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## Thinking about Civil Wars with and beyond Bourdieu: State, Capital and *Habitus* in Critical Contexts

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Building on Marx and Weber, Bourdieu developed a sociology for scrutinizing the processes of domination and accumulation that allow social reproduction to take place. Yet, Bourdieu rarely tackled the breakdowns of social orders and never construed war as a scientific object, even if he signaled the theoretical interest in an inverse sociogenesis of the state. Despite this limitation, we argue that his work furnishes conceptual instruments for thinking about change and remains heuristic for understanding the dynamics of civil wars. These extreme situations in return let us rethink some of the theory's central concepts (fields, *habitus*, capital). Thus, in succession we examine Bourdieu's definition of the state (which fits into the Weberian tradition), explain the consequences of defining civil war as a violent competition between social orders, and end with an exploration of the social impacts of civil war on *habitus*.

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## Thinking about Civil Wars with and beyond Bourdieu: State, Capital and *Habitus* in Critical Contexts

*“My whole work has been to show how a state is constituted, but we could also, almost as well, have done the work starting from the dissolution of the state. Genesis and involution, as some biologists have said, have the same virtues of removing the appearance of commonplaceness: the dissolution of a state makes it possible to see everything that is implicit and taken for granted in the functioning of a state, such as frontiers and everything that is unitary. The dissolution of a state makes it possible to see how the construction of national unity is achieved against secessionist tendencies, which may be regional, but may also [arise] from [social] classes.”*  
(Bourdieu, 2014: 359)

While working on war-ridden societies (Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan, Mali), we were confronted with a series of inextricably empirical and theoretical problems that led us to test different sociological paradigms. We thus constructed civil war as a scientific object with the help of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice (Baczko and Dorronsoro, 2017). In line with his own research, the main goal of this article is not to provide a scholastic point of view on “Bourdieu and civil wars”, but to reflect upon the contributions and limits of the Bourdieusian paradigm in light of our research on contemporary civil wars. In other words, following Bourdieu’s advice to think with and against classical authors (Marx, Weber), we use Bourdieu’s theory to go beyond Bourdieu.

At first glance, using a Bourdieusian approach for studying civil wars may appear a paradox: how can a thinker renowned for his work on social reproduction and on the state be of use in understanding these brutal, unpredictable, and radical challenges to the incumbent order? Indeed, the central question running through Bourdieu’s work – most notably *Les héritiers* [*The Inheritors*], *La distinction* [*Distinction*], *Le sens pratique* [*Practical Reason*] – has been the dominating role and, more precisely, the adequacy, of social structures and schemes of thought as viewed through the lens of an original conceptual apparatus (field, capital, *habitus*). Building on Marx and Weber, Bourdieu developed a sociology that scrutinizes the processes of domination and accumulation. In some respects, Bourdieu’s early writings fit into the structuralist current, as shown by the original version of a famous article “*The Kabyle House or the World Reversed*” (it appeared in a work paying tribute to Lévi-Strauss) in which the event is missing (Bourdieu, 1970). In the United States, Bourdieu additionally made an impression with

*An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, in which he lays out the basic precepts for analyzing culture as a domination structure (Bourdieu, 1977). Whereas Kabyl society had been the terrain allowing him to construct the principal concepts of his sociology, it was post-WWII French society in all its aspects, notably the place occupied by the state, that implicitly ended up framing his analyses. Thus, in his books on France, Bourdieu shows the mechanisms of transmission (through schools) and distinction (between classes) that allow social reproduction to take place.

Nevertheless, Bourdieu's focus on reproduction does not preclude consideration of social change, and his work indeed furnishes concepts for thinking about individual and collective transformations (Gorski, 2013a; Steinmetz, 2011, 2018). For example, he introduced the concept of *habitus* to account for the individual's disadjustment resulting from a transformation of structures. Similarly, Bourdieu researched symbolic revolutions within a field through his studies on Gustave Flaubert in literature (Bourdieu, 1996), Martin Heidegger in philosophy (Bourdieu, 1991), and Édouard Manet in art (Bourdieu, 2017). Moreover, in *Homo Academicus*, he proposed an outline for explaining May 1968 as a conjunction of sectoral crises, even if he left this important theoretical proposition isolated and poorly integrated with his theoretical system (Bourdieu, 1988: 159-193; for an application, Sapiro, 2013a). Finally, starting in the 1980s, he increasingly historicized his research subjects and showed a special interest in geneses, particularly those of states (Bourdieu, 2014).

These concepts shed light on the conditions of possibility for a breakdown and its consequences, but not on its unfolding. In other words, Bourdieu is a thinker on social change who is uncomfortable with the event, which he tends to reduce to its structural conditions. Remarkable here is that Bourdieu paid no heed to the theories of mobilization, despite their offering essential instruments for thinking about the passage from events to structures. Ultimately, Bourdieu does not think about state breakdown, even if he signals the theoretical interest of an inversed sociogenesis of the state (Bourdieu, 2014: 359). The war in Algeria, barely mentioned in the preface to *The Logic of Practice* despite the context of his study on Kabylia, is never construed as a scientific object (Bourdieu, 1990a: 1 ff.). The three texts that Bourdieu wrote on the war of decolonization in Algeria predate his major conceptual innovations, are more concerned with politics, and relate to his analysis of the uprooting of displaced peasants (Bourdieu, 2013: 83-115), which he developed in the beginning of the 1960s in *Le Déracinement*, his book on the uprooting of Algerian peasants (Bourdieu and Sayad, 1964).

Still, we argue that Bourdieusian sociology is heuristic in offering conceptual instruments for understanding the dynamics of civil wars. Such a perspective is especially beneficial in overcoming the caveats issuing from the current neo-positivist turn in social science, which heavily affected research dealing with contemporary civil wars. We have reviewed elsewhere the essentialist perspectives stemming from this

neopositivist turn, its atheoretical orientation and the resulting compartmentalization of research on civil wars apart from the rest of sociology (Baczko and Dorronsoro, 2017). In contrast, we use Bourdieu's theory of practice to build a consistent research agenda for conceptualizing civil wars in relation to other transformations that affect contemporary societies and states.

