Adam Smith’s Invisible Hand vs. The Taliban

Bottom-Up Expeditionary Diplomacy in Fragile States – Best Practices from the Civilian Surge in Afghanistan

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Abstract

The U.S. civilian and military surge in Afghanistan is over and the process of transition to full Afghan Government control and eventual withdrawal of conventional forces has proceeded according to the 2014 timetable agreed upon by the Afghan Government, U.S. policymakers and the international community. There is much public debate on what has been accomplished or not in the last thirteen years as the U.S. and international community counter a complex insurgency, a violent attempt to overthrow the democratically elected Afghan government. Academics, foreign aid critics, think tank analysts, journalists, media pundits, military officials and former civilian and military surge participants are contributing to this growing Revisionist and negative debate, arguing that the U.S. Counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy was a sustainability failure and Afghanistan will inevitably return to the pre-2001 levels of insurgent control and instability. The COIN strategy operated along a three-pronged assistance: security, governance and development. The emerging and continuing revisionist debate maintains that this strategy incorporating economic growth, agriculture, governance, health and education into COIN’s clear-hold-build-transition timeline has been a wholesale failure. Realistically there are numerous instances of failure to bring about the desired COIN end state goal of legitimizing and strengthening Afghanistan’s central government and extending its writ outside the capital, Kabul. However, as the COIN revisionist bandwagon grows in popularity with America’s weariness of the Afghan war and trepidation over involvement in possible future conflicts, it is imperative to pause and take a more balanced view of what was achieved in the early stages of COIN and apply those lessons learned and best practices to current and future U.S. Government deployments in fragile states. Those critics who don’t believe the United States and international community will find themselves in the not too distant future, confronted with challenges in strategic countries or regions where populations are ethnically and tribally fractured, poor, terrorized by threats from various sources and vulnerable to terrorist organizations, may want to reassess their perception of current world realities.

The primary purpose of this paper is not to determine directly whether or not the billions of dollars spent in Afghanistan in governance and development were well spent in relation to COIN results on the ground. Rather, this paper sheds light on that key question by providing compelling evidence of how setting conditions and promoting free market enterprise, as theorized by the father of modern economic theory, Adam Smith, stabilized conflict zones in Afghanistan, a fragile state. This paper documents the

These joint civilian-military units conducted “Expeditionary Diplomacy” outreachs with Afghan partners to promote the generation and growth of Afghan human institutions and institutional processes in the form of: traditional Afghan tribal decision making bodies called jirgas; traditional (tribal) forms of representational community leadership, i.e. village mayors (maliks); Afghan government-led district level agricultural extension agents and their services; and creation of village level farmers and traders associations (cooperatives). These culturally appropriate human institutions and institutional processes provided the framework from which Afghan villagers were able to pursue their own economic gain and thus reject the insurgent (i.e. Taliban) influence which discourages participation in a free market economy.

Given the fundamental change in the economic behavior, institutions being promoted, it is useful to step back at this point and review some of the basic premises of modern capitalistic thought. In his 1776 classic, “An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,” Adam Smith theorized that as people pursue their own individual economic self gain in the marketplace, their individual actions are guided by an Invisible Hand resulting in Beneficial Social Orders for the entire society. In a sense, this is what the programs under review sought to achieve. Led, as it were, by an Invisible Hand, each of the four communities represented in these case studies experienced the Beneficial Social Order of stability; a reduction in violence and a return to the “normal” function of society. How? By crafting inclusive economic development opportunities through Afghan institutions which not only develop the Afghan government’s capacity to deliver services to its people, but also keeps Afghan government accountable to its citizens. This is the key to strengthening a fragile state.

The U.S. and international coalition of 67 International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) member nations had some resounding successes stabilizing traditional, insurgent influenced societies through dialogue, community empowerment, job and market creation, and empowering Afghan provincial and district governments to delivery services and be accountable to their citizens. Though lost in the emerging revisionist debate to dismiss the Afghan COIN experience a failure, these stabilization intervention success stories need to be documented, analyzed and applied to future deployments in regions of the world experiencing violent conflict among poor and ethnically fractured societies. These best practices illustrate what “right looks like” during those initial steps to analyze and build successful governance and development program interventions, offering the best chance of stability in fragile states and for effective transition to democratically elected national governing authorities in insurgencies.

As 2014 draws to a close, the United States and international community are carefully considering how best to craft interventions in response to several complex, sectarian, ethnically and tribally divided fragile states in strategically important regions around the world. Perhaps the principles of Adam Smith’s Invisible Hand can illuminate for diplomats, aid workers and military commanders how best to craft effective expeditionary diplomacy efforts in strategically important areas before crisis flashpoints emerge using the lessons learned and best practices from the Afghanistan fragile state experience.

Introduction

During my last tour in Afghanistan at Embassy Kabul, I was tasked with interviewing departing civilian field staff who participated in the historic 2009-2011 Civilian Surge to collect and document their best practices and lessons learned. Though I was not able to conduct exit interviews with all deployed staff consisting of well over 1,000 civilians, I was able to conduct a solid representational sampling. In my estimation, four of these exit interview case studies illustrated a common thread of success as
impoverished Afghan communities caught in conflict zones, were allowed to participate in their own economic and security destiny against the forces of a resilient and intimidating Taliban insurgency.

All four case studies from 21st century Afghanistan mirrored the 18th century economic principles of Adam Smith explaining human behavior in another emerging economy of a weak and violence ridden state, the United States of America during its Revolutionary War. Specifically, Smith, wrote in the 1776 (and fifth edition in 1904) “An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations” that as individuals in the marketplace focus locally on pursuing their own economic self gain, the Invisible Hand guides the actions of farmers/traders and merchants in socially beneficial ways. Modern economic theorist, Dr. Jonathan Wight of the University of Richmond, expands on Smith’s analysis stating that the pursuit of economic self gain must be channeled through “appropriate human institutions” and “institutional processes” in order for beneficial social order to emerge. The four case studies presented in this paper illustrate what appropriate human institutions and institutional processes looked like in Afghanistan, 2009-2011, and the resulting beneficial social order that emerged. Each case study demonstrates COIN’s desired end state: enhancing the government’s legitimacy, by connecting the people to their government and the government to their people. Specifically, the five appropriate human institutions and institutional processes included:

- The creation of jirgas, ethnically and tribally inclusive community decision-making body working in tandem with an existing non-inclusive Afghan government sponsored decision making body.
- Resurrecting the traditional leadership model of the village mayor, i.e. the “malik,” to represent local citizens’ interests to their government.
- Consolidating farmers’ economic bargaining power by creating agricultural co-operatives for villagers and local business owners to advance economic development opportunities.
- Injecting Afghan company sourced improved vegetable seeds into insurgent held areas through Afghan District level agricultural extension agents thus jump starting the role of the Government’s agricultural service delivery to its citizens.

