

THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE UNITED STATES AND THE MIDDLE EAST: A TROUBLED TRIO?

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine the concept that a triangular relationship exists between the protagonists in this ongoing drama; that is to say the United States, the European Union and the Middle East. In the course of this paper the term Middle East is used to refer more specifically to the Middle East Peace Process as it pertains to the Arab-Israeli Conflict. The approach adopted has been to examine the idea that the above-mentioned parties have a triangular relationship with the EU and the US forming a 'united' top to this triangle; while the Israelis and Palestinians form the remaining points of the triangle. In order to examine this assumption, the actions of the EU and the US are analysed to establish the effect each has on the other actors in this drama while also attempting to determine if the relationship between the EU and the US itself has any bearing on the situation. To facilitate this analysis, the paper has been divided into four sections as follows: the first section will look at the European Union and the Middle East; section two will examine the United States and the Middle East; the third section will briefly deal with the Roadmap; and, finally, section four will contain conclusions.

2. The European Union and the Middle East

The first section of this paper examines the involvement of the EU in the region, both historically and in more recent times. This will be done by discussing the organisation's political and economic involvement.

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Before looking at the EU's political and economic involvement in the region over the last decade or so, perhaps it would be interesting to first examine two key dates which have, in some form or another, driven the EU's desire to play a key role in the region. Interestingly, it could be argued that each of these incidents belies the previously mentioned concept of the EU and the US presenting a 'united' front at the top of the triangle. It has been pointed out that there is some merit to the idea of the EU having a role to play in the region. As Roy Ginsberg clearly points out: 'what it (the EU) most needs is peace and stability in the region, which only Israel and its neighbours can negotiate and realize.'¹ As will be seen in the course of this paper, this EU role has primarily and historically been economically motivated and has only recently taken on a more political dimension.

The 1980 Venice Declaration by the then nine EC/EU heads of state marked the first significant attempt by the EU to appear active in the region. In the Declaration, the Community emphasised its ties to the region, indicating its belief that this required it to play an active role in any regional peace process. The heads of state also openly acknowledged that the 'growing tensions affecting this region constitute a serious danger and render a comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict more necessary than ever.'² Given that Venice came over a year after the Camp David Accords, in which the US played the role of a mediating third party, one wonders if the EC's reminder of its ties to the region were the result of jealousy at having been sidelined with respect to the above Accords. Perhaps here we get early indications of a split between the two entities forming the top of the triangle mentioned at the outset of this paper. Despite attempts by the EC throughout the document to appear even-handed, they upset the Israelis when they suggested that the PLO 'will have to be associated with the negotiations.'³ The EC's somewhat clumsy attempts to enter this

¹ Roy H. Ginsberg, *The European Union in International Politics: Baptism by Fire*, (USA: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001), p. 124.

² European Community 1980 Venice Declaration at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mcpp/decl/index.htm#10.

³ 1980 Venice Declaration.

particular arena led to Israel claiming that the EC was ‘putting the cart before the horse by making concessions to the PLO in advance of the PLO’s renunciation of violence against Israel.’⁴ The stance taken by the EU gives the impression that the organisation is pushing a more pro-Palestinian view; a sentiment always present but somewhat more obvious since the EC’s 1973 enlargement to include Ireland, Denmark and the United Kingdom. The result was that Israel was more than happy to allow the US to take the lead in peace talks in the region, especially given the ‘special relationship’⁵ between the two.

In Council declarations through the following years, the tone remained the same: somewhat jealous at being at the periphery of the continuing peace process while some statements aroused Israeli anger for presenting a pro-Palestinian sentiment. This was particularly the case with the March 1999 Berlin European Council when the EU again reiterated ‘the continuing and unqualified Palestinian right to self-determination including the option of a state’ and declared that it ‘looks forward to the early fulfilment of this right.’⁶ Since the start of the second Palestinian *intifada* in September 2000, the EU has repeatedly called on both sides in the dispute to do their utmost to prevent an escalation of the violence and to preserve the peace process. Given recent events in the region, it would appear that these appeals, for the time being, are falling on deaf ears.

As is well known, the EU attempted to have itself made a co-sponsor of the 1991 Madrid Middle East Peace Conference. However, this attempt failed and the US and Russia remained the only co-sponsors of the Conference. The EU had to content itself with being labelled as a non-Arab participant, along with countries such as Japan, Canada, Australia and Norway. As *compensation*, the EU chairs the multilateral committee on Regional Economic

⁴ Ginsberg, *ibid*, p. 114.

