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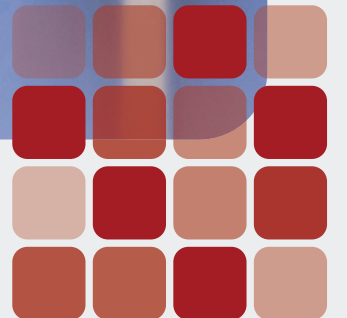
Analysis

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# TRUMP-EUROPEAN UNION AND ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT



**TAYLAN ÖZGÜR KAYA**





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# Trump - European Union and Israeli - Palestinian Conflict

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## Introduction

The division of opinion between the US and the EU (European Union) on issues such as commercial relations and nuclear settlement with Iran as a result of US President Donald Trump's recent policies, has gained a new dimension after US President's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel and to move the US Embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Since the beginning of the 1970s when the Western European states started to develop a common policy for the solution of the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian Conflict within the framework of the European Community (EC), the policies of the EU and the US towards the solution of the problem were sometimes in full compliance and sometimes in conflict. Following Trump's recent Jerusalem decision, the European stance against the unilaterally changing status of Jerusalem and its commitment to a two-state solution in which Jerusalem would be the capital of both Palestine and the state of Israel have revealed a new divergence in the two actors' approach to the conflict. This study aims to present an analysis of the similarities and disagreements of both actors' approaches to the solution of the problem since the early 1970s. In the first part, European states' efforts to develop a common policy that is independent from the US within the framework of the EC in the 1970s and 1980s and their efforts to develop peace initiative in the early 1980s and the US, Israeli and Arab reactions in the face of these efforts will be discussed. In the second part, the peace process that began with the Madrid Conference in the 1990s and the formation of the Quartet on the Middle East in the 2000s and the rapprochement between the European and US approaches to the problem will be addressed. The final chapter will focus on the diversion between the Union and the US after Trump's Jerusalem decision and how this will affect the future of the suspended peace process in the Middle East.

## EC Member States' Efforts to Develop A Common Policy Towards The Arab-Israeli Conflict During The 1970s and 1980s and the US Stance

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Western European states' dependence on energy resources in the Middle East, particularly oil, made it a vital issue for these states to maintain peace, stability, and security in the region. Specifically, the flow of Middle Eastern oil to Western Europe at reasonable prices and without interruption was of great importance for the energy supply security of Western European states. For this reason, the solution of a matter that poses a major threat to the peace, stability, and security of the region, and thus the safe access of the EC member states to the Middle East oil, such as the Arab-Israeli Conflict, has become a strategic priority for the EC member states. This has been the most crucial factor behind the decision of EC member states to develop a common European policy towards the solution of the problem at the end of the 1960s. Furthermore, France, led by Charles De Gaulle, sought to make Europe emerge as the third power under its leadership, independent of the US and the Soviet Union, the two superpowers of the era. In this context, the EC member states began to pursue policies to break the monopoly of superpower in the Middle East in the 1970s with the influence of France and by establishing special relations with the countries in the region, increasing the economic and political effects in the region, they tried to hinder the Soviets from penetrating the region and the US from monopolizing the relations of the regional countries with the west.<sup>2</sup>

However, it was not easy for the European states, which had different traditions, different interests in the Middle East region and different relations with both the State of Israel and the Arab countries, to develop a common attitude

towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the first place. Especially during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, or the Six-Day War, the fact that the six-member states had different stances revealed how difficult it was. While France adopted a pro-Arab stance during the war, Germany backed up Israel even though it declared its neutrality, while Italy was divided in itself, and Belgium and Luxembourg supported a solution within the framework of the UN; the Netherlands, on the other hand, supported Israel.<sup>i</sup> In the early 1970s, the EC member states could not develop a common attitude during the war and could not react effectively to a major international issue such as the Six Day War. At the beginning of the 1970s, the EC member states launched the European Political Cooperation which is a coordination and mutual consultation mechanism that will increase the coordination among the member states in foreign policy issues. Later on, the EC member states would enter the process of developing a common position towards the Arab-Israeli problem that continued throughout the 1970s and reached its peak with the Venice Declaration of 1980.

The first step in this direction was the Schumann<sup>3</sup> Document on which the foreign ministers of the EC member states reached a consensus on May 13, 1971. The Schumann Document was the first step in the efforts of the EC member states to develop an independent and common position towards the Arab-Israeli issue. The document was mainly based on UN Security Council Resolution 242, and provided for the establishment of demilitarized zones in the 1967 lines, in which international forces would be stationed; an overall Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories with minor border adjustments; the internationalization of Jerusalem; the postponement of any conclusive solution regarding the sovereignty of East Jerusalem; the choice, for the Arab refugees of either returning to their home or being

compensated.<sup>4</sup> After the document was leaked to the German press, the Israeli side showed a strong reaction and declared that they would be against any participation of the Europeans to future peace initiatives. In later declarations, this anti-EC attitude of Israel was further strengthened, and the Israeli authorities and public opinion continued to define the EC as a pro-Arab/Palestinian actor and thus held that it could not be a neutral arbiter.

