

# Why BJP chooses Kalam as India's new president



HARUN UR RASHID

perceived complicity of the BJP party in the pogrom. The campaign by right wing organisations, such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangstha (RSS), to build a temple on the site of the 464-year old mosque does not go well with liberal image of the BJP party. The selection of a Muslim candidate is likely to resuscitate BJP's non-communal image both inside and outside the country.

the people of Junagardh. However the same logic did not apply to Kashmir. The nomination of a Muslim President will demonstrate to the outside world that India remains committed to secularism, thus boosting its 'rightful' claim on Kashmir.

Third, the nomination of a nuclear scientist to the Presidency appears to reflect government's deep appreciation publicly to the

political climate in Pakistan. It will accentuate democratic and secular values of India as against Pakistan's rule by a military President coupled with an arguable conflict between moderation and extreme Islamic fundamentalism in the country.

A relevant curiosity is, who is this scientist Abdul Kalam? Presidential candidate A.P.J. Abdul Kalam hails from Kerala (his

holy book *Bhagavad Gita* along with his Muslim prayers.

As a child he had a very modest upbringing in a southern fishing village in Kerala and has been all along a brilliant student and is proud that he is a product of India's universities. It is reported that he takes strong exception to media referring to him as US-trained, after a four-month visit he made to various US space facilities in the 60s.

He presided over the underground nuclear tests in May 1998. He began India's integrated guided missile programme which developed short, medium and long range conventional and nuclear-capable missiles. In recent months it is reported that he launched an ambitious programme for self-sufficiency in all military equipment by 2005. He has been a firm believer of indigenous nuclear and missile programme and is reported to have said: "Do not indulge in short cuts by importing equipment. Do things yourself".

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## BOTTOM LINE

Although the office of the President under the constitution is a ceremonial one, the President may play a crucial role in forming coalition governments. He retains his discretionary powers as to who forms a government in situations when no political party commands a majority in the Parliament.

Second, constitutionally India is a secular country. However, the only Muslim-majority state within India is Kashmir. India's claim on Kashmir is tenuous because in terms of the UN resolutions of 1948 and 1949, it is a disputed territory. Furthermore when the Muslim ruler of Hindu-majority Junagardh princely state acceded to Pakistan (Junagardh's Prime Minister/Dewan was Shahnawaz Bhutto, father of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto) India grabbed it on grounds that the accession went against the will of

Indian nuclear scientist community for their determination, competence and ability to match India's nuclear capability with the rest of the world. This will provide incentives to them to continue to work to achieve to a greater height in the nuclear field. It sends a strong message to the professional class in India that if they excel in their fields, the country will express gratitude and honour them in an appropriate manner.

Fourth, the appointment of a Muslim President in India will sharply contrast with the current

initials like all Kerala names indicate his village name). He is 70 years old, a bachelor, famed for his shoulder-length hair, casual manner and heavy Tamil accent. He is known as "Missile Man" in the country. He is self-effacing, lives very modestly in a university apartment in Chennai (Madras) where he is an emeritus professor. He is a strict vegetarian and teetotaler. He loves playing sitar during his leisure time. It is believed that he has been liberal in his attitude towards religions and reads every day Hindu

INDIA'S top most atomic scientist Abdul Kalam is poised to be soon elected as the next President of India. The government has chosen an eminent scientist from minority Muslim community for the highest office in the country. In making the unique choice, the BJP-led coalition government has demonstrated its shrewd sense of political judgment that will have impact both within and outside India.

The question is: why did BJP-Coalition government choose a Muslim scientist as the President of India? There appears to be many possible reasons.

First, the recent Gujarat riots and the demolition of Babri mosque in 1992 have tainted the BJP's image. They lost popularity in the country for their extreme right wing views. The fact that riots in Gujarat took place under the BJP Chief Minister provided a sharp focus on the

# Only justice for the Palestinians will bring peace to the Middle East

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writes from Princeton

A journalist is demoralized when he realizes that a group of people will sink to any brutish level, sacrifice any individual or any nation, smear any group or any religion, destroy every truth and replace it with falsehood to get their way. Such is clearly the case with the Sharon Zionists of Israel and their all too powerful amen corner in the US. They are so relentless that in spite of all the free positive publicity Israel garners in the US media, the Sharon government is currently spending one hundred million dollars for public relations work in the US, to blame the turmoil in the Middle East entirely on the Palestinians.

Fact: Israel was created with the connivance of the British (The Balfour Declaration), through the terrorism of the Irgun and the Stern Jewish gangs, who expelled the Palestinians from their homelands. Fact: Although Israel flouts every United Nations resolution it does not like and calls the UN the enemy of Israel, the state of Israel was created through a UN resolution. Fact: According to UN resolutions and the official US policy through the presidency of Jimmy Carter, Israeli settlements on the territories captured in the 1967 war are "illegal." Fact: Since the early 1970s, with the instigation of the mastermind Ariel Sharon, Israel has embarked on a policy of creeping annexation, with the sole aim of claiming all of the West Bank and Gaza for Israel. Fact: Through digging of tunnels underneath the Al Aqsa mosque to weaken its foundation, Israel hopes to demolish the Al Aqsa mosque, the third holiest mosque in Islam, mentioned repeatedly in the holy Qur'an, and replace it with the lost Jewish temple. Fact: America derives absolutely no benefit from Israel, except the enmity of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims; Israel milks five billion dollars annually from America, and uses America as a political and diplomatic cover for all its crimes, all the time making not only the Palestinians, but the Muslim world as well angrier and angrier at America. Fact: Israel has made America a target of terrorists and is costing America trillions of dollars in enhanced homeland security. Wouldn't it be more cost effective for the US to reach out to the Muslims? Israel can do all this and much more and get away with it only because Israel has got America by the scruff of its neck!

