Panel 49: Making War, Building states, Critical Perspectives on Conflict and Statehood in Africa

"The phoenix State": the Congolese State facing war, between resilience and local declensions.

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Contrary to a widely held view, situations of internal wars in Africa don't give inevitably rise to a State collapse or to its calling into question. *A contrario,* illegal armed groups – often considered, in the common sense, as centrifugal forces – partake of a construction, indeed reconstruction process of the State. The political violence question has always been in the heart of the historical sociology of the State[1]. In Africa, the State is taking shape – and replicates – often by violence. War is the driving force of all the political machinery of the State. During the different conflicts which occurred in the Democratic Republic of Congo, this process was materialized in two ways at least, according to the action of the considered armed groups. Besides the fact that this process is a part of the general dynamic whose aim is to consolidate the armed movements' monopoly, on specific population and area, this process may be linked to a devolution phenomenon of the authority from the center to the periphery. It may also reveal a capturing of the authority by the local sphere: in a context of the country fragmentation into *de facto* autonomous regions, rebel movements tend to fill the administrative gap which is inherent to this configuration, by imposing their own conception of order and legality. Despite the devastating potential for the central State of these armed groups, and the deliquescence which characterizes this State in Congo, we have to admit that this latter remained, and that the model which carries it still remains strong.

Against State collapse theories, the aim of this communication is to show, in the tradition of Pierre Englebert's studies[2], the motives of the Congolese State resilience and the foundations of the popular attachment to this entity, despite the diffuse and continuous conflicting situation which characterizes large parts of eastern Congo.

The rise of armed movements favored the State resilience, mainly through the daily practices of the members of armed movements. In the scope of a slow and diffuse process, whose origin merges the initial formation of this State, the concrete demonstrations of State domination have been the object of an interiorized and implicit modeling by the civilian populations. This model allows us to grasp the dimensions through which the Congolese State

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[1] See notably Charles Tilly (eds), *The formation of national States in Western Europe*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975.

[2] Particularly « Souveraineté, développement et le paradoxe nationaliste congolais », in *Mondes en développement*, 2003/3, n°123, pp. 63-87, and "Patterns and theories of Traditional Resurgence in Tropical Africa", in *Mondes en développement,* 2002/2, n°118, p. 51-64.

succeeds in remaining under an ethereal guise, connected with the utilitarianism which shapes the relationship between the State and its citizens in Congo.

This communication is principally based on the study of the formation and the evolution of the main Congolese armed movements, as well as on the analysis of interviews with former members of armed groups such as the MLC[3], the RCD[4], the maï-maï[5], and with Congolese citizens who are present in the areas which are occupied by these movements. So, the micro-sociological perspective is privileged, and that allows us, to grasp thoroughly the motives of the Congolese State resilience, aiming at bringing to light the various objective demonstrations of this State, in singular relation with the popular *imaginaire* linked to this State[6].

The emergence of alternative orders, constituent of a State strengthening

The Congolese military-political field offers a large diversity. A great number of armed movements have been – and still are – active in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These armed groups differ according to their nature, their size, their composition and their objectives. Nevertheless, these one meet around similar practices concerning the management of the populations present on their action area. Rebel governance constitutes actually an essential element for every armed group whatever its size, its goal or its nature. Of course, this governance is not applied in the same way, according to the considered movement, and its

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[3] The *Mouvement de Libération du Congo* is principally composed of ancient dignitaries of Mobutu regime, hunted from their position by the AFDL, in 1997. This movement introduces itself as a Congolese alternative to the "Rwandese solution" of the RCD and to the regime established by Laurent-Désiré Kabila. Supported by Uganda, this platform remains largely used for personal ends by individuals who wish recovering positions from which they have been supplanted.

[4] The *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* will know several scissions. When it appeared, in 1998 in Goma, the movement was led by the academic Ernest Wamba dia Wamba. In 1999, further to internal dissensions, Wamba went to Kisangani, his organization then became the RCD-K and benefited of the support of neighboring Uganda. The faction which remains in the Kivu, is now called RCD-Goma with the support of Rwanda. Later, Wamba is removed from the head of the movement, whose new leader becomes Mbusa Nyamwisi. The RCD-K then becomes RCD-K-ML (Liberation Movement). These respective movements will continue to know fissiparousness movements according the leadership struggles.

