

ÖNGÖRÜLEMİYEN GÜÇ SİMSARI: İRAN'IN NÜKLEER KAPASİTE GELİŞTİRMESİNDE RUSYA'NIN ROLÜ

ÖZ

Yeni milenyum uluslararası ilişkilerinin en önemli gerilimlerinden biri şüphesiz ki İran ile Batılı devletler arasında uzun bir süredir süre gelen gerilimdir. Bu gerilimin en temel sebebi İran'ın, Rusya yardımıyla geliştirmeye başladığı nükleer kabiliyetidir. Batı da Rusya da, İran'ın bu kabiliyetini askeri nitelikli bir hale dönüştürmesini istememekte ve bundan ciddi bir endişe duymaktadırlar. İran'ın nükleer çabalarını bu düzeyde bir uluslararası soruna dönüştüren temel sebep de bu endişedir. Her ne kadar İran bunun aksini defalarca ifade etse de, özellikle Batı, bir gün gelip İran'ın askeri nitelikli nükleer bir güce kavuşup kavuşamayacağından emin olamamaktadır. İran'ın nükleer enerji teknolojisini, diğer pek çok edinimlerine ek olarak, Rusya'dan alıyor olması da Rusya'yı bu düzlemde en belirleyici arabulucu konumuna getirmektedir. Bu çalışma, Rus diplomasisini İran'ın nükleer kabiliyet elde etmesi çerçevesinde ve özellikle de arabuluculuk kavramı bağlamında değerlendirmektedir. Çalışma 2002-2014 yılları arasındaki gelişmeleri ele almaktadır. Bu değerlendirme aracılığı ile çalışma, uluslararası uyumsuzluklarda bir çözüm yöntemi olarak kullanılan arabuluculuğun esasında tam anlamıyla iyi niyetli bir diplomatik yaklaşım olmadığını, Rusya gibi, büyük güçler tarafından söz konusu uyumsuzluğu çözmek yerine tarafları etkileyerek sorunu tahakküm etmek ve bu şekilde kendisine özel bir mevki edinmek için kullanılan bir araç olduğunu iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rusya, İran, arabuluculuk, nükleer güç

القوة السياسية غير المرغوب فيها : دور روسيا في تطوير ايران طاقتها النووية.
محمد فاتح اوزكان – كورول بابا
خلاصة :

لا شك ان احدى اهم الأزمات في العلاقات الدولية خلال فترة الألف عام الجديدة، هو الأزمة المستفحلة منذ مدة طويلة بين ايران وبين الدول الغربية. ان السبب الرئيسي لهذه الأزمة هو القدرة النووية التي بدأت ايران بتطويرها بمساعدة روسيا لها. على ان كلا من الغرب وروسيا لا يرغبان في تحويل ايران لقدرتها هذه الى قوة عسكرية، وان كلاهما يشعران بقلق شديد جزاء هذا الاحتمال. ان السبب الرئيسي لتحويل فعاليات ايران النووية الى مشكلة دولية على هذا المستوى، هو هذا القلق. ومهما كانت ايران تعرب عن عكس ذلك مرات متتالية، فان الغرب بالأخص ليس واثقا من ان ايران ستمكن يوما ما من التوصل الى قوة نووية ذات طابع عسكري. ان حصول ايران على تقنية الطاقة النووية من روسيا، بالاضافة الى مكتسباتها العديدة الأخرى، يتيح لروسيا ان يلعب دور الوسيط المهم في هذا المضمار. وتتولى هذه الدراسة تقييم دور الدبلوماسية الروسية في اطار حصول ايران على القدرة النووية، وبالأخص في مجال قيامه بدور الوسيط. وتتناول الدراسة التطورات الحاصلة بين عامي ٢٠٠٢ و ٢٠١٤. ان العمل عن طريق هذا التقييم يظهر ان الوساطة التي تستعمل كطريقة لحل الخلافات الدولية، انما هي في الواقع ليست طريقة دبلوماسية تنطوي على نية حسنة، بل هي وسيلة لقيام قوى كبيرة مثل روسيا بالتأثير على اطراف النزاع والتحكّم في الموضوع وفسح موقع لنفسها بهذه الوسيلة، بدلا عن قيامها بحل الخلاف الناشب بين الاطراف.

الكلمات الدالة : روسيا، ايران، الوساطة، الطاقة النووية.

UNPREDICTABLE POWER BROKER: RUSSIA'S ROLE IN IRAN'S NUCLEAR CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACT

One of the major strains of the new millennium international politics has been happening between Iran and the West. Iran's efforts to build up its nuclear capability with Russia's help have been keeping the West on its toes. Neither the West nor Russia would really want, and therefore always concerned about, Iran to have a nuclear competence on a military grade. Even though Iran declares the opposite, the West is never sure about the possibility that Iran will achieve this grade one day. Since Iran has been receiving nuclear technology, together with many other commodities, from Russia, Moscow becomes almost a perfect candidate to be a mediator in this dispute. This study investigates Russian diplomacy on Iranian nuclear build up and its problematic consequences within the framework mediation as a strategy to ease disputes. The time frame covers the developments from 2002 to 2014. Via this investigation this research argues that mediation is not as suave as it seems but more of a means for a Great Power, like Russia, to be utilized to influence or almost dominate an international dispute, via carving out a special position and acting as an "unpredictable power broker", rather than solving it.

Keywords: Russia, Iran, mediation, nuclear power

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Introduction

Russia, as a part of its post-Cold War reintegration with the “new world Rorder” policy, has been deepening its relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Having a common understanding on more than a few foreign policy issues sustained Moscow’s success. One of these issues is Iran’s nuclear capability development and its repercussions.

West’s concerns about this issue were ignited from the very beginning with the construction of a light water commercial power reactor at Bushehr. On this very project Russia did not only provide technology transfer but also showed that it significantly controls Iran’s nuclear build up. This aggravated West’s concerns since mid-1990s. The West concerned that Iran desires to have nuclear weapon capability, which has constantly been refused by the latter.

