

4 *International Conflict and Cooperation: A Game Theoretical Model*

The U.N. format for the Geneva negotiations defined a cooperation problem. As defined by Keohane, "intergovernmental cooperation takes place when the policies actually followed by one government are regarded by its partners as facilitating realization of their own objectives, as the result of a process of policy coordination."¹ This case demanded coordination for mutual benefit of Soviet policies on military presence in Afghanistan and U.S. and Pakistani policies on aid to the mujahidin. In game theory terminology, the agenda implicitly defined troop withdrawal and termination of aid to the resistance as cooperative strategies and their opposites as noncooperative or defecting strategies. Hence the bargaining problem can be analyzed in terms of the formal game models that have been developed in the theory of international cooperation. The results of the negotiation generally confirm realist and neorealist arguments about the difficulty of cooperation, especially on security issues. The principal obstacle, however, seems to have been the continuing ideological opposition and mistrust between the superpowers, rather than the balance of relative gains among states, which realists see as the principal obstacle to cooperation.²

Most of the literature that uses game theory to approach problems of international cooperation does not apply it to specific cases except for purposes of illustration. Snyder and Diesing have developed a methodology for the application of such games to the study of specific international crises. I amend Snyder and Diesing's method to take into account certain criticisms of their work, as well as elements that they discuss but do not explicitly incorporate into their models. Snyder and Diesing attempt to uncover the "true" structure of each crisis by determining the preference ordering of each side. They note, however, both that actors may misperceive the situation, including the preferences of the other side, and that each side may be split among groups with different preferences.³

In the case under study here, the two sides at the table included pairs of states — the United States and Pakistan on one side, the USSR and the DRA on the other — each of which also had various domestic divisions and conflicts. Some of

these differences derived from bureaucratic constituencies, others from "epistemic communities," groups linked by a common paradigm for understanding the relevant political situation.

Furthermore, preferences changed over time as new leaders with different constituencies came to power, and individual actors learned from experience. Decision making was also affected by the actors' various images of their opponents.⁴ Even then, each side might dissemble its preferences and make threats that it had no intention of carrying out, trying to project a false image to its opponents to obtain a better result. Gorbachev in particular tried, even after he had secretly decided to withdraw the troops, to exploit the Reagan administration's conception of an aggressive and warlike Soviet Union. He continued to pretend that he might delay or reverse the withdrawal in response to apparent U.S.-Pakistani backtracking on their commitments.

Rather than attempt to identify a single preference ordering for each actor, I identify four such orderings on each side, each of which reflects both different subgroups and different images of that side held by the opposing side. The negotiation analysis thus comprises sixteen two-by-two games defined by these preference orderings. The analysis explains how changes in one side can cause coalitions to shift on the other and alter other aspects of the bargaining process.

Players and Strategies

The two actors — players — are the Soviet government and its Kabul clients on one side (represented by Kabul in the Geneva format) and the United States and Pakistan (represented by Pakistan) on the other. The Geneva agenda defined cooperative and defecting strategies for each side. In the theoretical literature these are known generically as *C* and *D*, respectively. The outcomes resulting from the choices of both sides are referred to by the strategy pairs, *CC*, *DD*, *CD*, and *DC*. Because the strategy choices available to the two sides in this case are not identical, I have adopted case-specific labels for the strategies and outcomes. When necessary for the argument, I shall clarify in context the relation of the case-specific terms to the general theoretical ones.

The Geneva agenda defined the Soviet-Kabul strategies as withdrawing the Soviet troops (*W*, the cooperative strategy) or keeping the troops in Afghanistan (*K*, the defecting strategy) and the U.S.-Pakistan strategies as ending aid to the mujahidin (*E*, cooperative) or continuing to arm them (*A*, defecting). The return of refugees was essentially a side payment to Pakistan. International guarantees would assure that the negotiations were in fact a two-player game, because each superpower would be responsible for ensuring that its client carried out its obligations.⁵

The negotiations addressed the timetable for the withdrawal, the timing of ending aid to the mujahidin, and the linkage of the two concessions. But in the course of the negotiation it became clear that these were pseudoissues used to delay or accelerate an agreement. Both sides knew that a short timetable for withdrawal linked to a "simultaneous" end of aid to the resistance was the only feasible outcome of the original Geneva process. The actual outcome — Soviet withdrawal but continued U.S. and Pakistani aid to the resistance — differed as a result of events that no one foresaw in the early 1980s, the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union.

