

safer if we leave Iraq than if we stay. Isn't that the key question? The question is not whether the Iraqi government deserves American sacrifice on their behalf.

Our sons and daughters are not fighting, being grievously wounded and dying for Iraq—but for American vital interests. If this were just about Iraqi democracy, I might join the screaming for a quick exit.

But if al Qaeda can plausibly claim they drove America out of Iraq (just as they drove the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan), they will gain literally millions of new adherents in their struggle to destroy America and the West. We will then pay in blood, treasure and future wars vastly more than we are paying today to manage and eventually win our struggle in Iraq.

Our staying power, unflinching persistence in the face of adversity, muscular capacity to impose order on chaos and eventual slaughtering of terrorists who are trying to drive us out will do more to win the “hearts and minds” of potentially radical Islamists around the world than all the little sermons about our belief in Islam as the religion of peace. As bin Laden once famously observed—people follow the strong horse.

We have two choices: Use our vast resources to prove we are the strong horse or get ready to be taken to the glue factory.

Even Bush's war critics who specialize in Middle East affairs (such as the Brookings Institute) believe that the immediate chaos in the Middle East that will follow our premature departure would likely involve not only regional war there, a new base for al Qaeda, but also a nuclear arms race that would quickly result in the world's most unstable region—which possesses the world's oil supply—armed with nuclear weapons on a hair trigger.

But the debate today in Washington is about none of these strategic concerns. It is exclusively about Washington's political timetable and when the president will bend to such political necessity. For self-admitted politics—rather than national security—to be driving decision making in wartime Washington is not only an unpatriotic disgrace—it is a national menace.

Imagine the following fanciful discussion in April 1943:

FDR: “Ike, you're going to have to get the Normandy Invasion completed by June this year.”

Ike: “But I need at least another year to assemble troops and materiel, establish logistics and strategy and train the men for the battle.”

FDR: “Sorry. Several senators are feeling very uncomfortable with the war. Frankly, they have just had it. And several of them are worried about their re-election.”

Ike: “My men are fighting and dying for yards in Italy right now—and even so, they can't wait to take the war to Hitler next year in France. Tell those pantywaisted senators to unloosen their girdles, take an aspirin and go to bed—and leave the fighting to my men.”

FDR: “But we could lose the Senate.”

Ike: “Better to lose the Senate than the war.”

FDR: “I'm with you, Ike. You beat Hitler, and let me beat the Senate.”

Ike: “My men thank you, Mr. President.”

Of course, it is an absurdity to imagine such a conversation would have been possible during WWII. And it is a tragedy and disgrace that we are, in fact, having precisely such a conversation today.

But the worm will surely turn. And senators who today proudly call for retreat will then be hiding their faces in shame. And deservedly so. And the public will remember.

Mr. ISAKSON. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

#### MINORITY RIGHTS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I so greatly admire the Senator from Georgia, and his words are so well spoken, I hope people will take them to heart. I also wish to rise on this issue. Before I do that, I wish to speak briefly on the issue pending, which is the cloture motion on the amendment from the Senator from Virginia, Senator WEBB. I haven't decided how to vote on the amendment of the Senator from Virginia. I have an immense amount of respect for the Senator, the former Secretary of the Navy, whom I greatly admire for his service to this country, but I am deeply concerned by the process which is being used.

It has always been the tradition of this Senate that there would be side-by-side votes. It used to be, when I first arrived, that there were actually second-degree votes, and then we got to a position where everybody knew if you had a second degree, you could always get to the first-degree vote, so you gave people side-by-side votes. Unless the issue is on the fundamental question of an overriding bill, the use of cloture for the purposes of cutting off the debate to that amendment has not occurred around here. This is an attempt to basically make the Senate operate as if it had the autocratic Rules Committee of the House, and it is wrong. It is just plain wrong.

The minority should be afforded the right—and has the right—to assert an amendment to an amendment offered on this floor. It has the right to a second degree if it wishes to, and then the author of the first degree has the right to position himself or herself so he or she can bring that amendment back up. As an alternative to that, the offer of a side by side is the way you resolve the issue. That offer was made to allow a side by side on the amendment of the Senator from Virginia. It was rejected, as I understand it. That is what this cloture vote, for me, is about. It is not about the credibility—not the credibility—it is not about the appropriateness or the correctness of the underlying amendment of the Senator from Virginia; it is about whether the minority has the procedural right to assert its standing as a functioning entity within the body and, therefore, the ability to amend or at least have a side-by-side amendment when amendments are brought to the floor on which there may be other views.

