

New York Times
Mr. Obama and Mr. Abbas
President Obama's meeting this week with the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, was a reminder of how much the Palestinians and leading Arab states, starting with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, must do to help revive foundering peace negotiations.

North Korea tests
Erratic, frightening and hugely self-destructive. Those are the words we would use to describe North Korea's behavior. First it defied the United Nations Security Council's cease-and-desist orders and tested both a nuclear device and half a dozen missiles. Now it is threatening to launch military strikes against South Korea and may have resumed production of nuclear fuel.

New Statesman
Making over the militia - Observations on Hezbollah
"If our coalition wins, it will not be a dramatic change in Lebanon," says the prospective Hezbollah MP Ali Fayyad. It is a somewhat unusual campaign pledge, especially from a party with its roots in the Iranian Revolution. But then Hezbollah, the radical Shia militia that forced Israel out of Lebanon, and whose political wing could become the most powerful party in the country after the parliamentary elections on 7 June, is running an unusual campaign.

Beijing's students, a generation on
How has life as a student in Beijing changed since the events in Tiananmen Square 20 years ago? The college cafeteria looks like the inside of a Starbucks. Students plug Lenovo laptops into the power points on the floor and, reaching under hoodies and baseball caps, insert headphones into their ears.

The Washington Post
Mr. Obama in Egypt
President Obama's decision to deliver an address to the Muslim world from Egypt next week has raised expectations that are as varied as they are inflated. Many Arabs insist that the president should spell out a detailed prescription for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Others would like to see him distinguish mainstream Islam from the extremism represented by al-Qaeda. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, like other Arab Sunni autocrats, wants Mr. Obama to make clear that the United States will prevent Shiite Iran from gaining hegemony over the region.

A leader's limit
In seven years ♦varo Uribe has established himself as one of the most successful presidents in modern Colombian history. When he took office, his country was on the verge of failed-state status; under his guidance the government has reestablished control over most of the country, demobilized or defeated guerrillas of the right and left, and revived the economy. Though Colombia remains a major source of cocaine traffic, drug kingpins no longer operate with impunity -- dozens have been captured, killed or shipped to the United States for trial.

The Economist
Kim Jong Il's bombshell
HE HAS been coaxed, cajoled, censured and sanctioned. Yet whenever it suits North Korea's boss, Kim Jong Il, he spews out new threats. For years he has managed to extort cash, oil and other goodies for then quietening down, only to behave even more threateningly next time. Can nothing be done to make this serial rule-breaker blink?

A necessary catastrophe
A catastrophe is unfolding in Swat, a picturesque region of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) once loved by honeymooners. Nearly 2.4m people are reported to have fled an army offensive against Taliban militants, launched early this month at America's behest. Thousands of civilians are trapped, with dwindling supplies of clean water and food. Hundreds are alleged to have been killed or maimed. On the evidence of two previous offensives in Swat, this may achieve nothing good.

The Guardian
Obama's speech in Cairo: getting the right audience
Cast a weary eye over the map of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and there are, on any one day, at least a dozen flashpoints. One erupted yesterday in the West Bank town of Qalqilya, when a local Hamas commander died in a shootout with Fatah forces. But fatalities could just as easily occur in Gaza, anywhere on its border with Israel, the

Rafah crossing with Egypt, in East Jerusalem, in the villages of Bil'in and Ni'lin, where protesters against the extension of the West Bank barrier are frequently shot. You would think it was not an option to wait around for the next gun battle.

Pakistan: all chaos on the western front

Pakistan, a country synonymous with political upheaval, military coups and social unrest, is facing one of its most critical tests. Having fought and ousted the Taliban from cities in the settled areas of the North-West Frontier Province, like Buner and Swat, the army is about to launch the most difficult part of its offensive. This will be in the tribal areas and in mountainous terrain naturally suited to the hit-and-run tactics of the militants. Faced with a determination that the army has not shown against them in past campaigns, the Taliban have not proved to be the formidable fighting force they were once feared to be - on the plains at least. They have been pushed back with relative ease.

The urban map of terror

The pursuit of national security has become the making of urban insecurity. Asymmetric war ♦ war between a conventional army and armed insurgents ♦ has made cities a strategic technology for the latter. Yesterday's bomb explosion in Lahore, which killed 30 and wounded up to 250, is part of this pattern. The blast damaged a government building as well as a nearby office of the Pakistan military's main intelligence agency. It came after warnings of strikes in response to the army's attack on militants in the Swat region in the north-west of the country.

After Iraq, it's not just North Korea that wants a bomb

The big power denunciation of North Korea's nuclear weapons test on Monday could not have been more sweeping. Barack Obama called the Hiroshima-scale underground explosion a "blatant violation of international law", and pledged to "stand up" to North Korea ♦ as if it were a military giant of the Pacific ♦ while Korea's former imperial master Japan branded the bomb a "clear crime", and even its long-suffering ally China declared itself "resolutely opposed" to what had taken place.