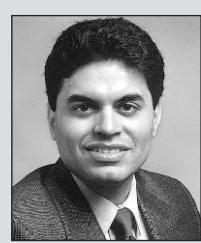


## True or false: We are losing the war against radical Islam



**FAREED ZAKARIA**  
writes from Washington

groups of all kinds. The result is an enemy that is without question weaker than before, though also more decentralized and amorphous.

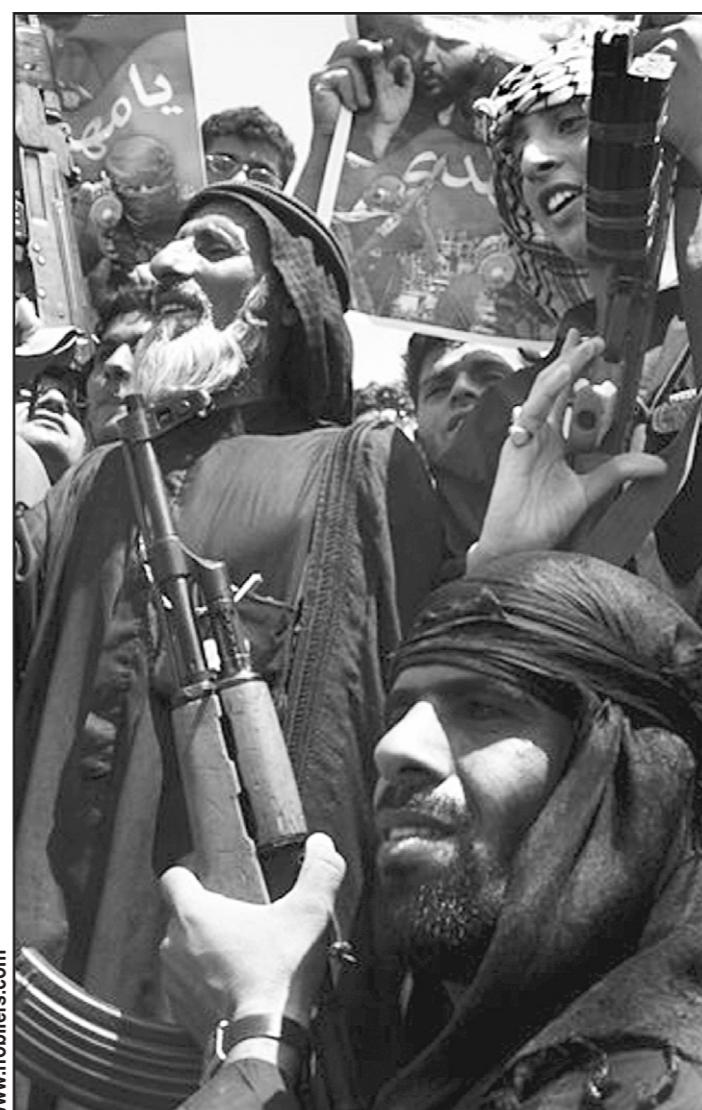
Consider the news from just the past few months. In Indonesia, the largest Muslim nation in the world, the government announced that on June 9 it had captured both the chief and the military leader of Jemaah Islamiah, the country's deadliest jihadist group and the one that carried out the Bali bombings of 2002.

In January, Filipino troops killed Abu Sulaiman, leader of the Qaeda-style terrorist outfit Abu Sayyaf. The Philippine Army -- with American help -- has battered the group, whose membership has declined from as many as 2,000 guerrillas six years ago to a few hundred today.

In Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which were Al Qaeda's original bases and targets of attack, terrorist cells have been rounded up, and those still at large have been unable to launch any major new attacks in a couple of years. There, as elsewhere, the efforts of finance ministries -- most especially the US Department of the Treasury -- have made life far more difficult for terrorists.

Global organizations cannot thrive without being able to move money around. The more that terrorists' funds are tracked and targeted, the more they have to make do with small-scale and hastily improvised operations.

