

Failed States Colloquium
Woodrow Wilson Center
Session Topic: How Can Adequate Basic Services Be Established in
Fragile States and Post-Conflict Failed States?
Paper topic: "How Can Islands of Stability
Be Expanded and, If Necessary, Created?"
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I will describe what I have come to believe is an essential approach to helping weak states begin to provide essential services – in other words, to function as a legitimate state should. I call this approach “TPA” for its 3 essential elements: effective Training, adequate Pay, and Accountability for actions. For any governmental sector to function, these 3 variables must be adequately addressed. If they are not, any other type of approach is nearly certain to fail. The second crucial aspect of TPA is that, in particular challenging countries like the Congo, TPA should NOT be implemented on a national scale; it must be implemented only on a scale where the success of implementation can be independently verified.

Before describing TPA in greater detail, I would like to give some theoretical background. The heart of the task in weak states like the Congo is to create a state sector that is minimally functional. Therefore, I agree with authors like Grindle in the need to focus on “good-enough governance.”

Next, I strongly agree with the point of view articulated by Brahimi and others that “(w)ithout functioning and self-sustaining government systems, peace and development will be, at best, short-lived, and the disengagement of the international community will take place in less than ideal conditions.” As a good diplomat, Brahimi sugarcoats the outcome.

Let us look at this hard in the Congo now. MONUC, the UN Mission in the Congo, has been there now for 10 years and even its leadership is now speaking openly about the need to plan for MONUC’s departure. Yet to say that conditions are “less than ideal” is really not accurate.

MONUC itself has laid out conditions under which it can withdraw successfully; these are not even close to being met. They include:

- The Congolese Army and Police achieve levels of capacity that enable them to assume responsibility for the country’s security, including duties now performed by MONUC;
- Establishment of an independent, functioning judicial system;
- Establishment of essential State institutions at the national, provincial and local level, and progress made towards decentralization.

In each of these areas, the Brahimi reality of “functioning and self-sustaining government systems” is remote.

What to do? Early disengagement is not a serious option: it will lead to disaster.

I believe Ghani and Lockhart's book, Fixing Failed States, contains one of the keys to how to proceed. Their conceptual breakthrough is on how to get out of the sovereignty debacle in weak states like the Congo. They call their concept the "double compact." This concept recognizes that all too often in these states, as Ghani and Lockhart state, "governments (function as) predatory agents preying on their people." In such contexts, they argue that sovereignty should be seen "as a set of both rights and obligations between citizens and their governments, as well as between a government and the international community..." Therefore, "the double compact" is an understanding that is come to among these actors.

In fact, I think of the compact more as a conceptual understanding that guides decision making rather than as a concrete document or series of documents.

In the context of the double compact concept, what should donors do? Donors, whether working on security or development issues, should adopt a new, bottom-up, targeted approach. The heart of this proposal is for donors to focus on three specific elements required for successful programs:

- effective training,
- adequate pay, and
- accountability for actions.

Its second key aspect is that it should NOT be implemented on a national scale in particularly tough cases like the Congo. Rather, scale is determined by the ability to independently verify the success of specific TPA interventions.

I call this approach "TPA" since effective training, adequate pay, and accountability are its key components. Note that not just any training suffices – it must be effective. Salary levels must be adequate. And, once individuals are well-trained and paid adequately, then they need to be held accountable for good performance. Finally, such an approach in the most difficult places requires sustained donor involvement and deep engagement.

Training

First, the "T." Training is a staple of donor-funded activities, but training is normally done as a stand-alone intervention, with the regularly unrealistic assumption that somehow disparate scattershot, uncoordinated training will lead to better performance and on-the-job results. This is nonsense. But, even assuming that training is well-coordinated and done effectively, would it alone be enough? Of course not.

Payment

The key is the "P." When trained officials return to their horribly paid positions, they revert to poor performance. The term "inadequate pay," however, does not begin to capture the deficiency in salary for most civil servants in the Congo and similar weak states. An employee with a family of six people needs a salary of about \$150/month in rural areas and \$200/month in urban areas just to survive at the poverty line of basic subsistence. This compares with actual salaries that normally

are \$25/month or less, going down to salaries actually received, which often range from \$0 - \$10/month.

Anyone receiving \$25/month or less, yet requiring \$150-200/month so that he and his family can survive will adopt whatever strategies he can in order to get as close as possible to bare subsistence. I trust that no one considers this statement controversial.

Therefore, adequate salaries, with salaries paid on time every month to civil servants and soldiers is an essential component of creating an “island of stability.” I actually get angry over this aspect of TPA, because the international community’s approach to paying salaries or salary supplements is both incoherent and intellectually dishonest. In those places where a donor really cares about results, donors are willing to pay salaries, or provide salary supplements to get salaries up to an adequate level. The T and P part of TPA describe the way donors do business in countries they really care about. For example, in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. has trained and paid enormous numbers of officials. The U.S. has paid police salaries in Liberia and elsewhere. Even in the Congo, the European Union has paid salary supplements as part of its successful application of TPA to its justice program in Ituri in northeastern Congo. Yet, in lower priority places, donors say that they “can’t” pay salaries because it isn’t sustainable. The donors’ stance is disingenuous at best.

