Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan: a comparative analysis between 1996 and 2021

A insurgência do Talibã no Afeganistão: uma análise comparativa entre 1996 e 2021

Insurgencia Talibán en Afganistán: un análisis comparativo entre 1996 y 2021

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Abstract
The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021 has significant implications for the country, the region, and the international community. The group's past government was marked by human rights abuses and support for terrorism, which raises concerns about their ability to govern effectively and address the country's challenges. Comparing the different approaches taken by the Taliban in 1996 and 2021 to achieve power, as well as the group's behavioral differences in both moments, through their speeches and concern for the image caused abroad, it is possible to notice that the new established government breaks, at least in public image, with the group's stereotype, trying to adapt to the new international scenario, which is very different from the late 1990s. The veracity of the statements made by Taliban representatives in Afghanistan regarding the measures that would be taken and the caution for the maintenance of human rights is not the subject of study in this work. It only seeks to demonstrate the government's intention to establish connections with the international community and the unprecedented concern for the repercussion of their actions abroad. The Taliban's relationship with neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and China will also shape Afghanistan's future, as well as commercial agreements with countries such as Russia, which can be decisive for managing the Afghan economy (BHATIA, 2021).


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Resumo

O retorno do Talibã ao poder no Afeganistão em 2021 tem implicações significativas para o país, a região e a comunidade internacional. O governo passado do grupo foi marcado por abusos de direitos humanos e apoio ao terrorismo, o que levanta preocupações sobre sua capacidade de governar efetivamente e enfrentar os desafios do país. Comparando as diferentes abordagens adotadas pelo Talibã em 1996 e em 2021 para o alcance do poder, bem como a diferença comportamental do grupo nos dois momentos, através de seus discursos e da preocupação com a imagem causada no exterior, é possível notar que o novo governo estabelecido rompe, ao menos em discursos, com o estereótipo do grupo, tentando se adaptar ao novo cenário internacional vigente, bastante distinto do fim da década de 1990. Não é alvo de estudo nesse trabalho a veracidade das declarações dos representantes do Talibã no Afeganistão, acerca das medidas que seriam tomadas e da cautela para a manutenção dos direitos humanos. Apenas se busca demonstrar a intenção do governo de estabelecer vínculos com a comunidade internacional, e a preocupação inédita com a repercussão de suas ações no exterior. O relacionamento do Talibã com países vizinhos, como Paquistão, Irã e China, também moldará o futuro do Afeganistão, bem como acordos comerciais com países como a Rússia podem ser determinantes para a gestão da economia afegã.


Resumen

El regreso de los talibanes al poder en Afganistán en 2021 tiene implicaciones significativas para el país, la región y la comunidad internacional. El pasado gobierno del grupo se ha caracterizado por abusos de los derechos humanos y apoyo al terrorismo, lo que plantea preocupaciones sobre su capacidad para gobernar eficazmente y abordar los desafíos del país. Comparando los diferentes enfoques adoptados por el Talibán en 1996 y 2021 al alcance del poder, así como la diferencia de comportamiento del grupo en ambos momentos, a través de sus discursos y preocupación por la imagen causada en el extranjero, es posible notar que el nuevo gobierno establecido rompe, al menos en discursos, con el estereotipo del grupo, tratando de adaptarse al nuevo escenario internacional en vigor, bastante distinto de fines de los 90. En esta labor no se estudia la veracidad de las declaraciones formuladas por los representantes talibanes en el Afganistán sobre las medidas que se adoptarían y la cautela para defender los derechos humanos. El único intento es demostrar la intención del gobierno de establecer vínculos con la comunidad internacional, y la preocupación sin precedentes con la
repercusión de sus acciones en el extranjero. La relación de los talibanes con países vecinos, como Pakistán, Irán y China, también dará forma al futuro de Afganistán, así como los acuerdos comerciales con países como Rusia pueden ser fundamentales para gestionar la economía afgana.


