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The Role of the European Union in Palestinian State-Building

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of the European Union (EU) in creating a Palestinian state and whether there is a coherent unity among EU Member States regarding its recognition. The research hypothesis is that EU Member States do not unanimously recognize the legitimacy of a Palestinian state, despite the EU's collective belief in creating a two-state solution. The methodology combines qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative research involves understanding political processes and analyzing relevant scientific studies and documents. The quantitative research involves statistical analysis of voting outcomes of EU Member States in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The analysis of UNGA resolutions between 2012 and 2022 found that there is no coherent unity among EU Member States regarding the recognition of a Palestinian state. Although the EU collectively supports a two-state solution, the foreign policy used has been insufficient to overcome the deep-rooted conflicts. In conclusion, the research suggests that a more effective approach is required to overcome the deep-rooted conflicts and achieve a common ground concerning the recognition of a Palestinian state. There is a need for a shift in the political and legal framework, which may be influenced by potential geopolitical reorganization in the Middle East.

Keywords: International Community, Palestine, Israel, State-Building, Peacebuilding

Research Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on a dual mapping approach, which utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative component of the research involved an in-depth analysis of diplomatic and political processes that may impact voting behaviour in the UN General Assembly. This includes a review and synthesis of national and international literature and documents.

The study also included an analysis of UN General Assembly resolutions between 2012 and 2022 to investigate the factors that influence the voting behaviour of individual EU Member States. A quantitative research methodology for collecting data through statistical analysis of voting outcomes and behaviours was used for this aspect.

The quantitative research focused on 870 resolutions related to Israel and Palestine, limiting the research sample to 11 resolutions, including issues such as Palestine, occupied territories, aid for Palestinian refugees, and decolonization. The voting behaviour of EU Member States was evaluated in terms of their support for Palestine or Israel for each resolution.

The research evaluates the results and draws conclusions about the involvement of the EU in state-building and whether it has been an effective approach. Additionally, there are questions from the research about whether there is a possible way to adjust the political and legal framework to reach a common ground concerning establishing the Palestinian state.

United Nations General Assembly voting concerning Palestine often centres around issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as the status of Jerusalem, the rights of Palestinian refugees, and the establishment of a Palestinian state. The General Assembly has passed numerous resolutions on these and other issues over the years, of which many have been critical of Israel's actions in the region. However, it's worth noting that many of these resolutions are non-binding, meaning they are not legally enforceable, and their impact is largely symbolic.

The General Assembly has also established several special committees to address the question of Palestine, such as the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

It's also important to note that the voting on these resolutions is often divided along regional and ideological lines, with countries from the Arab world, Africa, and Asia generally voting in favour of the resolutions, and countries from Europe and North America generally voting against them or abstaining. However, this was the theory in the past. The research will reveal that the European Union, subsequently it can be said that the international community, is in favour of Palestine.

Introduction

In the 1960s, there was a demand within the international community to create a Palestinian state. In the 1980s, thanks to the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), was proclaimed the President of Palestine and formally elected as a President by the PLO Central Council in 1989. There was significant progress in the peace process in the 1990s. In general, the international community was committed to supporting Palestine and settling the Middle East conflict. However, it was clear that the success of the peace process depended mainly on the ability of the two parties, Israel and Palestine, to reach an agreement. Stagnation continued to characterize the Middle East peace process in the 21st century.

The State is an organization with a monopoly of legitimate physical violence in a given territory, with sovereignty over its territory and authority over the legislative and judicial powers. It is also an important characteristic of a state that it is recognized by other states and can act autonomously in the international arena. (Baruch, 2013, p.53) However, it is also important to stress that states have rights and obligations.¹

One of the most important obligations is that a state must guarantee that it will not launch any action or operation that could threaten another state or even the international community. Palestinian state-building cannot take place without Israeli negotiation and compromise.

