



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Jean Charles,

Security and European Politican Cooperation

You may recall talk in the plane on the way back from Dublin on 28 April about EPC discussion of security issues. The following background may be helpful.

Under the Single European Act (SEA) the Twelve declared their readiness "to coordinate their positions more closely on the political and economic aspects of security". This restriction on the extent of the coordination was imposed during the negotiation of the SEA, largely because of Irish sensitivities. The formulation we had put forward under our original draft treaty on political cooperation was as follows:

"The member states agree that closer European Cooperation on security matters is an essential component of the effort to develop Europe's external political identity. The aim of such cooperation shall be to maximise the contribution which member states can make to the objectives of the organisations specifically established to guarantee Western security, in particular the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and Western European Union."

The Belgians have now suggested that the SEA restriction should be lifted. There have been other calls for this in the past, notably from the Spaniards, and there will certainly be pressure for it in the debate on institutional reform. The argument for dropping the restriction is made stronger by the clear security component in the CSCE (it is part of the title) and our wish to see the CSCE process greatly strengthened, e.g. in relation to CSBMs, crisis management (conciliation) and arms control more generally.

If the idea of lifting the restriction does pick up steam, the Foreign Secretary believes it would be wrong for us to oppose it. This is because:

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(a) we opposed the restriction in the first place; and

(b) it will be useful, in the institutional reform debate, to have a stock of positive UK proposals: the fact that this one may worry the Irish need not worry us.

EPC discussion of quasi-security issues is already developing usefully, for example on the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear and ballistic missiles, and on the evolution of the CSCE. The Americans are pressing for a stronger US/Twelve dialogue on such issues.

This is not of course to say that EPC should take on any role in the purely military sphere or on the important East/West arms control issues. EPC has no machinery to handle such subjects, and there is no risk of it setting up rival machinery to NATO's. The Foreign Secretary is clear that these subjects are and will remain NATO's territory.

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (MOD) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever, *Richard Gozney*

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