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## Can Rouhani Deliver a Nuclear Deal? Can he be Trusted?

By Meredith Tull and Andrea Stricker

Almost a decade ago Iran's new president-elect, Hassan Rouhani, held the position of chief nuclear negotiator for Iran. If Rouhani is again to take up the nuclear dossier—this time as president—what can the West expect from any negotiations? His past and recent statements are illuminating of possible strategies and positions. Below, ISIS has compiled a list of noteworthy statements, speech excerpts, and social media posts by Rouhani on Iran's nuclear program and policy, along with ISIS's findings about those statements. Past statements and actions by the seemingly shrewd, remarkably honest Rouhani show that the United States and its partners should expect any negotiations to be used to buy time for nuclear advancements and to garner sanctions relief. His more recent concern about the economic state of Iran due to sanctions indicates that the West may expect that he will at least try to make a deal, but whether that deal will go far enough or be accepted by the Supreme Leader is, as usual, a big unknown.

### Noteworthy Past Statements:

Findings:

- *Rouhani may seek to buy time for nuclear advancements with any negotiations.*
- *He may use the time to create additional "facts on the ground" with regard to the nuclear program.*
- *Rouhani seeks the West's acceptance of Iran's nuclear program, including the full fuel cycle.*
- *He denies intentions to build nuclear weapons; but admits to not delivering information in a timely manner to the IAEA.*

September 30, 2005: Text of [speech](#) by Rouhani delivered circa 2004:

- "While we were talking with the Europeans in Tehran, we were installing equipment in parts of the facility in Isfahan. . . . in fact, by creating a calm environment, we were able to complete the work in Isfahan. Today, we can convert yellowcake into UF4 and UF6, and this is a very important matter."
- "This is good for our international reputation and shows that we have made good technological progress and have been successful in the area of technology. . . . It is going to be a very effective and important statement." It would also, he observes, present the world with Iran's nuclear program as a *fait accompli*, which underscores that Iran's current and previous regimes shared one goal: mastering the nuclear fuel cycle"

- “If one day we are able to complete the fuel cycle and the world sees that it has no choice—that we do possess the technology—then the situation will be different. The world did not want Pakistan to have an atomic bomb or Brazil to have the fuel cycle, but Pakistan built its bomb and Brazil has its fuel cycle, and the world started to work with them. Our problem is that we have not achieved either one, but we are standing at the threshold. As for building the atomic bomb, we never wanted to move in that direction and we have not yet completely developed our fuel cycle capability. This also happens to be our main problem.”
- On lying to IAEA officials: “No, we have not lied. In all cases, we have told them the truth. But in some cases, we may not have disclosed information in a timely manner.”

### **Noteworthy Statements during the 2013 Campaign:**

#### Findings:

- *Rouhani considers himself a shrewd negotiator who was able to avoid sanctions and war during his tenure as nuclear negotiator.*
- *He acknowledges using negotiations to make technical nuclear advancements while avoiding UN Security Council sanctions.*
- *He touts his closeness to the Supreme Leader.*
- *He is concerned about the Iranian economy and notes the heavy impact of the nuclear program’s continuation on the ability of the economy to flourish.*
- *Rouhani is cagey about the prospect of direct talks with the United States.*

May 27, 2013: [Twitter feed](#) of live discussion on IRIB

- #Rouhani #Live as Chief Nuclear Negotiator, not only did we avoid war (US had just invaded Iraq then), but no sanctions were imposed on Iran.
- #Rouhani lectures #IRIB abt history of Iranian #nuclear energy program, criticizes Iranian #state television on air
- #Rouhani: I was personal rep of SL in National Security Council when I was #nuclear negotiator, #still am personal rep of SL in NSA
- #Rouhani: Iran was not, is not, and will never be after #nuclear bomb. We only seek peaceful #technology #Rouhani2013
- #Rouhani: In my tenure as #nuclear negotiator, Bush admin sought to #isolate us, but in the end they only isolated themselves #Rouhani2013
- We must engage in intelligent #diplomacy to move #nuclear file out of UNSC, lift unjust #sanctions #Rouhani2013 #engagement
- Enrichment, centrifuge tech #developed under #Rouhani tenure as nuclear negotiator while #sanctions were avoided and #tensions kept at bay
- #Rouhani sharply criticizes performance of current #nuclear negotiating team
- Constructive engagement led by #Rouhani averted #UNSC sanctions without halting program. #Legacy of past 8yrs failure to solve issue

May 28, 2013: [State television interview](#) regarding Rouhani's nuclear record, reported by Bloomberg: "You are saying that we suspended the nuclear program? We were the ones who came to master the nuclear technology."

- "The day I handed over the nuclear file, we had 1,700 or so centrifuges ready. The day I received the nuclear file we had 150."  
(See the full interview on [video](#) with English subtitles).

June 3, 2013: [Live Tweeting](#) by Rouhani regarding TV appearance on June 3

- #Rouhani: Govt not only decision-maker on nuclear issue. However, my govt can help design solution that optimizes interests, reduces costs
- #Rouhani: In my tenure as #nuclear negotiator, we expanded limited nuclear tech, built confidence, avoided UNSC referral/sanctions/war.
- #Rouhani: My government will seek to solve #nuclear issue once and for all

June 5, 2013: 30-minute [documentary](#) about Rouhani:

- "It's very beautiful if a centrifuge revolves, but on the condition that the country is revolving as well. We do not accept that one factory in Natanz works but hundreds of other factories do not due to sanctions preventing provisions of materials and parts."

June 6, 2013: [Live Tweeting](#) regarding live broadcast from IRIB from May 27

- Mir-Hossein #Mousavi and I visited the first nuclear facilities capable of proliferation back in the summer of 2002 #Rouhani #live on #IRIB
- At one point, Mir Hossein #Mousavi told me uranium #enrichment as important to our country as oil #nationalization once was.#iranelection

June 7, 2013: [Live Tweeting](#) during the final debate on domestic and foreign policy:

- #Nuclear file should never have been in UN Security Council..must be returned to IAEA Board of Governors..
- #Rouhani: It's good to have #centrifuges running..if people's lives and livelihoods are also running..
- #Nuclear diplomacy should be in hands of those who know the #world and can enter #negotiations wisely..
- June 8, 2013: Rouhani vows to amend foreign relations in [interview](#) with Press TV: "I'll pursue a policy of reconciliation and peace. We will also reconcile with the world."

June 17, 2013: First [press conference](#) as president-elect: “Iran’s nuclear [energy] programs are completely transparent but we are ready to show more transparency and make clear for the whole world that the measures taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran are completely within international frameworks.”

- “Firstly, as stipulated in the Algiers Accord, the Americans must state that they will never interfere in Iran’s internal affairs; second, they [must] recognize all the inalienable rights of the Iranian nation, including the nuclear one, and third they [must] abolish unilateral and bullying policies toward Iran, and ... when such conditions [are met], the way will be paved [for talks].”

June 17, 2013, Washington Post analysis on [press conference](#):

- “Iran has no plans to suspend uranium enrichment, Rouhani said, adding: ‘Those days are behind us.’ But he said that he hoped negotiations with the group of countries known as P5+1 would become ‘more active’ under his administration.”

June 17, 2013: [Live Tweeting](#) during Rouhani’s first international press conference:

- Two measures will be taken to remove sanctions step-by-step. First is #transparency.
- Our program is #transparent, but we can take more steps to make it clear to world that our #nuclear program is within intl regulations.
- Second, mutual #trust between the two sides should be promoted. We will work towards #rebuilding this trust.
- Solution to move forward on #nuclear issue is thus #transparency & mutual #respect
- We don't wish to see new #sanctions, but seek to alleviate existing ones, and then roll them back.
- #Nuclear agreement in 2005 could've led to final solution. French and Germans agreed, but Britain, under American pressure, couldn't agree.
- Same agreement as I had with President Chirac can be one of solutions to nuclear issue under which enrichment continues.
- NBC reporter asks #Rouhani abt prospect of direct talks with US. Answer: You are asking a hard question..(smile)
- Issue of Iran & US difficult and #complicated. It has been an old #wound and we must think of how to heal this injury...
- We don't want further tension. Both nations need 2 think more abt future & try 2 sit down & find solutions to past issues & rectify things.
- Talking to US, in addition to being based on #equal footing & mutual #respect/interest, should be dependent on certain conditions.
- First, as in the 1981 #Algiers Accords, the Americans must expressly state that they will never #interfere in our internal affairs.
- Second, all of Iran's #rights - incl nuclear rights - must be recognized. Third, #unilateral and bullying policies need to be scrapped.