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Master's Thesis

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CONSTRUCTING THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN
UNION IN THE POST-LISBON ENVIRONMENT:

The Official Discourse of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign
Affairs and Security Policy / Vice President of the Commission

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I have written the Master's thesis independently.

All works and major viewpoints of the other authors, data from other sources of literature and elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Constructing the External Image of the European Union in the Post-Lisbon Environment: The Official Discourse of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice President of the Commission

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MASTER'S THESIS

This thesis aims to demonstrate how the institutional actor of High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission (HR/VP) contributed to the construction of EU's external image during the period of January 2010 to July 2013. In order to deliver the research aim, the theory of Discursive Institutionalism (DI) is introduced along with the methodology of Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) of Critical Discourse Analysis. DRA foresees a three-level analysis guided by HR/VP-set three priorities for her time in office. After analysing semantic aspects of the six themes/concepts, inductively identified from the texts, the discourse analysis shows that the creation and the functioning of the European External Action Service (EEAS), as both a priority and a theme, became a common denominator with which all the remaining five themes and two priorities could be linked. It was depicted as a prerequisite to considerably enhance EU's external performance, in fact it was depicted as an institution which delivers EU foreign policy altogether. Consequently, the relationship between the HR/VP discourse and the institutional practice of external representation is explained through DI theory. Firstly, it is argued that in the HR/VP *communicative discourse* the identified themes/concepts could be taken as the upgraded versions of *role conceptions* (established images of EU's role and performance in international system). They were utilised as discursive tools to refrain from bringing attention to *role prescriptions*, i.e. the still prevalent institutional fragmentation in EU's external policies the HR/VP is aware of while speaking on behalf of the Union. This makes understandable with which means it was possible to construct the EEAS as a

source enabling advancements in the post-Lisbon EU's external conceptions. Secondly, the HR/VP symbolic act of setting three vague priorities in the *communicative discourse* enabled to depict this institutional actor as one of having true discretionary power to set goals for whole EU's external action, which in reality is impossible according to institutional rules. Lastly, in the HR/VP *communicative discourse* links were made between the initially set guiding priorities, the EEAS and the EU's foreign policy. The latter remains a clear discursive attempt to depict an institutionally inexistent phenomenon as something real and tangible. In sum, all the aforesaid allows to better understand how the EU's external image was constructed during the period of interest.

Keywords: HR/VP, discursive institutionalism, dialectical-relational approach, three priorities, six themes/concepts, EEAS, EU external image, EU foreign policy

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	8
1. THEORY AND CONEPTS.....	10
1.1 Theoretical framework “Discursive Institutionalism”.....	10
1.2 The notion of institution.....	13
1.2.1 The institution of the HR/VP.....	14
1.2.2 The functions of HR/VP: function of external representation.....	15
1.3 The role of the HR/VP.....	17
1.4 Discursive Institutionalism & the HR/VP official discourse.....	19
2. METHODOLOGY.....	22
2.1 Dialectical – Relational Approach & the HR/VP official discourse.....	22
2.2 The structure of analysis.....	25
2.2.1 Data collection.....	26
3. DATA ANALYSIS.....	28
3.1 Level I: Text analysis level.....	28
3.1.1 Priority I: <i>‘building a foreign service that raises the EU as a foreign policy actor’</i>	28
3.1.2 Priority II: The Neighbourhood.....	33
3.1.3 Priority III: Work with strategic partners.....	40
3.2 Level II: Discursive level.....	47
3.3 Level III: Institutional practice level – the HR/VP function of external representation.....	51
4. CONCLUSIONS.....	57
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	62
Appendix 1: Priorities, ‘themes/concepts’ and their relations.....	78

Abbreviation list

EEAS	European External Action Service
HR/VP	High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice President of the Commission
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DI	Discursive Institutionalism
DRA	Dialectical – Relational Approach
ICC	International Criminal Court
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Lisbon Treaty renaming of the Treaty Establishing the European Community)

INTRODUCTION

This study is motivated by the growing debates on EU foreign policy which got a new impetus after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty upon which the EU appointed the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy /Vice President of the Commission (HR/VP) as a liaison between the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and other streams of EU's external policies. In addition, the EU created the position of the permanent president of the European Council, and also established the High Representative-led European External Action Service (EEAS) (Aydın-Düzgit 2013: 7). As Aydın-Düzgit's points out, the introduction of these new EU institutions coincided with the rising challenges in EU's Southern Neighbourhood brought along by the so-called Arab Spring events, thus the question of EU's external power has become ever more prevalent and brought further into the spotlight (*Ibid.*). This, in turn, means that studying the topic of EU's external image construction is certainly topical and necessary.

First of all, it has to be noted that the discourse studies on European Union's external relations have become more popular over the years. For instance, authors like Henrik Larsen and Ole Wæver from the so-called Copenhagen school are worth mentioning in this regard. But also when it comes to specifically studying this novel institutional actor of HR/VP and the part it plays in EU's external affairs then also Niklas Helwig's ongoing research is worth bringing out as it very successfully applies the principal-agent theory to examine this institutional actor' in times of crisis. What then this thesis hopes to achieve, is to make a worthwhile contribution to the existing literature on the complex relationship between the European Union institutions and the domain of EU's external affairs. It aims to do so by studying the EU's institutional novelty of HR/VP from the discursive point of view by departing from the theoretical premises of Discursive Institutionalism (DI) and applying the Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) of Critical Discourse Analysis as methodology for tackling the texts.

Consequently, this research aims to demonstrate how the institutional actor of HR/VP contributed to the construction of EU's external image during the period of January 2010 to July 2013. The selection of the period of January 2010 to July 2013 marks on the one hand the approximate start of mandate of the first HR/VP (official starting date 1 December 2009). And on the other, the period reflects the

release of the High Representative-compiled assessment review on the role of the HR/VP and on the functioning of the EEAS. In sum, this period signifies the bulk of the first HR/VP office-holding period as it is about to conclude along with the term in office of the current Commission in 2014 (Council of the European Union, 01.12.2009). The official discourse of the HR/VP institutional actor is chosen as an object of study because through this institution the EU should now have a good medium to better speak in one voice and deliver a unified message at the global arena. This is because the Lisbon Treaty – Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) – granted the HR/VP increased powers to represent the whole Union in respect to its external affairs as the Article 27: 2 of TEU shows. The HR/VP has become responsible for the representational obligations previously handled by the High Representative, the Commissioner for External Relations and the Foreign Minister of the Rotating Presidency (Ashton 29.07.2013).

In order to address the aim of the thesis, following two research questions are posed. What are those characteristic themes/concepts that come up the most in the HR/VP official discourse? How these themes relate to each other, to the High Representative set priorities and to the practice of EU's external representation, i.e. what characterises the EU's external image which was being constructed through the HR/VP official discourse during the period of January 2010 – July 2013?

For answering the research questions an analysis is conducted for which the close infusion of theory and methodology is essential. In this regard Dialectical – Relational Approach as introduced by Norman Fairclough is applied as the methodology. It fits with the theoretical framework of Discursive Institutionalism as it helps to address and analyse in detail the discourse that the institutional actor of HR/VP engages in while carrying out its institutional function of EU's external representation. Thus, DRA becomes handy in situating the relationship between the language and discourse (as produced by the institutional actor) on the one hand and the structures and institutions on the other. This relationship is not mutually reflective, but rather is dialectical, i.e. they are both important at the same time, yet that discursive practice can have an effect on the structure. This point is important in two ways. Firstly, because it makes conceivable that due to the official character of the HR/VP representative function (i.e. speaking on behalf of the whole EU), the person carrying this role is

indeed institutionally constrained in terms of what he/she says. And secondly this point is important because makes theoretically possible to take notice of potential patterns, how through discourse some certain aspects of EU's external relations may not yet be institutional realities but are nevertheless presented or implicitly inculcated in a manner as if they were.

In more practical terms, the Dialectical-Relational Approach foresees passing three levels of analysis (text-level, discursive level and the institutional practice level). The texts which were analysed include HR/VP speeches/addresses, remarks, the statements and the final review. All the texts were withdrawn from the EEAS official website under the subsection of "speeches". The emphasis was set on speeches as they are counted to be sufficiently rich documents in terms of their content when compared to statements or declarations for instance, and can thus better deliver the understanding about the vision/image the EU has been constructing for itself with regard to the domain of its external affairs.

Lastly, after this introduction, the first chapter starts with a section which offers a general introduction to the theoretical framework of Discursive Institutionalism. This is followed by separate sections what clarify the main concepts which play an important part within this theoretical framework. This means being clear about how this research first of all understood the HR/VP as an EU institution. And also, how the person who takes over the functions of this institution (the interest of the present study: the function of external representation), starts to perform a role of the HR/VP. The final section brings those concepts together under the conditions of DI framework. The second chapter introduces the methodology of this study, which follows Norman Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – Dialectical-Relational Approach. After giving a thorough overview about how this approach fits with the theoretical assumptions of DI, it is demonstrated how this methodology is applied in the case of the present research in order to better organise and analyse the selected texts. In addition, this chapter also introduces what was kept in mind when collecting data. In the third part the analysis is conducted, which, as mentioned, according to DRA approach foresees passing three levels (text-level, discursive level and the institutional practice level). The fourth and final part draws together the theory, methodology, puts down the main conclusions and proposes some future research trajectories.

1. THEORY & CONCEPTS

This study is focusing on the European Union (EU). It is interested in one of the most salient institutional advancements brought afore by the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon – the creation of the institutional actor of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP). More particularly, the interest lies in how has the EU’s external image been constructed in the official discourse of the HR/VP institutional actor, who, as a result of the Lisbon Treaty, has unprecedented representative powers to introduce EU’s positions, views and approaches to the outside world. In what follows, the theoretical framework structuring this study – Discursive Institutionalism – is introduced. In the course of it, also the notions of *institution* and *role* are discussed as they constitute important links between the abstract theoretical framework and the specific EU context, which is of interest for the present study.

1.1 Theoretical framework “Discursive Institutionalism”

Discursive institutionalism (DI) as the underlying theoretical framework is often viewed as the newest approach under the social-scientific theory of New Institutionalism. In many respects it emerges from the premises as well as shortfalls of the older versions which all have stated, one way or another, that ‘institutions matter’. This makes it important to first start by briefly introducing some of the key tenets of the older versions of New Institutionalism in general before narrowing the discussion down to DI and its adaptability to the present work. The three older and grounding approaches are: rational choice, historical, and sociological institutionalism.

As the ideas of the rational choice institutionalism advocates go, Elinor Ostrom (1990) and Russell Hardin (1982) amongst others, this approach foresees rational actors with fixed preferences who calculate strategically to maximise their preferences and for whom institutions represent the incentive structures that reduce the uncertainties resulting from the multiplicity of individual preferences and issues (Schmidt 2010: 49).

The essence of historical institutionalism lies in the focusing on institutions as regularised practices with rule-like qualities. This approach also emphasises path-dependencies and continuities on macro-scale structures (*Ibid.*: 50). The third of the

three older New Institutionalisms is named sociological institutionalism. This approach stresses the forms and procedures of organisational life stemming from culturally specific practices, with institutions cast as norms, cognitive frames, and meaning systems that guide human action (*Ibid.*: 51). Yet, none of the three older approaches fit to provide a thorough theoretical foundation as they leave aside the importance of discourses when studying institutions. Therefore, in what follows, the qualities of the Discursive Institutionalism are introduced while also juxtaposing it with the older ones.

Unlike its predecessors, DI sets importance to ideas and discourse in politics and aims to provide a more dynamic approach to institutional change than the older three institutionalisms. Firstly, it defines discourses as interactive processes of conveying ideas, and sees institutions not solely as external-rule-following structures. Rather they are simultaneously structures and constructs internal to agents, whose *background ideational abilities* within a given “meaning context” explain how institutions are created and exist and whose *foreground discursive abilities*, following a “logic of communication,” explain how institutions change or persist (Schmidt 2008: 303). By *background ideational abilities* one should understand agents’ internal capacity to create and maintain institutions. These are similar to what John R. Searle (1995: 140-145) referred to as “background abilities” that encompass human capacities, dispositions, and know-how related to how the world works (Schmidt 2010: 55). On the other hand, for the *foreground discursive abilities* through which sentient agents may change or maintain institutions the most revealing explanation lies in that what Habermas (1996) has called “communicative action” (*Ibid.*: 56).

The second assumption implies that discourse which is seen as an interactive way of conveying ideas comes in two possible forms. First, there is the *coordinative discourse* among policy actors which is at the centre of policy construction. Secondly comes the *communicative discourse* between political actors and the public where individuals and groups are involved in the presentation, deliberation, and legitimisation of political ideas to the general public (Schmidt 2008: 303; 310).

The third tenet is a more general statement about the ontological scope of discursive institutionalism. Namely, DI as introduced and also greatly elaborated further by Vivien A. Schmidt does not make an abrupt argument in favour of DI being a

completely discrete approach of New Institutionalism that cannot be infused with any of the earlier versions. Quite on the contrary:

Discursive institutionalism thus lends new insights into the reconceptualisation of rationalist interests, the reshaping of historical paths, and the reframing of cultural norms. It is a natural progression from the three older new institutionalisms and a progressive development beyond them (Schmidt 2010: 64).

