# Saudi Arabia Arms Sales – Pro

#### Ayn Rand once said, “you can avoid reality, but you cannot avoid the consequences of avoiding reality.” It is because Brendan and I believe our opponents are avoiding reality that we must affirm Resolved: ****The United States should end its arms sales to Saudi Arabia. We offer framework and three contentions to support this reasoning.****

### Framework: Utilitarianism

#### First, on framing. Brendan and I believe that utilitarianism or the greatest good for the greatest amount of people ought to be the way the round is judged. Gary Woller puts it best in 1997, that public policies in a democracy must be justified to the public. Policymakers duty to the public interest requires them to demonstrate that their policies are to the overall advantage of society.

**Gary Woller** (BYU Professor). “An Overview by Gary Woller.” A Forum on the Role of Environmental Ethics. June **1997**. pp. 10.

Moreover, virtually all public policies entail some redistribution of economic or political resources, such that one group's gains must come at another group's expense. Consequently, public policies in a democracy must be justified to the public, and especially to those who pay the costs of those policies. Such justification cannot simply be assumed a priori by invoking some higher-order moral principle**.** Appeals to a priorimoral principles, such as environmental preservation, also often fail to acknowledge that public policies inevitably entail trade-offs among competing values. Thus since policymakers cannot justify inherent value conflicts to the public in any philosophical sense, and since public policies inherently imply winners and losers, the policymakers' duty [is] to the public interest requires them to demonstrate thatthe redistributive effects and value trade-offs implied by their polices are somehow to the overall advantage of society**.**

### Contention One: Rule of Law

#### Khashoggi’s murder violated international law states Professor Steven Ratner of the Michigan Law School in 2018. In killing American journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi Arabia violated two core principles of international law. Rule of law is central to international stability and enjoys a depth of commitment that goes far beyond any other.

Professor Steven Ratner, (Attorney-adviser in the Office of the Legal Adviser at the U.S. State Department. Advised governments, NGOs, and international organizations on a range of international law issues. Since 2009, he has served on the State Department's Advisory Committee on International Law and since 2013, he has been an adviser to the American Law Institute for the *Foreign Relations Law of the United States*. In 2010–2011, he was a member of the UN's three-person Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka, which advised Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on human rights violations related to the end of the Sri Lankan civil war. Professor Ratner holds a JD from Yale, an MA (diplôme) from the Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales (Geneva), and a BA from Princeton.), October 22, 2018, “The Khashoggi Murder: How Mohammed Bin Salman Underestimated International Law,” Lawfare, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/khashoggi-murder-how-mohammed-bin-salman-underestimated-international-law>

But media accounts have missed one key aspect of the prince’s miscalculation—one that makes the global reaction to the Istanbul murder less surprising. In killing Khashoggi, Saudi Arabia flouted two core rules of international law: the ban on extraterritorial enforcement of a state’s laws or policies, and the requirements for lawful uses of diplomatic missions. Those rules, developed to protect states from one another’s misdeeds, are central to the stability of the state system. They enjoy a depth of commitment that goes beyond states’ concern for human rights or international humanitarian law. While states can get away with violating them sometimes, impunity and non-enforcement are not to be assumed.

#### Next, If Khashoggi’s murder goes unpunished, then no one in the world is safe says Steven Cook, a senior fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in 2018. He says that Khashoggi’s murder comes at a time when journalists, academics, reformers, and critics have come under attack everywhere. If the Saudi Crown Prince is not held accountable, any remaining norms against this kind of behavior will be shattered.

Steven A. Cook (Senior fellow for Middle East and Africa studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. Won the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's gold medal in 2012. Prior to joining CFR, Cook was a research fellow at the Brookings Institution (2001–2002) and a Soref research fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (1995–1996). Cook holds a BA in international studies from Vassar College, an MA in international relations from Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, and both an MA and a PhD in political science from the University of Pennsylvania. He speaks Arabic and Turkish and reads French.), December 11, 2018, “Mohammed bin Salman Is Worse Than a Criminal. He’s a Symbol.” Center for Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/article/mohammed-bin-salman-worse-criminal-hes-symbol>

Washington has also grown to detest the Saudi crown prince, because he represents a world that seems to be spinning out of control. Khashoggi(‘s) was neither the first nor the last person to be a victim of state-sponsored violence. Yet, his brazen murder comes at a time when journalists, academics, reformers, and critics have come under attack everywhere from the Philippines and Pakistan to Bahrain and even the United States. The idea that the Saudi crown prince, who is widely presumed to have ordered the hit on Khashoggi, will get away with it stokes fear and outrage. If he (the Saudi Crown Prince) is not held accountable, any remaining norms against the kind of international thuggery that Khashoggi’s murder exemplifies will be shattered. Observers fear that it will then be open season on anyone who crosses a line with a given leader.

