

EUropa.S. 2022

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EUropa.S. 2022
European Council

Study Guide
Topic: *“Maintaining Peace and
Stability in the European Region:
EU’s Response to the Afghanistan
Crisis*

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Greeting of the Board

Distinguished Heads of States and Governments,

*It is our utmost honor to welcome you to EUropa.S. 2022 and specifically to the European Council. This year’s topic, “**Maintaining Peace and Stability in the European Region: EU’s Response to the Afghanistan Crisis**”, is a priority in the current EU agenda, a topic that has kept not only the European Union but also the whole world on the edge of their seat. As the Board of the European Council, we hope that this document will guide you throughout your studying and preparation for this year’s EUropa.S., will prove to be a useful tool in your effort to deepen your knowledge on the topic under discussion and will motivate you to conduct your own further research.*

The European Council constitutes one of the simulated European institutions with experienced participants, who are involved every year to get acquainted with its functioning and its substantial role in the European Union. This April, we are waiting for each and every one of you to transform yourselves into a Head of State or Government, actively participate in our heated debates, collaborate, and reach productive conclusions.

We wish that the committee proceedings will be full of excitement, heated debates, and professionalism. Last but not least, should you have any inquiries feel free to contact us. We are really looking forward to meeting you all this April, in the 12th edition of EUropa.S. Get ready for an amazing experience!

Kind Regards,

The Board of the European Council

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Introduction to European Council

Since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Council (EC) represents the highest level of political cooperation between EU countries¹. It sets the EU's policy agenda by defining its general political direction and priorities. However, it is not a legislative institution, therefore it does not negotiate or adopt EU laws².

Furthermore, it adopts conclusions which become public after every meeting of the EC. The purposes of the conclusions are the identification of specific issues of concern for the EU and the outline of actions or goals necessary for each issue³. It decides upon the conclusions with consensus apart from the cases that the Treaties state otherwise and only the heads of state or government have the right to vote⁴.

The EC consists of the heads of state or government of the EU member states, the European Council President and the President of the European Commission. When the agenda of the EC concerns issues of foreign policy, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy also participates. The President of the EC is elected by the heads of state or government for a once renewable two-and-a-half-year term⁵. The President, presides over the EC's meetings with the aim of facilitating cohesion and consensus among the member states during its proceedings, represents the EU to the international arena, ensures in cooperation with the President

¹ Pliakos, A. 2012. *The Law of the European Union*. Athens: Nomiki Bibliothiki Group, p.194.

² Moussis, N., 2011. *Europedia.moussis.eu*. [Online] Available at: http://www.europedia.moussis.eu/books/Book_2/2/4/1/1/?all=1 [Accessed 30 November 2021].

³ European Union, n.d. *The European Council*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/> [Accessed 30 November 2021].

⁴ Pliakos, A. 2012. *The Law of the European Union*. Athens: Nomiki Bibliothiki Group, p.194.

⁵ European Union, n.d. *The European Council*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/> [Accessed 30 November 2021].

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of the Commission, the preparation of European Council meetings and the continuity of their work and informs the European Parliament after every meeting of the EC.⁶

Introduction of the Topic

Not even the worst enemies of the United States could have imagined such a finale in the longest war in their history. A few days before the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Taliban, who had offered asylum to Osama bin Laden, returned to power, capturing all urban centres in just 24 hours. The diamond of the crown, the capital Kabul, a city of five million people, fell without the slightest resistance from the Afghan army, whose staffing and training cost hundreds of billions of dollars⁷. So, two decades after their overthrow and the invasion of the US-led international coalition, the Taliban era begins in Afghanistan, bringing complete uncertainty to some 40 million Afghans as the West struggles to find its footing, amid concern about new refugee flows. The rise of the Taliban is gaining momentum as Afghan President Ashraf Ghani says he is in urgent consultation with local leaders and international partners on the situation in the country. Many countries, including the United States, are preparing to evacuate their diplomats and nationals with US troops already beginning to arrive in Afghanistan to help evacuate thousands of people, including embassy staff and their families⁸.

