

The Red Line:

How to Assess Progress in U.S. Iran Policy

by [Patrick Clawson \(/experts/patrick-clawson\)](/experts/patrick-clawson)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Washington currently lacks broad consensus on how to deal with the persistent and dangerous strategic challenge posed by the Iranian regime. Supporters of current Obama administration policy emphasize progress made toward forging international consensus, delaying Iran's nuclear goals, and taking away the regime's "enemy narrative" about U.S. intentions. Others are pessimistic, emphasizing how little Iranian actions have changed despite U.S. efforts, and how boldly Iran continues to defy the international community.

If the pessimists are correct, Tehran and Washington are headed for a test of wills -- most likely initiated when Iran inadvertently crosses a U.S. red line and elicits a forceful American response.

How can policymakers measure the effectiveness of U.S. Iran policy with an urgency that allows for critical adjustments to ward off crisis? A recent Washington Institute workshop raised competing ideas about how to define progress with Iran. This new Strategic Report contains the assessments and recommendations of the high-level participants in this multipanel event.

the author

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. A widely published writer and media commentator, he has authored more than 150 articles about the Middle East and international economics as well as eighteen books or studies on Iran, most recently *Much Traction from Measured Steps: The Iranian Opposition, the Nuclear Issue, and the West* (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=322>) (2010). Prior to joining the Institute, he was senior research professor at the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies and a senior economist at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

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