

Reading Rouhani:

The Promise and Peril of Iran's New President

by [Steven Ditto \(/experts/steven-ditto\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Steven Ditto, a 2013 adjunct fellow with The Washington Institute, is an independent Middle East researcher who specializes in law, human rights, and education. He reads French, Arabic, and Farsi and has written extensively on topics related to Islamic law and history, religious freedom and women



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More than any previous Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani is an open book. In addition to his own copious Persian-language writings, he has engaged the domestic and international press throughout his three-decade political career, including as former chief nuclear negotiator. Analyzing these writings, speeches, and interviews can help clarify fundamental questions about his posture toward the West, his view of international law and human rights, and his intentions as president.

In this Washington Institute report, independent researcher Steven Ditto surveys Rouhani's vast output over the past thirty years, assessing its implications for policymakers as they evaluate potential Iranian overtures on the nuclear issue and other matters. Thus far, the new president's engagement with the international community and his prospects of instituting limited domestic reform show some promise. Yet given his background as an ideologue, he may view such moves as a way of reinforcing the authority of a system that has continually failed the Iranian people since 1979.

THE AUTHOR

Steven Ditto is an independent Middle East researcher who specializes in law, human rights, and education. He reads French, Arabic, and Farsi, and has written extensively on topics related to Islamic law and history, religious freedom and women's rights, and education and public diplomacy. Most recently, he authored the in-depth historical study *Nuclear Weapons in Iranian Religious Discourse, 1962-Present*. He holds a master's degree in international education from George Washington University and blogs at selfscholar.wordpress.com (<http://selfscholar.wordpress.com>). ❖

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