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India's Population Growth: An Important Constraint on Gandhi's Domestic Agenda

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An Intelligence Assessment

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December 1985

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [] Office
of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis.

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, South Asia Division, NESA, []

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**India's Population Growth:
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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 1 November 1985
was used in this report.*

India's population is growing at a pace that is likely to make it the largest of any country in the world within the next 35 years. Some 165 million people will be added between 1985 and 1995. Continued rapid population growth will be an important constraint on Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's efforts to accelerate economic modernization, improve living standards, and maintain political stability:

- Increases in the number of youth will hamper Gandhi's drives to achieve universal primary school enrollment and reduce the number of secondary and university students taking liberal arts degrees.
- Gandhi's economic liberalization initiatives risk alienating growing numbers of unemployed youth—particularly those with some education—who may see these initiatives as favoring the middle class and elites.
- Unmet expectations for housing and jobs and the competition between ethnic and religious groups in the cities will be aggravated by accelerated population growth. Opposition politicians will continue to exploit this volatile mixture.
- Migration that upsets the delicate demographic balance between ethnic and communal groups will increase instability—particularly in Punjab, Assam, and Tamil Nadu.

Prime Minister Gandhi probably will launch a revitalized family planning drive to reduce the country's 2-percent population growth rate. His stress on voluntarism and the importance of gains in education, employment, and income to reduce the birth rate suggest that he has learned political lessons from the ill-fated sterilization campaigns led by his brother in the late 1970s.

Gandhi probably will ask for additional financial support from US and multilateral institutions to accelerate economic growth and expand his program to slow population growth.

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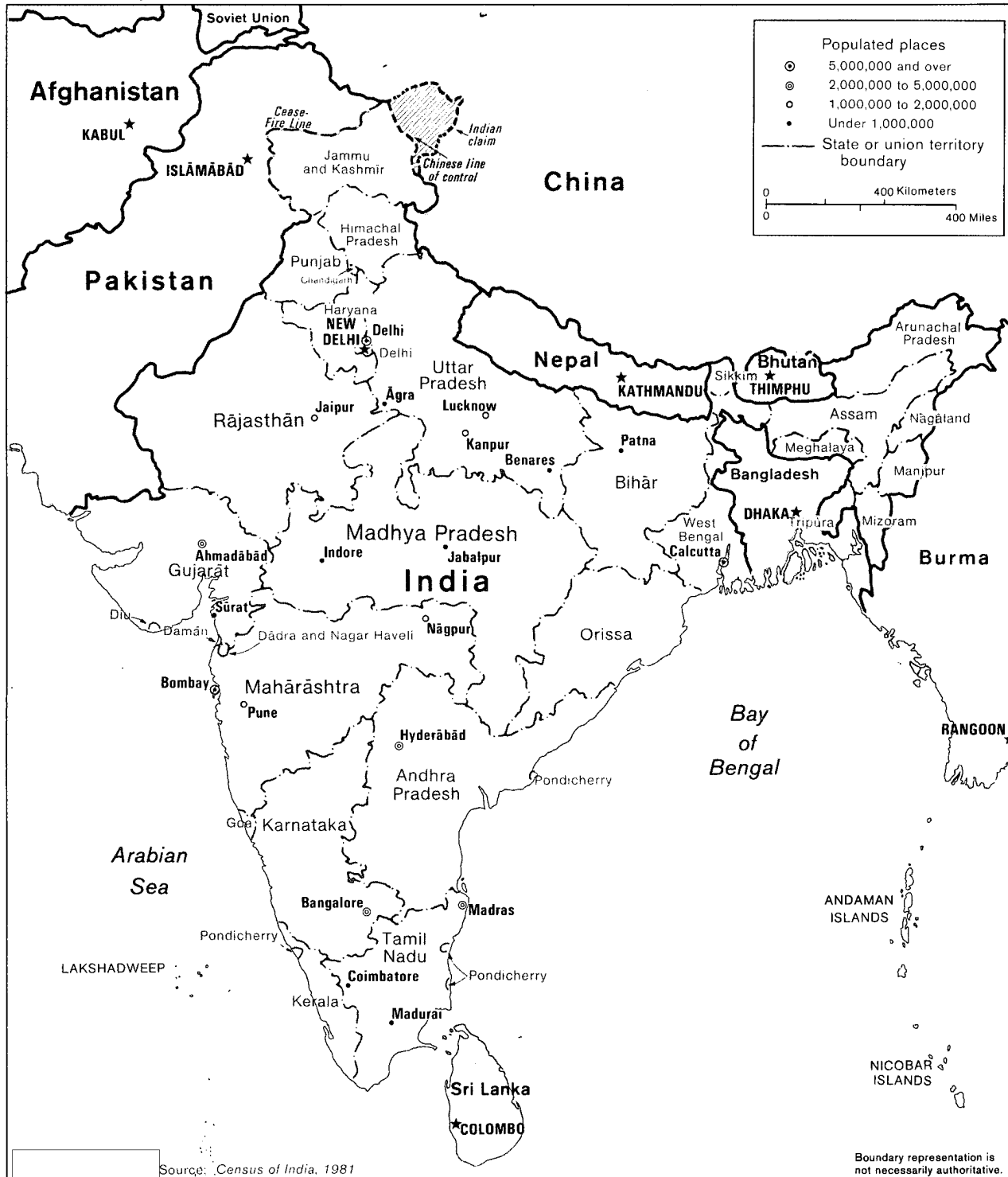
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Figure 1
India's Twenty Most Populous Cities, 1981



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India's Population Growth: An Important Constraint on Gandhi's Domestic Agenda

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Continued rapid population growth in India will hinder Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's efforts to accelerate economic modernization, improve living standards, and shore up political stability. India's population totaled 768 million in mid-1985—up by nearly 150 million since 1975. The population is projected to grow by another 165 million people in the next decade.¹

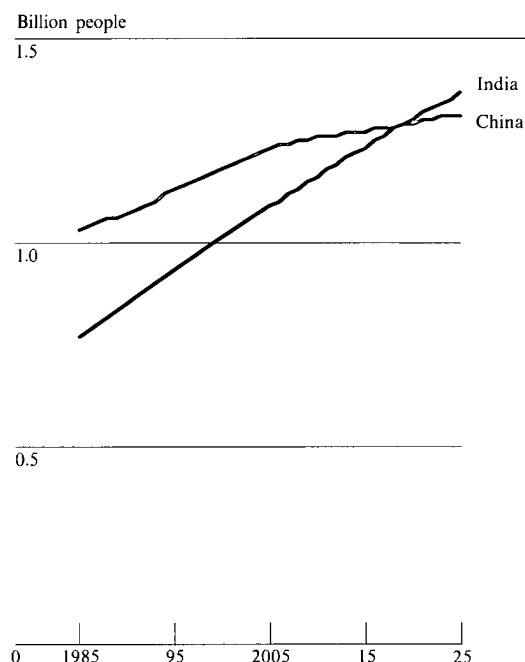
India is rapidly overtaking China as the world's most populous country. For 30 years India's annual rate of population growth has stayed just above or below the 2-percent mark as birth and death rates declined at about the same pace. Death rates declined steadily throughout the postindependence period as a result of better health care, improved food production and distribution, and slowly rising family incomes. Birth rates began declining somewhat later because of couples' lagging motivation to limit their family size and inadequate knowledge and supply of low-cost family planning options. China's population growth rate, in contrast to India's, declined precipitously from 2.7 to 1.3 percent per year during the 1970s and early 1980s.