The Yom Kippur War in October 1973 and the oil embargo imposed by the Arab countries in its aftermath had a serious negative impact on the EC member states, and in this conjuncture, the EC leaders declared the Brussels declaration of 6 November 1973 on the Arab-Israeli Conflict. This declaration was written in a more pro-Arab sense with the influence of France and the oil embargo, and for the first time, the EC Member States used the word “Palestinians” instead of Arab Refugees and recognized the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, after emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, the EC states re-emphasized the necessity for Israel to end the territorial occupation which it had maintained since Six-Day War of 1967<sup>6</sup>

Another part of the process of constituting a common position or a sort of *acquis communautaire*, by the EC member states regarding the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the 1970s was the London Declaration compromised by the EC leaders on June 29-30, 1977 in London. By this declaration, the EC member states placed the Palestinian issue at the very core of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, stressing that the only solution to the Arab-Israeli Conflict would be to recognize the right to a homeland for the Palestinian people and called for the participation of the representatives of the Palestinian people in the peace talks. In the London Declaration, the EC member states emphasized a pro-Arab / Palestinian tone although they also emphasized



that the Arab side must be ready to recognize the right of Israel to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries. This seriously disturbed the Israeli side. Israel strongly rejected the idea of granting a homeland to the Palestinian people and participation of the representatives of the Palestinian people in a peace settlement on an equal footing with sovereign states.

The London Declaration was originally considered to be the first step of a European initiative to resolve the Arab-Israeli Conflict, but a major development that occurred in the autumn of 1977 paved the way for the US to become a leading actor in solving the problem while disrupting the plans of the EC member states. On November 19, 1977, the Egyptian-Israeli peace process, which began with the visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Israel, continued with US-mediated negotiations and resulted in the Camp David Treaty signed on September 17,

from penetrating the region by taking advantage of the instability created by the Arab-Israeli problem. According to the Washington policymakers, the biggest threat to the American interests in the Middle East was direct Soviet intervention and communist subversion within, or at least its collusion with radical Arab nationalism, which could bring about regimes hostile to the West.<sup>7</sup> In this respect, the main priority of the US was to resolve the instability caused by the Arab-Israeli problem as soon as possible. In this period, the Soviet Union's penetration into Egypt and Syria also showed that the US' concerns were not for nothing. That's why the US played an important role in ensuring a cease-fire between the parties through immediately intervening in the 1967 and 1973 Wars. Furthermore, during this period, the Soviet Union's close relations with the Arab states such as Egypt and Syria made Israel the most important ally in the struggle against the Soviets

**“ The Camp David process has made the US a leading actor in the solution of the Arab-Israeli problem and turned the EU into a marginal actor. ”**

1978. The Camp David process has made the US a leading actor in the solution of the Arab-Israeli problem and turned the EU into a marginal actor. At this point, it is necessary to mention the US approach towards the solution of the problem in the 1970s and its similarities with and differences from the EC member states.

In this period, the Middle East region was of strategic importance not only for its large energy resources but also for being an important front in the struggle against the Soviet Union in the Cold War environment. The US saw the Middle East as a significant front in its global containment policy against the Soviets or communism. The US' main priority was to prevent the Soviets

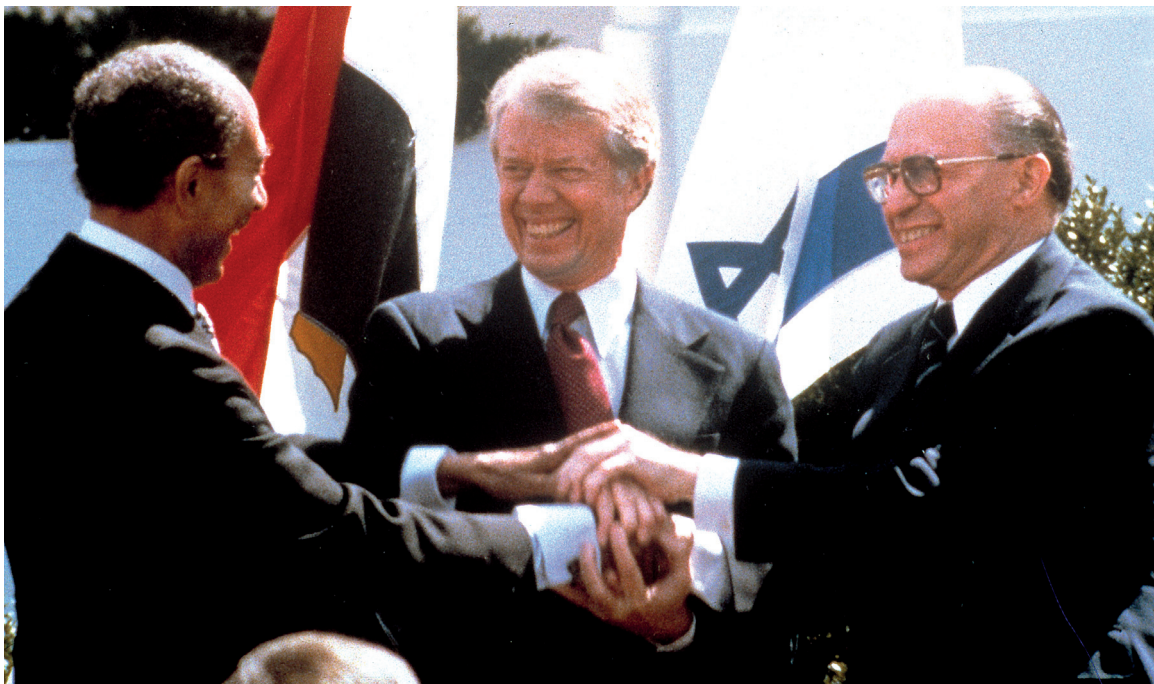
and Communism in the region. In this respect, the US adopted a kind of pro-Israeli approach that prioritized Israel's security concerns and interests in the region in order to avoid losing Israel, which it considers to be its most crucial ally.

