



Universiteit Leiden

Understanding the Czech Foreign Policy.

The Case of the EU Sanctions against
the Russian Federation

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Abstract

This thesis examines the decision of the Czech Republic on the adoption of the EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine. The perception of the Czech Republic and its behaviour is perceived ambiguously. For that reason, qualitative analysis of the decision was conducted in order to arrive at the understanding of the Czech position. The author works with a concept of identity based on Social Constructivist and Foreign Policy Analysis scholarship. It is argued that the elite idealistic identity, which is held by a proportion of Czech politicians and official, can be used as a variable in Czech foreign policy and a tool to enhance the understanding of it. The dominance of the elite idealistic identity is not fixed; therefore, the consequences enabling the identity to prevail are also discussed.

List of abbreviation

ANO 2011	Action of Dissatisfied Citizens movement
BIS	Security Information Service
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CFSP	Commons Foreign and Security Policy
ČSSD	Czech Social Democratic Party
EU	European Union
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
IR	International Relations
KDU-ČSL	Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party
MPO	Ministry of Industry and Trade
MZV	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
RF	Russian Federation
TEU	Treaty on the European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TGM	Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk
UN	United Nations
V4	Visegrad Group

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1. Introduction

The European Union adopted in 2014 a set of measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine, annexation of Crimea, and fighting in Eastern Ukraine; thus, clearly indicating their strong disapproval with Russian actions against Ukraine. The measures adopted were of various kinds from diplomatic measures, individual restrictive measures (including assets freeze and travel restrictions), restrictions on economic relations, to economic sanctions.¹

To adopt such measures, unanimity of member states is needed, which is not always easy to achieve. In the case of sectoral sanctions, it took a few months, before the final position was reached. Despite the complicated process, the measures were successfully agreed and repeatedly extended until now (as of May 2019). Nevertheless, the sanction regimes² have been repeatedly questioned by representatives of different member states. Cyprus government even adopted a resolution requiring the government to “work towards lifting” the sanctions in July 2016.³

The above-mentioned discrepancy rhetoric of certain political actors and politics is an interesting example of how difficult it is in the EU to find foreign policy consensus which would be acceptable for the governments, but also their citizens. One of the member states, from which voices criticizing the sanctions could be heard, is the Czech Republic. Its highest political representatives, especially President Miloš Zeman, have repeatedly criticized the sanctions and often issued statements that share a narrative with Russian official assessment of the situation. Public debate in the Czech Republic includes various and pro- and anti-Russian arguments and is generally divided into two groups. From the polls it occurs that the society is either divided over having any common foreign and security policy at the first place⁴ as well as in its opinion on RF,⁵ which is obvious on the debate about the Ukraine crisis and the sanctions.

Despite the cleavage and ongoing criticism of the sanctions from various political actors, the EU sanctions against RF were repeatedly unanimously extended by the representatives of

¹ EEAS. *EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine*. EU delegation to the Russian Federation. 29 March 2019, p. 1; To simplify, the measures are often referred to as EU sanctions against RF. Despite it not being exactly accurate, for the purpose of this thesis, the author uses either “the sanctions” or if needed “EU sanctions against RF” to make the text clearer.

² Terms “sanctions” and “sanction regimes” are in this context used interchangeably.

³ Cyprus parliament calls for end to EU sanctions on Russia. *Euractiv*. 8 July 2016.

⁴ For example, the example of the question whether Czechs are rather in support or against a common foreign policy of all member states of the EU shows the division. Since 2010 in between 50 and 60% people support it, and between 35 and 50% are against. European Commission. Eurobarometer Interactive.

⁵ TRACHTOVÁ Zdeňka. Strach z budoucnosti [Fear of the Future]. *iRozhlas*. 1 January 2019; ZELEŇKA, Jakub and Prchal LUKÁŠ. Rusko brání naše tradiční hodnoty, myslí si část Čechů. [Russia defends traditional values]. *ihned*. 28 May 2017.

all member states. That means that the Czech Republic had to be in favour of the proposal as well.

In the thesis, the author argues that despite the contradictory statements and incoherent rhetoric of Czech politicians on the issue of EU sanctions against RF over Ukraine, the Czech Republic is not “soft” or hesitant in its attitude towards RF and implements the sanctions successfully. For that reason, the author wants to focus on the reasons and thus arrive at understanding of the support of the decision on the sanctions’ adoption and further support on their extension. Therefore, the research question is as follows: “Why the Czech Republic decided to support EU sanctions against RF over Ukraine despite the cleavage among politicians?”

1.1 Literature on the sanctions

The issue of the sanctions over Ukraine is present in current politics. The conflict is still ongoing and the end of it is not forceable in the near future. At the same time, the conflict in Ukraine is really close to the EU, which is occupied with it since the outbreak. The sanctions have been renewed during past five years, which is usually accompanied by debates within the society and above-mentioned controversial comments from various European actors.

Nevertheless, there are just a few academic texts dealing with the issue. It is possible to find papers, which focus on the issue of EU sanctions more generally;⁶ however, they rather cover typology of sanctions than a decision-making behind them.⁷ A common topic related to this issue is an economic impact of the sanctions for RF, the EU as a whole⁸ or individual EU members.⁹ Nevertheless, there is only few articles dealing with the position of the member states. An exception is a useful study prepared under the patronage of the University of Geneva

⁶ CHRISTIE Edward Hunter. The Design and Impact of Western Economic Sanctions against Russia. *The RUSI Journal*. Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 52-64.

⁷ PORTELA, Clara. Member States Resistance to EU Foreign Policy Sanctions. *European Foreign Affairs Review* 20, Special Issue, 2015, pp. 39-62; PORTELA, Clara. Are European Union sanctions “targeted”? *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2016, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 912–929.

⁸ NASULEA, Christian, CRETU, Beatrice Nicolle and Diana Florentina SPINU. How Sanctions on Russia Impact the Economy of the European Union. *Studies in Business and Economics*. No. 10, 2015, pp. 147-157;

⁹ CAMPENAU, Virginia. The Results of The Embargo Imposed by The Russian Federation To The Member States Of The European Union. The Case of Lithuania. *Institute for World Economy, Romanian Academy*, Vol. 2, No. 10, October 2018, pp. 3-12; OXENSTIERNA, Susanne. The sanctions against Russia Are there winner and losers around the Baltic Sea? *BSR Policy Briefing series. Centrum Balticum*, October 2018

in 2016.¹⁰ There are bits of information which enables us to find out more about the attitudes of member states towards the sanctions in papers on EU-Russia relations.¹¹

Considering specific relations of individual member states with RF, there is literature on the relations of Visegrad Group (V4) with RF.¹² It is quite common that these countries are dealt with as one group when assessing foreign policy of EU member states,¹³ which logically narrows down a room for a deep analysis. The group earned a negative label due to its attitude towards the migrant crisis, especially its unwillingness to adopt migrant relocation quota as a solution for an inflow of migrants to the EU. Moreover, the countries opposed the implementation of the measure despite it being eventually adopted by the Council of the EU.¹⁴ The negative perception of V4 as troublemakers prevailed with some authors failing to distinguish the significant differences between the countries. However, this misinterpretation is misleading as there are not only differences in their political developments, but often in their attitudes to foreign policy agendas and one of the examples is their attitude towards RF. Nevertheless, the inaccuracy makes it complicated to get a right assessment of the situation for an external analyst as the information provided are often contradictory.

The Czech Republic has in this context slightly more complicated position concerning its President Zeman who often uses a strongly pro-Russian narrative, which make the position of the country confusing and unclear.¹⁵ The consensus among Czech (or Czech speaking/reading) scholars is more united; however, in order to research the decision on the

¹⁰ MORET, Erica et al. *The New Deterrent? International Sanctions Against Russia Over the Ukraine Crisis. Impacts, Costs and Further Action*. Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. Vol. 12, October 2016,

¹¹ Among such papers there are for example ORENSTEIN, Mitchell A. and R. Daniel KELEMEN. Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 55, N. 1, pp. 87-102.

¹² For example, DANGERFIELD, Martin. Visegrad States' Trade and Economic Relations with Russia: Before and After EU Membership. *10th Biennial Conference of the European Community Studies Association-Canada*, Montreal, 8-10 May 2014.

¹³ Either in V4 format, or the Czech Republic in a group with Slovakia and Hungary. DAVID, Maxine, GOWER, Jackie, and Hiski HAUKKALA. *National Perspectives on Russia: European foreign policy in the making?* London: Routledge, 2013; Or in some cases these countries are not mentioned at all. WONG, Reuben and Christopher HILL. *National and European Foreign Policy: Towards Europeanization*. London: Routledge, 2011; JONES, Eric and Saskia van GENUGTEN. *The Future of European Foreign Policy*. London: Routledge, 2009.

¹⁴ Even though, it is fair to note that usually in such sensitive cases, there is a will to find a consensus which would be acceptable for all member states. Therefore, the use of qualified majority voting in this case was a bit unusual. NUGENT, Neill. *The Government and Politics of the European Union*, 8th ed., London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 177.

¹⁵ Vitkus even put the Czech Republic in the group of so-called "trojan horses" with regards to their attitudes towards the EU sanctions against RF. VITKUS, Geminidas. Towards Stronger Normative Power: The Nature of Shift in EU Foreign Policy in the Context of the Crisis in Ukraine. *European Integration Studies*. No. 9, 2015, p. 9.

sanctions, the sources are rather limited. Most authors focus on the impact on Czech economy in various sectors¹⁶ or more general context of Czech relations with RF.¹⁷

Therefore, to fill the gap, the author wants to focus on the issue of the EU sanctions against RF over Ukraine and the reasons why member states decided to support such decision. As the scope of this thesis is limited, the author chooses to focus on the example of the Czech Republic as there are contradictory assessments of its foreign policy performance in the literature.

In this thesis, the author argues that the Czech decision on the sanctions can be better understood when a Czech foreign policy identity is taken into account. The identity, which is built on a long-term tradition leading back to the personalities, who were at the beginnings of independent Czechoslovakia (T.G. Masaryk, E. Beneš). As the author argues, there is more than one Czech foreign policy identity. Thus, the identity is presented and it is demonstrated, why it became dominant when the decision on the sanctions was taken.

1.2 Czech Foreign Policy Scholarship

Literature on Czech foreign policy reflects the fact that until recently the research was subordinated to heavy ideological control. The whole range of IR theories started penetrating the Czech environment in 1990s. This is reflected in the fact that first literature in Czech comprehensively dealing with IR theories appeared in 2000s with books by Drulák,¹⁸ Pšejja¹⁹, and Kratochvíl.²⁰ It impacted Czech IR scholarship, which is crucial for research on Czech foreign policy as Czech proficiency is a necessary to conduct an in depth analysis of Czech foreign policy.

¹⁶ COUFALOVÁ, Lucie and Libor ZIDEK. The Impact of Sanctions on Czech Economic Relations with Russia in: CINGULA, Marijan, PRZYGODA, Mirosław, and Kristina DETELJ (ed.) *Economic and Social Development. 23rd International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development. Book of Proceedings*.

¹⁷ KRATOCHVÍL, Petr, CIBULKOVÁ, Petra and Vít BENEŠ. Foreign policy, Rhetorical Action and the Idea of Otherness: the Czech Republic and Russia. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 39, 2006, pp. 497-511.

¹⁷ KUCHYŇKOVÁ, Petra, KRATOCHVÍL, Petr, and Boris SHMELEV. Czech-Russian Relations 1989-2012 in: ZAGORSKI, Andrei (ed.) *Russia and East Central Europe after the Cold War*. Prague: Human Rights Publishers, 2015; KRATOCHVÍL, Petr and Věra ŘIHÁČKOVÁ. Domestic political context since 1989: Russia as a dividing element in Czech society, in: KUCHARCZYK, Jacek and Grigotij MESEŽNIKOV (eds.) *Diverging Voices, Converging Policies: The Visegrad States' Reactions to the Russia-Ukraine Conflict*. Warsaw: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2015.

¹⁸ DRULÁK, Petr. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů* [International Relations Theories]. Prague: Portál, 2003.

¹⁹ PŠEJJA, Pavel (ed.) *Přehled teorií mezinárodních vztahů* [Overview of International Relations Theories]. Brno: MUNI, 2005.

²⁰ KRATOCHVÍL, Petr. *Slovník teorie mezinárodních vztahů* [Dictionary of International Relations Theories]. Prague: Oeconomia, 2007 and *Teorie evropské integrace* [Theories of European Integration]. Prague: Portál, 2008.

Unsurprisingly, the aforementioned scholars are the main vanguards of Czech IR scholars. As Drulák points out realism, liberalism, and constructivism are the most commonly used theories and concepts when Czech foreign policy is analysed.²¹ Majority of the scholarship, when not omitting theory and methodology, uses qualitative approaches characteristic of relativists attitudes towards IR, mainly in the social constructivist framework.²²

Moreover, Czech foreign policy scholarship suffers from a lack of studies providing a complex analysis of policy. Studies mostly cover only partial issues, a shortcoming Kořan pointed out back in 2009,²³ but still has not been overcome.

On the other hand, concerning the data on the Czech foreign policy, the situation is satisfying. Despite the Czech Republic having limited experience with think tanks culture and their number being rather small, they provide a quantum of policy papers and quality analysis that provides scholars with data on current Czech foreign policy development. It applies especially to the Institute of International Relations, which publishes every year a book on the development of Czech foreign policy, and the Association for International Affairs, which produces policy papers on current topics on regular basis.

1.3 Theoretical framework

The decision on the sanctions falls within the foreign policy of the Czech Republic. Using Christopher Hill's definition "foreign policy is a set of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations."²⁴ Therefore, in order to arrive at understanding of the decision of the decision of the Czech Republic on the sanctions, we need to answer a few questions. Considering that a decision on a sanction adoption is a demonstration of external relations, who represents the independent actor? And why the actor decided to make the decision in this way and not the other? To answer the questions, we need to look under the surface of the state as an actor. Therefore, it is impossible

²¹ DRULÁK, Petr. Úvod [Introduction] in: DRULÁK, Petr, HORKÝ, Ondřej et al. *Hledání českých zájmů. Obchod, lidský práva a mezinárodní rozvoj*. Prague: IIR, 2010, p. 12.

²² For example, in DRULÁK, Petr, HORKÝ, Ondřej et al. *Hledání českých zájmů. Obchod, lidský práva a mezinárodní rozvoj*; WAISOVÁ, Šárka. *The Burden of Choice. Czech Foreign Policy between Principles and Interests*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2012; KOŘAN, Michael (ed.) *Aktéři a Tvorba České Zahraniční Politiky*. [Actors and Czech Foreign Policy Making]. Brno: Centrum pro Studium Demokracie a Kultury and Masaryk University, 2016.

²³ KOŘAN, Michal et al. (eds.). *Česká zahraniční politika v zrcadle sociálně-vědního výzkumu*. [Czech Foreign Policy in social science research]. Brno: Centrum pro Studium Demokracie a Kultury and Masaryk University, 2016, p. 13.

²⁴ HILL, Christopher. *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 3.

to consider the Czech Republic as a unitary actor, a black box which produces decisions based on certain logic given by external situation as is common in rationalist scholarship.²⁵

Therefore, the author wants to build on Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), a subfield of International Relations (IR), which focus on a process of decision making and various actors involved in it, and Social Constructivism. Wendt²⁶ argues that Social Constructivism works well together with FPA, which started with the work of Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin²⁷ that showed a possibility of the two to work together as they focused on “how policy makers perceive their operating environment, how particular situations are structure, what values and norms are applicable to certain kinds of issue, what problems are selected for attention, and how past experience influences on their responses.”²⁸ Thus, FPA and Social Constructivism combined provide a framework and approach that enable us to create a multidimensional picture and understand the issue.

Constructivists build on sociological premise that reality is socially constructed.²⁹ A socially constructed world means that it is what we understand it to be. The perception is a crucial element, which affects how states response to the development around them as states are considered main actors in the international arena.³⁰³¹

Dimension of social construction applies not only to the system, but to the other actors themselves as well, which is a key feature of constructivism. One factor can be perceived differently by different actors as well as one actor can be perceived differently by different actors. A perception of others influences our attitude towards them. The way actors interact with their counterparts reflects how they perceive them.³² Therefore, enemies are treated as

²⁵ HUDSON, Valerie M. Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Touchstone for International Relations Theory in the Twenty First century. In: SNYDER, Richard, H. W. BRUCK and Burton SAPIN (eds). *Foreign Policy Decision Making (Revisited)*. London: Palgrave Macmillon, 2002, p. 2.

