Mr. Speaker, my uncle said a generation ago: If we

examine the history of the conflict, we find the dismal story repeated

time after time. Every time, at every crisis, we have denied that

anything was wrong; sent more troops; and issued more confident

communiqués. Every time, we have been assured that this one last step

would bring victory. And every time, the predictions and promises have

failed and been forgotten, and the demand has been made once again for

just one more step up the ladder. And once again the President tells us

that we are going to win; victory is coming.''

My Uncle Robert Kennedy made this statement in March of 1968. It took

another 5 years and 37,455 American lives before a United States

President was withdrawing Americans out of Vietnam and stopping that

war.

I am here tonight to say that the American people and this Congress

are going to say ``no'' to this President when it comes to repeating

that mistake.

There are those who will disparage this amendment and who say that

this is a nonbinding resolution. But this resolution says that we are

going to reject this President's doubling down on the gambling of

American lives, and this foolish policy which has sent over 3,125

soldiers to their deaths, over 23,417 wounded soldiers back home, and

hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis to their graves and countless

more also injured.

We are saying in this resolution that we either have to start digging

ourselves out of this hole, or we are going to start ruing the day

when we have failed to act tonight to start changing course.

This administration's bullheaded insistence, bullheaded insistence on

ideology over strategy is what has gotten us into this mess, and now

that same stubbornness is counseling us to send still more soldiers and

more Marines into an Iraqi civil war.

Our service men and women have been heroic. They have been confronted

with repeated civilian failures of leadership, ill equipped and under

equipped, and yet in increasingly untenable positions they have been

unflinching and have been uncomplaining in their shouldering of every

burden we have asked of them, and they have done it with dignity and

professionalism. But it is not right. It is not right to ask them, to

ask the military to bear the burden of the responsibility of solving

someone else's civil war. It is not right, and it won't work.

Instead of closing our eyes and crossing our fingers and giving this

President a rubber stamp for an endless civil war in Iraq, we should be

beginning to move our country back to a common-sense policy of strength

through leadership.

Our choice tonight is clear: Keep digging, or climb our way out of

this hole. I think this Congress will decide to start climbing our way

out.

And there will be many who will say, what will we do then? I will

say, well, maybe we will propose to fence off the funds as many have

suggested. That will be a debate for another day. That will be a debate

for another day whether we will fence off the funds. But tonight will

be the debate, and tomorrow will be the decision as to whether we will

vote to go in that direction.

So you can say it is a meaningless, nonbinding resolution all you

want, but it is the first conversation as to which direction we are

going to go, and that is the direction we have to decide, and I vote

that we go in the direction of starting to move our way and our troops

out of Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, ``if we examine the history of the conflict, we find the

dismal story repeated time after time. Every time--at every crisis--we

have denied that anything was wrong; sent more troops; and issued more

confident communiqués. Every time, we have been assured that this one

last step would bring victory. And every time, the predictions and

promises have failed and been forgotten, and the demand has been made

again for just one more step up the ladder. . . . And once again the

President tells us that `we are going to win'; `victory' is coming.''

My uncle, Robert Kennedy, spoke these words in March 1968, It took

another 5 years and another 37,455 American lives before a U.S.

President finally withdrew American troops from Vietnam.

I will not stand by, the American people will not stand by, and allow

the President to repeat that mistake.

Some disparage this resolution because it's nonbinding. But with due

respect, I couldn't disagree more. This resolution represents a

fundamental policy choice by this Congress.

It's about whether you agree with doubling down the President's high

stakes gamble with American lives.

This resolution poses a simple choice. After 4 years, after 3,125

deaths, after more than 23,417 wounded, are we digging our hole in Iraq

even deeper, or are we strong enough to start climbing out?

We need a stronger America, a more secure America and that begins

with a rejection of the failed strategy in Iraq.

It has now been nearly 4 years since the President declared that in

Iraq, our mission was accomplished.

Four years of disintegration. Four years of unfounded insistence that

the turning point is right around the corner.

Are we digging deeper, or climbing out?

We have watched a child hug their parents tight on the tarmac--only

to have to let go as Morn or Dad is deployed for the second, third, or

even fourth time.

We have stood at the graveside with a grieving family as a Gold Star

mother accepts a folded American flag.

We have visited our Nation's newest veterans in the hospital, their

bodies and minds scarred by the horrors of war.

Are we digging deeper, or climbing out?

Each day we all see, with our own eyes, the carnage and the chaos

that has become the norm in Iraq.

The administration's bull-headed insistence on ideology over strategy

has led us to where we are today. And now, that same stubbornness is

counseling some to send still more of our soldiers and marines into an

Iraqi civil war.

Our current course is failing in Iraq. It's failing the bigger

struggle against our terrorist enemies. It's failing our troops and

their families. And it's failing our core values as Americans.

I won't settle for that failure. We must change course. We must begin

to climb out of the hole in Iraq.

Democrats, Republicans, generals, and most importantly, the American

people now see that it is time for a new plan; it is time to embrace a

new approach.

Our service men and women have been heroic. Confronted with repeated

civilian failures of leadership, underequipped, and in an increasingly

untenable position, our troops have not flinched, they have not

complained, they have shouldered every burden we ask of them with

dignity and professionalism.

But it is not right to place upon our military the responsibility of

solving someone else's civil war. It's not right, and it won't work.

Instead of closing our eyes, crossing our fingers, and giving the

President a rubber stamp for endless war in Iraq, we should begin

moving our country back to a commonsense policy of strength through

leadership.

Our strong leaders of the last century, like Presidents Roosevelt,

Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan, recognized that while American military

might was important, American values were our greatest strength.

We rallied the world in the Second World War and defeated the Soviets

in the cold war on the strength of our Nation's democratic ideals. For

the entire 20th century, we led by our example, and by the force of our

principles.

While military action will continue to be a necessary component of

our current struggle, ultimate victory against this generation of

enemies will similarly be won not on the battlefield, but in the minds

of millions around the world. That victory is impossible while we are

in the middle of Iraq's civil war.

Our choice today is clear. Keep digging or climb out? If we decide to

begin climbing out, as I think we will, there are debates yet to come

about the best way to do that--whether we should fence off funds to

prevent an escalation, for example. I look forward to those

conversations. But today is a more fundamental question about the

direction of our country.

We can withdraw from Iraq without withdrawing from the fight. We can

be strong enough to climb out of that hole. For our troops, for their

families, and for our Nation's strength and security, I urge a ``yes''

vote.