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EU lessons from the evacuation of Kabul: Part 2 – Critical factors in the failure to prepare for evacuation

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Credit: EUROPEAN UNION

Table of contents

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Executive summary

"We all misread the situation", the then German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, admitted on 16 August.[1] This has the merit of honesty and conciseness, and, simply put, he was right. But the economy of words should not stand in the way of deeper scrutiny of the errors committed. Three factors of failure are evident:

1. **Dependence on the US and NATO groupthink.** The US was always at the forefront of transatlantic engagement in Afghanistan. The Europeans happily followed, with NATO acting as the driving belt and repository of collective decisions. Afghanistan revealed a military alliance dependent on US leadership. Most of the other Allies were largely incapable of critical examination, as illustrated by the absence of comprehensive discussions when the West's military withdrawal was decided on 14 April 2021. In the case of the EU, the implicit division of labour with NATO also played a role. Afghanistan had been the US and NATO's endeavour and responsibility and not the EU's, creating the expectation that a crisis would also be handled at the NATO level.

2. **A collective failure of anticipation.** Once the decision had been taken to withdraw militarily, the Allies failed to plan for the worst-case scenario of a collapse of Afghan security and state functions. This absence of anticipation left everyone unprepared for the events of August. On the EU side, there was not only a lack of intelligence but also a striking deficit of attention to what was happening. When the Taliban entered Kabul on 15 August, EU institutions were largely unprepared. A few uncertain days followed, informed as much by TV images as by reliable information on the ground. At the European External Action Service (EEAS) headquarters, it was a time of improvisation. The EU Delegation to Afghanistan was neither staffed nor ready for an evacuation effort in the timeframe set by the US retreat and at the scale required by the EU's duty of care.

3. **The absence of European will and capabilities.** EU Council discussions in the critical months of March to July revealed that Afghanistan was not a foreign policy priority for the EU executive. This said, even if contingency plans had been drawn up in April 2021, few would have envisaged a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) evacuation. For that, the operational capacities are too weak, the procedural hurdles too high, and the gains of joint CSDP action too low. In August, the EU's crisis management readiness was also tested and proved deficient. The Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangements, which support rapid and coordinated EU decision-making in complex crises, were never activated. The Political and Security Committee (PSC), which generally meets twice a week, was similarly dormant in August and only convened in urgency when an extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meeting had been called.

The evacuation from Kabul showed that, while rife with discussions on 'strategic autonomy', Brussels institutions still lack basic implements in terms of political will, appropriate decision-making structures, or military capabilities.

Introduction

"We all misread the situation". German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas' assessment of the Kabul evacuation on 16 August merits honesty and conciseness.[2] And simply put, he is right. But the economy of words should not stand in the way of deeper scrutiny of the errors committed. Still today, the EU has not engaged in a comprehensive ex-post evaluation of the factors of failure ahead of and during the critical summer months in 2021. By failing to deal with the past, one also does not learn about the future. Building on the preceding chapter's analysis of events leading up to and during the evacuation, we identify three main factors in the West's Kabul fiasco:

(i) a collective failure of anticipation;

(ii) NATO groupthink and dependence on the US; and

(iii) the absence of European will and capabilities.

1. A collective failure of anticipation

The seed of failure in Afghanistan's endgame undoubtedly lies in the Trump administration's Doha Agreement of February 2020. At this pivotal moment, the US switched from a condition-based departure to a calendar-based retreat. The Taliban must have realised then that if they were prepared to both hold their ground and fight, they would prevail.

When President Biden set the final date for exit in April 2021, the Taliban got confirmation that the primary US objective had become that they 'wanted out'. Securing peace, stability, and other gains from the last two decades consequently came second. In such a strategic setting, the chances of achieving secondary aims are greatly compromised.

INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

In the subsequent unfolding of events, the lack of reliable intelligence and a long history of misreading the situation on the ground proved critical. From what one can judge, the international intelligence community provided diverging assessments of the consequences of a full troop withdrawal. On the one hand, there were clear warnings of the risks of a Taliban overrun in public intelligence reports, the press, and within the international community. On the other, it seems that up until the final days, allied governments were advised internally that it would take months before the Taliban would seize Kabul.[3]

As late as 11 August, the US Intelligence Community assumed it would take 30 to 90 days before Kabul would fall, a timeframe they had estimated to be six months in June. Yet Mark Milley, the US chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also stated in front of the US Senate that it had been his personal opinion that "at least 2,500 US troops were needed to guard against a collapse of the Kabul government and a return to Taliban rule."[4]

European intelligence services likely offered no better advice. The German Federal Intelligence Service allegedly advised the *Bundestag* in June that a Taliban victory was only likely in 18 to 24 months.[5] In that regard, Germany's public broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* proved more prescient with an article published on 14 April, the day the Biden administration announced the unconditional withdrawal of all US troops, titled: "Has the US just handed over Afghanistan to the Taliban?"[6]

DENIAL OF THE WORST CASE

Intelligence services proved of little help, perhaps due to feedback loops between political expectations and intelligence reports. The true mistake, however, lies in not *planning* for the possible collapse of Afghan security and state functions. Scenario planning goes to the heart of what the military does. For a military organisation like NATO, the lack of planning for worst-case outcomes is startling. It shows the extent to which its military planning is dependent on the political signals it receives. Ultimately, it is this absence of strategic anticipation that caught allies and the international community so unprepared for the events in August.

In fairness, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg warned in November 2020 that a US withdrawal from Afghanistan might cause the situation on the ground to deteriorate rapidly. Still, the emphasis remained on the role Afghan security forces would play. The US and NATO were trapped and blinded by, it seems, not only their massive investments and association with the Afghan army but also their own narrative of success in Afghanistan. In summit after summit – Prague (2002), Chicago (2012), Cardiff (2014), Warsaw (2016) and London (2019) – NATO leaders made Afghanistan a beacon of the alliance's operational engagement abroad. Even at the Summit in June 2021, just weeks before the final debacle, NATO leaders hoped for a lasting inclusive political settlement that would "safeguard the gains of the last 20-years".[7]

Envisaging failure is never easy. And outside the conclaves of NATO, few Europeans can claim better foresight, be it individually or collectively. A lack of awareness and intelligence regarding the reality, together with an unwillingness to acknowledge the signs politically, clearly contributed to the EU's failure to imagine and prepare for the Taliban's quick arrival in Kabul. However, in the EU's case, there is also a prominent third reason for failure: its implicit division of labour with NATO. Afghanistan was the US and NATO's endeavour and responsibility, not the EU's war.

2. NATO groupthink and dependence on the US

In many ways, from start to finish, Afghanistan was America's war. Europeans went along in 2001, in the words of then German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, because of "unrestricted – I emphasise: unrestricted – solidarity" with the US.[8] But over two decades of engagement in Afghanistan, Europe never had any real say. Successive strategies, drawdowns, surges, negotiations and peace deals were always decided by Washington and according to US domestic politics and calendars. It is not that NATO Allies shied away from the collective effort: alongside the 2,500 American soldiers who died in combat, 1,144 other Allied soldiers laid down their lives in Afghanistan.[9] When Presidents Trump and Biden set their final dates for departure, European Allies had more troops in Afghanistan than the US. And yet, Europeans were still hardly consulted.

WHEN THE US DECIDES

In retrospect, this dependency on US conduct and decisions is one of the most remarkable aspects of the Allies' engagement and also a direct source of failure. In a 120-page report from August 2021, the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction provides a scathing assessment of the US military and government departments' (in)capacity to understand the Afghan context and define, coordinate and execute workable strategies.

One of the most candid assessments in the report is that of Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute, who was US Deputy National Security Adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan (2007-2013) and US Permanent Representative to NATO (2013-2017):

> *"We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan. […] We didn't have the foggiest notion of what we were undertaking. […] It's really much worse than you think. There [was] a fundamental gap of understanding on the front end, overstated objectives, an overreliance on the military, and a lack of understanding of the resources necessary."*[10]

The numbers speak for themselves: the US spent an astounding $837 billion on warfighting in Afghanistan and an equally incredible $145 billion trying to rebuild the country.[11] For over a decade, this spending surpassed every established threshold for aid saturation, even by as much as five to ten times, with only one conceivable outcome: endemic corruption and the breakdown of self-sustained economic and societal structures.