Firstly, different societies in the grip of civil wars generally vary in terms of capitals (relative kinds and values) and the autonomy of fields.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, in some societies, confessional or ethnic affiliations are highly objectivized, which imbues identities with the qualities of a collective capital. In that case, identities are not merely principles of territorial or social affiliation, categories of ethnographic description or of popular perception, they also indicate rank when accessing different resources in a competitive framework or a collaboration of unequals between groups (Dorronsoro and Grojean, 2017). Moreover, the relative weighting of capitals – revealed in their exchange value – is not identical from one society to the next. Social capital in certain political regimes holds the key to economic accumulation. On the other hand, while specialization of fields is practically universal, their specific degree of independence vis-à-vis the rest of society varies from one society to the next.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the transverse role of the security institutions and state-party relationships often determine the degree of autonomy possessed by fields in undemocratic regimes. Under Communist rule, for instance, the omnipresent party's role in society limits the autonomy of fields (political, economic, cultural, etc.). In Turkey, the confusion of party with the state at certain moments produces the identical result (Dorronsoro and Gourisse, 2015). In Syria, multiple security services play the same role (Belhadj, 2013). In Libya, the Gaddafi regime deliberately weakened institutions to the point where Libyan society in large part functioned informally (Martinez, 2007).

We start with the paradigm of a general economy of practices to construct civil war as a sociological object. A "civil war" appears in the first place as a revolutionary situation, a moment of rapid, brutal and unanticipated social change altering the general economy of practices. Contrary to neopositivist perspectives, what characterizes civil wars is not a threshold of violence but the coexistence of two (or more) social orders in violent competition. Thus, the setting up of an opposing administration – in particular a legal system –, due to the bureaucratic investment that it requires, appears very much as *the evidence of secession*, a much more distinctive criterion of civil war than the level of violence.

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<sup>1</sup> In a time of increased measurability, a growing number of resources are objectivized and therefore subject to being accumulated or convertible, which implies expanding the usual list of capitals (cultural, economic, social). In this connection, see Bourdieu's recognition of a political capital in communist Eastern Europe (Bourdieu 1982).

<sup>2</sup> On the distinction between autonomy-independence and autonomy-specialization, see Lahire (2012: 63).

The emergence of competing social orders and therefore of differing general economies of practices impacts the accumulation of different kinds of capital and the relations between fields. A civil war results in the withdrawal of the state as the main authority regulating the value of capitals and guaranteeing the autonomy of fields. The appearance of one or more alternative social orders thus affects the value of the different capitals and their convertibility depending on the territories controlled by the various factions. Similarly, the competition between social orders implies the reformation of fields variously articulated between them in each of the political entities, while remaining at least loosely related by the common stakes in the armed conflict.

A Bourdieusian perspective allows us to analyse transformations at an individual and structural level through the concept of *habitus*. Initially developed to account for the difficulties of reproduction in contexts of upheaval, this concept accounts for how past socializations shaped the dispositions to act and the interpretation of situations. In this regard, civil wars appear as moments of general disadjustment of the *habitus*, critical junctures in which the practical or common sense of the agents gets out of step with a social world that is itself undergoing structural changes. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 130-131) and Ivan Ermakoff (2013) pointed out, such uncertainty can result in increased calculatory rationality, but also in more intense social deliberations and in greater dependence of agents on the remaining institutions, first and foremost military apparatuses (Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay 2013).

In return, as Bourdieu suggested, conducting research on civil wars “*makes it possible to see everything that is implicit and taken for granted in the functioning of a state, such as frontiers and everything that is unitary*” (Bourdieu, 2014: 359). Contemporary civil wars throw into sharp relief the limits of the Webero-Bourdiesian understanding of the state as holding the monopoly on symbolic or legitimate violence and of the endogenous formation of the state through the concentration of capital. In particular, the state cannot be conceptualized outside of its insertion into the international system. Bourdieu neglects this element in his reflections on state formation, even though several scholars have since found that his concepts are useful for thinking about international structures (Dezalay and Garth, 2002; Steinmetz, 2014; Sapiro, 2013; Go and Krause, 2016; Kauppi, 2018). From the perspective of a general economy of practices, we will suggest a new definition of the state that will stress its international dimension and its role in defining the relative value of capitals and in organizing the relationships between fields.

As the starting point for developing our argument, we will take Bourdieu’s definition of the state, then explain the consequences of defining civil war as a violent competition between social orders, before concluding with an exploration of the impacts civil war makes on individual *habitus*.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF A WEBERIAN-BOURDIEUSIAN CONCEPT OF THE STATE

Any theoretical work on civil wars presupposes a discussion on the state, since the armed competition for power calls it into question. For Bourdieu and Wacquant, “*the state is an X (to be determined) which successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over a definite territory and over the totality of the correspond*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1994: 3). This definition picks up from Weber’s, modifying it on two points: Bourdieu adds “*the monopoly of the legitimate use of symbolic violence*” to that of physical violence and replaces the expression “*human community*” (or “*political enterprise with institutional character*”, a variant of Weber’s definition) with “*an X (to be determined)*”, because the very definition of the state is at issue in the contest between social agents.<sup>3</sup> From this perspective, civil war would be the violent struggle for the monopoly on physical and symbolic violence leading to a form of political separation. It is not denying the heuristic interest of this definition to assert that this conception of the state tends to conceal certain problems. The latter relate to the complexity of the subsumed objects, specifically on three points: symbolic domination, monopoly, and the international dimension of state formation.

