



Oral evidence: [Costs and benefits of EU membership for the UK's role in the world](#),

HC 545

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Members present: Crispin Blunt (Chair); Mr John Baron; Stephen Gethins; Daniel Kawczynski; Andrew Rosindell

Questions 267-285

Witness: **Federica Mogherini**, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, gave evidence.

Q267 Chair: Thank you very much for making time available and for agreeing to do this on the record for a transcript as part of the Foreign Affairs Committee's inquiry. The object of our inquiry is not to make a recommendation to the British people as to whether they should stay in or leave the European Union, because I don't think our Committee is going to agree on that. But what I hope we will be able to agree on is an understanding of the implications for Britain's role in the world of whether we stay in the European Union or whether we leave. We will try to highlight the issues the electorate should be thinking about—the implications for our role in the world if we stay or, equally, if we leave. I hope, in a Committee that does not agree, and that has all shades of opinion in it, that we can then be seen to be flagging to the British electorate the issues they should be thinking about when they make their decision, probably some time later this year.

One thing we need to examine is that this is not a decision that the United Kingdom is going to take just for this year; this will, hopefully, settle the question for the next 20 years, whether we leave or we stay—if we stay, this will, hopefully, take the issue out of British politics. We need to think about what the European Union is going to look like in 20 years. Your European External Action Service is the newest part of the institutional framework, and perhaps the most interesting, in terms of the development of European Union capability. My opening question, then, is, what do you think it could or should look like in 20 years' time? How do you foresee the development of the service beyond the continuing growth pains and everything else that you are managing now? When will it achieve some element of maturity? What should it look like?

Federica Mogherini: First, thank you very much for being here and for doing this inquiry. I have been looking carefully at your mandate and the scope of your inquiry, and I believe it could be extremely good to have all member states' national Parliaments do an

exercise like this. I am not referring to the referendum specifically—I am not suggesting that—but they could look at the added value, or the implications, for each and every member state when it comes to our common work on external action at the European Union level. That is because there is a lot of useful reflection at the national level—even at the local level—especially given the security situation that Europe and our region is living in, but maybe we will have time to talk about that as well during our meeting.

When it comes to how the service will look in 20 years, I have the privilege of having come in after the first turbulent moment of the establishment of the service, and so with the luxury of having some proposals on the table already for the review that my predecessor left for her successor to decide on the implementation of, and we have done this already.

So, there is already a starting point, and we have adopted the review of the structures of the EEAS over the last year. We have changed the organogram—by the way, that word does not exist in any other language than English, so if you are looking for translations, it is very difficult, which is good, because it means that we adopt the concept and not only the wording—in a way that allows us, hopefully, to have a more simple structure of decisions. That means easier, streamlined reporting lines and decision-making processes, with one secretary-general, three deputies, and managing directors with only one deputy.

So, it is an easier structure to deal with—hopefully, also from the point of view of those who are interacting with the service. As you said, it is quite a unique institution, as a newcomer. It is also an institution that is somehow at the crossing of different users. In my view, not only 20 years from now but hopefully one or two years from now, the EEAS could be a service at the disposal of, first and foremost, member states, which means that Governments but also other institutions—not only, but mainly institutions—of member states, such as national Parliaments, as is the case now, could benefit sometime from the knowledge or the co-ordination we can have, or the reading of events we can have through our delegations. That means that it is a service at the disposal of, first and foremost, member states, but also other European institutions, be it the Commission, the Council itself, just across the square, or the European Parliament. It is a way of having European external action better co-ordinated and, through this co-ordination, making more impact.

This issue touches on the difficulties in putting together in a coherent way all the different pieces and parts of our external action. That is also why I am trying—20 years from now, this should be solved—to use all the potential of the roles that the treaty gives my institutional role when it comes to being Vice-President of the Commission. One of the main points is that the financial resources of the European Union in humanitarian aid and development co-operation, but also trade and other things, lie in the Commission. That is why we hold monthly meetings that I chair of all the Commissioners who have portfolios that somehow have an external implication. We have them regularly—every month. The last one was just yesterday, when, for instance, we tackled, together with something like 15 Commissioners, including Vice-Presidents Katainen, Dombrovskis and Šefčovič, economy-related issues. We started to co-ordinate some aspects of our relations with China and with Russia. That means that we will have—20 years from now, for sure, but hopefully well before that—the possibility of really using in a comprehensive and co-ordinated way, along the lines of political priorities that are set in the Council by member states, the instruments of the Commission in all different fields, from science and technology co-operation to agriculture to trade and investment to climate and energy; of trying to put the instruments that

the Union has at the disposal of coherent political goals. That is shaped by the decision-making body, which in our field is clearly the Council in all its different formations. This is the direction that I believe—I don't know whether it will happen—it will be useful for our work to take: better co-ordination, a better, more coherent and complementary way of having this common sense of direction, clearly guided by the decisions of the Council, with all the instruments going together in a co-ordinated way.