²⁶ WENDT, Alexander. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 3.

²⁷ SNYDER, Richard, H. W. BRUCK and Burton SAPIN (eds). *Foreign Policy Decision Making*.

²⁸ WICAKSANA, Wahyu. The Constructivist Approach Towards Foreign Policy Analysis. *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol. 1, No. 1, 2009.

²⁹ BERGER, Peter L. and Thomas LUCKMANN. *The Social Construction of Reality. A treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966.

³⁰ SULLIVAN, M. P. *Theories of International Relations: Transition vs. Persistence*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

³¹ However, there are other actors who can exercise influence such as “states’ agencies, social community, international organisations, think tanks etc. WEBER, Max. Constructivism and Critical Theory. In: DEVETAK, Richard, BURKE, Anthony and Jim GEORGE (eds). *An Introduction to International Relations: Australian Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007 cited in: WICAKSANA, The Constructivist Approach Towards Foreign Policy Analysis, p. 5.

³² WENDT, Alexander. Anarchy is what States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics. *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 396-397; Berger and Luckman state that it is built on

enemies, as a threat, and friends are treated like friends. At the same time, a perception is not disconnected from a reality which is perceived. An enemy with a strong military and economic power is likely to be perceived as a bigger threat than if it had a half of the sources, the USSR became a more serious threat for the USA once it got nuclear weapons.

The salience of perception applies to an actor itself as well. Its attitudes are constructed in coherence with how it sees itself, its possibilities, its rights, and its interests. It determines how it deals with the world or what instruments it finds appropriate to use. Thus, the perception of the world co-creates a “navigation map” of an actor in current affairs; it helps “to make sense” of the world/actors around;³³ and the perception of Self sets the way how interactions are carried out.

Moreover, the world of international relations itself is “under constant construction.”³⁴ The situation and its perception can change with time as well as the actors themselves, they can evolve. Alexander Wendt in his famous article from 1992 shares the realist understanding of the international system being anarchic.³⁵ However, he argues that the anarchy is also socially constructed; therefore, created and re-created by the actors within the system.

Constructivists demonstrated that it is not only material, but also ideational factors that matter in a state decision-making³⁶ and; therefore, can shape or change a perception of reality. When discussing foreign policy, it is not determined solely by material interests and a cold calculation of costs and benefits to a country.³⁷ Interests are also socially constructed.³⁸ They are not given and constant as rationalists argue³⁹ and it matters how interests are perceived. Constructivists argue that besides interests, it is norms, culture, or identities that shape

the idea came from Weber’s understanding of subjective meanings of things. BERGER, Peter and Thomas LUCKMAN. *The Social Construction of Reality. A treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. England: Penguin Book, 1966, p. 29.

³³ HOPF, Ted. *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*. Cornell University Press, 2002, pp. 4-5.

³⁴ FLOCKHART, Trine. Constructivism and Foreign Policy in: SMITH, Steve, HADFIELD, Amelia, and Tim DUNNE (eds). *Foreign Policy. Theories, Actors, Cases*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, c2012, p. 82.

³⁵ WENDT, Alexander. Anarchy is what States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics. *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 391-425.

³⁶ JEPPEPERSON, Ronald, WENDT, Alexander, and Peter J. KATZENSTEIN. Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security in: KATZENSTEIN, Peter (ed.). *Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. New York: Colombia University Press, 1996, pp. 33-75.

³⁷ FLOCKHART, Trine. Constructivism and Foreign Policy in: SMITH, HADFIELD, DUNNE. *Foreign Policy. Theories, Actors, Cases*, p. 85.

³⁸ DUNNE, Tim, KURKI, Milja and Steve SMITH (eds.). *International relations Theories. Discipline and Diversity*. 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 188.

³⁹ WENDT. Anarchy is what States Make of It, pp. 391-392.

behaviour of international actors.⁴⁰ Norms and values of an actor are involved when interests are defined.⁴¹ And it is “cultural features of domestic and international environments” that have an impact on state policies.⁴² An important aspect of it is also a “world political culture” which includes elements such as rules of sovereignty and international law.⁴³

In this thesis, the author attempts to improve the understanding of the Czech decision on the adoption of the sanctions against RF over Ukraine using a concept of an identity, the concept which will be further developed below. The author considers identity a key feature in understanding the issue and the process with which the decision was reached. The author considers a variety of features (historical, cultural, political, and social) which influenced development of a Czech identity.

Therefore, to sum up, building on the constructivist scholarship, the author wants to argue that identity can be used as a variable when trying to enhance the understanding of the decision of the Czech Republic to support and continue in implementing the sanctions. However, the author also builds on Foreign Policy Analysis and its focus on the agent and a reconstruction of the process of decision-making as it enables the author to demonstrate clearly the presence and impact of the identity.

1.4 Methodology

In the research, the author uses qualitative methods. The author decided to present a discipline interpretive case study applying a constructivist approach in an attempt to provide a better understanding of the Czech Republic’s decision to adopt and further support implementation of the EU sanctions against RF over Ukraine considering the discrepancy between rhetoric of certain political actors and the commitment of the Czech Republic to the measures. The author argues that the key to the understanding lies in the Czech foreign policy identity. Therefore, the dependent variable is the identity.

The author combines various methods in order to gather enough data for the research. The author chooses to use qualitative methods such as narrative analysis, elite interviewing, and historical analysis. The methods were chosen to complement the incomplete picture which secondary literature provides. These methods of qualitative research enabled the author to acquire the data needed to analyse the issue profoundly.

⁴⁰ JEPPELSON, WENDT, KATZENSTEIN. Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security, pp. 33-75.

⁴¹ SCHIMMELFENNIG, Frank. *The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe. Rules and Rhetoric*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 69.

⁴² JEPPELSON, WENDT, KATZENSTEIN. Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security, pp. 33-75.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

Documents and statements of EU institutions and their representatives and Czech institutions and their representatives issued since the outbreak of Ukrainian crisis, especially those concerning the EU sanctions against RF, were used as the basis for the narrative analysis. It enables the author to analyse the reasoning different actors used and thus identify the cleavage/coherence in the understanding and presentation of the issue to the public.

The methods the author used to answer her questions is narrative analysis as Bryman states, it helps us asses “How people make sense of what happened?”⁴⁴ The objective of the method is to attempt to identify and reconstruct links between events and context in which they took place.⁴⁵ Furthermore, it provide the perception and understanding of the subject (interviewees, author of a document) of a certain event or phenomenon. Berger defines narrative as a type of a story/narration describing things that happened or are happening.⁴⁶ It consist of a list of events, actor, and environment present at the time of event and the ways how these are described. To put it simply, it shows what is described and how it is described.⁴⁷

Riessman distinguishes four different types of narrative analysis – thematic, structural, interactional, and performative.⁴⁸ The author chooses to conduct thematic analysis⁴⁹ which focuses on what is said in the documents and interviews

Information acquired using narrative analysis where completed by data from elite interviews. They were treated as a source of two types of information. Firstly, to fill factual gaps about the issue with information which are not publicly accessible. Secondly, to provide the interviewees’ perception of the issue; thus, enable the author to attempt to construct an elite narrative of the issue.

Elite interviews are useful in providing an opportunity “to gather individual perception or evaluation of the respondent in relation to certain phenomenon.”⁵⁰ It enables scholars to acquire information they could hardly get from other sources. It helps to uncover motivations

⁴⁴ BRYMAN, Alan. *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 582.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ BERGER, Arthur. *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media and Everyday Life*. London: Sage, 1997 cited in: ŠEĎOVÁ, Klára. *Humor ve škole* [Humour in School]. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2013, p. 55.

⁴⁷ CHATMAN, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 17-20.

⁴⁸ RIESSMAN, Catherine. *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008 cited in: ŠEĎOVÁ, *Humor ve škole*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2013, p. 59.

⁴⁹ In Chatman’s typology, this type is a study of a story. CHATMAN., *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*.

⁵⁰ KANIOK, Petr and Petra KUCHYŇKOVÁ. Jak zkoumat koalice v Radě EU? Analýza výzkumných přístupů ke koaličnímu chování v Radě EU. [How can we research coalitions in the Council of the EU? Analysis of research approaches to coalition formation in the Council of the EU]. *Central European Political Studies Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2013, p. 239.

and ideas of actors that were involved in the process of, in this case, taking the inquired decision.⁵¹ However, there are issues related to this method. The information provided by the interviewees are affected by the respondents' subjective perception of the event and their understanding of it.⁵² Furthermore, as in this case, the author deals with an event which took place six years ago, not all interviewees did recollect the events clearly. These issues were considered when the data were analysed.

The elite interviews were in a form of semi-structure qualitative interviews where an author had a list of prepared questions which were completed by additional questions which emerged during the course of the interviews. The author conducted twelve elite interviews in Czech and English with fourteen people. The interviewees were Czech politicians, former and current Czech officials from Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Industry and Trade, and Ministry of Finance, and officials of European Institutions, precisely from the European Parliament and European External Action Service. All the interviewees were or are involved in the process of the decision-making and implementation of the decision the sanctions and monitoring of their implementation. The interviews took place in March and April 2019 in Prague, the Czech Republic, and in Brussels, Belgium. The interviews provided the author with information about the sanctions, EU and Czech foreign policy making which are not public and their interviewees' perception.

To have the puzzle complete, in order to trace the roots and construct Czech foreign policy identity, the author uses historical analysis. Basis for the analysis are primary as well as secondary sources about Czech foreign policy and its main actors since the end of the 19th century. Secondary literature in Czech and English was used in the historical analysis. There has been a discussion among scholars whether political scientist should conduct their own archival research⁵³ as relying on secondary research brings always a danger of other scholar's bias. The author argues that archival research is not necessary in this case; however, it completes the analysis by including published primary sources and using secondary literature of numerous sources in order to minimise possible bias.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² Ibidem, p. 240.

⁵³ LEVY, Jack S. Explaining Events and Developing Theories: History, Political Science and the Analysis of International Relations in: ELMAN, Miriam F. and Colin ELMAN (eds.). *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientist, and the Study of International Relations*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, pp. 39-83 and LARSON, Deborah. Sources and Methods in Cold War History: The Need for a New Theory-Based Archival Approach in: ELMAN, ELMAN. *Bridges and Boundaries*, pp. 327-350 quoted in: THIES, Cameron. A Pragmatic Guide to a Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations. *International Studies Perspective*. Vol. 3, 2002, p. 358.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. First the author introduces development of identity as a variable in analysis of foreign policy. Subsequently, the Czech foreign policy identity is developed. Then, an overview of different narrative on Czech foreign policy and specifically on the decision on the sanctions is provided. Afterwards, it is demonstrated how the identity became dominant in Czech foreign policy decision-making at the time the sanctions were adopted. It is concluded that the analysis with providing certain background factors that enable the readers to understand, why the identity became dominant.

2. Analysis

Applying knowledge provided by the social constructivist and FPA scholarship, the author argues that a key to understanding the decision is the identity of people (politicians and officials) involved in foreign policy making when the decision was taken. For this identity to be able to become dominant, the circumstances of the decision were crucial as the identity provides understanding of those circumstances.

In the following section, the author presents the understanding of identity, the development of the aforementioned identity in Czechoslovak (Czech) society, and the circumstances that enabled it to act as a major influence at the moment when the decision under scrutiny was taken. To name but a few, these circumstances are political elites in the government, executivisation of Czech foreign policy, relations between the Czech Republic and Russia, and the character of measures, which were taken. The circumstances were important especially because the decision was sensitive and the identity is not the only relevant one; therefore, it was easier for such decision to be adopted if the counter-factors are minimized or favourable.

2.1 Identity in foreign policy

Identities altogether with other ideational phenomena impact behaviour of states.⁵⁴ Identities of actors are believed to be relatively stable; however, some argue that in certain situation or when effort is put in, even identities can change or at least evolve.⁵⁵ “Constructivists acknowledge the importance of the historical, cultural, political, and social context of the agents in question,”⁵⁶ which are factors that shape identities.

An identity is composed of actor’s perception of the world around, but also of an actor itself. Self-perception is important as certain actions are perceived to be allowed for actors of only certain type.⁵⁷ This is considered a behaviour according to logic of appropriateness, which for some stands in opposition to logic of consequence which is stressed by scholars pursuing realist view of the world. However, March and Olsen argue that states can take into account

⁵⁴ JEPPELSON, WENDT, KATZENSTEIN. Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security, pp. 33-75.

⁵⁵ This covers the example of Germany or Japan after the Second World War or Central and Eastern European states after the end of Cold War. FLOCKHART, Constructivism and Foreign Policy in: DUNNE, KURKI, SMITH (eds.). *International relations Theories. Discipline and Diversity*, p. 84.

⁵⁶ FLOCKHART, Constructivism and Foreign Policy, p. 85.

⁵⁷ For example, when a state considers itself a small state, it would act accordingly to its idea of what a small state can and should do. BREUNING, Marijke. *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative, Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 30.

both, logic of consequence and logic of appropriateness.⁵⁸ The appropriateness concerns not only decision-making in practical issues of foreign policy, but ethical ones as well.⁵⁹

Constructivists use a number of ideational factors such as norms, values, culture, and rules as well as identity as an (in)dependent variable that can and has already been used to explain the foreign policy decisions and struggles of for example Poland or Germany.⁶⁰ Drulák points out that identity as a concept applied to increase understanding of state behaviour was already debated in 1950s and 1960s by Karl Deutsch and Erast Haas but then put aside by rationalist approaches.⁶¹ The situation has changed since 1980s, which in fact reflected a return of a national identity to the social science in general.⁶²

For the purpose of this study, an identity is considered a phenomenon built on ideas. Those are defined as “the concepts and beliefs that derive from actor’s interpretation of history and provide them with a framework that specifies “proper” (and “improper”) behaviour vis-à-vis other actors in the system.”⁶³ “Idea provides agents with both a “scientific” and a “normative” account” of reality.⁶⁴ Therefore, ideas upon which an identity is build provide an actor with directions. The ideas also include “cultural or institutional elements of states’ environment”, which are among others represented by norms.⁶⁵ Identity as a set of ideas then creates a navigation system, which help an actor understand its surroundings, to examine available options, and come to a conclusion on a suitable solution. As Moscovici argues “identities are the causes of choices and reactions to others.”⁶⁶ The ideas provide an actor with an interpretation of the past, they indicate preferences for certain types of decisions or values in dealing with the outside world.

⁵⁸ MARCH, James G. And Johan P. OLSEN. *The Logic of Appropriateness*. ARENA Working Papers WP 04/09. University of Oslo, 2004, pp. 20-23.

⁵⁹ REUS-SMIT, Christian. *Constructivism in: Theories of International Relations*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 215-216.

⁶⁰ DUFFIELD, John S. *World Power Forsaken: Political Culture, International Institution, and German Security Policy after Unification*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998; GORSKA, Joanna. *Dealing with a Juggernaut: Analysing Poland’s Policy toward Russia, 1989-2009*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010.

⁶¹ DRULÁK, Petr. Introduction: The Return of Identity to European Politics in: DRULÁK, Petr (ed.) *National and European Identities in EU Enlargement. Views from Central and Eastern Europe*. Prague: Institute of International Relations, 2001, p. 11.

⁶² DRULÁK, Introduction: The Return of Identity to European Politics, p. 12.

⁶³ BLYTH, Mark. *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieths Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 11.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

⁶⁵ JEPPEPERSON, WENDT, KATZENSTEIN. Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security, pp. 33-75.

⁶⁶ MOSCOVICI, Phenomenon of Social Representation in: DUVEEN, Gerard (ed.). *Social Representations. Explorations in Social Psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000, pp. 7-8. cited in: HOPF, Ted. *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*. Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 6.