In the period following the Yom Kippur War, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy between the Arab states and Israel between the autumn of 1973 and the summer of 1974 yielded results, and cease-fire agreements were signed first between Egypt and Israel on January 18, 1974, and, later, between Israel and Syria, on May 31, 1974. The process between Israel and Egypt continued and in September

1975, the so-called Sina II agreement was signed between the two parties. In this period, while EC Member States favoured comprehensive settlement of the conflict within the multilateral framework of an international peace conference with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestinians, the US administration favoured a gradualist or step-by-step approach envisaging separate bilateral peace agreements between Israel and the Arab states. The agreements signed between Israel-Egypt and Israel-Syria as a result of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy and the Camp David process were the best examples of this. Moreover, while the EC member states considered the Palestinian issue essential for the resolution of the Conflict, the American approach in the Camp David granted a marginal place to the Palestinian problem by envisaging autonomy for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rather than providing a homeland for the Palestinians. In fact, the US President Jimmy Carter during first months of his presidency, emphasized the necessity of a solution to the Palestinian problem and the provision of a homeland to the

Palestinians in the spring of 1977<sup>8</sup>, and he became the first president to emphasize the provision of a homeland for the Palestinians among the US presidents. However, as the Israelis opposed the idea of providing Palestinians with a homeland, the Camp David Process could not come to fruition except the suggestion of autonomy for the Palestinians. In the early stages of the Carter administration, we can say that the US approach towards the Palestinian issue played along with the attitudes of the EC member states towards the resolution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

The EC member states were cautious about the Camp David process; on the one hand, they congratulated the US, Egypt, and Israel for such an initiative, on the other hand, they conveyed their wishes that this initiative would be the first step towards a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the problem through a multilateral process involving all parties, including the Palestinians. They emphasized once again that the Palestinian people should be provided with a homeland. Besides, on March 26, 1979, the EC





member states in another declaration identified Israel's policy of settlement in the Occupied Territories as the main stumbling block to the achievement of a comprehensive peace settlement. The EC member states repeatedly criticized Israel's policy of settlement in the Occupied Territories and continued to identify it as one of the biggest obstacles to peace.

During the autumn of 1979 and the spring of 1980, the EC member states concluded that the Camp David process had failed to achieve the desired progress in finding a comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli Conflict and that it was the right time for them to start their own Middle East peace initiative. In addition to this, the emergence of several developments in the Middle East such as the Iranian Islamic Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, the invasion of Afghanistan that risked the stability of the region and hence, the secure flow of oil to Europe, the member states' biggest concern, increased the concerns of the member states. Again, in this period, as the US, seen as the only guarantor of stability and security of the region as well as the western interests in the Middle East, was preoccupied with the Iranian Crisis (seizure of hostages in the US embassy) and the upcoming US presidential elections, the EC member states doubted that the US would overcome its responsibility and took step to take action to initiate a new peace initiative.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the member states of the Community started the preparation of a new declaration which would form the basis of this initiative.

However, during this period, US President Jimmy Carter, who wished to use the Camp David process as an asset in the upcoming elections, put pressure on the EC member states to prevent the proclamation of a declaration to launch a new process that would create an alternative to the Camp David process.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Israel and Egypt declared that they would not accept a separate process from the

Camp David process. Under these circumstances, the EC leaders declared the Venice Declaration on June 12-13, 1980. With this declaration, the EC member states emphasized that the peace to be established in the Middle East should be based on two basic principles. The first was the right to existence and to security of all the states in the Middle East, including Israel, and justice for all the peoples which implied the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the EC member states adopted a balanced and comprehensive approach by equating the Israeli security needs and the Palestinian rights as parallel objectives of the peace process.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the members of the Community recognized the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination through this declaration and emphasized that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) should participate in peace negotiations as an important representative of the Palestinian people for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace arrangement. The EC member states emphasized that they would not accept any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem and any agreement on the city's status should guarantee freedom of access for everyone to the holy places. Once again, they identified the Israeli settlement policies in the territories occupied by Israel as the biggest obstacle to a comprehensive peace arrangement and illegal in terms of international law and called on Israel to end the occupation as soon as possible. The principles laid down by the Venice Declaration are important as it outlined the basic principles of the EC's policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and these principles still constitutes the basis of the EC's policy.

