Mr.

Speaker, I thank the gentleman for

yielding, and congratulate him on a

very fine and thoughtful statement.

Mr. Speaker, there is a good possibility

that our country will be at war

in Iraq before the month is out. The

President held out little hope for any

alternative approach to disarming Iraq

at his press conference last Thursday.

Yet a majority of the American people

continue to urge for more time for inspections

while we are facing something

close to a diplomatic meltdown

with major allies. A failure to secure

allied support will have major consequences

for every American. Our citizens

alone will shoulder the financial

burden of this war and its aftermath.

Our troops will need to be kept indefinitely

in post-war Iraq, our country

alone as an occupying force will be the

target of hatred, resentment and hostility

from many in the Arab world,

and America will risk losing our standing

among the world’s democracies as

one who leads by moral suasion and example

as well as by military might.

Pollsters here at home say they have

rarely seen an issue where the public’s

reaction is more conditional or ambivalent.

Tonight I want to suggest this is

because the Bush administration has

not answered basic questions about

this war and has backed us into a situation

where we seem to be choosing between

equally unsatisfactory ways of

dealing with what most agree is a deadly

challenge.

The distinguished historian William

Leuchtenburg citing Thomas Jefferson’s

maxim that ‘‘great innovation

should not be forced on slender majorities,’’

recently contrasted George W.

Bush’s unilateralism to the behavior of

previous wartime Presidents and found

him ‘‘unique in his defiance of so much

international and domestic opinion.’’

Many of our constituents believe

that the full range and intensity of

public opinion has not been visible or

audible in Congress. One reason is that,

by our vote of October 10 which gave

the President an open-ended authorization

for the use of force, this institution

forfeited its coordinate decisionmaking

role. Mr. Speaker, an up or

down vote on a resolution authorizing

force is at best a blunt instrument for

checking the executive’s constitutional

dominance of foreign and military policy;

but by granting unchecked authority

months in advance, we made that

instrument blunter yet.

Still, I believe the questions and the

challenges to the President’s approach

emanating from the Congress, and from

Democratic Members in particular,

have been more persistent and more

consistent than most media accounts

have acknowledged. It is true, Democrats

were divided on final passage of

the October resolution. And, in fact,

this is not an issue on which a stance

of absolute opposition is called for. We

all understand Saddam Hussein to be a

brutal dictator who is implacably hostile

to our country and what we stand

for. There is near unanimity in this

body and in the international community

that whatever capacity he has to

make or use weapons of mass destruction

must be ended.

But critical questions remain regarding

alternative means to this end.

Many Members of this body have raised

these questions with increasing intensity

in recent weeks; and unfortunately,

the Bush administration has

rarely provided satisfactory answers.

What accounting do we have for the

costs and risks of a military invasion?

How are we to secure and maintain the

support and engagement of our allies?

Can Iraq be disarmed by means that do

not divert us from or otherwise compromise

equally or more urgent

antiterrorist and diplomatic objectives?

And do we have a credible plan

for rebuilding and governing postwar

Iraq, and have we secured the necessary

international cooperation to ensure

that this does not become a perceived

U.S. occupation?

Administration officials, for example,

have persistently refused to put a

price tag on a U.S. invasion which, unlike

the Gulf War, would have almost

no financial backing from allies. The

President’s budget omits any reference

to an Iraq war. With deficits for 2003

and 2004 already predicted to break historic

records and $2 trillion slated to be

added to the national debt by 2008, the

addition of $80 billion to $200 billion in

war costs could not come as welcome

news. But it is an insult to this body

and to the American people to submit

a budget that absolutely fails to give

an honest accounting, even within

broad limits, of what those costs would

be.

Daily dispatches from Korea leave

little doubt that North Korea is taking

advantage of our preoccupation with

Iraq to dangerously ratchet up its nuclear

program, and that the administration’s

diplomacy has not been up to

this challenge.

And now we learn that the Bush administration,

which, truth to tell, has

never had its heart in Middle East

peace-making, has rebuffed its socalled

quartet partners, the European

allies, Russia, and the United Nations,

and insisted on yet another postponement

in publishing the long-anticipated

‘‘road map’’ to an Israeli-Palestinian

settlement. Why? Because of the

crisis in Iraq. President Bush in December

demanded that release of the

timetable for reciprocal steps and negotiations

be delayed until after the

Israeli elections. Now he is insisting

again that the effort be delayed, this

time until after we deal with Iraq,

seemingly thinking that victory in

Iraq will be the key to solving this and

most other problems in the Middle

East.

As the New York Times editorialized

last Sunday, ‘‘The Bush administration

has not been willing to risk any political

capital in attempting to resolve

the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians,

but now the President is

theorizing that invading Iraq will do

the trick.’’

The fact is that the festering Israeli-

Palestinian conflict and the Bush

administrations’s failure to do anything

about it represent an enormous

obstacle to enlisting the support we

need to achieve our objectives in the

region, including the war on terrorism.