Nevertheless, for scholars aligning themselves with the rational choice institutionalism tradition, the turn to ideas has still remained rather modest, to say the least. This is due to the ontological gap between what the rational choice advocates in general accredit for 'isolated material interests' (separated from subjective ideas) shaping the fixed preferences, and what the constructivist take as one of their core assumptions – that ideas are seen to constitute interests (*Ibid.*: 51-52). Additionally, keeping also in mind the mathematical 'model games' associated with rational choice theorising, and the way the institutions are seen merely as 'neutral structures of incentives' (*Ibid.*), it becomes evident that the constructivist and interpretative approach of the current work is incompatible with such theorising and its corresponding methodological tools.

At the same time, for historical institutionalists the turn to ideas could become more fruitful. It could be so if authors operating under this theoretical tradition are willing to engage in studying the macro-structures and regularised path-dependent practices not only from the point of view that these shape ideas, but also from other way around (*Ibid.*: 53-54). In other words, starting from assumptions that ideas and discourse can also serve to reshape the macro-structures given the longer period of time. From all the preceding institutionalisms, sociological institutionalism is the most compatible to that of the discursive one. They both stress the importance of ideas and discourse concerning the question of norms, cognitive frames, and meaning systems, and the ways in which they are created and changed. Yet as Schmidt elucidates, in what they primarily differ is the way how ideas are treated: either as dynamic constructs (DI) or as static structures in sociological institutionalism (Schmidt 2008: 320). The above discussion should have given by now a compendious overview of DI and its possible intersecting points with the older forms of institutionalism. Yet, before it is possible to focus the discussion on answering the questions of why exactly is DI found as the most

apt theoretical approach according to the needs of the present research, the central concepts of 'institution' and 'role' need to be clarified first.

1.2 The notion of institution

The centrality of the concepts of institution and role within the theoretical framework of Discursive Institutionalism inevitably requires some clarifying discussion and context-dependent situating with regard to how these notions are understood.

To start with the notion of institution, it is first necessary to embed the concept in some preceding theorising. In this place, Robert O. Keohane's more practical discussion on what exactly could be counted for an institution is infused with John R. Searle's insightful specifications about status functions. These definitions are selected amongst others as they adapt well to the assumptions the DI holds with regard to institutions. The very fact that Keohane is counted to be a protagonist of neoliberal institutionalism, and thus belong to the rationalist camp of international relations theorizing, is not of importance at present as his 1988 interpretation of what an institution could be taken for makes the concept applicable for different research programmes and purposes (Keohane 1988: 382) – belong they then to the reflectivist (as the present work) or rationalist camp of social sciences' research.

First of all, Keohane differentiates between institutions as general patterns/categorisations of activity, and institutions as particular human-constructed arrangements formally or informally organised (Keohane 1988: 383). Examples of the first include varied patterns of behaviour such as marriage and religion, sovereign statehood, diplomacy, and neutrality. The second way how to understand institutions is as specific arrangements, i.e. discrete entities, identifiable in space and time, and as having unique life-histories depending on the decisions of particular individuals (*Ibid.*: 383). This is also the approach that the present research adopts. Nevertheless, as Keohane has put it, both of these ways of understanding institutions satisfy the criteria for a broad/overarching definition of institutions: namely that there is a 'persistent set of rules' (formal or informal) that (1) *constrain activity*, (2) *shape expectations*, (3) *prescribe roles* (*Ibid.*: 384).

In addition to Keohane's clear-cut definition of institution, John Searle's specifications add some necessary details. Namely, that the very nature of institutions

being viewed as social constructs/social objects derives from the fact that they are made possible/constituted by preceding social acts. Such social acts require continued human cooperation in the specific forms of recognition, acceptance, and acknowledgement of a *new status*. This new status (be it so that, for example, this new status materialises in the realisation of concrete institution or corporation) is now “in possession of” or “constitutive of” the assigned functions and thus the construct and its functions cannot be viewed separately (Searle 1995: 40-41). In addition, this new status with the constitutive functions could be ‘made official’ by a fiat or declaration whereby status functions now accrue to actually existing people, even though the corporation/institution can retain its identity through changes in the people who occupy the various positions of status functions within it (Searle 2010: 98).

To conclude, the present research-project takes the stance to view the institution as a discrete entity, identifiable in space and time, and as having a unique life-history depending on the decisions of particular individuals (Keohane 1988: 383). Moreover, it views them as specific arrangements having to correspond to persistent set of rules, which constrain activity, shape expectations and prescribe roles to actors (*Ibid.*: 384). And lastly, that institutions as social constructs are created and upheld by ‘patterns of activities’ (agentive functions) which in social reality is nothing more than ongoing commitment to perform certain activities which is essential from the point of view of maintaining a certain institution by its users (Searle 1995: 57).

1.2.1 The institution of the HR/VP

It is time to see whether the HR/VP satisfies the criteria of an institution or more particularly of an institutional actor outlined in the previous paragraph. First of all, it is a discrete entity, identifiable in space and time and has unique life-history depending on the decisions of particular individuals. In brief, the HR/VP could be counted for being a separate entity because of the specifically stipulated functions it is ought to carry out, and because of being assisted and supported in carrying out these respective functions by the EU’s foreign service, the European External Action Service (EEAS) (Article 27:3, TEU). The HR/VP is also identifiable in space and time, and has a life history which is in direct correlation with decisions of individuals. Meaning, it came into being by the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which in itself is a result of the work of EU

member states' officials and experts devising treaty changes to Union's founding documents. As well as it is the consequence of the Member States' legislatures' decision to approve the substantial amendments to founding treaties in the form of ratifying the Lisbon Treaty. Secondly, the institution of HR/VP certainly can be viewed as a specific arrangement having to correspond to persistent set of rules, which constrains activity, shapes expectations and prescribes roles to actors (Keohane 1988: 384) which are all almost one-on-one compatible to the '*background ideational abilities*' of DI. And thirdly, institution retains its status functions despite the changes in the people who are temporarily accrued with those functions (Searle 2010: 98). In other words, who exactly carries out the functions designated for this institution during a certain period of time, whether it is then the incumbent Catherine Ashton or someone else does not make a difference for the existence of this institution with its predetermined functions.

1.2.2 The functions of HR/VP: the function of external representation

The common approaches to this institutional actor have usually concentrated on its double-or triple-hatted specifics. The HR/VP double-hatted role was anticipated already as early as in 2005 when the initially envisioned position of Union's Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Constitutional Treaty was seen as an umbrella institution which shall ensure the necessary consistency and coherence of European foreign policy, which in terms of decision-making has been always happening in the domains of the Commission, the Foreign Affairs Council and European Council (Thym 2005: 17-18).

The person appointed for the HR/VP office by the European Council carries out the representative and administrative function of the Union in questions concerning the CFSP as well as in issues related to external policies in Commission's competence, i.e. acts as a hybrid, connecting external policies of the supranational and intergovernmental realm. The 'triple-hatted' definition on the other hand adds the function of being the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Council of the rotating presidency (Rüger 2011: 210, 289). In short, the competencies of the new High Representative comprise the right of initiative with regard to the development of CFSP, the right of coordination, control and implementation of policies, tasks in crisis management and the responsibility for the

external representation of the Union (*Ibid.*: 212; Eeckhout: 492-494; Gebhard 2011: 122).

As at the centre of attention in the present work is the HR/VP-function of external representation, it becomes appropriate to have a more thorough look on its pre-Lisbon past and post-Lisbon present. Before the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in December 2009, the EU's lack of visibility in the world had become the central issue of concern both in- and outside the EU. In great part it was seen to have been caused by the pre-Lisbon lack of continuity in external representation. It was argued that with the rotating Council presidency there was a change of leadership in the CFSP every six months, which hindered of stable interpersonal relations deemed vital in international politics (Rüger 2011: 204). Back then, the rotating presidency in its Foreign Affairs configuration was assisted by a similar position to that of the present HR/VP, it was called the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and was held for ten years by Javier Solana (Denza 2012: 482). The position was also viewed as necessary to enhance the cooperation between EU Member States in the Council (Nungent 2010: 390). Such necessities resulted in formalisation of the position of Secretary-General of the Council/High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, brought along by the Article 18.3 of the Amsterdam Treaty (Ondejčková 2012: 41).

Against this background it becomes pertinent to present the conclusion made by Carolin Rüger: namely that the abundance of actors, each of whom was to some degree in charge of external representation, prevented the Union from presenting a sharp profile in international relations. Having been previously represented by the troika (mostly in the form of High Representative, the Commissioner for External Relations and the foreign minister of the presidency-in-office, sometimes also complemented with the subsequent presidency), the EU was perceived as an actor with a 'fragmented profile' (Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2002: 259), both internally and from the outside (Rüger 2011: 205).

In post-Lisbon EU political environment the troika system in Union's external representation is substituted with one primary institutional actor, with the HR/VP (*Ibid.*: 214). With regard to the function of external representation, the Lisbon Treaty stipulates the following:

The High Representative shall represent the Union for matters relating to the common foreign and security policy. He shall conduct political dialogue with third parties on the Union's behalf and shall express the Union's position in international organisations and at international conferences (Article 27: 2, TEU)

The speaking is nevertheless also done by the Commission's president (currently José Manuel Barroso) along with the concrete commissioner when it comes to Commission's exclusive competency (in terms of external representation this means EU's trade policy and thus this area of EU's external affairs stays out from the reach of the present work). With respect to development cooperation and humanitarian aid (shared competency according to the TFEU, article 4:4), the speaking can be done either by the HR/VP or the respective commissioner. With regard to CFSP and CSDP, this remains the area where the HR/VP speaks most vocally as institutional actor mandated by Member States. However, this area is also shared with another Lisbon novelty, the European Council President (permanent representative for the body bringing together Member States' heads of state or government) (Wessels 2011: 1). This institutional actor, currently Herman van Rompuy, has the right of identifying the strategic interests and objectives for both CFSP and the external portfolios of the Union) (Vanhoonacker 2011: 81-83,89; Gebhard 2011: 122-123). However, as the HR/VP remains the very interface between the Commission and the Member States (*Ibid*: 122) and can speak on external issues staying on 'different side of the line', it becomes justified to study the official discourse of exactly this institutional actor as it can give the most extensive idea of how the EU has been constructing its external image in the post-Lisbon environment.

1.3 The role of the HR/VP

One of the most known and comprehensive approaches to tackle the question of role comes from the discipline of sociology – the sociological role theory. Authors like George Herbert Mead, John A. Jackson, Bradbury *et al.*, Ernest Goffman are just few of the important names who have discussed over the concept of role in social world. Nevertheless, as Donald S. Searing argues, it is worth keeping in mind that in political science and international studies there does not exist a single general role theory to draw on as to why, when and how certain role phenomena occur. He continues that by what is usually called “role theory” are frameworks of consisting of topics, concepts, and

assumptions (Searing 1991: 1243-44). Despite this, Searing has also pointed out that there are authors in political science studies who could be seen as contributing to an identifiable stream of research on roles, belong they then to the camp of structural, interactional or motivational approach (*Ibid.*: 1244). Also, Alexander Wendt as the leading figure of social constructivism has stopped on the notion of role and called it 'role identity'. According to him 'role identities' are the clearest forms of social identities as they can exist only in relation to others. Moreover, the sharing of expectations on which 'role identities' depend is facilitated by the fact that many roles are institutionalised in social structures that pre-date particular interactions (Wendt 1999: 227).

Nevertheless, given the present quite basic needs to conceptualise 'role' as unambiguously as possible, it is a fair statement to make that Kalevi Holsti's seminal article from 1970, which introduced the role concept to the field of Foreign Policy Analysis (Aggestam 2006: 12) offers most suitable approach to this notion. And although Holsti's focus was on national decision-makers and the ways how they perceived their own nations' place in the world, it is also applicable in EU context, as scholar Lisbeth Aggestam shows. She concedes that the great strength of Holsti's study was the taking of careful account of political reality as it is experienced by the policy-makers, who construct it in a dynamic interaction between rules and reasons (*Ibid.*: 13).

One important aspect in Holsti's work is the distinguishing between different facets of role, and in more particular, between *role prescriptions* and *role conceptions*. His understanding of *role prescriptions* bifurcated. On the one hand he understood these prescriptions as emanating from within cultures, societies, institutions, or groups themselves. Meaning that the position the role-holder has assumed, is made up of all those norms which are thought to apply to a person occupying a given position. And on the other, he approached *role prescriptions* as criteria emanating from external others or environment which implicitly shape the way how an actor in a role thinks he/she should act (*Ibid.*: 238). The current research, nevertheless, addresses *role prescriptions* only as the 'intra-institutional norms and rules' as one set of constitutive elements shaping the role-holder's understanding and expectations about the limits of and freedom to manoeuvre when carrying out a certain role of HR/VP.

The second set of constitutive elements that shape role-holder's understanding of his/her functions are reflected by *role conceptions* (Holsti 1970.: 239-241). When clarifying this concept, Aggestam quite one-on-one takes it over from Holsti and explains that *role conceptions* refer to "images that foreign policy-makers hold concerning the general long-term functions and performance of the EU in the international system" (Aggestam 2006: 19-20). Together *role prescriptions* and *role conceptions* make up role-holder's background knowledge (Holsti 1970: 239).