In each case study, Adam Smith’s Invisible Hand guided the actions to individual farmers, traders and merchants to produce the unintended “beneficial social orders” of stability: individual economic advancement; strengthening the capacity of the Afghan government to deliver services to its people; making the Afghan government more accountable to its citizens; reduction of inter-tribal and ethnic tensions and increasing citizens participation with their local government on issues such as governance, development and security.

ADAM SMITH’S 18TH CENTURY “INVISIBLE HAND” AND 21ST CENTURY CIVILIAN SURGE IN AFGHANISTAN

As the President said last night, the United States is meeting the goals he set for our three-track strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The military surge has ramped up pressure on al-Qaida and Taliban insurgents. The civilian surge has bolstered the Afghan and Pakistani Governments, economies, and civil societies, and undercut the pull of the insurgency. The diplomatic surge is supporting Afghan-led efforts to reach a political solution that will chart a more secure future.

By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, [a farmer/trader] intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.

Published in 1776, the same year the young United States of America ratified its Declaration of Independence from the British Empire, Adam Smith presented his analysis of how emerging nations build
wealth (and Stability) through division of labor and wages, agricultural productivity and trade. Smith is forever immortalized for his assessment of how the Invisible Hand leads to an overall, though unintended, beneficial social order as individuals focus on pursuing their own economic self interest. Per Wight’s study of Adam Smith, the metaphorical Invisible Hand represents the unseen instincts of human nature that motivate and direct behavior. Channeled through appropriate human institutions (and institutional processes), the Invisible Hand can generate a spontaneous and beneficial social order. Wight defines an appropriate institution as one that aligns incentives of the individual with those of society.

Sometimes, however, appropriate institutions can be disastrous for the society since societies change with time. For example, 18th Century Europe had in place the human institution of property rights ensuring that sons would inherit property, not daughters. Such a human institution was appropriate for the time to ensure adequate defense against invaders. Wight continues; however, as time progresses and societies change, Europe changed its outdated property rights (human institution) to better serve society’s interest to have resources flow into the most productive hands. Therefore, Smith’s Invisible Hand does not ensure the best outcome will result if the wrong institutions for the times are in place.[v]

At first glance, Smith’s analysis of the Invisible Hand fits nicely into the narrative of emerging Western, democratic societies, not a historically isolated tribal society such as Afghanistan with a small minority of the population belonging to an ultra-conservative form of Islam, i.e. the Taliban. However, Smith’s 18th century analysis of the “Invisible Hand” in emerging societies can provide insight for Expeditionary Diplomats to understand human behavior and how to set conditions in fragile states which promotes the equitable pursuit of individual economic interests, a force stronger than the chaotic insurgent attraction. For traditional societies, the hope of increasing personal economic gains to better the lives for families is stronger than the insurgent authoritative worldview which stifles commerce and collective, ethnically inclusive decision making. As communities look to their government to represent their interests in pursuing emerging economic advancement, governments are forced to be more accountable and transparent, less likely to favor one ethnic group over another.

WHAT WAS THE CIVILIAN SURGE IN AFGHANISTAN?

Our overarching goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future. To meet that goal, we will pursue the following objectives within Afghanistan. We must deny al Qaeda a safe haven. We must reverse the Taliban’s momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government. And we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan’s security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan’s future… These are the three core elements of our strategy: a military effort to create the conditions for a transition; civilian surge that reinforces positive action; and an effective partnership with Pakistan[vi].

Whether at the District Support Team (DST), Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) or the Regional Platform level, creating and sustaining gains in governance and economic development will take creative solutions, and given the level of investment over the past ten years, a mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of our efforts[vii].

We need to work with the Afghan government to refocus civilian assistance and capacity-building programs on building up competent provincial and local governments where they can more directly serve the people and connect them to their government[viii].

Following President Barack Obama’s December 1, 2009 directive to conduct joint civilian and military surges in Afghanistan to defeat al-Qaeda, over 1,200 civilians representing nine US government agencies continued to deploy to Afghanistan to work joint governance and development operations with US and
NATO military units throughout Afghanistan. Most of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces had a provincial level civilian-military team, a Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT). By late 2009, a new initiative sent civilian-military units to remote “key terrain areas” representing the lowest reach of the Afghan Government, the district level. District Support Teams, or DST’s, though a construct from the US experience in Iraq, were reminiscent of the 1960’s Vietnam experience under the US Government’s Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program, or CORDS program. This unique hybrid of a civilian-military structure was used by the United States in its “Pacification” counterinsurgency program to strengthen the South Vietnamese Government from the Communist North Vietnamese Government. Not since the Vietnam CORDS program, have so many US civilians been deployed with military units to conduct governance and development counterinsurgency operations (COIN.) Ideologically, the Afghanistan Civilian Surge followed Secretary of State Clinton’s priority to elevate the role of Diplomacy and Development along with Defense - a “smart power” approach to solving global problems.

During his June 22, 2011 evening address to the nation, President Obama announced the beginning of the US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The next day, Secretary of State Clinton announced the civilian surge had reached its height, at 1,200 civilians, on track to achieve its goals. Of note, the 1,200 civilians participating in the surge brought expertise in: agriculture, development, infrastructure, health, economic development, rule of law, stabilization and sub-national governance capacity building programs. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in its September 8, 2011 audit estimated that the cost of the civilian surge cost U.S. taxpayers nearly $2 billion since 2009.[ix]

By 2012, in response to the gradual drawdown of US military forces and the corresponding closure of District Reconstruction Teams (DST’s), civilians were gradually pulled back to regional capitals where their focus was one of “Transition” and capacity building of Afghan Government officials in provincial budget planning, formulation and execution. By 2013, the closure rate of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT’s) has accelerated more rapidly than originally planned, due to conversations and commitments beyond this author’s purview. The Afghan Government leads the “Transition” process stemming from concerns that PRT’s and DST’s functioned as “Shadow Governments,” thus weakening the Afghan State’s ability to plan, formulate and execute their national budgets down to the provincial level, impeding Afghan sovereignty. By the end of 2014, if not sooner in reality, the final PRT will close and the historic civilian surge will be a subject in future foreign affairs history books.

