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Víctor de Currea Lugo: "In Afghanistan a chronic situation of injustice can be perpetuated"

After twenty years of invading the country, the US withdrew all its troops and the Taliban took control again.



Images of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan shocked the world and were the cover photo of most media. Twenty years after the invasion decided by George W. Bush after the attack on the Twin Towers, the United States leaves the country in what seems a desperate flight and the Taliban retak control.



To understand what happened and what can happen in [Afghanistan](#), Contexto spoke with Víctor de Currea-Lugo, renowned academic and international analyst, author, among other books, of *[The Islamic State and The Arab Revolts: Travel Notes](#)*.

What does the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan mean and the country coming back under Taliban control?

The departure of the United States means the failure of a twenty-year military operation that did not understand or read the cultural-political particularity of Afghanistan, that did not contribute to its development and that tried to impose in a ridiculous way what we call democracy. It is very difficult to reduce democracy to one vote, but it is also even more pathetic if we think about the illiteracy rate, so that the real exercise of democracy falls short.

On the other hand, the Parliament, which was created, has a lot of influence from the former warlords, and the levels of corruption are worrying. That is, we have local elites that do not correspond to the reality of the country, fed and supported by an international community based mainly on the military, and an economy based on occupation or opium. All this represents a chain of errors that make this a great failure.

What have all these years of war and presence of U.S. forces in Afghanistan left behind?

The presence of the United States and its allies in Afghanistan leaves only one positive thing: the access of girls and women in general to education. More than 3.5 million girls returned to education. The reopening of work, educational and social spaces for women.

Except for this, what they leave is a lack of infrastructure, an increase in the violation of human rights, a clientelist and corrupt regime, an absolutely neoliberal model of administration and a stagnation of the country.

How are the different political forces positioned within the country? Is it possible for them to reach agreements and for the violence to cease?

The majority force of [the Afghan political situation is in the hands of the Taliban](#), a group of leaders including, for example, the son of Mullah Omar (founder of the Taliban); there is also the one who was a negotiator with the United States, in Doha, where the departure of US troops from Afghanistan was guaranteed; and some religious leaders. That team of people is the one that now, in a homogeneous and vertical way, will take the reins of the Afghan State.



Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo meets with the Taliban Negotiating Team, in Doha, Qatar, on November 21, 2020. Photo: Ron Przysucha / State Department

There is no possibility of political or religious diversity, despite the announcements made by the Taliban. They announce the formation of a project called the Emirate of Afghanistan, which has many elements in common with the Islamic State, which developed between the territories of Syria and Iraq, although it also differs from it.

The fundamental thing is to understand that there is a perverse and twisted reading of the Qur'an that is reflected in an experience that the world already knows because it was applied between 1996 and 2001 in those territories, and that it is difficult to imagine a moderate Taliban group or respectful of human rights.

What can be expected from now on in Afghanistan and what role will that country play on the geopolitical chessboard of the region?

Afghanistan had geopolitical significance as a "buffer country" in the wars between the Russian Empire and the British Empire in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century it again played as a buffer country in the war in the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Except for that role, it has neither the mineral resources nor a strategic location that makes it important. It is more likely to take a path similar to that of Somalia or Haiti, that is, countries nominally backed by the international community but really abandoned to their fate, with a precarious economy based on irregular activities; in the case of Afghanistan, opium production. As long as it does not splash the international community with its actions and does not disturb the great powers, a chronic situation of injustice can be perpetuated in Afghanistan without any reaction from the international community.

Héctor Bernardo for La Pluma, august 28, 2021

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