



OPEN EUROPEAN DIALOGUE

Highlights

MP Open Call #10

Your Direct Line to Europe's Policymakers

7 September 2021

The OED is committed to strengthening dialogue between policymakers across Europe by providing a neutral, informal, and accessible space for conversation. Our monthly, online MP Open Calls grew out of this mission and are a space for parliamentarians to set the agenda, discuss pressing national and European issues, and support each other by sharing best practices and concerns.

Our call was joined by five parliamentarians from Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, and Spain. Elio Calcagno, expert of European defense and maritime security at the Istituto Affari Internazionali, joined the call to share additional insights on Europe's strategic concerns in Afghanistan as US and European militaries retreat from the country.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CONVERSATION

- **The prospect of a new refugee crisis has many policymakers across Europe worried.** The current crisis comes on top of the 2.2 million Afghan refugees already in neighboring countries and the 3.5 million people forced to flee their homes within Afghanistan's borders.
 - “We see conflict between Belarus and its neighbors because Belarussian officials are illegally leading refugees over the border.”
 - “There is currently an empathy among the German population toward Afghan refugees, [particularly] because Germany has the impression that Afghans were let down.”
- **Many European officials are now adjusting to the reality of negotiating with the Taliban as the new governing force in Afghanistan.** The negotiation issue is as sensitive as it is controversial: if countries want to help the people in Afghanistan, they can hardly get past the Taliban.
 - “We are now in an awkward situation in which our country has to negotiate with the Taliban to get people who helped Germany out.”

- “The Taliban are now seeking international recognition.”
- “An open question is whether the Taliban will keep to its promises... development aid has been frozen, and the international community will start providing aid again on condition that these promises are kept.”
- **Policymakers ask whether Europe’s uncoordinated retreat from Afghanistan shows the need for a joint military mechanism.** If so, what is the role of European Union institutions?
 - “We see that several states in the EU acted on their own – cooperation and coordination did not happen in Afghanistan.”
 - “The European Union lacks the very instrument it needs to deploy any sort of joint military action. Even now, they were entirely dependent on the US for all operations on the ground.”
- **Stability is now the key word to international geostrategic concerns around Afghanistan.** The geostrategic consequences for the Taliban’s victory in Afghanistan are monumental but surrounding powers are now waiting for the dust to settle before taking further action.
 - “For India, a stable Afghanistan is beneficial; an unstable Afghanistan ruled by the Taliban is the worst-case scenario. They are deeply concerned with how the situation will develop.”
 - “There is currently no active support from Western powers to anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan - Europe and America have retreated completely.”

RESOURCES

- [What Will the Taliban Do Next?](#), *International Crisis Group, August 2021*

The Taliban have unquestionable control over Afghanistan. This podcast shares an expert analysis on what key decisions the Taliban will now take as they resume governance of the country. How will they fund and run their new government, and how will their foreign relations play out?
- [What the Fall of Afghanistan Means for Europe](#), *Atlantic Council, August 2021*

Experts from the Atlantic Council gather to share their opinions on Europe’s next steps. Three key commentaries emerge: first, trust in the capabilities of the transatlantic alliance is at an all-time low due to a visible lack of American leadership and European strategic coordination; second, a military retreat from Afghanistan do not wave it from its humanitarian commitments in the country; and third, a migration crisis is inevitable, requiring a reaction from European policymakers domestically and within the European Neighborhood.
- Opinion: [Why Afghanistan was Not a Failure of European Strategic Autonomy](#), *European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2021*

In contrast to a [previous article](#) from the European Council on Foreign Relations, the piece above argues that Afghanistan is not a litmus test for Europe's strategic defense capabilities. On the one hand, experts have shown that a timely European retreat from Kabul would have been impossible without American military assistance, leading them to highlight Europe's need to achieve strategic autonomy from the United States. On the other hand, the United States was the primary actor in Afghanistan – Europe countries had only a supporting presence in the Afghanistan at the time of evacuation. In a back and forth between its experts, the European Council on Foreign Relations asks whether the current assessment on European strategic autonomy is fair. Regardless, perceived shortcomings in Afghanistan have sparked many European leaders, like European Council president Charles Michel, to call for greater [EU strategic autonomy](#).

- [EU Agrees on Taliban Outreach Plan](#), *Politico*, September 2021

Although not offering full recognition of their new government, the EU must deal with the Taliban on critical issues in Afghanistan. During an informal meeting in Slovenia, European foreign ministers have announced that any diplomatic recognition of the Taliban will rely on their commitment to abide by further security and human rights stipulations.

- [Where will Afghan Refugees Go?](#), *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 2021

Historical refugee flows show that most of the half a million expected refugees from Afghanistan will stay in the region. In anticipation of a new migration crisis, however, various actors have already expressed their positions: [Turkey](#) and [Greece](#), for example, have expressed their unwillingness to bear the political and economic burden of migrants fleeing to Europe, while a border crisis has already risen between [Poland](#) and [Belarus](#). In the meantime, the European Union has reached out to [Pakistan](#) to help repatriate new migrants.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

The Open European Dialogue is a network driven by MPs. We look forward to hearing from you and helping you as best we can to connect and work with your colleagues from across Europe in these challenging times.

Keep in contact with your colleagues! Please know that you can always find the contact details of all OED members on the [members-only area of the website](#). Should you have issues logging in, you can contact rfarulli@gmfus.org.

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