A CASE FOR EXPEDITIONARY DIPLOMACY

This paper documents the efforts of four joint U.S. civilian and U.S. Army elements working with their Afghan counterparts to create “appropriate human institutions and institutional processes” during the civilian-military surge campaign in Afghanistan, 2009-2011. Hence, these appropriate human institutions and institutional processes provided a framework from which Afghans dialogued to make collective decisions on the distribution of scare aid resources, express their grievances, compete and obtain a fair price in the agricultural marketplace, received agricultural advice and assistance and gained a voice in their economic destiny.

Not having a previously written script to follow in Afghanistan, these four civilian-military units worked in different geographical areas devoid of any significant Afghan government control or influence beyond that of a district governor. Further, most district governors had no budget from Kabul from which to fund a staff or programs. Significant tribal tensions, insurgent intimidation, basic subsistence farming, and an absent operating commerce-based economy to speak of, were typical of all four operating areas in the early stages of COIN operations.
The term “Expeditionary Diplomacy,” though not a trademark, is a buzzword used by former Secretaries of State, governance and development professionals describing the need for diplomats to move out from the walls of the embassy and engage with the local population to find creative solutions in complex, conflict zones. From my experience, “Expeditionary Diplomacy” is the most effective form of diplomacy needed in today’s complex operating environment calling on unique individuals who possess not only practical technical skills sets but who also possess the interpersonal skills necessary to understand a complex operating environment and communicate effectively with key stakeholders in complex operating environments.

Case Study One

The district of Spin Boldak, in Kandahar Province’s southeastern corner, was an anomaly in Afghanistan’s turbulent south during the course of 2010. Despite its location astride key lines of communication for coalition, as well as insurgent, resupply in and out of neighboring Pakistan, the district had little to report in terms of coalition-insurgent activity and, most fortunately, not a single serious coalition casualty that year. The relative calm of the border district permitted coalition commanders to focus troop strength elsewhere in the south.

With fewer NATO troops at its disposal than might otherwise be deemed necessary for a border region with a population standing officially at 100,000-150,000, our coalition strategy was to enjoy the fruits of Spin Boldak’s stability and relative calm.

According to a prevailing view in the field, district stability was dependent on a tribal equilibrium underpinned by the force of personality, and numerous troops, of the local Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) chief. This narrative held that the ANSF commander was himself an Achekzai tribesman, a traditional tribal leader possessing the prestige and authority with which such a position is endowed.

Supporting this analysis was a local governance arrangement that recognized a distribution of shares among the two dominant, traditionally violent tribal rivals, the Achekzai and Noorzai. Perceived to reflect demographic realities, the balancing of each tribe’s claims in both the community decision making bodies, i.e. the District Tribal Shura and District Development Assembly, was held as a pillar of local security. This perceived demographic reality demanded equal apportioning of any development assistance only between the two tribes, the Achekzai and the Noorzai.

Often justified as necessary to ensure the delicate balance between the Achekzai and Noorzai, the position of District Governor was held by an outsider; since 9/11 primarily a member of President Karzai’s Popalzai tribe. The local tashkeel (civil service organizational chart) was thereby satisfied but with marginal impact on local affairs.

This was the accepted view of Spin Boldak when our civilian-military District Support Team (DST) was established in late 2009: a stable, representative tribal arrangement reflected district government, supported by a capable local Afghan National Security Force finding authority in the tribal basis of its command. Though coalition challenges to this analysis emerged during the last quarter of 2009, the basic narrative remained intact despite questions about the integrity and tribal favoritism of the local Afghan National Security Forces, in particular.

Within this analytical framework, the DST was forced to confront a number of contrary findings, primary among them:

- The Achekzai and Noorzai after thirty years of conflict and internal displacement could no longer
claim tribal exclusivity in Spin Boldak district.

- The main local Afghan National Security Force element and its Achekzai commander, Colonel Abdul Razik, rather than viewed as a tribal authority was felt by many, including within the Achekzai, to be a divisive factional leader.

As allegations surrounding Spin Boldak’s Afghan National Security Forces commander have been widely reported on,[xi] this paper will look at the demographic realities of the two unrecognized and unrepresented tribes in Spin Boldak district, a sizable population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the Kuchi nomadic tribe numbering according to some estimates at over 100,000.

Having settled in Spin Boldak, either while fleeing post-911 violence in neighboring provinces, or attracted by the border’s economic opportunities while returning from earlier exile in neighboring Pakistan, the district’s IDPs of diverse ethnic and tribal origins to include the quasi-settled nomadic Kuchis, were a substantial community. To the Achekzai and Noorzai, however, they were “outsiders” presenting a competing claim on resources and privileges. If these communities harbored deep mutual suspicions, they could at least agree on one thing: the imperative to restrict others from decision making circles and thus receipt of what limited government and donor assistance existed.

For our DST, a significant but disenfranchised population posed not only a latent threat to local stability, but also to efforts for the Afghan government to connect and extend its authority to the Spin Boldak district population. It was failure to date in the latter arena that was partly fueling the insurgency in the South and sustaining insurgent freedom of movement thought the district. This was particularly so in outlying communities where the narrative of tribal harmony was found wanting. Addressing the enfranchisement of IDPs and Kuchis thus became a priority for our DST.

It was determined that a first step for our DST was reducing reliance on the District Shura and District Development Assembly, both of which institutionalized existing monopolies favoring the Achekzai and Noorzai tribes. Imposing reform on these community groups was not an option and would have risked direct confrontation with Achekzai and Noorzai elders, whose continued cooperation was critical. On an occasion when the issue of Shura reform was raised, the District Development Assembly chairman proclaimed, “not over my dead body will they (the IDP’s and Kuchi) sit in my Shura.”

Though reducing reliance on the District Shura and District Development Assembly was as an internal matter for our DST, a local vehicle was still necessary for prioritizing development needs and obtaining indigenous approval-ownership of community development projects. Marginalized to a certain extent by his outsider status in Spin Boldak and lack of support from higher levels in the Afghan government, our DST turned to the Afghan District Governor for support.