North Africa has seen an uptick in activity, particularly Algeria. But the main group there, the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (known by its French abbreviation, GSPC), is part of a long and ongoing local war between the Algerian



government and Islamic opposition forces and cannot be seen solely through the prism of Al Qaeda or anti-American jihad.

This is also true of the main area where there has been a large and troubling rise in the strength of Al Qaeda -- the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands. It is here

that Al Qaeda Central, if there is such an entity, is housed.

But the reason the group has been able to sustain itself and grow despite the best efforts of Nato troops is that through the years of the anti-Soviet campaign, Al Qaeda dug deep roots in the area. And its allies the Taliban are

a once popular local movement that has long been supported by a section of the Pashtuns, an influential ethnic group in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In Iraq, where terrorist attacks are a daily event, another important complication weakens the enemy. From a broad coalition promising to unite all Muslims, Al Qaeda has morphed into a purist Sunni group that spends most of its time killing Shiites.

In its original fatwas and other statements, Al Qaeda makes no mention of Shiites, condemning only the "Crusaders" and "Jews." But Iraq changed things. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the head of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, bore a fierce hatred for Shiites, derived from his Wahhabi-style puritanism.

In a February 2004 letter to Osama bin Laden, he claimed that "the danger from the Shia ... is greater ... than the Americans ... [T]he only solution is for us to strike the religious, military and other cadres among the Shia with blow after blow until they bend to the Sunnis."

If there ever had been a debate between him and bin Laden, Zarqawi won. As a result, an organization that had hoped to rally the entire Muslim world to jihad against the West has been dragged instead into a dirty internal war within Islam.

The split between Sunnis and Shiites -- which plays a role in Lebanon as well -- is only one of the divisions within the world of Islam. Within that universe are Shiites and Sunnis, Persians and Arabs, Southeast Asians and Middle Easterners and, importantly, moderates and radicals.

The clash between Hamas and

Fatah in the Palestinian territories is the most vivid sign of the latter divide. Just as the diversity within the communist world ultimately made it less threatening, so the many varieties of Islam weaken its ability to coalesce into a single, monolithic foe.

It would be even less dangerous if Western leaders recognized this and worked to emphasize such distinctions. Rather than speaking of a single worldwide movement -- which absurdly lumps together Chechen separatists in Russia, Pakistani-backed militants in India, Shiite warlords in Lebanon and Sunni jihadists in Egypt -- we should be emphasizing that all these groups are distinct, with differing agendas, enemies and friends.

That robs them of their claim to represent Islam. It describes them as they often are -- small local gangs of misfits, hoping to attract attention through nihilism and barbarism.

The greatest weakness of militant Islam is that it is unpopular almost everywhere. Even in Afghanistan, where the Taliban has some roots, it was widely reviled. And now, when Taliban fighters occasionally take over a town in southern Afghanistan, they disband the schools, burn books, put women behind veils.

These actions cause fear and resentment, not love. Most Muslims, even those who are devout and enraged at the West, don't want to return to some grim fantasy of medieval theocracy. People in the Muslim world travel to see the glitz in Dubai, not the madrassas in Tehran. About half the world's Muslim countries hold elections -- representing some 600 million people.

In those elections over the past four or five years, the parties representing militant Islam have done poorly from Indonesia to Pakistan, rarely garnering more than 7 or 8 percent of the vote. There are some exceptional cases in places suffering from civil war or occupation, such as Hamas in the Palestinian territories and Hezbollah in Lebanon. But by and large, radical Islam is not winning the argument, which is why it is trying to win by force.

If this sounds like an optimistic account, it is, up to a point. The real danger, and the reason this will be a long struggle, is that the conditions that feed the radicalization and alienation of young Muslim men are not abating.

A toxic combination of demography, alienation and religious extremism continues to seduce a small number of Muslims to head down a path of brutal violence. And technology today -- most worryingly the large quantities of loose nuclear material throughout the world -- ensures that small numbers of people can do large amounts of damage.

