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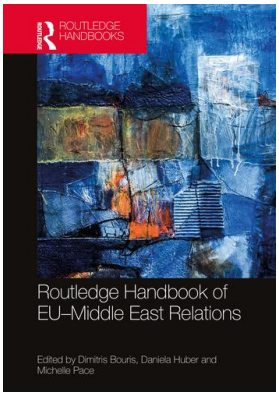

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EU foreign policy incoherence in the United Nations

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16

EU FOREIGN POLICY INCOHERENCE IN THE UNITED NATIONS

The case of the Middle East

Ioannis Galariotis and Maria Gianniou

Introduction

The European Union's (EU) quest to become a more prominent actor in world politics has always comprised a dominant issue in the agenda of EU leaders over the last decades. The new European Commission, for example, has announced its intention to become a more geopolitical actor (Politico, 2019). This is perfectly reasonable since the EU, as one of the most successful formats of regional integration across the globe, strives to promote its own political goals at the international level. The adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 was a considerable breakthrough in this direction by unifying the EU foreign policy apparatus and many signs of optimism are evident that the EU has become more coherent in its approach to external action and international relations (Blavoukos et al., 2016). However, the complex intra-EU environment – and the diverse political interests of the EU Member States more specifically – always constitute a formidable obstacle for the formulation and enhancement of a coherent EU policy approach in world politics (Smith, 2013).

When it comes to the UN, Member States typically still take centre stage in relation to all its principle functions, may that be mediation (Staffan de Mistura for example served as UN Special Envoy to Syria between 2014 and 2018); monitoring (Member States send international monitors or fact finding missions such as, for example, the Italian carabinieri for Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) established by the UN Security Council in 1994 in UNSC Res 904); peacekeeping (such as for example the Italian contingent in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL); or humanitarian action such as specialised agencies as UNRWA to which EU Member States are principal donors (see Huber, 2021; Makdisi and Prashad, 2016). In the UN General Assembly, the Member State holding the presidency of the European Council has represented the European Community since 1977, while the EU has had its own voice since 2011. In the UN Security Council, Member States also seek to coordinate. Despite these efforts, however, European incoherence still affects the impact the EU can have within the UN and this can be particularly well evidenced in its voting behaviour in the UN's principal organs (UNGA and UNSC).

To show this, we will focus on the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, arguably the conflict in the Middle East with the strongest EU presence, dating back to the Euro-Arab dialogue (EAD) and the commercial association between the European Community (EC) and Israel in

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the 1970s (Khader, 1999). These economic ties have been further enhanced with the participation of the EC/EU in different multilateral settings regarding the Israeli-Palestinian case, especially in support of the Oslo peace agreement in the 1990s (Peters, 1996; Kaye, 2001). Since the 2000s, the EU's economic engagement focuses more on emergency assistance in parallel to institution-building actions. Apart from its significant economic involvement in the wider Middle East region, the EU's presence in the conflict between Israel and Palestine is channelled through different lanes including official political declarations, EU missions, and participation in regional and international coordinated efforts to resolve the conflict, to name but a few. In this respect, the EU constitutes a non-negligible actor in the settlement of the conflict (Aymat, 2010: 18).

This chapter will, therefore, focus on this case to examine the coherence of the EU as a regional bloc in the United Nations (UN). In doing so, we adhere to a methodological framework which compares the EU's oral and voting coherence in the UN General Assembly (Blavoukos et al., 2018). We chose to focus on the UN General Assembly as – in contrast to the UN Security Council – all EU Member States are present and can be taken into consideration. Particularly, we examine (1) how the EU has developed a certain set of principles over the years regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; (2) we observe EU coherence at the international level (in this case, at the UN General Assembly) and (3) we identify the limitations of the EU's coherent action via an investigation of EU behaviour concerning two specific UN General Assembly resolutions pertaining to the conflict: the one associated with the Goldstone Report (2009), and the second with regard to the upgrade of the status of Palestine (2012). Our findings suggest that, even though the EU's oral stance often seems to be significantly coherent, the voting behaviour of the EU Member States is considerably incoherent regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We also contextualise this finding in relation to EU voting behaviour in other UN organs and on other conflicts in the Middle East. Our research targets both the literature concerning the EU's performance in international organisations (IOs), as well as EU relations with the East Mediterranean region.

