

RELEASE IN  
PART B6

**From:** sbwhoeop [redacted]  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 19, 2009 11:20 PM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Memo: EU, DC. Sid  
**Attachments:** hrc memo EU etc 111909.docx

B6

CONFIDENTIAL

November 19, 2009

For: Hillary  
 From: Sid  
 Re: EU; NI; This Town

The selection of two non-entities as EU president and foreign secretary continues the EU's tangential existence, but more spectral. Merkel was the decisive figure in plucking Herman Van Rompuy and Baroness Christine Ashton from obscurity in order to make the EU obscure. [redacted]

[redacted] knows Van Rompuy well—the reluctant Belgian premier, eager for retirement before being tapped as consensus builder of the fractured Belgian government, is a slightly distracted intellectual character, who likes to compose haikus (one published about his baldness), familiarly referred to in Belgium as “ET,” his most strongly held belief is opposition to admission of Turkey in the EU. Ashton is described to me by [redacted] as “incredibly nice,” irrelevant and ineffectual. She was not Brown's candidate for the job. He wanted a Brit to have the EU economics portfolio. Ashton was not a consolation prize, but Merkel's pick. In a way, putting her there actually reduces Britain's European influence. She is a large declension from Solana in any case. The center-left had gathered behind D'Alema, but according to the Guardian the Israelis lobbied Merkel against him because they felt he would be sympathetic to the Palestinians. (Apparently Bibi gets a veto on the top officials of the EU.) So Europe blows it. I would treat Westerwelle more or less as the equivalent of the EU foreign secretary.

Met with Shaun, will send you memo on state of things within a day or so.

Welcome back to the new conventional wisdom in Washington—see Elizabeth Drew below. On the one hand it's déjà vu all over again; on the other hand it's more than snobbery and faux naivete. There's something new in this disillusionment: Obama's shortcomings offending This Town's amour propre.