

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

**THE EU-ROPEAN POLICY TOWARDS ISRAEL'S WAR ON GAZA:  
ACTOR-CENTRED INSTITUTIONALIST EXPLANATION**

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**Abstract**

*There has not been a significant change on the EU's stance on the main issues regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the start of the formulation of its single foreign policy position on this issue in the 1970s. However, Israel's war on Gaza that started on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 compelled some EU states to recognise the Palestinian state. The primary goal of this study is to explore EU's policies towards Israel's war on Gaza from the angle of actor-centred institutionalism. This approach, which was designed by Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharpf, is an analytical tool employed to investigate political facts and processes. According to this approach, institutions are viewed as rules (laws, norms), regularities (behavioural routines, power relations, distributions of power and resources), social entities (formal corporate actors and organisations) and (formal or informal loose) networks. Non-written rules, legal regulations and regularities form real (formal or informal) social structures and create the framework for the relationships among the actors by the distribution of official competences, financial or power resources. Thus, these institutions determine their definitions of the actors' situations, on which their choices of action are based. The primary argument of this article is that the current actor constellation in the EU prevents it from following a common stance towards the Gaza war. There are two opposing camps concerning EU's policy towards Israel's war on Gaza. Spain, Ireland, Slovenia are pro-Palestine whereas Germany, Austria and some eastern European states such as Hungary and the Czech Republic are supportive of Israel. Another contention of this article is that the disunity within the EU also stems from the EU's institutional plurality and diversity. In other words, the divide is both within and between the EU institutions.*

**Keywords:** Institutionalism, Israel, EU, Gaza, Palestine.

**JEL Codes:** F51, F53, F59.

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## İSRAİL'İN GAZZE SAVAŞIYLA İLGİLİ POLİTİKASI: AKTÖR MERKEZLİ KURUMSAL AÇIKLAMA<sup>3</sup>

### Öz

*AB'nin İsrail-Filistin çatışması konusundaki temel meseleler üzerindeki tutumunda, 1970'lerde bu konuda tek bir dış politika pozisyonu oluşturmaya başladığından bu yana önemli bir değişiklik olmamıştır. Ancak, 7 Ekim 2023'te başlayan İsrail'in Gazze'ye karşı savaşı, bazı AB ülkelerini Filistin devletini tanımaya zorlamıştır. Bu çalışmanın birincil hedefi AB'nin İsrail'in Gazze Savaşı'na karşı olan politikalarını aktör odaklı kurumsalcılık açısından incelemektir. Renate Mayntz ve Fritz Scharpf tarafından geliştirilen aktör-merkezli kurumsalcılık, siyasi olguları ve süreçleri analiz etmek için kullanılan bir analitik araçtır. Kurumsalcılıkta, kurumlar, kurallar (yasalar, normlar), düzenlilikler (davranış rutinleri, güç ilişkileri, güç ve kaynakların dağılımı), sosyal varlıklar (resmi kurumsal aktörler ve örgütler) ve (resmi veya gayriresmi gevşek) ağlar olarak kabul edilir. Yazılı olmayan kurallar, yasal düzenlemeler ve düzenlilikler, gerçek (resmi veya gayriresmi) sosyal yapılar yaratır ve aktörler arasındaki ilişkilerin çerçevesini, yetkinliklerin, finansal veya güç kaynaklarının tahsisiyle belirler. Sonuç olarak, bu kurumlar, aktörlerin eylem tercihlerini temel aldıkları durumların tanımlarını belirler. Yasal hükümler, anayasalar, kararnameler, yönetmelikler, yasalar ve tüzükler, farklı kurumsal aktörlerin (otoriteler, örgütler) güç ve kaynak dağılımını tanımlar. Bu kurumsal aktörler, ilgili ülkelerdeki yasal gereksinimlere uygun olarak kurumsal düzenlemelerle oluşturulur ve onlara görevler ve yetkinlikler atanır. Makalenin birinci argümanı, AB'deki hali hazırdaki aktör kümeleşmesinin Gazze Savaşı'na karşı ortak bir tutum izlemeyi engellediğidir. AB'nin İsrail'in Gazze Savaşı'na karşı izlediği politikayla ilgili birbirine zıt iki kamp yer almaktadır. İspanya, İrlanda ve Slovenya Filistin taraftarıyken Almanya, Avusturya ve Macaristan ve Çek Cumhuriyeti gibi bazı doğu Avrupa ülkeleri İsrail'i desteklemektedir. Makalenin başka bir iddiası AB içindeki bölünmüşlüğü AB'nin kurumsal çoğulculuğundan ve çeşitliliğinden de kaynaklanmış olduğudur. Bölünme hem kurumların içinde hem de kurumların arasındadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kurumsalcılık, İsrail, AB, Gazze, Filistin.

**JEL Kodları:** F51, F53, F59.

“Bu çalışma Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.”

<sup>3</sup> Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet, makalenin sonunda yer almaktadır.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

From its inception in 1957 until the 1967 war, the Palestinian issue was not on the agenda of the then EC, not least because the Community didn't have a legal authority to act as a "whole" in foreign policy issues. This is because foreign policy was the prerogative of individual nation states. During this period, the USA dominated the Palestinian issue.

The first oil embargo by Arab countries on the Netherlands on 16 October 1973 in the aftermath of the October War (6 October 1973) compelled the EC to address the Palestinian issue. The Venice Declaration of June 1980 is another watershed development regarding the EC's position with respect to the Palestinian issue. Building on the previous statements, for the first time, it mentioned the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians that had to be included in the negotiations (Venice Declaration, 1980).

Unlike the 1970s, in which the EC was relatively pro-active and autonomous in foreign affairs, the EC's autonomy and internal consensus diminished during the 1980s as a result of the strengthening of the transatlantic ties during the Reagan – Thatcher period and the lack of the institutionalisation of the EC in foreign policy making (Hill, 1993).

Throughout most of the 1990s, the EU took on an economic role in the settlement of the Palestinian conflict. The sponsors of the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference were the USA and the Soviet Union with the EU carving out a role as a junior partner for itself. In this role, the EC/EU became responsible for the Regional Economic Development Working Group (REDWG). Brussels' growing economic role was reflected in the steady rise in its trade relations with Israel as well as in the external aid to the Palestinian Authority (Yacobi and Newman, 2008: 182).

The deterioration of the situation in Palestine limited the peace building efforts of the EU during the 2000s. The return of the Likud Party in Israel harmed the diplomatic efforts. Besides, the war on terror following the 9/11 terror attacks, the war in Afghanistan and then in Iraq have distracted the attention of the international community (Hollis, 2016: 36).