Introduction

The Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan has been the subject of several discussions since the mid-1990s. This armed group, originally formed in 1994, has undergone several changes over the years, but its ideology and methods have remained largely the same. The Taliban first came to power in 1996, after a brutal civil war, and ruled Afghanistan until 2001, when it was overthrown by U.S.-led coalition forces. Recent events in Afghanistan have brought the Taliban back into power, and the group has formed a new government (CRESWELL, 2011).

The main objective of the present work is to demonstrate the strategic and behavioral differences and similarities in the two processes of the Taliban's rise to power, highlighting mainly the discrepancies with regard to the maintenance of a positive international image. It is known that the contexts in which the jihadist group gained power in the 20th century and recently in the 21st century are quite distinct, being that in the past the group stood out among a cluster of small paramilitary organizations and, at the most current moment, its rise took place on the end of the American presence in the country. The relationship between the Taliban group, here widespread, and the US government was one of the main factors of great change (SN, 2021).

The guerrilla warfare and internal power struggle in the country during the 1990s, which resulted in the first Taliban government, was no longer a reality, and Afghanistan was now much closer to and influenced by the United States. The major Western power did not view the Taliban with neutrality during the first twenty years of the 21st century, having been considered a terrorist group and there were open statements both from the US government and from the Taliban that explained the relationship of enmity between them (SOUZA, NASSER & MORAES, 2014). Any political change in Afghanistan imposed by the US after September 11, 2001, in George W. Bush's so-called "War on Terror", however, was not
enough to prevent the resurgence of a government led by the fundamentalist group (RUCHEL & VIEIRA, 2021).

Among the strategies implemented by the Taliban, there are notable changes that can be interpreted as a need to adapt to the new domestic and international scenario in which it was reestablished in the country. It is a fact that Afghanistan has never been completely unoccupied by the Taliban, and it is public knowledge that some remote regions and villages have always remained under their influence or even control, however, the path taken by the group from these villages to the capital has never been so free (SN, 2021).

**Development**

To understand the Taliban's rise to power, it is important to understand Afghanistan's historical and political context. The country has a complex history of invasions, occupations and civil wars, and is home to various ethnic and religious groups. In the 1980s, Afghanistan became a battleground for the Soviet-Afghan War, which lasted from 1979 to 1989. During this period, the United States and other Western countries supported the Afghan Mujahideen, who were fighting Soviet forces. The war resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, but also left the country in a state of chaos (SN, 2021).

In the 1990s, Afghanistan was ruled by a communist government supported by the Soviet Union. However, such a government was unpopular, and a civil war broke out between various factions, including the Mujahideen, which had received support from the West during the Soviet-Afghan War. The civil war lasted from 1992 to 1996 and was characterized by extreme violence, human rights abuses and mass destruction of national infrastructure (SN, 2021). This episode was the stage for the expansion of authoritarian and repressive ideals in the country. In the midst of this situation, the Taliban emerged in 1994 as a group of religious students and militants who opposed the Mujahideen factions, and was initially supported by Pakistan, who saw them as a means of gaining influence in Afghanistan. The Taliban's ideology was based on a strict interpretation of Sunni Islam, and they sought to impose their version of Islamic law (Sharia) in Afghanistan. Thus, the group took control of most of the country in 1996, came to power and ruled the territory until 2001, still maintaining some strategies and logistics of the Mujahideen themselves to structure their government in a devastated Afghanistan (CRESWELL, 2011).
The Taliban's Rise to Power in 1996

The Taliban's rise to power in 1996 was, as already mentioned, characterized by violence, brutality and human rights abuses. The Taliban captured Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, in September 1996, and immediately imposed its version of Islamic law. The Taliban's treatment of women was particularly severe. Women were required to wear the burqa, a full-body garment, and could not work or attend school. The Taliban also imposed strict rules on men, including the requirement to grow a beard and attend prayers five times a day. Among the comments, and several others, the group also imposed rules that annulled freedom of worship, curtailed the right to meetings, access to information, among others, practices condemned by Western democratic countries (CRESWELL, 2011).