Outcomes

The combinations of these two pairs of strategies define four outcomes. The results produced by a pair of strategies could vary, depending on the number and effectiveness of the Soviet troops, the amount and effectiveness of the aid to the resistance, and many less unpredictable factors. Both sides had continuous rather than discrete strategies available — a partial troop withdrawal, for example, or reduced aid — and the simplification here abstracts from that reality. The payoffs from each outcome could also vary with endogenous changes in preferences or the development of linkages between Afghanistan and other arenas of negotiation between the superpowers. We will bear these imperfections in mind, but the simplified model of four outcomes developed here provides a useful starting point for a discussion of the strategic framework of the negotiations.

The strategy pair *KA* is the status quo of mutual defection, which I shall call *War*: the Soviet troops remain, and the aid continues to flow. The U.N. process implicitly aimed at reaching *WE*, the cooperative outcome I shall call *Geneva Accords* (*GA*) or simply *Geneva*. At least at the start of the negotiations, each side would have preferred a version of the outcome known in the literature as exploitation — *DC*. For the Brezhnev regime exploitative victory was represented by *KE*, which I shall call *American Capitulation* (*AC*), under which Moscow could maintain its troops in Afghanistan indefinitely and external aid to the resistance would end. The United States and Pakistan preferred *WA*, *Soviet Capitulation* (*SC*), wherein the Soviets would withdraw their troops and aid to the resistance would continue. At the beginning of the Geneva process no one considered either exploitative outcome feasible.

These labels are useful shorthand, but they should not be taken literally. The Soviets ultimately did withdraw their troops without a corresponding U.S. commitment to end aid to the resistance, but they did not capitulate; rather, they increased arms deliveries to Kabul. The Geneva agenda had not defined such deliveries as a strategy subject to negotiation, but the United States had raised the

issue during the last round of negotiations, and it defined a different bargaining game over the next four years.

Preferences and Payoffs

When we look at several different preference orderings for each side, the games that the various combinations produce will provide a framework for understanding the negotiations and the policy debates on each side. These debates dealt with: the definition of national interest, or what the order of preference should be for the possible outcomes; the effects of troop withdrawal or termination of aid to the resistance on the political or military situation, and thus the effect of strategy pairs on the ultimate military-political outcome; and the "intentions" — the inferred order of preference — of the other side.

All those preference orderings for each side that satisfy certain conditions appear in Table 4.1. I assume, first, that each side will uniformly prefer the opponent's capitulation to its own. (The preference rankings of radicals or traitors did not affect foreign policy decisions.) I assume further that no one on either side loves war for its own sake: I consider only preference rankings where the capitulation of the opponent is preferred to war.⁶ Finally, I assume that neither side has a martyr complex; each prefers the Geneva compromise to its own capitulation.

These symmetrical assumptions eliminate most of the twenty-four possible orderings among the four alternatives. Of the five possible preference orderings that remain for each side, one is the equivalent of the game of *Chicken*, in which War is the least preferred outcome for each side. *Chicken* provides a model of brinkmanship, but it can be eliminated from the analysis of "low-intensity" or regional conflict, which involves no risk of annihilation for the sponsor states. The preference orderings used in the analysis are derived deductively rather than by inference from each actor's actions, avoiding the problem of circularity that Snidal observed with regard to Snyder and Diesing's own applications.⁷

Table 4.1 shows the four preference orderings for each side, in order from most to least aggressive. The first position I have called *Expansionist* on the Soviet side and *Rollback* on the American. It corresponds to the preference ordering in the game of *Deadlock*, in which there is no possibility of cooperation. I have called the second ordering on each side *Dealer*. This ordering corresponds to the game of *Prisoners' Dilemma*, which has been exhaustively analyzed as the prototype of the cooperation problem. Both of these preference orderings embody classical notions of Cold War conflict: capitulation of the other side is the most preferred outcome and one's own capitulation the least preferred. The first, more aggressive, position prefers a continuing war to the mutual restraint of a Geneva agreement. Such a position typifies an unconditional preference for a forward policy, what Herrmann

Table 4.1 Preference Orderings for Negotiators at Geneva Talks

Ordinal Payoff	Soviet-Kabul Positions				American-Pakistani Positions			
	Expansionist (Deadlock)	Dealer (Prisoners' Dilemma)	World Order (Stag Hunt)	New Thinking (Harmony)	Rollback (Deadlock)	Dealer (Prisoners' Dilemma)	World Order (Stag Hunt)	Fortress Pakistan (Harmony)
4	AC	AC	Geneva	Geneva	SC	SC	Geneva	Geneva
3	War	Geneva	AC	AC	War	Geneva	SC	SC
2	Geneva	War	War	SC	Geneva	War	War	AC
1	SC	SC	SC	War	AC	AC	AC	War
Dominant Strategy	K	K	None	W	A	A	None	E

