Mr. BERGER. Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, members of the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee, I welcome this opportunity to

participate in the beginning of an important national discussion on

how we deal with a threat to peace posed by the regime of Saddam

Hussein.

That it is a threat is the essential starting point. Saddam Hussein

is a menace to his own people, to the stability of a combustible

and critical region, and a potential threat to the United States. He

has demonstrated his intent to seek hegemony in the gulf. He has

demonstrated his intent to develop weapons of mass destruction

and his willingness to use them. He has demonstrated his contempt

for the international community and his implacable hostility

to the United States. A nuclear-armed Saddam sometime in this

decade is a risk we cannot choose to ignore.

But let’s be clear. All these things were true before September

11. While the President is right to underscore the potential nexus

between hostile regimes, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorists,

viewing the Iraqi threat primarily through the prism of the

war on terrorism distorts both.

Is it conceivable that Saddam will link up with extremist Islamic

terrorists? Yes, but that has not been his history. And removing

Saddam Hussen does not eliminate the danger that terrorists will

obtain chemical or biological weapons from any of the more than

dozen states that have the capacity to produce them or acquire

dangerous nuclear material from inadequately safeguarded storage

facilities in the former Soviet Union.

This is not to minimize, Mr. Chairman, but to clarify it. Saddam

Hussein and the fight against terrorism may one day intersect, but

we lose our focus and our credibility on both fronts if we reflexively

lump them together.

What, then, is the right policy? Containment, in fact, has stopped

Saddam from attacking his neighbors since 1991. But when he expelled

U.N. inspectors in 1998, he substantially undermined the

ability of the international community to track his weapons-ofmass-

destruction programs. Simply keeping him in the box carries

higher risks when his WMD programs are unchecked and he can

break out with such lethality.

But concluding, that regime change is the necessary goal is to

begin the discussion, not to end it. It is just as foolhardy to underestimate

the challenges involved in ousting Saddam Hussein as it

is to underestimate the threat he poses.

There are different approaches to a regime change. One is to provide

tangible support to those around Saddam who can take matters

into their own hands. We have learned that achieving success

in this manner is easier said than done, but it now an avenue we

should abandon. We can enhance those possibilities to some degree

by increasing international efforts that de-legitimize Saddam and

defining more clearly what a new Iraqi government can expect

from the international community if it accepts international norms.

Another option is the so-called Afghan model, arming the Iraqi

opposition to march on Baghdad, supported by U.S. air power, but

limited manpower. Clearly there is an important role for the opposition,

both internal and external, but I am deeply skeptical of a

surrogate strategy in Iraq. The Iraqi opposition is weaker than the

Northern Alliance and fractured by internal rivalry. At the same

time, the Iraqi Armed Forces are signficantly stronger than the

Taliban, and Saddam Hussein’s grip is tighter. We should be very

wary of turning the U.S. military into an emergency rescue squad

if Saddam Hussein loses tanks against insurgents we are backing.

America does not need a Bay of Pigs in the Persian Gulf.

That leaves a U.S.-led military invasion, which ultimately may

become our only option. But we must define the necessary objective

more broadly than simply eliminating Saddam’s regime. Our objective

must be removing that regime in a way that enhances, not diminishes,

our overall security. Our strategy should bring greater

stability to the region, not less. It should contribute to ending

Israel’s isolation, not compounding it. It should not come at the expense

of the support we need in the fight against al-Qaeda or the

stability of friends in the region. It would be a pyrrhic victory, for

example, if we get rid of Saddam Hussein only to face a radial Pakistani

government with a ready-made nuclear arsenal.

We must approach this challenge with sharp focus, but also with

peripheral vision. That is why we need to do more than simply

plan a military invasion. We need to put in place the building

blocks that can make long-term success possible, and we need to

proceed on a timetable dictated not by elections or emotions, but

by a hard-nosed intelligence assessment of the trajectory of Iraq’s

capabilities, especially its nuclear program.

What are those building blocks? First, the United States must be

engaged consistently in trying to reduce the violence and tension

in the Middle East. If there is not progress on the ground in ending

the violence and improving people’s lives or we are not seen at

least working energetically to change the dynamic, I believe support

from the region for action in Iraq will be scarce, and an invasion

very well break along an already precarious Arab-Israeli fault

line.

