Chapter 7

Women on Mars: The Two Post-Lisbon High Representatives and EU Foreign Policy on Libya

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7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines women's leadership in EU foreign policy. Any women filling institutional posts in traditionally male-dominated policy sectors are bound to face a series of difficulties (Lazarou and Braden 2019; Williams 2017). Frequently, such difficulties are ascribed to the complexities of striking a balance between family life and work as mothers and carers (European Commission 2018). In the foreign policy sector, they are also often coupled with flawed cultural beliefs concerning women's alleged psychological and physical weaknesses (Gordon 2018; Prasad 2019). To misquote John Gray (1992), one could say that, in the political galaxy, Mars is still mainly inhabited by men. And yet, in the past decade two women have been nominated and acted as chief of EU foreign policy. Ever since the Lisbon Treaty's introduction of the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR, December 2009), in fact, Catherine Ashton and then Federica Mogherini have held the post.[1] Against this backdrop, two main questions arise: How did Ashton and Mogherini access their positions? And how have they performed their functions?

Addressing these questions not only provides crucial insights into women's leadership in the foreign policy sector, it also contributes to the book's aim of increasing our knowledge of women and leadership in the EU more broadly in multiple ways. First, examining the nomination of the two post-Lisbon HRs sheds light on the opportunities and obstacles faced by women seeking access to EU leadership in such a traditionally male-dominated sector. As a matter of fact, the nomination of two

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[1] This chapter opts for the term "HR" to differentiate between the High Representative's activities as chair of the Foreign Affairs Council and those as Vice President of the European Commission. It uses the term "Vice President," and therefore the abbreviation "VP," only when referring to the HR's activities in this latter capacity.

women as chiefs of EU foreign policy for two mandates in a row constitutes a *unicum* for the EU. The first, pre-Lisbon High Representative was a man (Javier Solana), and female Commissioners have routinely been allocated "soft" portfolios (chapter 4, Hartlapp and Blome, in this volume).

Second, examining the HR nominations and tenures of two different women allows us to identify whether and to what extent their leadership—or lack thereof—was shaped by the EU institutional framework (Tömmel 2013). Foreign policy epitomizes the opportunities and challenges the EU institutional system poses to women's leadership (Tömmel 2017). The post-Lisbon HR was seen as a strategic actor in the enhancement of the coherence, and hence effectiveness, of the EU's position in the international arena (Amadio Viceré 2018). Nonetheless, the multiple separations of power characterizing the EU system of government (Fabbrini 2010) may set several constraints on the HR's leadership in EU foreign policy (Aggestam and Johansson 2017).

Third, and lastly, the mandates of Ashton and Mogherini were deeply affected by several foreign policy crises. These include the difficult political transition in the Northern African and Middle Eastern region, the ensuing migration emergency, the Ukrainian crisis in the Eastern neighborhood, and the terrorist attacks in Europe (Amadio Viceré et al. 2020). The fact that both HRs had to juggle challenging situational factors during their mandates (Tömmel 2013; 2019) allows us to capture differences in their leadership in a nuanced manner.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of Ashton and Mogherini's leadership, we employ two complementary analytical approaches. We start by providing a comparative analysis of their nominations as HRs to examine their respective positional leadership and their behavioral leadership in facing the crisis in Libya (chapter 1, Müller and Tömmel, in this volume). Although Ashton and Mogherini both faced several political crises during their mandates, Libya represented a very complex policy dossier for both office holders. Ashton had to deal with the popular uprising and the civil war in Libya when she was in the process of establishing the new European External Action Service (EEAS; see Koops and Tercovich 2020). As for Mogherini, her tenure was characterized by the

migration crisis related to the Libyan political transition and, following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, the need to find a balance between ensuring Europe's security and saving lives in the Mediterranean.

The contribution of our chapter is twofold. On a theoretical level, we employ the original and innovative analytical framework outlined in the introduction to this edited volume (chapter 1, Müller and Tömmel). By doing so, we participate in the effort to move research beyond the current state of the art. On an empirical level, we shed light on the access to and exercise of women's leadership in EU foreign policy, which has been largely uncharted territory. In particular, we conduct an empirical examination by triangulating primary and secondary sources, complementing the analysis of EU official documents with information gathered in academic and so-called gray literature.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, we outline the analytical framework and make a set of arguments on its basis; second, we examine the positional leadership of HR Ashton and HR Mogherini; third, we examine whether and how Mogherini and Ashton exercised behavioral leadership.

