

The EU public diplomacy and the Iran nuclear problem post-JCPOA

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The following paper assesses the use of public diplomacy tools between the European Union and Iran after signing JCPOA. Drawing on official statements, it tries to extract insights about the advantages or disadvantages of the agreement, the contributions and the interests of the parties, developments and implementation, hopes for a peaceful nuclear future, and messages designed to shape public opinion and influence attitudes towards the outcome of 12 years of work. It presents how the EU has projected its own institutional image, beyond member state governments, by presenting its own actions and by contextualizing them, concluding that EU as the factor which ensured the balance of negotiations and success of the agreement. Consequently, the Iranian people are focused on JCPOA because, over time, people's lives have been affected by the nuclear issue. Accordingly, I argue that the attempt of High Representatives of the EU to send messages of encouragement to people who are aware of isolation, human rights restrictions, and radical interpretation given to religion marks a step forward in establishing cordial relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Keywords: diplomacy, agreement, nuclear, public opinion, cooperation, EU-Iran



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“The E3/EU+3 (China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, with the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) and the Islamic Republic of Iran welcome this historic Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which will ensure that Iran’s nuclear programme will be exclusively peaceful, and mark a fundamental shift in their approach to this issue.”¹ – Preface of *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*, Vienna, 14 July 2015

Introduction

The Iranian nuclear agreement represents a major achievement in the history of diplomacy, as it solved one of the most important concerns in international relations through ongoing negotiations and perseverance in engagement for peaceful purposes.

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The Islamic Republic has been concerned, for thirteen years, about nuclear power, which was considered an ‘inalienable’ right². After ten years of intense negotiations, Iran and the P5 + 1 group concluded an interim agreement in Geneva on 24 November 2013, agreeing that JCPOA will ‘involve a mutually defined enrichment programme with practical limits and transparency measures to ensure the peaceful nature of the programme’³. The dialogue, aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement, ran from February 2014 until 14 July 2015, the day of *Finalization*. The timeline includes a series of milestones:

- *Adoption*, established by Security Council Resolution 2231, which approves the agreement (18 October 2015);
- *Implementation*, when the IAEA checks whether Iran has achieved its obligations and when the US, the UN and the EU cease to apply specific sanctions after the

1 UN Security Council, (2015) *Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) [on Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Islamic Republic of Iran’s nuclear programme]*, Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/55b9e2084.html> (Accessed: 25 February 2018).

2 Blackstock, J., Phys, P., and Milkoreit, M. (2007) ‘Understanding the Iranian Nuclear Equation’, *Journal of Princeton International Affairs*, pp. 7-28.

3 U.S. Department of Treasury (2013) *Joint Plan of Action*, Preamble, Available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/jpoa.pdf> (Accessed: 25 February 2018).

positive feedback of IAEA as far as the filling in of steps concerned (16 January 2016);

- *Transition*, eight years from the day of Adoption, or when the IAEA concludes that ‘the nuclear material remains for peaceful activities’; and
- *Termination*, ten years from the day of Adoption when the provisions and measures imposed by Resolution 2231 will end and the Security Council will no longer be involved in the nuclear issue⁴.

These deadlines demonstrate the necessity of a comprehensive and lengthy process of compliance and implementation of agreed-upon principles.

But how did the EU perceive the agreement? How have relations between Iran and the EU evolved in the post-JCPOA era? I choose to analyze the path of public diplomacy for this discussion, in order to explore not only the political and the security dimensions of the agreement, but also the human dimension, the European perceptions that transcend governments and send a message to the people.

Public Diplomacy - Conceptualization and Practice

The term ‘public diplomacy’ has gained a special significance within the theoretical framework since the middle of the last century. Edmund Gullion offered the following meaning: influencing the public attitudes on the formation and implementation of external policies⁵. The 21st century presents new challenges, because information has a different role in the context of rapid development of media and globalization. Today, it is very important to influence points of view, and so internal and the international communication with different public audiences have become an important task for Foreign Ministries.