Second, we need a sustained strategy to make evident to others

the legitimacy of our actions. Today even many of our closest allies

do not share our sense of the threat. Some in the United States say

that doesn’t matter in the end, that our allies are weak militarily

and soft strategically. As for those in the region, others say, in effect,

if we do it, they will come.

But the fact that America can do it alone does not mean it is

wise to do it alone. We don’t need to recreate the gulf war coalition.

We acted essentially unilaterally in Afghanistan. But the world

saw our actions as a legitimate response to a terrible provacation.

Power by itself does not confer legitimacy. It is the widely perceived

purpose to which that power is applied and the manner in

which it is used. If we are right about the threat Iraq poses, we

ought to be able to build a solid case for the world and take the

time we have to do it.

Third, and crucially, we need to have an honest discussion with

the American people about what’s involved, consistent with the

Secretary’s very important admonition about operational surprise

and secrecy. From the gulf war to Kosovo and Afghanistan, our

men and women in uniform have performed superbly, securing impressive

victories at impressively low costs.

But our pride in them should not blind us to the very real challenges

of war in Iraq. Our objective here is not to drive Saddam

Hussein back to his own country. It is to drive him out of power.

The American people must be prepared for a more challenging mission—

urban combat, chemical weapons attacks, Saddam’s use of

human and civilian shields, an American presence in Iraq measured

in years when we succeed.

It is time to start asking and answering, as you have been doing

in this committee for the past 2 days, tough questions before we

launch our country down the path to war. What impact will our actions

have on key governments in the region, such as Jordan, Pakistan,

and Turkey? What allies do we need, from both a military

and political standpoint? What kind of successor do we see for Saddam

Hussen? How do we keep the country together and avoid a

Balkanized outcome? What kind of assistance—economic, political,

and military—can a new Iraqi government expect from the United

States? Do we see this as Korea, where we helped build a thriving

democracy from the debris of war but maintained a military presence

there a generation later, or Bosnia, where we seem impatient

to leave even before the conditions warrant? And who will pay for

Iraq’s recovery, with current estimates of the cost of rebuilding its

economy ranging from $50 to $150 billion?

Mr. Chairman, there is no question that the world will be a better

place without Saddam Hussein’s regime. As you’ve stated in the

past, if he is around 5 years from now, it means we haven’t done

something right. But if we don’t do this operation right, we could

end up with something worse. We need to be clear and open about

the stakes, the risks, and the costs that genuine success—meaning

a more secure America and a more secure world—will require.

Thank you.

Mr. BERGER. I think, Senator, that if we engage in a military action

against Saddam, and it’s successful, that it requires us to be

prepared to stay there for a considerable period of time. That’s part

of the calculation I think we need to make at the outset. The centrifugal

forces in Iraq are substantial—the Kurds in the north, the

Shia in the south, Turkey, Iran. And simply extracting Saddam

Hussein and all the rest of his Ba’thist colleagues and leaving a situation

which could unravel in which the Kurds, for example, could

declare some kind of independence, the Turks feeling threatened by

that, would move in against the Kurds, you can imagine a number

of scenarios here—I think it’s unrealistic to think that we can go

in somehow, parachute in, grab the bad guys, leave a couple of AID

people behind, and that America will be more secure as a result of

that.

Mr. BERGER. Senator, all hard decisions, in terms of America’s

role in the world, are balancing the risks, and that’s ultimately the

job the President or the Congress is going to have to do. I would

not rule out, under any circumstances, the fact that we might have

to act unilaterally if we believe that there was an imminent and

direct threat to the United States. But I think doing so alone would

greatly increase the risks of such action. I think that it is possible

that we could militarily do this by ourselves, although we do need

a base somewhere, we do need overflight rights.

But the reason I talked earlier in my remarks about building

blocks, it seems to me how we do this is very important. And I

think that, No. 1, to address your point in terms of the Middle

East, I think if we are not seen as engaged in an energetic,

proactive, consistent way in trying to end violence and create a better

dynamic in the Middle East, we will go into this by ourselves,

and many of the Arab countries will simply hunker down. They

may not try—they may not be able to stop us, but they will not

support us.

Second of all, I think we have to make our case to the world. We

see a threat. We see a threat to the United States, we see a threat

out at some timeframe. The Secretary is certainly right. We have

no precision about being able to estimate those timetables. You

have to take the best intelligence, the best information we have. I

don’t think it’s measured in months. I think it’s measured in years,

and I think we have the time to make our case to the world.

