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## Intelligence Report

Office of Russian and Eurasian Analysis

9 October 1996

### Central Asian Reaction to Taliban's Takeover of Kabul

#### Key Judgments

Most Central Asian leaders are alarmed by Taliban's capture of Kabul, fearing it will lead to additional instability on their borders, but press [redacted] suggests that they are not eager to see the Russian military presence in the region increased and that they have not yet decided on a collective effort to arm Taliban's opponents. None of the Central Asian states has officially recognized Taliban. [redacted]

*Tashkent--which in recent months has advocated a negotiated settlement to the Afghan conflict--continues its military and economic support to the ethnic Uzbek warlord, General Dostam.*

- Uzbek President Karimov [redacted] feared Tashkent may have no choice ultimately but to cooperate with Moscow and Tehran in trying to build a force against Taliban and, [redacted] already has agreed to allow free passage via Uzbek territory of Russian arms, ammunition, and equipment to Dostam's forces.
- At the CIS Summit this past weekend, Karimov claimed he rebuffed both Russian pressure to take the lead in orchestrating an alliance between Dostam and former Afghan leader Rabbani and Russian efforts to beef up the CIS military presence in Tajikistan, although he admitted he may change his mind should Taliban advance toward the Uzbek or Tajik borders. [redacted]

Tajik Government officials are worried that the power shift in Kabul could embolden the Tajik Islamic opposition to try to take advantage of Dushanbe's preoccupation with events to the south. [redacted]

- Although there is little evidence of contact between Taliban and Dushanbe's Afghanistan-based armed, Islamic-led opposition, the

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Dushanbe regime fears that the opposition will find it easy to switch allegiances among the Afghan factions, [REDACTED]

*Meanwhile, Taliban's success appears to have prompted Tajik President Rahmonov to undertake new reconciliation efforts toward his domestic opponents. Tajik President Rahmonov recently announced he was sending an envoy to Tehran to discuss a new cease-fire proposal with opposition leader Nuri.* [REDACTED]

*The Turkmen Government continues to try to stay on good terms with all the Afghan protagonists, in part because it wants to protect the viability of a planned construction project for a gas pipeline to Pakistan via Afghanistan.*

- Turkmenistan is a main supplier of fuel to Taliban, [REDACTED]
- President Niyazov [REDACTED] will not allow either air or ground routes through Turkmenistan to be used to transport arms to either side in the Afghan dispute, however. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] however, Niyazov reconsidered an earlier decision to recognize Taliban as the government of Afghanistan because he is not sure Taliban will be able to hang onto power.

- Although the Turkmen Government- [REDACTED] fears that a confrontation between Dostam and Taliban would be violent, Niyazov [REDACTED] Turkmenistan would stay neutral and would not become involved in any renewed fighting. [REDACTED]

Kazakstani and Kyrgyz Government officials [REDACTED] worry that Taliban's victory could help fuel the Tajik conflict, which they consider to be the main threat to regional stability. Kazakstan does not share a border with Tajikistan and is not inclined to increase its small military presence there in order to counter the threat.

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~~Secret~~**Central Asian Views of the Summit**

A variety of reporting suggests that the Central Asian Governments believe that Taliban's unexpected takeover of Kabul last week is a step towards greater regional instability. They are fearful that Taliban will eventually attempt to take the north of Afghanistan and that fighting there could cross into Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, generating a major influx of refugees, and, perhaps an explosion of drug trafficking. They are also concerned about possible Taliban efforts to export its Islamic revolution northward.

**Little Progress on the Multilateral Front**

At Moscow's urging, four Central Asian leaders--excluding Turkmen President Niyazov--met with Russian Premier Chernomyrdin at an emergency CIS Summit in Almaty last week to discuss the Afghan crisis. Although the participants agreed that "adequate measures" would be taken in accordance with the CIS Treaty on Collective Security, presumably referring to a situation in which CIS borders were violated, they agreed on little else. For example, they did not agree to Russian proposals to reinforce the Tajik border with CIS peacekeeping troops, to establish a Russian presence on the Uzbek-Afghan border, or to jointly provide arms to Dostam and Masood, [redacted] Tajikistan and Russia bilaterally agreed to reinforce the Tajik-Afghan border with additional Russian border troops, according to press reporting.

- The Uzbek and Kazakstani Presidents went into the meeting prepared to resist what they viewed as Russia's efforts to push its own agenda and use the Afghan crisis to increase its influence and presence in Central Asia, [redacted]
- At a press conference following the Summit, President Karimov called for increased support to Dostam. However, at the Summit, Karimov rejected a Russian proposal to create an anti-Taliban front in Central Asia, because he perceived that Iran would be likely to dominate the front, since Iran would take the lead in providing aid and advisers to Dostam, Rabbani and Masood [redacted]

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of Russian and Eurasian Analysis, with contributions by analysts in the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, at the request of a senior State Department official. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, [redacted] ORE, at [redacted]

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- [redacted]
- Tajik President Rahmonov espoused a position similar to that of Russia and Iran--calling for a broad, united front against Taliban--leading Karimov to conclude, [redacted] that Russian military commanders drafted Rahmonov's statement for the Summit. [redacted]

### Central Asian Statements that the US Supports Taliban

[redacted] after the CIS Summit in Almaty that Russia has been alleging that the United States is a main supporter of Taliban. Several Central Asian officials have espoused this idea as well:

- [redacted] senior Tajik officials are firmly convinced that Washington has been funneling weapons to Taliban [redacted] --and is responsible for Taliban's swift victory. Tajik leaders also view the early visit of US officials to Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif as proof of US involvement with Taliban, [redacted]
- [redacted] Kazakstani diplomats believe that the United States will recognize the Taliban regime because Washington seeks a pro-US regime in Kabul and less Russian and Iranian influence in Afghanistan.
- Kyrgyz diplomats are apprehensive about expected US recognition of the Taliban regime and the possibility that other countries will follow the US lead, [redacted]

[redacted] be cautious about US official contacts with Taliban, which he said will be misinterpreted by Central Asian leaders and could be used by Iran to foster a Dostam-Rabbani/Masood alliance.

