When the nuclear deal with Iran was struck in July 2015, it was hailed as a major breakthrough for international diplomacy, in particular for the post of EU High Representative that was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. Building on the work that Javier Solana had undertaken before Lisbon, both Catherine Ashton and Federica Mogherini put the Iran deal at the top of their priority list. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the international community and Iran was seen as one of the most important achievements of EU diplomacy in recent years, as was the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo.

The JCPOA was a diplomatic success and also appeared to be an institutional achievement – confirmation that the post-Lisbon foreign policy architecture could deliver.

**A success story**

The Iran deal was also validation of the High Representative’s dual role of speaking with a single voice for the entire Union and of forging consensus internally. She acted as spokesperson and coordinator for the international community – in this case, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany (P5+1) – and was selling the nuclear diplomacy to the other EU member states. Forging consensus in the EU Council for an ad hoc initiative by the three member states acting outside the Council was an important achievement.

In a sense then, this was a coming-of-age for EU diplomacy on a global strategic issue (the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo related to a situation that was of regional importance only). And the Iran deal has cleared a number of hurdles since it took effect in January 2016 – from the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions by the EU to the re-election of Hassan Rouhani as Iran’s president last Friday (April 27th). This has paved the way for deeper economic relations: while structural impediments to trade and investment remain, bilateral trade in the 16 months following the deal taking effect increased by 79%, according to the European Commission, while Iran's exports to EU rose by 450% – albeit it from a very low baseline.

**Challenges**

If the High Representative managed to create an intra-EU consensus on lifting the unloved sanctions – Italy in particular had been pushing hard for this, while France was eyeing the prospect
of commercial contracts – the next challenge is likely to come from a hardened US position on the politics of the Middle East, and of Iran in particular.

President Trump outlined his views on the Gulf region and the wider Middle East in comments during a visit to Saudi Arabia in late May. (The very choice of Saudi Arabia as the venue for Trump’s first visit abroad since taking office was telling, and troubling.) In his simplistic vision, the region’s major problems are all due to Iranian meddling. While the US cannot unilaterally cancel the nuclear deal, it can make its implementation very difficult. The EU’s task, therefore, is to make sure that the deal proceeds smoothly.

**The way ahead**
The EU’s eagerness to engage with Iran through the JCPOA may in part be motivated by commercial interests, yet it has contributed to the defusing of a global strategic threat. The hope from both sides appears to be that the nuclear deal will lead to wider engagement – and this is where matters get more complicated.

The EU’s role in implementing the nuclear deal is straightforward. It has been outlined in annexes to the agreement, which hand the High Representative a fairly modest role as coordinator of a Joint Commission tasked with implementation and as chair of two technical working groups (on procurement and on the lifting of sanctions).

Less straightforward are the hopes for wider engagement that have been pinned on the deal. These hopes were set out in a [Joint Statement](https://europa.eu) by Mogherini and Javad Zarif, Iran’s Foreign Minister, in April 2016.

If that wider engagement does not lead to any modification of Iran’s behaviour with regards to its support for Bashar al-Assad’s murderous regime in Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon – both of which run counter to the EU’s interests in the Levant – it is fair to ask what the goal of such engagement is supposed to be.

In dealing with these challenges to the nuclear deal and to turn it into one element of a broader transformation of regional security, EU diplomacy must transcend its coordination role and adopt a more strategic vision of relations with Iran. At the same time, being shut out of a decision-making role when it comes to JCPOA implementation might actually provide the High Representative with political capital to act as an honest broker – and to press for positive change on a wider agenda.

