

Degree's Final Project

**Reparation policies and their impact
on the end of African dependency toward
European colonizers: a perspective
for the 21th century**

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ABSTRACT

Considering the challenges faced by ex-colonized countries, and the apparent reluctance of Western powers to recognize the atrocities perpetuated during the second colonisation period, this paper focuses on the impact those reparation policies from Belgium could have on Democratic Republic of Congo regarding its development and its position in the international arena, using a both quantitative and qualitative methodology. By going through a postcolonial theoretical framework, analysing the circumstances of DRC's colonisation and decolonization processes, as well as its current political, social and economic situation, this paper examines the definition of reparation and recognition policies and their application in the Germano-Namibian case to apply it to the current process of reparation policies' implementation between Belgium and DRC. Meanwhile the overall impact would be tremendously positive for DRC, the lack of political will and popular support constitute barriers to their voting and establishment.

Keywords: Reparation, Recognition, Democratic Republic of Congo, Belgium, decolonization.

RESUMEN

Teniendo en cuenta los desafíos a los que se enfrentan los países ex-colonizados, y la aparente reticencia de las potencias occidentales a reconocer las atrocidades perpetuadas durante el segundo periodo de colonización, este trabajo se centra en el impacto que esas políticas de reparación por parte de Bélgica podrían tener en la República Democrática del Congo (RDC) en relación con su desarrollo y su posición en la escena internacional, utilizando una metodología tanto cuantitativa como cualitativa. A través de un marco teórico postcolonial, analizando las circunstancias de los procesos de colonización y descolonización de la RDC, así como su actual situación política, social y económica, este análisis examina la definición de las políticas de reparación y de reconocimiento, así como su aplicación en el caso germano-namibio para aplicarlo al actual proceso de implementación de las políticas de reparación entre Bélgica y la RDC. Mientras que el impacto global sería tremendamente positivo para la RDC, la falta de voluntad política y de apoyo popular constituyen barreras para su votación y establecimiento.

Palabras-clave: Reparación, Reconocimiento, República Democrática del Congo, Bélgica, **impacto**.

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Acronym / Abbreviation	Complete word
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
WGI	Worldwide Governance Indicators
HDI	Human Development Index
ISC	Independent State of Congo
MNC	Congolese National Movement, or Mouvement National Congolais

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1. INTRODUCTION

This past 28th of May 2021, after five years of diplomatic negotiations (BBC, 2021), Germany has officially recognized its responsibility in the Herero and Namas' genocide that occurred in Namibia between 1904 and 1908, has admitted the true nature of its criminal actions at the time, and, in the light of the historical and moral responsibility, has asked the country's citizens for forgiveness (Wieder, 2021). In doing so, Germany's foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, has officially announced the implementation of a development plan for an amount of 1.1 billion euros as a financial compensation for the profound suffering inflicted to the victims (BBC, 2021). According to the development plan, funds will be allocated for the next thirty years to the improvement of infrastructures, healthcare and education programmes in the impacted communities benefits (BBC, 2021). The restorative judicial decision represents, in the postcolonial times, a crucial milestone, as no ex-colonial power had ever pursued such actions in compensation of the crimes committed in its former colonies before.

In other former colonizing powers countries, those improvements are yet to be seen. It is the case in Belgium regarding its former colony, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Indeed, over two years and a half ago, after the Black Lives Matter movement breakout in 2020, a "Special Commission on Colonial Past" has been created as a part of the Belgian Federal Parliament with the main aim to negotiate and build up a development plan to contribute to the country former colony's progress through the allocation of financial resources (Demeestere, 2022). After two years of negotiation, the Special Commission had to present its policy recommendations to the Chamber of Deputies on the 19th of December 2022 (Demeestere, 2022). Nevertheless, due to a lack of consensus between the socialists, the ecologists and the liberals, the Parliament could not proceed vote and the work had to be abandoned (Demeestere, 2022). As a consequence, it is worth wondering why, while an ex-colonial power achieved to recognize the genocide and implement the appropriate compensation to Namibia, other countries, such as Belgium, are not capable to come to such reparation policies. In fact, meanwhile, in Belgium, some accuse others of sabotage of the Commission's proposition because of colonial dogmatism (Demeestere, 2022), in DRC, people are still suffering from the consequences of the colonial times, and the country, which is blocked in the vicious circle of postcolonial economic dependency, is one of the poorest in the world.

1.1. Definition of the Main and Specific Objectives

Therefore, the main objective of this research paper will be to study the impact that reparation policies would have on the end of dependency toward European ex-colonizers, and more specifically the end of the dependency of DRC toward Belgium in the 21st century. Moreover, this analysis will be guided by specific objectives, which are to study the historical facts, from DRC's colonization to its current situation, in order to set the basis and to highlight factors that could be helpful in analysing the reparation policies, but also to define briefly a reparation policy and compare it with a recognition policy, to analyse the reparation policies implemented by Germany to Namibia and compare it to the situation of Belgium and the DRC, and finally to study the impact, that those reparation policies would have on DRC, both regarding its development and its place in the international arena.