… NATO FOLLOWS

These facts were in plain sight. Still, one would be hard-pressed to find European leaders from the past two decades, be they German, British or French, who can claim to have had the capacity to build a case and influence Washington on the course of action. Instead, while the Afghanistan involvement lasted, the US would call the shots, and the Europeans would also happily follow, with NATO acting as the driving belt and repository of collective decisions.

Afghanistan confirmed the extent to which the Alliance is premised on US leadership. Most of the other Allies are stuck in herd mentality, not sufficiently capable of critical examination. At best, non-US Allies have held a negative or 'caveat' power, a fact that in turn is deplored by the US as having "hamstrung NATO's effectiveness and hindered the US' ability to make the most of coalition support."[12]

All considered, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that NATO, as the locus of transatlantic political discussion, strategy and decision-making on Afghanistan, proved dysfunctional. The final months were no exception. As NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg dryly pointed out in reply to ex-post criticism, nobody spoke out against the withdrawal decision and calendar at the NATO Foreign and Defence Ministers meeting on 14 April 2021.[13] When several Allies finally pleaded to extend the timeline for evacuations at the extraordinary meeting of NATO Foreign Affairs Ministers on 20 August, it was too late. The US stuck to its 31 August deadline, illustrating the Europeans' powerlessness once again.

FRENCH EXCEPTIONALISM

The clearest counterexample is France, which has often suffered criticism precisely for standing apart. In 2012, France justified its decision to withdraw combat troops from Afghanistan by the need for resources in the Sahel. But it also came after having loyally followed the Obama administration's surge then drawdown plans, undoubtedly building up annoyance over the years that they could not weigh in on strategy, decisions and outcomes.

In Afghanistan's endgame, too, France showed a healthy dose of scepticism. They had no better intelligence than others, it is claimed, but they manifestly took a more dispassionate view when anticipating the on-the-ground consequences of US and NATO military withdrawal.[14]

France's contrast with Germany is stark. In June, all three opposition groups in the *Bundestag* – the Greens, Free Democrats and Social Democrats – filed motions to evacuate local staff. Critical minds spoke out in Germany and other European countries throughout the Afghanistan engagement. But taking a critical stance was never Germany's official policy. The sense of loyalty to a collective course of action, for better or worse, and, in some circles, infatuation with NATO were much stronger than objective criticism. Ultimately, this proved damaging.

Table 1: The US–NATO–EU failure matrix in Afghanistan's endgame

	Anticipation		Execution in operational environment	
	Intelligence	Decision-making		Operational capacity
US	Over 20 years of presence. **Lack of (deep) understanding of Afghanistan and possibilities to deliver outcomes.** Military and other actors put up some red flags.	Domestic politics driving choices but not anticipating consequences. Chose a calendar-based withdrawal. **No early planning of civilian evacuation.**	**Decisions are driven by the withdrawal deadline.** Redeployment of troops securing evacuation and safe departure negotiated with the Taliban.	Full spectrum of capabilities is available. **Operational driving force of evacuation, including support to other nations.**
NATO	**Lack of own intelligence and analysis.** Aware of the deteriorating situation among the Allies.	**Dependence & groupthink.** Repository of US decisions; not a truly collective strategy and decision-making forum. **Failure to discuss and anticipate outcomes.** **No early planning of civilian evacuation.**	Not properly tested. Evacuation not conducted under NATO command and control.	Not properly tested / called upon. Relatively small operational role in final evacuation, limited to coordination.
EU	**Lack of situational awareness.** To the extent signals were present, there was little political unwillingness to acknowledge them.	Wilfully chose not to engage ("not our war"). **Failure to discuss and anticipate outcomes.** **No early planning of civilian evacuation.**	**Crisis management structures are inappropriate/ not operational** (e.g. IPCR not activated). Member states' individual decision making. **Strong informal staff-to-staff coordination at the EU level and with member states.**	**Not in capacity to conduct NEO** (lack of standing forces & critical enablers). Some EU means were activated, but the bulk of operations were national **EU & member states showed solidarity and capacity to act jointly** (e.g. convoy and transit model).

3. Absence of European will and capabilities

The marginalisation of Europeans in big decisions does not relieve them of blame. European Council President Charles Michel regretted ex-post that the US "made very few – if any – consultations with their European partners" before negotiating with the Taliban and when confirming the withdrawal.[15] Nevertheless, Europeans are ultimately responsible for their commitment to Afghanistan and weaknesses in following it up.

