IN A WORLD OF TRANSNATIONAL THREATS CAN WE ALLOW STATES TO FAIL?

EM UM MUNDO DE AMEAÇAS TRANSNACIONAIS PODEMOS PERMITIR A FALÊNCIA DOS ESTADOS?

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RESUMO

Este artigo discute o fenômeno da falência dos Estados como problema de segurança internacional e se é possível permitir a falência dos Estados em um mundo globalizado. A análise utiliza algumas medidas para desenvolver o tema: em primeiro lugar, os principais conceitos teóricos são introduzidos, dos quais quase todos estão ligados às funções do Estado, e também o problema da medição e classificação de estados falidos é analisado. Em segundo lugar, as principais ameaças à segurança internacional, e as conexões entre essas ameaças e Estados falidos são examinados. Em terceiro lugar, o problema da ajuda internacional e a questão da construção do Estado é abordada. Por fim, a conclusão apresenta razões fundamentais para que não se permita a falência dos Estados.

Palavras-chave: Estados Falidos. Segurança Internacional. Política Externa. Estratégia.

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the phenomenon of failure of states as an international security problem and whether can be allowed states to fail in a globalised world. The analysis uses some steps to develop the theme: firstly, the main theoretical concepts are introduced, almost all of which are linked with the functions of the state, and also the problem of measuring and ranking failed states is analysed. Secondly, the principal threats to international security, and the connections between those threats and failed states, are examined. Thirdly, the problem of international aid and the question of state-building is addressed. Finally, the conclusion presents fundamental reasons not to allow states to fail.

Keywords: Fail States. International Security. Foreign Policy. Strategy.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The failure of states is not a new phenomenon; history shows several cases in which states have lost the ability to perform their functions. Economic problems, wars, natural disasters, and ethnic and religious conflicts have all caused the failure of states in Europe since 1500. Similar factors have also led to the downfall of important empires such as the Ottoman, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian and British (ROTBERG, 2003, p. 303-304).

The concept of failed states has been used frequently in an academic context and in political discourses since the end of the Cold War; but became more prominent in relation to questions of global security following the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001. The 'Bush Doctrine' made great use of the link between failed states and international threats, including the subject in the United States National Security Strategy: 'America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones' (UNITED STATES..., 2002). Today the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Europe Union (EU) also consider failed states as a challenge in International security.

This analysis aims to investigate if, in a world of transnational threats, we can allow states to fail. In so doing, three steps need to be taken, which may be summarized in the following questions:
- What is a failed state?
- How does a failed state become a threat to international security?
- Can states be prevented from failing?

These steps will be developed as follows: first, the main theoretical concepts will be introduced, almost all of which are linked with the functions of the state, and the problem of measuring and ranking failed states will be analysed; second, the principal threats to international security, and the connections between those threats and failed states, will be examined; and finally the problem of international aid and the question of state-building will be addressed.

However, this work does not address interventions based on humanitarian issues or on the principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), although they are congruent and related topics.

2 WHAT IS A FAILED STATE?

There is no consensus when it comes to defining state failure because there are many different concepts of what actually constitutes fragile, weak, failing, failed and collapsed states. Indeed, due to this multiplicity of concepts, their use is often indiscriminate and politically motivated (PATRICK, 2007, p. 644-662).

The different concepts are generally associated with the theoretical functions of states. Weber defines states as having a monopoly on the use of violence. Fukuyama (2004, p. 3-27) argues that states have three types of functions: minimal, intermediate, and activist. Among the minimal functions he includes the provision of public goods, especially defence, law and order, property rights and public health; for intermediate functions he lists education, the environment and financial regulation; and among the activist functions are those such as industrial policy and wealth redistribution.

The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) uses the concept of fragile states to support its policy, programme and international development projects. In general, fragile states are described as being unable to assure basic services, control the economy, provide basic security and maintain law and order within their territory. Despite the variety of academic criteria, summarises that to measure fragile states there are three particularly relevant characteristics: conflict, poverty, and ineffective government (ZOELLICK, 2008, p. 69).

The term 'fragile states' has also been used pejoratively, which has led development agencies to use the wider term 'fragility'. Moreover, a country is defined as in a 'state of fragility' when it is failing in its functions of authority to protect its citizens, to provide basic services, or in terms of legitimacy (THE GOVERNANCE, [2000?]). However, academics have used a range of typology in their analyses of state failure, which is based on the strength or weakness of states. Rotberg (2004, p. 5-14) uses the following concept:

Weak states, also called 'states in crisis', have structural problems (economic, geographical or physical) or a conjectural situation (internal antagonisms, despotism, external attacks) that may trigger a conflict. Weak states generally have social tensions (religious, ethnic or linguistic, for example) that may become violent. Furthermore, their capacity to deliver public goods is limited. Poverty and GDP per capita are critical economic indicators.

