Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution.

I fundamentally disagree with the President's plan to add thousands

of troops to the Iraqi conflict. It is time for a new course in Iraq, a

rational course, a more humane course of action. It is long past time

to start a phased withdrawal of our troops from Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, this debate is about policy and direction. Surely, the

facts on the ground cannot be used to support continued or increased

combat involvement in Iraq. Iraq is in a civil war. That is the truth,

and it is time we accept the implications of that fact. Our soldiers

have no business acting as unwanted umpires or surrogate police

officers.

The latest National Intelligence Estimate concludes the term ``civil

war'' accurately describes key elements of the Iraqi conflict. If this

is the state of the current conflict, what do we expect the U.S.

military to do about it? Settle centuries of theological or religious

disagreement? Become diplomats? Whose side do they choose and what

would their mission be?

I do not believe combat forces permanently stop such conflicts. The

troops themselves tell us they are untrained for this role, a role that

puts them at extreme risk.

Yet, the President mistakenly continues to believe we are fighting

illusionary battalions on phantom battlefields. So, in his mind, we

need more troops for victory, a surge that will overwhelm and destroy.

Well, that is how he sees it, but he ignores the evidence and reports

of our generals, our troops, our Iraq Study Group, our diplomats, most

of our allies, the views of the Iraqi people and anyone else who

actually tries to find out the nature and state of the conflict.

He rapidly and recklessly proceeds ahead with one policy shift after

another.

He searches for a light at the end of the tunnel, but there is no

light. It was extinguished long ago. There is only darkness and

despair. The chaos deepens daily, and the President sits in the Oval

Office hoping that somehow, somehow it will turn out all right in the

end.

This is neither policy nor leadership. The administration's policies

are the stuff of dreams and fantasies, not hard core determinations of

our Nation's interests or the best course for addressing strategic

threats.

Mr. Speaker, hope is not a strategy. The escalation of troop levels

makes no strategic sense. We must not hesitate to describe the

President's policy in words that are honest and clear. We confront a

policy that is wishful thinking, not realistic assessment. The

administration's policy is like a conjuring trick of denial, delusion

and determined folly, which will only deepen the disaster. We are given

the vision of a make-believe story instead of a responsible and

realistic policy.

Civil wars are solved through diplomacy, negotiation and political

compromise. These are the types of developments identified by the NIE

that will make a difference in Iraq. While the NIE warns against the

rapid withdrawal of coalition troops, American forces can come home in

a careful, safe and deliberate manner.

As the Nation's Representatives, it is our constitutional duty to

stop this madness. It is our constitutional mandate to conduct

oversight, and it is our constitutional imperative to act. That is what

the Founding Fathers wanted. They constructed the Constitution to

provide checks and balances. They did not give the President a blank

check.

The Constitution is a sacred document to this body. We swear to

uphold it and to defend it. We do just that when we demand

accountability from the President. We honor our constitutional

requirement when we scrutinize policy. We defend our constitutional

process when we demand that the President listen to the American people

and end unilateral actions that undermine our Nation's strength and

place our troops in an untenable, lethal and unwinnable situation.

Mr. Speaker, I did not come here to ignore my oath to the American

people. I did not come here to watch our Constitution be rewritten by

presidential arrogance and disregard. And I did not come here to

relinquish my sworn duty to protect and defend this sacred document. I

did not come here to ignore the American people who want this war

stopped now.

Mr. Speaker, support this resolution and begin a phased withdrawal.