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DIPLOMATIC CRISIS BETWEEN POLAND AND ISRAEL IN RIGHT-WING DAILIES

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Abstract

The change of the law regarding the Institute of National Remembrance conducted by the right-wing government of Law and Justice in Poland probably led to the most serious diplomatic crisis in Polish-Israeli relations since their resumption in 1990. The whole situation has been widely described in the Polish and Israeli media. The role of this article is to analyse the content of two newspapers: Polish *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* and Israeli *Israel Hayom*, between 25 January and 31 March 2018. The two right-wing-leaning daily newspapers selected by the authors are perceived as not entirely objective due to open support for governments in their countries and as openly expressing their opinions, often in a controversial manner. It makes them a perfect case to compare the narrative about the diplomatic crisis between Poland and Israel.

Keywords: Poland, Israel, diplomatic crisis, Institute of National Remembrance, media, right wing dailies, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*, *Israel Hayom*

Introduction

Polish-Israeli relations were fully restored in 1990 following the united reaction of the Soviet bloc countries on the results of the Six Day War. This reaction was the result of orders from Moscow, who supported the Arab states and did not welcome Israeli victory in the war. One could think that the period of relations between the countries is relatively short. However, it is impossible to speak about Polish-Israeli relations without remembering not only their common history and coexistence, but also the tragic moments in Polish-Jewish relations that were manifested through existing anti-Semitism, the extermination of Jews on the Polish territory by Germans and the anti-Jewish policy of the communist author-

ities. All this means that, despite the considerable geographical distance between the two countries, the cultural and historical links between the nations (which are not always interpreted in the same way in Poland and Israel), make these relations unique. This was also confirmed by Prof. Joanna Dyduch (2010, 170, 282), who wrote that the most important factors that have impact on Polish-Israeli relations are historical, especially World War II and the restitution of Jewish property. It is hard to disagree with the author, because these historical elements also had a large impact on the recent crisis between the countries from the beginning of 2018.

The return to power in Poland in 2015 of the Law and Justice party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS), which is described as a right wing, conservative party (Ochman 2013, 21), in Poland in 2015 from the beginning could be perceived as the new chapter of the Polish-Israeli relations after eight years of the Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*) and the Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*) coalition government. This perception of PiS was caused by common identification, mostly in media and society, of the party with the political sentiments broadcasted from of Radio Maryja (a Christian radio station), in which anti-Semitic statements had been made earlier.

Additionally, it should be underlined that the Middle Eastern and Israeli relations have never been a main target of Polish diplomacy (Szydzisz 2014). Poland has supported the peace process and the right for self-determination of both the Palestinian and Jewish nations. Poland's limited attention towards the Middle East could be explained by the limitations of the Polish diplomatic service and its focus in setting other foreign policy goals. Prof. Ryszard Zięba (2012, 17–34) distinguished the two directions of Polish diplomacy after political transformation in 1989: the so-called “Euro-Atlantic option” and the eastern policy. The first includes all types of tightening relations with the EU, NATO and the United States. Eastern policy included breaking ties with Russian Federation as the successor of the Soviet Union. Currently, Polish diplomacy focuses more on a cooperation known as the “Three Seas Initiative” or the “Baltic, Adriatic, Black Sea (BABS) Initiative”.

However, for *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, Israel appeared as one of the most important non-European partners for Poland, especially in the field of economic and military cooperation. There was a clear increase in diplomatic activity between the two countries in 2016–2017. This was manifested, inter alia, in the intergovernmental meeting in Israel (21–22 November 2016), the Polish presidential couple's visit to Israel (16–19 January 2017), which was very well received in Israeli press and the first joint summit of the Visegrád Group and Israel in Budapest (19 July 2017).

All of the diplomatic achievements from over two years of Polish-Israeli cooperation under the PiS government, or even since the restoration of relations in 1990, encountered a crisis in January 2018 that was initiated by the amendment to the Act of the Institute of National Remembrance. The main aim of the new law was to prevent the use of the false terms “Polish concentration camps”, “Polish death camps” and to prevent accusing the Polish state of complicity in carrying out the Holocaust with the Germans and cooperation with Germans and their allies (‘Full text of Poland’s controversial Holocaust legislation’, The Time of Israel).