On the first point, domination for Bourdieu relates to symbolic capital, that is, to a form of non-physical violence for imposing categories of thinking, a reconceptualization of Max Weber’s legitimacy. “*I call symbolic capital any kind of capital (economic, cultural, academic, or social) when it is perceived according to the categories of perception, principles of vision and division, the systems of classification, the classificatory schemes, the cognitive schemata, which are, at least in part, the product of the embodiment of the objective structures of the field under consideration, that is, of the structure of the distribution of capital in the field under consideration*” (Bourdieu, 1998: 85). Symbolic violence thus implies a naturalization of the social order, an understanding by the agents of the allocation of power, of honors, and capitals as the reflection of natural laws, of religion, or of the economy, concealing the effects of domination in the hierarchies among groups: “*symbolic violence is the coercion which is set up through the consent that the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominator (and therefore to the domination) when their understanding of the situation and relation can only use instruments of knowledge that they have in common with the dominator*” (Bourdieu, 2000: 170). But, in contrast to the concentration of legal or military means, the central role of the state in symbolic domination is, at the very least, difficult to demonstrate (Addi, 2001), and the network of institutions that constitutes the state is never the bearer of a unified, coherent message. Similarly to Weberian legitimacy

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<sup>3</sup> For an analysis of this shift, see Linhardt (2012).

(Beetham, 2013), the notion of a “*dominant ideology*” developed by Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski (1976) poses a problem of empirical validation from the standpoint of its reception.<sup>4</sup> Even in peaceful contexts, it is possible to encounter categories of understanding produced outside legitimate institutions. Comprehending these counterhegemonic discourses, whose social credit at times is great, is also decisive for understanding the ideologies that subsequently emerge in the context of civil war. For example, in late-20<sup>th</sup> century Turkey, the Kurdish movement succeeded in building a counterhegemonic space in the majority Kurdish regions (Dorransoro and Watts, 2013).<sup>5</sup> The Islamists achieved the same thing in other parts of Turkey. Put differently, domination is always an uncertain endeavor, for there is no centralized production of the categories of understanding, particularly in a globalized world where ideas are circulating. The Arab Springs furnished a recent illustration of how fragile the regimes were whose longevity observers nevertheless had ascribed to a supposed interiorized domination (Heydemann, 2007; Hibou, 2011).

Consequently, it is difficult to determine why individuals obey the rules of daily life and if it implies a naturalized political and social order. Only rarely does empirical work allow us the luxury of choice between different hypotheses (fear of repression, internalized domination, a more or less negotiated equilibrium between the state and social groups). This arises from the fact that it is particularly difficult to carry out such an investigation under authoritarian regimes where most civil wars break out. We can therefore only agree with Tilly (1985: 171) when he notes that the legitimacy of violence is not determinative for domination by the state. Moreover, breakdowns are not necessarily conclusive tests: they cannot reveal the “true” opinions of individuals because these are unstable (Opp, Gern and Voss, 1996; Kurzman, 2005). Civil wars erupting therefore expose the concept of symbolic capital to critical examination, because events like violent breakups tend to highlight the limits of symbolic domination, especially since the disobjectivization of institutions and the denaturalizing of the social order could have antedated the violence. The rapidity with which social or identity hierarchies can be challenged *a contrario* is reason enough to think that domination under peaceful conditions largely relies on the ability to punish and to set certain limits on social action, i.e., that it is based on physical violence and the law.

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<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, Bourdieu (1993: 87) accepts the possibility that the categories of dominants are not internalized by the dominated but, on the contrary, evoke a repressed violence that will express itself at the first excuse: “*The ‘situation’ is, in a sense, the permissive condition of the fulfilment of the habitus. When the objective conditions of fulfilment are not present, the habitus, continuously thwarted by the situation, may be the site of explosive forces (resentment) which may await (and even look for) the opportunity to break out and which express themselves as soon as the objective conditions for this (e.g. the power of an authoritarian foreman) are offered. (The social world is an immense reservoir of accumulated violence, which is revealed when it encounters the conditions for its expression.)*”.

<sup>5</sup> For colonial situations of coexistence between an official order and a *de facto* order, see Terray (1986).

On the second point, no state truly has a monopoly on violence. Retaining the perspective of a “*general economy of practices*” – that is an analysis based on the accumulation and conversion of different kinds of capital and the autonomization of fields –, we substitute, instead of the monopolies on law and physical violence, the economies of juridical capital and military capital.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the state regulates a relatively stable organization of interactions (competition, cooperation, delegation) between agents capable of using law and organized violence. These actors (individuals, socioprofessional groups, institutions of the state, clans, criminal organizations, militias) collaborate with or confront each other over social, economic, and political stakes. Yet, the economies of law and violence is not predicated on their acting in an economically rational manner; moreover, nothing says that it has to be a functional or legitimate social order. For example, states can coexist with a significant level of private military capital: tribes, the socially or geographically marginalized, vigilantes, criminal organizations, and private companies (Pratten and Sen, 2007; Favarel-Garrigues and Gayer, 2016). In some countries, the military capital owned by criminal groups and corporations is steadily increasing, for instance in Mexico (Blazquez, 2019) and Pakistan (Gayer 2014b). Some acts of violence – against women, children, marginal populations – are accepted or tolerated. Furthermore, the state is never a unitary actor, and conflicts between state institutions may be far from minor on occasion. Nevertheless, the state plays a central role in organizing the economy of violence, especially by confining the actors to a social space, for example, the illegal sector or a territorial fringe. Even in a context of extreme violence, as in Mexico or Pakistan, informal rules still apply to make social routines possible. Criminal actors that directly challenge the central state, such as the Medellin cartel in Colombia and Italy’s Cosa Nostra, are subject to harsh punishment. Still, an armed group can resort to violence to take power or use it as a tactic in negotiating with the regime in place, thereby fundamentally altering the political dynamics. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo after 2003, armed groups regularly entered the political system during negotiations that functioned as sites for converting military into political and economic capital. That changed the logic of the confrontation from when the aim was overthrowing the regime. In a larger sense, the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be viewed as a variation on historical cases like that of the Ottoman Empire in which armed dissidence on the fringes led to the opening of negotiations and potentially inclusion in the bureaucracy (Barkey, 1994).