The EU has attempted to harmonise its policies with its official political stance, especially with respect to the issue of Israeli settlements. In December 2012, the EU declared that all Israeli-EU agreements in the future "must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967." (Council of the European Union, 2012) Furthermore, in November 2015, the European Commission decided that a number of products originating in the settlements had to be labelled as "product[s] from the West Bank." (European Commission, 2015). While the economic implications of this differentiation have been marginal, this was an important symbolic message sent to the Israelis.

Trump's coming into office in January 2017 undermined Brussels' efforts for the conflict resolution in Palestine. The EU denounced Trump's recognition of Jerusalem in 2017 as Israel's capital, stating that the USA had compromised its position as an intermediary for peace. Also, Brussels partially rejected U.S. President Donald Trump's peace plan for the Middle East in February 2020 that would grant Israel most of what it has wanted, including almost all Palestinian land, on which it has constructed settlements on the ground that it was not in line with internationally agreed parameters (Reuters, 2020).

Like in many EU Council conclusions, the EU stated in December 2010 Council meeting: "The EU believes that urgent progress is needed towards a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We want to see the State of Israel and a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security. The legitimacy of the State of Israel and the right of Palestinians to achieve statehood must never be called into question... Our views on settlements, including in East Jerusalem, are clear: they are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace... The EU will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties. This could include agreed territorial swaps" (Reliefweb.int, 2010). These views still form the basis of EU's policy towards the Palestinian issue.

The main objective of this article is to analyse EU's policies toward Israel's war on the Gaza Strip from the perspective of actor-centred institutionalism. Methodologically, the research is a qualitative study. It used secondary sources such as books, articles, reports and comments as well as primary sources such as the statements of EU institutions and officials and news. These sources are then analysed through the lens of actor-centred institutionalism in order to find out the policies of the EU institutions towards the Gaza war. The actor-centred institutionalism devised by Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharpf is an analytical tool quite useful to investigate political facts and processes within institutions like the EU, since written or non-written rules within these institutions and networks determine the way how they act in the face of various situations (Mayntz and Scharpf, 1995).

This article, primarily, argues that the current actor constellation in the EU prevents it from pursuing a united policy towards the Gaza war. The EU countries are divided into two opposing camps regarding Israel's war on Gaza. Whereas Spain, Ireland and Slovenia are pro-Palestine, Germany, Austria and some eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic and Hungary are pro-Israel. The article also maintains that the institutional plurality and diversity are another source of disunity when it comes to the EU's policy on the Gaza war. Thus, the divide is not only *between* EU institutions but also *within* EU institutions.

The first part of the article sheds light on the theory of actor-centred institutionalism while the second part deals with a literature review of EU policies towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The third section elucidates the functions of the EU institutions briefly in order to provide a background before proceeding with EU institutions'

policies towards the Gaza war. Then, decentral forms of cooperation to circumvent obstacles of EU decision-making are explained. Subsequently, EU institutions' policies towards the Gaza war are clarified. Before the conclusion, some recommendations concerning EU's decision-making models are provided.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Parallel to the EU's growing visibility in the Middle East, scholars have produced numerous studies with respect to its role on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Even though the presence of the EU has increased and diversified concerning the Israeli-Palestinian issue over the years (Altunisik, 2008), it is widely acknowledged that the EU is not an influential actor for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Ginsberg, 2001; Musu, 2010; Dajani and Lovatt, 2017). With respect to the ineffective role of the EU in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Henry Kissinger's famous comment is frequently quoted: "the Europeans will be unable to achieve anything in the Middle East in a million years." (Gomez, 2003: 123). Other studies (Miskimmon and O'Loughlin, 2019) also recognise the EU's limitations in international affairs in the face of greater challenges such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is explained by Christopher Hill's conception of the "capabilities-expectations gap" that drew attention to the divergence between the EU's capabilities and people's expectations from it (Hill, 1993).

In contrast to the leading role of the US, the EU has played a complementary role in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially as an economic actor rather than a diplomatic or political one. Therefore, the EU was often described as a "payer" not a "player" in the academic literature (Bouris, 2014: 71). In this context, Bouris and Huber, for instance, proposed that the EU had to recognise the Palestinian state since it was cheaper than paying for the occupation given the fact that Brussels spends almost 500 million euros a year for Palestine (Bouris and Huber, 2017: 5). The financial aid of the EU was not fruitful since weak policies and fragile institutional structure in Palestine like in any other developing country turned out to be an obstacle to transforming Palestine into a wealthy country through foreign aid like that of the EU. (Bawatneh, 2020).

Del Sarto suggests that while the possibility of a two-state solution has increasingly evaporated and the Israeli rule in the Palestinian territories has been entrenched since the Oslo Accords, the EU continued to insist on the Oslo logic because of the contradictions regarding the EU's complex institutional and decision-making structure, the lack of viable alternative models and the EU's preference for stability and economic interests in its periphery (Del Sarto, 2019). Other scholars also argue that the similar logic of EU's prioritization of stability and economic interests over conflict resolution is an impediment to the EU-ropcean peacebuilding efforts in the region (Pace, 2010). There is a general agreement that on many occasions different national interests or institutional complexity of the EU make it difficult for this actor to take a joint action on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Dror, 2014; Pace, 2010; Persson, 2018). Moreover, Akgül-Açikmeşe and Özel claim that the EU's conflict

resolution efforts didn't help solve the problem because of "the contextual interplay of multipolar competition, regional fragmentation and EU-level internal contestation." (Akgül-Açıkmeşe and Özel, 2024) Furthermore, Israel and several other actors' use of Eurosceptic attitude of some EU member states as an instrument to fulfil their own political objectives is put forward as another hurdle to Brussels' conflict resolution efforts in Palestine (Pardo and Gordon, 2018). Besides, there are some other studies that suggest that the EU's failure to meet its targets stems neither from an insufficiency of instruments nor from its internal divisions but from a growing gap between rhetorical objectives and conduct in practice (Tocci, 2005). Following the literature review, the next section explains the conceptual framework of this article.

