Abstract

The thesis concentrates on two phenomena: EU foreign policy and the EU-Israel relationship. As a result, the methodological approach is two-fold. The first focal point of the thesis is the evolution of EU foreign policy itself, especially concentrating on the situation before and after the Treaty of Lisbon came into effect on 1 December 2009. The second focal point of the thesis are two qualitative analyses of *Operation Cast Lead* (2008/2009) and *Operation Protective Edge* (2014) which compare the reactions of EU institutions with the reactions of two ‘pro-Israel’ EU member states (Germany and the Czech Republic) and two ‘anti-Israel’ EU member states (France and Sweden) to each conflict. The theoretical approach of the thesis is derived from the theory of normative institutionalism developed by Daniel C. Thomas. Based on this theory, the thesis argues that: [1] the increasing power of EU institutions has a mitigating effect on the sharp rhetoric of the member states; and [2] accentuated by the Lisbon Treaty reforms, institutionalism transforms the whole concept of EU foreign policy as individual member states perceive joint action as an intrinsic value and favour consistency and coherence in EU policy-making across time and issue-areas. Lastly, based on the qualitative analysis of the EU statements during both conflicts, this thesis argues that [3] despite the popular perception of deteriorating EU-Israel relations, the EU expressed more support for Israeli actions during *Operation Protective Edge* than during *Operation Cast Lead*. 