



Intelligence Report

Office of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Analysis

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India: BJP Flexing Muscles, But How Far Will It Go? [Redacted]

India's recent nuclear tests and sabre-rattling over Kashmir may be a sign that the country's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government believes it will be able to follow through with its long-range agenda--to remake the country as a powerful Hindu state in accordance with party mythology about India's past. If true, the party's widely popular security posture would help it strengthen its political base and prepare the ground for more controversial domestic reforms down the road.

- *Although the BJP failed to win a majority in the general election, the party is riding a tidal wave of popularity from the tests and is now signaling that resolving Kashmir on India's terms will be next on its agenda.*
- *New Delhi is claiming that its nuclear tests were for national security and to counter China. Nonetheless, last week Home Minister Advani declared publicly that Pakistan must "roll back its anti-India policy immediately" or "it will prove costly" for Islamabad.*
- *Pakistan's decision to conduct nuclear tests is being portrayed by the BJP government as confirmation that its "get tough" policy toward its neighbor was justified.* [Redacted]

The BJP is sending mixed messages on its foreign policy priorities beyond the confines of South Asia, at least in part to keep foreign powers guessing about its intentions. India is calculating that demonstrating its nuclear prowess makes it a state the international community can no longer ignore and will win it a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and a place at the table in various regional forums. [Redacted]

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It is far from clear how far the BJP will be able to proceed with more controversial aspects of its agenda. The party leads a coalition of diverse political interests and must retain the support of its allies to stay in power. Many BJP partners would oppose party goals to limit special provisions for India's 120 million Muslims on

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divorce and other religious practices and end the special status of Muslim majority Kashmir, both of which could produce widespread political unrest. [redacted]

[redacted] *If the party is serious about exploiting its burgeoning popularity to strengthen its hold on national politics, however, one indicator would be the calling of a snap election in the next few months.*

- *Some press pundits in India already are predicting such a poll.*
- *BJP insiders estimate that an election held soon could give them a solid majority in a new parliament and possibly enough strength to amend the Constitution.* [redacted]

Despite the BJP's current popularity, developments could reverse its fortunes, particularly if they occurred before the party is able to reinforce its hold on power through a snap election or other means. The BJP's handling of India's economic slowdown could be its most serious vulnerability.

- *Serious inflation could result if the government expands defense and security spending at the same time it tries to "kickstart" the economy with a broad-based economic stimulus.*
- *Although South East Asian-style meltdown is unlikely, the economy could deteriorate enough to erode the BJP's support as the euphoria from the nuclear tests erodes.* [redacted]

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~~Secret~~**India: BJP Flexing Muscles, But How Far Will It Go?**

India's new Bharatiya Janata Party-led government is riding a tidal wave of public support since its recent nuclear tests. The applause may embolden party leaders to consider pursuing other goals outlined in the coalition government's nationalist agenda, such as ending special provisions for the country's minority Muslims.

- Popular approval of the tests--which were conducted on 11 and 13 May--reached 91 percent in one poll, and shows no sign of diminishing.
- Indian financial markets are shrugging off threatened international sanctions.
- At a press conference with Kashmir Chief Minister Abdullah, Advani said that the nuclear tests ushered in a new era in India-Pakistani relations and warned Islamabad that New Delhi would respond to provocations in Kashmir in a manner "costly for Pakistan." Advani also refused to rule out Indian "hot pursuit" across the Line of Control, cautioned that Indian troops would adopt a more "offensive" posture, and said that the BJP would not hold talks with militant groups.

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to [redacted]

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~~Secret~~**India: Kashmir Policy Turns Proactive**

India and Pakistan's mutual claim on Kashmir--the cause of two wars between them--is the primary obstacle to improved ties and remains the most likely flashpoint for war. Several major incidents in the first few months of this year have doused hopes for a significant withdrawal of security forces from Kashmir, as envisioned by the state governor barely a year ago.

- Since January, militants have conducted several high profile attacks on civilians. Entire families of Kashmiri Hindus have been massacred.
- Journalists in Pakistan say that a similar slaughter of 22 villagers in the Pakistani part of Kashmir this month was a retaliatory strike by pro-Indian counter-militants.

