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Israel–Europe Relations After the Gaza War: Strategic Dialogue, Political Constraints, and the Role of Czech Israeli Cooperation

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Summary

The Gaza war has significantly reshaped Israel–Europe relations. While most European states continue to support Israel’s right to security after the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023, the broader regional conflict has deepened political divisions within Europe. As a result, cooperation has become increasingly influenced by domestic politics and differing strategic priorities. The Czech Republic remains one of Israel’s closest European partners, and its bilateral relationship can help sustain dialogue where EU consensus is limited. This policy paper argues that long-term stability requires renewed strategic dialogue combining security, governance, reconstruction, and economic cooperation to rebuild political trust and strengthen shared strategic interests.

Key Takeaways

- Establishing a structured Israel–Europe strategic dialogue focused on security, humanitarian stabilization, and regional escalation risks.
- Using trusted bilateral partnerships, including the Czech Israeli relationship, to maintain channels of communication.
- Linking reconstruction planning in Gaza to governance reform, anti-radicalization, and strict security guarantees.

Introduction

The war in Gaza following the Hamas-led attacks against Israel on 7 October 2023 has become one of the most consequential crises for Israel–Europe relations in recent decades. The attacks, which killed Israeli civilians and involved hostage-taking, generated strong initial solidarity with Israel across much of Europe.

The result is a relationship marked by contradiction. Israel and Europe remain deeply interconnected through trade, science, defense dialogue, intelligence cooperation, technology, and cultural exchange. The European Union is one of Israel’s most important trading partners, and Israel participates in major European research and innovation frameworks, including Horizon Europe (European Commission, 2021). At the same time, the political legitimacy of these ties is increasingly contested within Europe, especially where public opinion is strongly mobilized by pro-Palestinian circles (Ünlühisarcıklı et al., 2025).

This policy paper examines how the Gaza war has affected Israel–Europe relations and identifies the main political and diplomatic challenges. It also explores the role of bilateral partnerships, with particular emphasis on Czech-Israeli relations, as a potential stabilizing mechanism within a fragmented European environment.

The core argument is that Israel–Europe relations will remain strategically necessary but politically fragile. Their future will depend on whether both sides can move beyond crisis management towards a structured framework that integrates security, regional diplomacy, and practical cooperation (Quilliam, 2025; Tzidkiyahu, Bermant, 2024).

Strategic Context: Gaza, Regional Escalation, and European Fragmentation

The current crisis cannot be understood only as a bilateral issue between Israel and the Palestinians. It is embedded in a broader regional security environment involving Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis, Gulf states, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and the United States. The Gaza war has increased the risk of regional escalation, particularly through the Israel–Hezbollah front, Iranian-backed networks, maritime insecurity in the Red Sea, and wider polarization in Arab and Muslim publics (Sharp, Zanotti, 2024).

For Israel, the dominant strategic priority after 7 October has been the restoration of deterrence, the destruction or severe weakening of Hamas’s military capacity, the return of hostages, and the prevention of future cross-border attacks. Israeli security has been shaped by the perception that previous containment strategies towards Hamas failed. This has created strong domestic pressure for a military response aimed at fundamentally altering the security environment in and around Gaza (Shalom, Kurz, 2022: 59–62).

For Europe, however, the crisis has produced multiple and sometimes conflicting priorities. These include support for Israel’s security, prevention of regional escalation, humanitarian access to Gaza, protection of civilians, counterterrorism, domestic social cohesion, migration concerns, energy security, and the preservation of a rules-based international order. European governments also differ in their historical experiences, domestic political cultures, and diplomatic relationships with Israel and the Palestinian Authority. As a result, the EU has struggled to speak with one voice (Ünlühisarcıklı et al., 2025).

This fragmentation is visible in voting patterns at the United Nations, in national positions on ceasefire language, in debates over arms exports, and in discussions about recognizing Palestinian statehood, with some states not coordinating their positions on the Palestinian state with their partners in the EU at all. Some countries have moved towards stronger criticism of Israeli policy, while others have prioritized Israel's security and the fight against Hamas (United Nations Security Council, 2023; United Nations Security Council, 2024). The Czech Republic has generally belonged to the latter group, maintaining one of the most consistently pro-Israel positions within the EU.

The lack of European unity weakens the EU's ability to influence events. However, it also reflects a structural reality: Europe's Middle East policy is often driven by member states rather than by EU institutions alone. Therefore, bilateral partnerships remain essential. In the post-Gaza environment, trusted bilateral relationships can preserve dialogue, reduce misperceptions, and support targeted cooperation even when broader EU consensus is difficult (Quilliam, 2025).

