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WEEK IN REVIEW DESK

The Basics; Why (Not) Sell Nukes to India?

By **DAVID E. SANGER** (NYT) 701 words

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WASHINGTON - President Bush in effect legitimized India's nuclear arsenal last week, offering to sell it technology that has long been forbidden to anyone who played outside the world's nuclear rules. So what will senior officials say on Tuesday morning when North Korea opens its long-delayed negotiations with the West? "I can just see it now," said one of those officials, who spoke anonymously because of the sensitivity of the talks. "They come in, throw a newspaper from the other day on the table, and bellow: 'How can America demand that we give up all our nukes, while you just let the Indians keep all of theirs?'"

It's not an unreasonable question. The long-term implications of Mr. Bush's decision may not be clear for years, and some short-term risks seem evident to critics now. The timing is particularly awkward, in a summer of extraordinary tension with North Korea and Iran. "Asia is the continent with just about the most complicated nuclear problems we have: India and Pakistan, North Korea and Iran," said Joseph Cirincione, a nuclear expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "And by accepting India as a de facto nuclear weapons state, you are telling other countries that if they just hang tough, and put up with sanctions for a while, sooner or later they will be rewarded with status and military power. Is that the message the Bush administration wants to send?" India is no North Korea. It is a democracy. And unlike Pakistan, which gave rise to the biggest nuclear proliferation ring in history, it has kept strict control of its nuclear stockpile and its bomb-making technology. But the fact remains that for decades India flouted the world's nuclear safeguards. It ran a huge, secret nuclear weapons program, made easier by its refusal to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. It built its weapons by diverting material from civilian nuclear plants -- just what the United States says Iran is doing. Iran denies it, but so did India -- until it conducted nuclear tests. Still, as a matter of realpolitik, the administration argued, it has become silly not to acknowledge, at least implicitly, that India is a nuclear-armed state. "Our national interests have been intersecting," said R. Nicholas Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs, who spent months working out elements of the deal, including India's commitment to allow inspectors to visit its civilian nuclear facilities (but not its military stockpiles) and to adhere to provisions of the non-proliferation treaty that are designed to prevent further leakage of nuclear technology.

"India needs energy and prefers clean energy, which means nuclear," he said. "It is worried about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and it is worried about terrorism. Those are our interests as well. And we know what kind of country India will be 25 years from now: A pluralistic democracy." That last point is telling. Washington is far from certain what China -- India's nuclear-armed neighbor -- will look like in a quarter of a century. So even while embracing the Chinese as the key to solving the North Korean crisis, Mr. Bush appeared to be bolstering China's longtime rival.

The administration hopes to sell that to the Chinese by noting the deal includes Indian support for a new global treaty that would cut off the production of all new fissile material, the stuff of bombs. Eventually that could cap India's nuclear program. The counterargument is that Mr. Bush has again divided the world into America's friends and its enemies, giving the first a pass and showing the second the stick.

It is unclear how he will deal with Pakistan; not long ago, he declared it a "major non-NATO ally," but administration officials say its proliferation record means it won't be seeing a deal like this anytime soon. Nor, the administration insists, will the North Koreans. **DAVID E. SANGER**

Photo: A Deal -- Manmohan Singh, the Indian prime minister, and President Bush. (Photo by Jonathan Ernst/Reuters)

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Nuclear Deal With India a Sign of New U.S. Focus

By **ROGER COHEN**
[International Herald Tribune](#)

The cementing through nuclear cooperation of a "strategic partnership" between the United States and India represents a gamble typical of President [George W. Bush](#) and a shift in American foreign policy priorities of enormous significance.

Whether the gamble proves bold or reckless remains to be seen. What is already clear is that, beyond Iraq, American diplomatic energy is no longer focused on Europe, its central concern for the second half of the 20th century, but on the explosive growth of Asia driven by the emergence of India and China.

Confronted by this twin challenge, the United States has now made clear it is prepared to make an exception of India in order to draw it closer. Bush has ended the nuclear pariah status of India despite the fact the country is not a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. In a proliferation-plagued world, that is an extraordinary step.

