

December 24, 2009

A couple of items on global warming. First [Debra Saunders](#).

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More surprising than Saunders, is a piece by [Alexander Cockburn](#) in The Nation, one of the most obnoxiously liberal magazines in the country.

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[Spengler](#) covers events in Central and South Asia.

History speaks of a Pax Romana, a Pax Britannica, and a Pax Americana - but no other namable eras of sustained peace, for the simple reason cited by Henry Kissinger: nothing maintains peace except hegemony and the balance of power. The balancing act always fails, though, as it did in Europe in 1914, and as it will in Central and South Asia precisely a century later. The result will be suppurating instability in the region during the next two years and a slow but deadly drift toward great-power animosity. Those who wanted an end to US hegemony will get what they wished for. But they won't like it.

"No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation," US President Barack Obama told the United Nations on September 23. "No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed. No [balance of power](#) among nations will hold." Having renounced hegemony as well as the

balance of power, Obama by year-end chose to prop up the [power balance](#) in the region with additional American and allied soldiers in Afghanistan. Obama chose the least popular as well as the least effective alternative. The US president's apparent fecklessness reflects the gravity of the [strategic](#) problems in the region.

There is one great parallel, but also one great difference, between the Balkans on the eve of [World War I](#) and the witch's cauldron comprising Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and contiguous territory. The failure of the region's most populous state - in that case [the Ottoman Empire](#), in this case Pakistan - makes shambles out of the power balance, leaving the initiative [in the hands](#) of irredentist radicals who threaten to tug their sponsors among the great powers along behind them. But in 1914, both France and Germany thought it more advantageous to fight sooner rather than later. No matter how great the provocation, both India and China want to postpone any major conflict. The problem is that they may promote minor ones. ...

... The Obama administration has antagonized India in the hope of mollifying Pakistani irredentism, just as it has antagonized Israel with the dubious argument that if Israel makes concessions to the divided, ineffectual Palestine Authority, it will be able to mollify Iran. Nothing will assuage the Palestinians, who are failed before coming a state, nor the Pakistanis, whose failure is ineluctable.

As I argued in Asia Times Online on October 20 ([When the cat's away, the mice kill each other](#)), the net effect of America's fecklessness is to give the Russian Empire an opportunity to stretch a hand out of the geopolitical grave and grasp a last, great opportunity. Russia faces a slow demographic death, but it remains a great power in terms of [military technology](#): its surface-to-air missile systems are as good as anything American can field, and its newest system, the as yet undeployed S-500, may be better, according to a senior American aviation executive. ...

[Christopher Hitchens](#) draws out attention to South Central Asia also.

... This will continue to get nastier and more corrupt and degrading until we recognize that our long-term ally in Asia is not Pakistan but India. And India is not a country sizzling with self-pity and self-loathing, because it was never one of our colonies or clients. We don't have to send New Delhi 15 different envoys a month, partly to placate and partly to hector, because the relationship with India isn't based on hysteria and envy. Alas, though, we send hardly any envoys at all to the world's largest secular and multicultural democracy, and the country itself gets mentioned only as an afterthought. Nothing will change until this changes.

One reason the Pakistani army coddles the Taliban in Afghanistan is because it has recently been told that the United States will not be deploying there in strength for very much longer. Who can blame them for basing their future plans on this supposition and continuing to dig in for a war with India that we are helping them to prepare for? Meanwhile, though, it is the Afghans who get the lectures about how they need to shape up. "[Lots of luck in your senior year](#)" was the breezy way in which the vice president phrased his message to Kabul as I watched. (I wonder how that translates into Pushtun.) Speed the day when the Pakistanis are publicly addressed in the same tones and told that the support they so much despise is finally being withdrawn.

Jimmy Carter's grandson is running for state legislative office in Georgia. The district encompasses many Jews. Jimmy is now making nice to them. Is there anybody more disgusting than him? [Jonah Goldberg](#) has the story in a Corner post.

A cool wind braces the hot air crowd

by Debra J. Saunders

For years, global warming alarmists have pointed to every drought and heat wave as proof that global warming was a real environmental threat. They had few qualms about blurring the line between weather and climate to make a PR point. Perhaps, then, it was karma that brought a blizzard and freezing temperatures to the U.N. climate change Conference of Parties confab in Copenhagen (or COP-15 for short) last week.

