QOS-AWARE POWER CONTROL AND HANDOFF PRIORITIZATION IN 3G WCDMA NETWORKS

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ABSTRACT - Quality of Service aware power control (QaPC) mechanisms that supersede to the traditional closed loop power control in Wideband Code Division Multiple Access (WCDMA) type of networks, such as the Universal Mobile Telecommunication System (UMTS), provide significant advantages over blind channel estimation mechanisms. These mechanisms integrate specific QoS requirements of users in power control decision yielding optimal use of resources available at the base. Similarly QoS aware prioritization of handoffs (QaHO) that leverage user QoS profile can also yield significant improvements over blind prioritization.

This paper presents two such QaPC and QaHO mechanisms which are based on the class of service, the bitrate, and the Service Degradation Descriptor (SDD) [14] as enabling QoS parameters. The performance of our combined QaPC and QaHO mechanisms obtained using the testbed described in [1], under a variety of load and traffic scenarios, and admission strategies is also presented. The results show that, when measured against blind mechanisms, the combined QaPC and QaHO significantly improves contract upholding of premium service mobile users, as well as improve resource utilization by more than 22%, while improving handoffs failures by 12 %.

KEYWORDS - QoS provisioning, Multimedia QoS support, Closed loop power control, Handoff prioritization

1. INTRODUCTION

The rational behind the Universal Mobile Telecommunication System (UMTS) evolution is the delivery of multimedia services characterized by stringent real time requirements, great sensitivity to delivery delay and packet loss, and the need for considerable *wireless* resources. UMTS, therefore, supports QoS provisioning through four (4) basic classes of service [2, 3]. Class 1: Conversational (high sensitivity to delay and jitter). Class 2: Streaming (medium sensitivity to delay, and high sensitivity to jitter). Class 3: Interactive (low sensitivity to delay, high sensitivity to round trip delay time and Bit Error Rate (BER)). Class 4: Background (no delay sensitivity, high sensitivity to BER). Each of these classes imposes different QoS requirement on the UMTS network which must be maintained during the lifetime of the corresponding connections.

Provisioning QoS over WCDMA-based air interface cannot be fulfilled solely by proper Admission Control [4] and efficient Scheduling [5]. This is due, on the one hand, to the inherent characteristics of the wireless link [6, 7], that is, user mobility and fading channel (time variations) [8-10], high error rates, inherent interference limited characteristics of WCDMA [11, 12], and low and varying bandwidth (2Mbps at most); and to the unexpected Soft Handoffs (SHOs) requests on the other hand. The former effects have been, until recently, catered for using closed loop power control mechanisms, that operate solely on the basis of channel gain, but that are not aware of QoS requirements of underlying connections. This *blind* mode of operation does not necessarily yield optimal power utilization, especially when other non premium connections in the system are willing to be *degraded*; that is, they are capable of adaptation, and willing to have their required bitrate/power reduced. While the later, that is unexpected SHOs, have been tackled using either reservation or prediction techniques [13].

Our work aims at showing that user willingness to be degraded can be used to augment both traditional closed loop control mechanism for congestion (the effects inherent wireless link effects described above) handling, as well as, to improve handoff by reducing the rate of dropping of SHO requests.

A Lucent patented framework for modeling user willingness to be degraded as a new QoS parameter has been presented in [14]. Therein, the Service Degradation Descriptor (SDD) is a number between 0 and 5; the larger the SDD is the more willing is the user/connection to be degraded, and eventually dropped. We adopt SDD in this work too, and use it together with the service class (1-4) and the bitrate as enabling QoS parameters for the mechanisms we seek to develop, that is a system that combines both QoS-aware closed loop power control techniques and QoS-aware prioritization of SHOs in WCDMA-based 3G networks. We also seek to quantify the benefits of the combination of our two QoS aware schemas from the perspectives of both the network provider (that is resource/bandwidth utilization) and the user (forced terminations, and rate of acceptance of SHOs).

Specifically, we aim at building mechanisms that **1.** cope with the inherent characteristics of the wireless link, and **2.** minimize the probability of dropping of Soft Hand offs (SHOs), while **3.** maintaining QoS requirements of active connections, and **4.** achieving high system utilization.

In [15], a QoS information model for making adaptation decisions is described, and in [16] a run time adaptation of UMTS services to available resources is presented. Nonetheless, to our knowledge, there hasn't been much work specifically on QoS-aware closed loops and QoS-aware prioritization. We had, however, touched upon this issue in [17]. Furthermore, the European Telecommunications Standard Institute (ETSI) specifications for WCDMA air interface suggest five actions to be taken respectively in the presence of congestion [11-12], that is five actions to cope with link degradation. These are:

-**Action 1**: congestion control is activated which reduces the bit rate of non-real time applications to decrease the congestion level.

