Mr. Speaker, last week the House entertained 10 hours of

debate on the Iraq war. The unamendable resolution which formed the

basis of the debate was a partisan measure crafted to be a simple

endorsement of our troops, a subject upon which all Americans are

united. But the resolution also scoffed at the notion of establishing

time lines for withdrawal and thus implicitly sanctioned a prolonged

engagement, implying that it might be considered a 21st century version

of Lyndon Johnson's Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

During the debate, several of us suggested that the longer we stay in

Iraq, the greater the prospect that forces of anarchy will multiply and

spread, perhaps across oceans. I would like to amplify on this concern.

From an American perspective, the two central issues in our Iraq

policy are how best to advance our long-term national interests and how

best to protect our troops. At issue is whether a prolonged engagement

makes better sense than a time-lined withdrawal policy.

The case for a prolonged engagement involves a neocon objective of

establishing semi-permanent bases in Iraq and neighboring emirates from

which American military power, or the threat thereof, can be readily

projected against Syria or Iran, or potentially Saudi Arabia if it were

to become radicalized. It also allows greater flexibility in support of

the new Iraqi Government. On the other hand, there is a thin line

between being a liberating and an occupying power that many in the

Muslim world either do not accept or think has been crossed.

Sometimes it is as hard to determine when to end a war as when to

start one. It may have been a mistake to intervene in Iraq in the first

place, but clearly a precipitous departure after our initial engagement

would have been an error. By the same token, prolonging our involvement

runs the risk of causing American forces supporting the Shi'a majority

government to be seen by Sunnis as favoring one side in an

interreligious conflict. Worse yet, the longer we stay, the more we

will be seen as an occupying force, embarrassing to the Muslim world,

causing the prospect of a long-lasting conflict between the Judeo-

Christian and Muslim civilizations to increase in likelihood.

It is important to give momentum to and solidify Iraqi democracy, but

there are tipping points in all struggles. We are at a point where

action/reaction engagements could all too easily and rapidly intensify

in asymmetric and multigeographic ways if the struggle to build a new

Iraq comes to be perceived as an imperial American imposition on Iraqi

sovereignty instead of an effort by Iraqis working to shape their own

future.

This is why it is so important that we reframe the discourse away

from WMD and 9/11 concerns and define instead the establishment of

democracy as our principal reason for intervention, and thus the

logical basis for disengagement. Now that a Constitution has been

written, elections held, and a government formed, we should

forthrightly announce that we are prepared to draw down our troops in a

measured, orderly way. A hasty departure would be imprudent, but the

sooner the disengagement process begins, the better. Our goal may be to

fight anarchistic forces over there rather than here, but we must

understand that prolonging our involvement over there could precipitate

a gathering storm of resentment which could make violence here more

rather than less likely.

With regard to protecting our troops, it is impressive that in

polling data reported by the Brookings Institute, 47 percent of Iraqis

favor attacking American forces, and 87 percent favor time lines for

withdrawal. Occupation is neither the American way, nor is it tolerable

for Muslims. While precipitous withdrawal after our intervention might

have led to civil war and a breakup of the Iraqi state, the logic of

these polling statistics would seem to indicate that Iraqis have become

weary of and humiliated by a foreign occupying presence.

The rationale for attacks against American forces would be undercut

if Muslims had confidence that we were committed to an orderly and

timely withdrawal policy. If we do not begin to leave Iraq now that

democratic institutions have been put in place, anarchistic acts will

continue, and the other side may be in a position to say when we

eventually draw down our forces that they have somehow forced us out.

Little would be worse for the American national interest or more

demoralizing for all those who have

served so valiantly in combat there than such a preposterous claim.

This is why the implications of slogans like the need to stay the

course can be so misleading. There is nothing more disadvantageous for

our national security or more dangerous for our troops in the field

than overstaying our presence.

The longer this war goes on, the greater the likelihood that anger

will intensify in the Muslim world as well as among Muslims in the

West, including the United States. The recent arrest of 17 young

Muslims in Canada is a case in point. From news accounts it would

appear that an accumulation of U.S. actions with which Canada was

considered complicit triggered perfectly normal youngsters to consider

violent and profoundly anti-democratic actions, including a plot to

kidnap Canadian legislators and slit the throat of the Prime Minister.

As long as the conflict in Iraq continues and the Israeli-Palestinian

issue remains unresolved it is only a question of time before other 9/

11 type events or series of violent acts will occur in various parts of

the world. Bringing the occupation to an end and resolving other Middle

Eastern issues will not ensure against future violence but it could

dampen the anger of millions of Muslims and reduce the prospect of a

clash of civilizations.

