rapidly alienating the Iraqis—to the visible presence of the United Nations, headed by a high commissioner to whom effective authority should then be transferred. A genuinely empowered U.N. high commissioner could, in turn, progressively yield genuine sovereignty to the Iraqis with much greater prospects of gaining Iraqi public support for the interim government.

The authority of any such high commissioner should extend to the security sphere. The American military commanders in Iraq should retain full discretion to respond to attacks upon U.S. forces in the manner they deem necessary, but any offensive operations they—or other coalition forces—conduct should require explicit authorization from the high commissioner, perhaps in consultation with the Iraqi leaders. That change in command and control would automatically transform the character of the U.S. presence in Iraq from a military occupation to internationally supervised peacekeeping. The U.N. resolution the Bush administration proposed Monday makes token gestures to that end, but it does not fundamentally alter the continued and overt supremacy of the United States in Iraq.

Second, the longer the U.S. military presence lasts, the more likely it is that Iraqi resistance will intensify. It is, therefore, in America's interest to credibly convey U.S. determination to let Iraqis manage (however imperfectly) their own security. Setting a reasonable deadline for the departure of U.S. troops—far enough in the future not to look like a pell-mell withdrawal but soon enough to concentrate Iraqi minds on the need for self-sufficiency—could take practical advantage of the fact that the countrywide situation on the ground is currently not quite as bad militarily as necessarily selective TV images suggest.

April 2005—two years after the occupation began—might be the appropriate target for terminating the U.S. military presence. A publicly known date for the departure of U.S. troops would refute suspicions that the United States harbors imperialist designs on Iraq and its oil, thereby diluting anti-American resentments both in Iraq and the region at large. Only a firm deadline for military withdrawal will convince the Iraqis that we truly intend to leave. Conversely, failure to set a date will encourage Iraqi politicians to compete in calling for early U.S. departure.

Admittedly, there is a risk that a U.S. withdrawal will be followed by intensified instability, but such instability would harm U.S. global interests less than continued (and perhaps rising) resistance to a seemingly indefinite U.S. occupation—which, in any case, has not suppressed low-level but widespread crime, violence, and terrorism. That resistance could take the form of intensified urban warfare, such as that waged five decades ago by the Algerians against the French. The United States could doubtless crush such an insurgency with an intensified military effort, but the political costs of such escalation—massive civilian casualties, pervasive destruction, and the inevitable exacerbation of national, cultural, and religious indignities—would be colossal.

The United States should consult with the principal members of its military coalition about an appropriate deadline. A set date of April 2005 could force other states, notably our European allies, to focus on the need for a wider and more ambitious effort to help the Iraqis stabilize and reconstruct their country. The militarily significant members of the coalition (those with 1,000 or more troops in Iraq) are Great Britain, Italy, Poland, Ukraine, and the Netherlands. Their views should be solicited, if for no other reason than because the publics in these countries are increasingly hostile to continued participation in Iraq's occupation, while some of the officers commanding their contingents in Iraq have been quite critical of heavy-handed U.S. military tactics.

Third, the internationalization of the supreme political authority in Iraq and the setting of a date for U.S. withdrawal will require a redefinition of the oft-proclaimed (but largely illusory) goal of transforming Iraq into a democracy. Democracy cannot be implanted by foreign bayonets. It must be nurtured patiently, with respect for the political dignity of those involved. An assertive and occasionally trigger-happy occupation is no school of democracy. Humiliation and compulsion breed hatred, as the Israelis are learning in the course of their prolonged domination over the Palestinians.

Post-occupation Iraq will not be a democracy. The most that can be practically sought is a federal structure, based on traditional, often tribal, sources of authority within the three major communities that form the Iraqi state: the Shia, the Sunnis, and the Kurds. It would be unwise, however, to demarcate these communities into three territorially defined regions, for that would almost certainly produce intense border conflicts among them. Until the dust settles from Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and the U.S. military intervention, it would be wiser to rely on the traditional arrangements within the more numerous existing provinces—a strategy that could promote political compromise across sectarian lines. The result would likely be a somewhat Islamic Iraqi national government that roughly reflected the country's demographic, religious, and ethnic realities.

Fourth, but far from least, the United States must recognize that success in Iraq depends on significant parallel progress toward peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the single most combustible and galvanizing issue in the Arab world. If the United States disengages from Iraq before making significant headway toward settling that dispute, it could face a sovereign Iraqi government that is militantly hostile to both Israel and the United States.

Therefore, the United States—if it is to gain any international (and especially European) support for remedying its Middle Eastern dilemmas—will have to clarify its stand on the eventual shape of an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement. It should by now be clear that the conflict will never be ended by the two parties on their own. U.S. unwillingness to define, even in broad terms, the fundamentals of a peaceful outcome abandons those Israelis and Palestinians who genuinely desire peace to the mercies of their extremist leaders. Furthermore, endorsing Ariel Sharon's goals but ignoring the Palestinian side of any compromise is delaying, rather than accelerating, the peace process—while compounding the suffering on both sides.

To mobilize those Israelis and Palestinians who seek peace, and to convince the Middle East that U.S. occupation of Iraq is not simply a conspiratorial extension of Israeli domination of the West Bank, the United States should more explicitly state its position regarding the six key issues that a final Israeli-Palestinian peace will have to resolve: not only (as Israel demands) that there can be no right of return for Palestinian refugees, and that the 1967 lines cannot automatically become the final frontier, but also that there will have to be equitable territorial compensation for any Israeli expansion into the West Bank; that settlements not proximate to the 1967 line will have to be vacated; that Jerusalem as a united city will have to be shared as two capitals; and that Palestine will be a demilitarized state, perhaps with some NATO military presence to enhance the durability of the peace settlement.

A fundamental course correction is urgently needed if the Middle East is to be transformed for the better. Slogans about ''staying the course'' are a prescription for inflaming the region while polarizing the United States and undermining U.S. global leadership. A bold change of course—given the gravity of the situation confronting the Iraqis, Israelis, and Arabs more generally, as well as concerned Europeans—could still snatch success from the tightening jaws of failure. But there is little time left.

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

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

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

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN HONOR OF THE INAUGURAL CARIBBEAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to address the House for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Caribbean American community in honor of the first-ever National Caribbean American Heritage Month.

On June 27, 2005, the House unanimously adopted H. Con. Res. 71, my resolution to declare June National Caribbean American Heritage Month. On February 14, 2006, the Senate followed suit, thanks to the work of Senator SCHUMER of New York and Arielle Goren on his staff.

And let me begin by recognizing the many people who helped realize this 2-year bipartisan, bicameral effort, because this was quite a feat. First, I want to recognize our colleague, a great leader on so many issues and especially on health care, Congresswoman DONNA CHRISTENSEN from the Caribbean, who has been tremendous in terms of bringing us together to address the issues of health disparities throughout our country and throughout the world.

Also, I would like to thank the Institute of Caribbean Studies, especially Dr. Claire Nelson and her team, for joining us in this effort from the very beginning.

Also, we must recognize our friends from the Caribbean diplomatic corps, who worked so hard to spread the word about this effort both at home in the Caribbean and in their embassies and consulates across the country.