal Interview, Vondra 2017). During his visit to Israel in 2002, Prime Minister Zeman made a name as a staunch supporter of Israel when he compared Yasser Arafat to Hitler by claiming that "[a]nyone who supports terrorism, anyone who sees terrorism as a legitimate means, anyone who uses terrorism to cause the death of innocent people is a terrorist in my eyes." Furthermore, he suggested that just as ethnic Germans were expelled from the Sudetenlands in Czechoslovakia after WWII, so the Palestinians should be expelled from the West Bank and Gaza (The Guardian 2002).

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[66] Jiří Schneider, Michael Žantovský, Tomáš Pojar.
[67] For example, Prime Ministers Mirek Topolánek and Petr Nečas, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defense Alexandr Vondra from the Civic Democrats, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Cyril Svoboda from the Christian Democrats.

In 2017, when addressing the 4th Annual Algemeiner Jewish 100 Gala in New York, President Zeman outlined his view on Israel and the conflict with Palestinians:

> "You know, let us speak about the lack of courage. Let us speak about the cowardice, about hesitation, about hypocrisy, about solidarity which is conditioned. I call it "solidarity BUT". Let me give a few examples only. Of course we support the State of Israel BUT it is not the Jewish State of Israel; yes, we support the fact that every country is to have its capital, BUT we are against Jerusalem as a capital; yes, we fully respect the right of Israel to have safe borders BUT Golan Heights cannot be a part of the territory of Israel, and so on, and so on. Every killer from Palestine is a fighter for freedom, and if you send missiles from the Gaza Strip to Israel, it is bad, of course, BUT you cannot respond by bombarding the Gaza Strip. Do you understand me? This is Solidarity BUT – but, but. And these BUTs completely neglect the full time of solidarity. What we need is solidarity without BUTs. In other words, we need unconditioned solidarity for Jewish people and for the State of Israel" (Zeman 2017).

During his third official visit to Israel in November 2018, when he was the first Czech politician invited to speak in the Knesset, Zeman said:"[i]t is necessary all the time [to stand in] solidarity with Israel. Because if we betray Israel, we betray ourselves" (Zeman 2018).

Although Zeman's political career has been characterized by ideological somersaults in many areas, his pro-Israel stance has been consistent and has served as a check against attempts from the Left to change the Czech position.[68] As such, it was thanks to Zeman's stance that the Czech position towards Israel became a consensual political issue accepted not only by the central-right but also by the central-left. Unlike in the case of Havel, it was harder to understand the motivation behind Zeman's position. Probably the most dominant emotion was his Islamophobia and the anti-Arab stance which manifested itself clearly during the migration crisis. Zeman considered Israel to be the first defence line again the spread of radical Islam to Europe and as such, he gave the Jewish state his uncritical support.

To conclude, Havel and Zeman, two important decision-makers who influenced the process of the reconstruction of the post-1989 Czech collective memory concerning Israel, and who had an important impact on the central-right and the central-left attitude towards Israel, both promoted pro-Israeli positions. Even though alternative narratives have existed, they were never promoted by decision-maker as influential as Havel and Zeman.

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[68] Efforts to alter the Czech stance vis-a-vis Israel were especially frequent during the reign of Social-Democratic Ministers of Foreign Affairs Jan Kavan (1998-2002) and Lubomír Zaorálek (2014-2017).

5.3. Institutionalisation

After analysing the dominant narratives related to Israel and the main proponents of those narratives in the first two sections above, I will next examine how those narratives became institutionalized and translated into Czech foreign policy. I will look at examples from diplomacy, the economy, personal links, and public support which reflect the Czech position towards Israel.

Diplomacy

In the Czech foreign policy narrative, Israel was considered a reliable and predictable partner. This was sometimes contrasted with the government's lack of trust in Arab countries. A former Czech Minister recalled that indeed, Israel could be tough in promoting its interests, nonetheless, "there is a trust between us and Israel on basic issues because our interests are identical or related, our cultural heritage is identical or related. Whereas with Arabs, it is a problem because you cannot trust them unless you have the power to force them…" (Personal Interview, Czech Minister 2017). Minister Zaorálek also recognized that Israel was a fair partner who did not give its partners unpleasant surprises (Personal Interview, Zaorálek 2017). Taking into consideration the day-to-day reality of diplomacy, Czech officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs added that communication with Israeli officials was rather straightforward and clear, unlike the communication with diplomats from many Arab countries where the diplomatic culture varied and communication was not always as efficient as pragmatic officials, working on deadlines, preferred and needed.

While analysing the Czech diplomatic stance towards Israel, I will look first at the bilateral level, second at the EU level, third at the UN level, and last, I will briefly discuss the Czech position in the Visegrad Four.

"The Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy" from 2015 stated that the Czech Republic had a strategic partnership with Israel. According to the same document, in addition to Israel, the Czech Republic held bilaterally strategic partnerships, or a dialogue, only with its neighbours - Germany, Poland, Slovakia – and with France (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). Czech diplomats recognized that the word "strategic" was defined loosely, yet, in general terms, it meant above-standard, special, or exclusive relations (Personal Interviews, Drulák 2018; Sequencová 2017; Klucký 2017). The Head of the Department of the Middle East and North Africa at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Klucký, confirmed that in the past four years, "the development of relations with Israel was unprecedented, even compared to the EU countries […] the G to G meetings are attended by a high number of Czech ministers […] we have an intensive cooperation in cyber, military, we have Israeli investments in the Czech Republic, either directly or through multinational corporations […] apart from official relations, there are intensive unofficial links to Israel, student-exchange programmes, people-to-people, there are plenty of those vertical connections which we do not have with many other countries, only maybe

with Slovakia, which make those relations very strong" (Personal Interview, Klucký 2017). The Czech Republic has joint meetings of governments with two neighbouring countries, Poland and Slovakia, and with Israel. The first G-to-G meeting between the Czech Republic and Israel took place in 2012 in Prague. In 2014 and 2016 the meetings took place in Jerusalem.

The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs categorizes the Czech Embassy in Tel Aviv as being of the utmost political importance, on a level with Embassies in Washington D.C., Moscow, Berlin, London, the EU, Beijing, and a few others. The position of Ambassador to Israel has been considered very prestigious and in 2018, for example, during the search for a new Ambassador, several former ministers were interested in the job. Finally, Martin Stropnický, a former Minister of Defence, left his position at the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs after only a few months and presented his credentials to President Ruben Rivlin in Jerusalem.

Czech diplomats recognized that it was not always easy to give those "strategic relations" with Israel a strategic content. They would like to see deeper cooperation in security and in military areas. Many diplomats, both supporters of a strong pro-Israeli stance and those who prefer a Czech position more in line with the EU mainstream, agree that Czech-Israel relations are rather asymmetrical. As a diplomat observed, "We are a little bit in a position of a Trojan Horse of Israel in the EU and Israel has been able to 'instrumentalise' it in its favour. But we do not get anything in return" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 5 2018). Another diplomat added that while "with other countries, mutual relations are often transactional, with Israel, this would be a taboo." (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 4 2018). The Czech Ambassador to Israel from 1999 to 2003, Daniel Kumermann, acknowledged that Israelis often did not offer Czechs anything in return for their support. "This may eventually lead to a situation when Czechs will start to question what they get for their support" (Personal Interview, Kumermann 2017).

At the same time, the Czech diplomats recognized that the problem was not Israeli unwillingness to respond to Czech demands but the inability of the Czech side to formulate clearly what it would like to receive in return. This might be an indication of an identity, of the unconditional character of the Czech position. Furthermore, however, it is simply the incapacity of the Czech side to define its interests clearly. As noted above, to give the strategic partnership with Israel a strategic content has always been a challenge. Tomáš Pojar, Ambassador to Israel from 2010 to 2014, gave an example from the area of defence where the Czech Republic invested only a fraction of the money, compared to Israel, both in the purchase of military equipment and in military research and development. The asymmetric position of the two countries made symmetric and strategic cooperation in this field very difficult (Personal Interview, T. Pojar 2017). It is not only in the defence area that the potential of strategic relations with Israel has, according to the Czech diplomats, not been fulfilled. So far, it has not had an

impact on the Czech stance towards Israel. Yet, asymmetry has often been seen by Czech diplomats as a problematic feature of relations with Israel.

On the EU level, the Czech Republic has long been one of the most pro-Israeli countries who not always supported the position of the EU. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu recognized this Czech position during the visit of the Czech President, Zeman, to Israel when he said: "We have no greater friend than the Czech Republic [...] in the eastern hemisphere [sic!]. We value the enormous friendship we have with the American people, and there is something similar about the friendship we have with the Czech people [...]. We have flourishing relations with many countries of the world. [...] They are based on commonality of interests [...]. With the Czech Republic, as with the U.S.A., there is something else. It's a deep, deep commonality of values" (Netanyahu 2018b).

For example, the Czech Republic supported an upgrade of political and economic relations between the EU and Israel independently of progress in the peace process with the Palestinians. The EU position that conditioned relations to Israel on the peace process has often been criticized by Czech politicians and diplomats. For example, in 2009, during the Czech Presidency of the EU Council, among the Czech priorities was an upgrade of the partnership with Israel. Due to the conflict in Gaza, the foreign relations commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, decided that 'it was not the right time' to negotiate about the upgrade. The reaction of the Czech Prime Minister, Mirek Topolánek, was blunt: "The peace process should not be linked to the relations between the EU and Israel" (EUobserver 2009). Furthermore, notwithstanding the fact that the Czech Republic was holding the Presidency of the Council, a position which demanded a certain level of neutrality, a spokesperson of the Prime Minister openly supported Israel's right to defend its territory against rocket attacks by calling the Israeli operation against Hamas in Gaza a defensive war (iDNES.cz 2009).

Further, in 2015, Czech diplomats and politicians were critical of a new guideline approved by the European Commission concerning the labelling of products from Israeli settlements in occupied territories. The Czech Parliament responded by passing by an overwhelming majority a resolution, presented by a Social Democratic Member of the Parliament (MP), urging the Czech government not to implement the guideline. During the debate in the Parliament, MP Marek Benda from the Civic Democrats said: "This [the EU resolution] is not about the origins of goods but about a modern expression of anti-Semitism by a part of European elites [...] The state of Israel is our ally, it is our only potential democratic ally in the region. And I assure you that if the state of Israel falls, Europe would finally fall as well." His colleague, František Laudát, added that the EU's decision was 'very unfortunate,' "it concerns Israel, it concerns the Jewish nation to which Europe, despite a long time that passed, bears a great moral responsibility for what happened" (iDNES.cz 2015; JPost 2015).

Czech diplomacy also stood against the EU majority on the question of Jerusalem. In 2018, together with Hungary and Romania, it blocked a joint statement promoted by France which presented a unified European condemnation of Washington's decision to move its Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, Martin Stropnický, a member of the ANO (Yes) movement, explained that he did not agree with the text which suggested that no EU country would move its Embassy to Jerusalem until the final status of Jerusalem was resolved (Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty 2018). In a similar vein, the Czech Republic abstained in late 2017 when the UN adopted a nonbinding resolution criticizing the U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. A majority of the EU countries voted in favour. Instead, following the formal recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by President Trump in December 2017, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledged that "The Czech Republic currently, before the peace between Israel and Palestine is signed, recognizes Jerusalem to be in practice the capital of Israel in the borders of the demarcation line from 1967" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic 2017).

After the decision to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, the Czech government began to consider whether it should follow suit. Yet, in this case, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš, from the ANO party, have been quite reluctant, not wanting to pay a diplomatic price for breaking EU ranks on such an important issue. In addition, they had to consider the financial expenses and possible security repercussions for Czech Embassies in Muslim countries (Personal Interviews, Czech Diplomat 4 2018; Czech Diplomat 7 2017). President Zeman, however, was of a different opinion. In his speech in the Knesset in November 2018, Zeman, a long-term supporter of the move, suggested that after the reopening of an honorary consulate in Jerusalem in May 2018, and then an opening of a Czech House in Jerusalem in November 2018, the third step should be the opening of the Czech Embassy in Jerusalem (Zeman 2018). The risk-averting Prime Minister Babiš, in his attempt to get recognition from his EU colleagues has been less willing to break the EU consensus and, so far, has resisted President's Zeman call for the move of the Czech Embassy to Jerusalem.

Czech politicians saw Palestinian attempts to challenge the Jewish historical and religious connection to Jerusalem as problematic. In a response to a controversial resolution passed in 2017 by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which made no reference to Jewish ties to the Temple Mount, the most holy site in Jerusalem (UNESCO Executive Board 2017), the Czech Parliament recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel with an overwhelming majority, condemned UNESCO for promoting "a hateful policy towards the state of Israel," and called on the government "in the light of the incitement against Israel and the politicisation of the organization, to stop payments to UNESCO" (Aktuálně.cz 2017; Ynetnews 2017). During the debate before the vote, MP Jana Černochová, a member of the Civic Democrats, stated, "In the last years,

UNESCO became politicised and its name and credit were misused for a spread of anti-Israeli propaganda. In its resolutions, the Executive Board of UNESCO repeatedly denied Jewish, but also Christian links to the Temple Mount, the Wailing Wall, and other holy places in Jerusalem. It is our duty to stand against this attempt to manipulate history. With respect to our own history, it is our duty to express our disagreement" (iDNES.cz 2016; Novinky.cz 2016). A Czech diplomat involved with the UN agenda lamented that while Catholic countries like Poland, Italy, and Spain remained passive when UNESCO adopted a text in which the Temple Mount was named only in Arabic, "it was we, the secular Czechs, who were not ok with that" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 9 2018).

Similarly, in the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the Czech Republic did not vote against Israel's interests on resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On resolutions related to Palestinian issues that were renewed by the UNGA annually, the Czech Republic usually abstained. However, when taking a stand on important issues, the Czech Republic supported Israel. As is clear from the Figure 3, in the UNGA the Czech Republic voted more similarly to the U.S., which always voted with Israel, than any other EU country with the exception of Latvia.

In 2012 the Czech Republic was among the nine states which voted against a resolution that called for upgrading the UN status of Palestine to a "non-member observer state."[69] Among the 27 EU member states, the Czech Republic was the only state that rejected the resolution; the rest either abstained (12 states) or voted in favour. In an official explanation, Czech diplomats stated that they supported direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis leading to Palestinian statehood based on mutual recognition (United Nations 2012) rather than unilateral steps which aimed to change the status quo. Unofficially, however, Czech diplomats admitted that they were prepared to support a joint 'abstain' position of the EU member states. Following a French initiative which counsel Luxembourg to change its position and vote in favour of the resolution, the Czech Foreign Minister, Schwarzenberg, responded with a 'no' vote. Without a consensus among the EU member states, he decided to balance member states who decided to vote in favour of the resolution.

On the initiative of Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán, there has been an attempt to deepen cooperation between the Visegrad Four and Israel. In July 2017, the first V4-Israel summit took place in Budapest. The Heads of Government of the V4 countries and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu agreed on the need to "promote an improved relationship between the State of Israel and the EU" (Visegrad Group 2017). The Czech diplomats were, however, slightly reluctant to fully endorse this new 'Israeli agenda' of the V4. They considered

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[69] UNGA resolution 67/19. 138 states voted for, 9 against, 41 abstained.

the V4 to be a useful platform for the exchange of information and ideas but were hesitant to see it as a base for foreign policy cooperation. First, as one diplomat stated, "The problem is that for the Czech Republic it is not so great to be in tandem with Hungary – it is not exactly 'a 'heady partner' (omamný)" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 1 2017). Even more importantly, for Czech diplomacy, Israel has been a long-term priority. As a result, bilateral relations were well developed, and as another diplomat declared, they "will remain a priority. […] We do not want the bilateral relations being absorbed by the V4" (Personal Interview, Czech Diplomat 2 2017). According to Czech diplomats and experts, for other V4 members, Israel was not a foreign policy priority. Instead, their stance towards Israel was strongly under the influence of the EU mainstream (Slovakia), or they used Israel as a tool in their struggle with the EU (Hungary), or they approached Israel realistically, considering it a useful partner not only for military cooperation, but also, due to the legacy of history, for improving their name internationally (Poland).

To conclude, the Czech diplomatic stance towards Israel has mostly reflected the dominant pro-Israeli narrative. The bilateral relations have been extensive. Within the EU, the Czech Republic has been willing to distance itself from the Union's consensus, refusing to support positions it deemed harmful to Israel. In the next section, I examine other areas where the cooperation between the Czech Republic and Israel has been extensive.

