

## Comparative Analysis of Taliban Regimes to Assess the Global Challenges in Afghanistan: A Realist Perspective

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**Abstract:** *This paper delves into the challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, impacting their legitimacy and stability. These challenges encompass economic, humanitarian, and security issues similar to the previous Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001, along with new challenges arising from shifts in global security and politics. With a focus on international relations theory, specifically realism, the paper analyzes neighboring countries' responses to Taliban rule and their implications for regional security. Additionally, it examines potential spillover effects, such as increased terrorism and refugee flows. The paper advocates for a coordinated and multifaceted approach, considering the intricate political, social, and economic factors at play in Afghanistan. Emphasizing Pakistan's role due to its socio-cultural ties with Afghanistan, the paper encourages policymakers to involve governments, corporations, organizations, and international groups. Further research is necessary to develop effective strategies in addressing these challenges and promoting regional security and stability.*

**Key Words:** Taliban, Regime, Global Challenges, Realism, Pakistan's role

### Introduction

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan has raised concerns among the international community about its impact on the country's stability and regional security. The Taliban's previous regime in the late 1990s was marked by human rights abuses, international isolation, and harboring terrorist groups like Al Qaeda. Using a comparative case study approach to explore the global challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the study compared the current Taliban regime with

its previous regime in the late 1990s to identify similarities and differences in the global challenges faced. The Taliban's recent return to power in Afghanistan has reignited concerns about the country's stability and its impact on regional security. This event has triggered an international response that involves various actors, such as neighboring countries, international organizations, and the United States. The Taliban's previous regime, which lasted from 1996 to 2001, was characterized by human rights abuses, the oppression of

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women, and the harboring of terrorist groups like Al Qaeda (Thomas, [2018](#). 10). The fall of the Taliban in 2001 was followed by a prolonged period of conflict, foreign military intervention, and reconstruction efforts. However, after two decades, the Taliban has regained control of Afghanistan and is now facing a different set of global challenges.

Relating with the theoretical framework of realism, this qualitative paper seeks to explore the global challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and their implications for regional security. The analysis centers around the questions; What are the global challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan? , How do these challenges compare with those faced by previous Taliban regimes? And What are the implications of these challenges for regional security?

This research is significant for several reasons. First, since Taliban took control in a surprisingly quicker way, there is a need of new literature and this paper will contribute to the existing literature on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan by exploring the global challenges they are facing and how they differ from previous regimes. Second, it provides insights into the implications of these challenges for regional security, which is crucial given Afghanistan's strategic location and its history of conflict. Finally, this research has practical implications for policymakers and practitioners who are involved in addressing the challenges posed by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

## **Literature Gap**

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Since Taliban enjoyed rule over Afghanistan from 1996 till 2001, the literature on their earlier regime in Afghanistan is extensive, with a focus on their ideology, tactics, and history. However, few studies have focused on the global challenges faced by the contemporary Taliban regime and their implications for regional security. Previous

studies have highlighted the Taliban's reliance on Pakistan, their ties to Al Qaeda, and their lack of diplomatic recognition as significant challenges (Elias, [2022](#). 234-257). Additionally, studies have also highlighted the impact of sanctions, military intervention, and political pressure on the Taliban regime. Previous studies have also highlighted the impact of sanctions, military intervention, and political pressure on the Taliban regime. For instance, a study by Donno (2013) on nonviolent resistance in the context of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan showed that international pressure can be effective in weakening authoritarian regimes (Donno, [2013](#). 703-716.). Similarly, a study by Eckert ([2021](#)) on the impact of sanctions on the Taliban regime showed that sanctions can have a significant impact on the Taliban's ability to fund their operations. This paper has analyzed some potential challenges faced by Taliban regime and their implications on the regional and global politics.

## **Theoretical Framework**

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The analysis of the challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and their implications can be examined through realism. Realism can be applied to the challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and their implications for regional security in several ways.

First, realism emphasizes the importance of power in international relations. In the context of the challenges faced by the Taliban regime, neighboring countries may be motivated by a desire to maintain their own power and security. This may lead to policies that are designed to limit the Taliban's influence in the region and to promote their own interests. For example, neighboring countries may seek to form alliances or increase their military capabilities in order to balance against the potential threat posed by the Taliban.