The United States has spent 20 years and hundreds of billions of dollars to train and equip the Afghan army, but that has not stopped it from disintegrating in the face of a Taliban offensive that has amassed a dangerous arsenal that they have snatched from the enemy. "We have provided our

⁶ European Union, n.d. The President's role. [Online] Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/president/role/> [Accessed 30 November 2021].

⁷ UN News, 2021. *Afghanistan: Humanitarian crisis threatens basic human rights*. [online] UN News. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107902> [Accessed 29 December 2021].

⁸ Hadavas, C., 2021. *The Year Kabul Fell Again*. [online] Foreign Policy. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/12/21/2021-kabul-fall-afghanistan-withdrawal-taliban-takeover/> [Accessed 15 November 2021].

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Afghan partners with all the tools, let me insist on this, all the tools," US President Joe Biden said in July, defending his decision to withdraw the last US troops from the country. But members of the Afghan security forces did not show much desire to fight. Thousands surrendered their weapons, sometimes without the slightest resistance. Websites close to the Taliban are full of videos of Taliban fighters seizing a shipment of weapons, most of which were supplied by Western forces. Other images of soldiers being handed over to the Taliban in the northeaster city of Kunduz show armoured vehicles with anti-tank rocket launchers in the hands of insurgents. In the western city of Farah, militants patrol the streets in a vehicle bearing the official insignia of the Afghan intelligence services. Although US troops took the so-called "advanced" equipment with them when they left, the Taliban recovered "vehicles, ammunition, small arms and ammunition," Justin Flesner of the Conflict Armament Research (CAR) NGO told AFP. For experts, these unexpected loots have greatly helped the Taliban, who can also count on their own sources of arms supplies. Pakistan, in particular, has been accused of financing and equipping the Taliban, something it has always denied⁹.

This armament will not only help the Taliban launch a surprise attack on Kabul, but also "strengthen their power" in the cities they have captured, says Rafael Paducci, an expert at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. US troops have now withdrawn almost entirely, with the Taliban with their hands full of US equipment, without having to spend a single cent to obtain it. In the weeks leading up to the 20th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, this arsenal is being proudly displayed by the Taliban, who, according to the UN, still have close ties to al Qaeda, the organization responsible for attacks. The Americans were prepared for the possibility of some weapons being seized by the Taliban, but the rapid fall of the cities was the most pessimistic scenario for them, Jason Amerin, a former member of the US special forces who had taken part in the invasion, told AFP 2001 to oust the Taliban from power¹⁰.

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ Gibson Dunn, 2021. *The Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan: Update & Overview of Gibson Dunn’s Recent Efforts*. [online] Gibson Dunn. Available at: <<https://www.gibsondunn.com/the-humanitarian-crisis-in-afghanistan-update-overview-of-gibson-dunns-recent-efforts/>> [Accessed 26 November 2021].

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Historical Background

The situation in Afghanistan: Timeline and Analysis

In February 2020 a peace agreement was signed between the Taliban and the United States of America, under President Trump’s Presidency, to withdraw all military units from Afghan territory by May 2021, under the condition that the Taliban would minimize their violent actions and abstain from participating in terrorist actions in the future. Later on, after President Biden’s inauguration, the peace deal was once more examined so as to ensure that all terms were met by the Taliban. The review turned out to find the peace deal to be a success which led to the US announcing the withdrawal of their troops along with the NATO military allies and UK military personnel from Afghanistan by 11 September 2021.

Following the previous announcement, in May 2021, despite having accepted and committed to the peace deal until then, things took a turn for the worst as Taliban attacks became more frequent and intense than before, and even led to head on conflict between Taliban and Afghan military forces, that reached new heights during June 2021 when 150 Afghan troops were reported dead or injured and Taliban forces took control of the crossing border with Tajikistan.

