I would just like to say, it was

interesting to hear the previous speaker talk about the principles

articulated some years ago. They are reminiscent of the arguments I

heard on this floor some 20 years ago when Ronald Reagan made the

courageous decision to put medium range nuclear weapons into Europe,

despite the protest of Europe, despite the protest of many on the other

side, despite the fact we were told we were taking a unilateral step.

Sometimes it is difficult to make these decisions, and you can't

always guarantee success. And if we always went by that argument,

frankly, America would not be where it is today.

Let me begin with a note of bipartisanship, however. It goes without

saying that we can all agree that things have not progressed as we

wished they would in Iraq. Perhaps we could all agree with the

characterization of the Iraq Study Group that the situation in Iraq is

grave and deteriorating. I think we can all agree that there was

therefore a need for a change in the direction of U.S. policy in Iraq.

Not only has this happened, but we have a new Secretary of Defense

and, as was stated on the floor just a moment ago, we have a new

commander on the ground in Iraq.

It is at this point, however, that I am somewhat mystified by my

friends on the other side of the aisle. Since the resolution of

disapproval concerning this change in the direction of U.S. policy

contains absolutely no alternative, it follows that its adoption

represents a tacit endorsement for the policies which we all agree are

not working. It is a simple, logical entailment that criticism of a

change in policy without any concrete alternative is tantamount to the

endorsement of the status quo. Thus, we find ourselves in the ironic

situation that to support this resolution is to condone a policy that

virtually everyone agrees has not been working.

We are telling our troops that we are sending a new commander. We are

telling them by this resolution that we don't support what the new

commander is doing. We are saying by this resolution we don't believe

that the new plan will work. We are saying, Godspeed, we support you.

But we are sending you on a fool's errand.

If you truly believe that, stand up here and have the guts to stop

the program by cutting off the money. Take responsibility for your

actions, which the Constitution allows you to do.

Let me suggest to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that

the absence of any comprehensible policy objective leaves only one

element of the resolution intact: Disapproval of the President. And

this, in my estimation, is most unfortunate, for there was one thing on

which I wish we could all agree. This should not be about George Bush.

It is far more important than that.

Our response to the current state of affairs in Iraq will have

dramatic consequences not only for the people in Iraq but for the

security of the American people as well.

I believe we must resist the temptation to fight over matters which

have long ceased to be of any relevance.

The question of whether we should have initially gone into Iraq is

simply not the issue. The fact is that we are there, and that is the

unpleasant but essential reality to which we must respond. It is not

possible to pretend otherwise or to keep looking backward or to keep

quoting things that were said in the past or to suggest that we

shouldn't be where we are. We are there. It is of little solace to our

troops to say, gee, we made a mistake in putting you there, and

therefore we are going to pass a resolution of disapproval of what we

are asking you to do now. What sense does that make? What sense at all

does that make?

It should be acknowledged that findings concerning the absence of a

collaborative relationship between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda are not

dispositive of the role of al Qaeda in Iraq. As Peter Berger, the only

Westerner to conduct an interview on television with Osama bin Laden

puts it, there is one thing that bin Laden and Bush agree on, says

Peter Berger: that Iraq has become a central front in the war on

terror. Berger, who did not support the decision to invade Iraq, warns

of a potential repercussion at war's end that could make the blowback

from the Afghan war against the Soviets look like high tea at the Four

Seasons. This, in my estimation, is why it is so important that the

impression not be given that our hand has been forced by Iraqi

insurgents, notably al Qaeda of Mesopotamia.

If we have learned anything from the tragic events of the Khobar

Towers, the Embassy bombings in East Africa, and the attack on the USS

Cole, it is that the fanatics' perception of success only serves to

embolden those who seek to kill us.

The extreme nature of this murderous mens rea is illustrated in an

article in the London Telegraph which reports, ``A husband and wife

arrested in the British terror raids allegedly planned to take their 6-

month-old baby on a mid-air suicide mission, using the baby's milk

bottle to hide a liquid bomb.'' The story is shocking on many levels,

but perhaps so disturbing is that it shatters the belief that mothers

and fathers share a common commitment to the future of their children.