You may have read about the 1,200 limos and 140 private planes commissioned to transport COP-15 dignitaries in style. Critics love to point to the hypocrisy of world leaders - such as Prince Charles and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown - touching down in *separate* private planes to a conference ostensibly dedicated to curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

But it's the Flying High Lords of Greendom's air of unreality that concerns me. If world leaders truly believed that global warming will lead to famine, rising sea levels and melting of the North Pole ice - along with countless deaths - surely they would want to set an example by flying commercial.

Instead, they travel like pooh-bahs of the stratosphere, then justify their excesses by tossing \$100 or so into a carbon- offset fund.

In that godlike spirit, President Obama lauded the COP-15's pact to limit global warming to a rise of only 2 degrees Celsius by 2050 as "an unprecedented breakthrough."

What's the next trick? An eclipse?

Now I am fairly skeptical about global warming alarmism - largely because it's hard to heed true believers when they fail to behave in a way that addresses their big issue.

My advice to true believers:

-- If you really believe global warming is caused by man and threatens Earth, stop supporting treaties that don't mandate greenhouse-gas reductions.

For too long, the issue of global warming has hinged on whether politicians said they believed in global warming, not whether they worked to reduce their nation's greenhouse gas emissions. If the alarmists are correct, then it doesn't matter what people believe if they don't act on those beliefs.

-- Instead of pretending that critics don't exist, debate them.

-- Stop pretending that consumers can fight global warming simply by using politically correct lightbulbs and recycling. Environmentalists have argued that developed nations will have to cut emissions by 80 percent - and that requires bigger changes than sorting your trash.

-- Don't support treaties with untenable goals that are to be met decades into the future.

-- Enough with the worst-case scenarios. Al Gore has a penchant for repeating the most dire predictions on global warming - and not always accurately. As the Times of London reported last week, Gore told a Copenhagen audience, that according to a Dr. Wieslaw Maslowski, "there is a 75 percent chance that the entire north polar ice cap, during the summer months, could be completely ice-free within five to seven years."

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The Nation

From Nicaea to Copenhagen

Beat the Devil

by Alexander Cockburn

The global warming jamboree in Copenhagen was surely the most outlandish foray into intellectual fantasizing since the fourth-century Christian bishops assembled in 325 AD for the Council of Nicaea to debate whether God the Father was supreme or had to share equal status in the pecking order of eternity with his Son and the Holy Ghost.

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Many of the landmines in the CRU e-mails tend to buttress longstanding charges by skeptics (yours truly included) that statistical chicanery by professor Michael Mann and others occluded the highly inconvenient Medieval Warm Period, running from 800 to 1300 AD, with temperatures in excess of the highest we saw in the 20th century, a historical fact that makes nonsense of the thesis that global warming could be attributed to the auto-industrial civilization of the 20th century. Here's Keith Briffa, of the CRU, letting his hair down in an e-mail Sept. 22, 1999: "I know there is pressure to present a nice tidy story as regards 'apparent unprecedented warming in a thousand years or more in the proxy data' but in reality the situation is not quite so simple. ... I believe that the recent warmth was probably matched about 1000 years ago."

Now, in the fall of 1999, the IPCC was squaring up to its all-important "Summary for Policymakers" - essentially a press release, one that eventually featured the notorious graph flatlining into nonexistence the Medieval Warm Period and displaying a terrifying, supposedly unprecedented surge in 20th-century temperatures.

Briffa's reconstruction of temperature changes, one showing a mid- to late-20th-century decline, was regarded by Mann, in a Sept. 22, 1999, e-mail to the CRU, as a "problem and a potential distraction/detraction." So Mann, a lead author on this chapter of the IPCC report, simply deleted the embarrassing post-1960 portion of Briffa's reconstruction. The CRU's Jones happily applauded Mann's deceptions in an e-mail in which he crowed over "Mike's Nature trick."

Other landmines include e-mails from Kevin Trenberth, the head of the Climate Analysis Section of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo. On Oct. 14, he wrote to the CRU's Tom Wigley:

"How come you do not agree with a statement that says we are no where close to knowing where energy is going or whether clouds are changing to make the planet brighter. We are not close to balancing the energy budget. The fact that we can not account for what is happening in the climate system makes any consideration of geo-engineering quite hopeless as we will never be able to tell if it is successful or not! It is a travesty!"

