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**Do States Fail or Are They Pushed?  
Lessons Learned From Three Former Portuguese Colonies**

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## Do States Fail or Are They Pushed?

### Lessons Learned From Three Former Portuguese Colonies

**Abstract:** For the mainstream literature, the notion of failed state is void of political or systemic meaning: states fail because they are allegedly not capable of adopting the necessary reforms, either in economic or in institutional terms.

Quite differently, we argue that state failure must be understood as the result of a complex mix of exogenous and internal factors. The combination of an overload of demands by the donor community and the non-prioritization of internal legitimacy are at the heart of most state failure processes.

Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau have often been included in the group of “risk states” or “poor performers”. The analysis of their historical trajectory shows the need of a more complex approach than the usual prescriptive strategies, such as political conditionality, associated to failed or collapsed states.

In recent years, the notion of failed states has become a major topic of the international agenda. Mainstream literature tends to concentrate on an endogenous explanation of the phenomenon, underlining internal causes of failure: states fail because they allegedly don't have the required capacities to exercise positive sovereignty and because they are allegedly not capable of adopting the necessary reforms, either in economic or in institutional terms.

This vision must be submitted to a twofold critical approach. On one side, *the concept itself of failed state is both descriptive and prescriptive*. It describes a long lasting situation of crisis of horizontal and vertical legitimacy. But it also insinuates the imperative of a fixed standard of state capacities and instruments. This prescriptive strategy tends to ignore two things: first, the turbulence caused by the imposition of western modernity and its social and political imperatives in post-colonial societies; and second, the cumulative effects of different (and often opposed) strategies, from colonial times until the neoliberal global market, on local societies and governance structures.

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On the other side, most contemporary policies put into practice by the international donor community, as answers to state failure, are themselves a part of the problem and not a part of the solution. Quite often, namely in post-conflict reconstruction processes, aid policies adopt a standard whose priorities are precisely the ones that can easily push to state fragility, failure and ultimately collapse.

Therefore, a closer look into different concrete situations of state fragility shows the need to go beyond that endogenous perspective and to take into due account the incidence of the external interventions as a major factor of failure. The analysis of the state building processes and local society dynamics in three former Portuguese colonies – Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau – illustrates quite clearly the need of this critical approach.

In this paper, we will start by confronting the mainstream argument on state failure with some basic traits of a critical discourse on post-colonial state building. In a second moment, we will present a brief characterization of the post-colonial political processes in the three mentioned former Portuguese colonies. Learning from those experiences, we will conclude with the suggestion of some analytical tools for an alternative perspective.

### ***1. The mainstream vision of failed states***

The great majority of the studies on state failure shares two assumptions: the first is that states fail because they do not have the needed institutional, economic and political capacities to survive as sovereign states; the second is that this lack of capacities is a result of internal bad governance (Dornboos, 2006: 2). In standard perspectives, failed states are those that “cannot or will not safeguard minimal civil conditions for their populations: domestic peace, law and order and good governance” (Jackson, 2000: 296); where “the basic functions of the state are no longer performed” (Zartman, 1995: 5); “[a] state is failing when its government is losing physical control of its territory or lacks a monopoly of the legitimate use of force. Other symptoms of state failure include the erosion of authority to make collective decisions, an inability to provide reasonable public services, and the loss of the capacity to interact in formal relations with other states as a full member of the international community” (Fund for Peace, 2005). According to this view, there are states with capacities to perform the functions that they should and there are states “unable” or “unwilling” to perform them.

In fact, there is an implicit catalogue of state functions for this purpose, which includes the provision of welfare, law, order and security (Hill, 2005: 145).

The failed state is an *a contrario* concept, referring to something which isn't said: the definition of a successful state. And in that implicit space is clearly the archetype, the model of the Western Weberian state. Robert Jackson has underlined the distance between formal and effective statehood – or negative vs. positive sovereignty – as the determining criterion of distinction between a successful and a failed state: “A positively sovereign government is one which not only enjoys rights of non-intervention and other international immunities but also possesses the wherewithal to provide political goods for its citizens” (1990: 29).

Reinforcing this endogenous explanation, the mainstream vision identifies the inner characteristics of local political and social elites as the main source of state failure. They are presented as corrupt and greedy. According to one of the most important voices of this perspective, Robert Rotberg, “state failure is man-made, not merely accidental nor – fundamentally – caused geographically, environmentally or externally. Leadership decisions and leadership failures have destroyed states and continue to weaken the fragile polities that operate on the cusp of failure” (2002: 93).

## ***2. A critical approach***

This construction of state failure deliberately forgets some crucial dimensions of the reality.