#### Lastly, this loss of rule of law is highly problematic. Randall Peerenboom a professor of law at UCLA explains in 2005, that the loss of rule of law causes economic decline, a rollback of democracy, and increases the intensity of warfare. The rule of law is integral to and necessary for democracy and without rule of law, there is no global peace.

Peerenboom, 2005 (Randall Peerenboom, prof of law @ UCLA, “Human Rights and Rule of Law: What’s the Relationship?,” *Georgetown Journal of International Law*, Online: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5fk0j20q>)

Whatever the human rights movement's conceptual and normative shortcomings, the movement's biggest failure has been not making good on the promise of a better life enjoyed by all in accordance with the utopian ideals contained in the ever-swelling list of human rights. Despite the movement's successes, we still live in a world where widespread human rights violations are the norm rather than the exception. Rule of law is seen as directly integral to the implementation of rights. Without rule of law, rights remain lifeless paper promises rather than the reality for many throughout the world. Rule of law may also be indirectly related to better rights protection in that rule of law is associated with economic development, democracy and political stability, which are key determinants in rights performance. A long line of economists, legal scholars and development agencies from Max Weber to Douglas North to the World Bank have argued that rule of law is necessary for sustained economic growth. Rule of law protects property rights and provides the necessary predictability and certainty to do business. With one-fourth of the world's population living below the international poverty line of $ 581 a year per capita, 790 million people lacking adequate nourishment, one billion living without safe water to drink, two billion suffering from inadequate sanitation and 880 million lacking access to basic healthcare, economic growth is essential to the alleviation of some of the worst human suffering. (12) Rule of law is integral to and necessary for democracy and good governance. Attempts to democratize without a functional legal system in place have resulted in social disorder, as in Russia, East Timor, Haiti, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, and in the collapse of democratic regimes and their replacement by more authoritarian regimes in Indonesia in 1957, the Philippines in 1972, South Korea in the 1970s and numerous former Soviet republics. (13) Rule of law is said to facilitate geopolitical stability and global peace. (14) According to some, it may help prevent wars from occurring in the first place. (15) It also provides guidelines for how war is carried out, limiting some of the worst atrocities associated with military conflicts. It offers the possibility of holding accountable those who commit acts of aggression and violate humanitarian laws of war, and it is central to the establishment of a rights-respecting post-conflict regime.

**Impact:** Saudi Arabia violated international law in killing Khashoggi and in order to uphold the rule of law and all the great impacts it has, we must punish Saudi Arabia.

### Contention Two: Credibility and Leadership

#### The US has leverage writes Madawi Al-Rasheed, a professor on Middle Eastern Studies. He states in 2018, that with no one able to restrain the Saudi Crown Prince (or MbS) from the inside, he must be restrained from the outside. The US is the only power capable of exerting pressure. In addition, the US is the guarantor of the security of the Saudi regime and it sells more arms to Saudi Arabia than any other Western country.

**Madawi Al-Rasheed** [Visiting Professor at the Middle East Centre of the London School of Economics], “Why the U.S. Can’t Control MBS,” November 5 **2018**. Available at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2018-11-05/why-us-cantcontrol-mbs

With no one able to restrain MbS from the inside, he must be restrained from the outside. The United States is the only power capable of exerting the necessary pressure. The United States is the main guarantor of the security of the Saudi regime. It sells more arms to Saudi Arabia than any other Western country. In Washington, Saudi Arabia is still considered a strategic partner (albeit an embarrassing one, from the perspective of the American public and media). The United States treats the kingdom as an important ally in the fight against terrorism, a player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a check on Iran’s rising influence in the Middle East. Unfortunately, the United States’ relationship with Saudi Arabia is based entirely on personal relationships between leaders rather than diplomatic norms. These relationships are getting in the way of effective U.S. policy toward the crown prince.