**General news**
Remarks by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini upon arrival at the Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels, 15 May 2017. [Link](https://europa.eu)

Remarks by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels, 15 May 2017. [Link](https://europa.eu)

“EU remains committed to strengthen security and defence”: Council adopts Conclusions, Brussels, 18 May 2017.  [Link](#) 

The Council adopts a new European consensus on development, Brussels, 19 May 2017.  [Link](#) 

Foreign Affairs MEPs back closer EU - South Caucasus ties and encourage reforms, 30 May 2017.  [Link](#) 

---

**Eastern Neighbourhood**

**Armenia**

EU- Armenia Cooperation Council, Brussels, 23 May 2017.  [Link](#) 

Remarks by HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the EU-Armenia Cooperation Council, Brussels, 23 May 2017.  [Link](#) 


**Azerbaijan**

EU-Azerbaijan Business Forum, Baku, 10 May 2017.  [Link](#) 

**Belarus**

Execution in Belarus of Siarhei Vostrykau, Brussels, 06 May 2016.  [Link](#) 

**Georgia**

EU and Georgia successfully complete 10th Human Rights Dialogue, Tbilisi, 16 May 2017.  [Link](#) 

**Ukraine**

Visas: Council adopts regulation on visa liberalisation for Ukrainian citizens, Brussels, 10 May 2017.  [Link](#) 

Visa-free travel: joyful day for EU-Ukraine relations, say MEPs, Strasbourg, 17 May 2017.  [Link](#) 

Statement by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, on the vote in the Dutch Senate on the ratification of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine, Brussels, 30 May 2017.  [Link](#) 

**Russia**

Persecution of gay men in Chechnya: MEPs call for urgent investigation, 18 May 2017.  [Link](#)
Southern Neighbourhood

Remarks by the High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), Rome, 13 May 2017. Link

Egypt

Ambassador Surkoš: The EU and Egypt seek a more peaceful and prosperous future for our citizens, Cairo, 10 May 2017. Link

Attack in Egypt, Statement by the spokesperson, Brussels, 24 May 2017. Link

Statement on the new NGO law in Egypt. Link

Israel

EU Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation visits the Start-Up Nation, Tel Aviv, 17 May 2017. Link

The two-state solution is the only way to peace in the Middle East, say MEPs, 18 May 2017. Link

Jordan

Showcasing New Trade and Business Opportunities for Jordan and the EU, 03 May 2017. Link

EU launches programme to enhance support to Democratic Governance in Jordan, Brussels, 24 May 2017. Link

Lebanon

EU Ambassador Christina Lassen meets Prime Minister Saad Hariri, 12 May 2017. Link

EU Ambassador Christina Lassen welcomes the Committee against Torture concluding remarks on the initial report submitted by Lebanon, 15 May 2017. Link

Launch of the Sustainable Energy Strategy of the Lebanese Armed Forces, 22 May 2017. Link

Libya

HR/VP Federica Mogherini's phone conversation with Libyan Prime Minister Serraj and Foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed, 05 May 2017. Link

Statement by the Spokesperson on the attack at the Brak al-Shati air base in Libya, Brussels, 20 May 2017. Link
Meeting of the Libya Quartet: Joint Communiqué, Brussels, 23 May 2017. Link

Press conference following the 2nd meeting of the Libya Quartet, Brussels, 23 May 2017. Link

Commission debates future of European defence, Brussels, 24 May 2017. Link

Statement on the clashes in Tripoli, Libya, 27 May 2017. Link

**Palestine**

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press point with Børge Brende, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway ahead of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), Brussels, 04 May 2017. Link

Meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), Brussels, 04 May 2017. Link

**Syria**

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the EU Strategy on Syria during the plenary session of the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 16 May 2017. Link

New European Union support for education in Syria, Brussels, 17 May 2017. Link

MEPs want EU to step up its peace-building efforts in Syria, 18 May 2017. Link

**Tunisia**

Remarques de la Haute Représentante/Vice-Présidente de la Commission européenne Federica Mogherini lors du débat ‘Présent et futur des relations UE-Tunisie’ dans le cadre de la Semaine Tunisienne au Parlement Européen, Brussels, 02 May 2017. Link

Tunisian week: a stronger EU-Tunisia partnership, 04 May 2017. Link

Rapport sur l'état des relations UE-Tunisie dans le cadre de la Politique européenne de voisinage révisée, 2017, Brussels, 10 May 2017. Link