Economy, R&D, Defence

Since 1989, the volume of trade between the Czech Republic and Israel has grown steadily, as is summarized in Table 7. The Czech Republic has become Israel's biggest economic partner in Central Europe. After the U.S. and China, Israel is now the third most important non-European market for the Czech Republic. In 2017, the volume of trade between the two countries reached over one billion USD. In 2016, Czech exports to Israel grew by more than 90 per cent, mainly due to Israeli driver's fondness for Škoda cars. With 21 thousand cars sold, Škoda became the most successful European brand in Israel. In 2017, cars represented 60 per cent of Czech exports to Israel, followed by mechanical tools and reactors which represented 18 per cent of the exports. Metal work products, textiles, and chemicals used to dominate Czech exports to Israel. Recently, however, Czech exports to Israel increasingly comprise hi-tech products with high added value (BusinessInfo.cz 2018).

Table 7: *The Evolution of Trade between the Czech Republic and Israel* [70]

	Exports to Israel in current $ mil.	*Share of total exports*	*Imports from Israel in current $ mil.*	*Share of total imports*
1989	3.58	0.02%	2.02	0.01%
1998	40.7	0.15%	44.3	0.15%
2007	353	0.30%	188	0.16%
2016	966	0.61%	230	0.15%

The Czech politicians and officials have a strong interest in Israel's research and development and especially in its ability to successfully transfer results from theoretical research to global production. With its elaborate system of state support for start-ups, Israel is seen as a source of inspiration for the Czech Republic. Vice Prime Minister Pavel Bělobrádek stated that "Israel is our model for applied research, commercialization, and also in its system of the management of science […] (Denik.cz 2015). In 2015, when the Czech diplomatic service decided to create new positions for scientific diplomats who would focus on cooperation in science, research, and innovation, Israel was the first place such a diplomat was posted. Czech companies also recognized the potential of the Israeli start-up scene. In 2017, ŠKODA AUTO opened DigiLab in Tel Aviv focused on "IT development and access to new technologies" (ŠKODA AUTO DigiLab 2017). Similarly, in 2015, AVG, Czech security software company with over 200 million users, opened its global Centre of Excellence for mobile in Tel Aviv.

Israel was also held in high esteem in the field of defence. As an official at the Czech Ministry of Defence stated, there was no a difference of opinion regarding Israel. "Soldiers wanted to cooperate with Israel, they wanted to learn from Israeli soldiers who were, de facto, in a permanent operational mode" (Personal Interview, Czech Official, MOD 2017). A strategic dialogue existed between the Ministries of Defence of the Czech Republic and of Israel. The Czech side was interested mainly in joint training with Israeli special military units, in cooperation in the cyber and military industries, and in cooperation with Israeli secret services. In 2016, the Czech government chose the Israeli company Elta Systems for the delivery of eight sets of Mobile Air Defense Radar. If this delivery materializes, a broadening of mutual military cooperation, including the transfer of sensitive technologies, could result. Cooperative venture in the cyber realm are also developing. In 2016 the Israeli anti-hacker company CyberGym, a joint venture of the Israel Electric Corporation and CyberControl, a

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[70] The data are taken from the United Nations Statistical Division's COMTRADE database ('UN Comtrade | International Trade Statistics Database' n.d.).

cyber-security company of veterans of the Israeli army, opened its first European hub in the Czech Republic. Czech interest in Israeli military technology also contributed to the fact that the Czech Republic, together with Poland and the U.K., warned against limiting the European military market to European companies alone. Czechs argued that they wanted to continue to purchase military technologies both from the U.S. and from Israel (Personal Interview, Czech Official, MOD 2017).

Thus, the economic and defence cooperation, together with the Czech interest in the Israeli R&D model, have further contributed to extensive Czech-Israeli relations.

Personal Links

The renewal of diplomatic relations between the Czech Republic and Israel was also driven by the fact that strong personal links had long existed between the two countries, links which did not completely disappear even during the Communist time. In 1989, with the end of the boycott of Israel, Israelis with Czech(oslovak) roots started to re-discover the country of their origin, and Czechs began to learn about the fates of Czechoslovak citizens of Jewish origin who migrated to the Yishuv/Israel when escaping Fascist and Communist dictatorships.

While euphoria about the renewal of Polish-Israeli relations was marred by the grim memories Polish Jews carried from their experiences in their former homeland, similar negative emotions apparently did not exist among Czech(oslovak) Jews. Indeed, their emotions were quite the opposite. Many Jews who were born in pre-WWII Czechoslovakia shared the myth of the First Republic. In their collective memory, the First Republic, under the leadership of beloved President Masaryk, had provided the Jews with a safe space where they had spent a beautiful childhood barely realizing that they were of the Jewish origin. This all ended with the Munich Agreement. According to this narrative, the Fascist and the Communist regimes, rather than the Czech nation, were primarily responsible for anti-Semitism in Czechoslovakia. Forgetting and suppressing the fact that many Czechs endorsed both those ideologies, the collective memory of the Czech Jews concurred with the collective memory of Czechs. The end of Communism in their original homeland was thus welcomed with great hope by Jews of Czechoslovak origin.

Optimism and a positive attitude towards the leaders of democratic Czechoslovakia manifested itself openly during the first visit of President Havel to Israel in April 1990. He was the first post-Communist leader to visit Israel. As Vondra, who was a part of the visiting delegation, recalled, the Czechoslovak representatives were welcomed with open arms by both Israeli leaders and the Czech(oslovak) Jews living in Israel. "The visit to Israel [...] it was a bit different than other visits. It was very friendly and less formal. [...] We were enchanted by

intellectual wit of Shimon Peres who was such an interesting person [...]." As Vondra further pointed out, Czechoslovak Jews living in Israel played an important role in the preparation of Havel's first trip to Israel.[71] They "loved both countries and it was reflected in the character of our visit" (Personal Interview, Vondra 2017). Schneider, who served as second ambassador to Israel, mentioned that it was a rather unique coincidence that during Havel's visit, Czechoslovak emigrants of Jewish origin from all over the world convened in Jerusalem (Personal Interview, Schneider 2017). Being invited to their meeting in the famous Binyenei HaUma, the largest convention centre in Israel, Havel and the Czechoslovak delegation were welcomed like heroes.

Even after the early 1990's euphoria evaporated, people-to-people contacts between the Czech Republic and Israel continued and have now developed extensively. Contacts with Czechoslovak Jews living in Israel became an important part of the agenda for Czech diplomats. Ambassador Schneider recalled that together with building political and economic relations with Israel, "our compatriots [Czechoslovak Jews in Israel] were the most important for me [...] I felt that we owed them" (Personal Interview, Schneider 2017). Intense people-to-people contacts between the two countries have been fostered through academic exchange programmes run by various Czech and Israeli universities, residency programs for Czech artists in Israel, professional mobility frameworks for arts managers and, for example, an intergovernmental co-production treaty related to the film industry (Personal Interview, Schultz 2018).

Constant contact between people in both countries has also been facilitated by frequent and cheap flight connections. Low-cost companies connect Prague with Tel Aviv and Eilat. In 2017, over 180 thousand Israeli tourists came to visit the Czech Republic, which became one of top ten destinations visited by Israelis (BusinessInfo.cz 2018). Between 2013 and 2015, 50 thousand Czechs visited Israel (Israel Ministry of Tourism 2015).

Due to regular bilateral relations in various fields, regular communication has existed among various Czech and Israeli ministries, armies, and secret services. As Czech diplomats acknowledged, Israeli politicians, diplomats, and officials usually found an open door when they wished to talk to their Czech counterparts. Table 8 shows that the number of official visits between the two countries has also been rather high. Czech political representatives regularly visit Israel. Yet, the number of visits by important Czech politicians to Israel has far exceeded the number of visits by their counterparts to the Czech Republic. As Czech diplomats, who are mostly critical of this asymmetry, explained, the Czech Republic has been an important partner for Israel but it was only one of many countries with which Israel needed to maintain close relations. Moreover, Czech

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[71] Prominent among them were Chanan Rosen who, together with Max Brod, founded the Israeli-Czechoslovak Friendship League in 1948, and an interpreter, Hanna Arie-Gaifman.

diplomats further admit that Czech politicians and officials like to travel to Israel. Apart from official meetings, they like to visit a country which is very modern, yet, at the same time, quite exotic.

Table 8: *Visits of Senior Political Representatives from the Czech Republic to Israel and from Israel to the Czech Republic (source: Czech Embassy, Israel 2018)*

	Presidents	Prime Ministers
Czech Republic	- Václav Havel, 1990, 1997 - Václav Klaus, 2005 - Miloš Zeman, 2013, 2018	- Václav Klaus (ODS), 1994, 1995 (Rabin's funeral) - Miloš Zeman (ČSSD), 2002 - Mirek Topolánek (ODS), 2008, 2009 - Jan Fischer (Indep.), 2009 - Petr Nečas (ODS), 2011 - Jiří Rusnok (ČSSD), 2014 (Sharon's funeral) - Andrej Babiš (ANO), 2019
Israel	- Chaim Herzog, 1991 - Ezer Weizman, 1996 - Shimon Peres, 2009 - Reuven Rivlin, 2015	- Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud), 2012
	Foreign Ministers	G-to-G
Czech Republic	- Josef Zieleniec (ODS), 1993 - Jan Kavan (ČSSD), 2000 - Cyril Svoboda (KDU-ČSL),[72] 2004, 2005 - Karel Schwarzenberg (TOP 09),[73] 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013 - Jiří Kohout (ČSSD), 2009 - Lubomír Zaorálek (ČSSD), 2014, 2016 - Tomáš Petříček (ČSSD), 2018	- 2012 in Prague
Israel	- Moshe Arens (Likud), 1990 - David Levy (Likud), 2000 - Shimon Peres (Labour), 2001 - Silvan Shalom (Likud), 2004 - Tzipi Livni (Kadima), 2007 - Avigdor Lieberman (Yisrael Beiteinu), 2009, 2010, 2014	- 2014, 2016 in Jerusalem

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[72] The Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (*Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová*.

[73] Tradition Responsibility Prosperity (*Tradice Odpovědnost Prosperita*) - liberal-conservative party.

Support among the Czech Public

In the Czech Republic, groups effectively promoting an anti-Israeli or pro-Palestinian agenda did not exist. The Czech Muslim community has been rather small, and it did not constitute a voting factor. Many Muslims living in the Czech Republic, mostly men, came in the 1970s and 1980s as students, as part of the Soviet-sponsored program of cooperation among the socialist countries. Being ideologically close to secular Arab authoritarian regimes, they were not too religious. Those who stayed often married Czech women and became well integrated. After 1989, Muslims who were coming to live to the Czech Republic were mostly from the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia rather than from the Middle East. As a group, the Czech Muslims have been rather passive politically and have not promoted anti-Israeli initiatives.

Anti-Israeli activities known in many European countries and the U.S., among them the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, have been almost non-existent in the Czech Republic. Even among students, the anti-Israeli activities promoted by Czech branches of anti-Israeli NGO's, like the International Solidarity Movement, have not commanded significant support. Events organized in support of Israel and against anti-Semitism have often attracted more participants than, for example, anti-Israeli demonstrations which took place during times of military escalation between Israel and Hamas in Gaza or Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Public talks by Israeli Ambassadors, even those organized by universities, have not aroused interest among critics of Israel and have not been accompanied by protests known from universities in the U.K. or the U.S. Among the strongest pro-Israeli advocates is the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) whose Czech branch regularly organizes rallies in support of Israel and lobbies Czech politicians, as for example, during the notorious Durban II conference (ICEJ 2009). The lack of grassroots support for anti-Israeli initiatives has been noticed by the Czech political elites. As the Deputy Minister Drulák acknowledged, "The Czech general public is strongly pro-Israeli" and it supports the Czech position towards Israel (Personal Interview, Drulák 2018).

In this section, I outlined how the Czech positive approach towards Israel has been translated into diplomatic support, intense economic and security cooperation, and personal contacts between political elites, academics, artists, and businessmen. Support for the pro-Israeli stance has also been strong mong the general public.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the role of Israel and the Jewish question in the re-construction of post-1989 Czech national identity. I did so by examining the dominant narratives related to Israel and the Jewish question in the

Czech Republic. I showed that a consensus existed among the political elites concerning the Czech pro-Israeli stance. In the Czech narrative the renewal of relations with Israel came to be seen as a symbol of Czech independence after five decades of Nazi and Communist dictatorship. Relations with democratic, pro-Western Israel were a confirmation that the post-1989 Czech Republic had left the Communist heritage behind, and instead had resumed the democratic tradition of pre-WWII Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, the Czech narrative accentuated certain analogies between the geopolitical situation of Israel and the Czech Republic. Because of the Munich trauma, the Czech elites identified with Israel and its security predicament to some degree. Underlying these factors, the Czech narrative of Czech-Jewish co-existence, disrupted by the Nazis and the Communists, defined the Czech relations with Israel. Seeing the Jewish past as an important part of Czech history, and regarding Israel as a place where so many European Jews found refuge, the Jewish state was seen as historically and culturally very close, and as a place which must be supported. I also discussed an alternative narrative which questioned the pro-Israeli stance. Influenced by Czech membership in the EU, proponents of this narrative stressed the need to adjust the Czech stance to the mainstream position of the EU and not to break the EU consensus. However, so far, this narrative has not had a major impact on the Czech stance towards Israel.

From a theoretical perspective, I demonstrated that the current dominant Czech narratives concerning Israel and the Jews are rooted in the past. The anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism, and pro-Arab policies of the Communist regime, the legacy of the pre-war democratic First Republic, and the Holocaust, all resonated in the collective memory of the post-1989 generation of political elites and had an impact on their thinking about Israel and the Jews. The Czech position towards Israel, reflecting a specific historical legacy and entrenched in the collective identity of the Czech elites, has been stable, and attempts to bring changes to it have so far failed. The Czech stance towards Israel was dependent on political developments neither in the Czech Republic nor in Israel.

As I discussed in this chapter, Czech decision-makers often mentioned common values and understanding which connected the two countries. However, some diplomats did not hide certain concerns about developments in Israel which might bring this mutual closeness into question. Some were concerned about the vanishing European character of Israel. Israel, they felt, was increasingly becoming an oriental state, and the younger generation of Israeli politicians and diplomats knew very little about its European background compared to the generation of Shimon Peres. This made it more difficult to build relations with them. This situation, Czech diplomats felt, might lead to a growing distance between the two countries.

The changing character of the political regimes in both countries might also have some impact on the current status quo in mutual relations. The right-wing government of Benyamin Netanyahu, with its strong nationalist and pro-settler policies, has been more supportive of the Jewish, than of the democratic, character of Israel. If this trend continues and democracy in Israel weakens, the narrative that the Czechs support the only democratic state in the Middle East might be challenged by a narrative more critical of Israel.

In the Czech Republic too, the democratic political parties which had governed since the early 1990s have weakened, and instead the country has witnessed the rise of the populist ANO movement of Andrej Babiš and the non-ideological Pirate Party, whose positions on many issues have been rather vague. With the success of these new political movements, which have presented themselves as anti-traditional-parties, there arouse a concern that traditional foreign policy positions might be called into question. However, so far, both ANO and the Pirates have supported the foreign policy foundation of the Czech Republic as developed in the last three decades. Concerning Israel, Prime Minister Babiš, from ANO, a billionaire-turned politician, originally from Slovakia and suspected of cooperation with the Communist secret police before 1989, did not, for example, support President Zeman's call to move the Czech Embassy to Jerusalem. At the same time, Babiš did not oppose the opening of a Czech House in Jerusalem, and it was the ANO Foreign Minister, Stropnický, who voted against a joint statement of the EU condemning the move of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. Thus, notwithstanding ANO's ideological vagueness and the particular cultural background of its founder and current leader, the governing ANO party has not deviated from the long standing Czech foreign policy position towards Israel. However, since the party has not been in power long and seems to favour non-ideological pragmatists with very particular interests, it is still too early to tell if this new political elite will become part of the heterogeneous coalition of former dissidents, pro-Atlanticist (neo)conservatives, moderates, leftist liberals, and Islamophobes, which has promoted the pro-Israeli Czech stance during the last three decades, or if they will introduce some new paradigm to that stance.

CHAPTER 6: HUNGARY AND ISRAEL SINCE 1989

With the fall of Communism, the main Hungarian political parties agreed on three central foreign policy objectives: 1) integration into Euro-Atlantic structures; 2) good neighbourly relations; 3) support for the Hungarian minorities living across the borders. However, the third objective which often collided with the second, was interpreted differently by governments of the Right and the Left. The first democratically elected Prime Minister of Hungary, Antall József of the centre-right Hungarian Democratic Forum, set the tone for the Hungarian Right when he said in 1990, "I want to act as the head of the government of all the citizens of this 10 million strong country, but in spirit and sentiment as the Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians" (Jeszenszky 2007, 52). In a similar vein, Orbán Viktor, the leader of the Fidesz Party, who has dominated the Right since 1998, stated that "he believed that the Hungarian state and nation did not coincide and that his government 'would be part of the Hungarian nation'" (Král, Řiháčková, and Weiss 2008, 109). Representing conservative and nationalist Hungary with its lingering thoughts about the unfairness of the Trianon peace settlement of 1920, the Right advocated for a strong link with the Hungarian minorities.