What makes this issue even more controversial is Russia’s unpredictable acting as a mediator between the West and Iran. It was unpredictable because Moscow has been tilting its support from West to Iran depending on the situation. Moscow has been doing this for two reasons: first, it does not want to lose its influence on Iran’s nuclear capability development, arms and energy deals; second, it would like to keep the West believing that it is an indispensable communicator for easing the tensions.

This study elaborates on Russian diplomacy on Iran since 2002, when Iran’s relations with the West were seriously strained due to the revealing of two secret nuclear plants in Natanz and Arak. This brought Russia into the diplomatic scene as the foremost mediator. This research questions and criticizes mediation by analysing Russia’s mediation between Iran and the West as a case study. Accordingly, this study argues that the mediation as a dispute easing strategy is not completely battle-proven. As it is seen in Russia’s diplomatic moves, the mediator does not always interfere with impartiality, or even in good faith. The mediator, especially if it is a Great Power, could try to dominate the issue rather than aiming to resolve it. This transforms the mediator into a power broker in a way that it attempts to achieve a significant leverage over parties to accept its own proposals rather than acting as a referee. In other words, Russian diplomacy on Iranian nuclear capability is a good illustration for depicting how mediation can be utilized by a Great Power as a means of influence to almost dominate an international dispute rather than solving it.

The first part of the study analyses mediation in terms of its meaning in international politics, the elements of being a mediator, its strategies, and fallacies. The second part consists of three sections. Firstly, the 2002-2005 period in which Russia began its mediation between the West and Iran. Secondly, the 2006-2010 period when Russia joined the other members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for carrying out sanctions against

Iran's nuclear program at the same time preventing Iran to be alienated and radicalized. Finally, the 2011-2014 era in which Russia understood the ineffectiveness of sanctions and tried to increase its influence for a more stable dialogue between the West and Iran.

Mediation in International Politics

International crises do not only threaten the interests of the concerned parties but also the stability of the international system. They affect international institutions, belief systems and the distribution of power within international and regional realms.¹ Yet not every international conflict can be categorized as crisis. There are low-key conflicts known as "international disputes". Various legal/diplomatic/political methods can be applied to prevent these disputes to turn into a crisis, i.e. negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication. In terms of this study, mediation has a specific value. It is recognized as a means of solving international disputes in the principal documents of international law such as the 1856 Declaration of Paris and the Second Hague Conference of 1907.²

Mediation is an informal process in which the conflicting parties resolve their disputes with the aid of an impartial third party, the mediator. In this process, disagreements are determined, confusions are clarified, and solutions are investigated for reaching a mutually acceptable agreement.³ It generally has *ad hoc* and non-binding diplomatic means, which converts a bilateral dispute into a triadic interaction. Mediator makes sure that such interaction is non-violent,⁴ there is no direct use of force or any goal of saving one of the parties. Mediation creates a communication environment to change disputed parties' perceptions towards each other. For this mediators not only propose ideas for a settlement but also negotiate directly with both sides.⁵ In this way the mediator aims to re-interpret the dispute via confidence-building mechanisms.⁶ Yet this method is not as innocent and hassle-free as it seems.

1 Jonathan Wilkenfeld, "Mediating International Crises: Cross-National and Experimental Perspectives", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 47, No. 3, June 2003, p. 279.

2 Mohammad Naqib Ishan Jan, "The Role of Mediation in the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes", *Asia Pacific Mediation Forum*, http://www.asiapacificmediationforum.org/resources/2008/6-Muhammad_Naqib.pdf Accessed on 14 August 2014, pp. 2-3.

3 "Mediation: Another Method for Resolving Disputes", *Alabama State Bar*, January 2007, http://www.alabamaadr.org/web/publicinfo/documents/ADRC_Mediation_Brochure_English_1201.pdf Accessed on 14 August 2014.

4 Jacob Bercovitch, "The Structure and Diversity of Mediation in International Relations", in Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (eds.), *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches To Conflict Management*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), pp. 4-5.

5 William Zartman and Saadi Touval, "International Mediation: Conflict Resolution and Power Politics", *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1985, pp. 31-32.

6 Elizabeth Cousens, "It ain't over 'till it's over: what role for mediation in post-agreement contexts?" , *The OSLO Forum Network of Mediators*, OSLO Forum 2008, pp. 66-67.

Becoming a Mediator: Actors, Reasons and Impartiality

Although individuals, international institutions and organizations could play a mediating role, states are still the primary mediators.⁷ Successful mediation increases their reputation, influence, and, even, power.⁸

Recognition of the mediator is also a significant requirement. Strong political and economic ties between the mediator and disputants could facilitate this.⁹ For maintaining the recognition, the mediator acts with two major considerations: to protect its own interests and to boost its influence by deepening relations with disputed parties. During the recognition, the mediator aims to increase disputed parties' dependence rather than resolving the dispute.¹⁰ Here, the mediator attempts to achieve a special position of an indispensable communicator that the parties cannot even communicate without its help.

The other aspect is neutrality of the mediator. Although it is a requirement, it is very difficult to achieve. Since the third party intervention turns a bilateral interaction into a triad, mediators cannot easily be neutral. What they can do is to act impartially,¹¹ which means that the mediator does not promote the arguments of only one side while ignoring the concerns of the other. It should put forward impartial proposals for reaching a mutually acceptable solution.¹²

These major aspects show that mediation is not completely battle-proven. States' changing, shifting, intermingling, and conflicting interests can damage this impartiality and make the mediator to tend towards one side's position. The other issue is that the mediator can utilize its position to dominate the issue rather than aiming to resolve it. These two issues could both be observed in Russia's position in the repercussions of Iran's nuclear capability development.

The Strategies of Mediators

There are various strategies of mediation. Kressel and Pruitt put forward one of them by asking: What do mediators do to resolve disputes? Since there is not a single answer to this question, they underline reflexive, contextual, and substantive intervention strategies. Reflexive interventions refer to mediators' efforts to orient themselves to the dispute while contextual interventions refer

7 Jacob Bercovitch, "International Mediation and Intractable Conflict", *Beyond Intractability*, January 2004, <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/med-intractable-conflict> Accessed on 14 August 2014.

