

government's traditional neglect of its non-Hindu religious minorities. Quotas are provided for lower Hindu castes to gain seats in civil service, but none are in place to ensure Muslim participation.

To explain the appeal of violence for Indian Muslims, some scholars cite the recent rise in right-wing Hindu extremism. Over the past decade, the secular Congress Party's loss of power and the growing dominance of the Hindu extremist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in national politics have heightened tensions between Hindus and Indian Muslims. In fact, several human rights groups have accused the Hindu state government of encouraging religious conflict. With the rise of Hindu nationalist parties, Muslims in India confront an increasingly unstable political environment.

Marginalization at home may not be the only source of recent militancy, as moving abroad opens another avenue to radicalism for Indian Muslims. For instance, exposure to radical Islam and ties to extremism can increase when young men settle in Britain. There they are more likely to feel kinship with fellow Muslims, including Pakistanis, than other expatriate Indians. Several Islamic Indian and Middle Eastern medical professionals were arrested in association with the Glasgow and London car bomb attacks in June 2007. In this case, socioeconomic disparity does not appear to be the primary motivation for violence, but the religious cleavage of the Indian immigrant community does offer a viable explanation for it. The increasing number of scientifically-skilled Indian Muslims living abroad presents a worrying opportunity for radical Islamic groups to recruit technically capable individuals in immigrant communities.

Global events have also shaped the development of radical Islam in India. SIMI was formed in the 1970s to promote Islamic teaching to youths, but by the late 1990s it became a radical group responsible for riots. Finding inspiration from the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the youngest activists of the group transformed the originally educational organization into a mili-

tant outfit seeking India's conversion to an Islamic state. SIMI also began providing much-needed services like aid to victims of anti-Muslim violence, access to libraries, and free tutoring for poor Muslim students. When domestic tensions peaked, SIMI's mass campaigns for violent retaliation gathered support among Indians who believed that the group was sincerely committed to Muslim rights.

Several factors abroad contribute to the militarization of Indian Muslims, but marginalization at home is a key factor that the Indian government can attempt to rectify. Not all external factors can be alleviated by the national government, but with greater efforts to visibly support the Muslim minority, India can address the socioeconomic resentment that lends support to groups like SIMI.

One way to approach the problem is to reduce alienation of Muslim youths. Muslims won the right to set up their own schools during Partition, but these institutions continually suffer from a lack of sufficient funds. Consequently, the poor education that many children receive excludes them from higher professional paths and breeds resentment in the few who do manage to attain professional careers. Providing the basic social services that radical organizations such as SIMI offer to poor Muslims would help prevent conversion to extremism. Other efforts, like encouraging banks to provide greater credit access to their Muslim clientele, would show greater faith in the minority population. The influence of radical forces could be mitigated if governments demonstrate national support for Indian Muslims. ■

## The Road to Unity

### Tenuous Progress in Cyprus

EUROPE

staff writer

**COLLIN GALSTER**

Hope for a different approach to reconciliation in Cyprus has brought new leadership to the long-divided Mediterranean island nation. Communist president Dimitris Christofias opened historic Ledra Street in the capital, Nicosia, in accordance with his campaign promises. Amid much fanfare, Cypriots crossed the "Green Line," the north-south barrier that symbolizes the national divide, for the first time in decades. The recent progress has been encouraging but not without stumbles. Ledra Street, for example, closed again on the very day of its opening, when Turkish troops mistakenly entered the UN buffer zone. Cyprus' fragile advances suggest that even though Cypriots now have the moderate leadership they have long sought, unity is far from guaranteed. Reunification in Cyprus will likely hinge on the most difficult of roadblocks—Turkish compliance.

Voters elected Christofias wanting

to change the approach to the reconciliation process in Cyprus, where the Greek-controlled south has been divided from the Turkish-controlled north since 1974. Much of Christofias' wide-ranging support has hinged on his commitment to reuniting the island. He won the election on a moderate, pro-market platform—a stark contrast to his predecessor's obstructionism. His pro-unification stance attracted nearly 54 percent of Cypriots in the election, giving Christofias both a wide margin of victory and a mandate to follow through on his diplomatic promises.

The current situation seems to augur well for a political settlement. Most importantly, both governments are now led by moderate presidents. Christofias' northern counterpart, Mehmet Ali Talat, also defeated an obstructionist predecessor. The leaders have thawed a two-year diplomatic freeze in which little more than hardline rhetoric was exchanged between the two governments. The duo's resolve has gener-

ated several tangible successes that would have been difficult to imagine even a few years ago, including the high-level diplomatic talks that led to a joint opening of Ledra Street. They have acted on promises to convene nearly 100 experts to iron out details of reunification. The leaders have also publicly displayed goodwill measures, such as Talat's walk through shops in the Greek half of Nicosia's market. These efforts have been concrete enough to elicit high-level attention from the United Nations, the United States, Britain, and others.