Failed states do provide a very limited amount of essential public goods such as health, education and security. Increasingly these goods are distributed by non-state actors such as tribal leaders, religious groups, criminals or terrorists. The legislature and judiciary are extensions of the power of the ruler. The infrastructure of the country is committed to that power and the economy favours the ruling oligarchy. Civil wars or the inability to control insurgent movements leads to failed states, and another feature is the inability to control peripheral regions. However, 'it is not the absolute intensity of the violence that identifies a failed state' (ROTBERG, 2004, p. 5).

'Collapsed states are a rare and extreme version of a failed state' (ROTBERG, 2004, p. 9). There is a complete 'vacuum of authority' (ROTBERG, 2004, p. 9), public goods are delivered by a private system, and the security that exists is by the law of the strongest.

Another challenge lies in measuring and ranking states in accordance with the degree to which they are fragile or failed. There are different methodologies based on different indicators, but these indices are generally criticized because they use past data or the criteria are subjective and arbitrary.

Since 2005, *Foreign Policy* magazine has published an annual ranking of failed states drawn up by the Fund for Peace. 'The Failed States Index 2011' was based on sources from 2010 and three key groups of indicators. First, there are four social indicators: demographic pressures, massive movement of refugees and internally displaced peoples, legacy of vengeance-seeking groups grievances, and chronic and sustained human flight. Second, there are two economic indicators: uneven economic development along group lines and sharp and/or severe economic decline. Third, there are six political indicators: criminalization and/or delegitimisation of the state, progressive deterioration of public services, widespread violation of human rights, security apparatus as a 'state within a state', the rise of factionalised elites, and the intervention of other states or external factors (THE FUND..., 2011, p. 48).

The data analysis shows that sub-Saharan Africa has the largest group of fragile states (fourteen of the twenty most fragile), with Somalia having ranked as the most fragile of all for the last four years. Among the top ten are Iraq (9th) and Afghanistan (7th), both under military intervention. Haiti (5th), in addition to extreme poverty, has been affected by the aftermath of the earthquake of January 2010, which killed more than 300,000 people.

The list does have controversial aspects, however. The ambassador of Pakistan in Washington disagreed with the ranking of his country in the list (12th) and complained about the discriminatory treatment of the Index. The presence of subjective criteria might also be perceived in the rankings of China (72th), India (76th) and Russia (82th), all considered to be more 'failed' than other quite unstable countries such as El Salvador (89th), Libya (111th) and Greece (143th).

Indeed, the wide and controversial terminology regarding the failure of states and the subjective assessment of states as being fragile or failed points to the danger of such concepts being used as a justification for policy interventions in foreign affairs.

3 HOW DOES A FAILED STATE BECOME A THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY?

The 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* shows how the superpower saw risks arising from weak and failed states: 'Weak and impoverished states and ungoverned areas are not only a threat to their people and a burden on regional economies, but a real so susceptible to exploitation by terrorists, tyrants, and international criminals.' (UNITED STATES..., 2006, p. 33).

Patrick (2006, p. 27-53) summarizes the potential links between failed states and international threats as terrorism, proliferation, international crime, energy insecurity, disease and regional instability.

a) Terrorism

The threat of terrorism has remained the main fear in the world since the attacks of 11th September. When governments lack authority, which is a characteristic of weak and failed states, it opens opportunities for terrorist organizations to build safe havens, find sources of weapons and equipment, recruit people with experience in conflicts, and train new members (PARACHINI, 2003, p. 47).

Al-Qaeda used safe havens and training bases in Afghanistan and Sudan; Yemen and Kenya were bases to attack U.S. embassies in Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi; and in Somalia the connection between Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab provides training camps and safe havens (STEVENSON, 2010, p. 28-29).

However, in Patrick's analysis of the relationship between terrorism and weak states, he argues that not all weak states suffer from terrorism and also that the terrorism that occurs in weak and failed states does not necessarily take on a transnational form. He concludes that "weak and failed states can provide useful assets to transnational terrorists, but they may be less central to their operations than widely believed" (PATRICK, 2006, p. 35).

b) Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) proliferation

There are, of course, fears that international terrorists might use chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons. It is usually the case of weak and failed states that are not able to control stocks of these weapons, nor prevent their transportation over their borders. The principal concerns centre on stockpiles of weapons in former Soviet states; nuclear-armed states such as North Korea or Pakistan; and states that have developed nuclear technology, such as Iran. Also, the main argument for military intervention in Iraq was the alleged existence of WMDs (PARACHINI, 2003, p. 47).