Second, realism emphasizes the importance of the balance of power in maintaining stability in the international system. In the context of the challenges faced by the Taliban regime, neighboring countries may seek to maintain a balance of power in the region in order to prevent the Taliban from gaining too much influence or power. This may involve pursuing policies that limit the Taliban's ability to expand its influence or form alliances with other states in the region.

Third, realism also recognizes the potential for conflict and tension in international relations. In the context of the challenges faced by the Taliban regime, regional and global states may have concerns about the potential for spillover effects of the Taliban's rule, such as an increase in terrorism or refugee flows. This may lead to tensions between neighboring countries and a potential for conflict if they pursue conflicting policies or interests.

Realism recognizes the potential for conflict and tension in international relations (Sandal & Fox, 2013), particularly in the context of challenges posed by the Taliban regime such as terrorism and refugee flows. Neighboring countries may have concerns about the potential for spillover effects of the Taliban's rule, leading to tensions between neighboring countries and potential for conflict if they pursue conflicting policies or interests.

### **Global Challenges Faced by Taliban Regime**

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan is facing a range of global challenges that are impacting the stability of the country and the region. The Taliban's previous regime was associated with international terrorism, which posed a global security threat. Similarly, the current regime's association with terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State poses a global security threat. However, the current regime also faces the

additional challenge of addressing global concerns about human rights and democratic values, which were not a priority during their previous regime (Yevseyenko, 2022). These challenges can be broadly categorized into economic, diplomatic, refugees, regional and security challenges.

### **Economic Challenges:**

Due to international isolation and internal societal fragmentations, Taliban regime in Afghanistan is currently facing significant economic challenges. International sanctions have been imposed on the Taliban and their assets have been frozen by various countries and international organizations. The US, has frozen nearly \$9.4 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan Central Bank, which has severely impacted the country's macroeconomic variables (Modebadze, 2022, 277). Additionally, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has led to the suspension of international aid and assistance, which had previously supported the Afghan economy.

During their previous regime, the Taliban faced significant economic challenges due to international sanctions and the suspension of international aid. Similarly, the current Taliban regime is facing economic challenges due to international sanctions and the freezing of their assets. However, the current regime also faces the additional challenge of a lack of foreign aid, which was previously provided to Afghanistan before the Taliban's takeover.

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, and the Taliban will face significant economic challenges as they try to govern the country. One of the biggest challenges will be addressing the issue of unemployment, which was already high before the Taliban's takeover. The Taliban have stated that they want to address these economic challenges, but it remains to be seen how they will do so. The following

factors highlights the potential economic challenges for Taliban regime. The following statistics indicates deteriorating

economic challenges in Afghanistan with every passing month under the Taliban rule.

**Table 1**

*Economic Indicators in Afghanistan (trading economics)*

	Last	Previous		
Currency	86.2	86.54	Percent	April/23
GDP Annual Growth Rate	-20.7	-2.4	Percent	Dec/21
Unemployment Rate	13.3	11.2	Percent	Dec/21
Inflation Rate	3.6	5.2		Jan/23
Balance of Trade	-4458	-5761	USD Million	Dec/21
Current Account	-1047	-847	USD Million	Mar/21
Current Account to GDP	-17	-21.2	Percent of GDP	Dec/20
Government Debt to GDP	7.4	6.1	Percent of GDP	Dec/20
Government Budget	-4.5	-3.4	Percent of GDP	Dec/21
Corporate Tax Rate	20	20	Percent	Dec/22
Personal Income Tax Rate	20	20	Percent	Dec/22

### **Sanctions**

The Taliban regime is facing economic sanctions from several countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. These sanctions are aimed at curtailing the Taliban's access to financial resources and restricting their ability to carry out international trade. For example, the US Treasury Department recently announced sanctions on several Taliban leaders and organizations, including the Taliban's finance minister.