In a European context, two important factors are needed to be examined. The status of agreements between Palestine, Israel and the international community, and Israel's legal position in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. There are several agreements between the Palestinians and Israel, but many of these are no longer in force. The agreements that remain in force tend to be interpreted by both sides in a way that favours their interests. However, the international community recognizes the agreements as legally binding. (Baruch, 2013, p.54)

Since the 1967 Israeli war, the international community has interpreted Israel as an occupying power because the war was fought with a territorial motive. The territories in question are the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. In 2005, Israel withdrew its troops from the Gaza Strip but the territory remained under Israeli control. For this reason, the Gaza Strip is still considered by international policy as an occupied territory. On the other hand, it can be assumed that the territories in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem are not occupied, but these territories might count as "disputed territories". The reason is that these territories were not subject to the

¹Max Weber (1970). *Állam, Politika, Tudomány. Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó.* Budapest

sovereignty of any state, as there has been no defined status of the borders (Baruch, 2013, p.55). Israel's control over the Gaza Strip would continue even if a Palestinian state were to be established. This is because the Gaza Strip would then be, in terms of territory, a part of the newly established State of Palestine. The Palestinian Authority's operations in the West Bank are limited, with some total prohibitions of interaction in certain areas, such as infrastructure, airspace, and the Israeli population. The same applies to East Jerusalem.² Another requirement of statehood is that a state can only be established in specific territories where exclusive rights are given to a regime or ascendancy. This also means that only territories with exclusive Palestinian leverage could count as a recognized Palestinian state (Baruch, 2013, p.55-56).

Concerning the World Bank's report, it makes sense to separate Israeli security measures from exploring Israeli-Palestinian economic opportunities. This is because establishing a Palestinian state would provide many opportunities to boost economic relations³, thus allowing a comprehensive peace agreement to be reached soon. This would also allow for rapid economic development in the Palestinian territories.⁴

The Palestinian State and the International Community

In 1988, at the Palestinian National Council meeting in Algiers, Yasser Arafat proclaimed the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, which also marked the establishment of the Palestinian state. Under the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, Jerusalem was designated as the capital of the Palestinian state. The United Nations did not recognize the existence of a Palestinian state after the declaration of independence. The United States of America and Israel, of course, opposed the creation of a Palestinian state. (Gazdik, 2011).

The Palestinians have repeatedly attempted to declare a Palestinian state unilaterally. In 1994, Israel and the Palestinians concluded an interim agreement which was interpreted differently by the two sides. According to the Palestinians, they had five years from the adoption of the agreement to establish a Palestinian state. The Israeli position is that a final agreement

²Nagy Milada (2017). A palesztin államiság kérdése és a nemzetközi közösség. Mediterrán és Balkán Fórum. XI. évfolyam 1. szám Pécs pp. 38-40.

³West Bank and Gaza. Towards Economic Sustainability of a Future Palestinian State: Promoting Private Sector-led Growth.

<https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/864951468140640370/west-bank-and-gaza-towards-economic-sustainability-of-a-future-palestinian-state-promoting-private-sector-led-growth>
Downloaded:01.21.2023

⁴<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/960071513228856631/pdf/ACS22471-REVISED-Palestine-Trade-Note-Web.pdf> Downloaded:01.07.2023

should be reached within five years. In 1999, the Palestinians attempted to declare their state, but it was unsuccessful. The next such attempt was in 2009, a year after the declaration of independence by Kosovo, but this time the Palestinians did not succeed either.

The international community is committed to a two-state solution.⁵ The prospect of a Palestinian state was an integral part of international politics in 2004 when the UN sought the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) opinion on the defence wall that Israel had built (Ronen, 2009). The wall separates Palestinian territory from Israeli territory. The position of Israel is that the International Court of Justice should not even deal with this issue as it is not a dispute between two states. The ICJ did not explicitly want to play a role in settlement of this dispute but stressed that a negotiated agreement would be necessary to resolve the conflict. The resolution also stated that a Palestinian state should be established as soon as possible. This implicitly meant that the International Court of Justice did not recognize Palestine either (Ash, 2009).

In 2009, the Palestinian Authority informed the International Criminal Court (ICC)⁶ that it was willing to submit itself to ICC's legislative authority. With this political move, the PA⁷ wanted the ICC to investigate whether Israel had committed a crime. The Palestinians have invoked the Rome Statute to request the ICC to investigate because the Statute allows for an investigation to be opened on non-member state territory.