As implied above, the ideas and identity develop with time.⁶⁷ Social constructivism borrows in this from social psychology. In social psychology the process of establishing and reassessing self-perception in current reality is called socialization.⁶⁸ Through this process, actors learn how to react, what action patterns are appropriate within its current reality etc.

Berger further adds that “self and society are inextricably interwoven entities.” Thus, applying this to international relations, we can imply that international actors (a state in the case of this study) build their ideas and identity based on experience with its interactions with the structure,⁶⁹ which in this case means other international actors such as states or organisations.

However, an actor is not restricted to having only one identity. Berger argues that “every society contains a repertoire of identities.”⁷⁰ Taken into the Czech context, we could find a variety of identities within Czech society, but also within each individual involved in the decision-making process. In this case study, the author only focuses on one of identities detectable in Czech society in relation to Czech foreign policy. In author’s opinion this particular identity is crucial for understanding of decision of the Czech Republic to adopt and keep implementing the sanctions.

This identity is based on ideas and values which have been enshrined in the Czech and Czechoslovak foreign policy for a century. It is an identity of a community held by individuals and shaped not only by a collective Self but also by individuals, who are perceived as important and influential. As the number of individuals involved in the Czech Republic’s decision making is relative to the country’s size, individual people who hold the identity are crucial, as when in certain positions, they enable the identity to influence the state’s behaviour. Selected personalities, who are presented below, and their personal experience were crucial for the development of the identity.

⁶⁷ BERGER, Peter. Identity as a Problem in the Sociology of Knowledge. *European Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 7, No. 1, 1966, p. 106.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, 107.

⁶⁹ WENDT, Anarchy is what states make of it, p. 391.

⁷⁰ BERGER, Identity as a Problem in the Sociology of Knowledge, p. 107. See also HOPF, *Social Construction of International Politics*.

2.2 Development of Czech(oslovak) idealistic identity

Majority of texts on Czech identity are essays by prominent intellectuals dealing with the identity of the entire Czech nation.⁷¹ However, when it comes to academic texts, the results are rather limited to identities of minorities such as a volumes by Nosková, where the authors deal with Jewish or Roma identity,⁷² or Hlaváč, whose focus is on the identity of people who fled Czechoslovakia after 1968.⁷³ The identity as a variable in Czech foreign policy thus remained a highly under-researched area with a few exceptions, mostly in relation to the Czech accession to the EU.⁷⁴

The identity which the author identifies as dominant when the decision on the sanctions was taken is the elite idealistic (foreign policy) identity.⁷⁵ It is an identity built on legacy of influential personalities. It is idealistic because it is an identity with a moralistic accent, which stress the salience of international norms, international cooperation, and human rights.⁷⁶ It is

⁷¹ For example: HAHNOVÁ, Hana. *Češi o Čechách. Dnešní spory o dějiny* [Czech about Czechs. Current arguments about history]. Prague: Academia, 2018; HVÍŽDALA, Karel. *Hledání dějin: o české státnosti a identitě: 883-1918-2018: rozhovor* [Searching for history? About Czech statehood and identity: 883-1918-2018: interview]. Prague: Charles University, Karolinum, 2018; BEDNÁŘ, Miloslav. *Smysl české existence: česká státní idea a Masarykova česká otázka dějiny* [Meaning of Czech Existence: Czech state idea and Masaryk's Czech Question]. Prague: Academia, 2018; RUPNIK, Jacques. *Střední Evropa je jako pták s očima vzadu: o české minulosti a přítomnosti dějiny* [Central Europe Is Like a Bird With Eyes at the Back of Its Head: about Czech History and Presence]. Prague: Novela bohemia, 2018; PATOČKA, Jan. *Co jsou Češi? dějiny* [What are Czechs?]. Riga: Latvijas Universitāte, 2016; HAVEL, Václav. *Česká a evropská identity dějiny* [Czech and European Identity]. Prague: Václav Havel Library, 2013.

⁷² NOSKOVÁ, Helena, BEDNÁŘÍK, Petr et al (eds.). *National minorities, identity, education: collective monograph*. Prague: institute of Contemporary History of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, 2011.

⁷³ HLAVÁČ, Ondřej. *Exil a identita: Komparace českého exilu v Rakousku a Švýcarsku po roce 1968 dějiny* [Exile and identity: A comparison of the Czech exile in Austria and Switzerland after 1968], PhD dissertation, 2018.

⁷⁴ DRULÁK, Petr (ed.) *National and European Identities in EU Enlargement. Views from Central and Eastern Europe*. Prague: Institute of International Relations, 2001; FAWN, Rick. Reconstituting a National Identity: Ideologies in Czech Foreign Policy after the Split. *Journal of communist studies and transition politics*, Vol.19, No. 3, September 2003, pp. 204-228; VLACHOVÁ, Klára and Blanka ŘEHÁKOVÁ. Identity of non-self-evident nation: Czech national identity after the break-up of Czechoslovakia and before accession to the European Union. *Nation and Nationalism*. Vol 15, No. 2, 2009, pp. 254-279; WEISS, Tomáš. Projecting the Re-Discovered: Czech Policy Towards Eastern Europe. *Review of Central European Affairs*. Vol. 19, No. 2, 2011, pp. 27-44.

⁷⁵In his opinion, there are two Czech foreign policy identities. One shaped by Václav Havel, the other by V8clav Klaus. The idealistic identity shares features with the Havel's identity. FAWN, Rick. Reconstituting a National Identity: Ideologies in Czech Foreign Policy after the Split. *Journal of communist studies and transition politics*, Vol.19, No. 3, September 2003, pp. 204-228.

⁷⁶ POMORSKA, Karolina. Foreign Policies of Eastern EU States in: HADFIELD, Amelia, MANNERS, Ian, and Richard WHITMAN (eds.). *Foreign Policies of EU Member States*. London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 51-65, p. 55. KOŘAN, Michal. *Česká zahraniční politika*, p. 22; RACZ, Andras. The Visegrad Cooperation: Central Europe Divided Over Russia. *L'Europe en Formation*, vol. 374, no. 4, 2014, p. 66.

elite because it is not held by the nation as whole, but the author argues it is significantly spread among the elite who influences the foreign policy making in the Czech Republic.

It is accompanied by the perception of Czech Republic Self as a rather small actor,⁷⁷ which affects the choice of tools it is willing to use, but also strives for being accepted and perceive as an integral part of the West. It is accompanied by an anti-Russian narrative or at least Russia awareness, which represent the “Other” of the identity.⁷⁸ The identity traits draw upon historical experience of Czechoslovakia.

The ideas and values which constitute the identity were introduced and further developed by prominent personalities who were involved in politics and were trusted by the population. Among those people are the first Czechoslovak President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (TGM), Václav Havel, and their collaborators. Neumann also includes Šimon Pánek, director of the People in Needs and former student protest leader, whose comments of foreign policy are influential when Czech foreign policy is considered.⁷⁹ The constitutive values include universalism, internationalism, humanity, legalism, and moralism.

The changes that occurred in 1989 in Czechoslovakia began the transformation of the country from a vassal of the Soviet Union to an independent country with its own foreign policy. It was a critical juncture for Czechoslovak foreign policy. The juncture, as Šedivý points out, made it possible for the Czech Republic to return back to the foundations of the Czechoslovak foreign policy laid down in the times of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938) on the ideas of then President TGM.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Havlíček and Tyhynna even speak about tendencies to „self-marginalisation“. HAVLÍČEK, Pavel and Lyudyla TYSYACHNA. *Jak dál? Otázky a odpovědi k české zahraniční politice vůči východní Evropě* [What is Next? Questions and Answers about Czech Foreign Policy towards Eastern Europe]. Prague: AMO, 2016, p. 7.

⁷⁸ KRATOCHVÍL, CIBULKOVÁ BENEŠ. Foreign policy, Rhetorical Action and the Idea of Otherness.

⁷⁹ NEUMANN, Marek. *Too Small to Make An Impact? The Czech Republic's Influence on the European Union's Foreign Policy*. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang Edition, 2015, p.7. The People in Need are an NGO which among others provides humanitarian aid. Human dignity is one of their core values. Their activities are not only concentrated in Europe, but on other continents. For their knowledge of local issues and expertise on different parts of the world, they are sometimes invited to cooperate with Czech policy makers.

⁸⁰ ŠEDIVÝ, Jiří. From Dreaming to Realism - Czechoslovak Security Policy since 1989. *Perspectives*, no. 4, 1994, p. 63. The same argument used by KOŘAN, Michael. Politický Kontext Tvorby České Zahraniční Politiky [Political Context of Czech Foreign Policy Making] in: KOŘAN, Michael (ed.) *Aktéři a Tvorba České Zahraniční Politiky*. [Actors and Czech Foreign Policy Making]. Brno: Centrum pro Studium Demokracie a Kultury and Masaryk University, 2016, p. 13.

2.2.1 Personalities that shaped the identity

TGM has a prominent place in Czech politics. His legacy is respected, and his ideas taken as relevant. He is often perceived fairly uncritically.⁸¹ His ideas are used until this day in (foreign) policy debates as a tool to legitimize one's arguments.⁸²

Before he entered politics, TGM had been a university professor and a sociologist. He preferred universalist ideas in his approach to politics and understanding of it. He explicitly distanced himself from Bismarck's realpolitik and criticised Machiavelli's approach to politics as features of the "old regime".⁸³ For Masaryk, democracy and humanity were two interconnected concepts.⁸⁴ Humanity was a concept he understood as a combination of mutuality, universalism, and internationalism.⁸⁵ Based on these elements, in foreign policy he preferred cooperation to competition and advocated for moralism⁸⁶ as well as legalism,⁸⁷ and humanity.⁸⁸ Thus, according to him, politics were to be based on cooperation and, rule of law,

⁸¹ One of the occasions when a discussion about his legacy and an image of a flawless icon was opened occurred when love letters he wrote to his love interest Oldra Sedlmayerová after the death of his wife Charlotte Masaryk were published in 2017. ŠRÁFELDOVÁ, Milena TGM nebyl jen uctíváný idol [TGM was not only a praised icon]. *Radio*. 28 October 2017; Masaryk Institute, an institution set up to study and publish Masaryk's writings, was hesitant to publish the documents earlier in order to protect Masaryk's legacy. SLOMEK, Jaromír. Tomáš, Olda a Petr. Tyden. 29 September 2017.

⁸² SLAČÁLEK, Ondřej. Boj o národ. Obrazy Mnichova ve sporech o českou zahraniční politiku [Fight for the Nation. Images of Munich in Disputes over Czech Foreign Policy]. *Mezinárodní vztahy*. No. 4, 2010, p. 58.

⁸³ MASARYK, Tomáš Garrigue. *Světová revoluce* [World Revolution]. 1st ed. In MKP. Prague: MKP, 2013, p. 43, 387, 520. Masaryk's ideas are present until these days as he is still one of the most popular historical figures. He placed 2nd in the Greatest Czech show. His popularity is stable in regular polls by the Academy of Science. TGM has placed among the three most popular and positively perceived people in Czech history in the polls done after the Velvet Revolution, but also before in 1946 and 1968; therefore, it shows his popularity has been stable for generations. ŠUBRT, Jiří, VINOPAL, Jiří et al. *Historické vědomí obyvatel České republiky perspektivou sociologického výzkumu*. [Historical perception of Czech citizens in sociological research]. Prague: Charles University, 2013, pp. 115-116.

⁸⁴ MASARYK, Světová revoluce, p. 555.

⁸⁵ ČAPEK, Karel. *Hovory s TGM*. 2nd corrected edition in MKP. Prague: MKP, 2018, p. 263; ŠEDIVÝ, From Dreaming to Realism, p. 63.

⁸⁶ Masaryk's moralism was based on the importance of presence of Christian values in society with a strong emphasis on personal moral responsibility of each individual/politician. MASARYK, Tomáš. *Sebevražda hromadným jevem společenským moderní osvěty*, 1881, p. 90; MASARYK, Tomáš. *Ideály humanitní*, Praha: Melantrich, 1990, p. 45.

⁸⁷ Legalism as a respect to rules/rule of law on the international level and necessity of cooperation between states, ideally in a form of international organization (like the League of Nations). MASARYK, Tomáš. *Světová revoluce za války a ve válce 1914-1918* [World Revolution during the war and in the war 1914-1918] Praha, 1952, p. 389; In TGM understanding legalism was not a strict merciless adherence to the letter of the law. He understood law a part of justice as well as humanity. MASARYK, Tomáš. *Poselství prezidentovo k Národnímu shromáždění ze dne 22. prosince 2018* [Message of the President to the National Assembly from 22 December 1918]. *Parliament of the Czech Republic*.

⁸⁸ Ibidem.

which is respected by all and applicable to all with an importance of the respect to people's dignity. We can identify these features in today's understanding of human rights.

It is possible to see these ideas in Czechoslovak foreign policy in the interwar period. TGM articulated ideas which resonated with and were put into practice by Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš.⁸⁹ He advocated for and enthusiastically attempted to promote a universal approach to foreign policy and security based on international cooperation and respect to international law.⁹⁰ His opinions were formalized during his years of university studies, which he dedicated to studying politics, philosophy, and sociology. During his student years, he grew fond of France where he spent several years during the First World War advocating for the Czech (Czechoslovak) case and where he met his wife. He perceived France as a successful example worth following, which determined his foreign policy thinking and decisions after the Great War.

We can also detect similar features on the new Czechoslovak foreign policy actors after Velvet revolution. President Václav Havel and Minister for Foreign Affairs Jiří Dienstbier expressed views that were similar to those of Masaryk.⁹¹ It can be argued that their steps especially those taken during their first two years in the office were in line with Masaryk's ideas. While trying to free the country from the influence of the Soviet Union, they tried to rebuild or create new common institutions for dialogue which would also contribute to the security in Europe. In their plan, a European Security Commission would be setup up alongside with NATO and WTO as a pan-European security treaty and the Council of Europe should have become the institution of a new system of European Security. Again, it would be the system all countries would participate in (TGM ideas of mutuality, internationality, and universalism) and the respect of its rules would be required (legalism).

Like various other Czech politicians who were active in the 1990s, the two men originally members of the Czechoslovak dissent movement.⁹² During the era of communist regime, they faced oppression and abuse of power and they saw how it can negatively influence people's lives. This experience had a profound impact on their perception of politics and life in

⁸⁹ Edvard Beneš was the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1918 until 1935 when he became the President.

⁹⁰ Besides the alliance with France, the main pillars of his foreign policy (and therefore Czechoslovak foreign policy since he occupied the post of foreign minister from 1918 until 1935) was the Little Entente and the League of Nations. MARÈS, Antoine. *Edvard Beneš od slávy k propasti. Drama mezi Hitlerem a Stalinem* [Edvard Beneš from fame to the abyss: drama between Hitler and Stalin]. Prague: Argo, 2015, p. 129.

⁹¹ ŠEDIVÝ, From Dreaming to Realism, p. 63.

⁹² Close collaborators of the two, especially of President Havel are still active in politics and keep those ideas alive.

general.⁹³ This aspect is one of the key characteristics of Czech foreign policy after 1989.⁹⁴ The dissent heritage, and more precisely Havel's heritage was evident even after Václav Havel left its presidential position through his former associates like Alexander Vondra or Karel Schwarzenberg.⁹⁵

Such foreign policy was considered „ambitious and idealist“ and „reflected the idealistic (and moralistic) orientations and beliefs of Havel and the other former dissidents who were the major foreign policy decision-makers at that time.⁹⁶ However, Drulák argues that “dissent reduced the [Czechoslovak Communist – AF] regime crisis on its moral aspect only.”⁹⁷ At the same time, there were other proposals on how to deal with the situation, which later led to a development of a division among Czech political elites concerning Czech foreign policy.

The activities in the field of foreign policy were muted by the split of Czechoslovakia. It was the peaceful split that kept Czech political elites occupied during the second half of 1992. After the Czech Republic and Slovakia were separated on 1st January 1993, the Czech ministry for foreign affairs and its apparatus was busy with establishing and introducing the new state in the international community.⁹⁸ However, as mentioned above, the idealistic, humanistic, and universalistic approach and understanding of foreign policy was not the only one present in Czech political scene.