The first one is history. Reducing failure and the lack of legitimacy to post-colonial times is a strategy of oblivion of the colonial point of departure in both aspects. Colonial institutions were neither robust nor legitimate. On the contrary, the colonial state in Africa was based upon cheap and expedient apparatuses of domination which were administratively and physically confined to some outposts and whose core function was almost exclusively supervising the extraction of raw materials, taxes and labour on behalf of foreign elites (Sogge, 2007).

This strategy of oblivion of the colonial domination is paradoxically a strategy of continuity with it. State failure narratives follow the ancestral line of “othering” African and Latin-American states as *loci* of primordial savagery that goes back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Conquista and which was assumed as the scientific truth in the international

legal discourse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (dividing humanity into “civilized”, “semi-civilized” and “savage” peoples, with different legal status). This othering of the peripheral post-colonial states is expressed through the perception of those states as being in a position of deviancy from a western/universal norm (Hill, 2005: 148). The medical metaphor is often used as a rhetorical resource to reinforce this deviant condition: “[...] state collapse is a long-term degenerative disease” (Zartman, 1995). More serious than deviants, failed states are threatening pathologies.

The second dimension deliberately marginalized within the mainstream vision is the influence of exogenous factors. The concept of failed state is a product of the neoliberal counter-revolution. In the course of the eighties, the “overdeveloped state” in the Third World became the main target of the donor community. Backed by doctrines such as the New Public Management, the new dogma became the downsizing of government and deregulation of business all over the world. A new set of priorities was adopted in aid policies, including dramatic reduction of subsidies for primary goods, privatization of public services, cutbacks in public spending, namely in education and health sectors, etc. David Sogge (2007) synthesizes these neoliberal priorities in what he calls “the four D’s”: deflate, devalue, denationalise and deregulate. Dornboos (2006: 6) adds to this agenda some forms of erosion of the African state directly provoked by the donor community: significant diversion of aid funds via non-governmental organisations, the formation of donor coordination consortia and a donor specialization in selected sectors involving a devaluation of the policy roles of ministries, and a preference for working with “autonomous non-bureaucratic corporate bodies”.

The combination of this neoliberal standard of reduction of the social and economic capacities of states and the increased set of requirements by the donor community to local governments should be considered as a major explanation of state failure.

The neoliberal renewal of the donor agenda has put the bar clearly higher for Third World countries than what Western states had faced in their development process. As Susan Woodward noted, “poorer states now need far greater capacity than did the wealthy core states of western Europe and North America at equivalent levels of economic development and income; openness to the international economy, for example, requires far greater governmental capacity for flexible adjustment to unpredictable external shocks than do protected economies”. And she concludes: “State failure is not necessarily a collapse in what a particular state was doing before but an

inability to meet these new demands from outside” (2006: 19). There is, in fact, an overload of the set of normative and practical expectations to be accomplished by post-colonial (and often post-conflict) states. And most of the times, a state is said to fail if it doesn’t accomplish all those goals fixed by donors. Woodward calls that requirement “the responsible state model” (2006: 18), whose objective is the creation of reliable partners, able to fulfil a large set of international standards required by donors and, at the same time, open to the internationalization of the design and even performance of their basic functions (security, natural resources management, etc.).

Within the specific context of post-conflict reconstruction processes, the international response aimed at rebuilding failed states is designed to bring together international assistance for economic development and security assistance to consolidate peace. That approach follows five main features (François and Sud, 2006: 149): a) in these specific cases, donor pledges of aid far exceed normal levels of aid for poor countries; b) delivering quick and visible results is given absolute priority, namely through infrastructure rehabilitation; c) capacity-building becomes a central concern, to overcome the dramatic deficit of governance structures; d) as mentioned above, this deficit is used by donors to justify their preference for extra-governmental mechanisms to channel aid funds; e) finally, emergency and structural adjustment economic reforms go hand in hand with political reforms aimed at establishing market democracies, i. e. political competition.

This standard set of priorities designed for rebuilding post-conflict failed states results in an extraversion of sovereign powers. This process can take either the radical form of a “commodification of sovereignty” (Sogge, 2007) – tax paradises, offshore banking and corporate zones, etc. – or what Mark Duffield has called “governance states”: “Governance states are ‘post-conditional’ because reform no longer has to be imposed from outside. Neoliberal reform takes on the dynamic of a shared enterprise”. At the same time, the boundaries between the inside and the outside of the state have blurred. Rather than acting externally on the state, donor governments are better conceived as part of the state itself. The key policy innovation in achieving this integration has been the shift from supporting projects to funding through the budget. Within governance states, while territorial integrity is respected, the international donors and NGOs now exercise an unparalleled degree of influence over the core economic and welfare functions of the state. That is, its core biopolitical functions” (2006: 11).

