violence against India's so-called "weaker sections of society" remains virtually endemic. Assaults against untouchables, particularly in the large, backward states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar remain widespread. The only positive note that one can discern in her essay about the plight of the untouchable community is that sections of that community are finally fighting back. Here the massive "positive discrimination" (affirmative action) program that the Indian state undertook almost since its founding can claim some success. Tragically the very assertiveness of the untouchables as well as India's other ethnic minorities is also generating a backlash which is often violent. As higher caste Hindus are forced to make small accommodations to both untouchables and other minorities, many of them increasingly seek to dismantle the legal and constitutional safeguards designed to protect and enhance minority rights. The growing strength of the Hindu-chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) can to a substantial degree be attributed to a reaction against the growing political assertiveness of India's minorities.

The BJP's chauvinist agenda has domestic as well as foreign policy implications. Stephen Cohen in his imaginative essay on India's perceptions of itself as a great power argues that a BJP-dominated government may well encounter difficulties with India's Middle Eastern neighbours. Currently, India is dependent on many of the Gulf states for oil, remittances from having guest workers and turnkey projects. Solving the Kashmir problem may also become more problematic if the BJP were to emerge as a more central force in Indian politics in the years ahead. As Philips Talbot shows in his insightful essay on the origins of the Kashmir crisis, a professedly secular regime showed reckless disregard for the political rights of the residents of the state. One is forced to wonder how a political party like the BJP, which is openly committed to revoking Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, would seek to redress the genuine grievances of the Kashmiri Muslims.

Perhaps the single most important leitmotif that one detects in this volume is that despite the many reports of unrelieved gloom the country continues to stagger on. Whether or not it will be able to finally turn a corner and surge forward both in the political and economic realms depends on the pathway its leaders chose in the months and years ahead.

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When ancient Egypt appeared in the eastern Mediterranean nearly five thousand years ago, it helped introduce into a still dolorous world the succulent yet iniquitous fruit of geopolitical power struggle and empire. And when the last of the great Egyptian dynasties yielded to the Babylonian and Median empires some two thousand five hundred years later, civilization had certainly gained much from all of ancient Egypt's tribulations and achievements. But, of course, the price had been paid in the coin of interminable intrigue, slavery and blood shed by countless military expeditions to Nubia and the Levant.

In *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, Donald B. Redford traces the vicissitudes of ancient Egypt from the emergence of the 1st Dynasty out of the shadows of its Neolithic past to the ignominious collapse of the 26th Dynasty in 525 B.C. The
remarkable history of dynastic Egypt is vast and unwieldy but Redford handles it reasonably well, particularly when he begins to address the Middle Kingdom and beyond.

By the outset of the Middle Kingdom, or during the 12th and 13th Dynasties of the first half of the second millennium B.C., Egypt had begun to exhibit all the features of nascent empire as it expanded its spheres of influence southward into Nubia and eastward into Asia. With the advent of the Asiatic 15th, or Hyksos, Dynasty, Egypt's eastern policy had become a preoccupation.

Following the expulsion of Hyksos rule in the first half of the sixteenth century B.C., Egypt's Asian aspirations intensified. Between 1440 through 1375 B.C., the 18th Dynasty established a veritable "Pax Aegyptiaca" in the Levant after having arrived at a modus vivendi with its most formidable rival in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Hurrian Mitanni. When Mitanni succumbed to the Hittite onslaught which descended from the central Anatolian plateau in 1377 B.C., Egypt quickly found itself locked in a power struggle with the Hittites which resulted in the century-long Egypto-Hittite War. Nevertheless, when the war ended inconclusively in 1284 B.C., Egypt's Asiatic empire remained intact with Canaan more firmly than ever within the Egyptian orbit.

Inevitably, fresh challenges to Egyptian hegemony in Canaan and the Levant soon arose. Between 911 and 612 B.C., Assyria emerged as Egypt's most intimidating eastern rival and scourge. Assyrian belligerence was so successful that, in 663 B.C., the armies of Ashurbanipal sacked Thebes and brought the Kushite 25th Dynasty to its knees. But ancient Egypt returned one last time as the 26th Dynasty only this time allied with nearly defunct Assyria against the newly awakened Babylonian menace. However, in a series of military confrontations with the Babylonians between 610 and 588 B.C., ancient Egypt finally spent itself. By 525 B.C., it was no more.

Redford recounts this epic of geopolitical birth and decay with admirable skill (notwithstanding a certain awkwardness of style). Of particular interest is his treatment of one of the more controversial subplots to this grand drama, namely Egypt's complex relationship with Canaan and Biblical Israel. And perhaps the most fascinating as well as evocative aspect of Redford's account of this relationship turns upon dynastic Egypt's connection to the Biblical narrative of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus and the rise of David's United Monarchy. For Redford, archeological evidence condemns all three events to quasi-mythological ambiguity. For instance, Redford calculates that the total length of the reigns of the kings of Judah was 430 years which, when added to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., places the beginning of Solomon's rule at roughly 1016 B.C. And since, according to the Bible, 480 years supposedly elapsed between the Exodus and the dedication of Solomon's temple, the Exodus must thereby have occurred in 1496 B.C. Moreover, if we add another 430 years for the sojourn in Egypt, Jacob's descent to Goshen consequently occurs at 1926 B.C. Yet Egyptian archeological evidence from this large period mentions none of this. Indeed, this lack of evidence is all the more surprising since Egypt's Asiatic empire (about which the Bible, in turn, says precious little) reached its zenith shortly after Israel's apparent 15th century B.C. return from Egyptian exile. Furthermore, Joshua's conquest of Canaan and the rise of the United Monarchy are plagued by similar kinds of archeological and historical discrepancies. In Redford's words, "the Biblical writers are wholly and blissfully unaware of the colossal discrepancy to which their 'history' and 'chronology' have given rise" (p. 259). Therefore, far more than the Old Testament's creation story and other miraculous, events would seem to be incredulous.