I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I wish to thank the

Senator from Arizona for his important

and courageous comments that run

counter to the political currents of the

day, some of which have been expressed

in the other body and elsewhere. I

thank him for thinking about the strategic

interests of the country ahead of

some of the political interests with respect

to the next election.

There have been many occasions

when this body has behaved very differently

when a President, either Republican

or Democrat, has engaged

American forces in one way or another

without authorization within that 60-

day—or even outside of the 60-day—parameter

of the War Powers Act. The

fact is, we have had a number of military

actions—Panama, Libya in 1986,

Grenada in 1983, Iran in 1980, Haiti in

1993, the Persian Gulf in 1987 to 1988,

Lebanon in 1982, and then subsequently

Kosovo in 1999, Bosnia in 1992, Somalia

in 1992—which didn’t have this fight

about authorization.

In fact, only Iraq in 2003, Afghanistan

in 2001, and Iraq in 1990 were authorized

prior to our engagement. The fact is,

four of those I mentioned ended before

the 60 days had expired, but the others

didn’t. Bosnia, Kosovo, and Somalia all

went beyond 60 days, and the issue was

never raised. So I think it is important

for us to put this in context, if you

will, and to measure some of the realities

and the choices we face with respect

to Libya today.

We will shortly this morning—a little

later—be submitting this resolution. It

is a bipartisan resolution. Democrats

and Republicans are joining together

to put in a very limited authorization

with respect to our engagement in a

support role—not any direct engagement

but a support role only—and it is

limited to that support role.

I am particularly familiar with the

debate relating to, and with the War

Powers Act itself, over these years because

that was a debate that took

place specifically in response to the

war that Senator MCCAIN and I were

both a part of—the Vietnam war. The

War Powers Act was a direct reaction

to that war which was at that time the

longest war in our history, until now—

Afghanistan—10 years in duration.

Over 58,000 Americans lost their lives,

and it spanned several administrations,

including Kennedy, Johnson, and

Nixon. The fact is, as a result of that

war in which we never declared war,

the Congress wanted to assert its appropriate

prerogatives with respect to

the declaration of war and the engagement

of American forces. So the War

Powers Act was passed.

The War Powers Act very specifically

created this dynamic where the Congress

had 60 days to act. The President

could deploy troops for a period of 60

days without their action, and if they

hadn’t acted, the inaction itself would

require a President to then withdraw

troops. So it didn’t actually require the

Congress to act, but it created this 60-

day period. The fact is, any Member of

Congress during those 60 days could

bring a resolution to the floor denying

the President the right to go forward.

Nobody did that in the past 60 days, I

am glad to say, and we are now beyond

those 60 days.

It is not without precedent, incidentally,

that we have authorized an action

much later. In fact, I think one action

was specifically authorized for

about a year, and that was the action

in Lebanon. About a year after they

had landed it was authorized. So we are

within days of that in terms of this discussion.

Let me read specifically what the

War Powers Act says. It says:

I think the operative words, the critical

words, are ‘‘United States Armed

Forces are introduced into hostilities.’’

Now, one could argue, as people are—

there is an article in the Washington

Post today, and there are other articles

where people are saying: Well, of

course we are in hostilities. Hostilities

are taking place. Bombs are being

dropped. But that is not, in my judgment,

even though I support the War

Powers Act—and President Obama, incidentally,

has supported it here, which

is unique from other Presidents—but

the fact is, just because hostilities are

taking place and we are supporting

people engaged in those hostilities does

not mean we are ourselves, in fact, introducing

troops into hostilities.

No American is being shot at. No

American troop is on the ground or

contemplated being put on the ground.

So the mere fact that others are engaged

in hostilities and we are supporting

them I don’t believe automatically

triggers what was contemplated

in the aftermath of the Vietnam war.

Frankly, that is not the principal argument

we need to be having. What we

need to be doing is looking at the bigger

picture. I don’t think any country—

the United States, the U.N., or

any nation—ought to be drawn lightly

into any kind of military intervention.

I have always argued that. But, in my

judgment, there were powerful reasons

the United States should have joined in

establishing the no-fly zone over Libya

and forcing Qadhafi to keep his most

potent weapons out of the fight.

If we slice through the fog of misinformation

and weigh the risks and the

benefits alongside our values and our

interests, which are always at stake, I

think the justification for the President’s

involvement, for our country’s

involvement, and for our supporting it

are compelling, and I think they are

clear.

What is happening in the Middle East

right now could be the single most important

geostrategic shift since the fall

of the Berlin Wall. It has profound implications

for U.S. expenditures and for

U.S. military engagement in other

parts of the region. It has significant

impact on the threats we will face, on

the potential strategic risks for our

country, and for our interests in terms

of that region.