The theory is sustained by practice in the field of public diplomacy, whether we are looking at historical examples or

⁴ Chronology available on: European Council (2017) *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and restrictive measures*, Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/iran/jcpoa-restrictive-measures/> (Accessed: 25 February 2018).

⁵ Wolf, Ch., Rosen, B. (2004) *Public Diplomacy: How to Think About and Improve it*, Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, p. 3.

current developments. For instance, in Europe, after the Second World War, the states began to experiment with various versions of public diplomacy:

- Germany - *Politische Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*, an instrument adjacent to the foreign policy meant to increase the degree of state acceptance among Western democracies;
- France - *politique d'influence*, a practice aimed at rebuilding the image of the state after the war;
- The Netherlands - *publieksdiplomatie*, used to calm the public opinion as far as the ethical issues concern (euthanasia laws) or liberal policies (abortion and drugs laws).

Public diplomacy must also be analyzed in the light of the American experiences; the post-11 September 2001 period witnessed a focus on promoting the US image and persuading the world's population that it "pursues the same goals of freedom, security, and prosperity"⁶, all in response to the bombing of Afghanistan. This illustrates "the need for public diplomacy to resolve ideological conflicts that could have affected national interests."⁷

At the EU level, the practice of public diplomacy is fulfilled by the Brussels structures, which deal mainly with internal communications, via delegations, the primary agents of foreign communications. Thus, the EU is trying to present various events in a specific way in order to influence perceptions among different audiences. This is achieved through press statements, speeches, websites and/or various events organized by the Commission or by Delegations in third countries. Moreover, other tools are used to improve understanding and knowledge of the EU and its values: student exchange programs, the EU Visitors Program,⁸ and the Erasmus Mundus program. The EU also seeks to build its relationship with civil society by supporting and funding NGOs or projects that can direct the impact of its speeches in the desired sense⁹. The practice of public diplomacy is aimed at shaping the EU as a model of international governance, as a promoter of

6 Ham, P. (2003) *Improving America's Image After 9/11: The Role of Public Diplomacy*, Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, p.1.

7 Fitzpatrick, K. (2010) *The Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy. An Uncertain Fate*, Boston: Brill, p. 1.

8 Rasmussen, S. (2009) *Discourse Analysis of EU Public Diplomacy Messages and Practices*, Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, p. 19.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

democracy, human rights, and multilateralism, as a key to stability, playing an important role on the continent in economic, financial and commercial terms.

Public diplomacy has become a well-worn term within the EU since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, which strengthened the role of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy¹⁰ and increased the EU's external visibility by setting up the European External Action Service, an authority that 'will support the High Representative [...] in fulfilling his/her mandate to conduct the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the Union and to ensure the consistency of the Union's external action [...]'¹¹. The figures confirm the efficiency of these structures; in 2011, there were 593 statements focused on enhancing the role and the image of the EU as a global power and addressing the following themes: conflict resolution, development aid, natural disasters, pandemics and energy security.

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The Role of the High Representative in Negotiations: Aspects of Public Diplomacy

Between 2003 and 2015, there have been three High Representatives of the EU: Javier Solana, Catherine Ashton, and Federica Mogherini. Along with other global powers, these officials played a key role in negotiating a solution to Iran's concerns about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, demonstrating the EU's ability to resolve significant global threat. The challenges did not come to an end after the agreement was signed, due to the US president's reluctance, and diplomatic messages were intensified in order to preserve the deal.

Public diplomacy was actively manifested during the negotiations,

¹⁰ The function of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was established by Treaty of Amsterdam (High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy) and consolidated by Treaty of Lisbon. He was tasked to give the European Union greater visibility in international relations, greater stability in terms of external representation and greater consistency in the field of foreign policy. Specifically, the High Representative should lead the Common Foreign and Security Policy, chair the Foreign Affairs Council and be one of the Vice-Presidents of the Commission. (European Union (2007) *Treaty of Lisbon Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community*, pag. 21, Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/476258d32.html> (Accessed: 25 February 2018).

