Strategy and Credible Commitment

A game theoretic analysis of the conflict in Afghanistan

Tatjana Stankovic

NUPI Report

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1. Introduction

Why has military force failed to quell the Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan? This question has been the topic of numerous public debates; it has been widely discussed in the media, in the foreign policy and military arenas, as well as in the academic community. While some argue that the use of force has largely been ineffective due to the under-resourced military campaign, others point out that "bullets and bombs alone"[1] are unlikely to compel the insurgents to comply with the peace process set out at the Bonn Conference in 2001, and emphasize the importance of civilian efforts, such as statebuilding[2], for a lasting and credible peace.

Eight years after the overthrow of the Taliban regime, life in Afghanistan is pervaded by the basic lack of security. Despite increasing military presence, the security situation has progressively deteriorated: the insurgency has intensified and spread. The number of security incidents[3] has increased from 508 in 2003 to 6,286 at the end of July 2009 (UN SC 2008/782). There has been an average of 898 security incidents a month in 2009, as compared to 677 in 2008 (UNA/64/364–S/2009/475), resulting in over 1000 civilian casualties, which is an increase of 24 percent (UN News Centre). As security has deteriorated both the Afghans and western public opinion have become increasingly sceptical that the international military coalition can defeat the Taliban (Cooper 2009; Rubin 2009a).

1.1. Research Question

Coercion, including the use of force, is said to be the most appropriate strategy in dealing with the Taliban-type peace spoilers (Stedman 1997: 12). For the use of force to be effective, international assistance may be crucial because it compensates for

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[1] The metaphor is taken from President Obama's speech on a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan on March 27, 2009.

[2] Statebuilding may be defined as "the creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones" (Fukuyama 2004).

[3] The United Nations Department of Safety and Security counts as security incidents armed clashes, abductions, improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks.

weak local capacities (Doyle and Sambanis 2006; Stedman 1997). However, in Afghanistan internationally led military operations have failed to reduce the insurgents' capacity to spoil the peace.

Is force an effective tool against the insurgency[4], and if so, under what conditions? This study aims to examine why international security actors, in particular the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), have failed to defeat the insurgency in Afghanistan. More specifically, the purpose of this thesis is to attempt to establish a set of conditions under which the threat or use of force might be effective against the insurgents who disrupt the peace in Afghanistan. Hence the research questions are as follows:

1) What are the conditions, if any, under which the threat of force might deter the Taliban from spoiling the peace?
2) What are the conditions, if any, under which the Taliban might yield to the use of force?

Peace here refers to the peace stipulated by the Bonn agreement of 2001. This peace agreement is considered " not conventional" since it excluded the defeated party – the Taliban, and had no provisions for integrating the Taliban or the populations associated with it (Suhrke, Harpviken and Strand 2004:3-4).

In order to examine the conditions under which the threat or use of force may be effective against the Taliban-led insurgency, I adapt the game-theoretic model developed by Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz (2005) to explain the conditions under which imposed sanctions work. Thus, the research project aims to meet two criteria King, Keohane and Verba (1994) stipulate for research in social science: (i) it attempts to understand an important problem in the real world; and (ii) it attempts to contribute to the scholarly literature by showing that theory "designed for some purpose in one

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[4] For the purpose of this thesis, the following definition of insurgency would suffice: insurgency is an organised, protracted political-military struggle aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government (FM 3-24: 1-1).

literature could be applied in another literature to solve an existing but apparently unrelated problem" (ibid: 17).

Before I proceed to explain how I approach the specified research questions I briefly survey the literature on the insurgency in Afghanistan to establish the "state of the art".

1.2. Literature Review

The literature on the present insurgency in Afghanistan includes academic articles, reports and policy recommendations.[5] I find most of this literature to reflect trends of the research on insurgency in general, and to confirm its main findings. Therefore I choose to structure this section as follows: first, I outline the main political science studies' findings on insurgency; and second, on the basis of it I review a body of literature which attempts to answer why it has been remarkably difficult to end the insurgency in Afghanistan.

Insurgency is more likely to occur if a set of favourable conditions is in place. These include poverty, political instability, rough terrain and large populations (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Poverty favours insurgency for several reasons. First, poverty facilitates insurgent recruitment because economic alternatives are grim (Collier 2000: 94; Fearon and Laitin 2003: 80). Second, poverty favours insurgency because effective counterinsurgency presupposes political, military and organisational resources which poor states lack. If insurgents oppose a relatively weak government and military, without the reach into rural areas, they will have more chances to survive. Rural areas in poor countries usually lack infrastructure and thus provide insurgents with a shelter to hide from the government, as does rough terrain and large population. The access to a sanctuary[6] is of crucial importance for insurgents because they are weak relative to a

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[5] Almost every international actor involved in Afghanistan produces regular reports (see for example NATO, UNAMA etc.). In addition, various think-tanks such as RAND Corporation, International Crisis Group etc. publish comprehensive reports. These reports usually conclude with policy recommendations.

[6] Sanctuary can be *physical* (e.g. highly inaccessible mountains, jungle, or swamp) or *political* (e.g. weakly defended border areas or border areas controlled by supportive states) (Arreguin-Toft 2001: 104).

government, both numerically and technologically (at least at the beginning of the operations) (Arreguin-Toft 2001: 104; Fearon and Laitin 2003:80). Equally important is the support of a population. It provides intelligence, logistical support and replacement (Fearon and Laitin 2003:80). Finally, to sustain a protracted warfare, insurgents must have dependable sources of finance and weapons, for example the support from foreign states, the illicit economy (opium, coca, diamonds) etc. (Fearon 2004: 284). Conflicts in which insurgents have access to an illicit economy, as well as so-called "peripheral insurgencies", where rural guerrilla bands operate near the state's borders, have, with a very few exceptions, been particularly difficult to end (ibid: 277).

All these conditions are in place in Afghanistan and their interaction make the insurgency particularly resilient and difficult to defeat. This is the conclusion of a considerable body of literature. In addition, factors peculiar to Afghanistan are emphasized, such as the extreme religious ideology that motivates the leadership (Jones 2008), Pashtun nationalism (Johnson and Mason 2008; Roberts 2009), and exclusion of the Taliban from power sharing by the Bonn Agreement, which gave the leadership few options – namely, surrender or defy (Jones 2006: 111; Suhrke 2008:220). Failure to counteract these conditions has strengthened the insurgency. In this respect, the failure to address the following issues has been particularly emphasized: (1) the weakness of the Afghan government (its inability to provide basic services to the population, including security, has undermined its legitimacy and increased the support for the insurgents, particularly in rural areas) (Hodes and Sedra 2007; Jones 2008:16; Rubin and Hamidzada 2007: 17); (2) the role of Pakistan (its support to the insurgent movement and the border areas sanctuary) (Roberts 2009: 33; Rubin 2007: 65; Suhrke 2008: 220); and (3) opium production, which, apart from financing the insurgency, has two important implications. First, drug-related corruption has undermined governance and increased insecurity (Goodhand 2008). Second, inadequate policies for curbing opium production – the eradication of poppy fields without offering viable alternatives to the rural population to earn a living – have increased the support for the insurgents who appeared as protectors of the population's basic livelihood (Felhab-Brown 2009).

In addition to the abovementioned factors, two sets of arguments have dominated the body of literature that attempts to explain why the insurgency has not been defeated (Suhrke 2008: 214). The first set is centred on the argument that the counterinsurgency campaign has been under-resourced. The second set encompasses arguments that stress the limitations of the military approach.[7]

According to the first perspective, the lack of counterinsurgent resources, first of all, low level of forces deployed to Afghanistan, explains the failure to defeat the insurgency. It is pointed out that a 'light footprint' was inadequate to deliver security (Rubin and Hamidzada 2007: 11); in addition, a 'light footprint' implied a series of counterproductive measures, such as a heavy air presence and related civilian casualties (Ayub and Kuovo 2008: 656; Roberts 2009: 40), and cooperation with local warlords against the Taliban and its associates (Jones 2008:26; Rubin 2007: 66). Along with low levels of troops, financial assistance has been among the lowest of any stability operation since the World War II (Jones 2006: 111). Consequently, poverty persists and facilitates recruitment in the context when the insurgent movement is able to pay its soldiers good money (Roberts 2009:31; Rubin 2007:66).

The second set of arguments emphasizes the limitations of the military approach[8], which cannot be overcome by more troops or modified tactics. On the contrary, a heavier military footprint reinforces these limitations, whereas aggressive military operations are even counterproductive (Suhrke 2007: 229). First, they escalate violence and drive the insurgency, because the insurgents successfully adapt (Rubin and Hamidzada 2007: 13; Suhrke 2007: 221). Second, they undermine stabilization efforts, such as promoting the authority of central government, reconstruction and development (Suhrke 2007: 230; Thier 2006: 468). The insurgency cannot be defeated by military operations only; peace and security are not possible without good

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[7] These two groups of arguments may overlap to a certain extent when the implications are discussed. However, I choose to distinguish between them for analytical purposes.

[8] I understand the term military approach, as used by Suhrke (2007: 229) to correspond to the enemy-centred strategy (the goal is to defeat/eliminate the enemy) I discuss in this thesis, see 3.4.2.

governance (Ponzio and Freeman 2007: 174). The failure to assist institution building, reconstruction and development contributes to the increasing pool of potential recruits who join the insurgent movement due to unmet expectations (Suhrke 2007: 232). Finally, related to this group are arguments that stress the limitations of the military approach and the importance of political negotiations with the insurgents (Rubin 2009). [9]

In this thesis I build on both sets of arguments and examine its relevance for the failure of international actors to maintain security by scrutinizing the impact of *the enemy-centred strategy*, which I juxtapose with *the population-centred strategy*. My objective is to capture the most relevant factors that account for the failure to defeat the insurgency in Afghanistan within a single framework. I find that this is feasible by means of game theory, which I explain in the section that follows. Since game theory, to my knowledge, has not been used to explain the conflict in Afghanistan, this approach represents something entirely new in the literature on Afghanistan.

1.3. Research Design

In this section I explain how I approach the research question specified in section 1.1. First, I present the method. Second, I discuss the data I use.

1.3.1. Method

The objective of this thesis is to clarify the conditions under which the threat or use of force applied by international security actors, ISAF in particular, against the Taliban are likely to be effective. To generate explanations and predictions concerning this issue, I model the interaction between ISAF and the Taliban and analyze it using game theory. In this section I briefly define game theory, outline its main underlying theoretical assumptions, and discuss the implications of these assumptions for my model.

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[9] The set of arguments on political negotiations with the Taliban will not be examined further.

Game theory can be defined as a theory of interaction among rational actors (Hovi 2008:11). This definition explicitly states the fundamental assumption of game theory, that of actors making *rational choice* in the context of *strategic interaction*. This means that rational[10] actors are assumed to: 1) act consistently with their preferences and beliefs, where preferences are assumed to be transitive[11] and beliefs non-contradictory (Elster 1986: 1); 2) choose the best possible among available means in order to achieve goals they have in a given situation (ibid.); 3) act so as to maximize their own interests taking into account the strategic environment, that is, the range of possible choices other actors have, acknowledging that the outcome for all is determined by the actions of all (Hovi 2008: 19). Another typical assumption of game theory is that actors have *common knowledge* about the rationality of other actors and the rules of the game (Gates and Humes 1997:9). "Information is common knowledge if it is known to all the players, if each player knows that all the other players know it, if each player knows that all the other players know that all the players know it, and so forth ad infinitum" (Rasmusen 2007:49). The last assumption I list here is the assumption of a *unitary actor*, on which game theory relies when applied to international relations.

To model an interaction (a game) it is necessary to specify the following elements: (1) a set of players that interact; (2) a set of available strategies/actions for each player; (3) the information players have when making a choice; (4) the potential outcomes which follow from different combinations of actions players have chosen; and (5) the preferences each player has over outcomes (Hovi 2008: 27). This is the first step in formal modelling; the second step is to examine how rational players' strategies interact to produce possible solutions for the game (Gates and Humes 1997: 12). These solutions are referred to as equilibria; in this thesis I operate with two types of equilibria: subgame perfect equilibrium and Bayesian perfect equilibrium.

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[10] For the purpose of this thesis, I consider Elster's 'thin theory' of rationality sufficient. For an introductory overview on the concept of rationality, see for example Chapter 2 in Hovi (2008).

[11] If it is assumed that A > B and B > C, then it follows that A > C.

In this thesis I construct one model. The model is dynamic, since it includes the situations in which one actor can observe the other actor's move before it makes a decision. The model is a noncooperative game.[12] In order to generate predictions about the conditions under which the threat and use of force may work, I analyze the model under different assumptions regarding the information the players have. First, I analyze the model under the assumption of complete information, that is, I assume that the players' strategy sets and payoffs are common knowledge. Second, I assume that the Taliban lacks the information about ISAF's payoffs and I model this uncertainty by introducing Nature[13] in the model. Thus, I analyze the model under the assumption of incomplete information (i.e. one sided asymmetric information).

Is game theory the appropriate method to analyze conflict situations, such as the one in Afghanistan? Kydd (2004: 346-348) argues that game theory is particularly meaningful when applied to security studies, first of all, because stakes are high for the actors involved, therefore the actors carefully consider their strategies and have strong preferences over outcomes. In addition, game-theoretic models focus on key elements in order to arrive at the underlying essence of a strategic problem (ibid: 344). On the other hand, models are built on simplified assumptions, such as the assumption of a unitary actor. When modelling the strategic interaction between actors in Afghanistan, I assume that pro-government forces and the insurgents, whom I refer to as ISAF and the Taliban respectively, are unitary actors. This is a radical simplification. ISAF alone consists of 42 nations and has no unified rules of engagement. In addition, I do not consider the efforts of other actors, such as the US-led coalition in Operation Enduring Freedom and the government security forces, separately, but within ISAF efforts (see 3.3.). The same applies to the insurgents, whom I label the Taliban, although the insurgent movement incorporates other elements and the Taliban movement itself is rather complex (see 3.2.). Nevertheless, I reduce the actors to two players on the basis

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[12] Noncooperative game theory, in contrast to cooperative game theory, assumes that actors cannot make binding commitments (Rasmusen 2007: 21).

[13] "Nature is a pseudo-player who takes random actions at specified points in the game with specified probabilities" (Rasmusen 2007: 13).

of their common preferences, because I expect this simplification to generate some important findings. As long as the assumptions are explicit, the oversimplification should not be a problem, because "the greatest virtue of a good model is to make its own limitations apparent" (Snidal 2004: 228). Finally, the reader should bear in mind that the purpose of the model is *not* to be a comprehensive representation of the conflict, but to identify the most important elements of the conflict, to define them, and to specify the relationships among them, in order to derive logical inferences on the conditions under which the threat and use of force may work (Snidal 2004: 232).

1.3.2.   Data

In addition to theoretical assumptions I discuss in 1.3.1, the formal model in this thesis is built on empirical assumptions as well. I derive empirical assumptions from three sources of data: secondary literature, public documents and interviews.

I mostly rely on secondary sources: scholarly literature – books and articles, various reports released by ISAF, national defence departments, international organisations, as well as the media and the Internet. The reason is that the ongoing conflict entails restricted access to primary sources, such as official strategy documents and military plans. However, some are publicly available (for example, US Army Field Manual on counterinsurgency FM 3-24, ISAF Tactical Directives, ISAF Commander's revised strategy[14]). In addition, I conducted nine interviews[15] to complement data material. The idea was to collect "as much data in as many diverse contexts as possible" (King, Keohane and Verba 1994: 24).

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[14] The ISAF Commander revised strategy – also known as General McChrystal's assessment was leaked to the Washington Post in September 2009.

[15] Out of nine interviews, three were with Norwegian military officers who served in Afghanistan; two with Foreign Ministry representatives of Norway and the Netherlands with extensive experience from Afghanistan; two with experts (one researcher and one intelligence officer from Denmark and Norway respectively) and two with Afghan students who came to Norway as refugees. All of the interviews were semi-structured, in the sense that they were organised around broad topics with corresponding questions.

My research project is about an actual and ongoing conflict; therefore it is hard to exclude a potential negative impact the conflict may have on sources. For example, collected evidence may be inaccurate due to the unstable security situation, data may be intentionally distorted for political and military reasons, etc. Sometimes it is difficult to establish whether evidence is genuine, authentic (Bryman 2004: 380). The latter especially concerns the literature on the Taliban. However, using peer-reviewed journals, well-reputed newspapers and publishers, and cross-checking findings helps increase the credibility of the data material.