Note: Soviet strategies are: keep troops (K), withdraw troops (W), American strategies are: aid resistance (A), end aid (E). Outcomes are: War = (KA); Geneva = (WE); Soviet Capitulation (SC) = (WA); and American Capitulation (AC) = (KE). Preference orderings are labeled both by their meaning in this context and by the theoretical game that results when both players have these preferences.

calls a "rollback" strategy, of trying to advance onto the opponent's terrain.⁸ As applied to Afghanistan from the Soviet perspective, such a preference ordering meant that the USSR must keep its troops in Afghanistan, whether for ideological reasons (to assure the future of the Kabul regime) or for geopolitical expansionism (to approach the warm waters of the Persian Gulf). As applied by those Americans whose opponents called them "bleeders," such a strategy demanded continued aid to the mujahidin, whether to inflict costs on — "bleed" — the Soviet Union, to roll back the ideologically abhorrent Kabul regime, or to build up intelligence assets for future intervention in Central Asia.

These positions also correspond to the "enemy image" posited by attribution theory. Although many factors, including security dilemmas, can inspire aggressive behavior, an actor tends to attribute an opponent's aggressive behavior to such innate characteristics as expansionism. Each side held such an image of the other at the beginning of the talks.⁹

The second position (Dealer) prefers victory to compromise and war to capitulation, but chooses a Geneva agreement, with its de-escalation and protection of both Soviet and Pakistani border security, to unending war. This preference ordering corresponds to the Prisoners' Dilemma game and Herrmann's "containment" strategy. It accepts realist conceptions of international conflict but still finds value in negotiation.

Each of these Cold War positions has a dominant strategy — an approach that a player prefers regardless of the opponent's strategy. Soviet Expansionists and Dealers prefer to keep their troops in Afghanistan (*K*) regardless of the American position ($\text{War} > \text{SC}$, and $\text{AC} > \text{Geneva}$); American Rollback proponents and Dealers prefer to keep aiding the mujahidin (*A*) regardless of the Soviet position ($\text{War} > \text{AC}$, and $\text{SC} > \text{Geneva}$).

The next preference ordering describes conventionally self-interested proponents of constructing a cooperative world order. This *World Order* hierarchy corresponds to the preference ordering in the game of Assurance or Stag Hunt.¹⁰ It could parallel Herrmann's "pax superpower" or "détente" strategies, depending on the actor's perceived capability to affect events. World Order actors prefer the Geneva compromise to all other outcomes because it would be a step toward institutionalizing cooperation between the superpowers; they still prefer war to capitulation, however. This preference order has no dominant strategy on either side.

The fourth ordering corresponds to the game of Harmony that would result if both players had this preference order. These orderings resemble Herrmann's strategies of "disengagement" (if perceived threat is low) or "fortress" (if perceived threat is high).¹¹ Proponents of New Thinking in the Soviet Union decided that the war in Afghanistan was a mistake. Not only did they consider the war unwinnable, they considered withdrawal more desirable than victory, which would tie the Soviets to a regime promoting a "revolution" they no longer

believed in themselves. New Thinkers wanted to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan, with American cooperation if they could, without that cooperation if they must. Withdrawal from Afghanistan (*W*, the cooperative strategy) is the dominant strategy in this preference ordering.

Corresponding views carried little weight in the U.S. policy debate. Immediately after the Soviet invasion some officials of the Carter administration wondered whether it was ethical to give military aid to the Afghan mujahidin, who might only be encouraged to persevere and die in a doomed struggle. Others suggested that the best policy would be to let the Soviets choke on Afghanistan without giving them any grounds to blame the United States for the consequences of their own misdeeds. Such arguments, which could reflect a preference ordering resembling *Fortress Pakistan* in Table 4.1, never received serious attention because the Soviet invasion was perceived as a threat to vital U.S. interests and a violation of basic norms. The Reagan administration — aided, in fact, by the Soviet invasion — was moving foreign policy debate to the right, and international opinion was firmly against the Soviet presence. Because Afghanistan was far from U.S. borders and no American troops were involved, the U.S. commitment seemed virtually risk free, if expensive. By the time the Geneva negotiations began, all American policymakers clearly preferred continued support of the resistance to acquiescence in the Soviet invasion. Congress voted unanimously to authorize such aid as long as the Soviet troops were present.