The Hungarian Left, on the other hand, dominated by the Hungarian Socialist Party[74] which formed governments in 1994, 2002, and 2006, was satisfied with the status-quo and did not want to revive the spirit of Great Hungary. It was more interested in European integration and good relations with neighbouring countries and putting the interests of Hungarians living abroad high on the agenda was not compatible with these goals. The Left, in a coalition with the Liberals, practically ignored nationalistic issues which, however, resonated strongly among Hungarians; as a result, the right-wing parties kept a monopoly over these topics which proved to have great mobilizing potential.

With the monopolization of power by Orbán after the election in 2010, Hungarian foreign policy became characterized by the accentuation of nationalism and Euroscepticism, by the promotion of anti-immigration policies, by inclinations towards Russia and China, and by the defence of conservative and Christian values. Thanks to his cultural crusade against liberal democracy and multiculturalism, Orbán became a hero of far-right movements across Europe and the U.S. However, the increasingly autocratic character of Orbán's regime led to Hungary's isolation in both Brussels and Washington.

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[74] The Hungarian Socialist Party was established in October 1989 when the former Communist Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) transformed itself into the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP).

In this chapter, I examine the role of Israel in the post-1989 Hungary, at a time when the national identity of the state has been changing. I show that there exists a bi-partisan support of Israel. However, the moderates and the nationalist have had different reason for supporting good relations with Israel.

Hungarian Relations with Israel

Hungary continues to regard Israel as a strategic partner. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Péter Szijjártó (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2018)

Israel is one of the last fields where we agree with Fidesz. There exists 27 year-long consensus – the only field which did not become politicised. Harangozó Tamás, a member of the Parliament for the Socialist Party (Personal Interview, Harangozó 2017)

The relations with Israel are very special, exclusive and cannot be tackled the same way as the other countries in the region. In all senses, it was very sensitive for historical, political, geopolitical reasons and because of the peace process and a strong economic role of Israel. Hungarian Diplomat (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 1 2017)

Hungary became the first Communist country to renew full diplomatic relations with Israel after having broken them over the Six Day War. On September 19, 1989, in Budapest, Hungarian Foreign Minister Horn Gyula and his Israeli counterpart, Moshe Arens, signed a protocol restoring full diplomatic relations between the two countries. Of course, Hungarians and Israelis were no strangers to each other. Both nations have been linked through the very rich and turbulent history of Hungarian-Jewish co-existence which, with limited scope, continued even after the Holocaust. Furthermore, even during the diplomatic break between the two countries, there existed personal links between Hungarian Jews and Israelis of Hungarian origin. The renewal of relations was thus about more than re-building diplomatic and economic relations. As in Poland and the Czech Republic, it was not possible to fully understand Hungary's stance towards Israel without considering the Jewish question in Hungary.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that while a political agreement existed between the Left and the Right concerning Israel, two main political camps in Hungary – the moderates and the nationalist Right – had different motivations for supporting a pro-Israeli stance. I first present the narratives of the two groups relating both to the Jewish question and to Israel. Second, I look at main decision-makers and their role in the shaping the collective memory relating to the Jewish question. I show that leaders of both the moderate and the nationalist Right camp considered historical associations and analogies when defining their stance. Last, I look at how the political positions of the moderates and of the nationalist Right the Jewish question and Israel

became institutionalized. Specifically, I examine the politics of memory, and then I focus on the development of diplomatic relations and economic cooperation between Hungary and Israel.

6.1. Narrative

In this section, I present two dominant narratives related to the Jewish question and Israel that have affected Hungary's relations with Israel. I analyse their origins, main arguments, and impact. I argue that since 1989, when Hungary started to rebuild its post-Communist national identity, various memory entrepreneurs tried to shape the collective memory. This process was characterized by heavy contention and politicisation, manipulation, and projection of power. With the growing monopolization of power by Orbán and his Fidesz Party, the contention became constrained and one narrative started to reach hegemonic proportions. I focus first on the narrative of the nationalist Right and then I look at the narrative of the moderate Right, the Left and liberals.

Nationalist Right

The collapse of Communism and the restoration of civil liberties, free speech, and a free press brought topics suppressed during the Communist times to the surface. Among them was the Jewish question which returned to the Hungarian public sphere. As discussed in more detail in previous chapters, during Communist times, the Jewish question was astutely manipulated and used by the authorities to serve political goals. Openly anti-Semitic speech was prohibited; nevertheless, the fight against Zionism, which was a codeword for anything connected to Jews, kept the Jewish question on the agenda. With freedom of speech, latent anti-Semitism became open and anti-Semitic speech began to permeate the political discourse. It revived some of the old anti-Jewish motifs known from the interwar period.

First, Hungarian nationalism experienced a revival, which invigorated an old ethno-nationalist battle against those who were perceived as anti-nationalists. These were, of course, Communists but also liberals, represented by the Alliance of Free Democrats, a party some of whose key figures had Jewish roots and which attracted urban, well-educated voters. In the perception of the Hungarian nationalist Right, these two political ideologies were intrinsically connected as they aimed to weaken national forces, and furthermore, they were 'Jewish.' Of course, nationalists were also strongly anti-Communist which fitted nicely with their effort to delegitimize the old regime and their political opponents from the Socialist Party, most of whose leaders were former Communists. Second, as Hungary was abandoning the planned economy, at a time of economic uncertainty, the Jews came to be described as agents of capitalism and globalization; Jews were said to serve new masters who aspired to control Hungary. This time the masters were not in Moscow, but in New York and

Tel Aviv. The image of a Jew, presented by the nationalist Right, as simultaneously an acolyte of capitalism and an old style Communist was so reminiscent of the interwar era that Shlomo Avinery observantly talked about the "return of history" in Hungary (Avineri 1991).

Jobbik, The Movement for a Better Hungary, became a prominent promoter of the extreme nationalist Right narrative in Hungary. Jobbik defined itself as a Christian, patriotic, radical party "which lays its political foundations on the protection of national values and interests," and which aimed to "remove the successors of the Communist party and the extremist liberals, which are inextricably entwined, from the political power" (Jobbik 2003). Since its success in the parliamentary elections in 2010,[75] it has become an established party in Hungary and the main right-wing challenger of the ruling Fidesz Party. Building on the traditional "us" and "them" distinction between ethnic Hungarians and Jews, it also re-introduced the motif of a Zionist threat to the Hungarian political discourse. During the conflict in Gaza in 2012, Gyöngyösi Márton, vice-chairman of the parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee and a Jobbik member, used a parliamentary debate to call for the compilation of a national list of "people of Jewish ancestry" who live in Hungary, with a special focus on those in parliament and government, who represent a "national security risk" by allegedly influencing Hungarian foreign policy towards Israel (Reuters 2012).

Fidesz, The Hungarian Civil Alliance, the winner of parliamentary elections in 1998, 2010, 2014, and 2018, has used anti-Semitic discourse in the public sphere very calculatedly. Under some circumstances, the leader of Fidesz and the most dominant Hungarian politician of the last decade, Prime Minister Orbán, has spoken against anti-Semitism. When hosting the Israeli Prime Minister, Netanyahu, in 2017, he stated that Hungary proclaimed "zero tolerance" of anti-Semitism (Reuters 2017). Yet, capitalizing on well-entrenched prejudices, in practical politics he used anti-Semitic tropes as an expedient tool. His political tactic has been based on the search for a scapegoat who could be blamed for real, as well as alleged, problems. During a campaign rally in Budapest before the 2018 election, Orbán used the old motif of a rootless, shrewd Jew being the internal other and the enemy of the Hungarian nation when he said: "We are fighting an enemy who is different from us [...]. This enemy hides rather than operating out in the open; he is crafty rather than forthright; base rather than honest; has loyalty to foreigners rather than compatriots; speculates with money rather than believing in work; and, lacking his own homeland, feels he owns the whole world" (Politico 2018). In its view of Jews, the nationalist Right narrative built on an old myth of 'Jewish power' which remains well entrenched among Hungarians. Thus, the nationalist Right narrative, by keeping notions about 'foreign influence,' 'agents of

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[75] In the Parliamentary elections in 2010 Jobbik obtained 16.67%, in 2014 20.22%, and in 2018 19.06%, becoming the 2nd strongest party in the Hungarian Parliament.

capitalism,' and a 'Zionist threat' in the public space, kept old anti-Semitic stereotypes alive in the collective memory of Hungarians.

Another topic important for the nationalist Right narrative was related to one of the central events forming the collective memory of Hungarians – the legacy of WWII and more specifically, the degree of Hungarian collaboration and responsibility for the Holocaust. As in other post-Communist European countries, the construction of the Hungarian collective memory about WWII was influenced by the fact that the debate about responsibility was repressed during the Cold War. During the Stalinist era, the topic of the persecution of Jews "was virtually sunk into the Orwellian black hole of history" (Braham 2000, 415). Even in more liberal years under Kádár, the issue continued to be suppressed.

After 1989, the debate reached the public space, and it became very contentious. The nationalist Right narrative aimed to absolve the Hungarian nation of any responsibility for the crimes committed against Jews during WWII. The blame for the deportation and annihilation of the greatest part of Hungarian Jewry was placed on the Nazi occupation. In some cases, Hungarian participation was recognized, but it was not understood to be a general phenomenon. The guilt was placed upon a small number of the Arrow Cross radicals. By blaming the group which opposed Admiral Horthy, the proponents of this narrative could "protect historical integrity of the Horthy era, but also [to] bring about the rehabilitation of the Regent, and presumably assure the country's return to a "Christian-national course"" (Braham 2000, 416). This trend manifested itself repeatedly during events rehabilitating interwar personalities, among them the reburial of Horthy in 1993, the unveiling of his statues all over the country, and the 2012 reburial of Nyírö József, a prominent cultural ideologist and a fascist writer accused of war crimes in his native Romania (Spiegel Online 2012).

One of the priorities of Orbán's governments became the promotion of a national narrative which minimized Hungarian culpability for crimes during WWII. For example, in the new Constitution, adopted after Fidesz won a supermajority in the 2010 election, we read: "We date the restoration of our country's self-determination, lost in the 19th day of March 1944, from the second day of May 1990, when the first freely elected organ of popular representation was formed" ('The Fundamental Law of Hungary' 2011). By claiming that the Hungarian nation lost its self-determination after German soldiers crossed the borders, the responsibility for acts committed after that day was places solely on the shoulders of Nazi Germany. While overlooking anti-Semitic legislation adopted during Horthy's era, as well as the role of the state during the deportation of the Hungarian Jews from the countryside, this narrative instead highlighted that many Hungarian Jews avoided deportation mainly because of Horthy's skilful handling of Hitler and the rescue activities of individual Hungarians.

Furthermore, the nationalist Right narrative attempted to counterbalance the crimes committed by the Nazis and their Hungarian acolytes with those perpetrated by the Communists (Braham 2000, 417). The wartime suffering of the Jews was compared to the wrongs inflicted upon the Hungarian nation during the Red Terror and afterward WWII by the Communists. According to this view, there has been disproportionate attention given to the Holocaust while the crimes of Communism, which lasted almost 45 years, have been neglected. Hettyey András, an academic from the National University of Public Service in Budapest, whose grandfather spent three years in Soviet captivity after the war, explained, "If somebody starts to talk about his pains and his memories and his past, more often than not the other side will say, 'Well, mine is more important, what about mine?' And usually, there is this kind of feeling on the Right that we are underprivileged" (Personal Interview, Hettyey 2017). And indeed, the debate about who was the greater victim became an important part of the nationalist Right narrative. It stressed that Hungarians were victims of the Soviet Communism and, based on the myths of Żydokomuna, of the Jews as well.

The nationalist Right narrative put great importance on the need to protect conservative values and the Christian character of Hungary and Europe. Orbán promised to defend national values and Christianity, not only in Hungary but also in Europe, against transformation to a 'post-Christian era.' In delineating his vision before the elections to the European Parliament in 2019, he called for a Europe based on "Christian democracy," which he said is "anti-immigrant, anti-multicultural, and stands for the Christian family model" (euractiv.com 2018; DW.com 2018b). Indeed, a dystopian vision of a Christian Europe which would succumb to Muslims became an inherent part of the nationalist Right narrative. "The West will fall, as Europe is occupied without realising it. If things continue like this, our culture, our identity and our nations as we know them will cease to exist" said Orbán in his annual State of the Nation address in 2018. The main danger threatening Hungary, according to Orbán, "comes to us from politicians in Brussels, Berlin and Paris. They want us to adopt their policies: the policies that made them immigrant countries and that opened the way for the decline of Christian culture and the expansion of Islam" (Orbán 2018). Rather than relying on Europe which, according to Orbán, has headed towards a post-Christian and post-national era, hope has been coming from 'the east,' mainly in Russia, where Putin and Orthodox Church shared Orbán's view of the declining West.

The nationalist Right under Orbán started to emphasize close links with Israel. In the cultural war against Islam, multiculturalism, and liberal and post-nationalist values, Israeli became a close ally. As a Hungarian sociologist affiliated with the Central European University, Kovács András, observed, in Orbán's ethno-nationalist worldview, Israel became the perfect example of a self-conscious nation defending its own interests by its own means (Personal Interview, A. Kovács 2017). In Israel under Netanyahu's leadership, Orbán found an

ideologically close ally. Netanyahu's nationalism, together with a negative stance towards the Arabs, put Israel into the same camp as Hungary. Moreover, Orbán and Fidesz aligned themselves to some degree with the position of the pre-1989 Communists by believing in the power of Jews (Personal Interview, Vago 2017). According to this thinking, keeping close ties with Israel should help Orbán to pave his way to Washington and receive positive recognition in 'the Jewish media' in the U.S. Being recognized by Israel should legitimize Orbán's regime which had been increasingly criticized by American and European governments for its autocratic character.

To conclude, several issues became important in the narrative of the nationalist Right: spreading of anti-Semitic stereotypes; downplaying of the responsibility of Hungarians for the Holocaust; emphasis on Hungarian suffering during Communism; embrace of the Christian and so-called traditional values; and, last but not least, rhetoric characterizing Muslims as the external Other. The pro-Israeli narrative of the nationalist Right reflected its ideological stance with focus on the protection of conservative values and its anti-Muslim positions. Being promoted by the strongest political forces in Hungary, mainly the governing Fidesz, an impact of the nationalist-Right narrative on the Hungarian national identity has been significant.

Moderate Right, Left, and Liberals

Hungarian political elites of the moderate Right, the Left, and the liberal movement concurred that under the new geopolitical circumstances, Hungary should belong to the West. During the process of the 'return to Europe,' Hungary wanted to become a modern country, free from the negative aspects which had characterized the previous regime. In order to build Hungary's reputation as a successfully reformed country, Hungarian moderate elites had to respond to issues raised by the nationalist Right, specifically anti-Semitism and the legacy of WWII. For both the moderate Right and the Left, the situation was complicated by the fact that their own reputations were to some degree discredited. Under the Right, which defined the character of Hungary after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the country was characterized by state-sponsored anti-Semitic policies. The Left was discredited by Communism during which anti-Semitism, disguised as anti-Zionism, was kept alive. One Hungarian diplomat, when assessing the starting position of both the Right and the Left in 1989 said: "Without accepted antecedent, everybody had an inferiority complex, everybody had a background which was not beautiful" (Hungarian Diplomat 2 2017).

Without much of a usable past, it became important for Hungarian moderates to present Hungary as a normal country, one unburdened by an inglorious past. Political leaders were well aware of the negative impact of anti-Semitic expressions on Hungary's image and tried to distance themselves from them. The first democratically elected government in Hungary, formed by the central-right Hungarian Democratic Forum

(HDF), openly called for the protection of Hungarian Jews against rising anti-Semitism. In his 1990 address given at the unveiling of a memorial to Hungarian Jewish victims of the Holocaust, Prime Minister Antall József stated that the Hungarian government "considers it its duty to defend the Jewish community that has remained in Hungary […] from all aggressive ideologies, from all thoughts that remind it of the past" (Jeszenszky 2008, 148). On several occasions, Antall also said that Hungary fully respected those Jews who decided to emigrate to Israel, as well as those "who feel they have a "dual link" [Hungarian and Jewish] (Spier 1991, 22). At the same time, however, being well aware that the HDF itself was an amalgam of various political voices, including the ultra-right nationalists and extreme populists, its leading members were rather hesitant to unequivocally condemn anti-Semitic statements, especially in front of the domestic audience (Spier 1991, 20).