⁵ Bernard Reich, ‘The United States and Israel: The Nature of a Special Relationship’ in *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment*, (USA: Westview Press, 1996), p. 237.

⁶ Taken from the Europa web page previously listed. See footnote 2.

Cooperation and Development. It could be argued that this is a perfect committee for an organisation such as the EU to chair given its own founding history as purely and simply an economic organisation.

However, it could also be argued that the EU's exclusion from co-sponsoring the Madrid Peace Conference gave rise to jealousy within the EU. In effect, the Europeans were being dismissed as not having a political role to play; a situation which was no doubt frustrating for the EU at a time when it was beginning to develop the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the negotiations for the Maastricht Treaty. Therefore, it can be argued that the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 and the subsequent Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are the Union's response to being excluded from the US-led Madrid Conference and the Middle East Peace Process that stemmed from it.

The Barcelona Declaration itself is divided into three chapters or main objectives and these include both economics and a broader political element. The objectives are as follows:

1. The definition of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue (Political and Security Chapter)
2. The establishment of a zone of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free trade zone (Economic and Financial Chapter)
3. The promotion of understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil and societies through a social, cultural and human partnership (Social, Cultural and Human Chapter)⁷

The first chapter of the Declaration focuses on the political element of any dialogue between the parties. In this chapter, the participants

⁷ European Parliament: Directorate General for Research Working Paper, *The Middle East Peace Process and the European Union*, (Luxembourg: European Parliament, 2000 [Political Series: POLI 115]), p. 26.

‘agree to conduct a strengthened political dialogue at regular intervals, based on observance of essential principles of international law, and reaffirm a number of common objectives in matters of internal and external stability.’⁸ Given the varied views of the participants, both towards the EU and each other, it is surprising that all the parties agreed to hold meetings on some of the sensitive issues that could arise from this chapter of the Declaration.

The second chapter deals with the less controversial and contentious issues of economic and financial partnership. In the course of this chapter, the participants recognise the fact that the best way to ensure the regional peace and stability mentioned in chapter one is to create a ‘sustainable and balanced economic and social development.’⁹ Three instruments were set up to enable this to take place: the establishment of a free trade area; the implementation of economic cooperation; and, finally, there was to be a substantial increase in the EU’s financial assistance to those in the region who were party to the Declaration. A target completion date of 2010 was set for the free trade area. However, any agreements to implement this area will have to comply with WTO rules and, since some may not be members of the WTO yet, this may result in the delayed establishment of the free trade area.

The final chapter of the Barcelona Declaration is, perhaps, the most interesting. Here the parties agree that ‘dialogue and respect between cultures and religions are a necessary precondition for bringing the peoples closer.’¹⁰

The earlier assertion that the Barcelona Declaration is a response to the EU’s exclusion from co-sponsoring the Madrid Conference is somewhat supported by the statement made by the Foreign Affairs Ministers in the preamble to the document. Here they state that:

⁸ Taken from the text of the Barcelona Declaration on the Europa website http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/bd/htm

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

“this Euro-Mediterranean initiative is not intended to replace the other activities and initiatives undertaken in the interests of the peace, stability and development of the region, but that it will contribute to their success. The participants support the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace settlement in the Middle East based on the relevant United Nations Security Council resolution and principles mentioned in the letter of invitation to the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference, including the principle of land for peace, with all that this implies”.¹¹

As previously mentioned, it could be argued that the tone of this preamble reflects a sense of dissatisfaction felt by the EU at the lack of a role attributed to it under the Madrid Conference. This lack of an EU role appeases Israelis as they have come to see the EU as being more pro-Palestinian than pro-Israeli; a sentiment expressed to me during interviews conducted in May of this year in Tel Aviv. The European Commission itself has, in fact, emphasised the fact that the Barcelona Process is designed to be ‘complementary to US political leadership’¹² ; a phrase which appears to acknowledge the leading role played by the US in the MEPP and which also, it could be argued, makes clear the idea that the Barcelona Declaration and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership have been established in order to provide the EU with a role in the region in which the EU is not playing ‘second fiddle to the United States.’¹³ Again, the fact that the EU felt the need to establish its own programme, with political as well as economic aims, brings into focus the fact that there is less unity at the top of the triangle that one might expect.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership spawned by the Barcelona Declaration has two distinct levels. The first of these is a bilateral level where the ‘strategy consists of concluding Euro

¹¹ Taken from the text of the Barcelona Declaration on the Europa website: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/bd/htm

¹² European Commission, *Communication from the Commission: The Role of the European Union in the Peace Process and its Future Assistance to the Middle East*, (Brussels: European Commission, 1998) [COM (97) final], p. 5.

