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ANALYSIS

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EUROPEAN UNION CO-DECISION- MAKING PRINCIPLE: DIFFERENCES ON THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

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EUROPEAN UNION CO-DECISION-MAKING PRINCIPLE: AN ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES ON THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

The changing and developing international balance policy throughout history has affected many states and their structures, sometimes caused the establishment of new states and sometimes resulted in the disappearance of states. The European geography, which has been trying to maintain its political stability regionally since the Middle Ages, has also been affected by these changes. World wars and some regional conflicts have led to the formation of new states or the change and transformation of existing states in the European geography. The aim of establishing a balance of power among the new states that emerged with the changing balances brought together the regional states that have common points in many different areas such as geography, religion and culture. After the end of the Cold War, the regional states, which ended their dependence on the bipolar balance of power, reorganized the regional balance with the political powers they gained. States that recovered and regained their independence adopted the idea of forming a community under the leadership of the founding states, aiming to turn their common geographical values into a political unity. Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, which came together in this direction, formed the basis of the union. Thus, the European Union (EU) gained a political identity with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, which established it in 1993. The signing of the Treaty by the founding states created the legal and international identity of the Union and determined its purpose, objectives and vision. The Maastricht Treaty in that sense, has a great importance for the member states and the Union as it is considered the founding treaty and basic source of the Union. The effort to create a common political and economic union with the cooperation of member states has been adopted as one of the basic foundation instincts of the Union and the Union has been shaped accordingly. After its establishment, the Union, which expanded with the increase in the number of member states over the years, ensured the political and geographical unity in the European geography and aimed to have a common vision with its member states. The adoption of a common vision has strengthened cooperation between states and created a joint decision-making mechanism on issues such as near future plans.

EU Co-Decision-Making Principle

Since its establishment, the European Union has achieved success in many different areas, not only regionally but also globally. In addition to supporting various infrastructure services such as education, arts, sports and health in member states, the organization has expanded its scope of activity in line with its joint work with the United Nations (UN). Joint work with the UN has enabled the EU, which has a regional organization, to carry out activities such as preventing conflicts in the international arena, ensuring peace and

observing human rights. These various areas prove that the Union is not limited regionally but also has a multifaceted structure. In particular, the efforts and initiatives made in the fields of ensuring peace and maintaining regional stability and balance of power in the recent Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts have brought both the member states and the organization itself to the fore in this regard. The organization's attitude towards both wars basically include the joint decisions of its member states.

When the decision-making mechanism of the Union is examined, three bodies stand out: European Commission, European Parliament and European Council. The Parliament, composed of representatives from each of the member states, can be considered the body in which states play the most active role among the three bodies. All issues discussed in the European Parliament are evaluated by the principle of “joint decision-making”, also namely “co-decision”, which was accepted by the Maastricht Treaty and determined as the decision-making mechanism of the EU. Parliament sessions held with the participation of member states allow members to express their opinions in a free and egalitarian environment, independently of each other and without being pressured. A joint decision-making mechanism proves that the decisions taken are approved by the member states and that they play an active role in the decision-making process. By ensuring that the decisions taken, and the laws passed by the parliament are carried out with a consensus approach, the responsibility for the decisions is shared equally among all member states. Thus, the decisions made are taken by all member states in line with the aim of protecting the common goals and interests of the Union, without prioritizing national interests. The principle of shared decision-making encourages member states to cooperate not only in the decision-making process but also in the adoption of common policies. In this context, the cooperations that we can diversify, such as the common currency, the Schengen area application and common agricultural policies, are also compatible with the founding vision of the EU.

Although, in theory, the decisions taken by the Parliament and the Council are expected to comply with the principle of “joint decision-making”, as stated in the founding agreement of the organization, in practice it can be observed that there are disagreements on some issues due to the attitudes of local governments in the member states. While this divergence in the opinions undermines the common principle of joint decision-making, the decision-making process slows down and causes conflict between local governments. This difference, which also causes disputes within the Union, occurs on various issues such as the national interests, political cultures and economic concerns of local governments. Disagreements of opinion directly affect the structure of the Union, causing the integrity not to be achieved, which in turn causes the violation of one of the basic formation principles of the Union.