India's population will continue to grow well into the 21st century as today's children marry and have children. US Census Bureau projections show India's population nearly doubling to 1.3 billion during the next 30 to 35 years. The net yearly addition to India's population—even if projected declines in birth and death rates take place—will be 16.3 million in 1995 and 13.3 million as late as 2020. If birth rates do not continue to decline or death rates drop more quickly, additions to the population will be even larger.

We believe that several aspects of India's population dynamics, driven by continued growth, will be important underlying determinants of political instability. Three elements in particular will complicate Gandhi's efforts to consolidate popular support and advance his economic reforms:

¹ The demographic data in this paper are from the US Bureau of the Census unless otherwise indicated.

Figure 2
India and China: Projected
Population Growth, 1985-2025



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- The number of youth requiring education, jobs, and public services will grow faster than India can provide them, raising the likelihood that increasingly large numbers of young people will become ready recruits for antigovernment causes.
- Differing population growth and migration rates among sectarian and ethnic groups will aggravate rivalries and force changes in government policies and institutions that broker political and economic power.

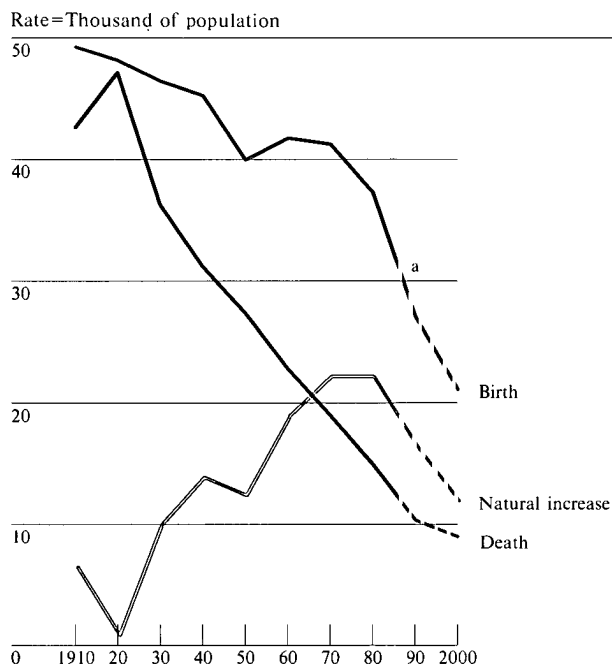
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Figure 3
India: Birth, Death, and Natural
Increase Rates, 1910-2000



Source: Government of India census figures.

^a Projected.

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- Rapid urbanization will make efficient management of large cities increasingly difficult, siphon off money needed for agricultural modernization, and increase the tensions between central, state, and local authorities.

A Glance at India's Population

India's large population—growing at a 2.1-percent rate—is predominantly young, Hindu, and rural. India dominates South Asia demographically. Pakistan and Bangladesh each have populations of about 100 million, while Nepal and Sri Lanka have 16 million people each. India's population growth rate is slightly lower than that of its neighbors, except for Sri Lanka,

Gandhi's Statements on Population

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has told reporters:

I think our biggest problem in India is population—getting it under control—because it affects everything that we want to do.

He has elaborated to the press that on the political side he hopes to "make the population more homogeneous, more cohesive—reducing the difference between religions, castes, regions, languages." On the development side he has said he hopes to "lift people from their very gross poverty and make them viable economically."

In April 1985, Gandhi told a group of Indian and foreign businessmen, "We are going to tackle population growth on a war footing."

where the rate of growth is estimated by the US Census Bureau to have dropped below 2 percent:

- Over three-quarters of India's population is under 40. Close to 40 percent are under 15. Life expectancy for those born in 1985 is estimated to be 55 years and infant mortality to be about 100 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- India remains overwhelmingly rural despite recent growth in the percentage of the population living in urban areas. Three-quarters of India's population, according to 1981 Indian census data, lives in over 500,000 villages—many too small to justify separate schools or other government services.
- The annual rate of urban growth accelerated from 3.2 to 3.8 percent between the 1960s and 1970s, according to Indian census figures. the trend reflects a concentration of growth in intermediate-size cities (500,000 to 1 million) and a diminution in the growth rate of most of the largest cities (over 5 million).

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- The 1981 census returns show that 41 percent of all Indians over 5 years old are literate. The breakdown for subpopulations shows that nearly three-quarters of urban males, but less than one-quarter of rural females, are literate. [REDACTED]

Behind the National Averages

National demographic averages in India mask differences by geographic region, state, and ethnic group that confound national policy and administrative direction. The populations of India's 22 states, for example, show wide variations in size, rates of growth, and literacy. Six states have populations exceeding 50 million—the largest, Uttar Pradesh with 115 million, approaches the size of Japan. The five states in the northeast, in contrast, have small populations ranging from 300,000 to 2.1 million. Other examples of the variability of Indian demographics include:

- The state of Kerala has demographic and social characteristics that vary considerably from Indian averages. Some 69 percent of the population is literate. Kerala's death and infant mortality rates are 50 percent below the national averages. Indian scholars note that the state has historically led the nation in public health and education and that this progress, not higher per capita income, helps to explain lower growth. The state's per capita income falls below the all-India average.
- India's 75 million Muslims live in every state and territory and showed the highest rate of growth of any sectarian group between 1971 and 1981. The country's 16 million Christians outnumber the Sikhs in India, live primarily in the south, and showed the slowest rate of growth of any religious group from 1971 to 1981.
- Urban young men are more likely to be enrolled in school than are rural young men. The 1981 census data show that, for ages 10 to 14, when enrollment levels are highest, 77 percent of urban but only 58 percent of rural males were enrolled in school. [REDACTED]