8 Moly M. Mellin, "When States Mediate", *Penn State Journal of Law & International Affairs*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, April 2013, p. 80.

9 Moly M. Mellin, "When States Mediate", pp. 82-83.

10 William Zartman and Saadi Touval, "International Mediation", p. 32.

11 Jacob Bercovitch, "The Structure and Diversity", p. 6.

12 William Zartman and Saadi Touval, "International Mediation", pp. 36-37.

to the mediators' attempts to change the conditions prevailing between the parties. Substantive interventions are related to some tactics, which facilitate to curb different point of views and accelerate the process of resolving the dispute. These tactics include finding common points, offering satisfactory accords, showing both the positive and negative sides of a possible solution and explaining the practice dimension of a technical agreement.¹³

Bercovitch and Houston, argue that mediation strategies, which are communication-facilitation, procedural and directive strategies can be identified according to their level of intervention from low to high. The minimum level of intervention is seen in the communication-facilitation strategies in which mediators both transfer information to the parties and ease cooperation. However, they have a passive role and limited control over the negotiations. Procedural strategies require mediators, which determine meetings' structural aspects, control constituency influences, and the flow of information among the disputed parties. Finally, in directive strategies, mediators influence the matter of negotiations by giving incentives to parties or by issuing ultimatums. The data about the results of mediation demonstrate that directive strategies are more successful than others although mediators more frequently use communication-facilitation-oriented ones.¹⁴

Zartman and Touval's classification examines mediators' principal roles for influencing the attitudes of disputants. The first is the mediator as a communicator who comes into play as a "telephone wire" when parties get stuck in a situation. The second is the mediator as a formulator, in which mediators work on carving out a mutually satisfactory solution depending on their understanding of the dispute. The third is the mediator as a manipulator. Mediators, with this role, get involved into the issue to protect their interests even in a way to keep the parties locked into a mutual stalemate. Here the mediator creates a perception that there is no way out of this impasse without its help.¹⁵

Marieke Kleiboer put forward four prototheories of international mediation. These are mediation as power brokerage, mediation as political problem solving, mediation as re-establishing social relationships and mediation as domination. Mediation as power brokerage¹⁶ is the most convenient approach for this essay for analysing Russia as "unpredictable power broker" on the nu-

13 Kenneth Kressel and Dean G. Pruitt, "Themes in the Mediation of Social Conflict", *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1985, pp. 188-192.

14 Jacob Bercovitch and Allison Houston, "Why Do They Do It like This? An Analysis of Factors Influencing Mediation Behaviour in International Conflicts", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 44, No. 2, Apr. , 2000, p. 175.

15 William Zartman and Saadi Touval, "International Mediation", pp. 38-39.

16 For another kind of usage of the term, also see "Putin Plays powerbroker in Mideast" , *Deutsche Welle*, 22 November 2013, <http://www.dw.de/putin-plays-powerbroker-in-mideast/a-17242484> Accessed on 17 October 2014.

clear issue of Iran. Kleiboer's makes a reference to the approach of neorealist international politics and lists the main characteristics of power brokerage.¹⁷

Firstly, the major powers or the actors close contact with major powers, are most of the time evaluated as the candidates for being a mediator. The success in this case is generally provided by the mediator's capability to possess a considerable leverage over the parties to accept its proposals. It is strengthened by the capability of the mediator that it has enough influence to persuade the unsatisfied party for a settlement.¹⁸

These tactics show that there is not a single method, procedure, aim or dimension of mediating. The strategies and tactics above propose ways and methods of mediators to handle and manage but more importantly to influence the dispute at stake. In this sense, one dimension of mediation is that the mediator aims to ease the dispute by using various strategies and tactics, as briefly listed above, but in another dimension it attempts to protect and develop its interests/power/capabilities via influencing it. In other words, the mediator acts as a power broker for the sake of its own interests. Russia's position vis-à-vis Iran and the West us a good depiction of this.

2002-2005: The Emergence of Iranian Nuclear Dispute and Russia's Mediation

The debates about Iran's nuclear program began with a statement of Alireza Jafarzadeh, one of the dissidents of the Iranian government. He revealed Iran's secret nuclear plants in the cities of Natanz and Arak in August 2002. This triggered the dispute. The US almost immediately accused Iran for attempting to have nuclear weapon capability and called the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to duty to prevent Iran's so-called attempts.¹⁹ Moscow, firstly, ignored these secret nuclear plants due to the previous statements of the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy (Minatom). Later in March 2003, Moscow's stance changed particularly after its representatives visited these plants. Moscow's representatives stated that Russia was only aware of the Bushehr but had no information about the others. This change in Russian stance did not stop the increasing diplomatic pressure of the US, which made the Russian Foreign Minister of the period Igor Ivanov to stress the importance of IAEA's supervision to all Iranian nuclear programs in May 2003.²⁰

17 Marieke Kleiboer, "Understanding Success and Failure of International Mediation", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 2, Jun 1996, pp. 377-383.

18 Ibid. , p. 380.

19 Cemile Asker, "Tarihsel Süreç İçerisinde İran ve Nükleer Gücü", *Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi*, April 2010, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/yazigoster.aspx?ID=751> Accessed on 16 August 2014.

20 Robert O. Freedman, "Russia, Iran and the Nuclear Question: The Putin Record" , *The Strategic Studies Institute*, November 2006, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub737.pdf> Accessed on 17 August 2014, p. 15.

Such change in Russia's attitude was an important depiction that Moscow's support to Tehran was not an unconditional one. Russia did not want to bear international risks prospectively caused due to its support of Iran. Yet this does not mean Russia would support every step of the US and Europe against Iran either. Instead, it began its mediatory role between Tehran and the West.

This approach could be seen in President Vladimir Putin's statements about the American reactions and diplomatic pressures. In September 2003 in a CNN interview, President Putin stated that Russia had been not only a signatory but also one of the most active defendants of the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Therefore, a new nuclear power very close to Russia will be against its national interests. If Iran has nuclear weapon technology, this might cause regional and global risks, which Russia has been aware of. Thus, it could (is ready to) cooperate with the international community. However, since it is a real threat perception, everyone should speak with numbers and exact information instead of speculation. Finally, if Iran doesn't aim to have nuclear weapon, it should not hide any information from the IAEA.²¹

Russia's constructive approach softened up Iran. Tehran informed the IAEA about its nuclear enrichment activities in October 2003. In November, Iran's nuclear negotiator Hassan Rouhani went to Moscow and proclaimed Tehran's decision to suspend its nuclear enrichment activities and to sign the 1997 Additional Protocol of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).²² In December, with Russia's encouragement, Iran signed the "Additional Protocol", which allows the IAEA to control the nuclear facilities without a prior notice. However, the Iranian parliament didn't officially ratify this agreement. In this period, Moscow also promised Tehran to proceed the construction of Bushehr's second complex as long Iran had a nuclear program compatible with the NPT's regulations and the IAEA's working principles.²³

In this phase of Russian-Iranian relations, Russia's mediation changed Iran's attitude against the West and apply more West-compatible policies. Iran's approach suits into Kleiboer's determination about mediation as power brokerage that if the disputed parties or even one of them do not want to break their relations with the mediator by declining its initiative, could have a tendency to accept the mediator's suggestions. Russia's mediation kept both the West and Iran in the loop. Additionally, this policy of Russia had similar aspects with the Bercovitch and Houston's directive strategies in which mediators influence the matter of negotiations by giving incentives to parties.

21 Fatih Özbay, "Realpolitik, Pragmatizm, Ulusal Çıkarlar ve Nükleer Program Ekseninde Dünden Bugüne Rusya-İran İlişkileri", in Kenan Dağcı and Atilla Sandıklı (eds.), *Satranç Tahtasında İran: Nükleer Program*, (İstanbul: Tasam Yayınları, 2007), p. 180.

22 John W. Parker, "Russia and Iranian Nuclear Program: Replay or Breakthrough", *INSS Strategic Perspectives* 9, March 2012, p. 21.

23 Fatih Özbay, "Realpolitik, Pragmatizm", pp. 191-192.

In 2004, Tehran announced the suspension of its uranium enrichment activities and submitted a report about the details of its nuclear program upon the demand of the IAEA in May 2004. However, the IAEA wasn't satisfied and criticized Iran for the inadequacy of cooperation. This annoyed Iran and the Foreign Minister Kemal Harrazi said that Iran's nuclear activities were irreversible so it should be recognized by international society. Russia stepped in and introduced a proposal to relieve the tension.²⁴

The details of this proposal took place in the Russo-Iranian protocol in February 2005, which removed the obstacles against the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant. Moreover, Russia would send nuclear fuel rods to Iran for this plant. The US and Israel were seriously concerned that giving nuclear fuel rods could open a path for Iran to improve nuclear weapons by aid of this power plant.²⁵

In August 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's election as a president fuelled up these concerns. Proving these concerns, the new administration stated that 'it had resumed work on converting uranium into a gas that can be purified for use in both nuclear reactors and weapons'²⁶. The IAEA Board of Governors' stressed the application of sanctions against Iran.²⁷

West's rising concerns did not harvest Russia's support for the sanctions. On the contrary, Russia, mostly with the support of China, tried to prevent the UNSC's sanction plans.²⁸ Russia's mediation here was not an ultimate support of Iran but to deescalate the situation. Moscow at that stage was still not sure that Iran's nuclear programme had a clear military objective.²⁹ In order to test Iran's new administration's aims Moscow, at the end of 2005, proposed a plan to Tehran, which offers to establish a consortium for the uranium enrichment in Moscow and the required fuel would be provided to Iran's reactors from here. Tehran declined this offer, which put Moscow in a difficult situation particularly in terms of UN's prospective sanctions.³⁰ The uncompromising attitudes of Tehran compelled Moscow to stiffen its approach in the next phase.

24 Talha Köse, *İran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti: Güç Dengesi ve Diplomasinin İmkanları*, (Ankara: SETA Yayınları III, 2008), p. 22.

25 Fatih Özbay, "Realpolitik, Pragmatizm", 192-193.

26 Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, (New Haven&London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 335.

27 Robert O. Freedman, "Russia, Iran", p. 43

28 Mark N. Katz, "Russia and Iran", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 3, Fall 2012, p. 56.

29 Thomas Kunze and Lars Peter Schmidt, "Russia's Iran Policy Against the Background of Tehran's Nuclear Programme", *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*, July 2009, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_17144-544-2-30.pdf?090721133140 Accessed on 20 August 2014.

30 Abbas Milani, "Russia and Iran: An Anti-Western Alliance?", *Current History Journal of Contemporary World Affairs*, Vol. 106, Issue 702, October 2007, p. 331.

Kressel and Pruitt's mediatory strategy fits into Russian attitudes, i.e. ensuring the Bushehr Plant's operation, sending nuclear fuel rods to Iran for this operation and presenting a plan for establishing a consortium in Moscow. In 2002-2005 period Russia did not only act to relieve the tensions but to keep both sides, particularly the West, on their toes. This is what makes Russia's image as an "unpredictable power broker" in between the West and Iran.

2006-2010: Russian Participation to the UNSC Resolutions about Iran's Nuclear Program

The crisis between the IAEA and Tehran at the beginning of 2006 was a breaking point in Moscow's support for Iran. In February 2006, the IAEA voted for the UNSC's punitive measures for Iran. As a reaction, Tehran declared that it would comply with the NPT rules but would end its cooperation with the IAEA and begin a full-scale production of enriched uranium. Russia and China did not support Iran this time and decided to solve the issue within the scope of the IAEA. Russia tried to soften up the crisis with a proposal that Moscow will make sure that the enrichment of uranium will be in lower rates, but the US rejected it. In March 2006, Washington and Moscow came to an understanding and supported the UNSC's retributory precautions against Iran.³¹ In Kleiboer's analysis again, the mediator should build up a perception that it has enough influence to persuade the other party for a settlement. In this case, Russia's support for the UNSC measures aimed to persuade Iran.