Our analysis shows that the appointments of Ashton and Mogherini can be explained by three equally important and interdependent factors: the situational, the institutional, and the structural settings. The different leadership performances of the two HRs in the management of the Libyan crisis, in turn, can be explained by the situational and the institutional setting.

7.2 Analytical Framework

Positional Leadership

Based on the analytical approach to positional leadership adopted in this volume (chapter 1, Müller and Tömmel) and on the Lisbon Treaty's provisions concerning nomination of the HR, we argue that Ashton and Mogherini's access to leadership was influenced by three equally important and

interdependent factors: the situational, the institutional, and the structural setting. For each of these factors, we can develop a specific argument about the two HRs' positional leadership.

First, the *situational setting*. The situational setting in which Ashton's and Mogherini's nominations occurred might have had a significant influence on their respective selections for a leadership position (Tömmel 2019; Barber 1992). As foreign policy is one of member states' core state powers (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2014), national governments are generally resistant to handing over power to the Union and its actors in this field. In the post-Lisbon era, national governments would thus have been expected to seek to limit the HR's power and scope of responsibilities. The probability of member states' pressure in this regard could have limited the attractiveness of the post. The situational setting encompasses foreign policy crises as well. Over the past ten years, the EU faced a series of crises both within and outside its borders. The attractiveness of the HR's portfolio to member states might also have been limited by the fear that anyone holding the office would face a volatile and increasingly hostile international arena.

Second, *the institutional setting*. Institutional settings may have significant implications for a person's access to a position of authority over other people (Tömmel 2013; 2017). These implications might be particularly evident in EU foreign policy governance, which is characterized by multiple separations of power. In principle, the HR is entitled to coordinate EU foreign policy's instruments (Rüger 2011). Nevertheless, the functioning logic of EU foreign policy institutional construction allows the European Council to exert tight control over this institutional actor (Amadio Viceré 2020; Helwig 2017). Added to this, the HR's job risks being an impossible one due to the multiple tasks assigned to it (Laursen 2013). The nomination of two women as HRs can thus also be ascribed to the post's institutional features, which render it less influential than other high-level political positions within the EU.

Third, the *structural setting*. Women often encounter a "glass ceiling" in their career paths. Frequently, they do not manage to reach the highest political positions due to gender stereotypes and

role expectations (Ridgeway 2001:652). In the foreign policy sector, a "hard" and politically prestigious area, member states' representatives would have probably preferred to nominate male Commissioners. In principle, since it is those representatives meeting within the European Council that nominate the HR, their preference in this regard could be of crucial importance. Nonetheless, the HR's appointment is confirmed only upon approval by the European Parliament (EP; see TEU, Art. 18). Notably, the EP has generally promoted gender balance in the allocation of high-level political positions within the EU. It is therefore likely that, when nominating the candidate for HR, member states took into consideration that the EP would presumably continue to support gender balance.

Behavioral Leadership

Considering the analytical approach to behavioral leadership adopted in this volume (chapter 1, Müller and Tömmel, in this volume) and the Lisbon Treaty's provisions concerning the HR's main tasks, we argue that Ashton and Mogherini's leadership performances can be explained through two equally important and interdependent factors: the situational and the institutional setting. For each of these factors, we can again make a specific argument about Ashton and Mogherini's leadership performances.

First, *performing within the situational setting*. The situational setting in which the HR exerts her leadership can have relevant implications on her performance (Tömmel 2019). It can influence member states' and EU institutions' specific policy preferences. Due to the intergovernmental nature of EU foreign policy governance, when crises and conflicts have unequal costs among member states, the HR's activities may be severely constrained by policy stalemates within the European Council and the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC). On the contrary, in situations in which member states' preferences are aligned, the HR may be able to significantly influence EU foreign policy (Amadio Viceré 2020). Furthermore, the situational setting includes the attitude of member states' representatives and fellow Commissioners toward the HR as an institutional actor. Since the post-Lisbon HR is placed at the

crossroads of supranational and intergovernmental policy making and execution, interinstitutional clashes are likely to occur that hinder the HR's leadership performance.