¹¹ Council of the European Union (2010) *Council Decision of 26 July 2010 establishing the organization and functioning of the European External Action Service*, art. 2, Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32010D0427> (Accessed: 26 February 2018).

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the officials practicing it in key moments. For example, 2006 brought intense diplomatic activity in the context of the resumption of talks on uranium enrichment concerns. The High Representative met with the Iranian nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani, providing a package of concessions from the P5 + 1 group, which, according to Solana, would allow a commitment in negotiations based on ‘trust and respect’¹². The statements of the two officials after the four massive rounds of talks demonstrated a common commitment to progress; the length of the talks (18-20 hours) also sent a public diplomacy message about the dedication of both parties.

Solana was replaced by Catherine Ashton in 2009. Ashton approached the key players, gained their trust and became indispensable. The High Representative tried to build an atmosphere conducive to further talks, addressing messages to Iran through multiple interlocutors in order to demonstrate the EU’s seriousness, or participating in informal talks before the official dialogues for drafting the reports. Ashton was praised for her ability to build working relationships, bringing difficult interlocutors into a comfortable, compromise-friendly framework¹³. The adoption of the Joint Plan of Action (24 November 2013) marked the beginning of an intense period of bilateral, trilateral or plenary meetings, all led by Catherine Ashton, who maintained the continuity of the talks and was considered a mediator ‘able to act more impartially than other Western officials’¹⁴.

The EU’s Post-JCPOA Public Diplomacy: Speech Analysis

JCPOA highlights the final position of the EU and the P5+1 group over the Iranian nuclear program, namely acceptance and normalization. The agreement was also perceived as a victory by the Iranian government, because Iran did not have to give up its whole program. At the declarative level, the optimism is clear.

12 Radio Free Europe (2006) *Iran: Solana Delivers EU Offer On Nuclear Program*, Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/1068944.html> (Accessed: 15 April 2018).

13 Al-Monitor (2012) *Can Western Women Tame Iran’s Nuclear Negotiators*, Available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/can-western-women-tamebr-irans-n.html> (Accessed: 15 March 2018).

14 Jessen, E. (2017) ‘European Diplomacy in the Iran Nuclear Negotiations: What Impact Did It Have?’, *Bruges Political Research Papers*, 61, p. 33;

Foreign Minister Zarif stated, on 21 July 2015, the importance of the agreement for ‘Iran’s dignity, the sovereignty of rights, the technological advancement and independence and the gain of legitimacy through the international recognition associated with the agreement’¹⁵. Former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsandjani considered that JCPOA was “more important than the war between Iran and Iraq and the liberation of Khorramshahr”¹⁶.

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Since November 2014, Federica Mogherini has held the position of High Representative, responsibility for managing EU foreign policy. Stating on many occasions the desire to develop a new strategy, a document billed as *A Global Strategy for the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy* was adopted in June 2016. The Strategy emphasized the need for coherence and unity in the action of the EU. But what was the role of Federica Mogherini in the negotiations concerning the Iranian nuclear file? How did she influence the evolution of the talks? What are the characteristics of her speech and what did she want to convey to the general public? Within this article, I will try to answer some of these questions based on different statements and the context in which they were delivered.

Mogherini followed Catherine Ashton as the EU’s chief diplomat, but named her predecessor Special Advisory on nuclear talks to ensure continuity in the negotiations. Even though Ashton did not participate in the dialogue, she facilitated negotiations with Iran during times of peak tension with the West (2009 to 2014). Many say that Mogherini has made efforts to combat the criticism by diplomats who considered her too inexperienced to work on nuclear proliferation. She subsequently became valued for her communication skills. Thus, various people have come to emphasize that ‘she does not have the charisma that Solana possessed but has a good political sense, much more visibility than Ashton, and she is never ideological’¹⁷.