Q268 Chair: British foreign policy is founded on three objectives: prosperity, security and consular services from the foreign service. Our foreign service, which I think has the second largest global network of any foreign service in the world, is really struggling to sustain that network on a flat budget, and of course all the smaller states in the Union, the vast majority of the states in the Union, do not have that kind of representation. If you are looking at agendas that are prosperity, security and consular based, surely there is enormous pressure for the smaller states then to look to the Action Service to pick up the burden for them. How are you going to resist—do you even want to resist—the fact that those states will be looking to the Action Service increasingly over the next two decades in effect to become their foreign service, unless there are very specific national interests that mean it is worth their while investing in some independent diplomatic capability of their own?

Federica Mogherini: Having been a Foreign Minister myself, I know very well how it works, and struggling with a flat budget is already a good scenario in these times.

Q269 Chair: We were delighted that the Government in the UK conceded that to the Foreign Office, because they were looking at 25% cuts.

Federica Mogherini: Exactly. It is an extremely positive situation compared with what is happening around, not only Europe, but the world, at a time when the European member states need more investment outside because of security and the other reasons you stated, and also because of our citizens being exposed to major threats and difficulties around the world.

But I have to say that I do not see this trend happening at the moment. It might be that 20 years from now there is this trend in national budgets—or in politics, because apart from budgets, there is politics inside member states. I do not see the trend happening today, of member states asking that the European External Action Service substitute, or imagining that it could substitute, in any possible way, for their own foreign services, for different reasons. One reason, and here perhaps I speak more from my previous experience, is that foreign policy is obviously inherent to national priorities, national decision making and national politics, so no member state at the moment is, I believe, considering imagining, or somehow planning, that the European services could substitute for national services.

What can be done, what can be imagined for the future or what can be proposed for the future, for some member states is to better use the presence of the European Union services in particular places around the world, to make the most of the common European presence there, which is never only the European Union delegation. We have 139 delegations around the world, and in most of these places, it is true, not all member states have a presence, but, on the other hand, in most of the places where we are, we have a majority of member states present. I see the role of our delegations in the world as being a key one of sharing information, sharing analysis of the situation on the ground, trying to facilitate the

work of the embassies of our member states and also trying to facilitate the work of member states that do not have a representation in those places. But I do not see a role of substituting. I see a role of facilitation, and of co-ordination when needed, for instance in external messaging.

In one case this year, we have played this role incredibly well, and I think this is a model we can use for the future, when it comes to negotiations on climate change for instance. We developed last year—exactly in January last year—a common climate change diplomatic action plan, which we discussed, together with the Foreign Ministers, the Environment Ministers and the Commission. We adopted a common plan that we implemented everywhere in the world, with common messaging that was based on very solid grounds of common policy with which all 28 member states felt comfortable and strongly committed to.

You cannot imagine in how many places in the world I have met Foreign Ministers, and even Presidents and Prime Ministers, who have told me, “The real difference came when it came to our own national position in climate change negotiations because of the strong, co-ordinated message we received from not only the EU delegation but all the member states of the European Union. We perceived that there was a real common effort, a real common objective of the European Union and its member states in this respect, and this had a huge impact on our own national decision”.

This happens also in other fields. Whenever we have a strong position defining the 28 in the Council, with all the member states strongly and comfortably behind it, this is the strong voice. I imagine this is something that also works well in the UK debate. I don’t say this to please you; I say it because I really believe in it, and I always say it all around Europe, and even outside Europe: I don’t believe in the single voice narrative—that Europe should speak with one voice. We have many voices, and that is our strength.

Our strength is our many different voices—the 28 plus all the rest, because even one single member state has many voices. You said that this Committee might not agree on something. Even within national debates, we have different voices, and that is the strength of democracies. It is natural and good. The good thing is when we manage to have our different voices, with different national perspectives, different histories and different geographies, somehow singing the same song. That makes it much more powerful.

Q270 Chair: To conclude this section, before you get on to the particular position of the United Kingdom, surely over the next 20 years you will sweep up much of the activity of the smaller states. For example, the Czech Republic cannot afford and cannot sustain some form of representation in much of the world, and why would it? But it does have, if you like, a common European interest by virtue of its sitting right at the geographic centre of the Union. If it were trying to get real value out of a limited diplomatic budget, surely it would, or should, simply look to the Action Service to help with commercial promotion and be part of whatever the security agenda issues are there.

Why maintain a presence if your consular activities—would you not rather look to the European External Action Service speaking for Europe on behalf of the Czech Republic, rather than pass it off to another member state which happens to be represented there? In terms of all those activities, there is a direction of travel, isn’t there?

Federica Mogherini: This depends very much on what the member states define as their own trajectory of external representation.

Q271 Chair: But can or should the United Kingdom stop the smaller states from beginning to move what is currently a national diplomatic representation, formally or informally, into the European External Action Service and using the common service that is available to them?

Federica Mogherini: What for sure will not happen is something on the basis—at least this is my vision; I will not be here 20 years from now.

Chair: Really? President Mogherini?

Federica Mogherini: My vision is that what for sure will not happen is a process or development in the role of the institution and of our external representation, in terms of the European Union presence abroad, that develops in a way that does not make any of the member states and the stakeholders comfortable with it, regardless of what is technically or legally possible.