Data collected through qualitative interviews may also be subject to intentional or unintentional distortions (for example, post hoc rationalisation mechanism) (Andersen 2006:293). In addition, the validity of data is affected by a sampling method. In selecting respondents, I applied not a method of choice, but of necessity: that is, I resorted to convenience and snowball sampling[16] to select informants. Consequently the sample is unrepresentative and unbalanced in the sense that it does not include all parties to the conflict. On the other hand, all the interviewees were knowledgeable about the research problem and qualified as key informants (Andersen 2006: 278). Nevertheless, I relied on the strategy of triangulation[17] when drawing on the data collected through interviews.

1.4. Organization of the Thesis

The remaining parts of this thesis are organised as follows.

Chapter 2 offers a brief account of the history of conflict in Afghanistan. I concentrate on the three most recent foreign interventions, and discuss the context that led to the

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[16] I applied convenience sampling to select Afghan citizens for interview and snowball sampling for the rest. Convenience sampling implies that interviewees were chosen simply by virtue of their accessibility; snowball sampling implies that I first made a contact with knowledgeable persons who recommended the interviewees and helped me establish contacts (Bryman 2004: 334; ibid: 100).

[17] Triangulation refers here to the use of multiple data sources, as well as to the process of cross-checking findings (Bryman 2004: 275).

rise of the Taliban. I conclude the chapter by briefly presenting the history of the ongoing insurgency.

Chapter 3 introduces the main actors in the conflict, their goals and strategies. In addition, I present the theoretical framework around which the discussion on the use of force is organised (the rationale for using force, challenges, and effectiveness).

Chapter 4 and 5 examine effectiveness of the use of force in fighting the insurgency in Afghanistan. In Chapter 4 I present a formal model and discuss its assumptions. Then, I analyze the game assuming that the belligerents have complete information about all relevant aspects of the conflict. In chapter 5, I analyze the model under a different set of assumptions: the insurgents are now assumed to lack information about the type of military actor they are interacting with.

Chapter 6 presents the main findings and concludes the thesis.

2. Background

Afghanistan is a land-locked, mountainous country in south-central Asia[18], bordered by the former Soviet republics of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the north, Iran in the west, China in the northeast, and Pakistan in the south and east. Its population is estimated to 28.4 million, and composed of approximately twenty ethnic groups (The World Factbook). The largest ethnic group are Pashtuns (42% of the population), followed by Tajiks (27%), Uzbeks (9%), Hazaras (9%), etc. Up till 1990s, the Pashtuns had been the traditional rulers of Afghanistan. Afghans are Muslims: 80 % of the population are Sunni, while 10-20% are Shiites. Islam is not only the national religion, but also the basis of Afghan values and culture, and provides some sense of unity, albeit weak. The national unity was strong only under the threat posed by an external enemy (Ewans 2001: 6). The state has never managed to establish control in the countryside, where nine-tenths of the population live with little outside interference (ibid: 8).

If there is one overriding feature of Afghan history, it is a history of conflict. Due to its geographical position, Afghanistan has had a turbulent history, being subject to invasions and often a pawn in great power games. The objective of this chapter is to give a historical overview. The first part examines how the interactions between great powers have influenced Afghanistan and provides an account of the indigenous resistance to foreign occupation. The second part provides a background for the contemporary conflict.

2.1. The Indigenous Resistance to Foreign Occupation

The history of invasion of the area that came to be known as Afghanistan is documented in the recorded history from the sixth century BC (Ewans 2001: 10).

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[18] Some authors refer to Afghanistan as Central, and some as Southern Asian country. According to Ewans (2001:2), Afghanistan is in south central Asia, since the Afghan mountain range the Hindu Kush is a part of the mountainous divide that separates Southern from Central Asia.

However, the focus of this section is on more recent history, namely the Anglo-Afghan Wars and the Soviet occupation of 1978, whose legacy is important for the understanding of the present conflict. This overview is structured so as to illustrate the similar pattern of great powers' invasions that were met with fierce resistance from the Afghan population.

2.1.1. Great Britain and Afghanistan

> " *I have been struck with the magnitude of your resources, your ships, your arsenals, but what I cannot understand is why the rulers of so vast and flourishing an empire should have gone […] to deprive me of my poor and barren country*" Dost Mohammed during the First Anglo-Afghan War (Ewans 2001: 50).

Situated between British India and Russia, the nineteenth-century Afghanistan, as a buffer state, was caught up in power politics at cost of three Anglo-Afghan wars. The British considered the position of Afghanistan "the most important in Asia for the protection of British India" and were determined to "counteract the progress of Russian influence" in that country, if necessary by "interfering decidedly in [its] affairs […]", as stated in 1836, in the instructions for the then Governor-General of India, Earl of Auckland (Ewans 2001: 37).

The First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) was the outcome of a direct British interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan when the British, by invasion, dethroned the then ruler Dost Mohammed and installed the more cooperative Shah Shuja. The British justified the invasion claiming that Dost Mohammed was "injurious to the security and peace of the frontiers of India", while Shah Shuja enjoyed popular support (Ewans 2001: 43-44). The British troops would be withdrawn "once the shah is secured in power, and the independence and integrity of Afghanistan established" (ibid: 44). Critics of the invasion warned that considerable resources would be required to hold the Shah in power.

The survival of the Shah on the throne depended utterly on the British Army; at the same time, the very presence of the troops that installed him undermined the legitimacy of his rule. The Afghans regarded the Shah as the British puppet and resented the presence of foreign troops. The discontent started in Kabul in 1840, was followed by the uprising in Kandahar and Helmand, and turned into a countrywide rebellion when the British reduced tribe subventions in 1841 (Ewans 2001: 48). The remaining British troops were unable to defend themselves and the First Anglo-Afghan War ended in British defeat.

The defeat cost the British 17-20 million pounds; the Army lost 15-20,000 soldiers (ibid: 52). In revenge, the British demolished the Kabul Bazaar and committed a massacre in the village Istalif (1842) – they killed all adult males, raped and killed many of the women, looted and destroyed property (ibid: 51). The Afghans – the only Mohammedans of the time devoid of antipathy toward the Christians – started to mistrust foreigners and despise them as infidels and immoral. Xenophobia, it is claimed, "became ingrained in the national outlook" (ibid: 52).

In 1842 the British withdrew from Afghanistan, stating: " the king we have set up has not, as we were erroneously led to imagine, the support of the nation over which he has been placed" (Ewans 2001: 51). Their ensuing policy of non-interference was challenged by two issues: the concern with the Russian expansion and hostility of the Pashtun tribes. The British attempted to subdue them militarily, playing one tribe against another and preventing the regime in Kabul from controlling them. Such policies reinforced Afghan distrust of the British and complicated their relationship up to 1947 when the British left India (ibid: 55).

The Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1890) was, as much as the first one, a British attempt to deter what was perceived 'Russian expansionism into a British sphere of influence'. The pretext for the war was the Afghan denial of the British request to establish a resident envoy in Kabul, on a par with the Russian. The then ruler of Afghanistan Sher Ali refused on the grounds that the British presence would create

"the fear firmly fixed in [the Afghan] minds […] that if Englishmen, or other Europeans, once set foot in their country, it will sooner or later pass out of their hands" (Ewans 2001: 60). The government in London felt that the national prestige was at stake and decided to go for war.

After a rapid military success, the British considered "after conquest" alternatives: a permanent occupation was "financially crippling", dividing Afghanistan into principalities undesirable because it might lead to the instability of the region. The most appealing alternative was to restore friendly relations and the British negotiated the Treaty of Gandamak (1879) with Sher Ali's heir, Yakub Khan, which permitted them to set up a permanent mission in Kabul and conduct Afghan foreign policy in return for a subsidy for the Amir (Ewans 2001: 63). The Treaty, however, was of no value. Yakub Khan's authority was limited, as the British learned when their residence in Kabul was attacked. The attack triggered the British reign of terror, while the Amir abdicated and escaped to India (ibid: 63-65). The Afghans, by then xenophobic and belligerent, responded with an immediate rebellion. Mir Din Muhammad, a mullah of great reputation, called for jihad, which resulted in a series of uprisings, but ended in Afghan defeat (ibid.). However, despite their victory, the British could not afford the cost of the occupation and left the country in 1880 (ibid: 68).

The Anglo-Afghan relations in the period between the Second and the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1880-1919) were based on mutual compromise and largely satisfactory. The Afghan ruler Abdul Rahman preferred the British to Russians and accepted Britain as its representative in foreign affairs. In return, Britain refrained from interfering in Afghan internal affairs. During this period, Britain delineated the borders of Afghanistan with Iran, Russia and British India. This demarcation has been considered detrimental to Afghanistan, particularly the border with British India, the so-called Durand Line[19], which did not take into account ethnographical and topographical factors and divided Pashtun tribes and villages (Misdaq 2006: 60).

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[19] In 1893, Sir Henry Mortimer Durrand, the British foreign secretary of India, signed an agreement with the Afghan ruler, Amir Abdul Rahman Khan, separating Afghanistan from what was then British India. The Durrand

The Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919) was provoked by King Amanullah's decree in which he proclaimed the independence of Afghanistan, and called for jihad against the British having sent the army to the frontier (Ewans 2001: 87) The British, concerned that this might provoke the uprising of the tribes, set for the war. After a month of hostilities, a peace treaty "heavily weighted in the British favour" was negotiated (ibid: 90). The British recognised Afghan independence, having compelled the Afghans to accept the Durand Line.

The Durand Line was to cause substantial problems in the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1950s-1960s. The Soviet Union used the conflict to its advantage to establish and strengthen its influence in Afghanistan (Ewans 2001: 108).

2.1.2.   The Soviet Union and Afghanistan

Due to its location, Afghanistan continued to have strategic importance in the post-WW2 period. After Stalin's death, the Soviet Union set out to establish good relations with the Third World countries in order to counteract Western influence. Afghanistan was the first country they approached and, as Khrushchev stated, they were prepared to go to great lengths to ensure that their influence in Afghanistan was predominant (Ewans 2001: 134).

The close Afghan-Soviet relations, especially during the premiership of Mohammed Daoud (1953-1963), seem to have developed out of need and not entirely in accordance with Afghan preferences. Namely, Afghanistan failed to approach the United States because the Americans considered the country strategically unimportant, and a potential threat to a close American ally – Pakistan. Consequently, the United States refused to supply Afghanistan with arms, and pushed them to the Soviets who provided loans for arms supplies, military training, and infrastructure. In addition, the Soviet Union supported Afghanistan over the issue of Pashtunistan (Ewans 2001:

Line, as it became known, divided the Pashtun tribes in order to weaken them, making it easier for the British to pacify the region (Jones 2009: 99).

112). During Daoud's premiership Afghanistan became militarily and economically dependent on the USSR.

The liberalisation of the Afghan society in the 1960s laid the foundations for the establishment of the communist party PDPA, which opened new possibilities in the Soviet-Afghan relationship. Under the pretext of supporting the communist party, the Soviets interfered in the Afghan internal affairs by supporting military coups, against the King Zahir in 1973, and against Mohammed Daoud in 1978, after which the Communists came to power (Dorronsoro 2005: 85). The popular resistance to the brutal communist regime induced the Soviet invasion in 1979, and the occupation (1979-1989).

The purpose of the invasion was the removal of Prime Minister Amin, who was regarded as the source of instability (Dorronsoro 2005: 91). Once the situation was stabilized, the troops would be withdrawn (Rubin 1995: 123). The Soviets justified the invasion as the response to "a genuine request from a duly constituted Afghan authority" (Ewans 2001: 147). Others argued that the invasion was ideologically motivated (ibid: 142). The USSR could not allow the fall of a communist regime because it would have damaged its prestige, raised doubts about its ability to support communist regimes and led to American predominance in the region. The fact that a counter-revolution was taking place along the Soviet southern border further enhanced the concerns. However, the position of Afghanistan – "within striking distance from the Persian Gulf oil fields and warm water ports" – has led many to regard the occupation as a sign of Russian expansionism (Misdaq 2005: 155).

The installation of a new regime by foreign troops provoked an immediate popular revolt, which turned into a nation-wide uprising. As the occupation progressed, Afghan groups, which opposed the regime from Pakistan, reorganised and, with extensive aid from the United States, Pakistan and the Arab World, played a central role in the resistance against the Soviets. They came to be known as the mujahidin, "holy warriors", having declared jihad against the "infidels" and the Kabul regime.

There were seven such groups in 1980 operating in Peshawar, four of them 'Islamist' and three 'traditionalists'.[20]

Faced with a growing insurgency, the Soviets applied a military strategy according to which the Red Army was to control the key sites and major cities, while the Afghan Army was supposed to tackle the insurgency in the countryside. For that reason, it was essential for the Soviets to strengthen the Afghan Army so that it could control the country on its own (Dorronsoro 2005: 188). The flaws of the strategy became soon apparent. The Afghan Army was largely ineffective and subject to mass desertions, while the Red Army, trained for conventional warfare, was ill suited for a guerrilla war in the difficult mountainous terrain of Afghanistan. The Soviets were unable to control the country, but for the major cities and main lines of communication, and these were frequently attacked as well (ibid: 189).

The Soviet counterinsurgency strategy was not based on so-called 'hearts and minds' approach, but on indiscriminate use of force. The overwhelmingly superior Soviet military machine depopulated the countryside in the search for insurgents, by carpet-bombing villages and 'scorched earth' policy (Ewans 2001: 159). The result was one million civilian deaths, over five million refugees, and two to three million internally displaced persons (Rubin 2002:1).

Although the Soviet military was preponderant – between 90,000 and 150,000 fought in Afghanistan – it could not defeat the mujahidin[21] or control the frontier toward Pakistan, the mujahidin main arms supply route, and ended up in a continuous stalemate. The question is why the Soviets did not deploy more troops. Several arguments have been put forward (Ewans 2001: 160). First, it seems that they realized that even massive troops reinforcements would be unlikely to achieve a decisive victory. Second, the maintenance and supply of a higher force level in such a difficult

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[20] The *Islamists* were fighting for the Islamic republic, the *traditionalists* for the return of the monarchy.

[21] The number of the mujahidin was estimated to 100,000; however, they were never concurrently engaged in resistance.

terrain was demanding and costly. Third, it is doubtful that the Soviets could sustain an even higher cost of the occupation.[22] Fourth, domestic public opinion was turning increasingly against the war, as it became known that the number of Soviet casualties was high, and that the Soviet Army was perceived as an occupier instead of a helping hand to fellow communists.

The new Soviet leadership with Gorbachev, the Party Secretary from 1985, was not willing to accept the prolonged stalemate, and set a deadline. The military was given one year to demonstrate that their strategy worked. After the 'bloodiest year of the war' and no progress, the Politburo authorised withdrawal of the Soviet troops in November 1986 (Rubin 1995: 146). The withdrawal started in May 1988, and ended in February 1989. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union continued to provide support necessary to sustain the Kabul regime at the estimated cost of $3-4 billion per year, until its disintegration in 1991 (ibid: 147). With the demise of the Soviet Union, the chances of the regime to survive diminished and it collapsed in 1992 giving way to the mujahidin rule.

2.1.3.   The United States and Afghanistan

The development of the US-Afghan relations was initially shaped by the Cold War superpower confrontation. The United States started to provide economic aid to Afghanistan in the 1950s to counterbalance the influence the Soviets had exerted through extensive military and economic assistance (Rubin 1995: 65). With the Soviet invasion, American assistance was directed at the mujahidin groups through which the United States fought a proxy war against the Soviet Union. In the early years of the war, American aid was discreet – so as to "keep the Russian wound bleeding, rather than be a part in the mujahidin victory" (Ewans 2001:164). From 1985, according to the President Reagan's directive, the US Administration was to use "all available means to compel the Soviet withdrawal" (ibid: 165). Supplying the mujahidin with

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[22] The cost of the occupation was estimated to approximately between $7 and $12 billion a year (Ewans 2001: 161).

arms and aid, the United States, together with other Western states and Saudi Arabia, contributed to the Soviet defeat. However, with the end of the Soviet threat, American interest in Afghanistan diminished, whereas the mujahidin, with the Gulf War and the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia, turned against the United States and started advocating indiscriminate attacks against Americans in the name of global jihad (Dorronsoro 2005: 302-305).[23] The alliance forged in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation ended and the religious rhetoric was soon to be followed by terrorist attacks, planned and organised in Afghanistan, which, during the 1990s became 'a safe haven for terrorists'.