The subject of discussion the comprehensive action plan (14 July 2015), which provides the signatories and the entire international

15 Bowen, W., Moran, M., Esfandiary, D. (eds.) (2016), *Living on the Edge. Iran and the Practice of Nuclear Hedging*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pag. 136.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Politico (2017) *The women behind the Iran nuclear deal*, Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-women-behind-the-nuclear-deal/> (Accessed: 1 March 2018).

community with the security of peaceful nuclear development: ‘Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons’¹⁸ Public responses underlined the importance of this historic day as the result of collective efforts. Mogherini and the Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif told the international community that ‘hope and determination, constructive engagement and dedication resolved a dispute that lasted more than 10 years’¹⁹. They emphasized the IAEA’s ‘critical contribution’ as well as ‘the support and hospitality’ of the Austrian government on a background of historical decision that no one considered easy. ‘Intensive work’ has resulted in the adoption of the JCPOA, an agreement that represents a ‘good deal for the broader international community’²⁰.

On 16 January 2016, the day of implementation of the Agreement, these officials released another statement, noting the results of a ‘heavy task’, ‘mutual commitment’ and ‘collective benevolence’²¹ (the adjectives used are addressed to the Iranian side given the difficulty of previous cooperation). On this occasion, the EU confirmed that the only remaining international legal framework on Iran’s nuclear activities was Resolution 2231, which approved the JCPOA and the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The obvious message of public diplomacy can be identified at the end of the statement, where, in addition to the gratitude shown towards the Austrian government and all those who have supported the negotiation process, the authors note that multilateral diplomacy can solve the most difficult issues and contribute to international and regional peace. Some regional actors were worried about the consequences of Iran’s nuclear weapons, namely Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and Turkey.

On 16 April 2016, Federica Mogherini headed a delegation of the European Commission’s representatives in Tehran to mark a new start in bilateral relations, both sides agreeing to sustain their cooperation in the economic, energy, education, migration, environment and transportation sectors. The message was the EU’s willingness to provide support to Iran, including ‘to become

18 Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) [...], pag. 2.

19 European Union External Action (2015) *Joint statement by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif*, Available at: <https://collections.internetmemory.org/haeu/content/20160313172652/> (Accessed: 1 March 2018)

20 Passages taken from the Statement. *Ibid.*

21 European Union External Action (2016), *Joint statement by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif*, Brussels, Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2991_en (Accessed: 1 March 2018).

a member of the World Trade Organization, participation in the EU Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program, cooperation in the field of higher education, the attention being centered on regional problems such as terrorism, extremism and violence in the desire to strengthen the principle of non-intervention and territorial integrity of states, as well as the primacy of international law, including human rights²². The High Representative of the EU openly stated that her message was addressed to the Iranian people regarding the dignity of diplomacy and the desire of the Europeans to develop a comprehensive, cooperative, critical and constructive dialogue (the dialogue of the four Cs).

The significance of JCPOA has always been flagged by official statements, which have highlighted the role of political desire, perseverance and multilateral diplomacy in solving the most difficult issues. One year after the agreement, Federica Mogherini underlined that the EU has accomplished its obligations concerning sanctions; sending a clear message to both the European and Iranian public about the benefits the agreement brings (it invoked the Informative Note of 16 January 2016, which describes in detail the EU sanctions that were lifting)²³. Mogherini also underlined the benefits of the agreement for the region, through ‘[creating] the opportunity to improve regional cooperation’²⁴, which will reduce the tensions. To support this affirmation, we can point to the EU’s outreach to its Mediterranean and Middle Eastern neighbors since its establishment in the 1950s. Today, the partnership is dominated by two components: the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighborhood Policy, as well the EU’s relations with the Gulf countries and the Middle East²⁵.

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The Council of the EU also adopted a series of conclusions on

22 European Commission (2016), *Joint statement by the High Representative/Vice-President of the European Union, Federica Mogherini and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Javad Zarif*, Available at: https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-16-1441_en.htm (Accessed: 2 March 2018).