And to make simply one point, I agree with the Secretary that

a victorious coalition would want to help us participate in anything

that needs to be done in Iraq. But if it’s a coalition of one, it’s a

bill payer of one. So I think we need to take the time we have here

to try to build, as I said, not necessarily the gulf war coalition, but

a common sense of threat, a more broadly shared sense of threat

internationally so we’re not acting alone.

Mr. BERGER. Senator, I think that—I see the process of going

back to the United Nations, in tactical as well as strategic terms.

Is it possible to construct an inspection regime that can give us absolutely

certainty? Probably not. Is it likely that Saddam Hussein

would agree to a totally intrusive regime? Probably not. Is it useful

in my judgment to use the forum of the U.N. to say, ‘‘Why won’t

Saddam Hussein let us back in?’’ Yes.

The problem I have with the ‘‘axis of evil’’ speech is that has focused

the world on us, not on Saddam. We’re talking about what

do we mean by the ‘‘axis of evil,’’ what has that got to do with terrorism,

are we becoming unilaterists? I want to get the subject

back on Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction.

It seems to me that if we went to the United Nations, we stood

as firm as possible, 100 percent firm, for a totally invasive, intrusive

inspection system—you’re talking, I think, about Mr. Gallucci’s

testimony—maybe even with some military capability—do I think

we’ll get that? Probably not. Do I think the exercise of having Saddam

and his surrogates and others in the U.N. have to explain why

he will not let the world come into Iraq to see what’s there is helpful

in building the sense of legitimacy that I’m talking about? Yes, I do.

So I think that—I know there’s concern that that will be—become

essentially—deflect us, and we certainly know that Saddam

can manipulate an inspection regime. But if we are not tough

enough to hang firm in the U.N. for a 100-percent invasive, intrusive

inspection regime, then I’m not sure we’re tough enough to go

through with an invasion and everything that entails.

Mr. BERGER. It seems to me it is a useful vehicle for building legitimacy

and explaining to the world why even if we don’t act pursuant

to a U.N. resolution, we are acting with legitimacy.

Mr. BERGER. Mr. Chairman, I agree with Secretary Weinberger

that Saddam is not likely to be bound by normal restraints in circumstances

such as this, which he would see as essentially existential

to his regime. So I think in devising a war plan—and I also

agree with Secretary Weinberger, there’s been entirely too much

babble in the press about various war scenarios—I think we would

certainly have to anticipate this potential. It would, obviously, take

you in the direction of trying to disrupt command and control as

quickly as possible, as swiftly as possible.

The dilemma here, of course, is how do you maintain even tactical

surprise if you have to have a substantial buildup in order to

accomplish your mission. But I think any war planning here would

have to anticipate the potential or the possibility that he would use

or threaten to use biological or chemical weapons against American

forces, potentially against Israel in order to turn this into an

Israeli-Arab war, and perhaps against his own people. I think that

would have to be very much a part of our calculation in developing

a war plan here.

Mr. BERGER. Mr. Chairman, any war carries with it the potential

of unexpected contingencies. You’re talking about an expected contingency,

one that we can foresee, not as a certainty, but certainly

as a possibility. And it would seem to me that it would be incumbent

upon us to engage in very serious discussions with the Government

of Israel quietly in advance of any such action.

I know there is a debate in Israel that took place after 1991

about whether Israel made the right decision in not retaliating

against Scud attacks which were not associated with chemical

weapons. And I can imagine it would be a very difficult decision

for any elected Prime Minister of any country to not respond to a

chemical-weapons attack on his own country.

So it is certainly not—if that were to happen—not out of the

realm of possibility that Israel would respond. And I think that,

again, this suggests the complexity of this operation. It doesn’t necessarily

dictate whether we should or shouldn’t do it, but I think

it would be surprising if we did not have a serious discussion with

the Israelis about how that contingency would unfold.

Mr. BERGER. Mr. Chairman, I don’t know how to estimate, at

this point, the cost of the operation itself, but I do think that being

able to convince, particularly the neighbors, that we’re prepared to

stay the course is extremely important. But I think staying the

course, in this case, is not simply pushing the Iraqis back into Iraq

in a very successful—an operation that all Americans were proud

of that lasted, as the Secretary said, a hundred hours.

We’re going to need to reassure the Turks and others in the region

that staying the course means that they’re not going to find

the Kurds declaring independence or moving to get oil assets, that

staying the course means that Iran is not tempted to take advantage

of a weak American-imposed government.

