

Cola citizenship

In the recently released film, *Corporate*, the US partner of a firm accused of selling soft drinks that have pesticide residues, says: You may be the finance minister of the country, but if you don't make this controversy go away, I'm going to withdraw all my investment. In the movie, a worried finance minister calls up the local politician in Maharashtra who's driving the pesticide campaign and asks him to stop it since the investment implications are substantial. Real life, of course, is different, so it is unlikely that P Chidambaram or anyone else will take seriously the threats made by the US undersecretary for international trade, Franklin Lavin. Mr Lavin has said that the action taken against the cola firms, after the Centre for Science and Environment found pesticide residues in their products, could affect investments from the US into India. "This kind of action is a setback for the Indian economy," he is reported as having said to the news agency AFP.

The bans on cola companies in half a dozen states are of course unwarranted and may well be illegal, because the products are being manufactured with government permission and are not violating any existing regulations. But they are more a setback for the companies concerned than for the Indian economy, and the lesson therefore has to be learnt by the cola companies—which have been resisting the stipulation of product standards that would have protected them from arbitrary bans.

In any case, Mr Lavin should check his facts, because the executive director of the American Chamber of Commerce, which represents the leading US companies doing business in India, has been reported as saying the opposite of what Mr Lavin

believes: the ban will not impact investments at this stage! That stands to reason, why would a GE lose a chance to tap the Indian market just because Coca-Cola's products are being asked to meet certain standards? Some observers have insinuated that the firms are being targeted for being American, but there are no cola producers of any significance that are not American. And before the CSE did its first tests on bottled soft drinks three years ago, it did similar tests for bottled water, and Indian brands like Bisleri and Bailey were among those named for producing sub-standard products. In short, people should forget conspiracy theories and macro-repercussions, and focus on the job at hand, which is specific regulation that is eminently feasible.

It is worth bearing in mind that, till some time back, the same firms that are now parading British test findings were arguing that it was simply not possible to deal with pesticide residues in complex products such as theirs. Indeed, after resisting regulations till the other day, the cola companies find that they are now willing to live with them—they probably see regulations as a lesser evil, if the alternative is an outright ban. Greater consistency in the stands they adopt would improve their credibility. The companies and others are of course right in arguing that India needs to set proper standards for other products such as milk and apples, but that doesn't make the case against the cola firms any weaker. All of which points to the central fact, that the real job is in the hands of the government, which needs to notify the standards, something it has failed to do so far, and also carry out its own tests periodically, to make sure that the products meet the stipulated standards.

Gains in peace

As the conflict in Lebanon gives way to a ceasefire, it is becoming increasingly clear that there was more complexity to it than first appeared to be the case. The kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah was not new. There have been pinpricks of this nature inflicted upon northern Israel for many months now. In some ways, the situation in Israel was not unlike what India has faced, in that attacks come from across the boundary and the attackers have a sanctuary in a weak state. There are similarities with the Taliban/al Qaeda situation in Afghanistan also, though the Lebanese government appears to have been a less willing host to Hezbollah when compared with the Taliban.

Hezbollah is a different animal when compared with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, which long fought against Israel. Hezbollah appears to have acquired considerable military hardware, whose source of supply would be interesting to unearth. In recent years, high oil prices have led to slush money being placed in the hands of dubious characters in West Asia, which has led to fresh resources flowing in to various jihadi bands.

Perceptive analysts have long known that a war against Hezbollah was inevitable. Israel also appears to have prepared itself for a full-scale conflict, and the kidnapping of two soldiers served as the last trigger on a simmering problem.

From an Israeli perspective, Hezbollah has been significantly defanged in terms of destruction of military hardware. The strategic Israeli goal—of being seen to win every conflict—has been largely achieved; no surrounding country will lose respect for the Israeli army out of this episode.

With the 30,000-strong peace-keeping force, the northern boundary of Israel will be somewhat safer. However, this has been obtained at great cost to Israel in terms of giving Hezbollah new supporters across West Asia.

The deeper story concerns the efforts of the international community, led by the US, on Iran's nuclear ambitions. As long as Hezbollah was strong in southern Lebanon, there was always the danger that when pressure on Iran escalated, Iran could trigger a proxy war against Israel, one that would immediately polarise West Asia in favour of Iran. That lever has now been taken away, both by the destruction of Hezbollah military assets, and by the injection of the peace-keeping force. It thus reduces the bargaining power of Iran in the coming confrontation about nuclear weapons.

Where do India's interests lie, in this conflict? There are elements which strike both ways. It is in India's interests that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons. It is in India's interests that non-state actors such as the LeT or al Qaeda or Hezbollah have reduced power, both from the viewpoint of direct attacks in India, and from the viewpoint of the health of the global economy. It is in India's interests that Israel be strong and safe, given the burgeoning economic and military links between the two countries. However, at the same time, there are factors that go the other way. It is not in India's interests to have high oil prices, which geopolitical tension in West Asia can cause. India has important economic links with countries like the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and the long-term health of these countries is undermined by the popularity of Hezbollah.