1.2. Research Hypothesis and Methodology

Throughout this paper, the analysis will be based on the hypothesis that "reparation policies implemented by Belgium will have a positive impact on DRC's development and position in the international arena". To do so, the methodology used will be both qualitative, using academic papers, books, legislative documents, such as the Charter of the UN, conference reports, and an interview of the Chancellor of the Embassy of DRC in Belgium [Annex 1], and quantitative, using social, economic, and political indexes to determine the current situation of DRC.

1.3. Delimitations of the Analysis

Nevertheless, it is of crucial importance to state the delimitation of this paper. First of all, its focus will be put on DRC, as well as on its former colonizer, Belgium. The first chapter will therefore study the most important historical facts, from the colonization of the DRC to its decolonization, but also its situation in the aftermath of its independence and the current situation of the country to provide a clear basis for further analysis. In this part, concepts such as Africanism, auto-determination, and nationalist movements, but also principles of International Law such as the Atlantic Treaty of 1941 and the Charter of the UN, as well as the result of the Colombo and the Bandung Conferences of 1954 and 1955 respectively, will be studied. Then, this paper will briefly examine the definition of reparation policies, as well as the ones established by Germany toward its former colony, Namibia, in order to see if those constitute reparation policies and if it

could also be implemented in the Belgium-DRC situation. Finally, as it is the main goal of this analysis, this paper will study the impact those reparation policies might have on the development and political situation of the DRC, as well as the necessity, or not, for Belgium to implement them as an “ask for forgiveness” measure.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that this topic has been chosen as a subject of analysis due to several reasons. On the one hand, it has been noted that only few research exists on reparation policies in the case of Belgium and the DRC. Although it is true that every colonial and postcolonial context presents some similarities, it also possesses an enormous number of differences that makes academic research extremely essential in the Belgian and Congolese situation. On the other hand, this paper has been redacted with the aim to have an impact in the practical and current reality in Belgium. In fact, the European country is currently leaving under some sort of denial regarding its colonial past. Thus, it is of crucial importance to analyse practically the possibilities and effects, that reparation policies could have on both states involved, with the hope that this work might provide some academic highlight to Belgian authorities and enable them to move forward in a constructive direction in the near future.

Nonetheless, this paper will have to take into account some structural limitations, as it only is a final degree project, and not a doctoral thesis. Moreover, and it is certainly the most essential aspect to highlight, this paper will face, throughout the analysis, the lack of objectivity of certain sources and references. Indeed, when studying colonization, some facts refer more to both sides subjectivities than to the objective reality. More generally, this problem is often posed in Social Science studies. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that some testimonies and information retrieved might not be of complete objectiveness, although this paper will put a great effort into enunciate objectivities and confront subjectivities for the purpose of academic correctness.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before going deeper into the analysis, it seems essential to determine the theoretical framework in which this paper will be developed. For the topic at hand, the conceptual framework chosen to conduct the study will be the Postcolonial Studies in the International Relations arena, including the Postcolonial and Decolonial Feminism. Indeed, although some might emphasize Belgium's realism in fighting for its own interest in this particular situation, the chosen perspective aims to examine the question from a completely different point of view. Consequently, as the main objective of this paper will be to determine the impacts of reparation policies on an ex-colony's development and position on the international arena, this focus seemed to be the most pertinent to use.

It is worth mentioning that the field of Postcolonial Studies has constituted an increasingly important framework of study since the 1970s (Barhi, 1996). As a matter of fact, some would date this outbreak in the Western academic field when Edward Said published his book, *Orientalism*, in 1978 (Barbé, 2020), whose theory will be developed later on in this section. Since then, the conceptual framework of Postcolonial has been defined generally as "the study of the interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized in the modern period" (Barhi, 1996). Nevertheless, defining precisely what represents this field of study in international relations has constituted a notable challenge for several reasons. One of the main justifications is that, nowadays, the world is most composed of countries with a colonial past, and their history and interactions with their former colonizers are extremely different depending on the case at hand (Barbé, 2020). Thus, a division that has been elaborated separates the settler countries, including Australia or Canada, from the non-settler countries, such as Nigeria or Senegal (Barbé, 2020). Consequently, this proves the wideness of meaning behind the term Postcolonial (Barhi, 1996), as well as the necessity to examine each and every scenario, both from a global and a specific focus.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise to notice the emergence of distinct specific definitions to understand the scope of Postcolonial studies in international relations. While the second edition of the American Heritage Dictionary provide a definition which state that "it is related to, or being the time following the establishment of independence in a colony", others suggest that "it is not only the period after the departure of the imperial powers that concerns those in the field, but that before the independence as