### **Aid Dependency**

Afghanistan has historically been heavily dependent on foreign aid to support its economy, and the Taliban regime is no exception. However, several countries have suspended or reduced their aid to Afghanistan in response to the Taliban's takeover. For example, the United States has frozen nearly \$10 billion in Afghan assets and suspended aid to the Afghan government (Modebadze, 2022. 277). Similarly, the World Bank has suspended funding to Afghanistan.

### **Drought and Agricultural Challenges**

Afghanistan is facing severe drought conditions, which have impacted its agricultural sector. Agriculture is a key sector of the Afghan economy, employing around 60% of the population (Muradi & Boz, 2018. 750-755.). The drought has led to crop failures and livestock losses, causing food insecurity and a rise in food prices. This is a significant economic challenge for the Taliban regime, which must address the needs of its population.

### **Currency Depreciation**

The Afghan currency has depreciated significantly since the Taliban takeover, with the exchange rate for the Afghan afghani falling by nearly 10% against the US dollar (Yousaf & Jabarkhail, 2021. 117-134.). This has led to inflation and a rise in prices for essential goods, which is a significant economic challenge for the Taliban regime to address.

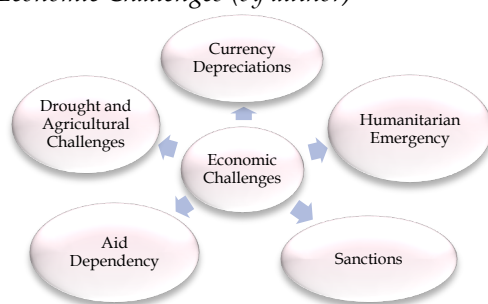
## Humanitarian Emergency

Afghanistan is facing significant humanitarian challenges, including a high prevalence of poverty, malnutrition, and displacement. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, over 18 million people in Afghanistan require humanitarian assistance, and over 500,000 people have been displaced due to conflict and natural disasters (Avis, 2021). This underscores the significant humanitarian challenges facing the Taliban regime and the importance of addressing these challenges to promote the well-being of the country's population.

Afghan refugees face significant humanitarian needs, including access to food, water, shelter, and medical care. According to the UNHCR, the majority of Afghan refugees are living in inadequate conditions, with limited access to basic services. This highlights the significant humanitarian challenges faced by Afghan refugees and the importance of addressing these challenges to promote their well-being (Malik et al., 2019: 185).

### Figure 1

*Economic Challenges (by author)*



## Diplomatic Challenges

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan is also facing significant diplomatic challenges. Many countries have not recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and have instead labeled them as a terrorist organization. For example, the

United States, the United Kingdom, and several other countries have indicated that they will not recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan unless it adheres to certain conditions, such as respect for human rights and freedom of the press. This highlights the diplomatic challenges faced by the Taliban regime and the potential impact these challenges could have on its ability to govern effectively. The Taliban's previous regime was also internationally isolated, and it is likely that the new regime will face similar challenges. This isolation may have implications for the Taliban's ability to access international financial institutions and aid. Additionally, the Taliban's human rights record and its treatment of women and minorities have led to international condemnation and pressure.

The Taliban's previous regime was internationally isolated and faced significant diplomatic challenges due to its association with terrorist groups like Al Qaeda. Similarly, the current regime faces diplomatic challenges due to its human rights record and its links to terrorism. However, the current regime also faces the additional challenge of being recognized as a legitimate government by the international community, which was not the case during their previous regime.

## Security Challenges

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan is also facing significant security challenges. The country has a history of violence and conflict, and the Taliban's rule has been marked by human rights abuses, including violence against women and religious minorities. The Taliban had also been associated with terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, which had led to international military intervention in Afghanistan. Moreover, the Taliban's control of Afghanistan may lead to a resurgence of terrorist groups in the region. The Taliban's ability to address these security challenges

and to provide security to the population is critical to its legitimacy as a government.

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan is also facing additional challenges related to governance, infrastructure, and development, which ultimately leads to insecurities in the country. The Taliban's previous rule was marked by poor governance and the absence of basic services like healthcare and education. The Taliban will need to address these challenges if it hopes to establish itself as a legitimate government and to gain the support of the Afghan people.