[5] These are generally considered as local tribal militias of eastern DRC, more or less united according to their interests. The maï-maï mobilize the local populations in order to protect the traditional rural order against what is perceived as external threats. These combatants mobilize the range of ancient occult practices of invincibility such as the ritual of water. These militias, which appeared in the 90's, are considered to be the resurgence of the rebellion led by Pierre Mulele in the 60's, also called in the eastern Congo the "Simba Mulele Maï". The formation of these militias, often considered as popular self-defense forces in the North and South-Kivu, finds its origins in the social and political exclusion of the local populations. They are also linked to the growing aversion of the natives towards the Rwandese communities (Banyarwanda and Banyamulenge) established in the region. Nowadays, the expression "maï-maï" vaguely refers to any group of armed young people coming from eastern DRC. Until 1996, their actions were led against the Rwandese communities, then, against all the Tutsi interests in the region. During the second conflict, the majority of these groups sided with the governmental forces. However, the political ideology (often reduced to a primary nationalism) of these militias seems to be a screen for actions which serve private interests to such an extent that some observers talk of "social banditry" to describe their action. These armed groups offered an upgrading of social status for the young people who were marginalized in the traditional networks of dependency. Within these militias, new experiences of more egalitarian forms of social organization, using violence as discursive mode took place

[6] About this perspective, see notably : J-F. Bayart, C. Toulabor et A. Mbembe, *Le politique par le bas en Afrique noire : contributions à une problématique de la démocratie*, Paris, Kathala, 1992.

efficiency, its mode of enforcement and its final aims are closely correlated to the capacity of these movements to apply it. This governance is not specially a matter for an expressly enacted will, however, we can postulate that the practical norms governing the Congolese military-political field assert the armed movements which are present in Congo and shape their strategy concerning the management of the populations and the territories under their control. In fact, even if the action of many armed groups is more similar to acts of predation of the natural resources than to military operations, strictly speaking, against supposed enemies, we can question the chaotic character of the geopolitical sphere in which these actions occurred. Paradoxically, the Congolese conflicting imbroglio gave rise to the emergence of an alternative political order (particularly in eastern Congo). In parallel to the deliquescence of the Congolese State (initiated under Marechal Mobutu's presidency and which was emphasized during the war years), the different conflicts are characterized by the constitution of quite autonomous socio-political entities.

These guerrillas managed to destabilize partially the central State. Besides, their action produces a general state of insecurity from which emerged new political orders more or less long-lasting. Moreover, the constitution of war economies enables an objectivation of these politico-administrative micro orders which are mainly agonistic. If this violence against the State can be analyzed in some cases as a "specific mode of political affirmation in a situation of conflict"[7] and despite the multiplication of centrifugal forces and the threats of the country breaking out from the different armed groups, we can notice a persistence of a preexistent scheme of social achievement which wants the State to be, as a last resort, the organ which assures and objectives the individual positions.

If the recurrent conflicting, in a large part of the country, doesn't enable the civil population to domesticate totally the State – or rebel – violence monopoly, these populations have the possibility to have recourse to the "authority bypass strategies" repertoire, in order to escape from the most predatory organization. On one hand, some categories of population are able to implement some local services (for the security of the exchanges for example) very functional, and expected by the populations[8], as for example, the Nande traders in eastern Congo[9]. On the other hand, in parallel to the authority of the power oligopolies constituted by customary institutions, rebel groups tend to set themselves up as the only agents who uphold the legitimate violence monopoly[10].

Following the example of the most important insurrectional movements, which intend to compete with the central government, for lack of being able to depose it, smaller armed groups tend to organize themselves in the same way as the States: security services, more or less rational tax collection, organization of a judiciary system, external relations. However, if

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[7] Dominique Bangoura, « Etat et sécurité en Afrique », in *Politique Africaine*, n° 61, mars 1996, pp. 39-54, p.45.
[8] Ibid., p. 51
[9] See notably Timothy Raeymaekers, "The silent encroachment of the frontier: A politics of transborder trade in the Semliki Valley (Congo–Uganda) », in *Political Geography*, Volume 28, Issue 1, January 2009, Pages 55-65
[10] However, it's necessary to notice that the authority of the customary chiefs is closely linked to the possibility they have to exercise it in an autonomous way, in relation to the armed groups, which is far from being the case, particularly in eastern Congo. See P. Mathieu et A.M. Tsongo, « Guerres paysannes au Nord-Kivu, 1937-1994 », in *Cahier d'Etudes africaines*, 150-152, 1998, pp.385-416

for the formers, the will to establish a "proto-State" is a matter of a strategy aiming at presenting themselves as an organization able to replace the fought State; for the others, they are the requirements of the struggle and of its organization which lead these groups to adopt some characteristics of a "minimal State". Indeed, the war, or rather the system of conflicts, generating its own rationality, the structuring modes of this system assert upon the armed groups as a yoke. In order to ensure the durability of their organization – whether it is for military goals strictly speaking, or for the rational and durable exploitation of natural resources – the members of the armed movement have no other choice than rationalizing their domination mode.