In the World Cup parlance, Israel, the golden boy can do no wrong. Since it has bought off the referee (the US), Israel can commit foul after foul, with the referee shrugging it off with a "boys will be boys" refrain. If the Palestinians commit fouls, yellow and red cards fly constantly and Israel shoots penalty kicks all day! Unfortunately, what Muslims do not realize is that the West regards them as no more than a slightly retarded child of the human race. Through its actions, the West is telling the Muslims: "You may rant and rave, but to us it does not really matter how you feel or what you think. We have all the economic, diplomatic and military power, which we are going to use against you. And we are going to make damn sure that you remain powerless." Israel has very powerful friends in the upper echelon of the US government; the Palestinians and the Muslims only have powerful enemies. Instead of compromising with their Palestinian victims, Israel has decided that as long as it has America in its pocket, it

can ignore the rest of the world, and does.

You have to hand it to the Israelis and their supporters. They have made outrageous behaviour ordinary and rewarding. When Israel invaded the Palestinian territories last March, there was an international outcry. When it did it again last week, the world remained silent. Now, let us look at the case of the recently retired columnist of *The New York Times* and staunch Zionist A. M. Rosenthal. He was so virulently anti-Arab and anti-Muslim and insulting to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that Arabs and Muslims considered him an unrepentant racist. When Republican President Bush senior and his Secretary of State James Baker stood up to Israeli prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and called Jerusalem a disputed city in 1992, Rosenthal, a "Republican" went ballistic. From then on until he retired a couple of years ago, Rosenthal insulted President George Bush senior and his Secretary of State Baker continuously by referring to them in his column as "bushbaker" a bastardized version of their names. (Where was *The New York Times*'s journalistic integrity, one wonders?) Imag-

getting anything whatsoever! Israel can have their elected leader, Sharon, but the Palestinians cannot have their elected leader, Arafat, but will have to elect a new one. Even if the Palestinians were to fulfil all their obligations, as has been seen repeatedly, Israel will not, and America will not push them. Mr. Bush was oozing with sympathy for the suffering of the Israelis, but expressed no compassion for the more numerous Palestinian victims of Israeli brutality. Palestinians must realize that they will get nothing from President Bush, whose head and heart are with the Israelis. Instead of pandering to the Jewish voters for short-term personal gain (reelection), shouldn't Mr. Bush be looking after the long-term interests of the United States?

Having lived in the US for so many years, and having interacted with so many Americans the writer can vouch for the decency and fair-mindedness of the ordinary American people. That is why over the last 54 years there has been a concerted effort by the Israeli agents to provide the Americans with misinformation. Every major American newspaper, magazine, television network is owned by

tatives, Mr. Tom DeLay, who wants Israel to annex the West Bank, Gaza and Syria's Golan Heights, accused Mr. Turner of lacking a moral compass. Even CNN disassociated itself from its founder's comments. The reasons the Zionists stifle any dissent and make it so unpleasant for the dissenter is that they are afraid. They are afraid that once ordinary Americans are allowed to speak the truth about Israel with impunity, the floodgates of truth will open and the lie that is Israel will be swept away.

While the non-Jewish Tom DeLays of the world heap lavish praise for every act of Israeli terrorism, the Zionists, with names like Stephen Emerson, Daniel Pipes, Yossef Bodansky and Frank Gaffney hardly ever mention Israel by name. They pretend that America is all they care about, and that Israel is the last thing on their mind, when in reality Israel is the only thing on their mind. They spend hours on television making the case why it is in America's interest to attack Hamas, Hizbullah, Islamic Jihad, Iraq and Iran (all Israel's enemies), when in reality it is in Israel's interest. They spend hours on television badmouthing Pakistan (a nation

Americans have a vested interest in America's prosperity, security and general well being; after all, they and their children have chosen America as their homeland.

There has been a horrific role reversal by the Jews in the Middle East and in America. After suffering the holocaust at the hands of the Nazis, Israelis have now become Nazis to the Palestinians. After suffering through the McCarthy era of the 1950s as "communist sympathizers," the rightwing Jews of America have now become the tormentors of American Muslims, and paint the Muslims as "terrorist sympathizers." Of course Muslims are not terrorist sympathizers; they are as patriotic as any other American group; the only difference with the Zionists being that the Muslim Americans owe their allegiance to, and consider themselves the citizens of the United States only, not of Israel. Although Muslims have lived in the United States (in Michigan) for over a hundred years, the Zionists are floating the idea that perhaps Muslims are not fit to live in the US! Mindful of the fact that Islam is the fastest growing religion in America, as in the rest of the world, the rightwing Jews have combined forces with rightwing Christians to gang up on the religion of Islam itself. Last week, Reverend Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida and a past President of the Southern Baptist Convention called Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) a "demon-possessed pedophile." Unlike Ted Turner, he did not apologize. Has any Muslim ever, or can any Muslim ever say anything negative about Prophets Issa and Musa (Jesus and Moses) (peace and blessings of Allah be on them)?