The optimal approach, of course, is for the Congolese Government to pay such minimally adequate salaries using its own funds. Determining what the actual capacity of the Congolese state is to pay such salaries needs to be done by the IMF, in conjunction with the World Bank. If the IMF believes that the Congolese Government does not have sufficient resources to pay adequate salaries, or if the Congolese Government is unwilling to do so, salary supplements should be provided by the donors.

This is where efforts to accomplish this at a national level come apart. To pay adequate, sustainable salaries to all civil servants requires fundamental civil service reform. In many cases, not just the Congo, the government is unwilling to do this. Under this proposal, the donors do not have to choose between the equally unpalatable options of pushing the government towards politically dangerous comprehensive civil service reform or doing nothing.

Instead, the donors should push for the TPA approach in those areas that are essential. In the case of the Congo, that would mean key sectors in key provinces. Donors should be willing to pay salary supplements, or, in extreme cases, salaries, but only for officials in the targeted areas and sectors.

Accountability

Finally, the “A” of accountability. It is in the context of accountability that civil society has a crucial role to play. Donors should support civil society’s role in monitoring and evaluating the government’s implementation. This is part of a durable solution. In the interim, outside verification by donors and donor-funded organizations to hold actors accountable is a key component to the success of TPA.

Bottom-up

The final component of TPA that I would like to emphasize is that it is a bottom-up approach. The goal is to have functioning state capacity in specific areas that can be observed and held accountable by local citizens. In the early stages, donors have a critical role to play in starting this off, since local systems in many states are too weak and governance too poor.

My view is that once this concept begins to take hold in a large enough area, other, citizens will begin to demand a similar level of performance. At some point, the system becomes self-sustaining.

Elsewhere in Africa, states like Sierra Leone offer hope and provide lessons on how TPA can work. In 2000 in Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom decided it cared deeply about the situation and would take the necessary steps to rebuild essential state capacities.

Major General Jonathon Riley, the UK commander in Sierra Leone during the relevant period starting in 2000, described the major tasks required and actions taken:

1. The manning, training and equipping of the Sierra Leone Army, air force and navy. This was done by a combination of specialist trainers (the Military Advisory and Training Team, or MATT) and partnering with assigned British units for collective training.
2. The structural, institutional reform of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces: its training organization, command structure, administration, supply, maintenance, and personnel management systems. ...
3. Fighting the RUF either directly, or using Sierra Leone Army units with embedded mentors, or by maneuver to force them to accept the U.N.'s DDR process.
4. A similar effort with the Sierra Leone police (was) conducted by a team of Commonwealth Police officers under a British Commissioner. ...
5. Capacity building in civil ministries, notably the Ministry of Defense. This was achieved by embedding civil service advisers; running courses for Sierra Leone civil servants; sending Sierra Leone civil servants and senior officers on courses at British universities and defense institutions; and using Department for International Development funds for selected projects like infrastructure, communications, and information technology. There was also money for proper salaries for the army, police, and civil service. Proper funding of salaries is one of the best methods of tackling corruption at lower levels since it removes the impetus. If a man can feed his family properly, he has no need to look for bribes and backhanders; if he does, he has something to lose in being fired. At higher levels, corruption can only be tackled, of course, by a package of measures which includes the accountability of ministers through the democratic process, and a functioning legal system.

This is TPA in practice.

How does TPA contrast with what donors do today in the Congo? On the security side, no donor has adopted the TPA approach. Training has been inadequate, whether undertaken by the U.S., Belgians, French, South Africans, or MONUC. Soldiers remain poorly paid, with all or part of their salaries regularly stolen by higher-ranking officials. Impunity is rampant, with nearly no soldiers held accountable for the uncounted numbers of abuses they have committed over the last decade.

A similar story can be told for donor efforts with the Congolese police. The police are poorly trained, poorly paid, and operate with impunity. They do not protect the population; they prey on the Congolese people.

However, the TPA approach is at the heart of the successful program implemented by the European Union to restore a basic system of justice to the province of Ituri in northeastern Congo. The Europeans have provided training, paid salaries, and carefully monitored implementation. This program is a model for others in the DRC. It can be directly applied to establishing an effective nucleus within the justice system in other provinces as well.

I believe that TPA is broadly applicable across all essential state functions. Therefore, I see TPA at the heart of effective state building approaches. Long-term commitment to the TPA approach, implemented by as many like-minded donors as possible working in a coordinated fashion with governmental allies and civil society, is the route to sustainable development and economic empowerment in fragile states from Somalia, Sudan, and Congo to Afghanistan and Haiti. Thank you.