over our foreign policy of interventionism. The mistakes made by both parties in dragging us into an unwise war are obvious, but the effort to blame one group over the other confuses the real issue. Obviously Congress failed to meet its constitutional obligation regarding war. Debate over prewar intelligence elicits charges of errors, lies, and complicity. It is now argued that those who are critical of the outcome in Iraq are just as much at fault, since they too accepted flawed intelligence when deciding to support the war. This charge is leveled at previous administrations, foreign governments, Members of Congress, and the United Nations—all who made the same mistake of blindly accepting the prewar intelligence. Complicity, errors of judgment, and malice are hardly an excuse for such a serious commitment as a pre-emptive war against a non-existent enemy.

Both sides accepted the evidence supposedly justifying the war, evidence that was not credible. No weapons of mass destruction were found. Iraq had no military capabilities. Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein were not allies (remember, we were allies of both Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden), and Saddam Hussein posed no threat whatsoever to the United States or his neighbors.

We hear constantly that we must continue the fight in Iraq, and possibly in Iran and Syria, because, ''It's better to fight the terrorists over there than here.'' Merely repeating this justification, if it is based on a major analytical error, cannot make it so. All evidence shows that our presence in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim countries benefits Al Qaeda in its recruiting efforts, especially in its search for suicide terrorists. This one fact prompts a rare agreement among all religious and secular Muslim factions; namely, that the U.S. should leave all Arab lands. Denying this will not keep terrorists from attacking us, it will do the opposite.

The fighting and terrorist attacks are happening overseas because of a publicly stated Al Qaeda policy that they will go for soft targets—our allies whose citizens object to the war like Spain and Italy. They will attack Americans who are more exposed in Iraq. It is a serious error to conclude that ''fighting them over there'' keeps them from fighting us ''over here,'' or that we're winning the war against terrorism. As long as our occupation continues, and American forces continue killing Muslims, the incentive to attack us will grow. It shouldn't be hard to understand that the responsibility for violence in Iraq—even violence between Iraqis—is blamed on our occupation. It is more accurate to say, ''the longer we fight them over there the longer we will be threatened over here.''

The final rhetorical refuge for those who defend the war, not yet refuted, is the dismissive statement that ''the world is better off without Saddam Hussein.'' It implies no one can question anything we have done because of this fact. Instead of an automatic concession it should be legitimate, though politically incorrect, to challenge this disarming assumption. No one has to like or defend Saddam Hussein to point out we won't know whether the world is better off until someone has taken Saddam Hussein's place.

This argument was never used to justify removing murderous dictators with much more notoriety than Saddam Hussein, such as our ally Stalin; Pol Pot, whom we helped get into power; or Mao Tse Tung. Certainly the Soviets, with their bloody history and thousands of nuclear weapons aimed at us, were many times over a greater threat to us than Saddam Hussein ever was. If containment worked with the Soviets and the Chinese, why is it assumed without question that deposing Saddam Hussein is obviously and without question a better approach for us than containment?

The ''we're all better off without Saddam Hussein'' cliche doesn't address the question of whether the 2,100 troops killed or the 20,000 wounded and sick troops are better off. We refuse to acknowledge the hatred generated by the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqi citizens who are written off as collateral damage. Are the Middle East and Israel better off with the turmoil our occupation has generated? Hardly! Honesty would have us conclude that conditions in the Middle East are worse since the war started: The killing never stops, and the cost is more than we can bear—both in lives and limbs lost and dollars spent.

In spite of the potential problems that may or may not come with our withdrawal, the greater mistake was going in the first place. We need to think more about how to avoid these military encounters, rather than dwelling on the complications that result when we meddle in the affairs of others with no moral or legal authority to do so. We need less blame game and more reflection about the root cause of our aggressive foreign policy.

By limiting the debate to technical points over intelligence, strategy, the number of troops, and how to get out of the mess, we ignore our continued policy of sanctions, threats, and intimidation of Iraq's neighbors, Iran and Syria. Even as Congress pretends to argue about how or when we might come home, leaders from both parties continue to support the policy of spreading the war by precipitating a crisis with these two countries.

The likelihood of agreeing about who deliberately or innocently misled Congress, the media, and the American people is virtually nil. Maybe historians at a later date will sort out the whole mess. The debate over tactics and diplomacy will go on, but that only serves to distract from the important issue of policy. Few today in Congress are interested in changing from our current accepted policy of intervention to one of strategic independence: No nation building, no policing the world, no dangerous alliances.

But the results of our latest military incursion into a foreign country should not be ignored. Those who dwell on pragmatic matters should pay close attention to the results so far.

Since March 2003 we have seen:

Death and destruction; 2,100 Americans killed and nearly 20,000 sick or wounded, plus tens of thousands of Iraqis caught in the crossfire;

A Shiite theocracy has been planted;

A civil war has erupted;

Iran's arch nemesis, Saddam Hussein, has been removed;

Osama bin Laden's arch nemesis, Saddam Hussein, has been removed;

Al Qaeda now operates freely in Iraq, enjoying a fertile training field not previously available to them;

Suicide terrorism, spurred on by our occupation, has significantly increased;

Our military industrial complex thrives in Iraq without competitive bids;

True national defense and the voluntary army have been undermined;

Personal liberty at home is under attack; assaults on free speech and privacy, national ID cards, the Patriot Act,

National Security letters, and challenges to habeas corpus all have been promoted;

Values have changed, with more Americans supporting torture and secret prisons;

Domestic strife, as recently reflected in arguments over the war on the House floor, is on the upswing;

Pre-emptive war has been codified and accepted as legitimate and necessary, a bleak policy for our future;

The Middle East is far more unstable, and oil supplies are less secure, not more;

Historic relics of civilization protected for thousands of years have been lost in a flash while oil wells were secured;

U.S. credibility in the world has been severely damaged; and

The national debt has increased enormously, and our dependence on China has increased significantly as our Federal Government borrows more and more money.

How many more years will it take for civilized people to realize that war has no economic or political value for the people who fight and pay for it? Wars are always started by governments, and individual soldiers on each side are conditioned to take up arms and travel great distances to shoot and kill individuals that never meant them harm. Both sides drive their people into an hysterical frenzy to overcome their natural instinct to live and let live. False patriotism is used to embarrass the good-hearted into succumbing to the wishes of the financial and other special interests who agitate for war.

War reflects the weakness of a civilization that refuses to offer peace as an alternative.

This does not mean we should isolate ourselves from the world. On the contrary, we need more rather than less interaction with our world neighbors. We should encourage travel, foreign commerce, friendship, and exchange of ideas—this would far surpass our misplaced effort to make the world like us through armed force. And this can be achieved without increasing the power of the state or accepting the notion that some world government is needed to enforce the rules of exchange. Governments should just get out of the way and let individuals make their own decisions about how they want to relate to the world.

Defending the country against aggression is a very limited and proper function of government. Our military involvement in the world over the past 60 years has not met this test, and we're paying the price for it.

A policy that endorses peace over war, trade over sanctions, courtesy over arrogance, and liberty over coercion is in the tradition of the American Constitution and American idealism. It deserves consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)