The challenge for the administration is to determine when the new

Iraqi Government is strong enough to stand on its own. Our presence is

dual edged. We have helped train a new army, perhaps erring along the

way in disbanding the Iraqi armed forces after the capture of Baghdad.

But we also are the subject of anger and humiliation for many Muslims

in and out of Iraq. The opposition continues for an assortment of

reasons. Some relate to the centuries-old antagonism between Sunnis and

Shi'a, complicated by the nationalist ambitions of the Kurds. Some

relate to the millennia-old implication of the Crusades, memories of

which hang over the Middle East the way the Civil War did for a century

in the American South. And some relate to current events--the

Palestinian-Israeli confrontation, the occupation of Iraq and, to a far

lesser extent, the more understandable U.S. intervention in

Afghanistan, as well as problems attendant to the unforeseen--

Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Haditha.

We are in unprecedented times. But there are parallels from recent

history that might provide glimmers of guidance for policy makers

today. One from the Reagan era that I have always assumed stemmed as

much from the President's wife, Nancy, the closet moderate within that

administration, as any geo-strategic planner relates to an attitudinal

shift away from confrontation to diplomacy. In Reagan's first term he

postured firmly in the anti-multilateralist, anti-arms control camp,

objecting to negotiations with the evil empire. At the U.N., he ordered

a U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO, one of the more financially bloated but

least dangerous international organizations ever created. In reaction

to a perceived anti-progressivism in his first term, two movements of

educated citizens mushroomed in size. One, the environmental movement,

was concerned with the confrontational policies of the Secretary of the

Interior, Jim Watt; the other, which paralleled it in foreign policy,

was the arms control movement. Thousands of fledgling advocates came to

support the concept of a nuclear freeze in the context of SALT--

strategic arms limitation talks. This movement gained so much currency

that a poll of delegates to the 1984 Republican National Convention

which renominated Reagan found that the majority favored a nuclear

freeze rather than the intransigent negotiating policy then in vogue.

But the President, in a remarkable policy shift early in his second

term upstaged his opposition by out-radicalizing it. Instead of pushing

for a ``status quo'' SALT approach which would halt the arms race, he

threw his support behind a more imaginative START initiative--a

strategic arms reduction treaty--which would reverse it. The

implication was a strategic oxymoron: America had to build up military

might in order to reduce it.

An inconsistent geo-strategic policy was adroitly presented as

consistency. In part because of the wisdom of the policy reversal, in

part because of Reagan's unique personal capacity to persuade, in part

because the persuader spoke from the bully pulpit of the Presidency,

America began to lead the world as a force both of resolve and

restraint.

A progressive might presumptuously hope today that on issues as

diverse as North Korea, Iraq and potentially the Israeli-Palestinian

challenge the Reagan policy-shift model beckons this President.

Since John Kennedy, all American Presidents have been obsessed with

what their place in history may be. In most circumstances I cannot

envision a more worthwhile or uplifting motivation. I am concerned,

however, that an unnecessarily sticky situation may be developing with

this presidency. My sense is that advisors are telling the President

that his administration will be judged on the steadfastness of his

commitment to a policy of continued military engagement in Iraq and,

quite possibly, following through with a military confrontation with

Iran. But might not the Reagan ``consistent inconsistency'' model be

fortuitously adapted? Instead of following one military action with

another, what if the President were to commence drawing down forces as

democratic institutions take hold in Iraq? And having proven that he is

willing to use force--as Reagan proved his willingness to escalate

defense spending--the President could then plausibly point out that he

is now prepared to negotiate from a position of strength with Iran and

North Korea. But for such a change in emphasis--use of diplomacy

instead of force--to take place, the administration cannot continue to

fritter away time and opportunity. If it continues to refuse to offer

the respectful attention that direct negotiations imply with countries

like Iran and North Korea, our adversaries could wait us out, or tempt

the administration into a highly dangerous confrontation.

The other historical model that gets little attention, except to

serve as an apparent warning not to get too involved in African civil

wars, is Somalia. Under this President's father, U.S. Armed Forces were

deployed in a unique humanitarian intervention. The logistical

capacities of the U.S. military were used to bring food and medical

help to a war-torn society. This might have been a model of success

rather than failure had events in the field not gotten out of hand. But

over time, as one administration folded into the next, American forces

in their efforts to provide assistance to starving people found it

necessary to try to stabilize internal relations and thus do battle

with anarchistic elements of Somali society. For many in Somalia this

came to be perceived as siding with one side in an internal conflict.

The disastrous consequence of becoming militarily engaged instead of

simply humanitarianly involved may have relevance in a very different

setting today--Iraq. Good intentions and heroic deeds can backfire.

