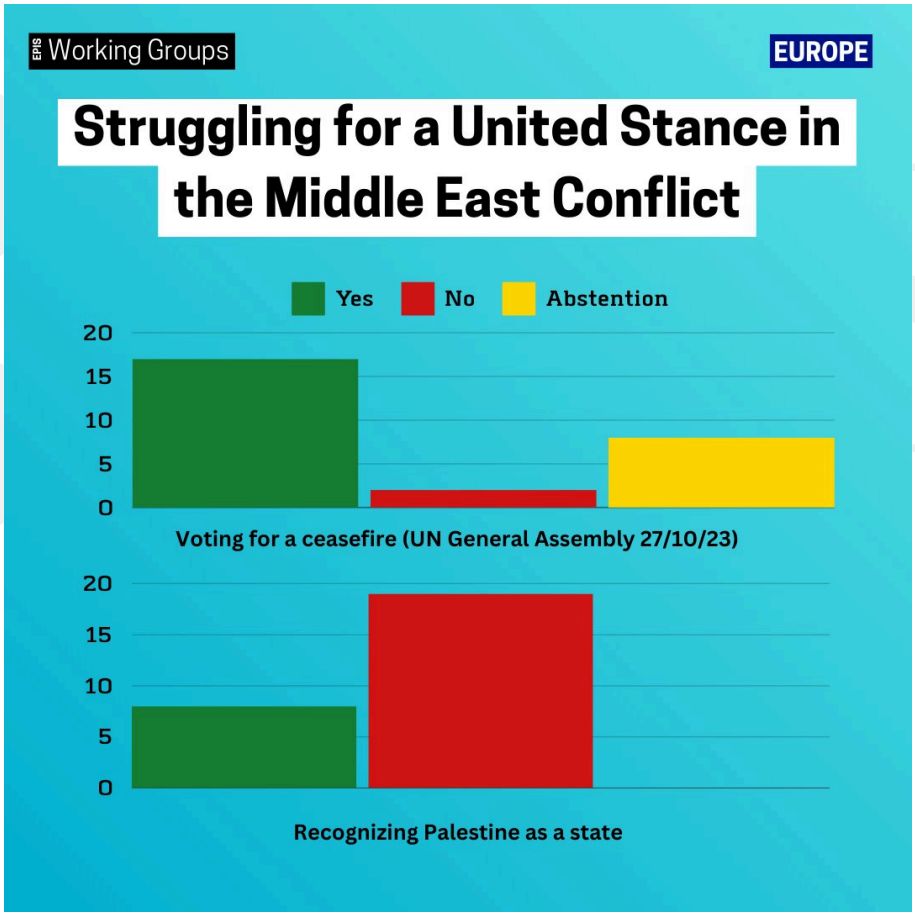
Europe's Struggle for a United Stance in the Middle East Conflict

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Following the EU's successful formation of a strong and united coalition against Russia in the Ukraine conflict, it appeared that the EU was united in its foreign policy. However, the recent conflict in the Middle East has revealed a divided EU rather than a united one. The EU has created an inner conflict between the current European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its core values. At the bottom of the ENP lies the democratization-stabilization dilemma, which tends to drift towards stabilization and

undermines the values the EU pursues to foster and promote. The EU's complex decision-making structure exacerbates these problems. European foreign policy belongs in the intergovernmental area, where decisions are made by the member states. However, the most prominent and apparent struggle within the EU is the difficulty in making unanimous decisions on foreign policy, particularly regarding the Middle East conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been shaped by various policies, including the differentiation strategy. This strategy aimed to create a normative, legal, and economic separation between the state of Israel and the settlements in the West Bank that are not recognized by the international community. To enhance this strategy, the EU would require a unanimous decision, which was deemed unlikely due to Israel's increasing influence within the EU through strong relationships with countries such as the Visegrad Group and Germany. This conflict of interests became more evident during the UN General Assembly on October 27, 2023, when a resolution was passed for an 'immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce'. The voting revealed a division within the EU. Spain and France voted for a ceasefire, while Hungary and Austria voted against it, and Germany abstained. The division was also evident after allegations against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which led some countries to halt funding while others increased it.

In recent developments, the EU has managed to overcome some of these discrepancies. Hungary has finally stopped blocking a European call for a stoppage on the upcoming attack on Rafah and allowed for a unanimous call for an 'immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire'. This breakthrough in European politics shows that the member states are still capable of forming unanimous decisions, even though they have different starting points. Following the breakthrough on March 21, some states proclaimed that they were in the process of recognizing Palestine as a state, stating that it was the only way to achieve peace and security in the region. France and Ireland were among the four states that made their intentions clear, but they also stated that they would wait for the right circumstances before making a positive contribution.

This suggests that the EU can still play a role in the peace process and stabilization of the region. To achieve this, it is important to take a united and public stance against further fighting in the south of Gaza and to provide humanitarian aid. The EU and its allies provide humanitarian aid through initiatives such as the humanitarian air bridge. Additionally, Cyprus has initiated the Amalthea initiative, which aims to establish a secure maritime corridor for delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza.