While Istanbul served as a confidence-building meeting, the Baghdad round on May 23th aims to achieve specific results.

The elections in the USA and new governments in Israel and France may impact the negotiations.
Nuclear Negotiations

27/04/2012
Gary Samore (Obama’s top advisor on nuclear proliferation) is wrong: Iran’s strategy is not to “play for time” but “to accumulate centrifuges, not in order to support a weapons programme, but rather to negotiate a larger bargain with the United States.” The final goal is to “have [the USA] accept Iran’s legitimate role in the regional politics”. Past failures occurred because Iran did not have enough bargaining power and preferred to derail the negotiations [Read].

24/04/2012
Iran focused in Istanbul talks on “face-saving measures”: “talk of war must stop” and the need for “a deal [Iran] can sell to its people to say they won”. For Baghdad, the agenda will be heavier: “Iran wants sanctions lifted, but the U.S. will not lift them without confidence-building measures”. These include stopping work at Fordow and limiting uranium enrichment to 20 percent [Read].

26/04/2012
The next talks will require “tremendous political will”. While Obama “will likely be politically unable to make significant concessions in an election year”, the Iranians believe “they have the upper hand [because they] have shown tremendous resilience”. The Western idea of totally stopping uranium enrichment has been abandoned [Read].

Sanctions

07/05/2012
Secretary of State Hillary Clinton failed to convince India to support international sanctions against Iran. Iran is considered geo-strategically very important to India, and “it is therefore imperative for India to try and mediate between the US and Iran” [Read]. Meanwhile, Iraq surpassed Iran as the second largest crude supplier to India because Indian private companies have stopped buying Iranian oil. [Read].

Iran: Domestic Views

26/04/2012
After the Istanbul talks, Iranian Friday prayers and officials expressed optimism and moderation in their public statements. These sources are personal appointees of Supreme Leader Ali Jamenei, who is considered to have sidelined Ahmadinejad in the negotiations. This article summarizes the different statements. [Read]

02/05/2012
Iran’s Supreme Leader intervened in the growing rift among the conservatives by creating a brand-new “Supreme Council for Resolving Conflicts”. By doing this, Khamenei sidelined the Expediency Council (a high advisory council that resolve disputes) to prevent pragmatist Rafsanjani (head of the Expediency Council who favors an opening to the USA) from taking advantage of the conservative rift. [Read]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16/04/2012</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Ali Akbar Salehi stated in an interview that “we are prepared to create the conditions to alleviate the spurious concerns that [the West] have created in their imaginations”. “A number of P5+1 members appear to have begun taking [Khamenei’s] fatwa more seriously during the Istanbul talks”</td>
<td>IranPolitik is a political analysis project. Its authors want to remain anonymous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/05/2012</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Is Israel’s new unity government good or bad for negotiations? Good, because Netanyahu’s Likud is less beholden to its far-right and ‘settler’ allies</td>
<td>New York Times is a leading USA newspaper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-30/02/2012</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Some well-known Israeli officials have expressed their distrust regarding Prime Minister Netanyahu’s handling of the situation. Ehud Olmert said that “they are creating an atmosphere and a momentum that may go out of their control”</td>
<td>Christian Science Monitor and Haaretz are leading newspapers in the USA and Israel, respectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/02/2012</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>What is the goal of sanctions? Following a leak from a U.S. official who recognized “regime change” as an objective, there’s been a growing debate about the goal of US policy: is it to press Iran to give up or to create economic havoc which will lead to revolts?</td>
<td>Jasmin Ramsey is a journalist and the editor of Lobe Log, a US foreign policy blog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/05/2012</td>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>Francois Hollande’s election as President of France may result in a softening of the European Union’s stance on Iran. While Sarkozy was a major advocate of economic sanctions, the French Socialist Party stresses greater independence from Israel and the United States and has some prominent figures of Iranian origin.</td>
<td>Muhammad Sahimi holds the NIOC Chair in petroleum engineering at the University of Southern California. He is also active in journalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/04/2012</td>
<td>The Region</td>
<td>Iraq’s Maliki’s visit to Tehran could be a step toward further collaboration between Baghdad and Tehran without abandoning Iraq’s mediating role. Maliki is the only politician close both to Iran and the USA. While the Syrian issue pits Iran and Iraq against the USA, the desire for regional stability prompts Iraq to help achieve a negotiated solution in the upcoming Baghdad talks.</td>
<td>Institute for Middle East Strategic Studies is an Iranian Tehran-based think-tank.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
China and Iran: Economic, Political and Military Relations  
19 April 2012. This paper examines factors driving Chinese-Iranian cooperation, potential tensions in the Chinese-Iranian partnership, and U.S. policy options for influencing this partnership. The authors conclude that the U.S. ability to fundamentally reshape China’s relationship with Iran is fairly limited, but the U.S. should continue to forestall an Iranian nuclear weapons capability and pressure China to reduce ties to Iran. [Read]

History of Official Proposals on the Iranian Nuclear Issue  
Updated April 2012. This timeline summarizes all the official proposals since 2003. [Read]

U.S. and Iranian Strategic Competition. The Sanctions Game: Energy, Arms Control, and Regime Change  
26 April 2012. Tightening sanctions and Iran’s reactions have become a race against time. Every day brings a new event as the competition between the US and Iran plays out on a global level. The Burke Chair at CSIS has issued a new report that puts this competition in a broader perspective. [Read]

The Unspectacular Future of the IAEA Additional Protocol  
26 April 2012. It has been fifteen years since the Additional Protocol was approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to rectify serious deficits in IAEA inspections and verification (...). But NPT parties still have not reached a consensus that the protocol should be an essential component of their long-standing Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements. [Read]

Take a break...

Batman’s “A Death in The Family” comic book (1980) featured the Joker as Iran’s ambassador to the UN. It also showed a “Lebanese Shi’i group” (in reference to Hezbollah) buying nuclear weapons from The Joker and trying to bomb Tel Aviv.

Rand Corporation is a global policy think tank first formed to offer research and analysis to the United States armed forces. It is currently partially financed by the U.S. government.

Arms Control Association is an USA organization supporting effective arms control policies.

CSIS is an USA think-tank that “conduct research and analysis and develop policy initiatives that look to the future and anticipate change”.

Carnegie is a “private, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing cooperation between nations”.

Report design by Nacho Díaz | idiaz.roncero@gmail.com