

New York Times
Combat and Community
You drive up to the forward operating base in Wardak Province in an armored Humvee, with the machine-gunner sticking up through the roof and his butt swinging on a little perch just by your head. Outside there's a scraggly downtown, with ragamuffin Afghan children, almost no old people (the median life expectancy is 45) and dust everywhere. The dust of Afghanistan piles up in front of the storefronts and covers the ruins of the buildings destroyed during the Soviet period, or during the civil war or during some lost conflict from centuries past.

Watershed Moment on Nuclear Arms
During the 2008 campaign, President Obama promised to deal with one of the world's great scourges — thousands of nuclear weapons still in the American and Russian arsenals. He said he would resume arms-control negotiations — the sort that former President George W. Bush disdained — and seek deep cuts in pursuit of an eventual nuclear-free world. There is no time to waste.

Graveyard Myths
As President Obama orders an additional 21,000 troops to Afghanistan, he faces growing skepticism over the United States' prospects there. Critics of the troop buildup often point out that Afghanistan has long been the "graveyard of empires." In 1842, the British lost a nasty war that ended when fierce tribesmen notoriously destroyed an army of thousands retreating from Kabul. And, of course, the Soviets spent almost a decade waging war in Afghanistan, only to give up ignominiously in 1989.

Radio-Free Swat Valley
On March 5, in the outskirts of Peshawar, Pakistan, forces believed to be affiliated with the Taliban bombed the shrine of Rahman Baba (born around 1650), the most revered Pashtun poet. The attack evokes one of the grosser Taliban outrages from the pre-9/11 era: the dynamiting in 2001 of the enormous stone Buddhas in Afghanistan's Bamiyan Valley.

The Wall Street Journal
The Real Afghan Issue Is Pakistan
In announcing his new Afghanistan and Pakistan policy, President Barack Obama articulated "a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future."

Washington Post
For Obama, Three Afghanistan Tests
Three time bombs are buried within the new and ambitious strategy for Afghanistan that President Obama unveiled Friday. Their detonation -- which would cripple the international mission to stabilize the country and perhaps cripple Obama's presidency -- is not inevitable. But defusing them will take an exceptional performance by U.S. military commanders and diplomats, some skillful politicking by the president -- and maybe a little of the unexpected good fortune that blessed the U.S. surge in Iraq.

A Killer Forces A Choice in Darfur
For years, the Sudanese regime, headed by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, has acted the part of a terrorist gang, holding millions of refugees in Darfur camps hostage and warning the world not to make any sudden or aggressive moves. Now the world faces a question: What do we do when the captors begin killing their captives?

The Price of Realism
The strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan announced by President Obama yesterday is conservative as well as bold. It is conservative because Mr. Obama chose to embrace many of the recommendations of U.S. military commanders and the Bush administration, based on the hard lessons of seven years of war. Yet it is bold -- and politically brave -- because, at a time of economic crisis and war-weariness at home, Mr. Obama is ordering not just a major increase in U.S. troops, but also an ambitious effort at nation-building in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. He is right to do it.

The Guardian
Brown and Obama may fail in Afghanistan, but they cannot give up
It is an embarrassment to discover that you are fighting the wrong war. President Obama's strategy review of Afghanistan, unveiled on Friday, makes almost explicit

what American and British soldiers and diplomats have understood for many months: that al-Qaida is now rooted in Pakistan, whose tottering polity represents a far graver threat to international order than anything happening next door. At last we get it - this war is Vietnam for slow learners One word shines through the spin surrounding this week's Barack Obama policy review on Afghanistan. The word is exit. Before he became president, Obama was much taken by the idea that Afghanistan was a good and winnable war, a usefully macho contrast to his retreatism on Iraq. But in a military briefing at the time, he asked what was the exit strategy from Kabul and was met with silence. He has got the point. The Economist Say you're staying, Mr President Who would have believed, Barack Obama mused on television the other day, "that the least of my problems would be Iraq?" He should hold on to that thought. Iraq's problems are far from over. But the fact is that a counter-insurgency campaign that looked almost completely unwinnable less than two years ago is now going well enough for America to begin to withdraw without leaving chaos behind. Now, as the president jets off for a series of meetings with America's allies in Europe, it is Afghanistan that is starting to look unwinnable and the Europeans, especially those in NATO (see article), want to know if he will fight on. Newsweek Obama's 50-50 Russia Strategy Even to some of the closest observers of Russian foreign policy, it's almost impossible to know which direction Moscow is headed. One day it's threatening to station missiles aimed at Poland in its western enclave of Kaliningrad; the next, it's proclaiming its eagerness to take up Washington's offer to press the "reset button" on U.S.-Russia relations. One day, it's vowing to help with supply routes for NATO forces in Afghanistan; the next, it's offering Kyrgyzstan some \$2 billion in loans and aid, emboldening the Central Asian country to demand the closure of the U.S. air base there. One day, it's signaling its solidarity with Western efforts to stop Iran from building nuclear weapons; the next, it's refusing to rule out the sale of sophisticated S-300 ground-to-air missiles to Tehran.