*This box is* [redacted]

### Uzbekistan: Hoping to Avoid a "Distasteful Alliance" [redacted]

The Uzbek Government, [redacted] believes that Taliban's takeover of Kabul and threat to Dostam's forces in the north could result in spillover fighting across the border into Uzbekistan and spark radical Islamic activity, which could lead to political instability in Uzbekistan.

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- Karimov [ ] did not believe Dostam could stand alone against Taliban and that a takeover of Dostam's territory by Taliban would be unacceptable for Uzbekistan. Karimov said he was worried that a Taliban-Dostam confrontation would draw Uzbekistan, Iran, and Russia together in a distasteful alliance in support of Dostam—which, from Tashkent's perspective, would be aimed at keeping "the Islamic fanatics" away from Uzbekistan's border.
- Tashkent--*whose policy over the past year has been to support a negotiated settlement, while providing Dostam with secret military and economic support in exchange for Dostam's promise to prevent fighting from reaching the Uzbek-Afghan border*--is facing the prospect that Dostam will need stepped-up aid, including support from Moscow and Tehran, to counter Taliban, [ ]
- Despite Karimov's oft-expressed concerns about the dangers of increased Russian involvement in the region, he reportedly has agreed to allow the free passage of Russian arms, ammunition, and other unidentified equipment to Dostam's forces, [ ]  
[ ] At the same time, Karimov continues to express a commitment to seeking a UN resolution on an embargo against arms supply to Afghanistan. [ ]

The Uzbek Government appears unwilling at this time to deploy Uzbek troops to Afghanistan to assist Dostam--*an option it probably would consider only if Taliban reached the Uzbek border*. Karimov, speaking hypothetically, [ ]  
[ ] that Uzbekistan "would have to get involved" in Afghanistan, should his southern frontier be threatened by the "presence of Islamic fanatics." [ ]

#### Tashkent's Support to Dostam

[ ] over the years [ ] Uzbek support for Dostam has consisted of large quantities of fuel and ammunition, tanks, aircraft, and other items of military equipment, as well as repairs and maintenance for that equipment. Such support probably continues--although we have no concrete information on the quantity of such support--based on information that Dostam frequently visits Tashkent and has representative offices there. Uzbekistan's aid program for Dostam began approximately in 1992 when Dostam and Rabbani were allies and continued after the two men split at the end of 1993.

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~~Secret~~**Tajikistan: Not in a Panic Mode... Yet** 

The power shift in Kabul has many Tajiks concerned about the possible "serious repercussions" for Tajikistan, according to  press reporting. The fact that Dushanbe has little or no first-hand information on events in Kabul or on the long-term external policy goals of Taliban has complicated the Tajik Government's ability to formulate policy.

- Dushanbe's fears about the immediate situation in Tajikistan have eased somewhat since the end of September, when some government officials feared that Taliban might advance to the Tajik-Afghan border before winter.  Dostam's decision to oppose Taliban's move northward, coupled with Taliban's apparent difficulty in advancing against Masood's forces in the Panjsher Valley, have calmed nerves in Dushanbe.

Taliban's takeover of Kabul, however, appears to have reinvigorated Dushanbe's lagging interest in political reconciliation with its domestic opponents.

- Rahmonov recently announced he was sending an envoy to Tehran to discuss a new cease-fire proposal with opposition leader Nuri, according to press reporting.

**Tajik Opposition-Taliban Relations** 

The impact of Taliban's gains on the Tajik opposition remains to be seen. Although the Tajik opposition and Taliban both are organizations with Islamic agendas, their agendas are not closely aligned, and there is little hard evidence to suggest that they have worked together.

- On the one hand, the opposition could seek to emphasize the common religious component and seek an alliance with Taliban, with the goal of securing a powerful patron to bolster its push into Tajikistan. Working against such an alliance, however, is Taliban's mainly ethnic Pashtun background, the majority ethnic group inimical to ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks in Afghanistan.

*In any event, the opposition appears to be trying to lay the groundwork for correct relations, based on  press reporting.* A high-ranking official claimed that his organization was on good terms with all groups and movements in Afghanistan, and that Tajiks in Afghanistan enjoyed the care of all tribes and nationalities, according to the opposition's clandestine radio broadcast. In addition,

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one opposition leader--Davlat Usmon of the Islamic Renaissance Movement--met this week in Kabul with the Taliban leadership, according to a Russian press report, to discuss possible joint efforts against the Tajik Government and to relay a congratulatory letter from the leader of the Tajik opposition movement, Nuri. [redacted]

**Turkmenistan: Trying to Appear Neutral** [redacted]

*The Turkmen Government thus far has sought to avoid making any statements or taking any actions that would publicly contradict its foreign policy of "positive neutrality." Turkmen officials have tried to stay on good terms with all the Afghan protagonists and until the fall of Kabul were providing some support to Dostam, Rabbani, and Taliban.* [redacted]

- [redacted] the Turkmen Government enjoys a very good relationship with Dostam, who controls the territory along a large section of the Turkmen-Afghan border, and Dostam recently sent assurances to Ashgabat that he would continue to respect Turkmenistan's sovereignty.
- At the same time, Ashgabat has ensured that communication and transportation links with the Taliban-controlled region along a small section of Turkmenistan's border with Afghanistan remain uninterrupted. Moreover, [redacted] Turkmenistan is a major fuel supplier to Taliban. [redacted]

The Turkmen Government believes that a confrontation between Dostam and Taliban would be violent and hopes that Taliban does not push further north toward Turkmenistan's border. [redacted] Ashgabat has no intention of becoming militarily involved in Afghanistan under any circumstance, according to a statement President Niyazov made recently [redacted]

- Should Taliban gain control over all of Afghanistan without extensive violence, the Turkmen officials reportedly would not be overly concerned about Turkmenistan's security, because there have been Taliban forces along part of Turkmenistan's border for the past year without any negative impact on Turkmenistan's security. Moreover, Turkmen officials assess that the Turkmen population has been immune to fundamentalist proselytizing from Iran.

