

A strategic look at the position of High Representative and Commission Vice-President

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Theme¹

What is the potential, and which are the shortcomings and possible ways of strengthening the post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs (and Vice-President of the European Commission) in order to improve the efficiency and standing of the EU as a global player?

Summary

Ten years have passed since the creation of the post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the holder of which also acts as Vice-President of the Commission. It was –and remains– an office with great potential for providing Europe with more cohesion, efficiency and influence, both among its neighbours and on the global stage. There have been major achievements in the intervening period, but the three goals established when the post was designed are yet far from being attained. There are still: (a) shortcomings in the coordination of the various foreign policy dimensions undertaken by the EU as an organisation; (b) numerous instances of fragmentation between the latter and individual member states' diplomatic efforts that hamper the business of speaking with a single voice in the world; and, in turn, (c) a limited capacity for inserting the EU effectively into an increasingly competitive and fraught international context, thereby revealing the shortcomings of a European foreign policy model that continues to focus on multilateralism and soft power. To help Europe respond to this threefold challenge it would be convenient to rethink and bolster the post of High Representative. The content and importance of the post are not predetermined, since they depend on two factors: (a) the specific powers assigned to it in relation to the other portfolios in the Commission; and (b) the specific personal influence of the individual who holds it. There is a degree of consensus that neither of its first two occupants were as effective as might have been wished on either count, thereby weakening the EU's external action.

The proposal offered here involves taking advantage of the high political profile of the person nominated to be the High Representative for the 2019-24 legislative term, Josep Borrell, and to combine it with a broadening of his responsibilities as Vice-President of the Commission (as well as some suggestions for improvements in the common foreign

¹ The authors would like to express their gratitude for the very valuable contributions made to this text by three EU officials who prefer to remain anonymous owing to their current responsibilities.

and security policy domain). To secure this, now is the time to strike a sort of grand deal whereby the High Representative would refrain from vying with the future President of the Commission over who has the authority to take the initiative on common policies of international scope and, in exchange, obtain new powers over these and the resources allocated to them. It would be a matter of, in those key foreign policy areas where the commissioners have been acting unconnectedly from the High Representative, starting to accept the coordination of the latter (for example, trade and the foreign dimensions of immigration, climate and technology) and in other areas even taking on direct supervision (development, humanitarian aid and defence). In a world where the great powers combine these activities with strategic logic and foreign policy, the EU cannot hope to present itself as a global actor unless it can ensure coherence across its diplomatic efforts, cooperation, trade, progress in security (where the recently launched [European Defence Fund](#) stands out) and the foreign dimension of innovation and migration policies.

Analysis

Since the end of the Cold War, the EU has taken three strategic lines of approach to further its aspiration of gaining global relevance: (a) pursuing its own foreign policy, one that properly connects the international dimension of the so-called EU pillar –where the Commission takes the lead– with the domain of intergovernmental cooperation on diplomatic and military issues known as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), overseen by the Council; (b) subsuming under a single position (and, if applicable, a single joint course of action too) all the member states' individual positions; and (c) convincing the international community that, despite its obvious idiosyncrasies that differentiate it from a state, the EU is a good deal more than a run-of-the-mill international organisation and, therefore, may be accepted as a participant comparable on certain occasions to the great world powers.

Only the first of these three major goals is the exclusive responsibility of the EU, because the second requires the cooperation of 28 national capitals, while the third relies on the acquiescence of almost 200 sovereign states. Not surprisingly, the progress that has been made over the years is directly proportionate to this scale of difficulty. Indeed, despite the persistent shortcomings that will be examined in more detail below, significant advances have been made in recent years to ensure that the EU's foreign policy as such is better coordinated internally and more active. Considerable headway has also been made in terms of ensuring that the member states and the joint institutions act together (climate change, the agreement with Iran and even sanctions against Russia, to name a few cases in point), although there are still many issues where there is either no unanimity (Israel, the status of Kosovo, recognition of the opposition in Venezuela, etc.) or the loudest European voice does not emanate from Brussels but rather Paris, London or Berlin. Lastly, there is still a very long way to go before securing the third goal, that of ensuring that the EU is viewed as a power capable of shaping international politics. Here it is not simply the fact that there are both failures (the 2010 United Nations vote rejecting the idea of the EU speaking to the General Assembly) and successes (for example, the EU being granted full membership of the G7 and G20, and eventually, in May 2011, being allowed to address the UN General Assembly), but rather that the most recent trends in international relations follow a 'neo-Westphalian' line,

which diverges from the approach hitherto favoured by the EU: one of multilateral governance, free trade and international law.²