This is something I strongly believe in, maybe because I have been a Member of Parliament and a national Minister and I am sitting here now. I have a background that makes me, at a more personal level, a strong believer in the added value of what we do at the European Union level, because I see it every day, especially in the field of foreign policy.

I believe that, regardless of the legal basis of decisions, our point of strength as Europeans is when we manage to make things complementary not in an artificial, but in a natural way. That is also the exercise we are trying to conduct with the global strategy—to make it emerge how the European work or the work we do together as Europeans serves or can serve national interests better.

Chair: We have limited time.

Federica Mogherini: Sure. I just want to say that I cannot exclude developments—especially between now and 20 years' time—in any direction on this basis. I can say for sure, as long as I can give a sense of direction to this work, that, whatever the development is, it will have to be based on the full ownership of all; otherwise, it simply will not work. Our common work delivers when it is fully shared by all. The confrontational way inside the European Union is not going to lead us anywhere. Developments are possible only if they are the result of a common identification of a common need or interest that can be served through different means. Then we might find out different solutions. That, by the way, is also the case with the exercise we are trying to do.

Q272 Mr Baron: Thank you very much for taking the time to see us. Many believe that the referendum in the UK is a once in a generation event. Therefore, part of the debate will be informed by how the EU will look in 10 or 20 years' time. You have said that your service is going to be a catalyst to enable members to agree, rather than a 29th foreign policy. One heard what you said, and it makes sense, but may I put it to you that you are going to be tempted to go beyond that?

On many crises around the world, whether it is migration, corruption, water scarcity, food scarcity, terrorism, organised crime, humanitarian crises or whatever, I think it is fair to say that the international community—not just the EU—has been found wanting, and in certain cases has failed to address those global challenges. Will you not be tempted to become more proactive as a service, because the EU, given its size, cannot be ignored on the global stage, and to try to address those failures of the international community to varying degrees? Trying to get 28 countries to agree on a course of action isn't always easy when facing these global challenges.

Federica Mogherini: It's much easier than you would expect, especially because we have this difficult moment—I hope it is a moment, but I am not sure it is going to be. There is clearly a trend of crises, especially around Europe. If you look at it from far away, we are right at the centre of the most turbulent phenomena, whether it is the migration crisis, terrorist threats, the conflicts from Syria to Libya, or the situation there still is in Ukraine—it is all around us. Europe, in particular the Mediterranean, is at the centre of the conflicts and tensions.

That is probably why I have found it much easier to find common European interests when we go for a common decision. I think that common decisions in the field of our External Action foreign policy are not the minimum common denominator at this particular historic time—I don't know how it was before. They are the result of national needs to identify the real instruments that can work in this kind of endeavour. It is not by chance that the global community's overall trend in recent months is to look at different formats and different ways of co-operating more, rather than going through the channels we have used in the past decades.

Q273 Mr Baron: One accepts that, but there must be a temptation over the coming years, in addressing these global challenges—because the international community, in many respects, has not stepped up to the mark as much as it should have—to go beyond just being a catalyst of the 28 and do more. That has implications for the foreign policies of individual countries. Will you not feel obliged to try to do more as a service to meet those global challenges?

Federica Mogherini: This is not a temptation but a job description, I am afraid. I refuse to read it in terms of opposing doing more in terms of the European External Action Service and the national interest. In theory, if you take it from an ideological perspective, for sure there is a debate, but if you get down to reality, I am afraid I do not have the luxury today, or probably for the next four years, to do only the philosophy of it. We have too many things to deal with to do only the theory: too much practice and too many things to deal with. If you get down to the practice of it, in reality what we do at the European level is more based on the national agendas, which converge today, and I think they will continue to converge tomorrow.

If you look at Syria in concrete terms, today you now have, finally, this international support group, where the UK and EU are sitting, and other EU member states are sitting, together with others. The presence of some EU member states and the EU reinforces the message that we commonly pass. This is then linked to a reflection and a common position that we take in the Foreign Affairs Council. That also gives us the strength to support the common European position on the Syria crisis, which is the common European interest in putting an end to the conflict and uniting forces against Daesh and so on. So there is a

common European interest that coincides very much with the UK national interest and agenda. For instance, in this case we are preparing the conference in London on 4 February together, because there is a natural convergence of interests that is better served by a more proactive European approach.

The example of Libya is exactly the same. Less than a week ago I was in Tunis meeting the Libyans. My meeting with the Prime Minister Designate and the Presidency Council was immediately preceded and followed by meetings with the ambassadors of the member states that were present there, including the UK—first and foremost the UK because there are not many ambassadors there, to come back to the previous point we discussed. It was a way of reinforcing the common European work to try to make this new start for Libya possible and get it and up and running in the coming months, because there is a coincidence of interests: the UK agenda, the national agenda, and the common European approach.