With Russia's support in July, the UNSC Resolution 1696 was passed, which invited Iran to suspend all its nuclear enrichment and plutonium processing activities by August 2006. Non-compliance would bring sanctions.³² This showed that Russian support for Iran was the most significant obstacle for the application of the UN sanctions.

Tehran did not take the UN proposal very seriously. In response, the UNSC passed the Resolution 1737, which issued the first round of international sanctions in December 2006. In addition to other sanctions, the resolution initially froze the financial assets and brought travel restrictions to persons, who are involved in the Iranian nuclear and missile program. Russia stood against the travel restrictions and claimed that its intention was to encourage Tehran to negotiate with international society instead of bringing solid punishments.³³ This was another "vague" message of Moscow: it supports the West but did not completely cut off its support for Iran.

31 Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, pp. 335-339.

32 Mariya Y. Omelichova, "Russia's Foreign Policy Toward Iran: A Critical Geopolitics Perspective", *Journal of Balkan and Near East Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, September 2012, p. 331.

33 Cole J. Harvey and Richard Sabatini, "Russia's Lukewarm Support for International Sanctions against Iran: History and Motivations", *Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI)*, April 2010, <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/russias-support-sanctions-against-iran/> Accessed on 19 August 2014.

Yet, neither Iran nor the West did receive this message in this tone. For Tehran, Russia's stance was not that different from the West's since it didn't show patience and continuity in its support. For the West, Russia was seen almost as an ally against Iran. For strengthening this, Washington proposed a few attractive offers to the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in his official visit to Washington. These were: acceleration of Russia's membership to the World Trade Organization (WTO), consolidation of Russia's position in G-8, and promising the President George W. Bush's attendance to the G-8 summit in 2006. Russia's above-mentioned "vague" attitude this time relieved the West but put Iran on its toes. One of the senior officials of Iranian Parliament, by referring to the negative aspects of two countries' historical relations, defined Russia as a "good cop" in the West's scenario of Iran.³⁴ In Zartman and Touval's analysis, one disputant blames the mediator as a supporter of the other disputant when it is displeased with the state of affairs.

Iran's unhappiness neither changed Russia's attitude, nor stopped the UN to take extra sanctions. In March 2007, the UNSC passed Resolution 1747, which primarily froze more persons' financial assets and brought extra travel restrictions. The resolution brought strict restrictions to Iran's imports and exports on arms or any related materials.³⁵

In October, Russia was back again to its power broker role. Putin in his visit to Tehran clearly expressed his concerns about Iranian missile tests and nuclear activities and recommended Iran to make a deal with the international community. During these talks, Russia accepted to give the *Tor M-1* air defence system and sell the more effective *S-300* system to Iran against any possible Israeli and American threats.³⁶ Putin's statements unearthed Russia's two significant aims: one was to prevent Iran to be completely cut off from international community, which could radicalize it and indirectly restrict Russia to use Iran's nuclear development programme as a bargaining chip and two was to have a control over Iran's both nuclear programme and its foreign policy particularly in terms of its anxieties against the US and Israel.

Developments at the end of 2007 restrained Russia to carry out these two aims. The US National Intelligence Estimates' (NIE) intelligence report claimed that Iran didn't have any kind of nuclear weapon. President Ahmadinejad stated that the report demonstrated Iran's righteousness.³⁷ This report was interpreted as a new beginning for a solution between the IAEA and Iran.

34 Fatih Özbay, "Realpolitik, Pragmatizm", p. 196.

35 Cole J. Harvey and Richard Sabatini, "Russia's Lukewarm"

36 Dimitri Trenin and Alexey Malashenko, "Iran: A View From Moscow", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2010, p. 21.

37 Gonca Oğuz Gök, "Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri Ekseninde İran'ın Nükleer Faaliyetleri", in Türel Yılmaz and Mehmet Şahin (eds.), *Ortadoğu Siyasetinde İran*, (Ankara: Barış Kitap, 2011), pp. 245-246.

In February 2008, the IAEA reported that there were not so many unsolvable problems about Iran's nuclear program except uranium enrichment process. The report unearthed the fact that IAEA's and Western concerns do not overlap. France and the UK did not agree with the report and dispatched Iran's insistence on uranium enrichment to the UNSC, which was followed with a more detailed package of sanctions under the Resolution 1803 in March.³⁸

The last quarter of 2008 enabled Russia to act as a power broker again. The IAEA's report in September stated that 'Iran has not suspended its enrichment related activities'.³⁹ Iran's successful launching of a space rocket re-raised the concerns about the Iran's possible goal to put a military grade to its nuclear program. In September, the UNSC adopted the Resolution 1835, which did not impose new sanctions but reaffirmed a legal proposal to halt uranium enrichment. Russia stepped in. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stood against Washington's increased pressure to put more punitive measures depending on this resolution.⁴⁰

Russian mediation, once again, was neither totally pro-Iranian nor pro-Western. It did not attempt to dissatisfy one side for the sake of satisfying the other. This condition also indicates the issue of difficulty of mediator's impartiality. An impartial mediator was not promoting the arguments of only one side while ignoring the concerns of the other but it cannot sustain it. Moscow ratified the Resolution 1835 but at the same time tried to soften its rigid terms.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the election of Barack Obama as the US president commenced a new era for the nuclear talks. Obama's reconciliatory attitude fuelled optimism. In April 2009, the Obama administration offered a proposal to Iran, quoting certain elements of the US, China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and Germany (P5+1) proposal. Tehran announced its readiness to discuss the package proposal with a precondition that the nuclear rights of Iran would not be negotiated in this process. The parties made the first meeting in Geneva on 1 October 2009. It was decided at the meeting the details of this issue would be talked between the US, France, Russia and Iran in Vienna on 19-20 October.⁴² The Geneva meeting managed to build up the roadmap.

38 Murat Yeşiltaş, "İran 2008", in Kemal İnat, Muhittin Ataman and Burhanettin Duran (eds.), *Ortadoğu Yılığ 2008*, (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2009), pp. 73-77.

39 "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *IAEA Board of the Governor*, 15 September 2008, <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2008/gov2008-38.pdf> Accessed on 24 August 2014.

40 Mariya Y. Omelichova, "Russia's Foreign Policy", p. 332.

41 Mark N. Katz, "Russia and Iran", p. 57.

42 Bayram Sinkaya, "İran'ın Nükleer Programı: Müzakere Sürecinde Umutların Yükselişi ve Düşüşü", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Aralık 2009, Cilt 1, Sayı 12, pp. 74-75.

This settlement plan anticipated the handover of Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium to Russia where further enrichment would be made. In this stage, the 20% level of enriched uranium would be sent to France to carry out their final fabrication and then to be returned to Iran as nuclear fuel. This aimed to curb Iran's capability to enrich its low-enriched uranium to weapons grade. Tehran was reluctant since it would like to keep a substantial quantity of low-enriched uranium inside the country. Moreover Iranian press stated that Russia delayed the construction of Bushehr and delivering the *S-300s*. From Iran's perspective, Moscow is also an "unpredictable power broker" and therefore should not be totally trusted due to the return of necessary fuel on time. In response President Medvedev suggested to stiffen up further sanctions against Iran in November.⁴³ In this scheme Russia not only achieved a more practical role in its mediatory activities in terms of controlling Iran's uranium enrichment but also showed its acerbity to the Iranians if its efforts were not appreciated.

With the Russian support, the IAEA Board of Governors urged Iran to comply with the obligations of the UNSC resolutions, meet the Board of Governors' requirements, cooperate fully with the IAEA, and ratify the Additional Protocol and implement other technical details.⁴⁴ Iran refused. President Ahmadinejad declared that their production level of enriched uranium rose up 20 percent from 3.5 percent on February 2010, which was a remarkable increase.⁴⁵

Iran's reaction disheartened Russia and tilted it to the Western side. With the US and France, Moscow sent a letter to the IAEA in February, criticizing Iran's increased enriched uranium production. In April, Moscow came to terms with the US on imposing limited sanctions on Iran.⁴⁶ This showed that Moscow's support to Tehran continued as long as Russia controls Iran's nuclear capability development and its compliance with the Russian national interests.

Moscow's "unpredictable power broker" role continued in 2010. In June, Moscow supported the UNSC Resolution 1929.⁴⁷ With this support Moscow aimed to "reset" relations with the US. Moscow evaluated Obama's aban-

43 Mark N. Katz, "Russian-Iranian Relations in the Obama Era", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, Summer 2010, p. 65.

44 "Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *IAEA Board of the Governor*, 27 November 2009, <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2009/gov2009-82.pdf> Accessed on 24 August 2014.

45 Chidozie Ezeozue, "The United States and Iran Nuclear Programme: A Critical Analysis", *Journal of Global Intelligence & Policy*, Vol. 6, Issue 10, 2013, p. 118.

46 Cole J. Harvey and Richard Sabatini, "Russia's Lukewarm Support".

47 "UN Security Council Resolution 1929, Iran", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 9 June 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/un-security-council-resolution-1929-iran/p22433> Accessed on 26 August 2014.

doning of European missile-defence plans as a gesture, which tilted it a bit more to the West.⁴⁸ Obama's conciliatory attitude also alleviated Russian concerns on NATO's enlargement into Ukraine and Georgia.⁴⁹

This was another element of Russian mediation. For Moscow, supporting Iran could not counterweigh any opportunity, which can contribute to Russia's international status. Iran's capability development could be sacrificed to a notable degree for the sake of Russian interests. Even though Russia supported the Resolution 1929 together with Obama's conciliatory attitude, it found out the sanctions appeared to be counterproductive. Therefore, it began to reorient its relations with Iran by returning back to its previous style of mediatory tendencies balancing Iran and the West in the next phase.

2011-2014: New Rapprochement between Moscow and Tehran and the Nuclear Negotiations of Iran with the P5+1

The new Russo-Iranian rapprochement began due to the criticisms in Russia that imposing sanctions went beyond the Resolution 1929. In February 2011, this became more visible when Moscow had opposed to the new round of sanctions. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov argued that the existing measures were enough for compelling Tehran to negotiate with the international society. The additional sanctions would create a turnaround in the Iranian economy and harm the population.⁵⁰ To prevent this, Lavrov proposed a "step-by-step" plan in July 2011. According to the plan, Iran would cooperate with the IAEA to eliminate the concerns about a possible military upgrade of its nuclear program. In response, the UNSC would ease the sanctions. The plan would progress through reciprocal measures. The West did not reject this plan but was not completely satisfied either.⁵¹

The IAEA's November report refuelled the crisis. The report claimed that Iran had some activities of developing a nuclear explosive device,⁵² which almost immediately heightened the US' and its allies' accusations on Iran.⁵³ The British Foreign Secretary William Hague said that the IAEA's report proved the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program so the UK would

48 Andrew C. Kuchins, "Russia's Contrasting Relations with Turkey and Iran", *CSIS Report on the Turkey, Russia and Iran Nexus Driving Forces and Strategies*, March 2013, p. 19.

49 Dimitri Trenin and Alexey Malashenko, "Iran: A View", p. 22.

50 John W. Parker, "Russia and Iranian", p. 22.

51 Richard Weitz, "Russia and Iran: A Balancing Act", *The Diplomat*, 21 November 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/russia-and-iran-a-balancing-act/> Accessed on 24 August 2014.

52 "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *IAEA Board of Governors*, 8 November 2011, <https://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2011/gov2011-65.pdf> Accessed on 24 August 2014.