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- Niyazov told [ ] recently refused an Iranian request for permission to transport military equipment to Dostam across Turkmen territory. Niyazov was anxious that during a meeting with President Yel'tsin scheduled for next week in Moscow, Yel'tsin may pressure him to open his borders to Iranian arms convoys. What worried him most, Niyazov said, were the consequences if Russia, India, and Iran were to pump arms and ammunition to Dostam and Masood, which would result in fighting that would require greater international involvement. [ ]

#### **Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan: Pursuing a Policy of Non-interference** [ ]

Kazakstani and Kyrgyz Government officials are fearful that Taliban's victory could help fuel the conflict in Tajikistan, which they consider to be the main source of instability in the region, according to [ ] press reporting. So far, they have been consistent in their position that neighboring countries should abstain from becoming involved in Afghanistan. Kazakstani President Nazarbayev has offered to mediate the conflict in Afghanistan and has called for a UN Security Council meeting to discuss the situation in Kabul. [ ]

Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan each have deployed 500 troops as part of the CIS Peacekeeping Forces in Tajikistan, according to press reporting. The Kazakstani troops in Tajikistan have suffered casualties and their safety has become a contentious domestic issue for Nazarbayev. Both countries have poorly trained and supplied militaries. Nevertheless, either could contemplate greater involvement under some circumstances.

- Nazarbayev told [ ] that he would resist pressure from Russia to arm Dostam and Masood, but would be compelled to intervene militarily if the Uzbek or Tajik border were violated.
- Kyrgyz President Akayev has not said under what conditions Kyrgyzstan would become militarily involved, but Kyrgyzstan this week moved troops from the Osh motorized rifle brigade and Russian border guards to bolster security on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, with the aim of preventing a possible infiltration by Afghan fighters through Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan, according to press reporting. [ ]

#### **Implications** [ ]

For the Central Asian leaders, the initial shock of Taliban's victory seems to have worn off, and they apparently perceive that Taliban probably will not be able to advance northward in the immediate future, in view of the onset of winter and Taliban's

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preoccupation with consolidating its gains. This has given the Central Asian leaders time to gather information, assess the situation, and try to formulate a new Afghan policy.

The key question confronting the Central Asian leaders is the extent to which they should attempt to get directly involved and join in regional cooperation arrangements, considering their individual security interests. They will also have to consider their evolving relationship with Russia and Iran on Afghan issues.

Turkmenistan probably will continue trying to support all Afghan protagonists for economic reasons.

- *Should a violent confrontation in Afghanistan move close to the Turkmen border, Ashgabat almost certainly would welcome increased Russian presence along its border, its commitment to "positive neutrality" notwithstanding.*

*Uzbekistan's decisionmaking reflects its priorities of keeping Islamic fundamentalism as far from its southern border as possible, while trying to maintain a monopoly on supplying Dostam and asserting itself as the main protector of stability in Central Asia. Tashkent will have difficulty balancing its desire to bolster Dostam--which it increasingly believes will require Russian and Iranian cooperation--while trying to allow these outside actors as little presence in the region as possible.*

- The Uzbek Government probably would curtail the flow of Russian supplies if it feels that it is benefitting other factions more than Dostam's.
- Meanwhile, Uzbekistan probably will make contingency plans for a possible incursion of its forces into Afghanistan--which Karimov has said would occur if the Uzbek and Tajik borders are violated by Taliban.

*The Tajik Government will probably allow military materiel and aid from Russia and other countries to transit its territory to benefit Rabbani and Masood, but only if they promise to curb support for the Tajik opposition and if Moscow agrees to keep a strong presence at the Tajik-Afghan border to repel any retaliatory efforts from Taliban forces.*

- A second echelon of CIS peacekeeping troops has already been set up along the border, according to press reports. While these troops were placed ostensibly to prevent opposition incursions into the country,

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they can serve as a backbone for any future troop deployments to the area.

It would be financially and logistically difficult for Kazakstan or Kyrgyzstan to become militarily involved in the conflict in Afghanistan, but both countries probably would do so if Taliban crossed the border into any Central Asian state. Neither country is likely to oppose Russian military materiel and aid transiting their territory to assist Rabbani and Masood.

- Kazakstan is more likely to stay aloof and to resist sending additional troops to the CIS forces in Tajikistan or to allow more Russian troops into its territory, even if the situation in Tajikistan is worsened by further Taliban maneuvers into northern Afghanistan.
- Due to its geographical proximity to Tajikistan and its fear of additional refugees and drugs into its south, Kyrgyzstan might be more willing to contribute additional troops to the Afghan-Tajik border.

