

EIAS Briefing Paper

India's National Security under the BJP: "Strong at Home, Engaged Abroad"

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ABSTRACT

In a marked departure from previous national governments, those led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) sought to address national security issues both proactively and strategically in line with the party's philosophy of achieving a strong India. This paper begins by examining the strategic vision of the BJP. It then analyses how this vision led the BJP to make India an overt nuclear weapons state in 1998, and how this status affected the government's actions in the Kargil Conflict of 1999. This is followed by an closer examination of national security strategy under the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), particularly as outlined in the seminal *Reforming the National Security System: Recommendations of the Group of Ministers* of 2001, and how this administration responded to the near-war situation which developed between India and Pakistan in the spring-summer of 2002. The paper then will conceptualise NDA national security policy as "strong at home, engaged abroad" as evidenced by defence spending on external and internal security, the military's deployment on peacekeeping duties, and defence cooperation with other countries. It will conclude with an examination as to whether this national security policy as conceptualised here will remain effective and/or viable in the future.