

MOGHERINI, THE QUEEN OF RESILIENCE REACHES THE END OF HER MANDATE

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Federica Mogherini's five-year mandate as High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is coming to an end. During her term Mogherini addressed important issues such as climate change emergencies, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the flaring tensions between the United States and Iran, as well as various diffused and hybrid conflicts, ranging from transnational terrorism to disinformation campaigns and cyberattacks. What has been her response to "an ever more connected, contested and complex world"? What is her legacy?

Mogherini's term has no great victories. Unlike her predecessors, Javier **Solana**, who could claim the glory for ending the Balkan wars and initiating complex statebuilding processes in Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro, or Catherine **Ashton**, who could boast about leading the negotiations to freeze Iran's nuclear programme, Mogherini's record has attracted less attention. **Critics** have suggested that under Mogherini EU's external action has abandoned its principles and grandeur, and has followed a much more modest, pragmatic and reactive path. All this is true. And yet, as High Representative, Mogherini found in the idea of 'resilience' a new direction and global strategy for the EU. This strategy is tied to multilateralism, integration, connectivity and multifaceted diplomacy, and represents an attempt to turn the EU's apparent weakness into a precious weapon.

Although the notion of resilience already appears prominently in the 2012 Commission Communication on food security and the Resilience Action Plan 2013-2020, it has been developed more consistently in the **EU Global Strategy** (2016) and the "**Joint Communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience**" (2017). The Global Strategy defines resilience as "the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises".

The idea of facilitating resilience enables the EU to intervene in a complex world. In contrast to more traditional intervention approaches (such as **international statebuilding**), the EU's resilience strategy can be summarized in four significant advances: First, resilience is a key concept to **bring together** all EU policy communities, actors and institutions to find a new and common purpose in the world. Tensions and disputes among member

states may be reduced through the adoption of a “**joined up**” approach. Resilience to crises and shocks cannot be built directly, unilaterally, hastily; instead, it requires different instruments and contributions by a range of actors. For example, in the **Sahel** region, the EU has deployed several tools at its disposal (from aid to trade, to humanitarian support, to civilian capacity missions, to special envoys and ambassadors) to support African-led initiatives and address all phases and dimensions of conflicts and crises, including consequences such as illegal migration. Under Mogherini, the EU’s external action has become both expansive and integrated, both plural and coherent.

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Second, resilience presupposes a more modest and cooperative approach to EU intervention abroad. The EU no longer seeks to export or impose European values on its neighbours. Instead, it counts on local resources and operates with complex partnerships at national and regional levels to promote resilience, economic growth and war-peace transitions. Rather than taking unilateral action, the EU has made multilateralism its selling slogan: “We will continue to be a principled, reliable, consistent and cooperative global player, a point of reference for **multilateralism**”, asserted Mogherini in the first International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace. The ratification of the Paris agreement in 2016 to **mitigate global warming** and the long standing relations between **Iran and the P5+1** (the permanent Security Council members plus Germany), to guarantee that Iran pursues a peaceful nuclear programme, are generally considered reasonably successful cases of multilateralism in which the EU’s role was paramount.

Third, Mogherini has increased the EU’s visibility abroad and emphasised connectivity. This approach stands in sharp contrast to the isolationism of the United States under the Trump administration. Mogherini understood that the EU has to be present abroad to play a prominent role and shape international relations. More than her predecessors, she **travelled** on numerous occasions to Africa, Asia, and Latin America to communicate the EU’s policies and actions and strengthen partnerships with other countries and regions. Reacting to international developments, she has also made numerous statements and declarations to increase the visibility and voice of the EU. This global presence is important, as enhancing the resilience of societies and communities requires sustained engagement and **continuous monitoring**.

Fourth, and relatedly, she elevated diplomatic initiatives and dialogue to one of the EU’s most important external relations instruments. With the aim of bringing different actors together, she has redefined diplomacy in innovative ways. Prominent initiatives include the annual Brussels conferences on “**Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region**” that have been organised since 2017 to support the UN Geneva talks on Syria. These conferences seek to strengthen the political, humanitarian, and financial commitment of international donors to the people in Syria and enable con-

versations between international, regional, and local organizations. Similarly, the project “Iraq and its Neighbours: Enhancing Dialogue and Regional Integration in West Asia” promotes multi-level dialogues through a series of bilateral and multilateral workshops that bring together civil society representatives from Iraq and its immediate neighbours: Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait. The idea behind these initiatives is to facilitate constructive and inclusive dialogues, so that policymakers and diverse civil society groups can share their experiences and views. This new brand of diplomacy does not pretend to settle disputes of the past, but instead support sustainable future solutions.

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In sum, Mogherini’s great achievement is that she accepted the limitations of the EU in a connected and complex world and turned them into a virtue. As she could not export EU values abroad, in a time where values are contested inside and outside EU boundaries, she has provided support to others; faced with a political climate in which she could not pursue targeted and rapid solutions, she opted for integrating different foreign policy tools and taking multifaceted action; with the world no longer being amenable to protectionist and isolationist solutions, she stayed connected and travelled far and wide; and, with final peace settlements being difficult to achieve, she pursued conversations and new openings. In an ever more connected, contested and complex world, Mogherini understood that the EU cannot change the direction of the wind, but can be an aroma that fills the air.