A Glance at India's Economy

India's economy has sustained about a 5-percent annual rate of growth during the 1980s, largely as a result of increases in agricultural production and crop yields—which account for nearly 40 percent of GDP—and more modest gains in industrial output. The Green Revolution in agriculture—the growth in production and crop yields through the adoption of high-yielding varieties, chemical fertilizers, and expanded irrigation—has been one of India's major economic success stories. [REDACTED]

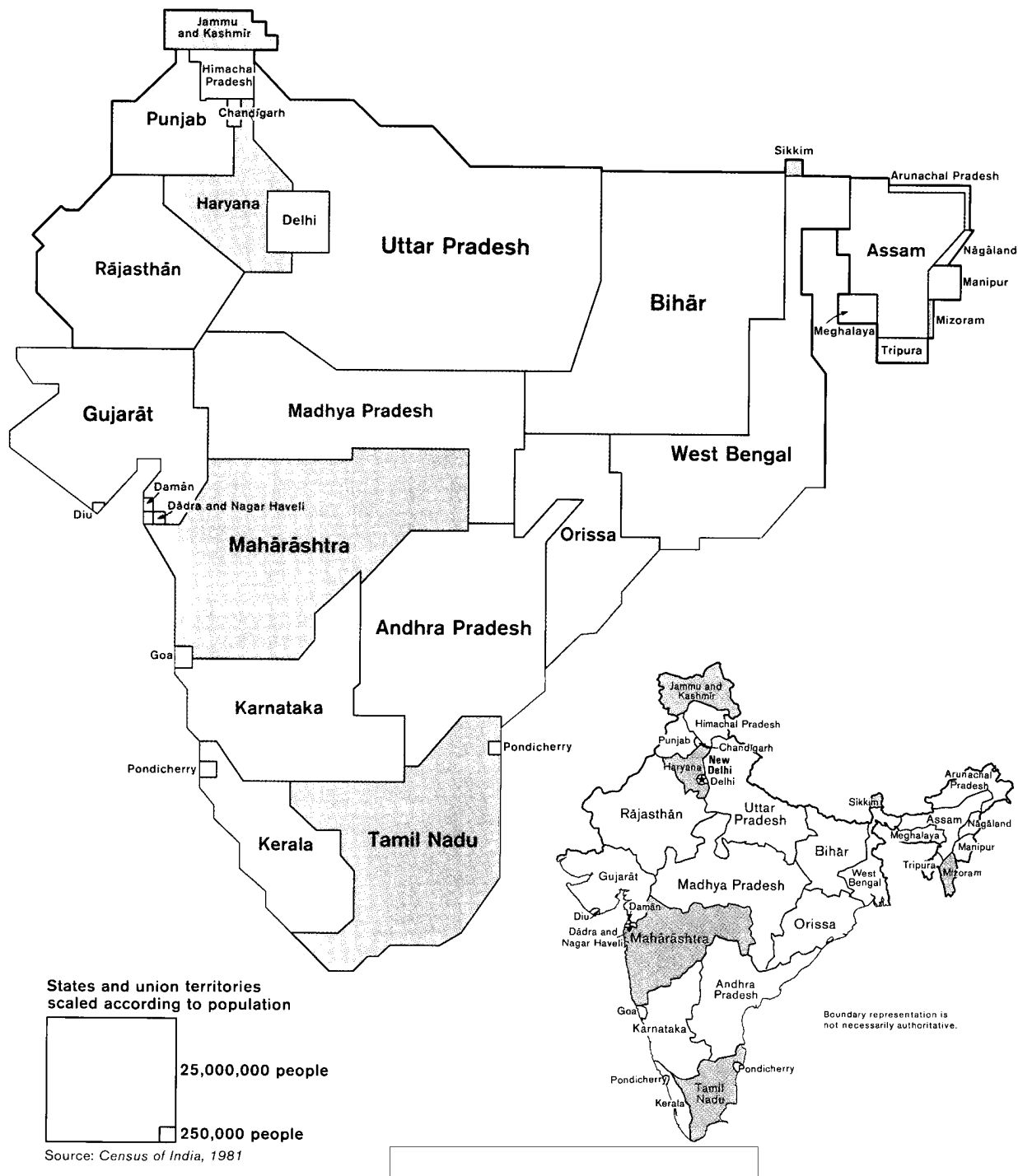
India's international financial position is comfortable but will probably deteriorate during the remainder of the decade. Increased domestic crude oil production and International Monetary Fund support during the past five years contributed to New Delhi's current favorable balance-of-payments situation. Over the next five years, however, India faces higher payments for petroleum imports, military equipment, and debt servicing. In addition, the industrial modernization and liberalization programs being pushed by Gandhi will increase demand for imported capital goods and technology, while prospects for Indian exports are uncertain. [REDACTED]

Rajiv Gandhi's strong interest in upgrading technology and increasing productivity has prompted him to accelerate economic liberalization moves begun several years ago. Gandhi still intends that the government retain overall control of the economy, but he believes that less bureaucratic meddling and more competition in the private sector will spur modernization, limit corruption, and ease strains on the government budget. [REDACTED]

Gandhi's policy reforms have fueled an atmosphere of optimism in the business community. Manufacturers in several industries may now set up new operations or expand capacity and vary their product mix without seeking government permission. He has also relaxed