The EU's position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Oral and voting (in)coherence

Looking at both the academic literature and official EU documentation, a persistent issue of concern for the EU is to appear with a coherent face in the world political arena (see, for instance, European Commission, 2006; Iakovidis et al., 2018). Typically, when we refer to the EU, coherence pertains to the "intra-EU dimension of EU international interactions; that is, the internal capacity of the EU to emerge as a cohesive, authoritative and autonomous player in the international arena and to become recognised by the other negotiating partners as such" (Blavoukos et al., 2017: 453). Oral and voting coherence have the same dimension: the former concerns the capacity of the EU and its Member States to speak with one voice; the latter is when EU Member States vote with the same manner in a voting procedure. Coherence could be observed at two levels: (1) at a micro-level, namely within the EU, where EU Member States bargain for common policy positions and (2) at the macro-level, namely at the international level where the EU uploads its agreed positions and negotiates in international fora.

The majority of existing scholarly literature that examines the EU's role in the UN setting focuses on the voting behaviour of EU Member States. The basic research scope of this literature is to identify convergent and divergent trends in the voting attitudes of EU Member States over time and regarding particular policy areas. Recently, Blavoukos et al. (2016) argued

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Table 16.1 Matrix of oral interventions and voting behaviour

Voting behaviour / *Oral* **Interventions**	*Cohesion*	*Incohesion*
Coherence	#1	#2
Incoherence	#3	#4

Source: Authors' own construction

that the EU's oral interventions and, subsequently, the EU's oral (in)coherence is a foundational dimension of the EU and its Member States' behaviour at the UN General Assembly. They have also proposed a methodological framework which takes into consideration, simultaneously, the oral and voting behaviour of the EU and its Member States (Blavoukos et al., 2018). Table 16.1 depicts a matrix that illustrates the four possible cases of oral-voting (in)consistency.

The first entry, i.e. #1, identifies cases when EU Member States speak with one voice and vote in the same direction. The second entry, i.e. #2, depicts cases in which the EU Member States speak with an aligned voice but vote differently. The third entry, i.e. #3, pertains to the cases whereby EU Member States vote similarly but express differences in their oral interventions. Finally, the fourth entry, i.e. #4, shows the situation when EU Member States speak differently and do not vote in the same manner. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, we will see that most of the cases lie in matrix cells either #1 or #2.

The intra-EU level: signs of a gradual EU oral coherence for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The formulation of the EU's official position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict comprises a striking case of how a joint EU position regarding a policy issue has been constructed hand in hand with the evolution of EU foreign policy over the decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, the political position of the EC was fundamentally based on political declarations within the European Political Cooperation (EPC) context and, essentially, on the humanitarian assistance provided by the European Commission and EU Member States.

During the early 1990s, the inauguration of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) provided a more coherent character to the EU's approach of external action, and this was a critical point for the more direct engagement of the EU in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The main direction of the EU was to be diplomatically present in the ongoing negotiations of the settlement of the conflict. However, this approach was profoundly constrained between the EU's political will to find a solution and, more importantly, a peaceful settlement for the conflict and the EU's internal limitations in synthesising a common position towards the conflict. The gap between what the EU could do as a competent actor in world affairs and its capacity to reach these expectations has been well depicted by the mismatch between the highly engaged rhetoric that the EU has used concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its concrete engagements (Bicchi and Voltolini, 2017; Bouris, 2014; Pace and Sen, 2019).

Several important political texts have set up and sufficiently demarcated the political approach of the EU towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These texts stem from diverse EC/EU declarations demonstrated over the years either in international fora or within the EU context. A vital European declaration was made in May 1971, some months after the EPC's creation (Bulletin-CE, 1971: 16; Allen et al., 1982; Gianniou, 2006). Among others, in this declaration,

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EU leaders recognised the Security Council (SC) Resolution 242 which called, inter alia, for a withdrawal of Israel's armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict. This recognition constitutes until today one of the main foundations of the EU's approach regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In November 1973, a second text was published, further enhancing the EU's position towards the conflict (Bulletin-CE, 1973: 115–116). In this text, apart from a repetition of the SC Resolution 242, SC Resolutions 338, 339 and 340 were also mentioned as foundational principles of the EU's stance for the determination of the tension (Gianniou, 2006). The oil crisis in 1973 led to the publication of the first common position from the EU about the conflict (Dieckhoff, 1988: 265). The position of the Europeans gradually consolidated, and they began to ask for the recognition of the "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people". Pompidou asserted that the Palestinian issue is a political problem and not one of refugees; a view which was in line with the old British stipulation that, at some point, the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians should somehow be satisfied (Dieckhoff, 1988: 265).

