Mr. President, last week a group of us, both Senators

and Members of the House, Republicans and Democrats, had the

opportunity to sit down with Frederick Kagan, who is a fellow at the

American Enterprise Institute, and listen to his comments about where

we are with respect to Iraq.

At the end of that very illuminating session, he gave us each a copy

of a new report that he has authored called

The report is too long for me

to ask consent that it be printed in the Record, but I recommend it to

all my colleagues. It is one of the most thorough and thoughtful

examinations of where we are in Iraq I have seen. I will be quoting

from it, but I wish to make a few observations about the situation in

Iraq before I do.

The Iraq debate seems to be mired down in arguments about past

decisions and whether they were right. These kinds of arguments are

useful, and they are particularly useful in the hands of historians who

are reviewing an entire situation from a vantage point of years

afterward, but they are not necessarily that valuable as we are

addressing the question of what do we do now.

If I can play the historian for a moment and give examples of how we

have entered into conflicts and seen the situation on the ground change

and, therefore, strategies change, let me go back to the Revolutionary

War. At the time of the Revolutionary War, the original strategies the

Commander in Chief, George Washington, applied didn't work. Indeed, the

Continental Army was defeated again and again and

again by the British troops, and Washington was forced to acknowledge

that his original strategic decisions were the wrong ones. This did not

mean we lost the war because Washington adjusted to the conditions on

the ground, adopted new strategies, and ended up winning the war.

In the Civil War, when Abraham Lincoln made the decision to provision

Fort Sumter, he did not understand how long the war would last, how

difficult it would be, how much life and treasure it would claim. He

was forced to change again and again in reaction to the results that

came from the battlefield.

In Iraq, we made some decisions based on intelligence at the time

which have proved to be wrong. Spending our time in this Chamber

arguing over those decisions instead of recognizing how conditions have

changed on the ground becomes a self-defeating exercise.

As I look at the decisions that were made prior to the decision to go

into Iraq, the one that strikes me as being the most significant was

our failure to understand the degree to which Saddam Hussein had

destroyed that country, not just physically, not just in terms of its

infrastructure but psychologically.

We believed there were Iraqis who could step forward and lead a

resurgence of that country if we simply freed them from the heavy hand

of Saddam Hussein. That was a false belief. We found Iraqis so

shattered by 37 years of one of the most brutal dictatorships we have

ever seen that the leadership vacuum was huge. For us now to spend our

time saying, well, we made the mistake, therefore we have to cure the

mistake by getting out, is to ignore the conditions on the ground that

have evolved as a result of getting into the war in the first place.

Mr. Kagan makes the point that there is no middle way. We are trying

to find a middle way in these Chambers. There are those who say the

only way is to withdraw immediately, and there are others who say, no,

the only way is to stay the course. That phrase has been hackneyed; it

doesn't work anymore. So it is natural for many of us to say: Let's

find some middle way. Let's stay in there somewhat, but let's eliminate

a good portion of the American footprint in Iraq and see if that

doesn't help us get out without absolute withdrawal.

Mr. Kagan makes the point that the conditions on the ground rule out

such a middle way. I find his arguments persuasive, and I would like to

share some of them with my colleagues today.

He looks not at the question of did Saddam Hussein have anything to

do with 9/11, a question we hear debated a great deal. He says: Is al-

Qaida engaged now in Iraq? The answer is overwhelmingly yes. Whether

al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein had any ties prior to our invasion in Iraq

is now irrelevant. Al-Qaida is in Iraq. Al-Qaida is a major player in

Iraq.

There are those who say Iran is the major threat, and we should be

looking at Iran. He points out that Iran is very much involved in Iraq

at the present time. These are the conditions on the ground. We are not

debating 9/11. We are not debating the U.N. resolutions. We are

debating conditions on the ground that very much involve both al-Qaida

and Iran. So those are the conditions to which we need to pay

attention.

If I may quote from Mr. Kagan's report, he says:

That is a very interesting thing to contemplate as you look ahead--

Iran expanding its power in the region, making some kind of

accommodation with the Saudis and the other Gulf States in order to

consolidate its power. Is that something America wants to look forward

to?

He goes on:

We are having a great debate about what to do about Iran. We are

showing great concern about the possibility of Iran getting a nuclear

weapon. The new President of France, Mr. Sarkozy, has talked about the

unacceptability of Iran having a nuclear weapon, even to the point of

suggesting that military options should be on the table. Military

options with respect to an Iranian nuclear weapon, if it comes to that,

will undoubtedly involve more American troops and more American

treasure than are currently at stake in Iraq.

In the conclusion section of Mr. Kagan's report, he says:

The report he discusses in the group that tries to find a middle

way--

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for an additional 2 minutes.

Mr. Kagan concludes:

I urge all Members of the Senate to pay attention to the wisdom of

Mr. Kagan's report.