



Toss a coin to your High Representative

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Álvaro de la Cruz

Over a decade ago, another Spaniard, Javier Solana, held the position of head of European diplomacy which is currently occupied by Josep Borrell. He was famous for his independent approach to the EU's foreign and security policy. He was courageous and effective, a great diplomat and a former NATO secretary general. What often goes unmentioned is that initially there was barely a paragraph in the Amsterdam Treaty describing and delimiting his role. Moreover, for most of his mandate he only represented 15 member states, none of which was a former Communist republic that had been part of the USSR or within its sphere of influence.

Ten years, two high representatives and a Lisbon Treaty later, it is Borrell's turn to be trusted with the EU's top foreign policy job. It is one of the toughest jobs in the entire Union given the member states' different interests and priorities and the fact that unanimous decision-making continues to be the rule in EU foreign policy. Borrell must deal with countries around the world, close neighbour or remote, friend or foe. And to act at full capacity, he has to have unanimity among the 27 member states. He must do this as Europe is under unprecedented enemy pressure, while a virus is striking and immediately after the loss of one of our 'stronger' members, the UK.

Despite these adverse elements, Borrell fights the monsters menacing the EU as the popular Polish fictional character *The Witcher* does in Andrzej Sapkowski's novels. But he is ill-equipped and lacks support. Whether the issue concerns Russia, Cuba, Iran, Venezuela or China, the 'lords' of Europe are divided and often have conflicting interests and priorities. All of this makes our Witcher's fight against the monsters a challenging—if not impossible—one, and forces him to bear the direct criticism of some of these lords, and at best their ignorance. For the inhabitants of the 'Southern Valley', the werewolf

Corresponding author:

Á. de la Cruz, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, 20 Rue du Commerce, 1st floor, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium.

Email: ade@martenscentre.eu



menacing the ‘Northern Rivers’ is not a daily preoccupation. The plague destroying the lands of the ‘East’ is not a concern for the ‘Kingdoms of the West’, or so their masters say.

Recently, the Witcher experienced an especially brutal encounter with the eastern werewolf on its home turf in Moscow, from which he came back somewhat wounded. But the Witcher keeps sharpening his sword, healing his wounds and returning to the fight as duty calls. It is more than probable that he will fail again, especially as we get used to failure and expectations fall lower and lower. We need to forget our prejudices about his ‘kind’, flaws and methods—they have proven unsatisfactory but, after all, the lords themselves created and agreed to them. Let us stand together with him and face the monsters who come to feast on European democracy and flesh.

Our duty, especially within the EU’s Brussels bubble, is to act as the loyal bard who will even garnish and embellish the stories about the Witcher, singing songs to the villagers about his great victories and his protection of the good people of the land, even if that is not always the case. The only way to unite our lords and kings is to unite the people, and boy, when they are united, the Witcher will vanquish every elf, devil and dragon. Until then, they will advance, multiply and thrive in every corner of Europe, growing in power while we debate the colours on our flags and wage internal battles for the control of a bunch of old castles.

So, whenever the high representative comes to your county, forest, village or harbour, toss him a coin and pour him some ale, oh Valley of Plenty!

Author biography



Álvaro de la Cruz is a communications and new media officer at the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.