The emergence of these alternative orders also ensues from a structural constraint: the geographical one. We can put forward the hypothesis that the deliquescence of the land communication routes in this huge country – if it doesn't constitute the origin of the State fragmentation – facilitated the partition of the country when the war broke out[11]. Furthermore, the topographic bias, associated to the disintegration of the central State authority, could have been one of the factors which have favored the hatching of armed movements and their inscription in a given area, forests offering to these groups, quasi- unassailable refuges. For eastern Congo citizens, this *de facto* partition has largely hindered their free movement capacity, and thus has had an incidence on the allegiance these people might have sworn to the governmental army, consequently for the Congolese State. This division of the territory in relatively different parts from the geographical point of view, associated to the prior action of the local centrifugal forces, could have constituted the "melting pot" in which the armed groups have enrolled young people, and thus, establish their authority on a given territory. Conversely, movement difficulties limited the field of possibilities for the people living in those areas, offering them only few alternatives to the recruitment in the insurrectionary organizations. The commitment within the armed groups, and the more or less voluntarist activity of these movements, are two phenomena which feed each other, and which participate into the constitution of the action areas of the subversive organizations, in *de facto* quasi-autonomous entities, from the administrative point of view.

Not being able to call a "conferred sovereignty", unlike the central State, the armed groups tend to establish themselves as the only organizations, holders of the monopoly of the legitimate constraint on a given territory. The question of the sovereignty dresses here a central aspect. Actually, if we compare the State governance and the rebel governance, we can advance, without any risk of mistaking, that the sovereignty of the Congolese State, on the one hand, will not suffer from questioning in a near future. On the other hand, it might not that the sovereignty which the rebel movements claim, would be durable. The uncertainty that surrounds the possible longevity of this "rebel sovereignty" has consequences on the mode of governance, which can be characterized by a bigger coercion. This hypothesis is based on the postulate that a rebel group can sometimes be more effective than a State - it is particularly pregnant in the Congolese case - to establish order and legality. This sovereignty, which does not generally survive the signature of the peace agreements, can produce an increase of the

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[11] See Roland Pourtier, « L'Afrique centrale dans la tourmente. Les enjeux de la guerre et de la paix au Congo et alentour », in *Hérodote,* 2003 (4), n°111

acts of predation in the group action area, in consideration of the uncertainty which surrounds the durability of the domination on a given territory and population. As the majority of the cases, unlike the State, the insurrectionary organizations cannot benefit from the principle of non-intervention in their internal affairs, sanctioned by the sovereignty principle. These movements will tend to increase the coercive aspect of their domination which is not based on a tacit contract accepted by the populations[12]. The fact of benefiting from a sovereignty which is not questioned allows the entity that is able to refer to it, to convert this resource in tangible assets, and that, the rebel movements cannot do it easily.

At the same time, in a quite systematic way, the first task of the armed groups consists of the imposition of taxes, whose rationalization differs according to the importance of the armed group. This "fiscal proto-policy", conjugated to the exercise of kingly skills, aims at establishing the legitimacy of the armed movement, as well as assuming to it the lacking sovereignty of the group. Concerning this subject, the sovereignty some rebel groups succeeded in imposing on certain portions of the territory is more legitimate for them, than the State sovereignty. This is because of the artificial character of this State sovereignty, contrary to theirs, which is the fruit of a struggle in an uncertain, changeable and subversive environment, their action taking form in a highly competitive field. The constitution of these proto-State entities does not necessarily generate a secessionist movement in DRC. The coercion, more or less pronounced in function of the case, which the rebel groups exercised in their action area, must be understood according to a utilitarian strategy. Their objective is not to constitute a sovereign and independent State; this coercion, whose goal is to establish the legitimacy of the movement must be seen in this case as a tool to insure the durability of the movement. Indeed the inclination of many rebel movements to display the characteristics which are particular to a State must be linked to the uncertainty inherent to their own existence. The Congolese military-political field presents the faculty to be linked to a strongly competitive market, every agent trying to increase one's presence on the sector. The temporal factor shaping the strategy of the various actors, each one uses tools at their disposal in order to optimize their domination, coercion representing the most efficient tool in those conditions to arouse the allegiance of the populations living in the action areas of the guerrillas. However, if the strategies of rebel movements leaders can join, the strategies of the individuals who integrate their group - increase the size of the group for the leaders, reach a certain status for the others -, the strategies of the fighters take into account the evolutions of the more global frame in which they are elaborated. Their fulfillment passes by a change of allegiance - from the rebel group to the regular army, consequently from a private actor to the State - inherent to the evolutions of the Congolese military-political field. Concerning this issue, considering the initial expectations of the young people committed in the armed groups, we can have reasonable doubts about a possible "strategy reorientation". Indeed, the integration of a rebel movement is not synonymous with questioning the legitimacy of the Congolese State. According to the resonance of the "former success figures" model, a position within the State apparatus remains an aim for many Congolese. The combatants are also aware of the international precedents of the conflict resolution: the idea that the commitment in a rebel movement guarantees a position within the army (in a more or less near future), is

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[12] This is particularly the case concerning the domination of the RCD on wide portions of Kivu.

deeply anchored in the mind of many young recruits, some rebel leaders even claim openly this idea by planning this probability as an acquired fact in advance[13]. So, the integration in the army is more a matter of "employer's change" than a real change of allegiance, the recognition of the State legitimacy being rarely the object of a questioning.