If you take the work that we do in the Balkans, it is exactly the same. The UK, together with Germany, proposed, as you know very well, a new approach for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, one year and a few months ago. It was presented in the Foreign Affairs Council, shared by all 28 and taken up by our services. I was personally in Sarajevo three times making this proposal, which was coming from two member states and shared by all, a living project that then goes back to the member states, and hopefully we will get some benefits.

I know that the consolidated narrative is often one of divisions on foreign policy, but if you look at the reality of the dossiers on which we are working currently—“currently” meaning in the last year—or the sanctions on Russia and our approach to support reforms in Ukraine or whatever, it is hard to find one issue where we do not have a unity of interests, of purpose and also of action among member states. So for sure it is not a temptation, it is a duty for our services to be more active, because this is a way of serving better the national interests and sense of direction expressed by member states.

Q274 Mr Baron: Coming back to a more selfish approach with regard to UK foreign policy, and coming back to your words about being a catalyst when the 28 members can agree, rather than being an extra foreign policy, given that the UK is a member of most of the major international organisations—P5, the IMF, the World Bank, NATO—what capacity does the EU’s External Action Service add to what the UK can already achieve on its own, given that, the way you describe it, your service will simply mirror what 28 countries are going to agree anyway?

Federica Mogherini: They are going to agree anyway? I do not know if they agree anyway or not. I do not know if this is a good example, or if I can manage to express it in English, but the exercise is to make a common interest and position emerge—to identify where it lies, build a consensus, make it evident and have the European services work for it. The example I would give is what many Italian sculptors of the golden age of Italian art said about sculpture: it is already in the marble. We have to take away the redundant part of it and make it emerge.

I think the common European interest—the interest of the European citizens—is there, especially in foreign policy. On other things, it might be slightly different, but on foreign policy—I mean, look at us. It is clear that we share some common interests, as do

most of the Europeans sitting in NATO: a common alliance sharing common interests and approaches, especially common interests in these times. I lost the question—I am sorry¹.

Chair: John, we need to move on to Stephen.

Federica Mogherini: But thank you for the question, because it was very interesting for me to see this in concrete terms this year. It is about synergies. Take the role of the UK in the P5 or NATO.

In the P5 in this particular year, we have had the Iranian deal and finally established the Syria group, which relies very much on the work of the Security Council, and therefore the P5. Also, on Libya, there was the key role especially of the UK as a penholder of the Security Council resolution, which was adopted with only the abstention of Venezuela in September thanks to the good co-ordination that we managed to have.

The reach-out of the P5, and of the permanent and non-permanent EU members of the Security Council, and the EU with them, in co-ordination with other members worldwide, is a matter of networking and synergies. It is not simply a mirror. First of all, my role—our role—is to help make the common interests and approach emerge, and to make it clear, visible, recognised and clearly spelled out and supported so that everyone can feel comfortable with it and work in the same direction. Sometimes that is not easy. It is not automatic, but so far it has always been possible. We have never had a difficult fight in the Foreign Affairs Council on wording—I refuse to have fights on wording in the Council. That is also because we have good ambassadors doing that beforehand.

Chair: That is important.

Federica Mogherini: Very important. I may come back to that later. So it is about making this common approach emerge and making the synergies work, especially in relation with other organisations, because my reading is that in these times what is crucial is not only the national, traditional foreign policy approach, but the network of synergies that a single actor of foreign policy—be that a national state or the European Union or another—is able to build. Take the UN's Iranian negotiations, which worked because we had a specific format that put together the P5 and another country in a particular setting, which I call mini multilateralism, and some ad hoc constructions or formats that can facilitate the solution of that one single crisis. Or take the case of Syria or Libya.

In that respect, the role of a country—a P5 member, a NATO member and a very important EU member—is obviously at the centre of many networks. If it can rely on the

¹ Note by witness: Jordan is a good example of the UK's membership of the EU enabling it in practical ways to deliver outcomes that serve its national interest in a way that would not be possible if the UK was outside the EU. PM Cameron is co-hosting a conference in London next month to provide support for Jordan which is faced with a massive refugee influx from Syria. Both the refugees and Jordanians need jobs, without which the former at least will be tempted to migrate on to Europe. So, on top of cash, the biggest help Jordan can get is greater access for its exports to the EU market of 350 million consumers. Only the EU can deliver this. But greater textile or agricultural imports could hurt the interests of other EU members with similar industries. Only with Britain arguing for this measure *from the inside* can we be sure of getting an outcome that is good for Britain, good for Jordan and good for the stability of the region. If the UK were outside the EU, it could send an email or lobby its friends; but it would not have a vote to help determine the right outcome.

added value of mirrors, it helps to build the common narrative in different places. In NATO it is the same. The role of NATO, as you know, is recognised in the treaty, so there is no question about that. I believe that there is an added value for the UK's role in NATO. Every time I, as High Representative, sit at the NATO table with the Foreign Ministers or the Defence Ministers, as I always do every single time, it reflects the position that we discussed in the Foreign Affairs Council—be it in the form of Foreign Ministers or Defence Ministers—because it helps to create the common narrative. It is more than mirror; it is a game of mirrors. It is a reflection of images that can build the synergies of the international organisations.