So that is why I intend to vote against cloture. It is not to extend the debate; it is not to, in some way, undermine the bill or even to undermine the amendment; it is to make sure that the rights of the minority are protected in this institution where the rights of the minority are the essence of the way this institution functions.

#### WITHDRAWAL FROM IRAQ

Mr. GREGG. On the question of Iraq, and specifically as I have my own amendment which I will be offering—it is not my amendment; I have an amendment in which I am joined by other Members, including Senator SALAZAR, on how to proceed in Iraq, and we will be talking about that later—maybe even later today—I wish to speak briefly on an amendment being offered by Senator REID and Senator LEVIN which fixes a timeframe for withdrawal that is arbitrary and which is condensed. That timeframe, as I understand it, would occur within 6 months, when there would be a withdrawal. There are no underlying policy proposals which say that the Government of Iraq has to be a functioning government and has to have the capacity to secure itself and has to have the capacity to maintain stability in order for the withdrawal to occur; the withdrawal simply is going to occur. I think the practical implications for that are pretty staggering and not constructive to the process, quite honestly. I think a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq, which has no underlying policy and which leaves behind a stable government or attempts to leave behind a stable government, will inevitably lead to a desperate government, which will, in turn, lead to chaos, and chaos in Iraq is not in our national interests.

We have to remember what the stakes are. Our purpose of being in Iraq is fundamentally to protect ourselves as a nation. The people who wish to do us harm—and they have made it clear they intend to do us harm and they have done us harm—intend to use their ability to attack the United States as the essence of their war on us. The way you keep them from attacking our Nation is to find them where they are and attack them and to make it very difficult for them to have a safe haven and to disrupt their activities and to find them before they can attack us. That is our philosophy. It is a philosophy which is totally appropriate to the war that we now find ourselves engaged in.

This is not a conventional situation. We are not fighting a nation state. We are fighting individuals who subscribe to a philosophy which says they will have a better afterlife if they destroy Western culture and specifically kill Americans and destroy America. That is their purpose. They have said that and they have done it. Let's not be naive about this. Let's not look at this through rose-colored glasses and say they wish some other outcome and if we are nice to them they will go away; that if we ignore them, they will ignore us. That is not the case.

So we have pursued a policy in Iraq and across the world of finding them before they find us. If Iraq, because of a precipitous withdrawal which leaves no stability behind, is allowed to devolve into chaos, it is very obvious what is going to happen. Besides a civil

war, which is obviously already going on, to some degree, which will be expanded radically with many thousands of people, more thousands of people dying, there will undoubtedly occur within Iraq the creation of a client state for Iran, and Iran has made it very clear what their intentions are. Their intentions are to develop a nuclear weapon and produce hegemony throughout the Islamic world.

Secondly, it will become a safe haven for al-Qaida and give them a base of operation which will represent a clear and present threat to us as a nation.

So that type of course of action, although it obviously looks attractive because it gets our troops out of immediate harm's way, and everybody wants to do that to the fullest extent possible, will have the exact opposite effect on our national security. It will actually put us at greater risk.

There has to be an underscoring of the withdrawal, or the drawdown, which I think is the more appropriate term, because even the most strident people on the other side of the aisle who wish to withdraw recognize there is going to have to be some residual force left for the purpose of protecting American assets, such as our embassies, and training, hopefully, troops of the Iraqi Government. But any process for the drawdown really has to be done in the context of leaving behind a stable government as we can possibly create, or participate in helping to create. That is why I have become a sponsor of and participating in the effort to put in place the proposals of the Iraq Study Group, which essentially outlines a series of steps that can be taken which will, hopefully, lead us toward a drawdown of American troops which is tied to leaving behind a stable government.

The Reed-Levin amendment abandons all of that. It abandons the Iraq Study Group proposal. It abandons the effort to try to leave in place a stable government. It essentially says: Here is the date; we are going to leave by that date. And it is a date certain.