In Pakistan, however, a significant sector of the opposition argued that General Zia was pursuing "America's war in Afghanistan." Aiding the mujahidin exposed Pakistan to Soviet retaliation from which the United States neither could nor would defend it, and war would fail in any case, because the Soviets would defend the Kabul regime at all costs. The security of Pakistan could be assured, and the withdrawal of at least some Soviet troops ultimately obtained, only by recognizing the Kabul regime and ceasing provocations against Moscow. This position corresponds to Herrmann's "fortress" strategy, and I have so named it. It resembles the policy known as *bandwagoning* in international relations theory, in which a small power tries to protect itself from a larger one not by seeking allies against it (*balancing*) but by negotiating terms of protection. Anticipation of bandwagoning underlay the domino theory, which posited the need for firm U.S. commitment to the defense of such small states to prevent them from assimilation into the Soviet realm.¹²

The Games

Figure 4.1 shows the sixteen two-by-two games that result from the various combinations of the preference orderings. Down the positive diagonal — the one

U.S.-Pakistani Positions

Soviet Positions	Rollback (Deadlock)	Dealer (Prisoners' Dilemma)	World Order (Stag Hunt)	Fortress Pakistan (Harmony)																
Expansionist (Deadlock)	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 2.2 1.4</td><td>K 4.1 3.3</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 2.2 1.4	K 4.1 3.3	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 2.3 1.4</td><td>K 4.1 3.2</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 2.3 1.4	K 4.1 3.2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 2.4 1.3</td><td>K 4.1 3.2</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 2.4 1.3	K 4.1 3.2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 2.4 1.3</td><td>K 4.2 3.1</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 2.4 1.3	K 4.2 3.1
E	A																			
W 2.2 1.4	K 4.1 3.3																			
E	A																			
W 2.3 1.4	K 4.1 3.2																			
E	A																			
W 2.4 1.3	K 4.1 3.2																			
E	A																			
W 2.4 1.3	K 4.2 3.1																			
Dealer (Prisoners' Dilemma)	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 3.2 1.4</td><td>K 4.1 2.3</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 3.2 1.4	K 4.1 2.3	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 3.3 1.4</td><td>K 4.1 2.2</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 3.3 1.4	K 4.1 2.2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 3.4 1.3</td><td>K 4.1 2.2</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 3.4 1.3	K 4.1 2.2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 3.4 1.3</td><td>K 4.2 2.1</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 3.4 1.3	K 4.2 2.1
E	A																			
W 3.2 1.4	K 4.1 2.3																			
E	A																			
W 3.3 1.4	K 4.1 2.2																			
E	A																			
W 3.4 1.3	K 4.1 2.2																			
E	A																			
W 3.4 1.3	K 4.2 2.1																			
World Order (Stag Hunt)	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 4.2 1.4</td><td>K 3.1 2.3</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 4.2 1.4	K 3.1 2.3	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 4.3 1.4</td><td>K 3.1 2.2</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 4.3 1.4	K 3.1 2.2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 4.4 1.3</td><td>K 3.1 2.2</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 4.4 1.3	K 3.1 2.2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 4.4 1.3</td><td>K 3.2 2.1</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 4.4 1.3	K 3.2 2.1
E	A																			
W 4.2 1.4	K 3.1 2.3																			
E	A																			
W 4.3 1.4	K 3.1 2.2																			
E	A																			
W 4.4 1.3	K 3.1 2.2																			
E	A																			
W 4.4 1.3	K 3.2 2.1																			
New Thinking (Harmony)	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 4.2 2.4</td><td>K 3.1 1.3</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 4.2 2.4	K 3.1 1.3	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 4.3 2.4</td><td>K 3.1 1.2</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 4.3 2.4	K 3.1 1.2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 4.4 2.3</td><td>K 3.1 1.2</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 4.4 2.3	K 3.1 1.2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>W 4.4 2.3</td><td>K 3.2 1.1</td></tr> </table>	E	A	W 4.4 2.3	K 3.2 1.1
E	A																			
W 4.2 2.4	K 3.1 1.3																			
E	A																			
W 4.3 2.4	K 3.1 1.2																			
E	A																			
W 4.4 2.3	K 3.1 1.2																			
E	A																			
W 4.4 2.3	K 3.2 1.1																			

Note: Numbers are ordinal payoffs from 4 (most preferred) to 1 (least preferred). Pairs are (Soviet ranking, U.S. ranking). W (withdrawing Soviet troops) and E (ending aid to the resistance), the cooperative strategies, are on the upper left; K (keeping Soviet troops in Afghanistan) and A (arming the resistance), the defecting strategies, are on the lower right. Preference orderings are labeled both by their meaning in this context and by the theoretical game that results when both players have these preferences. Thus the four theoretical games mentioned are those that are found on the positive diagonal.