Despite the situation and even though a report by an Afghan United Nations envoy revealed that Taliban took by force approximately 50 out of the 370 districts, the US abided by the peace deal and withdrew most of its military forces from Afghanistan, leaving only military personnel in Kabul to protect its embassy, a move followed by the removal of the UK troops in the country. This move gave the Taliban the opportunity to proceed to more severe actions by subjecting numerous cities to sustained attacks for weeks.

The situation spiked in August 2021, when Taliban proceeded to commit multiple high- profile assassinations, followed by a series of attacks in northern Afghan cities, resulting in their complete conquering by Taliban military personnel, despite the US and UK accusing the group of committing war crimes. Furthermore, after the previous events, hundreds of Afghanistan’s forces surrendered to the Taliban in the cities of Kunduz, Herat and Kandahar and Mazar-I-Sharif,

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meaning that only the cities of Kabul, capital of Afghanistan, and Jalalabad were left under Afghan control.

Taliban forces took control of the two remaining cities in the following days, after the collapse of the Afghan government and the complete withdrawal of US, NATO, and UK forces, causing mass complete evacuations from embassies and cities supervised by small US military forces and leading to a huge migration flow towards EU and the US and raising questions concerning security, stabilization, and relations between the states.¹¹¹²¹³

Legal Framework

Article 10A Treaty of Lisbon

“The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have **inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world:** democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. The Union shall seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and international, regional, or global organizations which share the principles referred to in the first subparagraph. It shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations”

Article 10B Treaty of Lisbon

“On the basis of the principles and objectives set out in Article 10 A, the European Council shall identify the strategic interests and objectives of the Union. Decisions of the European Council on

¹¹ House of Commons Library, Withdrawal of Military Forces in Afghanistan and its Implications for Peace, 17 August 2021. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9241/>

¹² NATO, ‘Resolute support mission in Afghanistan’, 6 July 2021. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_113694.htm

¹³House of Lords Library, Timeline of Taliban offensive in Afghanistan, 17 August 2021 <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/timeline-of-taliban-offensive-in-afghanistan/>

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the strategic interests and objectives of the Union shall relate to the common foreign and security policy and to other areas of the external action of the Union. Such decisions may concern the relations of the Union with a specific country or region or may be thematic in approach. They shall define their duration, and the means to be made available by the Union and the Member States. The European Council shall act unanimously on a recommendation from the Council, adopted by the latter under the arrangements laid down for each area. Decisions of the European Council shall be implemented in accordance with the procedures provided for in the Treaties.”

Article 188J §1 Treaty of Lisbon

“The Union's operations in the field of humanitarian aid shall be conducted within the framework of the principles and objectives of the external action of the Union. Such operations shall be intended to provide ad hoc assistance and relief and protection for people in third countries who are victims of natural or man-made disasters, in order to meet the humanitarian needs resulting from these different situations. The Union's measures and those of the Member States shall complement and reinforce each other.”

Article 63 §1 Treaty of Lisbon

The Union shall develop a common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection, and temporary protection with a view to offering appropriate status to any third-country national requiring international protection and ensuring compliance with the principle of non-refoulement. This policy must be in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 and the Protocol of 31 January 1967 relating to the status of refugees, and other relevant treaties ¹⁴

Challenges

The Impact of the Afghanistan Crisis on the European Union

The aforementioned events, caught by surprise the international community and have caused a shift in the modern “status quo” leading to an abundance of problems surfacing for nations to solve. Specifically, the rise of the Taliban shocked the European Union and even if the US was the prime

¹⁴ Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union. [EUR-Lex - 12007L/TXT - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eur-lex.do?uri=CELEX:32017R0679:EN:EUR-Lex)

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conductor of Western Strategy in the region, many European countries had invested both resources and troops in the intervention in Afghanistan. This led to lengthy and heated debates around the fields of defence and security and prevented any further crisis from happening, as the fear of a migration flow outburst towards the EU is always lurking in the shadows and is the centre of many conversations between EU member states. So, what was the specific impact of the events in Afghanistan on the EU?¹⁵

Security Challenges

Since 2014, NATO had the biggest responsibility concerning security and territorial defence, as it was the prime strategist of the Afghanistan mission. However, after the Afghanistan crisis and the removal of the troops the pressure has increased on the European Union to weigh in on the matter of defence and territorial security in the region, in order to ensure stability and healthy relations. An urgent need for more active engagement in crisis stabilization and peacebuilding has arisen in many EU Institution conferences, as it is clearer-now more than ever-that the EU depended heavily on the American military for similar situations and even needed help from the American troops to evacuate EU personnel from Kabul.

