

### Focus: Withdrawal from Afghanistan and its consequence in Europe [FR](#) [EN](#)

Following the United States' decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, all western forces deployed in the country organised their own retreat. However, the Taliban took over the country faster than expected.

Many countries had to deploy urgent capacities to evacuate nationals and local support staff threatened by the Taliban for having cooperated with them. Germany, despite having left since June 2021, sent again forces to evacuate them, with up to 600 soldiers, several A400M aircrafts and two H145 helicopters. This was the biggest airlift operation under severe risks of the Bundeswehr history so far, with 5300 people evacuated. The evacuation went through a stop in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent.

France also evacuated 2600 locals and 140 nationals with Airbus A400M and Lockheed C130 aircrafts, via United Arab Emirates Al-Dhafra air bases. As a testimony of the high level of threat around the operation, an A400M aircraft was seen using anti-missile flares at take-off.

The UK faced severe critics for the poor level of preparation their operations showed, as many people were left behind and lists of local collaborators were left in the embassy, according to many British newspapers.

Overall, international troops have evacuated more than 100,000 Afghans and foreigners – the majority by the US-led airlift, with requisitioned civil aircrafts. More than 9,000 Afghans who helped Western forces are currently stuck at the US base in Ramstein (Germany), after a measles outbreak stopped flights to the US.

Western countries have ruled out formal recognition of the Taliban government and the efforts to evacuate citizens and support staff are still ongoing. Josep Borrell recognized in an interview that the EU will now "have to deal with the Taliban, carefully weighing our options [...], subject to clear conditions on their behavior". He also pointed out that "China, Russia and Iran will have greater sway in the region" and that "we cannot let them be the only interlocutors with Afghanistan". The EU already quadrupled its humanitarian aid this year to €200 million to support local people and minorities, especially women, while suspending development aid. Among all this, Mr. Borrell pointed out the need for Europe to strengthen its capacity to act independently from the United States. "We Europeans must learn the lessons of the Afghanistan debacle".

### Industries [EN](#) [EN](#) [FR](#) [FR](#) [DE](#)

#### Kazakhstan purchases Airbus A400M

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, Airbus officially announced having signed a contract to deliver two Airbus A400M Atlas to Kazakhstan, which becomes the 9<sup>th</sup> country to operate the aircraft. This could come as complementary to the 9 C-295 fleet Kazakhstan already has. The aircrafts will be delivered in 2024.

The A400M has recently been deployed for the withdrawal operations in Afghanistan by many countries as a key component, fulfilling one of its core missions.

#### India purchases Airbus C-295 military transport aircrafts

The Indian government gave on September 8<sup>th</sup> its green light to the purchase of 56 Airbus military transport aircrafts C-295. First discussions started in 2015.

Even if the details of the contract are still unknown, the Indian Ministry of Defence declared that 16 aircrafts will be delivered in flyaway conditions from Spain within 48 months after signing, while the remaining 40 will be manufactured in India in the following 10 years, by the TATA Consortium. This is part of the Make in India policy from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

#### Missile manufacturer MBDA and Polish PGZ join efforts

The Polish Armament Group PGZ announced a €15.5 billion cooperation with the British part of MBDA Missile Systems to develop and build an anti-aerial missile system, Narew. This will require a technology transfer from MBDA, who has the expertise, as the missile would be developed and used in Poland.

#### Signature of 1B definition studies phase for FCAS

Germany, France and Spain signed an inter-governmental contract for the 2027 FCAS demonstrator. This has been announced on May 17<sup>th</sup> after a political agreement. In the meantime, the Bundestag voted for partial financing of the program, with conditions. The €3.6 billion agreement covers the 2021-2024 1B definition phase. An industrial agreement and the €5 billion financing for 2027 have still to be finalised.

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## European Union military cooperation and external operations [FR](#) [EN](#) [EN](#) [FR](#)

### Official creation of the Franco German squadron in Evreux, France

On August 31<sup>st</sup>, the German Minister of Defence, Annagret Kramp-Karrenbauer, and her French counterpart, Florence Parly, signed the official creation from September 1<sup>st</sup> of the Franco-German transport squadron in Evreux, France.

In preparation since 2016, this squadron will be equipped with C-130J tactical transport aircrafts, that could be operated either by French or German pilots for either country's needs. The aircrafts are however owned respectively by each country. A finance system has been put into place to balance the financial load of the aircrafts' operations. More broadly, all protocols and operational aspects have been established prior to the creation. The squadron is now installing in Evreux in new infrastructures and will deliver an initial operational capacity. The FOC (full operational capacity) will be obtained in 2024.

The French Ministry of Armed Forces stated that this cooperation has an integration level rarely reached in military aviation.

### Reflexions from the EU Defence Ministers on the creation of a EU Quick Response Force

In the conclusions of an informal meeting on September 1<sup>st</sup> in Slovenia, the EU Defence Ministers raised the question of a EU response force, in the aftermath of the Afghanistan evacuation. This operation's schedule was decided by the United States, and the EU Member States involved did not have the military means to stay and secure the Kabul airport on their own.

Many aspects are still to be defined, as this ancient idea has never been implemented. The European Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton, raised the topic after considering the European dependency to Washington security policies in Afghanistan. He said that a powerful Europe should be backed by an operational and quickly deployable force. Josep Borrell also supports the idea, and preliminary works scale it to 5000 men. The Slovenian Minister of Defence, whose country holds the presidency of the EU Council for 6 months, suggested on the contrary to use the Art. 44 mechanisms to allow willing Member States to send troops in the Union's name, avoiding the unanimity issue in foreign affairs decisions.

Events in Afghanistan could reactivate European leaders' will to move forward on Europe's strategic autonomy, a high-stake topic during the pandemic but recently weakened by Joe Biden's "America is back" policy.

## International relations [EN](#) [FR](#) [EN](#) [EN](#) [EN](#)

### Russian gigantic exercise "Zapad" worries NATO and neighbouring countries

From September 10<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>, Russia will conduct a large-scale military exercise with Belarus. It could gather up to 200.000 soldiers, according to a French company monitoring the moves with satellites and artificial intelligence. Russia however only declares 13.000, to avoid the Vienna Document dispositions that require OSCE observers above.

Zapad means "West" and will therefore take place close to EU borders. This is raising concerns from NATO and neighbouring countries. Poland has for instance voted in a one-month emergency state, and many surveillance and intelligence aircrafts from the United States, Sweden, Germany and France have flown in the area recently.

The Russian President Vladimir Putin explained that the exercise is not targeting anyone but was necessary considering NATO acceleration in military moves close to Russian and Belarussian borders.

### The EU deploys an Election Observation mission in Kosovo

In response to the invitation by the President of Kosovo, the EU deployed beginning of September a mission to observe the local elections scheduled on October 17<sup>th</sup>. 22 long-term election observers are planned until the election day across the country, and will be reinforced for the election day.

Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, declared that he trusts this mission will "contribute to an inclusive, credible and transparent election process, as well as help the necessary future electoral reform efforts". Indeed, the mission will release a final report that includes a set of recommendations for future election processes.