The group's rise at the time was largely due to its military strength and the weakness of the existing government. The Mujahideen factions were divided and lacked a unified strategy, and the communist government was unpopular and corrupt. The Taliban managed to exploit these weaknesses and gain the support of many Afghans who were tired of violence and instability, as well as inciting faith-sharing, the idea of an implementation of a "holy" government. As well as the process of its establishment, the Taliban government in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 was characterized by repression, brutality and human rights violations (CRESWELL, 2011).

As part of the imposition of Islamic law in the country, the Taliban still used physical violence such as public executions, amputations and flogging to penalize the violation of the law, as well as destroying or interdicting several historical and cultural sites, including the famous Bamiyan Buddhas (SN, 2021). All these attitudes were viewed with a bad eye by the international community, with Western outrage at the regime being further highlighted when it came to the Taliban's treatment of women, which was characterized as particularly severe, and many women were forced to live in seclusion, unable to leave home without a male relative, with even fewer rights and even more restricted freedom than men under the regime (CRESWELL, 2011).

Another source of concern for large Western countries is the Taliban's relationship with other evil groups, including terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda. Western countries, in particular the US, were not satisfied when the Taliban government in Afghanistan offered shelter to al-Qaeda members, given the terrorist group's relationship with the attacks of September 11, 2001 (SHAHZAD, 2011; SOUZA, NASSER & MORAES, 2014). This particular situation was the reason for U.S. military intervention in the country, accompanied...
by NATO forces, which overthrew the then-established Taliban government (RUCHEL & VIEIRA, 2021). The implementation, with U.S. support, of a new government, guaranteed the power access to the territory to carry out searches for those responsible for the attack, as well as brought the country closer to Western interests and influence (RUCHEL & VIEIRA, 2021).

The Taliban’s Rise to Power in 2021

The Taliban's recent return to power in Afghanistan was characterized by a swift and unexpected takeover of the country. The Taliban began their offensive in May 2021 and, in a matter of months, captured most of Afghanistan’s major cities (SN, 2021). On 15 August 2021, the Taliban entered Kabul and declared victory. The Taliban's rise to power was facilitated by several factors, among them the group's strengthening and the subsequent announcement by U.S. President Joe Biden of troop withdrawal and eviction. Thus, the evacuation of U.S. and NATO troops again created a power vacuum, and the Afghan government was unable to offer effective resistance to the Taliban offensive, which did not find organized armed forces that would prevent its return (GUISTOZZI, 2019; KUGELMAN, 2021).

Encountering scattered and largely popular and unarmed resistance from groups in society that consider themselves to be opposition to the Taliban, and having strengthened to the point of controlling the largest areas of the country without much effort or dispute with what was in contingent of foreign troops, the jihadist group did not encounter the same levels of challenges and obstacles that it had faced in 1996. For this reason, primarily, the seizure of the capital that at the time required two years of battle amid the Afghan civil war, was feasible in 2021 in a lightning offensive, in which in four months from Biden's announcement, the capital had already been surrounded by insurgents (SN, 2021).

In addition to the distinctions in the resurgence process, it is also worth mentioning the changes in the behavior of the Taliban government. In 1996, shortly after the seizure of power, the fundamentalist group drafted and imposed a government, as mentioned, authoritarian, characterized by repression of human rights, religious extremism and doctrines that harm women, condemn homosexuals and remove from life in society any sphere that is not tangenced by the government. Already after the resurgence, at least in the first official speeches and positions, the Taliban made promises to the international community and to the
population itself that human rights would be guaranteed and that women would not be subject to as many regulations and restrictions as they had been previously (SN, 2021).

