Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this

resolution. But, as this debate progresses, we should be proud of the

sincere expressions of concern by our colleagues on both sides of the

aisle and both sides of this resolution, for the lives and well-being

of America's defenders who are now at risk in order to protect our

country, our communities and our families.

All of us have been to heartbreaking wakes, funerals, burials; all of

us have gone to the bases to see off our Reservists and our National

Guardsmen and to wish them Godspeed; and all of us have been on the

tarmac to greet them when they return, sometimes having lost comrades,

killed or wounded. All of us want to do what is right for our defenders

and for the future of our country.

So we need to be extraordinarily careful. Whatever we do today honors

their efforts and their sacrifice. We should not be the authors of a

policy that ensures the lives of these American heroes have been lost

in vain. If at the end of this episode our country is at greater risk,

then indeed their lives will have been lost in vain.

I am supporting this last effort, this last chance, if you will, to

see that our commitment to Iraq will not result in failure. A failure

now will have consequences that are worse than the price that we are

now paying in blood and treasure. We do not have the option of walking

away without consequences. No amount of midwest corn pressed into

ethanol will allow us to ignore the Middle East.

Helping establish moderate democratic governments in the Middle East

is not just a favorite of the people there, but it is an imperative to

our own prosperity and security. Our dependency based friendships with

oil-rich yet dictatorial regimes has set the parameters for the

fundamental decisions American leaders have made. It has skewed our

ability to be a force for freedom and progress. And it is freedom and

progress that shield us from the whims of feudalistic, corrupt despots

and religious megalomaniacs. It is the onslaught of freedom that will

change that reality that we are now dependent upon.

That is what we had to deal with, and now we have come to this moment

of decision. I wish it were not so. But it is a sad reality that what

is right is usually not easy. The right course is, in the long term,

usually frustrating and heart-wrenching. There are stalls and reverses

to every historically significant event and undertaking.

There are always those who walk away when the road gets rough, who

cannot see the end and when uncertainty looms. If one seeks certainty,

bold actions will never happen. Only if we are bold to our enemies and

steadfast will we ever succeed in any international endeavor.

The current conflict in Iraq has several dimensions; and, yes, it is

between the Sunnis and the radical Shiite sects of Islam, a bloody

Janus, with one face to Tehran and the other to Riyadh.

But don't be fooled, Mr. Speaker. The murderers, torturers and the

haters on both sides revile the United States. The sword of Sadr and

the bombs of al-Qaeda have turned on each other, but they both have a

dream that is close to their hearts, and that dream is a nightmare to

those who cherish freedom and to those who stand with liberty and seek

comity among the people of the world. That macabre nightmare is the

removal of the United States influence from the Muslim world.

You see, there is another force in Iraq and throughout that part of

the world, where the majority of people are guided by the visions of

the prophet Mohammed. Those of whom I speak are those Muslims who

desire liberty and justice, who want government to be elected and

directed by the people, who do not want to live their life in fear and

would choose a positive relationship with the western world.

They are there, as we have witnessed in one of the most devout Muslim

countries of the world, Afghanistan. It was not the American soldiers

but the Afghan people themselves who drove out the Taliban and al-Qaeda

from their country. Similarly, moderate Muslims, people of good will

all over the Middle East, and they are there and they tremble that

America will lose its resolve and retreat before a radical form of

Islam.

An American retreat condemns them to suppression under the heels of

fanatic Muslims who hate our way of life

and are willing to murder anyone who suggests that Islam and the West

can live in peace with one another and that we can respect each other's

faith and build a better, more peaceful and, yes, a freer world.

Mr. Speaker, if the sole superpower cannot stabilize Iraq, we are not

a superpower. If we cannot thwart such a gang of bandits and savages as

we face in Iraq, who will stand with us anywhere? Who will be our ally?

We must not lose in Iraq.

But what does that mean? That means we must not leave that country

defeated and in retreat or we and our families will lose and in the

short run pay a horrible price. Yes, if we retreat from Iraq, these

ghouls who kill civilians, who would kill civilians and are currently

killing civilians by the tens of thousands, they will follow us home

and they will be emboldened.

The sides are chosen, the game is in play. We will determine, not the

terrorists or the radical lunatics, who stands and who falls, who

marches forward and who retreats. All of this will be determined by our

military capabilities, our technological advantages, but even more so

by our will, by our desire and by our sure grit.

What we do today makes the future. We choose how it will be shaped.

I am reminded of General Petain, the French commander who fought the

Germans at the Battle of Verdun. Some attribute the phrase ``they shall

not pass'' to him. Well, he rallied the French people to that German

onslaught. But, 20 years later, he capitulated to Nazi Germany almost

without a fight, because he and the people of France viewed the Second

World War as not worthy of the price necessary to prevent a Nazi

victory.

Well, did that defeatism and appeasement, what did it do? The cost

was unimaginable.

Let us today not make this severe misjudgment again about the

magnitude of the downside of retreating before an evil force that

threatens the West. There will be a cost with the retreat.

So let us note that what we do in Iraq will determine if the West

will truly stand behind any ally of freedom and any enemy of radical

Islam. Let us make sure there is hope in the Middle East and throughout

the world.

Mr. Speaker, let us today not make this severe misjudgment again

about the magnitude of the down side of retreating before an evil force

that threatens the West. There will be a cost if we retreat. Many in

this Chamber supported military interventions around the world during

the 1990s, including numerous civil wars, situations from which they

now claim the United States should steer clear. However, the

consequences of withdrawal from Bosnia or Haiti pale in comparison to

withdrawal from Iraq.

What happens in Iraq determines if the West will truly stand behind

democratic government in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Islamic

world. Moderate Muslims must have confidence in our ability to triumph

over our fears, to withstand humanitarian impulses to simply disengage

from conflict, not to give in to force and pressure when applied by an

enemy. Otherwise, we lose. The world loses. The moderates of the

Islamic world will never prevail against this evil unless we are with

them and have courage and persevere, unless we are willing to hold the

line, until the moderate forces in the Islamic world can take up the

fight with a reasonable chance of victory.

On the flip side, only a defeat of radical Islam will bring peace to

that troubled region. A loss of faith in America's ability to persevere

in the Middle East would be a catalyst for catastrophe. That region in

chaos would disrupt the entire world economy. Shifts of power would

channel enormous resources into the hands of the enemies of Western

civilization, enemies of the United States. It's a frightening picture

that doesn't need to happen.

How is this different than a year ago? The difference is 1,000

American lives lost in a distant, foreign land. America is war weary. I

too am weary. Every story of another young person, blown apart, rips at

my heart. Those Americans who have gone are volunteers, heroes all. We

owe it to them not to call it off and change direction in haste. To

withdraw quickly, without honor, that would indeed mean their lives

were lost in vain. It would mean the next front line battle will be the

home front.

I, then, am one who is not anxious to declare defeat and retreat from

Iraq. I am willing to give the Iraqi people a while longer, a slot of

time, to step forward and meet the bloody, yet historic, challenge that

faces them. We can't do it for them, but we can, as the world's leading

free nation, give them this chance. Otherwise, we are clearly not a

leading nation at all. We are too weary to lead. That is not the

America I know. Today we define ourselves, to the world, and to our

children. We must have a commitment to our ideals and courage.

America has a crucial role to play in this world and we are America.

Let us not fail in this our historic responsibility.