Only a few weeks before Copenhagen, here is a scientist in the inner AGW circle disclosing that "we are no where close to knowing" how the supposedly proven AGW warming model might actually work, and that therefore geoengineering - such as carbon mitigation - is "hopeless."

This admission edges close to acknowledgment of a huge core problem: that "greenhouse" theory violates the second law of thermodynamics, which says that a cooler body cannot warm a hotter body without compensation. Greenhouse gases in the cold upper atmosphere cannot possibly transfer heat to the warmer earth, and in fact radiate their absorbed heat into outer space. (Readers interested in the science can read Gerhard Gerlich and Ralf Tscheuschner's "Falsification of the Atmospheric CO2 Greenhouse Effects Within the Frame of Physics," updated in January 2009.)

Recent data from many monitors including the CRU, available on climate4you.com, show that the average temperature of the atmosphere and the oceans near the surface of the earth has decreased significantly across the past eight years or so. CO2 is a benign gas essential to life, occurring in past eras at five times present levels. Changes in atmospheric CO2 do not correlate with human emissions of CO2, the latter being entirely trivial in the global balance.

The battles in Nicaea in 325 were faith based, with no relation to science or reason. So were the premises of the Copenhagen summit, that the planet faces catastrophic warming caused by manmade CO2 buildup, and that human intervention - geoengineering - could avert the coming disaster. Properly speaking, it's a farce. In terms of distraction from cleaning up the pollutants that are actually killing people, it's a terrible tragedy.

Asia Times

Life and premature death of Pax Obamicana

The apparent fecklessness of the president of the United States reflects the gravity of the strategic problems in Central and South Asia. Those who wanted an end to US hegemony will get what they wished for. But they won't like it.

by Spengler

History speaks of a Pax Romana, a Pax Britannica, and a Pax Americana - but no other namable eras of sustained peace, for the simple reason cited by Henry Kissinger: nothing maintains peace except hegemony and the balance of power. The balancing act always fails, though, as it did in Europe in 1914, and as it will in Central and South Asia precisely a century later. The result will be suppurating instability in the region during the next two years and a slow but deadly drift toward great-power animosity. Those who wanted an end to US hegemony will get what they wished for. But they won't like it.

"No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation," US President Barack Obama told the United Nations on September 23. "No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed. No balance of power among nations will hold." Having renounced hegemony as well as the balance of power, Obama by year-end chose to prop up the power balance in the region with additional American and allied soldiers in Afghanistan. Obama chose the least popular as well as the least effective alternative. The US president's apparent fecklessness reflects the gravity of the strategic problems in the region.

There is one great parallel, but also one great difference, between the Balkans on the eve of World War I and the witch's cauldron comprising Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and contiguous territory. The failure of the

region's most populous state - in that case [the Ottoman Empire](#), in this case Pakistan - makes shambles out of the power balance, leaving the initiative [in the hands](#) of irredentist radicals who threaten to tug their sponsors among the great powers along behind them. But in 1914, both France and Germany thought it more advantageous to fight sooner rather than later. No matter how great the provocation, both India and China want to postpone any major conflict. The problem is that they may promote minor ones.

Western analysts are unanimous that Pakistan must not be allowed to become a failed state, for example, through a seizure of power on the part of Islamist elements in the military allied to the Taliban. Enlisting Pakistan in counter-insurgency against Pashtun rebels in Afghanistan, though, ensures this outcome. US policy, wrote Syed Saleem Shahzad on this site on October 23 ([Where Pakistan's militants go to ground](#)), "draws Pakistan, already mired in [political](#) and economic crises, into an ever-deepening quagmire. The country has become a playing field for operators of all shades. These include Iranian Balochi insurgents, over a dozen Pakistani militant groups linked with the Taliban or al-Qaeda, the US Central Intelligence Agency's network, security [contractors](#) associated with the American establishment, and last but not least, agents provocateurs. Pakistan, one of the booming economies of Asia just two years ago, seriously risks becoming a failed state."

The US-sponsored frontier war amounts to Punjabis - traditionally the core of the country's military - killing Pashtuns. The default view of area defense analysts has been that army operations against the Taliban may turn into a Punjabi-Pashtun ethnic conflict. But the cracks in the Pakistani state run in several directions. Punjabi Islamists allied to the Taliban, meanwhile, are in open revolt; Punjabi terrorists took part in the October siege of Pakistan's army headquarters in Rawalpindi.

