

CONFUSED

Former U.S. Sen. Ernest F. "Fritz" Hollings (D-SC)

MAY 7, 2009 -- All you have to do is read the lead editorial in *The New York Times* May 6th entitled "Mr. Obama, Mr. Zardari and Mr. Karzai" and realize that the problem is us.

I can't keep up with Afghanistan/Pakistan, but certain history comes to mind. I helped liberate Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia sixty-eight years ago, and they have yet to opt for democracy. We liberated Kuwait eighteen years ago, and it has yet to opt for democracy. In the Muslim world, stronger than freedom and democracy is tribe and religion. And we in the United States should realize after Vietnam that some peoples are happy to live in other than democracy.

We spent ten years and had 58,000 GIs killed in Vietnam and have yet to learn the lesson. I've been to Hanoi, and the people are happy under communism. And we all know that democracy comes from within and is not to be force-fed. We have yet to get the three religions in Iraq together, and after seven and a half years in Afghanistan it appears now that we are determined to "force feed." The President keeps parroting "disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida."

I'll never forget that a few days after 9/11 I got a list from the State Department showing Al Qaida in forty-five countries – including the United States, but not in Iraq. When we get through defeating Al Qaida in Afghanistan, we've got forty-four other countries to work on, plus Iraq, that we brought there. I helped Charlie Wilson on the Senate side in Charlie Wilson's war. I didn't know what was going on, but it was working. The Taliban were our friends. In fact, at the very beginning after 9/11, we told the Taliban to give us Osama and we would leave them alone. After all, the Taliban and Afghanistan didn't attack the United States and were no threat.

About four years ago there was a Gallup poll that reported Osama bin Laden had an 81% approval in Pakistan. Two years ago, I saw a poll where 76% of the people of Pakistan favored the Shiira law, which isn't democracy. I've been trying to find an up-to-date poll in both Afghanistan and Pakistan because I fear that we're the problem. It appears now that the best policy is put up the sign "Mission Accomplished" and leave Pakistan and Afghanistan to settle their own problems. After seven and a half years it appears that rather than eliminating terrorism, we're spreading it.

Senator Hollings of South Carolina served 38 years in the United States Senate, and for many years was Chairman of the Commerce, Space, Science & Transportation Committee. He is the author of the newly published book, [Making Government Work](#) (University of South Carolina Press, 2008).