Absent United Nations-NATO resolve,

the promise that the prodemocracy

movement holds for transforming

the Arab world—the whole Arab

world—and all it could mean for the

United States in terms of hopes for

peace between Israel and Palestine,

hopes for a different set of relationships,

hopes for restraining Wahabiism,

hopes for diminishing the levels of

religious extremism, hopes for reducing

the amount of terrorism—all of

those things are contained in this

awakening, in this transformation people

are trying to achieve. It is an effort

which I and others believe would have

been crushed if the hopes of the prodemocracy

movement were simply ignored

and we turned our backs on

them.

I can’t imagine—just think about the

consequences. Colonel Qadhafi says: I

am going to show no mercy. I am going

to go and kill those dogs—dogs—who

have risen up and expressed their desire

to have fundamental freedoms and

rights. He is going to go into Benghazi

and he is going to annihilate anybody

who is in opposition to him. We already

saw him pulling people out of hospital

beds. We already saw him attacking

women—using rape as a tool of war—

dishonoring people in the Muslim world

as a consequence for life. We saw what

he was doing.

Are we really serious that in the

wake of the gulf states, in an unprecedented

request saying to us: We want

your help; in the wake of the Arab

League in an unprecedented request

asking for U.S. and other Western engagement

in their part of the world to

stand up for these rights, that we

would simply say: Too bad, so sad, go

about your business, we have better

things to do?

The consequences would have been

extraordinary. Remember, President

Clinton said his greatest regret of his

Presidency was he didn’t engage in

Rwanda and prevent—which we could

have done at very low cost—what happened

with the genocide in Rwanda.

That is his greatest regret.

How many Senators have gone to

Israel and gone somewhere else in the

world and said to people with respect

to the Holocaust: Never again; never

again. Do the words only apply to one

group of people or do the words have

meaning in terms of genocide, in terms

of wanton killing of innocent people at

the hands of a dictator?

So what is the cost to us of this great

effort? I believe other dictators would

have seen the failure to challenge Qadhafi

as a complete license to act with

impunity against their people at any

other place.

The vast majority of the protesters

in these countries are simply crying

out for the opportunity to live a decent

life, get a job, provide for a family,

have opportunities, and have rights. I

think abandoning them would have betrayed

not only the people seeking

democratic freedoms, but it would have

abandoned the core values of our country.

And I can hear now—I can hear it.

Some of the same people now who are

complaining about the President being

involved would have been the first people

at the barricade complaining about

why the United States did not stand up

for our values and how feckless the

President was that he was not willing

to stop a dictator from coming at these

innocent people. You can hear it. Everybody

in the country knows that is

exactly where we would be.

Now, why there and not in Syria? A

legitimate question. There are different

interests and different capacities.

The reality is, the Gulf States

asked us to come in. The Arab League

asked us to come in. And we knew

whom we were dealing with with respect

to the council and the players.

There is a whole set of uncertainties

with respect to Syria, even today, that

distinguish it both in terms of what we

can assert and what we can achieve,

and sometimes both in foreign policy

and in domestic policy you are limited

to what you can achieve and to what is

doable in a certain situation.

I believe if we had simply turned our

backs, as some people are now arguing

we ought to do now, which would be

the most reckless thing I have ever

heard in my life—at a moment where

people are actually achieving the

goals, where the pressures are mounting,

where Qadhafi is less able to maneuver,

where his forces have been reduced,

where many people in our intelligence

community and in the NATO

intelligence community are saying

there is progress being made and the

vice is tightening—that we would suddenly

just pull the rug out from under

that is extraordinary to me. Snatch—

snatch—defeat from the jaws of victory.

I believe—I cannot tell you when

it might happen, but I am absolutely

confident it is going to happen—Qadhafi

is finished. Ask the people in the

country. Even his own supporters are

reacting out of fear. And the truth is,

the vice is tightening because every

day that goes by, the opposition gets

stronger; every day that goes by, he

has less ability to manage the affairs of

the country itself.

I think if we simply send the message

the House of Representatives is contemplating

today, it would be a moment

of infamy, frankly, with respect

to the House and with respect to our

interests because it would reinforce the

all too common misperception on the

Arab street that America says one

thing and does another.

We are already spending billions of

dollars in the fight against extremism

in many parts of the world. We did not

choose this fight. Everybody knows

that. It was forced on us, starting with

9/11. To fail to see the opportunity of

affirming the courageous demand of

millions of disenfranchised young people

who had been the greatest recruits

for al-Qaida for the extremism, for any

of the extremist groups—to not affirm

their quest now to try to push back

against repression and oppression and

to try to open a set of opportunities for

themselves for jobs, for respect, for democracy—

I think to turn our backs on

that would be ignorant, irresponsible,

shortsighted, and dangerous for our

country. It would ignore our real national

security interests, and it would

help extend the narrative of resentment

toward the United States and

much of the West that is rooted in colonialism

and furthered by our own invasions

of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Remember, the pleas for help did not

just come from the Libyan rebels. And

this is not something we just cooked

up here at home with some desire to go

get engaged somewhere. It came from

the Arab League, which has never before

asked for this kind of assistance.

