

Example of research paper on the qabala radar station disagreement process

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Introduction

Ever since Azerbaijan achieved its independence, it has enjoyed successful foreign policy relations with Russia in the region. However, Moscow/Baku relations have changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, on occasion balancing or bandwagoning. In general, Azerbaijan is known with much renown as the only former Soviet republic that is neither ' pro-Russian nor pro-Western'. The country has upheld cordial relationships with Moscow without sacrificing its economy, politics, and foreign policy to the demands of the Kremlin. One significant example of the independent decision-making of Azerbaijan is the recent disagreement between two countries of the leasing procedure of Russia of Qabala Radar Station. Azerbaijan has established a very consistent and determined position on the conditions of the continuation of their lease on the radar station.

The Gabala station, located in northwest Azerbaijan, was built during the Soviet era as one of the most important elements of the Soviet Union's missile defense system. The radar station was established in 1985 when Russia and Azerbaijan were still part of the Soviet Union. (Sokhov, 2010). For the past decade, Russia has paid Azerbaijan \$7 million a year in rent for the facility, along with other operational charges.

In 2002, Vladimir Putin personally tried to solve the problem of the Gabala radar station which was brought up in negotiations in January of that year, but on the basis of a three-day visit, he only managed to convince the Heydar Aliyev to conduct a detailed environmental review station, with the goal of assessing the impact of its activities to the health of citizens and the environment. The research lasted for almost six months, and the final report

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of the joint committee went to the table to Heydar Aliyev in the last week of July. A new series of negotiations began, which was completed to the mutual satisfaction of both parties on September 7 in Moscow during a meeting of defense ministers of Russia and Azerbaijan. They stated that it was possible to agree on all the controversial issues - an agreement on the conditions of existence on the territory of Azerbaijan's Gabala radar station will be signed at the end of this year during a visit Heydar Aliyev to Moscow. With the lease set to expire this year which was signed in 2002, the two countries had been in protracted negotiations over new terms, with Azerbaijan demanding \$300 million a year (Herszenhorn, 2012).

Until the expiration day, political scientists and journalists offered different opinions about the possible scenarios waiting Azerbaijan-Russia relations. Why had the Azerbaijanis decided not to come to an agreement with Russia? Was it the result of bureaucratic politics or was it a rational choice? Azerbaijan had been waiting for Russia to come up with the solution in favor of the Nagorno Karabakh problem. Otherwise, Azerbaijan would not extend the lease of the Gabala radar station and join the NABUCCO project.

Research Objectives

Research Question

- Which theory is more appropriate to explain the causes of disagreement between Russia and Azerbaijan regarding the Qabala radar station?

Methods

Diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Russia have been discussed and frequently written about by scholars such as Freni, Rousseau and more.

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The diplomatic process for the Qabala radar station has also been a common topic in various international and local media and academia, such as the Central-Caucasian Institute of Research, Global Times, New York Time, Eurasia Daily and others. The analyses of these previously mentioned sources were based only on qualitative information, and did not test the quantitative nature of these situations. My main contribution to this topic is to use quantitative research to test these two possible theories and to see which theory is more successful in explaining the position of Azerbaijan and their disagreement on the lease of Qabala Radar Station.

Once that answer has been found, research will move to questions regarding the decisions that remained, such as what happened for both sides to come to a disagreement. Why did the Azerbaijani choose not to compromise to Russia, disrupting their previously amenable perspective? Was it a political decision taken within a nation-interest framework or was it the separate bureaucracies who influenced the decision? Perhaps it was nothing than a simple economical cost-benefit calculation made by the Azerbaijanis.

Analysis

With the argument that the disagreement on Qabala Radar Station between Russia and Azerbaijan can be analyzed from two theories - the rational actor model (RAM) or bureaucratic politics model (BPM) - the following analysis proves that the rational actor model best explains this situation convincingly.

The rational actor model treats foreign policy choices just as outcomes of the following sequence: (Slantchev, 2005). Presented with a particular problem, any rational decision maker will take into account the foreign policies and

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goals of the nation and uses the rational person to determine which ones take priority over others. After that, they identify the available options trying to trace all costs and benefits associated with each option. A careful estimation of the possible consequences follows: The options are ranked from most preferred to least preferred. The ultimate choice of the decision maker is usually the option ranked the highest. This is usually the optimal choice for the actor.

The bureaucratic politics model, on the other hand, relies on three clear propositions as follows for valid foreign policy analysis: The first relates to the sources of the actors policy preferences, commonly referred to as stand-sit proposition. Another relates to the type of interaction among the actors during the decision making process (bargaining proposition) and the final proposition relates to the character of the decisions that are eventually adopted. The BPM is however limited in its application on realistic matters of foreign policy analysis due to the fact that its propositions are crippled and plagued with ambiguity making the model not to be true to itself. It does not specify the association and interplay between structural effects and motivations for specific agents on the formation of the actors' policy preferences (Slantchev, 2005). It also does not specify the conditions resultants are outcomes of the decision making process.