Figure 4.1 Game Theoretical Model of Bargaining in Geneva Talks

starting at the upper left — are the games of Deadlock, Prisoners' Dilemma, Stag Hunt, and Harmony. Within each game, the outcomes, arranged clockwise from upper left, are Geneva, SC, War, and AC. Table 4.2 summarizes the results of these games.¹³

Consider first the four games in the upper left-hand corner, among two types of Cold War antagonists on each side. In each of these games, not surprisingly, War is a stable equilibrium without coordination among the players, illustrating why the war broke out in the first place. In three of them — all of those in which at least one side has Deadlock preferences — there is no room for negotiation, and the game between Dealers is a Prisoners' Dilemma. Although war is a stable equi-

Table 4.2 Results of Theoretical Bargaining Games for Geneva Talks

		U.S.-Pakistani Positions			
		Rollback	Dealer	World Order	Fortress Pakistan
Soviet Positions	Ideological Expansionist	Deadlock. War is stable, preferred equilibrium of dominant strategies.	War is stable equilibrium of dominant strategies.	War is stable equilibrium as best U.S. reply to Soviet dominant strategy.	U.S.-Pakistani aid ends; capitulation is stable equilibrium of dominant strategies.
	Dealer-Realist	War is stable equilibrium of dominant strategies.	Prisoners' Dilemma. War is stable equilibrium of dominant strategies, but Geneva is mutually preferred. Both sides would defect from Geneva without sanctions.	War is stable equilibrium of best U.S. reply to Soviet dominant strategy, but Geneva is mutually preferred. Soviets will defect without sanctions.	U.S.-Pakistani aid ends; capitulation is stable equilibrium of dominant strategies.
	World Order	War is stable equilibrium of best Soviet reply to dominant U.S. strategy.	War is stable equilibrium of best Soviet reply to dominant U.S. strategy, but Geneva is mutually preferred. U.S. will defect without sanctions.	Stag Hunt. Coordination problem. War is stable status quo (not an equilibrium in pure strategies) if there is no communication, but Geneva is most preferred outcome for both and hence attainable by communication.	U.S.-Pakistani aid ends. Soviets respond by withdrawing troops. Stable Geneva result attained without communication.
	New Thinking	Soviets withdraw unilaterally. Soviet capitulation is a stable equilibrium of two dominant strategies.	Soviets withdraw unilaterally. Soviet capitulation is a stable equilibrium of two dominant strategies.	Soviets withdraw unilaterally. U.S. ends aid. Geneva attainable and stable without communication or sanctions.	Harmony. Both sides move unilaterally to stable Geneva result.

librium of the two sides' dominant strategies, both sides prefer Geneva to War. For each side, however, the initial move toward Geneva — troop withdrawal, ending aid — would leave it worse off if the other side did not cooperate. Furthermore, once Geneva was in place, each side could improve its position by violating the Accords unilaterally, which would induce the other side to reciprocate, leading to a resumption of the war. As in all noniterated Prisoners' Dilemmas, reaching the mutually preferred cooperative outcome and assuring its permanence requires confidence-building, coordination of the change of strategies, monitoring, or the establishment of rewards for compliance and/or sanctions for violations.

If several such regional conflicts exist, a stable, cooperative solution of one can increase the likelihood of cooperation in the others. Such "evolution of cooperation" in iterated plays of Prisoners' Dilemma is one route toward the creation of an international regime.¹⁴ Afghanistan, however, as Gorbachev noted in his February 1988 speech, was virtually the first regional conflict to inspire the United States and USSR to approach a cooperative settlement, and no such regime yet existed.

Taken as a whole, Figure 4.1 shows how political alliances can change with shifts in perception of the enemy. As long as actors with the first three preference orderings on either side believe they face a Rollback or Expansionist opponent, all would favor continuing the war and would find no room for negotiation (top three cells of the left-hand column for Soviet-Kabul negotiators, left three cells of the first row for U.S.-Pakistani negotiators).