The Taliban's initial statements after the taking of Kabul suggested that they had moderated their views on some issues. However, these statements were met with some skepticism, given the Taliban's record of human rights abuses. The group formed a new government in September 2021, and it was widely criticized for its lack of inclusion and absence of women in positions of power (SN, 2021). The government is dominated by members of the Taliban themselves, and there is little representation of other ethnic and religious groups. The composition of the government has also raised concerns about its legitimacy and how much it will be recognized by the international community. Not all countries recognize the government, however, Russia and China have already declared their recognition publicly, further increasing tension between these two countries and Afghanistan itself with the United States (BHATIA, 2021; ROCHA & LOPES, 2022).

**Comparison and Reflections on the Taliban's Rise to Power (1996 and 2021)**

There are several similarities and differences between the rise to power of the Taliban in 1996 and 2021. One of the similarities is that both cases were characterized by a power vacuum and the weakness of the existing government, as in 1996 the Mujahideen factions were divided, and the communist government was unpopular and corrupt, and in 2021 the Afghan government was unable to provide effective resistance to the advancing Taliban, and was widely criticized for its corruption and inefficiency. Another similarity is the Taliban's rigid interpretation of Islam and the imposition of Sharia law in Afghanistan. On both occasions, the Taliban sought to enforce their version of Islamic law in the country and was particularly cruel in the treatment of women (SN, 2021).

However, there are also several differences between the two situations. One of them, for example, is the role of external actors. In 1996, the Taliban was widely supported by Pakistan, which saw it as a means of gaining influence in Afghanistan. In 2021, the group was able to take advantage of the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops and received support from other countries, including China and Russia, added to Pakistan that did not withdraw its support (BHATIA, 2021).

Another difference is the international response to the Taliban's rise to power. In 1996, the international community largely ignored the seizure of power in Afghanistan, and the Taliban were able to operate with relative impunity. In 2021, the international community has
been more vocal in its criticism of the Taliban government and many countries have expressed concern about the Taliban’s human rights record and its support for terrorism. To a large extent, this move and the complaints against the group, by Afghan citizens and the outside community, can be attributed to factors such as the Internet, which were not present in the 1996 scenario. The dissemination of news, the instant flow of information and the contact that the population of the country has had with other cultures through the internet facilitates the finding and realization of criticisms of the new government (ROCHA & LOPES, 2022).

Yet, as has also been mentioned, since the Taliban's seizure of Kabul in August 2021, the group has made several public statements suggesting a change of thinking on some issues when compared to the ideals of the end of the century. (XX) Among those, they declared a general amnesty for all government officials and security personnel who served in the previous U.S.-allied government. They also stated that they would allow women to continue their education and work within the limits of Islamic law. In this way, the group that in 1996 already assumed power aggressively, applying sudden changes in society and internal organization without a diplomatic filter, now seemed more concerned about keeping the country's economic or political allies, still suddenly and violently assumed behind a facade open to dialog and negotiations (ROCHA & LOPES, 2022).

It is known that not all of these speeches were true, while women and children continued to oppose the regime and denounced school closures, repression of the body and female aesthetics, and the indifferent or violent treatment they received from members of the Taliban group, it can be noted that behavioral change may not be applied internally (ROCHA & LOPES, 2022). The differential is that there existed, even if only in the first instance, the concern with the country's image abroad, the commitment not to frighten or lose its allies, and the classic intention of authoritarian regimes to promote positive publicity and propaganda about their workings. This behavior was not identified in the group's first government imposition in 1996.

Finally, another factor to be mentioned is the lack of inclusion in the government and the international response to the contradiction between the Taliban's speeches and the reality denounced by several Afghans. Apart from the lack of inclusion being an aggravating factor for the other countries of the International System not to recognize the legitimacy of the government, claiming to doubt its ability to represent the interests of all Afghans, there is also the concern of the international community about the potential that the new Taliban government has to impact the stability of its region (SN, 2021). Several countries have imposed economic sanctions in response to Taliban actions. A clear example of this is the
freezing of Afghan government assets in the US, which also suspended economic aid it provided to Afghanistan. On the other hand, again highlighting the adaptation of the jihadist group in the government to the current international scenario, it is worth commenting that, subject to sanctions, the Afghan government chose to trade with another country that also suffers from the boycott and sanctions by the US, thus establishing a trade agreement with Russia in full throttle of the war in Ukraine.