The BJP government is adopting an aggressive posture in Kashmir that is certain to raise tensions with Islamabad. In response to increased violence in the state this year, New Delhi announced that senior civilian and military officials would be given "a free hand" to deal with insurgents and terrorists in Kashmir.

- Vajpayee this week gave hardline Home Minister Advani full responsibility for Kashmir policy. He will have carte blanche to approve measures like cross-border raids, "hot pursuit" forays across the line of control, village "sweeps," and crackdowns on infiltration.

The BJP has always endorsed a "get tough" policy in Kashmir, but the issue has taken center stage since India's nuclear tests.

- Last week, Advani announced the tests had "ushered in a new era in Indo-Pak relations," and explicitly linked India's nuclear capability with "finding a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem."
- Vajpayee also hinted at the connection between the tests and New Delhi's Kashmir policy last week when he took Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah--who lacks any connection to the scientific, defense, or nuclear establishments--on an official visit to the test site.

Advani's stated goals in Kashmir are to deal with Pakistan's "proxy war"; improve development in the state; and resettle Kashmiri Hindu refugees who had fled the violence in the state. Advani appears to rule out any non-military option, including talks with militant groups and Kashmiri political separatists.

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The BJP decided to conduct the nuclear tests to enhance its domestic political standing.

BJP leaders clearly anticipated that the move would be widely popular and would boost the government's political stock at home, particularly after the Ghauri launch.

- Although the BJP has long called for nuclear testing and inducting nuclear weapons into India's arsenal; Indians of all stripes take pride in standing up to the great powers by demonstrating the country's scientific achievements and military strength.
- Adopting an aggressive posture toward Pakistan also is a sure vote-getter, especially in the northern and western states, which comprise the BJP's main base of support.
- The BJP also knew that it would gain public support by openly defying Western threats of sanctions.
- Prior to the tests, the government had been fending off embarrassing public demands from unruly coalition partners that was fueling press speculation about the coalition's staying power.

Who Knew?

The decision to test was tightly held

The decisionmakers clearly kept the loop small for reasons of secrecy, but the BJP also has a history of ignoring its political allies when considering high-profile policy moves. The BJP has handled its state level alliances in this way, reasoning that partners who depend on BJP strength for their seats at the table should take a back seat on decisionmaking.

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Where the BJP Goes from Here [REDACTED]

Foreign Policy. India expects its demonstrated nuclear prowess eventually will earn it international respect and a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Advani's statements indicate that India will be prepared to defend its preeminence with force if necessary, although [REDACTED] India would prefer Pakistan make the first move in any conflict.

- Pakistan's nuclear tests will vindicate and embolden those in the BJP government who favor New Delhi's current, harsher stance toward Islamabad.
- New Delhi is unlikely to pick a fight with China, which lies outside India's security orbit, although it clearly regards nuclear weapons as an equalizer and a deterrent against Chinese aggression. Indians--Hindu nationalists in particular--remember bitterly India's humiliating defeat by China in their short 1962 border war, and ill feelings toward its northern neighbor run deep.
- Vajpayee was humiliated by the Chinese during a visit there as Foreign Minister in the late 1970s, however, and Defense Minister Fernandes is an outspoken advocate for the Tibetan cause. [REDACTED]

Beyond its immediate neighborhood, New Delhi is likely to send mixed signals on specific aspects of its foreign policy at least in part to keep foreign powers guessing about its intentions. It is already dangling the possibility that it might sign an amended Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to stifle world criticism in the wake of the tests. Statements by Indian officials, however, vary widely from saying that India "will never sign" to claims that it wants to sign "as soon as possible." In our judgment, India is trying to goad the United States into making an attractive offer on CTBT without tipping its own hand.