If we look at the reactions to this declaration, we would see that the US welcomed it as it did not regard the declaration as a serious deviation from the Camp David process, and the Israeli side reacted very harshly, and the then Israeli

Prime Minister Menachem Begin likened the declaration to the 'Munich surrender' of 1938<sup>13</sup>. The Israeli side declared that it would not be a party to any peace initiative initiated by the European states except for the Camp David process. In the forthcoming period, Israel opposed the participation of the Europeans in any peace initiative till the early 1991 when the Madrid Peace Process was launched. As to the Palestinian side, the PLO considered the declaration insufficient and unsatisfactory. Accordingly, the Palestinian side highlighted that the declaration should declare that the PLO was the sole representative of the Palestinian people and that there must be a change in the resolution 242 of the UN Security Council and that the refugee problem should be called as a Palestinian issue and that the Camp David framework was insufficient for a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East.<sup>14</sup> The PLO considered the declaration as the submission of the Europeans to the American pressure. Egypt, on the other hand, welcomed this declaration which was seen to be compatible with the goals of the Camp David.

In the forthcoming period, in order to know the position of the various parties toward the principles outlined in the Venice declaration and to determine the form of the European peace initiative in the light of the results of consultations with the parties, the EC member states sent two fact-finding missions to the Middle East to make necessary contacts with all the parties concerned, first in the autumn of 1980 and then in the spring of 1981. The first mission, the Thorn mission, which was headed by Gaston Thorn, Foreign Minister of Luxembourg and the President-in-office of the EC Council, visited the countries in the region including Tunisia, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt; the second mission, the Van der Klaauw mission, which was headed by Christoph Albert Van der Klaauw, Foreign

Minister of the Netherlands and the President-in-office of the EC Council visited the countries in the Middle East including Syria, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon and Egypt. During these visits, the Arab countries approached favorably to any European peace initiative while Israel adopted a negative stance and rejected any European Peace initiative. Since the negative attitude of Israel would cause such an initiative to be born at the beginning, the EC member states ceased to initiate such a peace initiative.

The 1980s were a period when the Arab-Israeli Conflict was of secondary importance in terms of both the EC and the US. In spring 1981, with Socialist Francois Mitterrand's coming to power in France, which was the greatest supporter of a common peace initiative, French stand for the solution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict radically changed. Instead of a common European initiative, Mitterrand advocated France for its own peace initiatives and argued that the Conflict should be solved step by step by the negotiations to be conducted on a bilateral basis by the conflicting parties, not by a comprehensive and multilateral international conference on peace, which had often been emphasized by the EC.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, there was not an important initiative except for a number of declarations which emphasized the basic principles of the Venice declaration during the 1980s.

As to the US, the very priority of Ronald Reagan who replaced Jimmy Carter as US president was the global struggle against the Soviet Union, and the Reagan administration gave priority to the Iran-Iraq War which it considered as the most critical source of instability due to which the Soviets could penetrate the Middle East. For this reason, the Arab-Israeli Conflict was put on the back burner. The Reagan administration only proposed a peace plan in September 1982 which envisaged total autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza

population, but in association with Jordan and an immediate freeze of the Israeli settlement policies in the Occupied Territories. However, this plan was rejected by both the Palestinian side and Israel. In the following period, the Reagan administration was not involved in the Conflict by any means.

### **Rapprochement Of The EU-US Attitudes To The Conflict After The Madrid Peace Process In The 1990s**

In the early 1990s, significant international and regional changes paved the way for a breakthrough in Middle East peacemaking including the Madrid Peace Process which started in October 1991, the Oslo Peace Process and the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan, signed on 26 October 1994. The demise of the Cold War in the early 1990s set the stage for a US and Soviet collaboration rather than a competition in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, although the Madrid Peace Process was regarded as an American initiative, the Soviet Union became the co-sponsor of the process with the US. In the regional context, 1991 Gulf War demonstrated the superior US military power and its ability to mobilize an international coalition to reverse Iraq's aggression against Kuwait; and the willingness of the prominent Arab States including Egypt and Syria to join the coalition and fight alongside Western armies against an Arab country.<sup>17</sup> In this international and regional context, the US President George Bush considered that it was the right time to launch a peace process which would lead to a comprehensive peace settlement. George Bush's peace initiative was mainly based on an international peace conference that would include all the parties to the Conflict. This was an idea, backed up by the EC since the 1970s which was based on a comprehensive solution to the problem as well as on the principles such as

