

A CADG White Paper



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Effective Smart Power in Afghanistan: Leveraging Hard Power and Soft Assets

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“As we think of power in the 21st century, we want to get away from the idea that power is always zero sum — my gain is your loss and vice versa. Power can also be positive sum, where your gain can be my gain.”

-Joseph Nye
former Assistant Secretary of
Defense and dean of Harvard's
Kennedy School of
Government

In 1990, Joseph Nye, the former Assistant Secretary of Defense and former dean of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, coined the term “soft power” as a way to describe “the ability to shape the preferences of others and get them to want the outcomes you want.”¹ History teaches that there are limits to the efficacy of military force alone in meeting and overcoming the threat of asymmetrical warfare. Rather, a well balanced and robust national security strategy is one that collects, coordinates and leverages the collective soft power strengths of the various federal government departments, the private sector, and the influence of American culture.

There is growing consensus within U.S. Government leaders that along with hard power, soft power has an important role in any national security model to effectively defend asymmetrical challenges and threats. Importantly, soft power alone can produce effective foreign policy. As Nye suggests, power is the ability to affect the behavior of others to get what one wants. There are three basic ways to do this: coercion, payment, and attraction. Hard power makes use of coercion and payment. Soft power, on the other hand, is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction. If a state can set the agenda for others or shape their preferences, it can save a lot on ‘carrots and sticks’. But rarely can a government rely solely on either type of power. Thus, there is a need for smart

¹ Nye, J. S. Jr., (2009 July –August). Get smart: Combining hard and soft power. *Foreign Affairs July/August 2009*. Retrieved from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/print/65163>

strategies that combine the tools of both hard and soft power.

History of Central Asia Development Group

Central Asia Development Group (CADG) is a privately held American company that has been an implementing partner of USAID Afghanistan since 2002. For more than 10 years, CADG has directly implemented a variety of development programs in Afghanistan, often in “shape to clear” and “clear to hold” operational environments.

Traditional counterinsurgency methodology consists of four main phases, Shape, Clear, Hold and Build. You conduct specific “shaping operations” to shape the battle-space” to conditions favoring the. Once the battle-space has been shaped, then forcefully then clears the area of insurgents. At this stage the focus is conducting military operations aimed at separating the insurgents from the main population. In the words of David Galula², have the insurgents starving in the mountains. You must continue to hold this terrain, or there is no reason that the insurgents will not just simply return to those very villages you just cleared. While holding this terrain, this serves to promote the local population’s airing of grievances that gave rise to the insurgency, and promotes the building of local governance, capacity and municipal and civil infrastructure.

Through practical experience, CADG has successfully developed a project implementation model that creates consensus among stakeholders, is grounded in a foundation of tribal empowerment, and has a high level of grassroots community ownership. As a result of this model, CADG in Afghanistan is consistently viewed by the community (and even occasionally by the insurgency) as a neutral third party, free of political agendas and able to balance the interests of even the most disenfranchised stakeholders equally with those of the most powerful. CADG’s unique position as one of the few organizations that can operate safely from

² *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. David Galula. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 1964



within often closed Afghan communities gives the organization a unique perspective.

This purpose of this paper is to highlight an example of CADG's implementation methods for international development programs in Naw Zad, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, as a new approach in the strategic application of soft power strategies in volatile "shape to clear" and "clear to hold" operation areas.



Afghan cash-for-work laborers working on a CADG implemented development project in the town of Chora, Urozgan Province.

A brief overview of CADG's presence in Afghanistan

CADG specializes in the direct implementation and management of assistance in remote, inhospitable and often hostile environments. In 2002, CADG began work on USAID's Cotton and Alternative Crops Pilot Project. Primarily focused in southern Afghanistan, particularly in the provinces of Kandahar and Helmand, the Cotton and Alternative Crops program was one of the first development programs launched in this region after the fall of the Taliban. This program continued until 2006, and served as a economic stimulus and counternarcotics program.