Ahead of the post-mortem informal Council of Defence ministers on 2 September, HR/VP Borrell stated, in a late admission of responsibility, that "Afghanistan was not just an American war – the EU had important interests".[16] Why, then, did Europeans choose not to prepare for Afghanistan's endgame and their exit collectively in the remit of the EU? The simple answer is that Brussels is rife with discussions about 'strategic autonomy' but still lacks the basic implements of that said autonomy in terms of political will, military capabilities and appropriate decision-making structures.

THE EU'S CHOICE TO BE WEAK

If they had taken ownership of the problem as of February 2020, President Michel and HR/VP Borrell would have been well placed to coordinate EU positions and speak with US counterparts. Yet neither did nor were expected by member states to do so, which highlights the absence of both political will and empowerment at the heart of the EU institutions when it comes to foreign policy and security matters. A particularity of the Common Foreign and Security Policy is the shared responsibility and lead of several institutional actors, including the President of the European Council, the HR/VP, the Commission, and member states themselves.[17] It is difficult to see that any of those institutional actors lived up to those responsibilities in that period.

This is also true for the endgame in Afghanistan and preparations for the consequences of NATO's 14 April withdrawal decision. In theory, nothing was stopping the EU from envisaging a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) situation and making contingency preparations, either as a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation or through an ad hoc coalition of member states. Articles 43 and 44 TEU explicitly provides such mandates:

> *"The tasks referred to in Article 42(1), in the course of which the Union may use civilian and military means, shall include joint disarmament operations,* ***humanitarian and rescue tasks****, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation."*[18]

Yet, how could the EU even start to consider this if the Afghan situation was barely considered in the Foreign Affairs Council meetings? Undoubtedly, informal and bilateral exchanges took place, but the Council discussions in these critical months reveal that Afghanistan was simply not a foreign policy priority for the EU executive. To the extent that discussions did take place, they did not engage methodically with the possible consequences of decisions. The focus was on diplomacy, development and human rights, not risks and hard security implications.

The EU's lack of political will in security and defence goes arm in arm with an absence of strategic culture. One might think that European's relative anaemia in the NATO setting would be compensated by a more active stance in the EU, but quite the contrary. Whether by conscious choosing or unwitting osmosis, the collective choice is to be weak and underinvest in security and defence.

Consider the European Parliament's resolution of 10 June, which, with some foresight, pointed to the "[vacuum from withdrawal] that in the worst case scenario will be filled by the Taliban". It called "on the EEAS, the Commission and the member states to ensure the security of European forces and staff in Afghanistan, [and] to *contribute funding for an enhanced security zone* [authors' emphasis] to ensure a diplomatic presence after the withdrawal of troops".[19] The implicit view here is that the EU should not be an actor on the ground.

EUROPE'S INCAPACITY TO ACT

Had contingency planning for evacuation from Kabul been on everybody's mind in April 2021, few would have envisaged it in the context of the CSDP. The CSDP's operational capacities are too weak, procedural hurdles too high, and the gains of joint action too low. Formally, the EU's military level of ambition is to be able to deploy up to 60,000 troops within 60 days and for at least one year. But that is a paper army, not a standing force that is committed, trained and ready.

EU Battlegroups do intermittently come into existence. For the second half of 2020, Battlegroup EUBG 2020-2 was on standby with 4,100 soldiers. Built around the German *Division Schnelle Kräfte* (DSK), it brought together forces from Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands and Sweden, in principle ready to be deployed within 5 to 10 days of approval from the Council, for at least 30 days. As such, it is tailor-made for an evacuation-type scenario.

Yet, EU Battlegroups have never been used, and some doubt they ever will. They are not permanent standby forces but serve only for a six-month rotation and with frequent breaks. In fact, due to there being no successor, EUBG 2020-2's standby period was extended into the first three months of 2021, but no more. The decision to deploy is also uncertain: not only is Council unanimity required, but also national parliamentary approval from the participating member states. As such, 'rapid reaction' is a hypothetical concept.