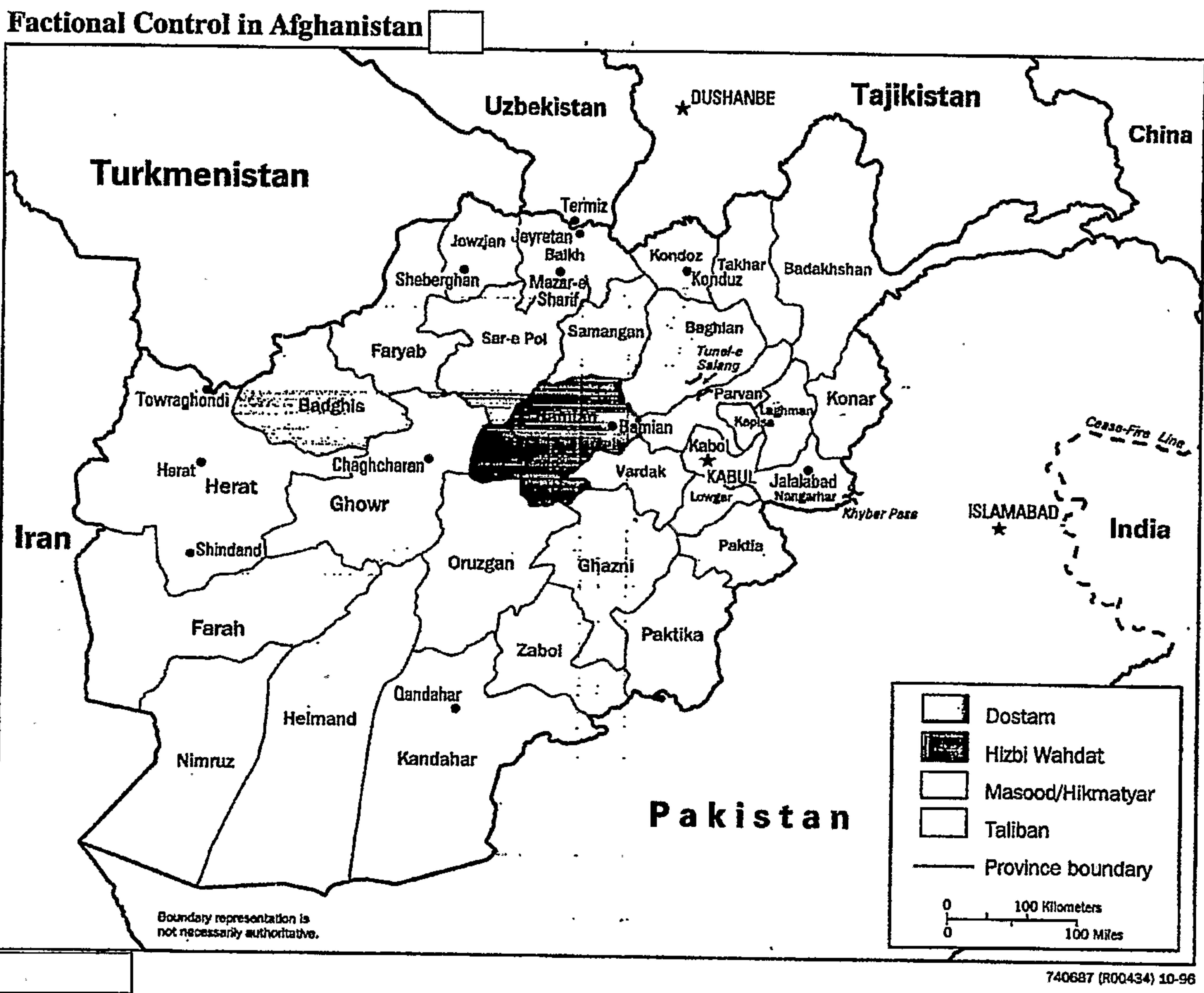
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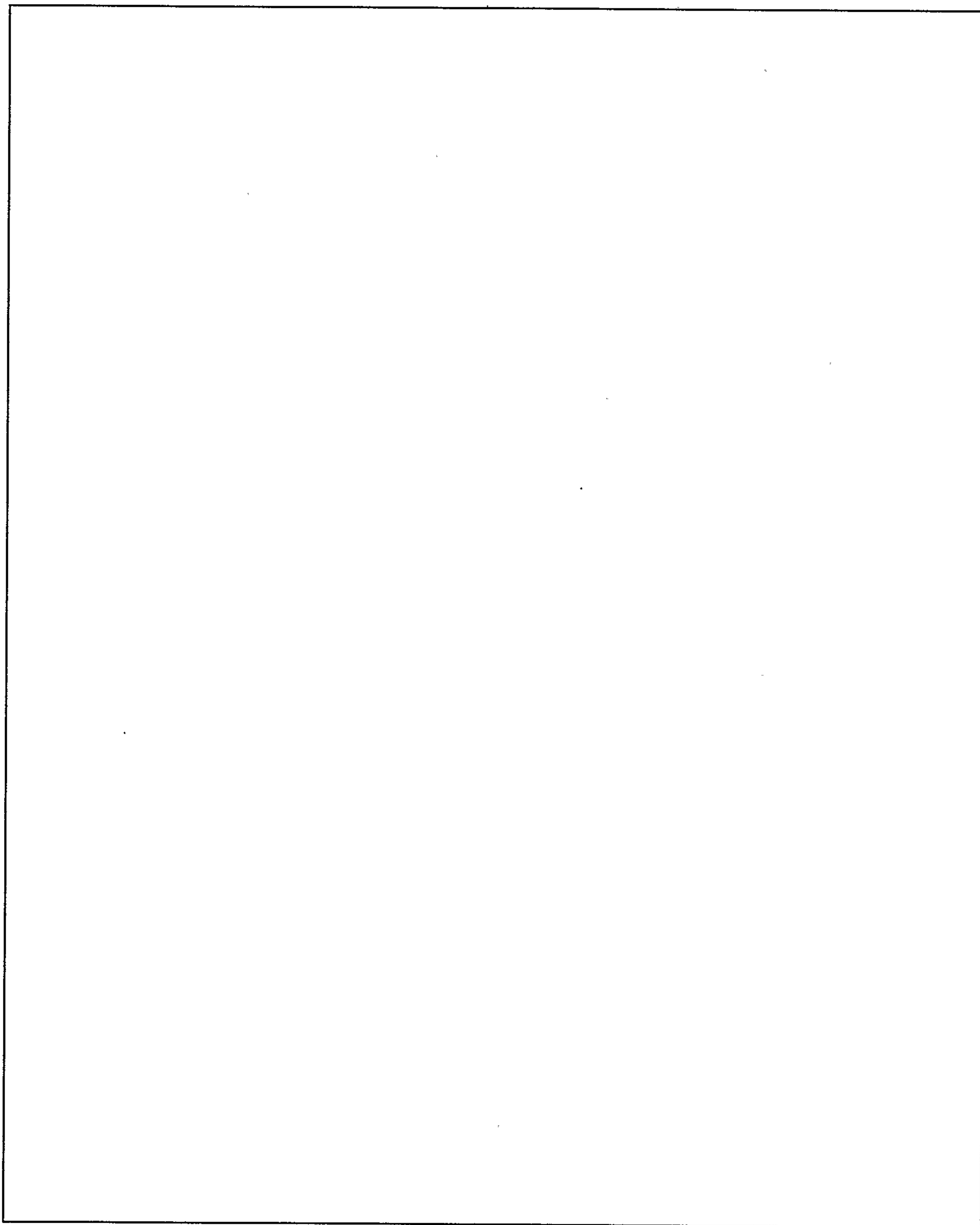
# Afghanistan's Key Players