Pakistan is being ground between two millstones: the Afghan war and the global economic crisis. Half the country is illiterate, and half of Pakistanis live on less than US\$1 a day. The country's respectable economic growth rate of 5% per annum during the late 2000s was fed by foreign credit, which allowed it to run a current-account deficit of 8.3% as of 2008. The country's finances collapsed in late 2008, forcing Islamabad to adopt an austerity program under the auspices of the [International Monetary Fund](#). "Pakistan is not yet a failed economy," wrote Santosh Kumar in The Hindu on November 24. "But it can happen. This is not a prospect the world, especially India, can view with equanimity, since the spillover will impact us badly."

The credibility of secular government - with its promise of economic improvement - is threadbare. The alternative is an Islamist regime committed to confronting India over Kashmir and suppressing the Shi'ite minority that comprises 30% of Pakistan's population. The Islamist alternative has such appeal that Punjabi terrorists, as noted, are conducting suicide attacks against the Punjabi-dominated army.

India might be compelled to respond to the victory of Islamist radicals in its nuclear-armed neighbor. Iran, for that matter, cannot maintain its credibility with its Shi'ite allies around the region if it sits on its hands while Pakistan crushes its co-confessionals. Iran's interest in obtaining nuclear weapons has several [motivations](#). One is to establish a screen of deterrence behind which it can grab its neighbors' oil, as it proposed to do by sending a division of the Iranian army to surround an Iraqi oilfield last week. Another is to prepare for prospective conflict with Pakistan; if Pakistan fails, Iran will have a strong interest in interfering in Pakistan on behalf of the Shi'ite minority.

The Obama administration's response to the threat of Islamist takeover has been "to pick a new fight with India on Kashmir", as Indian analyst C Raja Mohan complained in the online edition of Forbes magazine on November 8:

Obama has also sensed, rightly, that the US cannot stabilize Afghanistan unless it fixes Pakistan's profound insecurities and gets its army to level with the US and stop supporting America's enemies in Afghanistan. Few Indians disagree with Obama's reasoning that the threats to Pakistan's security are internal and do not come from India. But many are beginning to get anxious about the third step in Obama's logic: to get Pakistan to cooperate with the US in Afghanistan, Washington must actively seek to resolve Islamabad's problem with New Delhi over Kashmir. Put simply, the Indian fear is that they are being asked to pick up the political tab for America's failed policy in Afghanistan, and for the Pakistan Army's deliberate betrayal of US interests there.

The Obama administration has antagonized India in the hope of mollifying Pakistani irredentism, just as it has antagonized Israel with the dubious argument that if Israel makes concessions to the divided, ineffectual Palestine Authority, it will be able to mollify Iran. Nothing will assuage the Palestinians, who are failed before coming a state, nor the Pakistanis, whose failure is ineluctable.

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Compared with the airframe and avionics technology now in development phase in the United States, Russia remains a second-best producer of warplanes. But Obama's budget cuts have hit military aviation hard, leaving its closest allies - including Israel and Australia - without a clear alternative to the aging F-16 force. Russia and India, meanwhile, are developing a "fifth generation" fighter, with some inputs from France and Israel. There is widespread speculation that Russia's decision to cancel deliveries of its S-300 anti-missile system to Iran carried a price tag for the Israelis: order the latest Russian systems for their own use, and make available the entire package of Israeli avionics.

In short, Washington appears to have driven its two closest allies in Asia - Israel and India - into a technology alliance with Russia that may have enormous long-term consequences. It is not only that the US has renounced its intention to act as a hegemon; a few years from now, it no longer may have the technological ability to act as a hegemon. This threatens to close off what may become the best chance to maintain peace in the region.

Rather than chanting in unison "Pakistan must not be allowed to fail!", Western strategists should plan for the consequences of a failed state in Pakistan. One alternative - with its own attendant difficulties - was raised by M K Bhadrakumar on this site on October 10 ([Pakistan warns India to 'back off'](#)): India, of course, can do a lot to help the US and NATO in such a scenario by training the militia operating under the 'warlords' and also providing them with weapons. In sum, without military deployment in Afghanistan, Delhi has the capacity to play a decisive role in crushing the Taliban insurgency, which is what makes the Pakistani military establishment extremely anxious in the developing political scenario on the Afghan chessboard.

