

The Washington Post
Why we should get rid of West Point
Want to trim the federal budget and improve the military at the same time? Shut down West Point, Annapolis and the Air Force Academy, and use some of the savings to expand ROTC scholarships.

What Burma needs from the White House
When President Obama was elected, I was filled with hope that America would regain the moral standing to aid those who are impoverished and oppressed around the world. I have since rejoiced to see him reversing the most obnoxious policies of the Bush administration -- by ending torture, announcing the closure of the detention camp at Guantanamo Bay and engaging the world on climate change, to name just a few. But there is another issue on which America's moral leadership is desperately needed, and here, it must be acknowledged, President Bush was on the side of the angels: the struggle for human rights and justice in Burma.

Iraq's wobbles
It's been only seven weeks since President Obama outlined a strategy for Iraq aimed at withdrawing most U.S. troops by the end of next summer. But already there is cause for concern. During the past month security around the country has been slipping: At least 37 people have been killed in four major attacks on security forces in the past week alone, and there have been multiple car bombings in Baghdad and other cities. Those strikes have been claimed by al-Qaeda, which appears to be attempting a comeback. But there have also been new bursts of sectarian violence among Sunni and Shiite extremists.

Dealing with a disgrace
The Obama administration acted courageously and wisely yesterday with its dual actions on interrogation policy. The pair of decisions -- one essentially forgiving government agents who may have committed heinous acts they were told were legal, the other signaling that such acts must never again be condoned by the United States -- struck exactly the right balance.

The Guardian
Afghanistan's decisive days
Seven and a half years after the US intervention in Afghanistan, it is little surprise that questions about its purpose have abounded. In that light, the Obama administration's clarification of its primary goal in the country - to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat" al-Qaida - is welcome. The task of discerning the "defeat" of al-Qaida may be near impossible, but the new US policy linking the conflict in Afghanistan with the situation in Pakistan is a step in the right direction.

Kosovo was a just war, not an imperialist dress rehearsal
Ten years after Nato jets went into action against Serbia, the Kosovo war remains as controversial as ever. Welcomed by many at the time as evidence of a humanitarian world order in the making, its legacy has been overtaken, subsumed and ultimately distorted by the debate about the war on terror. What Vaclav Havel called "the first war for values" is now more often described as a dangerous precedent. Even Clare Short, a forceful advocate of intervention in the Balkans, attributed Tony Blair's foreign policy errors to the "taste for grandstanding" he acquired in Kosovo.

The disaster of Basra is all too likely to be repeated
In November 2002 I was one of six experts who met Tony Blair in Downing Street in a largely futile attempt to explain to him the size of the task that he was about to undertake in Iraq. I pleaded with the prime minister: "Are you prepared to commit yourself and your government to a generation-long project needed to rebuild this country?" "Yes," he answered without a moment's hesitation. A month before the invasion, as a million people marched through the streets trying to stop the war, Blair got to his feet in Glasgow attempting to justify the most unpopular decision of his premiership. We should, he argued, "be as committed to the humanitarian task of rebuilding Iraq for the Iraqi people as we have been to removing Saddam". On the eve of the war itself, Blair met with George Bush and the then Spanish prime minister, José María Aznar, in the Azores. Here they undertook a "solemn obligation: our commitment to

support the people of Iraq will be for the long term".

The Financial Times

In search of an Obama doctrine

Who can fail to be impressed by Barack Obama's energy, or a little stunned by his self-confidence? Show this man a financial crisis, sufficient to occupy or overwhelm an ordinary president, and he sees the chance to "remake" ♦ as he puts it ♦ the entire US economy. You might dismiss that as rhetorical exuberance, but it becomes ever more apparent that his ambition is real. For good or ill, he means to do it.

The New York Times

Fighting piracy in Somalia

We applaud the U.S. Navy for the rescue of Richard Phillips from Somali pirates, and Captain Phillips for giving himself as a hostage to safeguard his crew. We also regret the death of the French yachtsman, Florent Lema♦n, who was killed along with two pirates when French navy commandos stormed the sailboat they were on (Mr. Lema♦n's wife and child and two family friends were rescued).

Foreign Affairs

How dangerous are the Taliban?

George W. Bush led the United States into war in Iraq on the grounds that Saddam Hussein might give his country's nonexistent weapons of mass destruction to terrorists. Now, Bush's successor is perpetuating the war in Afghanistan with comparably dubious arguments about the danger posed by the Taliban and al Qaeda.

Newsweek

Is Robert Gates a genius?

When a true genius appears," the English satirist Jonathan Swift wrote, "you may know him by this sign; that all the dunces are in confederacy against him." Genius might be a bit much as a description of the secretary of defense, but Robert Gates's budget proposal has certainly gathered all the right opponents. There are the defense contractors, worried that decades of fraudulent accounting are coming to a halt; the Beltway consultants for whom the war on terror has been a bonanza; the armed services, which have gotten used to having every fantasy funded; and the congressmen who protect all this institutionalized corruption just to make sure they keep jobs in their state.

The Times

The battle against piracy begins in Mogadishu

We call them "pirates", because that is how they most easily translate into Western culture, but the Somali marauders currently terrorising Indian Ocean shipping might better be termed ocean-going shiftas, heirs to a long and uniquely African tradition of banditry.

The Telegraph

Threats to Pakistan are threats to the world

The President of Pakistan has warned that a "cancer" is eating away at his country, one which requires radical surgery. In fact, the patient needs three separate operations, each as risky as the next. The Islamist political parties, which have hardly ever been strong at the ballot box, sense victory through street-power and guns. The Pakistani Taliban and its Afghan and al-Qaeda allies wish to destroy the state as part of their war against the infidel West. And the so-called Kashmir liberation groups are slowly widening their field of operations, as shown by recent attacks in Mumbai and on the Sri Lanka cricket team in Lahore.