With Václav Klaus becoming a Prime Minister, a different approach to Czech foreign policy was adapted. ODS in general gave preference to “unilateralism, bilateralism and a generally more narrow and pessimistic foreign policy approach”.⁹⁹ It was reflected in worsening

⁹³ HAVEL, Václav. *Moc bezmocných* [Power of Powerless]. Brno: SV FF UJEP, 1989.

⁹⁴ WAISOVÁ, Šárka. *The Burden of Choice. Czech Foreign Policy between Principles and Interests*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2012.

⁹⁵ WEISS, Tomáš. Building leverage at the EU level? Specialisation and coherence in Czech policy on Eastern European transition. *Journal of International Relations and Development*. 2018, 21, pp. 177. Alexandr Vondra was a Czech minister for foreign affairs (2006-2007, minister for European Affairs (2007-2009), minister for defence (2010-2012), he is a member of ODS. He is still actively commenting politics and being invited to give opinion on foreign policy matters. Karel Schwarzenberg was a minister for foreign affairs between 2007 and 2009 and 2010 and 2013. He was the Chairman of TOP09 from 2009 until 2015. He was elected a MEP in May 2019.

⁹⁶ ŠEDIVÝ, Jiří. From Dreaming to Realism -Czechoslovak Security Policy since 1989. *Perspectives*, no. 4, 1994, p. 63; WALLAT, Josefina. Czechoslovak/Czech Foreign and Security Policy 1989-1999. *Perspectives*. No. 17, Winter 2001/2002, pp. 14-29, pp. 17-18; BAUN, Michael and Dan MAREK. Czech Foreign Policy and EU Integration: European and Domestic Sources. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 1, April 2010, p. 4.

⁹⁷ DRULÁK, Petr. *Politika nezájmu. Česko a Západ v krizi* [Policy of Indifference. Czechia and the West in crisis]. Prague: SLON, 2012, p 252.

⁹⁸ ŠEDIVÝ, Jiří. From Dreaming to Realism, p. 68.

⁹⁹ ŠEDIVÝ, Jiří. From Dreaming to Realism, pp. 67-69; WALLAT, Czechoslovak/Czech Foreign and Security Policy 1989-1999, p. 20.

of relations with Czech neighbours¹⁰⁰ and set up of CEFTA. Generally, a group around Klaus who used to work in the Prognostický ústav developed an attitude where a preference was put on economic side of relations with other states.¹⁰¹

The then President Václav Havel tried to compensate for the deteriorated relations with neighbour countries by introducing informal discussions in Litomyšl¹⁰²; nevertheless, it did not produce any significant outcome.¹⁰³ However, it was one of the cases when Czech president, despite being only a ceremonial figure according to the law, tried to play his foreign policy cards. A noticeable president's involvement in the foreign policy area, which can be in some cases interpreted as disproportionate and exceeding the powers given to the post by law, is one of the characteristic features of Czech foreign policy. It would be possible to trace the roots of such attitudes back to the times of the First Czechoslovak Republic, a period which is held with great respect within the population, where President kept his influence over Czechoslovak politics through so called "Castle" group. It consisted of representatives of large political parties, but also public figures and influential businessmen etc., who carried out interventions which they perceived as needed. "These undemocratic interventions helped in stabilisation of Czechoslovak democracy."¹⁰⁴ Therefore, President getting involved in politics above the scope outlined by the law is not unusual in Czech politics.

Klaus eventually concentrated his focus on fulfilling the accession criteria for membership in NATO and EU. "In practice, this meant: improving relations with the country's immediate neighbours, because good neighbourly relations are one of the Copenhagen criteria for the EU membership; alignment with the EU foreign policy declarations; and contribution to NATO crisis management missions."¹⁰⁵ It also meant improving relations with neighbours, especially Germany and Austria over issues from the past but in the Austrian case also over Czech usage of nuclear energy, which was forbidden by a referendum in Austria in 1978.¹⁰⁶

With a new socialist government established by Miloš Zeman in 1998, a chairman of Czech Social Democratic Party, there was a return in Czech foreign policy towards more

¹⁰⁰ BAUN, MAREK. Czech Foreign Policy, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ DRULÁK, *Politika nezájmu*, p. 252-253.

¹⁰² In April 1994, Havel met with presidents of Central European countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Austria, Slovenia, and Germany). „Meetings of the presidents later became a regular tradition.“ The Litomyšl Circle. [online]. *Václav Havel Library*. Available at: <https://www.vaclavhavel.cz/en/index/calendar/572/the-litomysl-circle>. Accessed on 17 May 2019.

¹⁰³ RHODES, Matthew. Post-Visegrad cooperation in East-Central Europe. *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1999, pp. 52-53.

¹⁰⁴ DRULÁK, *Politika nezájmu*, p. 243.

¹⁰⁵ WEISS, Building leverage at the Eu level?, p. 177.

¹⁰⁶ KOŘAN, Czech Foreign policy, p. 50-51.

convincingly multilateral and European character. It was also symbolized by a minister for foreign affairs in his cabinet, Jan Kavan, who was also a member of the Czechoslovak dissent.¹⁰⁷ Since shortly after the new government took power the Czech Republic joined NATO in April 1999, the prime endeavour of the Czech foreign policy became the path to an EU membership.

2.2.2 Return to Europe

The main motto of foreign policy in the 1990s was “return to Europe.” Brodský points out that it suggests that Czechs are coming to where they are from, where they have “strong cultural and historical ties” and where they naturally belong.¹⁰⁸ which symbolized the objective to join the NATO and the EU and thus becoming a full member of the Western civilisation.¹⁰⁹ There was a vast public consensus on the country becoming a member of the West. Drulák points out that the initial consensus was possible only thank to the vagueness of the motto.¹¹⁰ Later the motto was practically narrowed down to becoming a member of the aforementioned organisations. However, the profound debate about consequences of the memberships was hardly to be found in the public debate.¹¹¹ It is one of the issues of Czech foreign policy in general. As Kořan points out, Czech foreign policy after the Velvet Revolution was conducted by the executive branch without any significant public discussion, which Kořan sees as something understandable in chaotic times of regime changes. However, this feature of Czech foreign policy did not disappear even twenty years after the Velvet Revolution.

The aim of the “return to Europe” was partly fulfilled in the late 1990s. In April 1999 the Czech Republic joined NATO together with Hungary and Poland.¹¹² Shortly after, Czech

¹⁰⁷ BAUN, MAREK, Czech foreign policy, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ BRODSKÝ, Jiří. The Czech Experience of Identity in: DRULÁK, Petr (ed.) *National and European Identities in EU Enlargement. Views from Central and Eastern Europe*. Prague: Institute of International Relations, 2001, p. 24.

¹⁰⁹ BAUN, MAREK, Czech foreign policy, p. 3; To be precise, membership of NATO was Czech Republic accession to those organizations were publicly presented as a foreign policy goal after the dissolution of Warsaw Treaty Organization and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovak territory. VOTÁPEK, Vladimír. Policy of the Czech Republic towards Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus in: Belarus in: PEŁCZŃSKA-NAŁECZ, Katarzyna et al.(eds.) *Eastern Policy of the Enlarged European Union: developing Relations with Russia, Ukraine and Belarus; A Visegrad Perspective: thinking about an Eastern Dimension*. Prešov: Róbert Vico, c2003, p. 93.

¹¹⁰ DRULÁK, Petr. *Politika nezájmu. Česka a Západ v krizi [Policy of Indifference. Czechia and the West in crisis]*. Prague: SLON, 2012, p. 242.

¹¹¹ KOŘAN, Česká zahraniční politika.

¹¹² Originally, it was expected that Slovakia would join NATO altogether with other V4 countries; however, the political damage caused by Vladimír Mečiar and his government between 1994 and 1998 delayed Slovak accession until 2004.

army forces joined NATO campaigns in the Balkans¹¹³ and supported the EU involvement there.¹¹⁴

“Return to Europe” is still a persistent element of the elite idealistic identity. The Czech Republic demonstrated on several occasions by adjusting its foreign policy or economic goals to common EU or NATO positions.¹¹⁵ Křen talks about perception of the Czech Republic being the “eastern border of the European West.”¹¹⁶ It is rooted in the perception of the West being an example to follow and this perception had in 1990s a significant following. The concept has been losing its strength altogether with the debate on nationalism and increasing critique of the West per se; however, despite being weaker, it is still present. The underlying tenets of the discussion transformed from the debate on the Czech Republic becoming the member of “Western circles” to whether the Czech Republic is being perceived by our Western partners as a reliable ally. While this fact is not always openly presented to the public, this element includes Czechia willing to adjust its objectives to make them coherent with common policies.

We can find roots of this position in an attempt to deal with certain pivotal moments of the Czech(oslovak) history. Themes of Munich betrayal of 1938 and occupation in 1968 are ever present in the Czech public discussion.¹¹⁷ These images are repeatedly used in arguments over foreign policy with differing interpretations. As Slačálek shows in his study, the same event can be used by various sides in an argument over one issue with each side stressing a different element or interpretation of the event. In this context, there can be heard an underlying argument saying the Czech “were the victims”. Kořan calls it self-victimization and further states that “the tendency to misuse – or abuse – historical damages committed towards a national community by creating national images, myths, or identity was quite common in the world and European history.”¹¹⁸ However, Former Czech Minister of Defence Alexandr Vondra criticised it. “We did not learn our lesson from Munich” he said talking about Czech complex and inability to act clearly, talk directly, and feel confident.¹¹⁹ The attempt to stand up for themselves and accept responsibility, which is however sometimes practically carried out as following of

¹¹³ For example, Czech soldiers took part in KFOR mission in 1999 in Kosovo and Essential Harvest in 2001 in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

¹¹⁴ For example: European Union Police Mission in Bosnia and Hercegovina in 2002.

¹¹⁵ RACZ, Andras. *The Visegrad Cooperation*, p. 75.

¹¹⁶ DRULÁK, Politika nezájmu, p. 219.

¹¹⁷ For example: SLAČÁLEK, *Boj o národ*.

¹¹⁸ KOŘAN, *Aktéři a tvorba české zahraniční politiky*, p.14; More about the phenomenon for example BARTAL, Daniel et al. A sense of self-perceived collective victimhood in intractable conflicts. *International Review of the Red Cross*. Vol. 91, No. 874, June 2009, pp. 229-258.

¹¹⁹ Poučení z Mnichova, 2018 cited in: SLAČÁLEK, *Boj o národ*, p. 65.

opinion of others in international arena, is another key feature of the Czech elite's idealistic identity. It should be noted that it is not always the case. As Portela shows, the Czech Republic did not hesitate to express views which were not in accordance with the mainstream position in the case of the sanctions against Cuba, which is however interpreted as a way to support relations with the US government of G.W. Bush.¹²⁰

2.2.3 Human rights agenda

At the end of the 1990s the Czech Republic started its effort to create an image of a country to be heavily promoting human rights.¹²¹ The efforts were obvious in its activities in international arena (OSCE, UN, Council of Europe) "viewing this as an area in which it could add value due to its experience as a former totalitarian country that had successfully managed the transition to democracy."¹²² Furthermore, the image of the country was further enhanced by its President Václav Havel, a well-known and respected politician, dissident, and human rights advocate who added to the reputation of the country in this sense.

During the eventful 1990s, the Czech Republic established itself as a new state in the international arena and it began the long process of formulating its foreign policy. We can indicate it was built on the basis laid down in 1920s and 1930s by people which are held with respect among the population until these days. It is fair to say that it was often articulated by intellectuals such as TGM or Havel, who did not have a prior political experience, which shaped their understanding of foreign relations.

2.2.4 Ideas in the strategic documents of the Czech foreign policy

Analysis of the documents which represents the foundation of the Czech foreign policy confirms the presence of the aforementioned values and ideas in the current foreign policy narrative.¹²³ Respect to international law and human dignity, undeniability of human rights, multilateralism, and necessity of cooperation with others are the core principles of Czech foreign policy enshrined in the official Czech foreign policy documents. These principles can be found in Czech foreign policy strategies, Czech security policy strategies, or the Czech

¹²⁰ At the same time, Portela says that such resistance is rare among EU member states. PORTELA, Clara. Member States Resistance to EU Foreign Policy Sanctions. *European Foreign Affairs Review* 20, Special Issue 2015, pp. 39-62, pp. 60-61.

¹²¹ ŠEDIVÝ, Jiří. The impact of the new (post-communist) EU member states on the CFSP. *FORNET CFSP Forum*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2003, p. 9.

¹²² Ibidem.

¹²³ MZV. *Conceptual Basis of Czech Republic's Foreign Policy*. 3 August 2015.

strategy for Czech policy in the EU.¹²⁴ These values can be directly related to the values Czech foreign policy representatives such as TGM or Havel advocated for before. The sources of this humanist ideology are not limited to these two personalities, however. The last foreign policy strategy introduced in 2015 explicitly marks their heritage as a foundation of Czech foreign policy. “Specifically, Czech foreign policy is based on the legacy of Czech humanist philosophy, especially that of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, on the legacy of the current of democratisation spearheaded by Prague Spring and Charter 77, and on the tradition of promoting human rights as a prerequisite for a dignified existence.”¹²⁵

Another trait to be stressed out is an emphasis on solidarity among states which is mentioned in all foreign policy strategies and often in security strategies. In these documents, it is accentuated that the Czech Republic has a responsibility towards the rest of the world. The Czech Republic “accepts its share of responsibility for development of Europe and entire international community”¹²⁶ as well as responsibility for common decision. “By sitting at one table with other EU member and making decision, we take full responsibility for those decisions.”¹²⁷ These features might be identified in TGM’s understanding of personal responsibility towards others.

Human rights and its protection and human rights as the core of the Czech foreign policy have an essential position in the documents.¹²⁸ They are perceived as the basic element for the development of the Czech Republic itself as well as a basis for peaceful development in other countries. Therefore, the strategies also mention the necessity of their protection abroad.¹²⁹ The strong role of human right and democracy in the Czech foreign policy prevailed despite an open

¹²⁴ MZV. *Koncepce politiky České republiky v Evropské unii. Aktivní a srozumitelná Česká republika v jednotné Evropě* [Czech strategy on policy in the EU. Active and understandable Czech Republic in United Europe], 2015.

¹²⁵ MZV. *Conceptual Basis of Czech Republic’s Foreign Policy*, 2015.

¹²⁶ MZV. *Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky na léta 2003-2006* [Czech Foreign Policy Strategy for the years 2003-2006], 2003, p. 3; Or MZV. *Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky* [Czech Foreign Policy Strategy], 2011, p. 19.

¹²⁷ Projev předsedy vlády Bohuslava Sobotky na zahájení porady velvyslanců České republiky 2006 [Czech Foreign Policy Strategy for the years 2003-2006]. *MZV*. 2003.

¹²⁸ The Czech Republic has a strategic document for support of human rights. MZV. *Koncepce podpory lidských práv a transformační spolupráce* [Human rights support and transformation cooperation strategy], 2015.

¹²⁹ See for example: MZV. *Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky na léta 2003-2006*, p. 15; MZV, *Koncepce zahraniční politiky 2011*, pp. 5, 7, 10, 14; MZV. *Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky 2011*, p. 4.

public discussion opened by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Drulák over its relevance in 2013. In the end no significant changes have been made in this regard.¹³⁰

Besides that, the documents allow us to understand Czech Republic's perception of itself. It describes itself as a small country in global context but a medium-size within the European one.¹³¹ It acknowledges its limited resources and capacity and underlines the need for cooperation in order to achieve its goals. It acknowledges its limited resources and capacity and underlines the need for cooperation in order to achieve its goals. The perception of self as an actor with limited resources has its implications. The author argues that this fact determines its willingness to attempt to reach its foreign policy goals based on the circumstances, especially depending on the support of powerful allies. When it registers the support, it actively backs its foreign policy priorities and principles. However, it could be anticipated that when such is perceived as absent, it restricts itself from an action. Brodský calls it Czech "littleness" which "is conceived as a constant immaturity."¹³²

2.3 The Czech Republic and the sanctions

This section introduces Czech reaction to the Ukrainian crisis, sanctions' introduction, and implementation. In this context, it becomes even more obvious that the Czech political elite lacks consensus over its foreign policy. This is illustrated by an overview of public discussion on about the sanctions.

