

18 Years in Afghanistan: Will This War Ever End?



Mural in Kabul, Afghanistan depicting a peace march that happened in 2018. Photo from commandreams.org

BY CASSIDY KLEIN
STAFF WRITER

Last month, 30 pine nut farmers in eastern Afghanistan were resting after a day's labor in the fields when they were killed by a U.S. drone during a bombing raid, according to Reuters.

This bombing happened on Sept. 19 — less than a month before the 18-year mark of the Afghanistan war, the longest war in U.S. history. According to Reuters, there are about 14,000 U.S. troops currently in Afghanistan, and nearly 4,000 Afghan civilians have been killed or wounded in the first half of 2019.

"There is no such thing as war that doesn't kill innocent folk," PLNU philosophy professor Heather Ross said. "[It is a] devastation for the pine nut farmers mowed down by American drones, and for whoever was controlling that drone."

Reasons for U.S. involvement in Afghanistan have only become more cloudy and uncertain, according to PLNU

political science professor Rosco Williamson.

"The clear stated goal [of the Afghanistan war] was to make sure another 9/11 doesn't happen, which isn't really a clear goal," Williamson said. "And the actual involvement itself brings new enemies, and so the very fact that we are there creates new reasons to be there."

On Oct. 7, 2001, the U.S. began bombing Afghanistan, targeting al-Qaida and Taliban fighters, according to the BBC. The war spread into Iraq in 2003 and Syria in 2011.

College students have grown up in a post-9/11 world, with the Afghanistan war being a constant reality. Senior nursing major Hannah Messina said she grew up harboring a "negative stigma" toward the Middle East due to this war that she is now learning to process and question.

"We grew up with that stigma of, '[Muslims] are the bad ones, beware of them on planes,'" Messina said.

Messina works as a student nurse at the VA hospital in La

Jolla and sees the PTSD and other issues that veterans from all wars deal with.

"From my experience, people who I find out that were in Afghanistan don't like to talk about their experiences," Messina said. "It just uprooted their lives in ways that it's really hard to adjust back to the real world."

Trump announced at the beginning of this month that he was going to start pulling troops from Syria. Williamson said Trump's point in this was to "end this endless war," but it's not that simple due to the complex relationships the U.S. in the Middle East.

"I think it's not a good idea [to pull troops from Syria]," said junior political science major Christian Aguayo. "I guess I've always been more toward the U.S. having an active military role. The U.S. military is also one of the largest providers of aid in the world, so we kind of bring the sword and the shield at the same time."

Though San Diego doesn't send out as many troops to

Afghanistan as would Army or Air Force bases around the U.S., Williamson said people in San Diego tend to be supportive of troop members, even if they are not supportive of the war itself.

"San Diego has always been a big support to troops," Williamson said. "There's a real push to try to oppose being [in the war] without opposing the people who are there. That's a tough line to walk sometimes."

Ross said that as a pacifist she will use whatever power she has "to talk students out of joining the military because of the devastation of the violence of drone warfare on both sides."

"College is the prime recruiting age, with the promise of college tuition being paid for," she said. "[There is a] preying on poverty in order to place someone in a position where they are controlling a drone."

Evangelical Christians have historically been supportive of the Afghanistan war, Williamson said, primarily based on their support for Israel and attitudes

toward Islam.

"A big trend in Evangelical thought, at least since 9/11, is that Islam is by definition a violent religion, which it's not," Williamson said. "You put those two things together, and [the war] protects Israel and it takes down the violent parts of Islam."

Other Christians, like Ross, oppose war based on the model of Jesus, who suffered political violence. At the heart of Christian theology, Ross said, is the "wholesale indictment of political violence."

Williamson said he doesn't think there is an end in sight to this war, even with a change of president. He expects that the U.S. will remain there on a low level.