23 European Union External Action (2016), *Information Note on EU sanctions to be lifted under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)*, Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/iran_implementation/information_note_eu_sanctions_jcpoa_en.pdf (Accessed: 2 March 2018).

24 Federica Mogherini (2016) *Declaration by Federica Mogherini on behalf of the EU on the one year anniversary of the JCPOA*, Available at: <https://www.federicamogherini.net/declaration-by-federica-mogherini-behalf-of-the-eu-the-one-year-anniversary-of-the-jcpoa/?lang=en> (Accessed: 2 March 2018).

25 EU Politics (2012) *Europe and Middle East*, Available at: <https://testpolitics.pbworks.com/w/page/24737344/Relations%20Between%20Europe%20and%20Middle%20East> (Accessed: 3 March 2018).

the 14 November 2016 in order to express its position on the progress of the implementation and to shape Iranian, European and even international public opinion. It highlights the role of ‘the EU High Representative as coordinator of the Joint Commission established by the Agreement, which gives the Union as an institution an increased role in the JCPOA process’ (paragraph 2), ‘the condition for compliance by all sides as absolutely necessary for rebuilding trust’ (paragraph 5), ‘the opening of an EU Delegation in Iran as a key step in spreading the agenda for cooperation’ (paragraph 6) or ‘the necessity of improving the human rights situation’²⁶ (paragraph 8). The latter is addressed to the Iranian Government, which has been repeatedly sanctioned by the UN General Assembly because in regard to rights violations, urging it to comply with its obligations as part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights²⁷, but also to the Iranian people, aimed at empowering them through an understanding that their domestic issues are in the international spotlight.

One year after the JCPOA implementation, Federica Mogherini addressed an encouraging message to the international community and the Iranian government and people. Thus, the seriousness and rigor of the implementation by all parties as a way to build trust ‘sends a reassuring signal to the international community of Iran’s adherence to a civilian nuclear programme exclusively for peaceful purposes’.²⁸ The High Representative also acknowledges the merits of the multilateral commitment, and stresses that although the agreement was the result of E3 / EU + 3 efforts, it ‘belongs to the entire international community’. Unity of effort and vision remains the central theme of the speech.

This period was marked by an intense diplomatic activity by Federica Mogherini in the context of the statements made by the new US President, Donald Trump, on the nuclear agreement. He has repeatedly stated that ‘it is one of the worst accords he has ever seen’, and is keen to see it dismantled. As a result,

26 Council of the European Union (2016), *Council Conclusions on Iran*, Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/11/14-conclusions-iran/> (Accessed: 3 March 2018).

27 UNGA (2011), *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Available at: https://news.bahai.org/sites/news.bahai.org/files/documentlibrary/867_Iran_human_rights_situation.pdf (Accessed: 3 March 2018).

28 European Union External Action (2017) *Statement by Federica Mogherini on the first Anniversary of the Implementation of the JCPOA*, Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/18609/statement-federica-mogherini-first-anniversary-implementation-jcpoa_hr (Accessed: 3 March 2018).

Mogherini visited Washington, where her conversations with the White House officials suggested that that Trump's statements may have been hot air: "I was assured of the intention of full and strict implementation of the agreement."²⁹ Unlike his successor, President Obama considered that 'the US must remember that the agreement is the result of years of work between the great powers of the world, not just between the US and Iran. Moreover, it must be measured against the alternatives - a diplomatic solution that prevents the acquisition of a nuclear weapon is preferable to an Iranian nuclear program without constraints or to another war in the Middle East.'³⁰ The message of public diplomacy is built on the unique benefits brought by the compromise. Practically, the agreement prevents the expansion of Iran's nuclear concerns through strict limitations and inspections.