During the Maidan event, first to react and deliver help from the Czech Republic were NGOs. The government reacted in early 2014. It sent humanitarian and development help and MZV opened a new call for short-term projects supporting civic society and independent media. Řiháčková assumes that the overall cost of the projects could reach up to 3.7 million EUR.¹³³

A verbal reaction of the Czech government was rather cautious at the beginning.¹³⁴ However, the caution could have been influenced by the fact that the country had a caretaker

¹³⁰ BORČANY, Vít and Vít DOSTÁL. *Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2018* [2018 Czech Foreign Policy Agenda]. Prague: AMO, 2018, p. 14.

¹³¹ MZV. *Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky na léta 2003-2006*, p.3; MZV. *Koncepce zahraniční politiky 2011*, p. 4; MZV. *Conceptual Basis of Czech Republic's Foreign Policy*, 2015. The distinction between global and European scale only appears in the last foreign policy strategy.

¹³² BRODSKÝ, Czech Experience of Identity, p. 29.

¹³³ ŘIHÁČKOVÁ, Věra. Foreign Policy and External Security: the Diverging Trajectories of Domestic Actors vis-à-vis the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict in: KUCHARCZYK, Jacek and Grigotij MESEŽNIKOV (eds.) *Diverging Voices, Converging Policies: The Visegrad States' Reactions to the Russia-Ukraine Conflict*. Warsaw: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2015, pp. 32-33; However, Havlíček and Tsyachna argue that if there was more political will, the Czech Republic could provide more help as it has more capacity than what it currently uses. HAVLÍČEK, TYSYACHNA, *Jak dál?*, p. 9.

¹³⁴ UVM, 2013. 174.

government at that time. Minister for Foreign Affairs Kohout released a first statement on the situation in Ukraine on 5 December 2014.

When a new government led by Bohuslav Sobotka was established, government statements remained certain level of caution.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, on 6 March before the meeting of the European Council, PM Sobotka called Russian actions against Ukraine “unacceptable” and announced that the government is ready “to condemn Russian intervention in Crimea, require a withdrawal of Russian soldiers...and support negotiation which would ensure respect to Ukrainian sovereignty and..its territorial integrity.”¹³⁶ Later, the government refused to acknowledge the referendum on Crimean independence from Ukraine¹³⁷ and supported EU sanctions against Russia and their subsequent tightening.

The idealist identity constructed by ideas coming from TGM and Havel, which at the same time understands its performance in the international arena dependent on the circumstances is not the only one, which is possible to be observed in Czech society and among Czech politicians. As demonstrated above, during 1990s we could observe shift towards more pragmatic politics where understanding of foreign policy through prism of economic relation. Dominance of identity over Czech foreign policy depends among others on a composition of a government. It has been shown that the two main understandings of Czech identity alternate. Nevertheless, both are present in the Czech political discourse as their representatives are distributed along Czech political spectrum. Understanding this cleavage within Czech foreign policy helps in understanding the Czech political debate about the sanctions.

2.3.1 Public discussion over the sanctions

Despite Czech government stating its support for the sanctions, voices opposing the measures have been heard from the beginning. The discrepancy became confusing for some observers, who, because of that, classified the Czech Republic as a country whose reaction was “more reserved”¹³⁸ (to Ukrainian crisis) or “has been sending mixed signals concerning the

¹³⁵ The MZV established an intense official contact with Ukrainian representatives. Minister Zaorálek and his staff visited Ukraine on numerous occasions during the crisis; on the other hand, PM Sobotka did not visit the country once. JUZOVÁ, Jana. Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí jako aktér české zahraniční politiky [Ministry for Foreign Affairs as an Actor in Czech Foreign Policy] in: KOŘAN, Aktéři a tvorba české zahraniční politiky, p. 185; HAVLÍČEK, TYSYACHNA, Jak dál?, p. 9-10.

¹³⁶ SOBOTKA, Bohuslav. Press Conference on 5 March 2014. *vlada*.

¹³⁷ In this case both PM Sobotka and President Zeman agreed on the refusal the recognition of the referendum as it is against Ukrainian constitution and under irregular circumstances. Česko neuznává odtržení Krymu, chce s Ukrajinou jednat o vstupu do EU [Czechia refuses to recognize secession of Crimea, it wants to negotiation about the Ukrainian accession to the EU]. *iDNES*. 17 March 2014.

¹³⁸ SCHWARZER, Daniela. Reality Check for the EU: The stand-off with Russia challenges the European Union in its fundamentals. *Norwegian institute for International Affairs*. Policy Brief 14, 2015, p. 1.

issue of Ukraine” and “not genuine”, “New Cold Warrior”¹³⁹, showing “mixed stance”¹⁴⁰; the position was “rather cautious” or even a “Trojan Horse”¹⁴¹ with “careful, but still negative.”¹⁴² It demonstrates how difficult it is to read into what exactly the Czech position on the sanctions was.

The anti-sanction voices were heard from within the society, stakeholders, but also politicians. Vladimír Dlouhý or František Masopust from the Chamber of Commerce with the CIS countries criticized the sanctions since, according to them, they cannot solve anything and will not bring them anything positive.¹⁴³ The Association of Exporters’ prediction warned there can be up to 40 thousand jobs lost and up to 20 thousand jobs were to disappear in tourism.¹⁴⁴ A negative view was also adopted on numerous occasions by Minister of Industry and Trade Jan Mládek. He warned that some jobs could be lost. Later, he stressed that the economic relations with Russia are based on mutual trust which had been harmed by the sanctions.¹⁴⁵

Among politicians, who openly criticise the sanctions, is President Miloš Zeman.¹⁴⁶ He was against the sanctions from the very beginning. “The sanctions cannot lead to any reasonable

¹³⁹ KUREČIĆ, Petar. The „New Cold Warriors“ and the „Pragmatics“: The Differences in Foreign Policy Attitudes towards Russia and the Eastern Partnership States among the NATO Member States from Central and South-Eastern Europe. *Croatian International Relation Review*. Vol 80., No. 23, 2017, pp. 61, 73.

¹⁴⁰ MORET, Erica et al. *The New Deterrent? International Sanctions Against Russia Over the Ukraine Crisis. Impacts, Costs and Further Action*. Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. 12 October 2016, p. 12.

¹⁴¹ BAI, Eugene. Russia’s new ‘Trojan horse’ strategy for breaking European unity. *Russia Direkt*, 19 February 19 2015, Retrieved May 23, 2015; MARUŠIAK, Juraj. Slovakia’s Eastern policy – from the Trojan horse of Russia to ‘Eastern multivectoralism’. *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 1–2, pp. 42–70; MUDDE, Cas. *Russia’s Trojan Horse. Russia and beyond*. 8 December 2014; However, Vitkus later in his text distinguishes between Czech government and Czech president Miloš Zeman who is put to the group of EU pro-Russian trojan horses. VITKUS, Gediminas. Towards stronger normative power, p. 15.

¹⁴² RACZ, Andras. The Visegrad Cooperation: Central Europe Divided Over Russia. *L’Europe en formation*. No. 374, 2014, p. 69.

¹⁴³ Hlas Ruska. *Rozhovor: Negativní efekt sankcí vůči Rusku bude v Evropě růst* [Interview: A negative effect of the sanctions against Russia will increase]. 14 November 2014 cited in: COUFALOVÁ, Lucie and Libor ZIDEK. The Impact of Sanctions on Czech Economic Relations with Russia, p. 210.

¹⁴⁴ Sankce vůči Rusku mohou ČR vrátit do recese a umazat až 40 tisíc míst. [The Sanctions against Russia Can Get the Czech Republic Back to Recession and Erase Up to 40 Thousand Jobs]. *idnes.cz*. 18 March 2014 cited in: Lucie and Libor ZIDEK. The Impact of Sanctions on Czech Economic Relations with Russia, p. 210.

¹⁴⁵ Ministr Mládek: Sankce přinášejí problém oběma stranám. [Minister Mládek: The Sanctions Cause Problems to Both Sides]. *Parlamentní listy*. 20 October 2016 cited in: Lucie and Libor ZIDEK. The Impact of Sanctions on Czech Economic Relations with Russia, p. 210.

¹⁴⁶ For the analysis of President Zeman’s narrative on the Ukrainian crisis see ŘIHÁČKOVÁ, Věra. Foreign Policy and External Security: the Diverging Trajectories of Domestic Actors vis-à-vis the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict in: KUCHARCZYK, MESEŽNIKOV, *Diverging Voices, Converging Policies*, pp. 25-36.

outcome.”¹⁴⁷ And in principle criticised sanctions as a tool in foreign policy,¹⁴⁸ which, in case of the sanctions against Russia, are also an obstacle to mutual relations with Russia.¹⁴⁹ His critique has continued throughout the years. One of the last strong statements he voiced about the topic of sanctions, was in December 2018 in an interview to Russia TV NTV. ”The sanctions are useless. They are helping no one. They cause harm to both sides, from economic and political point of view.”¹⁵⁰ His stance on Russia-related issues is interpreted as adopting official Kremlin rhetoric¹⁵¹ and legitimizing it.¹⁵² Even Prime Minister (since 2018) Babiš did not refrain from negative comments on the sanctions. In July 2018, when asked about the sanctions, he criticized them for “not bringing much to Europe, but hurting everybody, so it would be good to solve it politically, which would enable us to start trading with Russia again.”¹⁵³

On the other hand, PM Bohuslav Sobotka (2014-2017) backed the sanctions on numerous occasions. He stressed the importance of respecting international law and responsibility of the country towards Ukraine. “We cannot betray Ukraine.”¹⁵⁴ Since the beginning he linked a softening or lifting the sanctions firstly to not breaking the truce and later to fulfilment of Minsk II Agreement.¹⁵⁵ However, he also mentioned on various occasions that

¹⁴⁷ KANTOR, Sebastin. Ruská akce na Krymu má k humanitární pomoci daleko, myslí si Zeman. *Tiscali.cz*. 4 March 2014.

¹⁴⁸ „Sanctions of any type are an obstacle to a dialogue of civilisations..and instead of a dialogue, there is just silence. Nothing more. “ An extract of President Zeman’s speech at the Rhodes Forum in 2014. Later in the speech, he called upon the EU to lift up the sanctions. PALATA, Luboš. Zeman bagatelizoval krizi na Ukrajině. Zrušme sankce, vyzval rusky. [Zeman trivialized Ukraine crisis. Let’s lift up the sanctions, he said in Russian]. *IDNES*. 26 September 2014.

¹⁴⁹ ČTK. Zeman: Sankce proti Rusku jsou překážkou vzájemných vztahů. [Zeman: The sanctions against Russia are an obstacle to mutual relations]. *E15*. 24 August 2014.

¹⁵⁰ ČTK. Zeman: Protiruské sankce jsou zbytečné. EU nemá silného vůdce, jací jsou v Rusku, USA nebo Číně. [Zeman: Anti-Russia sanctions are useless. The EU does not have a strong leader, which USA, Russia, and China have]. *E15*. 9 December 2018.

¹⁵¹ KRATOCHVÍL, Petr and Karel SVOBODA. Russia in Czech Foreign Policy. Increased Contacts amid Increased Tensions in: KOZEKOVÁ, Alica et al. *Czech Foreign Policy in 2017: Analysis*. Prague: Institute for International Relations, 2018, p. 176.

¹⁵² GROSZOWSKI, Jakub. Czech dilemmas over Russia and NATO. *OSW*; CHMELAŘOVÁ, Alžběta. Česko-ruské vztahy: čas na změnu. Policy paper. AMO. 2017, p. 3.

¹⁵³ KULIDAKIS, Thomas. Sankce nic moc nepřinesly, řekl Babiš. Chtěl by začít obchodovat s Ruskem. [Sanctions did not bring much, Babiš said. He would like to start trading with Russia]. Interview with Andrej Babiš. *iRozhlas*. 8 July 2018.

¹⁵⁴ KOPECKÝ, Josef. Sobotka podpořil protiruské sankce. Nesmíme hodit Ukrajinu přes palubu. [Sobotka supported anti-Russian sanctions. We cannot betray Ukraine]. *iDNES*. 20 October 2016.

¹⁵⁵ ČTK. Sobotka: Sankce poškodily ekonomiku Ruska, jeho chování nezměnily. [Sobotka: Sanctions did harm Russian economy, although they did not change Russian behaviour. *Echo24*. 8 July 2018; Sobotka: Konec protiruských sankcí až po naplnění minských dohod. [Sobotka: The sanctions regimes can end only after the Minsk agreement will be implemented]. *Novinky.cz*. 11 May 2015.

he is aware that the sanctions (or rather the Russian countermeasures) are hurting the Czech economy.¹⁵⁶

The cleavage evident from the examples above illustrates the cleavage among Czech politicians in their view of Czech foreign policy. The cleavage has been identified by scholars in political manifestos of Czech political parties, where Weiss identifies two groups (pragmatists and idealists),¹⁵⁷ which demonstrate two different understanding of foreign relations and thus two different identities. The cleavage was also identified in narratives politicians adopt when talking about Russia. One group perceives Russia as a threat due to its unconvincing understanding of international law and human rights, the other stresses the importance of economic relations.¹⁵⁸ The former could arguably overlap with idealist as identified by Weiss, the former with the pragmatists.

The two different narratives that appeared in the discussion about the sanctions overlap with narratives in the Czech society on Russia. Despite Ukraine being a country with which the Czech Republic has intense contacts, and which is important for Czech economy, which in certain sectors relies on Ukrainian labour, it was RF that was a central factor in the discussions about the reaction to Ukrainian crisis and the sanctions.

As Kratochvíl and Kuchyňková say, two different narratives concerning Russia have been present since the beginning of the Czech Republic in 1993. Each of these narratives perceive Russia differently. One is more inclined to see Russia as a source of economic opportunity and tends to perceive the relations with Russia in mostly economic terms, which is in line with pragmatic and economic view on foreign policy in general. On the other hand, the second group perceives Russia through the security prism and consider Russia a security threat as it violates international law. The latter group shares features with the idealist identity. Kratochvíl and Kuchyňková argue that the dominant narrative was usually dependent on the strongest party in the government; however they stipulate that there is an indication of a change since 2008 Georgian war, when the security concerns prevailed.¹⁵⁹ That also suggests a prevalence of normative attitude which is a feature of idealistic identity. Nevertheless, it was

¹⁵⁶ Bohuslav Sobotka's speech at the Conference of economic officials. Prague, 26 July 2017. Premiér Sobotka vystoupil na Konferenci ekonomických radů. *Vlada.cz*.

¹⁵⁷ WEISS, Building leverage at EU level.

¹⁵⁸ KUCHYŇKOVÁ, Petra, KRATOCHVÍL, Petr, and Boris SHMELEV. Czech-Russian Relations 1989-2012 in: ZAGORSKI, Andrei (ed.) *Russia and East Central Europe after the Cold War*. Prague: Human Rights Publishers, 2015, pp. 122-126.

¹⁵⁹ KRATOCHVÍL, Petr and Věra ŘIHÁČKOVÁ. Domestic political context since 1989: Russia as a dividing element in Czech society, in: KUCHARCZYK, MESEŽNIKOV. *Diverging Voices, Converging Policies*, pp. 19-20.

not without consequences. Since then pro-Kremlin voices began to be heard more. The intensification of both sides led to a “strong polarisation among political elites and in the media, as well as in public opinion, with a majority being rather critical of the Russian role in Ukraine and a very vocal minority defending Kremlin’s policies.”¹⁶⁰

Despite the competing narratives causing confusion among scholars and analysts, it seems it does not have an impact on the perception of the Czech Republic among its European partners. As there is an understanding among EU members that each state has its interests and specific domestic situation because of which public statements of EU members are sometimes in contrast with policies which are being introduced and implemented.¹⁶¹ This opinion is shared both by representatives of the EU institutions¹⁶², as well as representatives of national states.¹⁶³ To simplify, what is said in the negotiation room has greater value than public comments of political representatives.