### 3. ACTOR-CENTRED INSTITUTIONALISM

Actor-centred institutionalism, which was developed by Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharpf, is an analytical tool to analyse political facts and processes. Following this approach, institutions are considered as *rules* (laws, norms), *regularities* (behavioural routines, power relations, distribution of power and resources), *social entities* (formal corporate actors and organisations) and (formal or informal loose) *networks*. Non-written rules, legal regulations and regularities create real (formal or informal) social structures and set out the framework for the relationships among the actors by the assignment of official competences, financial or power resources. As a result, these institutions determine the definitions of the actors' situations, on which their choices of action are based. Statutory provisions, constitutions, decrees, ordinances, laws, statutes define the distribution of power and resources of different corporate actors (authorities, organisations) (Mayntz and Scharpf, 1995). These corporate actors are formed by the institutional arrangement in accordance with legal requirements in the respective countries, "whereby tasks and official competences are assigned to them ..." (Mayntz and Scharpf, 1995: 48). The institutional context establishes actors and their relations to each other through allocations of power resources, rights and duties (actor constellation). The institutional arrangement defines "their action resources and influences their action orientation" (Mayntz and Scharpf, 1995: 49). As individuals are members of such corporate actors or networks like organisations, bodies, authorities or communities, their own actions follow their memberships in these institutions (Mayntz and Scharpf, 1995: 50). Actors with constitutionally recognised or legally guaranteed appointment define the membership structures of other institutions and their strategic focus and orientation, which can differ from the officially proclaimed working areas. Another important point of interest is formal procedures or informal methods of decision-making, voting rules, majority thresholds within corporate actors like parliaments or EU institutions: the higher the majority threshold, the more difficult is achieving a common resolution and vice versa. The principle of unanimity makes reaching fast agreements more difficult, whereas a general majority voting procedure can enable quick coalition-building. The following section introduces the functions of the institutions of the European Union and the decision-making rules within the EU.

## **4. THE EUROPEAN UNION: INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR DECISION-MAKING RULES**

### **4.1. The European Union (EU)**

The European Union is a supranational political, economic and social organisation of 27 member states in Europe. It is an evolved successor organisation of different predecessors, of which the first was the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), originally established by (West) Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux Countries in 1951. The further evolution, enlargement of this organisation through the accession of new members and the deepening of the cooperation between them were accompanied by the gradual formation of new internal structures, restructuring and renaming processes with every concluded treaty. After successful accession negotiations, applicant countries delegate partially their national sovereignty, and receive participation, co-determination rights and gain even in some cases veto power in return. During the decade-long European integration, the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Community followed the ECSC, whereby the European Communities finally became the European Union (EU, 1991). The EU consists of many different institutions, some of which try to find a balance between each national particular interests and common pan-European goals and resemble to a certain extent the conventional branches of government (executive, legislative and judiciary).

The institutional great multiplicity of various EU-institutions takes into account the EU as a hybrid form between a federal state and a confederal state union. When it comes to a common policy formulation, EU-ropean policy depends on the current actor constellation, which shows a plurality and diversity of too many institutions with different internal decision rules and make a clear and unique orientation very difficult. The EU-ropean policy towards Israel's war on Gaza is one example. The below section elucidates how decision- and policy-making take place in the EU institutions.

### **4.2. Decision- and Policy-making in the EU- Institutions**

#### *4.2.1. The European Council (Plus Intergovernmental Representation of the member states)*

In its own self-conception, the European Council, which consists of the heads of the member states of the EU, “[t]he European Council defines the EU’s overall political direction and priorities, traditionally by adopting conclusions. It does not negotiate or adopt EU laws” (Consilium, n.d.) Because of these conclusions, specific issues of concern as well as actions to be taken or goals to be achieved are identified.

### **4.3. Legislative**

#### *4.3.1. The Council of the European Union (Intergovernmental Representation of the member states)*

The Council of the EU, which also represents the governments of each member country, consists of the national ministers and experts from each member state.

Negotiations and adoptions of EU laws, reaching of conclusions of international agreements, adopting the EU budget, development of the EU's foreign and security policy and coordination of member states' policies in specific fields belong to the functions of these institutions. Decisions are made together. Since the principle of unanimous decision-making applies, each member state's representative is a so-called "veto player" during these intergovernmental negotiations to serve each government's national interests (Scharpf, 2006: 847-849). As a result, any political outcome against each member state's interest is avoided as well as a real change of the status quo. Blockades of decisions or, at most, only "inefficient lowest-denominator compromises" (Scharpf, 2006: 848) can be achieved by the veto-power of each member state, which is then called "joint-decision trap" by Fritz W. Scharpf. This trap possibly leads only to a so-called "negative integration" by prohibiting negative effects through vetoing any EU policies, but prevents positive policy formulation and changes of the current status quo (Scharpf, 1999; van den Brink, Dawson ve Zglinski, 2023).

This Council is besides the European Parliament one of the legislative bodies that is also in the legislative process. The opportunity of blockage of any decision by veto-powers can be defined as so-called "veto-points" (Immergut, 1990). The more the number of veto-points increases, the more the possibility of reaching agreements decreases.

A change to simple majority decision rule or other bypass solutions like the "Enhanced Cooperation" or "Open Methods of Coordination" would be ways out of the crisis.

#### *4.3.2. The European Parliament*

One of the legislative bodies of the EU besides the Council of the European Union is the European Parliament (EP). Its parliamentarians, the so-called Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), are elected to serve as popular representatives. MEPs are elected by direct universal suffrage every five years by a form of proportional representation. The EP adopts European legislation based on proposals put forth by the European Commission. The European Commission presents a proposal to both legislative bodies (Parliament and the Council). Only if both institutions agree together on a text through successive readings, the proposal can become law. In the first reading, the Parliament can send amendments to the Council, which can either accept them as such or send back. The Parliament may approve or reject them by an absolute majority. The Parliament can also adopt further amendments by an absolute majority. A so-called "Conciliation Committee" is formed, if the Council does not approve the Parliament's position. This joint committee consists of members of both bodies with equal representation. If a common position is agreed, it must be approved by the Parliament, by a simple majority (ordinary legislative procedure).

In a few areas like justice, home affairs, budget and taxation or other policy areas, other so-called "special legislative procedures" apply, after which the Council or



Parliament decide the law alone after consulting the other (or with its consent), but there is no possibility to adopt amendments.

These legislative procedures, in which the Council of the EU and the European Parliament are both involved as veto-powers, consist of at least two veto-points, because this body and the Parliament as legislative bodies have both to accept a law bill, but as the current number of EU member states, veto-powers and veto-points in the Council is already 27, the sum of veto-points is much higher. Only those laws or other binding decisions can only be made, which are in the interest of the majority of the European Parliament and all of the governments of the member states. Therefore, only “inefficient lowest-denominator compromises” (Scharpf, 2006: 48) appear to be agreed on.

There are different legislative acts. The strongest one is a so-called regulation. Moreover, there are directives binding member states to certain goals, which must be achieved by their own domestic laws with some room to manoeuvre. Then, there are binding decisions, whereas recommendations and opinions are merely non-binding.