Not beholden to the district's status quo of Achekzai-Noorzai tribal dominance[xii], the Afghan District Governor proved sensitive to IDP and Kuchi needs; whether out of a desire to gain leverage over established local power brokers or a desire to better the community remained an open question.

Under the District Governor’s leadership, a new advisory committee was established called the "Commission". The Commission’s stated purpose was not to replace either the District Shura or District Development Assembly’s, but rather to offer the district governor his own venue in which Spin Boldak district residents could have their needs heard through their own representatives.

To this new community forum, the heads of the District Shura and District Development Assembly along with other influential Noorzai and Achekzai elders, who either could not be ignored or were seen as forces for change, were invited by the District Governor to participate in the Commission. More importantly, so were representatives of the communities making up the IDP population and the Kuchi camps; their first
official recognition by the local Afghan district government.

Henceforth, it was "Commission" endorsement, rather than the District Shura-District Development Assembly Shura which held weight with our DST, particularly where U.S. Military funded community development projects were concerned. To further the normalization process, our DST ensured IDP and Kuchi representation at coalition events, attended their respective community-level shuras accompanied by district officials, and coordinated their attendance at relevant Government of Afghanistan sponsored activities, especially those involving provincial or national level officials from the Kabul.

Not long after the Commission was operational, the chairmen of the District Shura and the District Development Assembly attempted to influence the composition of the Commission, but their efforts fell short. The number of tribal elders seeking inclusion in the new Commission, even from within the two dominant Achekzai and Noorzai tribes, exceeded the capacity of the old guard to resist. Finding himself increasingly redundant in local circles, the head of the District Development Assembly soon vacated his position, his departure allowing for more accommodating attitudes to emerge. Still a challenge, but with his main partner in obstruction gone, the district Shura leader was more easily managed.

The lifespan of the "Commission" was not long, reaching its natural limits by October 2010 due to a number of factors (e.g. It had no official Afghan Government recognition from Kabul.) However, with the environment seemingly more permissive, the District Governor decided to tackle reform of the District Shura. The District Governor was emboldened by an earlier announcement from the Kabul central government that “Shura Reform” would be a feature of a new Kabul governance initiative. In time, the reformed Spin Boldak District Shura opened up new seats for the previously disenfranchised IDP and Kuchi populations and received official recognition from Kabul. Though not a perfect reflection of the population demographics, leaders of the newly enfranchised IDP and Kuchi groups were satisfied with the outcome.

Gauging the immediate impact of Spin Boldak's District Shura expansion in quantifiable terms would be difficult. In some respects, it was a remedial step, rather than a real advancement; in the early days of the civilian surge, addressing decade-old neglect was par for the course. But if measurable dividends were still to be seen, our DST’s efforts engendered tremendous goodwill within the newly enfranchised communities, and the profile of the district government was increased. More significantly, within the directly affected communities, the prestige of elders was immeasurably enhanced by the District Shura outcome.

Case Study Two[xiii]

Dand, a rural district of 165,000 residents, is located between Kandahar City and the Registan desert bordering Balochistan Province, Pakistan. Dand District is an arid to semi-arid agrarian region with some small plot agriculture and erratic irrigation via underground canals and wells allowing one wheat growing season per year. Dand district is comprised of Durrani Pashtuns, chiefly the Popalzai (over 50%) of President Karzai’s tribe, Barakzai, Noorzai, Alikozai as well as several permanent and nomadic Kuchi population centers.

As of June 2010, Government of Afghanistan’s Dand district officials held little sway south of the Tarnak River, which slices Dand district in half. The Dand district government consisted of: the District Governor; three government line directors representing health, agriculture, a law clerk and six (6) “maliks,” the equivalent of village mayors in traditional Pashtun society. International Coalition forces in Dand included the U.S. Army’s 1-71 Cavalry unit of the 10th Mountain Division providing security, development and governance assistance following handover from Canadian Forces.
Unity of Effort - Team Dand: In order to function successfully, how we as civilian-military Team Dand were to work together was the precursor to reaching our strategic and tactical goals in Dand district. There could only be one guiding mission: clear the Dand of insurgents, hold the cleared space from insurgent control and infuse economic development project strategies behind clearing operations. Once stability (i.e. reduction of violence and a return to society’s normal function) held, these economic development strategies such as agricultural production for sale, engine repair, tailoring, and related jobs would solidify the security gains allowing Team Dand to transition out of the district. I overlaid what I brought to the effort as a “soft effects” (as opposed to kinetic operations) enabler within the bigger picture of successfully connecting the local population to the Afghan Government. To connect the Dand population to the Afghan government, Team Dand had to focus efforts to drive a wedge between the population and the insurgency and fill that void with a new perception for the average villager that they can withstand and defeat the insurgency. Team Dand were seamless and holistic in our process of working together. Unified, Team Dand was a group of civilian-military enablers focused on bringing the villages of Dand into the fold of the Dand district government. We began by building relationships with traditional village leaders through the process of working with these villages to improve their local conditions in security, governance and development. We focused on controlling the perception of the population by customizing our approach based on what they showed us, intentionally and unintentionally, and enabling them to decide to work with us.

Identifying and building an Afghan appropriate Human Institution: Early on in our interactions with the Dand population, Insurgents planted Improvised Explosive Devices (IED’s) placed along strategic roads leading to Team Dand’s forward operating bases. The high rate of IED emplacement was an indication of Team Dand’s lack of influence on the local villages. Dand’s District Governor held little influence outside the Dand district administrative center. Insurgents intimidated Dand district officials by sending harassing “Night letters” threatening district officials to leave their posts or face insurgent reprisal. Less than five schools were open in the vicinity of the district administrative center and only six villages were represented by their village mayors, the “maliks” responsible for bringing news, needs requests and grievances to the Dand District Governor and his staff of line directors.

Team Dand began to exert influence through daily, regular, dismounted patrols, speaking with village elders, local representatives and merchants to gathering information on local security and economic conditions, grievances of the local population and who the population trusted to solve their problems. Within two months, the data we collected on local conditions revealed that assisting local communities with infrastructure project assistance could facilitate better dialogue with communities, spontaneously generate economic growth opportunities and elevate local leaders back to their traditional roles in this Afghan society as those who represent their communities to the local government.