In June 1977, the nine EC Member States explicitly mentioned the need for "a homeland for the Palestinian people" that was highlighted in the European Council meeting in London (European Council, 1977). Unquestionably though, the most avant-garde declaration by the European side was published during the European Council in Venice, in June 1980. The text, which was mainly presenting the main theses of the Franco-German cooperation alliance (Gerbet, 1993: 51), illustrated very clearly the basic principles of the European position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and remained one of the main points of reference for the years to come. More specifically and reiterating the EC's commitment to UN resolutions regarding the issue, the nine EC Member States featured the necessity to recognise the Palestinians' right to self-determination. In addition, they insisted that the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) should be part of the negotiations and made clear that they would not "accept any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem" (Venice Declaration, 1980). Coupled with that, they noted that the settlements were an obstacle to the consolidation of the peace process and, at the same time, illegal under international law.

Until 1999, one can only witness minor changes in the European position towards the conflict. In the Berlin Declaration however, the EU went a step further by expressing its "readiness to consider the recognition of a Palestinian State in due course" (European Council, 1999). In 2002, the EU committed itself to the two-state principle (European Council, 2002); while in 2009, the European leaders underscored their ambition to see Jerusalem serving as future capital of both states (Council of the European Union, 2009). Since December 2012, the Foreign Affairs Council has stressed the need to exclude settlements from EU–Israel agreements. This has been repeated in all conclusions since then. For example, during the Council meeting in January 2016, the then 28 Member States underlined that "all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967" (Council of the European Union, 2016). In the following Table 16.2, we portray the evolution of the EU's position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the early 1970s to the late 2010s.

The EU's coherence at the international level: the case of the UN General Assembly

What is happening when the EU wants to transfer and promote this intra-EU output to the international level? One of the core international contexts in which the EU is striving to promote its political objectives is the UN General Assembly. As a complex negotiating environment

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Table 16.2 EC/EU declarations

EC/EU Declaration	*1971 EC* **Declaration**	*1973 EC* **Declaration**	*1977 London* **Declaration**	*1980 Venice* **Declaration**	*1999 Berlin* **Declaration**	*2002 Barcelona* **Declaration**	*2009 Council of the EU*	*2012 Council of the EU*
Basic Principle	Recognition of the SC Resolution 242	Legitimate rights of the Palestinian people	Homeland for the Palestinian people	Right to self-determination	Recognition of Palestinian State in due course	Two-state solution	Jerusalem as future capital of both states	Inapplicability of EU/Israel agreement to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967

Source: Author's own construction drawing on Bouris, 2014: 64

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where numerous states, regional organisations and diverse entities express their goals and sponsor their political interests, the UN General Assembly undoubtedly comprises a unique forum in which the EU can enhance its impact as a political power in world affairs. Europe's commitment to effective multilateralism, as depicted in various EU official documents (see for instance the European Security Strategy, 2003; and the European Global Strategy, 2016), portrays the EU as a global political actor firmly engaged in promoting and enhancing the values of the UN system. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this is even more germane. The first EC declaration on the issue has clear links to the UN documents (i.e. SC Resolutions 242 & 388). Following that, all official EU documentation related to the conflict is based on the value pallet that the UN context produces from time to time.

Apart from the set of values and norms that the UN environment provides to the EU, the UN General Assembly setting has played a vital role in the consolidation and evolution of the joint European stance towards the conflict. For instance, it was via the framework of the UN General Assembly from which the EC's position was developed until the 34th session in 1979 when, for the first time, the EC explicitly declared that the PLO should be associated with the negotiations (Gianniou, 2006: 203). In addition to that, EU Member States have been capable of delivering oral statements in the UN framework which are completely in line with the official, joint EU positions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this respect, one would argue that the UN General Assembly was always a negotiating context in which the EU could speak with a single voice regarding this conflict.