However, this cleavage in foreign policy, which also applies to the case of the sanctions in politicians’ rhetoric about the issue, does not have to necessarily reflect political reality. The author argues that in reality, even the actors who are verbally against the sanctions, follow the government decision on enforcing them in the end. Furthermore, they even supported the decision to implement the sanctions despite having a possibility of voting against without any consequences. The author wants to illustrate that on the following examples.

The first and most visible example of this phenomenon is a declaration issued in September 2018. After a meeting on 12 September in President’s premises in Prague Castle a declaration was issued. In the text it explicitly says that the constitutional officials¹⁶⁴ state that the reasons which led to the introduction of the sanctions had not passed and called upon its implementation by all parties involved. Furthermore, the text stipulates that the Czech Republic supports the discussion about the topic in European Council and will respect the outcomes of its proceedings.¹⁶⁵ There is nothing about questioning the sanction, on the contrary, there is an acknowledgement of the meaningfulness of the continuing implementation of the sanctions as

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁶¹ Interviews with Czech officials, Prague, March-April 2019.

¹⁶² Interviews with EU officials, Brussels, April 2019.

¹⁶³ Interviews with an EU official, Brussels, April 2019 and Czech officials, Prague, February 2019.

¹⁶⁴ The constitutional officers who attended the meeting were President Miloš Zeman, PM Andrej Babiš, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies Radek Vondráček, Vice-PM, minister of Interior assigned with management of Ministry for Foreign Affairs Jan Hamáček and Minister of Defence Lubomír Metnar.

¹⁶⁵ Společné prohlášení ústavních činitelů k zahraniční politice po setkání na Pražském hradě [Joint statement of constitutional officers on foreign policy after a meeting in the Prague castle]. [online]. *Vláda.cz*. 12 September 2018. Available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/spolecne-prohlaseni-ustavnych-cinitelu-k-zahranicni-politice-po-setkani-na-prazskem-hrade-168384/>. Accessed on 8 May 2019.

the reasons leading to their adoptions were still in effect. Needless to say, at least two constitutional officers issuing the statement publicly criticized the sanctions, with President Zeman doing it repeatedly on numerous occasions. He adopted an anti-sanction rhetoric on various occasions in interviews with journalists, speeches at international fora or during visits abroad; however, when issuing an official statement, he followed the policy approved by the government. The same applies to PM Babiš, who questioned the sanctions regarding their impact on Czech economy and trade with Russia, but eventually agreed on the statement.

It should be also noted that in Czech political system, despite both the President and the government being involved in foreign policy making, the government is the one responsible for its formulation and implementation. Despite Czech presidents sometimes take positions which are not in accordance with government policy, which often attracts media attention, it is the government which decides what is to be done.

Let us elaborate on the government which approved the sanctions in the first place. Alongside with then-Minister for Finance Andrej Babiš who criticised the sanctions, there was also Minister of Industry and Trade Jan Mládek who voiced an opposition to the sanctions. On the other hand, both were members of the government which approved the sanctions in March 2014 and further extended them in July 2014.¹⁶⁶ Allegedly, the government approved the sanctions unanimously.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, ministers Babiš and Mládek had to vote for the measures despite publicly expressing disagreement about it when discussing the issue with government members.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, a government that took office in 2018, and is led by Mr. Babiš, repeatedly extended the sanctions. On the top of that, the leaked materials of PM Babiš for European Council meeting in December 2018 revealed that the Czech administration suggested further tightening of the sanctions.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ In this case the author means the sectoral sanctions as mentioned in the introduction.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with a Czech politician, Prague, March 2019.

¹⁶⁸ Interviews with a Czech officials and a Czech politician, Prague, March 2019.

¹⁶⁹ ZELEŇKA, Jakub and Lukáš PRCHAL. Česko nevyklučuje tvrdší sankce proti Rusku. [Czechia does not rule out tightening of the anti-Russian sanctions]. [online]. *Deník N*. 7 December 2018. Available at: <https://denikn.cz/34269/cesko-nevyklučuje-tvrdsi-sankce-proti-rusku-ziskali-jsme-podklady-s-nimiz-ma-babis-letet-do-bruselu/>. Accessed on 9 May 2019. We can assume that it was in reaction to Kerch Strait Incident when Russian forces captured three Ukrainian naval vessels during an attempt to sail through Kerch Strait. The EU indeed extended the scope of the sanctions by adding eight more people who were involved in the incident on its sanction list. Německo vyzvalo Rusko, aby obnovilo Ukrajinskou suverenitu. [Germany called upon Russia to restore Ukrainian sovereignty]. [online]. *ČT24*. 15 March 2019. Available at: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/svet/2760527-nemecko-vyzvalo-rusko-aby-obnovilo-ukrajinskou-suverenitu-eu-rozsirila-sankce>. Accessed on 9 May 2019.

Therefore, despite the ambivalent and contrary rhetoric on the sanctions, which was confusing for some external observers, it seems that the adoption did not face a serious opposition when an actual implementation was being discussed. At the same time, although the anti-sanction rhetoric of certain Czech actors confused some, it was not understood among representatives of other EU member states and EU institutions as an attempt to undermine the sanctions. On the EU level, Czech government officials and politicians did not face questions from their counterparts about anti-sanction statements, nor they were asked to explain them or trivialize them.¹⁷⁰ From the other part, it was (or still is) understood that each state has a certain agenda and a specific electorate whose opinion a politician needs to take into account.¹⁷¹ For that reason, when discussing sanctions over Ukraine, only opinions and arguments presented in official meetings were considered.¹⁷²

It applies not only to rhetoric, but also to implementation issues. Despite certain news in media about breaches of the sanction regime,¹⁷³ it necessarily does not mean it was a deliberate mistake of the concerned state. It is understood among member states that such issues can happen and as long as a state involved is taking an action against it, the state is not pressured about the issue; moreover, since each state faced difficulties in at least some areas when the sanctions were being implemented. Thus, applying peer pressure on one state because of certain unclear issue, could lead to peer pressure to a member state that initiated the pressure application previously on another occasion.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, peer pressure in the case of the sanctions would be probably applied only when there is a suspicion serious enough that would suggest that a state breached some of the measures deliberately.¹⁷⁵ The caution in the issues of the sanctions can be also caused by the perception of the “Russian file”, which is considered a sensitive issue among EU member states.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Interviews with Czech officials, Prague, March-April 2019.

¹⁷¹ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, April 2019.

¹⁷² However, in the case of Russia file, the interviewee admitted that it is hard to estimate the impact of following statements on the general trust among member states as Russia is considered as an issue which causes great caution among EU members. Interview with an EU official, Brussels, April 2019.

¹⁷³ For example, the case of Siemens turbines that appeared in Crimea which was in breach of the sanctions. However, German authorities opened an investigation of three employees of Siemens who delivered the turbines from Russia, where they were officially to end up, to Crimea.

¹⁷⁴ Interviews with a Czech official, Prague, March-April 2019, and an EU official, Brussels, April 2019.

¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, in other cases, peer pressure is indeed used in order to „encourage potential defectors to adopt the common view. SMITH, Michael E. Institutionalization, Policy Adaptation and European Foreign Policy Cooperation. *European Journal of International Relations*. Vol. 10, No. 1, 2004, pp. 95-136, p. 107.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, April 2019.

However, the author has not found any indication of such suspicion towards the Czech Republic. As stated in Annual Reports from 2014 until 2019 of Financial Analytical Office (FAU) of the Czech Republic¹⁷⁷ there was no breach of EU sanctions against Russia, which was detected by the FAU.¹⁷⁸ Thus, it is presumed that the implementation was successfully implemented without any serious breaches.

Therefore, it is possible to argue that despite ambiguous rhetoric adopted by actors involved in Czech foreign policy making, the Czech Republic support and implements the sanctions. Furthermore, there is evidence that the country generally adopts rather anti-Russian position. The Czech Republic is sometimes put into a group of Russia-aware countries by scholars; however, from the primary sources collected by the author, it seems that the Czech Republic stance on the matter is more akin to that of Poland or Baltic countries. Those countries are known to be strongly anti-Russian. However, it seems that the country is positioned on the more “reasonable” side of the spectrum.¹⁷⁹ This view is shared by Czech officials involved in drafting foreign policy,¹⁸⁰ as well by non-Czech representatives of member states.¹⁸¹

2.4 Why the idealistic identity prevailed?

In this section, two questions are covered. First, how (where) the elite idealistic identity spread when the sanctions were adopted, and why. Composition of the government as well as executivisation and technocratisation of Czech foreign policy offer an understanding how people with the elite idealistic identity became dominant. However, it was possible due to low-quality relations with Russia and a type of the measures (sanctions) which were adopted.

2.4.1 Government coalition and party preferences

As indicated above, the prevailing identity which is reflected in current Czech foreign policy depends on parties in the government. When the crisis in Ukraine broke out, the Czech Republic had a caretaker government led by Jiří Rusnok. In January 2014 a new coalition centre-left government was formed. The government was led by Bohuslav Sobotka from ČSSD. Therefore, this government led the country when the sanctions were discussed and adopted. Beside ČSSD, there were two other parties – ANO 2011 and KDU-ČSL. Concerning the sanction, according to Kratochvíl and Kuchyňková, all three parties later perceived them as

¹⁷⁷ Until 31 December 2016 Financial Intelligence Unit at the Ministry for Finance of the Czech Republic.

¹⁷⁸ Annual Reports 2014, 2015, 2016 of Financial Intelligence Unit of the Ministry for Finance and Annual Reports 2017, 2018 – Financial Analytical Office/Unit of the Czech Republic.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with an EU officials, Brussels, April 2019

¹⁸⁰ Interviews with Czech officials, Prague, February-March 2019.

¹⁸¹ Interviews with EU officials, Brussels, April 2019.

necessary with ANO 2011 and part of ČSSD having certain reservation.¹⁸² On the other hand, KDU-ČSL and part of ČSSD represented by Lubomír Zaorálek, the then Minister for Foreign affairs, supported the sanctions and a common approach to the crisis in Ukraine.

The former understood the sanctions are necessary; but they were still concerned about the economic impact of the sanctions. However, as the decision on the sanctions was taken at the beginning of their term, ANO 2011 was rather indifferent to foreign policy issues; thus, we could assume that there was not a significant opposition from their part. As Kořan says that in essence ANO 2011 “joined the government without any foreign policy programme or clearer ideas.”¹⁸³ As shown above, the then Minister for Finance and current PM Andrej Babiš on several occasion expressed criticism of the sanctions, he refrained from public comments when the sanctions were adopted. Altogether with other vocal critic of the sanction, Minister of Industry and Trade Jan Mládek, they were the main critics of the measures within the government. Majority of the government members, who commented on the issue, displayed the features of the elite idealistic identity.

Despite PM Sobotka publicly voicing reservations over the impact of the sanctions, the narrative he used when talking about the sanctions corresponds with the idealistic identity. He stressed the importance of international law and rules that should be abided by all. “Ukraine is a sovereign state and has a right to restore sovereignty on its territory.”¹⁸⁴ And he interpreted the annexation of Crimea as “unacceptable violation of international law.”¹⁸⁵ He also stressed responsibility of the country to look for solutions of current global challenges. He emphasized the importance of international cooperation, which enable the Czech Republic to achieve more than if acted individually. The author argues the Sobotka mentioned his concerns about the economic impact of the sanctions to address the critics of the sanctions among stakeholders, but also within his own party; in fact, he stood firm behind the sanctions. As one of his former collaborators noted “the sanctions could not go that far if it was not for PM Sobotka.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² KRATOCHVÍL, ŘIHÁČKOVÁ. Domestic political context since 1989, pp. 20-21; JUZOVÁ, Jana. Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí jako aktér české zahraniční politiky [Ministry for Foreign Affairs as an Actor in Czech Foreign Policy] in: KOŘAN, Aktéři a tvorba české zahraniční politiky, p. 187.

¹⁸³ KOŘAN, Michal. Mezinárodní politický kontext a tvorba české zahraniční politiky v roce 2014 [International Political Context and Czech Foreign Policy Making in 2014].in: KOŘAN, Michal et al. Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2014 [Czech Foreign Policy in 2014]. Prague: ÚMV, p. 2015, p. 22.

¹⁸⁴ Projev předsedy vlády Bohuslava Sobotky na zahájení porady velvyslanců České republiky [A speech of P Bohuslav Sobotka at the meeting of ambassadors of the Czech Republic]. *MZV*. 25 August 2014.

¹⁸⁵ Reakce předsedy vlády České republiky na aktuální dění na Ukrajině. [A reaction of PM Bohuslav Sobotka to current situation in Ukraine]. *MZV*. 24 August 2014.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with a Czech official, Prague, March 2019.

The latter group is represented by for example Minister for Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek. In his comments on the situation, he used a stronger rhetoric than PM Sobotka did. In July 2014, he called for stricter sanctions against Russia over Ukraine.¹⁸⁷ In explaining why the sanctions were adopted he not only criticized the behaviour of Russian government, he also stressed that it is natural that the Czech Republic works on the solution together with other countries. “It is not about one country presenting its view, it is about all EU members creating one common attitude.”¹⁸⁸ In January 2015 he even said that the suspicion of Russia trying to create a frozen conflict in Ukraine is being confirmed.¹⁸⁹ He added that his impression is that Russia does not want to honour Minsk agreements. The narrative he accommodated is in coherence with the elite idealistic identity with its stress on international law, strive to be perceived as an integral part of the West, and awareness of RF.

Statements in support of the sanctions and Ukraine can be heard from other government members. KDU-ČSL even called for stricter sanctions against Russia.¹⁹⁰ Minister of Culture for KDU-ČSL Hermann interpreted the annexation as occupation “similar to the one in 1968 in our country”.¹⁹¹ KDU-ČSL President Pavel Bělobrádek also stressed that the Ukrainian crisis is not only about Ukraine, it is about Russia breaking rules. He added that sanctions might hurt the Czech Republic but “it is a price we pay for our values and principles.”¹⁹² Building on the historical experience of the Czech Republic, they almost passionately defended the international norms.

Therefore, it is evident that most government members issuing statements on the sanctions display features of the idealistic identity as described above. They share understanding of Czech Republic being a responsible member of international community that cannot overlook breaches in rules on which the community agreed (international law). In some cases, they did not even hesitate to clearly say that the country needs to back values it holds despite economic costs it can cause.

¹⁸⁷ Zaorálek: Tvrdé sankce vůči Rusku budou platit už od čtvrtka [Zaorálek: Strict sanctions against Russia will be implemented on Thursday] (Interview with Minister for Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek). *DVTV*. 29 July 2014.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁹ Boj s terorem: Evropa musí spolupracovat se zeměmi Blízkého východu [Fight against terror: Europe has to collaborate with Middle Eastern countries]. *Lidovky.cz*. 19 January 2015.

¹⁹⁰ Stropnický: Na Ukrajině bojuje pět tisíc ruských vojáků. *ČTK*. 2 September 2014.

¹⁹¹ KOPECKÝ, Josef. Komunist a okamurovec útočili na členství v NATO i sankce vůči Rusku [A communist and a member of SPD attacked NATO membership and the sanctions against Russia]. *iDNES.cz*. 26 September 2017.

¹⁹² BĚLOBRÁDEK, Pavel. Sankce – Ukrajina [Sanction - Ukraine]. *pavelbelobradek.cz*.

Presence of the features of the elite idealistic identity are detectable among other politicians involved in the process of the sanctions' adoption. When interviewed, politicians expressed their stress on international cooperation and respect to international law, which should apply to everyone.¹⁹³ They also always put the issues of the sanctions against Russia to the historical context mentioning the invasion of the Warsaw Pact in 1968 and the fact that the occupation forces caused damage the country has not recovered yet.¹⁹⁴ "I don't remember the USA occupying Czechoslovakia whereas Russians yes, they made a mess, caused economic damaged...and did they compensated us for that?"¹⁹⁵

Considering other Czech politicians, the general indifference to foreign policy issues prevailed. Despite MPs displaying increased interest in foreign policy issues in 2014, which also included issues related to Russia and Ukraine, Foreign Policy Committee of the House of Deputies did not work from June to October 2014;¹⁹⁶ therefore, it was not active when stricter sanctions were negotiated and adopted by the EU. Furthermore, from the experience of the interviewed officials, Czech MPs did not display a particular interest in the sanctions and if so, it was after the measures were already adopted and it revealed a lack of understanding what the measures really mean.¹⁹⁷

2.4.2 The role of government officials

Executivisation and technocratisation as Kořan argues are important features of the Czech foreign policy.¹⁹⁸ With many politicians and significant proportion of the public lacking any interest in foreign policy issues, the government officials included in Czech foreign policy making can exert significant influence over foreign policy decisions taken.

