

MEMO

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After Election, U.S. Must Judge Iran by Its Actions

Iran last week elected a new president, regime loyalist and former nuclear negotiator Hassan Rouhani. Rouhani campaigned on a platform of improved relations with the West. But to mend ties with the West, Iran must comply with its international obligations, including ending its nuclear weapons quest. The international community should provide sanctions relief only after Tehran takes concrete positive steps to halt its nuclear activities. Until that time, the United States should maintain a steady policy that couples a genuine willingness to negotiate with increased sanctions pressure.

President-elect Rouhani desires better relations with the West, but he has signaled no willingness to halt Iran's illicit nuclear program.

- The Iranian people selected Rouhani in part because they believed he offered the best hope for relieving the country's economic distress caused by sanctions and because of his commitment to improving the economy through better relations with the West.
- Even as Rouhani has promised better relations with the West, he has also strongly backed the continuation of Iran's nuclear program.
- More fundamentally, there is no indication that Supreme Leader Khamenei will limit his absolute control over Iran's nuclear policy. Even if Rouhani wished to change the country's policy, he may have no ability to do so.
- And there is no sign of moderation on this issue from the new president. In his first post-election news conference, Rouhani made crystal clear that he had no intention of pressing for a suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment program.
- Indeed, Rouhani has close ties to the regime. Unelected Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in power for 24 years, cleared each candidate for the presidency, including Hassan Rouhani. He rejected nearly 99 percent of those who filed to run in the election, including former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Every one of the eight candidates permitted to run was considered loyal to the regime and its interpretation of Islam.



Iranian President-elect Hassan Rouhani will not control the country's nuclear program.

Iran cannot be allowed to advance its nuclear program while using negotiations as a delaying tactic.

- The international community has spent the last 10 years negotiating with Iran over its nuclear program with nothing to show for the effort. Some examples of failure include:
 - Talks in Almaty in April 2013 yielded no progress, as Iran made no counter proposal to an earlier offer by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany – also known as the P5+1 – of significant sanctions relief in exchange for its termination of specific nuclear-related activity and its commitment to transparency.
 - Iran refused to discuss its nuclear program during talks with the P5+1 in 2011.
 - In late 2009, Iran rejected the international community’s offer to reprocess a portion of its low-enriched uranium (LEU) outside the country for use in its Tehran Research Reactor.
 - In May 2006, the P5+1 offered Iran a major package of economic and security incentives and the United States agreed to join multilateral talks if Iran suspended enrichment. After taking three months to consider the package, Iran rejected the offer and accelerated its nuclear activities.
- The West also has ample experience of Rouhani’s dedication to Iran’s nuclear efforts. From 2003 to 2005, Rouhani served as Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator. During that period, Tehran promised to suspend its nuclear enrichment. But Iran stepped up efforts in other key technical areas. And in a March 2006 speech, Rouhani boasted about Iran’s progress in its nuclear program, while the West thought it was engaged in negotiations with an Iran that had frozen its nuclear activities.

America must couple the willingness to negotiate with increased pressure on Iran.

- The United States must persuade nations still buying Iranian oil to significantly reduce their purchases. Countries that violate U.S. law, including China and Turkey, must face consequences, including sanctioning financial institutions involved in oil purchases.
- Financial institutions and individuals conducting financial transactions with or providing services to the Central Bank of Iran or other sanctioned banks must be identified and sanctioned. The European Union must be persuaded to stop allowing Iran to conduct transactions in Euros.
- The United States should consider barring companies or individuals from doing business in the United States if they engage in significant commercial trade with Iran.
- Congress and the Obama administration must continue to send a strong message that all options are on the table, and that the United States is prepared to use all of the instruments of its power to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon capability.
- As President Obama said during his trip to Israel in March, “America will do what we must to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.”
- The United States must maintain a strong physical presence in the Persian Gulf and the broader Middle East as a deterrent to Iran and to give credibility to the president’s statements.