The legacy of WWII became another topic on which Hungarian moderates opposed the nationalist Right. In the process of reconstructing the collective memory related to the Holocaust, the Left-liberal narrative recognized Hungary's problematic role and particularly stressed that the crimes committed against the Hungarian Jews were part of Hungarian history. Hungarian President Gönz Árpád (1990-2000), affiliated with the Liberal Free Democrats, speaking during a Jewish commemorative ceremony, said that victims of the Holocaust "were deprived not only of their life but, before their death, also of their fatherland." He added that "the Holocaust was not only a Jewish but also a Hungary tragedy" (quoted in: Spier 1991, 22). The first Socialist-Liberal government (1994-1998) under the Socialist Prime Minister Horn Gyula (1932-1913) was even ready to admit that Hungarians had played an active role in the Holocaust. In a meeting with the representatives of the World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Agency for Israel about the restitution of Jewish property, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs Kovács László stated: "It is self-deception if anyone shifts responsibility for the genocide in Hungary solely and exclusively to Nazi Germany. The shutting out of society and even persecution of Jews of Hungarian citizenship did not begin on May 19, 1944, when the Germans occupied the country. Consequently, it has to be stated unambiguously that history obliges us to apologize" (JTA 1994).

However, the impact of this narrative remained limited. As former diplomat Jungbert Béla recognized, "even today, this tragedy that happened to the Hungarian Jewry is not digested. […] The responsibility of the whole society – people of the street – the partners of the killings, was not digested. We put it under the rug" (Personal Interview, Jungbert 2017). Ambassador to Israel Gyenge András (2004-2008) added: "We couldn't draw the historic lesson from our own history of the 20th century, unlike the Germans […]. It is a large political and social debate still ongoing in Hungary whether we were victims or active participants of those crimes committed against the Hungarian Jewry during the WWII" (Personal Interview, Gyenge 2017).

The position of the moderate Hungarian political elites towards Israel has been strongly influenced by their life in Communism which formed their collective memory. Those with conservative, central-right political inclinations brought with them an especially strong anti-Communist stance, part of which was a desire to formulate a foreign policy contradicting the one formulated by the Communist authorities. Commenting on the atmosphere in the 1990s, Ambassador Gyenge admitted that in the early 1990s, "We were politically a little bit naïve. [...] Everything was good which was opposite to what we had before these changes. [...] So if we had no good relations with Israel, now we would establish very good relations with Israel, with Americans" (Personal Interview, Gyenge 2017). Jeszensky Géza, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first democratically elected government formed by the HDF (1990-1994), recalls, "I remembered when we broke the relations [with Israel] in 1967 and I regretted it. Hungary should have special warm relations with Israel because of our past. It was a sign how subservient Hungary was to Moscow [...] because it was not in the Hungarian interest. And as we emancipated ourselves, it was natural to change the policy" (Personal Interview, Jeszenszky 2017).

Post-Communist Hungary started to build good ties with countries which, before 1989, had stood on the opposite side of the Berlin Wall, among them the U.S. And as Hungarian politicians and diplomats recognized, Hungary perceived that one "cannot have good relations with the U.S. without having normal relations with Israel" (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 2 2017). An Israeli diplomat who served in Budapest acknowledged that this old perception has endured even after 1989. "Jerusalem is seen to be the gate to Washington. Jerusalem will help us to improve our position in the U.S. – A myth which exists till today" (Personal Interview, Israeli Diplomat 2017). Kovács László, Deputy Foreign Minister in the 1980s and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the post-1989 Socialist governments, admitted that relations with Israel were a part of an effort to build transatlantic relations. (Personal Interview, L. Kovács 2017).

However, an outburst of anti-Semitism promoted even by some members of the ruling HDF tarnished Hungary's relations with Israel and the U.S., where the return of anti-Semitism to the public sphere, including the political mainstream, did not go unnoticed. For example, in the 1990s, the U.S. Ambassador to Hungary, Charles Thomas, as well as Tom Lantos, a Hungarian Jewish-born Congressman, warned Hungary that racist and anti-Semitic policies would have a negative impact on the U.S.-Hungarian relations (Tucker 1996, 298). For this reason, prominent political representatives found it important to rebut any allegations that the new democratic government in Hungary had any anti-Semitic inclinations. As Jeszensky confirmed, during his visits to U.S., the topic of anti-Semitism was often on the agenda and "we did our best to refute these charges and I think we were convincing enough" (Personal Interview, Jeszenszky 2017). In Israel, the Hungarian reputation was complicated not just by the post-1989 'return of history,' but by the history itself. Szentgyörgyi Zolt,

Hungarian Ambassador to Israel (2009-2013), recalled that because he was born in the 1960s, he came to Israel and thought that "I was a representative of a new Hungary, a new democratic Hungary. [...] And in the first year, I felt that I was a symbol of all the Hungarian history, especially the dark years" (Personal Interview, Szentgyörgyi 2017). Similarly, Nagy Andor, a Hungarian Ambassador to Israel who served only recently (2014-2018), reflected that he was "from the beginning in a defensive position. I had all the time to explain that we were not fascists, anti-Semites, that my generation was not responsible for the Holocaust" (Personal Interview, Nagy 2017). In order to neutralize the stigma of being an anti-Semitic country, it became important for Hungary to develop good relations with the Jewish state. As Jeszensky explained, "It was meant to be some kind of a proof that charges against Hungary as being anti-Semitic were totally groundless. [...] There were some people inside and outside Hungary who for understandable reasons would always suspect Hungary as being anti-Semitic. But if we had exemplary relations with Israel, hopefully with time passing, these feelings would subside or ease somewhat" (Personal Interview, Jeszenszky 2017).

An important part of the identity of the moderate Hungarian elites was belonging to the West culturally and geopolitically. Good relations with Israel became part of rebuilding of Hungarian image as a normal, modern, and Western country. As Ambassador to Israel, Hóváry János (2001-2004), confirmed, to rebuild relations with Israel was important in order "to show a new political identity. To have a good image, including in the U.S." (Personal Interview, Hóváry 2017). In a similar vein, Ambassador Gyenge said that, "We re-established our diplomatic relations with Israel and wanted to develop our political cooperation and good political relations with Israel [in order] to show that we were going with the Western community and we were sharing the same principles as the decisive members of the Western community" (Personal Interview, Gyenge 2017).

In a similar vein, Hungarian moderate elites also inclined towards Israel because of the democratic credentials of the Jewish state. A socialist Member of the Parliament, Harangozó, pointed out that "It is admirable that Israel is a democracy, considering the circumstances and its geography" (Personal Interview, Harangozó 2017). Minister Jeszensky admitted that "As a politician, one should not have a kind of preference for one of the sides but I think in our heart, we had a preference for Israel not only because of our past ties, but also regarding Israel being a democratic state, stable state, and anybody who visited Israel is impressed by what they have achieved, especially compared to their neighbours" (Personal Interview, Jeszenszky 2017).

Among the moderate elites, there existed, often implicitly, a sense of national responsibility and guilt for what happened to the Hungarian Jews during WWII which manifested itself in their approach towards Israel. When contemplating the Hungarian stance towards Israel, a Hungarian diplomat clearly referred to this historical association. "At the end of the day, it is about a degree of historical responsibility of Hungary as a state for the

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Holocaust" (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 2 2017). Because Israel was a state which had offered refuge to many of those who were directly affected by the atrocities which took place in Hungary and in Europe at large, there existed a sense that it was Hungary's moral duty to have good relations with Israel. The link with Israel was thus further strengthened by the fact that a significant Hungarian-speaking minority existed in Israel, and Hungary remains the only Central European country with a large Jewish minority, which the World Jewish Congress estimates between 75 and 100 thousand. As a result, there has been a sense of closeness between the two countries. Jeszensky remarked that he felt that "we have a very special reason to cultivate ties with Israel. Israel is in some way Hungarian successor state. [...] There are still 200-300 thousand Jews[76] who do not deny their Hungarian background. [...] So it is our special interest to have good relations (Personal Interview, Jeszenszky 2017).

To conclude, there existed key differences between the narratives of the moderates and the nationalist Right concerning Israel. The narrative of the Hungarian moderate elites reflected their desire to reform Hungary and to make it a modern country well anchored in Western institutions, unburdened by Communist and anti-Semitic legacies. Their positive stance towards Israel thus stemmed from the fact that the Jewish state was a part of the West, a close ally of the U.S., a democracy in a region where an autocratic form of government prevailed, and a country which was linked to Hungary through the Hungarian-speaking minority in Israel and the Jewish minority in Hungary. For the nationalist Right, on the other hand, the pro-Israeli narrative reflected an attempt to disprove those, both at home and abroad, who accused it of anti-Semitism. Good relations with the Jewish state were supposed to serve as the best proof that accusations that Orbán's regime was not only condoning but actively building on anti-Semitic prejudices, were simply wrong. Furthermore, the positive stance towards Israel was also motivated by Orbán's admiration of Israel for being a strong nation state led by a bold nationalist leader.

6.2. Decision-Makers

In this section, I look at prominent decision-makers who formed the narrative related to the Jewish question and Israel. I focus on important mnemonic entrepreneurs who influenced and often manipulated the meaning of the past in order to promote and legitimize their policies.

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[76] There are different estimates of how many Israelis understand Hungarian today. The estimates range from tens of thousands to just a few thousand. However, composed of Jews not only from Hungary proper but also from territories which were under the political and cultural influence of Hungary, like Transylvania (today Romania) and Upper Hungary (today Slovakia), the Hungarian-speaking minority in Israel used to be very strong, numbering more than 300 thousand people.

Nationalist Right

In the early 1990s, the most vocal spokesman of the Hungarian ultra-nationalists and anti-Semites was **Csurka István** (1934-2012), a founding member of the HDF, and a Member of Parliament. Building on the narrative of interwar Hungary, he proclaimed that the new Hungary must be built up with "a Magyar ethnicum" and a "Christian middle class" (quoted in: Spier 1991, 19). In an article in *Magyar Fórum* in 1992, he accused the Jews for being responsible for the forty years of the Communist regime and terror in Hungary and added that currently, "the Jewish" International Monetary Fund, as well as "the Jewish" World Bank, the U.S., and Israeli circles were all conspiring against the HDF-led Hungarian state and nation (in: Tucker 1996, 297). When addressing his enemies, Csurka used terms like "cosmopolitan," "anti-Magyar," "a-national," the "Béla Kuns of today" (Spier 1991, 19), terms Hungarians historically associated with the Jews.

An anti-Semitic and racist narrative remained part of Hungarian mainstream politics even in the 2000s due to the rise of Jobbik, whose leaders were quite outspoken about their identification with the Hungarian Fascist movement. Its founder, **Vona Gábor** (1978), became notorious for targeting minorities, among them Roma and homosexuals. He became a founder of the Hungarian Guard, a paramilitary group with insignia evoking the Fascist Arrow Cross party. It was disbanded by the court in 2009. When targeting Jews, Vona evoked anti-Semitic stereotypes. Reacting to the meeting of the World Jewish Congress in Budapest in 2013, Vona stated, "The Israeli conquerors, these investors, should look for another country in the world for themselves because Hungary is not for sale" (Financial Times 2017). Vona also revived the old accusation that Jews were responsible for the 1920 Trianon Treaty. In 2010, in a Jobbik rally around a statue of Mihály Károlyi, a Roman Catholic aristocrat and Hungary's Prime Minister during WWI, Jobbik supporters put a kippah on the statue's head and a sign in its hands which read, "I am responsible for Trianon" (Applebaum 2013).

Together with Vona, **Gyöngyösi Márton** (1977), Head of International Affairs in Jobbik and Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Parliament, shaped Jobbik's narrative. Rejecting any notion of Hungarian responsibility for WWII atrocities against Jews, he said that Hungary "was protecting the Jewish population up until it was occupied by the Nazi forces" (The Jewish Chronicle 2012; The Times of Israel 2018). As noted above, in 2012, Gyöngyösi had suggested the government keep a list of Jews who pose a "national security risk." Five years later he explained that his initiative had to be understood in context. It took place during the conflict in Gaza in 2012, when the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement endorsing Israel's right to self-defence. "So we wanted to know if it [the statement] was motivated by the fact that in the Parliament, there are people with dual citizenship who are promoting Zionist interests," Gyöngyösi explained, complacently evoking the dual-loyalty accusation, one of the oldest anti-Semitic tropes (Personal Interview,

Gyöngyösi 2017). Furthermore, Jobbik became the only party in the Parliament that was very critical of Israel. Gyöngyösi said that Israel was established by "terrorists" and was run by a "Nazi system based on racial hatred" (The Jewish Chronicle 2012).

The pro-Jobbik weekly, *Barikád,* became a mouthpiece for both anti-Semitic speech and the anti-Israel narrative. The 2000 cover on the left side below displays a statue of Saint Gellért overlooking Budapest while holding a menorah. The title reads: "Wake Up Budapest! Do You Want This?" The original statue is holding a cross. The 2013 cover on the right shows politicians from Fidesz, the Socialist Party, and the Democratic Coalition[77] being united under the Israeli flag. The title reads: "One is the camp, one is the flag. New Fidesz-MSZP-DK unity."

Figure 4: *Barikád's Front Page Covers*

Source: https://www.lapker.hu/katalogus/index.php?p=catalog&act=search&csalad=0103228100&archiv=1&pageID=7

Not having executive power, Jobbik has not been given a chance to turn its narrative into specific policies. Nonetheless, it has actively kept anti-Semitic prejudices in the public sphere. Furthermore, by using the anti-Semitic narrative as a tool for attracting voters, Jobbik encouraged its main competitor, Fidesz, to emulate

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[77] The Democratic Coalition is a social-liberal political party founded in 2010 by a former Prime Minister, Gyurcsány.

some of its tactics. With the political centre in Hungary moving to the Right, issues and policies promoted by Jobbik, once considered taboo, became part of the Hungarian mainstream mainly because they were adopted by Orbán's Fidesz. A party of the moderate conservative Right, Fidesz began to radicalize its positions beginning in 2010.

In the cultural war he waged against liberal values, the leader of Fidesz, **Orbán Victor** (1963), found his nemesis in the figure of the Hungarian-born American-Jewish billionaire, George Soros. In the tradition of far-right conspiracy theories, Orbán blamed Soros for undermining European nation states by spreading liberal ideas and for threatening the Christian character of Europe by orchestrating the migration crisis of 2015 with the goal of "flooding" Europe with Muslims. Orbán started to refer to Soros as being on par with Hungarians' greatest enemies and occupiers. During a rally in central Budapest, Orbán promised his fans that "We sent home the [Ottoman] sultan with his army, the Habsburg kaiser with his raiders, and the Soviets with their comrades. Now we will send home Uncle George" (The Washington Post 2018b). For Orbán, Soros became a very useful bogeyman. By being born in Budapest, he was an insider; by living in the U.S., he was a foreigner who was meddling in Hungarian affairs; by being a Jewish financier, he was a perfect other, an enemy with the means and will to threaten the Hungarian nation. With these conditions available to manipulate, a legislative package characteristically called "Stop Soros," which curtailed the work of non-governmental organizations, criminalized refugees, and included an offensive against the presence of the liberal Central European University in Budapest, founded by Soros, was presented as part of Orbán's mission to keep Hungary safe.

The battle against Soros, including a massive state-funded poster campaign in which Soros was depicted as a puppet-master, a sinister manipulator controlling the opposition forces in Hungary, clearly evoked anti-Semitic imaginary. Nonetheless, Latorcai Csaba, Deputy State Secretary at the Prime Minister's office responsible for Jewish Affairs, categorically rejected the idea that anti-Semitism underpinned the anti-Soros campaign. "We are concerned about his finances, not about his origin." At the same time, he rather puzzlingly added: "And after all, many Jews here, including rabbis, tell us that Soros drifted far away from Judaism. That culturally and religiously, he is not very Jewish" (Personal Interview, Latorcai 2017). However, Harangozó Tamás, a member of the parliament for the oppositional Socialist Party was unequivocal about the anti-Semitic overtones of the campaign: "This anti-Soros world conspiracy campaign is all over Hungary. It uses the same words as in the 1930s, same symbols about how Jews are ruling over the world. This resonates strongly, especially in the countryside (Personal Interview, Harangozó 2017).

Figure 5: *Anti-migrant billboard created by the Hungarian government, featuring the image of George Soros. The caption reads "99 per cent reject illegal immigration. Don't let Soros have the last laugh!" Soros's image is defaced with graffiti that reads "Stinky Jew."* [Source: BBC.com]

[Removed for copyright purposes]

Figure 6: *Anti-Soros billboard created by the Hungarian government. On this billboard, Soros is depicted as a puppet-master who controls the leader of the Social Party, Botka László. "Geci" is a Hungarian obscenity which literally means 'sperm'. Geci Orbán became a popular slogan of anti-Orbán protests.* [Photo by the author]

The anti-Soros campaign fitted nicely into the nationalist Right narrative, and by appealing to radical-right voters, Orbán was able to consolidate his hold on the Right. At the same time, however, Orbán did not want to expose himself to the accusation of anti-Semitism. In his speeches, he pledged that in Hungary, there was "a zero-tolerance approach towards anti-Semitism" (Orbán 2018). He also often stressed that Jews in Hungary could feel safe, compared to their co-religionists in Western European countries where anti-Semitism, including physical attacks against Jews, had been on the rise. In a press-statement issued before meeting with Israeli Premier Netanyahu in July 2018, Orbán said that "[i]n Europe, potent forms of modern-day anti-Semitism have emerged, and [that] today we are living in a time when anti-Semitism is rising in Western Europe, while it is decreasing in Central Europe. [...] In Hungary citizens of Jewish origin are under the

protection of the Government, and we are proud that in Budapest and in Hungary people who openly declare their Jewish roots can also feel safe" (Orbán 2018).