#### **4.4. Executive**

##### *4.4.1. European Commission and its President*

The European Commission (EC) forms the executive of the EU. With 27 members or “Commissioners”, the Commission works as a cabinet government, which is led by a President. According to Article 17 of the Treaty on the European Union, development of medium-term strategies; drafting legislation and arbitrating in the legislative process; representing the EU in trade negotiations, making rules and regulations, taking rule-breaking deviant member states to the Court of Justice and implementation of the treaties and legislation belong to the work areas of the Commission. Only the European Commission can make formal proposals for legislation contrary to the legislative bodies. As a result, the legislative initiative power of the EC and its president enable them to have an agenda setting power over the topics of the Council and the Parliament. Or formulated differently: The President of the Commission has the agenda-setting power and decides which topic is a subject of the legislative. Legislative acts are not allowed in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the Treaty of Lisbon. Each Commissioner is responsible for one office and has to represent the general interest of EU-ropes “as if is a single unitary actor”.

Other members of the Commission are proposed by the Council of the EU in agreement with the nominated President, whereby they are subject to a vote of approval by the EP.

Following Art. 245 and 247, Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, these Commissioners can be compelled to retire on account of a breach of obligation by the European Court of Justice. The Parliament can dissolve the College of Commissioners following a vote of no-confidence. This act would require a two-thirds vote.

#### *4.4.2. The President of the European Commission*

The Head of the Commission, the Commission President, who is proposed by the governments of the member states (“European Council“), is elected by the EP after the results of European Parliament elections. The proposed Presidential candidate has to have close links to the dominant political group in the EP.

The President of the Commission has the political guideline power in order to implement the EU policies of the Council and the Parliament. The Commission President is responsible for the allocation of portfolios of the Commissioners. He or she delegates portfolios among each of the Commissioners. Their powers largely depend upon their portfolio.

After the college’s appointment, the Commission President appoints a number of Vice-Presidents from among the commissioners who manage different policy areas involving various Commissioners. The Commission President is also able to request the resignation of an individual Commissioner.

#### *4.4.3. The High Representative of the Union for the Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*

The High Representative is one of the Vice-Presidents’ ex officio who coordinates commissioners’ activities involving the external relations and defence cooperation of the EU. The current Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen created the position of more senior Executive Vice-Presidents who are appointed from the three largest political groups in the EP. These senior Vice-Presidents manage the top priority policy areas of the EC. The position of the High Representative of the Union for the Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was held by the Spanish Socialist Politician Josep Borell between 2019 and 2024. The below part explains what alternative forms of cooperation exist within the EU in order to overcome obstacles of decision-making.

### **5. DECENTRAL FORMS OF COOPERATION TO CIRCUMVENT HURDLES OF DECISION-MAKING**

Like-minded member states, that are in the minority and fail therefore to reach an agreement in the abovementioned formal arenas of decision-making, are institutionally given the opportunities to circumvent the obstacles by using decentral forms of cooperation to reach common goals to a certain extent, including “Enhanced Cooperation” and “Open Method of Coordination”.

There are different cooperation types, which do not require that all EU member states participate in. These include joint civil or military missions within the framework of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as the main component of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) like the EU Naval Force Mediterranean

Force Operation Iridi (EUNAVFOR MED Iridi)<sup>4</sup> (Berdud, 2024) or the really existing EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support of the European Union Police and Rule of Law Mission for the Palestinian Territory (EUPOL COPPS<sup>5</sup>) (Bouris and İşleyen, 2018), the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Enhanced Cooperation, and the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). One should differentiate between the decision and the operational level.

Even if active or passive participation of each member state is not required in the level of action in the CSDP missions within the CFDP, according to the Articles 42(4) and 43(2) of the TEU, all member states in (Foreign Affairs) Council or the Council of the EU have to decide with unanimity in order to establish the mission before. Following Article 21 of the TEU, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has the right to propose. As a result, he or she has the agenda-setting power of the Council. Therefore, joint CSDC Missions like the EUPOL COPPS or the EUNAVFORMED Iridi were established by the Council after the proposal of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Official Journal of the European Union, 2020). If in the current Gazan case the pro-Palestinian High Representative Josep Borrell made a proposal for a joint mission as a contribution to solve the conflict, the Council would not be able to make such a decision because of the decision rules (unanimity). Since he could anticipate this possible negative outcome, he would refrain from proposing such an intervention. As a result, the CSDP framework does not seem to be applicable to the current Gazan case.

Another cooperation type, which can be discussed, is the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) between the armed forces is the framework, in which 26 Member States deepen and widen the defence integration based on Article 42 (6) and Protocol 10 of the TEU. Their participation is voluntary, but the recommendations are binding for the participating members (Official Journal of the European Union, 2017b). The Council is the sole actor and arena for decision-making within the PESCO framework, but “only contributing PESCO members are allowed to have a vote and this voting procedure for implementation is ruled by unanimity” (Ertürk, 2018). Since there are different opinions on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, it is very unlikely, that a conclusion could be reached.

Following Article 20 of the TEU and Title III of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, “a minimum of 9 EU Member States are allowed to set up advanced integration or cooperation in a particular field within the EU, when it has become clear that the EU as a whole cannot achieve the goals of such cooperation” (Lex Europa, n.d.) This form of cooperation is used in different areas like the establishment of the European

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<sup>4</sup> EU Naval Force Mediterranean Force Operation Iridi has been established in order to enforce the UN arms embargo to Libya due to the Civil War in the country. <https://www.operationirini.eu/>.

<sup>5</sup> EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support of the European Union Police and Rule of Law Mission for the Palestinian Territory is a Police Advisory body for institution- and state-building in the Palestinian Authority with training courses and information exchange etc. <https://eupolcopps.eu/>.

Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPPO) in order to protect financial interests or divorce law etc. (Official Journal of the European Union, 2017a). Since there are not enough pro-Palestinian member states, enhanced cooperation in the Gazan case seems to be unlikely.