Illustration: BINAY SINHA

British Muslim youth: Why disaffected?

The first thing to be done is to destroy the Islamist infrastructure that has been created in Britain, says DEEPAK LAL

A recent survey of attitudes of Muslims in Europe by the Pew Foundation found that British Muslims held more negative views about the West than their co-religionists on the Continent. Particularly startling was the finding that 69 per cent of British Muslims held negative views of Jews, as compared with 29 per cent of French Muslims. Yet researchers have found that British Muslims are envied in the rest of Europe for being better integrated into the national life of their adopted country, with more successful role models in a variety of national roles including the media. Yet on 7/7 last year a group of home-bred Muslim youth blew themselves up and a large number of their fellow citizens (including other Muslims) on the London tube. As I write this my children have just arrived on 10/8 in the south of France for our annual holiday from London after a horrendous wait at Gatwick airport because of the chaos caused by the foiled plot to blow up 10 transatlantic airliners by as many as 24 British Muslim youth. How does one explain this paradox of the rage of Muslim youth in a country which has been the most successful example of multicultural integration of its various religious and ethnic minorities?

Two incidents cited by Lord Lamont (the former Chancellor of the Ex-

chequer) at an Institute of Economic Affairs lunch both show up this paradox and its causes. He said he was walking in central London last month when England were playing in the World Cup, and saw a car festooned with St. George's flags and from which the usual shouts of England supporters were issuing. When he looked inside the car to his surprise the loudest were from two obviously Muslim girls clad in burqas. They had obviously passed the well-known test for the integration of Britain's ethnic minorities by Norman Tebbit, who wanted to see if they would cheer for England in a popular sport. Yet to all appearances they seemed the epitome of the traditional Muslim girl's mendaciously pilloried by Islamophobes.

The other incident was even more telling. As Lord Lamont was walking through St. James' Park, he saw a girl and a boy in a clinch, which some years back would have led the police to caution them for indecent behaviour. Given their general state of *dishabille*—not an uncommon sight in London—the only surprise was that the girl was wearing a Muslim headscarf, and as it kept slipping off her head, she kept pushing it back!

These two incidents point to the cultural confusion of a certain section of the British Muslim youth, as well as the sources of the success of Britain's un-

forced multicultural assimilation. To understand this it is important to note the different streams of Muslim immigration into Britain. As a cultivated Muslim academic put it to me, imagine you are a child not of an educated middle class Muslim immigrant from the sub-continent, but of uneducated parents who have moved from their village in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan to the British Midlands, and your parents (especially the older women in the household) do not even speak the native language. Then as a child you go to the local primary and secondary schools, where you adopt the culture of your peers. Some of those who are bright (like non-Muslims in their cohort) eventually go to university and get respectable, even white collar jobs. But everyday when they go home they move from the culture of their British school to that of their Pakistani village.

Moreover, the culture of their schools reflects the general class structure of British society. This reflects the secret of Britain's success in integrating its minorities. Rather than putting its immigrants into ethnic boxes, as the US has done, or in ethnic ghettos, like the French, Britain allowed the various ethnic groups to sort themselves into the traditional British class structure. Thus the peasantry from Pak-

istan, which has fathered the British-born-and-bred Muslim fanatics, was naturally fitted into the working class slot. Their children adopted all the attitudes and habits of their peers in the working class. But most of these habits and attitudes—particularly in the domestic domain of sex and marriage—clash with those of their peasant parents, who, desperately trying to keep a traditional hold on their British progeny, would naturally turn to the traditional upholders of their customs and rites in their homeland, the religious leaders—the imams—for help in this effort.

Enter the final element in the unholy brew which has led to the British Muslim terrorist. Partly to counter the threat from theocratic Iran, the Saudi government sought to counter its theological influence by paying for and establishing Wahabi preachers in most Western countries. At the same time Britain, with its traditional tolerance of political refugees and supporters, from anarchists to Marxists, became a haven for all the Islamist preachers and activists who had fled their own countries when sentenced to death or imprisonment for inciting rebellion in their homelands. Most of them found a home as exiles in London, which came to be known as Londonistan.

But this British tolerance of foreign agitators and political refugees had always been based on the implicit contract with the British authorities that they would not foul their new-found nest, whilst being free to agitate for political causes in their homelands. This implicit contract was broken by Abu Hamza, the Islamist veteran of the Mujahidden's war against the Russians in Afghanistan. He and others of his ilk including Wahabi imams then found among some of the culturally confused Muslim youth, suffering from the usual angst of adolescence, ready converts to their *jihadist* ideology. The brilliant use of the Internet by Osama bin Laden and other Islamists, aided and abetted by a generally anti-American British media, particularly the BBC, then fuelled the new-found religious rage of these culturally-torn youngsters.