Mr Baron: Thank you very much.

Chair: Talking about big nations and small nations, I need to ensure that my colleague from the Scottish National party gets a decent chance of asking questions so I will ask Stephen Gethins to continue.

Q275 Stephen Gethins: That is very kind of you, Chair. High Representative, thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. It is very useful to our inquiry. As a European enthusiast, it is particularly good for me to be here. I would like to build on what John was saying about the added value that your foreign policy brings. Could you build on what you just said to John by giving some more day-to-day examples? I am particularly interested in the EU's role regarding soft power and bringing together the member states. Would you comment on that briefly?

Federica Mogherini: Soft power is our hard power in some ways. By the way, you do not have a Scottish accent.

Stephen Gethins: I do. I'm trying my best.

Mr Baron: He is mixing with us too much.

Federica Mogherini: I have some Scottish friends and I am used to concentrating a lot. In this case, it is very easy.

Soft powers are the core of our added value. It very much comes down to the co-ordination that we do or try to do with the instruments we have on the Commission side. If you put together our humanitarian aid and development co-operation envelopes with our trade relations around the world, the EU is everywhere. In all sectors, we are the first interlocutor, partner or donor. If you then add the EU plus the member states, it becomes a real superpower everywhere including Africa, Asia and Latin America. The big potential is sometimes underestimated.

You asked for recent examples and I can give you an example from yesterday. Yesterday, I met the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, whom I also met in Addis Ababa a few months ago. We discussed big foreign policy things—the horn of Africa, the Red sea, dynamics, tensions, Yemen and other things. Then we discussed our humanitarian aid a lot because of the effects El Niño that they faced. Again, the EU is the first donor. Our humanitarian aid is a way of supporting local communities that would otherwise be destroyed not only by poverty, but by the temptation of radicalisation or migration.

We then discussed the long-term development projects that we have in place and that we are increasing, especially the trust fund that we established at the Valletta summit a few months ago, and how we link the development projects to security. It is a major interest of all the Europeans to try to ensure that, for instance, that country or other regions—imagine the Sahel or others—do not go radical, and that they manage their own security and the conflicts around their own borders. We are empowering other partners to do the work that we want them, rather than us, to do more and more because it works much better.

Also, we want to have development projects linked to migration—work we do together with them, in terms of preventing irregular migration flows, or in terms of facilitating returns, which is something we are doing a lot. For instance, yesterday we had an agreement with them that they would take back the 3,500 irregular Ethiopians present in Europe with projects that we can fund through our development envelopes to facilitate the reintegration and the professional training, for instance, or the education of those people who they are willing to take back, provided that we accompany that with measures.

So it is somehow using the instruments we have in an integrated way, along the political priorities that we define together. I see very clearly that the political priorities we share at European level, when it comes to our soft power, where trade also plays a very important part, also climate, and energy as well. Energy is obviously a soft power instrument, but it can also be a part of the hard power, seen from the outside for sure, depending on who is on the other side.

How you play all the instruments together along the lines of our interests and main priorities, which at this moment are security, especially on counter-terrorism and prevention of radicalisation, and the management of migration flows. Given those two big priorities, you can use your trade agreements, your development work and your humanitarian money to have a coherent approach, and to use these instruments in order to fulfil the objectives.

Q276 Stephen Gethins: I have one more question, if I may, because I know others will want to come in. Thank you for that answer; that was very useful. On energy and developing policies, because we don't have so much time I'd like to touch upon Russia. Where do you see the role of the European Union developing in terms of our relationship with Russia, especially over the next 10 years; over the long term? It's an impossible question, but I think it gives us an idea of the added value of the European Union taking a common approach to these issues.

Federica Mogherini: It is an impossible question, simply because it will depend on the implementation of the Minsk agreements and how far Russia will go in honouring their part and the work they have to do to implement all parts of the deal.

However, I believe Russia is a very clear example of the added value of our European common foreign policy. Take the sanctions. Without any doubt, we had a very difficult exercise when the crisis in Ukraine started three years ago, and to come all together and agree on our reaction to that. I was not High Representative at the time, but I was a Minister. I experienced that first hand very clearly. But against all odds, we not only managed to find our unity on sanctions but we sustained this unity over two years in a very consistent way—in a way that Russia didn't expect. They have tried for some time to test it from different angles,

but I think that it's very clear to them now that our unity is here to stay. Again, imagine the impact of sanctions if it was not the 28.

The added value of a common European approach is therefore quite clear, both when it comes to the impact of sanctions on the Russian economy—at 28, and co-ordinated with our partners, first, the United States, but others as well—and also when it comes to the diplomatic track. The presence of a diplomatic channel that the EU has established with Russia—at my level with Foreign Minister Lavrov—to push for the implementation of their side of the Minsk agreements has been key for all member states that share the objective to try and solve the situation in east Ukraine.

Here I think the added value of the European Union is a perfect example of what can be achieved in terms of impact if you act together and what would be the impact if you act alone.