On 27 January 2018, during the seventy-third anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp, the ambassador of Israel in Poland – Anna Azari – expressed opposition of the Israeli government to the amendment to the Act of the Institute of National Remembrance from 25 Janu-

ary. She claimed that such legislation could lead to the limitation of freedom of speech and research and could be treated as punishment for Holocaust survivors' testimonies ('Zdumiewające słowa ambasador Izraela: Rząd naszego kraju odrzuca nowelizację ustawy o IPN', w Polityce). On the same day, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wrote on Twitter that the amended Polish law is "absurd" and "we cannot change history and the Holocaust cannot be denied" ('Zdumiewające słowa ambasador Izraela: Rząd naszego kraju odrzuca nowelizację ustawy o IPN', w Polityce). The amendment became the beginning of diplomatic tensions between Poland and Israel. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's attempts to ease the situation and defend Polish intentions were sources of more misunderstanding and criticism. Israeli politicians interpreted the law as violating freedom of expression and as an effort to change history. Members of Knesset such as Yair Lapid (Yesh Atid), Itzik Shmuli (Zionist Union), Shuli Moalem-Rafaeli (Jewish Home) or Merav Ben-Ari (Kulanu) strongly opposed the amendment and called PM Netanyahu to act against Polish legislation (Kenion, Zeive, Harkov, 2018). This situation led to the creation of Polish and Israeli dialogue groups to conduct talks on historical-legislative issues. On 1 March, the first meeting of the groups was held, but it did not bring any concrete results ('Po spotkaniu ws. dialogu polsko-izraelskiego. "Nasze perspektywy są odrębne"', RMF FM). As of writing, the next meeting date is to be announced. On 6 February, Polish President Andrzej Duda signed the amendment and then directed it to the Constitutional Tribunal to confirm that it would not violate the freedom of expression. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Science and Higher Education Jarosław Gowin met with Israeli Minister of Science, Technology and Space Ofir Akunis. Both agreed that the Polish-Israeli discussion on the amendment will resolve the problem, but nothing specific was established ("Ważny krok". Gowin w Izraelu, rozmawiał o ustawie o IPN', TVN24). On June 27, Polish PM Mateusz Morawiecki proposed the new bill of the amendment. Parliament passed it. The new version of the law repealed criminal responsibility for Polish citizens and foreigners for blaming Polish people for Nazi German crimes. The opinions of Polish President Andrzej Duda and Attorney General Zbigniew Ziobro and public debate on the issue were referenced as justifications for the new changes in the bill ('Sejm w ekspresowym tempie przegłosował nowelizację ustawy o IPN', TVN24). The next day, immediately after the new law was passed, Morawiecki and Netanyahu signed a mutual statement on their commitment to preserve the history of the Holocaust. Two important statements came from the mutual statement. First, the formulation "Polish death camps" downgrades German responsibility for the Holocaust and baselessly blames the entire Polish nation. The second statement says that any Polish crime against Jews will be condemned (Osiecki 2018).

An interesting way of understanding the tensions around the Polish law is presented by David Baron (2018). He related it to the views on the Holocaust. The first, created in Western Europe, is based on the universalist message that the Holocaust was a crime against humanity, which has become a metaphor of suffering in general, thus diminishing Jewish suffering. The second view was created in Eastern Europe where, during Communism, the Holocaust was replaced by the narrative of the glorious Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. After the collapse of the USSR, a space for national identities and national narrations was created. Baron stated that every newly created state presented itself as a suffering one and marginalized or ignored negative facts from the wartime. Thus, he claims that there is no

place for Polish, Russian or Ukrainian perpetration, there is only the relation “we – absolute victims” vs “they – total executioners”.

The aforementioned diplomatic tensions were constantly reported by both states’ media. The authors of this article decided to choose two daily newspapers with right-wing political leaning: the Polish *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* (Polish Daily Gazette) and *Israel Hayom* (Israel Today). Both daily newspapers are perceived as partisan due to their open support for their acting governments. The main goal of the article is to observe and analyse the content of both newspapers regarding Polish, Israeli and Jewish relations. The newspapers were analysed from 28 January to 31 March 2018. The starting date corresponds to International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the first official criticism of the amendment to the Act of the Institute of National Remembrance made by Israeli ambassador Azari. The end date is set for the end of the March due to the gradual disappearance of the topic. Additionally, in order to show how much controversy in the media this amendment provoked, the same period for 2017 will be analysed to show whether the subject of Polish-Israeli relations also appeared in media coverage.

Gazeta Polska Codziennie and *Israel Hayom* are compared and described from the perspective of the theory of constructivism, referring in particular to its social aspects. Constructivists claim that by participating in mutual relations, states gain identity or awareness of their roles and expectations towards each other. Additionally, states assign specific identities to different countries and constantly reproduce their own identity in everyday social practices (Czaputowicz 2007, 306–307). Moreover, identity arises as a result of the influence of norms dominating in a given community, repetitive action and interactions between states. Collective identities are in turn the result of historical processes. It is worth remembering that identities differ in type and role: the type is determined by such features as the form or system of the state (e.g. democratic or authoritarian state), and the role is determined by relations between states (e.g. they can compete with each other or support each other) (Wendt 2008, 211–223). Carrying out the analysis from a constructivist point of view will bring us closer to understanding the determinants of the relations between Poland and Israel.

The main research technique used in this work is content analysis of the mentioned dailies, namely quantitative content analysis focused on the number of articles appearing in both journals, while qualitative content analysis draws attention to the strategies of argumentation and general attitude towards the topic. The thesis that this article should verify is that the discourse in both journals was clearly negative towards the other country and that the authors of the articles defended the decisions of their own politicians.