### ***3. Three case studies***

#### ***a) Angola***

The state building process in Angola was influenced by 3 main stages: 1) 1961-1974, the war against the colonial rule which culminated in independence; 2) 1975-1991, a long civil war between the MPLA and UNITA, strongly influenced by external Cold War geopolitics, with the former being supported by Cuba and the Soviet Union and the latter by the United States and South Africa; this stage ended with a peace agreement that allowed the political transition to a multiparty system; 3) 1992-2002, a turbulent period with attempts to consolidate peace: the holding of elections in 1992 under UN auspices; the immediate return to war by UNITA that didn't accept the poll results; the 1994 Lusaka peace accord and its failure; and, finally, the April 2002 Luena peace accord, which marked the end of almost forty years of armed conflict and UNITA's military defeat.

Portuguese colonialism in Angola was characterised by high levels of violence and corruption, and created deep socio-cultural divisions between the existing elites (Chabal, 2002). Furthermore, the colonial centralised political-administrative system and capitalist resource exploitation mechanisms had an uneven geographic implantation, which was later reproduced in the post-independence period, reinforcing existing national imbalances.

The country's independence, in 1975, was followed by almost thirty years of nearly continuous civil war. Within that context, the post-colonial state assumed a neo-patrimonial character with the state's resources being appropriated by the elites in power to achieve political and economic hegemony, which led to clientelist practices, to the disruption of internal production, to a huge political and economic exclusion and to the almost complete obliteration of the majority of society. The war led to the gradual collapse of public administration, social security, health and education services. The increasing intensity of the war during the 1980s served as a justification for the decline of redistribution and poor state delivery of services, for a strong internal state security apparatus and authoritarianism aimed at political control and power concentration, and further justified the disruption of internal production and increased economic dependency on oil revenues (Vidal, 2003).

The beginning of the economic and political changes occurred from 1987 onwards, as a consequence of the economic decline caused by the decreasing capacity of the USSR to continue to support the war efforts and by the increasing imports to feed the war and to compensate for the disrupted agriculture and industry, along with the fall in oil prices in 1986.

The main driver of the economic reforms was a will to have access to international capital markets and foreign investment. Despite having produced economic liberalisation plans and having fulfilled the conditions for structural adjustment programmes, Angola was mainly concerned with the scarceness of its financial reserves and had little interest in the economic reform demanded by structural adjustment. To 'the inside' though, little changed: the state remained heavily centralized with the political and economic elite able to control extra-budgetary revenues for its own accumulation and clientelist purposes, whilst much of the country's infrastructure, agriculture and rudimentary health services remained destroyed (Kibble, 2006).

In political terms, the opening to the West and the path towards democracy and multiparty politics resulted not only from a will to find a solution to the war, but also from the view that such opening could be the way to mobilize resources and new income sources. Therefore, important legal reforms occurred in 1991 and 1992 – in the preparation for the 1992 first national elections – together with some effective openness that allowed the emergence of a myriad of organisations within civil society, opening the way to the arrival of massive international aid and development cooperation funds.

With the resumption of war after the elections and the need to reinvest in armament, the state went back to reliance on international humanitarian aid, ignoring even more its social responsibilities, despite the astonishing rise in oil revenues. Even with the complete halt of conflict in 2002 and the period of peace consolidation, despite having become an accepted player in the community of democratic states, again on 'the inside', the Angolan political system kept its basic characteristics. Notwithstanding its discourse on democracy, human rights and development, and adherence to international norms and protocols, the national scenario remains one of strong concentration of political power and administrative centralization, little distinction between state, party and government structures, a deep interpenetration between the judicial, legislative and executive systems, use of State structures and resources (mainly the oil rent and



diamonds) to maintain political and economic hegemony; poverty levels close to 70% of the population and a remarkable distance between ruled and rulers (Vidal, 2006).

External factors are also of utmost importance in the state building process in Angola. The country was a priority for the donor community during the nineties, with a strong commitment and fund allocation to overcome the war, promote democracy and consolidate peace and development. Aid was then closely related to the evolutions and setbacks of the peace process, shifting mainly to a humanitarian emergency focus each time conflict resumed. During this entire decade, Angola received around 3600 million US\$ in official development aid, 59% of which was granted by bilateral donors and 41% by multilateral agencies. The EU was clearly the main source of aid, representing 61% of all aid provided to Angola in this period (EU, 2001).

With the end of the war in 2002, Angola asked its donor partners for post-conflict support, through a Donor Conference that never materialised due to several constraints. The international community presented three demands as conditions for this donor conference to take place: transparency in the management of oil revenues, a poverty reduction strategy in accordance with other post-conflict WB programmes, and a deal with the IMF for a monitored programme of economic and financial reforms leading to a negotiation of the external debt (Pacheco, 2006). None of these demands were fully met and the Angolan government decided to pursue other kinds of partnerships to obtain funds, such as the oil-backed credits with the Chinese.