In this scenario, India would encircle and contain a Pakistani failed state, cutting off the [Afghanistan](#) operations of the Islamist wing of Pakistan's [military](#). Pakistan would be aghast, but the vise-grip around its borders would be so tight as to discourage future misbehavior.

There is one problem with this scenario, and that is [China](#). As Francesco Sisci wrote on this site on December 15 ([A radical empire looms](#)), "Afghanistan and Pakistan are not unstable [domino](#) tiles that can be moved at will in a careful balance of weights and counterweights, as in old political power games. Pakistan and Afghanistan are part of a more complex balancing act that is both domestic and international and in which we also find China and India."

China cannot sit by and allow India to encircle and eventually crush its ally Pakistan - not because China has fundamental strategic interests in Pakistan, but because it cannot tolerate such a blemish to its credibility. The problem does not lie in Pakistan, but in the mutual capacity of India and China to destabilize each other. Maoist rebels are active in about a third of Indian territory, and the Indian government claims that they receive their weapons from China - without yet accusing the [Chinese government](#) of direct involvement. India has a probe stuck prominently into China's most sensitive spot, namely Tibet. On November 10, the Chinese government denounced India for permitting [the Dalai Lama](#), Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, to visit Tawang on the Tibetan border. China still claims as part of Tibet the whole border state of Arunachal Pradesh, including Tawang.

Unlike World War I, in which the warring parties in the Balkans drew Russia and Austria into war and the

rest of Europe with them, India and China will not go to war over trifling border issues. But in the absence of a solution to Pakistan's state failure, they will continue to support low-intensity operations and add to the region's instability. China in this respect most resembles [Austria in 1914](#). It is the power that wants stability at all costs, and has the most to lose - through the provincial rebellion of ethnic minorities - from instability. But it cannot impose stability through any means within its own reach. More than any other power in the world, it regards the prospective failure of the Pakistani state with horror. Beijing does not seem to have thought through the configuration of a post-Pakistani world.

The [balance of power](#) fails along with Pakistan. The alternative to the balance of power, as Kissinger said, is hegemony, and no one but the United States can exercise it. A hegemonic US would do the following:

- Invite New Delhi to increase its role in Afghanistan - which the Russians emphatically support - and make clear to Islamabad that the consequences of a shift toward radical Islam will be to leave Pakistan at the mercy of India.
- Dictate to India a conciliatory policy toward China, including an empty dance card for the Dalai Lama and consideration for Chinese interests in Nepal and Myanmar.
- Persuade China to throw its Pakistani ally under the bus, in return for assurances of Indian good behavior, as well as other incentives (access to US technology, for example).
- Assure China that the United States will not take advantage of its troubles with the Uighurs in Xinjiang or any other Chinese ethnic minority - and that it will police such allies as Turkey with respect to such problems.
- Crush Iran's imperial ambitions in the region, both to protect US allies such as Saudi Arabia and to eliminate a potential existential threat to Pakistan and remove a claim to legitimacy for radical Sunni Islamists.
- Give Russia assurances that matters pertaining to its "near abroad" from Ukraine to Kyrgyzstan will be considered with a view toward Russian interests.

The implications of such an exercise in great-power politics are in some respects ugly. They include a perpetual civil war in Afghanistan and the continuation of at least low-level civil war in Pakistan. The object would not be to prevent Pakistan from turning into a failed state, but to prevent a failed state in Pakistan from poisoning the rest of the region. It also implies a self-interested recognition that the United States has nothing but sentimental interests in Ukraine, Georgia and Tibet - and that sentiment is cheap. It is not the best alternative, to be sure, but as General George Patton said, the best is the enemy of the good.

At the close of 2009, Washington still has the capacity to act as a hegemon. The most dangerous undertaking of the Obama administration is not the petty failures of policy, such as the hapless effort to appease the Palestinians over [West Bank](#) settlements, or Pakistan over Kashmir. If America's technological leadership in fighter aircraft, surface-to-air missiles, and related technologies continues to erode, the United States - like Britain in 1914 - no longer will have the power and credibility to enforce an agreement among prospectively hostile players.