On 13 October 2017, Donald Trump gave a speech harking back to the difficult past between Iran and US, and confirmed his opinion of JCPOA. The speech voiced concerns about the numerous negative consequences of the deal, such as financial (the money which the Iranian government received could be invested in subversive activities, i.e. terrorism) or relating to nuclear threats (removing some restrictions will slow but not terminate Iran's path towards a nuclear weapon). Moreover, the President made a statement that is not borne out by IAEA reports, claiming that Iran has not respected the agreement and 'has exceeded the limit of 130 metric tons of heavy water'³¹. This affirmation is not based on the official report which underlines that 'Iran has less than the JCPOA-mandated cap of 130 metric tons of heavy water (111 metric tons in August)'³². Trump announced that the lifting of sanctions is not 'appropriate and proportionate' (the standard required by the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act), and asked for a new strategy which will apply new sanctions. Trump's message reflects the idea that the agreement could

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29 CNN (2017) *EU leader: US 'committed' to Iran nuclear deal*, Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/10/politics/iran-nuclear-deal-trump-federica-mogherini/> (Accessed: 4 March 2018).

30 Business Insider Malaysia (2017), *Obama is marking the first anniversary of the Iran nuclear deal with a warning to Trump*, Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.my/ap-obama-issues-warning-on-1st-anniversary-of-iran-nuclear-deal-2017-1/#k6EYUuRPQSTTXLUO.97> (Accessed: 5 March 2018).

31 NPR (2017) *Transcript: Trump's Remarks On Iran Nuclear Deal*, Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/13/557622096/transcript-trump-s-remarks-on-iran-nuclear-deal> (Accessed: 5 March 2018).

32 Albright, D., Stricker, A. (2017), *Analysis of the IAEA's Eighth Iran Nuclear Deal Report: The JCPOA two years after Adoption Day*, Washington, DC: Institute for Science and International Security, p.4.

threaten regional, international, and especially US security. Three days after Trump's statement, Federica Mogherini declared that the agreement's provisions on sanctions are advantageous for cooperation with Iran, considering that "Trump's decision not to certify Iran's compliance with JCPOA [is] in the context of an internal US process"³³. Hassan Rouhani, Iran's president, did not hesitate to underline that the agreement could not be unilaterally decertified because 'it is an international, multilateral deal that has been ratified by the UN Security Council'.³⁴

On 12 January 2018, Trump reiterated his concerns about the flaws of the Iran nuclear deal, emphasizing that he would not certify it. He demanded that the European countries follow the same path as the US, threatening to withdraw from the agreement if he is not supported in his effort to revise it³⁵. However, the EU remains committed to the nuclear agreement, even if it does not cover other issues that the American president has repeatedly mentioned in his statements such as 'development of ballistic missiles and increasing tensions in the region'³⁶, and 'support for terrorism and violation of citizens' rights'³⁷. Europe is making its voice heard not only through the High Representative's statements but also through national decision-makers who have expressed their faith in the agreement's viability and are pleading for its preservation. For instance, the German Foreign Minister, Sigmar Gabriel, stated that 'it is absolutely necessary to have this agreement to prevent the development of nuclear weapons at a time when other parts of the world are discussing how to get them'³⁸.

Donald Trump's desire to withdraw from agreement was enforced on 8th May 2018 when he stated that 'it is clear to me that we cannot prevent an Iranian nuclear bomb under the decaying and rotten structure of the current agreement'. Moreover, in

33 European Union External Action (2017), *Remarks by Federica Mogherini on the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Iran nuclear deal)*, Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/33997/remarks-federica-mogherini-implementation-joint-comprehensive-plan-action-iran-nuclear-deal_en (Accessed: 6 March 2018).

34 CNN (2017), *Trump says Iran violating nuclear agreement threatens to pull out of deal*, Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/13/politics/iran-deal-decertify/index.html> (Accessed: 6 March 2018).

35 White House (2018) *Statement by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal*, Available at: www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-iran-nuclear-deal/ (Accessed: 6 March 2018).