Voting attitude of EU Member States: mixed evidence over time

When it comes to the voting records of EU Member States regarding UN General Assembly resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, one can witness periods of aligned votes and periods of divergent trends. In fact, the Israeli-Palestinian issue is an excellent case for the EU to be converted into a "dominant player [having] the ability to muster significant numbers of votes" and to increase, as such, its bargaining power through collective voting (Laatikainen and Smith, 2006: 16). The EU has been treated as a coherent bloc by the Arab states introducing draft resolutions pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this way, the EU can intervene *ex ante* in the formulation of the text in the respective resolutions through proposed amendments. At the same time, a coordinated EU vote could typically attract more than 20 non-Arab Member States of the UN General Assembly who could align themselves with the EU's position (Birnberg, 2009: 220–221).

Each year within the UN General Assembly sessions, approximately 20 resolutions are debated with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The deliberations take place in the Plenary and the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Committees of the UN General Assembly. The EU and its Member States strive to coordinate their positions on a topic which is highly controversial, and divergent political stances are typically the rule rather than the exception. Traditionally there is an engrained division among EU Member States whereby some are tendentiously closer to Israel (the Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic), some closer to the Palestinians (Spain, Ireland, Sweden) and others vary (Italy, Greece).

Putting this in context, it is interesting to note that in other situations, EU Member States do succeed in voting coherently. This can be evidenced in Figure 16.1, which is not about UNGA but the UN Human Rights Council and the voting behaviour of those EU Member States present in it on resolutions promoting accountability through commissions of enquiry. It reflects a pattern in which it is particularly on Israel/Palestine that EU Member States do not vote coherently.

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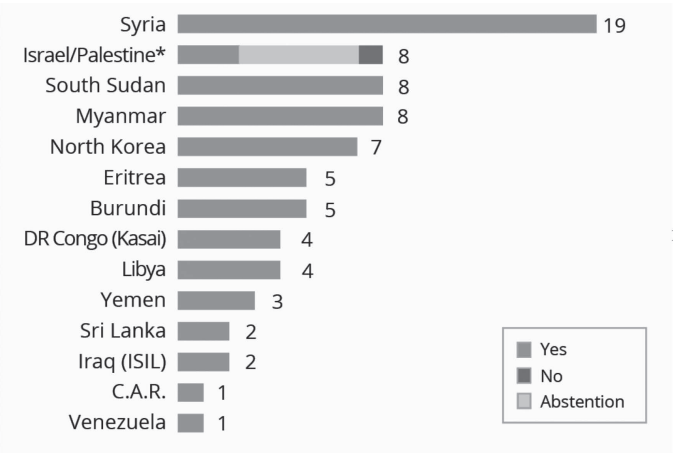

Figure 16.1 UNHRC resolutions on UN enquiries into conflicts, 2014–2019 (EU Member States' votes)
Source: European Middle East Project (2020)

Thus, it is particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that the majority of the cases regarding the Israeli-Palestinian dispute could be categorised in #2: namely, EU Member States speak the same language but vote differently, despite their agreement at the oral level. To explain this better, in what follows we present more in-depth research on two cases where one can see the limits of the EU's oral coherence: whereas the EU and its Member States intend to articulate a common language for a specific topic, it is very difficult for them to avoid an oral/voting split during the crucial voting procedure.

The limits of the EU's oral coherence: the Goldstone report and the upgrade of the status of Palestine

The Goldstone Report Resolution

The Goldstone Report Resolution, voted by the Plenary of the UN General Assembly in November 2009, advised both Israelis and Palestinians to undertake "independent, credible investigations" into serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed during the Gaza conflict in December 2008 (A/HRC/12/48). The main conclusion of the report was that both Hamas and Israel had gone very far with the war fatalities and possibly committed war crimes during the crisis.

The voting process in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), in September 2009, was noticeably contentious since Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands and Slovakia rejected the report, while Belgium and Slovenia abstained from voting and France and the UK did not vote at all. When the report arrived at the Plenary of the UN General Assembly, EU voting coherence was once again fragmented: Cyprus, Ireland, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia voted yes; the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia voted no; Austria,

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Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the UK abstained (United Nations, 2009).