Interestingly, on special occasions, Orbán was even willing to challenge one of the important pillars of the nationalist Right narrative which placed responsibility for the Holocaust on the Nazis. In July 2017, during the first visit of an Israeli Prime Minister to post-1989 Hungary, Orbán admitted that during WWII, the Hungarian state failed to protect the Jews. "I would like to make it clear that, as we see it, it is the duty of every Hungarian government to protect every one of its citizens – regardless of their origins. In the Second World War Hungary failed to fulfil this duty – this moral and political duty. This was a crime. Then, instead of protecting the Jewish community, we decided to collaborate with the Nazis" (Orbán 2017). This soul-searching statement, however, was not addressed to the Hungarian public, but to the Israeli Prime Minister, Netanyahu. This expression of contrition was part of the diplomatic effort and did not pose a major challenge to the dominant nationalist Right narrative.

Remarkably, another very pragmatic argument related to the government's positive approach towards the Hungarian Jews came to fore during my interview with the Deputy State Secretary at the Prime Minister's office responsible for Jewish Affairs. Asked why Jewish affairs were important to the government, Latorcai said that "During the time of Dualism [1864-1914], Hungary went through a tremendous modernization and development [...]. And the Jews played a key role in this process. Unfortunately, with WWI, this process started to come to an end, which culminated in 1944. We would like to build upon this successful period and the Jews again should be an important part of it" (Personal Interview, Latorcai 2017). Interestingly, in his analogy, Latorcai was evoking the important role of Jews on the modernization of Hungary in the 19th and early 20th century and comparing it to the situation today when the Hungarian economy has yet again been lagging behind that of more developed European economies. Yet, this approach is not entirely benign, containing as if does traces of exploitative pre-WWII thinking - the Jews might not be popular but by cooperating with them, by keeping them close, we ethnic Hungarians can hope to be able to emulate their success.

To invalidate arguments that he condoned anti-Semitism, the Hungarian Prime Minister showed strong support for the Jewish state. In remarks during his visit to Israel in 2018, Orbán admitted that anti-Zionism might be a form of anti-Semitism when he claimed that "We are ready to cooperate in everything connected to the war against anti-Semitism, and we think that one of its forms of anti-Semitism is expressions against the state of Israel" (DW.com 2018a). As a politician who praised nationalism and strength, warned against a Muslim 'invasion,' and stressed the need for security, he presented himself as a politician with a special understanding of Israel and its security concerns. During this same visit to Israel, Orbán recognized that he and

Netanyahu shared the same views on four important issues – security, the question of terrorism, the defence of borders, and modern-day anti-Semitism. Ambassador to Israel Nagy Andor (2014-2018), a close Orbán associate, added another dimension to the question of security when he declared that the security of Israel was "our prime concern because there are 300 thousand Jews of Hungarian origin living in Israel" (Personal Interview, Nagy 2017). To prove that Hungary was serious about its support for Israel, Orbán promised to "always act with the aim of ensuring that international organisations make fair, balanced, and unbiased decisions in relation to Israel; we, therefore, stand ready to continue our close cooperation with Israel in international forums" (Orbán 2018).

To conclude, the leaders of the nationalist Right, and especially Jobbik, promoted openly anti-Semitic narratives. Orbán, while not attacking the Jews openly, used anti-Semitic tropes in his cultural war against liberalism, multiculturalism, and Muslims. At the same time, however, Orbán presented himself as a close ally of Israel. In his eyes, Israel under Netanyahu's leadership was ideologically in the same camp as Hungary. Good relations with Israel should thus invalidate arguments of those claiming that Orbán condoned and even promoted anti-Semitic policies.

Moderate Right, Left, and Liberals

An important representative of the Hungarian moderate right was the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Hungary, **Antall Jószef** (1932-1993), a member of the HDF. In the first democratic election, in April 1990, Antall's main opponent was the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats. While the liberals stressed the economy, internationalism, and Europe, moderate conservatives gave attention to history and nationalism. The victory of the conservatives was a clear signal that nationalist issues, suppressed for decades, had never disappeared, and when given a chance to speak their mind, Hungarians brought them back to the fore. A historian by profession, Antall was well equipped for the formulation of a nationalist narrative in an era of transition, when the national identity was being re-shaped. Remembering Trianon, he declared on national television shortly after winning the election that "This day means for us that we have to send a message to every member of the 15 million world community of Hungarians. The Hungarian nation stands united regardless of the citizenship that some of them may have obtained in the thunderstorm of history" (The Washington Post 1990). To infuse conservative Hungarians with a sense of pride, Antall started a process of rehabilitation for politicians connected with the Horthy era, among them former Prime Minister Pál Teleki, an author of major anti-Jewish laws. Concerning Horthy himself, Antall declared he was a "Hungarian patriot" who "should be placed into the community of the nation and the awareness of the people." He further added that

thanks to Horthy's alliance with Hitler, many Hungarian Jews had been saved (The New York Times 1993). Antall's conservative narrative paved the way for Orbán's Fidesz.

Concerning the Jewish question, Antall's behaviour was rather mixed. He acted reluctantly against the anti-Semitic diatribe of his party vice-president, Csurka, who was not expelled from the HDF until in 1993. At the same time, however, in his June 1990 speech during the unveiling of a memorial to the Jewish victims in Hungary, he declared that Hungarian Jews, no matter whether they considered themselves Jewish, Hungarian, or Israeli, would be protected in Hungary. He further called the Holocaust of the Hungarian Jews "one of the most tragic periods of Hungarian history [...] a disgrace to the 1000-year-old course and tradition of Hungarian history." Yet, recalling 'the golden times,' Antall also insisted that far from being only a country of persecution, the Hungary of the Age of Reform had been "a haven" for Central-European Jews who came to Hungary in large numbers. Furthermore, taking a conservative line, he mentioned that "Jews and non-Jews" should remember that "the largest Jewish community of Europe could remain in place here up to 19 March 1944" [when Hungary was occupied by Nazi Germany] (Jeszenszky 2008, 147–49). In his speech, Antall did not mention anything specific about the role of the Hungarian state in the persecution and annihilation of Hungarian Jews, let alone express an apology for the tragedy that befell Hungarian Jewry. All in all, the conservative Right, although moderate in its policies, promoted a narrative which did not pose a challenge to the narrative of the radical-nationalist Right.

On the Left, Socialist Prime Minister from 2004-2009 **Gyurcsány Ferenc** (1961) challenged the dominant conservative-nationalist narrative of the Right. He openly stood against the return of anti-Semitism to the public space and offered a conciliatory stance towards the past. In 2005, during the Auschwitz Holocaust Memorial ceremony, he expressed apologies by stating, "I am standing here as a repentant and grieving fellow citizen, a Hungarian and European survivor, who bows his head before Hungarians, Europeans, Hungarian and European Jews. Also, before the memory of your and our loved ones. Please forgive us all." A former member of the pre-1989 Communist Party and later an independent Prime Minister (2002-2004), Medgyessy Péter, was even more direct when admitting crimes committed by Hungarians during WWII. During the opening ceremony of the Holocaust Memorial Centre in 2004, he stated, "I declare that this heinous crime was committed by Hungarians against Hungarians. There is no excuse or explanation [...] Forgetting is the ally of tyranny; forgiveness and remembrance - of freedom. We have a task to search and tell the truth" (both quotes in: Gerstenfeld 2009). The Hungarian Left and Liberal politicians offered an alternative to the narrative of the nationalist Right. However, Fidesz accused Gyurcsány of an attempt to discredit his opponents by accusing them of anti-Semitism in order "to divert attention from the failures and loss of credibility of his own

administration"(Fidesz-eu.hu 2007). And indeed, corruption charges and leaked tapes in which Gyurcsány admitted lying about the dire state of the economy cost Socialists elections in 2010 and tarnished their reputation to such an extent that they were unable to recover from it for the next decade. Liberal Free Democrats disappeared from the Hungarian political scene entirely. As a result, the liberal and the Left voices in Hungarian politics substantially weakened.

6.3. Institutionalisation

In the above sections, I analysed major narratives concerning the Jewish question and Israel and the leading decision-makers who promoted them. In the final section, I look at how these narratives were translated into practical political steps. I first study the politics of memory promoted by the nationalist Right and the moderates. Second, I examine diplomatic and economic relations between Hungary and Israel and personal links between the two countries.

Politics of Memory

In Hungary, the deep political division between the Right and the Left have been directed and reinforced by the politics of memory. In their attempt to shape the Hungarian collective memory, memory entrepreneurs have engaged in mnemonic battles over the meaning of the past with the goal of promoting their political visions and reaching their political goals. When analysing the practice of the politics of memory in Hungary, I focus most strongly on mnemonic battles over museums and memorials.

Under Orbán, Hungarian governments have invested heavily in museum exhibits and memorials which promote a revisionist version of the Hungarian role in WWII. Orbán has not hidden his intention of pursuing political goals by actively shaping collective memory. When addressing attendees of the Open University summer camp in 2015, he claimed: "The winners will be those who can better understand the past and who can come to the right conclusions more swiftly and more courageously" (Orbán 2015).

One of the most controversial embodiments of the nationalist Right narrative is a monument called 'The Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation,' erected in July 2014 at Freedom Square, one of the main squares in Budapest. Commemorating the 70th anniversary of the German occupation of Hungary, this memorial depicted Hungary as the Archangel Gabriel being attacked by a sharp-clawed German imperial eagle. It fitted nicely into the victimhood narrative which identified Hungary as being "the last victim rather than the last ally of Nazi Germany" (Braham 2000, 417). Because it had provoked controversy ever since the plan for the memorial had become public, the monument was erected during the night and for some time police had to

protect it against protesters. Simultaneously, a spontaneous counter-monument, 'The Living Memorial,' appeared, contesting the official narrative. It was composed of ever-changing relics such as photos, personal items, hand-written stories, and official documents issued by the Hungarian state. Belonging to victims of the Holocaust, it offered a different narrative than that of the official memorial (cf. Erős 2016).

Figure 7: *Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation and the Counter-Monument 'Living Memorial'*
[Photo by the author]
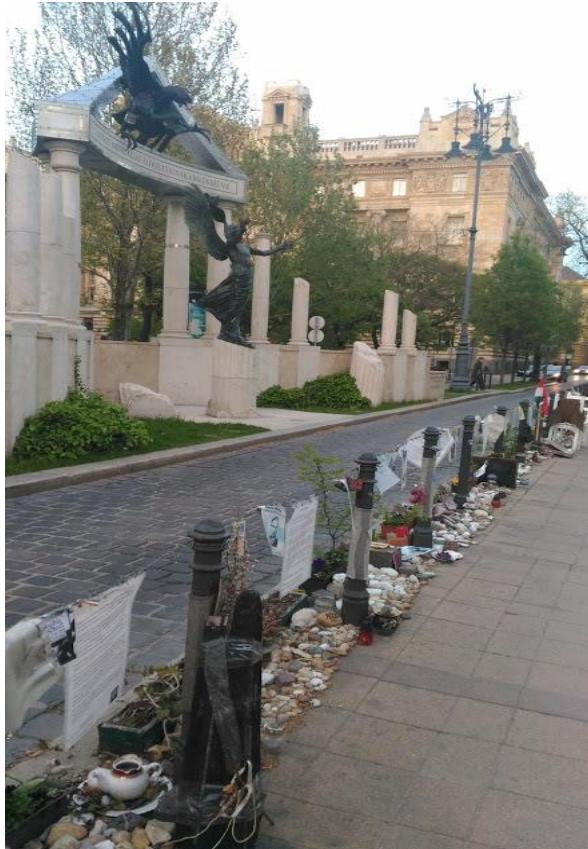
In defence of the official memorial, Fonágy János, Deputy Minister at the Ministry of National Development, a member of Fidesz, and an active promoter of Jewish affairs, claimed that "it was not inspired by bad intentions. It was just wrongly done. It was supposed to portray the suffering of Hungarians during two wars, during Trianon, and during the Holocaust. It tries to express too many issues. It is an emotional failure" (Personal Interview, Fonágy 2017). A Hungarian diplomat, an author of various speeches for Hungarian politicians, admitted that this monument was trying to represent an idealized version of the right-wing story about WWII which the right-wing politicians wanted to tell and share with the audience (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 2 2017). The representatives of both the liberal and the socialist camps understood about the purpose of the monument clearly. Demeter Márta, a member of Parliament for the green-liberal party, claimed that there were two inter-connected incentives behind the building of the monument: first, to attract voters of

Jobbik, and second, "to show that the Hungarians don't have any sins in [their] history" (Personal Interview, Demeter 2017). Harangozó Tamás, a member of Parliament for the Socialist Party, added a further explanation for Orbán's politics of memory, "[...] the problem is structural. The voters of Fidesz are the offspring of the Hungarian gentry who were traditionally anti-Semitic. So even if Orbán is not an anti-Semite, his voters are" (Personal Interview, Harangozó 2017).

One of the most touching WWII memorials, 'The Shoes on the Danube Bank,' located on a prominent Danube promenade south of the Parliament, was created to honour the Jews who were murdered by fascist Arrow Cross militiamen in the last months of WWII. Sixty pairs of shoes are attached to the stone embankment. The abandoned shoes refer to the fact that before they were shot and pushed into the Danube, the victims were ordered to take off their shoes. However, at one of the most prominent public memorials commemorating the Jewish victims of Hungarian Fascism, the plaque attached to it reads: "To the memory of the victims shot into the Danube by Arrow Cross Militiamen in 1944-45." Built in 2005, during the Socialist-Liberal government, it showed that even for Hungarian moderates, unequivocal recognition of the Jewish victimhood was not self-evident.

The nationalist Right narrative which counterbalanced the crimes committed by Nazis with those perpetrated by Communists, and which compared wartime crimes against the Jews with the suffering of Hungarians under the Communist regime, was presented in one of the most popular museums in Budapest, 'The House of Terror.' Seated symbolically in a building where the Fascists and later the Communists tortured their victims, it was opened in 2002 during the first Orbán government and it aptly presented Fidesz's narrative of the 20th-century history of Hungary. It focused on both the Fascist and the Communist dictatorships, with attention skewed towards crimes committed by the Communists. Both ideologies were depicted as foreign, as being imposed on the Hungarian nation by the others, omitting the fact that both the Fascist and the Communist ideologies were embraced and promoted by indigenous Hungarian parties. Instead, the museum presented Hungarians as perennial victims of both.

In 2004, during the Socialist-Liberal government, 'The Holocaust Memorial Centre' designed by a renowned architect, Frank Owen Gehry, was opened in Budapest. In addition to undertaking scientific research, the institution became the first Holocaust museum in Hungary. It presented a story of WWII rather different from the one offered by the House of Terror. It did not play down the role of the Hungarian state, including the gendarmerie and the Hungarian State Railways, on the ghettoization, robbery, and deportation of Hungarian Jews. One of the museum labels stated: "Without the active, initiative-rich assistance, and tireless work of the apparatus of the Hungarian police, gendarmerie, and public administration, numbering close to 200,000

persons, it would have been impossible to ghettoize and then deport hundreds of thousands of people within a few weeks from a country whose total area then was roughly 66,0000 square miles" (Holocaust Memorial Center 2017). Information about the appropriation of Jewish property by hundreds of thousands of Hungarians was also disclosed in the museum.

Two institutions, the House of Terror and the Holocaust Memorial Centre, presented two distinct narratives and represented two different stories about the Hungarian past. As already mentioned above, the story of the nationalist Right dominated the Hungarian collective memory; its popularity has been clearly mirrored in the number of visitors the museums have attracted. While more than 300 thousand visitors came to the exhibit in the House of Terror in year, the Memorial Centre drew about 30 thousand visitors per year (BBC 2019; Tóth 2018).

