

## Beside the State

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# Beside the State

Emergent Powers in Contemporary Africa



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# **Tracing Emergent Powers in Contemporary Africa Introduction**

Alice Bellagamba and Georg Klute

## **Deserters, the state and other powers in the border regions of northern Mali**

Kidal is Mali's northernmost region, bordering on Algeria. Currently, the political geography of this desert area appears full of contradictions. On 23rd May 2006, several hundred Malian soldiers of Tuareg origin occupied some garrisons of the Malian army in the north of the country. A few days later, they left them after looting all weapons, ammunitions, vehicles, fuel and provisions they could carry on them.

Immediately after these events, the Malian army deployed paratrooper units in the area with orders to stop the insurgents or to drive them out of the country. In order to avoid open military confrontation, the deserters, joined by other Tuareg, fled into the Sahara and cut themselves off in the mountains of Tigharghar, near the border between Mali and Algeria. The result was a 'cold-war-like' confrontation without any practicable solutions in sight, despite lengthy mediation efforts by outside parties, in particular Algeria. The situation in the Kidal region remained highly unstable for several months.<sup>1</sup>

On 9th March 2007, more than nine months after deserting the army garrisons, approximately 2,000 Tuareg insurgents returned to Kidal, which is Kidal region's main town. At the end of the month, after lengthy negotiations, the two parties in conflict, namely the government of Mali and the Tuareg rebels, signed a peace agreement. This included plans to implement a ten-year development programme for the three northernmost regions of Mali, Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal, involving an estimated total cost of 500 billion FCFA (nearly 762.6 million Euros).

This episode of recent Malian history highlights the complex political phenomena which are the subject of this volume. Some of the forces at play in the area of Kidal were local. Some were regional and trans-regional. Others were global. For the time being, and in spite of all efforts, none of

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<sup>1</sup> Published information about these recent events is not abundant. We have therefore relied on three kinds of sources: 1) personal communications by Tuareg from the region; 2) the Kidal region's excellent website [[www.kidal.info](http://www.kidal.info)], which also reports news from western and Malian media; 3) a recent publication by Baz Lecocq and Paul Schrijver, which mentions the 2006 and 2007 events although dealing mainly with the war on terror in the Sahara (Lecocq and Schrijver 2007).

these forces – including the US army and the Islamic GSPC (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat*) – has been able to achieve ultimate control over the border region. Neither has the Malian state, as is clearly shown by our description of the events. Instead of stopping the Tuareg mutineers by force, in accordance with its original intention, the government accepted negotiations and promised the enactment of an ambitious development programme.

Mali does not fit the stereotype of a state that is ‘weak’ or ‘falling apart’, which has been a recurrent trope of African political vocabulary since the late 1980s (Tull 2003; Young 2004; Ferme 2004; Ferguson 2006). The picture of the state in Africa is indeed diverse and complicated (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005: 127; Trouillot 2001). In Kidal the state may be weak or even absent insofar as guaranteeing services and economic rights to its citizens is concerned, but it is dramatically present with its military and coercive apparatus, made of soldiers, trucks and weapons. The number of armed state agents per inhabitant is greater than in any other area of the country. It is possibly even greater in comparison with most western countries.<sup>2</sup> The state has not rolled back from the region but it struggles to assert its military supremacy against other powerful political actors. The Malian state ultimately counters its fragile and contested sovereignty precisely by means of this competition with other powers (Hansen and Steputtat 2005: 29), as represented by the Tuareg rebels.