This request by the Palestinians has caused great outrage and concern within the international community. The Palestinian Authority did not sign the ICC treaty, but the Oslo Accords have been concluded between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, with the proviso that the PLO cede limited powers to the PA, thus assuring the other party (Israel) that a Palestinian state would not be established. The PA was not allowed to conduct foreign policy activities which were the exclusive responsibilities of the PLO. Under the agreement, the PA was confronted with the fact that it would be a violation of international law if PA would unilaterally declare a Palestinian state. This political move would provoke opposition from the international community (Gold & Morrison, 2010).

A further condition for statehood is that a state dominated by a fundamentalist political force (Hamas) or proclaiming the total elimination of another state (Israel) cannot be recognized. The PA put the issue of a Palestinian state back on the agenda in 2012, which was preceded by the 2006 Lebanon war and the 2009 Gaza war.

⁵Nagy Milada (2017) A palesztin államiság kérdése és a nemzetközi közösség. Mediterrán és Balkán Fórum. XI. évfolyam 1. szám Pécs pp. 40-42.

⁶International Criminal Court

⁷PalestinianAuthority

In 2012, PA leader, Mahmoud Abbas, took the case for statehood to the UN. Abbas asked the UN Security Council directly for help in establishing the State, having been disappointed with the mediation of the United States and the European Union. Due to the composition of the UNSC, this effort failed. However, in 2011, they became a permanent member of UNESCO. Israel and the United States of America withdrew their financial support and stopped funding the organization (UNESCO) due to their decision to allow Palestine to become a member⁸ (Nagan & Haddad, 2012).

In 2012, the UN General Assembly elevated Palestine to the status of a "non-member observer state". If an international entity recognizes Palestine as a state, it can become a contracting party in multilateral treaties, which could lead to a significant pressure on Israel. If Palestine's status and role in the UN are strengthened, it can once again request the position of the International Criminal Court in investigating crimes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The International Criminal Court have not only the possibility to interfere in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, but it is clear that if a Palestine state prevailed, there would be far more potential legal claims against Israel. For example, organizing a Palestinian army or inviting other states' armies to support Palestinian state-building, or the potential development of a Palestinian telecommunication network, which is totally independent from the Israeli technology, might cause difficulties for Israel (Baruch, 2013, p.61).

In December 2022, the UN General Assembly voted 87 in favour, 26 against, and 53 abstention concerning a resolution calling on the International Court of Justice (ICJ)⁹ to rule on whether Israel has committed crimes in the occupied territories.¹⁰

The possibility of establishing the Palestinian state was greatly influenced by former US President (Donald Trump's) announcement in December 2017 that he would move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This de facto means that Jerusalem is only the capital of Israel. The Palestinians could not accept this measure, there were demonstrations, bombings and assassinations against Israel, and not only the Palestinians but also Arab states expressed their displeasure. In the framework of the Oslo Accords, the city, Abu Dis, near East Jerusalem was offered as the capital of a potential Palestinian state but the Palestinians refused to accept it. Jerusalem is envisioned by the international community as the capital of two states, but the US position under Trump has been quite different.

⁸Nagy Milada (2017) A palesztin államiság kérdése és a nemzetközi közösség. Mediterrán és Balkán Fórum. XI. évfolyam 1. szám Pécs pp. 40-44.

⁹International Court of Justice

¹⁰<https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20221231-un-asks-icj-to-consider-consequences-for-israeli-occupation-of-palestinian-territories> Downloaded:01.08.2023

This is further evident that the international community's vision of a dual state is unclear and does not necessarily reflect a collective decision. The Trump administration's decision is presumably motivated by a desire to contain Iranian radicalism¹¹ (Dorsey, 2017). Supporting the containment of Iranian radicalism, the UAE¹² and Saudi Arabia, together with the US, have sought to redress the geopolitical balance in the Middle East.¹³

The Role of the European Union in the Palestinian State-Building

The European Union has been calling for the creation of a Palestinian state since 1977. At the time, the EU's predecessor and the EC¹⁴, recognized the rights of the Palestinians and the 1980 Venice Declaration. In 1999, the European Union's Berlin Declaration laid the foundations for a framework between the two states. In early 2000, the Seville Declaration laid down the need to establish a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders. Since the 1980s, the Palestinians have received economic support and political assistance from the EC.

