

[Low Graphics Site](#)[Latest News](#)[News in Pics](#)[Front Page](#)[National](#)[International](#)[Local](#)[Business](#)[Stocks](#)[Forex & Gold](#)[Sports](#)[Editorial](#)[Opinion](#)

July 14, 2005

Thursday

Jumadi-us-Sani 6, 1426

# DAWN

---

**Features**

[Perceptions of Pakistan](#)

[What goes on in the mind of a suicide bomber?](#)

[Letters](#)[Features](#)[Cartoon](#)[TV Guide](#)[Cowasjee](#)[Ayaz Amir](#)[Irfan Husain](#)**Magazines**[The Review](#)[The Magazine](#)[Young World](#)[Images](#)[Books](#)[Education](#)[Encounter](#)[Gallery](#)[Sci-tech](#)[Horoscope](#)[Recipes](#)[SPIDES](#)

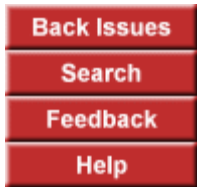
## Perceptions of Pakistan

By A.R. Siddiqi

At a select gathering of intellectuals in Karachi recently, one of the speakers said: "Pakistan is a dying country. It is only a question of time." Absolutely loud and clear: no mincing or garnishing of words. The pronouncement appeared by and large to be well taken by the audience.

That all is not well with the state of Pakistan goes without saying. We are a shambles. However, this is not unlike the condition in many other states around. The Soviet Union is dead and so is Yugoslavia; Bosnia stands partitioned; Iraq and Afghanistan stay under foreign rule, ripped off their historical moorings as a proud people even under autocratic regimes. What is so alarming therefore about seeing and calling Pakistan a 'dying country'? This is not for the first time that Pakistan has been so described. A section of the foreign press, through the closing stages of the 1971 crisis, would invoke the same description for Pakistan. And that came to pass as half of the country did go away.

East Pakistan was Islamabad's 'other island' — more or less. And its loss was anticipated even manipulated (and hardly ever mourned) by the West Pakistani mainlanders. Now there is little left to give away. A 'dying country' means a whole people, a whole nation in the throes



of death.

Why then must we still talk and hear of ‘a dying country’ and also greet it with muted applause? Is it the terminal manifestation of a crisis of identity — worse still a loss of it — or the end result of our progressive disengagement from the affairs of the state and the nation? National politics, the fine flowering of participatory democracy, is all but dead in Pakistan. Military rule would seem to have been suffering from lack of a fine balance between its tooth-to-tail ratio. The tail lashes somewhat spasmodically while the teeth have lost much of their bite.

The political apparatus has narrowed down to each party leadership’s selective agenda, without a national programme or manifesto. More than serving as a platform for the projection and advancement of public weal and aspirations, political parties, by and large, are reduced to acting as a group of in-feuding bodies up for grabs by those in power.

The government for its part seems split into an army of so many ministers and official spokesmen, each with his own version of a given incident or issue to leave us wondering about what the government is actually trying to say.

These last few days, the variety of versions pouring out through the media about certain major issues makes it difficult to decide which might be closer to the truth and to our national interest. Some of these could be tabulated as follows — US-Pakistan relations; the US-Indian strategic framework accord; up-and-down graph of progress on a resolution of the Kashmir issue; mounting Pakistan-Afghan tensions; controversial statements regarding Iran’s nuclear ambitions; and an all-parties conference being held for what are meant to be non-party local polls, and that too with the full participation of the official Muslim League.

As if the tally was not long enough, Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri added yet another potentially inflammable issue to it. After the Sanaa conference of OIC foreign ministers, he stated his opposition to the OIC’s contemplated demand for a seat in the UNSC on the basis of religion. He said: “If Muslim countries demanded a permanent seat, others like Hindus and Jews would also ask for the same on similar grounds.”

India is already pressing hard for a permanent seat and may well get it. It should not be hard to imagine the OIC’s adverse reaction to Pakistan’s dissenting note.

Near home catastrophic floods in the NWFP, Punjab and parts of upper Sindh together with the Internet disruption underscore our inadequacy to cope with a sudden nationwide contingency. Might it not be important to examine and assess our resources and ability, moral and physical, in the environment of a possible armed conflict, nuclear or conventional?