We shall start analyzing the Bureaucratic Politics model to see how well it suits the given case. The Bureaucratic Politics Model is based on an idea that the state is not a monolithic unitary actor but rather consists of different bureaucracies who play significant role in decision making (Slantchev, 2005). It does not specify the association and interplay between structural effects

and motivations for specific agents on the formation of the actors' policy preferences. It also does not specify the conditions resultants are outcomes of the decision making process.

I interviewed individuals from two offices considered to have an active role in the decision making process: the Ministry of Ecology and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The former one was skeptical about the chances of the negotiations process. The representative stated that the decision of the president was well explained, and the reasons to change their mind included the change in price and ecological concerns. According to the decree of the president of the Azerbaijan Republic on February 26, 2011, the special committee was established with the participation of Ministry of Health to explore the Qabala area, especially the area where the RLS is located, and to declare the results.

I was shown the report of the committee revealing the results of this year-long exploration of area; according to that report, the Qabala area was not considered dangerous for human health or the ecology. However, their representative from the radiology department of the Science Institute of Azerbaijan Republic argued that those indicators can be correct only when the station is functioning in the steel (neutral) region. If it is programmed to a different setting, it can irradiate the surrounding area to extremely dangerous levels. He has also mentioned concerns about the waste water produced at the final stage of cooling the station.

The Ministry of Foreign affairs was another main actor in this decision making. According to the representative of the ministry, the decision was partly related to the social and physical welfare of that region; however, the

main decision took by the government was based purely due to the lack of interest the nation had in the station. The representative also added that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and the position of Russia within the negotiation process led Azerbaijan to take this decision. He argues that the Russian government was very skeptical about the disagreement - they were quite sure that the Azerbaijani side would compromise in their prices and be more productive in the negotiation process. However, because that did not happen, Azerbaijan clearly demonstrated its position and in this way abandoned their concern for the pressure from Russian's government regarding their lease of the station.

The rational actor model and the disagreement on Qabala Radar Station between Russia and Azerbaijan.

The model is best suited to explain the disagreement between Russia and Azerbaijan due to the differences in ideological grounds for each party. Both parties seek to derive maximum utility/benefit from the lease agreement of the station. The search for optimal position by Russia and Azerbaijan resulted in selfish interests on both parties thus spurring a bitter disagreement. In the case of rationality, competition is one ultimate outcome which no party can avoid. It usually arises when the parties coincidentally identify a common opportunity and go for it. In the case of Russia and Azerbaijan, the Russian defense minister in 2012 hoped that the lease agreement would be extended on its expiry date. Russia was also setting up a new radar station in Armavir. The minister stated that the station would be put on full combat duty: this can be considered a selfish way of treating Azerbaijan, which is the current host of the stations. Russia would be very ungrateful to set up a new station

and put it under combat control just to hinder the Azerbaijanis from enjoying the services. The military cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan was an express selfish interest for Russia whose commercial interests to sell weapons to Baku.

Rationality never intends to serve morality but the goals of the actor.

Throughout 2008, Russia made extensive weapons transfers to Armenia; this was officially denied by the Russian foreign ministry until January 2009.

Russia intentions were to benefit from such trade without the involvement of the Azerbaijani. Upon that revelation, the lease agreement for the Qabala radar station was in peril, because it was the backbone of such trade. With these decisions, Azerbaijan opted to ruin the agreement because the nation was not a beneficiary of the trade conducted via the station. This constituted another instance of conflict amid rationality.

The lease agreement was one designed to benefit Russia only at the expense of the Azerbaijani. The rationality principle holds that each party seeks to derive the maximum benefits at the lowest costs and expect minimal consequences. Russia was using Azerbaijan as a stepping stone to reach greater profits in arms trading (bargaining with the United States over the deployment of a NATO missile defense system in Eastern Europe), something which agitated Azerbaijan to the point of disagreement with the Russians over the lease. The president of Azerbaijan has stated that the price up to this point could be considered as symbolic; considering the strategic importance of Gabala, the territory it occupies and the significance of this city for Azerbaijan's tourism industry, the price is simply not worth it. He further stressed that if the weapons trade made by Azerbaijan and Russia is

made based entirely on the market price and Azerbaijani side did not see any compromise on price, there would be no reason for Azerbaijan to follow through with the negotiations.

