

Much Traction from Measured Steps:

The Iranian Opposition, the Nuclear Issue, and the West

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

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Resolving the nuclear standoff with Iran remains a serious concern of major Western powers. At the same time, the international community has an interest in promoting Iranian human rights and democracy. The June 12 presidential elections in Iran brought the tension between these two objectives to a head, with Iranian reformers now fearing abandonment by the West as the latter actively pursues a nuclear deal with the hardline regime in Tehran.

In his newest study, Iran expert Patrick Clawson argues that although the interests of the West and the Iranian opposition are not identical, they need not conflict. He suggests that greater compatibility could be achieved if each side took modest steps toward acknowledging the interests of the other as each pursues its objectives separately. This publication draws from recent off-the-record strategic dialogues sponsored by the Institute, which brought together Iranians and their American and European counterparts -- including some in government service -- to discuss these issues. In the end, given dramatic changes on the Iranian domestic scene since June 12 and the hardline regime's growing fear of opposition strength, real progress on the nuclear issue by the West must stem from calculations about how such a deal would impact the cause of reform in Iran and in the larger Middle East.

THE AUTHOR

Patrick Clawson is deputy director for research at The Washington Institute, where he also directs the [Iran Security Initiative](#) (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateI02.php?SID=6&newActiveSubNav=Iran%20Security%20Initiative&activeSubNavLink=templateI02.php%3FSID%3D6&newActiveNav=researchPrograms>)

. A widely published writer and media commentator, he has authored more than seventy articles about the Middle East and international economics as well as twelve books or studies on Iran, most recently *Engaging Iran: Lessons from the Past* (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=309>) (2009). 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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