



US-India Civil Nuclear

Published On: 22-01-2025

Why in news?

Jake Sullivan, in his last trip to India as U.S. President Joe Biden's National Security Adviser has said The **United States is now finalizing the necessary steps to remove long-standing regulations that have prevented civil nuclear cooperation** between India's leading nuclear entities and U.S. companies.

US-India Civil Nuclear Deal Background

The Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal, which marked a major shift in the global nuclear landscape, was initiated during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the United States in **July 2005**. This historic agreement had profound implications for India's energy security and its global diplomatic standing.

Key Events Leading to the Deal:

1. July 18, 2005 Joint Statement:

- Prime Minister **Manmohan Singh** and President **George W. Bush** issued a joint statement that laid the foundation for the civil nuclear agreement. This marked the beginning of a process that would change India's status in the global nuclear framework.

1. 30-Year Sanctions History:

- This agreement came approximately **30 years after the U.S. imposed sanctions on India** following its first nuclear weapons test in 1974, in Pokhran. These sanctions had isolated India from global civil nuclear cooperation.

1. First Recognition as a Nuclear Weapons State:

- For the first time, India was recognized as a nuclear weapons state, even though it had not signed the **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**. The agreement signaled a new phase of engagement between the U.S. and India, acknowledging India's status as a nuclear power.

1. Completion of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP):

- During Singh's visit, the **Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP)** was also completed, which laid the groundwork for broader cooperation in areas like civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programs, high-technology trade, and missile defense. This was announced earlier in January 2004.

1. Focus on Non-Proliferation:

- A central element of the deal was the focus on **non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction**. While India was not a signatory of the NPT, the deal essentially accorded India the same status as NPT signatories in terms of access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

India's Position on the NPT:

India has long been critical of the **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**, which it argues creates an "exclusive club" of nuclear states. The treaty limits the legal possession of nuclear weapons to countries that tested them before 1967, and India believes it does not adequately address the issue of nuclear proliferation. India's stance has been to reject the NPT and instead focus on a **multi-polar world order** where nuclear technology is shared for peaceful purposes, without restrictions.

The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG):

The **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)** is a global consortium of countries that control the export of nuclear equipment, materials, and technology. The NSG's **export guidelines** are designed to ensure that nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes and not diverted for weapons production. Before the Indo-US deal, India was **excluded from the global nuclear order**, which restricted its access to vital nuclear technology and uranium imports. This exclusion was a significant barrier to India's energy ambitions.

Impact of the Deal:

1. Ending Isolation:

- The agreement helped **end India's isolation on the civil nuclear front**, allowing it access to uranium and nuclear technology from countries within the NSG, despite not being an NPT signatory.

1. India's Energy Needs:

- India has substantial **nuclear weapons technology**, but its **uranium reserves** are insufficient to meet its growing energy requirements. This led to the necessity of importing uranium, which was hampered by NSG restrictions. The Indo-US nuclear deal provided India with the opportunity to **import uranium** and improve its energy security by leveraging civilian nuclear technology.

1. Development of Indigenous Technology:

- Despite being excluded from the NSG, India successfully developed its indigenous nuclear systems, including **fast breeder reactors** and **thorium breeder reactors**. These technologies form the backbone of India's nuclear energy development, which has reduced its dependency on external sources to some extent.

The **Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal** was a landmark agreement that changed India's position on the global nuclear stage, providing access to civilian nuclear technology, uranium imports, and recognition as a responsible nuclear state. While India continues to face challenges in terms of uranium supply and the development of nuclear energy, the deal has been crucial in facilitating the country's transition to a more secure and sustainable energy future, while also reinforcing its strategic partnership with the United States.