

## New York Times

### Medvedev's First Year

On Thursday, Dmitri Medvedev marks his first year as president of Russia. There is little cause for celebration as the Russian economy is facing its worst crisis for more than a decade. Unemployment is approaching 10 percent, inflation 15 percent, and the credit squeeze is hurting all Russians from the factory floor to the oligarchs.

### Sri Lanka's Dirty War

Army troops in Sri Lanka are closing in on a dwindling band of Tamil Tiger separatists who are outgunned on an ever-narrowing battlefield. It would be a relief if this 25-year fight finally ends. In the meantime, tens of thousands of terrified civilians are trapped in the conflict zone — a strip of land about four miles long — and are running out of food and water. They must be allowed to leave.

### When Israel Confronted and Rejected Torture

Reading about the Bush administration's convoluted attempts to justify torture takes me back to reporting I did 12 years ago on the anguished debate in Israel over its secret service's use of violence in interrogations. That was two years before the Israeli Supreme Court banned the practice. "This is the destiny of democracy, as not all means are acceptable to it and not all practices employed by its enemies are open before it," wrote the president of the court, Aharon Barak.

### Mr. Obama, Mr. Zardari and Mr. Karzai

We suspect that there will be a lot of uncomfortable moments when President Obama meets on Wednesday (6th May) with President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. American officials don't have much confidence in either leader — a fact they haven't tried to conceal.

## Washington Post

### Obama's Prosecutions by Proxy

President Obama's passivity before the threatened foreign prosecution of Bush administration officials achieves by inaction what he fears doing directly. This may be smart politics within the Democratic Party, but it risks grave long-term damage to the United States. Ironically, it could also come back to bite future Obama administration alumni, including the president, for their current policies in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

## Difficult Friends

President Obama will meet today (6th May) with two presidents who are broadly disliked and distrusted both in their own countries and in Washington -- and who nevertheless play a central role in policies vital to U.S. national security. Afghanistan's Hamid Karzai, the toast of the town during his first official visit here seven years ago, has alienated many Afghans because of his ineffectiveness and tolerance of corruption; U.S. military commanders resent his loud public complaints about operations that cause civilian casualties. Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan, who inherited political leadership from his assassinated wife, Benazir Bhutto, has frittered away authority in feuds with other civilian political leaders even as Pakistan's Islamic extremists have grown in strength.

## The Guardian

Iraq: Our duty does not end with the soldiers' exit

Gordon Brown called it a "success story". Perhaps one day historians will agree, although they may also judge it an unmitigated disaster. But when the British army's occupation of southern Iraq formally ended last week, the most common emotion all round was probably relief. At least it is over. Or is it? A problem with the Iraq war from the outset was that it was devised as a military adventure, launched by politicians, executed by soldiers. Donald Rumsfeld once famously said that the US military did not "do nation-building".

## Defence spending: New battle lines

The House of Commons spent five hours yesterday holding a turgid debate about its finances. It achieved nothing. MPs might as well have been attending the annual general meeting of a pigeon fanciers' association, or the Garrick Club. Everything of substance has been shunted off to a committee.

## Foreign Affairs

### The Mushroom Cloud That Wasn't

The threat of nuclear armageddon is overblown. Instead of stoking fear, policymakers should focus on securing existing nuclear materials and keeping them out of the hands of potential proliferators.

## Wall Street Journal

### How to Handle the Guantanamo Detainees

When President Barack Obama declassified and released legal memoranda from the Department of Justice, he opened the door to a drawn-out battle over the Bush administration's use of coercive interrogation techniques on suspected terrorists. We believe that any subsequent attempts to subject those who provided such legal advice to prosecutions are a

mistake. They will have a chilling effect on the candor with which future government officials provide their best counsel.

Slate

Ruthless yet Humane: Why Obama cited Churchill on torture

He didn't get the attention he deserved for it, but President Obama was very cleverly fusing liberal principles with an appeal to the basic conservative values of "Old Europe" when, in his 100th-day press conference, he used Winston Churchill to justify his opposition to water-boarding and other "enhanced methods." He told his audience that, even at a time when London was being "bombed to smithereens" and the British government held hundreds of Nazi agents in an internment center, there was a prime-ministerial view that torture was never permissible.

The Independent

Stakes at US summit could not be higher

When Asif Ali Zardari sees Barack Obama at the White House tomorrow (6th May) for what is expected to be a tense meeting, the stakes could scarcely be higher. Pakistanis had grown used to headlines writing off their country as a "nation on the brink". They would read them, dismiss them with a sigh and get on with their lives. But with Taliban fighters moving ever closer to Islamabad and efforts to broker a ceasefire in tatters, many Pakistanis are now publicly despairing about their country's fate.

The Telegraph

Iraq: Is life better in Basra?

As Britain lowers the flag in Iraq, David Blair examines the changes that have taken place during six years of hard-won peace, and asks whether the local people have paid too high a price.