In this context, one of the most constitutionally awkward

pronouncements of the civilian side of this administration deserves

review. The President and Secretary of Defense have repeatedly

suggested that troop-level determinations in Iraq will be made by the

commander in the field. This articulation, which at first blush seems

undisputedly prudent, is perhaps related to the hammering the

administration has taken, especially from supporters in the press and

on Capitol Hill of the intervention, who hold that there would be far

fewer problems in Iraq today if more troops had been committed at the

outset. According to this reasoning, the mistake for any failure of

policy rests not with the judgment call on going to war, but with the

implementation of the decision.

It may be, as Colin Powell has implied, that once the decision to

intervene had been made, it would have been wiser to follow the

overwhelming force doctrine that is derived from military history but

in recent times has come to bear the former Secretary's name. In any

regard, whether or not the commitment of more troops would have made a

significant difference in sealing Iraqi borders or bringing greater

stability to Baghdad, both the military and civilian side of government

have to think through the issue of who responds to whom on troop-level

questions.

There are distinctions between tactical decision-making and strategic

judgments. The former should be disproportionately military; the latter

require greater and, at some point, total civilian involvement. In a

historical sense it is worth remembering, for instance, that Harry

Truman stood down the most popular military officer of the 20th century

when GEN Douglas MacArthur attempted to widen the war in Korea.

Decisions to end as well as begin wars are constitutionally proscribed.

The constitutional dimension of modern war making is not as clear-cut

as the Founders might have surmised. This is the case because modem

warfare, for a variety of reasons, is conducted without a formal

declaration of war from Congress and because the law of the land,

despite being unlikely to pass constitutional muster if tested in the

courts, is the War Powers Act. Whether one approves or disapproves of

the decision to intervene in Iraq, there is no question that because of

a congressional vote to authorize the use of force, this war is legal.

A strike without a precise Congressional authorization on Iran is more

conjectural, but the War Powers Act which gives the President 60 days

discretion on use of force as well as other war against terror

resolutions, the NPT and possible future Security Council resolutions

would presumably be used by the administration to justify executive

discretion. Others might suggest that lacking an imminent threat

rationale, the Constitution would seem to envision the need for

congressional concurrence.

As one who is doubtful of the wisdom of intervention against Iran, I

was disappointed

that an effort to amend the DOD appropriations bill this week to

require prior congressional consent for a strike against Iran was

defeated. In any regard, the executive branch, possibly with

congressional advice, has two profound judgment calls to make in the

near future: whether and how to end the Iraq war and whether and how to

engage Iran. And here--based on public commentary within the civilian

side of our government and the private observations of former

generals--my sense is that it is quite conceivable that a rift could

develop between the military and civilian elements of our government

which would be the reverse image of the MacArthur/Truman confrontation.

The professional military seems far more skeptical than the White House

of the judgment of the neo-cons who drove the decision to intervene in

Iraq and far more dubious than many on Capitol Hill about the wisdom of

a preemptive strike against Iran.

With regard to Iran, I am impressed how congressional leadership of

both parties, at least on the House side, remains confrontational. This

is one reason I feel that it is important to emphasize the

appropriateness of bipartisan criticism as well as bipartisan support

for executive branch foreign policies. Partisanship should stop at the

water's edge; but judgmental capitulation must never occur. Closed-

mindedness is the enemy. Members are obligated to review decisions made

and oversee actions taken by the Executive. It is the question of

motivation that must be above partisan reproach. The only motivation

consistent with our pledge to uphold and defend the Constitution is to

concern ourselves exclusively with the national interest. Neither

concerns for political party advantage nor individual ambition should

play a role in foreign policy judgments.

Over the years I have become impressed by how within Republican

administrations there is a tendency of political appointees,

particularly in the White House, to advocate confrontation over

diplomacy. My sense is that there is a lot of frustration within high

levels of the military with what might be described as an immature,

ideological machismo among key political appointees. It would not be

surprising to me if in the next couple of years it falls to the

professional military and career CIA and foreign service officers to

raise cautionary flags about various policy options.

In conclusion, as a representative of a State which has

disproportionately provided Reserve and National Guard forces for the

Iraqi conflict, I am struck by an extraordinarily impressive aspect of

America's involvement in Iraq. In one of the most psychologically and

militarily difficult settings ever to confront U.S. Armed Forces, the

morale of our troops and their families at home has never ebbed and the

patriotism of volunteer soldiers has never been challenged. This

reflects well on their character as well as on their dedication to

duty. There may be question whether intervention should have occurred,

but once our troops were committed there is no question that it is in

the national interest that they succeed.

What remains at issue is whether longevity of commitment contributes

to or undermines the success of the mission; whether IED attacks and

skirmishes at the field level escalate or diminish; and whether

diplomacy or lack thereof leads to a more peaceful or violent world.