INFOBOX 4: WHY THE EU INTEGRATED POLITICAL CRISIS RESPONSE (IPCR) DOES NOT WORK

The EU institutions' (lack of) reaction to the unfolding of events in Afghanistan over the summer is a good starting point to identify current deficiencies. The centrepiece of the EU's crisis management capacity is the so-called Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangement. Unbelievable as it sounds, the IPCR was *never activated* at any of its operational levels during the build-up to and unfolding of the Afghanistan crisis.

The IPCR currently has three operational modes: (i) monitoring mode ensuring basic information exchange; (ii) information-sharing mode triggering the creation of analytical reports, investment into situational awareness and preparedness for possible escalation; and (iii) full activation mode involving the preparation of proposals for EU action to be decided upon by the Council or European Council.

From an outsider's standpoint, one would think that at least the first mode, if not the second, would have been active from the beginning of the summer, when risks associated with the withdrawal were more commonly identified (c.f. the European Parliament resolution in mid-June). It should then have been scaled up swiftly to the third mode as of the beginning of August when these risks actually materialised.

Only on 18 August, when Afghanistan was added *in extremis* to the agenda of a ministerial IPCR meeting on migration flows from Belarus, did a discussion take place. The situation in Afghanistan was addressed under the guise of that in Belarus without the IPCR ever being formally activated. This was not uncontroversial: Germany regretted that the discussion was limited to a few remarks only, urging the Slovenian Council Presidency to convene an IPCR meeting on Afghanistan without delay. The Presidency signalled willingness, but, in reality, it was so late in the day that other informal processes had already taken over, and evacuation efforts were already underway.

The assessment of the IPCR is not unequivocally negative. In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the French Council Presidency decided on 27 February 2022 to activate the IPCR in full mode. In emergencies like COVID-19 or the migration crisis, for which it has been active since 2015, the arrangement has successfully served the function of convening EU institutions and member states to a common platform of information exchange and technical analysis, including on politically difficult issues.

Yet Afghanistan highlights that the IPCR is a *reactive* instrument ill-equipped to anticipate and prevent crises and, at times, deal with them. It is an *integrated* instrument in name only, with major flaws in both ownership and activation. As it stands, no matter the mode of operation, the IPCR can only be triggered by the Council's six-month rotating Presidency or following a member state's invocation of the solidarity clause (article 222 TFEU).

We will never know if EUBG 2020-2, or its Italian-led successor EUBG 2021-2, would have been available had the EU wanted to plan an evacuation mission in Afghanistan as of April 2021. What we know is that what was ultimately at play in Kabul was a much broader range of capabilities than what the EU can muster, from intelligence to carrier strike groups and a deep reserve force. Europeans were positively surprised by their capacity to mobilise strategic airlift, including through the EU – an improbable feat a few years back. But in the end, then Chancellor Angela Merkel summed it up well on 16 August: "Germany could only carry out the evacuation of its people with American help".[20]

EUROPE'S INABILITY TO DECIDE

By nature, CSDP decision-making is an obstacle to rapid reaction: there is no escape from the unanimity rule. Even in a scenario where the European Council entrusts the operation to a group of member states, as is possible under Article 44 TEU, the established doctrine has held until now that the "general conditions for the implementation down to the operational planning phase (rules of engagement, CONOPS and OPLAN) would have to be agreed by unanimity."[21]

To some extent, decision-making processes can be accelerated with advance planning, operational scenarios and the pre-identification of forces. As part of the CSDP's 'Level of Ambition', the EUMS has developed illustrative scenarios for rescue and evacuation and humanitarian support. Still, they serve the purpose of capability development rather than operational planning. In April and August 2021, there were no readily available EU military concepts for a Kabul-type rescue and evacuation scenario.

Another example of the EU's unpreparedness for significant operations is that the EU does not have readily available command and control (C2) structures for rapid reaction. The EU's permanent operational headquarter, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, is still in its infancy, with limited staff running the EU's training missions. Activating one of the ad hoc Operational HQs (i.e. Paris, Potsdam, Rome, Larissa, Rota) provided by member states takes time and carries high start-up costs.

Ultimately, what was tested in August was the EU's full crisis management readiness – and it proved deficient. The IPCR arrangements that support rapid and coordinated EU decision-making in complex crises were never activated. By any standard, they should have been on 'monitoring

mode' throughout the summer. The Political and Security Committee (PSC), which usually meets at least twice a week, was similarly dormant in August and only convened in urgency when an extraordinary FAC had been called under the overflowing pressure from events.