In 2009, CADG again began to work with USAID, this time implementing its Food Insecurity Response to Urban Populations Program (FIRUP), South and East (SE) Afghanistan. The goal of FIRUP SE was to link vulnerable and unstable urban population centers, at risk of acute food insecurity, with income producing programs, so that targeted beneficiaries could purchase

food as needed. Initially, the FIRUP SE program covered the four provinces of Nangarhar, Kandahar, Helmand and Urozgan.

In 2010, FIRUP was expanded from the original four provinces to an additional 10: Farah, Nimroz, Helmand, Kandahar, Urozgan, Zabul, Wardak, Logar, Ghazni, Nangarhar, Kunar, Paktia, Paktika, and Khost.

By 2011, FIRUP was renamed the Community Development Program – South, East and West (CDP-SEW). At this time, CDP-SEW was the largest labor-intensive program for the rehabilitation of irrigation systems, municipal infrastructure and sanitation in Afghanistan, spanning 19 provinces: Daikundi, Helmand, Nimroz, Urozgan, Zabul, Badghis, Ghor, Farah, Herat, Ghazni, Logar, Wardak, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Khost, Paktika, Paktia and Kandahar. As with its predecessor FIRUP, the primary objective of CDP-SEW was to promote stability in targeted regions of Afghanistan by providing temporary employment to at-risk groups. Through increased economic and political stability, at-risk groups are less likely to support or join the insurgency, or participate in criminal activity.

As mentioned, CDP-SEW projects are labor-intensive and typically involve the rehabilitation of irrigation systems, municipal infrastructure and sanitation systems, as well as vocational training. In 2012, the CDP-SEW program continues to operate in 19 provinces in Afghanistan: Daikundi, Helmand, Nimroz, Urozgan, Zabul, Badghis, Ghor, Farah, Herat, Ghazni, Logar, Wardak, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Khost, Paktika, Paktia and Kandahar.



CADG implementation of USAID: FIRUP Phase 1 (2009).



CADG implementation of USAID FIRUP Phase 2, 2010.



CADG implementation of USAID: CDP Phase 3 (formerly known as FIRUP), 2010.

Afghanistan challenges the concept of how to wage a modern counterinsurgency

Since November 2001, when the Taliban were effectively denied control over Afghanistan, the country descended into an asymmetrical war, the scope of which the U.S. had not seen since the war in Vietnam. Even when applying the lessons learned from Iraq, the extent and nature of the insurgency, organized crime and public corruption in Afghanistan challenges all established ideas about how to wage an effective modern counterinsurgency.

An important principle of counterinsurgency operations is that every case is unique. This is certainly true of Afghanistan (just as it was true in Iraq). While some of the approaches that proved important in Iraq may be applicable in Afghanistan -- such as the importance of securing and serving the population and the necessity of living among the people to do so -- the application of these 'big ideas' must be adapted to

Afghanistan.³ The 'operationalization' will inevitably be different, as Afghanistan has a very different history and a very different 'muscle memory' in terms of central governance (or lack thereof).

The country lacks the natural resources that Iraq has and is more rural, with very different (and quite extreme) terrain and weather. Afghanistan's also has higher illiteracy and unemployment rates. Further challenging the situation is the fact that Afghanistan's biggest cash export is heroin and the endemic levels of public corruption.

Finally, Afghanistan lacks an adequate level of basic services such as electricity, drinking water, and education -- though there has been progress in a number of these areas since 2001.

In addition to these issues, General David Petraeus also argues that while the number of Afghan and international security forces present is important for the success of the counterinsurgency, equally significant is what these forces actually do on the ground.

CADG's model for successful project implementation in Afghanistan

Since 2002, CADG has had a presence on the ground in Afghanistan. Over the past 10 years, the complexity, associated risks and geographic scope of the development projects implemented have varied. Yet, CADG's approach and results have been consistently positive. Several factors have led to the success of CADG implemented projects:

- **A top-down / bottom-up engagement of local stakeholders:** CADG engages tribes (through community tribal outreach and empowerment), as well as established stakeholders in central government.