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<sup>6</sup> Military capital is defined by all the accumulated resources, including bureaucratic skills and financing, that allow the exercise of organized violence. The term “military” (instead of “violent”) here is intended to account for the organized character of individual violence, which poses very different questions. For the development of this concept, see Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay (2018). For the concept of juridical capital, see Bourdieu (1987).

On the third point, Bourdieu, following Weber, conceives of the formation of the modern state as an essentially endogenous development (Bourdieu, 2014: 190 ff.), whereas for us it is inextricably linked to the emergence of the interstate system. Even in his commentary on Charles Tilly's *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*, Bourdieu (2014: 128-142) neglects one of its most important theoretical propositions: "*Most available explanations fail [...] because they locate explanations of state-to-state variation in individual characteristics of states rather than relations among them*" (Tilly, 1993: 11). Similarly, Bourdieu would only retain from Elias the concentration of capitals, when the competition among political entities is at least as central to the Eliasian model. Indeed, the state cannot be dissociated from the emergence of the interstate system that progressively formalized itself during the modern era. Far from the prevailing vision of the state's internal monopoly and a relatively anarchic interstate system, the contemporary world includes states incapable of imposing a monopoly of violence within their borders, while simultaneously still having a monopoly on representing their population and territory internationally. As the feuding between the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China since 1949 demonstrates, international recognition demands having a legal monopoly with a single embassy per country and sole representation at the United Nations (Mengin, 2015). The question comes up in every civil war, and France's recognition in 2013 of the Syrian opposition as the country's legitimate representative mechanically withdrew its recognition of the regime of Bashar al-Assad. This cross-linked monopoly that the states accord one another within the international system moreover engenders a growing homogeneity of the national fields, for example, in diplomacy and security but also of the economy or law.

Civil war is therefore an object to be historicized by looking at the state and the international system during a given period. In particular, the stakes and dynamics of a civil war are functions of the existing international system. While demonstrating these systemic effects for a particular case can be problematical, they do show up in the observable regularity of a series of cases. Contemporary civil wars exhibit structural similarities that are indissociable from effects of the international system and the norms that subtend it. First, civil war is not a phenomenon confined inside the state. Nearly all armed movements use a sanctuary in a neighboring country, refugees invariably are byproducts of these conflicts, and non-military external actors (international organizations, NGOs, private firms) intervene systematically. The existence of a sanctuary, the role of transnational political organizations, the refugee organizations play a key role in an armed movement's survival. Second, the stakes that orient the conduct of the warring parties are largely defined by the international system. In fact, civil wars do not, exceptions aside, bring with them a redrawing of international borders: annexation, rare as it is, is practically never recognized internationally; secessions are

seen less and less often (Atzili, 2006/7; Zacher, 2001). Since colonization's demise, territories have been more stable than states. In fact, in contrast to the Eliasian model in which the political center gradually defines its territorial sway (Elias, 2000), borders today are largely stabilized. This gives rise to the fact that the state, even if absent, imposes itself as the key prize in the contest, including for separatist projects. Resources linked to state formation are critical, including control of the capital city, currency, customs duties and international recognition, in a much more structuring manner than economic resources. Even if they have little chance of succeeding, the oppositional dynamics, for instance the authentically transnational Islamic State, are all the more interesting to analyze since they help us understand the dominant logic (Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay, 2018: 245-276).

The interplay of these constraints and resources largely conditions how the actors contending for the state interact (Dorronsoro, 2005: 235-256; Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay, 2018: 103-117). Any stabilization of relations between armed groups can only be temporary, for an actor's long-term survival implies controlling or neutralizing the political center and thus eliminating or coopting its competitors. Economic interests do not suffice to create the conditions for a stable partitioning of territory and its resources, which confirms the critiques leveled against theories that reduce civil wars to predatory exploitation by violent agents who avoid confrontations or at least minimize them. Quite the contrary, anticipation of a permanent reconstruction of the state brings with it an intensified violent vying for control of territory, state institutions and international recognition. In this struggle, developing a bureaucracy appears to be a key element, since an armed group's capacity for accumulating resources strongly influences its survival prospects.

This leads us to observe that, on the one hand, these competing armed groups are political actors explicitly organized as such, differing from more informal practices of resistance (Scott, 1990), which nevertheless still form part of the same economy of military capital. On the other hand, the political nature of a movement should not be construed as intentions and objectives etched in stone. They are subject to sometimes global, sometimes local change, with a given movement capable of adjusting its objectives over time. For all that, few examples of transitions from a political logic to an economic one (or vice versa) exist, even granted that some cases (e.g., Sierra Leone, Liberia, RDC) seem ambiguous. The thesis of the criminalization of politics, as distinct from a movement resorting to illegal sources of financing to achieve political objectives, relates more to ideological discourses than to rigorous research.<sup>7</sup>

## **SOCIAL ORDERS IN VIOLENT COMPETITION**

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<sup>7</sup> For this argument in regard to African politics, see Pascal Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz (1999).