Rollback ideologists would find nothing to negotiate whatever views the other side held, but they might become concerned if the Dealers and World Order advocates on their own side began to see the opponents as Dealers or World Order advocates. American Rollback proponents became seriously alarmed when others on their side began to take seriously Gorbachev's advocacy of international cooperation. World Order advocates who saw Gorbachev as a kindred spirit might even accept a Geneva agreement with weak sanctions, for in their view the USSR would have no motivation to violate the Accords. Among the arguments the Rollback proponents used were that the Soviets were actually Expansionists who were feigning an interest in Geneva — dissembling their preferences to evoke commitments from the other side.

On the other hand, Soviet advocates of New Thinking who believed that they were negotiating with American Dealers had an incentive to appear more hard-line. The stable solution with full information on both sides was Soviet Capitulation. If the Soviet New Thinkers, however, could convince the American Dealers that they were also Dealers, they could drive a wedge between the American Dealers and the Rollback proponents. The former would then be induced to ally with World Order advocates by committing themselves to ending aid as part of a Geneva settlement, which all Soviet positions preferred to uni-

lateral withdrawal. If the Americans discovered the Soviets' true preferences, however, the Rollback proponents and Dealers would reunite to resume aid to the resistance. The Soviets might threaten to stop withdrawing the troops — feigning a preference for War over SC — but would ultimately withdraw anyway, perhaps with some side payments or sanctions to make the result more palatable. This, in fact, is a reasonable account of what happened.

Bargaining Tactics

This model also enables us to analyze bargaining tactics, including various uses of force, threats, and signals. We must understand that a great deal of uncertainty surrounded what outcomes would result from each combination of strategies. One aspect of the outcome that concerned all sides, of course, was the shape of the future regime in Kabul. A Geneva settlement accompanied by the creation of a stable, neutral, interim government would have a different meaning from a Geneva settlement that left the Kabul regime in place with no agreement on a mechanism for replacing it, an approach that would consign the ultimate outcome to the fortunes of battle. In lieu of an agreement over the future government, each side negotiated the terms under which it would end flows of assistance that strengthened its own clients for the coming battles. Experts on both sides devoted much of their energy to forecasting the political outcome in Afghanistan of continuing the war, of escalating it, or of reaching one or another form of agreement.

The use of force and other signals of determination to continue the war were meant to demonstrate to the opposing side that success in the war was not likely. The strategy was designed to lower the perceived payoff from war for the other side. Ideological Rollback proponents or Expansionists sought a higher level of force, for they would not be satisfied until the other side concluded that capitulation was preferable to war; Dealers would apply force until the other side concluded that a Geneva agreement with acceptable terms was preferable to war. Until 1986, the Soviets launched a major military offensive before virtually every round of the Geneva talks. In an effort to persuade Islamabad to adopt the Fortress position and break its alliance with the United States, the Soviets also began a campaign of terrorism in Pakistan in 1984, killing hundreds of people in bomb explosions in Peshawar and other major cities. They also launched a few limited cross-border air attacks.

The United States and Pakistan responded in part by organizing a few covert attacks across the Soviet border in Central Asia. Although it was difficult, even impossible, for Washington to time mujahidin offensives precisely, U.S. negotiators usually assured that the opening of each session in Geneva was accompanied

by a press leak that provided figures for the aid to the mujahidin and asserted that it would continue.

These uses of "coercive diplomacy" were often interpreted by the other side as evidence of aggressive intentions, especially by ideologists who opposed the Geneva agreement. Dealers, meanwhile, had to use signals of various sorts to convey pacific intentions while simultaneously pursuing the war. A cooperative signal is an indication of willingness to compromise that is vague enough to be disavowed and does not impose any obligation upon the signaler. It is a means of testing the intentions of the other side. If Dealers are not sure whether they are in conflict with other Dealers or with ideologists, they can emit a signal to gauge whether there is a cooperative response. A clever hard-liner, of course — and each side's hard-liners credits the other's with cunning — can emit such a signal hypocritically, hoping to shift the onus of blame to the other side and to evoke an irreversible commitment. In an atmosphere of mistrust, a clear signal of desire to cooperate may be necessary to cut through noise, but such a signal may also suggest weakness and trigger more demands.¹⁵ This is what happened when the Soviets made clear their intention to withdraw from Afghanistan during the endgame of the Geneva negotiations.