Lastly, it becomes crucial to demonstrate how this interpretation on the notion of role suits with the theoretical framework of Discursive Institutionalism. By its different pre-assigned functions shaped by norms and rules the HR/VP is most certainly an institution which constrains role-holder's activity and shapes expectations about what is common and allowed in this position and what is not. Under the theory of DI a central importance was designated for the agent who is constrained by *background ideational abilities* (context within which agent thinks, speaks and acts) (Schmidt 2008: 314) when he/she engages in *foreground discursive abilities*. In order to be more specific about what could be understood by this background context, Holsti's and Aggestam's *role prescriptions* and *role conceptions* were seen to be adding necessary and more specific substance to the otherwise quite cursory concept of *background ideational abilities*. And lastly, hereinafter the term 'role-holder' is abandoned. This is so because after having added the specifying aspects from the theoretical approaches to role, found applicable to DI theory, the use of this term becomes disconcerting as it is not utilised under the DI theory nor applied in the specific EU context of the present work. Moreover, henceforth, the 'agent' of DI or specifically the 'institutional actor' is applied when referring to HR/VP.

1.4 Discursive Institutionalism & the HR/VP official discourse

This section is dedicated to explaining why the DI theory is found to be the most suitable for addressing the research aim of the present study. As shown above, the Discursive Institutionalism takes institutions as given and counts important *background ideational abilities* (context within which agent thinks, speaks and acts) and *foreground discursive abilities* (through which sentient agents may change or maintain institutions)

(Schmidt 2008, 2010). As briefly stated in the end of previous section, *role prescriptions* and *role conceptions* are to be taken as the constitutive elements of the *background ideational abilities*. The background ideational abilities should be understood as role prescriptions by the agent in the HR/VP office, who thus becomes institutional actor of HR/VP and is constrained by rules and norms with regard to HR/VP functions/tasks stipulated by the Lisbon Treaty. Yet, this background context also consists of the pre-shaped understandings and practices with regard to upholding and maintaining images of EU's international performance (role conceptions).

In short, in the case of the function of EU's external representation the institutional actor of HR/VP is aware of the fact that while making a statement or giving a speech he/she has to abide to what, how, and under what circumstances had been previously agreed in the Foreign Affairs Council for example. As well he/she has to be also be attentive when speaking on behalf of the Union and touching upon topics which stay in the area of shared competencies between the Council and Commission, this includes the humanitarian aid and development cooperation for instance (Article 4: 4, TFEU; Vanhoonacker 2011: 84). Such attention is also necessary when giving a summary speech about the developments in the field of CFSP in front of European Parliament or when representing the EU in international organisations and at international conferences (*role prescriptions*). Representing the EU externally also means being rather constrained by and thus expected to reinforce the well-established EU's external vision/image of itself (*role conceptions*). A vision which so far has included various denominators such as peaceful regional power, whose global reach is primarily discernible in the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and good governance, and as the key provider of international development and humanitarian aid.

The *foreground discursive abilities* deliver the idea that institutions, although taken as given, are simultaneously also contingent (the result of agents' thoughts, words, and actions) (Schmidt 2008: 314). In institutional contexts the degree up to what the institutions are actually contingent upon foreground discursive abilities depends on how compound and complex is the institution in question. Therefore, it will be taken as a premise that after the HR/VP has defined the potential range of options and strategies for acting, counted as "appropriate" for EU position-taking in external affairs questions, then whenever speaking on behalf of the Union and engaging in foreground discursive

abilities through *communicative discourse* and delivering officially produced documents for both the intra- and extra-EU audiences with regard to EU's external affairs, the HR/VP is thereby simultaneously constructing EU's external image.

To conclude this chapter, the message what the reader should take from here is that the question is not about how the HR/VP-institution might or might not be in the course of changing within the whole EU institutional system as a result of the HR/VP official discourse, especially given the fact that under inquiry in the present work is the bulk of the first operating period of this still new institution (January 2010 – July 2013). But the question is rather how has the EU's external image been constructed through the official discourse of this novel institutional actor, which is the result of this institutional actor carrying out the institutional function of EU's external representation. In other words, how the HR/VP *background ideational abilities* are reflected in the ways how the *foreground discursive abilities* are used and thus the *communicative discourse* produced.

2. METHODOLOGY

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been chosen to carry the methodological purposes of the present research because despite all the versatile approaches it can take, its core interest remains in the problem-oriented studying of social phenomenon as it is constituted through a relatively stable use of language which could then be understood as a discourse (Wodak, Meyer 2009: 6). It is also chosen because most of the critical discourse analysts agree that there needs to be a theoretical foundation which is capable of reconciling sociological and linguistic categories, so the “mediation between the social and the linguistic” becomes possible (Wodak, Weiss 2005: 124-125). And finally, from all the different streams of taught the CDA covers, the present research draws from Norman Fairclough’s approach when analysing the HR/VP speeches/addresses, remarks, few of the statements and the final review. This approach is called Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA).

2.1 Dialectical – Relational Approach & the HR/VP official discourse

On the whole, the chosen methodological approach is compatible with the theory because having texts as the material to work with it helps to better elucidate the complex position of the institutional actor when he/she balances between the *background ideational abilities* and *foreground discursive abilities*, i.e. *communicative discourse*. In short, carrying out the ‘function of external representation’ and delivering it through the *communicative discourse* (in the form of texts) already implies that some type of discourse analysis has to be conducted for tackling the texts and in order to get a better sense how has the discourse been used to construct EU’s external image. Consequently, Norman Fairclough’s Dialectical – Relational Approach was chosen as it includes both the text level description, discursive level interpretation and the institutional practice level explanation (Titscher et al. 2000: 153).

In what follows the core tenets of the DRA are introduced. Firstly, in parallel to texts at discursive dimension run ‘social events’ at social dimension (Fairclough 2003: 23; 2010: 59). ‘Social events’ in principle are nothing more than social actions like, for instance, giving a speech or engaging in conversation, which then are delivered in concrete textual forms at the discursive dimension. Secondly, ‘discursive practice’ is

seen as the intermediate level which mediates between the text *per se* and its social context like social practices (Fairclough 2003: 37) Thirdly, with regard to ‘social structures’ and ‘social practices’, then these are very often interweaved into one element because ‘social practices’ are viewed as ‘intermediate level of structuring’. From here the conclusion is possible that institutions are constituted as ‘networks of social practices’ (Fairclough 2009: 164). And moreover, that the HR/VP function of external representation is equal to the institutional practice at the level of discourse analysis.

Putting the aforesaid to the context of the present thesis, the results are as follows. At the centre of interest emerges then the HR/VP *communicative discourse*, i.e. the discursive dimension of the DRA. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that the texts at the discursive dimension are equal to the ‘social/institutional events’ at the social/institutional dimension. DRA assumptions hold that under the discursive dimension an analysis of a specific discourse has to be carried out at three levels : text level, discursive practice level and at the social/institutional practice level (Fairclough 2010: 59). Thus, at the discursive dimension the texts make up discursive practice which in turn mediates between texts and the ‘institutional practice of external representation’. This all is visualised on the diagram 1 – the upper box marks the area designated for the theory of Discursive Institutionalism, i.e. area which situates and frames the institutional actor of HR/VP and her ‘institutional function of external representation’. Moving downwards on the diagram, all of the following boxes are already part of discourse analysis level, the Dialectical-Relational Approach.

As briefly noted in the beginning of this section, the DRA’s added value is expected to present itself in the following way. It is expected to facilitate the possible pinning down of how the *background ideational abilities* of the HR/VP are maintained when engaging in *communicative discourse* and representing the EU. It is also expected to offer help in taking a better notice of discursive level attempts aiming to neglect the constraining *background ideational abilities (role prescriptions & role conceptions)*, inherent for carrying out the function external representation, and see whether these attempts might have had an effect on the institutional practice (the structure) itself. Especially when of interest is to recognise particular ways how the EU’s external image is constructed in the official discourse during the period of interest.

In sum, the DRA helps to demonstrate the idea that the communicative discourse the HR/VP engages in and thereby represents the EU, is still worth studying as it can show how the EU's image was being constructed during the bulk of the first post-Lisbon period after having streamlined the fragmented nature of EU's external representation by introducing the HR/VP institutional novelty. Yet, at the same time, that this institutional actor, by carrying out that certain function, is very much constrained by the highly institutionalised EU's system (i.e. how the actual decision-making in the area of EU's external action is still divided and not consolidated) and the long-term visions of EU's role in international arena.

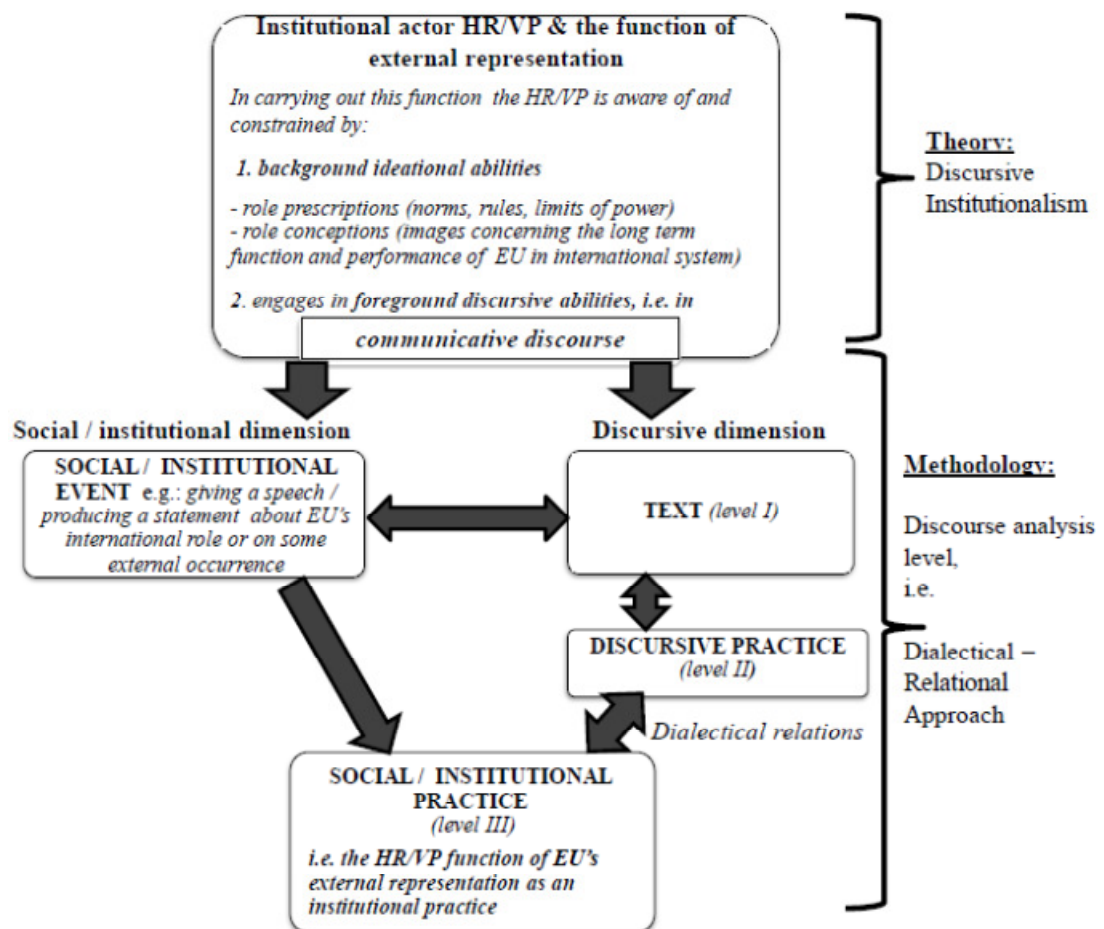


Diagram 1: Dialectical-Relational Approach and the study of High Representative's official discourse in EU's external image construction (compiled by the author)

2.2 The structure of analysis

As described above, in order to tackle the texts and answer the research questions, the three-level discourse analysis of DRA is applied in this work. Level I means doing the actual textual analysis, i.e. the so-called analysis of the ‘internal relations’ of texts (Fairclough 2003: 37). In order to do so, first, the text analysis was structured according to the three guiding HR/VP-formulated priorities for her time in office. These three priorities were chosen as landmarks to organise the empirical data and frame the period of interest, because in themselves they were also part of HR/VP official discourse. These three priorities were:

- I. Building a foreign service (*the External Action Service*) that raises the EU as a foreign policy actor
- II. The neighbourhood (from the Western Balkans, to the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood)
- III. Work with strategic partners – from bi- to multi-lateral relationships (from bilateral trade to tackling global issues at multilateral venues)

Secondly, the pervasive themes/concepts (in analysis referred to as themes) are inductively identified after several times of text-scanning and are found to have been repeated and emphasised the most visibly throughout the three-and-a-half year period; a reference to EU’s role/importance is visible with regard to these themes/concepts; and it is also possible to relate them with one of the three priorities. These themes are numbered in a way that they pervade all the three priorities and not finish and start again with each new priority. This should better capture the continuity between these themes as parts of the wider picture of how the EU’s external image was being constructed. Here, the present project primarily opts for the semantic analysis, looking how the identified themes are conveyed and presented in the HR/VP official discourse, do they seem to carry similar meanings and connotations in different texts and if some certain slogans or particular emphases are applied with regard to these themes/concepts. In the course of the level I analysis, also some of the most representative textual passages are handpicked to better exemplify the delivery of these concrete themes/concepts.

