

Leadership Divided?

The Domestic Politics of Iran's Nuclear Debate

by [Nima Gerami \(/experts/nima-gerami\)](/experts/nima-gerami)

Feb 19, 2014

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In-Depth Reports

Iran expert Nima Gerami examines the evolution of the country's domestic nuclear politics before and since Geneva, discussing how the underlying elite divisions and general culture of secrecy could complicate long-term efforts to convince Tehran to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

The implementation of the Joint Plan of Action (JPA) between Iran and the P5+1 has raised hopes that the agreement will mark a first step toward a long-term, comprehensive solution to international concerns about Iran's nuclear program. Although Ayatollah Khamenei has publicly endorsed the efforts of President Hassan Rouhani's nuclear negotiating team since the JPA was first signed in Geneva, internal criticism of the deal has persisted, particularly within Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Majlis. How has Tehran's elite debate on the nuclear issue changed over the years? Will Iran's political leadership be able to sustain internal consensus toward a credible, comprehensive solution?

In this Policy Focus, Iran expert Nima Gerami examines the evolution of the country's domestic nuclear politics before and since Geneva. He concludes that mounting political and economic pressures may have spurred Rouhani's election and recent progress in nuclear negotiations, but the underlying elite divisions and general culture of secrecy surrounding the issue could complicate long-term efforts to get Tehran to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

the author

Nima Gerami is a research fellow in the Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction at the National Defense University (NDU). A specialist on Iran and its nuclear program, he lectures at NDU and regularly serves as a guest instructor at senior service schools and other professional military education venues. His publications have appeared in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *Foreign Policy*, the *Guardian*, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, and the *New Republic*. ❖

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