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Figure 4
India's Population



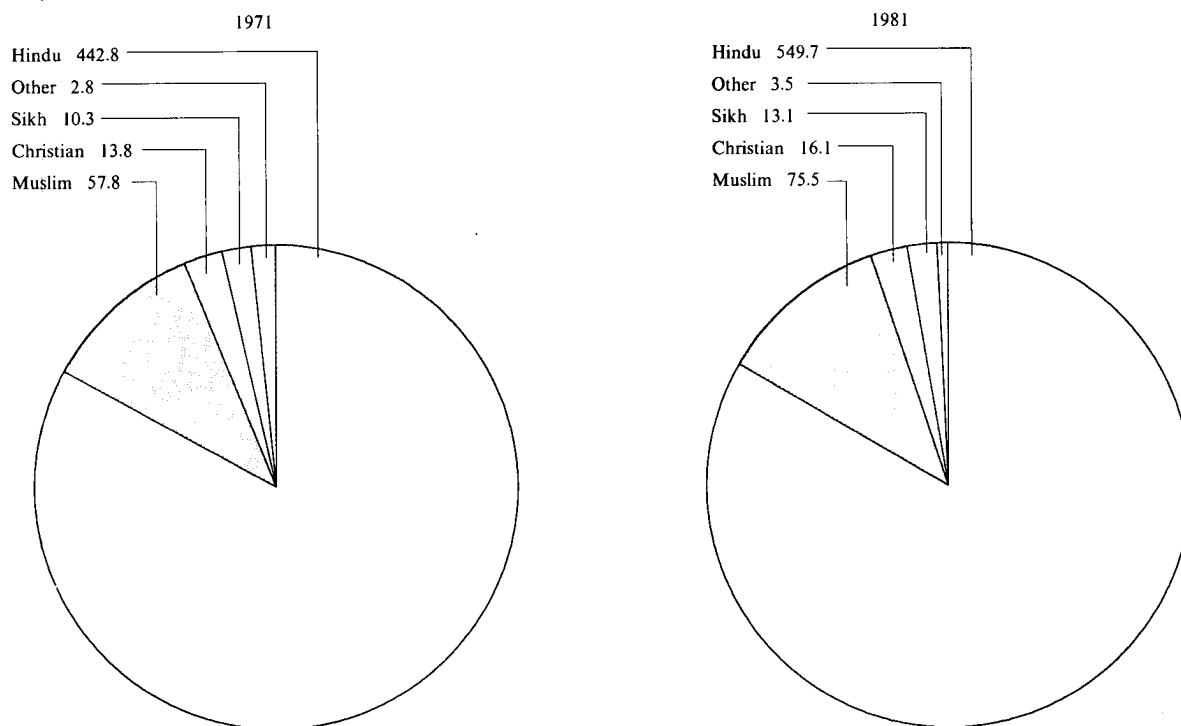
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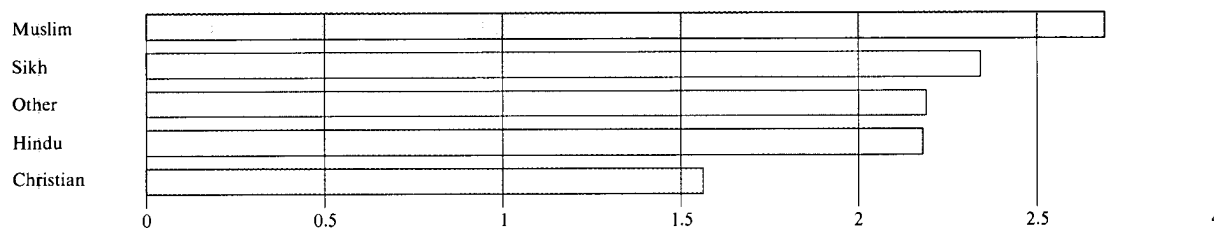
Figure 5**India: Population by Religion and Growth Rates, 1971 and 1981**

Million members



Percent

Growth rate

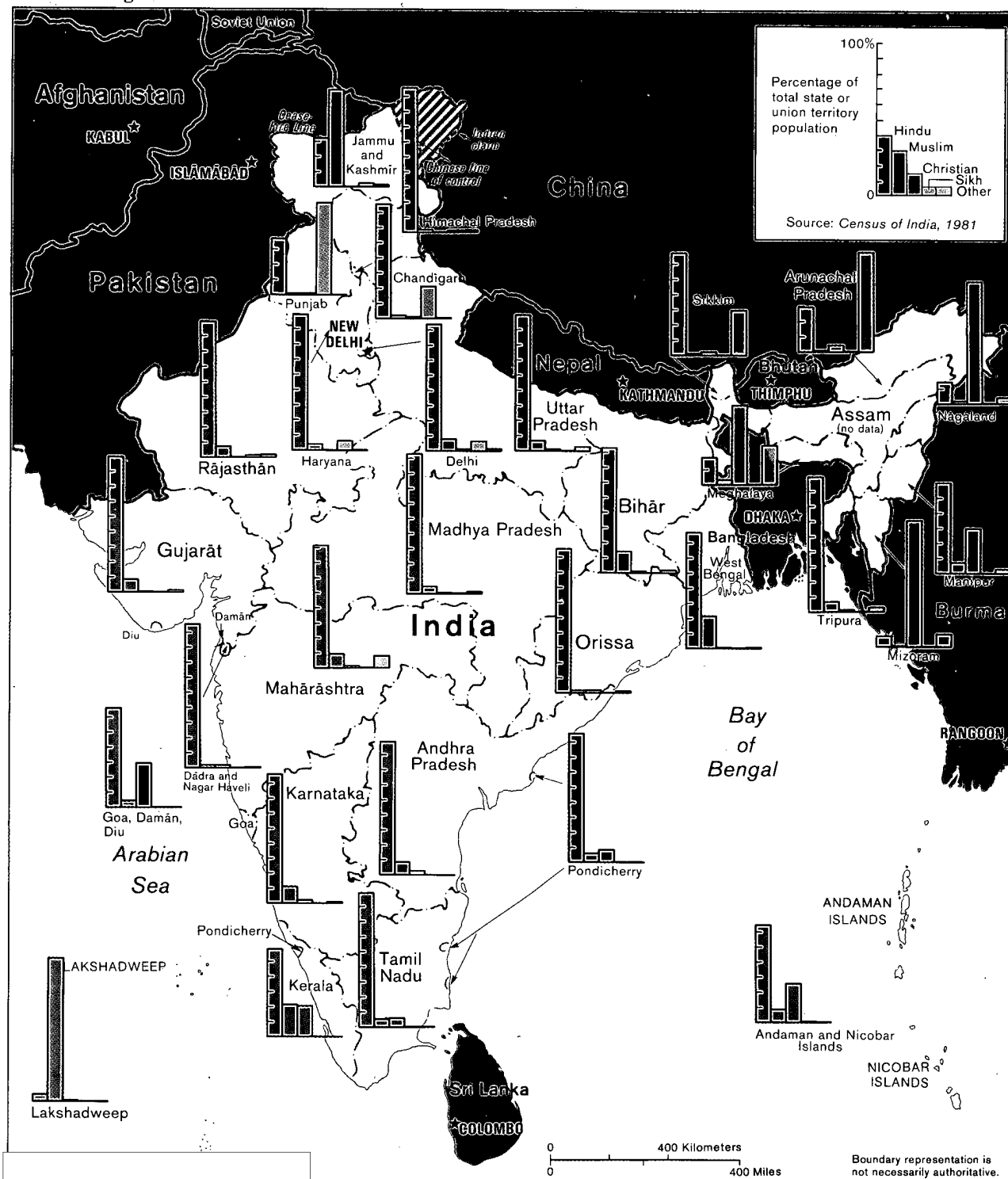


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Figure 6
India's Religions



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antimonopoly legislation, lowered personal and corporate tax rates, encouraged imports of high technology, and pushed the bureaucracy to expedite decisions that affect business. [REDACTED]

