



CRT Briefing on the Reform Treaty – Foreign Affairs

I. Introduction to the Coalition for Reform Treaty

The Coalition for the Reform Treaty (CRT) is a network of organisations and individuals advancing a positive view on the proposed EU Reform Treaty.

The principles of the CRT are as follows:

- The UK and its citizens derive significant benefit from membership of the EU.
- The EU's successful enlargements, which have increased membership from 15 in 2004 to 27 members today, necessitate reform of its institutions.
- The Reform Treaty is in Britain's interests as well as the European Union's because it will lead to more efficient, effective and democratic decision-making.
- Agreement and ratification of the Treaty by all 27 EU Member States will help the Union to focus on the issues that really matter: competitiveness, social and consumer policy, and the EU's role in tackling global challenges such as trade liberalisation and climate change.

The CRT has both individual supporters and member organisations. The member organisations of the CRT are as follows:

- All-party Group on Europe
- Business for New Europe
- Conservative Group for Europe
- Demos
- European League of Economic Cooperation
- European Movement
- Federal Union
- Foreign Policy Centre
- Global Policy Institute
- Jean Monnet Circle
- Jean Monnet Association
- Labour Movement for Europe
- Liberal Democrat European Group
- Policy Network
- Progress
- Weidenfeld Institute for Strategic Dialogue

II. How the Reform Treaty contributes to a more efficient EU foreign policy

The High Representative

1. The High Representative will be essentially a representative and advocate of policies established by national Foreign Ministers. He or she will not have the determinant role in establishing these policies, enjoyed by Foreign Ministers of national governments. Under the Treaty of Lisbon the Common Foreign and Security Policy remains at its core an intergovernmental matter.
2. With the Reform Treaty, the Union's High Representative will have the power to act as chairman of the Foreign Affairs Council, to make proposals to the Foreign Affairs Council and to direct the Union's external action service. In some circumstances the High Representative will also have the right to speak on behalf of the European Union in international fora such as the United Nations. (See paragraph 4.) These are significant administrative changes, which will streamline and increase the efficiency of the external actions of the European Union. The changes are a welcome contrast to the current lack of continuity and focus resulting from the rotating Presidency of the Foreign Affairs Council.
3. Despite his or her simultaneous role as a Vice-President of the European Commission, the High Representative is very much the agent of the national foreign ministers. His or her capacity to be a forceful representative of the European Union on the world stage will very much depend upon the willingness of national foreign ministers to agree on external policies for the European Union. It is national foreign ministers who will appoint, dismiss and instruct the High Representative. The traditionally marginal roles of the European institutions in CFSP, particularly the Parliament and Court of Justice, are reaffirmed by the Reform Treaty.
4. If either France or the United Kingdom, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, do not wish the Union to be represented at the UN on any particular issue by the High Representative, they will always be able to prevent by their veto the adoption of a common European approach to the topic in question. Without a common European approach, there would be nothing for the High Representative to present to the Security Council as a common European position.

The external action service

5. The High Representative will be helped in his increased responsibilities by a "European external action service". Many details remain to be agreed about the precise composition and working methods of the action service, but its potential tasks include providing personnel for Commission representations in third countries; the better co-ordination of existing external policies of the European Union (such as trade, development and environmental policies) and the briefing and support of the High Representative. The new service is a logical administrative consequence of the enhanced co-ordinating and representative role of the High Representative.

Qualified majority voting

6. The Reform Treaty envisages some very limited use of Qualified Majority Voting within the CFSP. The principle of limited QMV in the Common Foreign and Security Policy goes back to

the Maastricht Treaty. The appointment of the High Representative will be by QMV, as will certain administrative questions such as those relating to diplomatic and consular protection measures, and urgent matters such as humanitarian aid. Experience has anyway shown that national ministers usually prefer, even when majority voting is available as a decision-making procedure, to proceed by consensus, with the possibility of majority voting acting as a spur to compromise. This attitude is likely to be particularly pronounced in the predominantly intergovernmental area of the CFSP. The prospect a large member state such as the United Kingdom's finding itself bound on important matters by majority decisions which it finds seriously damaging to its national interests is a highly remote one.

Structured co-operation

7. The Reform Treaty envisages "structured co-operation" regarding military matters between a sub-set of those EU member states enjoying the highest degree of military capacity. This co-operation would take place on an intergovernmental basis, and would be designed to increase the military effectiveness of the member states and their ability to work together on joint European military tasks. Decisions on the membership of the subset would be taken by qualified majority voting. Given the universal recognition throughout the European Union that "structured co-operation" in the area of defence will have no credibility without the full engagement of the United Kingdom, it seems overwhelmingly likely that this new tool will develop in a way which is not only acceptable to the United Kingdom, but clearly reflects its strategic interests.

Conclusions

8. The proposal to merge the positions of EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Commissioner for External Relations into one role, the High Representative, is a logical improvement to the existing, ill-co-ordinated external actions of the EU. A strong EU foreign policy voice when all member states decide to act in common is in the UK's interest, particularly on external-facing issues with a substantial economic dimension such as energy security. The Lisbon treaty makes such a voice more likely, while substantially respecting the autonomy of the Member States in this field.