For centuries, the Pashtun tribes of Dand district have always prided themselves as shrewd businessmen, responsible for delivering negotiated rewards back to their clans and villages. However, thirty plus years of civil war and a religious extremism had torn the social and traditional fabric of Afghan society. Experience showed that “wanting to help the Dand people” did not provide a return on the investment. Doing development projects for the Dand community never resulted in a “magical return of appreciation.” Doing “top down” development projects belittled the Pashtun Dand communities. We had to find a way to bring Dand leaders to a perceived negotiation table with us as we elevated the role of their District Governor. If we were to provide projects, we needed to receive something of equal or greater value to us in order to gain the respect of the elders, per the Pashtun worldview. A Pashtun elder would take all that is provided to him and offer nothing in return if his counterpart is perceived as weaker or not respecting that which he has to offer. It was our position that presenting weak terms early in the relationship building process would handicap our efforts in the long run. If you are deemed as an equal,
with something to offer, “business” can expedite and solidify the relationship through the perception from the average villager as being one who is worthy, conveyed by the malik in bringing home the negotiated rewards. Our review of the culture, history and human nature show us these patterns of behavior and this dynamic has been studied, indirectly, in social psychology and organizational behavior literature.[xiv]

Team Dand conducted the first local community meeting, i.e. *Jirga*[xv], allowing the U.S. Army Dand Commanding Officer to speak directly to local Dand elders on issues related to security and eventually larger buy-in decisions from villagers on economic development projects. Regular *jirga* meetings were conducted at the district center, receiving motivated village elders and eliciting their help in forming a representational government. Farmer focused *jirgas* were conducted in the villages and eventually a district-wide farmer *jirga* was held at the Dand district center drawing the largest gathering ever at the Dand government center. Farmer *Shuras* here were even conducted south the Tarnak River, in concert with clearing operations, in areas which had no history of Afghan government contact. In such isolated communities previously untouched by the Afghan government, local villagers lived as subsistence farmers with food deficits and life-threatening disease and water contamination.

The role and influence of the traditional malik, or village mayor, has greatly diminished over the past thirty years of war and subsequent extremism. Ideally, the malik’s role is held in high regard as the “voice of the people.” Distinct from a village elder, the trusted malik position is vital for connecting the population with Afghan government at the district and provincial levels. Team Dand worked with respected elders and district political leaders to mentor maliks in their dealings with the district government to bring goods and services to the Dand communities. Election of maliks became one of Team Dand’s metrics of stability, determining which villages were cooperating with their district government. If a holdout village was denied inclusion due to a questionable malik whose activities may be in support of the insurgents, we leveraged projects to a neighboring village in an effort to isolate the population and force them to change their leadership. When Maliks or village elders tried to play games with Team Dand to unduly enrich themselves during project implementation or if insurgents returned to the area and IED’s showed up again, all projects would be halted until cooperation was restored.

Team Dand partnered with the Dand District Governor to conduct the first District Development Assembly (DDA) meetings, modeling for maliks and other village leaders how to nominate projects for their representative villages. DDA’s represent the Afghan central government’s initiative to establish a mechanism for mobilizing communities into the forefront of development planning and implementation. As Dand DDA groups became more comfortable in their new roles, they were provided a budget of $2,000 U.S. dollars with which to nominate, collect bids and close out their community infrastructure improvement projects. The District Governor and line directors would meet with the DDA’s on a weekly basis to achieve regular population interaction allowing the general population to receive benefits and services from their local, representative government.

**Evidence of Smith’s *Invisible Hand* guiding the actions of those seeking economic self gain in the market place producing the unintended consequences of beneficial social orders:** As stability increased in Dand, benefits that positively affected economic self gain such as seed distribution, trade establishment, market development and training in mechanics, repair and other trades were introduced at different times along the timeline, depending on the psychological state of the village. Farmers were provided improved seed, fertilizer, tools and other facilitators that would make it possible for them to begin to achieve self-sufficiency in crop production and, eventually, produce a surplus. It was here, with stability within sight, that the forward inertia of farmer’s actions began to dictate outcomes. No longer burdened with fear or security/safety concerns, farmers biggest concerns took the shape of universal business concerns. How large is my surplus? What are the current market price levels? How can I get
more of my product to market? What are my neighbors growing? Can I expand my market? Can I increase shelf- life of my products to get a better price in the future?

**Dand District Transformed**: Shortly after the start of 2011, (approximately 6 months after arrival), all of Dand’s 32 schools were open, all 50 of Dand’s villages were represented by a Malik and a fully functioning district government was meeting weekly to hear grievances and represent the interests of its people. Dand District became the model of stability in all of Kandahar Province and was the first Kandahar district to transition to full Afghan security control in July 2012. It remains Afghan secured and Afghan led. It’s all about relationships and how business is conducted.

**Case Study Three**

As the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Advisor in Regional Command East’s province of Wardak, USDA’s mission was to strengthen the emerging Afghan government’s capacity. To accomplish this mission, I worked with my U.S. Military and Civilian colleagues to mentor and guide Afghan civil servant officials of the Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (DAIL—the provincial arm of the Cabinet level Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock) in creating a provincial strategy for agricultural-based economic growth. This Afghan government led provincial strategy included: creating export opportunities; increasing the quality and quantity of crop yields through vocational trainings and the introduction of improved farming practices; to strengthening private sector agribusiness job options.

USDA worked with the DAIL Director and his team to assist receptive farming communities, the municipal capital and “stable enough” adjacent districts, by hosting farmer jirga meetings with a view to stand up farmer associations among population groups demonstrating a strong desire to participate in economic expansion. Afghan government led agricultural extension service delivery improved the overall image of the Afghan central government as the Wardak population witnessed their government delivering services to them.

**Location and Security Conditions**: Wardak province of roughly 500,000 people is fairly unique, situated less than an hour’s drive to Kabul, close in proximity to the largest airport in the country for export, semi-reliable electricity, and large domestic consumer base for agricultural goods. Kabul has an expanding population of at least 4 million people in need of agricultural produce.

Insurgent presence and kinetic activity in Wardak has had adverse economic impacts: inability to capitalize on abundant and inexpensive energy from the hydroelectric project in Chak district; constant road repair due to improvised explosive devices (IED’s) in the roadway culverts which cripple economic trade routes; and the constant insurgent intimidation of government officials preventing officials from reporting for duty and fulfilling their tasks. Tribally, Wardak province is predominantly Pashtun with Uzbeks, Hazaras and Tajiks people groups represented. Some levels of tribal tensions exist, stemming from past history of tense tribal relations.