In 2011, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, under external pressure (British and American), changed the EU's position and stopped calling for recognition by the UN General Assembly and started calling for the status of the Palestinian state to be raised. This also helped the Israeli idea because, in this case, the Palestinian State cannot appeal to the UN Security Council and cannot file a lawsuit against Israel at the International Court of Justice. Catherine Ashton has been criticized for her decision. She has tried to shift some of the responsibility to the EU Member States by urging them to develop a common position in the light of which the EU can pursue a united policy on the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. This would also consolidate the role of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on an international level (Ravid, 2011).

On the 29th of November, 2012, the UN General Assembly voted on the status of a Palestinian state. On that occasion, 14 states voted in favour, Bulgaria, Estonia, the Netherlands, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Great Britain, Germany, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia abstained. The Czech Republic was the only EU member state who voted against it.¹⁵

Javier Solana summarized the case by calling for the creation of a Palestinian state. First, the concept of a two-state solution must be kept alive.

¹¹ <https://lobelog.com/trading-jerusalem-for-iran/> Downloaded:01.21.2023

¹² United Arab Emirates

¹³ Nagy Milada (2017) A palesztin államiság kérdése és a nemzetközi közösség. Mediterrán és Balkán Fórum. XI. évfolyam 1. szám Pécs pp. 44-46.

¹⁴ European Communities

¹⁵ European Communities

Secondly, the European Union invests one billion euros yearly to achieve a two-state solution. The establishment of a Palestinian state should also be urged in terms of European security and energy supply issues. Finally, the establishment of a Palestinian state would be a tangible and positive result of the EU's common foreign and security policy.¹⁶

The European Union's state-building efforts have not only taken place in the context of the conventions and legal frameworks listed above but also in the context of actual missions. In addition to the legal framework, missions launched by the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) were designed to achieve security. EUBAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS are two civilian operations that are particularly important. Both the conceptual and empirical approaches can be set aside because the operationalization of the missions revealed the actual micro-political conflicts.

The Palestinian state-building process started after the Oslo Accords. In 1995, administrative areas were created by dividing the West Bank and Gaza Strip into three parts. Area A of the West Bank, approximately 17% of the West Bank territory, was fully under the jurisdiction of the PA. In Area B, which is 21% of the territory, the PA has only civilian control functions with Israel carrying out the security control functions. In Area C, Israel exercises exclusive authority over 60% of the territory of the West Bank (Shlaim, 2005).

This has created a rather fragmented territory which from the outside might seem to be a political decision against state-building. On the one hand, this division of territory has transferred certain rights to the Palestinian Police (Oslo II). Still, it has also led to the acceptance of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in Palestinian territories.

Following the second intifada, the Danish EU Presidency established a state-building plan for a two-state solution. The Middle East Quartet¹⁷ launched two civilian missions in the region.¹⁸

EUBAM RAFAH

In 2005, Israel agreed with the Palestinian Authority to transfer the supervision of the Gaza Strip. The Rafah crossing will be jointly supervised by the PA and Egypt under the control of a third party. The United States has not taken on the role of an inspector the EU has designated for them. In Israel's view, this was not the best solution but it allowed Israel to give a role to the EU. On the other hand, the EU was happy with this opportunity as it had been trying for years to be an international policy player in Middle East politics,

¹⁶Nagy Milada (2017) A palesztin államiség kérdése és a nemzetközi közösség. Mediterrán és Balkán Fórum. XI. évfolyam 1. szám Pécs pp. 45.

¹⁷USA, UN, EU, Russia

¹⁸Dimitris Bouris (2019) Unintended Consequences of State-building Projects in Contested States: the EU in Palestine, *The International Spectator*, 54:1, 92-95

and this role was an excellent opportunity to do so. The European Union also wanted to gain Israel's trust and convince Israel to cede certain rights to the PA under supervision.¹⁹ The mission's aim was to help the Palestinians improve their border control capabilities with EU support and deepen relations between Egypt, Israel, and the PA. The control of the Rafah border was not a particularly difficult task, but it was an opportunity for the EU to develop closer relations with Israel (Sayigh, 2007) and, not least, to contribute to state-building and also to the peace process (Del Sarto, 2007). Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, Israel has imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip and EU observers have not been allowed to enter the area.²⁰