Second, *performing within the institutional setting*. As both chair of the FAC (TEU, Art. 27.1) and VP of the European Commission (TEU, Art. 17.4; 17.5), the post-Lisbon HR is at the nexus of the intergovernmental and supranational foreign policy sectors. Through her influence as chair of the FAC, the HR may activate a reciprocal process between herself and the foreign ministers via bilateral discussions. By using her agenda-setting prerogatives and, especially, by tempering divergences among member states' representatives (Puetter 2014: 61–65), she may mobilize and persuade foreign ministers toward specific policy directions. In parallel with her work within the FAC, the HR may establish a reciprocal process with the Heads of State and Government (Heads, henceforth) by participating in the European Council's discussions when foreign policy issues are on the agenda (TEU, Art. 15.2). While doing so, she may promote alignment between the positions of the two intergovernmental forums (Amadio Viceré and Fabbrini 2017). Given the European Council's preeminence over the HR and EU foreign policy governance more broadly, the achievement of such alignment is particularly relevant to the success of her leadership performance (TEU, Art. 15; Art. 22). At the same time, the HR may facilitate the pursuit of goals that she and member states' representatives mutually embrace, a crucial competence given the decentralized nature of EU foreign policy resources.

As VP of the European Commission, in turn, the HR may establish a reciprocal process with the External Relations Commissioners. By fostering the achievement of specific EU foreign policy goals among them, the HR may help ensure the consistency of EU activities on the supranational side of EU foreign policy (TEU, Art. 18.4). Furthermore, as VP, she may use the Commission's technical and material resources as leverage during the process of intergovernmental deliberation within the FAC and the European Council. By doing so, with the EEAS's support, she may influence the general direction of EU foreign policy and hence the pursuit of goals that she, member states' representatives,

and the External Relations Commissioners aim to achieve through both supranational and intergovernmental instruments (TEU, Art. 21.3).

7.3 Positional Leadership

The First Post-Lisbon HR: Catherine Ashton

The accession to power in a highly male-dominated sector of a relatively unexperienced woman might have been facilitated by the complex and challenging nature of the situational setting in which the nomination occurred. Most likely, once appointed, the first post-Lisbon HR would have been constrained by member states resistant to centralization of foreign policy powers. In particular, the French and British heads of state and government ~~the French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the British Prime Minister David Cameron~~ were determined to shape and control the new EU foreign policy structure. Furthermore, in the eyes of member states' representatives, the HR might have lost some of its attractiveness as a high-level portfolio due to the challenges stemming from the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty (Spence 2015). In fact, the first office holder would inevitably have to handle the implementation of the new treaty while dealing with representatives from the Commission and the Council. In particular, the HR would have to carry out a highly delicate task: the establishment of the EEAS, the diplomatic corps of a union of 28 member states (Blom and Vanhoonacker 2015; Spence and Batora 2015).

As for the institutional setting, records show that the process that led to Ashton's selection was shaped by the institutional features of the post, which render it less influential than other high-level positions in the EU. Indeed, the biggest member states seemed to consider the HR as less "attractive" than other high-level EU positions. When the UK proposed its candidate, in fact, the HR was essentially the only high-level position still open. José Manuel Barroso had already been nominated again as President of the Commission. The then British Prime Minister and Labour Party leader, Gordon Brown, had just failed to obtain the appointment of Tony Blair as President of the European

Council. Against this backdrop, Brown proposed a potential candidate as the first post-Lisbon HR only after former Belgian Prime Minister Herman van Rompuy was appointed to head the European Council and Michel Barnier of France had obtained the post of Internal Market Commissioner (Howorth 2011).

Lastly, concerning the structural setting, it would be inappropriate to consider Ashton's nomination as an example of a woman's breaking of the glass ceiling. When she was nominated as first post-Lisbon HR, Ashton faced several hurdles related to gender stereotypes and role expectations. While the criticism she faced was based especially on the comparison with her male predecessor (Javier Solana), her nomination especially disappointed those who would have preferred a male candidate, such as David Miliband, Carl Bildt, Olli Rehn, or Massimo D'Alema (Castle 2009). In this regard, it is relevant to note that the British choice was initially a man, UK Foreign Secretary Miliband. As Miliband was not interested in becoming HR, Brown suggested the names of two other men: former defense ministers Geoff Hoon and John Hutton. However, because of the "horse trading" logic underpinning the allocation of high-level political positions in the EU, the first post-Lisbon HR had necessarily to come from a big Northern member state; be affiliated with a center-left party; and ideally be a woman (Howorth 2011). After all, a man from a small Southern member state and the member of a center-right party had just been nominated President of the European Commission. Most importantly, nominating a woman would increase the chances of the EP giving a green light to the candidate, and hence to the entire Commission. Therefore, despite Gordon's initial indications, the other Heads chose Ashton for the role (Barber 2010).

