

US-India The Way Forward



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President Obama would be wise not to take this important relationship for granted, advises US Congressman **ED ROYCE**, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

For decades following its independence, India's relations with the United States were rocky. Following India's 1998 nuclear test, the US unwisely sanctioned India, severely damaging relations. Over the past dozen years though, New Delhi has emerged as one of Washington's key partners.

Having joined President Bill Clinton on his 2000 trip to India, I witnessed firsthand the beginning of this bilateral cooperation. President Bush built upon a solid foundation. US-India relations grew stronger in Congress, too.

In the 107th Congress, I chaired the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans. Starting with only 8 members, we built the Caucus to become one of the largest in the House, with over 200 members.

But few have done more to advance US-India relations than Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who will come to Washington, DC later this month for his final visit as prime minister. Traveling to India in 2007, I had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Singh to discuss the progress made over the past several years. He told me the gains in the US-India relationship were "irreversible."

The premiere initiative in bringing our countries closer together has been the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, the product of strong cooperation by President Bush and Prime Minister Singh.

India needs additional electricity to fuel its growing economy, and officials in India have told me about their ambitious plans to expand nuclear power as a clean energy source. As I argued on the House floor, "Like in several other countries, nuclear energy is widely viewed as a critical technology, one central to uplifting hundreds of millions of impoverished Indians."

With this deal, the Indian nuclear industry will be able to reach its full potential, overcoming the international restrictions that have curtailed it since 1974. India will still rely on other energy sources, but it is smart policy for any country to diversify.

India's energy demands continue to grow. Already the fourth-largest energy consumer in the world, India needs more electricity generation to alleviate rolling blackouts and increase access to electricity. Here we have an opportunity to further strengthen energy cooperation between our two nations.

According to a recent study by the Center for Strategic International Studies, India imports 75 percent of its energy. With the US poised to become a major exporter of natural gas, now is the time to expand US exports of liquefied natural gas. This would create jobs and stimulate economic growth in both the US and India.

Of course, Prime Minister Singh, as finance minister, was instrumental in ushering in India's economic reforms. India's booming economy resulted from opening up to the world and making massive reforms 15 years ago.

Trade between the US and India has leapt to almost \$63



Indian Ambassador to the United States Nirupama Rao flanked by Congressmen Joe Crowley, left, and Ed Royce, right, at the House India Caucus reception. Starting with only eight members, the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans has become one of the largest in the House, with over 200 members.

Do not take this important relationship for granted

billion in 2012 from roughly \$11 billion in 1997. India has benefited from foreign investment, international competition, and access to markets abroad.

Despite this remarkable economic progress, some policy measures taken by the government of India have created concerns for US businesses. We are happy some of these are being reviewed by the Indian government.

For example, India has rolled back its Preferential Market Access initiative, which otherwise would have required Indian businesses and government offices to procure technology products and services produced in India that could severely limit choices in India and hurt trade between India and the rest of the world, including the United States.

I hope the US can further engage with India in international forums like the World Trade Organization. I also hope that India will join the WTO Information Technology Agreement expansion talks. ITA expansion would reduce overall tariffs, helping to accelerate productivity and lower prices.

As noted by Robert Hoffman from the Information Technology Industry Council, 'for every \$1 in tariffs India imposed on tech imports... it incurred an economic loss of \$1.30 due to decreased productivity.'

ITA expansion would be in India's best interests and would help US companies as well, expanding their market in the vibrant country.

The US and India are most aligned on defense and counterterrorism efforts. For over a decade, the two countries have worked to deepen counterterrorism cooperation. The terrorists targeting India are targeting the US

too. Following the tragic 2008 Mumbai attacks, investigators from both countries stood shoulder-to-shoulder in response.

Defense cooperation between the US and India has made impressive strides in the last decade. The India-US Defense Policy Group was revived in 2001 and now meets annually. In 2005, the United States and India signed a 10-year defense pact, which outlines planned collaboration in multilateral operations and expanded defense trade. The two countries signed an agreement in 2011 to increase the sharing of cyber-security and terrorism information.

Prime Minister Singh's final official visit will be an important bookend to an historic period of US-India relations. Earlier this year, the Foreign Affairs Committee's Asia subcommittee held a hearing on where India fits into the President's 'pivot' to Asia. As we heard, many fear that India doesn't have the prominent position it deserves.

President Obama would be wise not to take this important relationship for granted. Prime Minister Singh helped usher in a new period of US-India cooperation. Let's make sure we build on his impressive legacy.



US Congressman Ed Royce, who is serving his 11th term in Congress representing Southern California's 39th District, is Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He has served on the Committee since entering Congress in 1993.