

September 21, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As a bipartisan group of Middle East regional and nuclear nonproliferation experts, many of whom have served in both Democratic and Republican administrations, we urge you to reject the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's request for uranium enrichment as part of or separate from a normalization agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Such an agreement could bring much needed stability to the region, building upon certain positive Saudi policies and encouraging further progress. However, Riyadh does not need uranium enrichment to produce peaceful nuclear energy. Enrichment could bring Saudi Arabia to the brink of acquiring nuclear arms, and U.S. policy should prohibit it.

Since the dawn of the atomic age, it has been a core U.S. national security priority to prevent the spread of uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing technologies, which could be used to make fuel for atomic weapons. America has pursued this policy even with potential nuclear cooperation partners that are close U.S. allies. Public [reports](#) indicate Riyadh has requested an enrichment facility operated by Americans inside Saudi Arabia, but this poses an unacceptable proliferation risk, particularly given Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's public comments on nuclear weapons.

Riyadh's threats to choose China as a nuclear supplier are hardly reason to change this critical U.S. policy. Indeed, acquiescing to such threats amounts to a sign of weakness and could encourage similar efforts by other countries. The United States has multiple tools of leverage to persuade Riyadh not to choose China as a nuclear supplier and to disrupt cooperation on uranium enrichment.

At the same time, the United States should significantly intensify its efforts to roll back Iran's uranium enrichment activities. Providing Saudi Arabia with the same latent capability would be counter-productive and could trigger a regional arms race.

Any nuclear cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia must meet the highest nonproliferation standards, including the commitment made by the United Arab Emirates in 2009 to forgo enrichment and reprocessing technologies (also known as the "gold standard" of nonproliferation), and enhanced inspection and transparency measures through a strong Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We are confident you share our goal of preventing the spread of atomic weapons and the means to acquire them and urge you to uphold longstanding U.S. nonproliferation policy.

Sincerely,¹

¹ Affiliations listed for identification purposes only.

Anthony Ruggiero, Senior Director and Senior Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies' (FDD) Nonproliferation and Biodefense Program, and former Deputy Assistant to the President and National Security Council Senior Director for Counterproliferation and Biodefense (co-organizer)

Henry Sokolski, Executive Director, Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, and former Deputy for Nonproliferation Policy, U.S. Department of Defense (co-organizer)

Andrea Stricker, Deputy Director and Research Fellow, FDD's Nonproliferation and Biodefense Program (co-organizer)

David Albright, Founder and President, Institute for Science and International Security

Ilan Berman, Senior Vice President, American Foreign Policy Council

Peter Bradford, former Commissioner, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, former Chair, New York Public Service Commission, and former Adjunct Professor of Nuclear Power and Public Policy, Yale School of the Environment and Vermont Law School

Susan F. Burk, former Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation

Sarah Burkhard, Senior Research Associate, Institute for Science and International Security

Thomas Countryman, Board Chair of the Arms Control Association and former Acting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security

Mark Dubowitz, Chief Executive, FDD

Christopher Ford, Visiting Fellow, Stanford University's Hoover Institution, Visiting Professor, Missouri State University's Graduate School of Defense & Strategic Studies, and former Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation

Torrey Froscher, former Chief of Analysis, Director of Central Intelligence Nonproliferation Center

Robert Gallucci, Professor, Georgetown University, and former Ambassador-at-Large and Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs

Pierre Goldschmidt, former Deputy Director General and the Head of the Department of Safeguards, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Thomas D. Grant, Fellow, Lauterpacht Centre for International Law at the University of Cambridge, Faculty Director and Executive Board Member, LITSAT Initiative at George Washington University, and former Senior Advisor for Strategic Planning, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, U.S. Department of State

Olli Heinonen, Distinguished Fellow, Stimson Center, and former Deputy Director General and the Head of the Department of Safeguards, IAEA

R. Scott Kemp, Associate Professor, Nuclear Science and Engineering, MIT, and former Science Advisor for Nonproliferation and Arms Control, U.S. Department of State

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director, Arms Control Association

Gregory D. Koblentz, Associate Professor, George Mason University

Valerie Lincy, Executive Director, Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control

Edwin S. Lyman, PhD, Director of Nuclear Power Safety, Union of Concerned Scientists

Jacob Nagel, Senior Fellow, FDD, Visiting Professor, Technion, Brigadier General (Res.), and former Acting National Security Advisor to Benjamin Netanyahu and head of Israel's National Security Council

Yleem D.S. Poblete, Ph.D, former Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, and congressional negotiator on "gold standard" for U.S.-UAE and other nuclear cooperation agreements

Jonathan Schanzer, Senior Vice President, FDD, and former intelligence analyst, U.S. Department of the Treasury

Sharon Squassoni, Research Professor, George Washington University, and former U.S. Department of State and Arms Control and Disarmament Agency official

Behnam Ben Taleblu, Senior Fellow, FDD

Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, former U.S. representative to the IAEA