After the European Council nominated Ashton as HR, the members of the European Parliament (MEPs) gave their approval. Evidence suggests that their decision to do so can be mostly ascribed to the EP's interest in pursuing gender-balanced policies. In fact, MEPs were quite critical about Ashton's professional profile. In a nutshell, the candidate's foreign policy experience was considered insufficient (Koops and Tercovich 2020). This widespread opinion is clearly reflected in Ashton's first encounter with the EP in January 2010. On that occasion, several MEPs judged her performance as

"uninspired and uninspiring," labeling her replies as "rich in subjunctives and poor on specifics" (Vogel 2009: 1).

The Second Post-Lisbon HR: Federica Mogherini

With regard to the situational setting, it is reasonable to argue that the attractiveness of the HR as a high-level, hard portfolio had not increased by the time of Mogherini's July 2014 nomination, even though it could be assumed that the new HR would benefit from the institutional initiatives undertaken by her predecessor, including the establishment of the EEAS, and have the opportunity to build on Ashton's successful work in areas such as the negotiations with Iran (Bassiri Tabrizi and Kienzle 2020) and the EU-brokered dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia (Amadio Viceré 2016). Nonetheless, the continuation of conflicts in Syria and Ukraine and the increasingly strained enlargement process in the Western Balkans underscored the challenging international context in which the new HR would have had to operate. Internally, meanwhile, the new office holder would have had to act in a situational context affected by the unfolding of the eurozone crisis and the ensuing decline in the EU's and member states' resources, as well as by the popular discontent triggered by migratory pressure on Europe. To sum up, both the international and the internal situational setting in which the second post-Lisbon HR was nominated reduced the attractiveness of the post.

As for the institutional setting, evidence suggests that Mogherini's selection as HR was influenced by the qualifying features of high-level institutional EU positions. Because of the distribution of such positions, after a member of the European People's Party (i.e., Jean-Claude Junker) was nominated President of the European Commission, it was accepted that the new HR should come from a social-democratic party. At the same time, the nomination had to respect a geographical equilibrium among the member states, according to which either Italy or Poland could present a candidate. It is in this context that the Italian social-democratic Prime Minister Matteo Renzi put forth Mogherini's candidacy as HR. Renzi strongly supported Mogherini, especially when some Central and

Eastern European member states opposed her nomination on the basis of her alleged softness toward Russia (Vincenti 2014; Keating 2014). There are reasons to believe that Renzi's strong support was not entirely based on Mogherini's talents. Before nominating her, Renzi had rejected an offer from German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande to support his predecessor, Enrico Letta, for the position of President of the European Council (Valentino 2019). Renzi arguably saw that having his rival setting the agenda of the preeminent EU intergovernmental forum would put him in an uncomfortable position (Dempsey 2014). Unlike Letta, Mogherini was an ally of his. Hence, although the HR has less sway than the European Council's president, the Italian Prime Minister hoped to increase his personal influence in the EU through her appointment to the post (see Valentino 2019; Vincenti 2014).

Concerning the structural setting, in this case it would also be inappropriate to conceive Mogherini's nomination as a breaking of the glass ceiling. As with her predecessor, her nomination was colored by gender stereotypes and role expectations. In the first place, many were of the opinion that Mogherini was too young to be appointed as the second post-Lisbon HR (Gardner 2014; Tempest 2015). As it happened, though she had served only eight months as Italy's foreign minister, that still gave her more top-level foreign policy experience than Ashton had when the latter took office as HR (see Cameron cited in Dempsey 2014: 1). Regardless, there was speculation about the possible nomination of more senior male candidates, such as Radek Sikorski, Joschka Fischer, or Carl Bildt (Dempsey 2014). Additionally, powerful MEPs, such as Elmar Brok, expressed their disappointment with her nomination (Müller 2016) while using gendered stereotypes (Hansen 2016). Crucially, however, the EP had explicitly asked Juncker, the new Commission President, to reach a gender balance among his Commissioners (Keating and King 2014), while suggesting the allocation of the HR post to a woman. Eventually, after a well-received performance at her EP hearings (Vincenti 2014), MEPs confirmed Mogherini's appointment as the second post-Lisbon HR.