- [REDACTED] senior BJP officials charged with foreign policymaking support resisting US pressure to sign the CTBT. [REDACTED]

The Domestic Agenda. The BJP is a long way from meeting the full range of goals in its manifesto, and it is unclear whether the BJP's burgeoning popularity in the wake of the tests will embolden party leaders to begin implementing the BJP's controversial

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domestic plans. The BJP may first take steps to consolidate its recent political gains. [redacted] New Delhi political circles are discussing the probability of a snap election in the next few months, which might enable the BJP to form a majority government in its own right.

- BJP strategists expect they would win over 400 seats in a new parliament, [redacted] This calculation probably is based on their analysis of 141 constituencies in which it placed second in the most recent election.
- Such a showing would give the BJP a two-thirds majority--enough to amend India's Constitution. It also would allow the party to mount a campaign to change India from a parliamentary to a presidential system, a goal declared in its agenda, which would free the BJP from the threat of no-confidence votes and let it set a fixed time frame for implementing its agenda. [redacted]

Once the BJP gained sole control in New Delhi, we expect the party's extremist elements--including the party's right-wing parent organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsavak Sangh (RSS)--would become more assertive in driving policy decisions. Vajpayee, Advani, and party President Kushabhau Thakre all hail from the RSS and--with their political power consolidated--would be sympathetic to the organization's wishes.

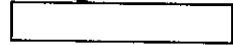
- RSS [redacted] assisted the party with policymaking and campaign strategy [redacted] during the campaign the RSS agreed to drop *Hindutva*-related issues from the coalition's agenda to preserve the political alliance, as its main objective was to have a BJP government installed.
- After the BJP's win, RSS officials kept a low profile in policymaking because they wanted the BJP government to be successful and improve on its position in the next election, [redacted] a strategy that may pay off much sooner than they expected. [redacted]


Indicators that the party was implementing its hard-line domestic policy would include:

- Resettling displaced Kashmiri Hindus in their own homes.

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- Laying the groundwork for adopting a uniform civil code that would end special provisions for the country's 120 million Muslims.
- Deporting foreign refugees and guest workers.
- Renewing the campaign to erect Hindu temples in place of disputed mosques, such as at Ayodhya. 

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The BJP's Hindu Blueprint for the Nation [redacted]

The BJP's election manifesto (*see Annex for excerpts*) calls for revamping Indian politics, society, and economics in accordance with the party's ideology of *Hindutva*, defined as "cultural nationalism" in BJP literature. Party mythology recalls India's "timeless cultural heritage," which the manifesto says is "central to all regions, religions and languages." Key elements of the blueprint include:

A Hawkish Defense Posture. Members of the BJP's defense cell in January established a working plan of action, [redacted]

[redacted] include declaring India's nuclear capability, forming a National Security Council; restructuring the Ministry of Defense; restructuring and reorganizing the military; and developing defenses against missile threats.

Cultural Assimilation. The BJP calls for an undivided India that is united by Hindu culture. More immediately, the party's manifesto aims at limiting special provisions for India's 120 million Muslims on divorce and other religious practices and ending special status for the majority Muslim state of Kashmir.

- The party also pledges to rebuild the Hindu temple at Ayodhya, the ascribed birthplace of Hindu God Ram and the site of the bloody destruction by Hindu hard-liners of an historic mosque in 1992. [redacted]

Economic Self-Sufficiency. The BJP's *Swadeshi*, or "India first" platform--if implemented fully--would focus the country's economy more inward. The party's manifesto suggests New Delhi will do whatever it takes to protect domestic industry. Specifically, the BJP manifesto calls for "rapid, large-scale internal liberalization, but calibrated globalization so that the Indian industry gets a period of seven to 10 years for substantial integration with the global economy." [redacted]

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~~Secret~~**Constraints on the BJP** [redacted]

The BJP is not invincible, despite its strong showing in recent days, and a number of developments could cause the party's popular support to erode. These would not include a military conflict with Pakistan, which would generate a national call to arms and probably would strengthen the government further. [redacted]

The BJP's handling of India's economic slowdown could be its most serious vulnerability. Although an East Asian-style meltdown is unlikely, the economy could deteriorate enough for the BJP's public support to erode as the euphoria from the nuclear tests wears off. Business circles and consumer classes in particular--a critical support base for the BJP--are impatient to return the economy to pre-slowdown growth levels. [redacted]

The BJP has promised a rosy economic future of healthy growth based on thriving domestic industries protected from foreign competition, expanding agricultural output, beefed up security forces, and a strong and respected currency. These goals may not be compatible, and serious resource constraints complicated by sanctions will force the government to make choices.