2.2. The Rise of the Taliban

The seven main mujahidin groups[24] which were central in the resistance to the Soviet occupation in the 1980s never turned into a unified movement due to internal divisions and external influences. With the withdrawal of the common enemy, personal rivalries, ethnic, tribal and religious cleavages proved even more divisive. Instead of forming a viable alternative to the communist regime that collapsed in 1992 with the

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[23] The main grievances, in addition to the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia, were the occupation of Palestine and sanctions against Iraq, as listed in Bin Laden's fatwa of 23 February 1998. More broadly, 'anti-Americanism' can be understood as the opposition to American financial, military and cultural domination (Dorronsoro 2005: 305).

[24] These were: (1) The *Hezb-i-Islami*, predominantly Pashtun Islamist group under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was considered the most radical and uncompromising of all the mujahidin groups. It was a favourite of CIA and Pakistani civilian and military establishments. (2) The second *Hezb-i-Islami,* under the leadership of Abdul Haq, was a breakaway from Hekmatyar and supported by Pakistan and CIA. (3) The *Jamiat-i-Islami,* primarily Tajik and non-Pashtun movement, was under the leadership of Rabbani, with Ahmad Shah Massoud as its famous commander. The group, which was regarded as a moderate Islamist group, was supported by Iran. (4) The *Ittihad-i-Islami Bara-I Azadi Afghanistan,* under the leadership of Abdal-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf, was supported by Saudi Arabia and recruited Arab volunteers. (5) The *Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami*, headed by Maulvi Nabi Mohammedi, was a Pashtun traditionalist group active in Helmand province. The group was regarded as ineffective, corrupted and engaged in drugs trade. (6) The *Mahaz-i-Melli-i-Islami*, led by Sayyid Ahmad Gailani, recruited mostly among the Turkmen. It advocated the return of King Zahir, was pro-Western oriented and hostile to the Islamists. As a result, it was opposed by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. (7) The *Jabha-i-Nejat-Melli*, led by Mujadiddi, was supported by pre-war elite and opposed by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The group was largely ineffective as guerrilla force. In addition to the abovementioned Sunni Afghan mujahidin parties, there was a number of Hazara Shia parties, supported by Iran (Ewans 2001: 154-155)

end of the Soviet support, the mujahidin turned against each other. Their struggle for power brought the country into civil war.

The popular disillusionment with the mujahidin was a spark that led to the rise of the Taliban, a radical religious movement that rapidly mobilized widespread support across the country (Sullivan 2007: 94). The Taliban themselves, when accounting for their origins, emphasize the violent mujahidin rule.[25] In contrast, observers, while not downplaying the disappointment with the once-idealized mujahidin, claim that the rise of the Taliban was less spontaneous, and point out that Pakistan played a key role in its rise to power (Rubin 2002:xii). Pakistan supported the Taliban in belief that a Pashtun dominated Afghan government would be beneficial for its economy and relationship with India (Sullivan 2007: 104). While these factors are important, they are not sufficient to explain the Taliban success. Undoubtedly, the background factors – state failure, poor socio-economic conditions, ethnic divisions, a large number of disaffected young males, and the fundamentalist teachings in religious schools (*madrasas)* – provided favourable conditions for the emergence of a fundamentalist Islamist movement (Sullivan 2007: 94). In addition, the religious ideology, which is a base of the Taliban authority, proved crucial for rapid mobilisation (ibid: 105).

Appearing as an alternative to disorder, the Taliban first gained control in the south, the Pashtun homeland. Five years later in 1999, the Taliban controlled virtually the whole territory, with the exception of less than ten percent in the north.[26] Its official goal was to unify all Afghans under an Islamic government, and to "emulate an ideal Muslim society" (Dorronsoro 2005: 267). For that purpose, the Taliban imposed a strict interpretation of the Islamic law and custom[27] and established a religious police as a mechanism of social control (ibid.). Concurrently, the Taliban rejected political parties and the idea of 'free and fair' elections as the foundation of political

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[25] See, for example, Ahmad Rashid's interviews with the Taliban leaders (Rashid 2001:22-23).

[26] This part of the country was under the control of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the leader of the Northern Alliance.

[27] The following will serve as an illustration: banning television, games and music; amputating hands and feet to criminals; banning female employment and education; limiting female freedom of movement and enforcing burqa on women.

legitimacy, arguing, like other Islamic and fundamentalist movements, that the numerical majority cannot alter the Law of God (ibid: 278). The *shariat*[28], interpreted by *ulema*[29], is perceived as the only legitimate source of law.

The Taliban core members were poor Pashtuns from rural areas in southern Afghanistan, educated in *madrasas* in Pakistan in the 1980s. The religious education is considered to be their key experience, and a source of strength and unity of the movement, together with the same social origin of its members (Dorronsoro 2005: 275). Rural Pashtuns have supported the Taliban as a guarantor of their security, while non-Pashtuns, Shiites and urban population have opposed it from the beginning (ibid: 278). Internationally, only Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates recognised the regime, which was notorious for its record of human rights abuses.

The Taliban became the best-known radical religious group in the world in the aftermath of 9/11. The regime had sheltered Osama Bin Laden and al Qaeda, responsible for the terrorist attacks on the United States. Bin Laden's links to Afghanistan can be traced back to the 1980s when he, together with many so-called Afghan Arabs, came to wage jihad against the Soviets with an active support of the United States. Then established training camps and networks with Islamic movements were used a decade later by bin Laden to launch his global jihad – this time against the United States (Dorronsoro 2005: 302).

Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States issued an ultimatum demanding that the Taliban extradited Osama Bin Laden; otherwise the country would be subject to US attacks. The Taliban discarded the extradition, and the United States responded with *Operation Enduring Freedom*, the combat operations against the Taliban and al Qaeda with the objective to destroy terrorist networks. After six weeks, the Taliban regime collapsed and a peace settlement was negotiated under the auspices of the UN.

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[28] The code of law, based on the Koran.

[29] Islamic scholars.

The Afghan peace accords – the Bonn Agreement of 2001 – was a settlement between various groups that opposed the Taliban regime – the members of the so-called Northern Alliance, which emerged as the victors over the Taliban due to the superior US military support (Suhrke, Harpviken and Strand 2004:3). The responsibility for the enforcement of the settlement resided with the Afghans themselves (Bonn Agreement: Annex 1). However, recognizing the lack of capacity of the Afghan Interim Authority,[30] the participants at the Bonn conference requested the UN Security Council to authorize "the early deployment to Afghanistan of a United Nations mandated force"(ibid.). Since as early as 2001, an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been deployed to Afghanistan to assist the Interim Authority, later on the Government, in exercising and expanding its authority throughout the country, in order to create the conditions for development and good governance. In 2003, NATO took command over ISAF[31] (ISAF).

However, the implementation of the Bonn peace agreement, i.e. physical and political reconstruction of the country has been challenged by the resurgence of the insurgency. The Taliban managed to regroup itself and has posed a serious threat to the peace efforts. Since 2003 the security situation has progressively deteriorated, the conflict has intensified and spread. Since 2005 ISAF has been confronted with the resilient insurgency.

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[30]The Interim Authority is a provisional arrangement, established by the Bonn Agreement, pending the reestablishment of permanent government institutions. The purpose of the Interim Authority was to be the repository of Afghan sovereignty.

[31] Prior to NATO's leadership, the command over ISAF was rotated every six month among contributing nations.

3. Spoiler Management: Coercion

The objective of this chapter is to introduce the main actors in the conflict, their goals and strategies, with special emphasis on the strategies international security actors have applied to manage threats to peace and security in Afghanistan. The discussion demonstrates that the international actors have opted for a strategy of coercion because coercion is expected to have the greatest leverage against the Taliban and its associates. Yet, coercion has failed to induce them to comply with the peace agreement. The reasons for noncompliance will be examined in the subsequent chapters.

This chapter is divided in three sections. The first section outlines the theoretical framework that underpins this and subsequent chapters. The second section presents the main actors in the conflict, and the goals they have attempted to achieve. The third section presents the strategies international actors have applied to provide security. Finally, come concluding remarks are put forward.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

The greatest risk to peace comes from spoilers – actors who are dissatisfied with the terms of a peace agreement and act so as to prevent those terms from being implemented.[32] Therefore, the success of a peace process depends on effective spoiler management. In that regard much depends on custodians – international actors mandated to oversee the implementation of a peace agreement – and their ability to devise and implement successful spoiler management strategies. These are the main arguments Stedman (1997) puts forward in his seminal article on spoiler problems in peace processes.[33] In the remaining part of this section I first outline Stedman's theory on successful spoiler management, focusing particularly on coercion. Second, I present

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[32] Please note that a spoiler may also try to prevent a peace agreement from being reached in the first place. While the definition I propose overlooks this, it suffices the purpose in this thesis.

[33] The theoretical framework on spoiler management is based on Stedman (1997), with the exception of the definition of spoiler.

the threat theory (Hovi 1998), around which the discussion on the effectiveness of coercive strategies is organised. Third, I discuss the challenges international actors may face in spoiler management by presenting the theory of asymmetric conflict (Arreguin-Toft 2001).

3.1.1.　　Spoiler Management

A successful spoiler management strategy is devised to match a corresponding type of spoiler. Spoiler management thus requires (1) a correct identification of a spoiler type; (2) devising an appropriate (matching) strategy; and (3) its implementation. To identify a spoiler type, the following issues should be examined:

(i)　　Is a spoiler a party to a peace settlement, or excluded from it? Depending on its position vis-à-vis a peace agreement, a spoiler can be *inside* or *outside* spoiler.

(ii)　　What goals do spoilers pursue? To what degree are spoilers committed to the achievement of their goals? Depending on the nature of their goals and commitment, spoilers can be *limited*, *total*, or *greedy*. Limited spoilers pursue limited goals, such as, for example, a share of power. Total spoilers pursue total power and have immutable preferences. Greedy spoilers' goals expand or contract depending on the calculation of cost and risk.

(iii)　　Does the impetus for spoiler behaviour come from the leadership or from the followers? If, for example, the leadership incites spoiler behaviour, the change in leadership may lead to a change in spoiler behaviour.

(iv)　　How many spoilers threaten the peace process? The number of spoilers may affect the implementation of spoiler management strategies, because a strategy devised to neutralise one spoiler may strengthen another (Stedman 1997: 8-11).

Spoiler management strategies are devised on the basis of the spoiler type. Here are outlined three general conceptual types of spoiler management strategies, with a special emphasis on coercion (ibid: 12). The strategies may be employed independently or jointly, simultaneously or in a sequence. These are:

(i) *Inducement*, i.e. giving the spoiler what it wants. The most effective strategy in dealing with limited spoilers.

(ii) *Socialization*, i.e. changing the behaviour of the spoiler so as to adhere to a set of established norms. The most effective strategy in dealing with greedy spoilers.

(iii) *Coercion*, i.e. punishing spoiler's behaviour or reducing its capacity to destroy a peace process. The most effective strategy in dealing with total spoilers.

I proceed to define coercion and discuss four different coercion strategies.

Coercion

Coercion may be defined as a threat or use of force with the aim to deter or alter unacceptable spoiler behaviour, or reduce its capacity to disrupt a peace process (Stedman 1997: 13). It can be applied through the following strategies: (i) coercive diplomacy; (ii) the 'departing train' strategy; (iii) the withdrawal strategy; and (iv) use of force. The first three coercive strategies are based on threats of force, while the last strategy is applied only after the threat of force has failed.

Coercive diplomacy entails the use of threats of force and demands, i.e. an international actor threatens to use force against the spoiler unless it complies, as NATO did against the Bosnian Serbs in 1995 (Stedman 1997:13). *The 'departing train' strategy* is based on threats to exclude total spoilers from a peace process. The strategy is based on the belief that "the peace process will irrevocably go forward, regardless of whether the spoiler joins or not" (ibid: 14). *The 'withdrawal strategy'* makes use of threats to withdraw international support and peacekeepers, provided that the peace spoiler wants international presence (ibid.). The strategy was successfully applied in Cambodia.[34] The last coercive strategy – *the application of force to defeat the spoiler* – is used only when threats of force failed to cause the change in the spoiler's behaviour.

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[34] For a case study on the use of the 'withdrawal strategy' in Cambodia see Stedman (1997: 26-32).

Not all coercive strategies, however, are equally effective in managing total spoilers. For example, coercive diplomacy and the withdrawal strategy are of little use. Coercive diplomacy is inefficient because total spoilers are usually cost-insensitive, i.e. they tend to regard any threat of force as insufficiently severe. In addition, if a threat of force turns out not to be credible, total spoilers will exploit the situation and present international actors as incapable in order to strengthen their own position. Equally inapplicable is the withdrawal strategy, as the threat appears not to be relevant: it is in accordance with total spoilers' preferences as they usually wish international forces to abandon the peace process (Stedman 1997: 15).

Consequently, international actors may either (i) use force to defeat the spoiler, and/or (ii) employ the "departing train" strategy. The use of force strategy has its limitations – few international actors are willing to commit themselves to defeating a total spoiler, as it demands time and other resources. An alternative is the departing train strategy: to strengthen the parties of peace so that they can defend themselves against the total spoiler.[35] For that purpose, peacekeepers are deployed to legitimize and strengthen the parties of peace, whereas the spoiler is delegitimized and deprived of resources it may use to undermine peace (Stedman 1997: 15).

Finally, it is important to note at least two issues that make spoiler management challenging. First, the diagnosis of a spoiler type is difficult due to the fact that issues such as the goals of spoilers, their commitment to the cause, the degree of the leadership's control of followers and similar, are not always easy to determine (ibid: 17). Second, an optimal strategy to manage a spoiler may be too costly or too risky for international actors to implement (ibid: 16).

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[35] The training of domestic security forces and security sector reform (SSR) has been an inherent part of peace support operations since the 1990s. This alternative requires resources as well, but they are so-called "treasure" rather than "blood" resources.

As this discussion illustrates, the potential impact of coercive strategies in spoiler management is directly related to the extent the threats these strategies make use of are effective. I proceed to discuss the threat theory.

3.2.1. A Threat Theory

First, I present the definition of the concept of a threat. Second, I put forward the theoretical conditions for a threat to be effective identified by Hovi (1998).

The Concept of a Threat

In this thesis, a threat is defined as a "contingent assertion signalling an intention to hurt somebody […] unless that somebody acts in the way prescribed by the threatener" (Hovi 1998: 11). It is important to note that a threat is a conditional commitment: it will be carried out only if the target fails to act in the way specified by the threat (ibid: 12). In case of noncompliance, the target will be hurt, either directly or indirectly, by the threatener.

The Conditions for a Threat to be Effective

In order to discuss the theoretical conditions for a threat to be effective, it is essential to define what is meant by an effective threat. In this thesis, a behavioural definition is applied: a threat is deemed effective if it causes the target to change its behaviour in the way demanded by the threatener (Hovi 1998: 13). Under the assumption of complete information[36], a threat, to be effective, must satisfy the following conditions: it has to be (1) relevant; (2) credible; (3) sufficiently severe (4) contingent and (5) clear[37] (ibid: 13- 16). I proceed to discuss what each of the proposed criteria implies.

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[36] We speak of a game with complete information if the players have full information about the parameters, that is, all variables defining the game before the beginning of the game. These variables include the players' payoff functions, strategies and information each player has about all of these variables (Harsanyi 1986: 90).

[37] The last criterion is redundant since I have specified the condition of *complete information*. Nevertheless, I keep it in order to reiterate its significance.

1. A threat is relevant if the target has (i) some freedom of action to adjust its behaviour in the way prescribed by the threatener, and (ii) an incentive to act contrary to the threatener's desires. If the first condition is not fulfilled, a threat cannot have any impact on the target's behaviour. Likewise, if the second condition is not met, any change in the target's behaviour would not be caused by the threat.

2. A threat is deemed sufficiently severe if the target prefers complying with the threatener's demands to defying these demands and having the threat effectuated. The severity of the threat, however, depends not only on the magnitude of the threatened punishment, but also on the character of the demands made by the threatener. Even a very severe threat may turn out to be ineffective if the threatener's demands have a bearing on the target's vital interests.

3. A threat is considered credible if it is in the threatener's interest to carry out the threat in case the target does not comply. If the target recognizes that the threatener has incentives not to carry out the threat in case of transgression, the threat cannot be credible.