Although, at the political level, there may be some theoretical acceptance of standardised models, which promote an external notion of development and economic growth based on UN post-war reconstruction models, good governance and fight against poverty, Angola has since 2002 always ended up defining its own policies and implementation rhythms, at the margin of international pressure.

It is the 'Angolan governance political agenda' that sets the rules, and not that of the donors. Political dialogue on sensitive issues part of the donor agenda exists, but has limited impact. Angola is a difficult and different development partner and it is donors who need to change their kind of standardised behaviour (Interviews with multilateral and bilateral donors).

This is related to the fact that the weight of international aid in Angola is today practically irrelevant for the state budget (it doesn't reach 0.1% of the State National Budget), for the definition of the country's financial and macroeconomic policy and

national development plans. This reality has clear implications in the present relationship between the country and the donor community. In practice, political and economic conditionality towards Angola, namely over transparency in revenues and good governance, has limited practical results, which is directly related to the fact that Angola belongs to a very select group of countries with sufficient internal resources and export revenues to hold out against the conditions usually imposed on countries emerging from violent conflicts by the IMF and the World Bank and by bilateral donors (Chabal, 2006).

The previously mentioned characteristics of the Angolan state building process highlight a degenerative and artificial state, a state without citizens.

Contrary to what might be expected, the growing economic neglect of distribution after independence intensified the recourse to vertical, preferential and sectarian solutions, where the clientelist system justified the attempt to access goods by any means, on an individual, not collective, basis. Informalisation and personalisation of social relationships, which fractured and disrupted social structures and easily promoted a feeling of collective helplessness, became the rule.

With the relative political openness of 1992 and the achievement of peace in 2002, some positive changes can be singled out with regard to social reaction. The so-called Angolan civil society gave relevant contributions to the creation of a public space independent from the state, gaining some political prominence in the attempt to influence public policies. On the other hand, examples from national NGOs, such as ADRA, provide the most relevant initiatives in attempting to bring the state and the population closer to each other, namely in rural areas, through the creation of informal dialogue spaces, usually known as 'new democratic spaces' (Pacheco, 2006).

Other kind of social reactions are also present in today's Angola. The high rates of unemployment, the frustrated expectations regarding better living conditions with the end of the conflict and the continuing deficiency of social services, are also leading to forms of social and urban violence. On the other side, neglected actors in the post-conflict stage, such as former child soldiers, orphans, former combatants, head of household widows, informal market traders, and so many more, struggle with survival strategies often associated with violence, criminality, drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution and domestic violence dynamics. Violent urban gangs are an increasing phenomenon in Luanda. Criminality rates boost, and summary executions by the police

are becoming a common method of dealing with this reality. Estimations are that around 3 to 4 million small arms are still in the hands of the civilian population, and no real civilian disarmament process was accomplished, both due to lack of official will and to the culture of fear that is rooted within the Angolan society, with most people having no trust in the police or the judicial system. No genuine reconciliation process amongst all sectors of society was promoted.

### ***b) Mozambique***

When assessing Mozambique's protracted fragility, one must take into account the heavy inheritances that have accumulated throughout history, making this country's short history a rather complex one.

The starting point for the characterisation of any post-colonial state is, evidently, the enduring impact of colonialism. Portuguese colonial rule pursued its goal of political and economic centralisation through violent means and discriminatory policies which favoured exclusively the small minority of settlers that controlled both the administration and the modern sectors of the economy (Hodges and Tibana, 2005: 37). Hence, centralising power went hand in hand with excluding the overwhelming majority of the population from its benefits. Indeed, although the last decade before independence remains until today the period of major economic growth of the last fifty years (Francisco, 2003: 146), underdevelopment still represented, by and large, the Portuguese burdensome legacy in Mozambique.

Unsurprisingly, this colonial strategy paved the way for the radicalisation of the liberation movement and the subsequent armed struggle, which lasted for a decade, leading to the abrupt exit of Portugal and the transfer of political power to Frelimo in June 1975. It was now up to those that had opposed colonial rule to face both the crisis the settlers' exodus had triggered and the colossal development challenges of the newly independent country.