53 "Russia rules out new Iran sanctions over nuclear report", *BBC News Middle East*, 9 November 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15659311> Accessed on 24 August 2014.

prohibit all business with Iranian banks. The Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a call to other international partners to attend additional sanctions.⁵⁴

Russia as an “unpredictable broker” reacted against these accusations by stating that additional punitive measures would be unacceptable, against the international law and would hamper the endeavours of dialogue and discourage Iran to negotiate.⁵⁵ The Russian Deputy Prime Minister Gennady Gatilov said that Moscow would be against new sanctions on Iran.⁵⁶

The change in Russia’s stance was a product of developing bilateral relations with Iran in security and economic aspects. Russia and Iran converged on the Syrian crisis.⁵⁷ Moreover, although the total figures were still low (\$3.7 billion), the bilateral trade between Russia and Iran have approximately tripled over the past decade.⁵⁸

Yet Russia’s tilt was not unconditional. When Iran began to enrich uranium at a level of 20% in Fordo nuclear facility, which was confirmed by the IAEA, Russia stepped in. The P5+1 offered Tehran to resume talks.⁵⁹ After four rounds of talks (Geneva, Istanbul, Baghdad, Moscow) not much of a remarkable result was achieved.⁶⁰

Russian diplomacy during the talks depicted its power brokerage. During the next round of 5+1 group talks in Istanbul in March 2012 President Medvedev managed to carve out a “win-win” resolution to the US antimissile defence in Eastern Europe issue.⁶¹ Russia utilized Iran’s nuclear capability development issue as a diplomatic leverage against both the West and Tehran. Depending on the situation, Moscow sometimes tilted to the West sometimes to Iran, in order to show its counterbalancing influence and to promote its national interests.

54 Jamie Craftword et al. , “Russia slams new sanctions against Iran” , *CNN International Edition*, 22 November 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/11/22/world/meast/iran-sanctions/> Accessed on 24 August 2014.

55 Ibid.

56 “Russia rules out new sanctions against Iran”, *Al Arabiya News*, 09 November 2011, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/09/176253.html> Accessed on 24 August 2014.

57 Mark N. Katz, “Russia and Iran” , p. 61.

58 Andrew C. Kuchins, “Russia’s Contrasting” , p. 13.

59 “Timeline of Iran’s Nuclear Programme” , *Aljazeera News Middle East*, 24 November 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/04/201241410645752218.html> Accessed on 22 August 2014.

60 Ersoy Önder, İran’ın *Nükleer Programının Analizi ve Türkiye (İlişkiler, Yaklaşımlar ve Gelişmeler)*, (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2013), pp. 348-352.

61 Nikolay Kozhanov, “Russia’s Position on Iran’s Nuclear Program” , *The Washington Institute Policy Analysis*, 19 April 2012, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/russias-position-on-irans-nuclear-program> Accessed on 28 August 2014.

Changes in 2013 proved this tilt once again. When the annual trade between Russia and Iran “declined to \$2.33 bn in 2012 – 38 per cent lower than in 2011”⁶² due to the sanctions on Iran, Russia stepped in to counterbalance. Russia did not want to lose its domestic market share in Iran because of the effect of sanctions.

On 23 February the Atomic Energy Organization reported new deposits of raw uranium and sites of 16 more nuclear power station sites in Iran.⁶³ The report resumed the P5+1 talks. Three round of talks (Almaty, Istanbul, Almaty) ended without an agreement or a specific timeline for a new round of talks.⁶⁴ The talks clarified one thing: Russia and China were against the new punitive measures on Iran.⁶⁵

Russia and China's attitude did not alleviate international sanctions. Continuing sanctions worsened the economic situation in Iran. From the mid-April, the national currency of Iran decreased in value by half, which significantly increased inflation. Moreover Iran's oil export was almost halved and international banking capabilities were very badly affected. This increased domestic pressure on Iranian government.⁶⁶ The sanction-worsened economy was one of the most important campaigning issues in the presidential elections in May/June 2013.

Iran's ex-nuclear chief negotiator; Hassan Rouhani won the presidential elections on 14 June 2013. Rouhani started with economy, i.e. mitigate the influence of sanctions and increasing trade with Asia. More importantly Rouhani government attempted to recalibrate relations with the West and the only way to do it was a negotiated solution to the nuclear impasse.⁶⁷ Rouhani

62 Y.Y Belevrov et al. , “New Agenda in Russian-Iranian Relations” , in I. S. Ivanov (ed.), *Modern Russian and Iranian Relations: Challenges and Opportunities*, (Moscow: Spetskniga, 2014), p. 20, quoted from Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation Integrated Foreign Economic Information http://www.ved.gov.ru/exportcountries/ir/ir_ru_relations/ir_ru_trade (in Russian).

63 “Timeline on Iran's Nuclear Program”, *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/03/20/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-timeline.html?_r=0/#time243_10489 Accessed on 4 November 2014.

64 Steven Erlanger, “As Negotiators Ease Demands on Iran, More Nuclear Talks Are Set” , *New York Times*, 27 February 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/28/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-talks.html?ref=world> Accessed on 3 September 2014.

65 David M. Herszenhorn and Rick Gladstone, “After Talks End, Iran Announces an Expansion of Nuclear Fuel Production”, *The New York Times*, 9 April 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/10/world/middleeast/iran-expands-nuclear-fuel-production-after-talks.html?ref=world> Accessed on 4 September 2014.

66 Thomas Erdbrink and Rick Gladstone, “Fearing Prices Increases, Iranians Hoard Goods” , *The New York Times*, 23 April 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/24/world/middleeast/iran-shoppers-fearing-price-increases-hoard-goods.html> Accessed on 4 September 2014.