Leaders		Ethnic Group	Party/Faction	Comments
<b>Taliban</b> Islamic fundamentalist movement of Pashtun religious leaders and students some of whom served as Hizb-i-Islami/Khalis (HIK) or Haraki-Intiqab-i-Islami (HII) faction commanders during Soviet occupation.	Mohammad OMAR	Pashtun		Founder of movement... revered by followers... the group's proclaimed Commander of the Faithful... seeks removal of warlords... wants Islamic state with sharia (Islamic Law) enforced... informal support from Pakistan.
	Mullah RABBANI	Pashtun		Second in command to Omar... more moderate... former commander of eastern zone.
	Mullah GHAUS	Pashtun		Foreign affairs representative... sophisticated by Taliban standards... hardliner on negotiations... firm believer in Taliban's purifying mission.
<b>Former Government Alliance</b> Jamiat-i-Islami (JI), the Supervisory Council of the North (SCN), Itihad-i-Islami Bari Azadi Afghanistan (IULA), Hizbi Wahdati/Akbari (HIWA), Harakat-i-Islami (HIA), Hizbi-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG).	Ahmad Shah MASOOD	Tajik	SCN; JI	Dominant military figure in former coalition... respected for military, tactical abilities... had played major security role in Kabul... some ties to Iran, Russia... Panjsher Valley stronghold.
	Burhanuddin RABBANI	Tajik	JI	Former nominal President... politically flexible... some ties to Iran, Russia.
	Abdul Rasul SAYYAF	Pashtun	IULA	Party leader... Islamist... objects to Dostam's role in governing... anti-Shia... ties to Saudis... involved in terrorist training camps... no intention of allying with Taliban.
	Gulbuddin HIKMATIYAR	Pashtun	HIG	Former Prime Minister... radical Islamist... longstanding ties to Pakistan... good relations with Dostam... diminished military... involved in training camps.
	Mohammad AKBARI	Hazara	HWA	Leads Shia faction... wants guarantee of Shia rights, role in future government... strong ties to Iran.
	Mohammed Asif MOHSENI	Qizilbash	HIA	Politically independent... reputation as peacemaker... leads smallest Shia faction... anti-Iran... now aligned with Rabbani.
	Abdul Rashid DOSTAM	Uzbek	NIM	Northern military strongman... effective military commander... former Communist... wants to ensure autonomy for northern regions... mistrusts Masood... probably will avoid formal alliances... envisions federal system.
<b>Other Parties</b> HIK, HII, Janja-i-Najat-i-Milli Afghanistan (ANLF) and Mahaz-i-Milli-Islami (NIFA) are neutral or not actively involved in factional fighting.	Karim KHALILI	Hazara	HWK	Strongly allied with NIM... Dostam follower... wants Shia role in future government... under increasing pressure from Iran to reunite with Akbari faction.
	Mohammad Yunis KHALIS	Pashtun	HIK	Moderate fundamentalist... highly respected... lacks political ambition... anti-Shia... proclaimed support for Taliban.
	Sibghatullah MOHADEEDI	Pashtun	ANLF	Preceded Rabbani as Interim President... respected... limited influence... whereabouts in question.
	Mohammad NABI Mohammadi	Pashtun	HII	Traditional Islamist... nonconfrontational... headed large anti-Soviet armed faction... probably anti-Shia.
	Pir Sayed Ahmad GAILANI	Pashtun/Arab	NIFA	Royalist, favors return of ex-King Zahir Shah... moderate... Westernized... limited influence.