So important is it for the EU to improve its role in this increasingly complex (and, in recent times, hostile) setting that it is here where efforts have been made to instigate the main substantive advance in the process towards integration. Following the Single European Act (1986), which ushered in the Internal Market, the Maastricht Treaty (1993), which launched the euro, and the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), which paved the way to the freedom, security and justice area, the great policy contribution of the ill-fated Constitutional Treaty (2004), subsequently reflected in the Lisbon Treaty (2007), comprises external action. It is true that it has been done without the member states making explicit new transfers of sovereignty to the EU, even if the interesting provisions included regarding security and defence are developed, but the institutional innovations that came into force rather more than 10 years ago brought about a significant qualitative change in the vague power arrangements of the CFSP and the international perception of EU policies. The idea (the genesis of which goes back to the 2002 Convention on the Future of Europe) consisted of connecting the two spheres better and hence the decision to formally abandon the notion of pillars, providing the EU with a status as a single legal entity, creating a stable President of the European Council who would share the task of foreign representation with the Commission President and, above all, creating an authentic EU 'Foreign Affairs Minister'.

Although the job title is different, just such a post has existed since 2009: the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who also acts as the Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP). It is a post that effectively amalgamates the duties discharged up to that point by three distinct offices: the High Representative for CFSP (which was created in 1999 and for 10 years was held by Javier Solana), the Commissioner for Foreign Relations and the rotating Presidency of the Council. But it was not simply a case of getting rid of the dysfunctional aspects of the old 'Troika' and uniting in a single figure the former 'Mr CFSP', the coordinator of the EU's international policies in the Commission and the President of the Council in its Foreign Affairs configuration (separated in 2010 from the General Affairs Council, which would continue with a rotating six-monthly presidency). In addition, new competences were given to the HR/VP, notable among which were oversight of his own new and ambitious diplomatic corps, the capacity to initiate and implement CFSP matters and the responsibility of coordinating EU foreign policy as a whole through the strengthening of his status in the College of Commissioners by virtue of becoming its Vice-President.

Ten years have elapsed and, while it is possible to point to a range of achievements and an incipient positioning on the global stage of the EU in its own right, any assessment made of the post following the performance of its first two holders (Catherine Ashton and [Federica Mogherini](#)) reveals a mixed picture attributable to its rather low political profile and, above all, an inappropriate allocation of its responsibilities, particularly in terms of the coordination of the Commission's foreign policy. This is why it makes sense to use Josep Borrell's appointment as the new HR/VP by the European Council to revisit the enormous potential implicit in the post and to place it in the context of the ideas circulating

² See L. Simón (2018), *The Spectre of a Westphalian Europe*, Whitehall Paper, nr 90, Routledge, Abingdon.

at the heart of the institutions regarding how to deal with the way the office fits into the Commission. Moreover, the current juncture (with the organisational jigsaw of the College of Commissioners for the 2019-24 term still being decided) offers a unique window of opportunity, which can be seized to ensure that the post has a wider remit than it has hitherto enjoyed. As the only job on the Commission (apart from the presidency) to be underwritten by treaty and given that the appointment is made before the other commissioners, there is scope for political autonomy that should not be squandered if the goal is to provide the HR/VP with more resources in order to implement more effective foreign policies in an extremely complex context.

Indeed, the contemporary political landscape has become increasingly fraught, characterised by growing competition between the great powers. Specifically, the geopolitical rivalry between the US and China looks set to become the main focal point of international relations in the decades ahead. And episodes such as the recent tariff spat between the Trump Administration and the Xi Jinping regime in China and the US embargo on the Chinese tech company Huawei throw into sharp relief the close interdependence between different parts of political activity, namely trade policy, industrial and technology policy, and foreign and defence policy. If it is to navigate such a world, it is important that the EU understands each of these areas of competition not in isolation but rather within the framework of broader geostrategic competition, one that looks beyond the 'trees' of sectoral policies and sees the 'wood' of global competition. This demonstrates the need for greater integration of any EU policies with an international dimension, ideally under the coordination and supervision of the HR/VP. Meanwhile, an international context characterised by the growing geostrategic rivalry between large blocs further underlines the importance of such key EU policy areas as trade, technology, industry and defence not being determined solely by economic considerations, but that they should also be anchored in a strategic vision of foreign policy.