EU Member States and Their Attitudes in the Israel-Palestine War: Conflict or Cooperation?

The principle of “joint decision-making” adopted by the EU with its founding agreement has aimed to ensure unity of thought among member states since the past. Member states that adopt the concept of consensus affect the EU decision-making process and cause minor disagreements in the Parliament due to differences arising from their domestic politics. These ideas, discussed in Parliament and presented on different grounds and interests, can sometimes result in much deeper disagreements. The differences between the actions of the member states, the statements made by the leaders and the attitudes of the EU Commission during the Israel-Palestine war

can be cited as examples of this deep disagreement. In more wider concept, based on the EU Commission's statements, the EU's reaction to the war and its support for the Palestinian people are frequently repeated. But at the same time, it is also notable that, in some cases, it has adopted an attitude that is completely opposite to the support it showed before by remaining silent in the face of human rights violations, hot conflicts and genocidal mass murders in the region. This contrast in the behaviours shown and the statements made causes fluctuations in the EU foreign policy and leads to uncertainty.

When the war is examined in order to understand the EU's thoughts on the war; It can be said that the tension between Israel and Palestine dates back to approximately the Second World War period. These conflicts, which have been going on for years, have intensified again under the influence of Benjamin Netanyahu and his far-right party policies, who gained political power with the change of government in Israel in 2022. When the date shows October 2023, the Israeli-Palestinian war has reached terrible dimensions as it continues today. The EU has taken some peace-making steps towards the conflicts that occurred before this date and the military and political movements that emerged in the Middle East region. As a matter of fact, these steps have shaped the EU's foreign policy on both the Middle East and the Israel-Palestine War. Nowadays, with the emergence of the current war situation, regional movements have begun to appear frequently in the world press. Palestine, whose lands have been occupied by Israel since 1948, is trying to respond to the attacks with the support of various military groupings and political formations within the country in the face of the latest

conflicts. However, this response is not enough to ensure peace or create a balance of power in the face of Israel's military and political superiority. The difference between the two states in terms of military power and political stability affects the continuity of the war in the region and thus prevents peace talks. For this reason, both material and humanitarian aid from other states is very important for Palestine. Although the EU takes positive steps for Palestine with its humanitarian support, the individual attitudes of the member states lead to questioning of the support given. The difference of opinion between the member states stems mainly from the attitudes of Germany and France. These two countries, which adopt an orientation that supports Israel in their domestic politics, influence the joint decision-making process with the economic and political balance they have in the EU decision-making mechanism. For this reason, there are major inconsistencies between the statements made by the EU and the attitudes adopted by local governments since October 2023. The statements made when the clashes first occurred prove this. Hamas, which entered into conflict with Israel representing the Palestinian state, was initially severely condemned by both world countries and the EU. Subsequently, after the conflicts escalated and Israel's aggressive attitudes progressed towards violation of human rights for Palestine and even a mass murder, Israel became the target country for condemnation. For example, on the first day of the conflict, the EU Commission stated that Israel had the right to defend itself and therefore it was legitimate to respond to attacks and made statements that humanitarian support and development aid to the Palestinian people would be stopped. This decision was harshly criticized by the governments of

Luxembourg, Spain and Ireland, and statements supporting the Palestinian people came from these states. After a short time, the EU Commission completely changed its attitude towards the war and made a statement that humanitarian aid would be tripled. The statements made show that, in line with the change in the course of the war and the news reflected in the press, there has been a change in the attitudes of not only the EU but also all other countries towards the war.