#### Next, US credibility is key to the global enforcement of human rights says Leslie Wexler, professor of law at the University of Illinois. She shows us in 2018, that enhancing our reputation for human rights is important. The international community **would welcome America's affirmation** of human rights and would give the US momentum for policy changes that would bolster it’s leadership.

Leslie Wexler, 2018 (Prof of Law @ Univ. of Illinois + former Copeland Award winner, "HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT STATEMENTS: AN IMMIGRATION CASE STUDY," 22 Geo. Immigr. L.J. 285, lexis)

Enhancing our reputation for human rights compliance is especially important given current political realities. Many countries hold a declining opinion of the United States. n53 The international community would welcome America's affirmation of the continuing importance of human rights in the wake of many post-September 11th actions such as torture, extraordinary rendition, increased domestic surveillance, and harsher and more frequent detention of immigrants. Moreover, the international community would benefit from the assurance that the concept of "human rights" means more than a justification for regime change. n54 American exceptionalism to human rights law angers our allies and complicates efforts to secure their cooperation. n55 Not surprisingly, many countries view the United States' silence about its own human rights failings as hypocritical. n56 In particular, the international community strongly criticizes the State Department's annual human rights reports for omitting an assessment of domestic performance as well as omitting "actions by governments taken at the request of the United States or with the expressed support of the United States . . . ." n57 Human rights advocates suggest that U.S. leadership on human rights faces a severe [\*293] credibility gap--for instance, other countries perceive the United States as a laggard on human rights treaty compliance in regards to migrants n58 --but that repudiation of past abuses and momentum for policy changes could restore its leadership.

#### Lastly, Thomas Barnett of the U.S. Naval War College contextualizes in 2011, the United States must strive to maintain it’s leadership (also known as hegemony) because it has been the single greatest force for peace the world has ever known. America introduced globalization that resulted in democracy, human rights, liberation for women, doubling of life expectancy, tenfold global GDP increase, and a 99% reduction in death due to conflict.

Thomas P.M. **Barnett** (Former Senior Strategic Researcher and Professor in the Warfare Analysis & Research Department, Center for Naval Warfare Studies, U.S. Naval War College American Military Geostrategist and Chief Analyst at Wikistrat, worked as the Assistant for Strategic Futures in the Office of Force Transformation in the Department of Defense) 3-7-**2011**, "The New Rules: Leadership Fatigue Puts U.S., and Globalization, at Crossroads," https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/8099/the-new-rules-leadership-fatigue-puts-u-s-and-globalization-at-crossroads

It is worth first examining the larger picture: We live in a time of arguably the greatest structural change in the global order yet endured, with this historical moment's most amazing feature being its relative and absolute lack of mass violence. That is something to consider when Americans contemplate military intervention in Libya, because if we do take the step to prevent larger-scale killing by engaging in some killing of our own, we will not be adding to some fantastically imagined global death count stemming from the ongoing "megalomania" and "evil" of American "empire." We'll be engaging in the same sort of system-administering activity that has marked our stunningly successful stewardship of global order since World War II. Let me be more blunt: As the guardian of globalization**,** the U.S. military has been the greatest force for peace the world has ever known. Had America been removed from the global dynamics that governed the 20th century, the mass murder never would have ended.Indeed, it's entirely conceivable there would now be no identifiable human civilization left, once nuclear weapons entered the killing equation. But the world did not keep sliding down that path of perpetual war. Instead,America stepped up and changed everything by ushering in our now-perpetual great-power peace. We introduced the international liberal trade order known as globalization and played loyal Leviathan over its spread. What resulted was the collapse of empires, an explosion of democracy, the persistent spread of human rights, the liberation of women, the doubling of life expectancy, a roughly 10-fold increase in adjusted global GDP and a profound and persistent reduction in battle deaths from state-based conflicts. That is what American "hubris" actually delivered. Please remember that the next time some TV pundit sells you the image of "unbridled" American military power as the cause of global disorder instead of its cure. With self-deprecation bordering on self-loathing, we now imagine a post-American world that is anything but. Just watch who scatters and who steps up as the Facebook revolutions erupt across the Arab world. While we might imagine ourselves the status quo power, we remain the world's most vigorously revisionist force. As for the sheer "evil" that is our military-industrial complex, again, let's examine what the world looked like before that establishment reared its ugly head. The last great period of global structural change was the first half of the 20th century, a period that saw a death toll of about 100 million across two world wars. That comes to an average of 2 million deaths a year in a world of approximately 2 billion souls. Today, with far more comprehensive worldwide reporting, researchers report an average of less than 100,000 battle deaths annually in a world fast approaching 7 billion people. Though admittedly crude, these calculations suggesta 90 percent absolute drop anda 99 percent relative drop in deaths due to war.