As mentioned above, the pertinent provision of the EU's regulations since the Treaty of Lisbon came into effect states that the HR/VP shall conduct the CFSP and ensure the consistency of the Union's external action.³ 'External action' is an extremely broad concept. It includes the CFSP, of course, covering diplomacy and issues related to security and defence (CSDP), but also common policies of an external nature such as trade, international cooperation and development, humanitarian aid, enlargement and neighbourhood policies. It should also include the important international aspects of many other policies such as those concerning migration, industry, economy, finance, digitalisation, energy, climate, environment, agriculture, fishing and justice. Bearing in mind the breadth of the EU's action in its entirety, it is evident that in reality the CFSP constitutes a relatively small part of it.

The HR/VP is appointed by the European Council, by qualified majority voting, with the approval of the President of the Commission.⁴ His term of office may only be ended by

³ TEU Article 18.

⁴ Although the extraordinary European Council meeting of 2 July 2019 has nominated Josep Borrell as the next HR/VP, the official appointment has not yet taken place; this will only occur when the European (cont.)

the same procedure. This entails that, politically, the HR/VP is accountable in the first instance to the European Council and the President of the Commission. He is also accountable to the Foreign Affairs Council (which he also chairs) for all matters relating to the execution of the CFSP. The HR/VP has the right to make proposals for the CFSP and as Vice-President contributes to the Commission's unique right of making proposals for EU policies. The European External Action Service (EEAS) assists the HR/VP in all his functions. Bearing all these factors in mind, it is clear that the treaties bestow a key role on the HR/VP, with the potential to be one of the most influential in the EU. He has ample autonomy, various special prerogatives (for example, the right to attend European Council meetings) and abundant administrative resources, notable among which is, of course, leadership of the EEAS, but also the fact that he can count on two Secretary-Generals (Commission and Council) and an 11-member cabinet, almost twice the size of the commissioners' teams.⁵

The problem...

In practice, however, there is a certain perception that the HR/VP plays a somewhat representative and diplomatic role, lacking real power. There are two main reasons for this. The first is the lack of the CFSP's effectiveness, attributable to such deep-seated problems as the complex decision-making structures, the requirement (and culture) of unanimity in the Council, the strategic differences between member states and the major capitals' persistent habit of prioritising their role over that of the EU in many instances. Ten years after the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, Foreign Affairs Ministers still jealously guard their exclusive responsibility for foreign policy and tend to view themselves as principals and the HR as an agent. Nor did it help that the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the main substantial innovation of which was the commitment to a more effective and proactive European foreign policy, coincided with five years of severe economic crisis, which diverted resources and political will to tackle other emergencies.

The second problem, already alluded to, is the insufficient use of the vice-presidential role in the European Commission. Indeed, since the creation of the post in 2010, various of the basic principles mentioned above have been neglected. The first HR/VP (2010-14) devoted her term in office almost exclusively to the CFSP and setting up a diplomatic service as complex as the EEAS from scratch, leaving to one side her role in the common policies overseen by the Commission. The second HR/VP (2014-19) sought to exercise her vice-presidential function better, and certain steps were taken in this regard at the beginning of her term in office,⁶ paving the way to rather more influence over common policies of a foreign nature –except trade– but with very limited say on the international

Parliament gives its blessing to the appointment of the person proposed to preside over the Commission (in principle, the German politician Ursula von der Leyen) and subsequently ratifies the new College of Commissioners.

⁵ For the importance of having access to this wide-ranging team of cabinet members, see L. Simón, I. Molina, E. Lledó & N. Martín (2019), 'Hacia un ecosistema de influencia española en Bruselas', ARI nr 30/2019, Elcano Royal Institute.

⁶ Her office was relocated to the Berlaymont building, next to the other members of the Commission, and the Commissioners' Group on External Action, chaired by the HR/VP, to coordinate foreign policies.