In addition to the deserters, the Tuareg civilians who joined them, and several hundred members of the Malian Special Forces, the Kidal region also hosts heavily armed external powers. Their presence is a sign of the increased relevance of transnational forces in shaping what happens on the ground, even in this remote corner of Mali. Algeria is represented by some army officers, who were sent in June 2006 to mediate the conflict. Even the United States of America are present. In 2004, the US army launched its “Pan-Sahel-Initiative” (PSI) in Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad. The programme was aimed at training the special forces of the respective national armies in order to improve control of the vast border regions between these four countries. In 2005 the PSI, currently known as the Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), was extended to Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal and Nigeria, with a budget of half a billion dollars. In the region of

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At the beginning of the so-called Tuareg rebellion in Mali in 1990 (for overviews of the historical events, see Boilley 1999, Lecocq 2002, Klute 2001, Klute and Trotha 2004), nearly 600 soldiers were based in a region (Mariko 2001: 233-234) of about 35,000 inhabitants. This meant a proportion of 1 soldier per 60 inhabitants. After the conclusion of the final peace between Tuareg rebels and the Malian government in March 1996, the number of soldiers rose corresponding to the growing regional population. After the events of May 2006, the Malian army reinforced its presence to achieve an estimated proportion of approximately 1 soldier per 40 inhabitants.



Kidal, US forces have occupied and repaired the abandoned airfield of Tessalit, which was built by the French colonial army in the 1950s as a strategic basis against the Algerian liberation front. The US army equipped the camp with new and sophisticated surveillance technology for the “war against terror” declared by the Bush administration after 9/11. Tessalit has become one of several bases in the Sahara (Keenan 2004) that enable the deployment of US troops whenever needed. The US army has been particularly alarmed by the presence of still another global force, the Algerian-based GSPC which in 2007 declared its affiliation to the Al Qaeda network. The GSPC has been operating in the region at least since 2003, when the public in the West became aware of its presence because of the kidnapping of a group of European tourists.

Far from being unique, the situation in Kidal exemplifies recurring processes in other African contexts. In the past twenty years, many parts of the continent have experienced profound changes, which have led to regionally shaped contradictions of the Kidal type, and to the emergence of new social and political settings. The notion of *heterarchy* (as opposed to the hierarchical representation of the state as standing above and disciplining other power groups within the society) seems to be more appropriate to describe the current plurality of competing power foci (Chabal, Feinman and Skalnik 2004: 47ff.) together with the mutable and unstable intertwining of state and non-state actors that emerges from the case studies from Kenya, Somaliland, Congo, Chad, Gambia, Ghana and Mozambique that are discussed in this volume. In the following pages, we will succinctly illustrate some of the open questions that inspired us in the first place.

### **Not only the state: an agenda for addressing the current political complexity**

More state representatives and more military and armed men than ever before have appeared in the Kidal region in the past two years. Powerful states, including the super-power of the Enduring Freedom age, the USA, stand next to non-state actors that on their side seem to be militarily, politically and financially engaged in the attempt to gain control over this piece of Malian territory. In order to explain similar developments in other African contexts, academic discourses, policy-making actors (including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), the media and the international press have insisted on two main arguments, which might respectively be qualified as the ‘substitute’ and the ‘deviance’ argument.

The first argument interprets the Kidal-type situation as the result of global changes, and it goes as follows: in Africa, and elsewhere, the free market for finance, capital and labour, the emergence of forms of governmentality strictly associated with neo-liberal capitalism and its strategies of

resource extraction, the internationalization of communication and military technologies, the flow of refugees and migrants' transnational connections have seriously undermined the sovereignty of the nation-state (Sassen 1996; Gupta 2006; Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 33-34; Ferguson 2006). The state has demonstrated that it is at once too small to govern such rapid changes and at the same time too big to give voice to the rising claims of minorities and marginal groups either living within its territory or crossing it (Benhabib 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005). Political actors and organizations of different nature and origins have appeared on the local, national and international stage, increasing the need to explore how both the state and global power networks have been locally appropriated (Callaghy, Kassimir and Latham 2001; Boone 2003).

The second argument has advanced peculiarly African causes, examining the trajectory of the Weberian model of the state after its implantation in Africa by colonial powers (Fatton 1992; Bayart 1993; Chabal and Daloz 1999). This line of thought stresses the criminalization of the post-colonial ruling elite, the re-traditionalization of politics as well as the dramatic growth of class inequalities, with only a few being entitled to the benefits of globalization and the larger strata of the urban and rural population *de facto* deprived of their rights as citizens (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999; Nyamnjoh 2007).