**Impact:** Since the US is the only one who can successfully pressure Saudi Arabia, we can not only improve our own reputation in human rights, but also bolster our hegemony, which has benefited the world immensely.

### Contention Three: Arms Race

#### The US is fueling an arms race according to William Hartung, the Director of the Arms and Security Initiative. He states in 2010, that by throwing weapons at Saudi Arabia with one hand while giving them to Israel with the other, the United States is simply fueling an arms race.

**William Hartung** (Director of the Arms and Security Initiative, New America Foundation), “Is Big Saudi Arms Sale a Good Idea?,” Expert Roundup by Deborah Jerome for the Council on Foreign Relations, September 24 **2010**. Available at: h ps://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/big-saudi-arms-sale-good-idea

Security considerations must come first. And on this front, there are serious questions that have not been addressed by the boosters of the deal. By throwing weapons at Saudi Arabia with one hand while giving them to Israel with the other, are we not simply arming both sides of a nascent arms race? Is Iran likely to be cowed by the Saudi megadeal, or will it simply seek a way to ratchet up its own military capabilities? Congress and the public should think twice before signing off on what may be the first stage of a new Mideast arms race.

#### Next, Saudi Arabia planning to make a massive investment in nuclear technology writes Zeeshan Aleem, an Oxford fellow in politics. He says in 2018, that Saudi Arabia is about to purchase more then $80 billion to build 16 nuclear reactors. He adds that Saudi Arabia is in talks with companies and American firms are the top candidates. However, experts agree that the motive behind the program is obvious: building nuclear weapons.

**Zeeshan Aleem** (University of Oxford fellow in politics, B.A. from GWU in history and sociology, M.A. from University of Chicago in history and sociology, intern in the House, award-winning reporter), 3-26-**2018**, "Saudi Arabia’s controversial quest for nuclear power, explained," Vox, https://www.vox.com/world/2018/3/26/17144446/saud-arabia-nuclear-weapons-trump-iran-deal