Financial Challenges

Last but not least, despite the fact that the European Union has a tremendous economic burden on its shoulders, as the Union Funds many projects and humanitarian missions around the world, a new problem is how will the EU further its humanitarian aid towards Afghanistan, as the Afghan socio-economic crisis has reached new heights and the nation is preparing for an economic collapse. With Humanitarian Aid being one of the main responsibilities of the EU, as stated in the

¹⁵ European Council on Foreign Relations, The fall of the Afghan government and what it means for Europe, 25 August 2021. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-fall-of-the-afghan-government-and-what-it-means-for-europe/>

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Treaty of Lisbon, member states should come up with a solution in order to provide it but also prevent an economic problem in the Union from surfacing.

Social Challenges

Immigration and asylum

One of the biggest if not the biggest impacts the crisis had on the EU is the migration flow that has slowly begun to move towards European countries. At first, the European Union has formally agreed to rely on neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, to manage and host those who seek refuge from the Taliban, in order to avoid a migration crisis similar to that of 2015. However, the movement of the migrants is unpredictable and due to the increasing numbers of them – approximately 3.5 million people have been displaced from Afghanistan- it is unknown for how much time the host countries would be able to support them and even then, the EU has amassed €200 million. If the migration flow moves towards the EU in its entirety, the Union will not be able to support it and the aftermath of such an unprecedented crisis may be devastating for the majority of the member states.¹⁶¹⁷

Actions that have been done

EU response to the crisis

General Response/ Responses from member states

In order to respond to the aftermath of the Afghanistan Crisis, the EU is having continuous talks, in an effort to prevent any further escalation of the situation. Namely, 15 EU Member States have taken responsibility and have agreed to take in and host 40.000 Afghan refugees. In addition,

¹⁶ European Council, Statement on the situation in Afghanistan, 31 August 2021. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/08/31/statement-on-the-situation-in-afghanistan/>

¹⁷ Priyanka Shankar, EU, fearful of refugees, delays response on Afghan asylum, 15 October 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/15/eu-fearful-of-refugee-crisis-delays-response-on-afghan-asylum-2>

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President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced, during the G20 meeting concerning the crisis, a “€1 billion support package” that will be able to stabilize the situation and avert a possible worse humanitarian and socio-economic crisis. Lastly, in a meeting in Slovenia on September 3rd, the five benchmarks agreed on by ministers of foreign affairs of the Union, highlight the importance of women rights amidst the crisis, as they are especially under threat by the Taliban.¹⁸¹⁹

Apart from the previously stated EU response the European Council after its meeting in September has made some conclusions regarding the situation and the future plans of the EU for the matter:

-First and foremost, the Council clarified that the primary concern for the EU is to maintain peace and stability and support the people of Afghanistan, especially women as they are in a more vulnerable position under the Taliban rule.

- Secondly, it highlighted the importance of getting minimal EU presence in Kabul, so that humanitarian aid can be provided, while averting possible violence outbursts in the region against Afghan people.