The Taliban's association with terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State poses a global security threat (Beradze, 2022, 4). Like the earlier Taliban regime, their control of Afghanistan may provide a safe haven for these groups to operate and plan attacks against other countries. In case, Taliban continuously fail to convince regional and international actors for their recognition and cooperation, they might rely on global terrorist networks for financial assistance; the situation could potentially lead to a global action against Taliban regime.

The Taliban's previous regime was marked by violence and conflict, with human rights abuses including violence against women and religious minorities. The current Taliban regime also faces security challenges related to their human rights record, as well as concerns about a resurgence of terrorist groups in the region. However, the current regime also faces the additional challenge of maintaining security in a country that has been destabilized by decades of conflict and war.

## **Regional Challenges**

The regional challenges faced by the Taliban regime are reflected in the form of refugee crises, border security, and a lack of regional cooperation. The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has led to a surge in the number

of Afghan refugees fleeing the country. This has created a regional humanitarian crisis, with neighboring countries struggling to accommodate the influx of refugees. Since the Taliban takeover, there has been a significant increase in the number of Afghan refugees seeking asylum in neighboring countries (Avis, 2021).

Similarly, Taliban's control of Afghanistan could potentially lead to increased border security challenges for neighboring countries. The Taliban's previous regime was associated with drug trafficking, and there are concerns that the Taliban's control of Afghanistan may lead to an increase in drug trafficking and other illegal activities across the border.

Thirdly, Taliban's rule in Afghanistan has the potential to increased regional tensions and a breakdown in regional cooperation. Many countries in the region have expressed concerns about the Taliban's human rights record and its links to terrorism. Afghanistan is a landlocked country that is heavily dependent on its neighbors for trade and economic integration. The Taliban regime's takeover of Afghanistan has led to uncertainty about the country's economic prospects, which could potentially impact regional economic integration. For example, trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has already been disrupted, with reports of goods being stuck at the border due to new restrictions and checks.

**Figure 2**

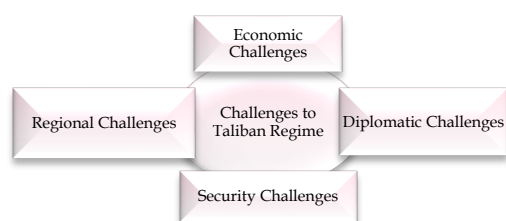
*Afghanistan's Regional Position (Congressional Research Service, 2021)*



In Figure 2, it can be seen that Afghanistan is a landlocked country, which makes it dependent on its bordering states for trade related issues. Similarly, its geographical position creates an unavoidable risk of infiltration of drugs, terrorists and illegal smuggling of goods. During their previous regime, the Taliban's control of Afghanistan led to regional challenges such as increased drug trafficking and tensions with neighboring countries. Similarly, the current regime faces regional challenges such as a refugee crisis and increased border security challenges for neighboring countries. However, the current regime also faces the additional challenge of navigating regional tensions and cooperation in the context of an evolving geopolitical landscape.

**Figure 4**

*Challenges to Taliban Regime (by author)*



## Way Forward

The future road map for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is still uncertain, but there have been some indications of their plans and priorities. One of the main priorities for the Taliban is to consolidate their power and establish control over the entire country. They have already formed an interim government, which includes several senior Taliban leaders, and are working to establish their administrative and security structures. However, there are reports of internal divisions within the Taliban leadership, which could impact their ability to govern effectively. Taliban's main priority should remain to consolidate their power and establish control over the entire

country. To achieve this, they have been working to establish their administrative and security structures. They have also been conducting a series of military offensives against opposition groups, including the Islamic State and the remnants of the Afghan government's security forces.

The Taliban have also indicated that they want to establish good relations with other countries and are seeking diplomatic recognition. They have already established unofficial diplomatic relations with several countries, including Pakistan, China, and Russia, but other countries, including the United States and many Western countries, have not yet channelized their relations with the Taliban regime. The Taliban have also expressed interest in establishing relations with other countries, including India, but these efforts have not yet borne fruit.