The activity of the guerrillas at the service of the central State

A particular interest can be brought to the circumstances in which the main rebel movements are formed, as well as to the ideals which led the individual commitment in these movements. Such an approach can allow us to refine our hypotheses concerning Congolese State resilience. Without drawing up an exhaustive typology of the Congolese guerrilla movements and their claims, in the thick of the war, we stipulate that the Congolese military-political field includes four main tendencies[14]: the governmental forces, the RCD, the MLC and the maï-maï. Apart from the RCD, whose ruling sphere, widely instrumented by Kigali, consists of a great majority of Tutsis. This movement can be also characterized by its reformist nature[15]; the other main armed organizations fight for the restoration of a "previous idealized order". Of course, the motivations of the diverse conflict protagonists do not materialize by claims relating to the restoration of a State of which they held the reins. Such complaints would inevitably collide with the hostility of the civil populations, because the former regime - which can be assimilated with the Congolese State - was loathed. Let's notice that the emergence of guerrillas, whose purpose is to conquer again positions from which the leaders were removed, is not exclusive to the Congo; Morten Boas has already brought to light this phenomenon in other geographical areas[16]. If the individual strategies of some of the main MLC executives can clearly be similar to an instrumentation of the movement in order to reestablish a previous order favorable to their personal interests, the formation of the maï-maï groups also ensues from the will to return to a pre-existing State organization, but in a much more ambiguous way. Certainly, the communities of the Kivu, the melting pot from which appeared the maï-maï groups, had to suffer from the deleterious policy of Mobutu's regime in its crepuscular phase[17]. However, obeying a kind of "theory of the inequitable sovereign"[18], this configuration of the Congolese State, already known, more easily subject to a possible domestication, is always preferable to a new State organization, whose landmarks, ins and outs remain vague, so synonymous of uncertainty. This tendency to the defense of the former order, carried by "conservative rebellions" is emphasized by the fact that the RCD,

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[13] A lot of young people joined the maï-maï groups at the approach of the peace agreements, with the aim of this probability.

[14] For a clearer view, we decided to consider only the main strengths in action. Naturally, the Congolese field of the guerrilla does not limit itself to these movements.

[15] See notably Christopher Clapham's typology in « Analysing African Insurgencies », in C. Clapham (eds.), *African Guerrillas*, Oxford, James Currey, 1998, p.7

[16] Morten Boas and Kevin Dunn, *African Guerrillas, Raging against the Machine*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007, p. 5.

[17] About this matter, see Koen Vlassenroot and Franck Van Acker, « Les maï-maï et les fonctions de la violence milicienne dans l'est du Congo », in *Politique Africaine*, décembre 2001, pp. 103-116.

[18] We borrow the expression to Jean-Louis Triaud, « Le renversement du souverain injuste : Un débat sur les fondements de la légitimité islamique en Afrique noire au XIXème siècle », in *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales*, 40 ème année, n°3, mai-juin 1985, pp. 509-519.

against which the maï-maï rose, is assimilated to a foreign occupying force. Besides, the resurgence of maï-maï concerning what is perceived as a foreign invasion, the maï-maï had to use the resources they could mobilize to carry out their fight successfully. In many cases, they had no other choice than turning towards the strengths that can support them. The Congolese State was the organization which was able to bring them the logistic support necessary for their fight. The regime of Kabila was so able to lead a war by proxy in eastern Congo. However, by answering purely military purposes, the collaboration between the maï-maï and the governmental forces, also contributed to reinforce the legitimacy of the Kabila regime, set up by the effects of the discourse, as the guarantor in the final analysis of the sovereignty of the Congolese State, threatened by the Rwandan annexation. It is not without consequence on the perception of this State, which merges even more with the regime of Kabila; so the action of the guerrilla movements contributes implicitly to the perpetuation and to the intensification of a pre-existing State model, by reinforcing its legitimacy, or by working at its restoration[19]. These dynamics also allow us to reveal the utilitarian aspect of the relations between the Congolese State and those who refer to it, in this particular case, the MLC and the maï-maï.

Generally, the belonging to an "imagined community"[20], among which the Tutsi - suspected of being the avant-garde of the Rwandan expansionism - would be excluded, transcends the allegiance to a given armed group. In spite of the confrontations which could oppose them, the positions of most of the conflict protagonists - set apart the RCD naturally – which rose in the country join around their aversion to the Tutsis. This resentment, maintained and instrumented by ambitious and sometimes little scrupulous political entrepreneurs, urged many young Congolese to enroll in the armed movements, in eastern Congo particularly. This hostility against the tutsie community, recurring in the discourse of the armed groups members, contributes to cement the Congolese national feeling. If the national feeling has never contradicted itself since the independence of the country, the motives which animate it have been really modified in the 90's, and so they met the dynamics which sustain the recurring confliction of eastern Congo. The reinforcement of this national feeling and the commitment in the armed groups are two phenomena which feed each other and grow rich. On the one hand, it is "the attachment to the homeland" - whose utilitarian aspect is not to be demonstrated any more - which directs partially the commitment into the struggle, whose purposes admitted by the armed groups members, concern the protection of the territorial integrity. On the other hand, the concrete modalities of the war[21], presented by the authorities as a war of annexation led by the Rwandans and their Congolese accomplices - individuals whose membership in the national community is called into question -, give a new dimension