Balancing Security and Humanitarian Considerations

Europe's central policy dilemma is how to uphold Israel's right to security while addressing humanitarian considerations. These objectives are often presented as mutually exclusive, but in strategic terms they are interdependent. A balanced European approach should rest on three principles:

First, Hamas's military and political role must be clearly addressed. Any sustainable post-war framework requires that Gaza is not be used as a platform for attacks against Israel. This implies demilitarization mechanisms, border monitoring, anti-smuggling arrangements, and international or regional guarantees (Shalom, Kurz, 2022: 40).

Secondly, reconstruction must be conditional but credible. Large-scale reconstruction without governance reform and security guarantees risks strengthening armed groups. Conversely, withholding reconstruction indefinitely would deepen despair and instability. A phased reconstruction model should involve the EU, Arab partners, international financial institutions, and de-Hamasified Palestinian administrative structures (World Bank, 2024: 21–23).

Third, Europe should avoid purely declaratory diplomacy. Calls for ceasefires, two-state solutions, or accountability are insufficient unless they are connected to operational proposals. Europe's comparative advantages lie in funding, institution-building, border assistance, civilian missions, regulatory expertise, technology, and economic incentives (Tzidkiyahu, Bermant, 2024).

The Role of Bilateral Partnerships: The Czech-Israeli Case

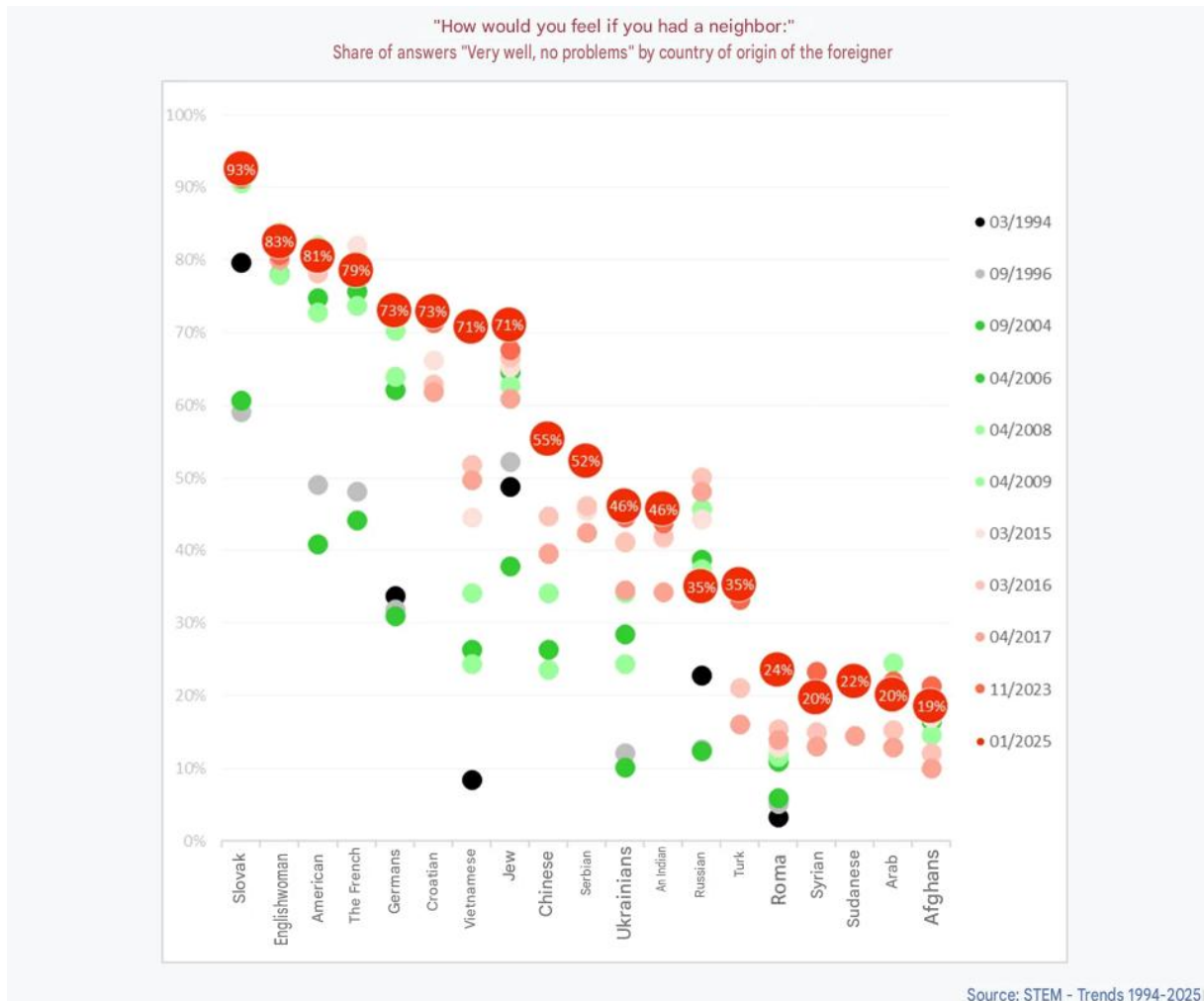
Bilateral partnerships can play an important role in preserving constructive relations when multilateral diplomacy is paralyzed. The Czech-Israeli relationship is among the strongest examples in Europe. It is rooted in historical memory, including Czechoslovak support for the establishment of Israel in 1948, as well as post-1989 political affinity, defense cooperation, scientific exchange, and shared perceptions of democratic resilience.

