

The New York Times  
New Commander for Afghanistan  
The war in Afghanistan is not going well. And President Obama has the right to choose his own top commander. We hope that his decision this week to fire Gen. David McKiernan and replace him with Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal means that the president and his team have come up with a strategy that will combine aggressive counterinsurgency tactics with economic development. That is the only chance for turning around a must-win war that America isn't winning.

Israel's Fears, Amalek's Arsenal  
When the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, visits the White House on Monday (18th May) for his first stage-setting visit, he will carry with him an agenda that clashes insistently with that of President Obama. Mr. Obama wants Mr. Netanyahu to endorse the creation of a Palestinian state. Mr. Netanyahu wants something else entirely: the president's agreement that Iran must be prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons.

New Statesman  
Obama is part of the problem  
War rages in the North-West Frontier and the poor are embracing the Taliban because they at least fix roads and discipline criminals. But if catastrophe is to be averted in Pakistan it is the corrupt elite who must be confronted.

The Washington Post  
Countering the Military's Latest Fad  
When Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates announced Monday that he was dismissing Gen. David McKiernan as the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan and replacing him with Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, he signaled his support for an intellectual movement that in a few short years has come to dominate military thinking in Washington. Both McChrystal and his new No. 2, Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez, Gates emphasized, have a "unique skill set in counterinsurgency."

Mideast Contest Of Wills  
Today (Monday 18th) Barack Obama will begin a diplomatic relationship that is likely to be as complex, as vexing and possibly as troubled as any he will have during the first years of his presidency. His meeting at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu won't produce the blow-up some expect; a smooth veneer of harmony is more likely. Yet it will quietly inaugurate a contest of wills between two very different politicians -- one that could help determine whether the Middle East shifts toward an era of negotiation and detente, or of deepening conflict.

Petraeus's Tougher Fight  
It's a small irony of history that Gen. David Petraeus, attacked by the left for his role in revitalizing the Bush administration's effort in Iraq, is now being asked by a Democratic president to do much the same thing in Afghanistan. The Centcom commander intends to apply the same counterinsurgency tactics he developed in Iraq, but Afghanistan will be in many ways a tougher fight.

On Trial in Burma  
Bizarre and contemptible legal charges brought against Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is due to be tried in Yangon on Monday, have produced a predictable but justified storm of outrage from Western democracies and the United Nations. Everyone from the British prime minister to Bono has condemned the prosecution of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and demanded her release. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who has muted American outspokenness about human rights in several other countries and who previously ordered a review of U.S. sanctions against Burma, said she was "deeply troubled" by the "baseless" case.

The Guardian  
Sri Lanka: the bloody end of battle  
The end of the once-ferocious army of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was as bitter and bloody as everyone had feared. Ignoring rebel calls for a ceasefire, in the same way it had brushed aside calls to halt the shelling, the Sri Lankan army launched its final assault on a pocket of territory no bigger than 400 by 600 metres. Wave after wave of suicide bombers blew themselves up on the frontline, after 70 were killed trying to flee in boats.

No more MoD cover-ups  
Ben Knight, an RAF airman who died

in Afghanistan in September 2006, was not killed by enemy action. The Nimrod in which he was flying, along with 13 others, exploded in midair because of an internal fault.

We need a European foreign policy. Improbable? Yes. Impossible? No

Fly-over country. An old people's home. A continent choosing irrelevance. "An international actor in a state of strategic confusion." Weak, divided and hypocritical. Perhapsburg. That is what you hear about Europe from observers in Washington, Moscow and Beijing. And that is what we Europeans have to change.

Progress is doomed if Obama is merely a cleverer version of Bush

Binyamin Netanyahu can comfort himself with one thought as he heads to Washington next week. At least when he stands alongside a popular US president who radically disagrees with him on the future of the Middle East, it will not be the first time. Netanyahu will be able to draw on the memory of a similarly tense encounter back in 1996 ♦ the day, shortly after his election victory, when he had to make nice with a visibly chilly Bill Clinton, who had all but campaigned for Bibi's opponent.

Wall Street Journal

The High Price of Deterring Iran

As Iran's presidential elections near, there is renewed optimism that some sort of great bargain could be struck with Tehran. The hope is that a new face may come to represent Iran after the June 12 vote and with the Obama administration prepared to engage the Islamic Republic, an accommodation about its nuclear program may yet be found.

Congress and Waterboarding

Someone important appears not to be telling the truth about her knowledge of the CIA's use of enhanced interrogation techniques (EITs). That someone is Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. The political persecution of Bush administration officials she has been pushing may now ensnare her.

Putin's Ninth Year in Power

It has become fashionable to speak of change and liberalization in Russia under President Dmitry Medvedev. May 7 marked his one-year anniversary in office. He has recently granted an interview with an opposition newspaper, allowed a few human-rights activists to criticize Russia's regime, and even started a blog. There is also a new administration in Washington that wants a fresh start with foreign powers.

The Times

Iran, not Palestine, tops Israel's agenda

Twelve US presidents and thirteen Israeli prime ministers have met since Israel's independence in 1948. Yet no meeting before seems to have generated as much hype, commotion, expectation and speculation as today's in Washington between the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and President Barack Obama. Is this merely a media-manufactured drama? Or is it a potential clash of views with far-reaching consequences for the Middle East political ♦ formerly known as peace ♦ process?

Foreign Policy

The Idiot's Guide to Pakistan

After eight years of a White House that often seemed blinkered by the threats posed by Pakistan, the Obama administration seems to grasp the severity of the myriad crises affecting the South Asian state. The media has followed suit and increased its presence and reporting, a trend confirmed by CNN's decision to set up a bureau in Islamabad last year.