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Out of Desperation, Indian Leftists Uniting?

By [Richard L. Benkin](#)

Last Spring, India's Gandhi-Nehru dynasty suffered its worst reversal in history. Its ruling Congress Party, which has governed India for all but a few years of the country's 67 year history, went from 206 seats to only 44 in the 543 seat parliament. Worse still for India's elites, this left-center party lost out to its arch rival and center-right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). State and local elections have offered the party faithful only more bad news, and in the just concluded Delhi elections, Congress failed to win even a single seat. After the debacle in India's capital, Congress Party General Secretary Ajay Maken was forced to quit, but the Gandhi-Nehru family seems immune. In fact, Congress Party President and strongwoman Sonia Gandhi still plans to anoint her son and serial failure Rahul Gandhi to succeed her, making the party's chances of revival almost nil.

BJP standard bearer and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a long time free market capitalist. He has championed small government, first as the Chief Minister of the Indian state of Gujarat, and now as Prime Minister. From his first day in office, Modi began dismantling the big government structures and programs that were the fruit of Congress's long socialist reign. He is also openly pro-US and pro-Israel, both positions anathemas to the Indian left.

The leftists might be trying to fight back. According to reliable sources here in India, various elements of the fractured Indian left are attempting to unite. It seems that Congress, modeled after European socialist parties, actually had a restraining influence on most of them; because ever since Jawaharlal Nehru took his nation into the Soviet Union's camp, leftists knew that Congress ruled governments would implement part of their agenda. Unfortunately, it also kept the Indian people in a constant state of big government slavery, which Modi is trying to change.

And that is why the Indian left is trying to unite. Recently, a group of politburo members (yes, they really do call their leadership councils politburos), met in the South India city of Hyderabad in order to craft a common agenda and political strategy. How long this "comradeship" will last is anyone's guess. In 1967, for instance, the Indian Communist Party split, and the factions engaged in bloody clashes with one another. So this effort might be as long lasting as the 2010 unity meeting between Indian communists and Islamists in the southern state of Kerala. On the other hand, sources have told me that the leftists might have found a national standard bearer in populist Arvind Kejriwal, victor in those recent Delhi elections. Which outcome prevails likely rests on how soon Modi can turn his free market policies into economic prosperity.