4. A threat is contingent if it is followed by an explicit promise that it will not be effectuated in case of compliance. If the target believes that the threat will be put into effect regardless of whether it complies or not, the threat cannot be effective because the target has no incentive to comply.

5. For a threat to be sufficiently clear the target must understand what the threatener requires and what the consequences of noncompliance are.

3.2.2.   A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict

The objective of this section is to discuss the challenges international actors may encounter when applying force to manage a total spoiler. Here I examine the conditions under which an overwhelmingly stronger actor cannot defeat its substantially weaker adversary.[38] For that purpose I introduce the strategic interaction thesis[39] (Arreguin-Toft 2001), which provides a general explanation of asymmetric conflicts' outcomes. This theory argues that strong actors are likely to lose asymmetric conflicts despite their overwhelming power advantage if they apply a wrong counterstrategy vis-à-vis their opponents' strategy (ibid: 95).

The strategic interaction thesis assumes that any strategy can be categorised as one of two ideal-type strategic approaches: direct and indirect, where direct approaches target an adversary's capacity to fight (i.e. its armed forces), and indirect approaches target its will to fight.[40] Same-approach interactions (direct-direct or indirect-indirect) favour strong actors who accomplish victory quickly and decisively. By contrast, opposite approach interactions (direct-indirect or indirect-direct) make power advantage irrelevant and imply failure for strong actors in a protracted conflict (ibid: 105). How do stronger actors lose? First of all, strong actors are likely to be overconfident: they tend to overestimate the prospect of quick and decisive victory. Therefore, in the context of a protracted conflict, they are likely to make mistakes in order to meet the expectations: they either escalate force (and hence the costs of a conflict) or employ

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[38] Arreguin-Toft (2001: 94) defines strong actors as belligerents whose military power is at least ten times the power of their adversary. The material power refers to the product of a given party' population and armed forces. Note that "strong" and "weak" have meaning only in a particular dyadic context.

[39] Arreguin-Toft's usage of the term *strategic interaction* does not correspond to the usage of strategic interaction in formal models, as explained in 1.3.1. It refers to the traditional usage of strategy in strategic studies, that is, a strategy refers to an actor's plan for using armed forces to achieve military or political objectives (Arreguin-Toft 2001: 99).

[40] The examples of direct strategies are: (1) direct attack (including blitzkrieg) and (2) direct defence. The examples of indirect strategies are (1) barbarism and (2) guerrilla warfare strategy (Arreguin-Toft 2001: 100).

barbarism.[41] Both approaches imply political costs and result in domestic pressure to withdraw, despite the military situation on the ground (ibid: 106).

It is important to note that actors cannot arbitrarily choose an ideal counterstrategy in an armed conflict and thus secure victory (ibid: 106-107). The forces trained and equipped for applying direct strategies cannot easily turn to indirect strategies, and vice versa, irregular armed forces cannot operate as regular. This is because manpower, equipment and training are closely integrated and not fungible. In addition, military tradition, organisational interests, and most important, the primary threat assessment affect the character of an actor's military capability.

Consider the following example. A strong actor attacks a weak actor directly with the aim to capture or eliminate its armed forces.[42] The weak actor, having inferior weapons, is aware that it cannot defeat the strong actor militarily. Therefore it avoids direct confrontation, but nonetheless attempts to impose costs on the strong actor in order to affect its will to fight. Such costs include the loss of soldiers, supplies, infrastructure, and most important, time (ibid: 103). To be able to accomplish such goals, the weak actor resorts to guerrilla warfare strategy, whose tactics deflect military and technological superiority of its adversary. The logic of the guerrilla strategy, is probably best stated by its most famous practitioner Mao Tse-tung[43]:

> In guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision. When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances;

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[41] Barbarism is the systematic violation of the laws of war (such as Four Geneva Conventions of 1949) (Arreguin-Toft 2001: 101). It includes, inter alia, the use of prohibited weapons and depredations against the non-combatants (such as torture, murder, rape of prisoners and civilians, the use of concentration camps, strategic bombing against targets of no military value etc).

[42] This strategy is in accordance with a prevalent military belief that once an opponent's military capability to wage war is destroyed, his will to continue fighting is irrelevant since the means to that end are no longer available (Mack 1975: 179).

[43] Mao's model of protracted warfare was copied to a large extent by, among others, the Mujahidin (Arreguin-Toft 2001: 106). The Taliban was also observed to study the revolutionary strategy of Mao Tse-tung (Bøe-Hansen 2009 [the interview]).

harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws" (Arreguin-Toft 2001:104).

The weak actor does not have forces trained and equipped for fighting a war, but relies on irregular armed forces, which are difficult to distinguish from civilians when not in actual combat. Thus the strong actor's forces kill and injure civilians when targeting guerrilla fighters, which turns the population against the strong actor. The weak actor exploits the mistakes of the strong actor in order to get the support of the population, which it needs to be able to defy the strong actor. The population provides intelligence, logistical support and, most important, replacement. In addition to social support, the weak actor depends on the access to physical sanctuary (inaccessible terrain such as high mountains, jungle, swamps etc.) or political sanctuary (for example, permeable border areas) where guerrilla fighters can retreat and recuperate. As long as the weak actor has access to these two elements, it can defy the strong actor knowing that delay favours the weak (ibid: 104). At the same time, the domestic political audience closely follows the strong actor's performance in the theatre. As the war drags on, it will appear increasingly incompetent. The domestic pressure will grow as military costs increase and war casualties rise. In addition, if a war is fought in a distant theatre, the domestic political audience will not be able to see that the survival of the nation is directly at stake, which will make sacrifice and risking death in a battle meaningless (Mack 1975: 186). As a result, the strong actor withdraws its armed forces under domestic pressure, and the weak actor wins.

I now turn to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. I proceed to introduce the actors. Relying on the presented theoretical framework, I distinguish between two parties[44]: *peace spoilers* and *peace custodians*.

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[44] In contrast to the authors (see, for example, Håvoll 2008) who focus on a plethora of actors in Afghanistan arguing that it gives a qualitatively new dimension to the conflict, I believe, in line with Kydd (2004:346), that most conflicts can be reduced to two sides.

3.2. Spoilers in Afghanistan

In this section I discuss spoilers groups in Afghanistan, their position vis-à-vis the peace settlement, their goals and strategies, as well as the locus of spoiler behaviour within the group. I conclude that the spoilers to the peace process in Afghanistan are *outside and total spoilers*, according to the spoiler typology (Stedman 1997). Furthermore, I describe the factors that sustain the insurgency.

The spoilers in Afghanistan have been casually referred to as the Taliban.[45] As an aggregative shorthand term 'the Taliban' refers to a plethora of actors who have undermined the peace process since the fall of the Taliban regime and the subsequent Bonn peace agreement of 2001, and encompasses the remnants of the Taliban, Gulbuddin Hekmatyars's Hezb-i-Islami, the Haqqani network, al Qaeda, other foreign fighters, criminal groups and a number of Afghan and Pakistani tribal militia (Jones 2009: 152). The core of the spoiler problem, however, lies in a threefold militant structure consisting of two indigenous groups, the Taliban and Hezbi-i-Islami, and one transnational network, al Qaeda (Hodes and Cedra 2007b: 31; Jones 2006: 116). [46] As the defeated party in the Afghan civil war (due to the US assistance to the adversary, the Northern Alliance), these groups were excluded from the peace negotiations and were not signatories to the peace settlement. As such, they qualify as *outside spoilers*.

What brings these parties together are their common goals: to overthrow the present government and compel foreign troops to withdraw. Beyond this, they may have

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[45] To circumvent oversimplification, some authors employ terms such as *militants* (Suhrke 2008), *insurgents*, or *the Taliban-led insurgency* (Cyrus and Sedra 2007). In this thesis I choose to use the label *Taliban* to refer to the insurgents in Afghanistan, although I also use the terms insurgents and the Taliban-led insurgency.

[46] Some see the Haqqani network as a separate entity from the Taliban; most sources agree that the leader of the Haqqani network, Jajaluddin Haqqani, remained loyal to the Taliban leader Mullah Omar "even if the relationship between the two went through a period of crisis in the last few years of the Taliban regime" (Guistozzi 2007: 91). However, to what degree the Haqqani network is under the central leadership of the Taliban remains uncertain, since the Taliban structures "remain extremely secretive and elusive" (Ruttig 2009: 61).

different, but not necessarily conflicting, interests[47] (Jones 2006: 116). Their commitment to the common goals has not weakened after eight years of the Karzai government, and the increasing foreign military presence that supports it. On the contrary, their defiance of post-Bonn Afghanistan has grown stronger, strengthening their reputation as total spoilers. As these goals meet the criteria of total goals, these parties qualify as *total spoilers*.

In dealing with total spoilers, it is particularly relevant to determine the locus of spoiler behaviour. Does the impetus for spoiling come from the leader or its followers? This can be established by examining the structure of a group. I assume that the more hierarchical a group is, the greater the probability that the impetus for spoiler behaviour comes from the leader. However, the insurgent groups in Afghanistan are extremely secretive and it is difficult to ascertain their organisational structure and internal decision-making process. The Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami are reported to have loosely hierarchical organisational structures; al Qaeda guerrilla units are more autonomous, at least at the tactical and organisational level, while at the strategic level so-called foreign fighters take guidance from more senior al Qaeda commanders (Jones 2006: 116-117).

Typically for total spoilers, these parties have employed violence to achieve their goals. Initially, the tactics consisted of attacks and assassinations of so-called soft targets associated with foreign presence, such as the UN, NGOs and humanitarian organisations (Suhrke 2008: 217). Over time the spoilers adopted new techniques, including suicide attacks and the use of improvised explosive devices (IED), and widened the scope of targets to include pro-government forces (NATO and coalition

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[47] Hekmatyar may be interested in the position of a leader once the present government is ousted from power. The Taliban seeks to impose the strictest interpretation of Islam on the Afghan society. Al Qaida, on the other hand, has much broader objectives (such as to overthrow corrupt regimes in Muslim countries and establish sharia, impose cost on Western forces and make them leave Muslim countries (Jones 2009: 76). However, as a transnational network, al Qaeda depends on movements like the Taliban, which can provide them with a safe haven to wage a global jihad.

forces, the Afghan army and the police) (Hodes and Cedra 2007: 27). By 2006, their opposition had grown into a full-scale insurgency (Guistozzi 2007: vii).

The Afghan insurgency is usually described as a typical case of asymmetric conflict. The insurgents are reported mimicking Mao's strategy of guerrilla warfare (Guistozzi 2007:99). Recall the two requirements for successful guerrilla warfare: the access to a sanctuary and the support of the population. The insurgents have found shelter in the harsh mountainous terrain as well as Pakistani tribal areas accessible through the 2,430 km long and permeable border with Pakistan. As regards popular support, the insurgents have employed various means to obtain it. First, they have exploited grievances of the population associated with foreign presence (civilian casualties, humiliating house searches and arrests, the eradication of poppy fields etc.) and weak, corrupted and ineffective governance (Guistozzi 2007: 51). Second, they have carried campaigns of intimidation and murder to obtain tacit popular support due to the fear of reprisal (ibid: 51). In addition, funds derived from opium production and trafficking, as well as from foreign funds and extortion, have facilitated recruitment (Guistozzi 2007: 86). Furthermore, the Taliban ideology – with an appeal to true believers ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause – has been an important asset for the recruitment (ibid. 15).

3.3. Peace Custodians

The label 'peace custodians' refers to international actors mandated to oversee the implementation of a peace settlement (Stedman 1997). According to the Annex II of the Bonn Agreement, the Special Representative of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA[48]) "shall monitor and assist in the implementation of all aspects of the peace agreement". Its role, however, will not be examined here, because UNAMA is a political actor, and not directly involved in the spoiler management. The

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[48] UNAMA was established in 2002 with the mandate to "to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan by leading efforts of the international community in conjunction with the Government of Afghanistan in rebuilding the country and strengthening the foundations of peace and constitutional democracy" (UNAMA 2009).

international actors dealing with spoiler management are security forces, whose responsibility is, inter alia[49], the provision of security. These are: International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition (OEF). My primary focus is ISAF, since ISAF is the only international security actor with an explicit responsibility to provide peace and security in Afghanistan. I proceed to outline the role of OEF, and its relation to ISAF before I discuss ISAF and its mandate. As emphasized throughout the thesis, the mandate of the international actors is to assist the Afghan government to exercise its authority. Correspondingly, ISAF assists the Afghan army (ANA) and the police to fight the insurgency. The efforts of the indigenous actors, however, will not be discussed separately, but are considered implicitly within ISAF efforts.

3.3.1. The Operation Enduring Freedom Coalition

As all threats to security in Afghanistan were not neutralised[50] by the time the peace agreement was concluded in Bonn in December 2001, the US-led coalition continued to conduct Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) beyond the initial military campaign set off on October 7, 2001 in response to 9/11. OEF is a counter-terrorist mission. Its primary objective has been to destroy the remnants of al Qaeda, the Taliban, and to bring to justice Osama bin Laden. "Finding Osama remained an overarching concern, if not an obsession, in Washington." (Suhrke 2008: 217). In addition to counter-terrorist operations, the coalition developed subsidiary objectives so as to promote security by deploying civil affair teams (in charge of humanitarian and reconstruction operations), training Afghan National Army and creating Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) (Thier 2006: 494). The coalition derives its mandate from the right of states to self-defence, stipulated by Article 51 of the UN Charter. Beyond this, the Coalition has not entered any agreement with the Afghan government to regulate the

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[49] International security forces operate along three main dimensions: security, governance, reconstruction and development (R&D).

[50] The bulk of the Taliban and al Qaeda forces were not captured or killed in the early fighting but escaped into Pakistan, or in the case of the Taliban melted back into their villages (Thier 2006: 486).

status of its forces deployed in Afghanistan[51] (Thier 2006: 493). OEF area of operation has been gradually taken over by ISAF, and OEF has been reduced to southern and eastern Afghanistan along the Pakistan border (CRS 2008: 1).

The relation between OEF and ISAF is not always easy to distinguish, especially taking into consideration that American and allied troops participate in both operations in contiguous areas. Initially, OEF was envisaged to fight "the war on terror", while ISAF was a "stabilization mission". However, with the expansion of ISAF to the south and east and its engagement in combat operations, the difference between the two has become more blurred. Some intermingling of the two missions has been difficult to avoid, as there is no clear dividing line between the regions where the Taliban and al Qaida are active and the relatively stable regions of the country. The two military operations are under separate military command, but there exists a "synergy" between the two commands, which allows each operation to support the other in times of emergency (CRS 2009: 18).[52]

3.3.2. ISAF

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was deployed to Afghanistan in 2002, in accordance with the peace agreement (Annex I of the Bonn Agreement) and the UN Security Council Resolution 1386/2001. It is the only international security force with an explicit mandate to assist the Interim Authority, later on the Government, to maintain peace and security in Afghanistan. To fulfil its mandate, ISAF was authorised to use "all necessary measures" (UN SC 1386/2001). Its initial area of responsibility was limited to Kabul and its surroundings, where 5,000 ISAF troops

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[51] Unlike the Coalition, ISAF concluded a military-technical agreement with the Afghan interim authority to outline ISAF's mission, area of responsibility, and the relationship with the interim administration and Afghan military forces (Thier 2006: 542)

[52] ISAF operates under NATO's Supreme Allied Commander (situated in Mons, Belgium); OEF operates under US Central Command in Tampa Florida. However, within Afghanistan the command chain of these two forces converge under American General McChrystal, as it did under his predecessor General McKiernan, before diverging again toward Mons and Tampa Florida (Dobbins 2009).

operated under British command[53] until NATO took over in August 2003. Acknowledging the contribution ISAF made to improve security in Kabul[54], the Afghan government, UNAMA, domestic and international civil society called for its expansion in order to "create a secure environment for peacebuilding", which was authorised by the UN SC 1510/2003. The expansion was implemented in four stages. Stage I and II, implemented in 2005, entailed the expansion into the relatively peaceful northern and western regions respectively.[55] The objective was to "demonstrate presence on behalf of central government" and assist reconstruction (Suhrke 2008: 223). Stage III, implemented in July 2006, entailed the deployment of ISAF troops to the south, where it faced a tenacious insurgency.[56] Stage IV entailed the expansion to the east. By October 2006 ISAF had taken over security responsibility throughout Afghanistan, breaking the country up into five Regional Commands (RC East, West, North, South, and Capital)(ISAF).