That has two effects. It means the Government of Iraq will inevitably be in desperate shape and potentially collapse, which will lead to chaos, and, more importantly, it means our troops who are on the ground will, during that period leading up to that date, be under significant stress because their morale will be at serious issue because they will know when they get to that date, they are leaving and they are leaving behind a mess and, more importantly, they will be pursuing a mission, which they will have been told by the other side of the aisle at least, has no viability. And how can you ask somebody to go out and walk the streets of Baghdad and participate in “the surge and the clear and hold and hopefully pass on stability” exercise that is going on there if you have the other side of the aisle saying: I am sorry, that mission is irrelevant. You are out there, we don't believe in what you are doing, we have no faith in that effort.

Yes, everyone has total commitment to our troops, but we also have to have a commitment that when we send the troops out on the street, and they put their lives at risk, they know there is a policy behind that effort which is supported. In this case, what is being said is that policy isn't being supported and their efforts on the streets in Baghdad and other places are not going to have support.

It is a very dangerous message to send, first, to our enemies who have a specific date and can ratchet up the violence radically to force that date on us; second, to our troops on the ground; and thirdly, to the long-term stability of a region which is critical to our national interests and which plays a major role in whether we are going to be successful in keeping our homeland, America, from being attacked.

A precipitous withdrawal without a game plan will lead to a dysfunctional and disorganized and possibly collapse of the Government of Iraq, and it will lead to chaos. Therefore, I think it is a very intemperate policy to pursue.

There is also a certain cynicism about it, when you get right down to it, and this bothers me. The people promoting this amendment have constituencies who are truly and sincerely, I am sure, committed to getting us out of Iraq as soon as possible, and they are trying to respond to those constituencies. We see those constituencies all the time, and their intensity is huge; especially in the Democratic Party they have great sway. But the amendment itself is almost a free pass in that everybody knows it cannot pass, and that is the irony. It is a free pass that cannot pass. It cannot pass the Senate because it cannot get 60 votes. If it did pass the Senate, and it did pass the House, it would be vetoed by the President and, clearly, would not go into effect.

So, essentially, what is happening is a policy is being put forward which has serious political implications on the ground and substantive implications on the ground in Iraq but has maybe a political upside in the United States for people who are speaking to that constituency which wants to immediately get us out of Iraq but has no viability behind it, has no expectation of success behind it, and therefore is, to a certain degree—a considerable degree—a rather cynical strategy.

The losers in this effort, quite honestly, are our troops on the ground because they are seeing this debate going forward, and they are scratching their heads saying: Why am I being asked to go out on the streets? Why am I being asked to do this mission when they are trying to pass legislation in the Senate which says they don't support the mission, and they know for sure that is not going to become law?

It is not good to pursue this type of an approach on an issue of such importance, of such significance to our Nation, and especially to the men and women who defend us.

I have serious reservations about not only the substance of the proposal but about the politics behind the proposal, knowing that the proposal has no capacity to become law, that it would be put forward in such a way that basically creates false claims, in my opinion, or false opportunities, or alleged opportunities.

This is an immensely serious issue, we all know that. What we need, quite honestly, is some sort of approach that has a little bit of bipartisanship to it, where both sides say: OK, we know we have a difficult situation, an extremely frustrating situation in Iraq. Let's come up with something that is a united policy, a bipartisan policy. That is why the suggestion which is being put forward—to put in place the Iraq Study Group as the blueprint for how we proceed there—is one which I think has some vitality to it.

Is it the perfect answer? Obviously not. There is no perfect answer. In fact, I was interested in hearing Lee Hamilton say there are no good solutions to this situation. It was a very forthright statement that I think resonates strongly.

The fact is, this little gambit—not a little gambit—this significant gambit of putting forward a proposal that speaks to a constituency, but everyone knows is not going to become law, is not constructive for the process.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, what is the pending business before the Senate?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is in a period of morning business. Three minutes remains on the majority side, and three minutes remains on the minority side.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask that I may speak in morning business on the Democratic side.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

#### WEBB AMENDMENT 2012

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Webb amendment. I know there will be many speakers. Like everything I do, I want to seize the day and talk about what I think about the Webb amendment.

It is almost 10:30 in the morning in Washington. It is 6:30 in the evening in Baghdad. Yesterday, in Washington it was 98 degrees, and everybody was complaining about the heat wave. They couldn't wait until they got into air-conditioning. Well, it was 115 degrees in Baghdad and, boy, would I like to get our troops in air-conditioning—in air-conditioning back home.

I check the temperature every single day in Baghdad because I want to think about our troops. I want to try to envision what they are going through. I think about those men and women out there carrying over 100