EUPOL COPPS

EUPOL COPPS is also a civilian mission in support of law enforcement and the rule of law processes. It was also aimed at implementing two-state solutions prepared by the Danish Presidency. The mission had to be launched in a difficult circumstances as Hamas won the Palestinian elections in 2006 (Paragi, 2009, p.77). The main task of the mission was to support the Palestinian Police and help to establish the rule of law. The actual work of the mission started after President Salam Fayyad came to power. Fayyad's political view was that the main building block of state-building was the establishment and maintenance of security. It is important to underline that EUPOL COPPS has contributed significantly to the successful cooperation with the Palestinian Police.²¹ The EUBAM Rafah mission has achieved a positive Israeli perception of the European Union's engagement in state-building and peace-building. As a result, the European Union can claim that it has been a part of the solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. When the mission was launched, it was clear that this was a bilateral agreement between Egypt and the PA, but Israel would have the final word in all the decisions. The EU's hidden agenda was to gain more leverage by slightly overshadowing the original objective. This claim is fully borne out by the EU's position that it wanted to be an indispensable active player in the Middle East peace process. This was also the case with the Iranian nuclear program and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In the case of EUPOL COPPS, the mission's success is questionable because it was able to operate in a very limited area. This was essentially due to territorial fragmentation, which meant that the mission was able to operate under a number of constraints. In the case of both missions, the

¹⁹Anders Persson (2018) Palestine at the end of the state-building process: technical achievements, political failures, *Mediterranean Politics*, 23:4, 436-438

²⁰Dimitris Bouris (2019) Unintended Consequences of State-building Projects in Contested States: the EU in Palestine, *The International Spectator*, 54:1, 92-96

²¹Dimitris Bouris (2019) Unintended Consequences of State-building Projects in Contested States: the EU in Palestine, *The International Spectator*, 54:1, 96-97

European Union's aim was to play a central role, but nothing could be done without Israeli control and approval. The question arises: why were these missions launched? No significant progress in state-building can be seen, but rather a regional balance of power competed with the European Union which may or may not represent the international community's will.²² (Mustafa, 2015; Müller & Zahda, 2018).

Research Outcomes

Since 2014, positions favouring Palestinian aspirations have become much more widespread within the international community. Sweden was the first Western European country to recognize Palestine. Subsequently, the Spanish, French, and British parliaments adopted a special resolution recognizing Palestine but stressing the importance of a two-state solution (Mac Cormaick, 2017). Increasing international pressure may prompt Israel to push again for peace talks with the Palestinians. Given the UN General Assembly resolution against Israel at the end of 2022, these issues are likely to intensify and this does not make the foreign and domestic policy of the recently returned Benjamin Netanyahu any easier.

The empirical findings of this research will be supported by examining the UN General Assembly resolutions from 2012 to 2022. The examination of the resolutions focused on the Palestinian issues within the indicated period with hope that a pattern would stand out concerning the votes of the EU Member States.

The first table lists the examined resolutions. The second table shows the votes of the EU Member States (A: abstained, Y: yes, N: no). The third table shows the percentage distribution of the number of votes. For each of the decisions examined, all EU Member States voted. As a result, there is no 'no vote' data.

For the first five decisions, a significant proportion of votes fall into the 'no' or 'abstention' categories. Abstention was most common in the countries. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that even after all these years, countries are not necessarily taking a position. This is in stark contrast to the position often taken in the European Union or by the international community.

If the votes were equally divided between 'yes' and 'no', it could be partly assumed that the voting mechanism within the Member States would reflect the position of the European Union. In comparison, Member States either abstain or vote in favour. These resolutions are all in favour of Palestinian rights. However, a conclusion can be drawn from the fact that half

²²Dimitris Bouris (2019) Unintended Consequences of State-building Projects in Contested States: the EU in Palestine, *The International Spectator*, 54:1, 97-100

of the resolutions Member States abstain, and the other half of the resolutions vote in favour of Palestine.

The resolutions 2018/37, 2019/70, and 2020/84 concern the Palestinian Rights at the Secretariat. It is outstanding that Hungary voted against, Cyprus and Malta voted in favour, and all the other EU Member States abstained. Malta has a very prosperous relationship with Palestine. Several high-ranking officials visited Malta and Palestine as well in the last decades. Probably, Malta's intention is to support Palestine at the UN to have a prosperous bilateral relationship.

