Mr. Speaker, I thank the

gentleman for yielding me this time.

We have before us today one of the

most important issues that a democracy must decide, whether to potentially go to war against another nation. It is a vote of conscience, and I

believe reasonable people can disagree

while looking at the same set of facts.

September 11, however, has changed

the psyche of our Nation forever. We

witnessed in horror what a few suicidal

terrorists can accomplish in a low-tech operation, and now we shudder to

imagine what suicidal terrorists can

accomplish if they gain access to high-tech weapons of mass destruction.

I believe Saddam Hussein has biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction and that he is aggressively

seeking to develop nuclear capability.

But I also believe that he can be deterred because, as New York Times columnist Thomas

Friedman puts it, Saddam loves his life more than he hates us.

It is, however, irrefutable that Saddam is in blatant violation of numerous U.N. resolutions that call for his

disarmament of these weapons. Now

the question becomes: How do we enforce these resolutions and accomplish

the universal goal of disarming his

weapons of mass destruction?

I have come to the conclusion that

my two sons’ futures and the future of

all our children across the globe will be

made a little safer if Saddam disarms,

on his own or with our help; militarily,

if necessary. I pray that it is done

peacefully. I pray that he blinks.

But I have also concluded that we are

dealing with a person who will not do

the right thing unless, literally, he has

a gun pointing at his head. Therefore, I

support the resolution before us today.

But I also support the Spratt amendment, because how we accomplish our

goals and with whom can make all the

difference. We need to do this with the

help and the support of the international community. I believe that it

would be disastrous if we try to accomplish disarmament through unilateral military action.

The process we take will determine

whether the rest of the world views us

as a beacon or as a bully. We could remain a beacon of hope and optimism as

the leader of the free world, promoting

economic progress for all, respecting

human rights, and ensuring democratic

values such as freedom, political pluralism, religious tolerance, free speech,

and respect for the rule of law; or we

could be viewed as the superpower

bully, imposing our military power

whenever we want and wherever we want.

I give the President the benefit of the

doubt when he now says that the use of

military force will be a last resort, not

a first option; that regime change can

also mean attitude change of

Saddam’s; and that we will work hard

to gather international support for disarming him before military action is taken.

That is what the administration

should have been saying from day one,

and it is now reflected in the new resolution before us today.

We need to do this the right way because U.N. engagement and inter-

national support is essential. I subscribe to the Thomas Friedman ‘‘crystal store’’ theory of U.S. foreign policy:

If you break it, you own it. If we break

Iraq, we will have the responsibility to

rebuild it, just as we need to rebuild

Afghanistan today. This is another

vital reason why international support

is critical for our action in Iraq, for what happens the day after.

We have never been good at nation

building. We can accomplish military

goals with little help, but our democracy does not have the experience or

the sustainability for successful nation

building. Therefore, we must approach

the aftermath of any conflict in the region with the greatest degree of humility.

In addition, I am concerned that the

administration is developing a blind

spot. They are becoming overly intoxicated with the use of our military

power. I am glad that we have the

world’s most powerful military; but

this is not just a battle of military

might, it is also a battle of values and

ideas in the region. Our message to the

outside world needs to be better than:

You are either for us or you are against

us; and if you are against us, we are going to kill you.

Instead, we need to send a message

through words and deeds that we are

interested in being good global citizens as well. Unfortunately, the

unilateralist message this administration has sent from day one has now

come back to haunt us in our attempt

to secure support against Iraq: No to

the global climate treaty, no to the biological treaty, no to the land mines

treaty, no to the ABM treaty, no to an

international crimes tribunal. If the

rest of the world does not like it, that is just tough.

Instead, the world needs to hear from

us that we are concerned about our

global environment; we are concerned

about their economic progress; we are

concerned that 2 billion people must

survive on just $1 a day; that 1.5 billion

people, most of them children, cannot

even get a clean glass of water; and

that we want to help eradicate the scourge of AIDS.

Furthermore, the world needs to hear

that we are truly interested in being

honest brokers in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle

East. We need to recognize that the

real battleground for peace throughout

the world ultimately lies in education.

We cannot just keep looking at the

Arab world as a great gas station, indifferent to what happens inside their

countries, because the gas now is leaking, and there are people starting to throw matches around.

If we have learned anything from

September 11, it is that if we do not

visit and help in a bad neighborhood,

that bad neighborhood can come and visit us.

So for the sake of our young military

troops, for the sake of the Iraqi people,

and for the sake of our Nation as it is

perceived by the rest of the world in

the 21st century, I pray that we can accomplish Saddam’s disarmament

peacefully and, if not, then with international support.

But today we need to give the President this tool in his diplomatic arsenal,

and also pray that he uses it wisely.

May God continue to bless these United States of America.