- Serious inflation could result soon if the government expands defense and security spending at the same time it tries to "kickstart" the economy with a broad-based fiscal stimulus.
- Sanctions would slow foreign inflows--now averaging about \$400 million a month--which the government needs to support the rupee and provide inputs for urgently needed infrastructure projects. Even limited US sanctions imposed narrowly on the Indian government would raise the cost of all foreign investment projects in India by removing the United States Export-Import Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the Trade and Development Association as potential financiers. [redacted]

Other developments could also produce a sudden fall in the BJP's popularity, in our judgment, including:

- An announcement by China that it will counter India's aggressive posturing by aiding Pakistan in any conflict with India.
- Widespread credible reports of radiation sickness in India from the nuclear tests. [redacted]

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[REDACTED]**The RSS: The Vanguard of Hindu Nationalism** [REDACTED]

Founded in 1925, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)--or National Volunteer Corps--is a powerful Hindu revivalist organization that seeks to unite Hindus in an explicitly Hindu state. The organization's strongholds are western India and the Hindi-speaking north Indian heartland, though its members are active in every region and among Indian communities in foreign countries. The RSS publicly shuns politics and prefers to focus on education, charitable work, and partybuilding activities. Behind the scenes, however, it provides the bulk of the BJP's funding, as well as party workers and political direction. RSS members occupy leadership positions at every level of the BJP, though both parties publicly stress their organizational independence. At least one-third of the Indian cabinet--including Prime Minister Vajpayee--are RSS members. New Delhi has banned the RSS three times since independence in 1947. The organization now functions legally and is thriving under the current BJP-led government. [REDACTED]

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ANNEX: The BJP's Optic on the World [REDACTED]

Hindu nationalists in the BJP and associated groups that make up the *sangh parivar*, or "family" of like-minded organizations, see the world differently from other Indian political parties. According to party documents, academic studies, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the BJP envisions a world order in which India's unique civilization takes center stage alongside Western, Chinese, and other great civilizations. The vision carries strong allusions to India's "civilizing mission" in the world. [REDACTED]

BJP ideology recalls a pristine--and mythical--Golden Age that predates the arrival of Muslim and European conquerors who they believe sullied India's unique Hindu identity. The BJP, however, does not seek to convert non-Hindus or impose religious uniformity. Its focus is cultural unity. Religious devotions hold little attraction to many BJP stalwarts, including Prime Minister Vajpayee and Home Minister Advani. On the other hand, the concept of *Hindutva*--loosely translated by the BJP as "cultural nationalism"--provides a national identity the BJP believes includes all Indians. The BJP's quarrel is with those Indians--Muslims and Christians, in particular--who reject this transcendent Hindu identity in favor of composite identities that spring from "foreign" civilizations.

- The cultural frontiers of the BJP's world vision extend beyond present-day political boundaries and incorporate all of India's South Asian neighbors--*akhand bharat* ("undivided India") in BJP parlance--and the Indian diaspora spread around the globe. This vision, however, does not encompass non-Indians living outside the Subcontinent. Historically, India has not harbored or pursued expansionist designs beyond its own neighborhood.
- Hindu national theorists reject the pacifist strains of Indian nationalism and champion images of martial prowess and strength. They insist that India's regional primacy be asserted vigorously. Attempts by external powers--the United States and China, in particular--to alter the Delhi-centric balance of power in the Subcontinent by supporting India's neighbors are opposed bitterly.
- The BJP is portraying its decision to test nuclear weapons as a demand for international recognition of Hindu civilization's rightful place in the world and a warning to New Delhi's neighbors to acknowledge India's supremacy. [REDACTED]

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ANNEX: Excerpts from the BJP's 1998 election manifesto entitled "Our Vision, Our Will, Our Way." [redacted]