The disagreement was also fuelled by the unfair Russian expert's proposal to shift the costly maintenance of the Qabala radar station onto Azerbaijan. This attempt sought to minimize the costs on the part of Russia hence put the weak Azerbaijan at an extra cost which meant increased government spending but reduced benefits, since the station was serving mostly the Russian interests of arms trade. The Azerbaijanis resented the scheming ideology of Russia and this fuelled more to the disagreement. This was an outright case of a rational conflict as each party to the lease was trying to win a better situation for her nation. According to the proponents of the rational actor Model, if an actor is behaving rationally, his choices are designed to achieve outcomes consistent with his goals. This is the usual cause of disagreements whenever two parties in any form of business resolve to adopt this model. As stated earlier, the rationality aspect converts all parties into disguised competitors with a great potential for rivalry. The frequent visits and talks with foreign countries by the Russian government officials are a clear indication of the country's rational actor approach. Despite the consequences suffered by the other parties of the arms trade like Mexico, Iraq and Azerbaijan, Russia is seen to put endless efforts in a deliberate attempt to sell its products such as missiles and other lethal arms. It is this trade which has seen the endless civil wars in some countries such as Iraq.

It is worthy to note that all rational activities do not necessarily have to be

morally just, but they are all aimed at satisfying the goals of the actor who engages in them. Therefore, all actions by Russia in the Qabala radar station were fuelled by the rational choices made by the Russian government to sustain and protect her interests and part in arms trade. The disagreement over the lease was also fuelled by the way Azerbaijanis nationals were treated in Russia. They were arguably subjected to undue discrimination due to their Caucasian appearance yet the Russian nationals in Azerbaijan were held and treated with dignity. The agreement initially sought to be mutually beneficial but Russia took the bigger share of the cake. She deployed her own citizens to work in the station and considered very few Azerbaijanis for the lowest technician jobs which were paid least. The top lucrative jobs in the radar station were preserved for Russians despite the initial agreement. This was also a result of rationality on the part of Russia despite their ostensible selfishness.

The ecological side of the QRLS was one of the most significant reasons to lead Azerbaijan to re-think the lease issue. The station uses a great deal of energy in its operation; in the event of power shortages, it was constructed with a nuclear energy station to provide backup power. This obviously creates a source of tension regarding the negotiations of the station due to its destructive potential. Moreover, the heat it produces is chilled in 12 artesian wells, which afterwards are drained to the rivers of that area.

One more reason this theory more accurately explains the situation between Russia and Azerbaijan is the Nagorno Karabakh factor in the negotiations process. Although it was not mentioned by Azerbaijan directly, representatives had waited till the final day before the contract expired - a

maneuver or a gesture from Russian side - to offer to decrease the military assistance to Armenia. Russia's military existence in Armenia has been argued to be nothing but the outcome of its security concerns, making the Azerbaijani protests to these maneuvers simply unjustifiable (Halbaten, 1999).

According to the MP of the International and Interparliamentary Relations Committee, Rasim Agayev, it was very clear that a negotiation on extension of the lease agreement between the parties would lead to conversations dealing with the construction of the station as well. As the " Daryal" type radar-based technologies built in their early 70s are very old, there is a need for new radar dishes to replace the old ones. However, since these would be modular changes, new construction would be minimal. Moreover, Musabekov contributed the idea of the building of a new station, dubbed " Voronej 2," which would lead to the presence of the Russian government in Qabala up to the year 2019, which is mainly to Russia's benefit more than Azerbaijan. Russia was not willing to let go the station even after the end of the lease. In 2012, the Russian defense minister anticipated for an extension of the lease after its expiry. This was accompanied by the selfish and rational plan by Russia to construct another station in Armavir and shift the maintenance costs of the Qabala radar station to the Azerbaijanis. This would contribute to great benefits for the Russians but the Azerbaijanis would be on the losing end. This occasioned another instance of a conflict amid rational considerations by both parties. It further served to make the deal sour. In addition to that the expert of Atlas center Elxan Shahinoglu also argued that Azerbaijan government should think of all the consequences of the as

the prolonging the lease agreement and the permission to the new radar station will be in many aspects against Azerbaijan. Firstly it will be the property of Russia and Azerbaijan will have nothing to do with that. Secondly, it should be noted that the radar station can be used against Azerbaijan's strategic allies, especially against Turkey. There is a provision in the previous agreement, that the information obtained to be passed to the third entity should be priory seen by Azerbaijan . However Mr. Shahinoglu is skeptical on this information as he thinks that it cannot be proved and Azerbaijan should consider that Russia is strategic ally with Armenia. In conclusion, the disagreement between Azerbaijan and Russia over the Qabala radar station can best be analyzed using the rational actor model. The rationality of both parties played a central role to compromise the entire partnership, hence crippling the agreement. Russia was on the verge of serving her greed at the expense of the Azerbaijani who hosted the station. Azerbaijan eventually developed a sense of rationality and that spurred an element of competition, culminating in the beginning of problems in the agreement. The two parties to the agreement opted to use the rational actor model - a move which sparked competition between the two countries. This resulted a tag of war over the resources at the station, and Azerbaijan wanted to maximize the benefits. This issue conflicted with Russia's rational ideology, which resulted in the disagreement on the Qabala radar station.

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