Sitting atop the world’s second-largest oil reserves, Saudi Arabia has little to worry about when it comes to generating energy. But the Gulf nation is now angling to make [one of the biggest investments](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-nuclear/saudi-arabia-aims-to-prequalify-firms-by-april-or-may-for-first-nuclear-plant-idUSKBN1F4187) in nuclear energy the world has seen. Saudi Arabia plans to spend more than $80 billion to build [16 nuclear reactors over the next quarter century](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/why-oil-rich-saudi-arabia-is-turning-to-nuclear-power-quicktake/2018/03/20/08f92d34-2c1d-11e8-8dc9-3b51e028b845_story.html?utm_term=.ec8c59876309). The power play shows that the world’s most iconic oil giant is serious about reducing its near-total reliance on oil — and it’s also raising questions about whether the country intends to seek out nuclear weapons in the future. Saudi Arabia [says](https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/18/munich-security-conference-saudi-arabia-sees-nuclear-energy-as-a-way-to-save-oil.html) it’s looking to expand its energy portfolio. If it uses nuclear reactors to generate electricity, that will allow the Gulf country to export more of its oil rather than consume it at home. More exports mean more money for the country’s government. Energy experts say that Saudi Arabia is trying to make money from its oil reservesas quickly as possible because global demand is expected to decline in the future, with breakthroughs in renewable energy technology and the eventual ubiquity of electric cars. In the long run, it’s aiming to diversify its economy away from oil to generate revenue from sectors like tech and entertainment services. Currently, Riyadh is in talks with firms from more than [10 countries](https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/18/munich-security-conference-saudi-arabia-sees-nuclear-energy-as-a-way-to-save-oil.html) about buying nuclear technology to build its first two reactors — and American firms are top candidates. But before any US sale, the Trump administration needs to strike a nuclear cooperation pact, known as a [“123 agreement,”](https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/AEASection123) with Saudi Arabia. In those agreements, countries make promises about how they will and won’t use the powerful nuclear equipment they could buy from the US in the future. Talks between the Trump administration and Saudi Arabia about such a deal are already underway — US Energy Secretary Rick Perry [met](https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/15/saudi-crown-prince-threatens-to-build-nuke-as-kingdom-seeks-nuclear-tech.html) with Saudi officials in London earlier this month to discuss the matter, and President Trump [almost certainly discussed it](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/trump-meets-saudi-leader-amid-fears-new-middle-east-arms-n858411) during his meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman last week. But nuclear proliferation experts and US lawmakers from both parties are deeply worried about the deal. They’re concerned that Riyadh could try to use the technology to start a nuclear weapons program and make one of most volatile regions in the world even more unstable. In fact, some skeptics think the whole energy argument coming out of Riyadh is merely a cover for its military ambitions. It’s more than just a hunch. In an interview with CBS’s 60 Minutes on March 18, the Saudi crown prince, widely known as MBS, [openly admitted](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-iran-nuclear/saudi-crown-prince-says-will-develop-nuclear-bomb-if-iran-does-cbs-tv-idUSKCN1GR1MN) it was a possibility: “Saudi Arabia does not want to acquire any nuclear bomb, but without a doubt, if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible.” The Trump administration can try to ensure that never happens. In the 123 agreement, it can get the Saudis to make a legally binding pledge that they won’t pursue uranium enrichment or spent fuel reprocessing down the road — the activities that would allow it to build nuclear weapons. But the Trump administration is [reportedly](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-26/u-s-energy-chief-is-said-to-plan-nuclear-deal-talks-with-saudis) considering allowing Saudi Arabia to enrich uranium in current negotiations. Experts say there are two main reasons the president may do this. First, Trump has demonstrated an unusual soft spot for Saudi Arabia: It was the first country he visited on his [first trip abroad as president](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/first-stop-on-trumps-first-official-trip-overseas-signals-saudi-arabias-importance/2017/05/18/a70e9ba4-39c9-11e7-8854-21f359183e8c_story.html), and he has backed some of Saudi Arabia’s most radical policies, like [its isolation campaign against Qatar](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar/trump-takes-sides-in-arab-rift-suggests-support-for-isolation-of-qatar-idUSKBN18X0KF) last summer and its [destructive military intervention in Yemen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwwP3SiBIC8). Second, Trump might be distracted by the prize of winning multibillion-dollar contracts for US nuclear construction companies in desperate need of business. The temptation to settle for a deal that gives the Saudis a path to the bomb might just be too great to overcome. Saudi Arabia has generally [described its ambitions](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-nuclearpower-usa/u-s-firms-invited-to-bid-for-saudi-nuclear-plants-idUSKBN1DY0PT) for a civil nuclear energy program as a way to increase energy production and said it doesn’t want to use the program to build weapons. “Not only are we not interested in any way to diverting nuclear technology to military use, we are very active in non-proliferation by others,” Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih [said](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-nuclearpower-usa/u-s-firms-invited-to-bid-for-saudi-nuclear-plants-idUSKBN1DY0PT) at a joint press conference with Secretary Perry in December. Energy experts say that it certainly makes sense for Saudi Arabia to look into new ways to generate energy so that it can export more of its oil before the value of oil plunges in the future. But they also say that it’s strange that the country is focusing so much on nuclear, rather than renewable, energy. Joe Romm, a former assistant secretary of the Department of Energy during the Clinton years, told me that Saudi Arabia is an outstanding candidate for using solar energy to power much of the country. Its vast and extremely sunny deserts are naturally suited to providing electricity to the country during the day. Given that Saudi Arabia can [build solar power facilities](https://www.thenational.ae/business/energy/world-s-cheapest-prices-submitted-for-saudi-arabia-s-first-solar-project-1.663842) and produce solar energy at [incredibly low costs](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/05/business/energy-environment/saudi-arabia-solar-renewables.html), Romm says, it “doesn’t make a lot of sense from an energy point of view” that Saudi is leaning so much toward the nuclear option, which is notoriously expensive. Comparing Saudi Arabia’s [plans to invest in renewable