In terms of their policies and priorities, the Taliban have indicated that they will implement a strict interpretation of Islamic law, which could impact the rights and freedoms of women and minorities. They have also stated that they want to address issues such as corruption, poverty, and unemployment, but it remains to be seen how they will address these challenges. For example, under previous Taliban rule, women were not allowed to work outside the home, attend school, or leave their homes without a male relative. There are concerns that the Taliban will implement similar policies once again.

## Pakistan's Role in Taliban Regime Vis-à-vis Overcoming Challenges

Pakistan's role remained significant role in the history of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, both during their previous period of rule in the 1990s and in the current situation after their recent takeover of the country. Pakistan's and Taliban bilateral relationship is multifaceted and complex, with both positive and negative aspects.

On the one hand, Pakistan has long been labeled as the sanctuary for Taliban in the form of military aid, training, and safe haven. This support has been seen as part of Pakistan's strategy to maintain influence in Afghanistan and to counter the influence of India, which is seen as a rival by Pakistan. Pakistan has denied these accusations, but there is evidence to suggest that some elements within the Pakistani state have provided support to the Taliban.

During the Taliban's previous period of rule in the 1990s, Pakistan was one of the few countries that recognized their government and provided them with support (Khan, Hassan, & Raza, 2023). Pakistan's support for the Taliban was driven by several factors, including a desire to counter the influence of Iran, which supported the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, and to establish a government in Afghanistan that would be friendly to Pakistan.

Pakistan's support for the Taliban continued after their ouster in 2001, when they became a militant insurgency fighting against the Afghan government and international forces. Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has been accused of providing support to the Taliban in order to maintain their influence in Afghanistan and to counter India's influence in the region (Khan, Hassan, & Raza, 2023).

On the other hand, Pakistan has also been affected by the Taliban's presence in Afghanistan. The Taliban insurgency has spilled over into Pakistan, with attacks on Pakistani security forces and civilians. The Pakistani government has also been concerned about the presence of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, many of whom are Pashtuns, the same ethnic group as the Taliban. The influx of refugees has put a strain on Pakistan's resources and has been a source of social and economic tension (Khan, Hassan, & Raza, 2023).

In recent years, Pakistan has been trying to play a more constructive role in Afghanistan, including supporting peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Pakistan hosted several rounds of peace talks between the two sides in 2019 and 2020, and played a role in facilitating the talks that led to the US-Taliban agreement in 2020. Pakistan has also been advocating for a political settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan, rather than a military solution.

Pakistan's and Taliban relationship is likely to continue to be a complex and multifaceted one. While Pakistan has expressed support for the Taliban's recent takeover of Afghanistan, it is also concerned about the potential for instability and violence in the region. Pakistan's main priority is likely to be maintaining stability in Afghanistan, which will require a delicate balancing act between its relationship with the Taliban and its relationship with the Afghan government and the international community.

Pakistan has played an important role in the current situation after their recent takeover of the country. Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban is multifaceted and complex, with both positive and negative aspects. While Pakistan has expressed support for the Taliban's recent takeover of Afghanistan, it is also concerned about the potential for instability and violence in the region. Pakistan's main priority is likely to be maintaining stability in Afghanistan, which will require a delicate balancing act between its relationship with the Taliban and its relationship with the Afghan government and the international community.

One of the most crucial aspects of Pakistan's role in the Taliban regime has been its political and diplomatic support. Pakistan has been instrumental in facilitating the peace process in Afghanistan, which eventually led to the Taliban's return to power. Pakistan's Prime



Minister, Imran Khan, has repeatedly emphasized the need for an inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan, with the Taliban as an important stakeholder. He has also called for the international community to recognize the Taliban as a legitimate political force in Afghanistan. In an interview with the BBC, Imran Khan stated, "The Taliban are now a reality in Afghanistan. If the international community wants peace in Afghanistan, they will have to engage with the Taliban."

Moreover, Pakistan has been actively involved in providing humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Pakistan has provided nearly \$30 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan since 2020. This aid includes food, shelter, and medical assistance to the displaced persons and refugees.