When the sample countries are examined; The rising far-right in France and the increasingly widespread Islamophobic thoughts in society cause uncertainties in the idea of solidarity with the Muslim Palestinian people. These thoughts, which fuel each other as a result of the reflection of the people's demands on politics and the reflection of politics on the public, also have a very important place in France's attitude towards the war. The fact that a significant part of the society organized demonstrations in support of Palestine in response to government policies can be considered as the most accurate example of this dilemma in local politics. At the same time, the close ties that Germany, which still experiences the responsibility of the Holocaust in domestic politics, has developed with Israel over the years have brought the two countries closer to each other both commercially and politically. For this reason, Germany's pro-Israeli attitude towards Palestine does not coincide with the EU's statements of support for Palestine. However, in contrast to the pro-Israeli attitudes of Germany and France, when other EU member countries such as Ireland, Spain and Belgium are examined, it is evident that a close solidarity with the Palestinian people has continued to being strengthened. Likewise,

calls for solidarity from various EU member states such as Slovenia, Spain, Malta and Ireland, positive statements about recognizing the Palestinian state, ensuring a ceasefire and accelerating humanitarian aid, and anti-Israeli actions in society can also be exemplified as a part of this unbalanced politics. This imbalance in European domestic politics also has an impact on the United Nations (UN), which assumes responsibility for the Israeli-Palestinian war. The fact that France, one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, has the power to directly veto the submitted decisions, combined with the pro-Israeli policies evident in French local politics, puts it in a position to directly influence the UN decision-making mechanism.

In broad picture, the financial and humanitarian aids that given by the EU to support Palestinian people is destroyed by the Israil, who has also friendly relations with the EU. This situation, in fact, creates a regional dilemma. The EU, which has been criticized for its insufficient and ineffective attitude in cooperation with the UN, cannot repeat its previous successes in areas such as resolving conflicts and ensuring peace. The most important reason for this is that the principle of joint decision-making is insufficient for the Israel-Palestine war and is due to the inconsistencies among the member states that cannot reach a common decision. All these differences of opinion, uncertainty in the attitudes adopted, rapid changes in policies and backward steps taken slow down the joint decision-making mechanism. As another example, when the EU's stance on the Israel-Palestine war is compared to its stance on the Russia-Ukraine war, major differences are evident. It is not possible to say that the common

foreign policy and anti-war attitude adopted by the EU with all its member states against the Russia-Ukraine war is also adopted for the Israel-Palestine war. This can be explained on many different axes. The most prominent reasons are listed as follows; Increasing Islamophobic thoughts in Europe, economic and trade concerns, disagreements in the EU internal balance, EU - Israel and US - EU relations, unbalanced power distribution in both EU Parliament and local governments can be given as examples. US-EU relations, which are one of the most effective reasons for the difference of opinion, directly affect the internal conflict experienced by the EU within itself and organizationally. For this reason, the US-oriented attitude in the EU's foreign policy is coming to light again and casting a shadow on the EU's independence goal.

The Effect on the War Attitudes of EU Member States within the Scope of US-Israel Relations

The USA, which has had a friendly relationship with the State of Israel since its establishment, has provided guiding support for the establishment of the State of Israel in the region, its legitimacy and recognition by other world states. These mutual ties, which have continued throughout history between the two states, were formed as a result of economic, political, cultural and commercial cooperation and various partnerships. The USA's unconditional support for Israel in the current Israel-Palestine conflict is also provided in line with these strong relations. The military ammunition, financial aid and political support that the USA has provided to Israel since the beginning of the war, such as bombs and warplanes, are one of the biggest factors affecting Israel's position

and attitude in the war. Thanks to the power and support it receives from the USA, Israel does not give up its aggressive stance against the Palestinian state, despite worldwide criticism and condemnation. The positive support that the USA showed to Israel during the war can be explained on many different grounds. First of all, Israel, which is the only Middle Eastern country operating on the NASDAQ stock exchange, dominates the US economy and markets with its large corporate partnerships such as The Coca Cola Company, Pepsi Co, Procter & Gamble, which contribute significantly to the economic activities of the USA. Subsequently, Jewish politicians who hold high-level management positions in various units of the US political system are of critical importance in shaping the political attitude and foreign policy of the US. The best example of this is the statement made by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, who visited Israel shortly after the start of the war, saying, *"I come before you not only as the United States secretary of state but also as a Jew."* This clearly indicates that the support shown by the USA also has a religious background. It is possible to say that the religious-based approach is common not only among politicians but also among the public. When the social view based on Jewish-Christian solidarity combines with anti-Islamism, the common ground of the US and Israel's Middle East policy becomes more evident. At the same time, as another factor, Jewish Lobbies, which have an important position in the press, economy and politics, can be given as an example in this context. The deep-rooted understanding of lobbying that has developed in US politics directly affects senate decisions. Thus, the powerful Jewish Lobby has an influential position on the decisions made and policies adopted.