EU-Tunisia relations, Brussels, 10 May 2017. Link

Rencontre de la Haute Représentante/Vice-présidente Federica Mogherini avec le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères de la République tunisienne, M. Khémaïes Jhinaoui, Brussels, 10 May 2017. Link

Joint Declaration on the occasion of the EU-Tunisia Association Council, Brussels, 11 May 2017. Link
Enlargement/Other

The Western Balkans and Turkey to deepen economic and social reforms with the EU, Brussels, 23 May 2017. [Link]

Joint Conclusions of the Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey, Brussels, 23 May 2017. [Link]

Federica Mogherini hosts an informal gathering with Prime Ministers of the Western Balkans partners, Brussels, 24 May 2017. [Link]

Albania

Statement of Commissioner Hahn to the citizens of Albania, 11 May 2017. [Link]

Statement by Federica Mogherini and Johannes Hahn on the agreement reached by political parties in Albania, Brussels, 19 May 2017. [Link]

Director General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Christian Danielsson visited Tirana, 19 May 2017. [Link]

Assessment on Albania - Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey, Tirana, 23 May 2017. [Link]

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Director General Danielsson's speech at the Banja Luka University, 26 May 2017. [Link]

Kosovo

The Council of the EU adopts Joint Conclusions on the Economic Reform Programmes, Pristina, 23 May 2017. [Link]

EU deploys Election Observation Mission to Kosovo, Brussels, 30 May 2017. [Link]

Macedonia

Federica Mogherini meets with Talat Xhaferi, President of the Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Brussels, 04 May 2017. [Link]

Statement by Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn on the mandate given to Zoran Zaev to form the government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Brussels, 17 May 2017. [Link]

Montenegro

Visit by Director-General Danielsson to Montenegro, Podgorica, 18 May 2017. [Link]

Serbia
Benedikt: EU-Serbia accession negotiations are not on hiatus, 22 May 2017. [Link]

Economic Policy Dialogue: EU commends Serbia for its economic growth and outlines outstanding challenges in the area of structural reforms and competitiveness, 23 May 2017. [Link]

**Turkey**

HoD Ambassador Berger spoke in PSO theatre on the occasion of Europe Day, 11 May 2017. [Link]

EU-Funded Cash Assistance Programme reaches half a million refugees in Turkey, 17 May 2017. [Link]

EU Inaugurates Konya Meram Multi Service Support Center for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, 25 May 2017. [Link]

**EEA/EFTA**

EEA Joint Committee adopts Third Energy Package, 05 May 2017. [Link]

European Economic Area (EEA) Council conclusions, 16 May 2017. [Link]

Ministers discuss Brexit and climate change at EEA Council Meeting, 16 May 2017. [Link]

EEA solidarity contributions and Norway, Iceland fisheries deals backed by MEPs, 18 May 2017. [Link]

EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee discussed developments in the EEA, 24 May 2017. [Link]

**CEPS Commentary: The Macedonian Crisis - A failure of EU conflict management?**

In this Commentary, Erwan Fouéré - Associate Senior Research Fellow at CEPS and former EUSR in Macedonia - argues that the EU must step up its game in Macedonia, an EU candidate country in the heart of the Western Balkans.

In the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy, there is a chapter devoted to “An Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises”. It sets out a ‘multi-dimensional’ approach through the use of all available policies and instruments aimed at ‘conflict prevention, management and resolution’. The difficulty of transforming such lofty aspirations into reality couldn’t be more evident than in the ongoing and deepening crisis in Macedonia.

If the EU is really serious about its role in conflict resolution, it needs to back its words with action. A periodic visit by a Commissioner or MEP delegation with no effective follow-up will serve little purpose. The EU should deploy all the instruments it has at its disposal, including a treat of sanctions, if the mediated agreements are not implemented. Failure of the EU to resolve
this ongoing crisis will send the worst possible message to the region where other 'Balkan strongmen' are watching closely.

To read the full text of this Commentary, click the button below.

Read more »

Contact CEPS:
Centre for European Policy Studies
1 Place du Congres, 1000 Brussels
Phone: +32 (0) 2 229 39 11
Email: foreignpolicy@ceps.eu