

US Foreign Policy and Global Standing in the 21st Century

Realities and perceptions

**Edited by Efraim Inbar and
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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2016
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Inbar, Efraim, 1947– editor of compilation. | Rynhold, Jonathan editor of compilation.

Title: US foreign policy and global standing in the 21st century : realities and perceptions / edited by Efraim Inbar and Jonathan Rynhold.

Other titles: U.S. foreign policy and global standing in the 21st century | United States foreign policy and global standing in the 21st century

Description: New York, NY : Routledge, 2016. | Series: BESA studies in international security | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015031157 | ISBN 9781138938489 (hardback) | ISBN 9781315675619 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: United States--Foreign relations--21st century.

Classification: LCC JZ1480 .U158 2016 | DDC 327.73--dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015031157>

ISBN: 978-1-138-93848-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-67561-9 (ebk)

Typeset in Baskerville
by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear



Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

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The case of Iran*

Emily B. Landau

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has pursued various nuclear counter-proliferation policies. Iran and North Korea stand out as prime case studies for examining the difficulties that are faced when seeking to confront a determined proliferator through peaceful means. Whether efforts focus on an attempt to alter such proliferators' motivation through offers of inducements ("carrots") or application of pressure ("sticks"), international negotiators have found that the proliferator tends to gain the upper hand in negotiations, due to its determination at the strategic level and its ability to play a primarily tactical game at the negotiating table (Landau 2012a).

The relevant international negotiators – the P5+1 group in the case of Iran, and five regional powers in the case of North Korea – are structurally hampered in this dynamic. The political context within which their efforts are carried out has a crippling effect on their ability to garner the kind of unified and determined stance necessary to compel a nuclear proliferator, in a tough bargaining situation, to back away from its military aspirations and uphold its commitment to remaining non-nuclear.

This article will focus on the major constraints that have hobbled efforts to halt Iran's nuclear development, even though these efforts have been ongoing for close to a dozen years, in different forms and formats.

The significance of the NPT framework

Any informed assessment of US policy in confronting determined proliferators must begin with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as the states in question are all members of the treaty, holding the status of non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS).¹ As such, the NPT has become the major source of *legitimacy* for the international community to respond with determination to states attempting to acquire military nuclear capability, as that represents a violation of their NPT commitment. The US was a major architect of the NPT, and is strongly committed to upholding it as the centerpiece of the non-proliferation regime (see FAS 2014).

But the NPT has been a *constraint* to countries intended to provide nuclear weapons for peace purposes². to advance a military program. The treaty excludes the NNWS but uranium enriched to 5 percent for 90 percent production states that have, over decades, such as Iran, abused the term military capability within the framework of the NPT.

The fact that the NPT provides access to dual-use technology, envisioning that states will not abuse the treaty, was in the late 1960s, Germany, Israel, and the United States were viewed as a nuclear states and the end was that states joined the commitment over time.

So the provision for seeking out states with them in a commitment that each state of ensuring that the treaty with the overriding principle not tailored to what that in today's world has proven to be a process that Iran has taken advantage. The United States has been able to acquire 19,000 of these rods and models; an estimated (LEU) to an amount provide fissile material national commitment paying a price in the international market.