In both cases, alternatives to the power of the state have been described either as substitutes for declining state organization or as specific African deviations from the model of the modern state. A more or less explicit argument runs through this reasoning, which sees informal and non-state political actors as doomed to disappear as soon as the state rebuilds its structure and solves its internal problems. This is not always the case, however, and in this respect the Tuareg rebels represent again a good example.

By employing the conceptions of "para-statehood" and "para-sovereignty", Georg Klute (1999) and Trutz von Trotha (Trotha and Klute 2001) have described the historical relationships between Tuareg communities and Malian colonial and post-colonial governments as characterized by on-going processes of alternate collaboration and conflict. Today, in spite of the fact that Mali is praised as a democratic country on the way to decentralizing its administrative structures and giving its citizenry a major degree of representation in municipal and regional administration, Tuareg para-sovereignty appears to be as strong as ever. It is strong enough to defy the Malian army and the Malian state, as became clear in 2006/07. It has also been able to militarily confront the Al Qaeda-affiliated GSPC, thus succeeding where Mali and the USA have failed. At the end of September 2006, the Tuareg insurgents reported that skirmishes occurred between them and the GSPC. This resulted in the death of three of the GSPC leaders, one of whom was the

commander-in-chief. Later on, the GSPC ambushed the Tuareg, who suffered a dozen casualties.

Although the state plays a role in the ethnographic and historical analyses presented in this volume, the efforts of our contributors tend to push it into the background while examining the blurred zones of its sovereignty, for instance in contexts like that of Kidal, where the presence of the state within society materializes only through constant confrontations with alternative forces and powers. Such forces and powers, which gain momentum in a specific historical situation and may lose visibility over the span of a few years, are the true protagonists of this book. By employing the expression ‘beside the state’, we attempt to overcome both the substitute and the deviance arguments. The emphasis is on the appearance of new figures of power such as non-governmental and community-based organizations (Galaty, this volume), and returnees from the diaspora (Ciabbarri, this volume), and on the persistence and vitality of neo-traditional political actors, whether they are chiefs (Kyed and Skalník, this volume), religious scholars (Bellagamba, this volume) or elders (Ciabbarri, this volume). Rather than an opposition of ‘state’ and ‘non-state’ political complexes or ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ politics, we believe there is a continuum within which the state and alternatives to state power have shown themselves to be mutually constitutive and interdependent during the past two decades. In these circumstances, the expression ‘beside the state’, which we chose as the title of this volume, has a double significance. First and foremost, it highlights forms of political organization and leadership that develop alongside the state, and sooner or later end up by either sustaining its apparatus and policies or appropriating its sovereignty by processes of informal privatization (Klute and Trotha 2004). At the same time, the term ‘beside’ points to a need to discuss under which circumstances and for how long such processes of power building create viable alternatives to the dominant power and organization of the state. ‘Beside’ may then become ‘below’, as the state reasserts its verticality by disciplining or suppressing alternative forces, or ‘beyond’, when the powers that develop at the margins of the state, and complement its power, eventually open up innovative and unexpected spaces for political organization and mobilization. As in Kidal, the result of such driving forces is often rapid, unpredictable and liable to change whenever there is a shift in the encompassing political, economic and social scenarios.

The word ‘emergent’ – which appears in the subtitle of this book – reflects our commitment to the analysis of fractures and moments of crisis, when power alignments are put into question by internal and external forces. Political forces growing beside the state and in the interstices of state organization can be ephemeral or durable. They can cohabit peacefully with the state or antagonize it. It is not even certain that they will have the chance to emerge and consolidate at all.

### **Dealing with historicity and lived experience**

By choosing to see and to listen to what is unfolding on the ground, we have opted for a certain degree of analytical empiricism (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003: 164). This does not exclude theoretical questions but recognizes the relevance of bottom-up approaches in the study of politics as opposed to the stereotypes and easy generalizations that continue to characterize debates on African societies even in the new millennium (Mbembe 2000a; Chabal and Daloz 2006).

