



**The nuclear deal with India: bigger consequences to consider** by Brad Glosserman and Bates Gill

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The U.S.-India civilian nuclear agreement was signed into law this month after two years of negotiations and bitter debates. The final deal sharply divides arms control and nonproliferation specialists. The focus of an often-emotional debate revolves around a simple question: Is the deal a meaningful compromise that protects India's national security interests and the integrity of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) or does it give Delhi too much and undermine the NPT? That debate continues with no consensus in sight.

Unfortunately, potentially far greater consequences garner far less attention. In particular, little has been said about how this deal is seen in other countries, the precedent it appears to set, and the impact it has on U.S. leadership generally and especially on nonproliferation issues. These are equally critical concerns and, while we are still in early days, they may come back to haunt this agreement.

Make no mistake: Washington's decision to come to terms with Delhi offers hope to other governments considering nuclear weapons that they too may receive special status. India's insistence that it is a unique case – it never signed the NPT and it developed its own nuclear technology – is unlikely to make an impression on would-be proliferators that see India getting official recognition despite rejecting the NPT. Even if this is only hope masquerading as reason, it is likely to encourage proliferation: will a democratic and nuclear-armed (but U.S. friendly) Pakistan, Iran or (your favorite future strategic partner) also get a pass?

While proliferation concerns top the list of the deal's critics, other political and security problems loom. Japan, for example, has made support for the NPT a cornerstone of its diplomacy and a core element of its postwar identity. Strategists there are dismayed that a country that has consistently thwarted the will of the international community on proliferation issues would be rewarded for its obstinacy, and its status enhanced in the process. Delhi, like Tokyo, has sought a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council; Japanese are confounded by the notion that India would not pay a price for insisting on having a nuclear arsenal and that being "a good nuclear citizen" does not count for much.

Japanese officials and strategists also worry that the U.S.-India agreement could clear the way for a nuclear-armed Korean Peninsula. Even though all six governments participating in the multilateral talks to deal with North

Korea's nuclear weapons programs have declared their goal is a denuclearized Korean Peninsula, there is a fear in Tokyo (and elsewhere) that those talks will yield a "gray" Korean nuclear capability, neither confirmed nor denied. Japanese strategists argue this could be the tipping point that encourages their country to reconsider its nuclear options – even if the finger on the button is "Korean," not North Korean.

The Japanese calculus shows how Washington's readiness to accept a deal with Delhi undermines its own credibility. A key ally is now wondering if it can rely on the U.S. extended deterrent. In private discussions, Japanese are asking if the U.S. commitment to protect Japan is more solid than the pledge to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. What will Washington do after Korean unification if another U.S. ally – one with a history of enmity toward Japan – has its own nuclear weapon?

The deal further undercuts American credibility in Europe as well. Europeans ask, "how can we take the United States seriously when it asks us not to transfer conventional weapons and technologies to China yet Washington flouts its own commitments by offering WMD-related technologies and assistance to a country outside the global nonproliferation regime?" European countries such as Austria, Norway, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland initially opposed the U.S.-India deal within the Nuclear Suppliers Group and could have scuttled the entire idea. But they came under enormous pressure from the United States and India (as well as France, Russia, and the United Kingdom) to let it go forward. In the end, these and other countries acceded to the deal in a unanimous NSG decision, but that did nothing to diminish the resentment and perplexity within certain quarters of European capitals about U.S. motivations and leadership on nonproliferation matters.

More profoundly, many European officials and defense specialists also see the U.S.-India deal as part of a broader effort to reshape the Asian balance of power. Many of them believe the agreement is an attempt to forge a new relationship with a regional power that ultimately aims at balancing China. The perception that Washington is willing to use the NPT as a pawn in a geostrategic game undermines U.S. leadership and diminishes the status of the NPT. Rather than serving as the cornerstone of the global nonproliferation order, the NPT now looks like just another item in a great power's diplomatic toolkit.

Debate on the U.S.-India agreement has focused on its impact on India's nuclear program and whether it strengthens the normative basis of the NPT by bringing a longstanding objector under its purview. Attention must also be given to the deal's impact on perceptions of U.S. global leadership and reliability and the credibility of the NPT itself, especially as the Treaty nears its next major review conference in 2010. The

next U.S. administration must pay close attention to the way that this agreement is implemented. It cannot be seen as lowering the bar on nuclear transactions either bilaterally or within multilateral forums.

More generally, the next U.S. administration must reassert its leadership in nonproliferation matters. It must challenge the perception that proliferation concerns have been subordinated to other priorities. Failure to do so will undermine efforts to build consensus on nonproliferation – one of the top U.S. security concerns – while simultaneously encouraging other countries to follow India's example.

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