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Snap! Crackle! Pop!

2007 started with a flurry of promises. But then the bubble burst. BY JOHN COOK

If the past 12 months have a unifying thread, it is the total breakdown of our once-reliable institutions. It was the year that everything broke.

Of course, it began as a season of action. In January, President Bush announced a troop surge he promised would finally put Iraq back on track. Forget about the last four years, this time it would be different: He would hand

