Mr. Speaker, supporters of the preemptive war against Iraq

say it was justified by the unprovoked 9/11 attacks. They claim that

Muslim hatred for our democracy, freedom, Western values, and

prosperity inspired the 19 suicide terrorists who attacked us on that

dreadful day.

Opponents of the war argue that al Qaeda radicals who planned the

attacks were not allies of Saddam Hussein, and that Iraq posed no

threat to our national security. They further argue that our occupation

of Iraq now inspires a growing number of radical Islamists to join the

ranks of al Qaeda and support its war against U.S. troops in Iraq and

Afghanistan.

But proponents of the war insist that our presence in Iraq is not

what motivates al Qaeda to attack us, since we had no troops on Iraqi

soil on 9/11; and yet al Qaeda attacked us anyway.

The enemy, they claim, is simply a group of radical Islamic

fundamentalists who have hijacked the Muslim religion and declared war

against our values for no legitimate or logical reason.

We should look at the facts if we want to understand why a growing

number of Iraqis and Muslims worldwide are now motivated to join the

insurgents in a guerrilla resistance that includes suicide terrorism.

It is true that there were no U.S. troops in Iraq on 9/11, but it is

also true that Saddam Hussein and Iraq had nothing to do with that

attack.

In addition, we have been bombing Iraq since 1991, more than 10

years, on a regular basis. Stiff economic sanctions imposed on Iraq for

over a decade by the U.S. and Britain caused extreme suffering and

death of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis, many of them

children.

Most military experts consider an economic blockade an act of war. We

insulted and provoked millions of Muslims, especially fundamentalists,

by keeping a military base in Saudi Arabia after the Persian Gulf War.

Osama bin Laden specifically expressed outrage at this policy in his

writings. Throughout the 1980s, we allied ourselves with Saddam

Hussein, a secularist in his fight against Iran and other Shiite

fundamentalists.

We involved ourselves in this civil struggle within the Muslim

community. For decades, we supported various secular Arab governments

throughout the region, always in opposition to religious

fundamentalists. The U.S. never wavered in its enthusiastic support of

Israel over Arab-Muslim interests.

For decades Muslim fundamentalists have viewed U.S. policy as being

driven by religious zealots because of the strong vocal support from

many fundamentalist Christian leaders.

For literally hundreds of years, Europe has continually challenged

Muslim and Arab domination of the Middle East. We have never, Europe or

the United States, denied our interest in controlling Middle East oil.

From Woodrow Wilson to the current neoconservative brand of foreign

policy, the zeal for spreading democracy and Western values through

force of arms has antagonized most Muslims.

If we continue to insist that our policy of foreign intervention has

nothing to do with the ongoing war against an enemy we refuse to

understand, we guarantee that this war will not soon end.

My suggestion is to change our foreign policy. Stop the war, bring

our troops home, and stop the wasteful spending overseas. If we do not,

the real security of our homeland will continue to be in jeopardy and

the economic consequences will get worse and our freedoms at home will

be further reduced.

It is time to say no to undeclared wars. It is time to say no to

political and U.N. wars. It is time to say no to preemptive war. It is

time to say no to nation building. It is time to say no to assuming it

is our duty to make the world safe for democracy. It is time to say no

to meddling in the affairs of others. It is time to say no to fighting

countries that have never threatened our national security. It is time

to stop financing extravagant war spending by printing more money. It

is time to say yes to more sensible diplomacy.

The senseless death and suffering of so many with nothing to show for

it must end. Peace is a far better goal to strive for than an undefined

victory in a war that has no end.