America's self-sabotage in this regard is a unique act of abnegation in [the history of world](#) strategy. It lost Vietnam because to win would have required more boots on the ground and more body bags on homebound aircraft. But the problems of South and Central Asia do not require a substantial US troop commitment. On the contrary, the escalation of US force in Afghanistan makes matters worse. India can put sufficient boots on Afghan soil to prevent a Taliban victory. No one else wants or needs US troops. But America's capacity to sail an aircraft carrier to any coast in the world and be master of the situation is essential.

Russia and India may field a fifth-generation fighter, perhaps a very good one if it contains the full Israeli avionics package. But a sixth-generation fighter is already in the research-and-development phase in the United States. If Washington puts resources behind cutting-edge [defense](#) technology, no other country or combination of countries can mount a challenge for a generation or more. America's failure to sustain its own power will be as tragic as it is unnecessary.

*Spengler is channeled by **David P Goldman**, senior editor at First Things (www.firstthings.com).*

Slate's fighting words

Why Does Pakistan Hate the United States?

Because it is dependent on us.

by Christopher Hitchens

Give credit to the vice president: He really does enjoy politics and "can't see a room without working it," as a colleague of mine half-admiringly remarked last Wednesday morning. We were waiting to enter the studio and comment after Biden had finished his [interview](#) with the [Scarborough/Brzezinski team](#), in which the main topic was Afghanistan. Exiting, he chose to stop and talk to each of us. Not wanting to waste a chance to be a bore on the subject, I asked him why he had mentioned [India](#) only once in the course of his remarks. Right away Biden managed the trick—several good politicians have mastered this—of reacting as if the question had been his own idea. Of course, he said, it was vexing that Pakistan preferred to keep its best troops on the border with India (our friend) rather than redeploying them to FATA—the so-called Federally Administered Tribal Areas—where they could be fighting the Taliban and al-Qaida (our enemy). My flesh was pressed, and it was on to the next. The newspapers that morning revealed that [Pakistani authorities showed no interest in apprehending a Taliban leader in Afghanistan](#) whom they considered an important asset. The newspapers the following morning [reported](#) that Pakistan was refusing to extend the visas to U.S. Embassy and other American personnel, resulting in a gradual paralysis of everything from intelligence-gathering to the maintenance of helicopters.

Several questions arise from this. The first: Who is in charge of policy in the area? When some hard words had to be spoken to President Hamid Karzai about the dire and ramshackle nature of his regime, it was the vice president who drew the job of delivering them. For the rest of the time, the Af-Pak dimension is supposedly overseen by [Richard Holbrooke](#), who seems lately to show some outward signs of discontent. Yet on one day Secretary of State Hillary Clinton may appear on the tarmac at Kabul or Islamabad. On another it will be Secretary of Defense Robert Gates or the CIA or any number of a series of generals. If this is really a "team of rivals," it doesn't seem to have had the effect of clarifying policy differences by debate. It looks more like one damn thing after another.

The next question is a version of an older one. Why do the Pakistanis hate us? We need not ask this in a plaintive tone of "after all we've *done* for them," but it is an apparent conundrum nonetheless. The United States made Pakistan a top-priority Cold War ally. It overlooked the regular interventions of its military into politics. It paid a lot of bills and didn't ask too many questions. It generally favored Pakistan over India, which was regarded as dangerously "neutralist" in those days, and during the Bangladesh war it closed its eyes to a [genocide against the Muslim population of East Bengal](#). During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Washington fed the Pakistani military and intelligence services from an overflowing teat and allowed them to acquire nuclear weapons on the side.

This, then, is why the Pakistani elite hates the United States. It hates it because it is dependent on it and is still being bought by it. It is a dislike that is also a form of self-hatred of the sort that often develops between client states and their paymasters. (You can often sense the same resentment in the Egyptian establishment, and sometimes among Israeli right-wingers, as well.) By way of overcompensation for their abject status as recipients of the American dole, such groups often make a big deal of flourishing their few remaining rags of pride. The safest outlet for this in the Pakistani case is an official culture that makes pious noises about Islamic solidarity while keeping the other hand extended for the next subsidy. Pakistani military officers now strike attitudes in public as if they were defending their national independence rather than trying to prolong their rule as a caste and to extend it across the border of their luckless Afghan neighbor.

