



Director of Central Intelligence

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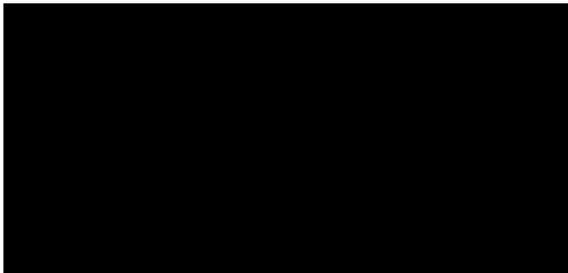
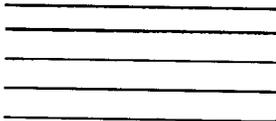
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INDIA: BJP Undaunted by Critics

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INDIA:

BJP Undaunted by Critics [REDACTED]

Some members of Prime Minister Vajpayee's 14-party coalition are expressing displeasure with the Pakistan baiting and self-congratulation that have followed the recent nuclear tests and saber rattling over Kashmir. A Punjabi regional party publicly has said the tests undermined programs to foster people-to-people ties to Punjabis across the Pakistani border.

- Other BJP coalition partners are spurning the BJP's calls for national unity and are threatening to pull out of the government; press reports suggest leaders from India's southern states are less supportive of a confrontational approach in Kashmir. [REDACTED]

The tests unified the BJP, however, and the party does not appear concerned about revolt within the coalition. The BJP retains the largest voting block in the government—181 seats in the 545-seat lower house—and opposition parties are unable to act together; moreover, the BJP routinely gets votes from an array of noncoalition parties.

- The BJP has felt secure enough about its hold on power to leave its coalition partners out of key decisions; public statements indicate no ally was consulted or even informed before the blasts on 11 and 13 May. [REDACTED]

Several regional leaders—like Tamil Nadu heavyweight Jayalalitha (who controls 18 seats), Andhra Pradesh stalwart Chandrababu Naidu (12 seats), and West Bengal gadfly Mamata Bannerjee (7 seats)—periodically voice defiance of BJP policies to test the coalition, but they lack a shared vision. [REDACTED]

The BJP still openly espouses the goals of its election manifesto, but Vajpayee has admonished some outspoken officials, like his personal adviser and the Defense Minister, for their intemperate remarks about Pakistan and China, [REDACTED]

- Press accounts suggest the BJP retains much of the popularity it gained from the tests, keeping alive the possibility of a snap election, particularly if the coalition becomes too unruly.
- An election would be an enormous expense, as well as a logistic burden during monsoon season, which typically does not end before mid-September. [REDACTED]

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