

New York Times

The U.N. in Afghanistan

Americans don't hear a lot about the top United Nations representative in Afghanistan, but the job is a critically important one. The mission's responsibilities include strengthening governance, combating corruption, monitoring and protecting human rights and assuring fair and independently supervised elections.

New Statesman

Welcome to Orwell's world

In Nineteen Eighty-Four, George Orwell described a superstate, Oceania, whose language of war inverted lies that "passed into history and became truth. 'Who controls the past,' ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'." Barack Obama is the leader of a contemporary Oceania.

Washington Post

In the face of protests, Iran's leaders are at an impasse

The mayhem that has swept over Iran in the past few days is once more calling into question the Islamic Republic's longevity. Recent events are eerily reminiscent of the revolution that displaced the monarchy in 1979: A fragmented, illegitimate state led by cruel yet indecisive men is suddenly confronting an opposition movement that it cannot fully apprehend.

Obama administration is right to prosecute alleged Detroit bomber in U.S. court

Former Vice President Richard B. Cheney on Wednesday joined a Republican chorus criticizing the Obama administration's decision to charge alleged bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab in federal court. Mr. Cheney and others argue that Mr. Abdulmutallab, who is accused of trying to down Northwest Flight 253 over Detroit on Christmas, should have been held as an enemy combatant and pumped for information, rather than read his Miranda rights and provided a lawyer.

How to fight al-Qaeda's offshoot in Yemen

As the evidence mounts that alleged airline bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was equipped and dispatched to attack the United States by a branch of al-Qaeda based in Yemen, some are asking whether the United States should launch a military offensive in that impoverished Arabian nation.

Foreign Policy

The Carter Syndrome

Neither a cold-blooded realist nor a bleeding-heart idealist, Barack Obama has a split personality when it comes to foreign policy. So do most U.S. presidents, of course, and the ideas that inspire this one have a long history at the core of the American political tradition. In the past, such ideas have served the country well. But the conflicting impulses influencing how this young leader thinks about the world threaten to tear his presidency apart -- and, in the

worst scenario, turn him into a new Jimmy Carter.

The Guardian

Catching terrorists: Why profiling is not the answer

Pre-empting his own quickie review into aviation security, Gordon Brown announced on Sunday that "the use of full body scanners" would soon be phased in. The move follows Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's alleged attempt to down a plane at Christmas. Naked imaging is now in prospect for all sorts of passengers, except under-18s – for whom an exception will have to be made if the fight against one collective anxiety is not to inflame another.

The war on terror has been about scaring people, not protecting them

So there was no ticking time bomb. No urgent need ever arose to torture anybody who was withholding crucial details, so that civilisation as we know it could be saved in the nick of time. No wires had to be tapped, special prisons erected or international accords violated. No innocent people had to be grabbed off the street in their home country, transported across the globe and waterboarded. Drones, daisy-cutters, invasions, occupations were, it has transpired, not necessary.

Terror and the west: A decade of misjudgment

The revelation in this newspaper that the kidnap of five British men in Iraq in 2007 was masterminded by Iran's Revolutionary Guard caps an unhappy week, the last of a parlous decade. The kidnap had two motivations – to bargain for the release of the Shia cleric Qais al-Khazali, and to prevent Peter Moore, the only British hostage to have survived, from installing a computer system that would have prevented millions of dollars of international aid from falling into the hands of Shia militia groups in Iraq. This story should serve as the epitaph for the invasion. Far from stabilising, or spreading democracy, the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan and Iraq proved combustible. But the follies of the old decade are set to last into the new one.

A Conservative Vision for British Foreign Policy

As Britain approaches a general election, likely to be held in March, every major poll points to a Conservative victory. The odds of Gordon Brown retaining the keys to 10 Downing Street look slim, and few would wager against the Tories. If he becomes prime minister, Conservative leader David Cameron will have an important opportunity to transform and rejuvenate British leadership on the world stage. As the world's fourth biggest military player, and sixth largest economy, the United Kingdom may not be a superpower, but remains a world power.