The United Nations (UN) is also involved in the response to the situation in Afghanistan. The UN Security Council held several meetings to discuss the situation in the country, and the UN urged the Taliban to respect human rights and ensure that Afghanistan does not become a safe haven for terrorists. The U.N. also asked the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people, who face significant challenges due to the ongoing conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic (UN, 2021). The future of Afghanistan under Taliban rule remains uncertain. The Taliban will face significant challenges in the governance of the country, including providing basic services to the population, maintaining security and rebuilding the economy, as well as factors such as unpopularity within the territory, caused and aggravated by the violations and restrictions the government imposes on the population. The Taliban will also need to address the concerns of the international community if they expect to receive support and recognition. Also, regarding the future of the country, one can highlight the expectation of continuation of similar behaviors to those of the first Taliban government in Afghanistan, such as strict interpretation of Islam, imposition of Sharia and authoritarian behavior (SN, 2021).

This future, however, will take place in a new context, with new generations of governments, new organizations of society. The prospect of changes in the national and international scenario may even have been a factor that favored the closure of any external interference in the country. Among the challenges that the government will need to face, it can be understood that if there were any new attack, a new "war on terror", or even if the disputes between Russia and the US still remained exactly the same as the previous century, it would be much more difficult for the Taliban to establish an offensive as direct and agile as the one that was applied, in addition to which there would be considerably wider opportunities for the emergence of obstacles (SN, 2021).

Even the episodes of international repercussions that do not directly involve Afghanistan have been changed, so that some are even favorable to the Taliban regime, such as the war between Russia and Ukraine, which led to an economic blockade between the former and Europe, favoring the establishment of the aforementioned trade agreements.
between Russia and Afghanistan, which are beneficial to the new government for being understood as strengthening the economy of the new regime after the economic crisis that follows any drastic political change. Thus, the current international system environment, the partnerships and alliances that the Taliban has cultivated over the past 20 years and its constant presence on Afghan territory were all factors determining the occurrence of such different scenarios between one process and another, distinctions that favored the resurgence en masse (SN, 2021).

Addressing obstacles to be overcome after the seizure of the territory and in a medium-term future, it is important to note that the Taliban’s rise to power in 2021 also led to a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The conflict caused internal displacement, and the sites of armed conflict faced the scars of population evacuation as many families sought to distance themselves from riskier areas. There are concerns about access to basic needs, such as food and health care, and many international organizations have warned of the possible presence of hunger and food insecurity in the country. The Taliban will need to work with the international community to address these challenges and provide assistance to those in need (SN, 2021).

This new scenario of greater globalization and interdependence among countries, to be faced by the Taliban in the situation mentioned, of need for external support, considering also the economic situation of the country, can be seen as a motor for the behavioral change of the group, which seems to value more its international insertion now than at the end of the 20th century. The Taliban's relationship with other countries is even relevant when observed the group's strengthening process (GUISTOZZI, 2019). In addition to needing outside support to remain in the government founded in 2021, there are beliefs that the group relied on this foreign support until its strengthening in the early 2020s. In that case, Pakistan is a particularly significant ally, given the country’s record of support for the Taliban. Pakistan has denied allegations of providing support to the group, but many experts believe that Pakistan's intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has provided assistance to the Taliban in the past.