Processes and people are the two axes around which most of the contributions to this volume revolve. Daily interactions between state officials and the people are questioned to see whether there is room for autonomous organization on the side of the latter. We describe situations in which non-state political actors have successfully competed with the state for recognition, as the Tuareg rebels did in Kidal, or in which they have humbly carved out marginal and contested spaces of autonomy for themselves, which allow them to partially distance themselves from the state and its repressive practices. Most of the contributions focus on the past two decades of African history without, however, losing sight of long term historicity and of the feelings and agencies of differently situated political and social subjects.

Paul Nugent's comparison between two border areas, one located between Ghana and Togo (Agotime) and the other between The Gambia and the Casamance (Darsilami), offers a chance to discuss how international boundaries might be conceived of as creative sites of interaction, which shape the very perception of the state (Nugent, this volume). Once traced, the border is appropriated and reworked on the ground and despite the high visibility of the state in such contexts – through checkpoints and a plethora of civilian and military officials – recurrent violations of territorial sovereignty have often been tolerated, in the shadow of what Nugent describes as officialdom. By turning a blind eye, state officials allow 'state' and 'non-state' practices to gradually become established, becoming part of how the border is represented by border people like the Agotime and the Darsilami communities, on which Nugent focuses his attention.

Lived experiences of the state inform the interaction between state and non-state actors, and between these actors and the populace. By means of such interactions people participate in constructing what the state (and its alternatives) means in time and context. What we call the state is hence a "site of symbolic and cultural production" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002: 981) always represented, understood and imagined in specific ways, which can vary even within the same socio-cultural and political context (Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 8). As an example of this, Mirjam de Bruijn opens her discussion of Chadian political dynamics by critically comparing three different experiences of civic organization: Mahamat and his recycling workshop for old shoes in the middle of the N'Djamena market, the NGO established by

Homere to assist street children in N'Djamena, and another NGO explicitly designed so as to activate civil society in those areas of the country that have been affected by oil-extraction since 2000.

For the leaders of the first two organizations, the state is a dangerous and alien entity, which has failed to guarantee its citizens the chance to lead a decent life. In the effort to fill this gap, Mahamat and Homere creatively cross the boundaries between the legal and the illegal, striving to avoid interactions with what they, like many other Chadians, consider to be a criminal state. The third organization is the by-product of international forces, and shares with these international forces, and with the majority of Chadians, a vision of the state as profoundly corrupted. It is nonetheless questionable whether this organization represents the true voice of the people living in the oil-producing regions of the country, or whether it is not another strategy of tapping the flow of international resources, though in a different way from that of the Chadian government. De Bruijn (de Bruijn, this volume) concludes that despite the mushrooming of multiple forms of power beside the state, the chances for voicing the needs and aspirations of marginalized and vulnerable Chadians are rather restricted. Imagining and constructing a political order that is more human and accountable than the current one seems to be a blocked option in contemporary Chad. Chadians construct their lives trapped between an oppressive state and the initiatives of the rebels, whose practices of power-building and whose attitudes towards the populace do not substantially differ from those of the state they are trying to countervail.

### **Democratization, armed conflicts and new authoritarian regimes: the historical situation in the 1990s**

To trace periods in the history of Africa is a challenging task; it sets the frames of reference established for the analysis of European and North Atlantic history against the inner historicity of African societies, and their different conception of being in history and in time. Despite such difficulties, however, some epochs stand as symbols of transition and change and are remembered as such by posterity. So it is for the achievement of independence, even if historiography emphasizes the continuities between the modernizing and developmentalist agenda of late colonialism and the first decades of independent African rule (MacGaffey 1985; Cooper 2002; Ellis 2002; Young 2004). The same holds true for the 1990s, when the realignment of the world order after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the socialist bloc produced their by-effects in Africa as well. Rapid political changes took place and mummified regimes, some of which had been in power for decades, destabilized under the pressure of external and internal factors. Democratization was on the political agenda again, along with hopes of social, political and economic renovation after decades of authoritarian rule, economic crisis, and political disengagement.