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[19] The hypothesis relative to the resilience of the Congolese State which we emit here, is based on the postulate that the Congolese State transcends the changes of regimes which were at its head. The regime established by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, strengthened afterward by his son, is characterized by the similarity of the configuration of the power relations with the regime of Mobutu.
[20] In the sense of Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983.
[21] The various conflicts in Congo were rather regularly characterized by exactions on the civilians, the armed confrontations between various rebel groups sometimes taking a secondary importance. See on this matter Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo, Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, on 2010. It is mainly at this declension of the conflict that we hint when we evoke the "concrete modalities of the war".

to this famous Congolese national feeling, of which the ownership is claimed with pride by all the combatants. The main beneficiary of this nationalism renewal remains the Congolese State, that constitutes the frame in which the demonstrations of this patriotic feeling could spread. The strategy that is able to generate this phenomenon of "State capturing" of the anti-Tutsi popular resentment, which was translated by a nationalism renewal, is based on the capacity of the Congolese State to be able to impose its own reading of the conflict. This latter is mainly reduced to a manichean vision of the conflicting dynamics, by establishing a dichotomy between the imperialist aims of foreign powers on the one hand, and the resistance of a State, whose wealth is desired by foreign countries, on the other hand. Beyond the compassion that this "victim posture" can arouse, the discourse of the Congolese State leaders meets the populations expectations who are victims of the exactions of the "Tutsi RCD", in eastern Congo. The pattern, conveyed by several observers, according to which Congo would be the victim of a war which does not concern it, finds a certain echo among the population, and also contributes to arouse a nationalism renewal, like the reduction of the conflict to a wild quest of natural resources[22]. The ingenuity of these singular conceptions of the Congolese conflicting imbroglio, is based on the simplicity of their approach, but also - and especially - on their capacity to synthesize and theorize the violent social interactions between the armed groups and the civil populations. These conceptions act as a catalyst of the nationalist-patriotic feeling. This particular feeling is translated by a popular attachment to the Congolese State, in the sense the State is considered as a "supra-community organization" whose sovereignty is not questioned. The State remains the privileged receptacle of the populations' claims because of its post-colonial history, but also because of the inability of the armed groups to set up as sovereign organizations[23]. So, that's why the legitimacy of the Congolese State is strengthened through the war, which doesn't constitute a paradox, considering the logics which animate the Congolese system of conflicts[24]. In the first place, they are pragmatic considerations, which explain the popular attachment towards the State, and *a fortiori*, its resilience.

The motives of the Congolese State resilience: "imagined State" vs "idealized State"

The attachment to the Congolese State is not exclusive of the one to the rebellion, for the Congolese citizens, but also for the members of the armed groups. The *imaginaire* relating to the perception of the State directs the strategies of the various actors, (leaders or simple fighters). It can give rise to a "*State engineering democratization*". The war and the decay of the post-colonial State - which generated the State desecration– produced paradoxically a

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[22] Notably the analysis of Paul Collier, « Economic Analysis of Civil Wars », in *Defence and Peace Economics,* vol.13, n°6, pp. 429-496.

[23] As we supposed it previously, it's not sure that these armed movements wish to reach a State sovereignty. Generally, the constraints, exogenous or not, which weigh on these groups, hinder their progress towards a possible sovereignty. This configuration of the Congolese military-political field is the object of a more or less conscious interiorization among the civil populations, which partially explains the attachment to the Congolese State, always perceived as the supreme organ of socioeconomic regulation.

[24] We hint here at the popular vague desires, in wartime, relating to the allegiance to the organization provided with authority which will be the most able to supply protection, identical frame, and possibilities of accumulation.

rapprochement between the State and the Congolese. However, a distinction must be established between "the idealized State" and "the imagined State". The Congolese citizens, in their immense majority, agree, on the fact of promoting the democratic ideals which have to lead the existence of a modern Congolese State – the "idealized State". The "imagined State" results from the implicit projection of the various actors of the conflict. The individual strategies of the actors are built according to this imagined State, which doesn't differ from the State in place since the dawn of the independence. Most of these actors wish a reorientation of the prebends this State offers, in their favor. In other words, the logics which animate the functioning of this imagined State remain similar to those which animate the post-colonial State, in spite of, the addition of some mechanisms of correction, obviously. More than the eviction of the people who occupy the most important institutional positions, the claims concern mainly the extension of the corps of those who can benefit from it.