Because Bourdieu's definition of the state is no longer adequate for understanding our subject, we propose a different one that nevertheless fits into the project of a general economy of practices:

*A state is a national web of institutions bound together by cross-linked relations of legitimation, which holds the internationally-recognized monopoly on representing a population on a territory, structures the economies of military and juridical capitals, and constitutes the principal but not unique authority defining the relative value of capitals and the organization of relationships between fields.*

The subject of "civil war" appears embedded in this definition as a situation in which the economies of military and juridical capitals is contested through violent means. It is hence not the level of violence that characterizes civil wars, but the attempt to install an alternative economies of military and juridical capitals and, more generally, of practices. Without institutions there is no social order, and precisely civil wars are moments of intense institutional production. In practice, civil wars show how the event can create the institution. The transformation of mobilization into institution that we have shown taking place in the case of Syria (Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay, 2018), is probably generalizable, for instance, to Afghanistan and Libya. In this respect, the setting up of an alternative juridical system, given the bureaucratic investment and administration of the population that it requires, appears very much as *the evidence of secession*, of a "dual power", to resurrect Trotsky's expression (2017).<sup>8</sup> It is thus a much more distinctive criterion of civil war. The rival social orders emerge into the open immediately when the armed movements are territorialized, but other modalities such as a day/night division of controlling the populations can also prevail. Some forms of external intervention – refugee camps or humanitarian zones under the United Nations umbrella, peace sanctuaries established by the Catholic Church – in similar fashion produce alternative social orders over enclaves.<sup>9</sup>

The categories of civil war and revolution do not match up exactly, for not all social orders undergo a radical breakdown. Thus, during the Ivory Coast conflict (2002-2011), the elites of the insurrection largely resembled those of the regime, and the conflict did not affect the sense of a shared political project (Banégas, 2010; Popineau, 2019). In contrast, Afghanistan since 1979, Iraq since 2003, and Syria since 2011 went through successive revolutions that went to extremes of redefining the body politic through ethnic cleansing or massacre. Therefore, civil wars most often are revolutions,

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<sup>8</sup> Thus, Charles Tilly (1978: 189-193) leans equally on the notion of "dual power" in conceptualizing "revolutionary situations".

<sup>9</sup> See especially the contributions dealing with civil wars in Agier (2004).

i.e., abrupt, unexpected transformations in the relative value of capitals, inter-field relationships and legitimacy discourses. The coexistence on national territory of different social orders, i.e., of multiple economies of practices, has several consequences: relative capital values in the national space vary, social orders compete with residual spaces of cooperation, and the overriding influence of international processes affect the functioning of fields.

Civil war affects the economy of capitals in three ways: new economies of capitals appear, the value of existing capitals fluctuates, often wildly, and finally, new circuits for converting capital emerge. The retreat of the state in civil wars thus comes with the revaluation of the relative value of capitals, which directs our attention both to the alternative institutions in a position to guarantee them and to the reorganization of certain fields. For example, the religious field may restructure around transnational institutions, groups linked to an armed faction may (or may not) guarantee the value of economic capital and impose a new legal code. This leads to a definition of civil war as *the coexistence on the same national territory of different social orders relating to each other with violence*. A social order assumes, with a varying degree of institutionalization and concentration, an economy of different capitals. The national territory therefore sees the coexistence of identity hierarchies, legal systems, and competing regimes of economic property.

First, the state's retreat gives rise to new economies of capitals, especially of military capital. The novel allocation of military capital outside the state transforms the value and conversion of all capitals and particularly the modes of economic accumulation. Second, economic capital, social capital, and identity capital are especially impacted by civil wars, for the state in fact acts as guarantor of what is held to be the spontaneous working of society. The fighting modifies the value of economic capital, particularly due to currency fluctuations and the loss of value or destruction of private and public assets. The social capital of individuals becomes central due to the disobjectivization of numerous institutions during the war. Territorial control by an armed group translates into a variance in social capital, for example, because of the transformation of gender relation and of segmental ties (families, clans, tribes). Social capital suddenly fluctuates in two opposite directions. While, the majority's social capital, hence its ability to act, diminishes, that of the militants increases, inserted as they are into highly mobilized networks (Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay, 2016). Identity capital is affected by an abrupt denaturalization of hierarchies among groups – being a Hazara in Afghanistan, a Banyamulenge in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, or a Sunni Arab in Iraq no longer implies the same things after the outbreak of civil war as before – and among a country's regions (Canfield, 2004; Vlassenroot, 2002; Quesnay, 2021).

Third, the state's retreat modifies the circuits for converting capitals. On the one hand, the state's barriers (economic, legal) that interdict or impose costs on the passage between fields tend to shrink or disappear, which facilitates capital conversion. For example, in Afghanistan starting in the early 1980s, religious capital converted into the political field, thus explaining the phenomenon of ulemas heading up most of the parties (Dorransoro, 2012). Civil wars likewise generally weaken the autonomy of the academic, literary and journalistic fields (Sapiro 2013; Raymond 2019). On the other hand, new conversion channels appear. For instance, armed agents can convert their military capital into economic capital through predation, taxation, or alliances with prominent landholders. In addition, dividing the national territory means internal boundaries crop up, posing the problem of regional capitals of varying value. On the economic level, if the internal barriers become more restrictive than international borders, channels between territories may develop for some commodities (food, gasoline, gas, drugs, etc.).<sup>10</sup> Certain individuals or groups stand to reap considerable profits from simple price differentials.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the existence of different identity regimes shifts the channels of migration as in the case of Afghan Hazaras for example (Monsutti, 2005).

If dividing the national territory among several armed groups entails the formation of violently competing social orders, these nonetheless remain highly interdependent. From this perspective, a recurring pitfall encountered in analyzing administrative practices in civil war is failing to take these relationships into account. For example, in Syria, the researchers focus on the regime in Damascus, where the insurrection originated, the Kurdish parties, or the Islamic State. Similarly, in Afghanistan, the studies concentrate either on the Kabul regime spawned by the Western intervention or on the Taliban insurrection. This creates problems especially in works on rebel governance, which have multiplied in recent years by too radically dissociating the regimes in place and the insurrectional movements (Mampilly, 2011; Arjona, Mampilly and Kasfir, 2015; Arjona, 2016).<sup>12</sup> Yet, the belligerents are caught in a zero-sum game that defines a common social space, in the sense that their claim on governance is the stake in an unappeasable conflict: in an international system in which borders are fixed, the victory of one side delegitimizes its competitors.

