

Question No. 5

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Graham Allison has devised different models for making choices in foreign policy decision. Compare and Contrast the rational actor model and bureaucratic politics models to illustrate foreign policy decisions. Which model better explains Pakistan's decision in 2015 to decline Saudi Arabia's call for armed support in the Yemen war?

Introduction

In 2015, Saudi Arabia and its allies mainly the UAE ^{intervened in} invaded the Country of Yemen on the pretext of providing assistance to the country's former ousted president's government. What followed were brutal airstrikes from the Saudi and Emirati sides.

In the midst of this intervention, Saudi Arabia called on its allies and friendly states to provide armed support in the war. It called on Pakistan to provide the same; however, Pakistan putting its strategic and national interest ahead politely declined. Pakistan's strategic calculus paid off and the war in Yemen widespread condemnation.

The foreign policy decisions that led to this situation according to Graham Allison in his book 'Essence of Decisions', were based on two models: rational actor and bureaucratic politics model. Pakistan's foreign policy opted for the rational actor as the result reflects the outcome of this model.

Both models advocate for nationality, but their methods varied and the results closely with the Rational Actor Model.

RATIONAL ACTORS MODEL (RAM) :- STRENGTHS AND DRAWBACKS

Graham Allison argues that in this model that states undergo the following process while following this model

Problem Recognition :-

→ The problems are identified by a central or unitary body of decision makers.

Goal Selection :-

→ All the available interests are taken into account and catered for.

Identification of Alternatives :-

→ Rationality requires that all possible alternatives are exhausted before proceeding ahead.

Choice :-

→ The best choice is then selected which has the highest chance of achieving the goal.

a) Strengths & Drawbacks

It has a unitary and centralized decision making process with complete emphasis on rationality. Goal of this is utility maximization and decisions are fairly consistent and predictable keeping in line with national/state interests. However, this is an idealized standard, where actors in reality focus on consequentialism and bounded rationality.

BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS MODEL (BPM)

STRENGTHS AND DRAWBACKS

Graham Allison describes model as a decentralized policy network. Different departments/organizations are handed out different responsibilities. Among these departments is a competitive game of politics. Bargaining and compromise are the key factors in lobbying and pitching their proposals for implementation as is the rule,

"where you stand depends on where you sit."

These departments and their policy makers through a constructivist lens possess group ^{characteristics} organizational mindset is reflected in the policy framework that is presented.

a) Strengths and Drawbacks

It is a decentralized decision making process with emphasis on rationality. However, individual departments try to forward their proposals and rather than being a value maximizing process it turns into a competitive game of politics. Bargaining and compromise are a process of decision-making and results are often incremental and predictable in nature. Reflecting the power dynamics between various actors.

How RAM BETTER EXPLAINS PAKISTAN'S 2015 DECISION

Rational actor model or (RAM) better explains the decisions that Pakistan took. The country took the following ^{process} into consideration when making a decision.

a) Strategic Calculus / Action Assessment of the regions

At the time, Pakistan was embroiled in its own internal war against terror. Particularly, Operation Zarb-e-Azb had been in full swing and troops on the ground were committed to fighting with the TTP. Moreover, potential backlash from the Iranians was also expected. Therefore, as to conserve manpower and not provoke sectarian conflict, this decision was taken.

b) Evaluation of all options: Limited Support or declining support

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia share warm and cordial relations. The latter has helped the country through various means financial, diplomatic etc. An option was also considered but of limited supported but that entailed the country getting dragged into a long war that Pakistan had no

business of getting into. A long and ^{detailed} cost- and benefit analysis was conducted for each option.

Optimal Choice & Declining Armed Support Request

The optimal choice, according to the rational actor model, was to decline the request. Pakistan's balancing act paid off when international criticism led to global perception of the Saudi being tarnished. Moreover, Pakistan's neutral stance in ^{the} Middle East led it mediate tensions between the Saudis and Iranis. Finally, it ^{prioritised} saved and maintained its national interest/resources during these considerations.

How BPM CONSIDERS THE 2015

DECISIONS

Bureaucratic Politics model or BPM considers that the outcome of the 2015 Decision was based on the compromises and bargaining of the relevant departments mainly Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military. However, on the contrary, this decision was a result of ^{strategic} deliberations at the highest strategic level, and of the country's leadership. If, in anyway, compromises or bargaining were seen some sort of support ^{or suggestion} would've been put forward. Therefore, it does not completely explain the decision.

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is not consistent

CONCLUSION:

Pakistan's strategic calculus paid off in a way that it put both its strategic interest at home and abroad ahead of the Saudi request. It asserted itself on the global arena and also kept its place as a neutral observer in the conflict. The Rational actor model is consistent with the calculus and calculation performed by the country at that time. While the bureaucratic politics model, does not completely explain this decision.