This is, and always was, a sick relationship, and it is now becoming dangerously diseased. It's not possible to found a working, trusting, fighting alliance on such a basis. Under communism, the factory workers of Eastern Europe had a joke: "We pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us." In this instance, the

Pakistanis don't even pretend that their main military thrust is directed against the common foe, but we *do* continue to pay them. If we only knew it, the true humiliation and indignity is ours, not theirs.

This will continue to get nastier and more corrupt and degrading until we recognize that our long-term ally in Asia is not Pakistan but India. And India is not a country sizzling with self-pity and self-loathing, because it was never one of our colonies or clients. We don't have to send New Delhi 15 different envoys a month, partly to placate and partly to hector, because the relationship with India isn't based on hysteria and envy. Alas, though, we send hardly any envoys at all to the world's largest secular and multicultural democracy, and the country itself gets mentioned only as an afterthought. Nothing will change until this changes.

One reason the Pakistani army coddles the Taliban in Afghanistan is because it has recently been told that the United States will not be deploying there in strength for very much longer. Who can blame them for basing their future plans on this supposition and continuing to dig in for a war with India that we are helping them to prepare for? Meanwhile, though, it is the Afghans who get the lectures about how they need to shape up. "[Lots of luck in your senior year](#)" was the breezy way in which the vice president phrased his message to Kabul as I watched. (I wonder how that translates into Pushtun.) Speed the day when the Pakistanis are publicly addressed in the same tones and told that the support they so much despise is finally being withdrawn.

The Corner

[Jimmy Carter Apologizes to Israel](#) [Jonah Goldberg]

In a letter to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, he writes:

We must recognize Israel's achievements under difficult circumstances, even as we strive in a positive way to [help](#) Israel continue to improve its relations with its Arab populations, but we must not permit criticisms for improvement to stigmatize Israel," Carter's message said. "As I would have noted at Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, but which is appropriate at any time of the year, I offer an Al Het (a plea for forgiveness) for any words or deeds of mine that may have done so."

The folks at [Creative Minority Report](#) write:

Isn't that nice. Oh, in a not-at-all related story, [Jimmy Carter's](#) grandson is running for Congress in a Georgia district that has a significant (at least for Georgia) Jewish population.

"Hey, I am really sorry for all that anti-Israel stuff I have been doing for years and years. I am also really sorry that I left that Holocaust thing out of my book on Israel and all the other things. Yeah, really sorry about that. Have you met my Grandson Jason, he is running for [Congress](#) and he really likes Jews."

The only thing worse than no apology is a convenient apology. Funny, I didn't think I could like Jimmy Carter less, I guess I was wrong.

The SNOWFLAKE

Winter's Secret Beauty



Text by Kenneth Libbrecht
Photography by Patricia Rasmussen

Pickings - 12/23/04

LA Times

Washington's Christmas Eve Gift

They wanted him to be king. He wanted to ensure the republic that so many had died for.

By Stanley Weintraub

Stanley Weintraub is the author of "General Washington's Christmas Farewell: A Mount Vernon Homecoming," published this year in paperback by Penguin/Plume.

December 23, 2004

We don't associate George Washington with Christmas Eve, or Christmas itself, yet the most significant Christmas Eve in American history occurred in 1783, when Gen. Washington, then 52, headed home to Mount Vernon after nine years at war — and turned his back on ruling the states like a king.

The American Revolution effectively ended at Yorktown in October 1781, but in the fall of 1783 the defeated British still held a few positions as bargaining chips for negotiating the peace. Although a treaty acknowledging American independence had been signed, ships carrying the documents were still at sea when Washington gathered up his remaining troops in November at West Point and headed for New York City, to take over as the last Redcoats embarked for Britain.

Equally important to Washington was his desire to have Christmas dinner with Martha, to bring yuletide gifts to his wife and his step-grandchildren (he had no children of his own) and to return to being "a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac ... under the shadow of my own Vine and my own Fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp and the busy scenes of public life."

That his imagery recalled the biblical book of 1 Kings is an irony he may not have recognized. He was renouncing the idea raised by his admiring countrymen — who had long lived under monarchs, the common form of rule everywhere — that George III be replaced by their own George I.