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note in this connection that most of the literature focuses on the "economy of war", in the sense of an economic motivation for waging war, and that works on the "economy in wartime", i.e., how war impacts the reconfiguration of the economy, to revive the distinction drawn by Roland Marchal (1997), are fewer in number. For a sampling of studies on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria, Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers (2004) and Vignal (2018).

<sup>11</sup> Jeroen Cuvelier (2004) expands on the example of John Kotiram, a Thai entrepreneur allied with RCD-Goma, who thus obtained concessions for harvesting and exporting exotic woods.

<sup>12</sup> For an alternative theorization leaning on the Foucaultian idea of governmentality, Hoffmann and Verweijen (2018).

This dynamic is particularly evident in the juridical field, in which the warring parties are competing for the same public good (Baczko, 2021).<sup>13</sup> Even if justice can have different definitions, the armed groups compete for the same actual or potential public. No matter if they are operating in distinct territories, their claims to exercising exclusive authority over the entire national territory – or over part of it in the case of secessionist insurrections – maintain a common social space in which they evolve in a relational manner. As such, they may collaborate, divide up some activities, and be bound by common conceptions regarding criteria that define juridical competence. However, sustaining recognized juridical authority for the long run implies the elimination or subordination of other juridical systems.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the territorialization of different social orders generally brings with it greater extraversion. Civil wars constitute moments of increased internationalization. They feature prominent transnational organizations coupled with a central authority incapable of filtering or instrumentalizing pressures exerted by international operators and negotiating the terms of implementing their programs with them.<sup>15</sup> Civil wars almost without exception are theaters of external interventions. They thus make visible more or less radical forms of fragmentation, superimposition, externalization and privatization of the state observed by researchers in other contexts (Buur, 2005; Shalini, 2007; Lund, 2011; Monsutti, 2012). Counter to the widely-held notion that local modes of social regulation predominate in civil wars, transnational operators wield significant influence over the general economy of practices. Relative value and conversion of certain capitals depend closely on how external institutions define them.<sup>16</sup> We pick up where studies dealing with economic transformation in war leave off to argue that extraversion affects social capital, identity capital, or cultural capital. Thus, international actions on behalf of minorities (Eastern Christians in Syria and Iraq, the Karen in the former Burma) transform the value of identity capital. Similarly, speaking certain foreign languages (a component of cultural capital), e.g., English in Afghanistan or in Iraq during the 2000s, Russian or Persian in Syria during the 2010s, becomes a discriminant resource on the labor market. Finally, the processes of negotiation constitute international venues for converting military capital into political or administrative positions and economic capital (Chebli, 2020).

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<sup>13</sup> This intuition is present in the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Villegas (2001) when analyzing the juridical situation in Colombia during the war as an extreme case of juridical pluralism.

<sup>14</sup> Dynamics of the same order can be observed in monetary questions, with at times even the same currency in circulation among all fighting parties, bringing with it issues of who controls the guaranteeing authorities (Marchal 2010; France 2019).

<sup>15</sup> For analyses of the state as playing a filtering role with respect to transnational organization for carrying out their own policies, see Randeria (2003) and Allal (2010).

<sup>16</sup> The Lebanese and Algerian civil wars brought with them a new centrality of international resources in the internal hierarchy in Lebanon's academic field (Raymond, 2021) and in Algeria's literary field (Leperlier, 2018).

In some interventions, as in Afghanistan, Iraq or Mali, international operators enjoy extensive autonomy and are even in a position to reform the state apparatus. Instead of being external actors, they become stakeholders in internal struggles in the juridical, economic, and political fields (Dorrnsoro, 2021). Internationalization thus affects the very structure of and relationships between fields. Perhaps the most heuristic question to ask is how the field of power – defined as the space in which plays out the competition and cooperation between the dominant actors in different fields – structures itself.<sup>17</sup> Contrary to what is implicitly accepted in the usual definition, the principal agents in the field of power in civil wars are frequently external to the society. Civil wars are rather extreme cases of more general processes that affect all societies. We are at a turning point relative to the process of differentiation as described in classic sociology, with major consequences for political systems.<sup>18</sup> Already in the 1990s, Pierre Bourdieu highlighted the loss of autonomy in certain social fields and while their formal existence may not be threatened, their functioning is called into question (Lemieux, 2011).<sup>19</sup>

### THE GENERAL DISADJUSTMENT OF *HABITUS*

Initially, Bourdieu developed the concept of *habitus* to account for the hardships of peasants forced out of the countryside by the Algerian war and of mid-20th century peasants in Southwestern France unable to marry and pass on their land (Steinmetz, 2011: 52). Subsequently, he showed how incorporating action and perception schemes constitutes a practical sense that allows individuals to adapt to the social world (Bourdieu, 1990a). “*Habitus entertains with the social world which has produced it a real ontological complicity, the source of cognition without which consciousness, intentionality without intention, and a practical mastery of the world’s regularities which allows one to anticipate the future without even needing to posit it as such*” (Bourdieu, 1990b: 11-12). To a degree, *habitus* is evolutionary: “*The adjustments that are constantly required by the necessities of adaptation to new and unforeseen situations may bring about durable transformations of the habitus, but these will remain within certain limits, not least because the habitus defines the perception of the situation that determines it*” (Bourdieu, 1993: 87). Subsequent works by his followers further questioned the coherence of the *habitus* simultaneously with the social positions of

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<sup>17</sup> “*Belonging to the field of power being defined not by personally owning some capital (in the form of a title deed or school certificate, for example) but possessing a quantity of capital large enough to dominate in this or that field, the dominant class are the agents in the aggregate who actually occupy positions of power over capital, that is, over the very functioning of a field or over the system of instruments of reproduction of this field*” (Bourdieu, 2011: 128, our translation).