On Indian civilization: *"The Indian nation evolved not by marching its armies and conquering...but by inner-directed pursuit of universal values by the [Hindu ascetics] living in the forests and mountains of India...It is the ancient Indian mind that formulated the Constitution of India...not the Constitution that shaped the Indian mind."* [redacted]

On protecting the national interest: *"In the recent past we have seen a tendency [by Indian governments] to bend under pressure. This arises as much out of ignorance of our rightful place and role in world affairs as also from a loss of national self-confidence and resolve. A nation as large and capable as ourselves must make its impact felt on the world arena. A BJP government will demand a premier position for the country in all global fora."* [redacted]

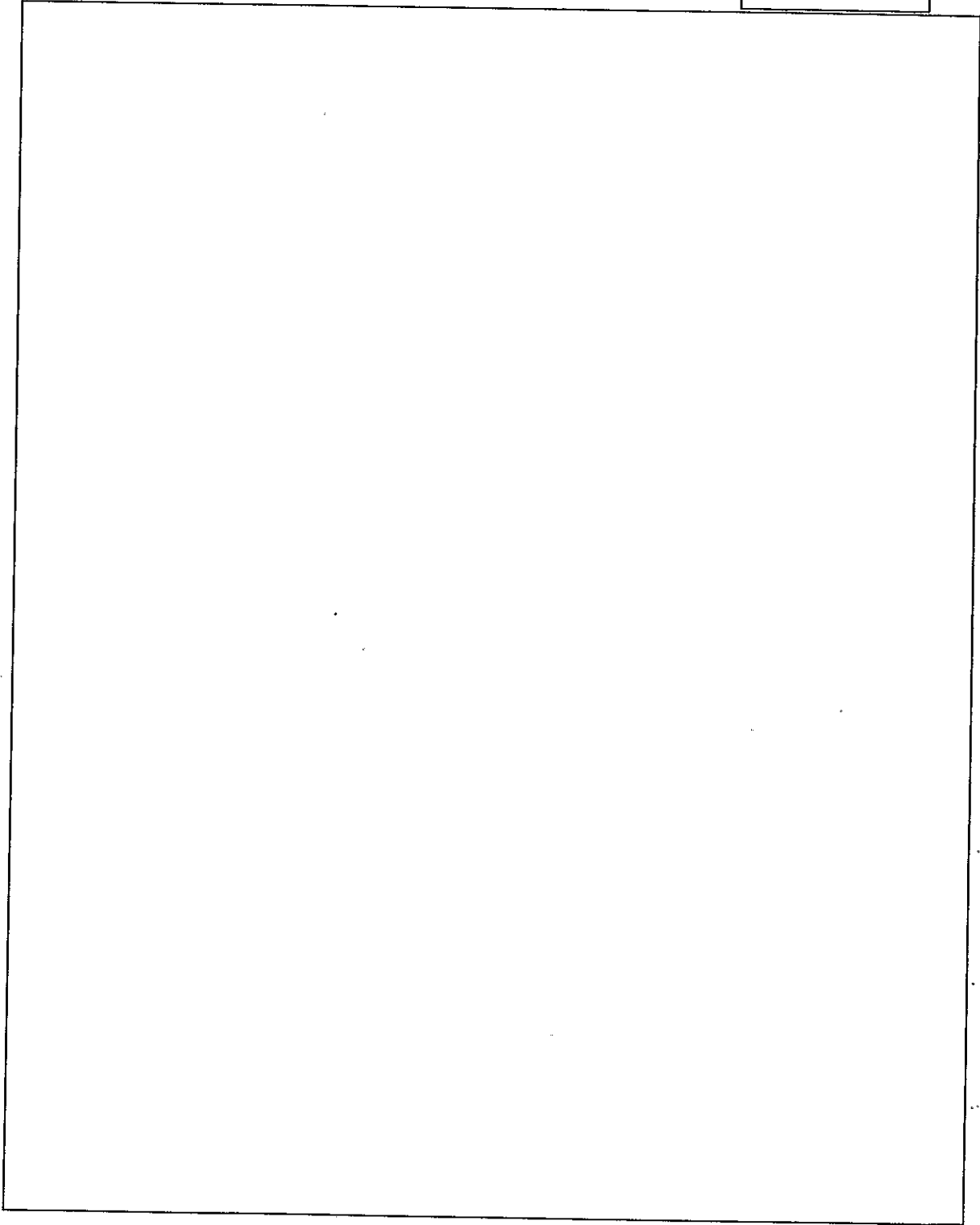
On WMD policy: *"The BJP rejects the notion of nuclear apartheid...We will not be dictated to by anybody on matters of security requirements and in the exercise of the nuclear option...We expect the United States to be more sensitive to India's security and economic interests... [We will] establish a National Security Council [that will] undertake India's first-ever strategic defense review...[The BJP] will re-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons...[We will] expedite the development of the Agni series of ballistic missiles with a view to increasing their range and accuracy."* [redacted]