**Building Afghan Government Capacity to Manage and Direct the Donor Aid Deluge**: Wardak province, like many provinces in Afghanistan, received millions of dollars of international donor assistance over the past decade to rebuild their infrastructure, enhance economic development opportunities and deliver some level of basic services to the population. As the Afghan government matured, the challenge became how to quickly build the capacity of Afghan civil servants in Wardak to effectively manage and direct all donor funded agricultural-based economic development activity in their province. To assist, USDA mentors and DAIL officials created a Provincial Strategy which required international donors, like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Military’s Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) to seek approval from the DAIL before any agriculturally-related projects were implemented, such as “Cash-for-Work” projects.
Traditionally, Cash-for-Work projects were conducted to offer fighting age males the opportunity to work for wages at a higher rate than insurgents were offering them to place Improvised Explosive Devices (IED’s). Further investigation, however, proved this theory erroneous. Cash-for-Work was indeed a potential tool that could be leveraged to reduce the susceptibility of fighting age males working with the insurgency, though not completely eliminating the economic incentive to accept insurgent employment. Simply employing hundreds of fighting age males to dig ditches or rebuild village structures for eight hours a day would only feed a village for a day. Upon further investigation, existing Cash-for-Work projects were undermining the historical and social traditions of the Wardak people; work they had organized for themselves without receiving financial remuneration. Cleaning and maintaining the traditional irrigation canal systems (kareez) rebuilding mosques and common use buildings, and digging deeper and new wells were all examples of historic traditions the USDA and DAIL officials decided against endorsing as Cash-for-Work projects. Instead, USDA and DAIL officials advocated Cash-for-Work projects with a heavy vocational training element to move villages toward economic self sufficiency. Thus, a trend toward village economic self sufficiency was in line with the Afghan government’s strategy for agriculture-based economic growth.

Farmer Cooperatives, an Appropriate (Afghan) Human Institution:

One of the objectives of the Afghan government’s Provincial Strategy for Economic Growth was creation and expansion of export opportunities for Wardak Province produced agricultural goods. To achieve this objective, DAIL, USDA and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched Wardak farmers’ associations, a low-cost, high impact program to unite farmers in getting the best price and developing new markets for their crops. The challenge, however, was overcoming the worldview held by Afghan farmers that “collectivizing” had negative implications due largely to the Communist legacy of involuntary land re-allocation and state control of agricultural markets during the Soviets era in Afghanistan, 1979-1989. Any mention of farmers’ associations, collective bargaining or mixing yields with neighboring farmers for efficient transport was viewed skeptically. It was unfortunate as this destructive and defeatist line of thinking does not allow a farmer to capitalize on the extremely advantageous opportunity that an association affords a typical farmer. If an Afghan farmer were a member of an association, he would have the bargaining power to demand higher prices from the trader or, ideally, ban together with other farmers to share transportation costs of delivering goods to pre-determined buyers, much as modern agricultural associations function in other parts of the world.

Added to the fear of “collectivizing,” the DAIL Director and his staff feared a 3,000 member Wardak farmers’ association would pose a challenge to his legitimacy as the director of DAIL. Instead of looking at the farmers’ association as complementary to his goals as the director, he viewed the association with fear and frustration. To help the Director overcome his fear, I leveraged my relationship with him to help him understand the proper role of a government institution in agriculture and the need for a quasi-private association to spur economic growth from my personal experience as an almond farmer belonging to a farmer’s association in central California. The DAIL Director and I shared a common knowledge of agricultural issues in Afghanistan, and I used this trust to push him toward acceptance of the concept of an association in spite of his high level of trust and skepticism.

The Invisible Hand guides the actions of farmers and merchants in the marketplace to produce unintended Beneficial Social Orders: Eventually, a strong farmers’ association was stood up in Wardak province’s very diverse Jalrez District. Primarily Pashtun in makeup, the Jalrez farmers’ association was multi-tribal led by a Hazara man with Uzbek and Tajik members. The Jalrez farmers’ association experienced tremendous cooperation among its leaders to get their agricultural produce to outside markets. With the economic incentive of export economic potential as the communal goal, the Hazara,
Pashtun, Uzbek, and Tajik members were extremely cooperative in putting their tribal squabbles behind them and a layer of tribal stability in the district emerged as a by-product of their drive toward economic self gain. In addition, other farmers and merchants benefited economically from the newly formed farmers’ association business activities as demand grew for expanded goods and services in Jalrez.

**Preventing the Donor Aid Hangover:** To civilian USDA Advisors and U.S. Military leaders alike in Wardak Province, security evolved first from governance capacity building, which then led to economic development opportunities. As farmers benefitted economically from greater access to markets for their agricultural produce, overall security increased in various districts of Wardak Province. When U.S. military leaders and company level soldiers witnessed the direct correlation between “functional local governance” and “economic growth” to achieve “stabilization,” civilian agricultural advisors were able to conduct comprehensive government capacity building programs down to the district level to effectively administer the Afghan government’s strategy for agriculturally-based economic growth. As the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) draw down in 2014, Afghanistan will undoubtedly have areas that slide back into insurgent control, an obvious threat to the Afghan government leaders in those districts. Civilian and military advisors should, therefore, remain focused on Afghan government capacity building programs, and bottom-up economic development and growth opportunities for farmers to avoid projects that create an “donor aid hangover.” Without functioning Afghan government agricultural assistance programs in place to deliver services to the population as donor aid assistance shifts directly through the central Afghan government system during this time of Transition, an “aid hangover” will lead to localized economic recession and other destabilizing impacts.

**Case Study Four**

I love farmers. I have been working for over twenty years with farmers in some of the poorest and most violent countries of the world. My initial thought before joining with Special Forces’ efforts in Afghanistan as an Agricultural Advisor was… how can my team and I replicate the success we had in Iraq in a unique operating environment in Afghanistan, the third poorest country in the world, where roads are inadequate, the terrain is difficult to transit and the rural areas are very kinetic with insurgent activity. It was my job to help Special Forces elements connect with the local population on the village level, in an effort to strengthen and encourage the local population to reject the Taliban insurgents and side with the democratically elected Afghan government. When we are successful in the rural areas of a “Rural-based Insurgency,” then we will be successful in the urban areas; but the opposite does not hold true. One of the best ways to gain influence in the rural areas is to assist the farmers and growers that live there. During a conflict farming may be reduced but, in most instances, farmers do not abandon their land. This is why farmers are such a rich source of information and influence in siding against insurgent forces. Also, farmers know their home areas; they know who belongs and who the insurgents are. Farmers also closely guard their investments and profits while pursuing their individual self gain in the agriculturally-based market place, thus their actions create other economic development opportunities for merchants and business owners who feed off the agricultural economy.