According to the perspective of the integration in the national army, which represents one of the main aspects of the post-conflict reconstruction policy, let's try now, to grasp the implications of such a dichotomy, concerning the Congolese State resilience. The objective here is not to establish a typology of the distinctions and the common points between the regular army and the illegal armed groups. We would like to insist on the changes caused by the integration in an "imagined institution". Indeed, the individuals integrated into the army often emphasize the "apolitical" character" of the organization they integrate. The interest for this type of organization brings us to wonder about the character of the group from which they arise. The subversive aspect of the armed groups represents an uncertainty that can be linked to a danger. It is not a matter of risks related to the illegality of these organizations, in fact, the Congolese State is not able to "punish" those who contest its authority through weapons. This is rather a question of durability of the status granted by the membership to the armed group. The "imagined army", as an armed demonstration of an institution whose sovereignty is not questioned, allows to secure the soldier's status, not according to financial considerations (financial means are lacking within this institution), but rather according to its apolitical character, that consequently exempts its members to fight for the survival of the group. These considerations bring to light the dynamics which lead the attachment to the Congolese State, that Pierre Englebert already has revealed[25]. So, for the case of the illegal armed groups ex-combatants, this tendency to conceive the Congolese State as the organization endowed with a legitimacy that cannot be questioned, is not without material considerations - beyond the sincere worship which can emanate from some of them. This attachment is based, above all on the possibility that the ex-fighters have to convert into mobilizable resources the position occupied through the state.

When we focus on individual reconversion dynamics, we realize that the individuals referring to the membership in a constitutional body symbolizing *par excellence* the State, tend to reproduce the behavior of their elders. It can be linked to an unconscious imitation effect, according to a logic where the ex- fighters' individual behavior is a matter of an implicit application of an "actions repertoire" related to the model governing the post-colonial State agents' behavior. The repetition of these acts - acts of predation on the population,

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[25] Pierre Englebert, *ibid*.

exaggerated accumulation - is not however reducible to a simple imitation of strategies observed previously, with the aim to secure a position of accumulation. The application of an "actions repertoire" referring to "the State *imaginaire*" must be understood in the most global frame of the evolution dynamics in a sphere where the respect for the standards, sure collectively admitted, collides with the imperatives of survival[26]. The behavior of these individuals, whether it is during the period of the armed struggle, or peace agreements once signed, shade off the antagonisms which might appear between the state-national post-colonial order and the alternative order ensuing from the emergence of more or less long-lasting armed groups. Consequently, the micro-sociological perspective, related to the combatants' everyday life behavior, which enables us to have reasonable doubts concerning a possible questioning of the post-colonial State. On the contrary, we could see in the reproduction and the duplication according to local declensions of these actions repertoire, a reinforcement of the essence itself of the models governing the supposed demonstrations of the Congolese State. Consequently, the particular way of the Congolese State functioning is strengthened, even when this latter has to face an armed contesting. They are not the capacities of action of this State that are strengthened, but rather the model which this State sends back of itself towards the populations. The projection of this model - that the armed groups, due to the behavior of their members, contribute to spread, sometimes against their will - limits the field of the possible alternatives to this particular configuration of State domination. And so the "imagined State" succeeds in becoming the only alternative, on behalf of the "idealized State", phenomenon strengthened by the fact that the citizens can appropriate the first type of State and only regretting the impossibility of deployment of the second type.

It is at the level of the "daily practices of the domination" that we can establish a parallel between what is a matter of the legitimate constraint in relation with the "imagined State" sovereignty and that imposed by the armed groups. The extent and the quasi-systematic application of these practices by the combatants partake of a slow and insidious process of configuration of the practical standards governing the domination of the supra-community authority, whether it takes the shape of the State - whose the most visible and intrusive demonstration is the army - or the shape of an armed movement, that tends to display the attributes of a sovereign organization similar to a State entity. This mimetism of the practices combines with the recurring invocation of a "patriotic spirit" by the armed groups members, which could explain their commitment, according to them[27]. According to this perspective – the perception by the local populations of the domination daily practices – we can consider the emergence of rebel movements, as local declensions of the Congolese central State. In other words, this recurring phenomenon contributes to model the popular *imaginaire* of the political domination. The interiorization of this *imaginaire* by the civil populations and by the

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[26] See at this subject the study of Maria ERIKSSON BAAZ et Maria STERN, « Making sense of violence : voices of soldiers in the Congo (DRC), in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 46, (1), 2008, pp.57-86.

[27] However, we must not overestimate this variable; above all, the discourse of the combatants confers a legitimacy to an action soiled by important drifts linked to the acts of predation and to the exactions on the civil populations, which a lot of rebels are made responsible for. Let's notice that these acts are not the privilege of the illegal armed groups members. The soldiers of the governmental army are regularly accused of committing violent acts on the civil populations. The common nature of these acts tends to shade off the antagonisms between the regular army and the armed groups.

combatants – if it doesn't give rise to a "voluntary servitude"[28] strictly speaking – configures the perception of the authority, in the sense of the reproduction of the State violent practices. The violence path, for the combatants, is the object of a particular perception. Contrary to what we could think at first, and against the catastrophist theories on State collapse, violence can be constituent of the State. It is through its deployment that a new national order may emerge, which would get closer to the "idealized State". For the rebel combatants, taking up arms against the State doesn't exclude the attachment to the State, it's rather the opposite. According to a particular logic, already well-tried by the precedents in the insurrectionary matter in Congo, taking up arms sends back to objectives aiming at reforming the State and not parting from it. That's the way the combatants give a sense to their action.

