Jolie Carlisle

Golden Sierra High School, Garden Valley

This year, I discovered an article that reported a 12.7% increase in military spending in China (Forsythe). After a lifetime of hearing paranoid propaganda, my knee jerk reaction was to panic. My mind began to fill with images of the People’s Liberation Army storming our shores to conquer our cities. Other inane thoughts blossomed as well. China is our competition. China is increasing military spending. Should we be increasing military spending? What if we were attacked? Then I paused, took a breath, and began to think like a rational human being. The world, I reminded myself, is no longer going through the Cold War. China is an ally.

In fact, the United States is neither on the brink of or participating in a war with any other country. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are against mere terrorist organizations, not entire nations, and the conflict in Libya is a military campaign backed by the United Nations in which America is part of a multinational coalition (Bengali). With this in mind, does not a defense budget of $708.3 billion for the year 2011 sound exorbitant (Olson)? Is so much money really necessary to defend ourselves from terrorists? Terrorism is an issue, but it is an issue that every country faces routinely. In a time where the United States is merely facing a few crazy extremists and a crazier dictator, such a high budget seems unwarranted.

I do not believe such a massive budget is ever warranted. After all, even with their budget increase, China, owner of the second largest defense budget, spends merely $91 billion (Forsythe). Although this is less than an eighth of America’s budget, it is more than sufficient for the Chinese, owners of the largest standing army. I am doubtful that there are many who know how we manage to spend or waste so much money in our defense department, but I am certain that there are many who know how we could better spend our money on improving the lives of our nation’s citizens. Take the healthcare debate. Our nation contains citizens who oppose socialized medicine and do not believe that the government should have the responsibility to provide for the health of its citizens. Many of these people do, however, believe that government should provide protection to its citizens. To me, these duties seem very similar. Both illness and war pose threats to the lives of Americans. In fact, far more Americans will face the dark shadow of illness than will ever face the horrors of war. Should not this be taken into account in our nation’s budget?

War will continue to rear its ugly head, terrorism will continue to threaten, but we cannot let the fear they instill control and harm us. Even without attacking us, our enemies can cause harm by influencing us to spend money on weapons, espionage, and soldiers instead of doctors and medical research. America must have the bravery to become less paranoid of imaginary enemies and more concerned with the wellbeing of its citizens.
Works Cited

