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The health care debate "is happening in a post-**Ted Kennedy** age and could be an acid test for the future of American liberalism," **Matthew Dallek**, a George Washington University fellow, speculates in **Politico**.

Dana Milbank has grown tired of all the talking about health care since the campaign: The Senate debate "is a desultory collection of rote talking points, dubious factual assertions and cheap demagoguery."

The Democratic health care "bill isn't really about 'lowering costs,'" the **Wall Street Journal** argues. "It's about putting Washington in charge of health insurance, at any cost."

In **Politico**, Montana Republican state legislators **Tom McGillvray**, **Cary Smith** and **Gary MacLaren** write that they "couldn't be more disappointed" with Sen. **Max Baucus**' work on health care because "Montanans want choice and competition in health care -- not the heavy hand of government."

In the **Wall Street Journal**, **Christina Romer**, chair of **President Obama**'s Council of Economic Advisers, lauds the president's work to help the struggling economy and advocates in favor of more legislation to stem unemployment.

In reference to the gate-crashing **Michaele** and **Tareq Salahi**, **Maureen Dowd** points out that "Washington has always been a town full of poseurs, arrivistes, fame-seekers, cheaters and camera hogs. Lots of people here are trying to crash the party, wangle an invite to the right thing, work the angles and milk their connections to better insinuate their way into the inner circle."

The **New York Times** finds "the president's military arguments persuasive" in Tuesday's speech on Afghanistan strategy but expresses concern about the reliability of President **Hamid Karzai** and how to pay for the war.

David Ignatius applauds **Obama**'s decision to increase troops in Afghanistan, even though he says it's a political strategy aiming "to make everyone unhappy."

Thomas Friedman "can't agree with" **Obama** 's "decision to escalate in Afghanistan" and would prefer a "minimalist approach, working with tribal leaders the way we did to overthrow the Taliban regime in the first place."

Former Pakistani President **Pervez Musharraf** advocates for a "political surge" in Afghanistan, because "a military solution alone cannot guarantee success. Armies can only win sometimes, and at best, create an environment for the political process to work."

Success in Afghanistan "will depend on a complex set of strategies aimed at breaking a knot of problems that have come to plague the war effort," **USA Today** maintains. "The lingering question is whether the president's elegant thinking can survive the harsh, shifting realities on the ground."

In **USA Today's** opposing view, **Christopher Preble**, director of foreign policy at the **Cato Institute**, argues that "the U.S. should have gotten out of the nation-building business a long time ago. Most such projects fail. The prospects in Afghanistan -- a country notoriously suspicious of outsiders and lacking central authority -- are worse."

"**Obama** ▼ 's strategy will not transform Afghanistan," **Tim Rutten** writes, but "it may someday make that country safe enough to leave."

Obama ▼ 's policy in Iran "of setting deadlines for cooperation that are violated with impunity, and continually extending the hand of engagement after it is slapped again and again, is both weak and irrelevant," **Michael Gerson** scoffs. The president "could try the strategy the Iranian regime most fears: supporting, overtly and covertly, the democratic resistance against military rule."