Level II means doing the discursive level analysis and synthesises the most important from the text-analysis and aims to show the intersecting points between the wider priorities and themes. The final, level III analysis makes an effort to handle the

framing priorities and themes/concepts from the wider point of view of the institutional practice of external representation and see what does the HR/VP official discourse (based on the results of the previous analysis) tell about the EU's external image construction during the period of interest.

As a final remark, with regard to level I analysis, it should be borne in mind that due to the multiple topics and approaches that are on EU's external affairs' agenda, and do to the interpretative nature of this work, one of the primary limitation of this work is that most likely if someone else would try to find such pervasive themes/concepts, they could categorise them in a different order or bring out some additional themes that were not found salient enough according to the observations made in this research.

2.2.1 Data collection

Lastly, it is important to explain which documents were used. All the retrieved documents were in English language because majority of the HR/VP utterances in general come first and foremost in English. Although some of the HR/VP documents are also available in French, they are not supplementary to English ones and are just the parallel translations. The idea is to primarily focus on the analysis of HR/VP speeches/addresses and remarks as these are usually longer and more substantial documents in terms of their content when compared to statements or declarations, which despite carrying high formal authority, are low in terms of carrying any wider vision as they usually are the end products of negotiations involving various actors (Hansen 2006, Aydin-Düzgüt 2013) and altogether come in a rather general standardised form. To refer to the ideas of Ruth Wodak and Gilbert Weiss, then speeches should be taken as visionary/speculative utterances on Europe (2004: 235-242). Or as Lene Hansen notes, political speeches entail high political authority, articulating both identities and policies, reaching a wide audience (2006: 82-87). The HR/VP-produced official review on the functioning of EEAS and on the role of HR/VP will be taken as a supportive and closing document of the period under observation. Additionally, as supportive material, nevertheless, some of the statements were also used in as much as they were categorised together with speeches at the EEAS official website under the subsection of "speeches" and helped to support the point made in speeches/addresses, remarks and in review.

What is more, with regard to speeches/addresses and remarks the following should also be borne in mind. As the aim of the present work is to look and analyse how the EU's external image has been constructed during the overwhelming part of the first post-Lisbon period, when the EU has, at least in theory, in place an institution which is responsible for the institutional practice of EU's external representation across different external policy areas, then the aspect whether the speech is given for intra- or extra-EU audiences does not make a difference. Because, communicating the wider vision about EU's role and place in international arena means communicating roughly the same message – the need to move towards certain goals and aims – thus whether it happens in front of the European Parliament on the basic choices and main aspects of CFSP (Helwig, Ivan, Kostanyan 2013: 52) or in the frames of some international conference is not a determinant in the process of image-construction. Remarks are mostly the summarising utterances made in ahead of/after some important international meeting/conference or before/after the formal and also informal Foreign Affairs Council meetings what the HR/VP chairs.

In sum, the first round meant retrieving 201 speeches/addresses, remarks and statements from the official website of the European External Action Service (subsection: the High Representative: speeches). The second round included the scanning and re-scanning of texts and selecting those which made any kind of explicit reference to EU's importance and role in relation to some kind of external occurrence. Moreover, all of the texts that passed for further inquiry included some kind of repetitive themes/concepts which were used throughout the years of interest and which in their relation to some external situation could be allocated under any one of the HR/VP-formulated three priority-areas. This finalised in the outcome that for the final inquiry passed 43 speeches/addresses, 51 remarks, 5 statements and the final review itself (altogether 100 texts). They make up the corpus of texts of this study.

Table 1. Corpus of texts

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Speeches/addresses	9	15	14	5
Remarks	3	19	18	11
Statements	1	1	1	2
Review	0	0	0	1
<i>In sum:</i>	13	35	33	19
				100

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Level I: Text analysis level

3.1.1 Priority I: *'building a foreign service that raises the EU as a foreign policy actor'*

The first priority set by the HR/VP for her time in office – the building of a foreign service that raises the EU as a foreign policy actor – is to be investigated as a theme in its own right. This is due to the fact that it is different from the other two priorities, 'the Neighbourhood' and 'the work with strategic partners', which as broad areas of external engagement comprise various issues and countries under them and in relation to what different prevalent themes arise. Thus, the creation of the EEAS as a theme is approached in two ways: firstly, as a desirable goal, and secondly as means to deliver certain purposes.

Theme 1:

The EEAS as a goal

The first way how the EEAS has been depicted is something as a liaison – something which brings together all the instruments of EU's global engagement: diplomacy, political engagement, development aid, civil and military crisis management tools in support of conflict prevention, peace building, security and stability (Ashton 07.07.2010). Such consolidation (in the form of EEAS) is presented to be a valuable asset for the whole EU as it offers a good and unified platform to project the EU's 'values and interests' (Ashton 08.07.2010), or at another case, 'values and policies' (Ashton 12.06.2013 (1)) internationally. These values and policies, of course, refer to the overarching ideas of promoting and protecting the human rights and democracy which are the guiding principles of EU's foreign policy (Ashton 11.09.2012). How the EEAS as a beneficial goal and desirable outcome is often conveyed in speech, is through stressing the 'citizens' factor'. Namely, as the widely accepted principle holds, the human rights and democracy have to be firstly something internal to a polity before they can be externally promoted. Moreover, each polity's own actions and engagements can be viewed as legitimate and democratic ones only if they have received the popular

identification with the system (Beetham 1991, as paraphrased by Lord 2011: 136). It could be argued that this is why it is often possible to identify linkages which are made between the EU-level external action and EU citizens, seemingly two elements in EU system which are worlds apart from each other. Yet, this is the proof that ‘European citizenry’ as group of people who always needs to be taken care of and protected, remains the ultimate goal driving the creation of the EEAS and main justification factor for any EU action in abroad. Such emphases are visible from the Example 1.

Example 1:

We (*HR/VP institution with all the other EU institutions and Member States*) exist to **serve our citizens** to help them be more secure, more able to pursue the lives they want, to give them the right environment and hopefully prosperity and to help others obtain what we have (Ashton 11.09.2012).

And we all know that results do not happen by themselves or by merely stating our views. They flow from choices we make and actions we take. **So we owe it to our citizens...**that we seize the opportunities that the Lisbon Treaty offers. One of the biggest tasks flowing from the Lisbon Treaty is the creation of the European External Action Service... (Ashton 11.01.2010)

...And that its (*the EEAS*) strength should lie in its ability to respond to what was happening, to any crisis, with a wide range of tools and instruments - short and long term, humanitarian, development, security, political – combining what is often called hard and soft power so that we get lasting security and prosperity. And all this **in the service of the citizens** of Europe (Ashton 13.06.2013).

But besides the citizens and also ordinary people around the world who are the addressees and also the reason for any kind of EU external action, there are other ‘elements’ which are seen to be benefitting from the goal of creating the EEAS. It is further comprehensible from the texts that the main beneficiaries to gain the most from this new impetus in EU’s external policies’ management are the Union’s international partners and the Member States. Linguistically, this is done by explicitly forwarding the wish for the EU being disassociated from the reputation of ‘all words, no action’. For this aim the slogan ‘*once in a generation opportunity*’ has been introduced in order to inculcate the understanding that the EEAS is a path-changing opportunity in the conduction of EU’s external action. In other words the EEAS makes as a change from how the EU’s external policies were conducted pre-Lisbon, and how much better they

could be conducted post-Lisbon if the EEAS is given the chance to prove its added value.

Example 2:

This is a **once-in-a-generation opportunity** to build something that finally brings together all the instruments of our engagement in support of a single political strategy (Ashton 10.03.2010)...The Lisbon Treaty offers precisely the opportunity to build a modern policy for the modern world – moving beyond traditional “diplomacy” (Ashton 25.03.2010)

We wanted to create a 21st-century European service that would tackle the new challenges that we were clearly going to be faced with, to complement the work of national foreign services...That it would seek **to add value by being more than a foreign ministry** – elements of development and defence, security policy, linked together in one (Ashton 13.06.2013).

In EU-literature it is sometimes called the ‘discourse of responsibility’ (Bretherton, Vogler 2006: 162), the responsibility to keep the EU as an up-to-date mechanism for actually coping with new arising global challenges and not only talking about how to tackle them, i.e. *‘making sure our words are backed up by actions to give the non-Europeans a reliable partner’* (Ashton 11.01.2010). This is visible when, for instance, trying to deliver the message that Europe, i.e. the EU, must be able to show it is united and has a strong position to take forward in the Syrian question (Ashton 27.05.2013). EU’s active wish to contribute to the possible resolution of the Syrian crisis has been tried to be presented through examples how the EU is one of the principals leading different UN initiations aiming to help the Syrian people and targeting the Syrian regime (Ashton 13.12.2011(3)). Thus, the emphasis is on depicting the EU’s true endeavour to become a more result- and delivery-oriented international actor through raising inter-institutional effectiveness by aligning all the different external relations instruments and services under the common roof of EEAS and guidance of the HR/VP.

The EEAS as means

When the first way of looking at the EEAS was more about looking the EEAS as a goal in its own right and looking at who benefits from it, then the second has more to do with

specifically foregrounding the potential core area(s) where this consolidated service under the leadership of the HR/VP could become an important asset for the EU increasing its status as a discrete international actor. The following examples can already give a rather good idea about the main areas where the EEAS could foreground EU's importance.

Example 3:

We (*the European Union*) continue to play a key role in the resolution of these conflicts, by co-chairing the Geneva talks and participating in the "5+2" negotiations on Transnistria...The EU supports confidence building measures to help this process. Beyond this, the European Union's main contribution to **conflict settlement** is to provide **long term perspectives** for the region by supporting democratisation and economic integration (Ashton 06.12.2012).

We are turning comprehensive approach into comprehensive action. The EEAS is uniquely placed for this. We can join up all EU instruments and cover **conflict prevention, development and conflict resolution**. We are putting this to full use in the Horn of Africa and in Southern Neighbourhood (Ashton 13.12.2011(1), cf. 11.05.2011).

Thus, this means looking the EEAS as means to achieve some certain type of ends. These ends mean being active and successful at the core area of international conflict prevention and resolution (Ashton 27.09.2011(1); cf. 07.09.2012, 08.09.2012). For instance in the beginning of the Libyan crisis the swift exchange of information and the effective planning of the evacuation of the European citizens from conflict-zones, which all happened under the EEAS coordinating framework, is also supportive example in this regard. This is because it simultaneously acts as a practical proof of the added value the EEAS brings, which until the beginning of 2011, until it fully became operational, was only a theoretical promise (Ashton 09.03.2011(1)). As such, the domain of conflict prevention and resolution is quite explicitly linked to the idea of serving of European citizens, which, as discussed above, viewed the European citizens as one group of addressees benefitting from the creation of EEAS. But also the Libyan people themselves are envisioned as to gain from EU's conflict prevention and resolution approach, as through the opened EEAS delegation they supposedly have thereby a guarantee of having EU's support present for a long-term perspective (Ashton 22.05.2011, cf. 23.05.2011(2)).

But moreover, the ‘EEAS as means’ is also to be understood as a step forward in creating a more coherent and consistent EU foreign policy (Ashton 19.01.2011(1)). Although what exactly is meant by EU’s foreign policy and not just different types of EU’s external action – firstly the CFSP, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) which are subject to Member States unanimity, then the development and humanitarian aid policies as signifiers for shared competencies between the Member States and the Commission and finally the enlargement and neighbourhood policy under Commission’s guidance – stayed obscure during the first two years of HR/VP office-holding, i.e. the years 2010, 2011. In 2012, although not still having specified what is exactly meant by EU’s foreign policy, there is already a clear reference visible that it is something that is to be associated with EU as a whole. In other words, the mentioning of different decision-making and policy-implementation procedures inherent to different spheres of EU’s external action is avoided and the automatic “our” is applied to forward the idea as if there is something as an overarching EU foreign policy: “on how effective our foreign policy is now that the European External Action Service is just over a year old.” (Ashton 09.03.2012(1), cf. 10.03.2012). And then, in 2013, there are already explicit trials to define what is meant by EU’s foreign policy and again it is the EEAS as a medium which is there to deliver it (Ashton 12.06.2013 (1)).

Example 4:

As the Service has been established the key elements of EU foreign policy have become clearer. At the beginning of the mandate the HR/VP set out three priorities: (a) establishing the Service; (b) the neighbourhood; and (c) strategic partners. **Three main elements of EU foreign policy** have emerged from the first two years of operation of the service: the neighbourhood, comprehensive approach, the EU’s collective weight (Ashton 29.07.2013).

Thus, in 2013 the High Representative already announces that three main elements of EU’s foreign policy have emerged: the neighbourhood, the comprehensive approach and critical mass. Thereby leaving an impression as if the mere existence and operating of the service, plus the HR/VP initially set priorities, were sufficient grounds for having made possible developing something which could be understood as EU foreign policy.

3.1.2 Priority II: the Neighbourhood

To start analysing the themes categorised under this priority, some preliminary remarks are necessary. Firstly, as is known, the second priority is a very broad one, the focus ranges from the Western Balkans (countries which are greatly subject to future EU membership status), to the Southern and Eastern Neighbourhoods (countries without EU membership offer). Nevertheless, the aim here is not about addressing the specifics of EU's relations with many of those countries individually, but rather about identifying what substantial themes/concepts are those that have been at the forefront of HR/VP attention when it comes to the questions what have to do with the EU's neighbourhood. What, nevertheless, characterises this broad priority in its totality is High Representative's often made statement that the EU's international credibility is in direct correlation with how the EU interacts and how effective it is with its immediate neighbourhood (Ashton 11.01.2010; Ashton 17.05.2011; Ashton 08.05.2013).