Creating peace during an "endless" war means to stand in solidarity with all who suffer political violence, Ross said, which calls for "justice in this life, action in this world and to not give in to the idolatrous temptation of [thinking] that people can only be together in a nation-state."

Students Finding Themselves Sleepless in San Diego

BY JEN PFEILER
STAFF WRITER

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a third of young adults between the ages of 18 to 24 are sleep deprived in California. This means most college aged students are getting less than the recommended seven hours of sleep per night.

Rachel Isteepho, a freshman biology major, said that she typically gets between five to six hours of sleep a night.

"I'm taking biology and chemistry classes that give a lot of information to cover. It can be difficult to find the balance between studying all the material and sleeping so I can actually retain it," Isteepho said.

According to PLNU's 2019-2020 Undergraduate Academic Catalog, students typically have two hours of homework for every unit of class. The average course load is 15-17 units. This means that students will spend around

45-51 hours a week on school alone. This is more than the average full time 40 hour work week. Students like Neo Tapia, a senior psychology major, must juggle a full time course load along with a job on the side.

"It takes good time management and prioritizing school over a lot of other things to be able to get a decent night's sleep," Tapia said.

While the daily grind of student life can influence sleep patterns, there is another opponent to quality rest: blue light. According to The National Sleep Foundation, blue light exposure from phones, laptops, tablets and other electronic devices before bed can reduce the amount of melatonin produced in the body, making it difficult to fall asleep right away. Checking emails and scrolling through social media can be over stimulating when you're trying to wind down.

Freshman graphic design major Jemima Goodson said she notices she has trouble falling asleep when she uses her phone before bed.

"I'm usually watching YouTube or checking emails before I go to sleep," Goodson said. "It definitely makes it harder to wind down after being stimulated. I notice it especially when I'm not wearing my glasses. The screen light can keep me up longer than usual."

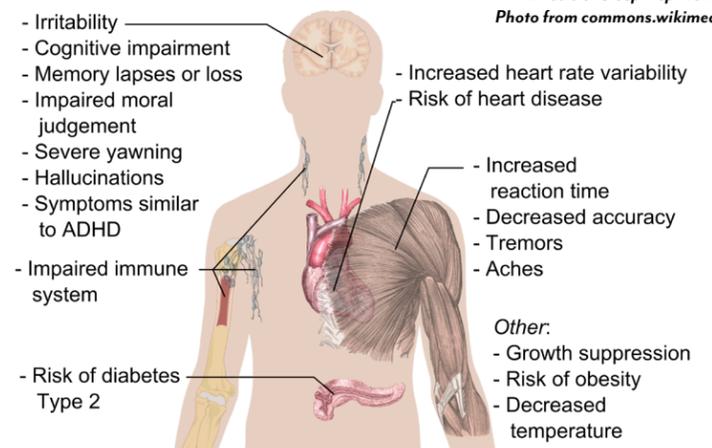
Despite technology's hindrances to rest, some developers have designed apps to improve sleep quality. One such app is Sleep Cycle. With Sleep Cycle, users set the app to wake them up between an adjustable time frame (usually thirty minutes). The app tracks noise and movement in order to determine how deep the user is sleeping. It uses this data to wake the individual up during the lightest part of their sleep cycle.

This way, the app claims, one can feel more rested when the alarm goes off.

Whether technology is a part of your nightly routine or not, the CDC has a few helpful tips on how to get a good night's rest: Wake up and go to bed at the same time each night, avoid

caffeine and large meals right before bed and exercise during the day. Student life can be busy, but quality rest is listed as one of the top five health behaviors known to prevent chronic disease, including depression, according to the CDC.

Effects of Sleep Deprivation
Photo from commons.wikimedia



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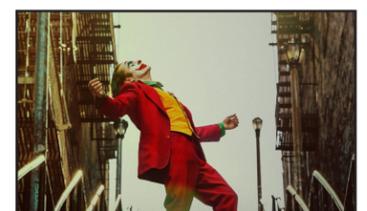
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