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Q1: Name

Janet Hancock

Q2: Organisation

Former FCO

Q3: Type of Organisation

- Member of Public

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Q6: What subject area of the Foreign Policy Report does your evidence relate to?

- Institutional Framework for EU Action in Foreign Affairs

Q7: What are the comparative advantages/disadvantages of working through the EU in the area you wish to comment on, rather than the UK working independently?

Advantage may often - but not always - lie in having the weight of a bloc of states rather than a single state. Diplomatic action and e.g. the imposition of sanctions can be more effective if the EU acts together. That said, greater weight can usually be brought to bear if non-EU UNSC members are also involved. The major disadvantage is that the EU must always move at the speed of the slowest in the convoy. This can be a major impediment to any form of action, as we have seen time and again over Israel/Palestine. The UK can be as effective acting in concert with other UNSC members and a range of states, EU and non-EU, as it can be with the EU. What is important is to have clear goals and consensus on action and follow up.

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Q8: In what areas of global affairs does the EU add value or deliver impact or not on behalf of the UK?

Does it? We so often find ourselves obliged to water down policy statements in order to achieve EU consensus. The UK can be constrained from taking action in the national interest because some EU members may not go along. Huge amounts of time are wasted in trying to cajole possibly one recalcitrant MS which could otherwise be spent in searching for solutions to problems and for positive outcomes. The Balkan conflict and subsequent efforts to stabilise the region is an example.

Q9: How effective is the EU at combining its foreign, defence, economic and civil contingency policy instruments to deliver best effect in foreign policy? What, if anything, should it do differently?

Generally it isn't. The action taken on Somali piracy is perhaps an example of a success. The problem there seemed to be the excessive weight given to human rights considerations and little idea on what to do with the criminals when they were apprehended. Action to stem illegal migration on the other hand does not seem to be successful. There has been little co-ordination and much MS activity has been directed towards shuffling the problem off elsewhere. More resources in dealing with illegal immigrants at point of arrival would be a start. Further co-ordinated effort in dealing with source and transit countries to press home the message that illegal immigration and facilitation is a crime and will be treated as such in all EU MS might have some effect. Though probably not much....

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Q10: How effective are the EU's delivery mechanisms? Would any changes make them more effective, and if so, which ones and why?

Not equipped to answer that one

Q11: Would a different division of EU and Member State competence in a particular area produce more effective policies? If so, how and why?

Doubtful unless changes were made to the need for consensus at the policy formulation level. Hard to see the Smalls agreeing to that.

Q12: How might the national interest be served by action being taken in this field at a different level e.g. regional, national, UN, NATO, OECD, G20 – either in addition or as an alternative to action at EU level?

The UK should take action with whatever regional or international forum/a is appropriate to the task in hand. If EU support is forthcoming well and good, but the unwieldy decision making mechanisms of the EU do not lend themselves to rapid decision making, still less action. EU support can add weight but shouldn't be allowed to act as a brake.

Q13: What future challenge/opportunities might we face in this area of policy and what impact might these have on the balance of competence between the UK and the EU?

We've already seen an example with Libya, and now with Syria. But the major challenge will come post conflict and the relationship with the region - including Israel/Palestine, Iran and the Gulf will almost certainly have to be redefined. Great opportunity there if we can seize it. A further challenge will be offered by Russia, where EU MS have strategic economic interests. Again, UK interests could diverge from e.g. fellow MS which depend on Russian energy supplies.

Q14: Are there any general points you wish to make which are not captured above?

Much of the above seems to suggest UK would be better off outside the EU. That's not necessarily the case, but UK interests could be better served with a more flexible relationship which allowed more scope for action in other fora where the UK determined that it would be more appropriate and effective.