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dimension of the EU's internal policies. At any event, she continued to maintain a distant relationship with the rest of the Commission, with a certain lack of acceptance of her (and the EEAS's) authority at the heart of the institution, and in consequence a prioritisation of the CFSP. The result is that in many of the large political dossiers the Commission frequently side-lined the HR/VP and awarded the visibility and credit to other members of the College,⁷ thereby contributing to the perception of the post's lack of influence.

... and the solution

The 2019-24 Strategic Agenda approved by the European Council prioritises 'promoting European interests and values on a global stage' and to this end being 'more determined and effective in exerting our influence... giving a clearer priority to European economic, political and security interests, leveraging all policies to that end'. This constitutes the first political framework in the new institutional cycle for embarking upon wide-reaching reform, constructed on a twofold foundation: (1) enhancing the stature of the HR as the VP of the Commission; and (2) improving the way the CFSP operates.

(1) Enhancing the stature of the HR as the VP of the Commission

The priority should be to maximise the potential of the HR's role as the Vice-President of the Commission. To do this, it is necessary to have an agreement from the outset between the HR/VP and the Commission President, who has ample powers to organise the structure and working methods of the institution. This agreement should be based on a sort of grand bargain, whereby the HR/VP would more explicitly accept his place in the strategic initiative and the hierarchical authority of his superior in the Commission on a day-to-day basis, including the work of the EEAS. In exchange for this, the President would agree to establish more explicitly the HR/VP's responsibility for coordination in the realm of the Commission's foreign competences and in the foreign aspects of the EU's internal policies, placing at his disposal the services and structures necessary for wielding such authority effectively, including access to the Secretary-General of the Commission.⁸ While this grand bargain would not affect the autonomy of the HR/VP or his special relationship with the Council and the European Council in terms of CFSP and CSDP matters, it would lay the foundations for greater input from the Commission on such questions, thereby underpinning the EU's overall cohesion as an international player.

To bring about this change in the organisational structure it would be worth considering the possibility of creating geographically-focused commissioners for external action, under the hierarchy of the HR/VP and replacing the current thematic posts (enlargement

⁷ For example, the agreement with Turkey on migration (First Vice-President Timmermans), the Paris Agreement (Energy Commissioner Arias Cañete), the European Defence Fund (Vice-President Katainen) and the institutional agreement with Switzerland (Enlargement Commissioner Hahn).

⁸ Especially during the Juncker Commission, the Secretary-General of the Commission has been steadily acquiring power and today constitutes the single lever by which the activity of the entire institution can be controlled.

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and neighbourhood, development and humanitarian aid).⁹ The HR/VP would coordinate their work through project groups, based on the current Commissioners' Group on External Action but with more flexibility and access to internal policies, given that all Commissioners would have as part of their formal mission the responsibility to coordinate their external action with the HR/VP.¹⁰ At the administrative level, the geographical commissioners would be supported not only by the Secretary-General but also working groups coordinated by the EEAS where all the pertinent directorates-general would be included.¹¹

This model would ensure the HR/VP's overall control and coordination role, while removing the burden of travel and management (whether involving attendance at high-level meetings or crisis management), enabling him to focus on strategic dossiers and reduce non-attendance of meetings of the College of Commissioners to a minimum.¹² The HR/VP would effectively have the power to oversee all the EU's policies with an international dimension, facilitating the creation of 'incentive packages', by being able to use in a coherent manner the entire arsenal of diplomatic, economic and other resources (visas, for example) that may be deployed to attain the EU's goals and interests in non-member countries.

In the realm of defence, the HR/VP would be responsible not only for the CSDP (and the Military Committee, which is in charge of all the EU's military missions) but also all the other defence-related policies pursued by the Commission. These policies (such as the European Defence Fund and the Military Mobility policy) fall within the remit of other commissioners, under the Vice-President for Industry Katainen. This is an especially important point, since one of the major threats to the EU's defence is the lack of connection between the its technological-industrial arm and its political-strategic arm. This was brought to the fore when the Commission launched the European Defence

⁹ The Trade Commissioner would be retained in any event, owing to the exclusive nature of this post in the treaties. It is important however to emphasise the hybrid character of this portfolio (which above all affects foreign and industrial policy) and therefore to strengthen its links to the HR/VP. This could be achieved by, for example, making the HR/VP the (co-) chair of a project group on trade policy, replacing the current Commissioners' Group on Trade and Globalisation.