energy](https://www.reuters.com/article/saudi-renewable/saudi-arabia-aims-to-exceed-renewable-energy-target-idUSL8N1LA456) versus its planned investments in nuclear energy, Romm estimated that Riyadh would be trying to generate at least three times more electricity from nuclear reactors than from renewable energy. And American foreign policy and nuclear nonproliferation experts generally think that the motive behind emphasizing one (the) program over the other is obvious: building weapons. “I think a main driver, if not the main driver [of Saudi Arabia’s nuclear program], is its security competition with Iran,” Kingston Reif, a nonproliferation expert at the Arms Control Association, told me. Iran is Saudi Arabia’s archrival in the Middle East, and Saudi Arabia is worried that Iran could use its civil nuclear program to make weapons in the future, and tip the balance of power in the region in its favor. The nuclear deal that Iran signed on to in 2015 heavily restricts Iran’s ability to make the materials required for a nuclear bomb, but crucial restrictions in the agreement [begin to expire around 2030](https://www.armscontrol.org/Issue-Briefs/2015-08-25/Restrictions-on-Irans-Nuclear-Program-Beyond-15-Years). And the restrictions could vanish far more quickly than that: Trump has [repeatedly threatened to withdraw from the nuclear deal](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-expected-to-stay-the-course-on-iran-deal-but-add-new-penalties/2018/01/11/366004b6-f723-11e7-b34a-b85626af34ef_story.html?utm_term=.7d43de640aed), and Iran could respond to a withdrawal by taking steps toward weapons production [in a matter of days](http://www.newsweek.com/iran-48-hours-higher-enriched-uranium-if-nuclear-deal-collapses-official-830543). Since MBS has openly admitted that Saudi Arabia would feel compelled to chase after a bomb if Iran did, it’s clear that it must see a civil nuclear program as a potential military asset. The Trump administration is currently in ongoing talks with the Saudis about a nuclear cooperation agreement, and [it probably came up](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/trump-meets-saudi-leader-amid-fears-new-middle-east-arms-n858411) when the crown prince met with Trump at the White House on March 20. (Neither [Saudi Arabia](https://sa.usembassy.gov/readout-president-donald-j-trumps-meeting-crown-prince-mohammed-bin-salman-saudi-arabia/) nor the [US’s](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/readout-president-donald-j-trumps-meeting-crown-prince-mohammed-bin-salman-saudi-arabia/) official readouts of the meeting explicitly mention the nuclear cooperation agreement, but both allude to “new commercial deals.”) Recent [reports](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-26/u-s-energy-chief-is-said-to-plan-nuclear-deal-talks-with-saudis) suggest that the White House may allow Saudi Arabia to enrich uranium as part of the arrangement. A country can enrich uranium to produce fuel for its nuclear reactors, but that same process [can also be used to make an atomic bomb](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/03/31/world/middleeast/simple-guide-nuclear-talks-iran-us.html) — and that has US lawmakers on both sides of the aisle very concerned. “The Crown Prince’s interview just last week is reason enough to have the administration pump the breaks on the negotiations and insist that there will be no 123 agreement that includes enriching and reprocessing,” Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), the chair of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, [said in a statement](https://ros-lehtinen.house.gov/press-release/us-must-hold-saudis-gold-standard-any-nuclear-cooperation-agreement-congress-must) on Wednesday. “Unfortunately, from the little we do know from the administration, it is looking at this deal in terms of economics and commerce, and national security implications only register as a minor issue, if at all,” she said. Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN), the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, [has told](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-21/saudi-prince-s-nuclear-bomb-comment-may-scuttle-reactor-deal) the administration that there’s bipartisan opposition in Congress to a 123 agreement that allows for enrichment. The White House has to submit the agreement to Congress for review, and lawmakers have the option to pass a joint resolution of disapproval to block it. But if that were to happen, it could ultimately backfire: The Saudis might turn to Russian or Chinese bidders for nuclear tech if they’re rebuffed by the US. And analysts say the Russians and Chinese are less likely to be stringent about restricting Saudi Arabia’s enrichment or reprocessing ambitions. For that reason, some analysts argue that Washington might have to consider a compromise with Riyadh. “I would prefer to have America’s nuclear industry in Saudi Arabia than to have Russian or China’s, so I think it’s useful that we’re reengaging with the Saudis. We should try to get the best restraints on enrichment and reprocessing, including a ban for some significant length of time, say 20 or 25 years,” Robert Einhorn, a former State Department adviser for nonproliferation and arms control, [told the Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/why-trump-might-bend-nuclear-security-rules-to-help-saudi-arabia-build-reactors-in-the-desert/2018/02/19/4cc26cc6-e684-11e7-ab50-621fe0588340_story.html?utm_term=.b916603c3922). “We should show some flexibility.” Saudi Arabia considers the ability to enrich uranium its [“sovereign” right](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-nuclear-turki/saudi-arabia-should-not-forfeit-sovereign-right-to-enrich-uranium-senior-prince-idUSKBN1EF287), and it wasn’t able to settle on a 123 agreement with the Obama administration precisely because President Obama refused to grant them that capacity. Alexandra Bell, an Obama-era State Department arms control expert, told me that the Saudis won’t budge “without high-level pressure from the White House.” That means sustained pressure from people like the president himself or top officials like Energy Secretary Perry are key to extracting any kind of concession on enrichment from Saudi Arabia. But Trump might not be all that interested in staying focused on that goal. He looks at the issue through a different lens than his predecessor — the prospect of boosting American business could eclipse security concerns for him. Last year, when Trump struck his [enormous $110 billion arms deal](https://www.vox.com/2017/5/20/15626638/trump-saudi-arabia-arms-deal) with the Saudis, he was eager to sell it to the public as a way to create [“jobs, jobs, jobs”](http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/375771-rick-perry-planning-nuclear-energy-talks-with-saudi-arabia-report) for the US. In this case, a deal to build nuclear tech with the Saudiswould provide a boost to struggling US nuclear construction companies. Westinghouse, the most prominent US bidder,is currently going through bankruptcy proceedings and has shed [thousands of US jobs](https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/24314/the-race-to-win-saudi-arabia-s-nuclear-reactor-bid-raises-fears-of-proliferation) because of it. When the Saudis negotiate with the Trump administration in the coming weeks, they’ll probably consider Trump’s eagerness to claim another job-creating deal to be a source of leverage.

