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Humanities Division 4

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Afghanistan Write-Up

The United States has occupied Afghanistan for eighteen years, causing turmoil and political unrest which has in turn created an unstable living situation for the Afghan people. We have an opportunity to support the Afghan government to function independently and as a sovereign nation, and in doing so stop spending American tax dollars on the war in Afghanistan.

The constant drone strikes and extreme military presence only ended up hurting those who it promised to help: the Afghan people. It has strengthened the Taliban military, as they see more and more of a need to have a strong military force with the US still present. One clear way this is true is the drone strikes through the Obama and Trump administration, which hurt civilians. The drone attacks are deeply resented in Pakistan, where 90 percent of people oppose them. One reason for their unpopularity is that civilians have been killed in drone attacks." It is hard to say if the Taliban would even be as much of an issue if the US didn't maintain a military presence after killing Osama Bin Laden.

Whatever acceptable grounds there were for going to war in 2002 are far from applicable all these years later. In certain situations in which the people of a country are facing extreme oppression and danger, it does make sense for a country with more global power to help. However, when possible, there are other routes. Right now, the Afghani government needs our support. Unfortunately, Trump believes that this financial support is only creating an even safer environment for the Taliban to thrive. Trump tweeted, "President Trump has also reduced U.S. military aid to Pakistan, arguing that it was providing a safe haven for the Taliban." To continue to pay for and follow through with drone strikes against the Taliban will only hurt the victims of the Taliban even more. A war should end when staying in the invaded country is no longer changing the situation. To stay

in Afghanistan for the optics of it, or just in fear that if we leave things will get worse is a waste of resources, not to mention it is thinking short term only.

If the United States wants to use its powers properly, it should think of what is helpful now, not eighteen years ago. Supporting the Afghani government and neighboring countries will strengthen alliances in the region and create an independent democracy. For the US to help other countries, they must think long-term, and consider if the action being taken can be sustained for over a decade. If it can't, alternative solutions ought to be considered.

US high school students can learn more about the cultures of the countries of which the United States is in conflict with. Instead of solely thinking about these countries in the context of terrorist attacks in Western countries or the violence in the regions themselves, learning about Islam in the same ways we do other religions will help all of us from othering these groups. We can also begin by being allies to Muslim minorities in America and other European countries, many of which are living in countries which prohibit them from freedom of religion. We can begin by confronting the ways we use Islam as a means to other minorities before using violence in other countries.