Gandhi's efforts are showing some signs of success. The incentive programs and a crackdown on tax evasion apparently have struck a responsive note with the middle class and business leaders. Indian monetary officials believe revenue from taxes will be 20 percent higher this year. Private businessmen have moved to increase investment in response to the Gandhi administration's decision to ease licensing requirements in several industries, and investor confidence remains high, as demonstrated by a booming stock market. Improved Indo-US ties have contributed to the approval of US export licenses for over 60 advanced high-technology systems. [REDACTED]

Gandhi's economic modernization program is not without its limitations. Government revenue shortages—a major factor behind Gandhi's push to free the private sector—may set limits on additional tax concessions. Gandhi will also have to weigh looming foreign payments strains against his wish to promote productivity through increased imports of technology. [REDACTED]

Gandhi also must contend with nascent domestic opposition to his economic initiatives:

- Cutting food subsidies or closing unprofitable factories to reduce public-sector losses run the risk of increased social unrest.
- Farmers held their first major public protest against his economic policies in October.
- Bureaucrats have traditionally resisted efforts to reduce their authority.
- Perhaps most important, Gandhi faces charges, particularly from within the Congress Party, that his policies are widening the gap between the rich and poor. [REDACTED]

The Consequences of Rapid Population Growth

India's youthful and growing population places ever increasing demands on the country's political leadership and economy for places in school and for jobs.

The Prime Minister's Office on Poverty

A spokesman in Gandhi's office refuted the accusation that Gandhi's government has abandoned the poor in favor of the middle class in an interview with the international press:

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The poor in India determine changes in government. Gandhi just can't forget the poor. I don't think any of those 70 or 100 million—said to be the new middle class—can forget the poor either. All we have to do is open the back door and see that the poor who live in the lanes outnumber us. [REDACTED]

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According to the official, Gandhi sees the increasing numbers of middle-class Indians as the force that is enabling the economy to grow at a geometric rate and will allow the underprivileged to break out of their cycle of poverty:

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They make it possible to say we will enter the 21st century in the year 2000. [REDACTED]

Moreover, the official maintained that India's less privileged already are being carried upward on a "tide of prosperity and now constitute the fastest rising class in the country." He spoke of an "explosion of the lower middle class." [REDACTED]

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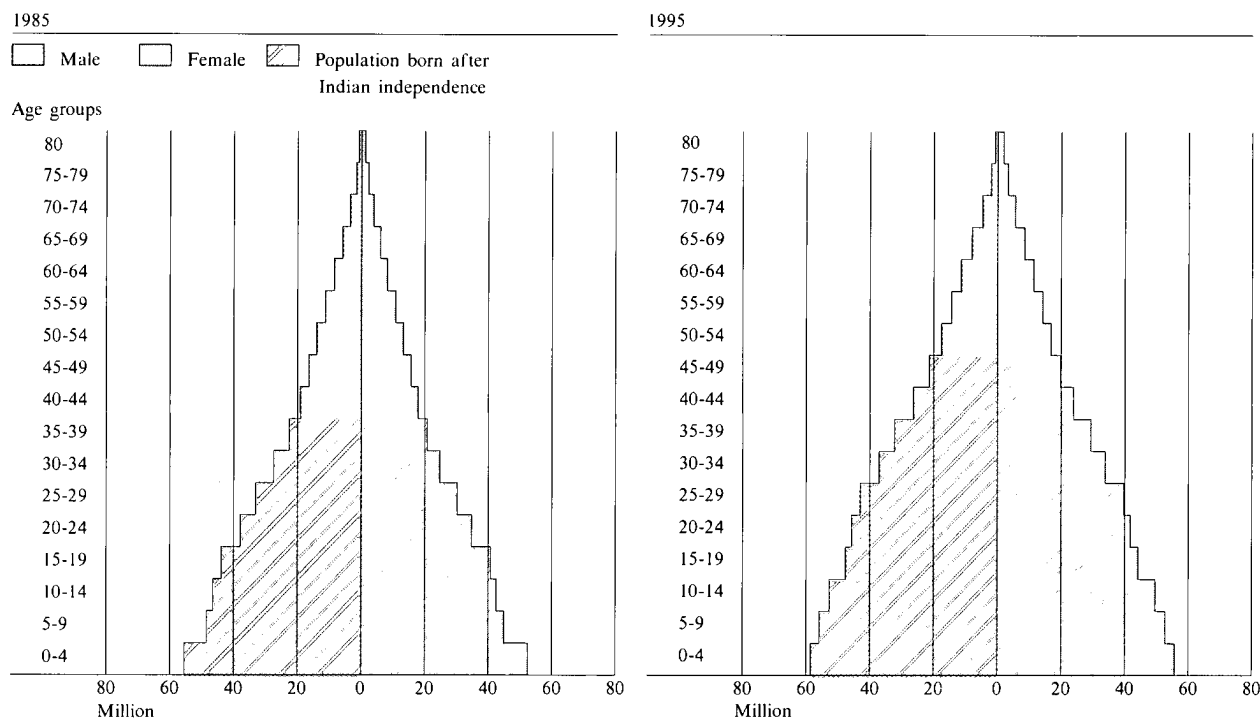
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The largest cohort in India's broadly based population pyramid is under 5, most of whom will survive to school, employment, and marriage ages. The pyramid for 1995 shows that the pattern will continue. New Delhi has committed itself to improving opportunities for the large and growing number of people who have been born since Indian independence. They have grown up with the Green Revolution in agriculture, the spread of literacy, radio, and now television—rather than the independence struggles, famines, and isolated village life familiar to earlier generations.

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Figure 7
India: Population Pyramids, 1985 and 1995



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Educational Gaps Closing Slowly

Steadily growing numbers in the school-age groups will place increasingly heavy burdens on New Delhi as it tries to meet the objective set in India's 1951 Constitution of providing free and compulsory education to all children up to 14 years old. Over the last 35 years, expenditures on education have escalated from 1.1 to 3 percent of national income, and the number of children in primary school (grades one to five) have increased fourfold, from 22.3 million to 90.5 million. Yet, according to 1981 Indian census data, just 44 percent of the 179.3 million 5- to 14-year-olds were enrolled in school. By 1990 the number of 5- to 14-year-olds is projected to increase to 195.8 million.

