

The EU `foreign office` needs its wings clipped

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Telegraph View: the EU's embryonic 'foreign office', the European External Action Service, must be reined in before it starts to assert itself.

Leader | The Telegraph

One of the most egregious consequences of the collective failure of our political establishment to subject the Lisbon Treaty to the popular will in a referendum – when it would assuredly have been voted down – has been the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS). This embryonic foreign office fulfils a long-cherished ambition of euro-federalists to give the EU a single identity on the world stage. Just like those other political contrivances, the single currency and the Schengen Agreement (both, incidentally, creaking under the strain), it is designed to give the union a legal personality that few of its citizens want.

For those who have no desire to be a part of a European superstate, it is fortunate that the EEAS is headed by Baroness Ashton of Upholland, the high representative for foreign affairs and security policy. She has proved singularly ineffectual in the role, which is presumably why David Cameron has been happy to see her stay in post. She will not, however, be there for ever, and the foreign policy empire she is trying to create could prove a formidable vehicle for a politician of talent and ambition – remember, both David Miliband and Lord Mandelson were mooted for the post before it went to her.

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