I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I also appreciate the opportunity to take part in this

debate, which as my friend from New York (Mr. Rangel) said, isn't this

a historic debate? It is part of our job. It is our obligation. It is a

legal obligation; it is a moral obligation to be heard on this most

pressing issue of our time.

I would also add at the outset, when we have talked about those who

died in Iraq, and all of us go to the wakes of those who were killed in

our district. Just the other day, if we are talking about the quality

of the type of person, where they come from and who was killed in Iraq,

there was a young man who was actually in what used to be the heart of

my district, very affluent area, Manhasset. He was a graduate of Duke

University, all-American Lacrosse player, was offered a scholarship to

law school, but he turned it down to go in as an enlisted man, as an

Army Ranger.

He served two tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, and he was killed on his

third tour of Iraq. His family was proud of what he did, what he

accomplished, what he stood for. I think it doesn't really add to the

level of debate to somehow be suggesting that those who go to Iraq

because they cannot be anywhere else or somehow it is all driven by

economic need, he was a young man with everything in front of him.

He had all the opportunity in the world, and he went, and he joined

the Army, went in as an enlisted man, died as a sergeant, and he was on

his third tour in Iraq. So I think it is important to put that in the

Record. Also, I know there are any number of Members in this body who

have had members of their families serving in Iraq.

I think if we are going to talk about the gentleman from New York who

wants to bring back the draft, we can have that in a separate debate.

But I don't think it should be part of this debate.

Now, when this debate was actually scheduled, I actually thought it

would

serve a constructive purpose. But as I look at the resolutions being

offered, if I could really, I guess, quote from Senator Lieberman of

Connecticut, rather than a resolution, it is really a resolution of

irresolution.

It is inherently contradictory, because it pledges support to the

troops but also at the same time washes its hands of what the troops

are attempting to do. I have heard speaker after speaker get up here

today and say the new policy cannot work. The new policy is more of the

same. This is the President's policy. He hasn't gotten the message from

the American people.

Well the fact is, this policy is strongly supported by the new

commander in Iraq, General Petraeus. As was pointed out, the Senate

unanimously approved the appointment of General Petraeus by a vote of

81-0. Now, for people to come here today and say this is an inherently

flawed policy, this is a policy that cannot work, this is a policy that

is doomed to failure, to me, after General Petraeus has said that he

believes the policy can work, that he supports the policy, is to attack

directly either the credibility or the competency of General Petraeus,

and that is a terrible message to be sending to our troops.

Actions do have consequences. I don't doubt the good faith of anyone

on either side of the aisle when it comes to supporting the troops. The

fact is, often you have to think beyond what the actual words are

saying and realize the consequences those words have. For instance, my

good friend, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, who I have

actually traveled to Iraq with in 2003, where we met with General

Petraeus and others in Mosul and with others and troops in Baghdad, he

said that Iraq is a mess, and we have to end the nightmare.

Does anyone really think by Americans pulling out the nightmare is

going to end, that the Middle East will become stable if we leave?

Certainly al Qaeda doesn't believe that. Certainly the mullahs in Iran

don't believe that. And also our allies don't believe that.

Again, what are the consequences of our actions? Are we saying just

draw down for the sake of drawing down? I heard the distinguished

Speaker of the House of Representatives say our goal is to get our

troops home.

Well, I would say our goal should be to have our troops come home

after we have achieved a goal, a goal of at least a stable Iraq, an

Iraq which is able to protect its borders against Iran, and an Iraq

which is able to prevent al Qaeda from setting up a privileged

sanctuary in Iraq, and an Iraq which is able to create a situation in

the north where the Kurds and the Turks are not fighting with one

another.

So these are all serious issues that have to be addressed. I regret

to say this resolution does not address it in any way. If anything, it

is a serious step backward.

Now, also we have heard that we have to listen to the polls. We have

to listen to what public opinion has to be at any particular time.

Well, if anyone wants to go back and look at the polls, in 1952,

President Truman's popularity rating was 22 percent. War in Korea was

amazingly unpopular, and yet today he is acknowledged as one of our

greatest Presidents, and the war in Korea is looked upon as an

absolutely indispensable step in the defeat of communism, because they

drew the line in Asia at the 38th parallel.

I know my good friend Mr. Rangel served in Korea, he was wounded in

Korea, and he performed valiantly in Korea. That war now is looked upon

as one of the linchpins of the Cold War strategy, which, again, brought

down the Communist menace.

Also I tried to research this. I am not aware of any time in the

entire history of our country where the United States Congress has

adopted a resolution questioning a particular battlefield strategy.

Like him or not, and I certainly support him, but the President is

our Commander in Chief. I said the same thing when President Clinton

was our Commander in Chief, and I was serving in this body at that time

when there was tremendous criticism directed at him.

But the fact is, the President, no matter where he or she happens to

be from, is the Commander in Chief. And we are at war. It was a war

that was authorized by this Congress. And we should not be, I do not

believe, setting the precedent of adopting resolutions questioning

specific strategies.

Should we have adopted a resolution in the winter of 1944, 1945,

questioning President Roosevelt's strategy in allowing the intelligence

failures that brought about the Battle of the Bulge? We can go step by

step. Certainly President Lincoln, during the Civil War when strategies

were changed throughout the war and finally resulted in a victory.