7.4 Behavioral Leadership: Foreign Policy on Libya

The First Post-Lisbon HR: Catherine Ashton

In terms of situational setting, when civilian protests broke out in Libya in February 2011 and Colonel Muammar Gaddafi responded with a campaign of violent repression, member states' preferences over the management of the Libyan crisis clearly diverged. While France, Germany, and the Netherlands proposed the imposition of sanctions on Gaddafi's regime, Malta, Cyprus, and Italy opposed them. Many southern European countries feared that such measures could hamper cooperation with Libya in the management of migration flows across the Mediterranean (Sutherlands 2011). Some European leaders, including Sarkozy in France, Cameron in the UK, and Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, seemed ready to make clear to the first post-Lisbon HR that they still wanted to play a crucial role in the definition of EU foreign policy in Libya (Fabbrini 2014). In the immediate post-Lisbon period, institutional overlaps and tensions stemming from the fight for competences and resources and clashing organizational cultures characterized EU crisis management (Koenig 2016). The EEAS's establishment, in particular, took several months of interinstitutional negotiations. As the Libyan crisis escalated, the HR was busy trying to make her diplomatic service operational. In the words of Ashton, the situation could be likened to "trying to fly a plane while still bolting the wings on" (EEAS 2013: 1).

As for the institutional setting in which the HR performed her leadership, despite member states' diverging preferences over the Libyan crisis, she initially seemed to establish a reciprocal process between herself and the foreign ministers within the FAC. On 20 February 2011, Ashton expressed concerns regarding the situation in Libya and condemned Gaddafi's use of violence (High Representative 2011a). On the following day, under her chairmanship, the FAC requested the halt of violence as well (FAC 2011). However, the HR appeared unable to establish such a reciprocal process with the Heads (Helwig and Rüger 2014). Ashton's inability to promote specific foreign policy goals among them emerged clearly during the extraordinary European Council held on 11 March 2011. On

that occasion, the HR opposed the imposition of a no-fly zone, siding with Germany and those who believed that any action in Libya should take place under a UN mandate and with the support of the Arab countries (High Representative 2011b). France and the UK, for their part, called for a strong response to Gaddafi's violent repression of civilians (Traynor and Watt 2011; Koenig 2014). Sarkozy went as far as to accuse Ashton of being passive about Gaddafi's brutalities in Tripoli (Fabbrini 2014). In the end, the Heads urged Gaddafi to step down and recognize the Benghazi-based Transitional National Council (TNC) as a "political interlocutor," without mentioning the no-fly zone (European Council 2011: 3).

One could adjudge the lack of reference to a no-fly zone in the European Council's statement as evidence that the HR had succeeded. The records, however, show that Ashton did not manage to foster a process of reciprocal coordination among the member states in the representation of the EU's position in the UN Security Council (UNSC), as per TEU, Art. 34 and TFEU, 220.2. Six days after the European Council took place, in fact, the UNSC (17 March 2011) approved the imposition of no-fly zone over Libya (UNSC 2011). Notably, EU member states represented within the UNSC pursued the same national priorities they had supported within the European Council a few days beforehand. France and the UK voted in favor of UNSC Resolution 1973, which imposed the no-fly zone, while Germany abstained. It is reasonable to assume that the Heads' agreement on recognizing the TNC in March 2011 was promoted by the French government rather than by Ashton. In fact, France had unilaterally recognized the TNC the day before the European Council took place, a move described by a French diplomat as "*diplomatie électrochoc*" (interview reported in Koenig 2012). As a consequence, ~~the EP and~~ several members of the ~~M~~EP~~s~~ openly questioned the HR's leadership and blamed her for not having provided a "proactive approach" on Libya (McMahon and Williss 2001).

Further evidence of Ashton's leadership performance within the EU institutional setting emerges from her management of the possible deployment of a military common security and defense policy (CSDP) operation in Libya. Certainly, the Council of the EU's decision on 1 April 2011 to

deploy the European Union Military Operation in Libya (EUFOR Libya) seems to reflect the HR's advocacy of the EU exercising "soft power with a hard edge" (High Representative 2011b: 1). In fact, EUFOR Libya's deployment was linked to the humanitarian activities of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). Rather than to Ashton's leadership performance, however, this can be ascribed to member states' lack of agreement over a full-scale military operation (Gomes 2011; Euronews 2011). In addition, shortly after the European Council's decision, the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Valerie Amos, made clear to Ashton that UNOCHA did not want to be associated with the EU military operation, fearing that its presence could put humanitarian workers in danger (Amos 2011). The planned operation was ultimately never deployed (Philips 2011).