What is one of the basic building blocks of agriculture? Seed, I imagine. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) had a large scale security program in southern Afghanistan that provided seed and hand tools to farmers. However, the seed for this project was purchased from local markets; most of this seed originated from Afghan farmers saved from the previous year’s harvest. This seed was at least one or two generations old and lost much of its ability to germinate. As one farmer told me, “If I wanted local seed I could go purchase it myself from the local market.” I contacted Monsanto, the international agricultural services company in Saint Louis, Missouri for assistance in finding and procuring improved vegetable seeds appropriate for the growing conditions in southern Afghanistan.
Monstanto introduced me to their Director of Operations in India who then introduced me to a small Afghan seed company with an office in Kandahar City. This seed company had access to the improved vegetable seeds I was seeking and was this particular seed company was willing to deliver the seed to Kandahar Airfield, the sprawling desert airbase in southern Afghanistan where I stayed between deployments into remote areas of southern Afghanistan with my Special Forces colleagues.

Four weeks later the first shipment of vegetable seed sourced from the U.S. (California), France and The Netherlands was delivered by taxi to the main gate at Kandahar Airfield. This shipment was significant for several reasons:

- The Afghan seed company used Monsanto connection to procure a new source of improved seed specifically designed for the growing conditions in Afghanistan.
- The seed was paid for in local currency thus stimulating the local economy.
- The Afghan seed company, with its local office in Kandahar City, represented a sustainable Afghan-process for procuring improved vegetable seeds for local Afghan farmers.
- The initial and subsequent shipments assisted an American company, Monstanto.
- The improved vegetable seed proved more valuable than money to local farmers since the seed was not readily available.

In early May 2010, we launched a Village Stability Operations (VSO) project in the Gizab District of Oruzgan and Daikundi Provinces, designed in part to halt the flow of Taliban fighters into the vulnerable and strategic Kandahar city. The Village Stability Operations Methodology is a bottom up approach that employs U.S. Special Forces Operations Teams and partnered units (like the U.S. Department of Agriculture civilian agricultural advisors) embedded with villagers in order to establish security and to support and promote socio-economic development and good governance[xix]. All farmers in the district were considered subsistence farmers unable to produce surplus produce to sell in the marketplace. Further, Gizab District residents had never seen an Afghan government official, much less receive assistance from an Afghan Government official. Our team began distribution of the improved vegetable seeds to farmers who expressed an interest in cooperating with us to secure their lands of insurgents. The seed was not given away, rather the seed was used as a catalyst for building relationships with local Afghans. These same farmers revolted against the Taliban insurgents, fearing insurgent presence and influence would limit the Special Forces team’s ability to work with farmers due to the poor security conditions. Thus farmers were not willing to give up their prospect of future profits generated from the infusion of the improved vegetable seeds and so they denied insurgent lodging, feeding, hiding in their villages and transiting their lands.

News of the improved vegetable seed project spread quickly from the Hazara farming communities to other areas including Pashtun communities. What was remarkable, was that the insurgents were mostly of Pashtun origin and now these Pashtun farming communities were choosing to participate in the vegetable seed project and rather than choosing the side of the Pashtun insurgents. We also used the injection of improved vegetable seed project also create a need for the role of the emerging Afghan-led district agricultural extension service to teach farmers new farming methods and practices. Farmers were anxious to learn new techniques in cultivating the improved vegetable seeds and once we trained the Afghan agricultural extension agents, the local people were able to see their government actually delivering agricultural assistance services to them. We were fulfilling our mandate to build the capacity of the Afghan government outside the capital; connecting the Afghan people to the Afghan government and vice versa.

**Conclusion**
By late 2010, testimonial field reports from civilian Expeditionary Diplomats started coming into Embassy Kabul about the progress, or lack of progress, in achieving the U.S. Counterinsurgency objectives in Afghanistan. These objectives involved security activities to clear areas of insurgents while governance and development activities were conducted to hold, build and transition Afghan districts and provinces to full Afghan security responsibility by the end of 2014. I conducted and documented 100-plus testimonial field reports from fellow civilian surge participants to track trends in best practices and lessons learned while meeting the counterinsurgency objectives. What emerged to impact me the most, were the experiences of four civilian surge participants who, with their U.S. Military and Afghan counterparts, worked with their respective Afghan communities in ways which caused the Afghan government to connect with its people and the Afghan people to connect with their government; the defined end state of the U.S. Counterinsurgency strategy. Realizing this and wanting to know what that common link was to explain the spark of interest in these communities to reject insurgent influence, collaborate with each other and their local government and enthusiastically participate in their local economy, I spent the next year and a half dissecting these four distinct case study experiences. I found the explanation in the writings of economist Adam Smith, first published in the year 1776 when Smith wrote about the dynamics of another emerging economy in a fragile state, the original 13 American colonies.

**Final analysis of the four case study experiences:**

Only when Afghan appropriate human institutions and institutional process were created or strengthened to promote advancement of economic development opportunities, could the market’s *Invisible Hand* guide the actions of those seeking economic self gain to produce intended beneficial social orders. Simply put, U.S. civilian-military teams with their Afghan counterparts collaborated to create or in some cases strengthened what was perceived by local populations as Afghan appropriate human institutions and institutional processes. These institutions and processes included: tribally inclusive or tribally neutral community decision making forums; reinvigoration of role of the village mayor, strengthening the role of the often times fledgling District Governor; creating farmer cooperatives; and strengthening and validating the role of the government agricultural extension agent to bring agricultural assistance services to the local population.

Once these Afghan appropriate human institutions and institutional processes were set in place, the Afghans felt a sense of ownership and security in their political and economic destiny further emboldening them to reject the insurgent pull to move away from the central government system. As farmers, traders and merchants participated in the market place seeking their individual economic gain, the *Invisible Hand* guided their actions to produce Beneficial Social Orders. Though the environment in each case study was unique, similar Beneficial Social Orders emerged: tribal tensions reduced as such groups had a representative voice in social and economic issues of concern to them; tribal and ethnic groups began working together to achieve greater economic gains than acting independently; security increased as insurgents lost their leverage with disenfranchised tribes and farmers were fearful insurgent presence would adversely affect their pursuit of economic self gain; villages started looking to their traditional village mayors, village leaders and Afghan government officials to hear their grievances and resolve their disputes vice the insurgents; and local government officials gradually became more accountable due to the fact their constituents were becoming more actively engaged to protect their economic gains and required greater local government accountability.