-**Action 2**: if the 1st action is not sufficient, congestion control triggers the inter-frequency handover that moves some subscribers to less loaded frequencies.

-**Action 3**: if the 2nd action fails, some subscribers can be handed over to a different operator.

-**Action 4**: if the 3rd action approach fails, some subscribers will be handed over to a different system such as the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM).

-**Action 5**: consists of blocking subscribers of lower priority to protect the quality of the remaining ones.

Actions 1 and 5 aim, specifically, at rendering power control dependent on the QoS requirements. No specifics are given however. Furthermore, these actions can be considered as extreme cases of our more general adaptation strategy that aims at redistributing system resources using extra information, i.e., user willingness to be degraded.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: We first describe the combined SDD-based (QaPC and QaHO) mechanism. We then describe the simulations carried out using the testbed of [1] for performance evaluation. Results of the combined scheme are compared to a blind mechanism for congestion handling as specified in UMTS [16], which does not use other QoS attributes than the classification of the class into real time (RT) (i.e., classes 1 and 2) and non-real time (NRT) (i.e., classes 1 and 2) as in actions 1 and 5 described above. Finally, we present our conclusions and future works.

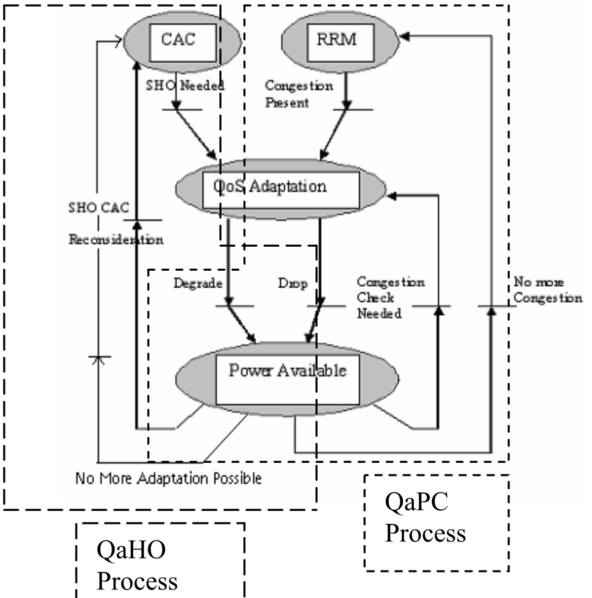

Fig. 1: Processes triggered to handle congestion and SHOs are baesd on a core QoS adaptation algorithm which uses SDD QoS descriptor, as well as class of service and bitrate.

2. COMBINED SDD-BASED QAPC QAHO PROVISIONING

Our new combined approach complies with WCDMA [11, 12] and 3GPP specifications [2, 3]. The rational behind it is to provide a basis for: **1.** Handling channel degradation in the WCDMA radio access network by dynamically triggering a **QoS Adaptation Algorithm** that supercedes to the closed loop power control, and **2.** Providing the incoming SHO requests, which would otherwise be rejected by the Call Admission Controller (CAC) due to lack of resources, with the necessary resources by triggering the same **QoS Adaptation Algorithm**. Fig. 1 describes our combined mechanism for handling congestion and SHOs.

The QoS adaptation algorithm is at the heart of the combined method, and is triggered to make room for an incoming SHO, and in the presence of congestion (that is the total power required by existing connections is less than the available power at the base: $\Sigma_i P_i < P_{max}$). Alternatively congestion is also defined as the lack of power for real time connections (RT) namely for class 1 and class 2 connections only. That is, $\Sigma_i P_{i \text{ in RT}} < P_{max}$. It is worth mentioning that both modes are supported in the testbed used for evaluation, and that congestion is declared after 2 unit time (ut) persistence of congestion symptoms (lack of power). This confers to the congestion handling process stability with respect to temporary short fades.

The adaptation algorithm resolves congestion in two phases. The two phases are applied differently in case of congestion handling and in case of SHO admission. In many ways, it is an improvement to the algorithm suggested in [17]. In accordance with the QoS framework defined in [14], each connection request by the User Equipment (UE) includes a QoS profile. The profile comprises the required bit rate R_i, the traffic class CL_i, and the Service Degradation Descriptor SDD_i. The latter takes values between 0 and 5. The larger the SDD is, the more willing is a mobile user to get degraded/dropped.

The Degradation Phase: This phase is solely based on the SDD. Iteratively, the active connection that has the highest SDD is the connection that gets degraded in terms of its bandwidth requirements as follows: one such connection with 384Kbps bit rate requirement will be degraded to 144Kbps. Similarly 144Kbps is swapped for 64Kbps, and 64Kbps is swapped for 16Kbps. 2 Mbps and 16Kbps connections are not degraded in this schema.