³Glasser, S. (2009, January – February), The FP interview with Gen. David H. Petraeus. *Foreign Policy (January/February 2009)*. Retrieved from http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/01/05/the_fp_interview_with_gen_david_h_petraeus



- **Living among the community:** The security of CADG is tied to the longevity of our programs. We achieve this by creating community vested interest in the ownership of a program and by our low profile security approach.
- **Staffing:** The majority of CADG project managers have had military experience in Afghanistan, enabling them to liaise effectively with local ISAF commanders and staff.
- **Specialization:** CADG often operates in “shape to clear” and “clear to hold” environments.

Since 2002 , CADG has helped to bolster the security and success of its programs in Afghanistan through consistently operating as a neutral third party, free of any political agenda, and grounded in a foundation of support for the tribal power structure.

In Afghanistan, there are typically three primary local power brokers: 1) the tribal elders, 2) the local political leadership (the sub-governors, commanders of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF); and other Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRoA) officials and 3) the local mullah.

At the beginning of every project, CADG engages the tribal elders, whom historically have been marginalized and routinely targeted for assassination by the Taliban⁴ for cooperating with ISAF forces.. Once empowered, the tribal elders gain authority and leadership not only in an ideological sense, but also in terms of religious and governmental standing This makes their potential influence over the success and security of the project significant.

However, in the effort to engage the Afghan community at the grassroots level, so as to foster a sense of ownership for the programs, it has been shown that it is equally critical to seek support

⁴ Partlow, J. (2010, May 22). In Kandahar the Taliban targets and assassinates those who support U.S. efforts. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/21/AR2010052104950.html>

simultaneously from the central and provincial governments.

Every CADG implemented program aims for such a bottom-up, top-down approach, in which guidance from tribal leaders is critical in gaining the support of local citizens. .



CADG staff meet with the District Governor and tribal elders in Chora Urozzan

Having helped the community gain a sense of investment in the success and security of a project, **CADG members then live among the community, adopting a low profile approach to security. Since 2002, CADG has never permanently placed development personnel inside ISAF facilities in Afghanistan.** Its belief is that vital community ties cannot be maintained from behind massive security barriers and armored vehicles that separate the project implementers from the stakeholders and recipients.

CADG’s method, while radically different from the more common high security approach, continues to meet with success, especially when implementing development programs in areas designated by ISAF as “shape to clear” and “clear to hold”. However, this community-based top-down, bottom-up, low-profile approach is not without risk. It also requires CADG staff to place a tremendous amount of trust in its host nation counterparts.

In May 2011, an Afghan National, employed by CADG as a finance assistant, stole \$180,000 US in cash from the CADG office in Arghandab, Kandahar Province. Unfortunately, due to the endemic levels of



corruption within all levels of the Afghan

Government, from the central and provincial governments, to the local tribal government, it was the common belief among NGOs, aid implementers and even USAID

officials that once official funds were stolen in Afghanistan, they were certainly unrecoverable.

CADG, upon learning of the theft, leveraged all three levels of its local power brokers: the tribal elders; the local political leadership; and the local mullah. CADG also activated the community's vested interest in the program and capitalized on its reputation in the Arghandab community. CADG leaders explained to the Afghan tribal leaders, local authorities and the community that they were responsible for seeing that the suspect returned all stolen funds. Furthermore, with the support of USAID, CADG explained that all CDP programs in the province of Kandahar would stop immediately until the money was returned.

Three weeks after the projects were suspended, the local Afghan community persuaded the suspect's father to return the majority of the cash to CADG, and surrender his son to the Afghan Police.

Because the community had a sense of ownership in the program and all power brokers could be engaged, the stolen funds were recovered. On top of this, CADG worked hard to build and maintain the community's trust and sense of neutrality by living among them and hiring staff that could work efficiently and successfully in the hostile environment of Afghanistan. In sum, the funds were recovered because Afghans participating in the CDP program viewed it as their program, and the funds as their funds, designed to help their families. As such, stealing these funds was seen as stealing from their own families, not from the U.S. government. The



community had zero tolerance for the theft because they knew the program would stop until the money had been returned.

Naw Zad, Helmand Province: Cooperation between CADG and the US Marines; a practical application of “smart power” in a “share to clear, clear to hold” environment

Helmand: An overview

Located in the southwest of Afghanistan, the province of Helmand is home to nearly 1.5 million residents and is one of the most active insurgent environments in the country. Helmand is rich in natural resources due to its fertile soils, as well as its natural water resources and irrigation infrastructure.