the recognition of the State of Israel by the Arab countries, the assurance of the security of Israel, and the recognition of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinians. In this respect, the US administration adopted a similar policy with that of the EC member states on the solution of the problem. President Bush announced that the main purpose of the conference was to close the gap between Israel and the Arab states and Israel and the Palestinians, laying the groundwork for future peace negotiations.<sup>18</sup> In that regard, the process proved to be significantly successful. Although the Madrid Peace Process did not result in the signing of a comprehensive peace treaty, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process formed the basis for the Oslo Peace Process and the Israel-Jordan peace treaty. Although the Palestinian side participated in the Madrid Conference as a part of the Jordanian delegation, not as an independent party, due to the Israeli objection, the PLO joined the Oslo Peace Process as the representative of the Palestinian people and Israel and the PLO formally recognized each other by signing the Oslo Agreement on September 13, 1993. While Israel recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by the mutual recognition letters signed on September 9, 1993, the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist and also renounced terrorism, violence and its desire for the destruction of Israel. In this respect, the Oslo Accords were the materialization of the EU's long-standing call for association of the PLO with the peace negotiations as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The Madrid Peace Process, initiated during George Bush's term, continued with the Oslo Peace Agreement, signed during Bill Clinton's presidency, and both the US and the EU made a significant effort to advance these two processes. Nevertheless, the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November

1995 by an Orthodox far-right student who was against the Oslo Peace Process and that the Likud Party led by Binyamin Netanyahu came to power deadlocked the peace process. Although the Clinton administration and the EU made attempts to revive the process, no progress was made during Netanyahu's term as prime minister. The prospects for peace increased in May 1999 when the Labor Party, led by Ehud Barak, won elections in Israel in 1999; nevertheless, the direct negotiations between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat at Camp David, mediated by US President Bill Clinton between July 11-25, 2000 failed as no consensus was reached on the status of East Jerusalem. Likud leader Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount with the Israeli security forces on September 28, 2000, increased the tension between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This led to the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. In this process, the efforts of the Clinton administration and EU representatives in order to put stalemated peace process back on the track were unsuccessful.

Unlike his father George Bush and his predecessor, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush who took over the presidency in the US in 2001 did not see the Arab-Israeli conflict as a priority in his Middle East policy and thus, did not involve that much in the Conflict at least until 9/11. In this respect, he had a similar attitude to the Reagan administration. However, in the wake of the September 11 attacks, the US administration, which confronted the fact that the continuation of this Conflict encouraged terrorism and hatred of Israel's Western backers, began to give priority to the problem.<sup>19</sup> In such an environment, the US sent retired Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni to broker a cease-fire between the Israelis and the Palestinians and put the peace process back on track. However, Zinni's mission failed due to the escalation of mutual violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians. At the same time, the mediation efforts of the EU representatives,

including the High Representative for the CFSP of the EU Javier Solana and the Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Pique, as the foreign minister of the country holding the EU Presidency, also failed.

After these failed missions, on April 10, 2002, US Secretary of State Colin Powell, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and the High Representative for the CFSP of the EU Javier Solana and Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Pique, the foreign minister of the country holding the EU Presidency, met in Madrid to coordinate mediation activities for the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and formed the mechanism known as the Quartet on the Middle East. Starting from the establishment of this structure till Trump's coming to power, there had been a period of full compliance between the US and EU attitudes towards the resolution of the Conflict.

The Quartet on the Middle East declared at the end of its first meeting that the problem between Israel and Palestine should be solved on the basis of the UN Security Council resolutions in accordance with the principle of "land for peace". Besides, it was emphasized that a just and lasting solution to the problem should be based on two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side within secure and recognized borders. This peace formula, called the two-state solution, is a principle that the US and the EU are determined to keep up their efforts to solve the problem. Moreover, this principle was once again approved by the members of the UN Security Council through the UN Security Council Resolutions, respectively 1397 dated March 12, 2002, and 1515 dated November 19, 2003, and became a legally binding principle for all UN member states.

In order to solve the problem on the basis of the two-state peace formula, the members of the



Quartet on the Middle East prepared on July 16, 2002, the peace plan which consisted of three stages called the Roadmap for peace in the Middle East and would result in a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by 2005. Accordingly, in the first two stages the construction of the Palestinian state to be established would be completed and in the final stage, a just and lasting solution to the problem would be found with the agreement reached at the end of bilateral negotiations. The US President Bush assumed the responsibility to persuade Israel and Palestine to accept the plan, and as a result of the meeting he conducted with the leaders of both communities in Aqaba, he was able to make the leaders of the two parties accept the Road Map in June 2003 although both sides had some reservation. In the forthcoming period,

European attempts to put the Road Map into practice failed. Although the Israeli and Palestinian sides agreed on the implementation of the Road Map and the continuation of bilateral negotiations as a result of the Annapolis Conference, which took place in November 2007 with the participation of 49 state and international organizations such as Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the EU, the UN, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the IMF and the World Bank, no progress was made in the bilateral negotiations in the upcoming period and the Operation of Cast Lead that Israel initiated at the end of 2008 ended the Annapolis process.