So staying the course here, I think, is more than the buildup and

the hundred-hour war. I think staying the course—and I—these

are arbitrary figures when you try to say what that will mean—

means convincing the region that our objective is to remove Saddam

Hussein in a way that maximizes the prospects of stability in

the region. And that’s going to be important to their being willing

partners—or at least acquiescing partners in this coalition and ultimately

being willing to help pay the cost that it will take.

Mr. BERGER. Mr. Chairman, maybe I could add——

Mr. BERGER. Right, if I can just add one dimension to that. The

task of forging some sort of government going forward, which has

the support of Iraqis, strikes me as doable, but difficult. You have

a wide variety of external opposition groups, a wide variety of internal

opposition groups, all of whom I would think you’d want to

draw upon in an exercise as part of at least the Iraqi piece of the

coalition. They have not had a great record of staying together,

even the two Kurdish groups, let alone all the others.

So there’s going to be a period, it seems to me, when there is a

vacuum of power, even though we may have installed some other

general, in the absence of some stabilizing presence. And that, it

seems to me, has to come from——

Mr. BERGER. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BERGER. We learned the hard way in Bosnia that artificial

deadlines are a mistake in a situation like that. We said we would

be out in a year. I think that was an honest judgment at the time.

It was wrong.

And basically, we have to be prepared to stay as long as it takes

until the conditions are such that a stable Iraq that is not threatening

to its neighbors can exist. And I don’t think we’re ever going

to be able to put a finer point on it than that, except ‘‘as long as

it takes.’’

Mr. BERGER. Senator, first of all, in terms of connection to al-

Qaeda, I can’t speak to that directly. I know that the intelligence

community has been looking rigorously at the issue of whether

there is a connection, over the last 10 months. And obviously it

would be important to hear from them as to what they’ve established.

With respect—to me, the greatest threat Saddam poses—and you

can’t rule out, obviously, the possibility of his sharing weapons of

mass destruction with terrorist organizations. He has had chemical

weapons for over a decade and has not taken that course. To me,

the greater threat is his own use of weapons of mass destruction

as a deterrent or directly. And specifically what I worry about most

is his obtaining a nuclear capability and believing that the possession

of that capability would dissuade the United States, therefore,

from responding to an aggression by Saddam Hussein in the gulf

to seek to extend his influence, his hegemony, in the gulf. So there,

obviously, is the potential of his sharing weapons of mass destruction

with terrorist groups. It has not been his pattern to date. I

think we should—I suspect the intelligence community is looking

under every rock for a connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam

Hussein, and I encourage that. But I can’t speak to it directly.

Mr. BERGER. Well, I—Secretary Weinberger could speak to this—

you know, I accept President Bush—first President Bush’s explanation

at face value on that, whether, in hindsight, we agree or

not, which is that he had a coalition—he had constructed a coalition

around a purpose, which was to expel—to defeat the aggression

of Iraq into Kuwait. Having accomplished that, President

Bush has said he felt that, in a sense, the mandate of that coalition

no longer existed.

I think, obviously, with hindsight, had we continued on for several

more days and at least eliminated the Republican Guard units,

we might not be facing this problem at this point. But I don’t know

that I’ve ever heard this articulated in terms of fear of use of chemical

weapons. In fact, as you know, of course, there was a very explicit

warning issued to Saddam Hussein with respect to use of

chemical weapons against third countries—Israel, Saudi Arabia—

which obviously had a deterrent effect in that context.

Mr. BERGER. I think there is some evidence that deterrence

worked in the context of the 1991 gulf war with respect to Israel.

Obviously, the equation is different in a situation where the purpose

of the exercise is the removal of Saddam. And I think that we

have to do—would have to do our planning and calculations based

upon less than certainty that under those circumstances deterrence

would work or at least define some device by which deterrence is

consistent with the removal of Saddam Hussein.

Mr. BERGER. I think there’s one other dimension, however, to

this issue. I am skeptical that we could achieve a weapons inspection

regime—let’s say the one outlined by Ambassador Gallucci yesterday

that was robust, that actually had some military pop behind

it, unfettered, that would alleviate our concerns about Saddam

Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction.

However, I do think that the process of seeking that kind of robust,

unfettered regime is a useful device in focusing the world

back on Saddam Hussein and away from us. He would have to explain

why he doesn’t want the world in, why he won’t accept this.