The research questions and additional follow-up questions in this article are:

- Q1.1: In which of the two newspapers was the diplomatic crisis more widely described and commented on?
- Q1.2: Was there a particular reason why one newspaper more widely described and commented on the diplomatic crisis than the other?
- Q2.1: Did both newspapers limit themselves to only the factual, precise description of the crisis, and did they try to present it in the wider context of Polish-Israeli relations?
- Q2.2: If one or both newspapers did limit themselves to factual, precise descriptions of the crisis and did present it in the wider context of Polish-Israeli relations, is there an explanation for it?

Gazeta Polska Codziennie

The Polish Daily Gazette should be identified with the environment of the right-conservative weekly magazine *Gazeta Polska*, which was created in 1993 and largely covers current social, economic and political events. The publisher of the journal, Tomasz Sakiewicz launched the daily newspaper in 2011, and it was recognized by some researchers as a tabloid (Hess 2013, 149) aimed at providing an alternative to the established dailies. *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*, with mostly the same writers as the weekly magazine, cannot be considered as “mainstream media”. The weekly magazine “remains relatively marginal in Polish society, although they do not go unnoticed” (Zubrzycki 2009, 213), especially because of their very close connections with the government and Catholic Church authorities (Balcer, Buras, Gromadzki, Smolar 2016, 6–7). A similar thing can be said about *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*, which focuses on a loyal but relatively small group of readers and is far beyond the top of the most frequently purchased daily newspapers in Poland. In February 2018, the average number of readers per month was 16,603 (compared to 18,871 in February 2017). This number puts *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* only in seventh place among the largest number of readers (with nine taken into account). As a comparison, the leader of the ranking, the tabloid *Fact*, in February 2020 recorded sales in the amount of 259,090 copies (279,933 in February 2017) (*Fakt liderem wśród dzienników w lutym. Sprzedaż Gazety Wyborczej spadła do 98 tys. egz.*, Wirtualne media). In summary, the market share of the *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* in the Polish newspaper market fluctuates around 2.7 percent.

Weekday issues of *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* contain such sections as Poland, world, topic of the day, economy, culture, opinions, comments, sports and sometimes church, law, national defense or science.

Briefly looking at all the publications of the *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* from the beginning of January 2018 until 28 January, the topic of Israel appears three times: first in the context of the situation in Bethlehem as one of the most important places for Catholics (18 January), then in the report on the visit of US Vice President Mike Pence in Israel (24 January) and in information about the development of cooperation between Poland and Israel in relation to the opening of many new flights in 2017 (25 January).

In the researched period, between 28 January and 31 March, the newspaper published fifty-three issues. The references to Polish-Israeli relations, as well as Polish-Jewish relations, Holocaust, Polish involvement during World War II or the situation in Israel and the Middle East, can be found in forty-seven issues. This means that only six times in approximately two months did *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* not provide information on the researched topic. Dailies with Israeli/Jewish content represented 90 percent of all issues at that time, therefore only 10 percent of examined materials did not mention it.

It should be underlined that, in total, one hundred and fifty-one articles, opinions, comments and interviews devoted to the Jewish/Israeli topics can be found, which makes around three per day in the researched period. As a comparison, in the same period a year earlier, i.e. from 28 January to 31 March 2017, Israeli and Jewish subjects appeared in the daily newspaper only eleven times. The articles from the previous year concerned, among others, the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz extermination camp, Jewish culture in Poland, Israeli-Palestinian relations and the situation in the Middle East, but

the most attention was devoted to the German responsibility for the Holocaust and the fight against the phrase “Polish concentration camps”.

Such an increase in the number of articles clearly means that the subject of Polish-Israeli relations was the dominant topic in the first quarter of 2018. However, in this entire discourse we can distinguish two key events. The first of them is related to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, the criticism from the Israeli side and the analysis of the Polish government's position, along with a broad description of how Poles helped Jews during World War II. This covers the period from 28 January to 12 February. During this period, the largest number of articles and comments were published in *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*, which gives as many as twelve (1 February) or ten (3 February) contents in one issue. The daily newspaper published the highest number of articles relating to the tensions and the case of Israel between 29 January and 7 February. There were twelve articles alone in the issue from 1 February. In 29 January, 6 February and 7 February, there were eight articles. Following that, there are several days in which the Polish daily newspaper moved its attention to other topics, yet the subject of Polish-Jewish relations came back once again after the speech of the Polish Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, in Munich on 17 February. The renewed interest in Polish-Jewish relations lasted until the beginning of March, when fewer articles on the subject appeared (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Gazeta Polska Codziennie's* issues with Israeli/Jewish content and the number of titles relating to it.

Published issues	Issues with Israeli/Jewish content	Articles with Israeli/Jewish content	“Topics of the Day”
53	47	151	12

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

It should also be noted that each issue of the newspaper has the so-called “Topic of the Day”. During the considered period, the analysed topics were considered as the most important twelve times.