The politics of memory of the nationalist Right had a negative impact on relations between the Hungarian government and the Hungarian Jewish community. As sociologist Kovács András admitted, the main conflict between the Jews and the government was a conflict about memory (Personal Interview, A. Kovács 2017b). Even Latorcai, Deputy State Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office responsible for the Jewish Affairs, did not deny that "we had debates with the Jewish community about the Memorial at Liberty Square, but now it is over." In the line of the Fidesz narrative, he further added that the Jewish community understood that it was a memorial commemorating all victims of Nazi occupation and that at the same square, "we would like to build a memorial commemorating the victims of the Communist occupation" (Personal Interview, Latorcai 2017). Nonetheless, the President of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Hungary (MAZSIHISZ), Heisler András, confirmed that relations with the government were complicated. On the one hand, Orbán's government supported Jewish life in Hungary, provided finances for reconstructions of Jewish sights, and had good relations with Israel, but on the other hand, it promoted historical revisionism, "especially in the question of the commemoration of the past." Heisler added, "We can make compromises in many things, but not in the question of the commemoration of WWII" (Personal Interview, Heisler 2017).

Another example of the memory conflict is the so-called 'the House of Fates,' another Holocaust museum which Orbán's government planned to open in 2014 in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust in Hungary. Apparently, the government was unsatisfied with the narrative of the already existing Holocaust Memorial Centre, and decided that an exhibit in the House of Fates should focus on the fate of Jewish children and non-Jewish Hungarians who rescued Jews during WWII. Schmidt Mária, a controversial historian closely affiliated with Orbán and the director of the House of Terror, became a curator-director of the project. However, complaints of experts who objected that the exhibit distorted history by withholding

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information about anti-Semitic policies of the government and the role of Hungarians during the Holocaust, together with a lack of coordination with the Jewish community, led to a rather absurd situation. The museum has been completed, but four years after its planned opening, it remains closed.

The politics of memory in Hungary has become a crucial part of the country's present political struggle. Fidesz under Orbán is an example of mnemonic warriors who have not tolerated any alternative vision of history. In order to reach its target group – nationalist voters – Fidesz became actively involved in the process of shaping and manipulating the collective memory. Its main audience, with its proclivity towards nationalist sentiments, responded positively to Fidesz policies backed by the nationalist narrative and in the elections in 2010, 2014, and 2018 rewarded Fidesz with a resounding win and the majority in the Parliament. The Left and liberals had a more pluralistic approach towards the past. However, by being mnemonic abnegators who did not make serious use of memory politics, by not offering a coherent story about the past to Hungarians, they were largely silenced by the mnemonic warriors of Fidesz.

After looking at the politics of memory in post-1989 Hungary, which directly involved the Jewish question, I now look at how Hungarian domestic politics influenced Hungarian foreign policy. More specifically, I will look at how the moderate and nationalist Right political elites defined Hungarian relations with Israel, what their motivations were, and how the memory narrative they championed became institutionalised in day-to-day politics.

Diplomacy

Two Hungarian experts who have analysed Hungary's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict claim that "Hungary's stance on the Israel/Palestine conflict is very complex and can be termed as a mixture of both '(somewhat) pro-Israeli' and as 'somewhat pro-Palestinian'" (Gazdik and Rózsa 2013). Indeed, compared to the Czech Republic and Poland, the Hungarian stance towards Israel has been more equivocal.

In September 1989, as a sign of a new beginning, Hungary became involved in the air-lift bringing thousands of Soviet Jews to Israel. The airport in Budapest served the Israeli carrier, EL AL, and the Hungarian national airline, Malev, also operated charter flights bringing Jewish immigrants to Tel Aviv. As in the case of other countries which assisted the emigration of the Soviet Jews, Hungary was under pressure from the Arab countries which objected it. On top of that, both Malev and the Budapest airport faced terrorist threats which led to a short-time suspension of Malev's charter flights (The New York Times 1990). And indeed, in December 1991, a bus carrying Soviet Jews to the Budapest airport was hit by a bomb, severely wounding both passengers and accompanying Hungarian policemen (The New York Times 1991).

After the regime change, it was mainly the Hungarian moderate elites who were instinctively pro-Israeli. A Hungarian diplomat sent to the Middle East by the Socialist-Liberal cabinet, when asked about the motivation for the pro-Israeli approach, explained that "We only wanted to be correct. There were no preconceptions that we had to be pro-Israeli. Sometimes you feel what is right and you act accordingly" (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 2 2017). Because of the historical burden, relations with Israel touched on a sensitive spot for the moderate Right elites and good relations with the Jewish state were therefore seen as essential. As one Hungarian diplomat explained, concerning Hungary's friendly stance towards Israel, the Right "was enough intelligent not to raise the hand in order to avoid any misinterpretations, and it was even more cautious than the leftists not to disturb the issue" (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 1 2017).

At the same time, however, Hungarian diplomats stressed that Hungary's aim was to promote a balanced policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Two main factors motivated the desire for balance. First, Hungary was interested in building good relations with Israel, but at the same time, it did not want to jeopardize its traditionally good relations with Arab countries. Second, Hungary did not want to stand out, especially among the EU member states. "On the EU level, Hungary is pro-Israeli but we don't want to be too vocal and to break ranks within the EU," added a senior Hungarian diplomat (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 3 2017).

Notwithstanding a basic agreement between the Left and the Right regarding Hungary's friendly position towards Israel, Hungary's stance went through changes reflecting domestic developments. With Hungary's admission to the EU in 2004, the Hungarian leftist elites came increasingly under the influence of ideology of European Left. With some European leftist parties being openly critical of Israel and especially of its treatment of Palestinians, the Hungarian leftist elites started to adopt some of their narratives. The Hungarian Ambassador serving in the Middle East under the Socialist government confirmed that "the Socialist government in Hungary joined the left-wing political forces in Western Europe in supporting the Palestinian cause, and we started to criticize the [Israeli] government" (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 4 2017). This criticism, however, remained rather subtle and did not lead to any major shift in Hungary's policy towards Israel.

Yet, the right-wing Fidesz has set Hungary's foreign-policy tone after the victory in the 2010 election. Especially after the election in 2014, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was restructured and about 150 experienced diplomats were purged, Hungarian diplomats affiliated with Orbán started to dominate the Ministry very strongly. Increasingly, Hungarian diplomacy became openly pro-Israeli in its stance. Diplomats claimed that in the EU, Hungary was balancing anti-Israeli countries such as Ireland and also Sweden, whose foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel was considered to be under the influence of its Muslim minority (Personal

Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 5 2017). As another Hungarian diplomat specified, Orbán was prepared "to go against the EU mainstream in [issues like] labelling[78] and Hungary was trying to prevent the hardening of the [agreed] language of resolutions concerning human rights in Israel prepared by the EU" (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 3 2017).

Hungary's more vocal pro-Israeli stance in the EU must be seen in the context of the growing criticism and diplomatic isolation of Orbán in the EU. To some extent, Israel became a tool in Orbán's struggle with the EU mainstream which Orbán consistently blamed for promoting policies detrimental to European nation-states. By standing in the opposition to the EU mainstream, which had been increasingly critical of Israel, Hungary, supporting Israel, further reinforced its status of as a rebel (the Hungarian view) or as a pariah (the EU view).

For Hungarian diplomacy under Orbán, the Arab-Israeli conflict ceased to be an issue (Personal Interview, Israeli Diplomat 2017). Claiming that because Hungary was a small country which could not contribute significantly to the solution of the conflict, a Hungarian Diplomat who recently served in Israel called for a realistic policy as neither the EU nor the U.S. were in a position to solve it. He further added that "sometimes you cannot resolve the conflict and you have to live with it," (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 6 2017). Remarkably, for many years, this has been an argument of the Israeli Right under Netanyahu. Rather than taking a stance on this diplomatic issue, Hungary has optimalized its foreign policy to enhance Hungarian economic interests. To intensify economic and defence links with Israel have thus become one of the goals of Hungarian diplomacy vis-à-vis Israel.

In the UN, Hungary, faithful to its aim of being balanced towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, voted more often with the majority of the EU countries than with Israel, as is apparent from Figure 3. For example, in 2008, 2009, and 2010, when the UN General Assembly voted on the Durban Declaration, the Czech Republic and Poland voted against, but Hungary abstained. Similarly, Hungary usually abstained when voting on resolutions related to the Palestinian issues renewed annually by the UN General Assembly. Nonetheless, current Hungarian diplomats did not hide their criticism of Palestinian initiatives on the UN level. When commenting on the practices of the UN Council on Human Rights, one diplomat showed dissatisfaction by claiming that "we are spending so much time and energy on discussing the regular resolutions condemning Israel. It does not have any impact anyway and it is a waste of time and energy" (Personal Interview, Hungarian Diplomat 5 2017).

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[78] A guideline approved in 2015 by the European Commission concerning the labeling of products from Israeli settlements in occupied territories.

In 2017, Hungary departed from its EU mainstream position during the vote on the UN Resolution declaring the status of Jerusalem as Israel's capital "null and void." The resolution was a response to the decision of the American President, Donald Trump, to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. While most of the EU countries, including Britain, France, and Germany voted in favour, Hungary, together with the Czech Republic and Poland abstained on this highly contested resolution. In a similar vein, Hungary was one of three countries, together with the Czech Republic and Romania, which blocked the EU joint declaration condemning the U.S. decision to move the Embassy. Apart from reflecting the pro-Israeli stance of the Orbán government, another possible explanation for this Hungarian diplomatic initiative was Orbán's attempt to improve relations with the Trump administration. Those relations had deteriorated following the campaign against the Central European University which had its accreditation in the U.S., activities against non-governmental organizations, and the suppression of freedom of speech, which U.S. diplomacy criticized. And apparently, it was a good calculation as finally, in May 2018, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Szijjártó was received in Washington, D.C. by the Head of the State Department, Mike Pompeo. That was the first high-level bilateral meeting between Hungary and the U.S. since 2012. In Israel as well, Hungary's diplomatic initiatives on the international scene did not go unnoticed. In July 2018, during Orbán's official visit to Israel, Premier Netanyahu said: "I want to thank you for defending Israel. You have stood up for Israel time and time again in international forums. It is deeply appreciated [...]" (Netanyahu 2018a).

Finally, Orbán promoted his 'Israeli agenda' through the Visegrad Four. He tried to use this regional group as a tool for intensifying relations with Israel. Of course, for Israel, close links with the four Central European countries, members of the EU, offered a promising diplomatic asset, especially in light of its increasingly difficult relations with the EU. During Hungary's presidency of the V4, the first V4-Israel summit took place, in July 2017, in Budapest. For Hungary, this summit was especially important, as for the first time since 1989, an Israeli Prime minister had come to Hungary for a state visit. However, as discussed in the Czech chapter, Orbán's attempt to make the V4 the main conduit for relations between the four Central European countries and Israel was met with scepticism. The Czech Republic and Poland in particular, whose bilateral relations with Israel were very well developed and included cooperation in many sensitive fields such as defence and security, saw the V4 platform as only an addendum to their own bilateral relations.

To conclude, since 1989, bilateral relations between Hungary and Israel have been generally friendly. However, the dynamic and intensity of those relations has changed in the last decade. While under the Socialist governments Hungary's interest was to maintain EU unity, a stance reflected in its behaviour on the international level, the situation under Orbán has been different. Orbán was steadily working on deepening

good relations with Israel, part of which was a willingness to stand out and to support Israel both in the EU and the UN. With foreign policy focused on foreign trade, good relations with Israel were also seen as an opportunity for Hungarian economic development. Furthermore, good relations with Israel helped to legitimise Orbán's regime and were considered a useful tool for gaining access to Washington.

Economy and R&D

Hungarian elites across the political spectrum agreed that it was important for Hungary to develop close economic ties with Israel. Because they considered Israel a technologically developed country with a modern economy, Hungarian elites saw great potential in bilateral economic ties. As Ambassador Gyenge confirmed, in the 1990s, when Hungary reformulated its economic interests, "we realized that developed Israel would be a very good partner for us, first of all in technology and technology transfer and [second] in investments (Personal Interview, Gyenge 2017). Today, as Ambassador Nagy remarked, there was a great interest in cooperation with Israel in high-tech, cyber, and autonomous driving (Personal Interview, Nagy 2017). During his visit to Israel in 2018, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Szijjártó said that economic cooperation with Israel was "extremely important" for maintaining Hungary's economic growth (About Hungary 2018).

As shown in Table 9, since 1989, the volume of trade between Hungary and Israel has grown steadily. Hungary has exported mainly cars, chemicals, and food products to Israel and has imported chemicals, electronics and machinery from it. In 2018, the Hungarian low-cost airline Wizz Air became the most popular low cost airline in Israel, with almost 75 thousand passengers. Only Israeli EL AL surpassed it in the number of passengers from Israel (Globes 2018). In 2018, there were about 200 Israeli companies operating in Hungary, employing about 5 thousand people (About Hungary 2018). Furthermore, Minister Szijjártó mentioned that deliveries of Israeli gas to Central Europe could start in 2024-25 (Ibid.). Hungary had also a growing interest in defence cooperation with Israel but as Ambassador Nagy noted, compared to Poland and the Czech Republic, Hungary was a latecomer and it was not easy to compete with these two countries. As a result, he added, "Hungary needed to find a niche which was not yet taken by other countries" (Personal Interview, Nagy 2017).

Table 9: *The Evolution of Trade between Hungary and Israel* [79]

An aid to bilateral economic and growing defence cooperation was the fact that the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement calling for the boycott of Israel was almost non-existent in Hungary. That being the case,

	Exports to Israel in current $ mil.	*Share of total exports*	*Imports from Israel in current $ mil.*	*Share of total imports*
1989	21.7	0.27%	17.9	0.22%
1998	35.9	0.15%	53.4	0.19%
2007	252	0.27%	115	0.12%
2016	358	0.34%	140	0.15%

Hungarian political elites were not pressed by Hungarian civil society to sever economic and defence links with Israel.

Personal Links and the Hungarian Jewish Community

Continuous people-to-people links between Hungary and Israel have played an important role in Hungarian-Israeli relations. The Jewish community in Hungary and Jews with Hungarian roots in Israel represented an important basis for mutual relations which were not completely cut off even during the Communist times and which, finally unconstrained, resumed vigorously after 1989. Between 2013 and 2015, over 50 thousand Hungarians visited Israel, and over 190 thousand Israelis came to Hungary (Israel Ministry of Tourism 2015).

The number of state visits by senior political representatives was not large as in the case of Poland and the Czech Republic. Israeli representatives visited frequently during the period when both countries were renewing bilateral relations. Later, the number of visits declined. Hungarian representatives visited Israel more often than Israeli officials visited Hungary, but unlike the Czech Republic and Poland, where the most senior political representatives usually visited Israel at least once while in office, that was not the case in Hungary. In the last few years, however, with the intensification of bilateral relations under Fidesz, the number of senior Hungarian politicians visiting Israel has grown again. Also, in 2017, for the first time, the Israeli Prime Minister visited Hungary.

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[79] The data are taken from the United Nations Statistical Division's COMTRADE database ('UN Comtrade | International Trade Statistics Database' n.d.).

Table 10: *Visits of Senior Political Representatives from Hungary to Israel and from Israel to Hungary (source: Hungarian Embassy, Israel, 2019)*

	Presidents	Prime Ministers	Foreign Ministers
Hungary	- Göncz Árpád (Lib), 1992 - Sólyom László (Indep.), 2008 - Áder János (Fidesz), 2012	- Antall József (Hungarian Democratic Forum), 1991 - Horn Gyula (Socialist), 1995 (Rabin's funeral) - Bajnai Gordon (Socialist), 2009 - Orbán Viktor (Fidesz), 2016 (Peres's funeral, non-official) - 2018, 2019	- Horn Gyula (Socialist), 1990 - Kovács László (Socialist), 1995 (Rabin's funeral) - Göncz Kinga (Socialist), 2007 - Martonyi János (Fidesz), 2010, 2013 - Szijjártó Péter (Fidesz), 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019
Israel	- Herzog Chaim, 1991 - Moshe Katsav, 2004	- Yitzhak Shamir (Likud), 1989 (non-official) - B. Netanyahu (Likud), 2017	- Shimon Peres (Labour), 1988 (non-official) - Moshe Arens (Likud), 1989 - Shimon Peres, 2001 - Sivan Shalom (Likud), 2005 - Avigdor Lieberman (Yisrael Beiteinu), 2010

Orbán's government has regularly stressed that Hungarian Jews were living in safety and that the Jewish community had the financial support of the state. Yet, for the Jews in Hungary, the Orbán government has presented a dilemma. On the one hand, Heisler András, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary, confirmed that the Jews in Hungary were "in a comfortable position." A sensitive question of restitutions for the victims of fascism has been resolved and "is closed now." The government provided the community with "a lot of money" for its activities, including schools, hospitals, and the reconstruction of Jewish sights. Furthermore, the Hungarian government respected freedom of religion, including circumcision and shechita,[80] rituals banned in some EU countries. Importantly, the level of physical security has been high, so much so that when celebrating 70 years of the Israeli independence, the Jewish Community organized a whole-day party in one of the main parks in Budapest, without the need for extensive police presence and without raising any public protests. On the other hand, Heisler admitted that historical revisionism complicated relations between the Jewish community and the government. Moreover, the anti-Soros campaign, unequivocally seen as anti-Semitic and as triggering anti-Jewish prejudices among Hungarians, caused concerns among Hungarian Jews (Personal Interview, Heisler 2017).