Helmand is also the region where 75% of the world's opium is cultivated. It is

Helmand's rank as the world's largest opium-producing region that makes the province so strategically significant. Further complicating the stabilization of Helmand Province is the tussle for dominance of the lucrative opium cultivation market, currently being fought by warring tribal groups, organized crime (warlords) and the Taliban, who are all vying for control. As a result, Helmand has seen some of the most intense fighting between NATO and insurgent forces.

The city of Lashkar Gar in Helmand was initially identified as a project site in the early stages of USAID's FIRUP program in 2009. Since then, the citizens of Lashkar Gar have benefitted from USAID's development programs, implemented by CADG. From 2010 to 2012, based on CADG's successful





implementation model, the CDP program has been expanded to some of Helmand's most dangerous "shape to clear, clear to hold" districts, such as Sangin, Nawa, Naw Zad and Kajaki .



The battle for Naw Zad

The town of Naw Zad is a typical remote Afghan outpost. The town consists of a bazaar, a primary road, and a maze of mud-brick houses with narrow alleys. Historically, the economy of Naw Zad has revolved around poppy cultivation.

In 2006, attacks by the Taliban insurgency on Afghan government positions in Naw Zad and Musa Qala escalated. At the urgent request of Helmand's governor, British troops were deployed to defend the Afghan government's position in Naw Zad . In 2007, the fighting between contingents of British and Gurkha forces and Taliban insurgents continued to escalate, resulting in approximately 10,000 residents fleeing Naw Zad. In 2008, in spite of numerous efforts by British and Estonian Army contingents, the Taliban fighters remained in their entrenched positions within Naw Zad.

By March 2008, the US Marines arrived to reinforce the British and Estonian forces. The primary mission of the 200 strong Marine company was to "train police", but upon their arrival at Naw Zad, they discovered that the Afghan police had also fled alongside the 10,000 residents. Until April 2009, the US Marines and remaining British and Estonian forces

found themselves in daily combat with Taliban forces. Despite their joint efforts, it was still not possible to clear the town of Taliban fighters, and the two opposing forces were at a stalemate.

However, in July 2009, Operation Khanjar was launched, and 4,000 US Marines advanced into the Taliban controlled territory in Naw Zad and the surrounding province. This offensive was part of the reinforcement of troops ordered by President Obama.

A balanced application of smart power

In January 2010, Naw Zad was still in the "clear to hold" phase of operations by the US Marines and ISAF forces. Tasked not only with removing the entrenched Taliban fighters from the town, US military leadership was also in charge of identifying initiatives in Naw Zad that would target at-risk populations; fighting-age males who would traditionally be lured into the insurgency or organized crime. These men would instead be encouraged to participate in gainful employment that would also benefit the community.

CADG brings development back to Naw Zad

In late 2009, CADG was approached by stakeholders within the US Marines to include Naw Zad in its implementation of USAID's CDP program. This was seen as a means to bolster the ongoing counterinsurgency efforts there, and CADG was the logical choice, being the first and only implementing partner in the district since 2005.

In Naw Zad, CADG gathered the support of stakeholders by using its bottom-up, top-down approach to foster stakeholder ownership of the development projects. Coordination with the district's central government, tribal elders, general populace, as well as the ISAF and Afghan National Army (ANA) identified the Deh Mian Karez as being in dire need of rehabilitation. The Deh Mian Karez (or water system) was to be the first project in the district where soft power programs would be applied simultaneously with active combat "shape to clear" and "clear to hold" operations by the US Marines and ISAF. The efforts in Naw Zad are believed to be one of the earliest



attempts to balance hard power and soft power (smart power), utilizing a non-military, non-governmental organization in a “shape to clear” operating environment.

Approved on January 18 2010, the Deh Mian Karez project consisted of clearing silt from wells, canals and karezes. Due to years of neglect and combat activity, the walls and roofing of the Deh Mian Karez had collapsed in several key areas. The rehabilitation of this critical municipal infrastructure created 234 skilled and 3240 unskilled man-days of labor.