The coordination process followed for the Goldstone Report was a bit unusual, considering the mainstream procedures of EU coordination in similar circumstances. While the majority of coordinating mechanisms takes place in Brussels prior to a vote at the UN General Assembly, especially with regard to human rights topics, the case of the Goldstone Report was coordinated through a different approach: each EU Member State expressed its own national position and the bulk of deliberations for a coordinated stance took place in Geneva (UNHRC) and in New York (UN General Assembly) (Voltolini, 2013: 165).

The coordination efforts of the Swedish EU Presidency to formulate and reach a common position among EU Member States and, more than that, to find cooperative paths between the EU and the Palestinian delegation, were colossal. The basic objective for the EU was to promote the principle in UN diplomatic circles that the UN General Assembly should "endorse" the HRC Report and not use less binding language such as "takes notice" or "takes note with appreciation". For instance, the Dutch delegation insisted on clear principles and the EU worked for more moderate language in the resolution (The Guardian, 2009). However, the language the EU supported for the resolution was rejected by Palestine (Goldberg, 2009).

During February 2010, a second resolution on this matter was voted in the UN General Assembly. EU Member States were divided into two camps: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden voted yes; Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovakia abstained (United Nations, 2010). This result provoked a furious reaction from Palestinians who underscored the ineffectiveness of the EU to bind to its own oral statements regarding human rights abuses and pinpointed the use of a double-standards policy (United Nations General Assembly, 2010).

The EU appeared divided during the debate on the resolution. Several statements – voiced by EU Member States – were not in line with the common EU position. The fact that the Goldstone Report has not been mentioned in any official EU Council document is quite revealing. The only exception is two resolutions which were voted by the European Parliament in 2010 and strove to adopt and synthesise a common position on the issue (European Parliament Resolution, 2010a, 2010b). On 30 November 2009, during the Plenary debate of the UN General Assembly, Sweden, speaking on behalf of the EU, did not make any reference to the Goldstone report, neither to the relevant UNGA resolution. The EU statement was only limited to references to the basic EU principles regarding the conflict, including the illegal character of settlements and the need for a two-state solution.

The status of Palestine resolution

If the Goldstone report emphatically showed how difficult it is for the EU to formulate a common approach as a unified regional bloc in the UN General Assembly, the Resolution which concerns the status of Palestine in the UN reveals how complex it is for the EU to overcome different national preferences and sensitivities regarding particular policy issues. After the breakdown of the so-called proximity talks introduced in March 2010 between Israelis and Palestinians, Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, presented a formal application for statehood before the Security Council on 23 September 2011. However, Abbas's attempt at full UN membership had small chances to pass since the US had already expressed its intention to veto the text. For the EU, this was a crucial moment to test its unity on a sensitive issue within an international setting such as that of the UN General Assembly.

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In early September 2011, the foreign ministers of the EU Member States gathered in Poland to prepare the positions of the EU for the forthcoming UN General Assembly meetings in New York. Apparently, the main topic of the discussion was the EU's position regarding the Palestinian bid, and how it could be formulated as a joint EU approach. Germany and Italy publicly opposed the bid and, instead of seeking a common position, EU Member States chose to support a Quartet statement as an alternative to a UN Resolution. On 23 September 2011, the Quartet recommended concrete steps for the reopening of direct bilateral talks between the interested parties (Middle East Quartet Statement, 2011). This was a sort of strategic move in order to minimise anticipated EU divisions over a possible vote at the UN General Assembly (International Crisis Group, 2011: 33). However, the divisions among EU Member States soon came to the fore. In October 2011, the Palestinians pursued and received membership in UNESCO. The EU was divided into three blocs: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Spain voted yes; the Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden voted no; and Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom abstained.