An utilitarian strategy at the foundations of the popular attachment to the Congolese State

The Congolese system of conflicts presents a particularity. In certain regions, mainly in North-Kivu and South-Kivu, maï-maï militias fought against the RCD troops and quickly allied with the central State, in their great majority. The use of a nationalist discourse by the leaders of these armed groups widely contributed to the massive support of the eastern Congo citizens. The conflict which began in 1998 gave rise to the emergence of a new class of individuals, wishing to dash into the politico-military adventure. Having at first at their disposal a financial capital and/or social capital, the display of their struggle – as an action in favor of the State protection – allows them to constitute the capital of legitimacy necessary for the increase of the group size, a purpose that cannot be realized only by coercion. Indeed, the defense of the State and the resistance arouse the popular craze and the commitment of many young people of these regions. These new armed organizations compete, and even supplant in many cases, the customary institutions[29]. The development of these armed groups gives rise to the constitution of series of local fiefs, whose governance is more or less rationalized, but generally directed according to military purposes. The support these groups could arouse, is not exclusive of the attachment to the Congolese central State, supposed to be the beneficiary of this struggle, which in parallel, strengthens the power of these new "Lords of the Kivu"[30]. According to the resources they can mobilize, the new elites stemming from the armed struggle, set up more or less advanced forms of governance whose ingenuity rests on the concomitance of the objectives that are served: the general interest, understood as the protection of the territorial integrity, and the private interests, in relation with the leader. Let's notice that these groups often transcend the community solidarities and include, in a relatively

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[28] The populations have at their disposal, "repertoire of bypassing authority strategies" according to the case. These strategies can go from the escapism, to the partial domestication of the new imposed order, or even to the opened contesting of the authority, which may materialize by the formation of a new armed group.
[29] Hélène Morvan, *Réinventer le quotidien. La cohabitation des populations civiles et des combattants maï-maï au Kivu*, Life and Peace Institute, Uppsala, 2005, p.58.
[30] We borrow this expression to Alain Mahé, *Histoire de la Grand Kabylie, XIXe-XXe siècles. Anthropologie historique du lien social dans les communautés villageoises*, Beyrouth, Bouchène, 2001, p. 53. The author appoints by the expression "Lords of the Atlas", the local potentates who were able to build real fiefs in the foothills of the Moroccan Atlas, because of their intercessor's role between the Berber tribes and the French administrators of the protectorate.

frequent way, individuals who are native from other regions than Kivu, cradle of the maï-maï groups. These groups, contrary to the armed movements endowed with a most important size, don't intend to compete with the State, even if they adopt State characteristics. On the opposite, in many cases, these "derivatives of the central State" must be perceived as the demonstrations of the State survival: these fiefs are similar to sovereignty archipelagoes in a region under the influence of the RCD which banishes all the signs of allegiance to the government of Kinshasa. The preservation, in several maï-maï areas, of the Congolese franc printed in Kinshasa, currency banished by the authorities of the RCD[31] is an example of this tendency.

The excessive use of a nationalist discourse is a practice in which the maï-maï leaders became famous. Besides the fact that this tendency reveals a lack of ideology without any doubt, this behavior has incidences on the post-conflict reconstruction field. Indeed, the redundancy of such practices could have played the role of catalyst in the commitment process of the young people native from these regions. These individuals intend to take advantage of their commitment. In these young people' mind, the State, in the final analysis, is indebted towards them, and is summoned to reward years of sacrifice. These requests, accompanied with threats of the resumption of weapons (phenomenon which occurred several times) illustrate on the one hand, the capacity of the maï-maï leaders to transfer the responsibility of their actions to the State. On the other hand, these demands reveal the utilitarian aspect of the attachment to the Congolese State. However, the iterative character of these phenomena contributes to destabilize deeply the reconstruction of the institutions emanating from the Congolese State. The particular characteristic of this loyalty has consequences on the State redistributive system: the army is in the quasi-obligation to provide the needs of a plethoric staff and their dependents. These particular modalities of the fighters' integration have also an incidence on the peace process in general, and on a State that is already in the grip of endemic difficulties. These "public policies" partake of the reproduction of a pre-existent model: they reinforce and perpetuate a singular way of functioning, based on an endemic weakness.