In certain African countries, the political reforms of the early 1990s gave voice to a lively and politically engaged civil society. In others, electoral and multi-party democracy rapidly became the official mask for the “unspoken restoration of more autocratic practices”, a phenomenon which was already evident by the middle of the decade (Mirzeler 2002: 106). Military coups destabilized Sierra Leone, Nigeria and The Gambia while former Somalia and Zaïre collapsed into civil war. Conversely, peace-agreements were reached in Mozambique and the transition to democracy was accomplished (Kyed, this volume). In a nutshell, the outcomes of the political ‘abertura’ of the early 1990s, as Richard Joseph (1998) has qualified this period, have been diverging and diverse. Africa may be properly described today as a continent of “mixed-governance” (Joseph 1998: 3), where the growing democratic culture in a number of countries is accompanied by enduring conflicts and neo-authoritarian developments in others.

When the wind of democratic change reached Mali, several events occurred simultaneously. The so-called Tuareg rebellion began in 1990, and at the same time the neo-patrimonial regime of General Moussa Traoré was put under immense pressure by the rise of a democratic opposition front in Bamako. Confronted with increasingly radicalized movements of students and trade unions in the south of the country, Traoré signed a peace agreement with the rebels in the north in order to get rid of at least one of his two big adversaries. This happened after only six months of military confrontations. Shortly afterwards, some of his army officers arrested him and installed a transition government (Bernus 1992: 28). Despite the peace agreement and the holding of democratic elections one year later, in 1992, the fighting continued in the north. This fact shows the different political trajectories of the southern and northern areas of the country.

The government and the rebels signed the final peace agreement in 1996. The subsequent processes of democratization and decentralization did not immediately lead to the expected results, but produced an ever more heterogeneous and conflicting political landscape (see for instance Fay 1995). To the surprise of external observers, the so-called traditional authorities (re)gained more influence than ever before, particularly in the rural areas. Many of them joined the ruling party, hence adding to their local influence access to the benefits of the central state. Their move prefigured the development of a mode of governance called ‘consensus government’, that was openly promoted by the second democratic president of Mali, elected in 2002. President Amadou Toumani Touré declared himself willing to collaborate with all political tendencies within the country. Former opponents joined the new big man in Bamako and agreed to collaborate with him. While many observers qualify this mode of governance in oversized coalitions as little democratic (Ottaway 1995: 248), others praise the consensus government as a form of specific African creativity, able to cope with the

difficult transition from a one-party-regime to parliamentary rule (Coulon 2000: 75-76).<sup>3</sup>

When referring to Kenya, some observers have used the expression 'virtual democracy' to describe the cosmetic attitude of the regime and its ability to survive the democratic transition of the 1990s, when the one-party rule of President Daniel arap Moi was forced to introduce liberal reforms by the combined pressure of international donors and of increasing internal claims (Joseph 1998; Ndegwa 1999). The orchestration of informal repression with piecemeal concessions to the opposition front allowed Moi's party to preserve its power until the 2002 elections, when the strategy of mobilizing the younger generation turned on its back (Kagwanja 2006). For John Galaty such developments, despite the political violence they entailed, created the space for liberating forces that were long repressed within Kenyan society. During the 1990s, such forces engaged in the national and international arena, claiming the rights of women, of minority groups, and of pastoral people like the Masai that form the core of Galaty's analysis. Political reforms have favoured the emergence of a third space between the state and society, which has been rapidly filled up by a lively variety of competing civic organizations. Moreover, such organizations have shown the capacity to act collectively and to overcome the ties of patronage, historically binding rural communities to the Kenyan state (Galaty, this volume).