Also we have to realize that the war in Iraq is part of an overall

war against Islamic terrorism. As the former chairman of the Homeland

Security Committee, as ranking member of the Homeland Security

Committee, certainly we see that this is an enemy which is overseas and

it is here. It is an enemy which is plotting every day to find ways to

attack us.

I know later the distinguished ranking member of the Intelligence

Committee will also speak to this part of the issue. But the fact is,

we do not live in vacuums. We cannot isolate battlefields and silos and

say this is Iraq, this is Afghanistan, and this is the Twin Towers.

The fact is, we are talking about actions having consequences. And I

have been very critical of the Republican Party for 1983 when I believe

we precipitously withdrew from Beirut. That had consequences. I was in

this body when we precipitously withdrew from Somalia. I was also in

this body when the Twin Towers were attacked the first time in 1993 and

we took no action, or Khobar Towers when a constituent of mine was

killed in 1996. We took no action.

The USS Cole in 2000 when we took no action. In 1998 the attacks on

the African embassies, where we took very limited action. All of those

had consequences. In fact, now we see after September 11, 2001, we find

the historical record where Osama bin Laden said that when we saw that

the United States was willing to withdraw from Somalia, how that

emboldened Islamic terrorists throughout the world, how that showed

them that we did not have the staying power, we did not have the guts

to stick it out.

Listen, those who are really putting it on the line, those who have

the guts are the men and women of the battlefield in Iraq and

Afghanistan. But also we as elected officials have to show some courage

and not just give in to the zeitgeists, not just give in to the latest

public opinion poll or to the latest election, because quite frankly we

were not elected to win elections; we were elected to show leadership

and to do what has to be done.

When future generations look back at this, will they really say that

we helped the struggle against Islamic terrorism by pulling out of

Iraq, by not continuing that fight? Does anyone really think that that

will not embolden al Qaeda, that that will not embolden Iran? Can

anyone honestly say that?

And so I believe that what disappoints me about this debate and this

resolution is we are treating Iraq almost like it is a pinpoint. It is

one issue standing by itself, and it is not. It is part of a mosaic; it

is part of a worldwide struggle. As someone who lost more than 100

friends, neighbors, constituents on September 11, I have seen firsthand

the evils of Islamic terrorism.

As ranking member on the Homeland Security Committee, I know how

there are forces in this country who would take action against us. I

know the connections between forces in this country and forces

overseas. It is no secret. It should not cause us any confusion as to

why al Qaeda wants us to lose in Iraq.

It should not cause us any confusion as to why al Qaeda encourages

the enemy against us in Iraq, and in fact has al Qaeda in Iraq itself

fighting against us.

So now we come to the question of, with our troops committed there,

with this being an absolutely essential part of the war against

terrorism, what do we do? I agree that there is a consensus that the

current policy has not been successful. There have been successes, but

the policy itself has not been fully successful.

That is true in almost every war in which America has been engaged.

It was certainly true during World War II, it was certainly true during

Korea, and even take a war like Kosovo, which is

probably almost as antiseptic as a war could be, even though every war

when anyone's life is on the line is brutal and deadly.

But from a strategic point of view, we are talking about it should

have been a simple war. We ended up bombing a Chinese embassy in

Belgrade. So, I mean, mistakes are made. And for us to say because

mistakes are made we should redeploy our troops, which really is a

euphemism for withdrawal.

We are sending signals to the world. We are sending signals to our

troops, we are sending signals to our allies, we are sending signals to

our enemies. On the one hand if we are unanimously confirming General

Petraeus who supports this policy, and on the other hand we are saying

we know the policy cannot work and we are actually going for the first

time in American history going on record opposing a particular

strategic policy, then I would say, where are we getting this from?

People say that this is just the same policy as we have had all

along. General Petraeus says it is not. And I do not believe it is. Can

I guarantee the new policy will work? No, I cannot. But I have met with

generals, I have met with military experts, and they give good reasons

why it can work. And there are people of very good faith on the other

side who say it will not work.

But as I look at this, our commander, who is looked upon as the

expert in counterinsurgency, who is the general who has certainly

achieved the most in Iraq, and anyone who has been to Mosul knows the

job that he achieved there, if he says this policy should work, and can

work, then I believe we have the moral obligation, we have the legal

obligation, and we have the obligation to history and for our children

and grandchildren that we not undercut General Petraeus, that we not

tell our troops we do not have faith in their ability to carry out the

mission which General Petraeus says can be carried out, and we do not

embolden our enemies by saying just wait this out a few months, wait it

out a few months and you will get it, wait us out a few months and we

will pull out like we did in Beirut or Somalia.

We cannot allow that message to be sent. The burden is on us. And if

we fail in this mission, and the mission I believe of standing with our

troops, standing with our commander in the field, and standing with the

policy that the overwhelming majority of Congress voted for in 2003,

and also the pledge that all of us made on September 11, 2001, then we

will have failed in our obligations as Members of the United States

Congress and failed in our obligation to our oath of office to do what

has to be done, which should be done, which is essential if we are

going to win the war against Islamic terrorism.