Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honor to begin this

debate today, and I believe that it is an important one. There is no

way for me in 1 minute to lay out all of the factors to take into

consideration here, but let me just make two observations at the

beginning of this debate.

We have a duty and a responsibility as a Congress to be heard on the

issues before us. As a Nation, we must face the fact that this is not

over and may not be over for some time and that we will be dealing with

the consequences of American actions in the Balkans for the next decade

at least. Our relationships with NATO, United States' relationships

with Russia, NATO's relationships with Russia, the problem of the

refugees, the pressure for a greater Albania with claims to Macedonia

and Greece, all of these things we will have to deal with as a

consequence of American actions, and they will be influenced by the

decisions and the votes that we take today.

We cannot and should not avoid this discussion on the merits. That is

our responsibility as elected representatives from the districts that

we have come here to serve.

Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the distinguished

minority leader that this is not about partisanship, it is about

policy. We have an advantage here tonight in that we are being asked to

authorize something that happened 5 weeks ago. That gives us the

advantage because we can see the immediate effects. We have got the

benefit here of a crystal ball to see what the results will be of the

President's policy.

The question for all of us is, do you want to stand behind this? Is

this the policy and the results that you want? Because if it is not,

you will be endorsing everything that has gone on in the last 5 weeks

and taking on the risk of what will happen in the future.

What have we seen? The political aims are not clear and they have not

been from the very beginning. Mostly they are humanitarian. Our

objective was to prevent a humanitarian disaster in the Balkans. We

have exacerbated that humanitarian disaster, and hundreds of thousands

of Kosovar Albanians have been pushed out of their homes and those

homes burned because our military means were not tied to those

political objectives.

I am a former Air Force officer. I believe in air power, as my father

did and my grandfather before him. And despite the images that we see

on our televisions of precise attacks, we can hit the bridges, but we

cannot change the mind of Slobodan Milosevic. As a result, we have not

been able to stop a door-to-door campaign of repression and ethnic

cleansing, and we have made it worse.

The refugees themselves enhance the instability of the Balkans. We

have pushed those refugees into neighboring countries which themselves

are fragile, and we will have to deal with the consequences of that for

the coming decade. We have increased domestic support for Milosevic and

enhanced Serbian nationalism in Serbia. That does not serve NATO

interests or American national interests.

And we have stretched our forces dangerously thin. We are almost out

of cruise missiles. Fully a fifth of the American Air Force is

committed and tied down in the Balkans. What kind of risk does that put

us in in Korea? We are a superpower, but much of our power comes from

our own restraint and the threat of the use of that power.

NATO will endure. I used to serve at the United States Mission to

NATO. It will continue to have the credibility to do that which is in

its vital interests to do and that, Mr. Speaker, is the fundamental

problem. This is not in the vital national interests of the United

States. If it were, we would be there, foursquare, with decisive

military force to get the job done and come home. But because it is

not, we cannot sustain this operation. I will not vote to support an

action which has been shown to fail.