Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the genuine American

hero from Texas, Mr. Johnson, for leading us this afternoon.

I supported the use of military force to remove Saddam Hussein's

regime because it was in America's interests. Afterwards, it should

have been up to the Iraqi people, and not Americans, to determine their

fate and how they govern themselves. President Bush has stated: The

survival of our liberty depends on its expansion throughout the world

and America must actively construct those institutions. Which, to me,

seems like a Wilsonian view of America's role in the world.

In 2000, Candidate Bush rejected nation-building. A view held by the

Founding Fathers who believed the exceptional calling of the American

people was not to shape the world in our image, but to be a light that

lightens the world. I prefer Candidate Bush's position.

Having said that, I cannot support Representative Skelton's

resolution. Nothing better illustrates America's democratic

institutions than this body having a full and open debate about this

topic.

I hope the Commander in Chief will recognize the desires and concerns

of the American people as expressed today through their elected

Representatives. But America has only one, and not 535 commanders in

chief. We cannot micromanage the conduct of a war. Representative

Skelton's resolution sends horribly mixed signals to our troops who

must solely focus on carrying out their assigned and dangerous mission.

Once a decision has been made and mission assigned, this body should

support the troops and their one and only Commander in Chief, as

Representative Johnson's resolution, had it been heard, would have been

done.

Critics of tactics who resort to a congressional resolution tell our

servicemen and women and their families, intentionally or not, that

their mission is futile. When we undermine hope, we undermine resolve,

and we reduce the likelihood of success.

As Senator Lieberman has stated, a resolution would, in quotes,

``give the enemy some encouragement, some clear expression that the

American people are divided.'' Or, as Army Sergeant Daniel Dobson

expressed, ``There is no honor in retreat, and there is no honor in

what the Democrats have proposed.''

Instead, the responsible thing for this Democratic-led Congress would

have been to propose a new way forward, new tactics, new strategies,

not just in Iraq but in the entire war on terror. Speaker Rayburn, a

Democratic Speaker, once famously remarked, ``Any jackass can kick down

a barn, but it takes a carpenter to build one.'' There are no

carpenters at work with this resolution.

God bless our troops. God bless their Commander in Chief. God bless

America.

Shortly after I entered Congress in 2003, America used military force

to remove the Saddam Hussein regime. I supported that action because it

was in America's interest.

The Hussein regime repeatedly defied the terms that ended the 1991

Gulf War--the transparent and verifiable dismantlement of the

capability to produce weapons of mass destruction. Previously, that

regime had used such weapons and wielded the potential of such weapons

against its enemies. Rather than resorting to openness to demonstrate

good faith compliance with its promises, the regime relied on Soviet-

style deception and defiance.

In the face of such opaqueness, why are we surprised that the

intelligence agencies of the United States and its Allies veered to a

worst-case scenario? After all, the perceived ``missile gap'' that

fueled the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union

stemmed from Soviet deception about its actual nuclear weapon

capabilities. The fault lies with those who deceive and not those

searching for the truth.

The perceived threat extended beyond the Middle East and raised the

specter of arming terrorists dedicated to harming the United States and

the West. To those who scoff at this notion, I remind them about the

dangers posed by ``loose nukes'' and how the West works everyday to

counter this threat.

Furthermore, this brutal regime repeatedly attacked its neighbors--

threatening the stability of America's allies and interests in this

region.

So with some sturdy allies, America took action. The Hussein regime

was toppled. Others took notice. Libya surrendered its weapons of mass

destruction capabilities to the U.S. including materials related to its

nuclear weapons program and ballistic missile capabilities.

Today's U.S. military is the finest in world history.

America can defeat any contemporary enemy by itself. But, we cannot

win the peace alone. We need help--not just from loyal friends like the

British, Poles, and Australians. To win a peace, we need less reliable

allies like France, Germany, and Spain to help. And we need support, or

at least not hostile opposition, from former adversaries we are trying

to befriend, like Russia and China. In this case, we have had too

little help to win the peace.

And instead of focusing on establishing a free and stable Iraq,

America strayed from the wisdom of its Founding Fathers who warned us

of the hazards of trying to shape the world in our image. As John

Quincy Adams noted in his 1821 Fourth of July Speech:

``America does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy.'' To

do so would involve the United States ``beyond the power of

extrication, in all wars of interest and intrigue, of individual

avarice, envy, and ambition. . . . She might become the dictatress of

the world. She would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.''

The Founding Fathers believed that the exceptional calling of the

American people was not to shape the world in our image but to be a

light to lighten the world. Our exercise and preservation of liberty

served as an example to other peoples. In today's world, we can see how

our culture and international trade influence other peoples. But a

critical difference

exists between being an example and trying to impose a set of beliefs.

The historian Walter McDougall describes this original tradition as

follows:

Accordingly, I support using American military might to defend our

interests as needed including preemptive strikes to those who would do

us harm.

But we strayed from this tradition by undertaking a mission to hold

Iraq together, build a nation based on Western liberal democracy, and

then spread that way of life throughout the Middle East. This

Administration labels this effort ``transformational democracy.'' But

it really is what Walter McDougall calls ``Global Meliorism,'' that

assumes:

Nothing is further from the conservative tradition. Conservatives

understand that free societies and peoples take centuries to evolve.

America traces its roots back to the Magna Carta. If you want to

illustrate the shortcomings of social engineering and the illusive goal

of remaking foreign societies, take these 792 years of hard earned

experience and impose it on a nation cobbled together by the British

after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and on a people who identify

more with a tribal than a national identity.

Conservatives take a realistic assessment of human nature--including

as George Will has noted ``the limits of power to subdue an unruly

world.'' This sobriety contrasts with the idealistic dream of

engineering the world--a dream with roots in Woodrow Wilson's visions

for a post-World War I world. As George Clemenceau remarked after

Wilson's 1917 Peace Without Victory speech:

President Bush has stated that the survival of our liberty depends on

its expansion throughout the world and America must actively construct

those institutions. In 2000, Candidate Bush rejected nation building. I

prefer Candidate Bush.

It is up to the Iraqi people--and not us--to determine their fate and

how they govern themselves. That is why in 2003 I proposed that the

Administration loan and not grant $20 billion for Iraqi infrastructure.

We weren't rebuilding things we destroyed during the war. Rather, we

were attempting to build an infrastructure degraded and neglected by

the Hussein regime. I wanted the Iraqi people from oil proceeds--and

not Americans--to build, fund, and protect their assets. As T.E.

Lawrence noted in an earlier era:

Having said that, I cannot support Representative Skelton's

resolution. Nothing better illustrates America's democratic

institutions than for this body to have a full and open debate about

this war. We are a strong and outspoken people. This Chamber has

witnessed similar debates at crucial times in our past. I hope the

Commander in Chief will recognize the desires and concerns of the

American people as expressed through their elected representatives.

But America has only one and not 535 Commanders in Chief. We cannot

micromanage the conduct of a war. Representative Skelton's resolution

cannot bring good. Rather, it sends horribly mixed signals to our

troops who must solely focus on carrying out their assigned and

dangerous mission. Once a decision has been made and a mission

assigned, this body should support the troops and their one Commander

in Chief as Representative Sam Johnson's resolution would. We should

deny the enemy encouragement and provide resolve to our servicemen and

women.

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servicemen and women and their families--intentionally or not--that

their mission is futile. When we undermine hope, we undermine resolve

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God bless our troops. God bless their Commander in Chief. And God

bless America.