That is certainly the way the Europeans

see it; and the President’s rebuff

has further poisoned the atmosphere,

even as the administration struggles to

gain allied support for military action

against Iraq. Among the angriest allies

reportedly is Britain’s Prime Minister

Tony Blair, who for months has pleaded

with President Bush to become more

involved in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

The administration’s torpedoing of

the Quartet initiative is also ill advised

and ill timed with respect to Palestinian

efforts at reform. It comes

precisely at the time that President

Arafat, under considerable pressure,

has nominated Mahmoud Abbas, otherwise

known as Abu Mazen, for the new

position of Prime Minister of the Palestinian

Authority. Abu Mazen, with

whom the gentleman from Florida (Mr.

DAVIS) and I had a cordial and useful

visit in Ramallah in December, has

been an outspoken critic of the militarization

of the Palestinian uprising.

How successful his appointment proves

in reforming Palestinian governance

will depend, among other things, on

how much real authority he and his position

are given. But President Bush

could hardly have picked a more inauspicious

time to throw cold water on the

plans to get back to negotiations.

‘‘There was a lot of dismay when the

road map was put off before, and the

dismay right now is even worse,’’ one

European diplomat told a New York

Times reporter. ‘‘Without hope, the

power of extremists will only grow,’’

added another.

Such, Mr. Speaker, are the costs of

allowing Iraq to trump everything else

on our antiterrorist and diplomatic

agenda.

Mr. Speaker, the world welcomed the

President’s decision last fall to take

the Iraq matter to the United Nations

and, apparently, to give more extensive

inspections and the supervised destruction

of weapons a chance to work. But

his rhetoric since that time has led

many to believe that he has always regarded

the inspections as foreordained

to failure and war as the only recourse.

Suspicions have deepened as administration

statements about links between

Iraq and al Qaeda have become

less and less measured. Such statements

have helped persuade some 42

percent of the American public that

Saddam Hussein was personally responsible

for the 9–11 World Trade Center

attacks. But prospective allies examining

the rationale for war have understandably

been less impressed.

Inspections, of course, are a two-way

street. They will never work without

Iraq’s willing cooperation; and that cooperation,

as Mr. Blix and Mr. El

Baradei have made clear, has been far

from satisfactory. No matter how numerous

or how skilled the inspectors

are, they cannot find what amounts to

needles in haystacks without honest

and complete information regarding

the weapons and the material which

the Iraqis claim to have destroyed and

the whereabouts of any remaining

stockpiles.

Still, it does matter how we reach

the conclusion that Iraq has effectively

continued its defiance that the inspections

have failed, and that war is the

only remaining option. In fact, the report

of the inspectors at the United Nations

last Friday significantly undermined

the American position, arguing

that progress has, in fact, been made

and discounting the dangers of any

Iraqi nuclear program.

It is essential that the world know

and face the fact, as the President said

last Saturday, that Iraq is still violating

the demands of the United Nations

by refusing to disarm. But we undermine

our own credibility when we

scoff at the destruction of a stockpile

of Al Samoud missiles as a matter of

no consequence, or insist on a U.N. resolution

with so short a time frame as

to make it seem merely a pretext for

war.

In fact, the U.N. inspectors themselves

have specified the tasks remaining

before them, and there is every reason

to support the systematic pursuit

of those objectives within a tight, but

feasible, time frame. In the meantime,

we must resist the notion that the alternatives

confronting us are either to

invade in the next few days or to appear

to ‘‘back down’’ in a humiliating

and dangerous fashion.

It is true that the massing of 235,000

troops has created a momentum of its

own, and they cannot stay in place indefinitely.

But the risks and the costs

of an invasion undertaken in the face

of major allied opposition remain, and

we need to give full consideration to

options that avoid either leaving Iraq’s

weapons in place or inexorably marching

to war.

What might those options be? Michael

Walzer has suggested intensifying

what he calls the ‘‘little war’’

in which we are already engaged and

challenging the French and the Germans

and the Russians to become part

of the solution. This could include extension

of no-fly zones to cover the entire

country, maintaining an embargo

on strategic and dual-use materials,

and intensifying the program of inspections

and weapons destruction under

international control.

If such a program succeeded in destroying

or neutralizing Iraq’s weapons

capability, the U.S. and the U.N. could

credibly declare their mission accomplished,

and most of the troops could

return home, having created the military

pressure that helped prompt compliance.

I realize that at present, prospects

for such an outcome appear to be

fading. But when we are in an untenable

position, contemplating outcomes

that are equally unacceptable, we have

an obligation to press in new directions.

Mr. Speaker, whatever course our

President and our country take, we

will give our men and women in uniform

our full support, and I am confident

that a unified Congress will provide

whatever resources they need to

succeed. I have been moved by the farewell

ceremonies for National Guard

units in my own district, and I have

the utmost respect for the service and

sacrifice that these men and women exemplify.

The debates we have over foreign

and military policy do not change

that in the least. In fact, we owe them,

and all of our citizens, this debate, so

that we do not choose our Nation’s

course either impulsively or by default,

but with due consideration of our Nation’s

interests and values, and consideration

of how our vast power can be a

force for what is just and right in the

world. May God grant us wisdom and

courage for the facing of these days.