67 Suzanne Maloney, “Three Reasons Why Russia Won't Wreck the Iranian Nuclear Negotiations” , *Brookings*, 25 March 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/iran-at-saban/posts/2014/03/22-russia-us-tension-sabotage-iran-nuclear-deal> Accessed on 5 September 2014.

stated Iran's intention to resume talks with the P5+1 group. The negotiations began on 15 October 2013 at Geneva, which ended with a Joint Plan of Action, a roadmap for the next six months. This was probably the most promising period of the ten-year long international dialogue.⁶⁸

Joint Plan aimed to make sure that Iran would not have military grade nuclear capability. The Plan involved many reciprocal concessions. For example, Iran would not enrich uranium more than 5% and the existent stockpiles of enriched uranium would be destroyed from the level of 20% to 5%. Some sanctions would be alleviated in return.⁶⁹ Second round was in Paris on 12 January 2014, which started the new schedule, monitoring of the progress in every six months.⁷⁰ This roadmap put forward some converging points for Russia and the West but it did not eliminate divergences completely. Meanwhile, the six-month period of the Joint Plan came to an end in July but the Obama administration announced a four-month extension to talks in order to persuade Iran to conclude a comprehensive agreement.⁷¹

At the end of this extension the P5+1 countries and Iran came together in Vienna between 18-24 November for a final decision. However, the parties only manage to declare a new seven-month extension. The parties were seemingly satisfied. The IAEA declared that Iran kept its word; Rouhani stated his belief in reaching a final agreement.⁷² During this process, as Nikolay Kozhanov stated, Moscow played an active role to sustain the efficiency of the dialogue. From Lavrov's 2012 step-by-step plan to the negotiations of November 2014, Russian diplomats constantly carried out bilateral consultations with almost all parties.⁷³ These efforts were also an indication of Russia's mediatory role, continuing in Iran's nuclear capability development and its repercussions.

68 Y.Y Belevrov et al. , "New Agenda in Russian-Iranian Relations" , pp. 11-12.

69 Yücel Acer, "İran ile Nükleer Antlaşma: Hepimiz Şimdi Daha mı Güveneyiz" *Ankara Strateji Enstitüsü*, 16 December 2013, <http://www.ankarastateji.org/yazar/prof-dr-yucel-acer/iran-ile-nukleer-antlasma-hepimiz-simdi-daha-mi-guveneyiz/> Accessed on 6 September 2014.

70 Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, "Negotiators Put Final Touches on Iran Accord" , *The New York Times*, 12 January 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/13/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-deal.html> Accessed on 6 September 2014.

71 Josh Rogin, "Putin Poised to Retaliate Against Obama by Trashing Iran Deal", *The Daily Beast*, 18 July 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/07/18/putin-set-to-retaliate-against-obama-by-trashing-iran-deal.html> Accessed on 7 September 2014.

72 "İran'la Nükleer Müzakereler 7 ay Uzatıldı" , *Al Jazeera Türk*, 25 November 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/iranla-nukleer-muzakereler-7-ay-uzatildi> Accessed on 27 November 2014.

73 Nikolay Kozhanov, "Russia, Iran, and the Nuclear Negotiations in Vienna", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 27 November 2014, <http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=57331> Accessed on 04 December 2014.

Conclusion

Mediation is not completely a battle-proven method for easing international disputes. Depending on the changing and conflicting interests of states the mediator cannot always fulfil impartiality. Moreover mediators sometimes mediate, not to resolve but to dominate the issue, or even the disputants. Particularly Great Power mediators, in our case Russia, try to dominate the disputes in order to protect and develop their own interests/power/capabilities. In other words, the mediator acts as a power broker. Its actions could be unpredictable because it tilts from one side to the other depending on situational fluctuations. Russia's position in the above mentioned case is a good depiction of this.

In the 2002-2005 period, Russia's mediation started after the revealing of Iran's secret nuclear power plants. Russia's mediation led Tehran to apply more West-compatible policies. Russia's power brokerage was to convince Tehran that it should not break its relations off with Moscow. If one of the disputed parties doesn't want to break their relations with the mediator, it should accept its suggestions. When the situation was strained between the West and Iran, Russia as a power broker used its veto power in the UNSC and prevented sanctions against Iran. In this term, Russia, as another mediation strategy, carried out substantive interventions, i.e. adopting a new solution-oriented approach like the establishment of a consortium for uranium enrichment.

Between 2006-2010 Russia's mediation was more of an "unpredictable power broker". Russia tilted from one side to the other. In 2006, Russia supported the West to pass the Resolution 1737, at the same time standing against some parts of the resolution and not completely leaving Iran alone. In 2007, Russia approved the Resolution 1747, but again recommended Iran to make a deal with the international community. In 2009, Russia worked with the rest of P5+1 to carve out a compromised settlement. Yet when Iran seemed reluctant and emphasized its distrust towards Moscow, Russia suggested to stiffen up the sanctions against Iran and supported the 2010 Resolution. These examples show that neither Iran nor the West were Moscow's major concern. Russia's unpredictable diplomacy was for protecting its national interests and dignity.

Between 2011-2014 Russia's unpredictable power brokerage continued. In the first phase Moscow tilted back to Iran with a new rapprochement and also with an understanding that continuing sanctions and additional punitive measures would be of no use. Therefore Lavrov proposed a cooperation plan between the IAEA and Iran. However, in 2012 the EU's decision for additional sanctions and Iran's unravelling attitude forced the P5+1 for a new negotiation process. Moscow utilized this process to smooth over its own issues with the West, such as the US antimissile defence in Eastern Europe. Once again Russia acted as a power broker by sometimes tilting towards the West

and sometimes to Iran, in order to show its counterbalancing influence and to promote its national interests. Russia continued its mediatory role with the new administration in Tehran, which came to power in 2013. Although this development opened a path for more substantial solution prospects between Iran and the West, Russia still continues its active mediatory role during the negotiations.

Russia, from the beginning of this dispute, was against the possibility of Iran achieving military grade nuclear technology. That was one of the reasons why Moscow had always been a part of Iran's nuclear capability development. This made it a very suitable mediator from the beginning. Yet, as a Great Power, Russia attempted to dominate this process. It has been playing an unpredictable power broker role to protect its national interest. This role is unpredictable for the disputants since Moscow constantly tilted due to fluctuations. Yet Russia, because of its continuing peculiar role in the development of Iran's national capabilities, will continue to be the most significant mediator (power broker) in currently easing nuclear dispute between the West and Iran.

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