And the moral balance here shifts from whether we’re acting unilaterally,

whether we’re acting legitimately, to what does he have

to hide? Why won’t he let the world in? So as a tactical matter, I

do believe that we can use an absolutist position in the United Nations,

an uncompromising, absolutist position, to serve our purpose

of gaining some greater support in the world for an action we may

have to take.

Mr. BERGER. No, I’m talking about an absolutist position by the

United States.

Mr. BERGER. I believe——

Mr. BERGER. Well——

Mr. BERGER. Well, I assume that we have the control of our own

vote, and I assume that if we have the tenacity to go to war in

Iraq, we have the tenacity to stand out ground in New York.

And, therefore, if we say we will only accept a regime which we

define as being an absolutist regime, one of two things will happen.

He will say no, in which case I believe we’re in a stronger position

internationally, or he will say yes, in which case the inspectors will

go in, and he will play games with them, and a very clear causus

belli will have been established.

So I don’t see inspections as a very probable way of solving the

WMD problem. I do see it as a useful mechanism for focusing the

world back on Saddam Hussein, weapons of mass destruction, and

the threat that he poses.

Mr. BERGER. I’ve discovered, Senator, that your view on—what

one’s view of this subject depends on which end of Pennsylvania

Avenue you happen to be sitting on at the time.

But I do think that this is a major undertaking. The United

States, in a sense, would be initiating a war, not without provocation,

not without—necessarily without justification, but that has

not generally been the way we’ve been—we’ve fought wars. It’s not

unique. I do believe this is a major undertaking, and I believe it’s

important for the American people to be supportive.

You know, when I speak publicly, I often ask audiences, ‘‘Should

we get Saddam Hussein?’’ And 75, 80, 90 percent of the hands go

up. But I think that that question ought to be asked after people

have had a lively and informed consent in the sense that they understand

this is not easy, this is a risky proposition, but the threat

is also a serious one.

So I think Congress becomes, as always, the vehicle for expressing

American public support. And we’ve learned in the past that

without sustained American public support, we can get ourselves in

trouble.

Mr. BERGER. Senator, let me first make a distinction I made in

my earlier remarks. I think the fight against terrorists and the

threat of Saddam Hussein, while they are related, are not identical.

We had a—Saddam was a threat before 9/11, and he’s a threat

whether or not he links up with terrorists. Therefore, it seems to

in terms of the fight—the clearest and present terrorist threat—

that is, the al-Qaeda, the Islamic Jihaddist militants?

We’re now in a phase of that, which I believe is a continuing

threat. I believe the President is right, that we will be struck

again. And I think he’s right to say that and to press that to the

fullest.

We are now at a phase where military action is only one dimension,

and may be a dimension of diminishing returns, in terms of

the fight against—we’ll call it al-Qaeda, the militant Islamic

Jihaddist extremists. This now requires cooperation. It requires intelligence

cooperation, it requires law-enforcement cooperation, it

requires political cooperation to take down al-Qaeda cells as we did

in Singapore, as we’re doing in the Philippines and in Indonesia

and elsewhere.

So how do we preserve that support as we go into Iraq? And it

seems to me a few things are important. No. 1, as I’ve said before,

I do believe that it is important that the international community

see us engaged in trying to end the violence and bring a new dynamic

to the Middle East, because, at least with respect to potential

support from the Arab countries that neighbor on Iraq, it will

be more difficult if we are seen as not deeply engaged, not actively,

energetically, consistently trying to stop the strategy of terror on

the part of the Palestinians and to end the violence in the region.

Second of all, I think we have to make our case—I agree with

the Secretary that power does have a magnetic pull, and the exercise

of power is, in some ways, self-reinforcing, but is it not, in my

judgment, sufficient.

It is important, I believe, that the world see what we’re doing as

a legitimate act. That doesn’t mean—we’re not going to get a U.N.

resolution passed to do this, but I don’t believe that we can be seen

as acting on old business. And, therefore, we have to make our case

to the world. And it seems to me, if we can make the case to the

Senate and Congress and we can make the case to the American

people, we ought to be able to make the case to our friends and allies.

And if we can’t make that case, then, we—acting alone is

going to be, perhaps under extreme circumstances, necessary, but

much more difficult.

Mr. BERGER. And I certainly share that view, Mr. Chairman.