In this final moment of failure, ad hoc and informal coordination across institutions and on the ground partially saved the day, paradoxically also highlighting the EU's relevance. EU institutions should be thankful for the military and civil protection staff who are trained and socialised to find solutions within even unprepared and piecemeal crisis management structures. In return, leaders must now heed the lessons and warnings for the future by delivering a step-change in the EU's capacity to act in crises.

Conclusion

The evacuation from Kabul showed that, while rife with discussions on 'strategic autonomy', Brussels institutions still lack its basic implements, be it in terms of political will, appropriate decision-making structures or military capabilities.

Yet there is no dark cloud without a silver lining. If there was a positive learning experience from those August days, it must be the realisation of a burgeoning European operational 'can do'. When faced with imperative necessity, gear wheels of action locked into position, communication lines opened, diplomacy deployed, and European planes and other strategic enablers combined. There was solidarity from one country to another, and EU means were not only used but played a non-negligible role in the airlift. In the final moments, ad hoc and informal coordination across institutions and on the ground contributed to partly saving the day, highlighting perhaps to EU sceptics that a sum can be more than its parts.

List of abbreviations

CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DG	Directorate-General
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EEAS	European External Action Service
ERCC	Emergency Response Coordination Centre
EUMS	EU Military Staff
EUCPM	EU Civil Protection Mechanism
FAC	Foreign Affairs Council
HR/VP	EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
IPCR	Integrated Political Crisis Response
NEO	Non-combatant evacuation operation
PSC	Political and Security Committee
RDC	Rapid Deployment Capacity
RSM	Resolute Support Mission
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

[1] Towfigh Nia, Oliver, "German foreign minister rules out resigning for misjudging Afghan situation", *Anadolu Agency,* 20 August 2021.

[2] Kamann, Matthias and Nikolaus Doll, "Jetzt kommt Maas in Erklärungsnot", *Welt*, 16 August 2021.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *The Guardian*, "Top US general says Afghan collapse can be traced to Trump-Taliban deal", 29 September 2021.

[5] Kamann and Doll (2021), *op.cit*.

[6] Shams and Saifullah (2021), *op.cit*.

[7] *NATO*, "Brussels Summit Communiqué", 14 June 2021.

[8] Petersmann, Sandra, "German parties weigh in on withdrawal from Afghanistan", *Deutsche Welle*, 29 June 2021.

[9] Knickmeyer, Ellen, "Costs of the Afghanistan war, in lives and dollars", *Associated Press*, 17 August 2021.

[10] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (2021), "What we need to learn: lessons from twenty years of Afghanistan reconstruction", Arlington, p.15.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] *Ibid*., p.12.

[13] Erlanger, Steven, "NATO Chief Backs Biden, Saying Europe Was Consulted on Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, 10 September 2021.

[14] Mallet (2021), *op.cit*.

[15] Groupe d'études géopolitiques, "Elements For A Doctrine: In Conversation With Charles Michel", 08 September 2021.

[16] *EEAS*, "Corriere della Sera - Borrell: Afghanistan was a catastrophe. Europe must share responsibility", 30 August 2021.

[17] Cf. Art.26 TEU: "If international developments so require, the **President of the European Council** shall convene an extraordinary meeting of the European Council in order to define the strategic lines of the Union's policy in the face of such developments." (Emphasis added.) Cf. Art.30 TEU "1. **Any Member State, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, or the High Representative with the Commission's support**, may refer any question relating to the common foreign and security policy to the Council and may submit to it, respectively, initiatives or proposals. 2. In cases requiring a rapid decision, the **High Representative, of his own motion, or at the request of a Member State**, shall convene an extraordinary Council meeting within 48 hours or, in an emergency, within a shorter period." (Emphasis added.)

[18] Emphasis added.

[19] European Parliament (2021), European Parliament resolution of 10 June 2021 on the situation in Afghanistan, 2021/2712(RSP), Strasbourg. Emphasis added.

[20] Karnitschnig (2021), *op.cit.*

[21] Council of the European Union (2015), Politico-Military Group Recommendations on Article 44 TEU, 6108/15, Brussels.

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