Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, Thomas Friedman wrote

an op ed in the New York Times titled,

In the article, Mr. Friedman laments that in the last couple of

months Mr. Friedman,

unfortunately, seems to be correct. We haven't been talking about Iraq

as much lately.

The media is partly to blame for this, but the consumers of the media

take some responsibility as well. Without new sensational stories to

run, war coverage becomes monotonous, and we can be desensitized to the

depictions of war. But it is the media's ethical responsibility to

focus on the issues that matter the most rather than what sells the

most papers and boosts ratings.

When reports of the terrible toll of the Iraq war fall off the front

page and disappear from nightly TV coverage, it can be easier to put

the sacrifices our men and women in uniform are making in Iraq out of

one's mind. It can be easy to forget the suffering of the Iraq people,

whose lives continue to be plagued by violence. The enormous costs of

the war don't seem as real when they are not thrust in our faces every

day.

But it is also the ethical responsibility of this Congress to

continue to debate an issue as important as the war. We are partly to

blame for letting the air out of the Iraq debate as well.

In the absence of the required number of votes needed to override an

inevitable Bush veto on any Iraq-related legislation, we in Congress

must do a better job of challenging the administration's false rhetoric

about the Iraq war. While the war in Iraq is disappearing from the

newspapers, problems in Pakistan, Turkey and Iran are sure getting a

lot of attention.

Why aren't we making the connection between the problems in these

countries with the problems we have created in Iraq? An enduring

foreign military presence will destabilize any region. An enormous

endless American military presence in the heart of the Middle East is a

recipe for disaster.

We in Congress need to do more to educate our constituents of the

incredible costs of this misguided war in Iraq and the danger it

presents to the peace and security of the entire region.

The Middle East is a house of cards, and we are shaking the table. It

is no accident that since we began our misguided war in Iraq, we have

seen more problems among Iraq's neighbors. Turkey is a very important

ally to the United States, and the threat of a Turkish invasion into

the Kurdish region of Iraq is a real problem for us. The last thing we

need is another front opening in an already unmanageable war.

We must also discuss the connection between the President's so-called

war on terror, with the problems we are watching unfold in Pakistan. We

must not forget that the al Qaeda forces, who might long ago have been

defeated if we hadn't been distracted in Iraq, have invaded northern

Pakistan and hundreds of Pakistani soldiers have been killed. Most

experts agree that Osama bin Laden is probably hiding in that region in

northern Pakistan.

Meanwhile, General Musharraf has imposed a state of emergency through

Pakistan dissolving the courts and suspending the constitution.

Thousands of angry lawyers in Lahore and other cities Monday have taken

to the streets to protest the embattled Pakistani President. Pictures

in our newspapers of the lawyers being beaten and arrested by the

police are ominous warnings of further trouble to come.

This is worrisome when it happens in any country, but down right

terrifying when it happens in a country that possesses nuclear weapons.

It is difficult for anyone to say exactly how this connects to our

failed war in Iraq, but it surely isn't helping.

The point is that President Bush's irresponsible policy in the Middle

East has destabilized the entire region. He has created a ticking time

bomb. Rather than trying to defuse the situation with the diplomatic

surge, Bush's answer was a military surge and to ratchet up the

rhetoric against those who dare oppose him.

We must make it clear every single day that it is because we care so

strongly about the safety of our country, the wellness of our military

and the help of those who serve, that we demand an end to the war in

Iraq. As Mr. Friedman pointed out, when we, as a country, allowed the

debate over Iraq to fizzle, we are not merely procrastinating and

delaying the eventual confrontation. We are committing negligence.

The daily cost of the war is staggering and cannot be ignored. For

every day the war in Iraq continues, more American lives are lost, more

Iraqis are killed, more of our tax dollars are spent, and political

reconciliation in Iraq becomes less and less likely as the vital

struggle for power continues to rage. Perhaps the most important

measure of progress, the stability of the region, seems to be slipping

further and further out of balance.

Countless proposals have been offered to change the course of this

President's war in Iraq. There is no shortage of good ideas on how,

when, and why we need to end the war in Iraq. I am of the opinion that

we must end the war in Iraq as soon as possible and only provide

funding to bring our troops home safely and quickly.

Others in the Democratic Caucus offer different answers but remain

committed to the ultimate goal of ending the war. We demand a new

direction. Let's bring our troops home to their families as soon as

possible and refocus this country's resources on the issues that matter

the most to the American people. It's time to end the war in Iraq.