As for the supranational side of EU foreign policy, Ashton struggled to foster a process of reciprocal coordination between herself and the Commissioners involved in EU external activities. The relationship between the EEAS's Crisis Platform and the European Commission's Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) was especially marred by interinstitutional tensions. In principle, the HR's decision to establish an EU Crisis Platform, bringing together the EEAS and the Commission's relevant services, represented a significant attempt to promote consistency in the use of institutional instruments, and hence a comprehensive EU approach to external conflicts and crises. Yet this approach was mainly focused on maintaining interinstitutional stability, without identifying operationalizing methods and practical solutions to inconsistencies and overlapping (Amadio Viceré 2014). During the Libyan crisis, in particular, DG ECHO refused to be coordinated by the newly established EEAS's Department of Crisis Response (interviews reported in Koenig 2016). Consequently, rather than Ashton, it was Kristalina Georgieva, the European Commissioner for International Co-operation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, who promoted and led the EU humanitarian response to the crisis.

The Second Post-Lisbon HR: Federica Mogherini

The situational setting within which Mogherini operated was more favorable than Ashton's situational setting. Political constellations were changing across European national politics. In France, Sarkozy left the presidency to the socialist François Hollande. Cameron was increasingly focused on British national politics. As of February 2014, Renzi, who belonged to Mogherini's original social-democratic party, was leading Italy. In addition, from July to December 2014, Italy chaired the Council of the EU's rotating presidency and, together with Malta and Greece, was very vocal about irregular migration. Germany and France, meanwhile, were increasingly concerned about foreign fighters returning to Europe from Syria. All this provided fertile ground for an alignment of preferences among member states over the need to counter the influx of migrants from Libya, and hence for the HR to exercise her leadership in this regard. Furthermore, since the EEAS was fully operational when Mogherini took office, the second post-Lisbon HR could focus more than her predecessor on increasing interinstitutional coordination within EU foreign policy (Von Ondarza and Scheler 2017).

Concerning the institutional setting, evidence shows that the renegotiation of the mandate of the European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya represented an opportunity for the HR to exercise leadership as an agenda setter within EU intergovernmental forums. While foreign ministers were in favor of EU engagement in Libya (FAC 2014), Mogherini's priority was to address the humanitarian tragedy happening in the Mediterranean Sea. Mogherini used the EUBAM review to champion among the member states' representatives the change of focus that, she argued, was necessary to avoid a deterioration of the migration emergency (High Representative 2017). Consequently, following the FAC held on 16 March 2015, foreign ministers requested the HR present a proposal on CSDP activities in Libya. They asked Mogherini to address their security concerns linked to migration even as they stressed their humanitarian concerns (FAC 2015a, 2015b). The interim EUBAM strategic review, released in April 2015, arguably reflected member states' appetite for a CSDP mission more centered on migration. It stated that, in case the civilian mission was relaunched,

its main priority "would be on developing the Libyan naval coastguard's capacity and delivering a search and rescue concept" (EEAS 2015a: 1).

On 19 April 2015, around 900 migrants lost their lives in a shipwreck off the Libyan coast. The tragic event not only pushed the EU to launch a joint naval mission in the Mediterranean, it also helped Mogherini to successfully align the FAC's position with the European Council's. The day after the shipwreck, Mogherini presented to the FAC a ten-point plan addressing the issue of migrant traffickers (EEAS 2015a). A few days later, the Political and Security Committee (PSC), composed of member states' representatives at the ambassadorial level, invited the EEAS to present options to counter the smuggling of migrants in the Mediterranean (EEAS 2015a). The extraordinary European Council held on 23 April 2015 tasked the HR with the preparation of a naval operation to address irregular migration across the Mediterranean, while implicitly referencing the involvement of criminal networks in Libya (EEAS 2015b).

