

New York Times
An Agenda for Mr. Netanyahu
President Obama has set clear and appropriate priorities ahead of the visit to Washington on May 18 by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. Speaking to Jewish-American activists last week, Vice President Joseph Biden conceded, "You're not going to like my saying this," and then he laid out the administration's list.

A Lot More to Cut
Faced with a \$1.2 trillion deficit next year ♦ and a projected \$640 billion Pentagon budget, not including the cost of two wars ♦ President Obama should have cut far deeper into wasteful weapons spending than the modest \$8.8 billion in savings he has now announced.

New Statesman
We need to talk about Trident
If some senior Tories are questioning the point of Trident then surely Gordon Brown should live up to his disarmament rhetoric argues CND's chair Kate Hudson

Washington Post
An 'Afpak' About-Face For Obama
After spending most of the past week in Washington, the presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan can be excused if they leave town looking a little smug. For weeks, Hamid Karzai and Asif Ali Zardari watched as senior officials of the new Obama administration publicly critiqued their leadership and all but openly courted their domestic rivals. Yet once they arrived in Washington, the two leaders were showered with attention, sympathy and promises of support from an administration whose handling of the mounting trouble in what it calls "Afpak" has been as mercurial as it has been energetic.

What if Cheney's Right?
Blogger Alert: I have written a column in defense of Dick Cheney. I know how upsetting this will be to some Cheney critics, and I count myself as one, who think -- in respectful paraphrase of what Mary McCarthy said about Lillian Hellman -- that everything he says is a lie, including the ands and the thes. Yet I have to wonder whether what he is saying now is the truth -- i.e., torture works.

Iraq: Hold And Build, Or Lose
Despite the violence of the past few weeks, it is Iraq that now risks becoming the "forgotten war." Iraq has become both a perceived "victory" and a war that many Americans and members of Congress would like to forget. As a result, we may rush toward the "exit" without a strategy -- and lose both the ongoing war and the peace that could follow.

The Guardian
Sharia solution
Somalia has confounded three successive US administrations, but its walk-on role in George Bush's war on terror proved particularly calamitous. Until recently, the policy of Britain, the United States and the United Nations hinged on a 74-year-old warlord who ruled in the sectional interest of his clan, and on an Ethiopian invasion. The presence of foreign troops succeeded only in uniting a disparate Islamist opposition and killing thousands of innocents caught in the crossfire. As international agencies attempted to persuade Islamist militias to allow aid in, US warplanes bombed and strafed the insurgents from the air (as happened in Dhuusamareeb last year), content to use the Ethiopian and transitional government forces as a dragnet. But nothing worked.

Pakistan: Blunders of the Taliban
Neither of the two leaders whom President Obama met in Washington yesterday inspires confidence. Neither President Asif Ali Zardari nor President Hamid Karzai is fully in control of their armed forces, let alone their countries, and both men have been tainted by allegations of corruption. It would be easy for sceptics to argue that the aid packages to Afghanistan and Pakistan currently before the US Congress should be hobbled by unrealistic benchmarks. That, however, would be a mistake.

Foreign Policy
Caught in the Middle
For three decades, David Ignatius has talked to all camps in the fractious Middle East. Then came Davos, and an effort to "moderate" a conversation between irreconcilable sides on the Gaza war. The center not only cannot hold, he concludes ♦ it no longer exists.

The Times
A Middle East miracle might just happen
I was once told by a senior Israeli official: "In the Middle

East, if you don't believe in miracles, you are not a realist." One would be forgiven for believing it will need a miracle for King Abdullah of Jordan's vision of a comprehensive peace between Israel and the Arabs to be achieved in the course of this year.

World Affairs

Tarnished Brass: Is the U.S. Military Profession in Decline?

Nearly twenty years after the end of the Cold War, the American military, financed by more money than the entire rest of the world spends on its armed forces, failed to defeat insurgencies or fully suppress sectarian civil wars in two crucial countries, each with less than a tenth of the U.S. population, after overthrowing those nations' governments in a matter of weeks. Evidence of overuse and understrength in the military abounds: the longest individual overseas deployments since World War II and repeated rotations into those deployments; the common and near-desperate use of bonuses to keep officers and enlisted soldiers from leaving. Nor is it only the ground forces that are experiencing the pinch. The U.S. Air Force has had to cut tens of thousands of people to buy the airplanes it believes it needs. The U.S. Navy faces such declining numbers of ships that it needs allies to accomplish the varied demands of power projection, sea control, and the protection of world commerce.