Theme 2: 'Deep democracy'

This is a notion which is extremely visible throughout the whole period of inquiry. It is a concept that the present HR/VP clearly sees as her contribution and a part of her legacy. Nevertheless, there are other circling slogans, concepts and programmatic platforms which are often associated with the notion of '*deep democracy*' like: the golden rule of more for more; the economics meets politics; the three Ms – Money, Market Access, Mobility (Ashton 12.03.2011); and Task Force (Ashton 13.12.2011(1)).

Based on text analysis, it seems that on the pure surface level of texts the concept '*deep democracy*' (Ashton 29.04.2013) is meant to be associated with both of the EU's Southern and Eastern Neighbourhoods. However, due to the concurrence of the first HR/VP time in office and the wave of revolutionary Arab Spring events in Northern African countries, the use of this concept in the HR/VP official discourse nevertheless seems to be more closely related to the Southern Neighbourhood countries, primarily with Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, but also to some of the Middle Eastern countries like Bahrain for instance (Ashton 06.06.2011; Ashton 20.06.2011(1); Ashton 20.06.2011(2)) and less to the Eastern Neighbourhood. And finally, it is not something which finds mentioning with regard to Western Balkans countries.

Example 5:

We have a common interest in supporting the countries that are moving to what I have described as **deep democracy**, countries like Tunisia and Egypt where old regimes have been swept aside (Ashton 06.06.2011).

I was extremely pleased with the positive response to the new European Neighbourhood Policy. The council welcomed the creation of the Task Force for the Southern Mediterranean...You know that I have talked often about the need for us to make sure that we see **deep and sustainable democracy in the neighbourhood** (Ashton 20.06.2011(2)).

Last May, I set out here my vision for North Africa and the Middle East – **a vision of deep-rooted democracy**, and the benefits of the development which will come with it...My priority is delivery...Success should translate into what I have called "**deep Democracy** (Ashton 27.09.2011 (1)).

In the case of Southern Neighbourhood countries, it is fair to say that behind this concept lie also several specific agendas with concrete financial and technical instruments available, which act as catalysts for encouraging these countries to go through democratic transitions and restore economic and investor confidence (Ashton 14.11.2012). This is the case, for example, with the 'Three Ms' initiatives and Tunisian, Egyptian and Jordan Task Force initiatives (Ashton 02.03.2012; cf. 15.10.2012, 13.11.2012). Thus by 'deep democracy' EU's involvement is both about promoting the disinterested values as practical solutions of how to help these countries to move towards viable democratic governance as well as it is about EU's own economic interests, which is conceivable from the emphasis on restoring investor confidence (Ashton 13.03.2013(2)). Thus, the slogan '*economics meets politics*' comes to the picture, which nevertheless is also used in other parts of the world where the EU supports democratic transitions, like in Iraq for instance (Ashton 11.05.2012).

Example 6:

...because we need good, economically strong neighbours with whom we can trade, we need growing markets for our own goods and **we need strong economies that can sell us the things that we need** (Ashton 10.02.2012).

In the case of the Eastern Neighbours, on the other hand, the concept is used, for instance, when referring to the Eastern Partnership Programme, an approach outgrown

from the European Neighbourhood Policy. Moreover, in the case of the Eastern neighbours, an associated slogan to achieving '*deep democracy*' is the '*more for more*' approach (Ashton 27.11.2011), which in principle is nothing new. It means the EU's idea of applying more conditionality to its actions, linking them closely to eastern partners' domestic reforms, and in the case of successful accomplishment, offering more political, economic benefits (Ashton 03.03.2011). Thus, it is to concede that at least in the case of Eastern Neighbourhood it is not possible to say that the notions of '*deep and sustainable democracy*' and '*more for more*' (Ashton 27.09.2011 (2)) are something that actually add something new to the way how the EU already has been constructing its image in that region.

Therefore, it is possible to argue that in the case of Eastern neighbours this concept is used in a rather cursory manner when compared to the Southern Neighbours. Because these were exactly the revolutionary events of Arab Spring in the countries of Northern Africa, which instigated the coining of the concept in the first place and thus made the using of the term more credible in their case, as it was a part of EU's attempt to formulate its own leverage to possibly guarantee itself a future say in how the countries in the Southern Neighbourhood start to build up their countries in post-crisis environments. And although the exact timing and conditions of coining this concept shift – from 2010 to 2011 and from speaking to a young man to young woman in the middle of fighting in Benghazi – it would still be fair to say that an important aspect of creating EU's external image during this period is the EU's serious trial to engage in the Northern African events by promoting the notion of '*deep democracy*'. However, it would be interesting to see whether in the official discourse the relationship between the Southern and Eastern Neighbourhoods has been possibly reversed, and thus this concept's emphasis shifted in favour of the Eastern Neighbourhood, in the light of the recent revolutionary events unfolding in Ukraine since the end of 2013 until present, i.e. spring 2014.

Thus, it is time to ask what is exactly meant by '*deep democracy*'? To start opening up the meaning of this concept, it is first illustrative to have a look at some of the excerpts from HR/VP communications where a clear reference is made to the origins behind coining the term. In fact, the sentences which start by "*we want...*" seem

to be used by the HR/VP often as means to reinforce the EU's image as an appealing centre of attraction (including in the assessment review).

Example 7:

In Benghazi, a young man, imprisoned by Gaddafi for 8 years, said to me: "We want what you have: democracy as everyday life..." (Ashton 06.07.2011(1)).

In the middle of the fighting in Libya I was in Benghazi meeting with a group of people from civil society and a young woman said to me: "**We want what you've got.** You have democracy and freedom every day, that's what we want, but we need your help to get it because it's more **than just finishing this fighting.**" And I coined the phrase "**deep democracy**" from that conversation (Ashton 09.03.2012(2)).

One of the ambitions I encounter most frequently when I meet people struggling for justice and democracy is: "**We want the same freedoms as you:** please help us to achieve them" (Ashton 29.07.2013).

The HR/VP herself explains this term by using contrasting, i.e. saying what it is not. As such it is opposed to 'surface democracy' which is defined as the mere possibility of people casting their votes on the election-day. Moreover, the '*surface democracy*' will not survive if the '*deep democracy*' fails to take root (Ashton 11.05.2011, cf. 01.07.2011). In other occasions as well, she defines the notion in a rather clear-cut manner, whilst also not forgetting EU's role of being the one who secures the 'deep democracy'. This is done by often already automatically taken emphasis on the pronoun "we", we as the EU.

Example 8:

The approach will vary from country to country. But what will be common is the need **to secure deep democracy**, and not just initial free elections. We need to help build up impartial administration, an independent judiciary, freedom of speech, enforceable property rights and free trade unions (Ashton 25.02.2011)

Directly connected to '*deep democracy*' nevertheless, and what has been used simultaneously with this concept, is the often used justification and slogan '*it is their country, not ours*'. This seems to have been added every time that the EU's involvement in helping to secure '*deep democracy*' is mentioned. It serves the purpose of not leaving an impression of the EU as someone who imposes its ideas of democracy, human rights

or the rule of law. On the contrary, that EU is about attracting and not imposing, in sum that the EU respects each country's sovereignty. The HR/VP specifically brings out that without any reasonable ground the EU is sometimes accused of trying to "export" the so-called European values, but then she straightforwardly opposes such accusations by saying that free speech, freedom of assembly, justice and equality are not European right, but that they are universal (Ashton 28.02.2011(1), cf. 09.03.2011(3)). In another speech the idea is repeated, when saying that the EU is not there to impose its ways of democracy, but to support countries who want to move to democracy (Ashton 25.02.2011, cf. 10.03.2011). Emphasis seems to be on the aspect that democratic transitions have to be home-grown, yet, what the EU can do is to be creative and determined when asked for help, yet not to be there to dictate outcomes (Ashton 09.03.2011(1)). The same was repeated to former Egyptian democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi: "Democracy and freedom are built from inside, not imported from abroad...We can help but only you can do it." (Ashton 19.07.2012). And moreover, another important argument that flows from the HR/VP utterances is that as much as the EU cannot impose anything to sovereign countries, as much it also cannot isolate every government that fails to live up the principles of liberal democracy because then it would face accusations of political imperialism (Ashton 25.02.2011). Distancing the Union from dictating the countries of EU's Southern Neighbourhood which future paths to choose, the HR/VP has nevertheless stressed that the EU's response to the happening in these countries has deliberately been comprehensive, designed to strengthen their move towards deep democracy, if this, of course, is the way these countries themselves want to go (Ashton 13.06.2013).

Theme 3: Human rights

Human rights with their varying thematic emphases have naturally always been high on the EU's agenda. From stressing the importance of human rights in their different forms in its economic and political partnerships with its international partners as different as China (Ashton 13.03.2013 (3)) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (Ashton 16.11.2012), to having them more strategically infused with the EU's distribution of financial and technical assistance for the countries raged by civil wars or other internal conflicts, like is often the case with the Sahel region countries in the African continent

(Ashton 19.01.2011(2)). Nevertheless, it seems that with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the creation of the institutional actor of the HR/VP and her led service, the EEAS, there has been a strong ‘new coming’ in terms of the attention that has been given to human rights and their strategic centrality within all areas of EU’s external action. In terms of language use, this centrality of human rights is illustrated by often repeated figure of speech ‘*silver thread that runs through everything the EU does externally*’ (Ashton 16.06.2010, cf. 28.02.2011(2), 23.05.2011(2), 24.01.2013)

Already back in 2010 it was possible to identify in HR/VP speeches that while it was acknowledged that that human rights are universal, the ‘one size fits all’ approach does not work. Instead, it was argued, that the EU should get smarter in how it delivers the message about the importance of human rights (Ashton 15.12.2010). Getting smarter was to be achieved through special tailor-made country-strategies on human rights, which were envisaged to be driven by the locally made recommendations. In order to receive such information about the current state of human rights in some certain country, the importance of the network of the back then 116 EU delegations (i.e. the EEAS delegations) was emphasised, which had one or two human rights focal points within their political or cooperation section (Ashton 13.12.2011(2)).

Another example of how the EU is already doing smart and right moves in promoting human rights is associated with the international cooperation under the framework of International Criminal Court (ICC), an organisation dealing with international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression. More precisely, in exchange for strengthened cooperation with the EU, the partner country, for instance the Seychelles, was advised to submit the Rome Statute of the ICC for the ratification in its parliament (Ashton 16.06.2010). This advice received swift reaction from the Seychelles and only some months later, by August 2010, Ashton already contentedly conceded in the official statement that the Seychelles had ratified the Rome Statute (Ashton 12.08.2010). Since then, this approach of stressing the significance of increasing international accountability and fight against impunity has had a successful take:

Example 9:

The EU has the power to **promote human rights** through its engagement by placing countries and regimes on a range that runs from engagement to isolation...So far, the

EU has signed three bilateral agreements including ICC clauses; it has initialled another three; and it is negotiating another three. The EU has also included ICC clauses in many of its ENP Action Plans (Ashton 17.04.2012).

The year 2011 witnessed the wider review process for the whole EU's human rights' policy. At the centre of it was the HR/VP idea to start introducing the approach to take up the rest of the crucial human rights topics in a similar manner as has been already done with regard to supporting the work of ICC and the international promotion of the abolition of death penalty, i.e. "...use thematic campaigns to deliver specific cross-cutting themes...I believe this approach can be extended, for example, to promote the rights of women, by setting realistic, time limited, achievable, objectives" (Ashton 13.12.2011(2)). Throughout the following years and against the background of the events of the Arab Spring, women's rights indeed emerged as one of the most addressed themes under the wider theme block of human rights.

Example 10:

...the faith of **women's rights** in a sense dictates the fate of the future of the Arab spring (Ashton 19.03.2012)...And I believe that **gender equality** is an essential component of building democracy. And I am determined that the support of the European Union should focus on civil society and **women's rights** (Ashton 12.11.2011).

I was really pleased that we saw the successful adoption of conclusions at the recent 57th session of the UN commission on the **status of women**. Some countries tried to water down the unconditional condemnation of violence against women through appeals to – domestic traditions, laws and cultures. It was the tireless work of **our EU delegations** that was largely responsible for the defeat of those attempts (Ashton 12.06.2013 (2))

Like many, I've been extremely impressed by the **role of the women** of Afghanistan...Their message was very clear: help us to preserve what we've achieved in very difficult circumstances and to build further on those achievements. I can assure you, Mr. President, that **we will continue to support them** (Ashton 05.12.2011, cf. 13.06.2012)

In sum, the agenda of human rights is a vast one it ranges from promoting the freedom of speech and assembly, the abolition of capital sentence, the rights of religious, ethnic and sexual minorities and the freedom of press to the protecting of the

fundamental rights in the cyber space, if to name some of the most outstanding fields. Yet what could be concluded is that primarily because of the turbulent events in its Southern Neighbourhood, the issue of women's rights has not left the limelight ever since the start of the uprisings in Northern African, and also in some of Middle Eastern countries. Moreover, there are many other countries and regions around the world whose record on protecting women, their rights and participation in society is poor (Ashton 23.05.2013). Yet, it seems that such programmatic or campaign-like approach has become this intensively stressed exactly in relation to the Arab Spring events and because EU can deliver its message at one voice in international organisations like the UN (Ashton 06.07.2011(2)).