<sup>18</sup> The “division of labor in society” (Durkheim), the “spheres of life” (Weber), or the “fields” (Bourdieu).

<sup>19</sup> The multiplying of atypical fields, especially expertise, heads in that direction. For an introduction, see Medvetz (2012), Bourdieu (2014) and Laval (2018).

agents and social structures. Thus, in the context of late 20<sup>th</sup> century France, Bernard Lahire (2004) emphasized that the plurality of experiences trigger “*cultural dissonances*” in most individuals, resulting in contradictory and split *habitus*. Bourdieu, with the hysteresis of *habitus*, moreover conceptualizes the eventual inadaptation of the dispositions to act and schemes of perception caused by structural changes. In particular, in *Le déracinement* (The Uprooting), Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad (1964) chronicle the disadjustment of objective structures and dispositions of rural populations in the throes of urbanization or penned up in camps by the French army during the Algerian War of Independence. Two distinct cultural codes, one a Kabyl peasant *habitus*, the other an interiorized – urban and capitalist – colonial discourse, coexist without solution of continuity, hence preventing the migrants from naturalizing their practices. “*The peasant can remain a peasant even when there is no longer the possibility of behaving like a peasant*” (Bourdieu and Sayad, 1964: 102).

Civil war touches off an abrupt, generalized disadjustment between the dispositions to act and interpret that are generated by the *habitus* and the social world affected by structural transformations (migrations, economic breakdowns, internationalization) and unexpected social interactions. In this undoing, agents are forced to improvise, since their *habitus* no longer fulfills its role of generating adaptive practices. This uncertainty and the consequent reduced functionality of the *habitus* give rise to alternative modes of behavior, notably increased calculations (Ermakoff 2013), but also more frequent deliberations (a form of collective inquiry) and modes of surrender to institutions (Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay 2013). In the case of the young people of Guinea-Bissau, Henrik Vigh (2006) shows clearly how his interlocutors “navigate” by relying on the rare landmarks available to them and why they essentially regard their decisions as bets. Likewise, some routines play an essential role in the sense of avoiding making a decision; for instance, never (or always) running in a street in Sarajevo sighted in on by snipers (Macek, 2009). In this case, the individual routine takes the place of the institution in limiting uncertainty.

War multiplies unlikely social interactions, for example, due to mobilizations being mixed with respect to classes, communities and gender.<sup>20</sup> In the Syrian case, the regions controlled by the insurrection in 2012-2013 thus saw interactions between members of social elites and lower classes that before the war clung to their respective social and communitarian memberships. The social capital, which grows out of these contacts when they are repetitive, is decoupled from the social capital accumulated prior to the war. This new social capital helps explain the civil councils that emerged from the demonstration or marriages that would have been highly unlikely before the war. Melting pot logics like these can be institutionalized in organizing certain armed

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<sup>20</sup> For an argument in this sense, Nordstrom (1997); on the mobilization in Syria, see Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay (2013).

movements such as the PKK, which mixes students, peasants, and lower or middle class urban youths (Grojean, 2017).

Three points let us be more specific about the scope and nature of the disadjustments. First, some individuals with little exposure to violence or the fighting retain their dispositions to act, while others see theirs radically redefined by the war. Thus, the inhabitants of Aleppo, Raqqa and Latakia in Syria, or those in Bamako and Kidal in Mali, have not experienced the same war. Occasionally, the transformations wrought by war do not prevent certain forms of reproduction. In Ivory Coast during the 2000s, inclusion in the rebel institutions required possessing academic capital, hence the important homology between those dominant on either side of the ceasefire line (Popineau, 2017). Conversely, armed movements in Sierra Leone and Liberia during the 1990s generated forms of exploiting youths belonging to the most impoverished strata that kept them at the bottom of the social ladder (Hoffman, 2011). Second, the *habitus* associated with certain institutions can survive after these disappear. For example, former judges or soldiers continue within limits to carry on as professionals (bodily *hexis*, linguistic competences). Perhaps the most striking cases are doctors or clergy whose status continues to be socially recognized even after the health sector or the religious field collapses. Finally, the difficulty posed by the concept of the hysteresis of *habitus* has been well identified by anthropologists and sociologists who make everyday civilian life during war their subject. For some, it is not so much a matter of idle permanence of disadjusted dispositions as of individuals striving to maintain them. Thus, Teresa Koloma Beck (2012) and Ivana Macek (2009) emphasize that the following of routines, necessary for reproducing a sense of the ordinary, passes for a reconstruction of continuity and coherence in a world turned upside down, which they respectively term “normalization” and “imitation of life”. These processes involve an intensive work of narrativizing the self that verifies the ego’s permanence and accents continuities in spite of the breakdowns produced by war. In this regard, a common pitfall involves assuming that carrying on routines signifies the continuity of dispositions and practices (Richards, 2004; Lubkemann, 2008), when in reality they have already changed meaning and pose different problems. The act of ironing one’s shirt in Sarajevo during the siege or of working in the fields in areas of Angola where UNITA and the MPLA clash was not the same before and after the outbreak of war (Macek, 2009: 47; Koloma Beck, 2012: 125).