¹³ Ginsberg, *ibid*, p. 105.

Mediterranean Association Agreements between the Union and its twelve Mediterranean partners and in establishing national indicative programmes for financial assistance under the Community's MEDA programme.'¹⁴ However, by 2000, the Commission pointed out in a document called *Reinvigorating the Barcelona Process*, that 'the process of negotiation and ratification of the Association Agreements has been slower than expected.'¹⁵ In some cases, there have been delays of up to four years between the negotiation of these agreements and their eventual ratification and implementation. As the Commission has claimed that progress is being made in the more challenging areas of political and security dialogue, the decisions have been made to proceed with several joint projects in the region, including those in areas such as maritime transport and energy. The EU is also sponsoring programmes which bring Arabs and Israelis together in social situations, as part of the third chapter of the Barcelona Declaration.

Despite these attempts to further ties in the region, even the Commission has noted that its attempts under the Barcelona Declaration and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership have encountered some difficulties. One of these has already been discussed; that of the delays in ratification of Association Agreements. However, the slow progress being made in the Middle East Peace Process itself over recent years, has meant that several issues to be discussed under not only the politics and security chapter, but also the social, cultural and human chapter of the Barcelona Declaration, have suffered similar difficulties. According to the European Commission: 'The spirit of partnership has not led to a sufficiently frank and serious dialogue on issues such as human rights, prevention of terrorism or migration.'¹⁶ However, the EU does not attribute blame solely to the participants. The Commission also acknowledges that it has some role to play in

¹⁴ European Commission, *The Role of the European Union in the Peace Process and its Future Assistance to the Middle East*, p. 6.

¹⁵ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: To Prepare the Fourth Meeting of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers: "Reinvigorating the Barcelona Process"*, (Brussels: European Commission, 2000) [COM (2000) 497 final], p.4.

¹⁶ European Commission, *ibid*, p. 4.

the lack of progress being made on these issues since its human rights policy is described as lacking ‘consistency.’¹⁷ It could be argued that, since the EU itself has failed to present a unified, coherent message to the parties involved, the lack of success is, therefore, not surprising. Further problems exist with the proposed establishment of a free trade area in the region by 2010. Not only is there a difficulty with respect to the WTO, as previously mentioned, but the failure of the countries involved to expand intra-regional trade has also placed the completion date in doubt. Despite the problems faced by the Barcelona Process, it is perhaps worth mentioning one extremely significant achievement of the process in the political field. The Commission point out that ‘despite the ebb and flow of the Middle East Peace Process all partners have participated in the process and it is the only forum where Israel, Syria and Lebanon meet at Ministerial level.’¹⁸ Surely this must be considered as a great political achievement on the part of the European Union.

While the Barcelona Declaration and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are based on economics, they also have a political element attached. The focus of this paper moves to examine the more strictly political aspects of the EU’s involvement in the MEPP. To begin to analyse this issue, one can pose the following question: what does the European Union bring to the Middle East Peace Process? It could be argued that the Union’s role is purely that of a ‘payer not a player.’¹⁹ For example, the EU is only involved in the MEPP to finance the agreements made when the US brokers a deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Again, during interviews, the view was expressed that this should remain solely the case; with the EU maintaining a purely economic involvement in the region and allowing the US to be the only power involved on the political side of the equation. In fact, the view that the EU has a very limited role to play has been outlined by Roy Ginsberg as follows:

¹⁷ European Commission, *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁸ European Commission, *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁹ European Commission, *The Middle East Peace Process and the European Union*, p. 46.