3.1.3 Priority III: work with strategic partners

The third broad priority which was set by the HR/VP for 2010 and beyond was the work with strategic partners. The work with strategic partners involves both the bilateral relationships as well as cooperation in multilateral venues like different international organisations and forums. The work with strategic partners primarily includes countries like the U.S., Russia, Japan, Canada, China, India, Brazil (e.g. Ashton 07.02.2012) but also Mexico, South Africa and Indonesia (Ashton 01.02.2012(1)) to name the main ones, and organisations such as the UN, NATO (cooperation in Somalia, e.g. Ashton 07.11.2012, cf. 23.03.2012(2)), Council of Europe, OSCE, Gulf Cooperation Council, African Union etc.

With the strategic partners the goal is rather clear, they are above all the main partners with whom to trade and do business with. But they are also the counterparts with whom to cooperate and create partnerships in order to face, seek solutions to and tackle the emerging global challenges. The "objects of interest" for EU's cooperation with its strategic partners include grand issues of global scope, from non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, human rights and combating maritime piracy to energy and climate change issues. These are issue-areas where the EU is also most certainly active on its own, yet where the biggest desirable impact can only be achieved through international cooperation. However, as was the case with the Neighbourhood priority, also here the aim is not to focus on bi-or multilateral relations *per se*, but on the substantive and

repetitive themes/concepts which have been noticed in the official discourse of the HR/VP.

Theme 4: *‘Comprehensive Approach’*

It could be argued that the concept *‘Comprehensive Approach’* runs at two parallel levels. First, it runs at the international level where by ‘comprehensive’ the EU’s cooperation with its strategic partners is meant, both bi-and multilaterally, for the purposes of joining up forces in crisis management and peace building (Ashton 20.06.2011(2), cf. 02.02.2013). At the EU-level this concept refers exactly to the levers that the Union has been able to converge from different EU external action related units in the Council and Commission and from Member States (Ashton 22.05.2013) thanks to the Lisbon Treaty offered innovations. These tools are primarily various instruments of conflict prevention and instruments of development and conflict resolution, and they make it possible to link the aspects of security, development and human rights in EU’s external engagement (Ashton 04.05.2010; cf. 13.12.2011(2), 01.02.2013, 31.01.2012). What is more, with regard to the *‘Comprehensive Approach’*, often the following strong slogan is used to better deliver the underlying idea of this concept. It is done by contrasting the quality of EU’s past international engagement against its possible future, i.e.: *“To tackle not only the symptoms but also the underlying causes of a crisis situation”* (Ashton 12.06.2013(1)). In other words, it is envisioned that the creation of EEAS brings a substantial change what enables the EU to start acting as a fully-fledged international player. The collected excerpts from HR/VP speeches in front of European Parliament and from the conference in Spain are illustrative in this regard:

Example 11:

The real point is that all these issues (*various global threats and challenges*) are inter-linked. That is why we need **comprehensive strategies**. So we must have a system that promotes comprehensive strategies and joined-up action – not where, as today, we try to work comprehensively despite our system. As important: **by making right kind of linkages between different policy areas we can build up European leverage**. If you tackle issues in isolation and develop policies in stand-alone silos you will have less international influence (Ashton 23.03.2010).

For years, we have been trying to frame and implement **comprehensive strategies**. But **the structures and systems we had, made this difficult**. With the Lisbon Treaty and the EEAS we should be able to achieve this (Ashton 10.03.2010).

I've already spoken about the **EU's comprehensive approach**...One of the best examples is the work we are doing in the Horn of Africa, our engagement in fighting piracy. When I took over my role, the EU response to this threat was fragmented. We had a **naval mission** to protect the World Food Program and catch pirates off the Horn of Africa, but this was **not linked** into our development policy, to our rule of law strategy or any kind of work in the region. **We were dealing with a symptom, but not with the underlying causes** (Ashton 13.06.2013, cf. 23.03.2012(1))

As the last quote elucidates, an issue where the underlying idea of EU's comprehensive approach becomes the clearest is the international cooperation in tackling the maritime piracy, especially in the Horn of Africa (Ashton 26.09.2012). It is an issue which has almost always been accentuated during the three-and-a-half year period when talking about 'comprehensive approach'. As the maritime transportation routes and thus commercial interests of many European and Asian countries are affected by the piracy-threat deriving from the countries in the Horn of Africa, primarily from Somalia, the most successful results are expected to grow out of the international cooperation with the EU's strategic partners as well as with the regional powers from the African continent, like with South Africa (Ashton 24.08.2012) for instance. What the HR/VP stresses, is that the EU's new '*Comprehensive Approach*', understood primarily as intra-EU strategic planning or the process of organising thorough programmes through which it is possible to contribute to tackling different international multilayered problems, makes the EU a more worthwhile partner for its international counterparts in Asia and elsewhere (Ashton 23.06.2010, cf. 01.06.2013). It is argued that such improved EU capacity to act can contribute to achieving global security and prosperity and is to be directly associated with the Lisbon Treaty which made it possible to combine hard and soft power (Ashton 01.06.2013). In addition, with new international crises arising, there is also a call to apply '*Comprehensive approach*' in EU's Southern Neighbourhood, in both North and South Sudan (Ashton 20.06.2011(2)), in Mali and other countries in Northern Africa which stay in the Sahel area (Ashton

13.02.2013), for this ever more important becomes EU's pooling and sharing of defence capabilities (Ashton 08.05.2013).

Example 12:

But to be more effective in addressing the security challenges we face...we need to make sure that we use them as part of a joined-up strategic approach to crises and threats. And that means bringing all of the different aspects of EU action together in what I call the **Comprehensive Approach** – something which only the European Union as a whole can do, and something which I believe makes us an effective foreign and security partner for our allies such as the United States of America. (Ashton 08.05.2013)

However, it is interesting to note that besides the Somali case, where EU's implementation of 'comprehensive approach' is quite explicitly described, it is not so in the case of the other examples that have been named above. Thus it could still be argued that, at least at the level of speeches/addresses, remarks and statements, the general idea of how this concept is to be applied in other parts of the world does not come out clearly.

Theme 5: Mediation / negotiation

What else is detectable in the many of texts is that there seems to be a noticeable emphasis on moving further in increasing EU's visibility as an international mediator/negotiator. Thus, the argument could be made that the current HR/VP has definitely been trying to establish the image of EU as an appreciated international mediator and partner in different phases of conflict resolution.

A good example in this regard is the Middle East Peace Process, which has got rather much High Representative's attention in her different utterances since the beginning of her time in this position. In 2010 speech to the League of Arab States an ambitious goal was heralded for the EU to develop closer relationships with key actors for Israel-Palestine negotiated settlement, including the US and reinvigorated Quartet, in order to get the Peace Process moving from conflict management to conflict resolution (Ashton 15.03.2010). Moreover, in the HR/VP 2011 utterances it is possible to notice the emphasis on depicting the EU as having moved from 'payer to player' and that the Union is the more and more starting to take on the leading role in negotiating

settlement to the Israel-Palestine conflict (Ashton 06.07.2011(1); cf. 13.02.2013, 27.06.2013). Along with it, the HR/VP has often stressed the EU's suitability and also preparedness for engaging in mediation and negotiation, which in turn has been directly linked to her vision about the EEAS, a service with a conflict prevention and resolution focus. It is possible to conclude from here that the current HR/VP sees her position as perfectly equipped one to engage in international negotiations on behalf of the EU and in this way gaining the Union more international leverage. As a successful example to this, High representative's own experience from working with different stakeholders in the Israel-Palestine conflict is brought afore. According to the HR/VP words, her endeavours were important for improving EU's position in the Middle East Process negotiations as the example shows.

Example 13:

I have visited the region 7 times this year, each time with a single purpose – to promote a negotiated settlement of the conflict and to **demonstrate the importance of Europe's role**...I have worked with quartet envoys, with the Arab League and been in discussion with the Prime Minister of Israel and President of the Palestinian Authority together with Prime Minister Fayyad.

It is clear, honourable members that **these efforts have succeeded** in demonstrating **the EU role - a player and a payer**. Our financial commitment matched by our political strength - For too long the EU has been on the sidelines of the Peace Process. I have worked to achieve a greater EU role as I believe we are ideally placed as a friend of both parties (Ashton 27.09.2011 (1)).

And finally, the other two supportive examples the present High Representative often uses when referring to EU's growing importance in the domain of conflict resolution, are the ones of facilitating the Iranian nuclear issue (Ashton 22.03.2011, cf. 09.03.2011(4), 01.02.2012(3)) and the Kosovo-Serbia facilitated dialogue (Ashton 26.05.2011). Stopping longer on the latter, it most certainly could be counted as a successful example of the incumbent High Representative's endeavour to convey and inculcate the EU's image as a serious international mediator, especially given the complexity in Kosovo-Serbia relations and the prejudices with regard to this facilitation attempt actually succeeding.

Example 14:

I am personally committed to facilitating the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina to normalise their relations in order to secure the European future of both (Ashton 06.12.2012)...I mentioned that **we have been involved in the Serbia-Kosovo Dialogue**. It has been a privilege to facilitate the dialogue between the Prime Ministers of both. I was told it couldn't be done, **but we did it** (Ashton 13.06.2013).

Thus, the EU's offer to facilitate this dialogue (Ashton 10.09.2010) and the reaching of agreement between the two adversaries most certainly is a gain for EU's international reputation. As the above example showed, through the HR/VP professional gain (by equating the actors "I" and "we"), the EU was presented as a 'winner' in this situation against all the odds and the sceptics' opinions.

Theme 6: Development and humanitarian aid

This theme, as was the case also with the theme of human rights, is most certainly a part of the well-known EU's international agenda. It is presented under the priority of "work with strategic partners" because development and humanitarian aid are seen as essential parts of how the EU engages internationally. And more specifically, it is exactly the development aid through which the EU has earned itself an estimable reputation as the world's leading donor (Ashton 07.07.2010).

Example 15:

In 2010, we gave collectively €53,8 billion for Official Development Assistance. This is 57% of total development assistance from all donors of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee. In other words, **we are by far the biggest donor in the world** (Ashton 23.05.2011(1)).

...in 2012 we collectively (*the EU as a whole, i.e. the Commission's and Member States resources combined*) decreased aid. So I have asked Ministers, as I regularly do, to do their best to live up to the EU's commitments. It makes a huge difference in the poorest countries **but also supports our role in leadership and our credibility in what we do** (Ashton 28.05.2013).

But also the humanitarian assistance remains the top priority in EU's activity, especially in cases of overt crises situations like the one in Syria (Ashton 13.03.2013(1));

cf. 22.05.2013) or like the continuously insecure situation in the Gaza strip (Ashton 12.06.2012). The previous theme of HR/VP stressing the EU's vantage position suitable for increasing its role as a renowned negotiator/mediator, especially the example of becoming more involved actor in the Israeli-Palestine conflict, is also pertinent here. This is the case because of EU's leading role as a development and humanitarian aid provider in the region, which the Union sees as a justified reason to also gain more political leverage in the process of finding solution to this perennial conflict. Following examples are used in this regard: *'EU as the largest single donor to the UN agency working with refugees'* (Ashton 15.03.2010); *'EU as the largest contributor to the Palestinians'* (Ashton 09.03.2011(2), cf. 08.02.2011); *'EU's role as instrumental to the Palestinian institution building'* (Ashton 13.04.2011). Besides Palestine there are, of course, other instances like Somalia where the EU's role as top donor for development and reconstruction is often stressed (Ashton 07.10.2010), or Pakistan, where the EU is the largest humanitarian donor (Ashton 05.06.2012).

Another aspect which could be linked to EU's development and humanitarian aid is the often repeated emphasis that the EU is not engaging in actions just for the sake of seeking headlines. For instance, an example can be brought from 2010 when the devastating earthquake hit Haiti:

Example 16:

The **EU has responded quickly, not seeking headlines**, but with a total focus on getting to the people in need. On advice from the UN I resisted the urge to travel to Haiti immediately – that would have only diverted attention and scarce resources away from the relief effort (Ashton 19.01.2010).

But also in 2011, when giving a speech in front of the European Parliament on the main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP and CDSP, the incumbent HR/VP yet again conceded that the EU must not act only when the media's attention is on any of its target countries or on the Union itself. This argument held that in doing so, the EU would fail in helping those countries who are in need of assistance to successfully complete their journeys towards democracy (Ashton 11.05.2011). Furthermore, in 2013 while giving a speech at economic forum in Spain, the High Representative stated the following:

Example 17:

People say lots of things about the EU. But one of the things they do say is that **we work for the long term**, that we are partners who stay and ensure that we work continuously (Ashton 13.06.2013).

To sum up this last theme, it is fair to conclude that development and humanitarian aid remain the benchmarks through which it is continuously possible to measure and thereby also emphasise EU's international significance. Yet, if accusations emerge towards EU and its inadequacy in providing swift reactions to some international happenings (contrary to EU's own vision about its sanctions enabling the Union to react rapidly to political challenges and developments, e.g. Ashton 01.02.2012(2)), then one way how to rebuff the criticism is through foregrounding the idea that the EU is always acting and engaged, yet it does not have to constantly prove it to media or uninvolved third parties. This is so, because the Union primarily acts on long-term basis through well deliberated calculations how to allocate development aid instruments (Ashton 28.04.2012, cf. 30.04.2012).