The current issue of Britain's Prospect magazine has a deeply illuminating profile of the main suicide bomber in the 7/7 London subway attacks, Mohammad Siddique Khan, who at first glance appeared to be a well-integrated, middle-class Briton. The author, Shiv Malik, spent months in the Leeds suburb where Khan grew up, talked to his relatives and pieced together his past.

Khan was not driven to become a suicide bomber by poverty, racism or the Iraq War. His is the story of a young man who found he could not be part of the traditional Pakistani-immigrant community of

his parents. He had no memories of their Pakistani life. He spoke their language, Urdu, poorly. He rejected an arranged marriage in favor of a love match.

And yet, he was also out of place in modern British culture. Khan was slowly seduced by the simple, powerful and total world view of Wahabi Islam, conveniently provided in easy-to-read English pamphlets (doubtless funded with Saudi money).

The ideology fulfilled a young man's desire for protest and rebellion and at the same time gave him a powerful sense of identity. By 1999 -- before the Iraq War, before 9/11 -- he was ready to be a terrorist.

Britain, the United States and most other countries have not found it easy to address the root causes of jihad. But clearly, they relate to the alienation, humiliation and disempowerment caused by the pace of change in the modern world -- economic change, migration from Third World to First World, movement from the countryside to the city.

The only durable solution to these ongoing disruptions is for these people to see themselves -- and, most important, the societies they come from and still identify with -- as masters of the modern world and not as victims.

How to open up and modernize the Muslim world is a long, hard and complex challenge. But surely one key is to be seen by these societies and peoples as partners and friends, not as bullies and enemies. That is one battle we are not yet winning.

Fareed Zakaria is Editor of Newsweek International.

© Newsweek International. All rights reserved. Reprinted by arrangement.

## A tale of three democracies in South Asia

### AHMADUL AMEEN

"Comparisons are odorous" -- Shakespeare.

During the current tumultuous and difficult phase of democratic evolution of the country, it is quite natural for the citizens to do some soul searching as to why democracy came to such a pass in the country. To compare is a universal human trait.

Hence, it is natural to compare our democratic development with those of other nascent or established democracies, particularly those undergoing a similar evolutionary cycle.

Obviously, the first comparison should be made with our immediate neighbour, i.e. India, with whom we have shared history and political development. Both the countries have good secular constitutions, to start with. Pakistan's democratic evolution, that was in tandem with that of Bangladesh till 1970, however, is murkier, and lags behind those of Bangladesh and India.

In the context of the same discussions, the personalities of the important political players need to be considered, of necessity, to assess how they affected the shaping of political evolution in their

respective countries.

#### India

Elections have been held in India at regular intervals since independence in 1947, and governments have been changed at critical junctures. In the case of India, holding fair elections is more laudable, simply for the fact that the country is not homogeneous in respect of ethnicity, religion and language.

By any standard, it is a difficult country to govern, having a multitude of national, regional and communal political parties. commendably though, the change in political leadership has been smooth during transitions.

By large, the quality of political leaders in the higher echelons is very good, despite the fact that crooks and goons are in abundance in the rank and file. The judiciary is above the political fray, and defence is never seen to be interfering in political affairs.

The judiciary is respected and feared, despite its slow dispensation of justice. Indira Gandhi's removal from power for a trivial (by our standard) indiscretion was a landmark of judicial probity. Another prime minister, Narasimha

Rao, was prosecuted, but avoided jail on health grounds, and Sarin is in jail now.

The great Lalu Prasad Yadav of Bihar was running the state from jail, through his surrogate Rabri Devi. His comeback is also equally remarkable. Interestingly, his commendable turning around of the Indian Railway is being studied at the famed Harvard School of Business.

Despite the many political crooks, bigots and radicals, there emerged a good number of clean, pragmatic and committed leaders in post-independent India. Highly educated, committed, and respected politicians like Manmohan Singh, Chidambaram, Jyoti Basu etc., to name a few, can stand tall in any milieu/forum.