All the elements of a heady brew were in place to lead to 7/7 and 10/8. Whether the ostensible spark which lit the fuse was Kosovo, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq or now Lebanon is immaterial. Given the commitment to *jihad* inculcated in these youngsters, to right perceived or imagined wrongs, the bombs would inevitably have gone off. Now, the first thing to be done is to destroy the Islamist infrastructure that has been created in Britain and hope, in time, that the next generation of disaffected British Muslim working class youth, like their peers, stick to mugging old ladies in shopping malls instead of blowing themselves up on means of public transport.

In the arms of Israel



BROADSWORD

AJAI SHUKLA

Long before the CPI (M)'s recent demand to scrap India's defence ties with Israel, governments in New Delhi have finessed difficult questions about that growing military relationship, with politically correct formulations in support of the Palestinian cause. But with Israel's latest foray into Lebanon, the questions could get more searching and, with Tel Aviv already frustrated at India's reluctance to hold hands in public, there is the potential for growing discord.

Both sides truthfully aver that the military relationship is separate from the political one. But of all commercial dealings, arms relationships are by far the most political. A country can trade in food grains, software or leather for purely economic considerations; Soviet Union gas supplies warmed West Europe through the coldest days of the Cold War. But arms supplies, by their very nature, extend beyond the economic realm into the political. Israeli arms sales have always rested on a common security perception with Raisina Hill. Islamic extremism is the favourite nightmare of decision-makers on both sides. But this security convergence has never translated into open political support for Israel; on July 26, India's Parliament strongly condemned the Israeli bombing of Lebanon. The arms relationship lives in the shadow of this contradiction between security convergence and political divergence.

The numbers, though, make fine reading for Israel. In less than a decade, its arms sales to India have made Israel

the fifth-biggest arms supplier in the world. Only Russia sells more weaponry in India, because the Indian military is locked into a dependency: our vast arsenal of traditionally Soviet-origin weaponry must be replaced or upgraded with systems that match its technical characteristics. In practical terms an armoured division equipped with T-72 tanks cannot be upgraded with British Challenger or American Abram tanks. Only the Russian T-90 (in effect, a new-generation T-72) has the communications links, operating characteristics and logistical similarities that enable it to function seamlessly alongside that armoured division's other weapons systems.

In penetrating the Indian market, Israel has used the only workable strategy: riding piggyback on the Russian bear. India's major weapons platforms—tanks, air defence guns, warships, and fighters—will remain principally Russian for at least two decades. For Israel, that's not a problem; its defence industries do not specialise in major systems. Instead, Israel swells its bottom line in India by giving a new lease of life to outdated Russian systems. The principle is simple: a major platform, say, a

Russian MIG-21 fighter, will continue to fly for up to three decades. Its fighting capability—which depends on its radars, avionics and missile systems—will get outdated in half that time. Replacing those with state-of-the-art systems (retro-fit and mid-life upgrades are the technical terms) often costs more than what the fighter did when it was bought. It is here that Israel excels. Cash registers in Tel Aviv are still ringing from upgrading India's old MIG-21s into the Bison fighter, now usable for another 15 years, and from transforming India's vintage Russian 130 mm artillery guns into modern 155 mm howitzers.

Working to Israel's advantage are the mix-and-match deals now on offer in the global arms supermarkets. India may opt for a mazboot-sasta-aur-tikau Russian platform—a T-90 tank, a Krivak-class frigate, or a Su-30MKI fighter—but it no longer has to buy the less-than-cutting-edge electronics, surveillance and missile systems that Russia fits. After problems with the T-90 night vision and fire control equipment and the Krivak anti-missile defences, India's military is wary of Russian electronics. So the three new frigates that India is buying from Russia will be fitted with an Israeli anti-missile system: the Extended Range Barak (ERB), which Tel Aviv says it will co-develop with India.

The agreement to co-develop the ERB shows how Israel is learning from Russia in exploiting the less-than-ethical working of India's defence production organisation. When Russia wanted to by-

pass the unpredictable realm of competitive bidding in capturing the Indian market for its Yakhont cruise missile, Moscow signed up with Delhi to "co-develop" the Brahmos. Billed as a triumph of joint development, the Brahmos is little more than the Russian Yakhont with a joint label. Similarly, the Extended Range Barak, "jointly developed" by India and Israel, will be an up-rated version of the old Barak missile, with India firmly locked into the deal.

