



Our Opportunity With India

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Op-Ed

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The week before last President Bush concluded a historic agreement on civilian nuclear cooperation with India, a rising democratic power in a dynamic Asia. This agreement is a strategic achievement: It will strengthen international security. It will enhance energy security and environmental protection. It will foster economic and technological development. And it will help transform the partnership between the world's oldest and the world's largest democracy.

First, our agreement with India will make our future more secure, by expanding the reach of the international nonproliferation regime. The International Atomic Energy Agency would gain access to India's civilian nuclear program that it currently does not have. Recognizing this, the IAEA's director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, has joined leaders in France and the United Kingdom to welcome our agreement. He called it "a milestone, timely for ongoing efforts to consolidate the non-proliferation regime, combat nuclear terrorism and strengthen nuclear safety."

Our agreement with India is unique because India is unique. India is a democracy, where citizens of many ethnicities and faiths cooperate in peace and freedom. India's civilian government functions transparently and accountably. It is fighting terrorism and extremism, and it has a 30-year record of responsible behavior on nonproliferation matters.

Aspiring proliferators such as North Korea or Iran may seek to draw connections between themselves and India, but their rhetoric rings hollow. Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism that has violated its own commitments and is defying the international community's efforts to contain its nuclear ambitions. North Korea, the least transparent country in the world, threatens its neighbors and proliferates weapons. There is simply no comparison between the Iranian or North Korean regimes and India.

The world has known for some time that India has nuclear weapons, but our agreement will not enhance its capacity to make more. Under the agreement, India will separate its civilian and military nuclear programs for the first time. It will place two-thirds of its existing reactors, and about 65 percent of its generating power, under permanent safeguards, with international verification -- again, for the first time ever. This same transparent oversight will also apply to all of India's future civilian reactors, both thermal and breeder. Our sale of nuclear material or technology would benefit only India's civilian reactors, which would also be eligible for international cooperation from the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Second, our agreement is good for energy security. India, a nation of a billion people, has a massive appetite for energy to meet its growing development needs. Civilian nuclear energy will make it less reliant on unstable sources of oil and gas. Our agreement will allow India to contribute to and share in the advanced technology that is needed for the future development of nuclear energy. And because nuclear energy is cleaner than fossil fuels, our agreement will also benefit the environment. A threefold increase in Indian nuclear capacity by 2015 would reduce India's projected annual CO₂ emissions by more than 170 million tons, about the current total emissions of the Netherlands.

Third, our agreement is good for American jobs, because it opens the door to civilian nuclear trade and cooperation between our nations. India plans to import eight nuclear reactors by 2012. If U.S. companies win just two of those reactor contracts, it will mean thousands of new jobs for American workers. We plan to expand our civilian nuclear partnership to research and development, drawing on India's technological expertise to promote a global renaissance in safe and clean nuclear power.

Finally, our civilian nuclear agreement is an essential step toward our goal of transforming America's partnership with India. For too long during the past century, differences over domestic policies and international purposes kept India and the United States estranged. But with the end of the Cold War, the rise of the global economy and changing demographics in both of our countries, new opportunities have arisen for a partnership between our two great democracies. As President Bush said in New Delhi this month, "India in the 21st century is a natural partner of the United States because we are brothers in the cause of human liberty."

Under the president's leadership, we are beginning to realize the full promise of our relationship with India, in fields as diverse as agriculture and health, commerce and defense, science and technology, and education and exchange. Over 65,000 Americans live in India, attracted by its growing economy and the richness of its culture. There are more than 2 million people of Indian origin in the United States, many of whom are U.S. citizens. More Indians study in our universities than students from any other nation. Our civilian nuclear agreement is a critical contribution to the stronger, more enduring partnership that we are building.

We are consulting extensively with Congress as we seek to amend the laws needed to implement the agreement. This is an opportunity that should not be missed. Looking back decades from now, we will recognize this moment as the time when America invested the strategic capital needed to recast its relationship with India. As the nations of Asia continue their dramatic rise in a rapidly changing region, a thriving, democratic India will be a pillar of Asia's progress, shaping its development for decades. This is a future that America wants to share with India, and there is not a moment to lose.

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