Q277 Daniel Kawczynski: Before I ask my question, let me follow up from what Stephen Gethins said about Russia. Russia will not give up Crimea—I don't foresee that happening—and is increasing its trade with China, Brazil and other emerging markets. Does that mean that we will have a perpetual impasse between Russia and the European Union and continue not to trade with it for the next 10 or 20 plus years?

Federica Mogherini: First, we have trade ongoing with Russia. Sanctions have hit certain sectors that we discussed for a long time, and we have some specific reasons why it is those sectors and not others. Our sanctions are related to some sectors of our trade. We have had talks with China, Brazil, Turkey and others, and Russia is not in a good position at this moment. Its economy is seriously and severely damaged, not only by our sanctions, but by those of other partners with whom we have co-ordinated this approach.

For sure, as I have always said and really believe, sanctions in themselves do not represent an objective for Europe. They are an instrument to put pressure on Russia to follow the diplomatic engagement and commitment that Russia took when it signed up to the Minsk agreements. They are an instrument and I hope and wish, but I am afraid I cannot say I am confident or expect, but for sure I wish that we could come in the next months to a point where the Minsk agreements are fully implemented, sanctions can be lifted and relations with Russia can be re-discussed on that basis. This is what the European Council—in this case not the Foreign Affairs Council but the European Council itself—has discussed over the past year: agreeing at 28, with continuing unity, that the lifting of sanctions will be connected with full implementation of all parts of the Minsk agreements.

If you ask me whether this sort of situation with Russia is desirable for the European Union in the long term, I have always made it clear that our first interest is to see Russia playing a responsible role, especially when it comes to the situation in east Ukraine and Crimea, with respect for the international obligations, principles, rules and laws that are the basis for our international relations. As a European Union, the first and more important aspect or basis for our international relations is respect for international law. This is what we ask our partners to do. This is what we do and this is what we expect our partners to do. Obviously, it would be very good news if we managed to overcome the situation that Russia produced with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of east Ukraine.

There are sectors where our work with Russia has continued, over this year particularly. The Iranian deal is a clear example of co-ordination and co-operation with Russia bringing good results. Syria is for sure a field where it is very difficult to work with Russia, but it is necessary and I believe our active engagement is extremely important for European positions. Supporting the United Nations in facilitating dialogue and a process among the Syrians to the degree to which it is possible for the international and regional players to come together is what can happen when regional and international players have a direct impact on the position and the behaviour of players inside Syria.

Because it is in the European interest to try to shape a common approach for the international community, starting from the P5, the field for our active engagement is wherever it is difficult, but needed. That is always with the good, solid basis of a common position. That is not just because the treaties say that, although they do, but also because it is the only way in which our position can be strong. My position is strong if my interlocutors know that when I speak, I speak on behalf of the 28, not because there has been a vote, but because they feel represented, because the position is the same.

Q278 Daniel Kawczynski: I understand and respect that, it is just that there is a difference in mindset between ourselves and the Russians, and I find it very difficult, if not impossible, to envisage a scenario where Russia will give up Crimea, but that is a separate argument.

My question to you is this: there are millions of moderates in the United Kingdom like myself who are not vehemently hostile to the European Union nor vehemently pro what is happening. They are people who are very interested in assessing, to the best of their ability, the British strategic interest in remaining in the European Union. I would call us moderates: practical people who are looking at this from a practical perspective. The way that the renegotiations are going thus far is causing us a significant amount of exasperation and disappointment, and that is pushing us towards Brexit. I am talking about moderates such as myself. Bearing that in mind, if the United Kingdom does pull out of the European Union, how do you envisage us co-operating with yourselves in tackling major global challenges around the world?

Federica Mogherini: If you will allow me, I will not answer the question, for the simple reason that for me, personally and institutionally, it would be an incredible loss. I could say that my work—

Q279 Chair: I am sorry to interrupt, but we need you to answer this question, because it goes to the centre of our report in trying to indicate to the people of the United Kingdom the consequences of whether we stay or leave. People have a binary decision to take. We have yet to come across a country or institution that does not want us to stay, but we have to make an assessment of what is in the British interest, and we have to try to help the British people understand the consequences. If we can possibly persuade you—we understand that you absolutely are keen for us to remain, but we may take a decision in June as a country to leave. Can you answer Daniel's question on the premise of our understanding that it is not what you want?

Federica Mogherini: It is not only a matter of personal desire. If I can develop my thoughts, it is not just a personal wish, but a matter of the relevance of EU foreign policy,

which fundamentally counts on the UK contribution. There is not one single field of my daily work that does not consistently include inputs from or relations or interactions with the UK. That is the case today and has been the case for the year and few months I have held this position. It is not just a personal wish; it is a matter of considering that EU foreign policy would definitely be a different thing if a key component of it—the UK—was not there.

Obviously, the EU institutions and I would respect the sovereign choice of the British people whenever the referendum happens, but it is extremely difficult to answer what kind of setting would be in place in case the decision was taken to exit the European Union. It is something that we will need to find out, develop and think about in the moment when the decision is taken. It is extremely difficult today to imagine, first, what EU foreign policy will be without the UK, because today the UK shapes EU foreign policy a lot. Foreign policy will need to be revised and reviewed somehow, in a way that is quite impossible for me to predict, because the UK is a fundamental part of it.