The Czech Republic has repeatedly positioned itself as one of Israel's closest partners in the EU. This is no coincidence, and this exceptional relationship stems from the deep friendship that permeates Czech society. Israelis are among the most popular nations and ethnic groups in the long-term monitored attitudes of the Czech public. If we look at the data from the STEM agency¹ (see the graph below),

¹ A credible private sociological research firm with socio-economic research projects spanning decades.

we can conclude that having an Israeli (labeled as a “Jew” in the survey) as a neighbor would not be a problem for 71 percent of those surveyed, which is not surprising, since the attitude of the Czech population towards Israelis and Israel has been positive for a long time, and this positive perception has been gradually increasing since the 1990s. This gives Prague a degree of political trust in Israel that many other European capitals lack.

Figure 1: STEM: Answers to the question: “How would you feel if you had as a neighbor:” Share of answers “Very well, no problems” by country of origin of the foreigner in the years 1994-2025.



Source: (STEM 2025; machine translation of an image from Czech to English)

Regarding the interstate diplomatic exchange that has taken place so far and with regard to the program statement of the new government (PPV, 2025), we can describe the potential areas of Czech-Israeli partnership in five areas:

- **Security and Defence Dialogue:** The Czech Republic and Israel have shared interests in counterterrorism, air defense, intelligence cooperation, drone technologies, cybersecurity, and resilience against hybrid threats. Israel’s defense innovation ecosystem is highly relevant for European security, particularly in the context of Russia’s war against Ukraine and the growing importance of air defense and unmanned systems.
- **Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure:** Both countries face cyber threats from state and non-state actors. Cooperation in cyber defense, protection of critical infrastructure,

and public–private technology ecosystems could be expanded. This area is politically less sensitive than military operations in Gaza and offers practical benefits for broader European resilience (OECD, 2023).

- **Research, Innovation, and Start-up Ecosystems:** Israel’s participation in European research programs remains a key channel of cooperation. The Czech Republic can help protect scientific cooperation from political breakdown while encouraging ethical standards and transparency. Joint projects in artificial intelligence, medical technology, water management, agriculture, and energy efficiency can demonstrate the practical value of continued engagement (European Commission, 2021; OECD, 2023).
- **Humanitarian Technology and Reconstruction:** Czech-Israeli cooperation should not be limited to hard security. It could also include humanitarian technologies, trauma medicine, emergency response, water purification, rehabilitation, and post-conflict reconstruction expertise. This would help reframe the partnership as contributing not only to Israeli security but also to regional stabilization (World Bank, 2024).
- **Strategic Dialogue within Europe:** Prague can serve as an informal platform for discreet dialogue among Israeli officials, European diplomats, regional experts, and policy institutions. The Chatham House format is especially suitable for discussing politically sensitive topics, including post-war governance in Gaza, European public opinion, hostage diplomacy, and regional escalation (Quilliam, 2025).

Conclusion

Israel–Europe relations after the Gaza war will be shaped by the tension between strategic necessity and political fragility. Europe and Israel continue to share significant interests in security, counterterrorism, innovation, technology, trade, and regional stability. The central task is not to return to the pre-war status quo. That status quo has been shattered by the events of 7 October. Instead, Israel and Europe need a new framework for engagement that recognizes Israeli security trauma, regional escalation risks, and Europe’s normative commitments.

The Czech-Israeli partnership can play a valuable role in this process. Its strength lies in trust, continuity, and practical cooperation. But its future relevance will depend on whether it can contribute to broader strategic dialogue rather than only bilateral solidarity. If carefully used, the Czech relationship with Israel can help sustain communication, promote sectoral cooperation, and support a more balanced European approach.

Long-term stability will require more than military success, humanitarian aid, or diplomatic declarations. It will require a combined strategy: security guarantees for Israel, credible governance for Palestinians, regional participation by Arab states, and sustained European engagement. Without such an integrated approach, Israel–Europe relations will remain vulnerable to recurring crises, public polarization, and strategic drift.

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