Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time

to me. Mr. Speaker, this Nation once again

considers a course of action that will

define our moral standing in the history

of free peoples. I agree that America

should speak with one voice in response

to the challenges to international

peace, security, and human

rights posed by the regime in Iraq.

That voice must be founded on the

most fundamental of moral principles:

the sanctity of human life.

The value of human life has been the

basis for the settled, bipartisan international

policy toward Iraq that we in

this Congress have expressed in the

past. In 1998, Congress reflected a

strong, unified voice when we voted to

support legislation that noted Iraq’s

violation of U.N. disarmament demands

to eliminate all weapons of

mass destruction, as well as their development.

In that same year, we also enacted

the Iraq Liberation Act that authorized

U.S. support for Iraqi liberation

forces in their efforts to replace the

Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. We

did so because Saddam Hussein has

proven himself to be a serious threat to

regional stability in the Middle East, a

growing threat to the United States,

and a leader who deserves to be tried in

an international tribunal for crimes

against humanity. However, we did not

authorize the unilateral use of U.S.

military forces towards that end.

Neither the American people nor

their elected representatives have

wavered in our support for the values

of human rights, security, international

stability, and democracy reflected

in those 1998 congressional resolutions.

However, as we consider this resolution,

we must not forget one essential

fact. As the gentlewoman from California

(Ms. PELOSI) of the Permanent

Select Committee on Intelligence has

concluded, we have seen no evidence or

no intelligence to suggest that Iraq indeed

poses an imminent threat to our

Nation. In the absence of an imminent

threat to the United States, I cannot

support the resolution proposed by the

Bush administration that would authorize

preemptive military strikes by

the U.S. forces to enforce all relevant

U.N. resolutions, some of which deal

with issues other than Iraqi weapons of

mass destruction.

I agree with the senior Senator from

West Virginia, who has observed that

the President’s proposed resolution is

dangerously hasty, redefines the nature

of defense, and reinterprets the

Constitution to suit the will of the executive branch.

The resolution proposed by the administration

would codify the doctrine

of preemption, the assertion that

America has the unilateral right to attack

a nation that has not attacked us.

This, in my view, would be a precedent

with disastrous consequences. A unilateral

first strike would almost certainly

result in substantial loss of life, both

among American troops and among

Iraqi civilians. A unilateral first strike

would undermine the moral authority

of the United States and could set a

devastating international precedent

that we could then see echoed in conflicts

between India and Pakistan, Russia

and Georgia, China and Taiwan, and

in many other corners of the world.

In addition, unilateral U.S. action

may well destabilize the Middle East,

harming the international cooperation

that we need to defend America against terrorism.

Experts tell us that the United

States might have to remain in Iraq for

a decade, a commitment requiring

international support and engagement.

Finally, the economic costs of going

it alone would undermine the ability of

our Nation to address our unmet domestic priorities.

Although this resolution would authorize

the President to take this Nation

to war, it is not a declaration of

war, it is a blank check to use force

without the moral or political authority

of a declaration of war. Congress

must not abandon its authority under

the Constitution. This resolution

would do just that.

The course of action that is more

consistent with the values and security

interests of the United States is to support

a multinational collective security

strategy towards the threats to regional

peace and international stability

that are posed by the regime in

Iraq. The administration has indicated

some progress within the United Nations

Security Council towards that

goal. I join the President in urging all

members of the Council to act with due diligence.

I also join in the position advanced

by our colleague, the gentleman from

South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), who has

proposed that we once again authorize

U.S. military support for a renewed

and strengthened U.N. Security Council

resolution that demands true disarmament

by Iraq. This is a threat that

the civilized world must face together.

The regime of Saddam Hussein, after

all, is the world’s problem as well as our own.