Focusing on the bordering state of West Bengal, Comrade Buddhadev Bhattacharya is a living legend because of his spartan lifestyle and popularity with the capitalists, who are making a beeline for investing in West Bengal.

#### Pakistan

Despite the impressive economical and financial development, socio-political development lags behind badly in Pakistan. The slow social progress is attributed to the feudalistic nature of the society, particularly in Punjab and Sind.

The landed elite have their

played by the rules. Her political comeback also speaks of the robust political process in India. Atal Bihari Bajpai, giving up power without hesitation when faced with a no-confidence vote, also set a fine tradition.

Despite the many political crooks, bigots and radicals, there emerged a good number of clean, pragmatic and committed leaders in post-independent India. Highly educated, committed, and respected politicians like Manmohan Singh, Chidambaram, Jyoti Basu etc., to name a few, can stand tall in any milieu/forum.

Mahatma Gandhi did not seek power after independence, despite being the undisputed leader of the nation. Rather, he went (or threatened to) on hunger strike on a matter of principle, because of non-payment of money due to Pakistan.

Nehru could have become an authoritarian dictator if he had wanted to, but chose the path of democracy. Even after the war with China, he advocated the inclusion of China, a pariah state at that time, into the United Nations just because it was the right thing to do.

Maulana Azad did not hanker for power. The common characteristics of these pre-independence leaders were their patriotism, commitment to democracy, and principled exercise of power.

Indira Gandhi had the propensity to be authoritarian, but generally

tentacles in every sphere of life in Pakistan. Besides dominating agriculture, defence and bureaucracy, they have also monopolised business and industry.

Since independence in 1947, except for brief periods, the military has ruled the country directly or through surrogates. The rules of Suhrwardy and Mohammad Ali were transitory at best.

Ayub's democracy came in the garb of "basic democracy." Similarly, Musharraf is trying to colour his democracy in a different shade. Democracy could not flourish in Pakistan because of the dominance of the military.

The relatively brief interlude provided by the elected governments of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif was unsuccessful due to their ineptitude and all-pervasive corruption. Sharif who, despite having two-third majority, squandered a golden opportunity to return the country to a viable democracy. The same was true for Benazir, who also could not deliver the fruits of democracy to the common people of Pakistan.

Hardly any leader, having the stature of the pre-independence political leaders like Jinnah, Liaqat Ali, Gaffar Khan etc., emerged in

Pakistan. Both Bhutto and Benazir had the potential to be good political leaders.

Both of them were well educated and charismatic, but their lack of principles and scruples undid them. Sharif also suffered from similar weaknesses, and was disgracefully thrown out of power. Had there been continuous democratic governments, a group of good leaders might have emerged.

Thereafter, the country was run by the dictatorial regime of General Ershad, who was convicted and jailed for corruption, but has made a political comeback since.

In Bangladesh, proper democratic process began in 1991. Since then, the governments have been changed twice through elections. The elections were generally perceived to be free and fair, which itself is an achievement.

In 1991, BNP won the election fairly, but Awami League did not accept the defeat gracefully. They doggedly carried out *hartals* and strikes at regular intervals throughout the five-year reign of BNP. In 1996, BNP engineered a sham election that did not work.

In 1996, Awami League came back to power, but was removed by the BNP in 2001. The first BNP government governed the country

reasonably well, compared to the next two governments. The misrule and corruption, particularly in the last ten years, have been monumental and heart-breaking.

Other than the two leaders of the liberation period, no single leader of the stature of Fazlul Haq, Suhrwardy or Bhashani emerged. Instead, a pack of unscrupulous and greedy felons hijacked the so-called democracy. The sordid stories of their misdeeds are unravelling every day beat any soap opera.

Now that a historic (if not divine) intervention is in process, there are indications that a seismic change is brewing in the political landscape. If the politicians realise and internalize that the old rules of the game have changed for ever, and that there ought to be "give and take" politics -- the long suffering people can look forward to better days. The dynamic politics should be a distant memory. The nation should discard the Bhutto/Benazir, Khaleda/Tareque models in favour of better example of Sonia/Rahul.