If we focus on the action of the rebel groups in general, and the maï-maï in particular, or most exactly to the individual motivations of the fighters, we realize that the logics sustaining the inscription of these combatants in a "constitutional body" (respect for the hierarchy, granting of a particular status) feed the dynamics through which the State succeeds in penetrating into the society. In other words, they are the fighters' individual strategies that contribute to spread the image of the State – through the army that is still considered as the institution through which the State shows its supposed power - as the frame, perceived as the impassable horizon, in which the personal ambitions take shape. Considering the fact that, as we mentioned it above, a lot of fighters wish to integrate the governmental army, once peace is signed, we realize that most of them take care of advancing the respect for the directives emanating from a superior authority, which is the State, in the final analysis, for the maï-maï. These armed groups members don't miss to echo in their circle of acquaintances the obligation of submission to the established order. That is to say the political order established

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[31] Hélène Morvan, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

by their group, and consequently the order of the State they wish to integrate the structures, in a more or less distant future. The Congolese State is still considered as the regulating organ of the social interactions. This particular perception is based on concrete elements: indeed, it is according to this authority, that the official recognition of the ranks which are acquired in the rebellion is indexed. The individual behaviors resulting from the particular State perception can be assimilated to a kind of "alienation of the free will" in favor of the State institution. These behaviors contribute to the reinforcement of the State, still considered as the only entity able to legitimize the struggle and the individual positions of the combatants. This phenomenon is spread out in the areas where the State was almost absent during long periods, as in eastern Congo.

If the rebel combatants express their attachment to the State because of its redistribution potential; what about the civil populations who most of the time are subjected to the diktat of the armed groups? In spite of its decay, the Congolese State is always widely considered in many places, by the civil populations as the guarantor of their protection. This perception is often contradicted by reality, in which the members of the governmental forces don't distinguish generally themselves by their preoccupation of the populations, except when their task consists of seizing the civilians' goods. The attachment of the Congolese citizens to their State can be very often explained, not by a possible resignation, but rather mistrust towards rebellions, perceived as the product of a foreign power. It is the case for the RCD, whose relations with Kigali are well known. For the civilians, it's always preferable to turn towards the carrier of a "national solution". According to this pattern, we can understand the important scores realized by Joseph Kabila in eastern Congo during the 2006 presidential election, in spite of the State quasi-absence in the region during the conflict. Kabila benefited from a massive influx of votes, according to his supposed capacity to pacify the region. The worship towards the State can also be grasped according to more pragmatic criteria, and follow for example the paths of the support to a given armed group. Consequently, the civil populations can support certain rebellions, if they hope that the members of their community, committed in the local rebel group, will be able, at the end of the war, to share the possible prebends provided by the occupation of an accumulation position[32] which is a purpose for many combatants who wish to integrate the governmental army. Anyway, according to the utilitarian perspective, this pattern can partially explain the "reproduction" of the armed groups and the absence of "recruitment crisis".

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[32] About the question of the commitment remunerations in an insurrectionary movement, in terms of returns on investment at more or less long term, according to the quality of the investor, see Jeremy Weinstein's study: « Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment », in *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 49, n°4, 2005 (8), pp. 598-625.

Conclusion

The individual commitment dynamics, the perspective we have decided to borrow, contributes to reinforce the legitimacy of the State. These dynamics are neither favorable to a radical reform of the principles which lead the State, nor to a change of its functioning mode. Indeed, the Congolese rebel movements' leaders, which are characterized by their reformist dimension, do not speak generally in favor of the foundation of a State that would be cleared of its "tribal defects". They hardly wish to operate a reorientation of the prebends offered by the State, to the advantage of their community. This new configuration can be similar to a shape of consociationalism registered in the fundamental texts, or simply be synonymous of a better consideration of a particular group's interests, within the framework of the existing State shape. As for other armed groups members, their hopes concerning their integration in the State apparatus - always considered as capable of supplying economic goods in exchange of a political loyalty - rest on the possibility of receiving allowance from an occupied position. Conscious of the endemic weakness of the State institution they wish to integrate, their survival can only be assured by the implementation of corrupt practices and predation acts. In this configuration, these acts are not considered as criminal practices, but rather as the application of a model structuring the field of power relations. By virtue of these patterns of thought – which, by their force of penetration, take the shape of standards collectively and implicitly accepted – this kind of State is doomed to be duplicated according to a similar configuration. And that, in spite of the claims that appear - and which constitute often the framework of the armed movements' members discourse - concerning a radical change of the State functioning mode. This singular running of the State is characterized by an endemic weakness, but survives the predation whose it is a victim. The perception of this State directs the strategy of the various actors, according to short-term objectives, the temporal factor - and the uncertainty whose it is the carrier - contributing to an acceleration of the practices of "State siphonage". Certainly, the forms of governance which this kind of State is the carrier, don't compromise the faculty to think out another type of State. However, the contingencies linked to the individual evolution in a deleterious environment, as well as the structural constraints, limit the field of the possible alternatives to this kind of State organization. Consequently, all these dynamics contribute to the similar reproduction of the State, which is then the object of a particular attachment from the people who can take advantages of the State, but also from those who hope to benefit of it.