But the current optimism belies the tenuous nature of Cyprus' progress. After the Turkish troops' mishap marred the opening of Ledra Street, Christofias sparked further diplomatic controversy by suggesting that his counterpart was unaccountable and not truly in control. However, obstacles larger than rhetoric further obstruct a settlement, however. History shows that Turkey's opinion—and particularly that of its military—carries the most weight in Cyprus' politics. In the 2004 UN proposal for reunification, for example, Turkey was able to extract key concessions during the negotiation process in exchange for its assent. The plan was ultimately rejected by Greek voters because of provisions that would have allowed Turkey to keep some troops on the island indefinitely and Turkish settlers to remain on Greek land.

The issue of Turkish troops, 35,000 of which still occupy the island, has been the major obstacle preventing a settlement. Turkey's military argues that such forces have been critical to Cyprus' relative peace, implying that any agreement depends on Turkey. Despite Christofias' otherwise warm diplomatic meetings with Talat, this issue has still generated friction among the populations. Greek Cypriots criticize the military as an ominous reminder of Turkish hostility, while Turkish Cypriots regularly accuse the Greeks of impeding the peace process.

To be sure, Turkey's military is not the only issue impeding Cyprus' unity. In 2006, confidence-building measures faltered over substantive is-

ues of unification such as water management, which is a salient political problem in Cyprus. Turkey's interest in preserving a Turkish government on the island should lead it to play a role in power-sharing discussions, but this support has not been forthcoming. Indeed, Turkey always seems to find an excuse to avoid negotiating; it balked at the suggestion of the EU as acting as an intermediary for multi-party diplomatic talks. Turkey reasoned that after incorporating both Greece and Greek Cyprus, the EU could no longer be impartial. There seems to be little chance that Turkey will budge without being offered either carrots or sticks.

Turkish support will be needed for the withdrawal of troops, solving of lo-

gistical issues, and the island's ultimate reconciliation. Nationalist political pressures make it increasingly difficult for Turkey to compromise its current stance. This pressure cements Turkey's position of keeping troops in place and retaining guarantorship rights, which grant Turkey responsibility to maintain peace on the island. Turkey will likely reject any settlement that Christofias and Talat create unless this hardline nationalism recedes. If Turkey declared support for reconciliation, both presidents would have more breathing room. Unfortunately, the political landscape in Turkey will not change as easily as Cyprus' has changed under Christofias and Talat. Ledra Street may open, but 35,000 obstacles still lie in the path. ■

## Things Fall Apart

### Violence and Poverty in Yemen

MIDDLE  
EAST

staff writer

**OWEN BARRON**

Recent unrest in Yemen indicates that the Gulf state—for decades the region's poorest—may be in slow-motion collapse. On April 6, 2008, an Al Qaeda bombing shook the capital city of Sanaa, capping a spree of political violence that killed 21 people. Riots have flared in response to stagnant economic conditions and rising food prices. The most dismal omen came in March, when the state's oil ministry admitted that oil production has fallen considerably and will continue to drop. Indeed, while the current violence affects Yemen's political stability, it is economic security which, in the long run, is most endangered. Though Yemen's current instability is worrying, only more trouble lies ahead for the nation.

Al Qaeda in Yemen (AQIY) is the most prominent of the recent threats to Yemen's stability, mounting a recent surge in anti-government propaganda and violence. A new generation of jihadis, battle-tested in Iraq and virulently anti-American, have rejected the conservatism of AQIY's old guard and criticized the Yemeni government for

cooperating with the United States. Since mid-2007, Al Qaeda has supplemented its propaganda with a series of attacks on military compounds and tourist convoys. In April 2008, those attacks increased in severity.

A second destabilizing factor includes the renewal of the four year-old Houthi rebellion of Zaydi Shi'a in northern Yemen. The rebellion began in 2004 under Zaydi leader Badr al-Din al-Houthi and was revived, several years after al-Houthi's death, by his brother Abd al-Malik. According to experts, the Houthis aim to overthrow President Ali Abdullah Saleh's government and restore the Shia imamate that was toppled in 1962. The Houthis maintain that their real objection to the Sanaa government stems from its partnership with the United States. Regardless of their intentions, the Houthis are responsible for four years of on-and-off guerrilla violence and have been accused of terrorist attacks.

The third indicator of the country's weakness is the long-term rift between North and South Yemen.