Israel's greatest achievement could be its entry into the innermost portals of Indian defence: the shadowy anti-missile defence programme, which detects and shoots down incoming ballistic missiles (presumably armed with nuclear warheads) before they hit Indian targets. India has bought billion-dollar Green Pine radars from Israel that already scan threatening Pakistani launch areas, such as a 500-km sector around Islamabad. Now, if America clears the sale, India could spend more billions on Israeli Arrow missiles, which will severely erode Pakistan's nuclear deterrent, perhaps forcing Islamabad to step up its production of nuclear bombs.

With billions of dollars in the balance, Israel has chosen to quietly accept being politically spurned by India. But with the two establishments clearly in sync on the military and the strategic fronts, Israel could be correctly calculating that New Delhi's public distance from Tel Aviv will inevitably diminish, gradually transforming mistress into wife.

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As we celebrate Independence Day, it is worth remembering that the great literary works from that time concern Partition and mourning, not Independence and celebration. Here are four extraordinary works that go deep into the heart of Partition.

Saadat Hasan Manto, Collected Short Stories: Manto lived in Bombay at the time of Partition, and had a nervous breakdown in its aftermath. The violence he had witnessed was remembered in his stories in precise, unflinching detail; what was more serious for the writer was that his sense of identity had been brutally reshuffled. He was Manto, the Muslim, suddenly, for people who had known him for years as Saadat, the writer. Manto moved back to Lahore, where he wrote his perfect stories, often in one swift draft, in between tending

to the serious business of being a full-time alcoholic.

The man who captured the psychic agony of Partition more completely than any other writer is claimed by both India and Pakistan, fittingly. Today, his story "Toba Tek Singh" is an iconic classic; to Manto, it was natural to set the drama of Partition in a lunatic asylum, and have its main protagonist inhabiting the no-man's-land of insanity rather than make an impossible choice between the two countries he could claim. There are other stories, stories only Manto could tell, like the chilling "Thanda Gosh" (Cold Meat), where a man stabbed by his suspected infidelity by his lover confesses that he has indeed been unfaithful—in the heat of the riots, with a corpse.

Khushwant Singh, Train to Pakistan: Published nine years



SPEAKING VOLUMES

Nilanjana S Roy

after Partition, *Train to Pakistan* introduced a young, sensitive writer called Khushwant Singh. Singh set his story in the small Punjab village of Mano Majra, where the rhythms of daily life are set by the trains that rattle by at regular hours.

Then one day, a ghost train arrives at the village station. No one gets off; the villagers can

make nothing of the train until they are asked to collect wood and kerosene, for no apparent reason.

"A soft breeze began to blow towards the village. It brought the smell of burning kerosene, then of wood. And then—a faint acrid smell of searing flesh.

"The village was still in a deathly silence. No one asked anyone else what the odour was. They all knew. They had known it all the time. The answer was implicit in the fact that the train had come from Pakistan."

Khushwant Singh has since become the Grand Old Man of Indian letters, and is famous for his bestsellers; but he never

wrote anything to equal that early novel. This year, Roli Books released a new edition of *Train to Pakistan* with Margaret Bourke-White's unrelenting, agonising photographs of the year of Partition.

Rahi Masoom Reza, A Village Divided: In 1966, Rahi Masoom Reza published *Adha Gaon*, perhaps the novel that was closest to his heart. The novel is divided into ten chapters, mirroring the ten days of Moharram, and set in a lightly fictionalised version of the village of Gangauli, where Reza grew up.

Reza offers an insight into the world of a largely Shia Muslim

village in India, which survives World War Two, is heavily scarred by Partition, but limps into Independence with the rest of India. The life of the village and the relationships between the various characters are disrupted by Partition in the same way that Reza interrupts the flow of the story to insert an "Introduction" on page 272. "I, Saiyid Masson Reza Abidi... am deeply worried. I am constantly asking myself where I belong—Azamgarh or Ghazipur?" says the narrator. He knows only Gangauli, in Ghazipur; he will not let anyone have the right to tell him to leave for elsewhere, and because he must lay claim to a concept called "home", he interrupts the story, with an Introduction.

Kamleshwar, Partitions: In May 1990, Kamleshwar began work on *Kitne Pakistan*, an ambitious attempt to understand

Partition through allegory and realism. Hope, tragedy and suffering have equal roles in the India of 1947, as Buta Singh and Zainab find and lose each other, separated by refugee camps, religion, national policies and ultimately, death. But Partition is only another defendant in a long-running trial, where an anonymous aadeb, a man of literature, presides over the testimony from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Nazi Germany, East Timor, the Aztec civilization and mythological Greece. From Toba Tek Singh to Babur, Ignatius Loyola to the Ganga (present as a witness), Qurratulain Hyder to Mountbatten and Ravana, a cast of thousands wades through blood towards a tenuous peace in this extraordinary novel.

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