However, for proliferation to take place the states in question need to possess a high level of technology, which is typically not the case in fragile states.

c) International Crime

In addition to terrorism and proliferation, international crime finds space to build and operate bases in fragile states. Privatized violence spreads quickly when states collapse. In general, the absence of the rule and law, lack of government control, and impunity are the reasons why international crime finds fertile ground in regions where conflict is taking place or has recently ended (MANDEL, 2011, p. 21). It is possible to list several kinds of 'international crime': illegal drug trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling, environmental crime, piracy, financial crime, cyber crime, and money laundering (PATRICK, 2006, p. 38-40).

The World Drugs Report 2011 (UNITED NATIONS, 2011) states that Afghanistan is the world's principal heroin producer. This illegal commodity, which supports the activities of Al-Qaeda, is trafficked to Europe through weakly-governed states in Central Asia. The same report presents Colombia as the major cocaine producer, and the trade as being the main source of funds for the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) guerrillas, the drug reaching the United States via the weak states of Central America.

The Piracy Annual Report states that of 445 reported pirate attacks in 2010, 75% occurred in seven areas where fragile states can be found, specifically in the Horn of Africa. Piracy has had an impact on maritime trade between Asia and East Africa, particularly the transport of oil and weapons, increasing rates of insurance. The international community has been conducting anti-piracy operations, but unless the serious problems that exist inside Somalia itself are solved, it is likely that piracy around the Horn of Africa will continue (STEVENSON, 2010, p. 30-31).

d) Energy insecurity

Energy supply constitutes a major challenge for a globalised world that remains dependent on fossil fuels. About 60 % of the world's oil and gas reserves are located in fragile states like Iraq, Venezuela, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Angola, and countries on the Gulf of Guinea. Also, other important producers such as Russia and Saudi Arabia have become less stable than they were ten years ago. Moreover, the fuels need to be transported through unstable regions like Transcaucasia, the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca (PATRICK, 2006, p. 42-44).

Disruption of production or delivery may destabilize the security of developed economies such as the United States and the European Union countries, and emerging countries such as China, which import fossil fuels from unstable regions.

e) Disease

The spread of new pandemics is both a fear and a reality in the globalised world. The H1N1 and avian influenza viruses illustrated the speed with which infectious diseases can spread. In general, the public health systems in weak and failed states are fragile, which obviously makes such diseases more difficult to treat and control.

Well-known pathogens such as malaria, cholera and tuberculosis can incubate in failed states and then spread at an alarming rate in periods of conflict and turmoil. Grim examples are provided by malaria and cholera in Haiti after the earthquake of January 2010 (P.B., 2011).

According to the World Health Organization, in the world 'there are still 781,000 deaths from malaria annually, completely unacceptable for a disease that is entirely preventable and treatable' (WORLD..., 2011, p. 7-8). The main endemic regions with deaths are Sub-Sahara Africa and South-East Asia, where states are generally poor and weak.

Nevertheless, McInnes and Rushton (2010, p. 1-2) consider that HIV/AIDS is the most serious disease of all in terms of its societal impact and its implications for national and international security. Although it contains only 12% of the world population, Sub-Saharan Africa has about 68% of HIV/AIDS infections (UNITED NATIONS, 2011, p. 7).

f) Regional Instability

When countries suffer from internal conflicts, economic instability, crime and violence, it is sometimes the case, of course, that these problems spill over to affect their neighbours. These countries in which the problems originate – generally fragile states – are considered bad neighbours, being the sources of refugees, drugs, violence and migration that become a security problem and a source of instability in the region.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Global Report 2010 (UNITED NATIONS, 2010) states that 10 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa are either refugees or have been displaced, including more than 653,000 refugees from Somalia living in the camps of Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia. In the Middle East, meanwhile, there remain 1.3 million displaced people inside Iraq and about 200,000 refugees in neighbouring countries.

Globalization has made the world smaller and countries more susceptible to influences originating outside their borders. Threats can spill over not only at a regional but also at a global level. The examples above show that fragile states may create conditions that spread threats beyond their region, affecting the interests of countries in other parts of the world.

4 CAN STATES BE PREVENTED FROM FAILING?

The 2006 *American National Security Strategy* states that "We will work to bolster threatened states, provide relief in times of crisis, and build capacity in developing states to increase their progress" (UNITED STATES..., 2006, p. 33).