The analysis of all one hundred fifty-one articles on the subject of Polish-Israeli and Jewish relations allows the identification of the most important categories that appeared in the newspaper. It is probably no surprise that the most common topic was the issue of the Amendment to the Act of the Institute of National Remembrance, which started the entire diplomatic crisis between Poland and Israel. The journalists of the newspaper described in detail and fully supported the Polish position in this matter. They believed that Poland had the right to defend its historical narrative in which Germans were responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War and for the preparation and operation of the Holocaust. *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* used this time to discuss who were the victims and who were the perpetrators. The second important topic was the description of diplomatic relations between Poland and Israel. In this section, the authors of course referred to the diplomatic crisis itself, but they also paid attention to the good economic cooperation between the countries. Many articles concerned the period of World War II and the later years of the Polish People's Republic, in particular the merits of Poles for saving Jews during the war and of members of the anti-Soviet, anti-communists resistance movement known as the “Cursed Soldiers”. Additionally, attention should be paid to the special cam-

campaign organised by the publishers of the Polish newspaper that consisted of support for the activities of the Polish government ('Stań w obronie Polski!', *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*, 2018). The aim of the campaign was to send a special video clip to the Western media, in which the presenter explains the misunderstandings resulting from the naming of Nazi death camps as "Polish death camps" ('Odpowiedź Izraelowi...', YouTube). It should be highlighted that since 2004, Polish diplomacy has been reacting to offensive and false public statements about "Polish concentration camps" or "Polish death camps" appearing abroad, especially in the media. In 2017 alone, Polish diplomatic missions intervened two hundred and fifty-eight times against the distortion of historical facts ('Najwięcej błędów popełnili Brytyjczycy. Walka z "polskimi obozami" – MSZ pokazało dane', TVN24). Regarding the main topic of Polish-Israeli/Jewish relations, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* devoted relatively little space to the subject of anti-Semitic incidents in Poland. The paper instead gives more information about the difficult situation of Jews in other countries, mainly in France, Germany or Austria.

Table 2. Categories of mentioning Israeli/Jewish topics in *Gazeta Polska Codziennie's* articles.

Categories	Amount
The Amendment to the Act of the Institute of National Remembrance	22 percent
Diplomatic relations between countries	19 percent
Holocaust, the World War II, period of Polish People's Republic	16 percent
Polish help during the 2 nd World War, Righteous Among the Nations	11 percent
Foreign media about diplomatic crisis	10 percent
Statements of officials (Polish and Israeli politicians, ministers, secretaries)	6 percent
<i>Gazeta Polska Codziennie's</i> supportive action for Poland	4 percent
Polish-American Relations	4 percent
March 1968	3 percent
Antisemitism in Europe	2 percent
Internal policy of Israel	1 percent
Polish antisemitism	1 percent
the Middle East conflict	1 percent

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Because the description of all one hundred and fifty-one texts devoted to Polish-Israeli and Jewish relations would significantly exceed the permissible length of the article, the authors chose only the most meaningful opinions of journalists representing the *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*.

The first day of the crisis brought some interesting texts for the described topic. On the one hand, there was the article written by Piotr Lisiewicz (2018) in which the author strongly stated that Poland is no longer a communist country and should be treated by Israel as an equivalent partner in diplomatic relations. Another article explains to readers why this law really had caused controversy in Israel, blaming it on the political conflict in Israel between Prime Minister Netanyahu and his political opponents (Mucha 2018). In an article published on 1 February, Piotr Wojcik (2018) stated that instead of arguing with

the Israelis, Poland should learn from them: “Scandalous words of Israeli politicians and journalists have caused understandable indignation in Poland, but instead of offending the Israelis, it would be better if we were finally standing alone like modern Israel – effective, clever and deprived of complexities”. The author refers to a 2017 act that gave Israel the ability to block entry into Israel for anyone who openly advocated a boycott of Israeli goods. This means that the law will silence the opponents of Israeli-manufactured goods exported from the occupied Palestinian territories. He also described how the Israelis created their air force against all odds, appreciating their deviousness (Wojcik 2018).

Particular attention should be given to the numerous historical elements in *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*. It is quite typical for this newspaper to avoid referring to the events from Polish history that were not positive for the Polish Jews. However, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* journalists during the examined timeframe often described glorious moments from Poland’s history, especially taking advantage of the first National Day of Remembrance of Poles rescuing Jews under German occupation (Czarnecki 2018; ‘Ratując innych, kładli życie na szali’, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*). The journalists criticized those who had a different approach to the role of Poles in the Holocaust, such as Jan Tomasz Gross (‘Gross znów pluje na Polskę’, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*).