The current UN SC Resolution 1868/2009 calls upon ISAF, in conjunction with the OEF coalition, "to continue to address the threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan posed by the Taliban, Al-Qaida, illegally armed groups, criminals and those involved in the narcotics trade". The resolution, however, does not provide details of how ISAF should accomplish the tasks. The resolutions' provisions are

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[53] Prior to NATO's command, the leadership over ISAF was rotated every six months (after British, it was under Turkish, then under the joint Dutch-German command) (Thier 2006: 544).

[54] In the first six months, starting January 2002, crime dropped 70% due to extensive patrolling throughout the area of operation (Thier 2006: 547). This was a significant improvement for ordinary Kabulis as no government has been able to control the situation in Kabul in the last two decades.

[55] During Stage I (December 2003-October 2004), Germany established the first ISAF PRT in Kunduz in northern Afghanistan and ISAF took over four PRTs from the US-led Coalition: in Mazar-i-Sharif, Maimana, Faizabad, and Baghlan. In Stage II, from May 2005, ISAF assumed command over two PRTs in western Afghanistan – Herat and Farah, and established two new PRTs in Ghor and Badghis province in western Afghanistan (ISAF).

[56] ISAF assumed command over six additional southern provinces – Day Kundi, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan and Zabul, and four PRTs.

refined into active policy measures by the allies themselves in consultation with the Afghan government.

I proceed to discuss the strategies these actors have applied in Afghanistan in order to manage spoilers to the peace process.

3.4. Spoiler Management in Afghanistan: Coercion

Two of the coercive strategies Stedman (1997) describes have been applied in the post-Bonn Afghanistan: "the departing train" and the use of force.[57]

3.4.1.   The 'Departing Train Strategy'

The 'departing train' strategy, as outlined in 3.1.1, denotes that spoilers will be excluded from a peace process. The Bonn peace agreement was a settlement among the various groups that won over the Taliban, due to the superior US military support. The Taliban as a defeated party was not a signatory and the agreement had no provisions for the integration of its remnants or the populations associated with it (Suhrke, Harpviken and Strand 2004: 3-4). Excluding the Taliban from the peace settlement was due to two issues. First, the Taliban's preferences, as those of a total spoiler, were considered impossible to accommodate. Second, in the aftermath of Operation Enduring Freedom, the Taliban was regarded a "spent force" (i.e. incapable to pose a threat to the viability of the Afghan state). For example, Olivier Roy, one of the most prominent experts on Afghanistan, found it "unlikely that the Taliban resistance will come into being", and suggested that the defeat of the Taliban was "the signal of the probable disappearance of the radical Islamists in Afghanistan" (Dorronsoro 2005: 313). In accordance with these premises, ISAF was deployed to

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[57] I list only these two strategies, as my focus is the period after the conclusion of the Bonn agreement. However, the United States initially pursued *coercive diplomacy* against the Taliban, which failed and instead the US resorted to force in Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001.

strengthen the sides of peace, as the "departing train strategy" specifies. In that context, resources have been invested in the training of indigenous security forces.

The departing train strategy is still applied in Afghanistan, albeit with decreasing confidence that "the peace process will *irrevocably* go forward" (italics added). The Taliban, contrary to the initial assessments that it would be incapable of undermining the peace process, managed to regroup itself and has posed a serious security threat that hampers political and physical reconstruction of the country. Consequently, force was increasingly applied against the spoilers.

3.4.2.   The Use of Force

This section presents an overview of use-of-force strategies applied in Afghanistan. The overview would not be complete, if it focused only on ISAF. ISAF took over command over combat operations in the south and east from the US-led coalition, whose spoiler management had an impact on the dynamics of the insurgency, as well as on the strategies NATO would adopt. For a complete overview, I present both OEF and ISAF strategies by outlining a strategy and discussing the implications of its application in the field.

In this section I demonstrate that force is sometimes used to target an enemy and sometimes to target the factors that enable the enemy to persist and pose a threat. The former objective is realised by an enemy-centred strategy that targets spoilers directly, while the latter objective may be accomplished by a so-called population-centred strategy that aims to protect civilian population in a conflict and win its support. [58]

I first discuss the strategies the OEF Coalition applied in dealing with spoilers in Afghanistan. These are:

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[58] General David Barno, the Commander of US-led Coalition 2003-2005, refers to these two approaches as: an 'enemy-centric raid strategy' vs. a 'people-centric' counterinsurgency (Suhrke 2008: 222).

    i)   Counterterrorism

    ii)   Counterinsurgency (COIN).[59]

Counterterrorism[60] is an enemy-centred strategy. It has been implemented through (i) light and (b) heavy military footprint. The light footprint, which was used initially, implies a very light presence of ground troops (usually special operation force) and a heavy dependence on air power, as well as close cooperation with indigenous ground troops (Suhrke 2008: 215). It was devised on the basis of the "lessons learnt" by the Soviet Union, whose heavy military footprint, with over 100,000 ground troops, was perceived as an occupation, and fiercely resisted by the Afghans.

The light footprint approach was not as efficient as anticipated due to at least three important shortcomings. First, the cooperation with indigenous troops proved to be problematic as Afghan troops turned out to be corrupt, disorganised and unmotivated. During the coalition operations in 2001 the Taliban and al Qaeda managed to escape into Pakistan by bribing some of the Afghan commanders. Later on, the Taliban was able to infiltrate some of the Afghan militia, for example during the operation *Mountain Storm* in early 2004, when it turned against US troops (Suhrke 2008: 216). Second, few ground troops made it impossible for the Coalition to hold the territory, which it cleared previously from insurgents. Third, the inherent risk-averseness of this approach, manifested in heavy reliance on air power, leads to high numbers of civilian casualties, which in turn decreases popular support for foreign military presence. All these limitations convinced the US Army of the need to increase the number of its own ground troops and from 2004 the light footprint approach was abandoned.

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[59] It is important to note that these strategies have never been applied in pure, but rather in hybrid forms. For example, the US-led coalition conducted counterterrorism operations alongside small-scale humanitarian and reconstruction projects. A pure counterinsurgency campaign was impossible to implement due to the lack of necessary resources.

[60] I refer to this strategy as "counterterrorism" as the US-led Coalition fought the war on terror in Afghanistan – the enemy was the terrorist organisation al-Qaeda and those that provided it with a safe haven.

The heavy footprint implies an increased number of combat ground troops, which operate with close air support. This approach required force expansion and a steady increase in US troop deployment followed. At the tactical level, the troops were engaged, inter alia, in cordon-and-search operations. Acting on intelligence tips, troops raided villages in search of insurgents backed up by close air support.

The military build-up had two consequences. First, it affected the dynamics of the insurgency: faced with a better equipped and more numerous enemy, the insurgents began to rely increasingly on asymmetric warfare employing new techniques, such as suicide bombing and improvised explosive devices (IED).[61] Second, it undermined popular support. The culturally insensitive modus operandi of cordon-and-search operations, together with civilian casualties, undermined popular support for foreign military presence (Suhrke 2008: 221). Recognizing that waging conventional warfare against insurgents has limited and even counterproductive utility, the US Army started to consider a population-centred approach – counterinsurgency (COIN), as established by the US Army Field Manual FM 3-24.[62]

Counterinsurgency

The goal of *counterinsurgency* is to win the support of the population.[63] Its core assumption is that the protection, welfare and support of the people are vital to the success. However, gaining and maintaining that support is a formidable challenge that requires comprehensive military and civilian efforts. An efficient counterinsurgency strategy combines offensive, defensive, and stability operations, whereas offensive operations focus on eliminating the enemy, defensive operations focus on protecting

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[61] Another factor that contributed to the new insurgent techniques was the invasion of Iraq, which put Afghanistan into a context of global jihad (Suhrke 2008: 220).

[62] According to Ravndal (2009) FM-3-24 does not contain any new or "groundbreaking thoughts" on COIN. It is based on classical COIN publications, as well as on a long tradition of American field manuals addressing irregular warfare (FFI Report 2009/01346).

[63] Indicators measuring popular support are: assistance in gathering accurate intelligence and popular participation in political processes.

the population and infrastructure from direct attacks, and stability operations[64] secure the local population and provide for essential services.[65] The proportion of effort is determined by the security situation and needs of the population in question. As security improves, stability operations become more about governance, reconstruction and economic development, and expand across the area of operation.

The primary objective of any COIN operation is to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government (FM 3-24: 1-21).[66] In that regard, it is necessary to strengthen institutions and train indigenous security forces. To ensure such a development the following principles must be followed, according to the US Army Field Manual FM 3-24 (1-23):

1. Civilian and military efforts in a counterinsurgency campaign must be coordinated. Unity of effort is paramount.
2. The primary purpose of military actions is to create a safe environment for political and economic development. Military operations should be conducted only if they lead to positive political effects. In that regard, use of force must not be counterproductive - excessive use of force undermines the achievement of the overarching political goals. The risk for collateral damage must be minimized, as it fuels insurgent recruitment. Whenever possible, indigenous security forces should apply force.[67]
3. COIN strategy must take into account the particular environment (society and culture) where the campaign is conducted in order not to alienate the population.

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[64] Throughout the thesis I use the terms stability operations and stabilization interchangeably.

[65] Such as water, electricity, sanitation, medical services, basic education and similar. Local preferences should be appreciated and needs assessments should reflect cultural sensitivity (FM 3-24: 5-14).

[66] A government is considered to be effective and legitimate if it is elected in fair and free elections, is able to provide security for the population, works on political, social and economic development, respects the rule of law, fights corruption etc. at a culturally accepted level (FM 3-24: 1-21).

[67] Only if the population regards the indigenous army and the police as competent and impartial. In Afghanistan, the army enjoys popular respect, while the police are perceived as corrupted.

4. The focus should not be on killing or capturing every insurgent, but rather on cutting off the sources of their recuperative power. These include social, political and economic grievances that fuel the insurgency, but also border control and population control (i.e. isolating insurgents from the population).

5. Security for the civilian population under the rule of law is essential. Protecting the population, not the COIN force, leads to the ultimate success. This is the cornerstone of the COIN doctrine.

6. Popular support allows counterinsurgents to develop the intelligence necessary to identify and defeat insurgents. Timely and reliable intelligence is a precondition for effective operations.

7. Counterinsurgency is a long-term commitment. The population will not support the counterinsurgents if they are not convinced that they have the ability, stamina and will to win. The population must be confident about the staying power of the counterinsurgents. For that reason, international security force should constantly reaffirm its commitment to COIN effort and enjoy support back home for a protracted deployment.

COIN strategy is typically implemented through a *clear-hold-build* approach.[68] *Clear* is a tactical mission with the aim to eliminate insurgent presence in the area of operation through cordon-and-search operations. The force employs a combination of offensive small-unit operations, such as saturation patrolling, interdiction ambushes and targeted raids. The *hold* phase aims to further eliminate insurgent infrastructure by establishing security forces bases among the population. The objective of this phase is to create secure physical and psychological environment, as well as to re-establish national government presence at the local level. *Build* refers to capacity building for the provision of essential services (water, electricity, sanitation, health, education etc), good governance and economic development (ibid: 5-23).

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[68] Other approaches include combined action and limited support. For more information, see FM 3-24: 5-18.

On the basis of the above it can be concluded that COIN operations are extremely complex and resource, manpower and time intensive. Securing the population requires vast resources, first of all, a high density of security forces. A rule of thumb stipulates approximately 20-25 counterinsurgents for every 1,000 residents in an area of operation (FM 3-24: 1-13), meaning that a country the size of Afghanistan would need a force of approx. 570,000, along with a range of civilian experts.[69] In addition to resources, long-term commitment is a prerequisite to gain and maintain the populace support. For all these reasons a protracted counterinsurgency may be hard to sustain. With the elapse of time and mounting casualties, weariness with the mission increases in a troop contributing country, which is the very goal of insurgents who try to win by undermining and outlasting public support in the countries involved in the counterinsurgency.

Despite the proclaimed intent[70] to follow the COIN doctrine in Afghanistan, it is questionable whether and to what extent the OEF coalition has actually managed to apply it. First of all, a force of approximately 20,000 troops is not sufficient to conduct a comprehensive COIN campaign in a country the size of Afghanistan. However, some COIN elements were employed in order to win "hearts and minds" of the population, through the Coalition civil-military teams[71], that have been responsible for planning and executing the Coalition humanitarian and reconstruction operations (Thier 2006: 495). For example, by April 2004, the Coalition helped to build 400 schools, dig 600 wells and construct 170 health clinics, in projects that employed a total of 30,000 Afghans (ibid: 496). On the other hand, military operations were shaped by the principle of force protection rather than the populace protection. Such

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[69] Political, social, and economic programs are most commonly associated with civilian organizations and expertise; however, effective implementation of these programs is more important than who performs the tasks. If adequate civilian capacity is not available, military forces fill the gap (FM 3-24: 2-9).

[70] In 2003, General Barno, the commander of the US-led Coalition, promoted 'people centric' counterinsurgency based on tolerance and respect. For that purpose, he issued a Directive for the troops consisting of a 15-point list of do's and don't's (Suhrke 2008: 222).

[71] CJCMOTF, CAT-A and later on PRT.

risk-averse operational culture tends to alienate the population, as stated in the US COIN doctrine.

ISAF strategies

Two variables determine ISAF strategies of spoiler management: security situation and the contributing nation.[72] Depending on these variables, there are two main approaches:

    (i)   Stabilization[73], and

    (ii)   Counterinsurgency (COIN).

A relatively secure environment allows for the implementation of stabilization strategies, whereas the existence of insurgency requires a more robust military response as prescribed by COIN. Geographically, stability operations have been predominant in relatively peaceful northern and western Afghanistan, while COIN has dominated in turbulent southern and eastern provinces. Chronologically, stabilization was prevalent during the Kabul period, as well as during the Stage I and II (ISAF expansion to northern and western regions), while COIN became an established strategy with ISAF expanding to the south where it was confronted with the resilient insurgency. However, it is important to note that these terms are far from standardized. Depending on the contributing nation, its military tradition and domestic political support, a range of stabilization and counterinsurgency models has been applied.

Stabilization

Stability operations, as defined within the outline on the American COIN doctrine, may be the last phase within the COIN approach (which corresponds to the hold-build phases in the clear-hold-build approach) or an independent strategy in a relatively

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[72]Some nations have national caveats for their troop engagement in combat operations.

[73] ISAF/NATO's vocabulary includes terms such as 'stability operations', 'stabilization mission', while the media often use 'nation building' and 'state building'. The term 'stabilization' as used here corresponds to the category 'peace support operations' (PSO) and its peacekeeping and peacebuilding dimensions. For an overview on PSO typologies see Durch (2006: 5-9).

secure environment. The stabilization strategy consists of two components: i) security and ii) reconstruction and development (R&D). Security is managed by military force that patrols the area of operation thus demonstrating presence on behalf of the central government and aiming to deter potential spoilers. The R&D component, including governance capacity building, addresses potential grievances that may fuel the insurgency and thus reduces the prospects for recruitment.

Stabilization strategies are implemented by ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which consist of military force and civilian personnel, led by individual ISAF nation. Currently, 26 PRTs operate in Afghanistan (ISAF). ISAF PRTs differ considerably depending on the operational environment and the lead nation.[74] PRTs military components, however, are under the ISAF command and are coordinated by the relevant Regional Command.

PRT is not intended for the business of coercion, but for "robust military diplomacy" (Jakobsen 2005:12). Military force within a PRT is equipped for self-defence only, like traditional peacekeeping forces, but can call military backup in the form of rapid reaction forces and air power in an emergency (Jakobsen 2005: 12). For example, when the Norwegian-led PRT in Meymaneh, northern Afghanistan, was attacked, a British quick reaction force was called in to control the situation (Forsvaret.no). The Norwegian military capacity was insufficient to handle a mob consisting of 200-300 persons breaking into the camp.

To what extent has the stabilization strategy been effectively implemented in practice? The Norwegian experience from the relatively peaceful northern Afghanistan (Faryab

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[74] PRTs differ on size, composition and operational style (Jakobsen 2005:11). However, three PRT models (the US, the UK and the German model) are usually distinguished on the basis of the following determinants: 1) the degree of civil-military integration, 2) the approach to R&D. Thus, the US model is under military command, and emphasizes quick impact projects. In the UK model, military, political and development efforts are jointly led. Military force is organised in mobile observation teams, and soldiers live amongst villagers. The focus is on local institution building and rule of law. In the German model, military and civilian components are totally separate. German PRTs have large military component, which operate in heavily armed patrols (in comparison to light armed British) and are located in the bases.