Aiming at the destruction of the colonial capitalist system and influenced by the geopolitics of the Cold War, Frelimo adopted Marxism-Leninism as its ideological framework, established a one-party state and began to build a centrally planned economy, whose inefficiency soon became apparent. The nationalist movement to whom power had been turned over was attempting to unify the country and consolidate

its legitimacy. However, besides failing to ‘break out of underdevelopment’ (Addison, 2003: 21) – despite its efforts –, the new government was preserving as well the pattern of exclusion that had been set by the former power: conforming to colonial bequest, the new elite perceived the state apparatus as an instrument of power, from which the general population was barred. The alienation of most citizens gravely undermined the state-building project and provided a propitious environment for exploitation by the post-independence government’s opponents – the resentment shortly evolved into an armed opposition led by Renamo, backed by the surrounding white regimes (Rupiya, 1998:12). The emergence of a military struggle, in addition to confirming severe grievances towards the government, drastically weakened its effective control over national territory and population. Facing the enormous costs of war, the failure of the socialist strategy and the internal discontent, as well as the withdrawal of Soviet patronage, the ruling party revised its economic policy and embarked on a radical shift that would allow it to open up to the West for financial support and thus ensure its own survival (Wuyts, 2003: 148).

The international community had a twofold “recipe” to assist Mozambique overcome this serious political and economic crisis, which was further advanced following the official end of the conflict in 1992: holding the first multiparty elections to legitimise the government and adopting a structural adjustment programme for the transition from a socialist planned economy to a liberal market-oriented one.

The 1994 parliamentary and presidential elections formally marked the end of the UN peace operation in Mozambique, as well as the beginning of a path towards the consolidation of political stability and democratic structures (Ostheimer, 1999). Yet, the elections were not enough for the necessary progress towards democracy, as the years to come would prove. The following general elections (1999 and 2004) and local elections (1998, 2003) highlighted Frelimo’s near-absolute grip on power and Renamo’s manifest structural weaknesses. It seems rather evident that several problems remain critical for furthering democratisation in Mozambique. From 1994 to 2007, Mozambique has made little progress towards democratic maturity: having undertaken the first transition from authoritarianism towards a democratically elected government, the second transition towards a deeply institutionalised democracy is still far from complete. We have not even seen an actual change of power. There is, indeed, “a tendency towards the

conservation of a fragile *status quo*, or the permanent entrenchment of democratic minimalism” (Ostheimer, 2001).

To fulfil the other component of the international community’s demands, the Mozambican government adopted the comprehensive stabilisation plan set up by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs), which envisaged the implementation of a panoply of economic liberal reforms intended mainly to surmount the acute crisis. The new orthodoxy increased the dependence on market forces and drastically reduced the role of the state to minimalist functions (Sender, 1999: 101). The ‘omnipotent’ socialist rule, that ushered roughly all economic sectors, was considered too large to be efficient or even useful, and became discredited and significantly weaker. The gloomy perception of its performance thus far and the external environment were conducive to the downfall of the interventionist state.

There is no doubt that the government’s acquiescence to IMF and World Bank recipes allowed the economy to grow exponentially, especially from the mid-nineties onwards. Nevertheless, though impressive, this buoyant economy hides deep concerns. Double digit growth rates have meant very little to the 70% of Mozambicans who still live beneath the poverty line, while the country lingers in the last positions of UNDP’s Human Development Index. Indeed, Mozambique’s socio-economic rehabilitation has not been evenly spread, and the unequal distribution of the nation's wealth echoes a recurrent characteristic of the neoliberal approach. The hasty and obscure privatisation process is a classic example of how economic power can be co-opted by narrow national elite as well as foreign actors, further marginalising the poorer peasantry. The gap has widened and, inevitably, the prevalence of low-income households has been translated into minimal levels of human capital, especially among women and the rural population – the poorest amongst the poor (UNDP, 2004: 7-9).

Furthermore, the strict financial austerity imposed by the international institutions, notwithstanding initially the ongoing war and the following particular post-conflict circumstances, prevented the government from redressing these problems, by constraining budget spending (Hanlon, 2005: 280-281). Hence, the state’s capacity to absorb the ‘human surplus’ from war and meet the population’s needs was curtailed, which generated internal dissatisfaction and was reflected in worrying unemployment rates, and a dramatic rise in criminality.

In spite of being hailed as one of the few successful stories of the international community's interventionist agenda, particularly in the African continent, by and large, life in most of the country remains depressingly dire. And this, together with sharpening imbalances, can inflame social unrest and potentially endanger the consolidation of peace. Macroeconomic stability and growth are necessary; nonetheless, as conceived by the BWIs during the preceding decade, they had far too many collateral effects, undermining the role of the state, national cohesion and inclusive development (Ratilal, 2004: 252).

In that sense, the neo-modern state projected for the post-colonial world, under strict guidance of the international community, is yet to be fulfilled – clearly both political and economic reforms fell short of expectations.

Mozambique's capacity to stand up for its own priorities in this context is quite limited. Being one of the world's most aid-dependent countries has led to international donors gaining decisive strength in what agenda-setting is concerned. Moreover, in a highly aid dependent Mozambique, external stakeholders, besides controlling policy initiatives, frequently replace the central authority in its execution, establishing their own parallel management structures, thus deteriorating the state's legitimacy in the eyes of its own citizens. In fact, the state is more accountable to international donors than to its own population – the 'external voters', as Mozambicans call them, have a saying in issues that never reach public opinion. While financial accountability – which meets donors' objectives – is improving significantly, political accountability towards national citizens lingers.