Ahmadul Ameen is a freelance contributor to the Daily Star.

## The need for a national DNA database

### SHARIF AKHTERUZZAMAN

BEFORE the turn of this century, at a time when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a Scottish author, was spinning his detective stories of Sherlock Holmes, objective scientific evidence was routinely used to investigate crimes.

Today, although most crimes continue to be solved through confessions and eyewitness accounts, scientific evidence is increasingly being used to establish the truth. Advances in technology have helped DNA analysis to become an established part of criminal justice procedure.

Despite early controversies, and challenges by defense lawyers, the admissibility of DNA test results in the courtroom has become routine in most of the countries in the world. During the past two decades, identification based on the differences that exist in the DNA molecule has indeed become an invaluable instrument in the search for justice. The prosecutors never had such a powerful tool at their disposal, both to convict the guilty and exonerate the innocent.

DNA, or Deoxyribonucleic acid, is the chemical storehouse of an individual's genetic material. It is a tiny thread-like molecule that contains all the information required for the life process. It is the hereditary blueprint passed on to us by our parents. It governs the inheritance of all the characteristics of an individual, such as, eye colour, hair colour, stature, bone density, likes, dislikes etc.

It is a component of virtually all the cells in the human body. A person's DNA is the same in each cell, and does not change throughout his lifetime. Any bodily substance, like blood, saliva, semen, hair, tooth, bone, tissue etc., therefore, can serve as a potential source of DNA.

By using modern molecular biological techniques, it is now possible to generate a DNA profile from any one of those substances, where the possibility of finding two individuals with the same DNA profile is in the order of 1 in a trillion.

DNA analysis can link suspects to violent crimes like rape or murder by comparing DNA evidence recovered from the crime scene, or

victim, with the DNA sample taken from the suspect. By means of DNA analysis, it is also possible to resolve disputes arising over paternity or maternity, immigration disputes, identification of missing children, mutilated dead bodies, disaster victims, and exchange of babies in hospital wards.

DNA technology was first used in criminal justice in 1987 in the UK, to convict a criminal who allegedly raped and murdered two teenage schoolgirls. Bangladesh is not far behind in accepting this technology, as the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has established a national forensic DNA profiling laboratory at Dhaka Medical College, with the financial and technical assistance of the Danish government.

The laboratory started providing its service to various law enforcing agencies from January, 2006. Though the laboratory has had a good start, it has a long way to go to realize the full advantage of the power of DNA technology to solve crimes and protect the innocent.

The first important step that has to be taken is the creation of a national DNA database. And how does it help solving crimes?

A DNA database means an electronic database of DNA profiles. The database, however, is not simply a collection of DNA profiles, but a composite database where DNA profiles are organized in different indexes, with the capability of electronically searching, retrieving and comparing, thereby linking crimes to each other and to the convicted offenders. Ideally, a DNA database should include DNA profiles under the following indexes:

- Crime scene index
- Convicted offender's index
- Missing person's index

**Crime scene index**  
The crime scene index contains DNA profiles from biological evidence (blood, blood stain, semen, saliva etc.) obtained at the scene of the crime. This type of DNA index can link crime scenes together, possibly identifying serial offenders. This database is equally useful once a perpetrator is identified.

**Convicted offender index**  
The convicted offender index contains DNA profiles of individuals convicted of violent crimes (e.g. murder or rape). Many countries, like the UK, Netherlands and Australia even include DNA profiles of individuals convicted of recordable offenses.

The criteria, of course, differ from country to country, and require legislation prior to implementation of such a database. The existence of this kind of database enables law-enforcing agencies to identify possible suspects, and link suspects to unsolved crimes or cases where no suspect was available. Matches made between crime scene and convicted offender indexes provide investigators with the identity of the perpetrator.