It came from the Gulf States, which

have never before said to the West: We

need your help to come intervene.

Even at the hand of their own leader,

it seems to me that if we had silently

accepted the deaths of Muslims, we

would have set back our relations for

decades. Instead, by responding and

giving the popular uprising a chance to

take power, I think the United States

and our allies send a message of solidarity

with the aspirations of people

everywhere, and I believe that will be

remembered for generations.

The particular nature of the madman

who was vowing to ‘‘show no mercy’’ to

his own people, to his own fellow Muslims,

the particular nature of this man,

who was going to go after the ‘‘dogs’’

who dared to challenge him, and his

role in the past, I believe, mandated

that we respond. And we responded in a

stunningly limited way.

I do think our colleagues from New

Jersey and New York and other States

in New England need to reflect on the

fact—they do not really need a reminder,

I suspect—that Qadhafi is the

man who was behind the bombing of

Pan Am 103, claiming the lives of 189

Americans.

The intervention in Libya, in my

judgment, sends a critical signal to

other leaders in the region that they

cannot automatically assume they can

simply resort to large-scale violence to

put down legitimate demands for reform

without any consequences. I

think U.N. resolve in Libya can have

an impact on future calculations. Indeed,

I think the leaders of Iran need to

pay close attention to the resolve that

is exhibited by the international community,

and we need to think about

that resolve in the context of our interests

in Iran.

The resolution we will submit—Senator

MCCAIN and myself and other Senators—

is absolutely not a blank check

for the President. Not at all. It is a resolution

that authorizes limited use of

American forces in a supporting role. I

want to emphasize that. There is only

an authorization for a supporting role.

It says specifically that the Senate

does not support the use of ground

troops in Libya. The President has

stated that is his policy, but we adopt

that policy in this resolution. It authorizes

the limited use of American

forces for a limited duration, and it

would expire 1 year from the time of

authorization.

This resolution envisions action consistent

with the letter the President

sent to congressional leaders on May 20

in which he specified that the U.S. participation

in Libya has consisted of

nonkinetic support of the NATO-led operation,

including intelligence,

logistical support, and search and rescue

missions.

Mr. President, I think I

asked for such time as I would use, but

I will try to tighten it up.

The administration informed Congress

last week it does not consider the

use of U.S. forces to rise to the level of

‘‘hostilities.’’ I have already discussed

that. I think there is an important constitutional

question here, but it is not

a new question. The truth is that Presidents—

Democratic and Republican—

have undertaken limited military action.

I mentioned each of those instances.

I think this debate is healthy, but

the words we use about it have consequences.

They send a message. And I

think none of us should send any message

to Colonel Qadhafi lightly. The

last message any U.S. Senator wants to

send, in my judgment, is that all he

has to do is wait us out, all he has to

do is wait for the Congress—even as the

progress is being made and the vice is

tightening—because we are divided at

home.

I believe passage of this resolution

would be an important step in showing

the country and the rest of the world

and particularly showing Muammar

Qadhafi that the Congress of the

United States and the President of the

United States are committed to this

critical endeavor. I firmly believe the

country is on the strongest footing

when the President and the Congress

speak with one voice on foreign policy

matters. So I hope our colleagues will

support this resolution.

For 60 years, we have been working

to build a cohesive and consistent alliance

with our partners in NATO. Many

times our military and political leaders

have complained that our European

allies have not carried their share of

the burden; that Americans have paid

too high a price in blood and treasure;

that we have led while others followed.

Earlier this month, Secretary Gates

warned that the NATO alliance is at

risk because of European penny-pinching

and distaste for front-line combat.

He said the United States was not

going to carry the alliance as a charity

case. Well, here is the alliance leading.

Here is the alliance doing what we have

wanted them to do for years. And here,

all of a sudden, are Members of Congress

suggesting it is OK to pull the

rug out from under that alliance. I

think that would really toll the bell for

NATO.

I believe we need to see the realities

of the strategic interests that are on

the table and proceed. Will we stand up

for our values and our interests at the

same time? Will we support the legitimate

aspirations of the Libyan people?

I think our own security ultimately

will be strengthened immeasurably if

we can assist them to transition to a

democracy. The cost now will be far,

far less than the cost in the future if

we lose our resolve now.

I thank my colleague for his generous

allowance of the extra time.