Finally, it should also be noted that it is difficult to clearly indicate the attitude of the authors of the newspaper to the topic of Polish-Israeli and Polish-Jewish relations. On the one hand, we have articles focusing on the positive aspects of this cooperation, even from the historical perspective (Kluz 2018), or referring to the growing economic exchange between the countries (‘Umowa PSE z izraelskim IEC’, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*; Maciejewski 2018) but also appreciating the achievements of the state of Israel (Wojcik 2018). On the other hand, we have some examples of unambiguously critical texts about Israel and its politicians who, according to the journalist, offend Poles (Makowiecki 2018) and conspire against Poland (Kneset knuje przeciwko Polsce, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*).

Israel Hayom

Israel Hayom is the only free daily newspaper in Israel. The first issue was published in 2007. In the beginning, the newspaper was issued five days a week, but after two years *Israel Hayom* added a Shabbat extension. Since 2011, the newspaper has been available online in English and also offers digitalized Hebrew issues on its website (‘About Israel Hayom’, *Israel Hayom*).

Israel Hayom has become the leading newspaper in Israel due to being a free publication. In the first half of 2010 it gained the first place for daily exposure with 35.2 percent result. The second-placed newspaper, *Yediot Ahronot* had 34.9 percent (Averbach 2010). In 2016’s Israeli newspaper ratings, *Israel Hayom* had again the highest result – 39.7 percent of weekday exposure and 37.6 percent of weekend exposure. *Yediot Ahronot*, again ranked second, had 34 percent of weekday exposure. *Haaretz*, the most known Israeli newspaper, reached a 3.9 percent result (‘Israel Society & Culture: The Press’, The Jewish Virtual Library). In 2019, Israeli market research company TGI published a survey that revealed *Israel Hayom*’s daily exposure was the highest in the country in 2018. It had 29 percent of readership. In comparison, *Yediot Ahronot* had 25.7 percent (‘*Israel Hayom* leads in Israeli weekday readership’, JNS). It proves that *Israel Hayom* became widely available in Israel and its agenda could be influential among citizens. It should also be noted that its free

giveaway has a strong impact on *Israel Hayom*'s exposure, thus readers do not represent the same political camp and do not have to agree with newspaper's views.

Weekday issues of *Israel Hayom* contain sections such as News, Economy, the World, Culture, Opinions, Sport and Gossip. Weekend edition sections are extended to Life Style, Travels, *Israel Hashavua* (opinions and comments to the most important news from all week) and *Shishbat* (magazine for Shabbat).

In the 2009 Israeli elections, *Israel Hayom* was thought to be sympathizing with Likud. The newspaper was accused by Netanyahu's opponents of publishing articles defending and siding with the Prime Minister. Even parties' leaders from the current Likud's coalition – Naftali Bennet and Avigdor Lieberman – said that *Israel Hayom* is a pro-Likud daily. The owner of the newspaper was Sheldon Adelson, an American businessman and billionaire with Jewish roots. He is thought to have had right-wing political views, supporting Republicans' campaigns in the USA and backing Netanyahu. *Israel Hayom* is regarded as a daily newspaper whose aim is to solidify conservative media in Israel. In 2014 Adelson bought a national religious newspaper called *Makor Rishon*, which is also the voice of the settler community (Pfeffer 2014; Presico 2012). The ownership of two important right-wing dailies made Adelson the possessor of a significant part of conservative journalism in Israel. Thus, he also possesses influence on media representing this political sphere.

Israel Hayom reported on Polish-Israeli diplomatic tensions since Anna Azari's 27 January 2018 speech and Benjamin Netanyahu's Facebook and Twitter messages during the tensions. In the researched period of time (28 January to 31 March 2018), the newspaper published fifty-four issues, weekday and weekend editions together. In twenty-two of them Poland was mentioned in the context of the amendment and linked with it repercussions (other articles referring to sports news, were not considered in the statistics). It shows that *Israel Hayom*'s dailies containing content on Polish issues represented forty-one percent of all issues in that time. More than half (59 percent) of the examined materials did not consider any information about Poland in the mentioned context.

It is important to show that within the twenty-two mentioned issues there were forty titles (articles, opinions and interviews) thematically concerning Poland. Additionally, the frequency of issues relating to the tensions was not constant. The highest number of articles concerning Poland appeared during the first two days after Azari's speech on 27 January. In that time, there were eleven articles and opinion pieces. On 29 January and 2 February, *Israel Hayom* also published letters of the Holocaust survivors to the Polish President Andrzej Duda (Cezana, Lin 2018). Editions published on 28 and 29 January contained articles covering the beginning of diplomatic tensions. The next issue with higher number of articles (four) was released on 19 February and referred to Morawiecki's words about "Jewish perpetrators" spoken during the 2018 Munich Security Conference and his visit to the monument of Holy Mountain Cross Brigade, a unit of the National Armed Forces of the Polish resistance movement. This issue also reported an act of vandalism on the Polish Embassy in Tel Aviv (Beck, Dvir, Cezana, Lavi, Yalon 2018; Cohen 2018). As the examined material consisted mostly of one article or opinion piece in the context of Poland per issue, it reveals that this topic was not widely described and it was limited to coverage on the most important speeches or statements.