Province) indicates that governance and the R&D aspects of the operation are often neglected at the expense of security (Heier 2009 [interview]). This is explained by the fact that military force is trained to assess threat perceptions, rather than to tackle underlying causes of a conflict. An additional problem is the civil-military cooperation.

Assuming that northern Afghanistan, as the most stable part of the country, represents the most likely case for the stabilization strategy to work, it is unlikely that the strategy was more effectively implemented in the rest of the country.

COIN

In dealing with the spoilers, ISAF's use of force is guided by, inter alia, ISAF Tactical Directive for the employment of force[75] and the ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance. NATO has not developed a specific ISAF COIN strategy, but follows the doctrine as established by FM 3-24 (Heier 2009 [interview]).

Although it appears that there is a consensus among ISAF members that COIN is the appropriate strategy to handle the insurgency, the actual implementation is not consistent across the theatre. It depends on the area of operation and available resources, but also on the military tradition of a contributing nation, which may emphasize some COIN elements over others.[76] However, ISAF members lack proper resources for a comprehensive COIN campaign, as evident in the ISAF Commander Assessment Report of 30 August 2009, which calls for the change in operational culture and "the implementation of a *properly resourced* integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency campaign" (COMISAF: 1-1) /italics added/.

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[75] The most recent Tactical Directive was released on 6 July, 2009, available at http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/Tactical_Directive_090706.pdf , accessed 29 September 2009.

[76] The British emphasize cultural awareness, the French cooperation with indigenous security forces, while the Dutch stress the importance of minimizing collateral damage. For more information on French, British and Dutch approaches to COIN, see FFI rapport 2009/01346.

In conclusion, the enemy-centred strategy was abandoned for the population-centred strategy (COIN). However, the full COIN campaign has not been feasible as the international actors have not had sufficient resources at their disposal so as to properly address the three pillars of COIN – security, governance and R&D. First, the international actors lack a sufficient number of ground troops to protect the population. For that reason, they have infrequently utilized their technological superiority over the insurgents and resorted to the enemy-centred approach, which appears to be little appropriate for guerrilla warfare and tends to undermine other potential positive outcomes accomplished within COIN and related to governance and R&D. In addition, the international financial assistance to Afghanistan has been among the lowest of any stabilization operations since the Second World War (Jones 2006:111). This has further challenged the fostering of effective governance and economic development as a way to tackle the factors that sustain insurgency.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter identifies the actors in the Afghan conflict as peace spoilers and peace custodians. Spoilers, although manifold, have common goals: to overthrow present government and compel foreign forces to withdraw. On the basis of their common preferences, I consider the spoilers as one single player, which I refer to as the Taliban in the formal model that I present in the next chapter. The Taliban's adversary in the model is ISAF. As a player, ISAF stands for the international and national security forces that fight the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. I chose ISAF as an aggregate term because ISAF has an explicit mandate to provide peace and security in Afghanistan. The chapter also provides the rationale for using force against the Taliban and outlines two use-of-force strategies ISAF may use in order to defeat the Taliban: the enemy-centred strategy and the population-centred strategy. The effectiveness of these strategies against the Taliban will be examined in the subsequent chapters.

4. A Formal Model of Coercive Spoiler Management

The use of force may be an effective strategy in the management of a total spoiler (Stedman 1997). An effective strategy in this thesis is a strategy that neutralizes a spoiler to the extent that it does not pose a problem to peace. In that context, the use of force can either (i) eliminate a spoiler, or (ii) induce a spoiler to comply with an imposed peace agreement. Note that the elimination of a spoiler, in the sense of its removal, is meaningful only if force is used to target the leadership that is the impetus for spoiler behaviour; if that is not the case, the strategy is meaningless since killing every militant is an impossible task, and may violate the laws of war. I focus primarily on the capacity of force to induce compliance, either by deterring or altering unacceptable spoiler behaviour.

Under what conditions is force likely to work? Two possible scenarios are identified in the literature on coercion.[77]

1) Force tends to be effective primarily at the threat stage. "If [the threat] fails", as Schelling (2006: 2) poignantly remarks, the actual use of force " is both costly and ineffectual".

2) When the threat of force has failed, the actual use of force may work only if: (i) the threat of force failed because the threatened party's initial threat assessment was erroneous; (ii) the threatened party corrected its initial threat assessment after the threat had been executed, that is, after force had actually been used. A threat assessment concerns the potency, credibility and contingency aspect of a threat (Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz 2005: 480).

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[77] Under the assumption that actors are rational.

The objective of this chapter is to consider the first condition; in the subsequent chapter I examine the second condition. Here I consider the proposition that force failed to deter the Taliban from spoiler behaviour because the threat of force proved to be ineffective. Recall that a threat of force, to be effective, must be credible, sufficiently severe, relevant, clear and complete (Hovi 1998). I treat the latter three requirements as given, that is, I assume that the threat of force is relevant, clear and complete. In other words, I assume that i) the insurgents have an incentive to violate the peace; ii) the insurgents understand that force will be used unless they comply with the peace agreement; and iii) the insurgents know that the threat of force will not be carried out if they do not violate the peace. Thus, I consider two possibilities: (i) the threat is not deemed credible; and (ii) the threat is not deemed sufficiently severe.

I now present and analyze a simple game-theoretic model, which makes it possible to consider this proposition in more detail. In the subsequent chapter, I analyze the same model under a different set of assumptions regarding the information available to the insurgents in order to examine the conditions under which *the use of force* may work after *the threat of force* has failed.

4.1. The Model

The model I present and analyze in this thesis draws upon the game theoretic model developed by Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz (2005) in order to examine the conditions under which imposed economic sanctions work. The applicability of the sanction model on counterinsurgency warfare confirms Drezner's (2003: 646) observation that the use of force (military coercion) and the use of sanctions (economic coercion) have similar dynamics.[78] The model in this thesis, which examines the conditions under which the threat or use of force might work against the insurgents in Afghanistan, keeps the game structure of the Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz model on economic sanctions; however, I introduce some important differences regarding the payoffs,

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[78] Drezner (2003:646) argues that game-theoretic models on economic sanctions resemble Fearon's (1995) arguments of why rational unitary actors go to war.

which will be outlined after the model has been fully explained. Needless to say, the ranking of coercion costs and audience costs is adapted as appropriate to the situation in Afghanistan.

4.2. The Sequence of Decisions

There are two players, the Taliban and ISAF. ISAF wants to deter potential spoiler behaviour. The Taliban is aware that ISAF's mandate is to maintain security; therefore a threat is not explicitly made, but assumed, i.e. the model assumes it is common knowledge that a threat is inherent in the game structure.

The Taliban makes the first move in the game and must decide whether to violate the peace or not. I consider any attack on ISAF troops, indigenous security forces or civilians, in a conventional or unconventional manner (such as suicide bombers, IED), as a violation of the peace. ISAF is able to observe the Taliban's move. If the Taliban does not violate the peace, ISAF has no choice to make and the game ends. If the Taliban violates the peace, ISAF must respond by choosing between three military options. The first option – a minimum response – implies only necessary defence. The second and third options are offensive in character, where the second is an enemy-centred strategy and the third is a population-centred strategy – a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign (COIN) as outlined in section 3.4.2. Recall that the goal of an enemy-centred strategy is to eliminate/defeat an enemy, while the goal of a population-centred strategy is to win the support of a population.

I consider three ISAF options in order to be able to examine both the credibility of the threat of force and the potency of applied force within the framework of a single model. For that purpose, I assume (1) that the Taliban is able to observe ISAF's move; and (2) that the Taliban is prepared to stand firm if ISAF opts for the enemy-centred strategy but it will yield[79] in case ISAF implements the population-centred strategy.

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[79]I find the term 'yield' adequate for the Taliban's potential response to the enemy-centred strategy, but not *necessarily* to the population-centred strategy. However, I continue to use the same term for the sake of

This assumption is based on the established military doctrine that argues that an insurgency can be defeated only by winning the support of a population (Galula 1966; FM 3-24).

If ISAF chooses a minimum response, the Taliban does not get to make a move as I assume that the minimum response is not sufficient to make the Taliban consider whether to yield or not. Therefore the game ends and the Taliban continues with its noncompliance. In contrast, if ISAF chooses either the enemy-centred or the population-centred strategy, the game continues. The Taliban responds by choosing one of two options: yield and not yield. If the Taliban yields, ISAF stops prosecuting them (the status quo is re-established); if the Taliban does not yield, ISAF continues the offensive.

4.3. Discussion of the Model's Payoffs

The objective of this section is to discuss one type of benefit (violation benefit) and three types of cost (violation cost, military cost, and audience cost) for the contending parties.

4.3.1. Benefits

I assume that violating the peace entails certain benefits for the Taliban. By creating insecurity, the Taliban prevents political and economic reconstruction of the country, which, in turn, facilitates recruitment and opium production, and enables local power holding from which the Taliban movement benefits. Let $B > 0$ be the violation benefit obtained by the Taliban if all of the three following conditions are fulfilled: 1) the

consistency, although it does not imply that I automatically expect the hard-core Taliban leadership to yield in case ISAF applies the population-centred strategy; rather, the movement may gradually lose its rank-and-file, financial resources and popular support. In that way, the movement may gradually wither away, disintegrate. The difficulty in finding a single term to encompass possible Taliban's responses is also evident in General McChrystal's assessment of August 30, 2009, where he anticipates that the Taliban will have three choices to the population-centred strategy: fight, flee and integrate, depending on the rank of an insurgent (COMISAF's Initial Assessment 2009: 2-13)

Taliban violates the peace; 2) ISAF opts for either the minimum response or the enemy-centred strategy; and 3) the Taliban does not subsequently yield. I therefore assume that the Taliban will not be able to realize its potential violation benefit if ISAF decides to apply the population-centred strategy. That is because ISAF, by providing security and creating conditions for reconstruction and development, curbs the incentives of the populace to join the insurgents, engage in opium production etc.

I proceed to discuss three types of costs that are assumed to be relevant in determining the outcome of the coercive spoiler management game.

4.3.2.   Costs

While the Taliban benefits from the peace violation, ISAF suffers a violation cost. This cost may be direct (for example, loss of life, material damage, the cost of increased insecurity), or indirect (a damaged reputation of NATO as a security actor). Let $C > 0$ be the violation cost ISAF incurs in case the Taliban violates the peace and does not yield subsequently. Let C^i, where $C^i < C$, be the violation cost ISAF incurs in case the Taliban violates the peace and yields subsequently. C^i stands for direct violation costs. That is, $C^i = C - R$, where R stands for the indirect (reputation) costs NATO incurs as the security actor.

A military response entails costs for both parties. However, I assume that a minimum military response does not incur additional costs[80], since the minimum response entails "business as usual". On the other hand, offensive military operations are costly. A population-centred strategy, i.e. a COIN campaign, requires vast resources, as it rests on comprehensive military and civilian efforts, and implies high risk for ISAF troops. Recall that according to the COIN doctrine force is used in a way that it does not alienate the population. This principle requires, inter alia, i) a heavy military footprint to protect the population; ii) a culturally sensitive modus operandi and iii) the use of

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[80] Additional to the cost of maintaining the troops deployed to a distant theatre and performing their regular duties (such as patrolling the area of operation).

firepower, particularly aerial bombardment, only when the risk of collateral damage is minimal. This strategy thus requires a less risk-averse operational culture which makes ISAF troops more vulnerable to the insurgents who fight only when the opponent (ISAF) cannot fully exploit its fighting capacity and technological superiority. Usually[81], the Taliban engages in fighting only when it enjoys a tactical advantage (provided by, for example, a highly inaccessible mountainous terrain); otherwise it leaves an area of operation or melts into the civilian population. In conclusion, the population-centred strategy implies high risk for ISAF and medium risk for the Taliban. On the other hand, an enemy-centred strategy requires less manpower and resources, and ISAF troops bear less risk in comparison to the population-centred strategy. This is because ISAF utilizes its technological superiority and overwhelming firepower, especially air strikes, in its efforts to locate and eliminate the Taliban. To what extent the enemy-centred strategy will be successful depends on how reliable intelligence is. This strategy implies high risk for the Taliban provided that the intelligence is correct.

Let the military cost for the Taliban be M_T^E if ISAF implements the enemy-centred strategy, and M_T^P if ISAF implements the population-centred strategy, given that the Taliban does not yield (where $M_T^E > M_T^P \geq 0$).[82] If the Taliban yields, the military cost for the Taliban is αM_T^E in case of the enemy-centred strategy, and βM_T^P in case of the population-centred strategy respectively, where α, β are two constants ($0 < (\alpha, \beta) < 1$), where α, β are temporal units, i.e. crude measures of how long it will take before the Taliban yields).

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[81] There are examples when the Taliban confronted NATO in relatively large formations rather than applying classic guerrilla techniques, as illustrated during the operation *Medusa* in Kandahar in 2006, when the Taliban suffered major losses (Suhrke 2008:226). However, having realized that "defeat is the invariable outcome where native forces fight with inferior weapons against modernised forces *on the latter's terms*" as Mao Tse-tung argued, the Taliban started increasingly to rely on guerrilla warfare (Mao quoted in Mack 1975: 176) (the emphasis in original).

[82] The Taliban has advantage over ISAF in two areas: intelligence and knowledge of the terrain. Therefore $M_T^P \geq$ 0, because the Taliban may decide to leave the area prior to an ISAF offensive, and wait in Pakistan. Alternatively, the Taliban can engage only when it enjoys such an advantage that it cannot suffer any cost, under condition that ISAF does not use air power (hypothetically). For an example, consider the battle of Wanat (Shanker 2009).

Similarly, let the military cost for ISAF in case the Taliban does not yield be M_I^E if it opts for the enemy-centred strategy, and M_I^P if it undertakes the population-centred campaign, where $M_I^P > M_I^E > 0$, as the population-centred campaign is much more costly in comparison to the enemy-centred approach. In case the Taliban yields, the military cost for ISAF is αM_I^E and βM_I^P, respectively.

A final type of cost incorporated in the model is audience costs.[83] As a minimum response will likely result in growing insecurity, I assume that domestic political audience in troop-contributing countries will question the purpose of ISAF's presence in Afghanistan. Military presence in a distant foreign country is costly and if it does not fulfil its mandate, the electorate in troop-contributing countries, as well as political opponents, will blame the government for its choice of action, which has led to deteriorating security on "the first front in the war against terror". Let A_I^{MR} be the audience costs ISAF suffers in case of the minimum response. The second option – the enemy-centred strategy, which relies heavily on air strikes, often implies collateral damage (a high number of civilian casualties) due to insecure intelligence and the nature of guerrilla warfare when the Taliban hides itself among the population. In case ISAF opts for the enemy-centred strategy and the Taliban does not yield, it will affect negatively, first of all, the Afghan public opinion, but also the international civil society and domestic public opinion in troop-contributing countries. Let A_I^E be the audience cost in case ISAF responds with the enemy-centred approach to the Taliban's disruption of the peace, and the Taliban does not yield. The third option – the population-centred strategy – will significantly increase the likelihood for ISAF casualties, which decreases popular support for the war in ISAF contributing countries as the recent examples from Britain, the United States and Italy illustrate (Cooper 2009a). Alternatively, increased casualties may trigger a nation involved in the counterinsurgency to impose a national caveat that restricts its troops engagement in combat operations. Let A_I^P be the audience costs ISAF will suffer in case it engages in a comprehensive COIN campaign and the Taliban does not yield, where $A_I^P > A_I^E >$

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[83] This notion is based on the assumption that wars are "public events carried out in front of a domestic political audience", where the audience can observe and assess the performance of its leadership (Fearon 1994: 577).

$A_I^{MR} > 0$. That is, I assume that ISAF's own casualties are more costly for the leadership in a troop-contributing country in comparison to Afghan civilian casualties, which are in turn more costly in relation to the costs of minimum response. The assumption $A_I^P > A_I^E$ is derived from the conjecture that domestic popular support for the war in Afghanistan weighs more in relation to the indigenous support for the international military presence.[84] In addition, drawing on Miller's (1995: 49) argument that people of same nationality have special obligations to fellow nationals, which they do not have to other human beings, I assume that the audience cost the government incurs when its choice of action causes a high number of own casualties is by far the greatest.

The game structure and payoffs for the Taliban and ISAF are shown in Figure 4.1.[85] All benefits and costs use the status quo as a reference point, and thus both the Taliban and ISAF obtain a payoff of zero in case the Taliban does not violate the peace.