“The EU brought to the score the instruments it plays best: diplomacy and good offices; trade concessions and investment; technical and development expertise; humanitarian and refugee assistance; electoral support; multilateral aid coordination; and bilateral grants and subsidized loans for running costs, infrastructure, and institution-building designed to build the foundations for civil society and conditioned on respect for the rule of law and human rights.”²⁰

However, despite being seen as simply a financing organisation, the European Union has, in fact, had political impact on the MEPP. Although, it can be argued, it is most successful at influencing the Palestinians rather than the Israelis. For example, EU aid agreements with the Palestinian Authority contain an element of conditionality, as is the case with most agreements currently. This has allowed the EU to withhold aid from the Palestinians in order to ensure that the principles agreed to in the Barcelona Declaration and Euro-Mediterranean Partnership processes are adhered to. An example of this would be the EU decision to withhold funding from the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation due to what the EU considered censorship. The conditions attached to aid agreements enable the EU to have political influence over the PA since ‘The EU’s financial aid has been designed first and foremost to prevent the Palestinian economy and society from collapsing, which was seen as a key contribution to peace, even by Israel.’²¹

The European Union has also used its political influence in the region in facilitating the construction of the seaport and airport in Gaza, which allows the PA direct external access for trade. With respect to the EU affecting Israel, the successful conclusion of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Accord in 1995 must be considered. This Accord extends the pre-existing 1975 free trade area that exists between the EU and Israel and has the secondary role of facilitating negotiations between the Israelis and the

²⁰ Ginsberg, p. 106.

²¹ Ginsberg, p. 144.

Palestinians. Perhaps the most significant example of the European Union having political impact on the Middle East Peace Process was its pressuring of the Palestinian Authority in 1999 to delay its planned declaration of statehood until after the imminent Israeli parliamentary elections.

Before moving on to the next section, it is perhaps interesting to note that the Norwegians, in particular their former foreign minister Johan Jorgen Holst, who assisted in brokering the Oslo Accords on which the current Peace Process is based, admitted to using the European Community as the basis for what they were attempting to achieve between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The parallel here is how the European Community transformed the animosity between France and Germany into a successful, interdependent economic relationship. In a speech at Columbia University in 1993, Holst put it as follows: 'We invoked the experience of the European Community in transforming political relations by institutionalizing shared economic endeavour.'²² Perhaps this is another example of the EC/EU having an unexpected involvement with the peace process.

Having examined, somewhat briefly, the involvement of the European Union in the Middle East Peace Process, the focus of this paper now shifts to the other side of the triangle to discuss the involvement of the United States and to examine the differences that can be seen in how it is involved when compared to Europe.

3. The United States and the Middle East

The contrast between the involvement of the European Union and the United States in the region of the Middle East, not just the attempts to solve the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict, could not be more obvious. Throughout the last thirty years or so, the United States has been actively involved in putting forward attempts at politically resolving the Arab-Israeli Conflict. As mentioned in the

²² As quoted in David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accord*, (USA: Westview Press, 1996), p. 15.

previous chapter, the EU, on the other hand, is a more recent actor in this arena and tends to be a more economic actor.

Attempts to achieve peace in the region have been made by successive US presidents, be they Republican or Democrat.

As is well known, the most successful attempt at a peace process in the Middle East began in 1991 during the final year of the George H.W. Bush administration and continued under the two Clinton administrations. It is interesting to note the international environment that prevailed immediately before the beginning of the Middle East Peace Process as it exists today, and during the initial phases of negotiation. Initially the Bush administration faced a situation where large-scale changes were taking place in Eastern Europe following the fall of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communism. Therefore, the administration had 'no long-range strategy plan or specific policies for the Arab-Israeli issue of the Gulf region of the Middle East.'²³ It is also interesting to note that, historically, the Soviet Union had supported the Arabs in the conflict, thereby adding a further element to the situation. Following the end of the Gulf War in 1991, an opportunity presented itself to move forward with a peace process and all sides appeared keen to embrace it.

Much has been written elsewhere about the secret Oslo negotiations that led to the signing in 1993 of the Declaration of Principles and the now-infamous handshake on the White House lawn, and, therefore, it will not be discussed in detail here. However, it is important to point out that these discussions took place without the initial knowledge of the United States. In fact, the new Clinton administration was not informed about the existence of the so-called 'Oslo Channel' until the negotiations were almost finished. At the time, the US believed that the only negotiations between the two sides were taking place in Washington under the auspices of the Madrid Conference. This marks one of the few instances when the US did not take a leading role in furthering attempts at peace in the region. Despite this, however, when it

²³ Reich, p. 241.

came time for the signing of the Declaration, the United States assumed the role of facilitator and the enduring image of Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shaking hands, with Bill Clinton in the background, was born.