Isn't it astonishing that even after 54 years of brutality against the Palestinian people Israel has to repeatedly utter the mantra, "Israel has a right to exist"? Is there any other nation on earth that does that? No. Because, no other country in the modern times was created through the forcible expulsion of the native people. No other country in the world stole the land of the neighbouring people and built settlement on it. No other country scuttled a peace process that could mean the surrender of those settlements and another people's sacred religious institutions.

without whose assistance American war against Taliban would have been impossible) because Pakistan has the only "Islamic Bomb." The Zionists use Sept. 11 to drive a wedge between America and Saudi Arabia, because Saudi Arabia has money and hosts Islam's two holiest sites. Osama Bin Laden could have picked hijackers of many nationalities for September 11. He chose so many Saudis to get back at the rulers of his native land for expelling him and stripping him of his Saudi citizenship. The Zionists would have America believe that the government of Saudi Arabia picked those Saudi nationals to commit acts of terror against America! To perpetuate the lies, the Zionists have taken dead aim at the one American community that sees through their lies: the Muslim American community. The Zionist agents all profess to be experts on Islam, Taliban and Al Qaeda and write books on those subjects. The titles of their books invariably contain the word "Jihad" to conjure up America's worst fears about Islam. Zionist Mr. Emerson is the number one exponent of anti-Islamic vitriol. In every television appearance, which is several times a day, he touts his book "Jihad in America," with a subtitle "terrorists living among us." Recently he castigated the Director of the FBI, Mr. Robert Mueller, for calling American Muslim Alliance a mainstream organization. Mr. Emerson and his Zionist cohorts want to indict the seven million-strong Muslim American community as fifth columnists so that they are always on the defensive and their views about the Israeli exploitation of America are dismissed as irrelevant and tainted. The Zionists want to suppress the fact that Muslim

## LETTER FROM AMERICA

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ine, therefore, the writer's astonishment when President George Bush junior awarded the renegade journalist, A. M. Rosenthal, the nation's highest civilian award, The Medal of Freedom, last week!

Perhaps surprise was not in order. It is common knowledge that after the endorsement of candidate George W. Bush by Muslim American associations, seven million Muslim Americans helped elect Bush President by overwhelmingly voting for him, and by providing crucial votes in Florida. Close to seventy percent of Jewish Americans, on the other hand, voted for the Democratic candidate Al Gore and his Jewish running mate Joseph Lieberman. No matter. Bush promptly appointed the most unabashed supporter of Israel, Ari Fleischer, as his spokesman, and among American Presidents, Bush has become the most diehard supporter of Israel. The state of Israel has a policy of inviting all up and coming US politicians to Israel, to reap benefits later. When Texas Governor George W. Bush was thus invited a few years ago, so well the Israelis treated him that it is said that Bush fell in love with Israel. It is a pity that the Palestinians do not have a country to invite and pamper impressionable politicians!

The idiotic Middle East peace proposal enunciated by President Bush last week (*The New York Times* called it, "A plan without a map"), toeing the Israeli line to the letter, with Israeli-coined expressions like "homicide bombing," could have been written by the Israeli government; perhaps it was. As with Oslo, Israel can act satanic but will receive all the benefits upfront, whereas the Palestinians have to become angels before

Zionist or Zionist sympathizers. The fare that they offer American public is: 1) Israel is the only democracy in the region (Israel's brutality and occupation of Palestinian lands are glossed over.); 2) Israel is America's only friend in the Middle East (the Lavon Affair when Israeli agent attempted to kill Americans to engineer enmity between Egypt and America; the Israeli bombing of USS Liberty in 1967 and killing of 34 American sailors, and the damage done by the Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard to American intelligence network are never mentioned); 3) Support of Israel serves America's interest (actually it serves only Israel's interest. Whereas Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States have saved America trillions of dollars by keeping oil prices low, Israel collects 5 billion dollars from US annually.) Further, how can US's long term interests be served by aligning itself with a terrorist nation of 6 million people while alienating 1.3 billion Muslims? If the US population is continuously bombarded with such lies, they can be forgiven for believing in some of those.

The Zionists are quick to pounce on any errant American espousing a point of view critical of Israel, however powerful that individual may be. Last week, in an interview with London *Guardian*, Ted Turner, the head of CNN, articulated some views shared by the rest of the world. Mr. Turner said that Israel has one of the strongest armies of the world whereas the Palestinians have nothing but their bodies. Mr. Turner also said that both the Israelis and the Palestinians are guilty of terrorism. Immediately, Israel called Turner "stupid." Majority Whip in the US House of Represent-