

# US-India The Way Forward



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THE MAGAZINE

India Abroad September 27, 2013

The future of the US-India relationship is based on something intangible, but in plentiful supply: The belief that our destinies are intertwined, says US Representative **JOE CROWLEY**.

**A**s an Irish-American, I have always been interested in India. Why? Maybe it is the stories I heard growing up about our similar, difficult histories with colonial-era Britain or because of the familial history I share with my Indian-American friends — whose families, like mine, left all they know behind to come here to start a better future for their children.

My interest has lasted for so long that it is hard to know the exact starting point, but what I do know for sure is if the United States and India work together we can form the most influential and responsible big-country alliance in the world.

For this reason, I have made it one of my goals to help US-India ties blossom ever since I was elected to the US Congress.

In the late 1990s, even beginning that effort seemed like an impossibility to all but those of us who were active in the India Caucus and the administration. Today, it looks increasingly like the US-India partnership is irreversible.

We have simply come too far together to turn back, and the US's encouragement of India as a global power has become a cornerstone of regional and international cooperation. For those of us who consider ourselves decidedly pro-India, this is a victory a long time in the making.

This is not to say that we don't have important shared challenges, including fully completing the US-India civil nuclear agreement, overcoming barriers to economic growth, expanding educational opportunities, cementing defense co-production and addressing environmental challenges.

Good friends of the US-India relationship working with the Wadhvani Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Center for American Progress have published a number of papers over the past two years outlining a number of ways to approach these issues, and a common theme runs throughout: The sky is really the limit for US-India relations.

As a Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans, I have focused on a number of these issues. First, I have made every possible effort to maximize communications between Congress and the people of India.

Already this year, the India Caucus has hosted over 10 delegations of visiting Indian groups, including from the Indian government, business and political communities. We held detailed discussions with a politically diverse delegation of parliamentarians in a high-level exchange, and in late July we welcomed business leaders attending the US-India CEO Summit, as well as the leader of the BJP, Rajnath Singh. We have also planned several educational events for Congressional staff members, including an exchange with the Andhra Pradesh government.

But the India Caucus isn't just about maintaining a dialogue. It is about continuing to expand and produce con-

Members of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans meet with visiting members of the Indian Parliament in the US Capitol in June. According to Congressman Joe Crowley, seventh from right, back row, the US-India partnership that seemed like an impossibility in the 1990s to all but those who were active in the India Caucus and the administration, today looks irreversible.



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## We have simply come too far together to turn back

crete results that will further the two nations' relationship. Our members led the way on the passing of the nuclear pact in the House and Senate.

Dozens of our members have pressed successive administrations to share critical intelligence with India regarding potential threats from terror groups, especially after the devastating Mumbai attacks. Many are working to secure stronger energy cooperation, both to help reduce poverty and to address key environmental problems.

Perhaps most importantly, our members are focused on expanding commercial relations between our two countries, encouraging business delegations between cities and states in the US and India that can lead to the creation of jobs and economic growth.

Earlier this year, members of the India Caucus helped secure one of the most important victories for the Indian-American community in years, convincing the Department of Justice to begin tracking hate crimes against Hindu and Sikh-Americans.

Policy steps aside, we have also focused on deepening understanding between the people of the US and India. We have done this, in part, by celebrating our cultural, historical and religious differences, and that's why this October we are putting together the first-ever Congressional Diwali celebration in the US House of Representatives.

Taken together, these steps forward represent a record of concrete progress for the India Caucus and for the people of our two countries. They show that the fruits of cooperation far outweigh the costs of discord, and lay the foundation for even greater cooperation in the future. And, suc-

cess breeds success.

Over time, more and more Congress members have seen our efforts and joined the cause. This year, there are already over 40 brand-new members of the India Caucus, with more on the way.

India's Ambassador Nirupama Rao has played a critical role in our efforts, advancing India's interests as well as encouraging new friends to see the potential in our relationship. In addition, Indian-American leaders like M R Rangaswami, Shekar Narasimhan and so many others continue to step forward with new and creative ideas for action inside and outside the Congress. As MR reminds me, it is essential that our efforts focus on supporting all those in our communities, not simply those that are already fortunate.

More than anything, the future of the US-India relationship is based on something intangible, but in plentiful supply: The belief that our destinies are intertwined.

The US faces many domestic challenges, including creating jobs and continuing to recover from a painful economic downturn. India faces its own challenges. But at the end of the day, the governments and peoples in both of our countries wish each other well.

We not only believe each other will succeed, but we want it to happen. It must.



**US Representative Joe Crowley is the Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus, the fifth-highest ranking position in the House Democratic Leadership.**