The Open Method of Coordination is a new EU policy-making method in contrast to classic community (Union) and conventional intergovernmentalist methods. It is already used in different specific areas like employment, research, information society, social policy, social protection, enterprise policy, environment and struggle against social exclusion etc. At First, the Council agrees on guidelines. Then, according to paragraph 37 of the Lisbon European Council, each member state implements these broad goals into its own national policy "in accordance with its own particular situation" (Collignon et.al., 2005), specific understanding of them and requirements. In order to find out the best practice of these different and specific implementation processes from information exchange and mutual learning, likeminded member states agree upon specific indicators and benchmarks. Finally, they monitor and evaluate the results of their measurements and comparisons periodically. While the role of the Parliament remains recommendatory, the Commission's role is limited on monitoring (Collignon et.al., 2005: 2-3). In the case of the Israeli war on Gaza, the like-minded member states Ireland, Spain and Slovenia, which already have recognised Palestine, could cooperate with each other and with other supportive states like Malta, which have not been willing or able to go so far in order to contribute to solve the Middle East conflict. The requirement of setting broad guidelines by the European Council, which can be transposed by the willing member state, is not fulfilled yet, whereby the current president of the Commission, which should survey this pro-Palestinian OMC, is regarded as too "close to Israel" anyway. The next part unveils the EU's existing policy with respect to Israel's Gaza war, drawing attention to different positions of the EU institutions.

## 6. EU'S CURRENT POLICY TOWARDS ISRAEL'S GAZA WAR

The current actor constellation in the EU prevents it from speaking with "one voice" and acting as a coherent actor. The 27 member states are seen to be split into two opposing divisions when it comes to Israel's war on Gaza. While Spain, Ireland and Slovenia are viewed to lean towards the Palestinian side, Germany, Austria and eastern European member states like Hungary and the Czech Republic are regarded to tend to be pro-Israeli. The institutional plurality, variety and diversity from the EU also provide another opportunity for disunity on the right course. As a result, the divide also runs *between* and *within* EU institutions. Different *presidents* of different European *institutions* seem to be set against each other: The President of the *Council* Charles Michel and the (then-) *Commissioner* for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrel, who was replaced later, criticised *Commission President* Ursula von der Leyen of promoting a too Israel-friendly course and harming EU's interest in the region (Tagesschau, 2023) while Oliver Varhelyi, the EU commissioner responsible for close regional relations, single-handedly wanted to stop the funding of the U.N. Palestinian Refugee Agency (UNWRA) by the EU (Mamedov, 2023).

### **6.1. The Council of the EU**

As the Council of the EU is supposed to represent territorially-based diverging self-interests of the governments of each member state and political decisions are made by unanimous agreement, differences of opinion among the 27 member states regarding possible policies on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict can possibly lead to fruitless negotiations with mutual blocking of veto-powers or agreement of lowest common denominators. Even a so-called summit-declaration is not easy to achieve. Since, the standing up for ceasefire for humanitarian reasons for Gazans civilians, which was demanded by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and Josep Borrell, counters the arguing for Israel's right to exist and self-defence, pro-Israeli countries like Austria, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic and Latvia opposed the common official call for "ceasefire" as well as "humanitarian pauses" and "no-fire periods" (Tagesschau, 2023) while member states like Spain, Slovenia and Ireland that are already critical of Israel's war against Gaza, decided to officially recognise Palestine as a state in June 2024 (Deutschlandfunk, 2024).

### **6.2. Charles Michel, the President of the European Council**

While Ursula von der Leyen puts Israel's interest first, the Council President Charles Michel's speech seems to be more balanced and more critical of Israel: "The European Union was born from the ashes of the World War II, a horrific humanitarian disaster. Since then, we have built our Union on the principles of human dignity, international cooperation, and international humanitarian law. Each civilian life matters, always and everywhere. That is why, from day one, we have condemned Hamas' brutal attack against the people of Israel last October. We also condemn the loss of each civilian life and the horrendous suffering and humanitarian disaster in Gaza. The EU has three key priorities: ending the war, more humanitarian assistance and a political process. First, ending the war in Gaza and ensuring the protection of all civilians. Every day without a ceasefire is another day of blood and death. The orders of the International Court of Justice must be respected. ... Second, we must address the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and the magnitude of the disaster. ... UNRWA is not a terrorist organisation. And we do not accept any attempt to label it as such. Our third priority is about the future. A more peaceful future. We have no choice but to look beyond this darkness to an urgent settlement based on the two-state solution. In addition, there is one lesson learned: security without peace is not security (European Council, 2024). Like Borrell and Janez Lenarčič, Michel's speech is also an indication that not all top EU politicians are pro-Israeli like Commission President von der Leyen.

### **6.3. The European Commission**

Even if the Commissioners have to represent common (pan-)European interests instead of interests of the national governments of their member states, von der Leyen, Varhelyi, Borrell and Lenarčič's positions seem to be in line with the official points of view of their own governments.

### 6.3.1. *President Ursula von der Leyen*

Germany has a traditional pro-Israeli stance across all party boundaries because of its own Nazi past. The conservative former German Defence minister and EC President Ursula von der Leyen, who was nominated by German Chancellor Merkel's grand coalition government between the centre-right CDU/CSU and the social democratic SPD in 2019, underlined strongly both her pro-Israeli stance as the official position of the EU after the Attacks of October 7th and Israel's reaction as air raids and ground operations against Gaza: "Europe stands with Israel. And Israel has a right to defend itself. In fact, it has the duty to defend its people. And we must call by their name the atrocities committed by Hamas. This is terrorism. This is an act of war. Nothing can justify what Hamas did. This is the time to stand in solidarity with Israel and its people. And this is why I am here. Let me also be very clear that Hamas alone is responsible for what is happening." (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2023)

While targeting civilian infrastructure and cutting off water and electricity during the Russian attack on Ukraine was criticised by her, the same Israeli actions against Gaza during air raids and ground operations were regarded within the frame of legitimate self-defence against terrorism (Memo Middle East Monitor, 2023). Moreover, von der Leyen supported the review of EU's funding of Palestinian Authority after Israeli accusations of redirecting aid to Hamas (Ahramonline, 2023), whereas vice-President Borrell stated that "defunding UNRWA 'would amount to collective punishment' of Palestinian civilians" (Mamedov, 2024).

Shortly, after the October attacks von der Leyen promptly visited Israel in order to show her support. Her supportive statements did not have any reference to international law. Her unconditional support of Israel was viewed as *carte blanche* for any kind of retaliation even outside humanitarian and international law. Spain, Ireland and Slovenia regarded it as her "usurpation of the EU foreign policy prerogatives which are reserved for the Council" (Mamedov, 2023).

After the European Parliament elections of June 2024, which was won by the European Peoples' Party again, the German EPP politician von der Leyen was renominated by the Traffic light coalition (Ampelkoalition) coalition government of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and The Greens of Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD).

According to an Israeli newspaper, "[v]on der Leyen is known as a friend of Israel and, if her appointment is confirmed in next month's parliamentary vote, she is expected to wield even greater influence" (Avrahami and Eichner, 2024) in the EC.