For Somalia, the 1990s marked the end of national integrity. Along with armed conflicts, the collapse of state structures and administration has signified a process of societal re-organization aimed at ensuring protection against violence and economic crisis. Clan and lineage politics, and elders as recognized representatives of both social institutions, have gained a visibility that they never enjoyed under Siad Barre. Luca Ciabbari (Ciabbari, this volume) describes how the northern regions of Somaliland have been engaged in a process of state-building and democratic transition since 1991, when they declared their independence from former Somalia. Currently, Somaliland has a democratically elected government but lacks the recognition of the international community. In addition to elders, returnees from the Gulf States and from western countries have played a major role in the process of political reconstruction that occurred after the civil war, providing material, intellectual and social resources to sustain party politics and political competition at both the local and national levels. In the 2005 legislative elections the political relevance of the international diaspora was high, as Ciabbari details in his analysis.

The trajectory of the Gambia is different. This is one of the few African countries that resisted the transition to one-party rule during the 1970s and 1980s, formally maintaining a pluralistic political regime. The 1994 military

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<sup>3</sup> We would like to thank Grégory Chauzal, Bordeaux, who introduced us into this particular debate.

coups opened an era of flawed human and civic rights, which continues to date despite the return to civilian rule and to democracy in 1996. Like in Chad (de Bruijn, this volume), the Gambian citizenry seems to experience the state as something either to profit from – if there is a chance to benefit from the regime’s neo-patrimonial practices – or to distance oneself from because of its repressive attitudes. Commenting on the conflicts between the government and Islamic religious leaders that took place in the late 1990s, Alice Bellagamba shows the urgency for the military government and for its civilian successor to conquer – even at the price of direct and at times violent confrontation – the support of local communities and authorities, and the determination of the latter to resist these attempts, although with scarce success (Bellagamba, this volume).

### **New guys or old fellows?**

As the Kidal example shows, in contemporary Africa the cast of relevant political actors goes far beyond national governments and political parties (Ferguson 2006: 86). In the past decades, governments have been constrained by international demands in terms of budgetary restrictions and debt-recovery and by the challenge of ruling over large sections of an impoverished and increasingly dissatisfied citizenry (Joseph 1998; Nyamnjoh 2000). Political parties have often shown to be ad hoc coalitions built around specific political candidatures. Their organizational machines, especially if they belong to the opposition front, last only over the span of an election, as Ciabbari comments in the case of Somaliland.

Conversely, the realm of what has been often described as ‘informal politics’ is densely populated. Militia, international organizations and transnational corporations, community organizations, returnees from the diaspora, but also elders who represent the resurgence of the ‘traditional’ within society are some of the characters that we have presented so far. Each of these power figures may act and interact on levels that are ‘below’, ‘beside’ and ‘beyond’ the state. Some are ostensibly visible and sit at the table during peace-making negotiations, like the Tuareg rebels did in Kidal. Others, like the Chadian organizations for street children described by de Bruijn, derive their strength from the capacity to infiltrate the informal economy with innovative practices and to gain the assistance of western aid organizations. Thanks to de Bruijn’s sensitive ethnography, we learn about their feelings of oppression and their day-to-day struggles against a state that regularly violates their rights as citizens. Rebellion does not really make any difference, as the power practices of the rebels and their attitudes towards civilians do not differ radically from those of their state counterparts (Roitman 2001; 2004).



For comparative purposes, we have grouped this plurality of powers into the two broad categories of ‘new guys’ and ‘old fellows’. Again, more than opposed categories the two represent the poles of a continuum. In a broad historical perspective what qualifies as new would probably show its linkages with longer and deeper political dynamics. On the other hand, contemporary interests frequently move ‘old fellows’ by vindicating their historical legitimacy.

Governor Serufuli of North Kivu province in Eastern Congo represents the prototype of the ‘new guy’, his power being a by-product of the conflicts that have ravaged the Great Lake region since the 1990s. By tracing his social and political biography, Luca Jourdan (Jourdan, this volume) discusses the blurred boundary between the public and the private sphere in Northern Kivu. Serufuli had built up his political career by dwelling in the territorial peripheries of the Congolese state. His power network rested on three interdependent footings.