The other side of the question, however, is how the Mozambican government has learned to manipulate the international community's discourse to its favour. The openness to the West and its major donors was premeditated in the beginning and it still is: national elites need this external financial support to survive and know how to take advantage of it. Indeed, being labelled as a "star pupil" serves both sides.

Which is, then, the role of the general population in this scenario? So far, it has been rather absent. Like any typical young democracy, Mozambique lacks a strong civil society and a truly free and intrusive press capable of monitoring the state and making pressure for deep reforms – a crucial component of the democratisation process (Ostheimer, 2001). Despite considerable improvements since the beginning of the 1990s, the endeavour of non-state actors is still not sufficient to provide for the

necessary vitality of Mozambique's political culture. The players, in what development is concerned, remain mainly two – although there have been some signs of change.

From the late nineties onwards, a timid try-out of a “post-Washington Consensus” reflects a commitment to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development, as well as to restructure the relationship and the responsibilities of both national and international actors. Claiming to no longer share the market fundamentalism that shaped the ruling orthodoxy of the preceding period, external stakeholders have prioritised public investment in areas previously neglected, namely the distributional aspects of growth, human development and institutional building.

Mozambique has been, once again, a privileged target of this new strategy. Within the African context, the donor community has proved to be a consistent funding source for Mozambique for the past 15 years, and has lately revealed willingness to provide an increasing share of financial aid in the form of direct budget support. In the absence of substantial domestic revenue, mainly due to the persistent lack of comprehensive and efficient tax collection, the feasibility of this valuable exercise is profoundly dependent on external assistance. Public expenditure is still at the basis of the new development model and inexorably requires aid inflows to assure budget allocations for social areas (Castel-Branco, Sulemane *et al.*, 2005: 16; 18). Hence, external actors will continue to play a preponderant role in Mozambique and to dictate the agenda.

An agenda that has, indeed, remained quite similar: the underlying framework is still the neoliberal order, along with its faith in the market and the minimalist conception of the state (Hildyard, 2000). Notwithstanding the rhetoric, and the ‘cleaning’ of some collateral damages that incited the popular backlash, the debate over development approaches has not yet been freed from its strings. The alleged reform emphasises the efficient implementation of given policies rather than the conception of alternative ones – which, in turn, questions the authenticity of ‘ownership’. External stakeholders maintain not only a vested interest in the establishment of priorities and the outline of strategies, but the capacity to threaten aid cancelling, which inevitably puts a great deal of pressure on the supposed ‘dialogue’ between government and donor community. The norm is still for national leaders to reflect the viewpoint of its financiers, being fairly difficult to distinguish the former's ideas from the latter's. This is particularly evident when one compares the first

Mozambican poverty reduction plan (PARPA) with the World Bank's general guidelines. As Foster sees it, "[t]he distinction between old style 'conditionality' and new style 'ownership' is a subtle one" (2000: 7). Moreover, creditor interests barely leave space for a true democratic participation in the development process outside their own intents (Stiglitz, 2003: 34-35; 40). Indeed, the Mozambican civil society confirms the lesser impact of proclaimed consultative processes, which implies that the nation's specific needs are overlooked while the risk of 'prescribing' remains pretty much present.

### ***c) Guinea-Bissau***

Guinea-Bissau's recent history may be divided into six main political stages or phases: a) from 1961 to 1974, an armed struggle led, mainly, by the PAIGC against the Portuguese colonial forces; b) from 1974 to 1980, a socialist inspired, modernizing and centralizing regime; c) from 1980 to 1994, a progressively economically open regime, with traditionalizing, militarizing and authoritarian traits; d) from 1994 to 1998, the implementation of the multiparty system, with the continuity in power of the PAIGC; e) between 1998 and 1999, a period of armed conflict with international interventions from Senegal, Guinea-Conakry and France; f) and finally, from 1999 until the present, a situation of unstable peace marked by several coup d'états, a period of ethnic manipulation of the state, and finally the return to power of the former President Vieira (1980-1998). After the departure of the traditional donors – acting in the immediate post-independence period – in the nineties (Sweden, the Netherlands, and the USA), those who stayed became the principal development partners: the European Union, Portugal, France, the African Development Bank and some United Nations agencies. Emergent partners, as Brazil and China, are currently positioning themselves as complementary financing sources. Actions currently concentrate in the following areas: a) governance and public administration reform; b) security sector reform; c) social areas as health and education. From the nineties onwards, there was a decrease in net official aid, with some periods of increase due to post-conflict measures and external debt relief:



