Madam Speaker, this

resolution is not as much about Libya

as it is about us. Wouldn’t it be wonderful

if we could control events

around the world, determine the way

that people see us and always accurately

predict the consequences of our

actions? But that’s not what life is all

about. The best we can do is establish

the values and the principles that define

us individually as citizens and collectively

as a Nation.

This resolution is not about whether

we should be involved. We are always

going to be involved in what is taking

place around the world, because we are

the world’s economic, military and

moral superpower. To choose not to

act, particularly at a time of such crisis

and transformation that is occurring

throughout the Arab world, is, in

fact, to choose. In this case, it would be

to choose to define us as a people who

has decided to look the other way, to

choose not to hear the cries of desperate

help from the Libyan people

who have chosen to put their lives on

the line in the cause of democracy, of

individual liberty and of freedom from

oppression.

These are the values that define us as

a people and as a Nation. They are the

values, frankly, that give hope to a

world of repression and despotism that

will, in fact, continue to exist and, in

fact, will gain strength if we do not

stand up, speak out and ‘‘have their

back’’ at such a time as this.

That’s why we should defeat the

Kucinich resolution, because it is really

about who we are as a people and

whether we still have the courage and

the constancy to defend the moral high

ground. As long as the rest of the world

has to look up, not down and not sideways

as this resolution would place us,

we will, in fact, be advancing our own

security and prosperity and the integrity

of our moral force as a Nation of

principled people.

We must always bear in

mind that we live in a world that

wants more than anything to shine as

brightly as the beacon of freedom and

hope that we represent. We should always

bear in mind that we have the

privilege of representing and burnishing

ever brighter that beacon in a

time of crisis when there is clear cost

and consequence to our actions. This is

when we show the courage and the constancy

that must define us. Once again,

we are called upon to be equal to our

history to the legacy of those who have

gone before us.

This may not seem like a terribly

critical vote in the scheme of things;

but to all of the Libyans who have chosen

to put their lives on the line for the

values that define us as Americans, it

is a big deal. It is everything. It is

their lives. It is their hope. It is their

future. That’s why this resolution

should be defeated. Because this is

about us and a world that looks to us

for its moral leadership.

Madam Speaker, I rise

to oppose this motion.

The War Crimes Tribunal is about to

prosecute Ratko Mladic—16 years

later, but they’ve finally gotten him.

Why? Because he masterminded the

massacre of over 8,000 innocent civilians

in Srebrenica. Serbia is now a

democratic ally, thanks to President

Clinton’s taking action against congressional

resistance.

We took the lead in the Balkans. It

was a NATO effort, but I think we all

know that NATO could not have put an

end to those massacres, that genocide,

had we not taken the lead. We had to

act responsibly, and we had to act in a

timely and forceful manner.

Now, more recently there have been

more than a dozen times since 2000

when the President has had to use

American troops to intervene for humanitarian

reasons against terrorist

threats, against whatever endangered

American civilians and troops.

To tie the President’s hands in such

situations, whether it be a Republican

or Democratic President, is wrong. We

should not be doing this. Of course we

should be advising the President, working

with the President, whoever that

President might be. And through our

committee leadership, we have any

number of opportunities to do that.

But to pass legislation that is designed

to tie the President’s hands at a time

of military crisis is inconsistent with

the legacy of this body, which is to do

what is necessary to protect America’s

interests at home and abroad.

With regard to Libya,

we don’t know what the outcome is

going to be in Libya. We do know that

Muammar Qadhafi is a bad guy. He’s

not an ally. He’s not even reliable in

terms of working with us in any economic

or foreign policy measure. This

is an opportunity to establish a government

that we can work with. We can’t

control that government, we’re not

sure of the outcome, but we know the

people putting their government together

today want to work with the

United States. But they need American

support, obviously under the umbrella

of NATO—that’s NATO’s purpose—but

none of us should be so naive as to

think that NATO can operate independent

of United States leadership.

That’s just not the case. We have made

the investment in our military capability,

we have established ourselves as

the world’s superpower, and with that

role comes a concomitant responsibility

to use it when and wherever necessary

for the advancement of world

peace and security.

Let’s defeat this resolution.