First, Serufuli governed the region on behalf of the Congolese state. Secondly, he created a local non-governmental organization whose declared objective was fighting for peace. Thirdly, Serufuli armed and commanded his personal militia under the pretence of securing the region. Although Serufuli’s regional power seemed to defy the state, it was linked to state power in various ways. Apart from the military support of his Rwandan allies, and apart from the income stemming from transnational networks for resource trafficking, Serufuli attempted to consolidate his power politically by proposing a federalist reform to the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is worth noting that Serufuli followed the same “politics of extraversion” (Bayart 2000) as the Congolese state: the federalist reform would have allowed him to levy taxes within the region. Through the activities of ‘his’ NGO he tapped development aid.

Chiefs, local notables, religious leaders and other influential personalities, whose contemporary return to the stage has come after a long history of conflicting relationships and adjustments to the colonial and post-colonial state, are ‘old fellows’. In this respect the Mozambican case is particularly interesting. Helene Kyed explores the national and international background against which chiefs have been brought back by the state as “community authorities” able to mediate between the central government and local constituencies (Kyed, this volume). Although the rehabilitation of chiefs recalls the colonial past and the Portuguese form of indirect rule, there are also remarkable differences. Both donor agencies and the state have presented the chiefs as a basically apolitical force – which they are not – thus giving substance to the image of a participatory and bottom-up type of democracy that governed the transition. Kyed argues that the process of their re-emergence has been highly state-driven. The purpose of this process was the reordering of administrative territories and population groups after the end of the civil

war. The hope was to reinforce state administration and control. It remains to be seen whether in the future the chiefs will be able to capitalize on their power of mediation between the requirements of the central state and the needs of their constituencies. In such a case, the result would be a heterogeneous setting, where central and local powers confront each other.

As Pierluigi Valsecchi shows, the institution of chieftaincy is deeply rooted and much discussed in Ghanaian political culture (Valsecchi, this volume). The 1992 Constitution ensures the participation of chiefs both at the local and at the national level of administration in a way that has widened their areas of autonomy after a long period of political manipulation following independence (Rathbone 2000; Odotei and Awedoba 2006).

Drawing on long-term fieldwork in Northern Ghana, Peter Skalník (Skalník, this volume) argues that an original African contribution to the field of politics and societal organization consists of articulated systems of ritual sanctions, customs and consensual processes of decision-making that counterbalance and limit power centralization. Failing or absent state services and administration in contemporary African states have favoured the resurgence of political institutions that predated colonization. Among these, Skalník argues, chiefdoms and chiefs are of particular importance as they not only represent specific and historically situated institutions, but they provide analytical models for understanding non-state politics both in historical and contemporary societies.

### **Questioning the future trajectory of powers beside the state**

Do the case studies discussed in this volume anticipate future stability or ongoing conflict between plural and competing powers? Is their interdependence the outcome of a stand-off situation, in which both sides struggle without being able to overcome their counterpart? Making prognoses goes beyond the scope of our analysis and we cannot anticipate whether the phenomena assessed by our contributors will disappear with the rebuilding of state power and structures or will continue to live underground, ready to resurge under a different guise at the first chance possible. Political transitions, conflicts and post-conflict situations, collapsing state structures and administration, or the intervention and material support of foreign powers are some of the external factors that have played a part in their emergence. But the strength and vitality of local forms of power and institutions that stem from the long-term historicity of regional and trans-regional spaces has to be taken into account as well.

The question of how powers beside the state succeed in maintaining their socio-political and economic role even when the state leaves little or no room for manoeuvre remains open. In contexts in which the safety of the civilian population is at stake, the issue of protection from violence becomes

crucial. Under these circumstances, power alternatives to the state, if they are meant to last, have to figure out regular and enduring modes of conflict resolution, which substitute, parallel or articulate with the ones offered by the state itself (Klute, Embaló and Embaló 2006: 255). Eugene Serufuli's story and the regained regulatory role of elders in former Somalia are two good examples. The Chadian street-children organizations described by de Bruijn, whose leaders protect 'their children' against both state exploitation and internal conflicts by offering a niche to recover from the disruption of the civil war, are another one.