The Taliban's relationship with other groups is also of concern to some countries, especially when it comes to groups considered terrorist by the international community. The Taliban has a history of providing safe haven to terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, and there are concerns that the group will continue to support terrorism under its new government (SOUZA, NASSER & MORAES, 2014). The international community is uncomfortable with the perception that while in 1996 the Taliban government was largely isolated, in 2021 the
group received support from other countries in the region in its recent resurgence. From the perspective of the international community, it is noted that an important factor contributing to the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan was the failure of the previous government and the United States to address the root causes of the conflict. The conflict in Afghanistan has its roots in a complex network of historical, social and political factors, including ethnic divisions, corruption and poverty (SN, 2021). The United States and its allies focused primarily on military solutions to the conflict, neglecting the underlying political and economic factors that fueled the insurgency.

Meanwhile, the Taliban capitalized on these grievances and used their control over rural areas to gain support among disaffected Afghans. The Taliban's message of Islamic justice and opposition to corruption resonated with many Afghans who had lost faith in the previous government. The group also used targeted attacks on government officials and security forces to undermine the government’s legitimacy and further gain public trust. Equally importantly, the United States’ decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in 2021 was also a contribution to the Taliban’s recent takeover of the country (SN, 2021).

The withdrawal of U.S. forces and their allies created an opportunity the Taliban were able to exploit. The Afghan security forces, which had been trained and equipped by the United States and its allies, were ill-prepared to counter the Taliban offensive, which can be seen when it is noted that such forces quickly collapsed. The Taliban's seizure of power in Afghanistan has significant implications for the United States and its allies. The conflict in Afghanistan has been a key focus of U.S. foreign policy for more than two decades, and the U.S. has invested significant human and material resources in the conflict. The failure of the United States to achieve its goals in Afghanistan raises questions about its ability to achieve its strategic goals elsewhere in the world (SN, 2021).

An important question that remains is whether the Taliban will be able to govern Afghanistan effectively and face the challenges the country presents. The Taliban promised to provide security and stability in Afghanistan and to respect the rights of all Afghans, including women and minorities. However, there are concerns that the Taliban's ideology and human rights record suggest that they will not be able to govern effectively or fairly. The Taliban's treatment of women is a particular concern, mainly because it is influential, albeit not restricted, to the opinion that other countries in the international community have about the regime, which places Afghan foreign policy as partially dependent on the resolutions for the country's social problems (SN, 2021).
Another challenge faced by the Taliban is the economic situation in Afghanistan. The country is one of the poorest in the world, with high levels of unemployment and poverty. The Taliban will have to face these economic challenges and provide basic services to the Afghan people to maintain popular support for their government. The group's recent resurgence has also raised concerns about the spread of extremist ideologies in the region. The Taliban has long been linked to extremist groups such as al-Qaeda, and there are fears that their return to power will encourage similar unrest by parts of such groups in the region (SHAHZAD, 2011).

The Taliban’s rise to power in 2021 also brings the possibility of significant implications for a broader regional cutout. The conflict in Afghanistan has long been seen as a battleground for regional and global powers, and the Taliban's return to government is likely to have implications for the balance of power in the region. An important international player in the region is Pakistan, which has long been a supporter of the Taliban. Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban has been a source of tension with the United States. Pakistan has been accused of providing support and sanctuary to the Taliban, and there are concerns that the Taliban's return to power will strengthen Pakistan's influence in the region (SN, 2021). Another prominent international actor in the region is Iran, which has historically had a strained relationship with the Taliban. Iran is a Shia Muslim country, while the Taliban qualifies as Sunni Muslims, and the two groups have ideological differences. Iran was also a supporter of Afghanistan's previous government and provided economic support to the country. The Taliban's return to power is likely to re-establish tensions between Iran and the Taliban. Still, China is also important in the region, and the Taliban's return to power is likely to have implications for China's strategic interests in the area. China has invested heavily in infrastructure projects in Afghanistan as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, and the Taliban's seizure of power in the country is likely to disrupt these projects (BHATIA, 2021).