Such approach not only enable politicians to have more room to be involved in other (domestic) issues; it also enabled them to distance themselves from certain decisions. Ukraine crisis as illustrated above, found Czech political scene divided. When the crisis escalated, it was the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MZV), which had contacts there as it is involved in various programmes in Ukraine, which collected information and provided analysis on the situation in Ukraine. Based on the analysis, MZV provided recommendations for the Czech reaction. Juzová argues that it was MZV, which played a key role in the process of formulating official

¹⁹³ Interviews with Czech politicians, Prague, March 2019.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with a Czech politician, Prague, March 2019.

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁶ KOŘAN, Michal et al. *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2014* [Czech Foreign Policy in 2014]. Prague: ÚMV, p. 2015, p. 28.

¹⁹⁷ Interviews with a Czech official and a Czech politician, Prague, March 2019.

¹⁹⁸ KOŘAN, Michal. Politický kontext tvorby české zahraniční politiky [Political Context of Czech Foreign Policy Making] in: KOŘAN, Aktéři a tvorba české zahraniční politiky, p. 14.

position of the Czech government.¹⁹⁹ This was the case of the sanction, especially the sectoral sanctions which were adopted in July 2014. Czech position was being prepared at the time when the members of the government were on summer vacation. It was one of the reasons why it was decided that State Secretary for European Affairs Tomáš Prouza will be in charge of the team which should prepare the position of the Czech government. Only Prime Minister Sobotka asked for reports on the progress to be sent to him regularly. Ministers, who expressed their opposition to the measures, after voicing their opinion did further not engage with the issue.²⁰⁰ They subsequently seized the opportunity to criticize the sanctions implying it was not the “their fault.” Thus, the burden was transferred from politicians to Czech officials. Even though Juzová states that it is unfortunate that MZV was not able to present its position to the public,²⁰¹ it apparently managed to fulfil its role diplomatically.

Actions of the MZV were guided by the instruction to appear as a dependable partner. As Juzová says “based on its foreign policy orientation and ideology of his and his party, Minister for Foreign Affairs Zaorálek wanted...for the perception of the Czech Republic as a reliable and consistent pro-European partner, which...eventually led...to a pressure to support mainstream EU position.”²⁰² This requirement shows how important it was for the administration to be perceived as a decent partner and integral part of the community.

The interviews conducted with the staff of MZV suggest that they display features of the elite idealistic mentality. They understand the importance of rules on international level and do not support understanding of foreign policy in solely economic terms.²⁰³ As it is MZV which is generally seen prone to idealistic approach to foreign policy, the interviewed officials from other Czech government bodies expressed views based on respect to similar values and norms, although in less strong fashion.

2.4.3 Czech-Russian relations

Awareness of RF or even anti-Russian attitude is one of the features of the elite idealistic identity. In this section the author provides an overview of Czech-Russian relations with a special focus put on three features of the relations (trade, security, energy), which shows that the mutual relations were not of an excellent quality before the measures were taken; therefore, in fact did not provide a serious obstacle to the adoption of the sanctions.

¹⁹⁹ JUZOVÁ, Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí, p. 182.

²⁰⁰ Interview with a Czech official, Prague, March 2019.

²⁰¹ JUZOVÁ, Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí, p. 189.

²⁰² JUZOVÁ, Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí, p. 185.

²⁰³ Based on several interviews with Czech officials, Prague, February-April 2019.

After the Fall of Berlin Wall, the relations with the USSR and later Russian Federation changed significantly. There was a decrease in the significance of Russia in Czechoslovak and Czech politics as both countries were going through profound internal changes. Votápek identifies three factors that influenced the relations with RF after the split of Czechoslovakia – strengthening of Czech relations with other developed countries; weakening of the significance of RF in the international arena and especially in Central Europe; and Russian attempts to prevent Czech, Polish, and Hungarian accession to NATO.²⁰⁴ The relations became to change at the end of 1990s. It was among other influenced by the attitude of other European countries towards RF. As the countries such as Italy, Germany, and France were improving its relations with RF, the Czech Republic changed its attitude to become closer to theirs.²⁰⁵

2.4.3.1 Economic relations

The deterioration in political relations was reflected in their economic relations. In early 1990, there was a great drop in mutual trade exchanges and the volume of trade remained low throughout the whole 1990s. It was also because of the unstable and unpredictable conditions in the RF, which made business with Russian subjects hazardous.

With Putin as President of RF the situation changed. He has been trying to at least exercise economic influence over the countries which used to be under its control (the control of RF/USSR) as he understood that to exercise direct political influence will not be possible.²⁰⁶ It slowly led to a change and eventually, from early 2000s the trade between RF and the Czech Republic become growing. It was supported by an improving state of Russian economy and better relations of Russia with the USA after 9/11 terrorist attacks.²⁰⁷

Chmelařová argues that these days RF despite its decreased role/importance in Czech foreign trade is still an important element of discussions about Czech foreign policy. “Czech Republic labels it as a country which threatens European security, but at the same time we want to do trade with it preferentially, even though it is not an important, nor perspective partner at least for next few years.”²⁰⁸ Indeed, several Czech actors tend to exaggerate the importance of

²⁰⁴ VOTÁPEK, p. 99.

²⁰⁵ KRATOCHVÍL, Petr, CIBULKOVÁ, Petra and Vít Beneš. Foreign policy, rhetorical action and the idea of otherness: The Czech Republic and Russia. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 39, 2006, pp. 497-511, pp. 504-505; “In relations with the Russian Federation, the Czech Republic enforced similar strategy like NATO and EU states.” A Report on Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic (1998-1999). *MZV*.

²⁰⁶ RACZ, Andras. The Visegrad Cooperation: Central Europe Divided Over Russia. *L'Europe en Formation*, vol. 374, no. 4, 2014, pp. 65-66.

²⁰⁷ RACZ, Andras. The Visegrad Cooperation, p. 65.

²⁰⁸ CHMELARŮVÁ, Alžběta. Česko-ruské vztahy: čas na změnu. Policy paper. AMO. 2017, p. 4.

RF in economic relation.²⁰⁹ For example, the Ministry of Industry and Trade tries to support business with RF, especially through the Czech Export Bank (ČEB), CzechTrade agencies or the Export Guarantee and Insurance Corporation (EGAP).²¹⁰ However, considering the data provided by the Czech Statistical Office, the volume of trade with RF has been decreasing since 2012. It went down from 3,8% of Czech export and 5,6% of Czech import in 2012²¹¹ to trade with RF representing 2,0% of export and 3,1% of import to the Czech Republic in 2018.²¹²

Several politicians and businessmen repeatedly pointed out at the worsening trade between the Czech Republic and Russian Federation due to the sanctions. However, it cannot be attributed solely to the sanctions. Russia's economic condition has been worsening past few years due to low oil prices and devaluation of the rouble.²¹³ The critique often mentions the impact on Czech agriculture business; nevertheless, it suffers because of the Russian countermeasures as agricultural products accounted for a significant share of Czech export to RF. "Russia has over a long time been the biggest trade partner of the Czech Republic outside the EU."²¹⁴ Moreover, despite the countermeasures being presented and interpreted as a reaction to the sanction, the measure had been prepared long before the sanctions were adopted.²¹⁵ As one of the interviewees said, they were to be part of Russia protectionist strategies which were designed to help the country to strengthen its economy.²¹⁶

Besides that, Russian market does not belong among stable nor safe ones and it causes problems to business. The Czech Republic has unresolved claims with Russian partners, which were insured by Czech agencies, but the dialogue about them has proven to be difficult. Based on data provided by EGAP, RF is the country with highest overall amount of bad debt.²¹⁷ According to Groszkowski, 25% of all insured transactions in Russia face problems.²¹⁸ It is more difficult to negotiate about that such issues as RF is less responsive to Czech claims than

²⁰⁹ Ibidem, p. 2.

²¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 2-3.

²¹¹ External Trade. *External Trade Statistics Department, Czech Statistical Office*. Vol. 2013. 27 September 2013.

²¹² The data available for first three months of 2019 shows a drop in import from Russia (2,7%); however, similar situation occurred in 2018 when during first three month of the year, the import was lower (2,2%) than the overall volume in the whole year (3,1%). Foreign Trade Statistics. *Ministry of Industry and Trade*.

²¹³ Český export: místo Ruska Kolumbie, Senegal, Indie nebo Singapur. [Czech export: Colombia, Senegal, India or Singapore instead of Russia]. *ČT24*. 16 April 2015.

²¹⁴ Ruské sankce [Russian Sanctions]. Ministry of Agriculture.

²¹⁵ Interview with a Czech official, Prague, March 2019.

²¹⁶ Ibidem.

²¹⁷ BORČANY, Vít and Vít DOSTÁL. *Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2018* [2018 Czech Foreign Policy Agenda]. Prague: AMO, 2018, p. 41.

²¹⁸ GROSZKOWSKI, Jakub. Czech Dilemmas over Russia and NATO. *OSW*. 1 April 2015.

other Eastern European countries.²¹⁹ Furthermore, businesses operating in Russia face numerous obstacles, especially of administrative kind.²²⁰

Therefore, despite certain actors presenting the economic relations with Russia as an essential element of Czech trade, in fact the volume is not that significant. Furthermore, it seems that despite the sanction measures taken against RF and counter measures adopted by RF, Czech business managed to survive without being significantly damaged. Most companies that were impacted by the sanctions already managed to reorient their business elsewhere.²²¹

2.4.3.2 Energy relations

The Czech Republic is dependent on import of raw materials (oil, gas) from abroad. Most supplies come from RF. Despite Czech attempts to diversify its resources, it still relies on RF for approx. 60% of its supplies.²²²

Raw material security is an important theme in Czech strategical documents.²²³ Among strategic aims of the Czech Republic is to “ensure economic security of the Czech Republic through...diversification of strategic raw material;”²²⁴ “secure energetic security...and adequate strategic reserves.”²²⁵ Furthermore, among the security threats is “interruption in supplies of strategic raw materials.”²²⁶ For that reason, the country “supports mutual advantageous relation with countries that have supplies of raw material.”²²⁷ Therefore, it is important for the Czech Republic to keep the relations with Russia on certain level to ensure the supplies are not disturbed. The supplies were of concern of some government politicians in relation to the sanctions.²²⁸

²¹⁹ Interview with a Czech official, Prague, March 2019.

²²⁰ Among those obstacles are: „long and non-transparent procedures for a local branch set up“; „every changing legislation on entrepreneurship“; „use of half-legal or illegal measures by local companies which disqualifies foreign agents who are not willing to use them“; „official and unofficial preference for local suppliers“ etc. Rusko: obchodní a ekonomická spolupráce s ČR [Russia: business and economic cooperation with the Czech Republic]. *Czech embassy to Russia in Moscow.cz*. 8 April 2019.

²²¹ Interview with a Czech official, Prague, March 2019.

²²² In 2016, 64.44% of gas and 64.3% of oil comes from Russia. National Security Audit. Ministry of Interior. Prague, 2016, p. 115; MPO: Odbor surovinové a energetické bezpečnosti. Ropa, ropné produkty [Oil and oil products]. Říjen 2017.

²²³ Conceptual Basis of Czech Republic's Foreign Policy, 2015.

²²⁴ Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky [Security Strategy of the Czech Republic]. Prague, 2003, p. 6.

²²⁵ MZV. Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky [Security Strategy of the Czech Republic]. Prague, 2011, p. 6; MZV. Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky [Security Strategy of the Czech Republic]. Prague, 2015, p. 7.

²²⁶ MZV. Bezpečnostní strategie, 2011, p. 10.

²²⁷ MZV. Bezpečnostní strategie, 2011, p. 16; MZV. Bezpečnostní strategie, 2015, p. 19.

²²⁸ ČERNÁ, Daniela. Sankce jsou hezké, ale přijde zima, připomíná ministr zemědělství. Pak prý uvidíme, jak jsme na Rusku závislí [The Sanctions Are Nice, but winter is coming, reminds Minister of Agriculture. Then We Will See How Dependent on Russia We Are]. *Parlamentnilisty.cz*, 3 August 2014.

Thus, this issue could be an important element in decision on an adoption of sanctions against RF. Especially because the Czech Republic experienced cuts in supplies when RF used it as a tool against Ukraine with which the Czech Republic shares a pipeline. Czechia altogether with Poland, Hungary, France, and Germany “suffered the greatest economic losses due to the cut off of Russian gas” in 2006 and 2009.²²⁹ Some also suspected that the “technical reasons” which caused decreased inflow of oil from RF was in fact the Russian way to express its disagreement with an agreement on US radar located in the Czech Republic.²³⁰ The agreement was signed three days prior the issues occurred.

However, Tichý points out that Russians systematically worked on security discourse which would picture them as reliable partners and suppliers of oil and gas. He argues that the attempt to desecuritize energy relations with the EU was supported by various diversification projects that would ensure undisrupted supplies of raw materials going around “unreliable transit countries such as Ukraine.”²³¹ Therefore, these Russian attempts could have played a role in an assessment of measures against RF considering that these concerns are not voiced anymore.

2.4.3.3 Security concerns

On the other hand, anti-Russian narrative, which saw Russia as “a threat trying to destabilize international order and European security,”²³² has been strengthened by security concerns arising from Russian activities in the Czech Republic.

Security strategy from 2015 indirectly marks Russia as “a threat which could lead to weakening of collective security principles as well as political and international law commitments.”²³³ This reference did not appear out of nowhere. Czech Security Information Service (BIS) for at least past sixteen years mentions Russian intelligence services (IS) as the top priority of their concern.²³⁴ Moreover, the narrative used in BIS annual reports when talking about Russian IS has changed. In 2003 it mentions the intensity of Russian activities which should be of a concern of BIS, but at the same time mentions that there is a cooperation among

²²⁹ ZADOROZHNA, Olha. How Much Do the Neighbours Pay? *Centre for Research on Energy and Environment Economics and Policy*. Working Paper n. 48, March 2012, p. 19.

²³⁰ KRAMER, Andrew. Russian Oil to Czechs Slows after U.S. Pact. *The New York Times*. 11 July 2008.

²³¹ TICHÝ, Lukáš. Bezpečnostní diskurz Ruské federace o energetických vztazích s EU v letech 2012–2017[Security Discourse of Russian Federation on Energy Relations with the EU in between 2012 and 2017]. *Vojenské rozhledy*. Vol. 2, pp. 56-72, p. 71.

²³² CHMELAROVÁ, Alžběta. Česko-ruské vztahy: čas na změnu. Policy paper. AMO. 2017, p. 2.

²³³ HAVLÍČEK, TYSYACHNA, Jak dál?, p. 11.

²³⁴ It is based on the intensity of activities of a foreign intelligence services in the Czech Republic. Russian IS have been the most active so far. Sometimes accompanied by North Korean IS in 2000s and since 2012 by Chinese IS. BIS. Annual Reports of the Security Information Service for 2003-2017.

Russian IS and Czech and other intelligence services. It also mentions Russians building “necessary information basis on our territory.”²³⁵ The understanding tone cannot be found in any subsequent annual reports.

