Mr. President, I say to my colleagues in the

Senate that I support this motion to proceed and want us to get on to

the resolution so we can have a full and thorough debate on this issue

of what to do in Iraq. Without a doubt, this issue is the No. 1 issue,

foremost in the minds of the American people. My State of Florida,

being a microcosm of the entire country, is certainly reflective of

that. People are unsettled over the course of the war. They are

unsettled over the fact that none of our leadership will indicate we

are winning this war and, indeed, at the same time they recognize the

stakes are so very high in that part of the world if we are

unsuccessful. Therefore, because this issue naturally is at the

forefront of Americans' minds now, and what to do about it, we need to

get it out here and get it thoroughly discussed and debated.

It seems to me one of the fundamental mistakes at first of going into

Iraq was not to understand the world of Islam and the schism that has

been there for 1,327 years, ever since the battle of Karbala, in 680

A.D., when the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed was killed in the

battle. That led to a division of those new worshipers who had followed

the Prophet Mohammed into the primary sect, Sunnis, and those who were

rebelling, the Shiites.

That schism has lasted ever since. We see attempts at bringing those

two groups together, but we always see--just in the demonstrations in

the religious holidays recently reenacting that battle, establishing

the Shiite sect as one that is separated from the Sunnis--they have

been at it ever since. So, when you have a country that has those two

sects, they have been at each other's throats and you find that order

has been maintained, in the case of Iraq, by a brutal dictator who

favored one sect over the other. Now that that dictator has been

overthrown and is no more, in an attempt to bring about democracy, you

see the majority in that country of Iraq, the Shiites, suddenly feeling

they have control and maybe it is not quite so bad that they let out--

in their mind, they say it is not so bad--to let out their frustrations

on the ones who had kept them down for years and years, their rivals,

the Sunnis. In the process, you get this sectarian warfare which is, by

anybody's definition, very close to civil war.

How do we stabilize Iraq? For us just going in and thinking it is

going to be a democracy and that the Shiites are going to play the

democratic game and the Sunnis are--and not even to speak of the branch

of the Sunnis, the Baathists, who had been the ruling party--to think

they are all going to play the game of democracy and majority rules,

you have seen, now, after going on 4 years, what has happened.

So what do we do? We have a suggestion by a unanimous decision by a

bipartisan group of extremely well thought of people called the Iraq

Study Commission, led by former Secretary of State, former Chief of

Staff of the White House, Jim Baker, and led by Congressman Lee

Hamilton, former Member of the House, former head of the International

Relations Committee in the House of Representatives. Unanimously, 10

people--5 Democrats and 5 Republicans--came up with a plan. How do you

stabilize Iraq, given the conditions we find ourselves in there today?

They said, clearly, what you have to do is stop having the mentality of

an American occupying force. Let the Iraqis start to work it out for

themselves. Realize there is probably going to have to be a separation

of the sects until they can get them stabilized, and in the meantime do

a very aggressive, diplomatic effort throughout the region to get all

of the countries in the region to buy into what is ultimately the

political solution.

This Senator thinks, given all of this chaos and tumult and sectarian

warfare, that political solution is going to have to be some kind of

division. Clearly Kurds in the north basically have their own

autonomous government. Shiites are concentrated in the south. Sunnis

are concentrated in the center. They made an important first step

recently in the establishment of a new law distributing the oil

production--which is not distributed geographically throughout the

country but is concentrated in the north and in the south.

So if all the elements are there to make this possible for local

control, of Kurds in the north, Sunnis in the middle, Shiites in the

south, distributing the oil wealth proportionally according to the

population, having a national government for the common defense, let's

see if that political situation will work.

People say you can't do that because you have all these neighborhoods

where Sunnis and Shiites are all living together. But the fact is the

separation is already occurring because of the sectarian violence and

the killing that is going on. You are seeing that separation.

If that is a likely political outcome that has the best chance to

stabilize Iraq, then what should be the position of the United States

and its forces, and what should be the policy of the United States to

bring that about? Go back to the Iraq Study Commission. People say

there is not a plan. There is. There is a plan. It is printed. It has

about 75 recommendations. What it says is the American force should

withdraw from the midst of that sectarian warfare, withdraw more to the

perimeter, start lessening the forces and therefore the casualties to

our American men and women, and use that force to train the Iraqi

Army--to continue to train them--to provide force protection and very

likely border control, since the neighbors in the region have not been

exactly good on that--that is something we ought to be diplomatically

insisting on, with the neighbors in the region--and to continue to

prosecute the war against the terrorists by going after the terrorists

there, particularly al-Qaida, who are trying to undermine the whole

process.

What I have outlined, which came from the basics of the Iraq Study

Commission Report and Recommendations, is the essence of the Reid

resolution that is before the Senate. That is why I think we ought to

get it out here, get it debated and, barring some unforeseen turn, it

is this Senator's intention that he will support the Reid resolution.

This does not say withdraw. It says redeployment. It doesn't say get

out of Iraq, it says get out of the cities in the middle of the

crossfire of a civil war. It says utilize the American forces for

training, going after al-Qaida, and for the purpose of force

protection. That makes common sense in the overlay of a very

complicated part of the world.

As I close, I say that the United States, back in the 1980s, thought

by the introduction of troops we could suddenly help bring about peace

in another very troubled part of the Middle East, the country of

Lebanon. Suddenly, it was as if scales fell from our eyes, that we saw

it was an either/or. But it was multiple choice of all the factions

that were there, each with a stake in the outcome. It became very

difficult, particularly when the Americans became perceived to be

supporting one particular part of those factions. Watch out for that

happening today in Iraq. Let us understand something from the mistakes

that were made in the past in places such as Lebanon as to how you

ultimately stabilize an area and what is in the interests of the United

States.

I think part of that wisdom is what came to bear by those 10 people

unanimously agreeing, in the Iraq Study Commission, whose work product

boiled down is, in essence, the resolution before us here in the

Senate.

I thank the Chair for this opportunity to share these thoughts with

the Senate.