Gandhi plans to expand technical and vocational training at the secondary and college level and limit the number of liberal arts graduates, according to the Indian press. He says he hopes to staunch the flow of educated youth from the schools into the ranks of the unemployed and to encourage acquisition of those skills needed to advance India's technological aspirations. His drive to shift resources to technical education, however, may run into difficulty. Growing numbers of aspiring secondary and college students will continue to apply for places in traditionally prestigious liberal arts fields that hold poor employment prospects. The higher per capita cost of expanding

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technical schools will also slow Gandhi's drive. Census data for 1981 show the dimensions of New Delhi's dilemma. Only one-quarter of today's 15- to 19-year-olds are enrolled in school. Some 84 percent of the 4.5 million college graduates in their twenties and early thirties hold nontechnical degrees. [REDACTED]

Youth Face Poor Employment Prospects

We believe Gandhi's most difficult task will be to create enough jobs to absorb the rapidly growing number of youth entering the labor force, particularly as he pursues policies that call for job cuts in India's large state-run industries or in the massive government bureaucracies. [REDACTED] unemployment today is most acute among educated youth in the 15 to 20 age group—those whose expectations are highest. [REDACTED] during the first half of the 1980s the labor force was growing at a 2.5-percent annual rate, adding approximately 7 million young people to the total each year.

[REDACTED] however, large private and public-sector firms created only 800,000 jobs per year during the period. The remaining 6 million or more continued in school, took marginal jobs, or joined India's estimated 42.8 million chronically or temporarily unemployed. [REDACTED]

With slow growth in nonagricultural jobs and Gandhi's emphasis on technological innovation in agriculture—the majority of the 250 million people active in the labor force are in agriculture—rural youth face worsening employment prospects. According to Indian census data, the proportion of the labor force in agriculture declined from 69.6 percent to 65.6 from 1971 to 1981. With declining access to land or income rural youth will join others who have left for the cities and towns. [REDACTED]

Migration Increases Ethnic and Sectarian Rivalries

Shifts in the ethnic and sectarian composition of state and local populations have contributed to ethnic and communal tensions. Migration by particular subpopulations, rather than different rates of natural increase, has upset or has been perceived to upset the existing demographic balance. [REDACTED]

In Punjab, Sikhs contend that their numerical majority is threatened by unskilled Hindu labor moving into the state and Sikhs moving out for better education and higher paying jobs. According to the 1981 Indian census, Punjab's 10.2 million Sikhs represented 60.8 percent of the state's population, while the 6.2 million Hindus represented 36.9 percent. Sikh politicians note that many of these Hindus were formerly seasonal migrants who had settled permanently and claim the number of additional Hindu landless laborers reaches into the millions. [REDACTED]

The Punjab Accord, signed in July 1985 by Gandhi and Sikh leader Sant Longowal to end martial law in the state, left the ticklish issue of dividing predominantly Hindu and Sikh villages between Punjab and neighboring Haryana, which is largely Hindu, to a special commission. The commission is scheduled to complete realigning the boundary by early 1986. To the extent that normality returns to Punjab, however, we expect the influx of Hindus and outflow of Sikhs to continue, which in time will probably overwhelm the Sikh majority in Punjab. A continuation of violence by Sikh extremists against Hindus would slow the inflow of Hindu labor, and any repetition of the anti-Sikh violence that followed Indira Gandhi's assassination would pull Sikhs scattered throughout India's cities back to Punjab. [REDACTED]

Migration into the northeastern states of India has fueled political agitation and outbreaks of violence by separatist movements over a period of years. The conflict in Assam stems from competition for educational opportunities, jobs, and land between the indigenous population and immigrants. Most of the immigrants have come from Bengali-speaking areas of Bangladesh and India. Militant Assamese students have forced the postponement of national elections and census taking in the state with their demand to exclude the 5 million people they consider illegal immigrants. In mid-1985 Gandhi and the student leaders agreed to a formula for determining the resident and voting status of the "foreigners," which is to lead to elections and possibly the repatriation of

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Table 1
All-India Trends in Urbanization, 1941-81

Census Year	Population		Percent Urban	Average Annual Growth Rate (percent)		Growth in Urban Population (thousands)	Transfer From Rural Areas	
	Total (thousands)	Urban (thousands)		Total	Urban		Thousands	As Percent of Growth
1941	309,019	43,559	14.10					
1951	349,805	61,630	17.62	1.24	3.47	18,071	NA	NA
1961	424,836	77,562	18.26	1.94	2.30	15,932	8,706	55
1971	528,918	106,966	20.22	2.19	3.21	29,404	10,402	35
1981	658,141	156,188	23.73	2.19	3.78	49,222	23,088	47

Note: India's adoption of a more restrictive definition of "urban" for the 1961 census explains in part the slowdown in the growth of the urban population.

Source: Government of India census figures.

those immigrants who arrived after 1971. The settlement gives pre-1966 immigrants full residence and voting privileges but requires that those arriving between 1966 and 1971 wait 10 years before voting.

The south Indian state of Tamil Nadu is host to about 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. According to US Consular officials in Madras, most Indian Tamils consider the refugees competitors for scarce economic resources. Peace talks between Colombo and the Tamil insurgents have not yet addressed the issue of the refugees' status, but we believe the potential for violence in Tamil Nadu will intensify if the peace talks fail or the settlement does not provide for the refugees' return.

Migration Underlies Violence in Key Indian Cities

Competition between longtime urban residents and recent urban arrivals has intensified and frequently flared into antigovernment violence as India's annual urban growth rate accelerated from 3.2 to 3.8 percent and the urban population grew from 106 million to 156 million from 1971 to 1981. We expect the episodes of violence growing out of the scramble for

education, jobs, and housing to expose the weaknesses of state and local police, strain New Delhi's relations with state governments, and force New Delhi to call out the Army to restore order. The fallout from such incidents has often served opposition politicians looking for issues to exploit.

In Bombay, India's second-largest city with over 8 million residents, the Hindu nativist Shiv Sena party touched off two months of rioting in 1984 and then won municipal elections in 1985 largely by blaming outsiders—especially Muslims from the state of Uttar Pradesh—for the city's problems. Shiv Sena politicians provoked the initial round of communal violence with inflammatory anti-Muslim rhetoric and posters. They later capitalized on the voters' anti-immigrant sentiment and dissatisfaction with the incumbent officials to capture a surprise victory at the polls.

