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**CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF A DIVIDED SOCIETY:
The Case of Israel in the Czech Republic**

Abstract:

The thesis explores the cultural representation of the State of Israel in the Czech Republic from an anthropological perspective, depicting how the topic of the state is appropriated and represented by different actors.

Among its key theoretical statements, the thesis differentiates between cultural diplomacy—governmentally facilitated communication with a foreign audience through whatever is considered as culture—and the cultural representation of a state—the resulting picture of a state that depends on a multiplicity of narratives that emerge when various actors use the topic of the state to publicly assert their self-understanding.

In an actor-oriented analysis, based on events observation, the thesis deals with the Israeli foreign policy institutions, artists engaged in cultural diplomatic activities, the Diaspora, audiences, various Czech non-governmental actors including pro-Israeli support groups, BDS movements, and others. The thesis analyzes Czech-Israeli bilateral relations and their impact on current Israeli cultural representation, concluding that while formerly close, the contexts of the two countries are drifting apart, creating “false familiarity” in cultural representation that results in low efficiency and misunderstandings.

The research focuses specifically on the deep divisions of the represented society, that, in contrast to cultural representations of more homogenous entities, produce mutually exclusive notions of the state. It describes how, especially in times of heightened attention, certain actors put increased pressure on the dissemination of their own notion of Israel, involving other high-standing actors, increasing communication with the public, and adjusting their strategies to the reactions of their counterparts.

While examining the cultural representation of a divided society, the thesis shows how the state administration can cope with domestic divisions by either centralizing the message, or leaving it incoherent, as in the case of Israel. The reasons for this, including the low status ascribed to cultural diplomacy in Israel, are examined. The thesis also describes how the representation of divided societies, even if decentralized, favors cultural elites with better access to channels of communication. The thesis concludes by characterizing the cultural diplomacy of deeply divided societies as caught in a permanent dilemma between efficiency and normative democratic standards, that can be resolved only by a focus on personal relationships.