"Had he lived in days of idolatry," a colonist had written in 1777, "he would have been worshiped like a god." Abigail Adams wrote of Washington's "Majestik fabrick." To one poet he was "Our Hero, Guardian, Father, Friend!" To another he was "First of Men." And, by 1778, a Pennsylvania German almanac had referred to him as "Father of his Country."

A brigadier general wrote to Washington, echoing sentiments in the press, that the colonies should merge as a monarchy, with him as king. Washington responded: "I must view this with abhorrence and reprehend [it] with severity."

Philadelphia artist Benjamin West, painting in London on the commission of the king, told George III that despite Washington's popularity, the general chose to return to his farm in Virginia. The king was astonished. If Washington does that, said His Majesty, he will be the greatest man in the world.

In December 1783, the general made good his word.

Crossing the Hudson from New York on Dec. 4, Washington began his journey home and away from public life. He rode through villages and towns in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland. Americans watched expectantly for his arrival, banquets and balls were planned in his honor along the way. When less formal crowds gathered, he stood atop the wagon carrying his belongings and thanked his countrymen, even those he knew had been less than loyal to the American cause, for supporting the new nation.

At Annapolis, Md., where the weak and disunited Confederation Congress was meeting, Washington planned to showcase his retreat from public duty and public life. He would return the official 1775 parchment appointing him commanding general. The occasion was to be a piece of theater to emphasize the nation's civil foundations.

The adulation along the way delayed his arrival in Annapolis to Dec. 22. There he penned his parting address for delivery the next afternoon — the only valedictory he would ever give in person. (The "Farewell Address" of 1796, written largely by Alexander Hamilton to mark the end of his second term as president, was never spoken. It was published in a newspaper.)

On the evening of the 22nd, Washington was honored once more at a banquet and ball, this one punctuated by 13 patriotic toasts and ceremonial salutes by cannon. Late that night, he returned to his lodgings and reviewed his speech. Apparently no longer sure that he would or could bar the door to further public service, he deleted two phrases suggesting finality: "an affectionate and final farewell" and "ultimate leave."

The address the next day at the Maryland State House was a solemn occasion. "The glory of your virtues will not terminate with your military command," Thomas Mifflin, president of the Confederation Congress, told Washington, "it will continue to animate [the] remotest ages. You have defended the standard of liberty in this new world."

Up and down the former colonies, newspapers would report the remarkable events. "Here we must let fall the scene," the New Hampshire Gazette closed its report. "Few tragidies ever drew more tears."

It would not be Washington's final act, as he had hoped — although with less and less assurance as he neared home. From retirement, he watched the nation drift toward disunity, and then answered the call to lead first the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and then, by unanimous vote of the first electoral college, the republic.

After serving two terms and with the nation now set on course, he would retire, this time for good, from the

public stage.

But none of that was known on Dec. 24, 1783, when Washington's party crossed the Potomac to Virginia. Winter twilight came early. Up the slope from the river, Mount Vernon, with its three shuttered doors in the white west front and its many green-shuttered windows, now candlelit, beckoned.

The next day, as a heavy snowfall locked the plantation in snow and ice, Washington at long last celebrated a festive and unmilitary holiday. There he confronted, he later wrote, just one challenge: an "Attack of Christmas Pyes."

Pickings - 12/24/04

[Christmas Joke](#)

Three men died on Christmas Eve and were met by Saint Peter at the pearly gates. In honor of this holy season," Saint Peter said, "you must each possess something that symbolizes Christmas to get into heaven."

The first man fumbled through his pockets and pulled out a lighter. He flicked it on. "It represents a candle," he said.

"You may pass through the pearly gates," Saint Peter said.

The second man reached into his pocket and pulled out a set of keys. He shook them and said, "They're bells".

Saint Peter said, "you may pass through the pearly gates."

The third man started searching desperately through his pockets and finally pulled out a pair of women's panties. St. Peter looked at the man with a raised eyebrow and asked, "And just what do those symbolize?"

The man replied, "They're Carols".

[UglyChristmasLights.com](#)
[Rulers of Toyland](#)



Listen up! We can only let 3 things in at a time! Everyone else please stay behind the velvet rope!

Frosty, I believe that you were next.



The only time the neighbors are wishing for a tornado in Indiana.



Luckily, the innkeeper had a manger on the roof that they could stay in.

Where'd Waldo



It may be a little tough to find him if he's wearing that Santa hat!