### 6.3.2. *Oliver Varhelyi, the EU Commissioner Responsible for Close Regional Relations*

The Hungarian politician and EPP member Oliver Varhelyi with close links to pro-Israeli right-wing populist PM Victor Orban tried to freeze European aid to

Palestinians on his own personal initiative without any consent of other EU institutions at first. Then, the EU intervened in order to review the European aid to ensure that it did not fund Hamas (Mamedov, 2023). Even if more than 70 socialist, Green and liberal Members of the European Parliament called for his resignation, he was backed by von der Leyen (Euronews, 2023).

#### *6.3.4. Josep Borrell, Vice-President and the European Union's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*

The Spanish Left is traditionally critical of Israel. Even though the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) politician Josep Borrell, who belongs to the European Party of the Socialists and is affiliated to the Progressive Alliance of the Socialists and Democrats, stressed Israel's right to defend itself, he reminded its government to act in accordance with international law. He openly criticised the total blockade of Gaza, the Israeli air raids and ground operations resulting in the death of tens of thousands of Gazan civilians and openly demanded "humanitarian pauses" for delivering aid to Palestinians, while other European politicians stuck only on the repeated discourses of Israel's right to defend itself:

"More than three months after the beginning of the Israeli military operation against Hamas, triggered by the horrific terrorist attacks of 7 October, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is tragic. The number of civilian casualties in Gaza, including a very high proportion of children, is unacceptable. The protection of civilians is of utmost importance and Israel must do more to exercise maximum restraint. Respect for International Humanitarian Law is imperative and non-negotiable. This is a message that we consistently pass to Israel. And Hamas must release all hostages without preconditions. While Israel maintains its military objectives to destroy Hamas, with 60% of housing stock and infrastructure destroyed, humanitarian actors already describe Gaza as an unliveable place. A new humanitarian pause is needed now. The situation is worsening by the day, with 85% of the population now being displaced, often living in the open and facing the risk of famine and disease" (EEAS, 2024a).

Borrell's diplomatic efforts corresponded often with his statements. For example, during a meeting with US State Secretary Anthony Blinken in March 2024, he demanded a humanitarian access to Gazan civilians by sea and the air (US Department of State, 2024).

As the "foreign minister" of the EU, he tried to make an agenda-setting before an EU summit close to Spanish and his own political viewpoints: "Borrell said there was 'basic consensus' among the ministers on the need for a humanitarian pause in the fighting. ... 'Basic consensus' was wide of the mark. While Spain was angling for a full cease-fire, countries such as Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic wanted to avoid any language that sounded like it might impinge on Israel's right to self-defense" (Barigazzi and Moens, 2023).

Moreover, Borrell accused the Netanjahu government of secretly co-funding the creation of Hamas in order to weaken its rival Fatah in the Palestinian Authority and

indirectly implied that it is complicit in the Attacks of October 7th (Reuters, 2024). When it comes to the Houthi militia's blockade of ships with links to Israel and the US-led military coalition against them, he also spoke out against any possible EU's actions "beyond defensive actions to protect ships and intercept the Houthi attacks" (Mamedov, 2024). Borrell also officially criticised Israel's "de-facto annexation" (EEAS, 2024b).

Borrell's critical stance was the cause that Israel's foreign minister Israel Katz harshly rebuked him for his point of view. As mentioned above, he criticised also von der Leyen for her pro-Israeli stance, but was criticised by both the German and the Austrian chancellors Olaf Scholz and Karl Nehammer privately for not speaking for Germany and Austria (Moens and Bariggazi, 2024).

#### *6.3.5. Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management (and Humanitarian Aid)*

Slovenian diplomat Janez Lenarčič made several public and official statements to draw international and European attention to the critical humanitarian situation in Gaza. He urged Israel to stop its attacks on Gazan medical and civil infrastructure, called for international increased fuel and aid supplies and demanded member states to accept severely ill Palestinians for medical care (Agenzia Nova, 2024). Moreover, he admitted that Israel had not shown any evidence for its accusations of the staff from the UNRWA to have close links with Hamas (Noestlinger and Baczynska, 2024). Moreover, Lenarčič made even joint pro-Palestinian statements with Josep Borrell on the "general catastrophic situation of Gaza" or the "Israeli destruction of Gazan health infrastructure" (Agenzia Nova, 2024).

#### **6.4. European Parliament President Roberta Metsola**

The Maltese pro-European and conservative (Post-) Nationalist Party member and EPP politician Roberta Metsola made a more balanced and less Israel-critical statement, in which she condemned the terrorism of Hamas, demanded Israel's self-defence to be in line with international and humanitarian law and mentioned explicitly "the legitimate aspirations of Palestinian people": "The situation in Israel, Gaza and the wider Middle East is at the top of all our concerns. The reality on the ground is horrific, it is tragic and it is desperate. There can be no excuses for that. We must emphasise that we need to keep looking for solutions that mitigate the humanitarian consequences in Gaza in line with our obligations and international law. Even in the most difficult times, the European Parliament has always and will always push for a fair two-state solution that is equitable and that is just. We cannot lose sight of that. We will always push for a sustainable and lasting peace" (European Parliament, 2024). Apart from that, Metsola did not stand out for critical remarks and actions against Israel unlike Josep Borrell. The next section provides a series of recommendations regarding EU decision-making rules.



## **7. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS: “ENHANCED COOPERATION” FOR SANCTIONING OR “OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION”?**

The EU-uropean decision-making mechanism is more likely to tend to be on a voluntary basis in future. Four European countries (Norway, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain) have recognised Palestine nowadays, while other members' recognition happened in the socialist era during the Cold War (Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, etc.). The recognition of Palestine by Spain, Ireland and Slovenia still does not represent the official policy of the EU as an institution. It means that only three member states recognise Palestine individually or in a coordinated manner. For example, the recognition of Kosovo can also set an example in this regard. Since five EU member states (Spain, Slovakia, South Cyprus, Romania, and Greece) still do not recognise Kosovo, it is emphasised in EU documents that the union does not recognise Kosovo institutionally. Nonetheless, like-minded member countries with similar interests can formulate a common foreign policy on an intergovernmental arena within the framework of “Open Method of Coordination (OMC)” or “Enhanced Cooperation”. Since the last-mentioned option requires authorisation for advanced integration or cooperation in a particular field within the EU by the Council, which is divided in this policy field, OMC is more likely than “Enhanced Cooperation”. Spain, Ireland and Slovenia can found a “coalition of the willing” to put forward the “Palestinian Cause” to a certain extent (demand for ceasefire, criticism of Israel, more activism in favour of a two-state solution) also on a common platform within the European Union without the vetoing or hesitation of Germany, France, Austria, the Czech Republic or Hungary. In contrast to “Enhanced Cooperation”, there is no need for authorisation by the Council or the Commission. The final part wraps up the results of the study.