As events unfolded quickly, under the HR's direction, the EEAS had to come up with a Crisis Management Concept (CMC) for the mission. The CMC is normally based on the assessment presented in the Political Framework for a Crisis Approach (PFCA). As there was no PFCA on migration, however, nor time to prepare one, the EEAS employed the analysis contained in the PFCA on Libya. On Mogherini's indications, this document did not frame the EU support to Libya in terms of facilitating the transition from an autocratic regime to democracy (EEAS 2015b: 2). Instead, it listed the threats to the EU, including the increasing irregular migration flows, proliferation of foreign fighters, spread of weapon smuggling in the region, and risk to strategic economic sectors. Consequently, the EU focus on Libya shifted from the country's political transition to the migration emergency. It is in this context that EUNAFOR MED, the first-ever joint EU naval mission aimed at fighting human trafficking and arms smuggling, was agreed to on 22 June 2015. Notably, it took only two months to move from a political initiative to a full CSDP operation. With remarkable swiftness

for an EU mission, consensus was built among EU member states, capabilities were identified, and the deployment started (Faleg and Blockmans 2015).

Mogherini was more effective than Ashton in exercising leadership on the supranational side of EU foreign policy. From the beginning of her mandate, she took advantage of her role as VP of the Commission (Von Ondarza and Scheler 2017). The second post-Lisbon HR gained the trust of her fellow Commissioners in the Group of External Action. In particular, Mogherini established a reciprocal process with them by regularly reporting on the progress of her activities in Libya. Notably, she also organized several joint missions with her fellow Commissioners (Blockmans and Montesano 2015). At the same time, she promoted a special relationship with the EP by regularly meeting with the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) to report on the status of the various policy dossiers, including Libya. This approach was not only welcomed by her fellow Commissioners and the MEPs, it also reinforced Mogherini's status as the main interlocutor for issues related to EU foreign policy (Blockmans and Russack 2015).

7.5 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has offered an assessment of the positional and behavioral leadership of the first two post-Lisbon HRs in EU foreign policy. By shedding light on the processes that allowed Ashton and Mogherini to access the HR's office and by evaluating their leadership performance in facing the Libyan crisis, we offered an in-depth study of women's leadership in the EU. Concerning gender stereotypes and role expectations, we have shown that these were encountered by both Ashton and Mogherini when they became HRs. However, we found no evidence that they had a significant effect on the two HRs' exercise of their functions during the Libyan crisis.

As for positional leadership, based on the arguments presented in our analytical framework, we can draw some meaningful conclusions about the appointment of two women as HRs. The appointment of Ashton and Mogherini in what is traditionally considered a male-dominated portfolio

is explained by three factors. First, in terms of situational setting, because of the growing instability of the geopolitical situation and the institutional uncertainties related to the Lisbon Treaty's implementation, the role of HR was considered an institutionally ambitious and highly contestedinsidious position. Hence, member states were less keen to seek a portfolio that could hamper the credibility and future prospects of their candidates. Second, in terms of institutional setting, among the top positions, the HR was considered less relevant than the President of the Commission, the President of the European Council, and even the Commissioner for Internal Market. Against this backdrop, the Heads chose to leave the "less powerful" position to a woman. Third, and finally, the structural setting: the appointment of two women as HR should not be considered a success story in breaking the glass ceiling's constraints. In fact, despite the EP's growing pressure to maintain a good gender balance among the EU's high political positions, European leaders still tended to favor men.

Concerning the differences between the leadership performances of the two HRs, they are empirically evident in the management of the Libyan crisis. At the intergovernmental level, Ashton focused on finding a common denominator among the member states' positions. Yet she often had to leave the leading role to other actors, such as the Heads of State, the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council, or the EP. Overall, we can conclude that in the case of Libya she could exercise leadership neither in the intergovernmental settings nor in the supranational EU forums. She was sidelined, attacked and—at best—ignored by member states' representatives. At the supranational level, Ashton could not efficiently coordinate the EU's external actions. Her attempts to foster coordination were often interpreted by other Commissioners as ways to impose her—and the EEAS's—leadership on them. On the contrary, Mogherini benefitted from the changing situational setting to set a new agenda for EU actions in the Mediterranean and to reshape the EU approach on Libya. Overall, she was successful in interpreting member states' preferences and in adjusting her narrative to gain support from her different audiences. Her active involvement in the EU supranational forums reinforced her position in the intergovernmental debates as well.

To conclude, even if both HR Ashton and HR Mogherini faced similar challenges in accessing their leadership positions, they represent two quite different models for how women may operate in a complex, male-dominated institutional system such as the domain of EU foreign policy.

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