When we look at the scope of the war more broadly, it can be said that the main source of Israel's persistent aggressive attitude is the political support that Israel receives not only from the USA but also from various EU countries such as Germany and France, which are close to the USA. The USA, which has strong cooperation with the EU and mutual dependency on various issues, has a direct impact on the anti-war attitudes of EU member states. Mutual trade agreements, supportive aid and cooperation provided by the USA to EU member states have pushed the EU and its member countries to turn towards the USA in political terms and to shape their own foreign policies in this direction. The EU, which has received support from the USA on many different issues since its establishment, also adopts a stance close to the USA in its attitude towards the Israel-Palestine war. The similarity of the statements made by the EU Commission with the US stance also draws attention at this point. The fact that the EU's stance on Middle East policy is US-centred can be explained as another reason for the differences of opinion within the EU. The US attitude, which is relatively more influential on Germany and France, does not coincide with the attitudes of other EU member states such as Spain, Ireland and Belgium. This is the basis for the disagreement among EU member states. When the EU member states that adopt both different attitudes are examined, it can be said that the close relations and close cooperation with the USA are effective in the attitudes of local governments towards the war. At the same time, another element of the political, economic and commercial cooperation established with the USA and a similar policy approach is security. The fact that the EU is directly dependent on NATO and

thus on the USA in terms of security causes the policies of both local governments and the EU to be shaped in a US-oriented way. When mutual relations are examined, the US influence on EU policies will maintain its continuity as long as the EU's dependence on the US does not decrease. In this regard, it is possible to infer that the decisions to be taken by the EU Commission in the future will be in line with the US attitude.

Conclusion

The European Union, as an institutional structure, was formed by the coming together of various states in the European geography in line with their common interests and goals. In this regard, the main objectives of the Union are to ensure commercial, economic and political cooperation that will ensure regional development. The EU Parliament, one of the main decision-making bodies of the Union, undertakes the task of discussing the ideas presented through local governments and adopting appropriate policies on these issues. The understanding of an equal and liberal environment in the parliament allows the ideas presented by member states to be discussed with a balanced participation and decisions to be taken accordingly. The EU, which adopted the principle of "joint decision-making" with its founding treaty in order to form a consensus and be adopted by the states, evaluates the decisions made accordingly. Joint decision-making mechanism has an important role in achieving the common goals adopted by the Union. However, the national interests and independent policies of local governments cause disagreements in EU internal politics. The resulting differences of opinion slow down the decision-making mechanism and erode the principle of joint decision-making adopted

by the Union. The most effective result of this difference of opinion can be interpreted through the Israeli-Palestinian war, which still continues today. The fact that the statements made by the EU are independent of the attitudes and policies adopted by local governments causes the steps to be taken against the war to be delayed and naturally affects the course of the war. In this regard, it can be interpreted that the EU joint decision-making mechanism has slowed down and the main objectives of the Union have different problems within themselves. These problems and disruptions also damage the EU institutional structure. Independent policies of local governments, economic and commercial concerns, religious-based statements and the US influence on the EU can be listed among the main reasons for the difference of opinion. These differences of opinion shake the EU's balance policy both nationally and internationally and significantly damage its global image. The fact that the activities and achievements of the Union, which is based as a regional organization, in the international arena to date are affected by disagreements may lead to major problems for the Union in the near future. Among the problems that may arise when disagreements continue, there is also the possibility of member differences. Although member separation is not expected in the near future, the continuity of ideas becoming independent from each other creates a question mark in minds about member separation or exit. In this context, the EU aims to strengthen communication and cooperation with local governments in order to reach a common decision on the ideas discussed in the Parliament in the near future. Thus, it is also aimed to prevent disagreements. Otherwise, the problems that may be encountered in the near future may shake

the foundations of the Union structure and result in a decrease in its reliability in the national and international arena.

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