On Kashmir: *[A BJP government will] take active steps to persuade Pakistan to abandon its present policy of hostile interference in our internal affairs by supporting insurgent and terrorist groups. The BJP affirms unequivocally India's sovereignty over the whole of Jammu and Kashmir, including areas under foreign occupations...Our security forces will be given a free hand to deal with armed insurgency and terrorism...Repeated massacres of Hindus in Kashmir show that unless the State Government takes the business of curbing militancy seriously, a durable peace will be hard to achieve...The BJP promises immediate action to help those displaced from the Kashmir Valley and other parts of the state...[We will] place paramilitary forces in sensitive border areas under the full control of the Indian Army."* [redacted]

On cow protection: *"The BJP will impose a total ban on the slaughter of cows...Cow-protection has remained one of the basics of Indian culture and Indian agriculture."* [redacted]

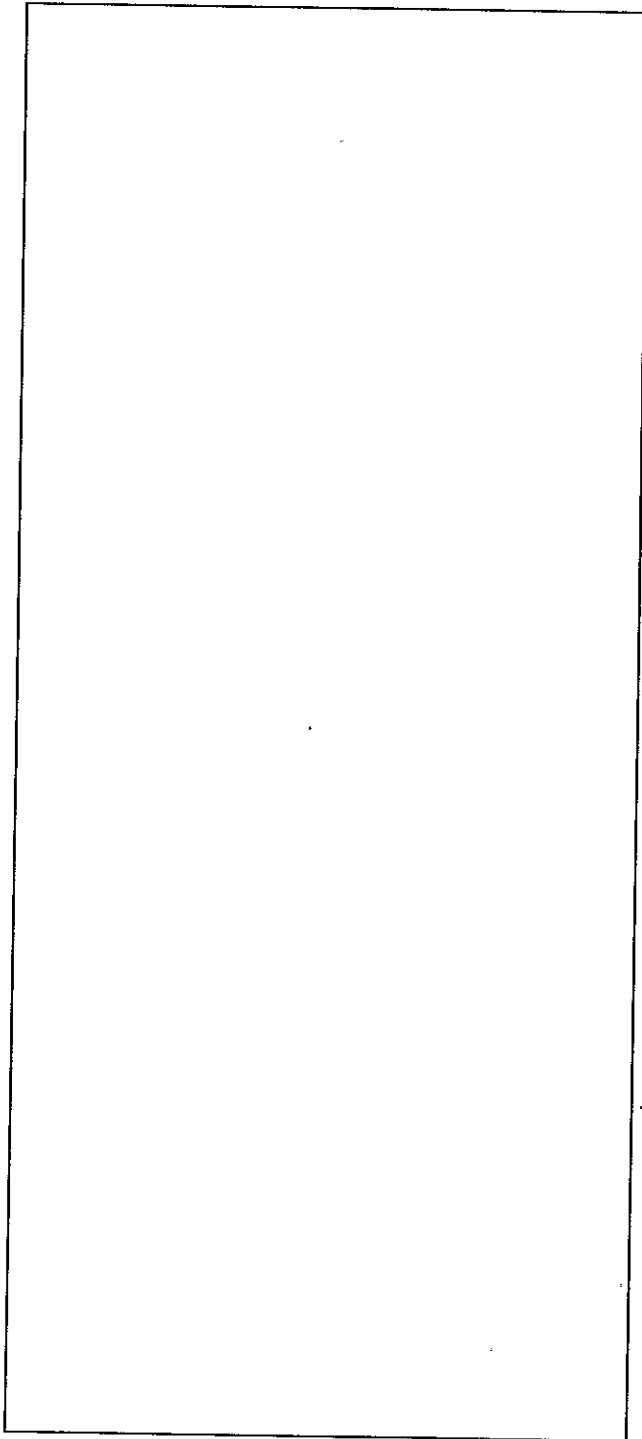
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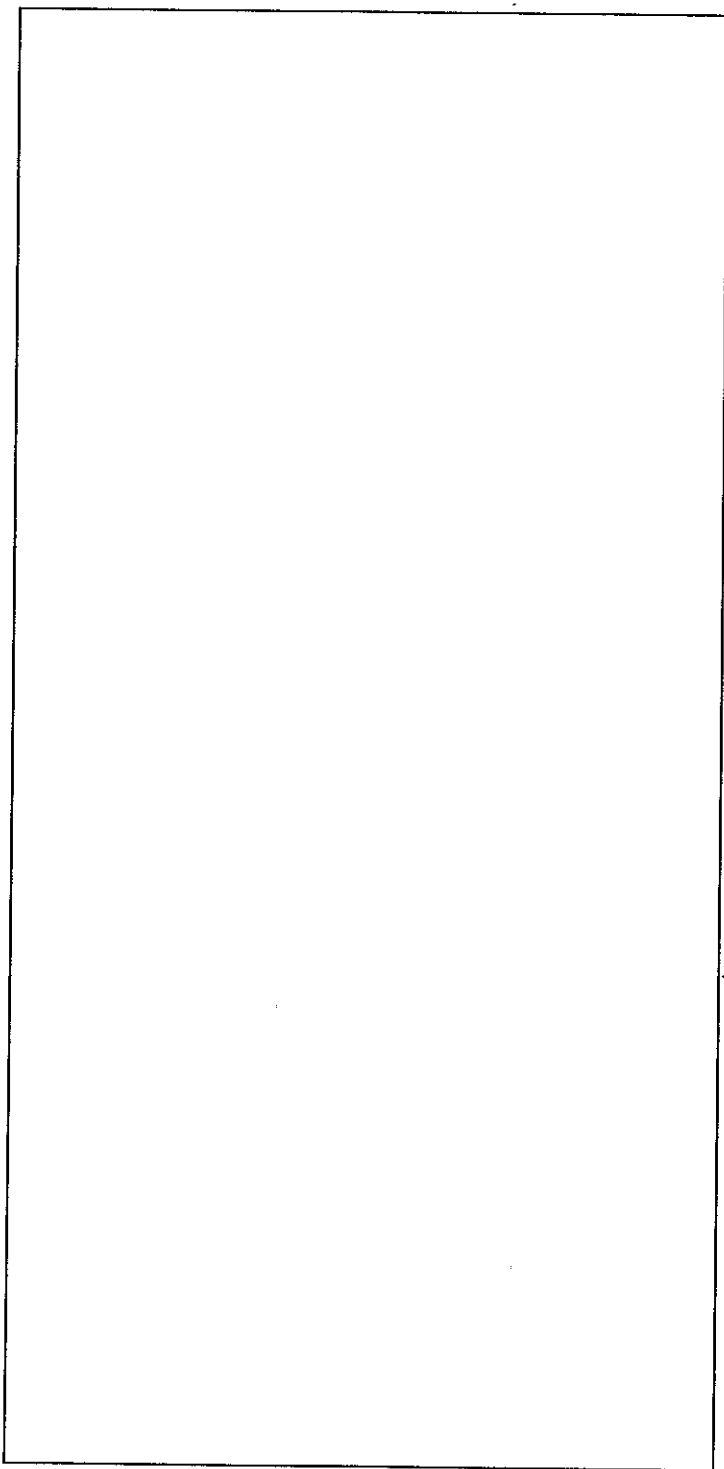