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[84] The assumption is based on the following premises: 1) To be able to fight a war, a democratic country needs popular support; own casualties undermine popular support. 2) To be able to win against the insurgency, it is vital to have indigenous popular support; civilian casualties undermine indigenous popular support.

[85] As stated in 4.1, the model in this thesis keeps the structure of the Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz model on imposed economic sanctions; however I introduce some important differences regarding the payoffs. In contrast to their model, I assume that:

1. The violation benefit is not incurred *regardless* of the strategy the coercer chooses as long as the player who benefits from the violation does not yield;
2. I distinguish between direct and indirect violation cost. The coercer continues to suffer a direct violation cost *after* the player that has caused the cost yields to coercion;
3. *Every* action of choice the coercer uses has inherent audience costs as long as the other player does not yield.

Figure 4.1: A Model of Coercive Spoiler Management

Model adapted from Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz (2005: 491)

Taliban

Not violate   Violate

ISAF

Minimum
response

Enemy
centred
strategy

Population-centred strategy

Not   yield   Not   yield
yield   yield

Taliban: 0   B   B - M_T^E $-\alpha M_T^E$ $- M_T^P$ $-\beta M_T^P$

ISAF: 0 $-C - A_I^{MR}$ $-C - M_I^E - A_I^E$ $-C^i - \alpha M_I^E$ $-C - M_I^P - A_I^P$ $-C^i - \beta M_I^P$
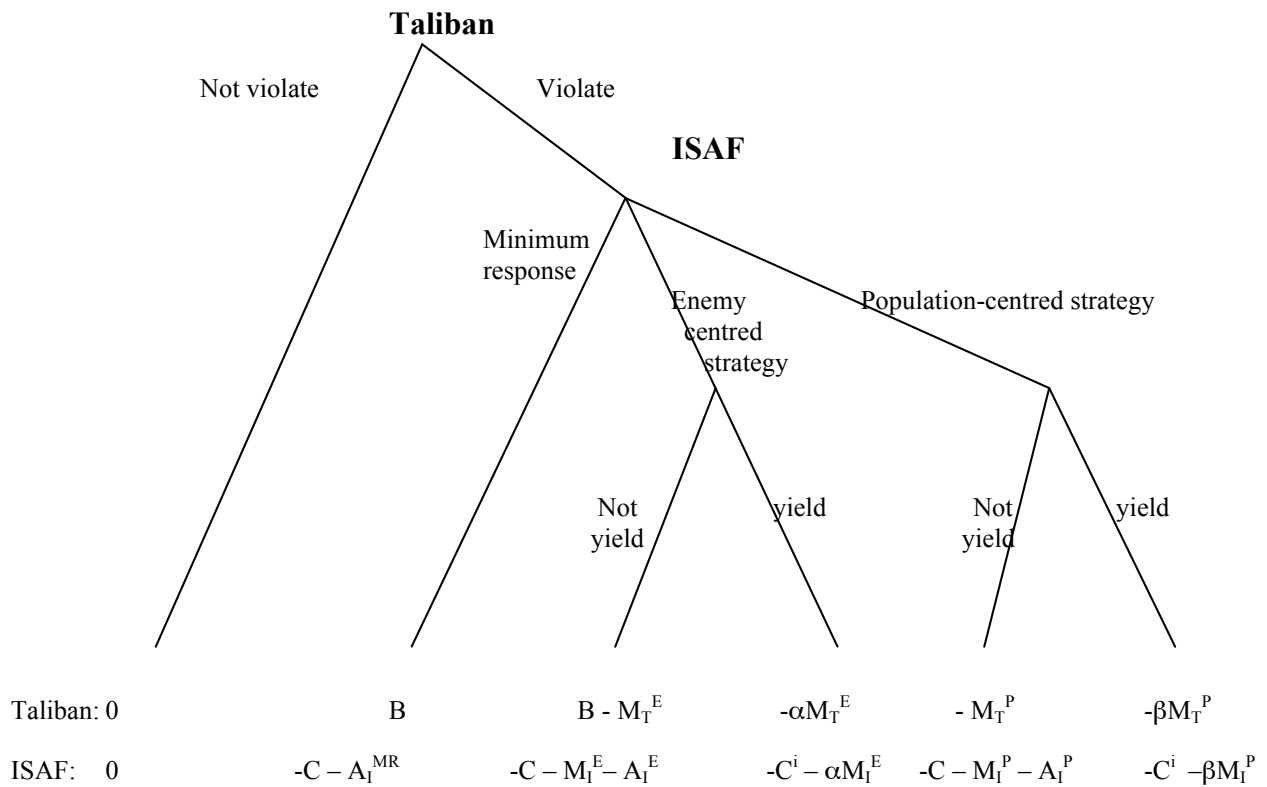
Key:

B = violation benefit to the Taliban if it violates the peace (and does not yield afterwards)

C = violation cost incurred by ISAF if the Taliban violates the peace and does not yield afterwards

C^i = violation cost incurred by ISAF if the Taliban violates the peace and yields afterwards

M_j^t = military cost incurred by party j if military action is of type t (j = T,I; t = P, E)

A_j^t = audience cost incurred by ISAF if it takes action t after the Taliban has violated the peace (t =MR, P,E)

α, β = constants $(0 < (\alpha, \beta) < 1)$

4.4. Preferences over Outcomes: the Taliban

The objective of this section is to explicitly state and discuss the assumptions regarding the Taliban's preferences over outcomes.

The best possible outcome for the Taliban is the one in which the Taliban violates the peace and ISAF chooses the minimum response, allowing the Taliban to obtain the payoff B and benefit from the violation. Recall that the model assumes that the Taliban is prepared to stand firm if ISAF opts for the enemy-centred strategy but it will yield in case ISAF implements the population-centred strategy, implying that $M_T^E (1 - \alpha) <$ $B < M_T^P (1 - \beta)$. This entails that:

(1)   The benefits the Taliban derives from violating the peace outweigh the costs it incurs when ISAF implements the enemy-centred strategy, and

(2)   The Taliban derives no violation benefit in case ISAF implements the population-centred strategy so that the insurgency loses its raison d'être.

Assumption (1) implies that the Taliban considers the threat of force imminent in the enemy-centred strategy to be insufficiently severe. Recall that the potency of a threat depends on i) the magnitude of a threatened punishment and ii) the character of demands made by the threatener (Hovi 1998: 15). The enemy-centred strategy, especially the use of close air support in military offensives, may have a devastating effect on the insurgents.[86] However, the guerrilla fighters can reduce the magnitude of a punishment by leaving the area of operation (taking refuge in the mountains or across the border in Pakistan) or by blending themselves with the civilian population. In addition, they exploit weaknesses of the enemy-centred strategy, such as collateral

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[86] For example, as a consequence of OEF military campaign in 2001, which heavily relied on air strikes, 8,000 to 12,000 Taliban were allegedly killed, approximately 20 per cent of the entire force. In addition, 7,000 were taken prisoners. Assuming at least two wounded for every person killed, it is calculated that the Taliban could have lost half their initial strength, which is, according to O'Hanlon (2002: 55), a point at which most armies start to crumble.

damage, to win the support of the population. Furthermore, noncompliance offers some benefits to the Taliban, such as war economy, local power holding etc. Therefore, the benefits of the violation seem to be greater than the costs incurred when ISAF effectuates its threat of force through the enemy-centred strategy, especially in the context where compliance with the peace does not offer any positive incentive for the Taliban leadership, only the exclusion from power and prosecution.

In contrast, if ISAF implements the population-centred strategy, the Taliban is not assumed to derive any benefit from spoiling the peace. Assume that ISAF, in offensive operations, applies force in a way that does not create grievances the Taliban exploits to recruit its rank and file. Further assume that ISAF establishes security forces bases among the population and thus creates a secure environment that makes it possible for a local government to function, and for international civilian actors to build capacities for the provision of essential services, good governance and economic development. Then, it is plausible to assume that, over time, the Taliban will lose popular support and thereby intelligence, logistics and replacement sources. The movement is assumed to lose its raison d'être. On the basis of the above, the Taliban is assumed to prefer to yield in case ISAF commits to the population-centred approach.[87]

Having discussed the model with regard to the sequence of decisions, the payoffs, as well as the Taliban's preferences over outcomes, I proceed with analyses under different assumptions regarding the nature of the information available to the players. In the next section I analyze the game under the assumption of complete information.

4.5. Equilibria Under Complete Information

The objective of this section is to examine the conditions under which a threat and use of force may work given complete information. The Taliban is thus assumed to know

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[87] Regarding the use of the term 'yield', see footnote 79.

(with certainty) ISAF's set of strategies and payoffs. Given this assumption, I turn to the game's equilibria.

Under the assumption that

(1) $A_I^{MR} < M_I^E + A_I^E$, and

$C + A_I^{MR} < \beta M_I^P + C^i$, where $(C - C^i = R)$, i.e.

(2) $A_I^{MR} < (\beta M_I^P - R)$,

that is, if $A_I^{MR} < \text{Min } [(M_I^E + A_I^E), (\beta M_I^P - R)]$, then ISAF will apply the minimum response if the Taliban violates the peace. Recall that the model assumes that $A_I^P > A_I^E > A_I^{MR} > 0$, therefore condition (1) is always fulfilled. Since condition (1) is inherent in the model, ISAF prefers to apply the minimum response to the enemy-centred strategy. This is explained by the following: as neither of the two options will induce the Taliban to yield, it is rational for ISAF to opt for the minimum response rather than for the enemy-centred strategy because the aggregate cost of the minimum response (which consists of audience cost) does not exceed the aggregate cost of applying the enemy-centred strategy (which consists of higher audience costs plus military costs).

If condition (2) holds, ISAF will prefer to apply the minimum response to applying the population-centred strategy. The population-centred strategy is assumed to induce the Taliban to yield, but its application requires enormous military costs (manpower, time and resources) for ISAF until the Taliban yields; in addition ISAF suffers the violation cost C^i (the violation cost (C) excluding the cost of damaged reputation (R)). Therefore, the minimum response will be ISAF's best option if (i) military costs of the population-centred strategy are substantial and (ii) the incurred violation cost is not significant.

If it is common knowledge that ISAF's payoffs satisfy conditions (1) and (2), (that is, if it common knowledge that ISAF's threat of force is insufficiently severe and empty respectively), then the subgame perfect equilibrium of the game is that the Taliban violates the peace and ISAF opts for the minimum response.

If

$$A_I^E + M_I^E < \beta M_I^P - (C - C^i), \text{ where } (C - C^i = R), \text{ i.e.}$$

(3) $A_I^E + M_I^E < \beta M_I^P - R,$

then ISAF will apply the enemy-centred strategy rather than the population-centred strategy in case the Taliban violates the peace. The enemy-centred strategy would be a preferred option when (i) the military costs of the enemy-centred strategy are small and (ii) the population-centred strategy entails large costs. Given the assumption $B > M_T^E$, the Taliban will prefer to violate the peace; however, because $B > M_T^E (1+ \beta)$, the Taliban would not yield.

Thus, if it is common knowledge that condition (3) holds (that is, if it is common knowledge that ISAF's threat of force is not sufficiently severe), the game's subgame perfect equilibrium is that the Taliban violates the peace, ISAF applies the enemy-centred strategy and the Taliban does not yield.

Finally, if

$$C > C^i + \beta M_I^P - A_I^{MR}, \text{ i.e}$$

(4) $R > \beta M_I^P - A_I^{MR}, \text{ and}$

$$C > C^i + \beta M_I^P - M_I^E - A_I^E, \text{ i.e.}$$

(5) $R > \beta M_I^P - (M_I^E + A_I^E),$

ISAF's best response is to apply the population-centred strategy if the Taliban violates the peace. If condition (4) holds, then ISAF prefers to apply the population-centred strategy rather than opting for the minimum response. If condition (5) holds, then ISAF prefers the population-centred strategy to the enemy-centred strategy. The population-centred strategy is the best option for ISAF in case (i) the cost of damaged

reputation is significant; and (ii) the military cost of applying the enemy-centred strategy would be almost as high as the implementation of the population-centred strategy.

If conditions (4) and (5) hold, then ISAF would apply the population-centred strategy if the Taliban violates the peace. Recall that the model assumes that the Taliban is prepared to stand firm if ISAF opts for the enemy-centred strategy but it will yield in case ISAF implements the population-centred strategy. On the basis of this assumption, and given complete information, it follows that the Taliban, foreseeing that ISAF's threat of force is both credible and potent, would not disrupt the peace because $B < (1-\beta)\, M_T^P < M_T^P$.

If it is common knowledge that conditions (4) and (5) hold (if it is common knowledge that ISAF's threat of force is both credible and potent) the game's subgame perfect equilibrium is that the Taliban does not violate the peace, anticipating that NATO/ISAF would apply the population-centred strategy, that is, that ISAF would opt for a comprehensive and properly resourced COIN campaign.

The model demonstrates that with complete information force cannot work. The threat of force might successfully deter the Taliban from violating the peace (if conditions 4 and 5 are fulfilled). That is, if ISAF credibly demonstrates its commitment to the population-centred strategy, the Taliban will not violate the peace in the first place. In contrast, if ISAF is not able to convince the Taliban of its commitment to the population-centred strategy, the threat of force will fail to deter the Taliban from violating the peace. When the threat of force has proved ineffective, the actual use of force will be equally ineffective: ISAF chooses either the minimum response (if conditions 1 and 2 hold) or the enemy-centred strategy (if condition 3 holds) that cannot induce the Taliban to yield and the belligerents end in a stalemate.

4.6. Implications

Given this conclusion it is plausible to assume that the resurgence of the insurgency might not have occurred if ISAF had been able to credibly demonstrate its commitment to the population-centred strategy. Note that in the early stages of international engagement in Afghanistan, in the aftermath of Operation Enduring Freedom, the security situation was tolerable. In 2002/3 the Taliban posed no serious threat (Traavik 2009 [interview]). The situation started to deteriorate in the second half of 2003. "In retrospect, 2005 appears as a watershed in the development of the insurgency" (Suhrke 2008: 219). Therefore, if the commitment of security actors to the population-centred approach had been undisputed in the early stages of the international engagement, the model predicts that the insurgency movement would not have gained the strength it has today.

However, neither ISAF nor the US-led Coalition managed to demonstrate credible commitment to the population-centred approach. Despite public announcements, it was common knowledge that the international community was not willing to bear the high cost of a comprehensive and properly resourced counterinsurgency campaign. The United States started neglecting Afghanistan as its focus on Iraq increased, while many NATO member states, faced with high audience costs of A_I^P type, have been reluctant to commit combat troops. The lack of troops and risk-averse operational culture indicated a lack of commitment. Given common knowledge that the promise/threat[88] of the population-centred approach was not credible, the Taliban resorted to violence to undermine the peace process from which it was excluded.

4.7. Conclusion

In order to examine the conditions under which the threat and use of force may be effective, I presented a game-theoretic model and analyzed it under the assumption of complete information. I recapitulate here the equilibrium results of this analysis.

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[88] The threat to the Taliban, but the promise to the population.

The Taliban will only violate the peace if the benefits associated with the violation exceed the costs. Under the assumption of complete information, this means that the Taliban will violate the peace if ISAF is not prepared to respond with a comprehensive and properly resourced counterinsurgency campaign (also referred to as the population-centred strategy in this thesis). If ISAF can credibly demonstrate its commitment to use force within a comprehensive counterinsurgency approach, the Taliban will effectively be deterred from violating the peace. This is because the Taliban, foreseeing that ISAF is committed to the population-centred strategy, will not violate the peace because peace violation will not lead to any benefits in case ISAF responds with the population-centred strategy.

Conversely, if the Taliban observes that ISAF is prepared to respond with (a) a minimum response or (b) the enemy-centred strategy, the Taliban will violate the peace because the benefits of the violation exceed the cost of noncompliance. In other words, the Taliban considers the threat of force imminent in the minimum response and the enemy-centred strategy to be insufficiently severe. Furthermore, when the threats of force prove ineffective, the actual use of force will also fail in compelling the Taliban to abide by the peace agreement.

5. The Coercion Game Under Incomplete Information

The previous chapter concludes that force, if it works at all, works at the threat stage. But can force work after the threat of force has failed and force has actually been used? The literature on economic sanctions demonstrates that coercion might work after the threat has actually been executed under the condition that (i) noncompliance was based on misperception and (ii) that misperception was corrected after coercion has been used (Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz 2005). Misperception is related to the threat assessment (the potency, credibility and contingency aspect).

