Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Iraq's transition

to democracy and what it holds for our future.

Mr. Speaker, like all Americans, I was pleasantly surprised on June

28 when the Coalition Provisional Authority transferred power to the

Iraqi interim government 2 days ahead of schedule. This was an

important first step toward demonstrating that America fulfills its

promises. Iraq is again a self-governing sovereign state.

However, with that said, we face many challenges in the days ahead.

The anti-democratic insurgency in Iraq is still a reality that we and

the sovereign and legitimate government of Iraq must confront every

day.

Mr. Speaker, in dealing with this insurgency, we must first ask

ourselves the questions that opponents of the war in Iraq often fail to

raise: Who are the insurgents? And why do they hate us and the new

government in Iraq?

It is clear from studying this situation in Iraq, the insurgency is

not made up of one group of people united around a common message.

Rather, it is an insurgency based upon disparate groups with differing

and conflicting agendas.

It is clear that we face an unholy alliance of four different, but

overlapping, groups: Baathists, radical theocrats, transnational

terrorists, and common criminals.

Each of these groups has differing objectives. The Baathists yearn

for the day that they once again can control Iraq. This Fascist party

formed the basis of the Hussein regime; and at its core it is corrupt,

brutal, and anti-democratic.

The radical theocrats and fundamentalists, like Moqtada al Sadr,

desire

the installation of a revolutionary theocratic government like that of

Iran. Such a government will most certainly be anti-democratic and

inherently repressive. Those who desire such a government do not have

the support of the majority of Iraqis.

The foreign fighters and transnational terrorists can be divided into

two categories: the first is al Qaeda. The second is made up of

disparate radicalized Islamic groups. We know what the objectives of al

Qaeda are, as September 11 so clearly demonstrated. It wishes to drag

the Muslim world into a war against the West. The other foreign

fighters are recruited by radicalized clerics and have a similar vision

of international jihad.

The criminal elements in Iraq are undeniably part of the insurgency.

While many thousands were unjustly persecuted in prisons under the

Hussein regime, many prisoners were also legitimately criminals. Before

the war began, Saddam Hussein saw fit to release a large number of

these criminals to prey upon his own people. They form part of those

opposing the legitimate government and the coalition forces.

Mr. Speaker, the follow-up question that many opponents of the war

fail to ask is, Why do these insurgents hate us?

Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is clear and

straightforward. Our opponents hate us, the coalition, not because of

what we do, but because of who we are. We represent individual liberty

and democracy, two values that our terrorist opponents neither

understand nor accept.

If we take the time to examine each of these four insurgent groups,

we will find their opposition to the coalition is built upon a

rejection of individual liberty and democratic pluralism. The

Baathists, of course, have never supported freedom or true democracy.

Thirty years of their regime amply demonstrated they believe in an Iraq

ruled by a strongman like Saddam Hussein and plundered by his Fascist

followers.

The radical fundamentalists for their part certainly do not believe

in either freedom or democracy, unlike their mainstream Muslim

brethren. They clearly support a regime ruled by a religiously radical

minority. In this regime there will be no place for freedom or

democracy.

Al Qaeda, of course, will never stop hating us and despises the

principles which we believe are essential to Iraq's future. The other

foreign fighters also aim to create a state that will pursue a

permanent jihad against the West. This jihad is antithetical to values

like freedom and democracy.

Finally, the criminal element of the Iraqi opposition is also opposed

to the principles of freedom and democracy precisely because these

principles do not empower them.

The great weakness of all these opposition groups, Saddamists,

transnational terrorists, theocrats, and common criminals, is that none

of them offer an attractive future for the Iraqi people. None of these

groups could compete in open elections or attain power in a genuine

democracy. That is why they so fiercely oppose our efforts to create a

free Iraq based on individual liberty, tolerance, and democratic

elections.

Mr. Speaker, our President is right: the key to victory in the war

against terror is the spread of freedom and democracy throughout the

Middle East. Our own security is intimately linked to the success of

democracy in this troubled part of the world. The success of democracy

and self-government in Iraq is the crucial first step to transforming

and liberating the Middle East. That is why we must succeed in this

critical battle of the forces of oppression and terror in Iraq, and

that is why the opponents of the war in Iraq are so badly mistaken in

their criticism of our current efforts. Success in Iraq will make

America safer.

Mr. Speaker, despite the claims of critics, we have made real and

genuine advances in Iraq. No one can deny the significance of 16 new

governing councils, 90 new district councils, 194 city or sub-district

councils, and 445 neighborhood councils. Together these institutions

allow millions of Iraqis to engage in local policy discussions for the

first time in history. These are clear advances which will empower

Iraqis to control their own destiny. Through building democratic and

free institutions, Iraq will be free; and America will be safe.