**Net official development assistance from all sources**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>Millions of dollars</b>	118	180	124	96	52	80	59	59	145	76

*Source: African Development Bank*

The current state configuration of Guinea-Bissau is the result of a number of simultaneous building and collapse dynamics, meaning the fusion between the constitution and continuous “improvement” of a modern state model and its deterioration process – marked by a position of growing emptiness and omission regarding society’s political and economic performance. The virtual characteristics of the modern state currently appear as one among several possibilities and forms of governance/authority/social cohesion. There were periods in Guinea-Bissau’s history when the emphasis was put on modern state building processes. One of these refers to the colonial efforts towards political and economic centralization. The other relates to the politics and policies of post-colonial state building. The post-colonial state is the result of the contradiction between “thoughts and actions”, declared purposes and their concretization, implemented policies and society’s reactions and answers. Its foundations were laid over several “original” myths: the independent nation-building state, the centralizing socialist-oriented state, and the modernising and social emancipating state. However, as in other countries, the real outcomes were, at best, mostly unachieved promises and incomplete processes. The main traits of the outcome-state in Guinea-Bissau were the continuity of colonial structures – concerning education, territorial centralization and militarised authority and infrastructures; the dispersion and manipulation of identities and loyalties; growing external dependence; the rural-urban division and the bifurcation of citizenship (Mamdani, 1996); and finally the informalisation of survival strategies. These same outcome-traits were deepened by external action with the imposition of structural adjustment programmes. These programmes promoted the quasi-collapse of the state’s material and human structures and allowed the state to retreat from the so-called “social sphere”, mostly in the rural

areas, and, at the same time, contributed to disseminate the state's presence in the economic sphere through a kind of privatisation that allowed the abusive control of peasants by state workers converted into public-private intermediaries. In this context, as the patrimonial state strengthened, the modern state vanished, and central authority became the best way for personal enrichment.

In Guinea-Bissau state building has been, to a great extent, an externally-led task. Large groups of the population have not experienced subordination or participation related to state laws or decisions. The intersection of internal and external demands is so entrenched that a partial perspective can only be a fiction. The formal state remains totally reliant on external aid. This dependency is as old as the independent state. Perceiving a “negative” or “unable” state in construction, the international networks intervened in order to complement the absent characteristics of a “very modern” state – economic development, democratic system, good governance – giving birth to operations oriented towards paying international debts and designing a responsible and trustable state façade. Meanwhile, they have nonetheless produced crucial dynamics as modern civil society organizations or political parties. The evolution of development models adopted by Guinea-Bissau is determined by the international development agenda and by the manner the aid conditionality waves were implemented. As domestic elites manipulated the blindness and orthodoxy of international recipes, a culture of dependency grew, both at state and society levels. National development was finally totally conceived to respond to international assistance conveniences and to forget realistic local resources and potentialities. Thirty years of international assistance resulted in an accumulated impact of state-society disconnection, promoted or reinforced alternative organization models and the dispersal of power sources, mainly after economic and political “liberalization”. The Bissau-Guinean society came to find “old” (ethnic, lineages, *mandjuandades*<sup>1</sup>) and “new” (NGOs, grassroots organizations) organizing principles, replacing the state, creating parallel decision-making sources. However, the penetration of modern organization models remains, in most cases, superficial, based on the appropriation and imitation of the discourses that allow fundraising and integration in the global economy of development. In this context, the withdrawal of aid resources can bring problems as serious as their own introduction.

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<sup>1</sup> Multifunctional age, class or urban association with ceremonial purposes. Also forms of collective work organisation, urban or rural.

External aid emphasis on the reconstruction of the state and the rehabilitation of the formal economy through institutional building and the promotion of new investment rules overlooks other methods and instruments to qualify existing social and economic dynamics. This happens because it focuses on the lack of capacities and resources of official institutions and not on the lack of political will or the lack of opportunities and information of the economic actors. Not only does this externally-induced model of political and economic organization not pay proper attention to alternatives, but it also hides the institutional and social impact of its implementation. The individual and collective survival strategies produced by societies and frequently ignored by external aid must be taken into consideration. These strategies produce differentiated forms of influence and governance mechanisms, and interact with the formal state by resisting it, allying with it or replacing it. Some important features may help understand what Joshua Forrest (2003) calls state fragility in Guinea-Bissau. The author highlights the existence of a strong civil society, or what he calls a *praetorian social memory* – society's ability to resist or defend itself from the hegemonic control of the state. Rosemary Galli (1989: 94) observes the rural civil society resistance to state abuses through refusing credit payments, using projects resources in own benefit, migrating, avoiding tax duties or smuggling. These were, in fact, the consequences of central government aid-supported policies marginalising rural populations while extracting their productive potential in order to finance urban consumption through primary products export revenues. Also transnational economic networks contribute to alternative means of social cohesion and survival, as presented by Augel (1996), based on ethnic solidarity and confronting centralization. Quoting the author again, in spite of all the attacks the Guinean political and economic systems have been under, "*the social and economic situation has been surprisingly solid*" (Augel in Augel e Cardoso, 1996: 51). However, we must doubt that this situation remains as solid as it was then: after an armed conflict that had worse economic consequences than those provoked by the Rwanda genocide (World Bank, 2005), after de dismantling of the productive areas with the support of failed aid projects, and looking to an hypothetic narco-state in development and the search for an oil-dependent economy. Soon, the consequences of exhausted and failed modernization and centralization processes can lead to what Temudo and Schiefer (2003) or Sigrist (2001) call the