The Deh Mian Karez



Work on a section of the Deh Mian Karez

Based on the success of the Deh Mian Karez rehabilitation program, on February 17 2010 the project was expanded to include an additional 8817 unskilled and 1096 skilled man-days of labor.

This was the first program of its kind in Naw Zad after more than four years of brutal fighting in which the residents of Naw Zad were caught between ISAF forces and Taliban insurgents. The program served to rehabilitate not just the town’s water supply, but also started to repair its trust in the US military and ISAF forces.

Success is often the best form of self promotion. During the project, and at its conclusion, many of the project’s 480 direct beneficiaries were its biggest advocates, having made the choice to work and earn money for their families rather than opting to fight in the insurgency.



Naw Zad Feb 21, 2010 with severe battle damage

The Naw Zad Bazaar Project: an example of a perfect balance of smart power and stakeholder cooperation

No project better highlights the application of smart power and CADG’s cooperation with all stakeholders, than the Naw Zad Bazaar project. The Naw Zad bazaar was in a serious state of disrepair due to the protracted conflict between the ISAF forces and Taliban insurgents. The bazaar project began in April 2010, and focused on the repair of 103 battle damaged



shops in the bazaar, employing 697 laborers and directly benefiting over 4000 citizens.



US Marine on patrol in Naw Zad Bazaar

Of significance in this project is the scope of participation and cooperation from the US Marines. Specifically during the first few months of the project, Taliban insurgents still had control of the area surrounding Naw Zad, and had cut off supply routes, making it impossible to obtain building materials for the bazaar project to progress. However, shortly after the project lost its supply lines, the US Marines were able to provide a convoy of 30 trucks to carry building materials for the project. With this cooperation by the US Marines, Afghan laborers were able to rehabilitate an average of six shops per week.

As the original USAID CDP funding for the project had been exhausted by April 2010, CADG approached the US Marines for supplementary funds to build momentum for the project. This would increase

stability in the community, and enable the rehabilitation of an additional 60 shops in the bazaar.

Due to the high level of cooperation between all stakeholders and the success of the project up to this time, the US Marines leadership agreed to provide an additional \$75,000 US for the Naw Zad bazaar rehabilitation.

As part of this supplementary support, the Marines participated in pay days for the Afghan laborers, giving them a new opportunity to interact with the local Afghan community in Naw Zad and vice versa. It is this kind of interaction that can significantly increase the possibility of great dialogue, smooth cooperation, and even the sharing of critical life-saving information.



US Marines distribute wages to CDP laborers participating in Naw Zad Bazaar Rehabilitation Project



CDP laborers install roller doors that just arrived on US Marine convoy on shop front in Naw Zad bazaar.



The beneficiaries of smart power in Naw Zad



Nayeze Mohammed, Naw Zad, small business owner and participant in Naw Zad Bazaar Rehabilitation Program.

Who: Nayeze Mohammed, Baker from Naw Zad

Employment: Cash-for-Work Supervisor and small business owner. His bakery is located in the rehabilitated Naw Zad Bazaar

In the late afternoon, at the Naw Zad bazaar, fresh bread is pulled from Nayeze Mohammed's wood-fired ovens. Fresh and yeasty, the bread, called *dodai*, is a staple across Afghanistan. For Nayeze, the bakery is a new business, and his is one of the few shops that have opened in the demolished bazaar since the end of fighting in the town in January 2010.

Nayeze is a survivor who has spent much of his life as a refugee. He has spent much of the last three decades running from war. After the Soviet invasion in 1979, he escaped to Iran where he spent 12 years working as a laborer. He then moved on to Karachi, where he worked for another six years as a heavy equipment operator. He returned to his home town of Naw Zad in the late 1990s and opened an automotive repair shop which he operated through the Taliban years and after the American intervention in 2001, earning enough to take care of his large family of wives and children.

However, in 2009, the coalition forces moved in and began to attack the Taliban. After months of fighting between the Taliban and coalition forces, the ancient bazaar of Naw Zad was left ruined, with most of the shops destroyed. Many of the town's citizens had fled into the countryside to escape the fighting and Nayeze

had to close down his repair shop because most of the town's car owners had gone; taking all his business with them.