## **CONCLUSION**

There has not been a dramatic change on the EU's stance on the main issues regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the start of the formulation of its single foreign policy position on this issue in the 1970s. The European Union endorses “a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. A comprehensive peace, which is a fundamental interest of the parties in the region and the EU, must be achieved on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative” (Council of the European Union, 2009).

As can be seen repeatedly in many EU documents, the European Union also requires Israel to withdraw from the territory occupied in 1967 and views the settlements built there, including East Jerusalem as illegal under international law; peace negotiations should include the settlement of all problems concerning the status of Jerusalem; the problem of Palestinian refugees should be resolved in a just and viable manner; Israel has the right to protect its citizens from attacks, but this right should be used according to international law.

Since the start of the Oslo Peace Process in 1993, the EU has provided a considerable amount of financial aid to Palestinian institutions, infrastructure and projects in order to support Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding efforts. Concurrently, Many EU countries have forged excellent economic and institutional ties with Israel and have become the country's largest trading partner. In spite of this, the EU has proved to be not an effective actor in the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As succinctly put by Taylan Özgür Kaya, “[w]hile the USA has played a primary role and acted as the principal mediator in successive mediation efforts and dominated political and diplomatic dimension of the peace process; the EU was relegated to a secondary and supplementary role and has mainly focused on economic and financial dimension of the peace process” (Kaya, 2017).

The article explored the policies of the EU towards Israel's war on Gaza from the perspective of actor-centred institutionalism. The main contention of the article is that the existing actor constellation in the EU prevents it from pursuing a joint policy towards the Gaza war. In other words, the EU countries are divided into two opposing camps when it comes to Israel's war on Gaza. While Ireland, Slovenia and Spain are pro-Palestine countries, Austria, Germany and some eastern European countries like the Czech Republic and Hungary are pro-Israel. Another claim of the study is that the institutional plurality and diversity are another reason of disunity regarding the policy of the EU on the Gaza war. The divide is both between and within EU institutions.

## **İSRAİL'İN GAZZE SAVAŞIYLA İLGİLİ POLİTİKASI: AKTÖR MERKEZLİ KURUMSAL AÇIKLAMA**

### **1. GİRİŞ**

16 Ekim 1973'te Ekim Savaşı'nın ardından Arap ülkeleri tarafından Hollanda'ya uygulanan ilk petrol ambargosu, AT'yi Filistin sorununu ele almaya zorladı. Haziran 1980'deki Venedik Deklarasyonu, AT'nin Filistin meselesine yönelik tutumunda önemli bir dönüm noktasıdır. Önceki açıklamalara dayanarak, ilk kez Filistin Kurtuluş Örgütü'nü (FKÖ) Filistinlilerin tek temsilcisi olarak müzakerelere dâhil edilmesi gerektiğini belirtti (Venedik Deklarasyonu 1980).

1970'lerde AT dış işlerinde nispeten proaktif ve özerk bir rol oynarken, Reagan-Thatcher dönemi sırasında transatlantik bağların güçlenmesi ve AT'nin dış politika yapımında kurumsallaşmamasından dolayı 1980'lerde bu özerklik ve iç uzlaşma azalmıştır. 1990'ların büyük bölümünde AB, Filistin çatışmasının çözümünde ekonomik bir rol üstlenmiştir. 1991 Madrid Barış Konferansı'nın sponsorları ABD ve Sovyetler Birliği idi; AB ise kendisi için bir alt ortak rolü üstlenmiştir. Bu rolde AT/AB, Bölgesel Ekonomik Kalkınma Çalışma Grubu'ndan (REDWG) sorumlu olmuştur. Brüksel'in büyüyen ekonomik rolü, İsrail ile ticari ilişkilerinde ve Filistin Yönetimi'ne yaptığı dış yardımlarda artış olarak yansımıştır. Filistin'deki durumun kötüleşmesi, 2000'lerde AB'nin barış inşa çabalarını sınırlamıştır. Likud'un İsrail'e geri dönmesi diplomatik çabaları zayıflatmıştır. Ayrıca

11 Eylül terör saldırılarının ardından başlayan terörle mücadele, Afganistan ve ardından Irak savaşları uluslararası toplumun dikkatini dağıtmıştır. AB, İsrail yerleşim yerleri konusundaki resmi siyasi duruşuna politikalarını uyumlu hale getirmeye çalışmıştır. Aralık 2012'de AB, gelecekteki tüm İsrail-AB anlaşmalarının "1967'de İsrail tarafından işgal edilen topraklara uygulanamayacağını" açıkça belirtmesi gerektiğini açıklamıştır. Ayrıca, Kasım 2015'te Avrupa Komisyonu, yerleşimlerden gelen bazı ürünlerin "Batı Şeria'dan ürün" olarak etiketlenmesi gerektiğine karar vermiştir. Bu ayırımın ekonomik etkileri marjinal olsa da İsrail'e gönderilen önemli bir sembolik mesajdır. Ocak 2017'de Donald Trump'ın göreve gelmesi, Brüksel'in Filistin'deki çatışmayı çözme çabalarını zayıflatmıştır. AB, Trump'ın 2017'de Kudüs'ü İsrail'in başkenti olarak tanımasını kınamış ve ABD'nin barış arabulucusu rolünü zedelediğini belirtmiştir. Ayrıca Brüksel, Şubat 2020'de ABD Başkanı Trump'ın İsrail'in yerleşim yerleri kurduğu Filistin topraklarının çoğunu İsrail'e verecek olan Orta Doğu barış planını, uluslararası kabul görmüş parametrelerle uyumlu olmadığı gerekçesiyle kısmen reddetmiştir. Bu makalenin ana amacı, AB'nin Gazze savaşına yönelik politikalarını aktör-merkezli kurumsalcılık perspektifinden analiz etmektir.

## 2. YÖNTEM

Bu araştırma nitel bir çalışmadır. Kitaplar, makaleler, raporlar ve yorumlar gibi ikincil kaynakların yanı sıra AB kurumları ve yetkililerinin açıklamaları ve haberler gibi birincil kaynaklar kullanılmıştır. Bu kaynaklar, AB kurumlarının Gazze savaşına yönelik politikalarını ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla aktör-merkezli kurumsalcılık çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir.