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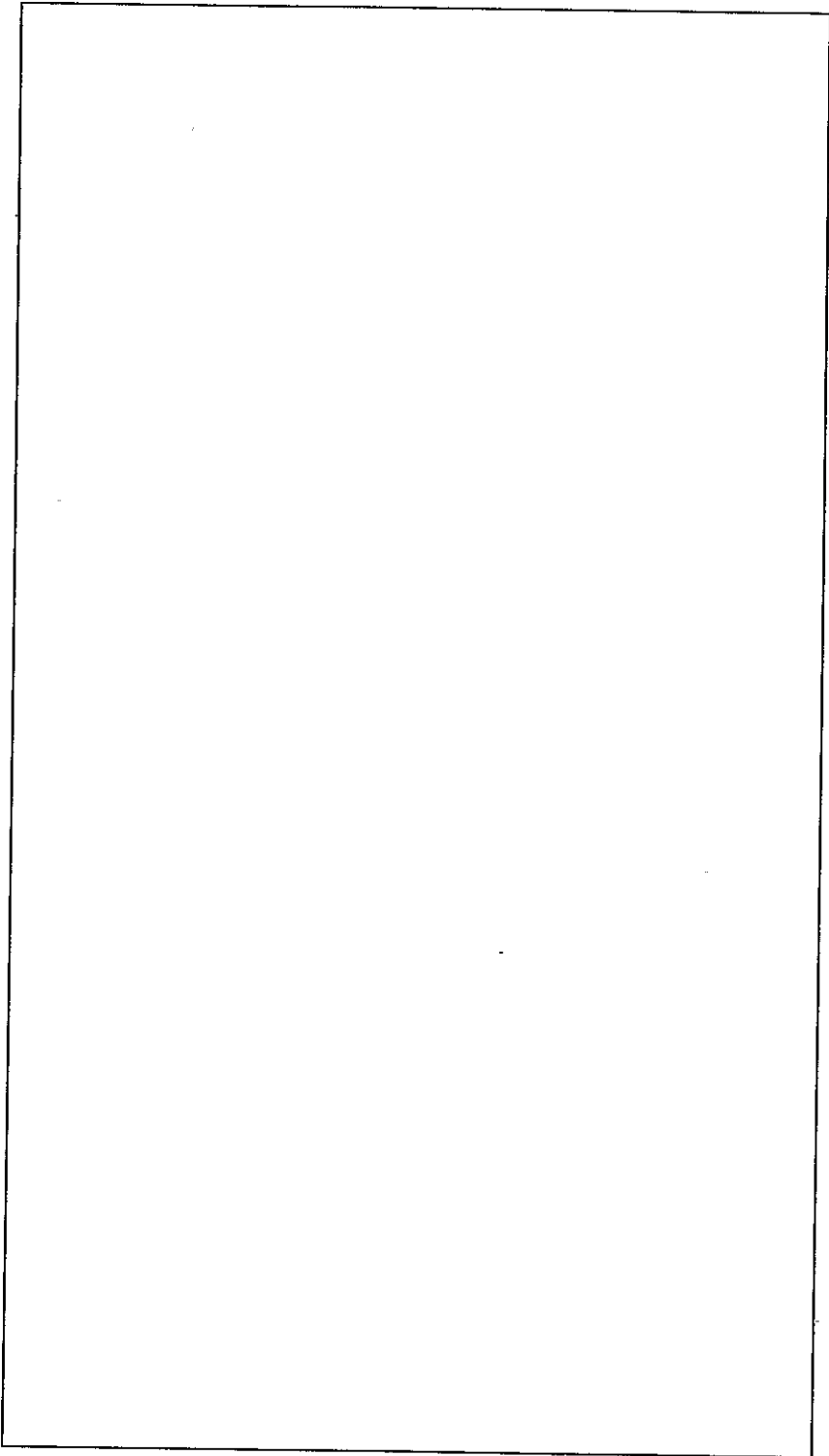
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