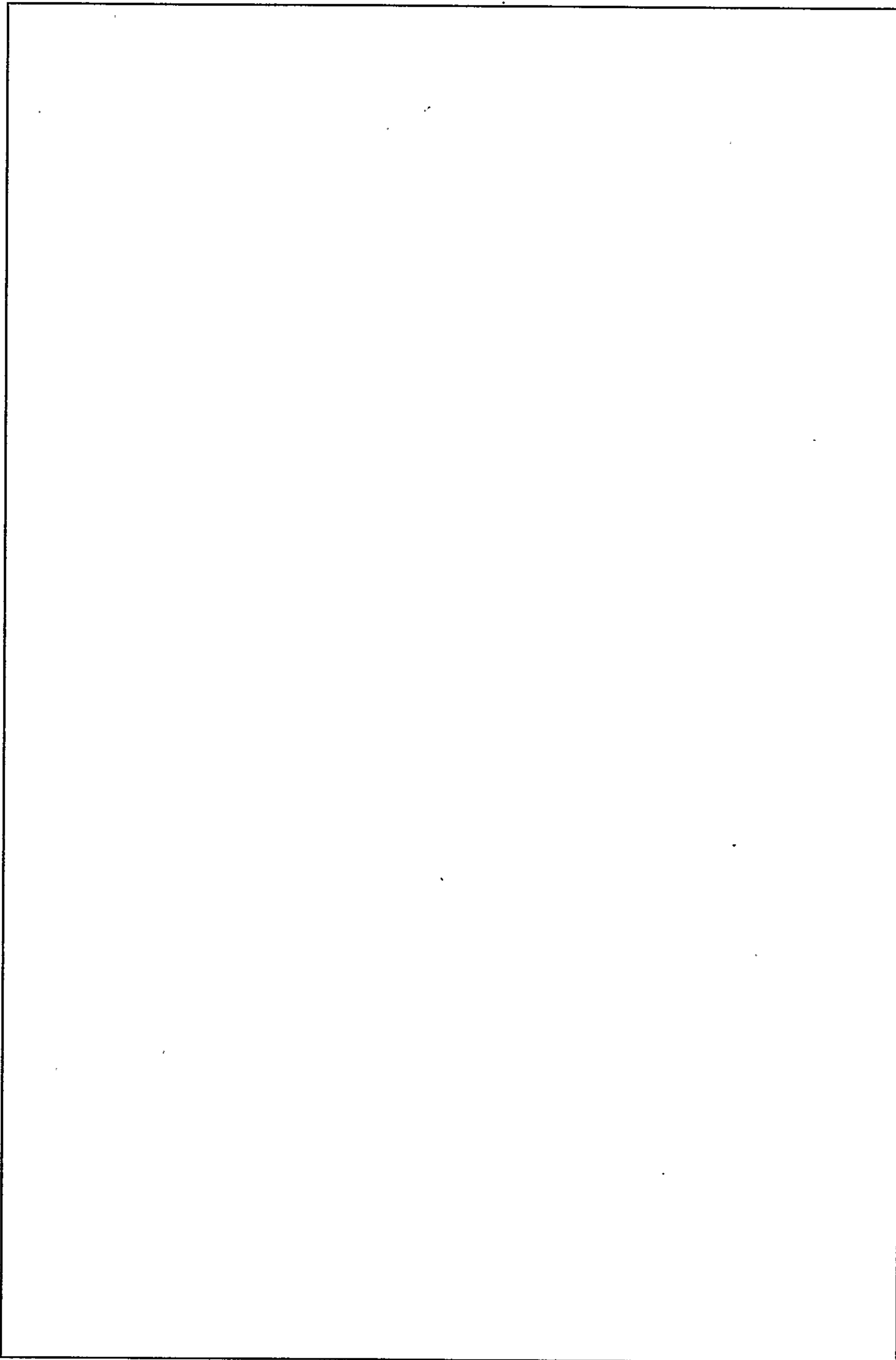
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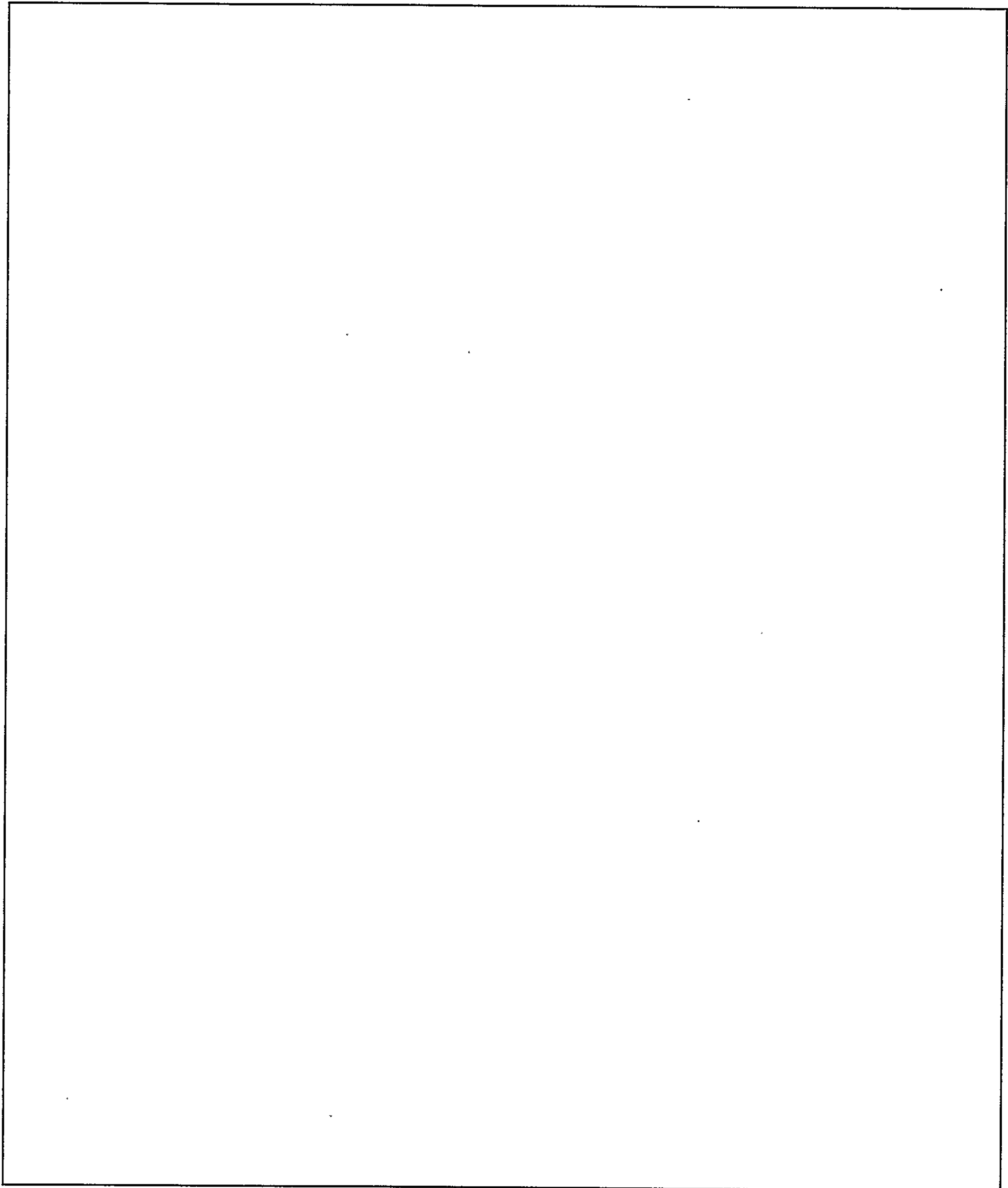