Hyderabad, in the opposition-controlled state of Andhra Pradesh, has also experienced repeated outbreaks of violence in recent years. The city's population, according to 1971 Indian census figures—the

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Table 2
Population and Growth Rates of the
20 Largest Cities of India, 1981

	State	1981 Population (<i>thousands</i>)	Average Annual Growth Rate (<i>percent</i>)	
			1961-71	1971-81
Calcutta	West Bengal	9,166	2.04	2.65
Greater Bombay	Maharashtra	8,227	3.63	3.21
Delhi	Delhi	5,714	4.35	4.49
Madras	Tamil Nadu	4,277	4.89	2.99
Bangalore	Karnataka	2,914	3.21	5.66
Hyderabad	Andhra Pradesh	2,528	3.63	3.42
Ahmadabad	Gujarat	2,515	3.67	3.61
Kanpur	Uttar Pradesh	1,688	2.72	2.81
Pune	Maharashtra	1,685	3.61	3.95
Nagpur	Maharashtra	1,298	2.99	3.33
Lucknow	Uttar Pradesh	1,007	2.16	2.12
Jaipur	Rajasthan	1,005	4.39	4.56
Coimbatore	Tamil Nadu	917	4.96	2.20
Patna	Bihar	916	2.98	6.23
Surat	Gujarat	913	4.40	6.16
Madurai	Tamil Nadu	904	3.71	2.40
Indore	Madhya Pradesh	827	3.51	3.88
Benares	Uttar Pradesh	794	2.14	2.68
Agra	Uttar Pradesh	770	2.22	1.94
Jabalpur	Madhya Pradesh	758	3.77	3.48

Source: Government of India census figures.

latest available at this level of detail—was about evenly divided between Hindus and Muslims and growing rapidly. Anti-immigrant sentiment runs strong in the city and is exploited by state and local politicians seeking support. Although communal insults usually touch off inner-city violence, as in the case of Bombay, politicians are suspected of engineering such outbreaks to strengthen their electoral support. Political leaders regularly raise the specter of a flood of migrants—always from the other sectarian group or outside the state—swamping the urban housing and job markets, according to the Indian press.

In Ahmadabad, the state capital of Gujarat, prolonged violence during 1985 compelled New Delhi to deploy the Army to restore calm and forced the

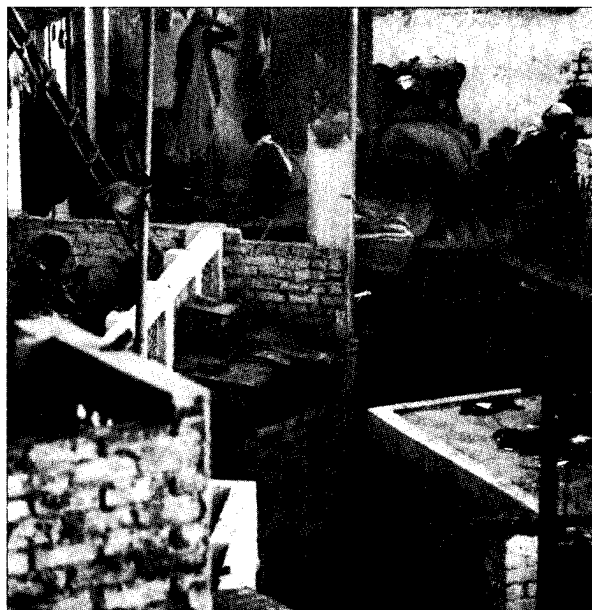
Congress Party to retract its statewide campaign pledge to increase the reserved places for lower caste groups in colleges and universities. The violence included clashes between Hindus and Muslims in the poorest sections of the city as well as intercaste confrontations over the proposed educational reforms. Gandhi eventually dismissed the incumbent Congress Party Governor for failing to handle the issues at the state level effectively.

New Delhi has had difficulty absorbing the additional 2.2 million people added to its population from 1971



Poor migrants in squatter settlements compete for low-paying, occasional employment within sight of Bombay's modern high-rise buildings.

[redacted]



Working-class families in Delhi have accepted crowded living conditions in exchange for proximity to the city's jobs, services, and amenities.

[redacted]

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to 1981. Groups bent on peaceful or violent demonstrations in the capital city have no difficulty recruiting participants in the crowded slums on the outskirts of the city. The anti-Sikh violence following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, for example, was carried out by such individuals, according to Indian accounts. [redacted]

Gandhi's Population Policies

Gandhi, like Indian officials before him, says he is committed to reducing the nation's rate of population growth through purely voluntary means. India's population policy since the early 1950s has assumed that demographic change will follow the classic "transition" model. According to this theory—reflected in Indian official thinking—social and economic development precipitates declines in death rates first and only later prompts declines in birth rates. Indian policy also has held that a family planning program would accelerate the decline in birth rates, even where literacy and incomes, for example, were just beginning to rise. [redacted]

Rajiv has promised to revitalize India's family planning program and has proposed a \$3.6 billion budget—a 50-percent increase over previous allocations—for the 1986-90 five-year plan. With the additional funds, the program aims to raise from 29 to 42 percent the proportion of eligible couples who use contraception. New monetary incentives have been proposed: a five-year, \$5 per month subsidy to couples who elect sterilization after the birth of their second child, and a \$5,000, 20-year bond for couples who stop childbearing with just two daughters.² [redacted]

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Gandhi appointed Krishna Kumar, a young, highly respected Indian civil servant and head of a major manufacturing firm, as the new Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare in the Cabinet reshuffle in late September 1985. According to US Embassy reports, his appointment is widely welcomed by bureaucrats in the Ministry. We expect Kumar to turn

² India's per capita annual income is \$210. [redacted]

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Well-to-do Delhi and Bombay residents have complained of traffic snarls, deteriorating public services, and rising crime that they associate largely with rapid urban population growth. [REDACTED]

to professionals in the media and advertising fields, like those who aided Gandhi's successful election campaign, to craft a new family planning message and to make more effective use of television, radio, and films to reach young couples.³ [REDACTED]

The Likely Domestic Response to Gandhi's Family Planning Initiatives

We believe that Gandhi can depend on the new generation of politicians that his election victory brought to power in New Delhi to support his economic and family planning policies. Many of his close advisers belong to India's elite—which has long backed both public and private population limitation programs. They, like Gandhi, typically have small families. [REDACTED]

Gandhi also has a core group of young, enthusiastic proponents who, we expect, will support his population programs in Parliament. Eighty-six of the 401 Congress Party members of Parliament are first-time

³ Television had reached an estimated 50 percent of the population by late 1984 and is expected to reach 70 percent by early 1986, according to Indian officials. [REDACTED]