“disintegration of societies”<sup>2</sup> and the widespread inability of avoiding frustration or thinking about alternatives.

Despite “apparent” changing global aid patterns, we argue that, in reality, these changes do not present added value or innovative prevention strategies. Since 1999 (after the military conflict) Guinea-Bissau has joined the group of countries to which the international community is supposed to pay renewed attention: post-conflict countries and failed states. The recipes were based on the formula: elections, national reconciliation, security reform, good governance and macroeconomic stability. Besides the fact that only the first element of the formula was really implemented, the total formula could only, until the present, avoid the catastrophe and respond to emergency, isolated facts (and spoil some millions of dollars...). In fact, it may eventually promote a controlled and phased collapse of social, economic and political cohesion mechanisms without supporting viable and consistent alternatives. In fact, democratic conditionality and good governance appeals could only contribute to an environment of apparent trust and legitimacy. Presidential elections in 2005 brought to power former President Vieira, supported by the African Union and other international actors through “arguable” tools, without any serious discussion or judicial mechanisms to end impunity or to lead to national reconciliation. A presidential-nominated government, without stable parliamentary support, is negotiating external funds with the international community, which has little trust in its capabilities but has no other option than to support it. Obviously, at this stage the failures and the lack of capacities are seen as only local. The international community decided to teach Guineans how real states function through good governance projects in order to avoid “donor fatigue” and assure their own investments. These initiatives have centred around two main areas: economic governance and public administration reform. The first area is mostly an external need and means essentially providing experts to assist with accounting and financial reports that are the base of local legitimacy and proof of good behaviour towards international agencies. The other area means the persistence of structural adjustment without lessons learned about unemployment, reintegration and absence of economic alternatives in

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<sup>2</sup> “By ‘disintegration’, we mean the loss of the internal capacity for social reproduction. This process can be observed in the dismantling of social institutions normally guaranteeing both: social reproduction and the maintenance of the economic potential. This can also be seen in the loss of the capacity to reconstitute social relationships after breakdowns. This phenomenon is accelerated by the erosion of the spiritual dimension (Temudo and Schiefer, 2003: 395).

order to receive external funds to support current expenditures, as for example travel and per diems to request more external aid.

#### ***4. Conclusion: other adjectives***

The in-depth analysis of the trajectory and the current complexity of concrete cases of so-called failed states evinces a theoretical failure of the endogenous explanation developed by mainstream literature. We definitely need other adjectives to describe those realities as a solid basis for alternative policies aimed at promoting sustainable peace and development in those societies. “Internationally responsible state” and “governance state” are important suggestions. The cases of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau point towards other emphases:

- *The outcome state* – Post-colonial/conflict states must be understood as a result of a process of accumulation of different – and often contradictory – political, economic and social experiments. The continuity of colonial structures is one of its founding myths which, in practice, is combined with other founding myths and their corresponding strategies: the nation-building state, the socialist state and the local-global state. The outcome state is, most of the times, made of unachieved promises, incomplete processes and survival strategies.
- *The parallel state* – Post-colonial/conflict states experiment a dramatic dualism between their inward and their outward logic. Economic and political reforms are conceived with totally different meanings: a correspondence to international standards of aid conditionality for pragmatic purposes of fundraising, together with an internal practice of appropriation and patrimonialism.
- *The artificial state* – In post-colonial/conflict states, the modern state façade coexists with individual and collective strategies of survival and informal economies. The penetration of the modern structures is superficial in most cases, producing a state-society disconnection and different social reactions, from adaptation to indifference or to de-modernization.

- *The induced state* – In post-colonial/conflict states, state building is an externally-driven process following externally-induced models. The recipes are well-known: elections, good governance, security sector reform and market-oriented policies. Their strategic goals are the identification of a local elite of reliable partners and the persistence of macroeconomic neoliberal discipline, within the framework of a global governance of the borderlands of the world system.

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