One thing the town was missing was a bakery. Nayeze bought one of the old shops in the bazaar, directly across from the base that the Marines are now using. He started baking bread with the help from his extended family, each taking turns at preparing the dough or baking over the 400-degree pit oven, preparing hundreds of the flat pizza crust-like *dodai* bread.

Nayeze also has another job. He is working with CADG on the renovation of the Naw Zad bazaar. Considered one of the city's elders and a successful businessman, Nayeze is in charge of deciding which of the war-torn kiosks and shops gets rebuilt first. As this is a cash-for-work project, Nayeze is also involved in selecting labor for the project. More than a thousand laborers will work to rebuild the bazaar, earning much needed cash to support their families.

Nayeze's shop has become one of the most popular bakeries in town. Late in the afternoon when the fresh bread is pulled out of the oven and stacked, people stop in to buy some for dinner. He always sells out; none of his dough goes to waste. Along with a few other shops that have sprung up across from the base, he is doing good business.

"When the bazaar is rebuilt, the town will come back," said Nayeze in translated Pashtu. "I want to see the city of my family and my father return to what it once was. I want to see everyone return. I hope to sell lots of bread. But I also hope no other bakeries open up in the bazaar! But I know my bread is the best and my customers will always come back."



Summary

In the model of soft power developed by Joseph Nye, he describes a successful national security strategy as a balanced application that collects, coordinates and leverages the collective soft power strengths of the various federal government departments, the private sector and the influence of American culture. The balanced application of these assets is best categorized as “smart power”.

Since 2001, when the Taliban were effectively denied control over Afghanistan, the country has descended into an asymmetrical war that challenges conventional thinking about how to wage a modern counterinsurgency. The scope and nature of the insurgency, organized crime and endemic levels of public corruption risk negating any forward progress - be it military, diplomatic or from within the private sector. A balanced smart power strategy has been and will be key in maintaining the progress achieved over the past ten years and in ensuring future progress.

For over 10 years, CADG has been directly implementing a variety of development programs in Afghanistan, often in “shape to clear” and “clear to hold” operational environments. Through practical experience, CADG has successfully developed a project implementation model that creates consensus among stakeholders. This model is grounded in a foundation of tribal empowerment coupled with a high level of grassroots community ownership.

As a result of this implementation model, CADG is consistently viewed by the community in Afghanistan (and even occasionally by the insurgency) as a neutral third party, free of politics, and focused on balancing the interests of the most disenfranchised stakeholders equally with those of the powerful. CADG’s unique position as one of the few organizations that can operate safely from within often closed Afghan communities, gives the organization a rare perspective which fits well into a balanced smart power counterinsurgency strategy.

The province of Helmand can be singled out as an example of the necessity for a strategy that applies the

balanced approach of smart power. Helmand is currently one of the most active insurgent environments in Afghanistan, primarily due to the ongoing power struggle by tribal groups, organized crime and Taliban insurgents for world’s largest opium cultivation market. Caught often literally in the crossfire between these powers are the citizens of Helmand province.

In the remote town of Naw Zad, in the province of Helmand, civilians were caught between the front lines from 2006 to 2008 when British and Estonian forces found themselves in a literal stalemate with Taliban insurgents who held the town. Civilian lives were lost, and homes and business damaged by both sides in the conflict, leaving the population of Naw Zad vulnerable and rife for recruitment by the insurgency.

In April 2010, at the request of US main command in Zaw Nad, CADG was given the opportunity to include the town in its implementation of USAID’s CDP program. No project better highlights the effectiveness of smart power strategies in reaching development and counterinsurgency goals as does the Naw Zad Bazaar Project.

Using the project implementation model developed by CADG, the Naw Zad project was able to achieve an unparalleled level of cooperation and success. Specifically, this project resulted in the physical rebuilding of the town of Naw Zad but also the rebuilding of a basic level of trust and communication between Naw Zad’s citizens and the US Marines.

Importantly, if CADG’s soft power strengths had not been leveraged alongside the hard power assets of the US Marines, Naw Zad would certainly not be the success it is today.



One of Naw Zad’s tribal elders enjoys a peaceful evening in front of his home at sunset. (2011)



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