

This past week various news events once again made it abundantly clear that our foreign policy is an abject failure. Unfortunately, in spite of this the administration is determined to stay on this destructive course, despite any past promises to change it. For Afghanistan especially, if ever there was an opportunity to admit shortcomings and change strategies along with leaders, this past week was it.

There really is nothing for us to win in Afghanistan. Our mission has morphed from apprehending those who attacked us, to apprehending those who threaten or dislike us for invading their country, to remaking an entire political system and even a culture. I remain highly skeptical that, as foreign occupiers, we can ever impose western-style democracy on another country. Our troops have debilitating restrictions on defending themselves against enemies, which are so often indistinguishable from civilians. They also face dire setbacks in winning hearts and minds when innocents are mistakenly harmed, which happens all the time. We can never make friends this way; the tactic never works.

This is an expensive, bloody, endless exercise in futility. Not everyone is willing to admit this just yet. But every second they spend in denial has real costs in lives and livelihoods.

Many of us can agree on one thing, however. Our military spending in general has grown way out of control. This is largely because fiscal accountability in military budgeting is seen, by many, as weak on defense. This is absolutely wrong and a dangerous way to think. It is certainly possible for the military to waste money, or to spend money counterproductively, and indeed it has. But out of political correctness, the military has been getting blank checks from the administrations and Congress for far too long.

It is important to defend our soil, but let us defend our own soil instead of defending Europe's soil. Our willingness to defend Europe enables their lavish social spending at our expense, while they criticize our model of capitalism. It is time they allocated the money for their own defense. The same goes for Korea, Japan and other countries like Egypt and Israel.

It is also important that while our troops are in combat, our soldiers have what they need to do the best they can, even if we disagree with why they are there. It is an embarrassment that some soldiers and families have had to buy body armor at their own expense when billions are

awarded to politically well-connected defense contractors for weapon systems that don't work, are over-budget, past deadline. This is the kind of waste that needs to end. I firmly believe that there is enough waste in the military budget that we can both save money overall and at the same time be safer.

Of course, the obvious way to save money and be safer is to stop meddling in the affairs of foreign countries and just bring our troops home. This will happen eventually if our empire, like every other fallen empire, insists on spending itself into collapse. If we want to avoid this, we must look into ways to bring our costs under control. Military budgets must be on the chopping block along with everything else.