During his administration which started in 2009, President Obama made two peace initiatives, the first of which was in the period of 2010-2011 and the second in 2013-2014, but both

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both the US and EU made serious efforts to ensure the Road Map provides the desired target. In particular, the EU made significant contributions to the Palestinian state-building process in the given period. Despite these efforts, the Israeli unilateral actions deviating from the Road Map, including the construction of the ‘Security Fence’ and the ‘Disengagement Plan’, and, and Israel’s continuation of settlement activities in the Occupied Territories resulted in the fact that the desired progression put forward by the Roadmap could not be achieved. These Israeli attempts began to make the two-state solution, the basis of the Road Map, impossible and the Road Map reached on a kind of impasse. In the next period, both the American and

of these attempts failed as Israel did not put an end to its activities to construct new settlements in the Palestinian territories it occupied. During the Obama period, it was observed that there was a full compliance between the US and the EU on finding a solution based on both the two-state principle and the UN Security Council resolutions.

### **The EU’s Stance Against Trump’s Decision On Jerusalem**

During his election campaign, Donald Trump, elected as the 45th president of the US in November 2016, promised to move the US Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in



case he won the elections, and thus, he received serious support from Evangelical Christians and pro-Israel Republicans. Although the previous presidents made similar promises in their election campaigns, they did not fulfill these promises after being elected as president. In this respect, Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel in December 2017 and then to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem symbolizes a real rupture from the attitudes of the previous US administrations had adopted as well as fulfilling his pre-election commitments. Trump's decision, in fact, represents the enactment by a US president of the "Jerusalem Embassy Act" that was adopted by the US Congress on November 8, 1995, and provided for the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel and the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem by May 31, 1999 at the latest. To preserve the US national security interests, the previous American presidents did not apply this law by benefiting from their right generating from the same law to suspend the

clause every 6 months. The main reason here was the fact that a step taken without a final solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict would jeopardize the US national security interests in the region, disrupt its relations with the Arab and Islamic world, and jeopardize the future of the Middle East peace process. After this decision, both the strong reactions from the Palestinians and the Islamic world and the increasing tension and emergence of violence between Palestine and Israel, clearly demonstrated how right the previous US governments were to postpone this decision. This decision stroke a severe blow to the peace process that had not been progressing for a long time and reduced peace prospects as well as increasing conflicts in the region.

Representing a serious rupture from the attitude that the previous US administrations have adopted up to now, Trump's Jerusalem decision also showed that the Jewish lobby had a greater influence than ever before in shaping the US policy towards the Middle East and Arab-



Israeli Conflict. Although the US governments refrained from pursuing a policy that would harm Israel's interests in the region, they also avoided from taking steps to endanger the US national interests in the region, such as the Jerusalem decision taken by the Trump administration and the decision to withdraw from the nuclear agreement with Iran. In this respect, Trump disrupted this very tradition by these decisions.

of the UN General Assembly held on December 21, 2017, the Jerusalem decision of the US was considered null and void with the favorable votes of 128 countries participating in the voting, it was stressed that any unilateral decision to change the status of Jerusalem was not to be accepted and the member states to the UN were called on not to move their embassies to Jerusalem. In spite of the threats made by the US to cut down on aid to

**“Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, stated that the EU member countries definitely do not support Trump’s decision, the stance of the Union was clear, and that the only realistic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict was a two-state solution in which the capitals of both Israel and Palestine would be Jerusalem. She also added that “the announcement has the potential to send us backwards to even darker times than the ones we are already living in”. ”**

At this point, we can say that Trump's Jerusalem decision was affected by his desire to receive support from the Jewish lobby which has a significant influence on the US politics and the US Congress especially in a period when he was domestically stuck due to the allegations that Russia got involved in the US elections and thus, he may be dismissed from his office as well as Trump's desire to keep his promise to the Jewish lobby that gave him a huge financial support in his election campaign. What is more, it is highly asserted that Sheldon Adelson, an American billionaire and one of the most effective figures in the Jewish lobby who endeavored for a long time for the transfer of the US Embassy to Jerusalem, claimed that Trump gave this promise and provided Trump with a great amount of financial support during his election campaign played a remarkable part in Trump’s decision.<sup>20</sup>

This decision of Trump has not been accepted not only by the Muslim and Arab world but also by the whole international public. In the voting

the countries that would vote positively, only 9 countries voted against the draft resolution, while 35 of them remained neutral.

At this point, if we look at the attitudes of EU member states, the focal point of this study, Croatia and the Czech Republic remained neutral in the voting of the UN General Assembly, 22 states including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom, voted for the draft resolution while Romania, Poland, Hungary, and Latvia did not participate in the voting. In this respect, we can conclude that the majority of EU Member States were opposed to the decision of the US whereas the minority that abstained or did not participate in the voting adopted such an attitude in order not to disrupt the good relations with the US.