Cyprus voted in favour, as both Cyprus and Palestine were British colonies. There is a very strong and close friendship between Cyprus and Palestine. Cyprus was among the first countries who recognize the Palestinian state after 1988.

It can be seen that in 2020, more countries started to vote in favour of Palestine. Concerning the final resolution and the voting pattern, there is a chance that the pro-Palestine countries were not satisfied with the outcome of the work of the Special Committee, which examined how the human rights of the Palestinians have been affected.

There is also an interesting pattern of regional cooperations vote on issues concerning Palestine. For example, among the V4 countries, Slovakia and Poland sometimes have the intention to vote in favour of Palestine, but Czech Republic and Hungary are the V4 countries that most probably support Israel. An answer to this pattern could be that there is a very thriving military and defence policy cooperation between Israel, Czech Republic, and Hungary.²³

Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia are the EU Member States countries that support Israel. This could also be explained by the fact that mostly the V4 countries are against the EU's political will. Also, Israel is a special country as it has the right to protect itself. However, Israel is always stigmatized that it is an occupying country.

The resolution 2021/37 is about the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. Czech Republic and Slovenia abstained, Hungary voted against, and all the other countries voted in favour.

However, the 2022/2249 resolution of the European Parliament is striving to achieve a common negotiation platform. The belief of continued peace negotiation is desirable. On the other hand, the Parliament has formulated that among the obstacles to the two-state solution is that Israel has

²³<https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/israel-and-czech-republic-sign-gtg-agreement-5-october-2021> Downloaded: 01.25.2023

a full right to fight against all acts of violence and has the right to defend itself and its population.²⁴

This is mainly the major issue because Israel is a very important partner (also political but concerning security and economics as well) for the European Union. It is indeed essential that the EU seizes every possible opportunity to initiate the peace process between Israel and Palestine. As mentioned before, Israel is judged by the international community as an occupying country but still has its right to self-defence. If the security and legal framework makes it possible that Israel has its right for self-defense – this is mainly because of the establishment of the State of Israel and the crimes which were committed against the Jewish communities across Europe and the World – then, on the one hand, it is extremely difficult to give rights, and on the other hand it is also difficult to observe if there have been some human rights violations by Israel.

In the case of the resolutions on the occupied territories and the human rights of Palestinians, the "yes" vote is almost always over 90%. In comparison, 85% abstained concerning the evaluation of the work of the Commission in regard to the occupied territories. This difference also confirms the assumption that Member States cannot decide which position to take.

It is clear that Hungary consistently voted "no" on all issues with a clear explanation. Hungary has a very good relationship with Israel and fully supports it.

The fourth table shows the overall voting record of the EU Member States. Malta and Cyprus have a Palestinian position in 82% of their votes, and all other EU Member States except Hungary and the Czech Republic have a Palestinian position in almost 50% of their votes. Hungary voted "no" in all cases, and the least supportive of the Palestinian position after Hungary are Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Netherlands. In other words, except for some countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Malta), almost half of the EU Member States are in favour of a Palestinian position, and the other half abstained.

It can also be assumed that voting in favour of Palestine does not necessarily mean that it is a vote against Israel. However, the research reflects the uncertainty of the EU Member States as the votes are being shifted from abstains to in favour. In this context, it is not relevant to determine if a country is against or for it. It is mainly self-evident that the EU Member States are shifting thoughts and actions concerning the voting mechanisms and patterns.

²⁴<https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1727954&t=d&l=en>
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In summary, it is proven that domestic and international literature supports the two-state solution which means that although Israel has the right to exercise full self-defence, the EU is willing to initiate the state-building process of Palestine. As mentioned earlier, Catherine Ashton has also put efforts into transferring the EU's responsibility to the Member States to formulate a common position on Palestinian state-building. Despite all these efforts, it is indeed difficult to determine the EU's position. For the EU, it is indispensable to have a good relationship with Israel. Obviously, this is the political reason for the EU's contribution to the practice of Israeli self-defence.

On the other hand, the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union could have the vision of a supportive narrative. However, the national interests of the Member States could easily overwrite the EU's political plan concerning the two-state solution. In general, it is also very important that states are not so easily committed to supporting the Jewish State as the Muslim population is growing in Europe, and the reason for this could be the migration crisis. It is projected that within the 27 EU Member States, there will be a growth of more than 60% of the Muslim population by 2030.²⁵

The coherent consensus, also in space and time, among EU Member States and the EU itself could be examined in several ways.

