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Foreign policy and human rights under Team Juncker

Green MEP Barbara Lochbihler gives an optimistic initial assessment



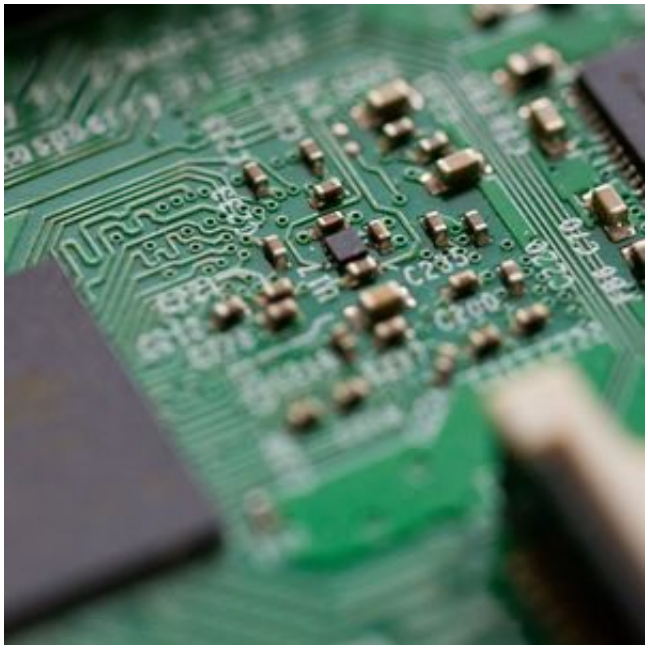
So, overall, are you happy with the proposal from Jean Claude Juncker? The nomination of certain candidates for their portfolio raise some serious questions. In particular those nominees who are closely associated with certain interests or lobby groups are very problematic. The European Parliament hearings will have to thoroughly vet these candidates and make a decision on this basis. Problematic candidates cannot simply be waved through due to political loyalties. **What is your initial reaction to the proposal Federica Mogherini as the high representative for foreign policy?** Earlier this month we had the chance to debate with the designated EU high representative on foreign affairs and security policy in the EP's foreign affairs committee. In her capacity as Italian foreign minister, she spoke about the current crisis in the Ukraine, Syria and Iraq, Gaza and Libya. The initial impression was positive: she appeared

confident and competent. Those who had initially questioned her nomination have become less audible. Her clear commitment to the need to engage globally for the protection of human rights was very encouraging. **What is the one question you would pose to the designate high representative?** It is difficult to focus on just one question, with so many burning foreign policy issues at present. At an initial meeting with Ms Mogherini, we discussed the situation of countries in the EU's Eastern and Southern neighbourhood. She emphasised the importance of 'soft power' for the EU when dealing with countries in crisis, including prevention mechanisms and follow-up in post-crisis situations. She also stressed the need of involving relevant regional actors in order to achieve sustainable long term solutions. **What other issues will she have to address in the hearing?** I would be particularly interested to know how the designated high representative will ensure that the EU's External Action Service and the EU Commission have a coherent and strategic approach on human rights issues, including with regard to strategic partners and interests. This should also be seen in relation to EU member states´ policies. Coherent and coordinated policies are required in many areas, for instance when looking at border management and the protection of migrants and refugees but also in relation to arms exports to regions of instability. The crucial question would be how to ensure that human rights are not sidelined by economic or strategic interests but that the EU is living up to the promise of value-based policies.

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