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[80] Jewish religious method of slaughtering of animals.

Relations between the Jewish community and the Hungarian government have been complicated by the fact that although the Federation which represents most of the Jewish organizations and religious groups in the country used to have close links to Socialist-Liberal governments, Fidesz cultivated close relations with a smaller, orthodox Jewish community associated with the Chabad movement. Therefore, when the government needed to legitimize some of its policies by having the support of 'the Jews,' it could rely on Chabad Rabbi Köves. The two Jewish groups openly clashed, for example, over 'The House of Fates.' After Köves agreed to cooperate with Schmidt Mária on the exhibit, Heisler responded by blaming Köves for helping Hungarian government to whitewash and rewrite history concerning its role in the murder of Jews during WWII (Ynetnews 2018). With the Federation in increasing conflict with the government, while Chabad kept close links to it, the Hungarian Jewish community became part of the domestic political struggle. Therefore, while Orbán's government openly spoke against anti-Semitism and supported Jewish life in Hungary, its relations with the Jewish community have been tense due to historical revisionism and the 'divide-and-rule' tactic which has contributed to division within the Jewish community.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the role the Jewish question and Israel in the re-construction of post-1989 Hungarian national identity. I did so by examining moderate and nationalist Right narratives related to the Jewish question and Israel. I showed that the narrative of the nationalist Right, with its identity rooted in the conservative-Christian past, became dominant. I showed that the narrative of the conservative-nationalist Right was anchored in the collective memory of Hungarians. Anti-Semitic prejudices and myths, seemingly dormant during Communist times, proved resilient, and after 1989 they returned to the public space. The conservative-nationalist Right used these collectively shared blocked memories, and by integrating them into their narrative, made their story credible and acceptable. The Left and the liberals, building their identity on their belonging to the West and eager to rectify past mistakes, offered an alternative narrative. They were ready to challenge the collective amnesia concerning the Jewish question by including also less than glorious stories about the Hungarian past to their narrative. Yet, being memory pluralist and abnegators, they were far less successful in making it part of the Hungarian national identity. Nonetheless, this alternative narrative, less vocal and in the last decade without significant political backing, existed in Hungary and challenged the dominant narrative of the Right.

In this chapter, I also showed that the leaders of the nationalist Right not only reinforced the existing collective memory but that they also actively shaped and manipulated it. By actively pursuing the politics of memory, the

mnemonic warriors of the nationalist Right re-created myths about the past when the Hungarian nation allegedly prospered, and when the society was built on so-called traditional values. The Left and liberals rejected this mythologised and sugar-coated view of the Hungarian Christian-nationalist past, yet, they did not pay enough attention to the politics of memory. Their critical stance did not translate into effective policies which would have had a significant impact on the national identity of Hungarians.

When analysing political actors, I not only gave examples of intentional manipulation of the meaning of the past, but I also argued that decision-makers themselves were limited by the past. Using historical analogies and associations, and seeing the past as a source of self-identification, the worldviews of political actors of both the Right and the Left were strongly embedded in the past. Events like the Treaty of Trianon, the Nazi occupation of Hungary, and Communism, had a deep impact on the generation of Hungarian leaders who came to power after 1989, and defined their political positions.

Concerning Israel, both Right and Left-liberal governments promoted friendly relations towards the Jewish state. Seeing themselves as part of the Western, democratic world, acknowledging the historical responsibility of the Hungarian nation for the fate of Hungarian Jews during WWII, and recognizing a close link between the two countries due to intense personal links between the Hungarian-speaking minority in Israel and the Jewish minority in Hungary, moderate political elites considered good relations with Israel something important, reflecting their identity. The nationalist Right governments under Fidesz, on the other hand, saw good relations with Israel as an opportunity for rebutting criticism that their policies promoted anti-Semitic speech. Yet, it was not only pragmatism which defined its attitude towards Israel. Having their identity rooted in Hungarian ethno-nationalism, nationalist Right elites of Fidesz has endorsed Netanyahu for his strong stance when promoting Israel's diplomatic and security interests and for his domestic policies which aimed to strengthen the ethnic character of the state.

Looking at the main challenges in the near future, the question is how sustainable today's Hungarian-Israeli relations can be. For Orbán, the decision to intensify relations with Israel has been motivated by pragmatism and ideological closeness with Premier Netanyahu. For Israel, Orbán became a convenient partner as he did not criticize Israel for its transgressions and provided it with international support in institutions where the position of the Jewish state has been weak. Yet, it remains to be seen how long Israel is going to keep friendly relations with a regime that promotes xenophobia and builds its anti-immigration campaign using anti-Semitic symbols. Furthermore, the intensive Hungarian government effort to relativize Hungary's role on the Holocaust and the promotion of the victimhood narrative which sanitizes the Hungarian past, a past which has long alienated Hungarian Jews, may, just as in the Polish case, elicit a negative response in Israel. Good

relations with the Jewish state well served Orbán in his effort to rebuff critics accusing him of anti-Semitic policies. However, notwithstanding the political expediency of Hungary's support, Israeli political elites may start to find this relationship not very attractive. In particular, a more moderate government in Israel may become intolerant of Orbán's cultural war against liberalism.

To conclude, there exists a very good basis for strong bilateral relations between Hungary and Israel. Both moderate and nationalist elites consider Israel an important ally of Hungary. The Jewish community in Hungary and Jews of Hungarian roots in Israel further contribute to continuous friendly contacts between the two countries. However, policies promoted by the Orbán government which directly involve the Jewish question, be it the anti-Semitic anti-Soros campaign or the relativisation of the past, may lead to the alienation of Israel.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I examined the origins of Polish, Czech, and Hungarian foreign policy towards Israel. I showed that rather than the materialist factors, it was the national identity which defined these countries' stance towards Israel. In each of the observed countries, the narrative about the Jews and Israel developed differently, reflecting politically-driven domestic mnemonic battles. It is a story of variation whose constant is the importance of close relations with Israel.

When the three countries re-constructed their identity, and consequently also their foreign policy following the end of the Cold War, their relation to Israel played an important role. Renewal of relations with the Jewish state symbolized the return of those countries to the West, a goal to rectify mistakes of the Communist regime, and an attempt to link the newly emerged democratic regimes with their pre-WWII past, when the Jews were part of their societies. The past experiences of those three nations, which witnessed the brutality of two dictatorial regimes, injustice, and victimization, shaped their national identities and their positions towards both Israel and the Jews.

In Poland, the Czech Lands, and Hungary, the Jews lived for centuries, and they built flourishing communities with an impact on their host societies. At the same time, however, as a significant and distinct minority, the Jews were often in a position of the internal Other against whom the distinctiveness of the collective Self of those three nations was defined. During the process of their national revival, the Poles, the Czechs and the Hungarians dealt repeatedly with the question whether the Jews could be a part of their respective nations. Based on certain conditions, primarily that Jews assimilate into their host culture, there were moments when the answer to this question was positive. However, in times when the existence of those nations was under threat and when the core ideas of these nations was challenged, the Jews were increasingly being seen as strangers; as those who not only did not belong to the nation, but who, through their otherness, threatened the existence of these nations. This development culminated during WWII when the Jews were faced with the Nazi's Final Solution. The political elites of the three Central European nations did not consider the fates of the Jewish citizens as their main concern and, especially in Poland and Hungary, embraced the idea that disappearance of the Jews, and of the Jewish question, would be beneficial to their nations.

The past legacies, reflected in narratives, shaped the post-1989 identities of the three aforementioned countries. To a large extent, these narratives contributed to the pro-Israeli positions of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Driven by a remorse for the tragic fate of the Jews in Central Europe during the 20th

century, the Central European elites lend strong support to the Jewish state. Polish, Czech, and Hungarian elites also recognized a special link to Israel. Two main reasons made the Jewish state particularly close to them: the fact that the Jews from those three countries, and especially from Poland, played a key role in the establishment of the State of Israel; and that many Polish, Czech, Hungarian Jews who run away from the Nazi and later the Communist dictatorship found a refuge in the country. Special links were further sustained through family relations between the Jews in the three Central European countries and Israel. On top of it, the experience with the life in a part of Europe, where neighbouring states repeatedly threatened and occupied their territory, made the three Central European countries more sensitive to Israel's security concerns. The historical experience with defeats and humiliating international agreements made those countries admirers of Israel's military strength and resilience. Emerging nationalist narratives in Europe further stressed the importance of Israel as a bulwark against radical Islam.

The legacy of anti-Semitism tarnished Poland's and Hungary's reputation of successfully transformed, modern, Western countries. To prove their aspirations and to shed the stigma of anti-Semitism, good relations with the Jewish state were deemed important. Yet, it was not only the pre-WWII and WWII anti-Semitism that played a role. Considering the anti-Semitic character of the Communist regimes, manifested in Czechoslovakia during the Communist trials of the 1950s and after the Prague Spring, and in Poland mostly in the late 1960s, establishing and maintaining good relations with the Jewish state were important for the rectification of anti-Jewish policies implemented by those states throughout of the 20th century.

Moreover, it was the legacy of Communism which defined the post-1989 identity of those three countries. Promoting for forty years the foreign policy that was in line with the Soviet Union, the three post-Communist countries wished to prove that finally they were independent, modern countries which belonged to the West. Good relations with Israel became part of their new geopolitical stance and as such, an important symbol of their independent foreign policy free from Moscow's pressure.

However, the legacy of WWII, especially the role these countries played in fate of their Jewish citizens, remains a much-contested issue with a negative impact on their relations with Israel. In Poland and Hungary, two main political camps – nationalist Right and moderates – often clash over this issue. Through mnemonic battles, decision-makers of the nationalist Right actively promote narratives which reject any soul-searching, stressing instead the suffering of the Polish and Hungarian nations and promoting the courage of individuals who protected the Jews during WWII. As true mnemonic warriors, they consider alternative narratives, challenging the collective amnesia by recognizing also moments when Poles and Hungarian failed, as harmful to those nations.

By contrast, in the Czech Republic, political debates about the past, and particularly about the Holocaust, were mostly uncontroversial. The myth about interwar Czechoslovakia as an island of democracy where the Jewish question did not exist, and about philosemitism of the Czechs, became well entrenched in the Czech national identity. In Czech collective memory, the Nazis were solely responsible for the Holocaust. The harsh conditions under the Protectorate should have absolved the Czechs from any responsibility for the fact that the expulsion of Jews went unopposed by both the Czech authorities, either in the Protectorate or in exile, and the public. The voices which challenged this dominant narrative have been scarce and appeared mostly in academic debates among historians. This lack of controversy stemmed from the fact that in interwar Czechoslovakia, the Jews were indeed not exposed to institutional discrimination, and anti-Semitic incidents were mostly relegated to political extremes. During the war, Czechs did not actively oppose, but also did not assist, the extermination of Jews. This set the Czechs apart from the other Central European nations. While the mnemonic battles became part of daily politics in Hungary and Poland, Czech Republic remained free of these clashes.

Mnemonic battles over the national narrative regarding the responsibility for the past had an impact on bilateral relations with Israel. Israeli national narrative, which emphasized not only suffering of the Jews during WWII but also a betrayal of local populations, was in a clear contradiction with the narrative of victimhood and heroism of the Polish and Hungarian nationalists. As such, conflict over the politics of memory, like for example over the Polish Holocaust Law, had a negative effect on bilateral relations. Unlike in Poland, the Hungarian-Israeli relations did not yet reach a level of a diplomatic crisis. Yet, Orbán's politics of memory has not gone unnoticed in Israel. In contrast, the Czech national narrative was not challenged by the collective memory of the Czech Jews who mostly followed it. Therefore, in the Czech-Israeli bilateral relations, the past has not been a source of controversy.

Key Findings about the Nature of Political Support for Israel

In Poland, political elites of the Right and the Left shared some of the pro-Israeli narratives. A legacy of the long Polish-Jewish co-existence, an important role of Polish Jews in the Zionist movement and the establishment of Israel, anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism of the Communist regime which manifested themselves fully in the late 1960s when so many Polish Jews were forced to leave the country, together with the feeling of guilt about what happened to the Polish Jews during WWII, all formed the pro-Israeli position of the post-1989 generation of Polish elites. The pro-Israeli narrative of the Polish moderates, both the Right and the Left, reflected new geopolitical position of the country, a centuries-long co-existence between Poles and Jews, and common values shared by two democracies which were culturally and historically linked. The

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narrative of the nationalist Right, on the other hand, loyal to Polish ethno-nationalist past, depicted Israel as an ally in the battle against radical Islam and terrorism and as an outpost of Western civilization in the Muslim Middle East. It recognized the ethno-centrist characteristic of Israel and showed its admiration for the nationalist policies promoted by Israel under Prime Minister Netanyahu. However, for the nationalist Right, any recognition of the responsibility of Poles for atrocities committed on Polish citizens of Jewish origin during the Holocaust was seen as an attempt to denigrate the Polish nation. Instead, the Right promoted the victimhood and heroism narrative, even if it led to diplomatic clashes with Israel.

In the Czech Republic, there were no major differences between political camps concerning pro-Israeli narratives. The Czech political elites of both the mainstream Right and the Left did not clash over the collective memory concerning the Jewish question or Israel. It was mostly anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism, and pro-Arab policies of the Communist regime, the Czech-Jewish co-existence in the interwar Czechoslovakia which abruptly ended with the Nazi occupation, the Czechoslovak military aid to the Yishuv/Israel, and the trauma of surrender to Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, which influenced the identity formation of the post-1989 generation of political elites and had an impact on their positions towards Israel. In the Czech narrative, Israel was seen as a close ally with whom the Czech Republic shared not only geopolitical space and foreign-policy interests but also basic values. The Czech Republic and Israel were seen as two democracies culturally and historically close, with a similar experience of an existence in a hostile neighbourhood. The Czech support of the Jewish state was not seen as subject to conditionality. The unconditional pro-Israeli stance was, however, challenged by a narrative which adopted a more mainstream EU approach towards Israel. This narrative, promoted in the Czech diplomacy due to the Czech membership in the EU, called for position more in line with the EU. Yet, so far, this narrative did not have major impact on the Czech relations with Israel.

In Hungary, political elites of the moderate Right, the Left, and liberals shared a pro-Israeli narrative which stressed the geopolitical, ideological, and cultural closeness between the two countries further strengthened by the fact that a significant Hungarian-speaking minority lived in Israel. Hungarian moderates, mainly from the Left and the liberal camps but also from the Right, recognized Hungary's problematic role during the Holocaust. They were more open to debate about the past, and refused anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli narrative of the extreme Right, represented first in the early 1990s by Csurka and in the 2000s by Jobbik. Furthermore, the collective memory of the post-1989 moderate Hungarian elites was formed on the backdrop of the anti-Zionism of the Communist regime and recognized the role of Hungarian Jews in the pre-WWII Hungarian society and economy. Nationalist-conservative Fidesz, which dominated Hungarian politics since 2010, depicted Israel as an important ally in the cultural battle against radical Islam, as a guarantor of stability in the

Middle Eastern region, and as a model for a strong ethnic-nation state, capable to defend itself and to promote its interest. Yet, at the same time, Fidesz promoted the victimhood narrative and attempted to absolve Horthy's regime of crimes against the Jews. Furthermore, it did not shy away from using anti-Semitic tropes in its cultural war against 'Brussels.'

The pro-Israeli stance of the Polish and Hungarian nationalist parties reflected both identity of those parties and a useful role Israel played in their policies. In their identity, the Polish and Hungarian nationalists were very close to the political views of the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. Inspired by their ethno-nationalist pasts, Polish Law and Justice Party and Hungarian Fidesz shared the admiration for a strong nation-state, were suspicious of minorities (especially of Muslims), tried to limit non-governmental organizations (especially of those financed by Soros), and depicted their political opponents as enemies of a nation. Thus Polish and Hungarian nationalist leaders gladly endorsed policies promoted by Israel under Netanyahu's leadership. At the same time, both Polish and Hungarian nationalist ruling parties promoted narratives which appealed to radical-right voters with anti-Semitic inclinations, did not act decisively against anti-Semitic violence, and in the case of Fidesz, built its propaganda on anti-Semitic tropes. Therefore, good relations with the Jewish state became a useful tool for invalidating both domestic and international critical voices which accused Polish and Hungarian nationalists of condoning and even promoting anti-Semitism. Being a strong ally of Israel was supposed to serve as the best proof that the accusations of anti-Semitism were only part of the political struggle in which their opponents tried to defame those nationalist parties. The pro-Israeli voice of the Polish and Hungarian nationalists reflected their diplomatic isolation, mainly in the EU. Exposed to criticism from both EU institutions and individual member states for undermining basic democratic values, Poland and Hungary attached themselves closer to Israel. By siding with Israel, a state which has been exposed to EU criticism for years, Poland and Hungary indicated that they were ready to oppose the EU mainstream positions.