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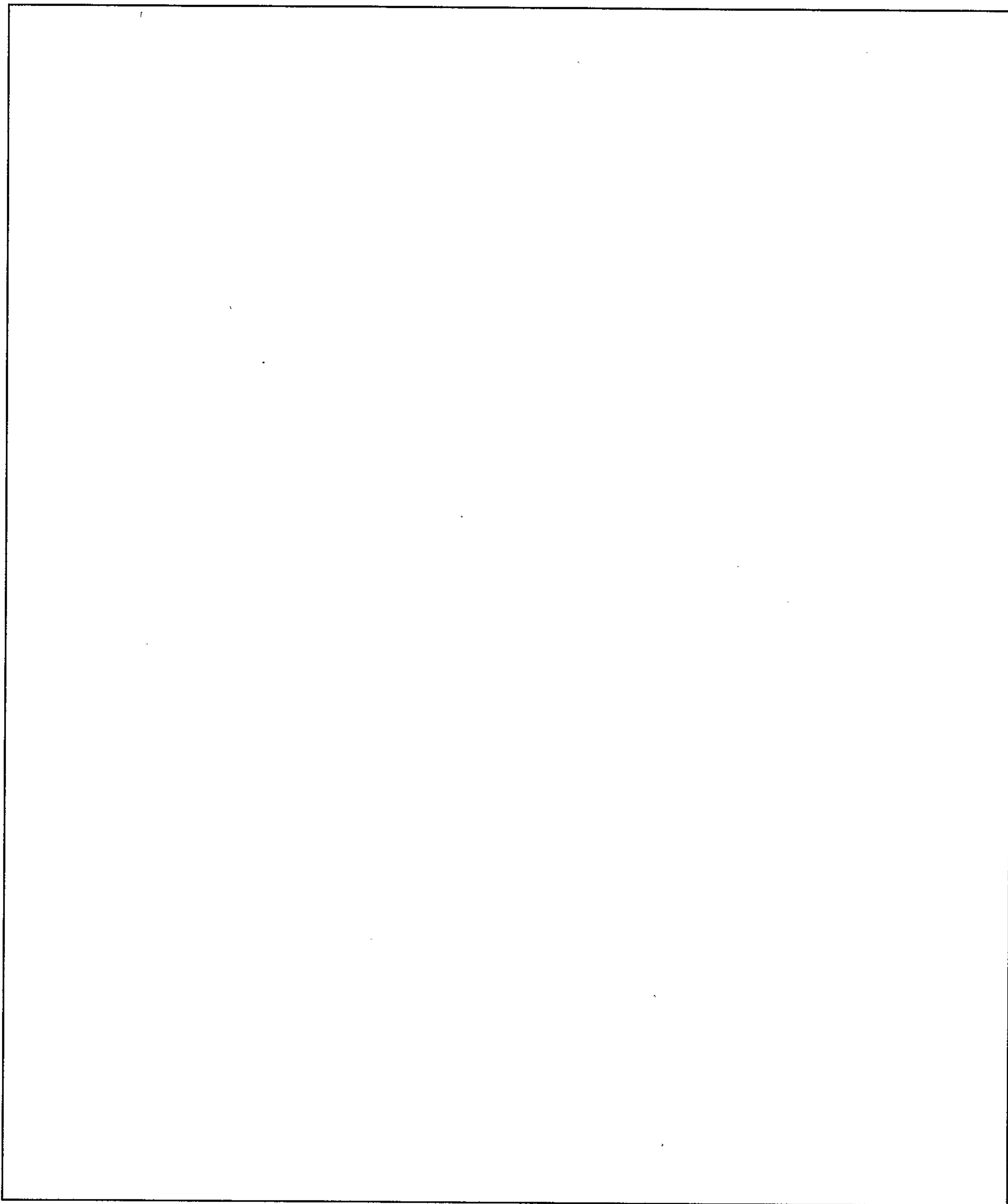


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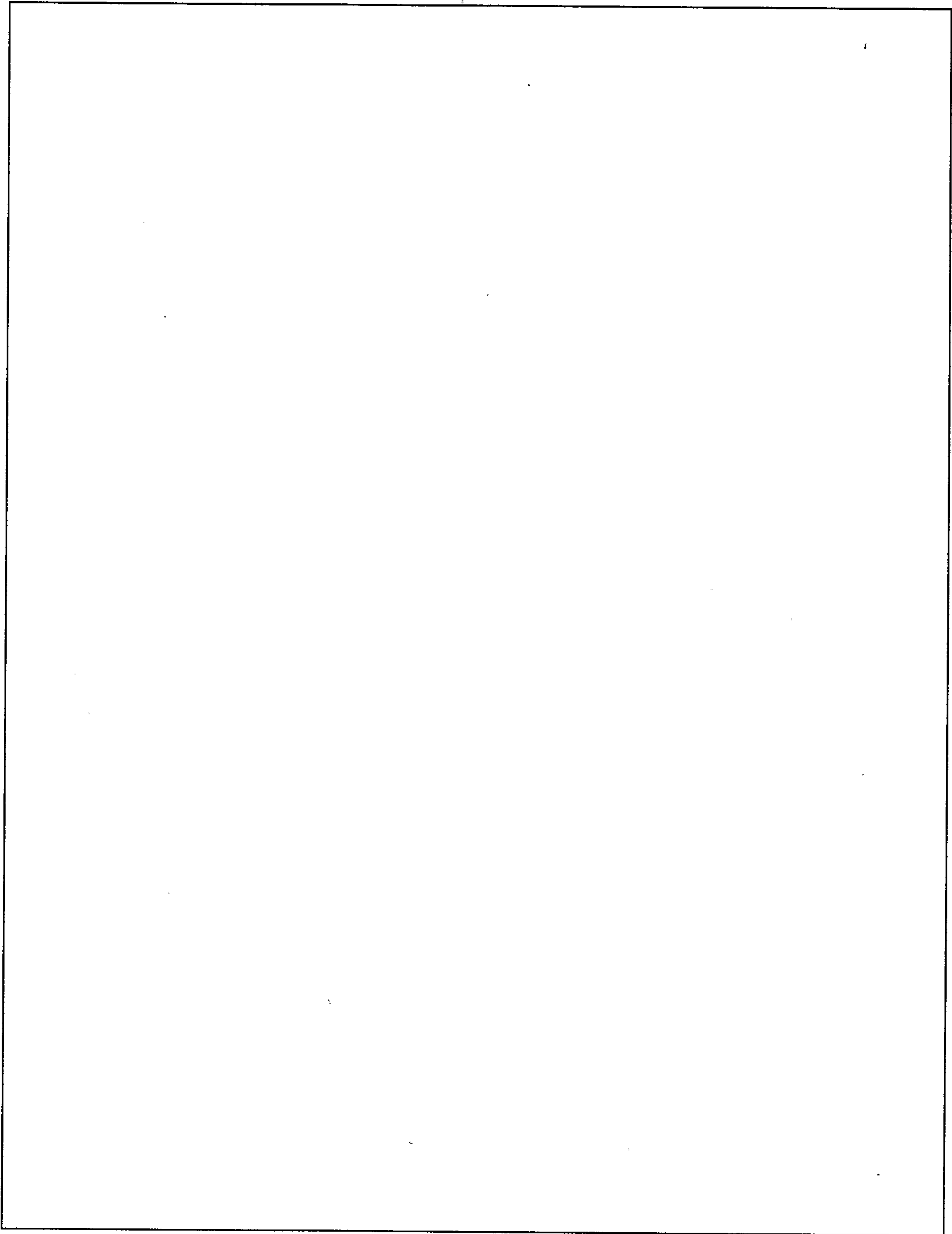
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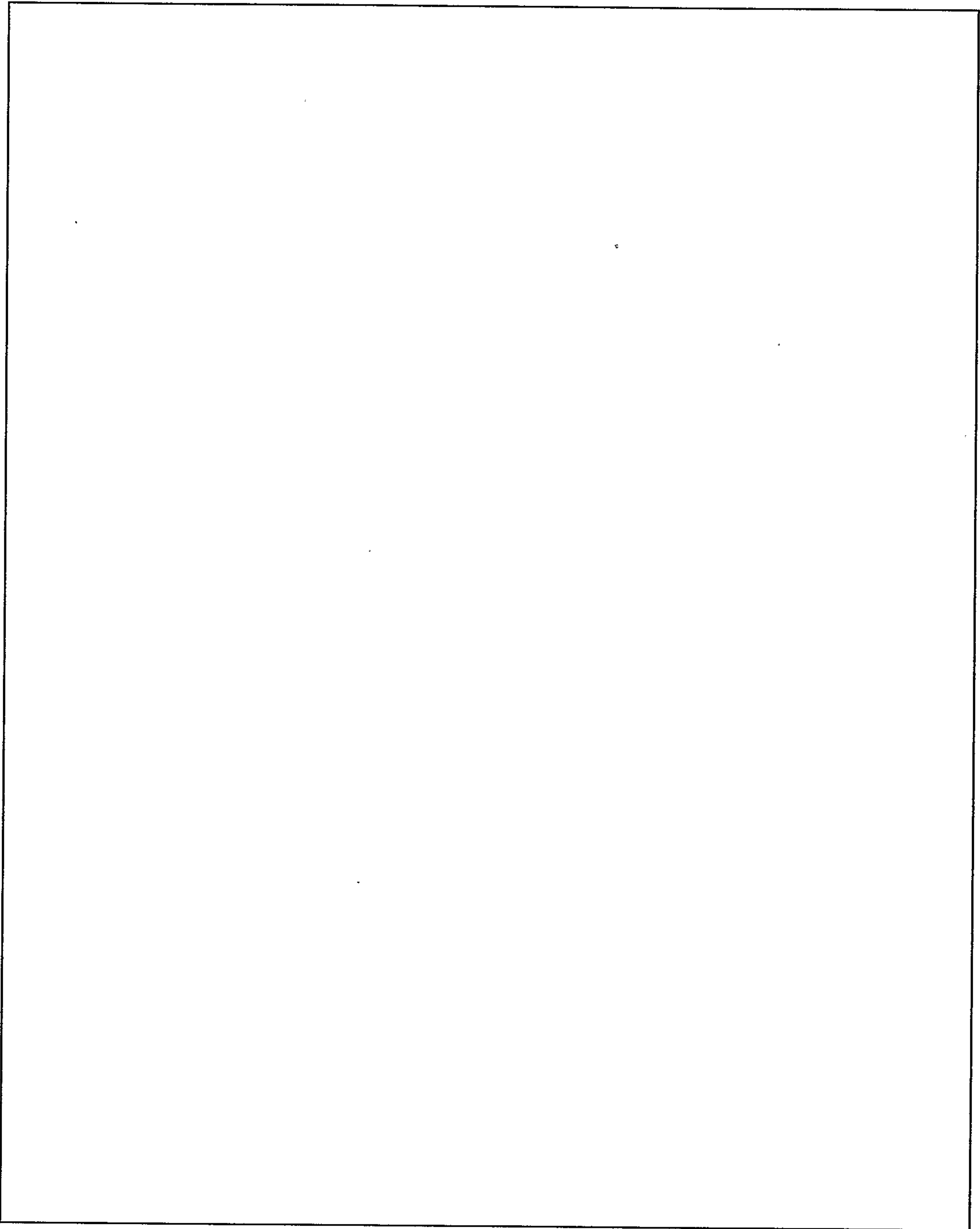


