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Ambivalent Memory Politics: How German and Czech Political Actors Construct and Navigate the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans in Official Discourse after 1990

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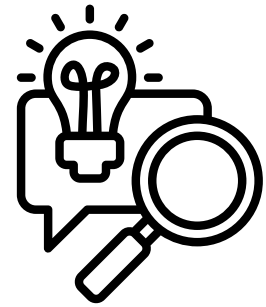
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Literature already describes:

- postwar silence
- Cold War interpretations
- reconciliation after 1990

What my work wants to do:

- give a systematic analysis of the ambivalence in official Czech and German discourse after 1990 and how politicians simultaneously promote reconciliation and maintain national memory boundaries



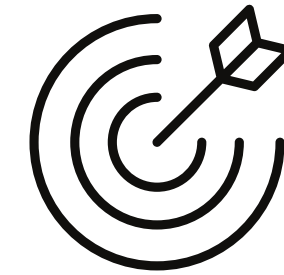
Research Topic

- should examine how German and Czech political leaders have framed the Expulsion after 1990



Research Question

- How do German and Czech political discourses express ambivalence on the Sudeten German expulsions after 1990?



Aims

- To identify ambivalent rhetorical patterns in speeches, declarations and public statements



- “Deutsch-Tschechische Erklärung über die gegenseitigen Beziehungen und deren künftige Entwicklung” (1997) in full text: [Stenographischer Bericht („Bundestag“) 30 Jan 1997] → <https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/13/13154.pdf>
- Bundestag Drucksache 14/6612 (3 July 2001) — Inquiry to Bundesregierung on claims of displaced persons from the Sudetenland etc. → <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/14/066/1406612.pdf> (Dserver Bundestag)
- Website of the Česko-německý fond budoucnosti (Czech-German Future Fund) — statutes, projects and archived documents showing German-Czech reconciliation work. → <https://www.fondbudoucnosti.cz/en/> (Česko-německý fond budoucnosti)

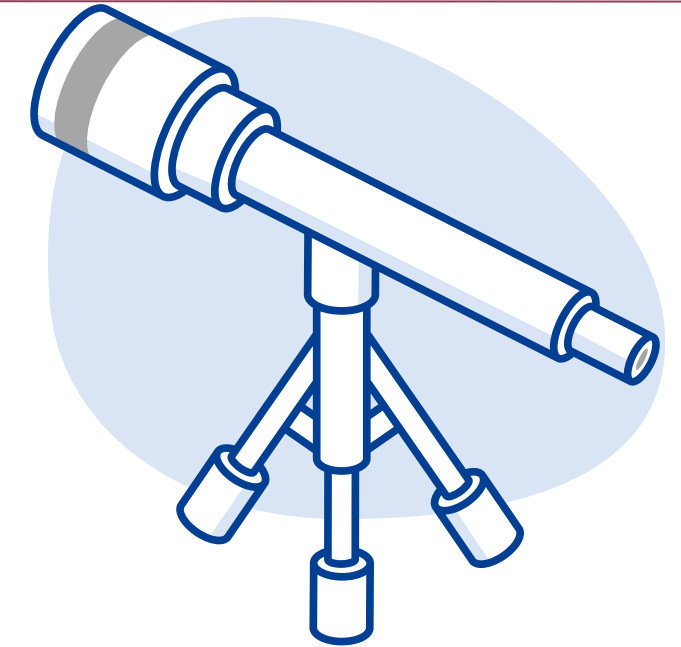


- Moral Political Dissent in German-Czech Relations (1998) by Jan Pauer – PDF article analysing political speeches regarding the expulsions. (sreview.soc.cas.cz) <https://sreview.soc.cas.cz/pdfs/csr/1998/12/06.pdf>
- The Germans as a Threat to 'Us'? The Use of History and Othering of Germans in the Speeches of the Czech President Miloš Zeman – PDF of analysis of Czech presidential speeches referencing German-Czech memory narratives.
- On the Legal Construction of Ethnic Cleansing (2006) by T.W. Waters – PDF addressing legal framing of the expulsions and ethnic cleansing. (repository.law.indiana.edu) <https://law.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4600&context=expresso>
- Lizcová, Z., Urbanovská, J., & Müller, K. B. (2025). Shaping bilateral relationships from below: Civil society actors and their motivations in the Czech-German context. German Politics. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644008.2025.2504566>
- Beneš, J., McGee Deutsch, S., & Wingfield, N. M. (Eds.). (2011). Gender and war in twentieth-century Eastern Europe. Indiana University Press.
- Frankl, M., & Becker, A. (2008). Aus der Asche die Zukunft: Vertreibung und Integration der Sudetendeutschen. Oldenbourg.
- Frommer, B. (2005). National cleansing: Retribution against Nazi collaborators in postwar Czechoslovakia. Cambridge University Press.
- Staněk, T. (1991). Perzekuce 1945. Academia.
- Ther, P. (2014). Die dunkle Seite der Nationalstaaten: „Ethnische Säuberungen“ im modernen Europa. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Ther, P., & Siljak, A. (Eds.). (2001). Redrawing nations: Ethnic cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948. Rowman & Littlefield.



Qualitative Discourse Analysis

- Focus on Ambivalence: contradictions, tensions, parallel messaging
- Moral positioning: guilt, responsibility, justification
- Silences: what remains unsaid
- Symbolic language: metaphors, emotional cues
- Boundary-making: "we" and "they" structures
- Europeanization vocabulary: responsibility, coexistence, shared history



2.



- 1997 Declaration: Uses reconciliation language ("mutual respect"), but avoids direct moral culpability;
- Havel's speeches: Highly moral, empathetic, open to reconciliation, but politically constrained by Czech domestic debates
- Bundestag debates (2001): Sympathy for victims, but reframed through European future
- Czech-German Future Fund: Promotes joint memory projects, but avoids deep historical reinterpretation