This policy signals the determination to act in the international environment to prevent threats from becoming real. But what are the alternatives to operating this way? The options are aid allocation in fragile states and state-building.

Aid allocation is generally used for poverty reduction, health care and education development; but in fragile states there is a serious problem when it comes to trying to make aid allocation effective. Fragile states frequently receive less and more volatile aid than other countries with low incomes, but with authority and legitimacy to apply the resources received. An alternative approach is to deliver aid to fragile states in the context of state-building (THE GOVERNANCE, [2000?]).

The definition of state-building used by the United Kingdom Department for International Development is 'the process through which states enhance their ability to function' (FRIZT; MENOCAL, 2007, p. 4) . There are two theoretical interpretations of this concept. In one interpretation, the state-building is developed in the context of an international intervention, like in Afghanistan and Iraq, or of a peacekeeping operation headed by the United Nations, like in East Timor. In this approach the building or re-building of institutions is conducted by external actors. In the other, the process of state-building is led by internal actors, with the role of donors restricted to supporting and influencing the process through agreements and the setting of goals.

Englebert and Tull's (2008, p. 109-110) analysis about the obstacles to state-building in Africa is important in order to understand the process of state-building in failed states more generally. They conclude that the three major flaws in international efforts are: first, trying to reproduce Western institutions not naturally suited to the African environment; second, the appreciation of the causes of failure is made only by donors; third, that only exogenous actors are able to rebuild African states.

This approach is like that of Kaplan towards Somalia; he argues that the model of post-colonial roots absorbs resources, and strengthens a governance structure that clashes with the institutions and values of the population. He suggests changing the current approach of the United Nations and donors in Somalia who are trying to organize a central government based on a Western mo-

del. Kaplan recommends starting to work with clans and sub-clans, for example, supporting the success of Somaliland, and then organizing a federation. The effect of this modus operandi would be to strengthen the indigenous institutions (KAPLAN, 2010, p. 94).

Other important analysis comes from The World Bank in its World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development , which argues that the main causes of conflicts in the 21st century are extreme poverty and underdevelopment. The report says the keys to preventing conflict are social inclusion, jobs, education, justice and security. For the development of responsible leadership and to be more effective, international efforts need to start at the regional level. In addition, countries with middle and higher income are called upon to coordinate efforts with others with lower income.

The importance of state-building in order to prevent future conflicts is unquestionable but these operations are complex, requiring continuous resources and long-term action. The major discussion among academics and politicians is who should lead the process, and how. The Western model required by donors and suggesting evidence of colonialist attitudes is not always the best solution,. However, there is a consensus that in several cases the challenges of state-building must continue to be faced because it is right to do so.

5 CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of state failure is not new, but its importance for international security has increased since the end of the Cold War. The concept has been used to support academic theories, government policies and practices in international relations.

Failed states become a threat when their problems spill over and affect neighbouring countries. The spread of conflicts, refugees, epidemics and international crimes are threats to regional stability.

Globalization has exacerbated the spread of problems that were previously restricted to national and regional levels. Failed states have represented threats to developed countries, as is possible to verify in the priorities of NATO, the European Union and the United States National Security Strategy.

This threat materializes when regional problems overflow and jeopardize global security, such as when there are links with international terrorism and the possibility of disruption to the production and transportation of fossil fuels.

The case of Somalia is an example of how a failed state can become a regional and international threat. Thousands of refugees have been scattered around the Horn of Africa, spreading conflict to neighbouring countries. The links between Al-Shabab and Al-Qaeda have expanded terrorism to the regional level, affecting the security of countries elsewhere. Piracy has affected international trade, particularly regarding the safety and cost of transporting fuel and weapons.

Attempts to solve the problem have not been fruitful, especially because they have involved the United Nations and Western-donor models, instead of the regional-institutions models. The reconstruction of a state like Somalia demands continuous resources, long-term actions, and the flexibility to negotiate a solution with the local institutions; and even then the results will be unpredictable. The challenge is to prevent other states from fall in, into the critical situation such as that of in Somalia.

It is important to identify the causes of failure and, following the recommendations of The World Bank, to begin working at the regional level. In this context, countries and institutions of the developed world (such as the EU or NATO) that identify the relevance of failed states to their own security should be proactive in supporting fragile states and regional institutions.

It might be stated, finally, that there are two fundamental reasons not to allow states to fail: the first is moral – it is right to do so – and the second is that vital interests are at stake. Despite the prevalence of interests in international relations, it is important not to forget the moral component, and to seek to combine these motivations in order to build an international security that is more participatory, cooperative, and based on trust.

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