In the longer run, the new experiences (traumas, socialization in armed groups, skill acquisition) and the transformation in capital values (identity, social or economic especially) lead to a change of *habitus*. Bourdieu himself considered that *habitus* can change when confronted with new situations, but, because *habitus* itself conditions the interpretation of situations, innovations are limited. Yet, in a civil war context, *habitus* for most of the agents does not provide suitable schemes of thought, even if some dispositions to act can make adaptation easier (discipline of closed organizations,

professionals of violence and illegality). Three elements play a determining role in *habitus* transformation. First, the exercise of violence – suffered but also committed and observed – plays a key role in transforming dispositions to act (Dorransoro, 2008; Theidon 2013). These are not effects specific to civil wars: the Mexican, Brazilian, Nigerian or South African societies experience extremely high levels of violence; torture is perpetrated in many authoritarian regimes; the uncertain status of migrants in numerous European countries induces considerable trauma. Civil wars are moments when these transformational experiences prevail for perpetrators, victims, and witnesses alike. Second, entering total institutions (Goffman, 1961), like some armed movements (PKK, LTTE, FARC, Islamic State), prison, or, to a lesser extent, a refugee camp, profoundly changes individuals.<sup>21</sup> The effects of militant engagement persist the more the militants are inserted into networks that actualize these dispositions (Chebli, 2019). Third, acquiring skills contributes to agents' interiorizing novel positions and hence to transforming their *habitus*. In effect, war brings – at times compels – the acquisition of competencies differentiated as a function of the agents' frequent changes of positions: physical techniques, mastering objects and tools, grasping social codes, interpreting situations.<sup>22</sup> This emerges clearly in the case of fighters (knowledge, handling and maintaining weapons, tactical skills, physical discipline) (Audoin-Rouzeau, 2008), but in reality, it affects the whole of society. Indeed, restrictions will, for instance, impact cooking methods; fightings compels learning how to hide, move, or seek protection, how to interpret sounds and smells. The presence of wounded persons requires learning simple first aid techniques (possibly in a care facility) and militancy leads to mastering certain communications and administrative tools.

This disadjustment between *habitus* and social structures manifests itself in the multiplication of exceptional social trajectories reflecting a redefinition of the space of possibilities. The extraordinary reinventions that occur in civil wars (the middle class joining militias, petty smugglers turning into commanders) draw our attention to the effect of the socializations made possible by the abrupt transformation of the rules of the social game. The inclusion of women in armed movements, for instance, in the Turkish PKK, the Liberian ULIMO-J or the Salvadoran FMLN, makes possible social trajectories difficult to imagine in these pre-war societies, even if, as Mats Utas (2005) and Jocelyn Viterna (2013) show, their enrollment can coexist with gender-based forms of domination. Accordingly, civil wars are probably contexts that boost the incoherence or dissonance of the *habitus* underlined by Bernard Lahire.

Still, social reproduction necessarily reappears. An armed group consolidating its influence leads to establishing institutions and distributing positions of power generally

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<sup>21</sup> On the role of armed movements, see Grojean (2008) and Gayer (2014a). On refugee camps, see Turner (2004) and Agier (2011).

<sup>22</sup> Along these lines, see the classic work by Marcel Mauss regarding the “Techniques of the body” (1973).

to the benefit of social elites with ties to the armed movement. However, as the fate of the inhabitants of areas controlled by the LTTE until 2009 shows, these forms of social reproduction are precarious and remain vulnerable to a reversal in the fortunes of war.

## CONCLUSION: GOING BEYOND BOURDIEU

We have shown that the Bourdieusian paradigm remains fertile for the study of civil wars if amended to overcome “its methodological nationalism” (Gorski, 2013b: 364). The key concepts (fields, *habitus*, capital) remain heuristic and are susceptible to reinterpretation: redefinition of the state, dissociation of capital from field, new economies of capitals, the role of *habitus* in critical junctures. We have suggested a new definition of the state that highlights the constraints of international structures and the regulation of the economies of violence and law. Consequently, we have defined civil wars as violent competition between social orders, *i.e.* the emergence of several general economies of practice on the same national territory. We have also expanded the list of capitals by including identity capital and conceptualized capital as an objectified resource, which is not necessarily accumulated in a field. In addition, we have pursued Bourdieu's intuition regarding the circuits for capital conversion to underline the variation in the hierarchies of capitals according to societies. This led us to highlight the centrality of social capital in relation to economic or cultural capital in some cases. Finally, we elaborated on the notion of *habitus* in uncertain contexts, stressing in particular its generalized disadjustment and the role of deliberation in decision making.

In this way, we used our research to extend Bourdieu's paradigm and account sociologically for what happens in the revolutionary breakdowns caused by civil wars. Bourdieu's work fits into Tocquevillian approaches whose subject is the formation of the state over the *longue durée*<sup>23</sup> with two opposing difficulties: on the one hand, these works underestimate the indeterminacy of social systems, rationalizing *a posteriori* trajectories and neglecting possible moments of bifurcation; on the other hand, starting from an endogenous vision of state formation, they downplay the overdetermination by the international system, beginning with maintaining states as *de jure* entities (borders, capital city, diplomatic representations). By contrast, we argue that the similarity of certain processes in contemporary civil wars arises from international constraints, which partly explain the formation of states, the relative value of capitals (economic, cultural, religious), and the social hierarchies. Accounting for the effects of civil wars requires keeping in mind these two paradoxical dimensions of indeterminacy and the constraints/resources of the international system.

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<sup>23</sup> In this respect, the works of Pierre Bourdieu pose the same problems as those by Norbert Elias (2000) or by Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale (1992).

Finally, the dynamic nature of civil war situations provides new ways of thinking about the relationship between event and structure (Sewell, 1996). The difficulty of determining how the theories of mobilization articulate with the Bourdieusian paradigm resides in the fact that the former are ad hoc theories whose prominent figures, from Olson to Tilly, belong to different sociological traditions (Rational Choice Theory, Chicago School, Historical Sociology). One of the main tasks of a sociology of revolutionary phenomena, including civil wars, consists therefore of integrating the contributions of the theories of mobilization with the concepts derived from the theory of practice. Here, the concept of capital can throw a bridge between them. For instance, social capital can simultaneously be produced by mobilization and contribute to the genesis of institutions, thus linking event and structure. More broadly, how does the state of relationships between fields influence the repertory of collective action? How do the frames that shape mobilization relate to the *habitus*? How do new institutions emerge in contexts of uncertainty? Overall a sociology capable of accounting for social breakdowns and the formation of new social structures largely remains a work in progress.

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