We face an enemy which subscribes to an ideology rooted in a

nihilistic culture of death. This contemporary version of the ``will to

power'' seeks justification for a totalist world view through the abuse

of a religion to camouflage its deeper roots.

As Paul Berman has chronicled in ``Terrorism and Liberalism,'' this

fascist-like ideology arising out of the revisionism of Sayyid al Qutb

taught that there was no middle ground and no possibility of

compromise. Bin Laden became interested in a radical distortion of

Islam from the fiery taped sermons of Abdullah Azzam, a disciple of al

Qutb, and came to share Qutb's grim view of the world and used it to

justify mass murder.

By the late 1980s, following the crackdown by the Egyptian Government

on the extreme Islamist groups in response to the assassination of

Sadat in 1981, many of the Islamic militants went into exile. It was

through the presence of Egyptian Islamist teachers in Saudi Arabia that

bin Laden and other al Qaeda members were influenced; most notably,

Ayman al-Zawahiri, a leader in the Egypt Islamic jihad.

Another avenue by which this totalist ideology was introduced to the

Middle East via the Vichy Government of France during World War II,

which despite its short shelf-life, infected the French mandated

territory of Syria-Lebanon. It was during this time that the

ideological foundations of the

Baathist Party were laid and a Nazi regime headed by Rahid Ali was set

up in Iraq. During this same period, the mufti of Jerusalem was wined

and dined by none other than Hitler himself.

The point is that there were some very dark influences on this region

of the world which are still playing themselves out today. We cannot

believe that our absence from this area will solve problems and allow

us to retreat.

We must make no mistake about their intentions: They seek to kill us.

Ayman al-Zawahiri, al Qaeda's second in command, has left us with no

ambiguity on the matter when he states that they have the right to kill

4 million Americans, 2 million of them children, and to exile twice as

many and wound and cripple hundreds of thousands. No, we must not give

such people a misapprehension about any misguided notions they may have

about their providential place in history.

Although our ultimate objective in Iraq is to hand over power in an

orderly fashion to a duly constituted government, the manner in which

we do so is of the highest order of importance. That is what I don't

hear from the other side. It is not just the question of peace being

the absence of war, it is what we will have in the aftermath. What kind

of a world will we have in the Middle East? Will it be safer for our

children and our grandchildren? Will the implications of our decisions

be heard in history as something of which we will be proud, or will it

be just that we got tired of the effort?

And if we believe that by absenting ourselves from the area, that

solves problems, it has never been the case. It wasn't the case when we

got out of Lebanon following the attack on our marines; it was not the

case when we basically got out of the area after the USS Cole.

Again, independent of the origins of al Qaeda's presence in Iraq, the

relevant point is how al Qaeda itself perceives the war there. It is

their potential reaction to our Iraqi policy which has most relevance.

In this regard, the intercepted letter sent by al-Zawahiri to al-

Zarqawi is most important and has been mentioned on this floor many

times. He said, We must think for a long time about our next steps and

how we want to attain it, and it is my humble opinion that the jihad in

Iraq requires several incremental goals.

The first stage: Expel Americans from Iraq.

The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or emirate, and then

develop it and support it until it achieves the level of caliphate over

as much territory as you can spread its power in Iraq and Sunni areas

in order to fill the void stemming from the departure of the Americans.

The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries of

neighboring Iraq.

The fourth stage: Go after Israel.

It is, therefore, clear that regardless of how we might wish the

situation to be, wishful thinking, as described in this resolution, is

not a basis for policy.

Al Qaeda is present in Iraq, and they perceive it to be a central

front in the war. It is simply not possible for us to pretend

otherwise, as much as we would like it. This resolution does nothing to

help us in this war against Islamic fascism. In fact, it goes in the

opposite direction.