

Issue Analysis # 2

Instructions

1. Select a current real world issue.
2. Write a short essay (1.5 spaced, 2 pages max) on how the current issue relates to principles and concepts covered in this course. The aim is to show your understanding of the subject matter and apply it to current events/business settings.
3. Submit your essay in PDF format to this assignment item.

Afghanistan and the United States

One of the most interesting examples of Game Theory in international relations in recent times was the situation in Afghanistan. We could see the development of a prisoner's dilemma situation where the rational actors involved (the US, the government in Pakistan, the Afghan government, the Taliban and regional players) did not cooperate with each other even though they would have benefited from doing so. This was because each actor would benefit from a long term peaceful outcome in Afghanistan but do not pursue that because they perceive unacceptable short term costs associated with that outcome.

Firstly let us talk about the United States. The US used to spend over \$45 billion dollars annually because of the war and lost a lot of its service members in the war. It would hugely benefit the United States to end the war as soon as possible. The Afghan government would be happy if the war came to an end because it would be able to invest the billions of dollars it receives from the international community on infrastructure, the economy and on the Afghan people who have suffered a lot for the last several years. The Taliban would also benefit from the end of the war because it also suffered a lot of fatalities during the course of the war. Pakistan also benefits because the end of the war would bring a lot of stability to its western border.

However, in spite of these huge benefits, all of these players were short sighted and saw only the negative consequences. The US was very suspicious of the Taliban as a negotiating partner. It felt that the Taliban might not be able to overcome the divisions in itself. Also negotiating with the Taliban would risk undermining the legitimacy of the elected government in Kabul. The Afghan government was against a reconciliation with the Taliban because of the deep animosity it had with the Taliban and the memories of the unpopular Taliban rule. Also, giving any kind of political legitimacy to the Taliban would threaten the current powers of the Afghan government. Also the international aid coming to the Afghan government might decrease with the end of the international military effort in Afghanistan.

The Taliban on the other hand used “never give up” slogans in its recruiting and military campaigns which would be undermined if it sought to pursue peace with the US and the Afghan government. And therefore this was of the major stopping points for the Taliban. Pakistan has certain strategic partners who would be majorly affected if the Taliban loses the power that it had and therefore it does not pursue peace in Pakistan with urgency.

However, in spite of all these roadblocks, long term peace was a very desirable objective for all the players involved and all parties would be better off. Therefore, this is a multi party example of the prisoner’s dilemma problem in international relations.