The Army has been deployed with increasing frequency to restore order following police failures to control communal and sectarian violence in India's cities. [REDACTED]

legislators who swept into office with Rajiv. These first-time legislators share not only Gandhi's priorities but also favor his pragmatic approach to problem solving. The Indian press has described them as a "group apart in India's body politic," after observing the new members through three sessions of this Parliament. They have been portrayed in the press as economically independent and a marked contrast to both the traditional dhoti-clad, aging freedom fighter and to the loud, patronage-wielding young members of Parliament brought into politics by Rajiv's brother, Sanjay. [REDACTED]

Vijayanthimala Bali, one of several movie and sports idols among the legislative newcomers, has launched her own family planning drive in Andhra Pradesh and taken the Health and Family Welfare Ministry to task for its shortcomings. She is quoted in the press as saying that her first priority is to do something about family planning—to take the campaign to every doorstep in the villages. [REDACTED]

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Sanjay's Attack on Population Growth

Once before, in 1975-76, New Delhi launched a major family planning campaign. Rajiv's brother Sanjay, then being groomed to assume the prime-minister-ship, gave the problem the top-level, urgent political support Indian elites argued was needed to mobilize the Indian bureaucracy. Under pressure, lower level leaders turned to sterilization as the fastest and most reliable of the family planning options experimented with during the previous decade and pushed it vigorously, according to US scholars. Those workers who resorted to coercion did so in response to intense pressure for results—in this case, large numbers of sterilizations—with no excuses accepted for failure to meet targets. [redacted]

The drive was successful when measured by family planning service statistics. In the single year of the campaign, 8 million sterilizations were reported—more than three times the number in the preceding year. This accomplishment—achieved within a matter of months—meant a nearly 50-percent increase in the proportion of Indian couples believed to be protected by modern contraception. [redacted]

By the time the intensive family planning drive came to an end in early 1977, however, millions had suffered harassment at the hands of officials bent on implementing it, according to US scholars. The Congress Party and the political leaders who had backed it were out of office, and the program was in disarray. US scholars found that excesses in the sterilization drive in the Hindi-speaking northern and central states led to the repudiation of the Congress Party in traditional electoral strongholds. [redacted]

The major obstacle to Gandhi's family planning drive is likely to come from rural Indians who are bound to the caste-based social system that still permeates village life and that encourages large families. Three-fourths of India's population live in rural villages with less than 2,000 residents. Given the close relationship between low standards of living, low levels of literacy, and high birth rates, the 450 million people under 40

in rural areas probably will be the last to alter their preferences for large families. Customs and traditions surrounding marriage and childbirth, especially of sons, continue to dominate village life. The traditional preference for male children is strong and is justified in the village economy where men produce and earn more for their work in the fields. Men also tend to remain with and provide financial support to aging parents in rural areas. [redacted]

Gandhi's program could also draw criticism as a "Western" technological intrusion on traditional life as has happened in other developing countries such as Iran and Egypt. Some conservative high-caste Hindus objected to Sanjay's family planning drive in the late 1970s on these grounds. They may once again conclude that Rajiv's initiatives—including his family planning program—threaten their traditionally powerful position in Indian society.⁴ [redacted]

Because the issues of economic growth and family planning will be linked by both Gandhi and his political opposition, efforts to promote a smaller family norm for India could come under attack as part of a more general backlash against "modernization." Gandhi's economic policies already have been criticized by some Congress Party, farm, and labor leaders as being skewed in favor of India's middle and upper classes and small private corporate sector. [redacted]

Outlook: The Politics of Population Change

We do not believe that the growth of India's population will slow appreciably before it becomes the most populated country in the world by early in the second quarter of the 21st century. Gandhi's bold approach to other priority issues—Punjab, Assam, and the Sri Lankan communal conflict—indicates that he will

⁴ We doubt this kind of rallying cry would have a similar appeal to Indian minorities. Heightened self-consciousness among religious minorities has not been strongly tied to antitechnological or anti-Western rhetoric. Sikhs, for example, have been quick to adopt new technology and have smaller families on average than either Hindus or Muslims, according to Indian survey data. [redacted]

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launch his own program to address the complex problems of population growth. His stress on voluntarism and the importance of modernization in increasing motivation to reduce fertility shows, however, that he recognizes India's transition to lower fertility will necessarily be gradual. If India manages to slightly accelerate economic growth, introduce a family planning campaign, and rejuvenate its bureaucracy, Gandhi will be able to hasten the day when India's population stops growing—perhaps when it has reached 1.4-1.5 billion. [REDACTED]

We believe Gandhi will not be able to sustain an effective family planning campaign through the 1980s without maintaining his current high level of political popularity. As a result, we expect he will be a tenacious advocate rather than impatient taskmaster. His party enjoys a comfortable majority in Parliament and controls most state governments. He has favored a collective approach to problem solving and disparaged the authoritarian style of his brother. Gandhi is also well aware of the political risks of a coercive campaign. [REDACTED]

We believe Gandhi and his supporters face an uphill battle, given the dynamics of population growth that virtually guarantee increasingly large cohorts of young school and job aspirants. Ultimately, the progress of Rajiv's "war" on population growth will depend heavily on his ability to deliver the educational and employment opportunities to young Indians that will alter their motivation to marry early and have large families. [REDACTED]

Opportunities for the Soviet Union

Population problems and attendant economic, political, ethnic, and sectarian stresses create conditions favorable for Soviet efforts to derail Gandhi's moves to improve relations with the United States, Pakistan, and China. The pro-Soviet Indian press and Soviet media regularly feature articles alleging, for example, US and Pakistani sponsorship of Sikh terrorists in Punjab, US and Chinese interference in Assam, and Pakistani influence behind Hindu-Muslim clashes in India's cities. [REDACTED]

We expect Moscow to make a concerted effort to disrupt Gandhi's economic reforms to prevent deepening economic ties to the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. Moscow will again use its media contacts and encourage its Indian friends in the Congress Party and Communist parties to attack Gandhi's liberalization initiatives. The press has already carried articles warning of the political dangers of opening India's doors to multinational corporations and capital-intensive development. [REDACTED]

Implications for the United States

Gandhi's efforts to reduce Indian population growth probably will have few direct implications for the United States or for Indo-US relations. Washington, as one of India's largest bilateral aid donors, probably will be asked for additional assistance to help finance the family planning program, but New Delhi will almost certainly look to international and other bilateral donors as well. [REDACTED]

The population program could, however, have an indirect negative effect on Indo-US relations. Rajiv's policies of accelerating economic growth and modernizing India by early in the next century are strongly linked to New Delhi's widening ties to the West and the United States in particular. A conservative indigenous backlash against Rajiv's foreign-linked policies, which could conceivably extend to an aggressive family planning program, could involve Washington as a target. [REDACTED]

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