Throughout his two terms as President, Bill Clinton actively pursued attempts to achieve a lasting peace in the region. During his first term, he oversaw the successful conclusion of a number of agreements between the parties which allowed for the establishment of the Palestinian Authority that exists today, along with the withdrawal of the Israelis from some of the Occupied Territories. However, as the process moved along, the two sides in the dispute did not always welcome the Americans' actions. In fact, on a number of occasions during both Clinton presidencies, American actions angered the Palestinians leading to a growth in anti-Americanism in the wider Arab world.²⁴ Following the election of Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996, Clinton faced an uphill task as was demonstrated at the 1998 Wye River talks organised by the US. Tension appeared rife between the parties with talk being described as 'constructive and pragmatic'²⁵; a phrase which seems to indicate hostility among the participants.

Clinton made even greater attempts during his second presidency as he appeared to be determined to finally settle the issue before leaving office in January 2001. However, tension was steadily rising in the region, making it more difficult to achieve this aim. In July of 2002, the US organised intensive talks on the peace process which were held at Camp David. The aim of these discussions was to conclude the process that had begun years earlier with the signing of the Declaration of Principles. Despite these attempts, the talks ended in failure. As Bill Clinton left office, the situation between the Israelis and Palestinians had become critical following the start of the second *intifada*. As George Bush took office in

²⁴ Two actions in particular stand out in relation to this. First, the change in US policy to one of support for the construction of settlements in East Jerusalem. Secondly, the decision by Congress to move the US embassy to Jerusalem by 1999.

²⁵ Press Briefing at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/rubin8.htm>

January 2001, peace in the Middle East seemed further away than ever.

The contrast between the policies pursued by Clinton and Bush with respect to the Middle East Peace Process could not be more stark. From the moment he took office, George W. Bush pursued a foreign policy that was far more isolationist than that of his predecessor. However, one must take into account the effect that the terrorist attacks of September the 11th have had on both the United States and the rest of the world. Following the attacks, the United States has become more withdrawn and more focused on its own security than on events happening elsewhere in the world. In fact, President Bush's first year in office was marked by aggressive statements on the Middle East rather than the more conciliatory tone adopted by his predecessor. Some of these differences are not surprising when one considers the political differences between the two men, as well as the climate that existed in the US following the attacks of September 11th. Nevertheless, Bush's attitude was to demand progress rather than facilitate it. This attitude has, no doubt, contributed to the great rise in anti-American sentiment throughout the Arab world over the last four years. In fact, the American invasion of Iraq in March of last year has only further aggravated Arabs throughout the world and made the Americans more unpopular than before. President Bush's focus on the so-called War on Terror, specifically the invasion of Iraq, has, in fact, highlighted differences between the United States and Europe on issues dealing with the region. It has also highlighted differences between EU member states. For example, the split among the European allies has been widely documented, with France and Germany leading the European countries expressing anti-war sentiments. The Americans only received initial support for the invasion from the British and the Spanish; leading to frosty relations between the US and its European allies. It is also interesting to note the American attitude to these countries, especially France.²⁶ In contrast to the positions adopted by most of what US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has called 'old

²⁶ As was widely reported, French products such as wine and cheese were boycotted following the French refusal to support American actions in Iraq.

Europe', the newer NATO member states, many of whom have joined the EU in May of this year, were supportive of the war. This, perhaps, emphasises a shift in US-EU relations away from traditional lines. In many respects, the ill-feeling engendered by the war in Iraq is still present and has seen the previously discussed unity at the top of the triangle become strained, leading to both sides moving forward separately rather than together.

It will be interesting to note what, if any, effect the second Bush presidency will have on this somewhat strained relationship. Will a continuation of the Bush administration lead to continuing disharmony between the European Union and the United States and continued growth in anti-American sentiment in the Arab world? The answer to this question will only become known in time.

Having discussed the involvement of the United States in the wider Middle East, as well as the Middle East Peace Process, this paper will now move on to briefly discuss the Roadmap to peace that was published last year.

4. The Roadmap

The Roadmap to be used in order to achieve peace in the Middle East was finally published by the United States in April of 2003. In the months leading up to its publication, there had been much discussion on exactly when it would appear. It is interesting to note that it was published when the US was in the midst of the Iraq War and at, perhaps, the height of its unpopularity in both the Arab and non-Arab worlds. While officially the Roadmap has been produced by a Quartet consisting of the United States, the United Nations, the European Union and Russia, it has consistently been referred to as the US Roadmap to peace in the Middle East. This again results in the impression that the US alone is driving the process forward and sidelines the existence of other participants; perhaps echoing the events that took place when the Norwegians brokered the Oslo Accords but the US appeared to take the credit.