It is also very difficult today to say what kind of relation or interaction there could be between a different EU foreign and security policy and a UK that is outside the European Union, because that situation is extremely far from the reality of today, when the UK's contribution is at the heart of our daily work. It is not that I am reticent; it is that we would need to develop ways to find out together. It would also depend on the UK's willingness and intentions, because a relationship is based on at least two intentions. It is something we should discuss together.

Let me also say one other thing. The way that the EU would look would depend on the UK's contributions, whether it stays in the EU or not. That is to say—this is my personal view, but it is also from my experience in this area and a few months in this position—there is no EU policy or institution that is set and stays there. How and what the EU is, looks like and does is the result of common work. UK input is part of the shaping of that. The EU is what the member states do with it and make of it. My personal view is that the EU is far from perfect, but what the EU will look like 20 years from now, to go to the opposite side of your question, will depend, if the UK stays, on the UK's contribution to shaping it.

Obviously, if the UK leaves, relations between the UK and the European Union will have to be defined by the UK and the European Union, but that is not an answer I can give today. First, it will also depend on the decisions of the UK; the relationship is based on decisions that the two entities make together. It is impossible for me to define one unilateral way in which the UK and the EU will develop their relations on foreign and security policy if the UK decides to exit. It is not reticence; it is simply that we would need to discuss together and come back. If the decision to leave the EU is taken, we will need to define how we co-operate on foreign and security policy. That also depends on the willingness, desires, aspirations and national interests of the UK.

Q280 Daniel Kawczynski: You, as a very professional Foreign Secretary of the European Union, for want of a better term, have very good ongoing practical relations with big countries such as America and others that are not in the European Union, with which you consult and work constructively on dealing with major global problems, don't you?

Federica Mogherini: Absolutely, yes. If you want me to state on the record that, for sure, if the UK decided to exit the European Union, we would have diplomatic relations, I

think this is the minimum. Going from being a member of the European Union to not having diplomatic relations with it seems a little extreme and not moderate or practical. For sure, I imagine that we would keep diplomatic relations, consult with the UK and so on, but the degree, the forms and the level of intensity of this—I imagine; this is actually more of a question from me to you—would be determined by two wills: the UK's and that of the other member states at the moment, which they would need to define among themselves.

Chair: May we trespass on your time a bit further? If that's okay, I'll ask Andrew Rosindell to ask questions, which may be on the same theme.

Q281 Andrew Rosindell: Thank you and good morning. You will understand that Britain is a little bit different from the rest of the European Union. We're not a continental country; we're an island nation. We've had hundreds of years of global outreach through the British empire and now the Commonwealth and through being a seafaring, free-trading nation. We've also defended our freedom and sovereignty for nearly 1,000 years. We haven't had the same issue that perhaps, with respect, other countries in Europe have suffered in recent decades. You will therefore understand why we're different and why most British people do not understand why we would want to give up our right to decide our own foreign policy by putting it into a central body such as the EU.

Wouldn't it be better for the rest of the EU, and perhaps give you the opportunity to have a more coherent foreign policy for the EU, if Britain wasn't there to muddy the water? If we were separate, we could obviously have diplomatic relations, discuss the issues, work together and co-operate, but we could also be outside that intense internal co-operation that the EU seeks to achieve.

Federica Mogherini: I don't want to shock any of you, but let me say, as I tried to say before, that the UK is not in the mainstream, but at the core of our foreign security policy. That might surprise you, but if you look at the UK national priorities in foreign security policy, they coincide with the EU core positions in all sectors. There would be no sense of relief for the others if the UK decided to leave. The contribution of the UK to the common position is central. It is key in all things, whether it is the middle east peace process, Syria, Libya, Russia, Africa, Asia or whatever—our relations with NATO. In my area of foreign security policy, I cannot imagine one single field of action in which the UK's position is not central to our debate. There would be no sense of relief in any possible way. On the contrary, there would be a vacuum right at the centre of our political debate, because the UK's contribution to the discussion on our common foreign security policy is absolutely key.

Q282 Chair: We are limited for time, but I want to pick up on a point that falls out of your answer to Andrew. On defence policy, European defence policy is neuralgic in the United Kingdom, so creating any effective European Union co-operation around defence has always died a death at the hands of the British. You wouldn't have that problem if Brexit happens.

Federica Mogherini: Let me give you a concrete example—because I am a practical person, as you mentioned. This year, I have experienced the launch of one of our missions: the EUNAVFOR Med operation that we launched in the Mediterranean to fight the traffickers and the smugglers. By the way, the operation was launched in a record time of one month, which has never happened before. The European Union is sometimes not that slow

when we have a clear objective and everybody is well-convinced that that objective is a common one. In order to establish that common operation—CSDP operation—of the European Union, the UK's contribution has been vital. The contribution that the UK is giving to the operation is vital for the operation itself. The diplomatic contribution that the UK has given to the UN Security Council support and endorsement of that operation, which happened in September, was vital. I understand very well all the sensitivities and can give all the reassurances that you need—

Q283 Chair: Vice-President, with respect, you wouldn't have been doing that in a month; you would have been doing it in 48 hours if you had a military headquarters with troops allocated and stood to on some form of notice to move. You could have had forces on the ground, as could NATO, within a week to respond to a situation like that, if you had command and control facilities under the political direction of the European Union. All that has been prevented by the British.