About a year later, in 2012, the Palestinians pushed for a second bid for Palestine to join the UN General Assembly, as a non-member observer state. They were assured that a positive outcome was probable since 131 countries had already recognised Palestine as an independent, yet occupied, state. For the EU, this was one of the greatest battlefields concerning the Palestinian bid (Bouris, 2014: 63). On the one hand, most UN Member States had expressed their desire to vote in favour; on the other hand, there were the US and Israel which were completely antithetical about it. Therefore, the EU's vote would carry a symbolic political burden and importance as a power promoting and consolidating moral legitimacy in world affairs (Strenger, 2011). Nevertheless, EU Member States could not respond to such an important political challenge. On 29 November 2012, the UN General Assembly Plenary conferred Palestine a "non-member observer state" status with a vast majority of 138 votes in favour, to 9 against. Among the negative votes was the Czech Republic's on the EU side. Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom abstained; Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Spain and Sweden voted yes (United Nations, 2012). The Head of the EU Delegation, during the debate for the Palestinian bid, repeated the EU's commitment to recognise a Palestinian state "when appropriate" (similar statements had been made during the 1999 Berlin Declaration), and urged the parties to avoid unilateral measures that would undermine the two-state solution (HR Declaration, 2012).

Compared to the EU's behaviour regarding the Goldstone Report, the split over Palestine's status came two years after the adoption of Resolution 65/276 that conferred an enhanced observer status to the EU in the UN General Assembly, and its main scope was to unify the presence and impact of the EU in the wider UN context (Serrano de Haro, 2012). The latter objectives would be accomplished by the minimisation of individual European voices during official meetings of the UN General Assembly, and by the articulation of a single EU voice, ideally expressed via the EU Delegation in New York. However, the EU's attitude towards the Palestinian status barely reflects these aspirations.

Conclusions

The preceding analysis attempted to highlight the EU's approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to shed light on how the EU and its Member States behave as a coherent regional bloc in the UN General Assembly. We showed that, since the early 1970s, the EU has managed

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to formulate a common policy regarding the conflict, based on irrefutable principles such as the need for a two-state solution, the establishment of Jerusalem as future capital of the two states, the illegal character of Israeli settlements, the renouncement of violence from all parties and the necessity of the economic reorganisation of Gaza, to name but a few. When the EU transfers its agreed policy output from the intra-EU level to the international landscape, we have recognised considerable problems that condition its behaviour. The most important problem concerns the fact that EU Member States have diverse political preferences and interests in numerous policy areas and cases, and this constrains the EU in acting as a coherent bloc in international fora. The EU's behaviour on the two resolutions on the Goldstone Report and the status of Palestine in the UN General Assembly confirm the difficulties that the EU faces when sensitive political issues are at stake at the international level. Musu has characterised the EU's approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a case of "converging parallels", meaning that the Member States converge towards a common position, but they never totally assign their respective national interests to central European mechanisms (Musu, 2010: 101–102). In other words, the EU's position towards the conflict is based on the "lowest common denominator" doctrine that severely characterises the EU's foreign policy.

This also happens at the level of the Security Council. EU Member States had, for example, closely cooperated on UNSC Resolution 2334, which had been influenced by the EU's differentiation policy (see Bicchi and Voltolini, 2021), as it calls "upon all States, bearing in mind paragraph 1 of this resolution, to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967" (UNSC, 2016). EU Member States have also coordinated sanctions on Syria (Seeberg, 2016). Furthermore, in light of the EU's Foreign Affairs Council being increasingly blocked on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by some Member States, the UNSC has been used as a forum for Member States present in the Security Council to voice united positions (Permanent mission of France to the UN in New York, 2020). Nonetheless, as in the UNGA, there have also been splits in the UNSC, for example regarding UNSC Resolution 1973 on Libya, where the UK and France closely coordinated (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014), but Germany abstained; or on the US-led 2003 Iraq intervention, where a deep split ran through Europe. The Security Council is also a forum where European Member States present can potentially cooperate with the rotating Member State of the Arab League. This happened, for example, in 2014, when Jordan tabled a resolution on behalf of the Arab League to impose a 12-month deadline on a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (UNSC meeting 7354, 2014). This resolution, however, failed to be adopted due to a split in the European vote. Whilst France supported the resolution, the UK and Lithuania abstained and the resolution thus failed to gain the necessary nine votes. Thus, it is not only the EU's own incoherence which harms its influence in the international community, but also its lack of ability or willingness to cooperate with regional institutions such as the Arab League in the United Nations for more effective diplomacy in the region. Indeed, this is an issue area where much more research is still needed.

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