3.2 Level II: Discursive level

As already briefly introduced under the part of methodology, the second step of analysis is to bring all the indentified themes together and demonstrate how they relate to each other and the wider priorities. This is summed up by eight following points and illustrated by appendix 1.

1. The priorities themselves are different in terms of their preciseness or generality and the angle from where they approach the wide agenda of EU's external relations. The current High Representative said in the beginning of her time in office that the EU must always be able to deal with issues that arise, yet that it is also important to decide what is it that the EU really wants to achieve, thus that given the particular amount of time to serve Europe, it is important to be clear about the priorities that she sees crucial. Despite this prioritization ambition, in the end these priorities obtained their actual content only on *ad hoc* basis as they were set to be too loose for having any firm future vision to keep to. As a result the priorities themselves and also the themes/concepts categorised under them are very closely connectable to each other.

'Building of the foreign service that raises the EU as a foreign policy actor (i.e. the EEAS)' with its two main streams (as a goal and as means) emerges as the clearest and the most precise priority and also a theme. This is so as it is an operational priority, i.e. creating/founding something as a clear-cut goal, compared to the other two priorities which could basically cover themes/concepts ranging from EU's tools and mediums aimed to tackle arising problems ('work with strategic partners') to the issue-areas or problematic regions themselves ('the Neighbourhood'). Moreover, the creation and then the functioning of the EEAS was, in general, viewed as central for the enhanced conduction of EU's external relations. As a priority and also as a separate theme it became something with which basically all the other five themes/concepts under the rest of the two priorities could be linked. The EEAS was depicted as the underlying foundation and in a way a prerequisite for making the advancements under other two priorities possible.

2. *'The EEAS as a possible goal for EU citizens'* is connected with the idea of *'the EEAS as means to raise EU's importance in conflict prevention and resolution'*. This is because a part of contributing to crises prevention means having enhanced circulation of information and coordination within the EEAS about countries and territories of the world so that in case of emerging conflict situations, the EU's citizens are evacuated swiftly and safely. Such examples have been brought out in the case of Libyan crisis of 2011 for instance. Thus the often heralded expression of EU doing everything, including creating the EEAS, because "it owes it to its citizens" has some practical backing up and as such it is also a way how the Member States can cut the expenses and pool the resources by working together on the ground through EEAS and its delegations' coordination.

3. The creation of *'the EEAS as means through which contribute to conflict resolution by providing long-term perspectives'* is also directly linked to the theme *'development and humanitarian aid'*. This is because EU's short term humanitarian instruments are usually followed by long term engagements through development aid and all this is done by working on long-term basis, through being engaged continuously and not, as often stressed by the EU "seeking solely the media outlines". Thus, as such, the emphasis on the principle of EU's long-term basis engagement is often also used in

order to rebuff criticism on EU's invisibility and slowness in reacting promptly and visibly to various international crises.

4. The creation of '*the EEAS as means to prevent and resolve conflict*' is directly related to the concept of '*comprehensive approach*'. This is so because the biggest benefit of the EEAS is demonstrated to lie in the consolidation of all the EU's external action related instruments under the roof of EEAS which could be applied effectively to tackle international multi-layered crises, like the maritime piracy threat emerging from Somalia. This idea is often delivered through the slogan "To tackle not only the symptoms but also the underlying causes of a crisis situation" in order to contrast the Union's approaches in pre- and post-Lisbon periods. As a concept, the 'comprehensive approach' should be viewed as the common denominator for linking the pooling and sharing of Member States defence capabilities, humanitarian and development aid instruments from both the Commission and Member States with wider human rights' country strategies, along with mediation and negotiation efforts if necessary. And lastly, such multi-layered approach is to be directly associated with the creation of EEAS, a service which combines elements of foreign, development and defence ministries (Ashton 01.06.2013) and has a conflict prevention and resolution focus. Moreover, designing 'comprehensive approaches' at the EU level also means being a more worthwhile and reliable partner to its *international strategic partners*, primarily US, China, India, with whom the Union works in close cooperation, which in itself was one of the HR/VP initial priorities.

5. It is also noticeable from the HR/VP official discourse that the institutional actor HR/VP and the EEAS are depicted as utile mediums for the EU to engage more profoundly in international and regional *mediation/negotiation*, through which the Union could effectively raise its international leverage and reputation. Thus here the priority II 'the Neighbourhood' and the priority III 'work with strategic partners' come together as the mediation/negotiation does not only mean working together with international partners, and negotiating of Middle East Peace Process or mediating and working on Iran's nuclear issue. Good example of regional facilitation in its Neighbourhood, and thus also of EU's increased capabilities as a negotiator, is the Serbia (EU candidate status) – Kosovo (potential to become EU candidate in the future) dialogue, led by the HR/VP and her team from the EEAS. By that example, the added

value of the High Representative's own position and of its supporting service is demonstrated also in the domain which otherwise belongs to the supervision of the Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. And finally, as the mediation and negotiation are concrete phases of conflict resolution, this theme too is well linked to *EEAS as service with conflict prevention and settlement approach*.

6. '*Deep democracy*' is quite explicitly related to the Neighbourhood priority, more primarily with Southern Neighbourhood, as the concept's origins derive directly from the events of the Arab Spring. This is partially a philosophical and partially a practical concept. It is rich with examples of how the Southern Neighbourhood countries see the EU as a model for true democracy (i.e. the often used sentence "we want what you have...democracy and freedom every day") as opposed to the mere surface democracy of just casting your vote on the election-day. In parallel to heralding this notion also other known visions of EU are reinforced. Namely, the one which stresses that EU is "not about imposing but attracting", and at the same time that the EU cannot quit communicating with countries which have not chosen the path of liberal democracy ("It is their country, not ours"). Yet at the same time, this on the surface level philosophical theme can be also linked to the '*comprehensive approach*' and thus to the '*conflict resolution and settlement approach of EEAS*'. This is because the Neighbourhood countries are also offered concrete long-term multi-approach programmes to move towards the '*deep democracy*' if these countries themselves have demonstrated their will and dedication to do so. The practical incentives are programmes like primarily the "three Ms – Money, Market, Mobility" and "Task Force initiatives". The neighbourhood in its totality is referred to as highly important for the EU not only because of the necessity to increase the regional security and have friendly and likeminded states around EU's borders, but also to prove EU's international credibility (Ashton 10.03.2010). In other words, EU's ability to have an impact on its possible new members' and other neighbouring countries' political and economic future scenarios as well as on the post-conflict transition processes, means that the Union can be counted as successful in proving its deserved place next to other big international actors.

7. But also the *Human Rights* as a theme which has always been high on EU's agenda, is depicted as being in the process of "getting smarter" in taking up the most

effective approaches to better deliver EU's expectations in this domain. Theme 'human rights' is also closely related to the concept of helping to build 'deep democracy' in the Southern Neighbourhood countries. In respect to the promotion of women's rights, especially the problematic conditions of these rights in many of the revolution-raddled Northern African countries, the often proclaimed ideas implied for the need to take a campaign-like approach on them. Thus, similarly to as has been already done with the promotion of abolition of death penalty throughout many years. Or through economic incentives like has been the case through promoting the signing of the Rome Statute of the ICC. Yet again, also here the *creation of the EEAS* has seen as the crucial prerequisite for such approach to succeed. This is so because getting the "human rights run like silver thread through everything the EU engages in externally" means having special tailor-made country-strategies on human rights, which in turn are to be received through the human rights focal points in each of the EEAS delegation situated around the globe.

8. And finally, the EEAS became also depicted as means to deliver EU's foreign policy. Because as became clear from the HR/VP utterances, three elements of EU's foreign policy had emerged in the course of two and a half year functioning of the EEAS. Furthermore, these three elements of EU's foreign policy seem to have gotten their impetus exactly from the initially set three priorities.

3.3 Level III: Institutional practice level – the HR/VP function of external representation

Firstly, when speaking on behalf of the EU and engaging in *communicative discourse*, the HR/VP quite freely moved between various issue-areas which belong to different institutional traditions of EU policy-making and implementation. From certain thematic topics, like the variety of human rights issues and democratic governance promotion, to the concrete regions/wider politico-geographical territories as places where different types of problems converge (political, economic, human rights or security related) and for which different methods of EU engagement become necessary. Thus, it could be argued that what made the manoeuvring between such all-encompassing topics rather easy, was that agent's *role conceptions* supported and reinforced agent's *role prescriptions* (together make up *background ideational abilities* according to the theory

of Discursive Institutionalism) while trying to convey a favourable external image for the EU.

To look more closely: what is eventually spoken/written by the HR/VP has been decided upon before at the political level, be they then reflected in either more visionary utterances like speeches or declarations and statements. Thus, the topics about what the HR/VP speaks are beforehand settled either by Member States in Foreign Affairs Council and in the Defence Ministers' Council (especially in respect to the aspects related to EU's civilian missions or questions which have to do with humanitarian or development aid, but are more political in nature) or there is a certainty within the Commission's respective domains how some issue on humanitarian/development aid financing, enlargement or on the Neighbourhood Policy should be communicated to the public. Therefore, these intra-EU institutional procedures, existent in the domain of EU's external action, make up the institutional constraints, *role prescriptions* (Holsti 1970: 238) that the HR/VP institutional actor has to acknowledge while speaking on behalf of the EU and representing the whole of EU's external action (Tomic 2013:6, Wessels 2011: 11-12).

Role conceptions, long-term images about the function and performance of the EU in international system (Aggestam 2006:19-20), on the other hand, could be viewed as facilitating tools which at the discourse level help the HR/VP to introduce some new themes/concepts or approaches, yet which in reality often mean using the common and well-known images of the EU in international arena in their situation-specific adaptations. This is an effective discursive tool, helping to avoid talking about EU's external policies in their specifics, which would in great part be admitting that at the institutional decision-making and policy implementation level not that much changed after Lisbon Treaty entered into force, especially when EU's enhanced international role needs to be proved and backed up by evidence for various extra-EU publics. The post-Lisbon examples of such use of role conceptions are, for instance, '*deep democracy*' and its associated economic initiatives – basically equivalents to applying conditionality in turn for EU's economic/technical assistance. Then, emphasis on having introduced more strategic approaches to promoting human rights than was the case in pre-Lisbon times, or stressing how the EU's international leverage is growing as it continues to be the world's biggest donor for development and humanitarian aid. If to add also the EU's

improved position as a negotiator after having cleared out the external representation question, plus the pooling and sharing of Member States defence capabilities, and putting it all in the service of aiming to solve certain multilayered global or regional challenges, it becomes already conceivable what is meant by much-heralded ‘comprehensive approach’.

In sum, viewing of *role prescriptions & role conceptions* as mutually reinforcing becomes justified as it helps to understand how through the discourse the EU is constructed as of having become more advanced in how it engages externally than it actually has become in reality as a result of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. However, what should not be neglected is that most likely the reinforcement of already known images of EU ‘in their new updated looks’ has managed to be this successful because simultaneously there was a practical, material example to prove this, i.e. the EEAS. Although in reality it is more of an autonomous establishment which carries rather the coordination functions than something which should be taken equal to the actual EU’s foreign ministry as often alluded through means of mass media.

Secondly, these themes/concepts which were inductively identified from the texts and underwent first text- and then discursive level analysis could be rather easily categorised under any of the wider priorities and not just under the one they seemed to fit best based on the preliminary observation. This, in turn, should deliver the idea that these three priorities failed to offer a firm understanding about the possible overarching directions for EU’s external engagements and how they all could make a unified whole. This is because the real substance of these priorities rolled in on *ad hoc* basis as the events themselves unravelled, and this actually made the HR/VP initial prioritization a rather demonstrative and symbolic attempt than anything truly considerable in terms of content and future-looking vision. Moreover, mentioning these priorities was abandoned by the HR/VP rather quickly after acceding to the office and taken up again only when the time to assess the bulk of the first post-Lisbon period of having in place the HR/VP and the EEAS drew closer. Nevertheless, these priorities were most likely deliberately designed to be this vague and lacking of any truly visionary agenda encompassing all the EU’s external action. Why setting this kind of priorities has been the case, is explained in what follows.

Namely, it could be argued that such vague priorities were set as the institutional actor was highly aware of the *background ideational abilities (role prescriptions & role conceptions)*. The *role prescriptions* as the constraining institutional norms, rules and limits of power what the HR/VP had to keep in mind when speaking on behalf of the Union, help to understand what inhibited the HR/VP from setting more precise goals in the field of EU's external action. To recall, this broad field is continuously divided between both the intergovernmental sphere of CFSP, CSDP (Member States through Foreign Affairs Council, Defence Ministers' Council) and communitarian domain with the Commission's upper hand in questions having to do with trade, much of the aspects of development and humanitarian aid, and the enlargement and neighbourhood policies. And although in different occasions these areas overlap (besides international trade issues) – and this is what the rough aim of the work of the HR/VP as well as the EEAS is, to substantially facilitate the cooperation across these areas – then possible formulating of more detailed and farsighted priorities would still have been rather impossible. Impossible because for that the Member States and the Commission would have to agree on long-term vision for the EU across all the different streams of EU's external engagement, then correspondingly align all the existing external policies based on such consensus and only after such steps could the HR/VP receive a mandate which would probably entail much more discretionary power in representing and speaking on behalf of the Union and setting more straightforward goals. And of course, such scenario would need the prior amendments in the founding treaties, which, as the practice shows, is a highly complex undergoing.