¹⁰ Given that the HR/VP would not have the right to appoint or remove geographical commissioners, it would be important to create the necessary mechanisms to ensure that they would be subject to the HR/VP's authority. One way, already mentioned, would involve creating transversal working groups with representatives from all the Directorates-General (DGs) that have responsibilities in each geographical region (for example, migration, energy, climate for Africa, etc.). This would involve the existing DGs and avoid creating a bureaucratically disruptive structure. Such working groups would be chaired by a geographical commissioner who would in turn come under the hierarchy of the HR/VP.

¹¹ It is worth noting the risk that the creation of geographical commissioners could incur in terms of pigeonholing the UE's foreign policy, particularly bearing in mind the existing connections between the major regions. In order to offset such risks, it would be necessary to ensure an oversight role for the HR/VP and to create the mechanisms needed to guarantee the geographical commissioners' hierarchical inferiority to the HR/VP, whose responsibility it would be to ensure the cohesion of the EU's external action.

¹² Even if the replacement of thematic by geographical commissioners were not to take place (either because it is deemed inappropriate or the continued existence of International Cooperation and Development and Enlargement portfolios, in addition to the Trade portfolio, is deemed indispensable) the role could be created within the EEAS of four or five special envoys for the major regions, thereby reducing the travel burden on the HR/VP.

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Fund, which is set to spend €13 billion between 2021 and 2027 on supporting research projects in the defence domain and co-funding capabilities.¹³ This initiative has revitalised the debate about defence in Europe after years of lethargy. By way of illustration, the money the Commission expects to spend on funding defence research is greater than that earmarked by most member states (with the sole exception of France and Germany). This means that virtually all of them will start to structure their defence R&D policy around the Commission's European Defence Fund. It is important to ensure, however, that the Fund pursues a strategic and not an exclusively industrial or economic approach.

It is true that the EEAS has launched a series of initiatives in recent years geared towards establishing a political-strategic framework that would provide a foundation to the European Defence Fund. Specifically, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) seek to set the parameters of Europe's strategic ambition and stimulate cooperation processes that equip European countries with the capabilities and structures needed to exercise greater strategic autonomy.¹⁴ Such initiatives are of a markedly intergovernmental character however, and their scope raises serious questions, given the persistent discrepancies between member states on issues as fundamental as the role of force in international relations and the threats and geographical areas to be prioritised. Against this background, doubts emerge about the extent to which the Commission's initiatives in the domain of defence industry policy are truly anchored in a strategic-political vision that is coherent and shared by all member states.

The possibility of setting up a Directorate General for Defence in the Commission (and even a Vice-President and Commissioner for Security and Defence) could aggravate this problem, inasmuch as it could pave the way to a situation of dual leadership, with one Vice-President and Commissioner in charge of the technological-industrial aspects of European defence, and another (the HR/VP) in charge of the political-strategic aspects, thereby creating a recipe for institutional rivalry and political disjointedness. The solution to this problem may involve the previously-mentioned grand bargain between the Commission President and the HR/VP, whereby the latter would submit to the political authority of the Commission in the area of defence industry policy in exchange for overseeing the management of the European Defence Fund, as well as the Commission services earmarked for managing it. It would be quite different if the potential new Commissioner for Security and Defence came clearly under the authority of the HR/VP because, in this case, he or she could even be considered to be an assistant high representative in charge of defence, space and cybersecurity, which would give the HR/VP additional oversight of significant budgetary allocations.¹⁵

¹³ See Félix Arteaga & Luis Simón (2019), 'El Fondo Europeo de Defensa y el futuro de la industria española', Elcano Policy Paper, January.

¹⁴ Pedro Serrano (2019), 'The bundle of sticks: a stronger European defence to face global challenges', Working Paper, nr 03/2019, Elcano Royal Institute.

¹⁵ Moreover, greater cohesion between the Commission and the EEAS in the defence realm would facilitate the integration of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in the management of European Defence Fund projects, thereby ensuring a greater strategic orientation in the management of the Fund (given the experience of the EDA in this field) as well as greater overall cohesion in the EU's defence policy.

As a quid pro quo, the HR/VP would need to accept the prospect of giving more space to the Commission, which would be unlikely to give the HR/VP access to its resources without getting something in exchange. Thus, for example, the HR/VP could consult the Commission and seek ratification for his proposals and initiatives prior to submitting them to the Council. In this way, such proposals would have the assurance of the full backing of the Commission and its resources, which in turn would strengthen the HR/VP's position in the Council.