Foundational to all of these case study experiences was the creation and strengthening of another Afghan human institution, the Afghan National Security Forces providing protection for the local population.; a core principle of the Counterinsurgency strategy.
Application of the final analysis in fragile states:

Just as the United States prepares to move beyond its historically longest war experience to date in Afghanistan, the revisionist and other anti-foreign aid advocates are declaring the U.S. Counterinsurgency strategy a wholesale failure with an inevitable takeover by insurgent forces after 2014. Firstly, the U.S. Counterinsurgency strategy, conducted with 48 other member nations of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF,) created space for the Afghan government and civil institutions to establish and free themselves from the ultra-Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime. The space has been created, now it is up to the people of the sovereign Afghan state to decide their level of vulnerability to insurgent takeover after 2014 when the U.S. and international community’s drawdown is complete.

Secondly, it is imperative to pause and assess what was accomplished in the U.S. Counterinsurgency strategy and apply those lessons to future scenarios as the U.S. contemplates future involvement in other fragile or failing states. For those who don’t think the United States and international community will find themselves today confronted with how to react in fragile strategic countries or regions where populations are ethnically and tribally fractured, poor and terrorized by threats such as from insurgencies or terrorism, may want to think again. Specifically:

- When fragile country or region specific human institutions and institutional processes are established, Adam Smith’s theorized Invisible Hand guides the actions of merchants and traders pursuing their individual economic gain in the marketplace resulting in unintended Beneficial Social Orders of stability, further economic expansion and the tendency toward greater governmental accountability and responsiveness to its citizens
- 21st century Expeditionary Diplomats (civilian or military) must have a solid understanding all ethnic groupings, have an understanding of the tendency of dominant ethnic groups disenfranchise minority ethnic groups in scare resource environments, and the ability to successfully navigate ethnic and tribal dynamics. Therefore, aid assistance must attempt to break down barriers to access such assistance for all ethnic groups. When all ethnic groups are given a voice in the distribution of scare resources, these ethnic groups have the tendency to persuade governments to be more accountable. Simply put, tribes matter; ethnic groups matter. When minority tribes or minority ethnic groups are continually disenfranchised in accessing scare resources, flash points erupt causing the world community to react in some form.
- 21st century Expeditionary Diplomats must have a solid understanding of how to strengthen or create if absent, appropriate human institutions and institutional processes specific to the fragile state they are working in. Counterinsurgency strategies or traditional aid assistance strategies conducted outside appropriate human institutions or institutional processes will fail to achieve local buy in.
- Foreign aid assistance, especially targeted economic development aid assistance, provides a stabilizing force in fragile countries and regions. Strategic economic aid can set into play the free market dynamics of Smith’s Invisible Hand which is capable of directing people’s behavior in productive ways.

End Notes


[iii] Testimony by former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton before the U.S. Senate Foreign


[vi] Remarks by U.S. President Barack Obama in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan; Eisenhower Hall Theatre, United States Military Academy at West Point, West Point, New York, December 9, 2009.


[ix] “Joint Audit Identifies Civilian Uplift Costs, Recommends Strengthened Management; Civilian uplift key to U.S. transition strategy in Afghanistan,” Office of Public Affairs, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction(SIGAR,) September 8, 2011


[xv] “Jirga” is a term found in Pashtu, Persian (and Dari), Turkish, and Mongolian that appears to be related to the word “circle,” the formation used when a jirga meets. But regardless of the origin of the word, jirga refers to a local/tribal institution of decision-making and dispute settlement that incorporates
the prevalent local customary law, institutional rituals, and a body of village elders whose collective
decision about the resolution of a dispute (or local problem) is binding on the parties involved. *Shura* is
an Arabic word that translates to “consultation” since it is mentioned twice in the Koran as a praiseworthy,
it is readily adopted by Afghanistan’s ethnic groups, although the term has a religious connection. Tribal
Analysis Center, “Jirga: Pashtun Participatory Governance.” Tribal Analysis Center.

[xvi] Creating an appropriate (Afghan) human institution of tribally and ethnically inclusive and neutral
Farmer Cooperatives to promote the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA’s)
national strategy for agricultural-based economic growth. Joint U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S.
Army’s 73rd Airborne Division and GIRoA’s Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL)
Advisor, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

[xvii] In arid climates, a kareez canal system of both below and above ground canals, brings water down
to a settlement or agricultural fields via gravity from an aquifer, lake or spring of higher elevation. The
kareez canal system is an ancient system designed to transport water long distances and prevent water
from evaporating before it reaches its intended destinations. Civilizations have developed intricate social
systems to maintain and repair the deep kareez canals and equitably distribute the scarce water resource.

[xviii] Using improved vegetable seeds as the catalyst to develop the need for emerging district level
agricultural extension services for local farmers - an Afghan appropriate human institution. Joint U.S.
Department of Agriculture and U.S. Army Special Forces Units; Kandahar, Oruzgan and Daikundi
Provinces, Afghanistan: November 2009 – November 2010. Paul Heidloff, Special Forces Agricultural
Advisor, U.S. Department of Agriculture.


About the Author
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Melinda Hutchings is an “Interagency” subject matter expert for the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps conducting disaster response/humanitarian assistance training scenarios in live interagency exercises prior to deployment to “fragile states.” Following almost a decade of experience as a humanitarian aid worker in Africa; Somalia, Rwanda-Congo, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Mozambique, Melinda spent six years (2004-2011) in southern and eastern Afghanistan working for the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development conducting Governance and Stabilization interventions to strengthen the Afghan Government in countering the insurgent threat. Melinda participated in President Obama’s Afghanistan “Civilian Surge” operation in 2009 working jointly with the U.S. Military at the lowest level of the Afghan Government’s reach, the District/Community level. In her last tour at U.S. Embassy Kabul, Melinda represented the Embassy in numerous joint Civilian/Military research projects to “measure the effect” of U.S. Government humanitarian assistance investments in Afghanistan.

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