It will not have been lost on China. R. Nicholas Burns, the U.S. under secretary of state for political affairs, said in a telephone interview: "We have never seen India as a counter to China. It stands on its own and we do not draw that linkage."

India has its own fast-developing economic relationship with China and does not want to be seen as a pawn in a Washington-Beijing game. Burns's message will be well received in New Delhi.

Still, Bush's push to transform the relationship between the world's most powerful and most populous democracies into a strategic alliance locked in by intense military, nuclear, scientific and agricultural cooperation amounts to an overarching response to the expansion of Chinese influence in Asia.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Qin Gang, responded to the agreement between Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India by saying that any pact "must meet the requirements and provisions of the nuclear nonproliferation regime and the obligations undertaken by all countries concerned."

That's Chinese grumpiness dressed up in formal demands. The fact is the nuclear nonproliferation regime has been transformed - many would say devalued - by the agreement allowing India to buy nuclear fuel and reactor components from the United States and other countries in return for separating its civilian and military nuclear facilities and permitting international inspection of the former.

Therein lies the heart of Bush's gamble: He has wagered that it is worth undermining the nuclear treaty, even as the West tries to stop Iran from developing a nuclear weapons program, in order to secure Indian help in increasing "mutual security against the common threats posed by intolerance, terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction," as a joint statement put it.

That looks contradictory. How can emptying the nuclear treaty of meaning help stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction? But the treaty and reality have long been at odds - nobody has any illusions about Israeli nuclear weapons - and Bush has clearly taken a hard look at the facts.

India has been a known nuclear power for more than three decades, ever since it conducted a nuclear explosion in 1974, a move followed by a test of atomic weapons in 1998. Over that period it has never, unlike Pakistan, been a source of proliferation, nor has there been any international access to a program run by the much revered "nuclear maharajahs" of the Indian Department of Atomic Energy.

Now, India has agreed to classify 14 of its nuclear power reactors as civilian facilities, opening them up to inspection. The others, and a fast-breeder reactor in development, will remain closed military facilities. That India will go on making nuclear weapons is clear.

"Our conclusion was that India should be an exception," Burns said. "It has not been a proliferator of nuclear technology. For 30 years, we've had zero transparency. Now we will have well over half open to supervision and safeguard."

But of course having 65 percent of a program opened to international oversight still leaves 35 percent without it. The heart of the American calculation is not reining India in; it is bringing an ever more powerful India alongside.

The economic and strategic benefits could indeed be enormous. Bush still needs the approval of Congress, where opposition will be stiff, and the agreement will also require the nod of the 45-member Nuclear Suppliers Group, the international body that regulates the transfer of nuclear technology.

These are significant hurdles. But if they can be overcome, the provision to an energy-hungry India of civilian nuclear energy would open a large and lucrative market. It could also, as President [Jacques Chirac](#) of France has recognized, reduce the Indian appetite for oil and offer environmental benefits.

That is important but not the heart of the matter. Bush will now count on India to support his nonproliferation efforts, including in Iran, where India has influence.

He will be looking to India for intelligence and even military support in the war against terrorism. He will be counting on America's fastest-growing export market becoming a strategic partner in the full sense of that term.

Unless he gets all this, his gamble may prove expensive. China is not happy. Pakistan will have to be reassured in the form of unstinting American support. Domestic critics will argue a dangerous precedent has been set by legitimizing India as a nuclear power outside the nonproliferation treaty.

But the foundations of a powerful and effective American-Indian alliance are strong: democratic values within multiethnic states, entrepreneurial cultures, the English language, the presence of more Indian students in the United States than any other nationality, more than two million Indian-Americans, huge investments and a growing web of business, scientific and technological interests.

Bush to India is not quite Nixon to China, but this agreement marks a turning-point. The long Cold War frostiness of Indian-American relations was an anomaly. The thaw began under President [Bill Clinton](#). Through Bush's deal with India, made at the cost of the formal weakening of the nuclear treaty, Bush has turned a thaw into an embrace that will serve America, India and democracy well.

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