

The U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative

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The cooperative agreement between the United States and India could set a precedent for similar agreements worldwide.

INDIA, THE WORLD'S sixth largest consumer of energy, has the largest electrical power grid among developing countries and the 14th largest power system in the world. It has a massive and rapidly growing appetite for energy driven by its population of more than a billion people and an economy growing at approximately 8 percent each year. India's society is open and free; it is transparent, stable, and multiethnic. Its government is a multireligious democracy characterized by individual freedom. India is a rising global power that could be a pillar of stability in a rapidly changing Asia.

There are many reasons that the proposed U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative would be beneficial to both countries. It would advance international security, enhance energy security, further environmental protection, and increase business opportunities.

The initiative, first and foremost, would deepen the strategic partnership between the United States and India. These two countries are laying the foundation for cooperation on major issues in the Central Asia region and beyond, building on the broader relationship between our peoples and governments. International companies that employ U.S. workers will likely be contracted to provide materials and services to India to supply its nuclear infrastructure. This will simultaneously strengthen the economy of the United States and accelerate the development of India.

With its large population, India has a major influence on the regional and global economy for the energy sector. With nuclear energy constituting a larger part of the electricity production mix in India, its reliance on oil and natural gas for general energy production will be reduced. This will affect the global market for petroleum and gas products because the global demand will decrease.

Second, the initiative would benefit the environment. Nuclear energy is, after all, clean energy, and provides the world with an environmentally friendly energy source. Nuclear energy production precludes the emission of 700 million metric tons (t) of carbon dioxide, 1.1 million t of nitrogen oxide, and 3.3 million t of sulfur dioxide annually in the United States alone. With India expanding its nuclear energy portfolio, the avoidance of emissions

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from that country alone will be substantial.

Third, India is increasingly doing its part to support the international community's efforts to curb the dangerous nuclear ambitions of a few countries. India has pledged to keep its military production separate from civilian power production. But with the increase in the number of civilian nuclear sites, the number of potential terror targets increases as well, a fact of which India is well aware.

The U.S.-India deal could set a precedent for similar agreements throughout the world. China is in desperate need of an increase in

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electrical power capacity. With nine nuclear power plants in operation, two units nearing completion, and four others under construction, it hopes to increase its nuclear power production five-fold by 2020. China hopes to keep all design, production, and engineering within the country, but it has begun to rely heavily on uranium imports to support its nuclear programs.

The U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative would be a strategic achievement. The hope is that other nations will follow in the peaceful civilian nuclear footsteps of India. Elsewhere in the world, if there is a conversion to nuclear power, the world will prosper economically and environmentally. This initiative is good for the United States, for India, and for the international community. Working together, the United States and India can seize this tremendous opportunity to solidify a key partnership that can advance the interests of both countries and serve as an example to the world community.