(2) Improving the way the CFSP operates

With all the developments set out in the preceding section, the HR/VP would underpin his coordination role in the Commission's external action, but maintain his autonomy in the CFSP, the latter being something that is underwritten by the treaty. It is also necessary to carry out improvements within the domain of the CFSP, however. Solving the deep-seated problems here is an enormously complex challenge requiring profound and detailed reflection, including perhaps reform of the treaties. There are certain steps that the HR/VP could take almost immediately, however, within the prerogatives the treaty bestows upon him:

- Designing a more functional Foreign Affairs Council. The Council's agenda could be designed in such a way as to discourage grandiose theoretical debates and focus on practical questions of representation, use of financial instruments and other policies such as incentivisation, the planning of joint initiatives with and between member states, the coordination of multilateral negotiations and positions in international bodies, etc. Instead of rambling, inefficient conclusions, the HR/VP could put forward short, structured conclusions, separating declaratory parts from operational parts.
- Encouraging the use of qualified majority voting in the CFSP. Invoking the 'passerelle clause' of the Treaty¹⁶ requires unanimity in the European Council and is, as things currently stand, totally unrealistic. There are, however, parts of the CFSP where qualified majority voting may be used without recourse to this clause, and there is an ever-growing number of capitals interested in extending its use. For example, the HR and the Commission could decide to structure the legal initiatives on sanctions in such a way that the decision to impose sanctions continues to be taken by unanimity, but the names of the people to be sanctioned and the specific economic measures are taken by qualified majority voting.¹⁷ In addition, the HR and the Commission could submit themed or regional strategies for the approval of the European Council, in accordance with TEU article 22.1. Once approved, all the Council's decisions and positions within the framework of these strategies would be by qualified majority voting.¹⁸

¹⁶ TEU Article 31.3 permits the invocation of qualified majority voting in any part of the CFSP except military or defence decisions, if unanimously agreed by the European Council.

¹⁷ TEU Article 31.2, third paragraph.

¹⁸ TEU Article 31.2, first paragraph.

- Reforming the EEAS (which currently has some 140 delegations and some 5,600 bureaucrats) to encourage better administrative organisation and coordination, a less theoretical/academic and geographic approach and a more functional, thematic and horizontal orientation, better capacity for making use of the EU instruments in support of the CFSP, and a more coordinated and strategic use of the EU Delegations as sources of information and agents for the promotion of interests.
- Encouraging coordination with member states' embassies through the EU Delegations in third-party countries.

Conclusions

The post of High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission contains elements of immense value for advancing towards a European external action characterised by greater cohesion, visibility and influence. In its first 10 years of existence however, the holders of the position have largely wasted its potential. Expectations have been thwarted, partly because of problems inherent to the CFSP but above all because its first two holders were not capable of leveraging the rank and the coordinating functions implicit in the fact of also being Vice-President of the Commission. It is therefore a question of the future HR/VP being able to effectively manage and oversee the entire international dimension of the common policies and having access to the Commission's financial instruments and services in key areas with a direct impact on his competences and power.

The treaties and organisational structure of the EU are sufficiently flexible to enable the HR/VP to have direct access to the Commission's instruments. Ultimately this will depend on a political agreement with the new President, which ought to be concluded without delay, before she takes decisions about the structure of the various portfolios; these will create a series of *faits accomplis* and force the HR/VP into a defensive and reactive position.

If an appropriate arrangement of these coordinating functions is achieved, the 2019-24 legislative term currently getting under way will see not only an exponential increase in the influence of the HR/VP but it could also, much more importantly, have a simultaneous and positive impact on the three strategic goals of European external action set out at the start of this analysis: (1) a real (and not simply theoretical) use of the 'two hats' as Vice-President of the Commission and chair of the Council would almost automatically ensure the first goal of the EU itself being better coordinated; (2) greater cohesion between the external work undertaken by both institutions and improvements in the operations of an external service where EU bureaucrats and national diplomats coexist would help to generate dynamics of continuity and trust with the member states, which would reduce and, over the medium term, tend to eliminate the fragmentation of almost 30 foreign policies; and (3) this greater cohesion would bolster the efficacy and visibility of the EU as an international actor.