The Dropping Phase: This phase is invoked only when willing connections were degraded, but congestion persists. In this phase, dropping is based on:

$$F_i(t) = SDD_i * P_i(t) \quad \mathbf{(1)}$$

where $P_i(t)$ is the power requited by connection i at time t.

$$P_i(t) = C_i(t) * R_i \quad \mathbf{(2)}$$

where $C_i(t)$ is the cost (power per bit) for maintaining bitrate R_i for connection i; it embodies time variations of the channel [1]. $F_i(t)$ is high for connections requiring much power and at the same time more willing to be degraded. Iterating through class 4, 3, 2, then 1, connections with high $F_i(t)$ are dropped until congestion disappears.

To confer fairness to the dropping phase, connections with similar $F_i(t)$ are considered according to their cost $C_i(t)$ first, then according to their arrivals time.

As mentioned earlier the QoS adaptation algorithm, just described, is invoked to provide the necessary bandwidth for SHO requests that normally would not be accepted due to lack of resources/power. Two cases are distinguished depending on the class of service of the SHO request: **1. NRT:** if the degradation of exiting connections is not enough to collect the necessary resources/power, the SHO request is rejected. **2. RT:** the necessary resources/power will always be provided by degradation first then dropping.

It is worth mentioning a prediction phase is undertaken by the testbed before the actual degradation/dropping phase of connections takes place.

3. NUMERICAL RESULTS

The evaluation of the proposed combined approach is carried out using the WCDMA compatible testbed described in [1]. This testbed allows for a variety of user/connection arrival patterns with UMTS compatible QoS profiles (classes, bit rates, speed, etc.) as well as SDD, to be injected. It also allows for a variety of admission and congestion signaling strategies to be setup. Using this testbed we benchmark our proposed combined approach, against a basic combined non QoS-aware congestion handling mechanism that conforms UMTS classical dropping [16], and a non QoS-aware SHO prioritization mechanism. Actions in this basic combined mechanism (BA) are triggered solely by poweravailability regardless of QoS attributes of current connections (see Fig. 2).

Iteratively connections consuming largest amounts of power are dropped until the total power of remaining active connections becomes less than P_{max} (the maximum available transmit power to a UMTS Base). It is worth noticing that the cost (power/bit) is not used in BA either.

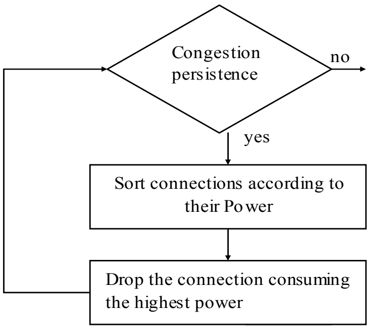

Fig. 2: QoS provisioning in BA mechanism. SHO requests are treated like new connections.

Specifically, we measure average dropping per class, SHO acceptance rate, and average bandwidth utilization for BA versus combined QaPC and QaHO under two load scenarios: a steady increase (A), and sudden increase (B) as in Fig. 3. To this end, two series of experiments: series A and series B (5 runs exactly in each series) were carried out on a Pentium III (728 MHz) with 128MB of RAM running Windows XP using the testbed. These experiments consist in launching the testbed simulations for 300 unit time (ut), corresponding to 20 minutes real time, for each run. Then averaging all collected measurements for each series separately over the five runs.

In each run, the testebed is loaded with 100 initial connections to bring it to an initial close to congestion state. P_{max} (see Table 1) as well as other physical layer parameters have been carefully chosen to yield congestion around 100 connections. Subsequent connections are thrown in according the following traffic models: call requests are generated for series A according to Poisson distribution with a rate of 2 connections/ut during the 300 ut. As for series B, a burst of 5connections/ ut is generated between ut 50 and 100 (see Fig. 3). The initial position in the cell of a new call, as well as its class of service CL, and its SDD are generated randomly. For each call, the bitrate R, the speed V, and the call duration CD are assigned according to the class. For the purpose of all simulations a 10% overload corresponding to NRT traffic is used. A summary of the traffic model, physical layer parameters, and testbed admission strategy is given in Table 1.

Physical Layer Parameters	E/N=18DB W=3.84Mcps P_{max} =35 W (for 100s of users) C_{max}= 2.5mW/bit
Traffic Parameters	CL=1, R=2Mbps, CD=60ut, V= 0km/h CL=2, R=384Kbps, CD=30ut, V=60 km/h CL=2, R=144Kbps,CD=30ut,V=100 km/h CL=3, R=64Kbps, CD=4ut, V =120 km/h CL=1, R=16Kbps, CD=64ut, V=160 km/h Queuing timeout: 2 ut for all connections. SDD random
QoS adaptation triggering	2 ut congestion persistence
Degradation	384Kbps→144Kbps 144Kbps→64Kbps 64Kbps → 16Kbps. 2 Mbps and 16Kbps connections are not degraded
CAC strategy	NRT overload is 10% of the total available power

Table 1: Main experimental setting parameters.