Federica Mogherini: This is a hearing or an inquiry, from you to me, on what I think is, or can be, the added value or the pros and cons of the UK being part of the EU, not, with all respect, the contrary. Please don't put this into question. Believe me when I say that there is no appetite at all in the European Union institutions and member states for the UK to leave. It would not be easier.

Chair: We know that.

Federica Mogherini: There is nothing magical or wonderful or great that awaits us if this impediment of the UK presence in the European Union is lifted. Nothing at all. On the contrary, things are complicated. Yes, the UK is different. All the member states are different. You would be impressed—you probably are—to hear the national debates in other member states, because they are not necessarily much easier than the one you are having. All member states have their own specific concerns, difficulties, problems and specificities, in different ways—each of them, from Estonia to Malta, Portugal, Ireland and Finland. We're all very much different, and there is everywhere an ongoing national debate, so do not imagine that there is an island where things would go perfectly well and easily if the UK was not there.

On the contrary—I am being very open here; I am not being politically correct and I am not reading the papers, as you can see—we are in a challenging moment for the European Union for sure and, I would say, for Europe, because this goes beyond the European Union only, if you look at the Balkans for sure. There is a reflection on how we manage, as people and institutions, to respond in an effective way to a situation in the world and in our region that has developed to an extent that makes it difficult to understand how you serve your sovereignty better. Is that at a purely national level? Is it at a sub-national level? That is another difficult debate that I am not going to enter into today, but it is also not a purely UK debate. You find it in plenty of places around Europe. What is the level at which you should exercise sovereignty in the most effective way to give answers to the needs of your citizens? That is the question, at the end of the day.

My strong conviction, especially after having seen this in practice for one year and some months, is that when it comes to specific foreign and security issues—terrorists, crisis management, crisis prevention, humanitarian aid, trade, climate and so on—the most

effective practical ways to give answers to our citizens and exercise sovereignty is through our European Union instruments, which are well defined by the treaties.

Q284 Andrew Rosindell: More broadly, how do you think a Brexit would affect the other EU member states? If Britain leaves, which is currently a distinct possibility, how will the rest of the member states react? What would happen the next day? What mechanisms could you see being put in place so that sensible bilateral co-operation would continue—I think we all want to see that—without us being part of the European Union?

Federica Mogherini: With respect to the same national sovereignty that you indicate for the UK, this is a question that I should put first of all to the other 27 member states. I cannot answer for them. This is a discussion that we need to have with the 27 and with the UK if it decides to exit.

Q285 Andrew Rosindell: How do you see it panning out? How do you see the next few years after Brexit? How do you see that working? Are you going to close the door on us? Will you not want to deal with us anymore? Or will there be sensible arrangements in place so that we can deal on day-to-day issues? Or can we only co-operate, in your view, via the European Union—is it as black and white as that? Or can we actually find a sensible way of dealing with each other in the future?

Federica Mogherini: I think that we are all sensible people—almost—so I imagine that we will have that discussion in a pragmatic and sensible way, as you put it, but again I cannot pre-empt the discussion. There is going to be a discussion that the member states will have to have. Imagine that it was not the UK having the referendum, but Estonia. The UK and the other 27—26 in that case—would have to have a discussion on how to relate with Estonia. Put yourself in the other member states' shoes. They will have to have that discussion and to discuss everything, as we are discussing everything together now. Also, this will be one of the issues that they will need to discuss, so I can definitely not pre-empt, prejudge or draw some lines on this, because it will have to be a discussion among member states in their capacity as national, sovereign countries. They will need to discuss that. Sorry, I am not being reticent; it is not in my competence—it is a decision that member states will have to take.

Chair: Vice-President, thank you so very much for your time. We have noted where you have been reticent—properly, as you see your own responsibilities and powers. It is a frustration for our Committee that we have to give some advice to the British people, or that is what we are aiming to do—if not advice, at least notice of the potential consequences—but there appears to be no institutional preparation for the consequences of Brexit in the United Kingdom or any work going on inside the British civil service. You are also unwilling to be drawn on the subject here, because it is too awful to contemplate the foreign and security policy consequences for the European Union. Yet, in spite of all that lack, we will have to try and do something in terms of pointing out to people the consequences of the decision that they will have to take some time this year, we expect, in June or September. We will have to go on and do our work, but thank you very much indeed for the enlightenment that you have given us, which will be a particular help to our inquiry. Thank you for your time and for the time of all your colleagues.

Federica Mogherini: Thank you very much. I appreciate very much the opportunity to exchange on this. It will be a pleasure to see you again, hopefully in London.