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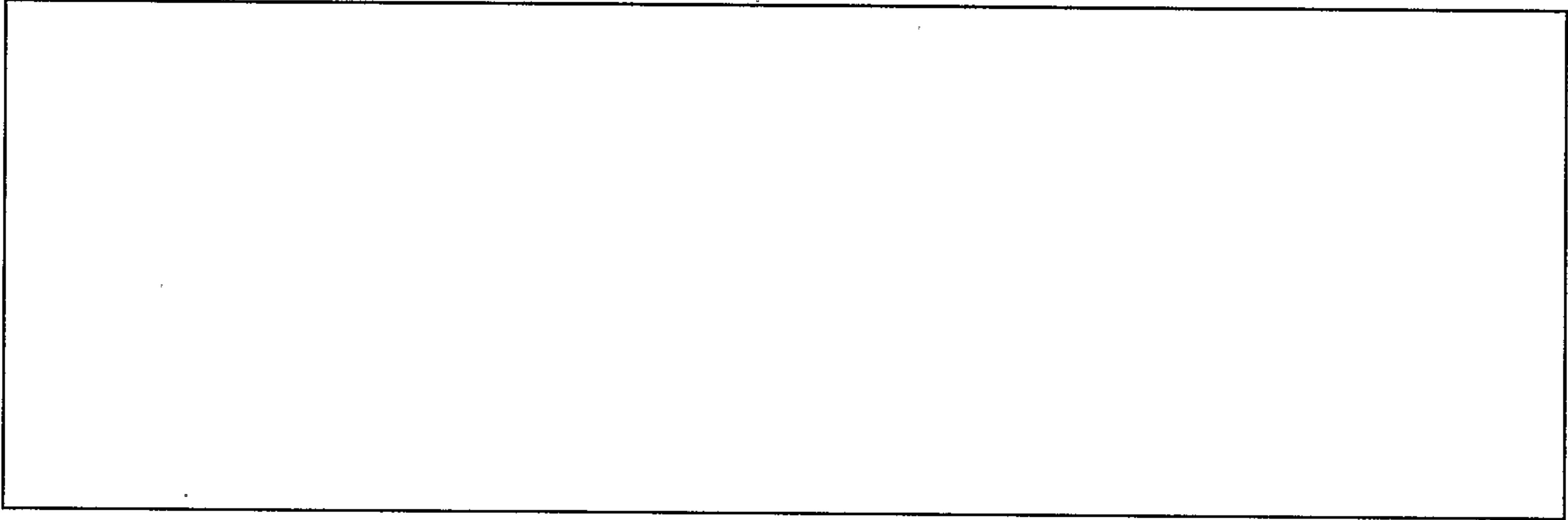
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