

## US-EU relations, prospects

When in March 1979 George W Ball, a former top US foreign policy maker, attended the funeral of Jean Monnet, he noted that one of the tunes played during the service, along with music from all European Community member states, was the US's Battle Hymn of the Republic. After the ceremony he reports that Monnet's widow was "gleeful" at having slipped the music into the repertoire. Ball recalls that she added "mischievously" that none of the eminent Europeans at the service had realised "what it was about". "The Battle Hymn of the Republic was one of Jean's favorites" she said well aware of the irony that some of the great European's closest links, both in business and in public service, had been with America.

Before the Second World War, Monnet had, as a merchant banker, indeed been involved in arranging US loans to help finance reconstruction in post First World War Europe. During Second World War, Monnet was kept busy helping to secure and transport vital supplies from the US to Europe and North Africa to underpin the Allied war effort. It could be argued that after the war he was instrumental in securing an arrangement between France and Germany which allowed the latter country to play a military role in defending the west against the Soviet Union at a time when the memories of German behaviour in the last war made this difficult for public opinion to stomach.

Indeed it is probably too ambitious to seek to argue that the post war drive to European unity was little more than a US backed arrangement designed to organise the territory behind the cold war front line in political and economic terms. But certainly the US favoured the development of the European Community and its unfailing backing for Turkish membership in the Community would, indeed, suggest that the US, in the cold war years saw EC membership as a useful supplement to membership of the western military alliance.

The cold war has now thankfully been over for more than a decade and both Nato and the European Union, as it is now, are bravely facing a new future with the former finding it difficult at times to clearly define the enemy and the latter struggling to em-

brace a gaggle of former soviet bloc would be members for whom the original institutions of the western European Community were never designed.

In one sense there is an element of continuity in the US approach to the EU. Support for Turkish membership of the Union on the part of the Americans is still strong and now there are indications that Washington would like to see the EU being more welcoming to the Ukraine for similar, strategic reasons.

The EU, I would suggest is still basically seen by the US as an element of political and economic stabilisation on the continent. Viewed from Washington it is basically viewed as an organisation, at times quaint in its approach to social issues, the labour market and farm protection, which allows multinationals to ply their trade safely. Not that there are, and will not in future be, no rows over bananas or genetically modified foods but these are essentially containable within the wider framework.

On defence issues the same would apply. The US, through Nato appears to be committed for the foreseeable future to securing the defence of the continent. At the same time, given the cost and the ever present threat that domestic public opinion might question why such an effort is necessary in peacetime, the US welcomes European attempts to put together a military force which could ease the burden. The present European rapid reaction force which is to be ready to intervene by 2003 in situations where Nato wouldn't or couldn't do so, marks a start. Thus James Rubin a former US State Department spokesman wrote recently in the FT: "European countries are now making their first serious effort to develop effective military capabilities to allow them to act without the US....As part of the US's desire to promote a more equitable sharing of defence burdens, Americans have encouraged this development; and so long as the process does not undermine the overriding security role of the Nato alliance, they must continue to do so."

Rubin goes on to suggest that the new European force could take full responsibility for Kosovo and Bosnia from 2003 onwards allowing the US forces currently stationed there to go home. Thus it would appear that the US views the new European forces as a form of national guard or militia which could be used to intervene when tensions flare locally on the peripheries of an enlarged European Union. Hence the debate over planning staffs. Are they to be a joint operation with Nato or stay separate. The Nice sum-

mit decided to go it alone. But given the overlap in functions, membership and ultimate reliance of the EU forces on Nato capabilities it appears that even in this situation both staffs will work together. Thus US Defence Secretary William Cohen's recent warnings of Nato becoming a "relic" if the rapid reaction force has its own planning staff reflects more a turf war between staff officers rather than a major difference of opinion leading to a permanent rift between Nato and the EU.

To sum up it would appear that the relationship between the US and the EU, will endure for the foreseeable future, despite, at times acrimonious, debates and disputes on security and arms procurement as well as trade policy. This is the impression which is also to be gained from reading Samuel R. Berger's overview of US foreign policy in the latest issue of Foreign Affairs. In truth, relations with the EU scarcely rate a mention apart from an underscoring of the need for the US to maintain a military presence in Europe. Berger echoes Rubin's in expressing support for a 'strong European defence policy which complements, not undermines, a strong transatlantic alliance. But the article shows that the US's concerns lie elsewhere with Russia and China, North Korea, Taiwan and the threats from rogue states which the national missile defence will one day counter. It is a global view in which Europe is merely a part. However bravely Tony Blair may talk in Warsaw of the EU becoming a "super power and not a super state" the US knows that it is destined to remain alone in the "super" league for the foreseeable future.