#### Finally, proliferation of nuclear weapons increases the risk of nuclear terrorism writes Matthew Kroenig, Professor of International Relations at Georgetown. He shows us in 2015 that if terrorists acquired nuclear weapons, they would use them. As nuclear weapons spread, the possibility that they will fall into terrorist hands increases.

**Matthew Kroenig, 2015** (Matthew, Associate Professor and International Relations Field Chair in the Department of Government and School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, 2015. “The History of Proliferation Optimism: Does It Have a Future?” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 38, Issue 1-2, 2015)

The spread of nuclear weapons also increases the risk of nuclear terrorism**.**54 While September 11th was one of the greatest tragedies in American history, it would have been much worse had Osama Bin Laden possessed nuclear weapons. Bin Laden declared it a ‘religious duty’ for Al- Qa’eda to acquire nuclear weapons and radical clerics have issued fatwas declaring it permissible to use nuclear weapons in Jihad against the West.55 Unlike states, which can be more easily deterred, there is little doubt that if terrorists acquired nuclear weapons, they would use them.56 Indeed, in recent years, many US politicians and security analysts have argued that nuclear terrorism poses the greatest threat to US national security.57 Analysts have pointed out the tremendous hurdles that terrorists would have to overcome in order to acquire nuclear weapons.58 Nevertheless, as nuclear weapons spread, the possibility that they will eventually fall into terrorist hands increases**.** States could intentionallytransfer nuclear weapons, or the fissile material required to build them, to terrorist groups. There are good reasons why a state might be reluctant to transfer nuclear weapons to terrorists, but, as nuclear weapons spread, the probability that a leader might someday purposely arm a terrorist group increases. Some fear, for example, that Iran, with its close ties to Hamas and Hizballah, might be at a heightened risk of transferring nuclear weapons to terrorists. Moreover, even if no state would ever intentionally transfer nuclear capabilities to terrorists, a new nuclear state, with underdeveloped security procedures, might be vulnerable to theft, allowing terrorist groups or corrupt or ideologically-motivated insiders to transfer dangerous material to terrorists. There is evidence, for example, that representatives from Pakistan’s atomic energy establishment met with Al-Qa’eda members to discuss a possible nuclear deal.59 Finally, a nuclear-armed state could collapse, resulting in a breakdown of law and order and a loose nukes problem. US officials are currently very concerned about what would happen to Pakistan’s nuclear weapons if the government were to fall. As nuclear weapons spread, this problem is only further amplified. Iran is a country with a history of revolutions and a government with a tenuous hold on power. The regime change that Washington has long dreamed about in Tehran could actually become a nightmare if a nuclear-armed Iran suffered a breakdown in authority, forcing us to worry about the fate of Iran’s nuclear arsenal.

**Impact:** In order to prevent an arms race in the Middle East and to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons spreading to terrorist groups, we respectfully ask that you vote pro.