Renate Mayntz ve Fritz Scharpf tarafından geliştirilen aktör-merkezli kurumsalcılık, siyasi olguları ve süreçleri analiz etmek için kullanılan bir analitik araçtır. Kurumsalcılıkta, kurumlar kurallar (yasalar, normlar), düzenlilikler (davranış rutinleri, güç ilişkileri, güç ve kaynakların dağılımı), sosyal varlıklar (resmi kurumsal aktörler ve örgütler) ve (resmi veya gayri resmi esnek) ağlar olarak kabul edilir. Yazılı olmayan kurallar, yasal düzenlemeler ve düzenlilikler, gerçek (resmi veya gayri resmi) sosyal yapılar yaratır ve aktörler arasındaki ilişkilerin çerçevesini, yetkinliklerin, finansal veya güç kaynaklarının tahsisleriyle belirler. Sonuç olarak, bu kurumlar, aktörlerin eylem tercihlerini temel aldıkları durumların tanımlarını belirler. Yasal hükümler, anayasalar, kararnameleler, yönetmelikler, yasalar ve tüzükler, farklı kurumsal aktörlerin (otoriteler, örgütler) güç ve kaynak dağılımını tanımlar Bu kurumsal aktörler, ilgili ülkelerdeki yasal gereksinimlere uygun olarak kurumsal düzenlemelerle oluşturulur ve "onlara görevler ve yetkinlikler atanır...". Kurumsal bağlam, aktörleri ve birbirleriyle olan ilişkilerini, güç kaynakları, haklar ve görevlerin tahsisi yoluyla oluşturur (aktör dizilimi). Kurumsal düzenleme, "eylem kaynaklarını ve eylem yönelimlerini etkiler". Bireyler, örgütler, kurumlar, otoriteler veya topluluklar gibi kurumsal aktörler veya ağların üyeleri olarak, kendi eylemleri bu kurumlara olan üyeliklerine göre şekillenir. Anayasal olarak tanınan veya yasal olarak garanti altına alınmış atama yetkisine sahip aktörler, diğer kurumların üyelik yapısını ve stratejik odaklarını tanımlar ve bu odaklar, resmen ilan edilen çalışma alanlarından

farklı olabilir. Başka bir önemli ilgi noktası, parlamentolar veya AB kurumları gibi kurumsal aktörler içindeki karar alma süreçleri, oylama kuralları, çoğunluk eşikleri gibi resmi prosedürler veya gayri resmi yöntemlerdir: Çoğunluk eşiği ne kadar yüksekse, ortak bir çözüm bulmak o kadar zor olur ve bunun tersi de geçerlidir. Oybirliği ilkesi, hızlı anlaşmalara varmayı zorlaştırırken, genel çoğunluk oylama prosedürü hızlı koalisyon kurmayı mümkün kılabılır.

Makalede ilk olarak aktör-merkezli kurumsalcılık teorisine değinilmekte, ardından İsrail-Filistin çatışmasına yönelik AB politikalarına dair literatür taraması yapılmaktadır. Üçüncü bölümde, AB kurumlarının işlevlerine kısaca değinilerek Gazze savaşına ilişkin politikalarına geçilmeden önce bir arka plan sağlanmaktadır. Daha sonra, AB karar alma sürecinin engellerini aşmak için merkezi olmayan iş birliği formları açıklanmaktadır. Ardından, AB kurumlarının Gazze savaşına yönelik politikaları açıklanmaktadır. Son olarak, AB'nin karar alma modellerine ilişkin bazı öneriler sunulmaktadır.

### **3. BULGULAR**

Makale, mevcut aktör yapısının, AB'nin Gazze savaşına yönelik ortak bir politika izleyememesine yol açtığını öne sürmektedir. AB ülkeleri, İsrail'in Gazze savaşına ilişkin olarak iki karşıt kampa ayrılmıştır. İspanya,İrlanda ve Slovenya Filistin yanlısı iken, Almanya, Avusturya ve Çek Cumhuriyeti ile Macaristan gibi bazı Doğu Avrupa ülkeleri İsrail yanlısıdır. Makale ayrıca, Gazze savaşı konusunda AB'nin politikasındaki ayrılığın bir diğer nedeninin kurumsal çoğulculuk ve çeşitlilik olduğunu savunmaktadır. Ayrılık, sadece AB kurumları arasında değil, aynı zamanda AB kurumlarının içinde de görülmektedir.

### **4. TARTIŞMA**

AB'nin çok kurumlu yapısı ve dış politikada ulusal egemenliğin üstünlüğü ilkesi AB'nin dış politikada ortak bir karar almasını güçleştirmektedir. Bunun üstesinden gelmek için çeşitli formüller üzerinde durulmaktadır. Bunların arasında “geliştirilmiş işbirliği” ve “açık koordinasyon metodu” yer alır. Böylelikle, benzer düşünce yapısına sahip olan devletler ortak karar almanın zor olduğu konulardaki engelleri bu yöntemlerle aşabilirler. Bu yöntemlerin daha da geliştirilmesi gerektiği anlaşılmaktadır.

### **SONUÇ**

1970'lerden bu yana İsrail-Filistin çatışmasına ilişkin olarak AB'nin dış politika tutumunda büyük bir değişiklik olmamıştır. Avrupa Birliği, “İsrail Devleti ile bağımsız, demokratik, bitişik ve yaşanabilir bir Filistin Devleti'nin yan yana barış ve güvenlik içinde yaşadığı iki devletli bir çözümü” desteklemektedir. Kapsamlı bir barış, bölgedeki tarafların ve AB'nin temel çıkarıdır ve bu barış, ilgili Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi kararları, Madrid ilkeleri (toprak karşılığı barış), Yol

Haritası, taraflar arasında daha önce varılan anlaşmalar ve Arap Barış Girişimi temelinde sağlanmalıdır (Avrupa Birliği Konseyi 2009).

Makale, AB'nin Gazze savaşına yönelik politikalarını aktör-merkezli kurumsalcılık perspektifinden incelemektedir. Ana tez, AB'deki mevcut aktör yapısının, Gazze savaşına karşı ortak bir politika izlenmesini engellediğidir. Başka bir deyişle, İsrail'in Gazze savaşına gelindiğinde AB ülkeleri iki karşıt kampa ayrılmaktadır. İrlanda, İspanya ve Slovenya Filistin yanlısı iken, Avusturya, Almanya ve Çek Cumhuriyeti ile Macaristan gibi bazı Doğu Avrupa ülkeleri İsrail yanlısıdır. Çalışmanın bir diğer iddiası da kurumsal çoğulculuk ve çeşitliliğin, AB'nin Gazze savaşına yönelik politikasındaki ayrılığın bir başka nedeni olduğudur. Bu ayrılık, sadece AB kurumları arasında değil, aynı zamanda bu kurumların içinde de gözlemlenmektedir.

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