The durability of powers beside the state also depends on material means of reproduction which parallel and go beyond the organizational and coercive capacities that allow for 'war making' and '(para)-state making' (Tilly 1985). Against the neo-Marxist findings of an 'Asiatic Mode of Production' in pre-colonial Africa, the French historian Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (1978) has argued that earlier African societies evolved in ways that differed greatly from European and Asian societies. As observed by Coquery-Vidrovitch, early Africa does not provide examples of the exploitation of surplus labour by a ruling class. On the contrary, pre-colonial African economies seem to have been characterized by the juxtaposition of two contradictory circuits of production. On the one hand, there was village life, which revolved mainly around subsistence. On the other hand, both the evolution and reproduction of the elite in pre-colonial African polities were based on international and even intercontinental trade or raids against external territories (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1978).

Despite warnings against naïve historical analogies, Jean-François Bayart has underlined the "perpetuation of a regime of external rents and internal under-exploitation" (Bayart 2000: 232; see also Bay 2006: 7), which characterizes the past and present of African polities and states. A good number of sub-Saharan countries cover the majority of their current costs by financial transfers from development aid, which proves crucial to the bureaucratic apparatus and the civil service. Internal revenues, which often do not equal external financial funding (Bierschenk, Elwert and Kohnert 1993; Cooper 2002), come to a large extent from customs. Again, this is a form of income externally generated. The emergence and reproduction of power besides the state seems to have followed a path similar to that of resource extraction. The appropriation of material development aid plays an important role in this respect. Development projects are raided, pressed to pay transit fees, and urged to participate in regional and trans-regional mechanisms of power reproduction (Jean and Rufin 1996). Economic entrepreneurship, whether legal or illegal, offers another basis for building up and accumulating power (Roitman 2001; 2004), along with the control of trans-border trade and smuggling activities. Access to central-state benefits through membership in political parties or through the occupation of government positions at the regional, national and international level also plays a role. Final-

ly, powers beside the state need to develop political means of securing their predominance. Along with national politics, which create conflicting scenarios of both co-option and marginalization, they attempt to establish relationships with international development agencies and with political entities and communities abroad, thus following the same strategy as the central state, even if more circumscribed in scope. This brings us to our last point, which is the issue of legitimacy and acceptance. How do the powers described in this book construct and maintain their internal and external recognition? Here, we have traced three different (and again interrelated) strategies.

First and foremost, there is what can be qualified as a form of ‘basic legitimacy’ (Trotha 1995), the most important aspect of which is the ‘protection from violence’ (Klute and Trotha 2004). Particularly impressive in times of “generalised violence” (Beck 1996), such aspect is also relevant in times of peace, as well as in post-conflict situations. Those individuals, groups and organizations that are able to guarantee safety, as we have argued in the previous pages, are at the same time those with the best chances of accumulating power and stabilizing it. In general, this form of ‘basic legitimacy’ refers to the fact that any social order must cope with violence by limiting and ‘taming’ its use.

‘Moral legitimacy’ uses instead the convincing power of re-imagined historical traditions (Ranger 1993; Spear 2003). By stressing continuity over change, it represents reliability in increasingly complex socio-political situations which may prove difficult to understand and deal with. For Skalnik, chiefs and other neo-traditional authorities are in the best position to achieve this goal, as they represent the commoner in the face of the state better than any elected representative. Moral legitimacy, and the reworked past that sustains it, are subject to on-going processes of transformation. In times of crisis their particular dynamics depend on the conflicting interests of the political actors involved.

The third form of legitimacy equates with governance. Directly or indirectly, contemporary forms of power have to deal with the state, and with the models and imaginary of the state, even when they antagonize it. Their legitimacy is related to their ability to produce ‘state-effects’ (Mitchell 1991; Trouillott 2001), to territorialize themselves, as did the rebels in Kidal, to redistribute resources and, last but not least, to develop elements of justice and equality (Klute 2004: 312), like the CBOs engaged in defending the Kenyan pastoralists, whose battles for rights and recognition Galaty (Galaty, this volume) describes.

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