Final Considerations

After a detailed analysis of the rise of the Taliban in 1996 and 2021, and further underlining new elements such as the support and funding of the group by other countries or even other armed organizations, whether declared criminal or not, it can be seen that the processes were totally or at least mostly distinct. While in 1996 it was a civil war with a scattered focus and enemy and waves of violence applied and faced by the jihadist group in question, in 2021 the start of the group's strengthening served as a warning to those who could
be its enemies on the path to government and, after some clashes that took place until the end of the complete withdrawal of foreign troops, the Taliban could clear their way to Kabul with some ease, taking advantage of resources left behind by foreigners and even conquering entire cities without any conflict. That is, the 2021 campaign was much more elaborate and articulated in order to conquer territories quickly and efficiently, to regain control of the capital as soon as the troops ended the withdrawal or even earlier, avoiding the scenario of total government eviction that, in 1996, allowed the establishment of a civil war in the country. In the absence of major resistance, especially as of June 2021 (President Joe Biden's announcement of eviction aired in April of that year), the group wanted to move forward and ensure that the new government position would not be put into dispute.

It is clear that the Taliban’s rise to power in Afghanistan in both 1996 and 2021 had significant implications for the country and the region. However, as has been shown, there are also several differences between the two cases, including the role of external actors and the international response to the Taliban's seizure of power. The international community's response to the group's recent takeover was mixed. Many countries condemned the Taliban's violation of human rights and called for the protection of vulnerable groups, such as women and minorities. Other countries also imposed sanctions on the Taliban and refused to recognize their rule. On the other hand, there are those, like China and Russia, who have indicated their willingness to work with the Taliban, citing the need for stability in the region. With regard to these results, and the notion that the Taliban now has even easier communication with fundamentalist governments installed in other countries, such as Pakistan, and without the imminence of attack or intervention by any of the country's historical rivals, the Taliban government in Afghanistan remains stable and impositive even today, almost two years after its strengthening movement and resurgence.

The Taliban’s rise to power is likely to have implications for the United States and its allies as well. As mentioned, the failure of the United States to achieve its goals in Afghanistan may be reflected in a doubt present in the international community about its ability to achieve its strategic goals in other parts of the world, which was not facilitated by the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, which also represents a frustration and limitations to American power.

Finally, one challenge facing the international community is how to engage with the Taliban while penalizing the group for its actions of disrespect for human rights. Some countries argue that engagement with the Taliban is necessary to achieve stability in Afghanistan and deal with the country's many challenges. Others expressed skepticism about the Taliban's ability to effectively rule and called for a more cautious approach, given the
history that while the Taliban were able to retain power in the 1990s, their rule was marked by grave human rights violations and support for terrorism. The Taliban’s return to power in 2021 raises important questions about expectations about the group’s future behavior, which has so far proved unpredictable.

Yet, it is summarized that the Taliban’s rise to power in Afghanistan in 2021 is the result of a complex set of factors, including the failure of the previous government and the United States to address the root causes of the conflict, the support the Taliban received from outside actors and the decision of the United States to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan (KUGELMAN, 2021). The recent Taliban takeover in Afghanistan has significant implications for the country and the region, and the international community will need to closely monitor the Taliban's actions and hold the group accountable for any human rights abuses or support for terrorism, which makes room for another debate: how far can the Taliban be required to adhere to and commit to Western values, and how far can a country or government be punished for behaving differently from the ideal developed by other countries, with completely different cultures, religions and customs?

Much of what is considered negative in the Taliban regime has to do with violence, which is understandable, but factors such as the subjugation of women, dress regulations, and the demands placed on the population are based on the Muslim faith, established in a very patriarchal society, which follows to the letter the written determinations of its religion, which are responsible for determining the frequency of prayers, the distribution of household tasks, social coexistence, and other aspects of life, in a very specific and detailed manner. If the country's government is fundamentalist, and religion is so determined, it would be surprising, to say the least, if the strict Sharia rules were not followed. The questioning of the international community needs to return to a harmonious coexistence with difference, in order only to prevent the fundamentalist regime, whatever it may be, from becoming harmful to those who do not identify with it.

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Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan: a comparative analysis between 1996 and 2021


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