- Thirdly, the European Council emphasized the priority to start a regional political platform of cooperation with the neighbouring countries to help avert future struggles that might occur.²⁰

¹⁸ Aljazeera, EU countries agree to take in 40.000 Afghan refugees, 9 December 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/9/eu-member-states-agree-to-take-in-40000-afghan-asylum-seekers>

¹⁹ European Commission, Afghanistan: Commission announces €1 billion Afghan support package, 12 October 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_5208

²⁰ European Council, Afghanistan: Council conclusions set out the EU’s position and next steps, 21 September 2021. [Afghanistan: Council conclusions set out the EU's position and next steps - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/09/21-afghanistan/)

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Perspectives

Bloc Positions

Germany

Germany has been one of the European member states with the biggest presence in Afghanistan, as it had established military personnel in the region since 2001 and was amongst the most significant donors of humanitarian aid towards the country. After the outbreak of the crisis, the troops were withdrawn, alongside the rest of the troops and became one of the countries that faced the devastating consequences of the crisis. Following the events of August, Germany has been one of the main countries to accept refugees and organize evacuation flights from Afghanistan, as it was announced that it will host even more refugees in the future. As Foreign Minister Seiko Haas has stated: “A lot is expected of Germany”. To conclude, Germany is relying mostly on diplomacy for the situation and is planning to continue operational contacts with Kabul in the future.²¹

France

France reinstated its diplomatic relations with Afghanistan in 2002, after participating in the previous NATO-led war on Afghanistan and played a critical part in maintaining peace and providing security in the North-Eastern part of Afghanistan. During the events of the crisis, France suffered many losses, as the northern part of Afghanistan was the first to fall under Taliban command. France has played a big role after the crisis as it has planned and conducted many flight evacuations since August and has conducted on December 2nd a joint humanitarian operation with

²¹ Federal Foreign Office, Federal Foreign Office on talks held in Afghanistan, 18 November 2021. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/visit-to-kabul/2496758>

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Qatar, which allowed the two countries to dispatch 40 tons of medical equipment to Afghan territory.²²

Italy

The cooperation between Italy and Afghanistan has come a long way since the vents of 2001, with Italy becoming a strategic partner of the country and providing critical help during the fight against terrorism, while providing security and stability in the region. After the Taliban took control of the country, Italy has been very critical towards the new heads of Afghanistan to the point that it does not recognize them as a government. Nonetheless, Italy will constitute to support Afghan people and is trying to prevent a massive outburst of migration flow by providing financial support to the Afghans in the region.²³

Denmark

Denmark engaged Afghanistan for the first time in 2001 and deployed troops there in 2002. Moreover, it was part of NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in 2015 and the Danish forces contributed to the security of the region by offering training and advisory programs to Afghan forces, thus building very strong relations with the Nation. After the crisis, Denmark became one

²² Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Afghanistan- Evacuation Operation, 3 December 2021. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/afghanistan/news/article/afghanistan-evacuation-operation-3-december-2021>

²³ Aljazeera, Italy rules out recognising a Taliban government in Afghanistan, 26 September 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/26/italy-taliban-government-cannot-be-recognised>

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of the main contributors in the fight to aid Afghanistan and donated a lot of funds towards humanitarian aid.²⁴²⁵

Questions Raised

1. Should the European Union initiate the creation of a new security framework, in order to promote security and defence in the Afghanistan region?
2. How can member states act so as to further the already existing humanitarian aid towards Afghanistan?
3. What measures should be taken at a European level in order to create a new security architecture, thus reducing the possibilities for large migration flows towards Europe?
4. How can member states promote European values in the region, such as the protection of fundamental human rights?
5. What measures can be taken by member states in order to promote the need for the inclusivity of Afghan women in education, working life etc.?
6. In what ways, a new cooperative effort between EU and NATO can ensure stability and peace at the European borders and the Central Asia region?
7. What economic measures could be taken from the EU in order to strengthen the levels of readiness of the European institutions towards a possible migration flow from the region of Afghanistan?
8. How should the EU approach the local voices and capacity opposing the new Taliban regime?

²⁴ Danish Ministry of Defense, The Danish engagement in Afghanistan.
<https://www.fmn.dk/en/topics/operations/igangvarende-operationer/afghanistan/>

²⁵ Cph POST online, Denmark set aside a huge sum to aid the Afghanistan crisis, 13 September 2021.
<https://cphpost.dk/?p=127870>

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9. How could the handling of the Afghanistan crisis affect the EU's global role and strategic compass?

10. How could the European governments engage with the Taliban regime?

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