Table 3. *Israel Hayom*'s issues with Polish content and the number of titles relating to it.

Published issues	Issues with the Polish content	Articles with the Polish content	"Topics of the day"
54	22	40	2

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The examination of *Israel Hayom*'s issues allowed the distinguishing of contextual categories in which Poland was mentioned in the newspaper. Table 4 shows that the Second World War, the Holocaust and the period of Polish People Republic together were the most popular contexts in which Poland was presented. The second most popular context is the amendment to the Act of the Institute of National Remembrance, the source of diplomatic tensions. In this case, Poland was mentioned in 21 percent of all articles. The context of anti-Semitism of the past and present times was popular. Therefore, the diplomatic crisis was described in the light of Polish people's negative, sometimes even stereotypical, features and appealed strongly to the uneasy past of the two nations. Articles concerning Polish Righteous Among the Nations or help for Jewish people during the Holocaust were mentioned in only 4 percent of all articles and opinions. It may be considered to be the only positive context found in *Israel Hayom* during the studied period. Table 4 shows that there were also other ways of describing the tensions. *Israel Hayom*'s authors additionally wrote on diplomatic relations (meetings of ambassadors, ministers and Polish officials with ambassador Azari), statements from Polish and Israeli politicians, March 1968 and its anti-Semite campaign and Polish-American relations in the case of a movie made by the Ruderman Family Foundation ('Gminy Żydowskie potępiają film o...', Gazeta.pl).

Table 4. Categories of mentioning Poland in *Israel Hayom*'s articles.

Categories	Amount
Holocaust, the World War II, period of Polish People's Republic	22 percent
The Amendment to the Act of the Institute of National Remembrance	21 percent
Diplomatic relations between countries	17 percent
Polish anti-Semitism	12 percent
Statements of officials (Polish and Israeli politicians, ministers, secretaries)	9 percent
Israeli politics of the Holocaust remembrance	8 percent
Polish help during the 2 nd World War, Righteous Among the Nations	4 percent
Polish-American Relations	3 percent
March 1968	2 percent
National Armed Forces	2 percent

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

On 28 January 2018, the amendment was the main topic of *Israel Hayom*. The authors noted the possible legal implications that could be introduced by the new law. The new legislation would penalise one for blaming Polish people for German crimes and denying

the genocide of the Polish people in Volhynia and Podolia. Beck, Cezana and Alon (2018) claimed that the amendment is a political move by PiS to “rewrite” history and show Polish people as the only victims of Germans and Ukrainians during the World War II. The newspaper quoted Holocaust survivor Haim Kuznitzki, who negatively wrote that Poles “knew who a Jew was, and who was not” and helped Germans. He also cited Yitzhak Shamir’s words that “every Pole sucked antisemitism with his mother’s milk” (Kuznitzki 2018). Eldad Beck wrote about the long history of “Polish antisemitism”, saying it is as long as the history of Jews in Poland. He underlined that Poles cannot be blamed for the German Nazi crimes. The Holocaust was planned only by Germans, the same as the Final Solution (Beck 2018a). In the next issue, Hanan Greenwood (2018) cited Chabad’s rabbi, Eliezer Gur Arieh, who claimed that the Polish government tries to “rewrite” history and show Poles as the only victims. There were Polish perpetrators who took part in killing Jews. However, Gur Arieh claimed that, nowadays there are a lot of volunteers, scholars and activists in Poland who try to renovate Jewish cemeteries and commemorate Jewish history. *Israel Hayom* reported diplomatic reactions of Israeli government, such as the meeting of the First Counsellor of Polish Embassy in Tel Aviv, Piotr Kozłowski, with Foreign Ministry Deputy Director-General Rodica Radian-Gordon and Foreign Ministry Chief of Staff Akiva Tor. It also covered Anna Azari’s meeting with Krzysztof Szczerski, the head of the staff of the Polish President’s Office (Cezana, Dvir 2018; Cezana 2018b).

On 1 February, in the context of Israeli politics towards Holocaust remembrance, *Israel Hayom* published an article on the passed amendment by the Knesset, as a response to the Polish actions, to the Defense Against Holocaust Denial Law of 1986 proposed by MK Itzik Shmuli (Zionist Union). The new Israeli legislation defined “denial or reduction of the joint responsibility of Nazi aides and their assistants (including part of the population of Poland and other countries) as a criminal offense of Holocaust denial”. The punishment for this offense was already set up to five years in prison (Elon 2018).

Israel Hayom reported on the inauguration ceremony for the new monument of the Righteous Among the Nations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Shlomo Cezana (2018a) cited Netanyahu who said that Israel cooperates with their partners, including Poland, to protect the memory of the Holocaust.