In the course of time, BIS Annual Reports show increasing activities of Russian IS on the Czech territory. In 2014, BIS in its annual report stated that Russian activities in Europe aim at “not only against the integrity of the EU and NATO. It is assessed that Russia is creating a structure in Europe drawing on the concept of the Comintern...”²³⁶

Russian IS have always been active in the Czech Republic, but the activities increased since the conflict in Ukraine. Before the conflict, Russian IS focused on its influence over Czech business, especially in the energy sector, and communities of immigrants living in the Czech Republic.²³⁷ Besides that, it also created a network of people willing to share internal information from Czech government bodies or business, even though it was not always intentional²³⁸ as Russian IS has many officers among Prague embassy staff. It is worth noting that Russian Embassy in Prague staff is excessively large since the 1960s and there is a reasonable suspicion, among other supported by information from BIS annual reports, that some members of the staff are working for Russian IS and operating not only on Czech territory, but in other countries as well.²³⁹

The structure Russian IS created earlier to promote Russian economic and political objectives, has been used to spread Russian propaganda about the Ukrainian crisis since 2014.²⁴⁰ The propaganda is identified as a part of hybrid strategy targeted at NATO and EU. Ditrych and Eichler assumes that in 2014 Russian information operations had an impact on Czech public discussions on security and defence.²⁴¹

Overall, the activities of Russian IS has become a serious threat to “security and other key interest of the Czech Republic.”²⁴² The author argues that this fact created an environment strengthening anti-Russian narrative and Russia awareness, which eventually helped the elite idealistic identity to become more dominant.

²³⁵ 2003, p. 8.

²³⁶ BIS. *Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2014*, p. 11.

²³⁷ For example: BIS. *Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012*, p. 13.

²³⁸ BIS. *Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2014*, p. 11.

²³⁹ HAVLÍČKEK, TYSYACHNA, *Jak dál?*, p. 11; For more information on Russian spies in the Czech Republic see for example KUNDRA, Ondřej. *Putinovi Agenti [Putin's Agents]*. Prague: Bizbooks, 2016.

²⁴⁰ BIS. *Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2014*, p. 11.

²⁴¹ DITRYCH, Ondřej and Jan EICHLER. *Bezpečnostní rozměr české zahraniční politiky [Security Dimension of Czech Foreign Policy]* in: KOŘAN, Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2014, p. 84.

²⁴² BIS, *Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2017*, p. 6

2.4.4 Measures

It is worth noting that an important part of the debate was the type of the measure which should be adopted. The EU has several possibilities from which to choose. Recently, it decided to side with a more selective approach when it comes to sanctions. Furthermore, the system of sanctions' adoption enables member states to voice their opposition and veto the measure if it truly does not want to participate.

Firstly, the author briefly introduces the roots of European foreign policy cooperation (and the issues of sanctions. Especially, how they are anchored in the law which influences the process of their implementation. It is important to understand the procedure to see that for the sanctions to be efficiently implemented, all member states not only must be willing to agree but also ensure the implementation. It also covers the type of the sanctions, as there has been shift from comprehensive to targeted sanctions which on one hand ease the burden on civilian society, on the other hand it also enables the imposing states to diminish possible damage the measure could inflict upon the imposing states.

2.4.4.1 Sanctions

Sanction or restrictive measures²⁴³ are one of the measures the EU implements to pursue its foreign policy. The EU adopts two kinds of sanctions – autonomous EU sanctions and sanctions adopting certain UN restrictive measures.²⁴⁴ Until 1980s, member states of the EC implemented sanctions adopted by the UN. As Russell points out, that changed after the end of Cold War,²⁴⁵ 1990s were called “the sanction decade” due to a high increase in imposed sanctions.²⁴⁶

The legal basis of sanctions lies in EU acquis. Sanctions adopted under CFSP must always be in accordance with CFSP objectives listed in Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). Their aim, as stated by the Council of the EU, is “to bring about a change in policy or activity by the target country, part of country, government, entities or individual, in line with the objectives set out in the CFSP Council Decision.”²⁴⁷ There are six types of EU

²⁴³ Terms „sanctions“ and „restrictive measures“ are in the EU context used interchangeably. General Secretariat of the Council. *Sanctions Guidelines – update. 5664/18*. Brussels, 4 May 2018, p. 2.

²⁴⁴ Eckes points out that despite the possibility to appeal EU decision regarding EU restrictive measure, there is a persistent problem of lack of transparency and inability to access relevant documents based on which decisions were taken to judiciary, nor the targeted persons. ECKES, Christina. Decision-making in the Dark? Autonomous EU Sanctions and National Classification. *Amsterdam Centre for European Law and Governance. Working Paper Series 2012 – 02*. 2012, p. 3.

²⁴⁵ RUSSELL, Martin. EU sanctions: A key foreign and security policy instrument. p. 2.

²⁴⁶ Over fifty new sanctions were implemented in the 1990. OUDRAAT, Chantal de Jonge and PJ SIMMONS. Sanctions decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s. *Carnegie*. April 18, 2000.

²⁴⁷ General Secretariat of the Council. *Sanctions Guidelines – update. 5664/18*, p. 5.

CFSP sanctions: asset freezes, visa bans, arms embargoes, financial measures, flight and shipping bans, and trade measures.²⁴⁸

A legal procedure for sanctions adoption is as follows. First the Council of the EU “adopts a CFSP Decision under Article 29 of the TEU.”²⁴⁹ That decision is intergovernmental in its nature²⁵⁰ and must be adopted by unanimity.²⁵¹ Subsequently, as is further described in the council guidelines on sanctions, if the sanctions are meant to be implemented directly by member states; therefore, do not fall under exclusive competences of the EU, such as visa bans, arms embargoes, member states are responsible to ensure a practical implementation of the measures as they are required by the treaties to act in accordance with CFSP Council Decisions.²⁵²

The sanctions can also be implemented by means of regulation are “directly applicable throughout the EU.”²⁵³ Such sanctions include economic relations with third countries. In order to adopt this kind of restrictive measures, the Council of the EU adopts a regulation under qualified majority voting which was jointly proposed by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission under Article 215 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Such regulation as well as CFSP Council Decision which introduce restrictive measure against legal and natural persons are subject to judicial review.²⁵⁴

The Council stresses out that restrictive measures should be targeted; therefore, they should cause harm only to those responsible for problematic issues.²⁵⁵ This tendency appeared after the devastating impact of comprehensive sanctions on civilian population became apparent.²⁵⁶ Targeted sanctions or smart sanctions are used increasingly by the EU to limit the

²⁴⁸ RUSSELL, EU sanctions, p. 4.

²⁴⁹ Ibidem.

²⁵⁰ PORTELA, Clara. Member States Resistance to EU Foreign Policy Sanctions. *European Foreign Affairs Review* 20, Special Issue, 2015, p. 42.

²⁵¹ RUSSELL, EU sanctions, p. 6.

²⁵² In case of sanctions implemented by member states, the actors bond themselves to cooperate under sincere cooperation principle. PORTELA, Member States Resistance to EU Foreign Policy Sanctions, p. 44.

²⁵³ Ibidem.

²⁵⁴ Council of the European Union. *Sanctions Guidelines*, p. 6. A unique element of EU sanctions is that it can be appealed at the court. This right has been successfully invoked in the past. DE WET, Erica. From Kadi to Nada: Judicial Techniques Favouring Human Rights Over United Nations Security Council Sanctions. *Chinese Journal of International Law*. Vol. 12, no. 4, 2013, pp. 787-807.

²⁵⁵ More precisely, „responsible for the policies or actions that have prompted the EU decision to impose restrictive measures“. General Secretariat of the Council. *Sanctions Guidelines – update. 5664/18*, p. 8.

²⁵⁶ OUDRAAT, Chantal de Jonge and PJ SIMMONS. Sanctions decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s. *Carnegie*. April 18, 2000.

impact of sanctions to general population of a targeted state. At this moment, targeted sanctions are commonly used in the international arena. Some scholars pointed out that coming back to comprehensive sanctions is hard to imagine;²⁵⁷ however, some contributions from the more recent scholarship bring out a tendency slowly coming back to more comprehensive sanctions. They call it “comprehensivisation” of targeted sanctions. They provide two reasons for that. Firstly, politicians have already forgotten humanitarian impact comprehensive sanctions had in 1990s. Secondly, they argue that “it is not easy to keep targeted sanctions targeted.”²⁵⁸ At the same time, there is not enough evidence that targeted sanctions are more successful in delivering a required result.²⁵⁹

Even though some scholars provide arguments that unanimity in EU foreign policy decisions is not necessary to successfully achieve goals²⁶⁰ as indicated above, in the case of the sanctions is the unanimity necessary, especially because it concerns a long-term measure which is implemented on the national level.

2.4.4.2 The sanctions against RF over Ukraine

This sanction regimes belong to those which were adopted by the EU, not by the UN. It is for obvious reasons as RF has a permanent seat in the Security Council of the UN with the right of veto; therefore, its approval is necessary for sanctions adoption and it is highly unlikely that RF would approve of sanction measures against itself. This could possibly suggest stronger determination among member states to adopt the sanctions without wide UN backing.

The sanctions were firstly adopted between March and July 2014 and further expanded later. The sanctions against RF include four sanction regimes: restrictive measures in view of Russia’s actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine (sectoral restrictive measures), restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty

²⁵⁷ PORTELA, Clara. Are European Union sanctions “targeted”? *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2016, Vol. 29, No. 3, p. 915; DOXEY, Margaret. Reflections on the sanctions’ decade and beyond. *International Journal*. No. 64., Vol. 2, p. 544.

²⁵⁸ BIERSTEKER, Thomas J., ECKERT, Sue E. and Marcos TOURINHO (eds.). *Targeted Sanctions. The Impacts and Effectiveness of United Nations Action*. Cambridge University Press 2016, pp. 270-271.

²⁵⁹ DREZNER, Daniel. W. Sanctions Sometimes Smart: Targeted Sanctions in Theory and Practise. *International Studies Review*. Vol. 13, No. 1, March 2011, p. 97; Some scholars even question the effectiveness of economic sanction per se. SMEETS, Maarten. Can Economic Sanctions Be Effective? *World Trade Organization*. 15 March 2018, p. 2.

²⁶⁰ For example: MACAJ, Gjovalin and Kalypso NICOLAÏDIS. Beyond ‘one voice’? Global Europe’s engagement with its own diversity. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 21, No. 7, 2014, pp. 1067-1083.

and independence of Ukraine, restrictive measures in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and a response to misappropriation of state funds of Ukraine.²⁶¹

The sanctions approved by the Council of the EU were accompanied (and in some cases preceded) by a statement from European Council, which includes the reasons for which the EU decided to adopt the measures. The justification is also included in the text of the decision on the sanctions. In the decision 2014/119/CFSP in the justification the Council refers to “full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms”, to which later in the text also adds “consolidation and supporting the rule of law” and negative interpretation of use of violence. Therefore, calling upon adherence to international law and fundamental rights as understood by the EU.

A very careful approach was adopted when the sanctions (especially the sectoral sanctions) were drafted. The aim was to ensure that any of member states does not feel hurt too much or significantly more than the others.²⁶² It was to strengthen the support for the sanctions and prevent possible future inconvenience.

2.5 Understanding Czech position over the sanctions in the context

After the idealistic identity became more dominant in the issue of the sanctions, it kept its dominance throughout next few years. Right at the beginning when first sanctions were adopted, the plans for a Russian company, which was expected to secure a construction of two new reactors of Temelín nuclear plant, were called off in April 2014.²⁶³ The Skripal²⁶⁴ and Nikulin²⁶⁵ affairs displayed features of the idealistic approach which is not inclined to be indulgent with Russia. The affairs contributed to worsening of mutual Czech-Russian relations

²⁶¹ EU Sanction Map.

²⁶² Interviews with Czech officials and an EU official, March-April 2019.

²⁶³ RACZ, Andras. *The Visegrad Cooperation: Central Europe Divided Over Russia*, p. 71.

²⁶⁴ In March 2018 a former Russian spy Sergej Skripal was Poisoned by Novichok Poison. The UK blamed it on RF, which refused the allegation and accused among other the Czech Republic saying the poison came from there. AS a result, the Czech Republic (altogether with a few other countries) decided to expel three Russian spies, who operated under diplomatic cover. KUŽNÍK, Jan, JUN, Daniel and University of Defense. *Co zabije ruského špiona Skripala a proč jen novičok v Česku nemáme* [What Kills Russian Spy Skripal and Why We Do Not Have Novichok in Czechia]. [online]. *Idnes.cz*. 29 March 2018. Available at: https://www.idnes.cz/technet/vojenstvi/novicok-novichol-newcommer.A180327_143957_vojenstvi_kuz;

Accessed on 20 May 2019; PRACHAL, Lukáš. *Česko kvůli kauze Skripal vyhostí tři ruské diplomaty*. [Czechia is going expels three Russian diplomats over the Skripal case]. [online]. *Idnes.cz*. 26 March 2018. Available at: [https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/cesko-vyhosti-tri-ruske-diplomaty-shromazdovali-informace-a/r~4e417dd630f211e88560ac1f6b220ee8/;](https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/cesko-vyhosti-tri-ruske-diplomaty-shromazdovali-informace-a/r~4e417dd630f211e88560ac1f6b220ee8/) Accessed on 20 May 2019.

²⁶⁵ Yevgeniy Nikulin is a Russian hacker accused by the USA authorities of attack on servers such as LinkedIn or DropBox. He was arrested in 2016 in the Czech Republic on the basis of the US arrest warrant. Shortly after, the Czech Republic received US and Russian request to extradite Nikulin. In March 2018, the Czech Republic extradited him to the USA. *Kauza Nikulin přehledně*. [Nikulin Affair Clearly]. [online]. *Respekt.cz*. 9 August 2016. Available at: <https://www.reflex.cz/nikulin-jevgenij-hacker;> Accessed on 20 May 2019.

which reached the point where the high-level official contacts remain rather limited.²⁶⁶ Russian perception of the Czech Republic also changed. Previously, it was perceived as “a friendly country” to RF, but the signals Czech officials are getting now reveals that they are not perceived like that anymore.²⁶⁷

In this chapter, the author introduced basic features of the elite idealistic identity, which became dominant when the Czech government adopted the decision on the sanctions against RF. The author further presented the conditions which made it possible for the identity to prevail in Czech political decision-making and thus influenced the choice which was eventually made. Therefore, providing an understanding of why the decision was taken.

As the discussion in the Czech Republic was divided, Czech politicians tried to distance themselves from it by framing it as a European decision which was shaped in detail by the administration, not politicians, thus trying to transfer the responsibility elsewhere avoiding a negative public reaction. The elite idealistic identity was strong among officials from MZV who led the process of position drafting as well as some members of the government, which determined the final outcome of the process. Moreover, some Czech politicians and officials involved in the decision on the sanctions expressed strong emotions considering the issues especially in relation to RF. Their understanding of the issues was influenced by complex set of ideas based on historical experience of Czechoslovakia with RF and the USSR, but also by its position in the structure (EU, NATO) and the importance put on being perceived as a reliable partner by Western partners of the country. These findings support the author’s argument on the dominant elite idealistic identity.

²⁶⁶ Interview with a Czech official, Prague, March 2019.

²⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

3. Conclusion

In this thesis the author attempts to arrive at understanding of the decision of Czechia on the sanctions and answer the question “why the Czech Republic decided to support EU sanctions against RF over Ukraine despite the cleavage among politicians?” Building on Social Constructivist and FPA scholarship, a phenomenon of identity is used. It is argued that one of the foreign policy identities present in Czech political environment –the elite idealistic identity - dominated among the elites involved when the decision on the sanctions’ adoption was taken. Therefore, the decision was in coherence with the norms and values of the identity such as respect to international law, moralism, and influenced by awareness of RF. As implied, it is an identity held not by majority, but just a segment of the population, which had a crucial role in decision-making at that time.

Identity is rarely used when dealing with the Czech foreign policy. Thus, this thesis is a contribution which aims to draw more attention to it and possibly provoke other scholars to more in-depth analysis of the phenomenon in the Czech environment it provides understanding to Czech foreign policy. The thesis is a case study; therefore, application of the identity to other cases can lead to a shift in its definition; however, the key features should remain.

Considering identity in foreign policy evaluation provides with more complex comprehension of it. Understanding the existence of identities in foreign policy could in general improve a cooperation on international level. As indicated, the perception of the event can differ based on sources of information. Observes relying exclusively on public statements of politicians can without deeper understanding of context come to misleading conclusions. It can further lead to undesirable consequences as the EU is built on mutual trust. Therefore, this thesis contributes to a better understanding to Czech foreign policy and politics on international level. For the future, identity as a variable in foreign policy issues deserves more attention from scholars especially in the context of the EU where misunderstandings, particularly in public discourse, are a common feature, which can seriously damage internal cohesion.

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