Pakistan has also played a crucial role in the security of the Taliban regime. The Taliban and Pakistan have a long-standing relationship, and the Taliban leadership has been based in Pakistan for many years. According to reports, Pakistan's military intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has been providing military and logistical support to the Taliban. This support has included training, weapons, and ammunition to the Taliban fighters. The ISI has also played a crucial role in facilitating the safe passage of Taliban leaders between Pakistan and Afghanistan. There is also evidence of Pakistan's support for the Taliban in the international arena. In March 2021, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) imposed sanctions on a senior Taliban leader, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai. However, Pakistan opposed the move and blocked the UNSC's attempt to impose sanctions on Stanikzai. This move was seen as an indication of Pakistan's support for the Taliban leadership.

Furthermore, Pakistan has been working towards strengthening its bilateral ties with Afghanistan. In November 2021, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan visited Kabul, where he met with the Taliban leadership and Afghan officials. During his visit, Imran Khan emphasized the need for stronger ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan, particularly in the areas of trade and investment. He also reiterated Pakistan's support for an inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan.

### Key Findings

The key findings of the comparative analysis of the global challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan are as follows:

- The Taliban regime faces a range of global challenges, including economic, humanitarian, and security challenges, which are likely to impact the stability and legitimacy of their rule.
- The economic challenges faced by the Taliban regime include a lack of international recognition and aid, which is likely to impact their ability to provide basic services to the population and to finance their rule.
- The humanitarian challenges faced by the Taliban regime include high levels of poverty, displacement, and vulnerability, which are likely to exacerbate existing social and political tensions in the country.
- The security challenges faced by the Taliban regime include threats from internal dissidents, regional terrorist groups, and global powers, which are likely to impact their ability to maintain control over the country and to establish diplomatic relations with other nations.
- The challenges faced by the Taliban regime are comparable to those faced by previous Taliban regimes, but there are also new challenges arising

from changes in the global political and security environment.

- The challenges faced by the Taliban regime have significant implications for regional security, including the potential for spillover effects such as an increase in terrorism or refugee flows.
- The challenges faced by the Taliban regime can be analyzed through the lens of international relations theory, with realism providing a useful framework for understanding the actions and motivations of neighboring countries in response to the Taliban's rule.
- Pakistan's role in stabilizing government in Afghanistan through direct support as well as bridging it with the rest of world remains crucial. In order to get diplomatic advantages from Pakistan, Taliban needs to address, Pakistan security concerns with respect to Tehreek-e-Taliban-Pakistan (TTP).

The key findings suggest that the challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan are complex and multifaceted, with significant implications for regional security and stability. The comparative analysis highlights the similarities and differences between the current and previous Taliban regimes, and emphasizes the importance of international relations theory in understanding the actions and motivations of neighboring countries in response to the Taliban's rule.

## **Conclusion**

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The comparative analysis of the global challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of these challenges, which impact the legitimacy and stability of their rule. The Taliban regime faces a range of economic, humanitarian, and security

challenges, which are comparable to those faced by previous Taliban regimes but also include new challenges arising from changes in the global political and security environment.

The analysis also emphasizes the importance of international relations theory in understanding the actions and motivations of neighboring countries in response to the Taliban's rule, with realism providing a useful framework for analyzing these challenges and their implications for regional security. The implications of the challenges faced by the Taliban regime for regional security are significant, with the potential for spillover effects such as an increase in terrorism or refugee flows. Addressing these challenges will require a coordinated and multifaceted approach that takes into account the complex political, social, and economic factors at play in Afghanistan and the wider region.

The paper underscores the importance of taking a holistic approach to international relations that takes into account the complex political, social, and economic factors at play in global challenges. Addressing these challenges will require a multifaceted approach that involves not only state actors but also non-state actors such as civil society organizations, multinational corporations, and international organizations. By understanding the complex interplay of these factors, policymakers can develop effective strategies to address the challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and promote stability and security in the region.

The paper highlights the need for continued research and analysis of the challenges faced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and their implications. By understanding these challenges and their root causes, policymakers can develop effective strategies to address them and promote stability and security in the region.

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