Mr. Speaker, the good news, I suppose, is that nearly 3

years into the Iraq war, the Bush administration has seen fit to share

with the American people their war plan.

The bad news is that there is no ``there'' there. The ``national

strategy for victory'' shared with the American people last week is

barely worth the paper it is printed on.

It is essentially the same old warmed-over rhetoric that we have

become accustomed to and frustrated with: the enemy is bad; we are

good; we will never back down; we will achieve total victory.

To the extent that this strategy for victory contains specifics, they

are completely divorced from reality.

In last week's speech, the President mentioned that Haifa Street,

formerly called Purple Heart Boulevard because of all of the U.S.

attacks incurred there, is now safely under the control of Iraq's

security forces, but taking control of Haifa Street in Baghdad does not

make Iraqi forces self-sustaining. Taking the battle to the enemy, as

the President likes to put it, has not thwarted terrorism but, instead,

made Iraq a hotbed of terrorism.

The President insists that fighting the terrorists ``over there''

means that we are not fighting them at home. I doubt the people who

call London, Madrid, or Bali their home would agree with that

assessment. Who is to say that next time it will not be Chicago, Las

Vegas, or San Francisco? There is no evidence that we are any more

secure at home because of the war in Iraq.

Iraqi democracy is anything but a certainty. We are undermining our

own stated goal of advancing freedom when we torture prisoners and when

we spend millions of dollars to spread propaganda in the Iraqi press.

When the White House's statements are not divorced from reality, they

contradict everything they once said about the war. Like this one, from

the supposed ``victory strategy'' document: ``It is not realistic to

expect a fully functioning democracy, able to defeat its enemies and

peacefully reconcile generational grievances, to be in place less than

3 years after Saddam was finally removed from power.''

Now they tell us. So much for ``Mission Accomplished.'' We have sure

come a long way from the confident assertion that we would be greeted

by grateful Iraqis throwing flowers at our feet, that we would be in

and out in a flash, that all we had to do was depose Saddam and

democracy would instantly take hold.

The President's speech last week demonstrates his inability to

recognize the intensity of people's anxiety about this war. Americans

are not looking for the administration to do the same thing but just do

it a little bit better and to put it in a glossy booklet.

They want to see a fundamental shift in direction, like the plan

outlined in a letter I wrote to the President, which was cosigned by 61

other House Members: one, engage in greater multilateral cooperation

with our allies; two, pursue diplomatic, nonmilitary initiatives;

three, prepare for a robust post conflict reconciliation process; and,

four, and most importantly of all, bring our troops home.

I wish this administration would step out of its bubble. They should

break away from the yes men and listen to the American people who do

not understand the cause for which more than 2,100 and countless

thousands of Iraqis have died.

It is not just the American people that the administration is

ignoring. It is the Iraqis also. Kurdish, Shiite, and Sunni leaders

agree on practically nothing except that there needs to be a clear

timetable for our troops to leave Iraq.

The President wants to have it both ways on Iraq. He will not change

his underlying approach, an open-ended military commitment that will

last as long as he deems it appropriate, but he can read the polls. So

he wants to be perceived as doing something new and something different

in order to rescue his administration from political oblivion; but, Mr.

Speaker, repackaging a Twinkie does not improve its nutritional value,

and the same goes for the Bush Iraq policy.