

Infographic: Iranian Students in the United States

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The rising number of Iranian exchange students presents an opportunity to revitalize U.S. public diplomacy outreach to Iran. This infographic highlights key findings of a new Washington Institute report.

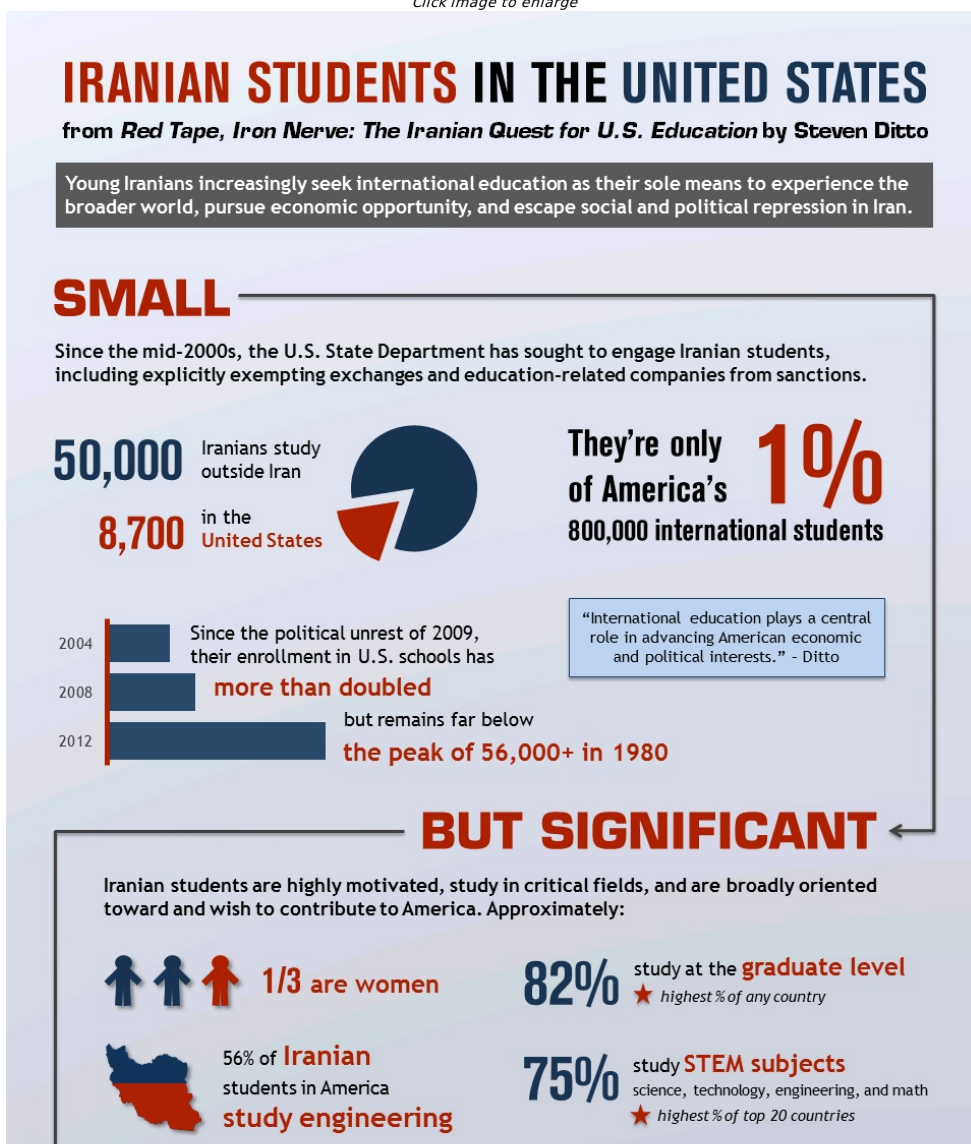
The number of Iranians attending U.S. colleges is on the rise, as bright, motivated students overcome significant obstacles in order to fulfill their professional goals and escape repression in Iran. Both politically and economically, America's international student body helps advance key interests, and Iranians are unlike any other group in terms of their academic talent or level of priority for outreach for public diplomacy and national security.

Red Tape, Iron Nerve: The Iranian Quest for U.S. Education, a Washington Institute Policy Focus by analyst Steven Ditto, explores the notable characteristics of America's Iranian exchange students and assesses the financial, logistical, and consular challenges in their path. Drawing on extensive historical research as well as personal interviews and surveys of Iranian students, Ditto concludes that lowering certain barriers, reaffirming America's commitment to human rights, and fulfilling past pledges to these students can help Washington revitalize its public diplomacy efforts and pave the way for short- and long-term change in Iran.



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the **majority** are enrolled in **doctoral programs**

55% receive **full tuition** funding through scholarships, etc.; 27% pay entirely with their own funds

"The future of Iran belongs to the young people—the youth who will determine their own destiny." - President Obama

89% would **prefer to stay** in the United States after graduation
★ highest % of any country

AGAINST THE ODDS

Iranian students continue to face severe limits and significant challenges on the path to an American education.

"The story of Iranian students, often mirrors that of students seeking a U.S. education from across the developing world." - Ditto



\$3,000 to \$5,000 on average spent on the application process to American universities, roughly 5–7 months income for an urban family



GMAT, LSAT, MCAT, & SAT standard admissions tests that Iranians have to travel outside of the country in order to take



75% of students surveyed in 2012 held single-entry visas a year after the U.S. government extended multiple-entry visas to Iranian students

AMERICA'S OPPORTUNITY

Much effort has been made to cultivate goodwill and create outreach to the Iranian people, but—in spite of limited initiatives—Iranian students in the United States have received relatively modest attention. Now is the time to:

- 1 Revitalize** Revitalize public diplomacy vis-à-vis Iran, with students playing a more central role. Whether or not they return to Iran, students have the ability to project their opinions far beyond themselves.
- 2 Reaffirm** Reaffirm the U.S. commitment to the aspirations and rights of the Iranian people, particularly students, sending a robust message to the new Iranian president.
- 3 Reform** Seek to reform the areas of policy that cast doubt on the public diplomacy mandate, the challenges that affect the lives of Iranian students as well as their perception of U.S. government competence and American commitment.

At this key political juncture, genuine, consistent assistance from the United States could be the start of a relationship that bears fruit for both countries.

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