By contrast, the pro-Israeli stance of Polish and Hungarian moderates, together with the Czech position, was predominantly built on identity. Their pro-Israeli stance was rooted in the past legacies and reflected their geopolitical views and values. In the case of Poland and Hungary, the intensity of the pro-Israeli stance was weakened under governments which endorsed the EU mainstream approach towards Israel, but it never led to any major re-definition of the pro-Israeli positions. In the Czech case, the pro-Israel stance was a stable feature not subjected to a significant change, notwithstanding shifts in domestic politics. For Czechs, as well as for Polish and Hungarian moderates, Israel was not a useful tool for a promotion of their foreign-policy goals. Rather, Israel was an ally with whom they shared basic values and with whom they were linked through common culture and shared history.

Discussion on Generalizations

How can we generalize from these empirical findings? The thesis has built on the constructivist school of thought which claims that in order to understand the national interest of a state, we need to know more about a polity/a nation from which this interest stemmed. More specifically, constructivism focuses on national identity as a source of national interest. In my thesis, I showed that it was the national identity of the three countries, rather than the materialist and rationalist considerations, such as an interest to join the NATO or an interest in economic cooperation, which shaped their attitudes towards Israel. Those attitudes have been rather stable, regardless of domestic developments both in those countries and Israel. The moment of crisis between Poland and Israel developed recently as a result of a clash between national narratives promoted by the Polish nationalists and Israel.

I asked what the sources of national identity are and how is national identity constructed. In my contribution to the constructivist literature, I focused on the past as a source of national identity and the role decision-makers play in the process of national identity formation. I especially examined the process of identity formation in times of change, in times, when following a major geopolitical shift, the three aforementioned countries underwent a major socio-economic transformation and foreign policy re-orientation. I discussed how the past, reflected in narratives, constituted and constrained policy choices.

This research showed certain patterns concerning the past and its role during the process of national identity re-creation. In the time when the old regime collapsed and the new one was attempting to attain legitimacy, the political elites searched for a usable narrative of a past to which a new regime could be linked. In this process, a certain period in history, used as a point of reference, gradually mythologised and carefully curated by the new regime, would eventually become one of the defining features of the regime. In the case of the three aforementioned countries, an important referential point became the interwar era of national independence of these three countries, which preceded the era of Nazi occupation and Communist dictatorship.

In the Czech case, the interwar First Republic was one of the most prosperous democratic states in Europe where the Jewish question did not play a major role in the mainstream politics. With no need to substantially curate the myth of the First Republic in order to use it as a positive example from the past, post-Communist political elites presented it as a predecessor of the post-1989 democratic Czech Republic without causing much of a debate among the memory entrepreneurs. Building on the myth of the First Republic, a post-1989 Czech identity was thus constructed on a widely-shared narrative of the Czech democratic tradition and the Czech philosemitism.

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In Poland and Hungary, however, the situation was more complicated. The interwar era was characterized by instability, violence, and state-sponsored anti-Semitic policies. Widespread anti-Semitism among both the elites and the general public was later manifested also during WWII. Therefore, in search for usable past, the interwar era, but also events of WWII, became mythologised, curated, and subjected to mnemonic battles which became part of day-to-day politics. The main dividing line was between those who recognized the complexity of the past and were ready to admit responsibility for morally repugnant acts, and those who presented Poles and Hungarians mostly as innocent victims and eventually heroes who courageously faced more powerful enemies: Germans, Soviets, or both. In regard to the Jewish question, the line was drawn between the recognition that home-grown anti-Semitism existed and contributed to a dire situation of Jews during the Nazi-organized Final Solution, and between relegating anti-Semitism to a mere social problem. The emphasis was put on depiction of golden times of co-existence between Jews, and Poles and Hungarians respectively, with a special focus on examples of heroic acts of individual Poles and Hungarians who saved Jews during WWII. In the process of identity re-construction, various narratives about the past competed for epistemological dominance in order to create and define *the* national identity. In Poland, the battle about the dominant narrative is still part of the political debate. In Hungary, the nationalist narrative of the dominant Fidesz has overshadowed alternative narratives.

However, in order to look credible, decision-makers could not completely fabricate their narrative of the past. In order to appear authentic and acceptable to the general public, a narrative must resonate with the collectively shared ideas and visions about the nation's history, character, and aspirations. Narratives introduced by the post-Communist political elites were thus rooted in the past. Naturally, politicians from various political camps evoked narratives of the past which fit their story best. Nationalist Right elites referred to stories which emphasized the nation's heroism, victimhood, evoking times when so-called traditional and Christian values prevailed. Moderate politicians looked for moments in the past when their societies embraced more liberal ideas. While referring to past events which symbolized 'paradise lost,' or moments when the nation stood on the right side of history, decision-makers emphasized certain characters of the era or event at the expense of others, less glorious historical moments.

A further key finding is that once a stance towards Israel was formulated following the changes in 1989, it became institutionalized and rather stable. The main challenge to the pro-Israeli stance came in all three countries from political elites who were under the influence of the EU mainstream narrative, and in the case of Hungary, also from the radical-Right Jobbik party. However, the alternative narratives which challenged the pro-Israeli narrative, stronger in Poland and Hungary than in the Czech Republic, did not lead to a significant

change in bilateral relations between those countries and Israel. Economically, the cooperation rose steadily in the past 30 years and neither Poland nor Hungary, let alone the Czech Republic, diplomatically supported anti-Israeli policies initiated either by the EU or the UN. Therefore, once formulated following the major changes in 1989, the position towards Israel became rather stable and proved to be resistant to domestic political changes.

In order to explain this stability, I looked at the role of Israel in the process of national identity re-construction. I showed that Israel played a special role in this process in all three countries. It was the legacy of the Jewish question, together with an attempt to become a modern Western country, which made Israel an important factor in the process of the re-definition of national identity and the re-building of international image. Of course, in all three countries, the legacy of the Jewish question resonated with a different intensity. Whereas in Poland and Hungary there developed competing narratives related to the Jewish question and linked to the question of victimization, in the Czech Republic only one narrative was dominant. Importantly, however, I showed that the Jewish question, present in the collective memory of all three nations, lingered over and largely shaped the relations towards Israel. Thus even during post-1989 domestic political shifts when some basic foreign-policy pillars were challenged, foreign policy towards Israel was not subject to major alterations. My empirical findings show clearly that foreign policies rooted in the past and stemming from collective memory have a tendency to persevere.

In this study, I discussed the agency of decision-makers in shaping the meaning of the past. The role of decision-makers as mnemonic entrepreneurs increases especially in the time of major political and socio-economic changes when a society re-constructs its identity. I showed that decision-makers tried to influence collective memory by shaping narratives in order to promote their political goals. In post-Communist countries, the importance of mnemonic debates further stemmed from the fact that the old regime suppressed debates about the past and promoted historical research based on fabricated data. After its demise, there was an urgent need to come to terms with the past and to bring to the fore topics which were for a long time taboo. This moment of crisis provided the decision-makers with an opportunity to strengthen their agency over the process of identity re-formation. As political leaders, they contributed to the formation of a new national narrative which legitimized the new regime and which, following the period of instability, allowed a nation to feel ontologically secure in the new circumstances.

Importantly, I found that it was mostly political elites of nationalist Right who became most invested in the mnemonic battles. For them, politics of memory became an important tool for promotion of their domestic agenda. As true mnemonic warriors, they became involved in creating a meaning for the past, while often

manipulating the past. They ontologised one version of the past event and often labelled alternative narratives as strange, false, and even treacherous. In contrast, moderate politicians with more pluralistic approach recognized the existence of more than one meaning of past events. Yet, compared to their nationalist colleagues, they were far less interested in politics of memory and did not invest so much in the promotion of their, more liberal, narrative. As a result, memory politics became the domain of nationalist politicians.

However, the link between decision-makers and the past was not a one-way relationship. Decision-makers shaped the meaning of the past, yet, the past also influenced them. In this thesis, I showed that a generation of political elites which came to power in 1989 was strongly under the influence of the past. Based on their personal experiences, it was especially their life during Communism which defined the world-view of this generation of decision-makers. Furthermore, pivotal traumatic events like the Munich for Czechs, the Trianon for Hungarians, and the German and Soviet aggression and brutality during WWII for Poles, resonated in the collective memory of post-1989 leaders. It was personal experience with life under the authoritarian regime, together with deep awareness of significant historical moments linked to pre-WWII and war times, which served as available heuristic for the post-1989 generation. When taking a stand towards post-1989 events, when setting policy goals, and when rebuilding the image of those states, the past influenced the choices of the generation of decision-makers who came to power in 1989. Past legacies provided background information which framed decisions of post-1989 political elites. Using the past as a precedent, decision-makers used historical analogies in order to orient themselves in the post-1989 reality.

I also showed that during the process of transformation, the past served as an important source of self-perception. Past international status and positions were evoked when the post-1989 identities were re-constructed. Polish elites wanted to ensure that the Polish territory would not become a cordon sanitaire for either Russia or Germany. Considering Israel, a combination of a long legacy of Polish-Jewish co-existence, together with the aim to shed the image of a formerly anti-Semitic country, influenced the Polish stance towards Israel. Czech elites identified with the positive example of democratic and economically strong interwar Czechoslovakia. In relation to Israel, an alleged Czech philosemitism, the important role of the Jewish presence in the Czech pre-WWII society, and the Czechoslovak military aid to Israel all influenced the Czech position towards Israel. Hungarian elites, mostly the nationalist ones, wished to strengthen the regional influence of Hungary by fostering links with Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring countries, while liberal politicians were more interested in creating bonds with European countries west of Hungary's borders. Hungary's position towards Israel was influenced by a complicated legacy of Hungarian-Jewish co-existence

during which Hungarian Jews were considered part of the nation, but later were excluded, persecuted, and murdered as the pernicious Other.

Contribution to the Literature

This thesis main contribution is to both empirical and theoretical literature. Empirically, this study mostly contributes to the literature on bilateral relations with Israel. While there has been a plethora of academic literature focused on American, British, French, or German foreign policy towards Israel, so far, relations of the three Central European countries with Israel have been outside of the interest of IR scholars. Thus academic literature delving into, for example, the diplomatic crisis between Poland and Israel over politics of memory, Czech staunch support of Israel, or Orbán's sincere relations with Netanyahu, was missing. This thesis at least partially fills this gap.

This thesis also contributes to the literature on foreign policy of Central European countries. So far, IR scholars were mostly interested in Polish, Czech, and Hungarian foreign policy towards the U.S. and European countries. By examining relations with Israel, I extended the scope of inquiry related to foreign policies of these three countries. Moreover, this thesis contributes to the literature related to EU foreign policy. For the EU, the Arab-Israeli conflict has been high on its foreign policy agenda since the 1980s. With the EU enlargement in 2004, Central European countries joined in formulating the EU position towards the conflict. Therefore, by shedding more light on Polish, Czech, and Hungarian stance towards Israel, I hope to contribute to our understanding of EU's position towards the Middle East.

Theoretically, my thesis adds to the constructivist debate on the identity formation of a state. Constructivist theory, offered by Wendt, has been criticised for being too systemic, considering certain factors as "nonprocess givens" (Mattern 2005, 248), for example, by claiming that it is the international structure which produces identity of each state within the system without particularly examining the agency of a state. This being so, an explanation of the role of states in the identity formation process was excluded from this theory. Furthermore, constructivism as a theory aids with analysis of situations mostly during stable social facts; it does not provide tools for analysis of moments of instability and change.

In order to address some of the weaknesses of the constructivist theory, I investigated the concept of identity and the process through which it is constructed. I added the past as a crucial factor which influences the formation of social structures, such as identity and interests. I showed the importance of history especially in a time of major changes when the past bounds the limits of possible. I showed how, during the process of identity re-construction, the structure of available pasts framed the contours of the 'new' identity. Further, by

examining the role of decision-makers, I opened the black box of a state and added the agency of decision-makers into the analysis of identity formation. By including discussion about the role of the structure (the legacy of the past) on agents (decision-makers) and vice-versa, my aim was to contribute to the constructivist structure vs. agent debate. Approaching this perennial question rather instrumentally, I showed how the past shapes and limits decision-makers, and through which mechanisms decision-makers shape the meaning of the past and why.

I showed that collective memory is important for the formation of national identity. Through the process of curating collective memory, a group of individuals develops the 'we-feeling.' Prominent among those curators are decision-makers, important memory entrepreneurs. By shaping narratives, through which collective memory is articulated and by competing over them, collective memory reflects power relationship; rather than being stable, it undergoes a process of renegotiation. This process can be quite radical, especially in times of major political changes. In such moments, when an old regime is being replaced, when the collective Self is challenged, and when national identity is problematized, decision-makers play a key role. Using, among others, politics of memory, they shape the collective memory and, by extension, the process of national identity re-construction.

However, the past bounds the limits of possible and influences the behaviour of decision-makers. The past is a kind of a structural power which frames political issues. Present-day national self-image of a nation, which decision-makers must reflect in their policies in order to look credible, stems from the nation's past. The past events often serve as precedents, based on which decision-makers make their decisions. Through analogies and associations, historical events can influence the choice of policy. Major historical moments, such as the last war, serve as the main source for historical lessons. A shared historical experience of a dramatic event or an era often influence the entire generation. When this occurs, it creates a strong schema, a generational lesson, which has an impact on the world-view of that generation.

My thesis is mostly built on the empirical puzzle, rather than the theoretical one. While approaching the constructivist structure vs. agent debate, my aim was not to offer universal generalization from the story of the three Central European countries and their relations to Israel. Instead, I offer the reader a rich and complex story involving a multiplicity of processes which, however, is still coherent enough to provide a nuanced analysis of factors accounting for the Polish, Czech, and Hungarian positions towards Israel. Yet, without losing sight of the particularity of each case, this thesis offers also a context-bound particular generalization. On the one hand, the coherence has been provided by the theoretical apparatus built on a study of identity construction in the time of major changes. On the other hand, by involving context-

specific narratives and by highlighting certain particularities of each case, my analytical framework has not reached a general conclusion about identity construction under any circumstances. Instead of offering "if, then" generalization, I have brought a historical explanation to the process of identity formation.

The Way Forward

Further studies could build on this thesis. The main argument, that foreign policies of the three Central European countries towards Israel reflect their national identities, raises the question: to which extent is this true also of other countries? Of course, as mentioned in the Introduction, Slovakia, the last member of the Visegrad Four, is a country on which the mechanisms presented in this thesis should be tested. Further, the Baltic countries, where the Jewish question played an important role, and which vote in the UN similarly to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary (see Figure 3), may present another interesting case study. It would be interesting to examine Austria, another Central European country where the Jewish question was an important issue, yet which was not part of the Communist Bloc. To explore the dynamic behind foreign policies towards Israel in other countries with their own histories and peculiarities would be valuable both empirically and theoretically.

Moreover, the findings of this thesis should be re-evaluated in the near future, when a new generation of decision-makers, whose collective memory has been formed not during Communism, but after 1989, will start to dominate politics in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. What will be the dominant historical legacies influencing their attitudes towards Israel? The membership in the EU? The global war on terrorism? Or, will they build on similar legacies that influenced the previous generation of decision-makers? Such a study could contribute to our knowledge about the changing national identities of countries which, after a long period of time during which their identity had been defined by the Communist experience, had their national identity re-constructed during a long period of political stability when they belonged to the democratic part of the world. Will this lead to a substantive change in their foreign policies?

To conclude, this thesis provides a contribution to arguments within IR scholarship which claim that in order to be able to understand motivations of states, we need to know more about their identities. And in order to understand their identities, we need to take into consideration their histories. But aside from a theoretical rendition, this thesis tries to bring attention to the part of Europe which was often overlooked by the Anglo-Saxon IR scholarship. Naturally, acting largely as passive recipients rather than agents of the geopolitical order in Europe, scholars have preferred to focus in their analyses on bigger powers, rather than on smaller countries

of Central Europe. Nonetheless, in the past, it was often Central Europe where first chapters of major European histories were written before they spread to other parts of the world. Often, major European histories took place on the territory of Central European countries. These rich historical legacies loom large over the region, and the past is not passé. By bringing the attention to a specificity of bilateral relations of the three Central European countries towards Israel, I want to shed more light on the complexity of the histories of Central European countries which in the last three decades underwent an enormous transition and which, after decades of passivity, represent a new voice in the European politics. To get a better understanding of the voices of these states by examining their past has been the ultimate goal of this thesis.

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