The newspaper wrote about the political storm around the Polish amendment after PM Morawiecki’s comparison of Polish, German and Russian responsibility for the war crimes to Jewish responsibility during Munich Security Conference. Netanyahu said that Morawiecki’s words were “outrageous”; Avi Gabbai (chairman of Zionist Union) called Morawiecki “the Holocaust denier”; and the Chairman of the Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel claimed that Poles were anti-Jewish and cooperated loyally with Germans during the war (Lin 2018). In response to Israeli reactions, Beck (2018c) asked if there is still a place for factual and precise discussions on Holocaust with Poland. He claimed that both sides should de-escalate the conflict. It shows that even the Israeli side wondered if it was necessary to use political slogans and biased opinions in the discussion on the Holocaust.

Israel Hayom also reported on a open dialogue between groups from Poland and Israel in Jerusalem. Cezana and Lavi (2018) quoted Israel Foreign Ministry Director-General Yuval Rotem, who said that both states enjoy bilateral relations based on the same values. However, there was not much written about the course of the meeting and common statements. *Israel Hayom* noted tensions that rose around the Ruderman Family Founda-

tion movie in which American Jews used the provocative and controversial term “Polish Holocaust” to protest the Polish law. The newspaper mentioned that some American Jews even tried to convince US officials to suspend diplomatic relations with Poland. There was information about the firm reaction of the Polish Embassy in the USA that urged for the foundation to denounce this campaign (Lavi 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). It is interesting that *Israel Hayom* did not report on any reactions from the Israeli Embassy in Poland, The Union of Jewish Communities in Poland and the Jewish Community of Warsaw. All institutions condemned the movie, claiming that it contained false history (‘The statement on the Ruderman Family Foundation film’, Jewish Community of Warsaw; Burakowski 2018).

The last context in which Poland was mentioned was March 1968, at the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the anti-Semite campaign. Beck quoted President Duda, who said that Poland apologises for deportations of Jews in 1968. The journalist called it a “historic gesture” and a part of confidence-building steps of the Polish government to appease Israel after the Polish law crisis and the desire to prove that Poland is acting against anti-Semitism (Beck 2018b).

Comparison

Both newspapers are thought to have readers with right-wing backgrounds, but in the case of *Israel Hayom*, it is worth emphasizing that it is a free publication. Thus, people who are not conservatives are also reaching for *Israel Hayom*. This situation has an impact on statistics and exposure—*Israel Hayom* has the highest weekday and weekend exposure in Israel. By contrast, based on the research done for this article, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* has one of the lowest sales statistics in Poland. This examination shows that *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* appeals to a narrow and ideologically specific social group. The situation is different in the case of *Israel Hayom*. Its readers, except for people who can be described as “pro-Likud”, are ones who take advantage of its free-of-charge issues.

Research also shows that both dailies are said to be partial newspapers in their states. In Poland, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* is said to be biased towards the current government and the PiS party. Its journalists mostly support or justify the politics of the ruling party. The case of *Israel Hayom* is similar. It was mentioned that this newspaper in Israel is claimed to be a supporter of PM Netanyahu’s policies. Both dailies claim that they practise honest journalism.

Both newspapers present a wide spectrum of information. They contain such parts as news from the state and the world, economy, culture, opinions, commentaries and sport. Because of cultural and religious differences, *Israel Hayom* additionally releases a special Shabbat issue at the end of the Jewish week.

In the case of Polish-Israeli relations and diplomatic tensions, *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* released more issues (forty-seven) containing Israeli/Jewish topics than *Israel Hayom* with Polish topics (twenty-two). In the Polish daily there were one hundred fifty-one articles written through the prisms of Poland and Israel’s diplomatic tensions, Jewish history, Polish Righteous Among the Nations and their help for Jews during the World War II, Israeli internal policy or the Middle Eastern conflict. On the contrary, *Israel Hayom* released twenty-two issues with forty articles containing Polish topics. Poland was presented in the context of Polish law, Jewish history in Poland, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism or diplomatic tensions.

It is important to underline that the crisis in Polish-Israeli relations was not as popular in *Israel Hayom* as in *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*. The Polish newspaper covered this issue almost on a daily basis, and twelve out of fifty-four times it was “the topic of the day”. In *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*, Polish-Israeli relations were described in a wider spectrum of topics. On the contrary, Poland appeared only twice on the front pages of *Israel Hayom*. The Polish-Israeli tensions were not as popular as Netanyahu’s corruption problems, the case of Iranian drone, tensions around new Haredi draft law or Israel’s admission to the attack on the Syrian reactor in 2007. In the beginning of the diplomatic tensions, the Israeli daily published testimonies of Holocaust survivors and limited itself only to the description of the crisis. What cannot be overlooked is that both dailies recognised the positives of Polish-Israeli cooperation during the tenure of the PiS party in terms of economy, defense industry, youth exchanges or Polish support for Israel in the UN. However, there were also negative articles about Polish people or about Jews/Israelis.

Israel Hayom and *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* published two types of articles. The first type mentioned positive opinions about Poland or Israel, showing the positive aspects of their mutual relation. The second, negative commentaries, presented bad attributes of Polish people or Jews/Israelis. This type of articles mainly exploited historical stereotypes of the other.