Nevertheless, as the HR/VP as an institution was granted these enhanced powers to speak on behalf of the Union and represent the Union, the image of this institutional actor as an influential figure had to still be inculcated as it supported the whole talk how the Lisbon Treaty brought a step-change in the conduction of EU's external affairs. Therefore the broad priorities with well-known areas of EU's engagement – the neighbourhood and the work with strategic partners – plus the rather operational goal of building a new service were very easily adaptable for this purpose in HR/VP *communicative discourse*. Therefore, once again, *role conceptions* were reinforcing *role prescriptions* because the emphases on the Neighbourhood, but as well on the EU's long-yearned wish to become a more considerable international partner *per se* and not

just be secondary to its constituent parts, the Member States, have been characteristic to the EU's performance in the international system for already quite a while. Therefore, in some ways the criticism found in Ramopoulos and Odermatt article (2013: 30) that these priorities failed to offer a concise strategic direction to EU foreign policy is justified, because it really was/is the case. But on the other hand, as explained, there is the wider context of constraining elements which does not make the obscurity of those priorities that remarkable either. Especially as EU foreign policy as such is an ambiguous and unclear phenomenon.

Consequently, the institutionally highly compound domain of EU's external affairs constrained the HR/VP through the strongly acknowledged '*background ideational abilities*' while she engaged in '*foreground discursive abilities*', i.e. *the communicative discourse*. Thus, the text-, discursive- and institutional practice-level analysis proves that institutional actor's function of external representation was firmly framed by *background ideational abilities* and thus in reality inhibited the HR/VP from applying any real discretionary power when engaging in *foreground discursive abilities*, i.e. in *communicative discourse*, while formulating those priorities. In sum, through discourse analysis it was proved that the institutional actor reproduced its function of external representation according to the structural constraints which embed the HR/VP institutional actor and its functions in the EU institutional framework. Or as Fairclough would have it "actor reproduced structure" (Fairclough 2010: 38)

Thirdly and finally, despite the fact that the HR/VP institutional actor is highly constrained by '*background ideational abilities*' and thereby maintains the institutional structure within which she thinks, speaks and acts (Schmidt 2008: 314), it is nevertheless possible to notice some peculiarities in the *communicative discourse*, i.e. in the official discourse the HR/VP produces. Namely, one way or another, the text- and discursive-level analyses reveal that the creation of the service (the EEAS) grows out to be little more than just one priority among others. It quite effortlessly and obliviously obtained a central role as a priority and a theme within the whole unfolding discourse. Thus, it could be argued that the idea which was trying to be delivered held that as a result of the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the whole EU was/is in the course of substantial upgrading in many of the fields of its external action, and this is primarily possible thanks to the creation of EEAS. This idea, present throughout the period of

interest, finds its peak and most explicit expression by the time of drawing the final review which states that the EEAS ensures effective and timely delivery of the EU foreign policy. And from here the justified question, what is EU foreign policy?

In the beginning of her time in office, the incumbent HR/VP defined the discussed priorities as general ones, guiding and framing the limited time she had to serve Europe. For instance she conceded that the EU must always be able to deal with arising issues, but at the same time has to be able to prioritize, and thus she set those three priorities (Ashton 08.07.2010). What is nevertheless worth noting is that based on the compiled review, released in summer 2013, and on the preceding statement on it (Ashton 29.07.2013; 12.06.2013(1)), in retrospect these priorities all of the sudden became implied not just as mere priorities encompassing one period, but rather as pioneering priorities for EU's foreign policy. Such conclusion is possible because they were referred to as being starting points for the elements which make up EU's foreign policy, and which have emerged and become clear due to the two and a half year functioning period of the EEAS. These elements themselves were: the neighbourhood, comprehensive approach, the EU's collective weight (Ashton 29.07.2013). Thus, an argument could be made that the 'new' elements which supposedly make up EU's foreign policy are nothing substantially revamped compared to original priorities. On the contrary, the added 'critical mass' or 'collective weight' has made the understanding of what has to be understood by EU's foreign policy even fuzzier. It implies that as the EU is the world's largest economy and because it can act collectively, the EU already is leading on many internationally important topics like Somalia, Serbia-Kosovo and the Iran nuclear file (*Ibid.*; Ashton 13.06.2013). Yet, what nevertheless can be said about the HR/VP official discourse is that through undergoing the three-level analysis of DRA it is possible to discern the subtle trial to reinforce the idea that during the first post-Lisbon period there is already underway something which could be viewed as EU foreign policy. In short, it is possible to note an attempt of trying to discursively shape the structure (i.e. the HR/VP as an institution accrued with the function of external representation) by constructing the image of HR/VP representing something which could be understood as the EU's common foreign policy, however unclear its real content may be and that in the strict institutional sense of the word there is no unified and common EU foreign policy existing at present.

4. CONCLUSIONS

According to the theory of Discursive Institutionalism, the agent – the HR/VP institutional actor – was constrained by *background ideational abilities* (role prescriptions, role conceptions), yet engaged in *foreground discursive abilities* (communicative discourse). HR/VP discourse was viewed as an official discourse, representing the whole EU because amongst other HR/VP functions, the HR/VP also carries the institutional function of external representation as stipulated by the Lisbon Treaty. All this situated the institutional actor of HR/VP and its external representation function in theory.

For tackling HR/VP produced texts (speeches/addresses, remarks, few of the statements and the final review) Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) of Critical Discourse Analysis was introduced. Institutional actor's function of external representation (Discursive Institutionalism) became equal to the institutional practice of external representation at the discourse analysis level where the relationship commutes between the discourse produced by institutional actor and the institutional practice of external representation as structure with its constraining norms/rules, limits and established traditions. Under the DRA, social/institutional and discursive dimensions unfolded in parallel ('social/institutional events' on the one hand vs. 'texts' and 'discursive practice' on the other). Both dimensions nevertheless ended up in giving the social/institutional practice, i.e. the institutional practice of external representation or the institutional function of external representation when taken from the point of view of the HR/VP institutional actor. As of interest became the discursive practice level, which was not seen as mutually constitutive with institutional practice, the assumption held that it could be possible to identify ways how discursive practice (through texts) may have an effect on the social/institutional practice. In sum, all the previous made it possible to study the HR/VP official discourse as a source based on what to explore how the EU's external image was being constructed during the period of interest.

As it was noticeable in many of the first speeches, presented right after the incumbent HR/VP had acceded to the office, three main priorities were continuously brought out as the ones guiding her period in office. Consequently, also the present research used these priorities to frame the data analysis part. Subsequently, the first

research question of this thesis was answered as six themes/concepts were inductively identified from the texts: the EEAS as a separate theme (as a goal & as means); ‘deep democracy’; human rights; ‘comprehensive approach’; mediation/negotiation; development and humanitarian aid.

Yet, in order to start bringing out the final conclusions, it is necessary to recall the second and the main research question: How these themes/concepts relate to each other and to the High Representative set priorities, and to the practice of EU’s external representation, i.e. what characterises the EU’s external image which was being constructed through the HR/VP official discourse during the period of January 2010 – July 2013? Answering this question meant conducting the detailed three-level analysis. Firstly, Level I demonstrated the ways how different themes/concepts were delivered (connotations, slogans, salient emphases). Secondly, Level II (discursive level) synthesised these themes/concepts and interpreted how they related to each other and the guiding three priorities. These relationships were presented in eight points of which the appendix 1 gives a visual image. And thirdly, Level III explained how the theory of DI can be applied to explain the delivery of the HR/VP institutional function of external representation based on the results gotten from Level II analysis.

When answering the second question, then based on the text- and the discursive-level analyses, it first becomes possible to give a descriptive overview of what characterises EU’s external image as it was being constructed throughout the period of 2010-2013, i.e. the web of relationships between priorities on the one hand and the themes/concepts on the other (appendix 1). As noted above, both the creation and the ensuing functioning of the EEAS were depicted as central for the enhanced conduction of EU’s external relations. As a priority and also as a separate theme it became something with which basically all the other five themes/concepts under the rest of the two priorities, including the priorities themselves, could be linked as is shown under the discursive level analysis. Thus, the image which was constructed for the EU during this period showed the Union as an upgraded international player, which through pursuing its aim of becoming more engaged in international conflict prevention and resolution, did not only speak about it, but backed it up by actions. EU being result-oriented was reflected also by introducing the concept ‘deep democracy’ in its Southern Neighbourhood and moving towards ‘comprehensive approaches’ in places like

Somalia, the Sahel region and elsewhere in the world where crises emerged. But it was also reflected via presenting how the EU successfully protected its own citizens in conflict-zones like Libya through the enhanced coordination-work at the EEAS and its delegations around the globe. Moreover, the EU was depicted as ideally befitting for being a key player in mediating international disputes of multi-party involvement or facilitating dialogues between two opposing parties. All that was presented to be possible due to the coordination and support coming from the EEAS and due to EU finally having a unified voice when communicating with its international counterparts. In addition, also EU's international partners were demonstrated to gain from the Union's enhanced endeavour to make the EEAS an institution with a conflict settlement approach. And eventually, not less importance was dedicated for the human rights issues, especially the centrality of women's rights. For the EU getting wiser in that field meant achieving it primarily through the EU delegations around the world, where the human rights focal points were seen to be contributing to devising tailor-made country strategies.

When answering second part of the question, i.e. how the interpreted relationships between the themes/concepts and wider priorities relate to the institutional function of EU's external representation, it has to be noted that the interrogative word *what* characterises the external image is substituted with *how* the EU's external image was discursively constructed. As demonstrated in detail in the preceding section, three ways were tracked. Firstly, applying the well-known *role conceptions* (established images of EU's role and performance in international system) in their upgraded and context-dependent versions supported the HR/VP-held *role prescriptions* (knowledge about the rules, norms and the limits of power when representing the EU externally, i.e. the awareness about the continuously prevalent institutional fragmentation in the conduction of EU's external affairs). Thus, while engaging in *communicative discourse* the impression of EU's substantial upgrading in many of the external relations domains through the existence of EEAS was wisely delivered through discursive means (the themes/concepts as the 'upgraded' role conceptions). In this way, the discourse reproduced the institutional structure 'framing' the HR/VP institutional actor in carrying out its function of EU's external representation, while on the surface the image of considerably advanced international actor was constructed.

Secondly and similarly, to inculcate the understanding of EU undergoing a real step-change in the conduction of its external affairs, the initially set priorities were deliberately left empty of any firm visionary content. It could be argued that setting such priorities made it easier to neglect bringing attention to the fact that considering the still fragmented nature of EU's external action any strategic-goal setting by the part of just one representative institutional actor was and still is impossible.

Thirdly, two preceding conclusions make it easier to discern that through effectively keeping the balance between *role prescriptions* and *role conceptions* (supporting role prescriptions with role conceptions), i.e. manoeuvring wisely with the *background ideational abilities* when engaging in *foreground discursive abilities*, a subtle yet consistent attempt was made in discourse to reinforce the idea that the EU is already having its own foreign policy. By the time of drawing the review in 2013 this had become to mean (1) the neighbourhood; (2) 'comprehensive approach'; (3) the EU's collective weight. In short, from the cursory use of the concept 'EU foreign policy' throughout the period of interest up to explicitly associating it with those three elements stemming from the three initial priorities for which the EEAS was depicted as medium of delivery. In sum, an attempt was made to reinforce the perception and construct the image of EU already having a unified foreign policy, thus to depict it to be more consolidated international actor than it actually is.

The ultimate aspect which should be addressed is the explanatory potential of this research. Its added value lies in demonstrating the possibility of approaching the EU's institutions also from discursive point of view. For example applying this theory and methodology to some specific EU policy, it would be also interesting to follow how the EU's positions are delivered through the agents who form a part of certain EU institution. For instance, how the agents speak about some certain EU policy through the means of mass communication, i.e. how they might be contributing to constructing the EU's image through mass media outlets like newspapers, journals etc. and thereby try to (re)shape how the EU is perceived by some particular addressee-group.

Moreover, when it comes precisely to the possible future developments which would elaborate the research on the institutional actor of HR/VP and how it is developing concurrently with the emerging international happenings which require vocal expression on EU's stance and position, then most certainly the theory of

Discursive Institutionalism and methodology of Dialectical-Relational Approach could be well accommodated to specific case-studies. For example, why not, in the future, to conduct a research on how EU's position and role has been constructed in the course of providing reactions to the rapidly unfolding Ukrainian events. The period could range from when the ousted ex-president Viktor Yanukovich declined from signing the Association Agreement and the free trade pact with the EU in November 2013, to the ensuing dramatic 'Euromaidan' uprisings in Kiev and the consequent coming into the power of the interim government, up to the incorporation of the Ukrainian Crimea into the Russian Federation along with the pro-Russian revolts in different parts of Eastern Ukraine. Studying Ukrainian events through the official discourse of the HR/VP as a mandated speaker to communicate EU's message to both of its international partners as well as to Ukraine itself, could help to reveal in detail how the institutionally fragmented nature of EU's external policies is exposed when at line are the economic, political-diplomatic and security interests of the EU. Thus, how the relationship between *background ideational abilities* and the *foreground ideational abilities* would play out in this specific case would most certainly be worth studying.

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