In addition to the EU member states' stance in the UN, Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, while speaking on behalf of all EU member states' foreign ministers after a meeting with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on December 7, 2017 stated that the EU member countries definitely do not support Trump's decision, the stance of the Union was clear, and that the only realistic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict was a two-state solution in which the capitals of both Israel and Palestine would be Jerusalem. Mogherini also added that the EU would not accept any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem, EU member states would not recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel without a final solution to the problem, and a decision upon the status of Jerusalem were to be identified through negotiations to be carried out between the Israelis and Palestinians. Furthermore, Mogherini stressed that the issue should be solved within the framework of the UN Security Council resolutions on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, and that any changes to these borders, as in Jerusalem's status, should only be made with the consent of both sides as a result of the negotiations between Israel and Palestine. Mogherini underlined that a just and lasting solution to the problem can only be achieved by finding a solution that meets the expectations of both sides. Mogherini also stressed her concern regarding the Trump administration's decision by stating that "the announcement has the potential to send us backwards to even darker times than the ones we are already living in." The main concerns of the EU member states because of this decision were that the decision would cause instability and insecurity in the region and boost the conflicts and increase violence between Israel and the Palestinians, which would pose a threat to the security and stability of EU member states in the long run. The EU member states are concerned that the instability in the region will

lead to the strengthening of radical groups, which in the long run may trigger new terrorist attacks in Europe, and that increased instability may increase migration flow from the region to Europe.

Another concern for EU member states is the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe after this decision. In particular, after the decision, anti-Jewish slogans in demonstrations in various parts of Europe and the attacks on a Synagogue in Sweden and a Jewish restaurant in the Netherlands showed that this concern was not unwarranted. EU member states are worried that the rise of anti-Semitism among Arabs and Muslims in Europe as well as the extreme right and xenophobic groups in Europe in the long term will threaten peace and stability in Europe, leading to a new division and conflict between Muslim and Jewish communities. For this reason, both the official representatives of the EU and EU member countries perform careful rhetoric in their criticism for Trump's decision on Jerusalem and after emphasizing that anti-Semitism has no longer a room in Europe and that they definitely reject it, they underlined that their criticism is not an expression of a Jewish or Israeli hostility, but against the policies pursued by the State of Israel. EU member states often emphasize that finding a just and lasting settlement to the Conflict based on the consent of both sides is necessary for the stability and peace in the Middle East region and Europe.

Despite Mogherini's statements on Trump's Jerusalem decision and the objection of the majority of EU member states, particularly the leading actors of the Union such as Germany, France and the United Kingdom, the EU member states failed to issue a joint statement against Trump's decision. The draft statement prepared to condemn Trump's decision was hampered by those states that failed to vote or abstained from voting in the UN General Assembly resolution that had previously invalidated Trump's decision,



such as Romania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. While all three states argue that there is no reason for the EU to be directly involved in this issue, they are essentially seeking to strengthen their relations with the US and Israel.<sup>21</sup> Even though the Czech Republic, among these three nations, stressed that it backed up the two-state solution in Jerusalem, the common position of the EU, according to which Jerusalem would be the capital of both Israel and Palestine, and that it had no intention of moving its embassy to Jerusalem, it recognized Jerusalem as the capital city of the State of Israel based on pre-1967 borders in December 2017, and as a symbolic gesture, opened an honorary consulate in Jerusalem on May 29, 2018.<sup>22</sup> Romania and Hungary, on the other hand, emphasized their support for a two-state solution, just like the Czech Republic, which is by the way the common position of the EU, but stressed that they opposed such a statement to avoid a situation that would undermine any of the two pillars of their foreign policy, EU membership, and alliance with the US.<sup>23</sup> Although both states are currently not pursuing Trump's decision to declare Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move their embassies to Jerusalem, their future attitudes are still unclear. In this process, the ambassadors of these three states, together with the Austrian ambassador, once again demonstrated that they took a different position from the other EU member states by attending the reception in honor of the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem on May 14, 2018. The attitude adopted by these three states shows that they are reluctant to face Trump's decision even though they have not made the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move their embassies to Jerusalem. In this regard, we cannot say that there is a full unity in the EU against Trump's decision. In the long run, we will see whether these states will change their stances and follow Trump's decision, or whether they will join other EU member states. At this

point, the balance within the EU and these states strategic calculations on their EU membership and their alliance with the US and their relations with Israel will be decisive.

## Conclusion

The basic principles of the EU's policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict have demonstrated continuity and consistency since the 1970s. The EU has always argued that the Conflict should be resolved within the framework of the principles of exchange of land for peace; the non-acceptability of the annexation of territory by force; respect for human rights; the rejection of terrorism of all kinds; good relations between neighbors; and compliance with existing agreements and the rejection of counter productive unilateral initiatives. The official statements of the EU authorities and the official documents of the Union on the problem have repeatedly emphasized that the Conflict must be resolved within the framework of UN Security Council resolutions and international law and that any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem would not be accepted by the Union. Within the framework of these basic principles, the EU has argued that the peace formula that can bring a just and lasting solution to the problem is the two-state solution which envisages Israel and sovereign, independent, democratic and viable Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security. The statements by Federica Mogherini following Trump's decision indicate that this decision will not cause any change in the official position of the Union.