Although Fig. 3 shows the arrival patterns for both series A and B, due to space shortage we will show only the graphs corresponding to series A, that is simulation under a steady arrival pattern. The results obtained for series B will nonetheless be given.

Fig. 4 summarizes the average connection dropping per class for the combined QaPC and QaHO versus BA, for series A. In BA, premium traffic of class 2 is heavily penalized when congestion occurs, while with the combined QaPC and QaHO, premium traffic that is classes 1 and 2 experience less dropping, thus maintaining QoS requirements for critical traffic. Similar results are obtained under series B.

Moreover, as shown in Fig. 5, an improvement of 12% is obtained for the combined QaPC and QaHO for SHO requests. This improvement reaches 19% for series B. As illustrated in Fig. 6, combined QaPC and QaHO gives a total 22% more resource/power utilization than BA with series A, and a staggering 25% more utilization is obtained for series B. The results clearly show that our combined QoS aware congestion and SHO handling is superior to the mechanism suggested in [16], in all respects.

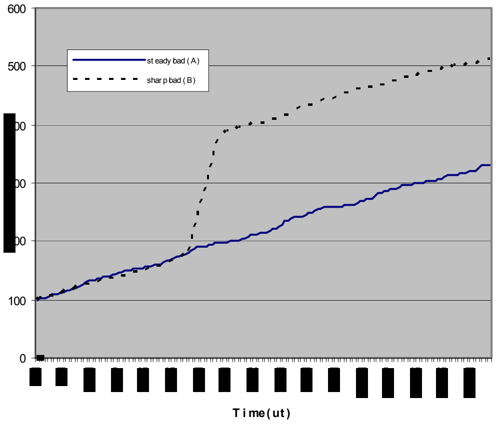

Fig. 3: Arrival scenarios: steady(A) and unexpected sharp (B) load at 50 ut.

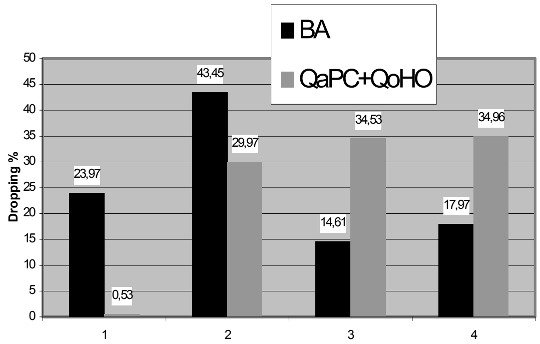

Fig. 4: Average dropping rate per class obtained for series A, for combined QaPC and QaHO versus BA.

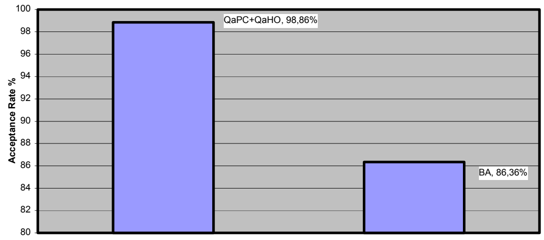

Fig. 5: SHO acceptance rate for combined QaPC and QaHO versus BA obtained with series A.

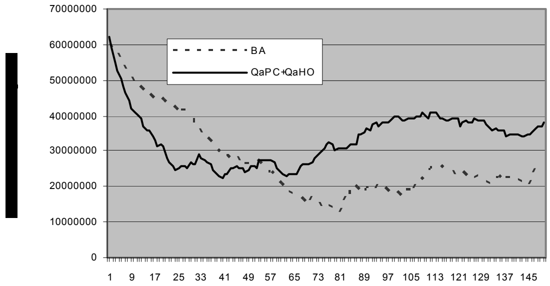

Fig. 6: Resource utilization: combined QaPC and QaHO vs. BA.

4. CONCLUSION

We have presented a QoS aware mechanism for power control and Handoff in 3G WCDMA networks. We have used bitrate, service class and Service Degradation Descriptor as enabling QoS parameters. Numerical results obtained using a WCDMA-and UMTS compatible testbed, show that our proposed QoS aware mechanism significantly improves QoS contract upholding for premium mobile users, as well as increase resource utilization, while improving SHO acceptance. Current investigations are focusing on integrating BER and queue length as extra enabling QoS parameter for our approach; as well as, evaluating this mechanism in presence of distributed admission strategies.

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