The statement that the European Union is in favour of the two-state solution means that it should be supporting Palestine as well. Comparing this assumption with the voting behaviour of the Member States, most of them do not have the same vote orientation as the assumption of the European Union's policy.

If the years of the resolutions are examined (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021), it is also visible that the Member States have no coherent voting behaviour, not only among themselves, but the voting behaviour is neither coherent with the assumption of the EU's political will.

Checking the investigated years of the resolutions, the result of the research is that Hungary, Poland, Portugal, and Slovenia had the most coherent voting behaviour. Among these countries, Hungary was the only one with coherent voting behaviour in the given years.

For each resolution, there is no coherent voting behaviour among the Member States. As mentioned before, Member States were not voting coherently, and this sum up the resolutions for the examined years as well.

Finally, projecting the analysis of the votes of the Member States onto the entire sample, it is visible that there is no coherent voting behaviour.

The conclusion to be drawn from this voting mechanism is that there is no coherent consensus among EU Member States. Therefore, the idea of a

²⁵https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Az_iszlám_Európában

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two-state solution, as preferred by the international community, cannot be transformed into the Member States' visions. The outcome of the voting pattern is that the EU Member States are not necessarily showing the same way of thinking as the European Union is demanding. It is more like a projection of which country supports Palestine or Israel.

Therefore, it can be said that the European Union is not formulating its policy-making direction through a collective decision-making mechanism but is entering the international political arena to actively participate in international politics as it has done in the past.

Table 1. UN General Assembly Resolutions on Palestine 2012-2022

Decision Number	Decision	Decision Link
2018/37	Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1654161?ln=en
2019/33	Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3837829?ln=en
2019/70	Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3837827?ln=en
2019/97	Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3839966?ln=en
2020/84	Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3893463?ln=en
2020/95	Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Global Communications of the Secretariat: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3893459?ln=en
2020/96	Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3894281?ln=en
2020/100	Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3894278?ln=en

2021/37	Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3949881?ln=en
2021/84	Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3950798?ln=en
2021/86	Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly	https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3950806?ln=en

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Table 2. EU Member States' Votes for the Decisions Examined

Country	2018 /37	2019 /33	2019 /70	2019 /97	2020 /84	2020 /95	2020 /96	2020/ 100	2021 /37	2021 /84	2021 /86
AUSTRIA	A	A	N	A	N	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	N
BELGIUM	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
BULGARIA	A	A	N	A	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
CROATIA	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
CYPRUS	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
CZECHIA	A	N	N	A	N	Y	Y	A	A	A	N
DENMARK	A	A	N	A	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
ESTONIA	A	A	N	A	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
FINLAND	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
FRANCE	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
GERMANY	A	A	N	A	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
GREECE	A	A	N	A	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
HUNGARY	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
IRELAND	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
ITALY	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
LATVIA	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
LITHUANIA	A	A	N	A	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A

LUXEMBOURG	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
MALTA	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
NETHERLANDS	A	A	N	A	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
POLAND	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
PORTUGAL	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
ROMANIA	A	A	N	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
SLOVAKIA	A	A	N	A	N	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	A
SLOVENIA	A	A	A	A	N	Y	Y	Y	A	A	N
SPAIN	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A
SWEDEN	A	A	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A

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Table 3. Voting Mechanism of EU Member States in %

	2018 /37	2019 /33	2019 /70	2019 /97	2020 /84	2020 /95	2020 /96	2020/ 100	2021 /37	2021 /84	2021 /86
yes %	7%	7%	7%	0%	7%	96%	96%	85%	89%	89%	0%
no %	4%	7%	44%	4%	44%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	15%
abstained %	89%	85%	48%	96%	48%	0%	0%	11%	7%	7%	85%

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Table 4. Distribution of Votes in EU Member States in %

Country	Y %	N %	A %
AUSTRIA	36%	27%	36%
BELGIUM	45%	0%	55%
BULGARIA	45%	18%	36%
CROATIA	45%	0%	55%
CYPRUS	82%	0%	18%
CZECHIA	18%	36%	45%
DENMARK	45%	18%	36%
ESTONIA	45%	18%	36%
FINLAND	45%	0%	55%
FRANCE	45%	0%	55%
GERMANY	45%	18%	36%
GREECE	45%	18%	36%