The Roadmap makes clear that it was 'a performance-based and goal-driven roadmap, with clear phases, timelines, target dates, and

benchmarks aiming at progress through reciprocal steps by the two parties in the political, security, economic, humanitarian, and institution-building fields.²⁷ However, the timeline set throughout the document for the completion of the various stages of the plan immediately appeared unreasonable. By 2005, the document foresees the eventual resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, through a two-state solution. In essence, the Roadmap is based on all previous agreements and initiatives relevant to the region and the conflict. The text of the document specifically states that ‘as a performance-based plan, progress will require and depend upon the good faith efforts of the parties, and their compliance with each of the obligations outlined below.’²⁸ It is difficult to see how any of these aims can be achieved when one considers the current situation in the Middle East. Recent months have seen a rise in violence between the two sides and little attempt at negotiation. In effect, the Roadmap has become a cul-de-sac. Before its publication, it was seen as the best way to move the peace process ahead and, perhaps, achieve the aim of peace and stability in the region. Since its publication more than twelve months ago, there has, in fact, been little or no progress. Violence continues to escalate and neither side appears to want to negotiate an end to the conflict. Dates set out in the plan have passed and the aims have not been achieved.

Despite the failure of the Roadmap to move things forward, it remains the basis on which the peace process is to be moved forward towards completion. During interviews conducted by the author in Tel Aviv, it was pointed out that the Roadmap is impractical since you can not have a performance-based plan with a timetable.

5. Conclusion

During the course of this paper, the aim has been to examine the triangular relationship between the European Union, the United

²⁷ Taken from text of the Roadmap at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062pf.htm>

²⁸ Ibid.

States and the Middle East. This has been achieved by discussing the two sides of the triangle separately and by examining the different roles played by the European Union and the United States with respect to the Middle East Peace Process. Finally, there was a brief discussion of the Roadmap and its vision for resolving the conflict.

In the first section, the important issue of the EU's role in the Middle East Peace Process was examined in some detail. In the course of this examination, it was discovered that the EU still plays a rather more prominent economic role in the region and a somewhat limited political role. Despite the heavy economic pressure of the EU in the region, though mainly as a donor to the Palestinian Authority, there is some evidence to suggest that the EU does have political impact on all parties to the peace process. The only problem is that the greater part of this political impact is not as significant as the EU would wish it to be. Perhaps, as the CFSP becomes a more coherent policy, this will change and the EU will challenge the role of the US in the region.

The second section of the paper discussed the role of the United States in the Middle East Peace Process. As was clearly seen throughout, America has always been strongly pro-Israeli, and that continues to be the case. The Americans are the main outside political force in the region and, over the last ten years - but particularly under the Clinton administration - have put a great deal of effort into attempting to achieve a peaceful political settlement to the conflict. At times, however, the pre-eminence of the US as a political force has caused jealousy in the EU, which has resulted in the EU drawing up its own initiatives. It was also pointed out in this section that recent events over the last 18 months have resulted in growing anti-Americanism in the region as well as tensions between the Americans and the Europeans. This growing anti-US feeling will make any American attempts to move the process forward unpopular among Arabs.

The third section of this paper briefly discussed the Roadmap and pointed out some of the difficulties inherent in this particular

document with respect to finally achieving the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In relation to the issues raised at the outset of the paper, the findings are clear. First, in response to the question about the role played by the EU, it is clear that the main responsibility of the EU to the region is an economic one. Without economic aid from the EU, through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, it is possible that the PA economy would collapse. From this point of view, the EU has a very important role to play. The second question looked at the differences between the actual roles the European Union and the United States play and those they think they should play. Here, it is obvious that the US is playing exactly the role that it wants to play; that of the political leader in the MEPP. The EU, on the other hand, aspires to play a more political role than it currently does. The prospect of that changing has been discussed above.

The final question asked: to what extent is convergence between the EU and the US essential for a settlement to be achieved in the Middle East? It can be argued that there is a need for the two sides to work more closely together to secure a peaceful future for the region. The united top of the triangle mentioned at the beginning of the paper, though somewhat strained considering recent events, must be renewed in order for a successful conclusion to the Middle East Peace Process. It remains to be seen, however, how current and future events will influence this triangle and whether divisions created can be healed such as to allow the parties to work together successfully.