In this chapter I examine this proposition by analyzing the model presented in Chapter 4 under the assumption of incomplete information. Put simple, I assume that the Taliban does not know with certainty how ISAF will respond to a peace violation. How does this uncertainty affect the outcome of the interaction?

5.1. Defining the Type of ISAF

I assume that the Taliban does not know what kind of opponent it is facing when the game begins. ISAF may be one of three possible types: weak (meaning that conditions 1 and 2 hold), casualty-shy (that is, condition 3 holds) or committed (conditions 4 and 5 hold). I further assume that the Taliban believes ISAF to be committed with probability p, casualty-shy with probability q, and weak with probability $1- p - q$, where $p \geq 0$, $q \geq 0$, and $p + q \leq 1$.[89] This is modelled by letting "Nature" make the first move in the game. This is a random move, which decides ISAF's type with the probabilities stated above. ISAF is assumed to be able to observe Nature's move, i.e. it knows its own type. In contrast, the Taliban cannot observe Nature's move, i.e. it does not know ISAF's type when the game begins, but it may learn its type by observing how ISAF behaves in the game. However, the Taliban knows the payoffs for each

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[89] In games of incomplete information, p and q are assumed to be common knowledge.

type of ISAF and therefore expects that violating the peace would cause ISAF to respond minimally if it is weak, to use the enemy-centred strategy if it is casualty-shy, and the population-centred strategy if it is a committed actor.

I proceed to determine the equilibria of the coercion game under incomplete information.

5.2. Equilibria under Incomplete Information

If the Taliban violates the peace, its expected payoff is $p(-\beta M_T^P) + q (B - M_T^E) + (1- p - q) B = B (1 - p) - p\beta M_T^P - qM_T^E$. On the other hand, if the Taliban does not violate the peace, it receives with certainty a payoff of 0. This means that it is rational for the Taliban to violate the peace only if the expected payoff of violating peace is higher than 0 (the payoff it receives in case it does not violate the peace), that is

$$p(-\beta M_T^P) + q (B - M_T^E) + (1- p - q) B > 0$$
$$-p(\beta M_T^P + B) + B - qM_T^E > 0$$
$$-p(\beta M_T^P + B) > qM_T^E - B$$

On the basis of the abovementioned, I conclude that it is in the Taliban's best interest *not* to violate the peace when the probability p for ISAF to be a committed actor is

(6)
$$p > \frac{B - qM_T^{E}}{\beta M_T^{P} + B}$$

In contrast, if

(7)
$$p < \frac{B - qM_T^{E}}{\beta M_T^{P} + B}$$

it is rational for the Taliban to violate the peace.

If condition (6) holds, the game has a pooling perfect Bayesian equilibrium, in which the Taliban does not violate the peace and the game immediately ends. ISAF has no opportunity to make a move and thus its strategic type is not revealed by the course of the game.

When condition (7) holds, the game has a separating perfect Bayesian equilibrium, in which the Taliban violates the peace. How the game will develop depends on ISAF's type. If ISAF is weak, it will respond minimally. If ISAF is casualty-shy, it will use the enemy-centred strategy. And if ISAF is committed to Afghanistan, it will use the population-centred strategy. By opting for one of the three possible strategies, ISAF will reveal its type. If ISAF uses the population-centred strategy, the Taliban will yield, otherwise it will persist to oppose the peace. In conclusion, this equilibrium demonstrates that the use of force *might* work, but only under specific conditions. For the use of force to be effective, ISAF must be a committed actor and implement the population-centred strategy.

Which of the two equilibria appears to be more plausible? For the pooling equilibrium to be likely the Taliban should be sufficiently convinced that ISAF is prepared to commit itself to the population-centred strategy. That is, the threat of the population-centred approach will be effective to the extent the Taliban attaches high probability p to ISAF being committed actor. Taking into consideration that ISAF is perceived to have incentives to go back on the population-centred strategy (see 5.4.1), I assume p to be rather small, the pooling equilibrium less plausible, and consequently the separating equilibrium more likely.

5.3. Updating Beliefs with Bayes' Rule

After ISAF's move, the Taliban may revise its perception of ISAF's type, i.e. it may update its prior belief of its opponent type in the light of new information. The Taliban acquires the new information by observing ISAF's behaviour during the course of the game; specifically what strategy ISAF applies after the Taliban has disrupted the peace (whether it will opt for the minimum response, the enemy-centred strategy or the population-centred strategy). If, for example, ISAF implements the population-centred strategy, the Taliban updates the probability distribution of ISAF's possible types so that the posterior probabilities become $p = 1$, $q = 0$, $1 - p - q = 0$.

The updating of prior beliefs on the basis of new information is possible by applying Bayes' rule, hence the Bayesian updating. Bayes' rule states the relationship between a set of conditional probabilities.

$$P(A/B) = \frac{P(B/A) \cdot P(A)}{P(B/A) \cdot P(A) + P(B/\hat{A}) \cdot P(\hat{A})}$$

P(A / B) = posterior probability of A, given B

P(B / A) = probability of B, given A

P(B / $\hat{A}$) = probability for B; given not-A

P(A) = prior probability of A

P($\hat{A}$) = prior probability of not-A

B = the new evidence

I now apply Bayes' rule to update the Taliban's prior belief of ISAF after ISAF's move. I first examine the case where

$$(6) \qquad p > \frac{B - qM_T{}^E}{\beta M_T{}^P + B}$$

A, Â and B are here defined as follows:

A = ISAF is committed

Â = ISAF is casualty-shy

Á = ISAF is weak

B = ISAF applies the population-centred strategy

When the game has a pooling perfect Bayesian equilibrium, it follows that

P(B / A) = 0

P(B / Â) = 0

P(B / Á) = 0

because ISAF does not get to make the move, as the Taliban does not disrupt the peace. Furthermore I have assumed that

P (A) = p

P (Â) = q

P (Á) = 1-p-q.

The application of the Bayes' rule gives the following result:

$$P(A/B) = \frac{P(B/A) \cdot P(A)}{P(B/A) \cdot P(A) + P(B/\hat{A}) \cdot P(\hat{A}) + P(\tilde{A}) \cdot P(B/\tilde{A})} = \frac{0 \cdot p}{0 \cdot p + 0 \cdot q + 0 \cdot 1 - p - q} = \frac{0}{0}$$

The result is undefined, which implies that Bayes' rule cannot be applied in this instance to update the Taliban's prior belief of ISAF's type. As ISAF does not get to make a move, the Taliban cannot observe its behaviour in the game and update its estimate of probability. However, it is reasonable to assume that in this instance the Taliban's belief of ISAF will be the same when the game ends as it was when the game started. As the course of the game does not give any new information to the Taliban, it is likely that the Taliban will continue to believe that ISAF is committed with probability p.

I now examine the case where

$$(7) \qquad p < \frac{B - qM_T{}^E}{\beta M_T{}^P + B}$$

This is a game with a separating perfect Bayesian equilibrium. As a result of the strategy ISAF has chosen to pursue, it follows that

P(B / A) = 1
P(B / Â) = 0
P(B / Á) = 0.

Furthermore, I have assumed that

P (A) = p
P (Â) = q
P (Á) = 1-p-q

The application of the Bayes' rule gives the following result:

$$P(A/B) = \frac{P(B/A) \cdot P(A)}{P(B/A) \cdot P(A) + P(B/\hat{A}) \cdot P(\hat{A}) + P(\tilde{A}) \cdot P(B/\tilde{A})} = \frac{1 \cdot p}{1 \cdot p + 0 \cdot q + 0 \cdot 1 - p - q} = \frac{p}{p} = 1$$

Given that ISAF uses the population-centred strategy, it follows (in this equilibrium) that ISAF is a committed actor. Thus,

- if ISAF uses the population-centred strategy, the posterior probability distribution becomes (p = 1, q = 0, 1− p − q =0);
- if ISAF uses the enemy-centred strategy, the posterior probability distribution becomes (p = 0, q = 1, 1− p − q = 0);
- if ISAF uses the minimum response, the posterior probability distribution becomes (p = 0, q = 0, 1− p − q = 1).

5.4. Findings and implications

In order to examine the conditions under which the use of force may work after the threat has been executed I analyzed the model presented in Chapter 4 under the assumption of incomplete information. I recapitulate here the equilibrium results of this analysis.

Under incomplete information, the threat of force may be effective provided that the Taliban and the population are sufficiently convinced that ISAF is committed to a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy. Deterrence from violation is the best possible outcome for ISAF; therefore, it is in ISAF's best interest, regardless of its type, to make efforts to convince the population and the opponent of its commitment.

Regarding the actual use of force, the model, analyzed under the assumption of incomplete information, predicts that force might work provided that the Taliban violated the peace acting on an erroneous belief that ISAF was not a committed actor. If the Taliban learns from ISAF's response that its calculation was mistaken due to the private information, the Taliban might reconsider its action of choice and yield. Therefore for force to work ISAF must convince the Taliban of its commitment.

5.4.1. Implications

The model identifies the issue of credibility of ISAF's commitment as crucial for the outcome of the counterinsurgency. For the threat of force to deter the Taliban from spoiling the peace, or the use of force to compel the Taliban to yield, one of two following conditions must be fulfilled: 1) the Taliban must know with certainty that ISAF is committed to the population-centred strategy, or 2) the Taliban must be sufficiently convinced that ISAF has such commitment. In other words, ISAF's commitment must be credible, in the sense that the Taliban places sufficiently high probability that ISAF, in case the Taliban acts as a spoiler, will respond with a comprehensive and properly resourced counterinsurgency campaign.

A credibility problem arises since ISAF is perceived to have an incentive to renege on its commitment to the population-centred strategy because the proper implementation is complex, lengthy and extremely costly. [90] In that context, ISAF is expected to have a particular challenge to maintain public support for protracted deployment of resources due to the 'guns *or* butter dilemma', especially when domestic constituencies do not perceive the insurgency as directly threatening nation's security (Mack 1975: 186). The option of bluffing commitment is unfeasible due to, at least two issues: first, "when man's life is at stake, it takes more than propaganda to budge him" (Galula 1964: 78); second, the contemporary media coverage reveals it (Hovi 1998: 32). Media expose the lack of political will and public support for a sustained and properly resourced counterinsurgency campaign, as well as what happens on the battlefield.

How can ISAF then make its commitment more credible? There are several strategic moves an actor can employ to raise the credibility of its commitment and thereby the probability to succeed (Hovi 1998: 32).[91] With respect to ISAF's commitment in Afghanistan, I discuss two following possibilities:

1. Eliminating options
2. Substitution

Using the former technique ISAF demonstrates that other options, i.e. the minimum response and the enemy-centred strategy are eliminated. This can be communicated by costly signals such as committing necessary resources to the theatre, and establishing security bases among the population. By doing so, the audience costs of the minimum response increase substantially, and thus minimum response ceases to be a viable alternative. Similarly, home constituencies will not tolerate the enemy-centred approach once they have "authorised" the population-centred strategy by supporting

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[90] The model assumes that the Taliban will yield if ISAF implements properly the population-centred strategy. In real life, success is not guaranteed – every strategy entails risk.

[91] For an overview and discussion on different techniques which may improve the credibility of threats see Chapter 3 in Hovi (1998).

the deployment of enormous resources to the distant theatre. In this way ISAF is expected to significantly increase the credibility of its commitment.

Using the latter techniques, ISAF might replace the population-centred strategy with another strategy that is more limited in scope. In this respect, I consider two possibilities:

1. The area of implementation of the population-centred strategy is limited to the most threatened and most populated areas.[92] (This technique is already recommended in COMISAF's Initial Assessment: 2009: 2-19.) In that way, the costs of implementation are reduced and thereby the incentive to renege on the commitment is also reduced.

2. The scope of the implementation is limited to one segment only: the training of indigenous forces to fight the insurgency on their own. In this way the cost and length of commitment may be significantly reduced and thereby the commitment appears more credible.

Finally, it is important to note that raising commitment is costly. In this context, the first alternative – eliminating options – is extremely costly. Taking into consideration that the costs are immediate whereas benefits uncertain, it is important for ISAF to ensure that the cost of commitment is not greater than the benefits incurred by defeating the insurgency (Hovi 1998: 51).

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[92] This strategy is expected to have negative effects – the insurgents are expected to relocate their operations. However, the relocation from the traditional area of operation weakens the insurgents because they may lose physical and political sanctuary; in addition they incur the cost of migration, renewed recruiting, and re-establishing a stronghold (COMISAF's Initial Assessment: 2009: 2-19).

6. Conclusion

The established military doctrine postulates that an insurgency cannot be defeated by conventional military operations that target the enemy's armed forces and advocate the so-called population-centred approach because the support of a civilian population is crucial in determining the outcome of a counterinsurgency. Empirical studies on Afghanistan confirm the limitations of the traditional military approach. With this as my point of departure, I set out to explore why international security actors, in particular the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), have failed to defeat the insurgents in Afghanistan. More specifically, I set out to examine the conditions under which the threat and use of force might work against the Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan. For this purpose, I developed a game-theoretic model and analyzed it under different assumptions regarding the information available to the belligerents. In this chapter I present the main findings.

Underlying the model are the following two assumptions: (1) the Taliban will violate the peace only if the expected benefits of the violation exceed the expected costs; and (2) the Taliban's incentive to violate the peace is curbed only when ISAF conducts a comprehensive and properly resourced counterinsurgency campaign (referred to in this thesis as the population-centred strategy). Given *complete* information, the model predicts, that a threat of force will effectively deter the Taliban from violating the peace if the Taliban knows that ISAF is committed to implementation of the population-centred strategy. Given *incomplete* information, the model predicts that the threat of force will effectively deter the Taliban from spoiler behaviour provided that the Taliban is sufficiently convinced that ISAF is prepared to implement the population-centred strategy.

As long as ISAF is not able to credibly demonstrate its commitment to a properly resourced, comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign, the Taliban, foreseeing that the threat is not credible, will act as a spoiler. Under *complete* information, when the threat of force has proved ineffective in deterring the Taliban from violating the peace the actual use of force will be equally ineffective. This is because the Taliban will only

defy ISAF's threat of force if this threat is insufficiently severe. Taking into consideration the character of the demands that is asked from the Taliban, the magnitude of the punishment ISAF inflicts on the Taliban when ISAF (i) simply defends itself (referred to as the minimum response in this thesis) or (ii) employs the enemy-centred approach does not exceed the positive effects of noncompliance.

However, under *incomplete* information, the model predicts that the use of force might be effective in curbing the Taliban's incentive to act as a spoiler. Specifically, the use of force against the Taliban might work if the following conditions are fulfilled: (1) the Taliban violates the peace because it erroneously believes that ISAF is not committed to the population-centred strategy; (2) ISAF in its response demonstrates credibly its commitment to the population-centred strategy; and (3) the Taliban corrects its belief about ISAF. In conclusion, the Taliban will cease to pose a threat to the peace process only if it is reassured that ISAF is a committed actor.

How do these findings contribute to the existing literature on the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan? First, the model clarifies why the military approach, which I refer to as the enemy-centred strategy, has not been effective against the Taliban. Second, the model suggests that the credibility of ISAF's commitment is an essential element for the population-centred strategy to work, thereby supplementing the literature arguing that military force alone cannot defeat the insurgency. Concurrently, my findings highlight the importance of proper resourcing that is also emphasized in the previous research; however, this thesis contributes by finding that proper resourcing is a necessary, yet not sufficient, condition for demonstrating credible commitment.

My model makes it clear that the credibility of ISAF's commitment is crucial for the outcome. Given this conclusion, the model entails important implications for ISAF's policy in practice. First, to end the insurgency, ISAF must convince its opponent as well as the population of its long-term commitment. Such commitment can be signalled by, first of all, a change in operational culture, deployment of necessary troops and resources to the theatre, and assurances about ISAF's staying power (through strong public support for a protracted deployment). Such signals are costly

and thereby credible. Alternatively, ISAF may raise the credibility of its commitment by limiting the implementation of the population-centred strategy territorially (to the most threatened and most populated areas), or functionally (focusing on the training of indigenous security forces).   Finally, taking into consideration (i) the cost of commitment to the population-centred strategy; and (ii) the fact that success is not guaranteed, ISAF must, before incurring additional costs, ensure that the benefits to be accrued by defeating the Taliban are greater than the expected costs of credible commitment.

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