In fact, the two-state solution formula was adopted and supported by the US since the Oslo Peace process, which began in the 1990s. In a period that started with the Road Map based on the two-state solution introduced by the Quartet on the Middle East in 2002 till now, we have seen that the US and the EU are in close cooperation and harmony in the process. The question of what will be the future of the two-state solution plan

after Trump's Jerusalem decision is one of the most curious questions. Although Trump stressed that the US administration would support a two-state solution if the parties agreed on it, we can conclude that this two-state solution will be different from the solution that is foreseen for the present which is based on the sharing of Jerusalem. As a matter of fact, the two-state solution supported by the US and the EU has been a solution in which Jerusalem is shared and the west belongs to the State of Israel and the east to the Palestinian state to be established, but that the US recognized Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel without a final settlement to the Conflict and the consent of the Palestinian side signals that the two-state peace formula in the mind of the Trump administration will not include a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital in the next process. It is clear that such a formula will not be accepted by Palestine and that a solution not accepted by Palestine will not bring a just and lasting solution to the problem. As for the EU, although the official statements of the Union emphasize that there would be no change in their stance regarding the status of Jerusalem and the two-state solution formula, the diverging positions of the Czech Republic, Romania and Hungary from the common EU stance may result in a division in the Union similar to which was described by the former US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as the Old Europe-New Europe in 2003 just before the US intervention in Iraq. The emergence of such a situation could make the EU an ineffective and disunited actor, as in the Iraq crisis, that cannot take the initiative to solve the Conflict and each member state of which acts on its own. The fact that Romania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic blocked the announcement of a joint declaration criticizing Trump's decision shows that such a situation is within the bounds of possibility.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who visited Brussels in January 2018 to get the support of the EU after Trump's decision, called on EU member states to recognize Palestine as a state and to replace the US, which had lost its credibility as a neutral arbiter. Abbas, however, did not find the support he expected in Brussels on either issue and Mogherini emphasized that the recognition of Palestine as a state was related to the sovereign rights of the member states and that the EU will continue to work in a multilateral framework together with its regional partners and its partners in the Quartet on the Middle East, including the US. This shows that the Union does not have any idea of initiating a peace initiative or attempting mediation on its own, except for the Quartet on the Middle East. In fact, it is possible to say that this is a realistic approach, because such a mediation initiative of the EU would not be welcomed by the State of Israel which considers the Union as pro-Arab/Palestinian actor and is uncomfortable with the Union's criticism towards Israel's settlement policies in the Occupied Territories and Trump's Jerusalem decision. We can say that we will experience a period when the peace process, which has been in place for a long time, is becoming even more deadlocked. The Palestinian declaration that after the Jerusalem decision, the US lost its status as a neutral arbiter and that they would not discuss peace negotiations with the US authorities under no circumstances as long as they insist on this very decision on the one hand and the long-standing insistence of Israel not to accept any mediator but the US on the other enable us to argue that hopes for the Israeli-Palestinian peace have declined and, in Mogherini's words, we are headed towards darker times.



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## Endnotes

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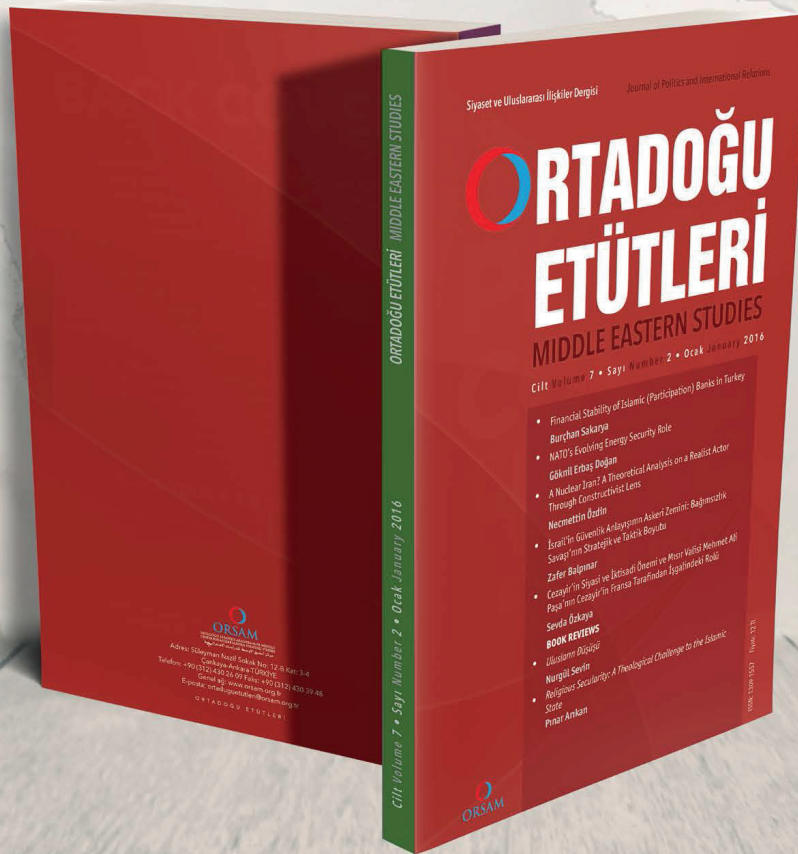
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