36 Arms Control Association (2018) *International Support for the Iran Nuclear Deal*, Available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2018-01-16/international-support-iran-nuclear-deal> (Accessed: 10 March 2018).

37 *Statement by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal [...]*

38 *International Support for the Iran Nuclear Deal [...]*

announcing his long-telegraphed decision, Trump said he would initiate new sanctions on the regime, any country that helps Iran obtain nuclear weapons being ‘strongly sanctioned.’³⁹ His decision has generated immediate critical reactions at international level. The UK, France and Germany have issued a joint statement mentioning the regret and the concern towards Trump’s decision and emphasizing the continuing commitment to the JCPOA which ‘remains important for their shared security’⁴⁰.

Also Federica Mogherini reiterates its worries towards the announcement of new sanctions and the commitment to the full implementation of the nuclear deal. In terms of public diplomacy, she sends a message, specifically, to the Iranian citizens and leaders, encouraging them to preserve the nuclear deal and not to let anyone to dismantle it. Mogherini underlines that the agreement ‘is the demonstration that win-win solutions are possible, through dialogue, engagement and perseverance’⁴¹. In efforts to rescue the deal and to protect EU’s the security interests and its economic investments, she has begun a series of meetings on 13th May: with Chinese counterparts, with Russian Foreign Minister, with the Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom⁴².

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Conclusion

Since its founding, the EU has been evoked as a peace project, a promoter of democratic principles and a defender of human rights. The task of presenting it as a unique model, of combating and of explaining its objectives, policies and activities can now be accomplished by the apparatus of public diplomacy. It has

39 CNN (2018) *Trump withdraws from Iran nuclear deal, isolating him further from world*, Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/08/politics/donald-trump-iran-deal-announcement-decision/index.html> (Accessed: 17 May 2018).

40 Independent (2018) *UK, France and Germany issue a joint statement attacking Trump’s withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal*, Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/iran-nuclear-deal-latest-trump-macron-us-theresa-may-merkel-europe-response-a8342126.html> (Accessed: 17 May 2018).

41 European Union External Action (2018) *Remarks by HR/VP Mogherini on the statement by US President Trump regarding the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA)*, Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/44238/remarks-high-representative-vice-president-federica-mogherini-statement-us-president-trump_en, (Accessed: 17 May 2018).

42 Arms Control Association (2018), *The P4+1 and Iran Nuclear Deal Alert, May 16, 2018*, Available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/print/9551> (Accessed: 17 March 2018).

gradually developed through the process of European integration and institutional development, and it is becoming more and more important. The creation of the European Commission in 1958, the General Directorate for Communication and the European External Action Service provided the formal framework for the practice of public diplomacy. The High Representative, together with the Special Representatives, plays an important role in promoting EU policies and interests in different regions and countries.

In my opinion, the EU proved to be one of the most important actors for keeping Iran engaged in dialogue and for launching diplomatic initiatives between 2003 and 2015. Starting with Javier Solana, the High Representative gave the negotiating format greater coherence, facilitating relations between the parties and bringing them back to the negotiating table even at times of inflexibility and sanctions.

In accordance with the chosen period, I focused on the role played by Federica Mogherini, the third High Representative, both during the talks and after the agreement was signed. This paper has evaluated the modalities and tone of her outreach to domestic and foreign (mainly Iranian) public audiences regarding the basic principles of the EU: belief in the possibility of a compromise based on respect, mutual gains, continued and constant commitment, concern for Iran's opportunities for development and bilateral co-operation, in order to maintain and promote global peace.

Moreover, through statements and speeches delivered by the High Representative, public diplomacy has helped us to see how the EU perceives Iran after the nuclear deal. Having participated actively in the negotiation process since 2003, the EU considered the agreement a major success in terms of the diplomatic principles outlined in the Treaty of Lisbon. JCPOA means the re-establishment of hope and trust between EU and Iran, the proof of peaceful intent and good faith engagement, and the beginning of enhanced cooperation in areas of mutual interest.