Table 5. Comparison of *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* and *Israel Hayom*

	Number of the issues	Polish/Israeli tension references	Articles with Polish/Israeli content	“Topics of the day” pertaining to Polish/Israeli diplomatic tension
<i>Gazeta Polska Codziennie</i>	53	47	151	12
<i>Israel Hayom</i>	54	22	40	2

Source: Authors’ own elaboration.

Finally there are the explanations of the causes of the crisis found from the analysis of the dailies’ articles. We can distinguish three explanations for the cause of the crisis, with the first two being similar for both dailies. The first reason for the diplomatic tension between the two countries was that each were defending their own interests and historic narratives. The second reason is that the Polish and Israeli newspapers claimed that the opposite side lacked sensitivity and real knowledge on what happened during the Holocaust and the Second World War. Each newspaper presented a differing third explanation. The Polish daily claimed that Israeli reaction was caused by the campaign before Israel’s 2019 elections and political leaders tried to gain more support by conducting furious and unjustified attacks against Poland. On the contrary, it was visible that *Israel Hayom* mostly quoted people who claimed that the Polish government tried to “efface” Polish faults from the time of the Holocaust, what can be perceived as non-factual journalism. It could be stated that three explanations and the use of biased arguments did not help readers of the respective dailies to understand the other side’s intentions for acting the way they did in this crisis.

Summary

The foregoing research discusses the way of presenting and perceiving diplomatic tensions caused by the amendment to the Act of the Institute of National Remembrance. This article aimed to verify the thesis that the discourse in the newspapers analysed—*Gazeta Polska Codziennie* and *Israel Hayom*—was clearly negative in relation to the other country and that the authors of the articles defended the decisions of their own politicians. Based on the above research, it should be concluded that the thesis has been verified partly positively as both dailies defended politicians from their own countries. *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* described Polish legislative efforts in the context of fighting for the “political truth” and presented articles recounting glorious moments from Poland’s history to its readers, especially including the nation’s help to Jews during German occupation in the Second World War. *Israel Hayom* saw the Act of the Institute of National Remembrance amendment as a scandal. *Israel Hayom* praised in turn the narrative adopted by Israeli authorities. Journalists insisted on a firm defence of the Holocaust memory. The Holocaust survivors’ memories about Poland were negative overall and they can be perceived to be the result of the newspaper’s manipulation and validation for its predetermined thesis.

However, both newspapers did not present a clear view on what Polish-Israeli relations should look like. On the one hand, they appreciated the mutual relations and cooperation between Poland and Israel. On the other hand the newspapers published criticism towards the opposing side and biased articles supporting their government’s reactions and decisions regarding the amendment. Thus, we cannot state that both states were presented solely negatively. There were critical opinions about the other side that portrayed their bad intentions. However, there were also articles presenting Israel as a good example of economic, political and technological development or opinions exhorting to factual discussions with Poland and treating this country as a partner, not only as the perpetrator of the Holocaust.

As the answer to the research Q1.1, it should be underlined that *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* devoted much more space and issues to the diplomatic tension and Israel in general (forty-seven issues, one hundred fifty-one articles). Israel was presented in the contexts of diplomatic tensions, reaction of Israeli politicians, mutual history, the Middle Eastern conflict, relations with the USA, anti-Semitism or even internal policy of the State of Israel. We may infer that it was a priority for the Polish daily, marginalizing other topics such as the European Union or the Three Seas Initiative. On the contrary, for *Israel Hayom* the diplomatic tension was not the most important topic (twenty-two issues, forty articles). Only the first two issues were devoted mostly to Poland. In the subsequent issues throughout the researched timeframe, articles containing information about Poland were less important than, for example, decisions of US President Donald Trump or news referring to internal policies of Israel. As the result, we can conclude that the diplomatic tensions between Poland and Israel were more important for *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*. *Israel Hayom* did not mention Poland at all a year ago during the same period.

The analysis also provides an answer to Q2.1, namely in what prism both dailies presented Polish-Israeli relations. Based on the conducted research, we can conclude that it is still perceived in the light of World War II, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. The points of view of both sides are dominated by history and, additionally on the Polish side, controversy over unresolved issues of Jewish property restitution. Military, academic or

economic cooperation were not visible in the both narratives provided by the newspapers, and it is rather rarely mentioned. In our opinion, strong references to history are inevitable in Polish-Israeli relations, especially at the current level and the narrative of conservative politicians from both countries. However, it may be disappointing that in recent years there have been no other substitute topics that could improve the two countries' attitudes towards each other and strengthen these relations at other levels of international relations. Based on the constructivist theory used while conducting the research, it can be assumed that this is an effect of the current awareness of the roles of the countries and expectations toward each other in the mutual relations. When analysing the statements of Israeli politicians, one can especially notice a lack of willingness to establish close relations with Poland, which may be the result of Poland's weak negotiating position on the international arena, e.g. in the context of Poland's disputes with EU institutions.

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