Mr. Speaker, I come to the well tonight after a long

day of debate on whether or not we should redeploy our troops from

Iraq.

A careful reading of the gentleman from Pennsylvania's resolution,

had we debated it, would have pointed out that the fourth point that he

raised was that we have to diplomatically pursue security and stability

in Iraq. It is that issue I want to talk about because the question is

always raised, If we leave, will it not get worse? Will it not just

explode into civil war? We have already got that. And the question must

be answered as we talk about deployment from out of the country.

At the same time, we have to decide to call on the Arab League or the

Egyptians, to call together all the members of the community of Iraq:

the Sunnis, the Shiias, the Kurds, the Turkomens, the Assyrians. All of

them need to come together in a conference to resolve this. We have the

idea that we can go with a Western idea of a constitution and that

because it works here, we can just insert it into an Arab culture that

has never worked under those circumstances.

What we need to do is recognize how Arabs have resolved problems for

hundreds, thousands of years, if you will. It is called reaching an

atwa.

If two villages, and this story was told to me by an iman, a high

ranking Iraqi, he said many years ago two villages had a brother and

sister and they married across these two towns. One went to one

village, the other went to the other village. In one village the wife

was fertile and quickly had three children. In the other, the wife was

barren and had no children. The village made fun of her. They ridiculed

her. They said she was a terrible woman, and the social pressure was so

great that she killed herself by throwing herself into the village

well.

Now under Arabic custom, that village that lost this woman has a

right to go and extract blood within 24 hours. As those two villages

came together for this bloodletting that was going to happen, they

called and got them all to sit down and they decided how they were

going to resolve this situation.

The decision was made that the village that had had the young woman

die in it would give $20,000 to the other village and that there would

be no contact between those villages for 20 years. They reached an

atwa, A-T-W-A.

What that is in the Arabic culture is an arrangement, not a peace

treaty. In the West we think of peace treaties where I agree with you

and you agree with me, and we sign a bunch of pieces of paper. In the

Arab culture where there is honor, people say I will stay here for 20

years and you will stay there.

The gentleman who told me the story said I was there 20 years later

when the money was brought back from the first village back to its

original place. He said within 2 years, there were marriages between

the young people from the two villages. Even though they were 6

kilometers apart, for 20 years there had been no contact.

Now, Arabs have been resolving these kinds of things for thousands of

years in the desert. There is a way for the Sunnis and the Shiias and

the Kurds and the Turkomens to come together, but it cannot be driven

by the United States. We cannot say you come over here and come to this

conference that we are going to have in some hotel somewhere. It has to

be called by the Arab League.

This same thing could have prevented the gulf war back in 1991. When

Saddam Hussein went into Kuwait, the Arab League said before the

Americans attack, let us settle this among the Arab community. This is

a fight among us. Saddam Hussein thought he had fought in Iran because

he was defending Kuwait and the Saudis, and he thought that they owed

him something. He said give me some money, and they said no. And so he

said all right, then I am going to move in and take Kuwait.

It could have been resolved if we had the patience to let this happen

and the mentality in the White House that can allow Iraq to develop its

own peaceful society. We have removed Saddam Hussein. We are all glad,

but we now must let the Arabs resolve the situation in a way that makes

sense to them.