Reverting to the Karachi gathering, yet another speaker, a national leader and a national hero at one time, tore the military high command to pieces for its gross, almost ludicrous, misconduct of the 1965 war. In his critique of the tank thrust on Amritsar via Khemkaran, he



castigated the general staff for the operation (involving the bulk of our First Armoured Division) through an overwhelmingly untankable terrain.

The area beyond Khemkaran happens to be criss-crossed by canals to deny tanks the element of speed and manoeuvrability essential for the success of an armoured push. The enemy exploited the terrain to his best advantage by simply breaching the canals and flooding the area to drown practically a whole regiment of tanks.

The eminent speaker would have the audience believe that this happened because the general staff at the GHQ did not even have correct maps of the area.

The same maps, he said, were available and offered for as little as \$20 in a foreign country where he happened to be at that time around. The story brought forth loud cheers from the audience.

Shouldn't this sort of casual light- heartedness put us to thinking as to what we and our country are all about?

Are we a dying country or a failed state? A horrifying question to answer either way. What's even more horrifying is the seeming acceptance of the hypothesis by many. — The writer is a retired brigadier of the Pakistan Army.



---

## What goes on in the mind of a suicide bomber?

By Richard Ingham

PARIS: Political leaders and the media usually portray suicide bombers as crazed, impoverished, murderous or fanatically religious, and generally the loner type.

Experts say the truth is far less gothic and, as a consequence, strangely more terrifying.

The typical profile of a suicide attacker is someone who comes from a good home, often has a good education, has friends and holds down a steady job.

In other words: The man who blows himself and innocent people apart on a London train could also be that nice young man who lives next door.

“Study after study shows that suicide attackers and their supporters are rarely ignorant or impoverished,” says Scott Atran, a research leader with France’s National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and assistant professor of psychology at the University of Michigan.

“Nor are they crazed, cowardly, apathetic or asocial. The common misconception underestimates the central role that organisational factors play in the appeal of terrorist networks.”

Claude Berrebi, an economist at Princeton University, carried out a study of Hamas and Palestinian suicide attackers from the 1980s to 2003 and found that more than half of them had a college education.

Fewer than one in seven were raised in poverty, compared with a third of the Palestinian population in general.

Israeli psychologist Ariel Merari of Tel Aviv University studied the backgrounds of suicide bombers in the Middle East from the early 1980s, when the contemporary era of the phenomenon began in Beirut.

“In the majority, you find none of the risk factors normally associated with suicide, such as mood disorders or schizophrenia, substance abuse or history of attempted suicide,” Merari told Britain’s New Scientist.

A unifying factor among suicide bombers is a sense of deep injustice or humiliation, a sense of immovable despair that can be addressed only by self-sacrifice.

Among Palestinian “martyrs”, Gaza mental health expert Eyad el-Sarraj found that witnessing humiliation of their fathers by Israeli troops was a common source of trauma and the desire for revenge.

Among Muslims born outside areas of conflict, such as the Britons of Pakistani origin suspected to have carried out the London bombings, a common perception is that Islam and its followers are under attack.

The plight of the Palestinians has long been a deep grievance for many Muslims, to which that of Muslim Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya and now Iraq can be added.

Atran, in a paper published last year in *The Washington Quarterly*, said organisers of suicide attacks eagerly look for “able and committed” recruits — not loners — who are willing to give up their lives for a cause.

Someone who has invested in education and training has signalled a willingness to sacrifice today’s satisfactions for tomorrow’s rewards and is able to realise commitments, he said.

Having found the recruit, the next step is to coax him (or her) along the path to “martyrdom.”

This requires social, cultural and political guidance to help them along the way, and success lies with having good organisation, says Atran.

The would-be kamikaze is thus enclosed by a disciplined, well-organised group which forges and promotes the cult of the suicide bomber.

It places an austere “brotherhood” around him, glorifies his acts within the community and promises the recruit that by his death, he can gain freedom for future generations or eternal bliss in paradise.

A typical point of no return is when the recruit — by now enclosed in a culture of death and reward — makes his farewell testimony in a letter or video.

With this act, the bombers have effectively pushed the recruit over the threshold. “The psychological investment is such that it would be almost impossibly humiliating to step back,” Atran says. —AFP



---

**DAWN**

---



---

[Contributions](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[© DAWN Group of Newspapers, 2005.](#)