HUNGARY	0%	100%	0%
IRELAND	45%	0%	55%
ITALY	45%	0%	55%
LATVIA	45%	0%	55%
LITHUANIA	45%	18%	36%
LUXEMBOURG	45%	0%	55%
MALTA	82%	0%	18%
NETHERLANDS	45%	18%	36%
POLAND	45%	0%	55%
PORTUGAL	45%	0%	55%
ROMANIA	45%	9%	45%
SLOVAKIA	36%	18%	45%
SLOVENIA	27%	18%	55%
SPAIN	45%	0%	55%
SWEDEN	45%	0%	55%

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Conclusion

The international community has been trying for decades to achieve its goal of a two-state solution for Palestine. Negotiations between the parties have failed, and it is increasingly apparent that Israel needs to find new supporters, both regionally and globally, as pro-Palestinian views in the international community appear to be gaining strength. There are only a few EU Member States that support Israel. In general, the two-state solution is very hard to be reached. The EU, because of its special relationship with Israel, is not in a position to form the Middle-East policy.

The much-vaunted unity of the international community seems to be breaking down. The research has shown that state-building and security are not clearly the responsibility of the international community. The positive effects of the various missions and economic aid cannot be denied. Still, it must be recognized that neither the political nor the legal framework for resolving a Palestinian-Israeli conflict is in place (Wildeman & Tartir, 2013), and that a two-state solution is only viable if the two parties concerned can reach an agreement (Baruch, 2013, p.64).

As the Middle East's geopolitical, economic, historical, and religious orientations are completely different from those in the transatlantic world or the European Union, it is difficult to bring this multipolar system under one roof.

The outcome of the UN General Assembly's voting concerning Palestine also shows that the presumed international community position, as presented in international and domestic literature, that a two-state solution can achieve state-building and a sustainable peace settlement, is not reflected in the voting behaviour of EU Member States. It is more like a pattern of preference of each EU country, but this indicates something else. The EU was not successful in convincing the EU Member States how the Middle East peace process should be initiated with a pan-European vision.

It is clear that the European Union wishes to play an active role in peace-building in the Middle East, but it is equally important for the EU to develop a system of relations with the Mediterranean that is indispensable in the current international political situation.

The Quartet policy will not resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but possibly by certain regional realignments, which will lead Israel and the PA territories to seek new allies.

As the EU is willing to formulate the European Neighborhood Policy and strengthen the relationship with the Mediterranean, a new structure is evolving. The Middle-East peace process actors will be looking for potential partners and supporters, as the EU lacks the presence and effective and forward-looking policies concerning state-building and peace-building.

There are several possible ways for Palestinian state-building, but the key to any successful state-building effort is a lasting and sustainable peace agreement with Israel. Without a peace agreement, state-building efforts will likely be hindered by ongoing violence and political instability.

One possible way for state-building is through negotiations between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel. The PA has already established some institutions of governance in the West Bank, but it has limited autonomy and authority due to the ongoing Israeli occupation. A peace agreement with Israel would likely lead to an expansion of the PA's governing authority and a greater ability to build state institutions.

Another possible way for state-building is through regional and international support. The EU has been an important factor in supporting Palestinian state-building by providing financial and technical assistance to the PA. The EU has also supported the development of democratic institutions and civil society by promoting economic growth and providing humanitarian aid.

In addition, the EU could play a more active role in support of the two-state solution, which is the internationally supported framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the establishment of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

It's important to note that the ongoing conflict and the lack of progress toward a lasting peace agreement limit the EU's role in supporting the Palestinian state-building process. The EU has called for the resumption of peace negotiations and for both parties to refrain from actions that would undermine the two-state solution.

As it was stated before, the EU has the potential to play a significant role in peace-building and state-building. Still, if the EU is willing to be an actor in this international political arena, there is much to change.

It's also important to consider that the political situation in the region is complex and constantly changing. A sustainable and lasting solution for Palestinian state-building will require a comprehensive approach that addresses the political, economic, and social challenges.

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