well” Barbé, 2020). Furthermore, it is worth highlighting, that the postcolonial framework sometimes also includes countries that have not yet achieved independence, as well as people who constitute ethnic minorities in “First World” or Western states (Barhi, 1996). Finally, it also covers the state of independent countries, which suffer “neocolonial” forms of diplomatic, political, and economic relations through the extension of capitalism and globalism (Barhi, 1996). In other words, those countries have entered, most of the time against their will, it a centre/periphery model. This model has been theorized by different authors, including Andre Gunder Frank, and enables to understand the underdevelopment of peripheries to the benefit of the centre, as the centre does not allow the exploitation of the resources in the peripheries and favours the creation of added-value to those resources in the centre, therefore bringing all the benefits to the centre at the expense of the periphery (Political Science Student Blog, 2016). Nevertheless, many scholars argue that most of the ex-colonies are not free from domination and colonial influence, so that it is not conceivable to talk about the “postcolonial” period (Barbé, 2020). Rather, those authors emphasise on the importance to talk about “neocolonialism” when examining the relations among former colonizers and colonies (Barhi, 1996). Therefore, it is essential to state that, as it is nowadays, the “Postcolonial” conceptual framework positions itself against imperialism and Eurocentrism of any kind (Barhi, 1996).

Moreover, among the main figures of the Postcolonial conceptual framework in international relations, it is worth emphasizing the important influence that authors such as Chinua Achebe, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Ian Buruma, Avishai Margalit, G. Spivak, Anibal Quijano, or Aimé Césaire have had in strengthening the Postcolonial theory over the years. Therefore, the next paragraphs will be dedicated to the study of Said, Césaire, and Fanon’s theories, as it seems very important to develop some of their perspectives in this regard.

Edward Said, considered as the father of the Postcolonial theory, as mentioned above, has often been criticized for his work (Markouzi, 2004). Indeed, as stating that Orientalism was Orient defined by Occident, a consequent number of authors denounced a perspective too simplistic and Manichean, which would oppose an Imperialist Occident to a victimized Orient (Markouzi, 2004). Moreover, critics say that he didn’t take enough into account the resistance strategies developed by citizens in

dominated colonies, and that his theories appeared to be “occidentalists”, unilateral and stigmatizing (Markouzi, 2004).

Nevertheless, Said also considered that “forgetting” to use knowledge as a strategy of power and a domination method on the subject of study was the starting point of the intellectual’s activity (Markouzi, 2004). In other words, losing sight of the hierarchy, the labelling, and the classification of cultures was, according to him, the central aspect of establishing an “exilic” intellectual, who does not experience feelings of belonging anywhere and, consequently, can observe from a comparatist and historical perspective (Markouzi, 2004). Indeed, no matter the physical location from which an intellectual elaborates their theories, they need to be in the position of outsider in order to develop a sense of duty of truth and universality (Markouzi, 2004).

Aimé Césaire had another perspective in the elaboration of his theory. Indeed, as developed in his work “*Discours sur le Colonialisme*” (1955), his position regarding the European countries is tremendously more extremist. He begins stating that Europe is not defensible for what it has done, and continues by questioning the generally used justification of colonizing to civilize primitive population (Césaire, 1955). From his perspective, this argument represents a collective hypocrisy that enabled to ably emphasize false problems to better legitimate the obnoxious solutions European were bringing to colonized communities (Césaire, 1955). Strictly speaking, “colonisation is not what colonizers want to sell to the world, but a gesture of appetite and strength to spread globally its antagonist economies” (Césaire, 1955).

Furthermore, he emphasizes on the benefits of bringing different civilizations into contact with one another, as well as on the considerable risk that constitutes the isolation of a civilization from the rest of the world (Césaire, 1955). Nevertheless, he also notices that colonisation has not permitted this contact between colonies (Césaire, 1955). As he develops in his work, colonisation focuses first on decivilizing the colonizer, to dumb him down in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to wake him up to buried instincts, therefore “implementing a universal regression, or settling in a profound gangrene” (Césaire, 1955).

It is also worth highlighting that, according to Césaire (1955), from the European humanist perspective, “the race of workers are the Negroes”, meanwhile “the race of masters and soldiers is the European one” (Césaire, 1955). As a consequence,

between colonizers and colonized, there is only room for chores, intimidation, pressure, taxes, robbery, rape, the imposition of a culture, and more broadly decerebrated elites and debased masses (Césaire, 1955).

Finally, one of the last crucial aspects of his theory's content relies in his statement: "No one colonizes innocently" (Césaire, 1955). A nation that colonizes to justify its proper foundation is considered as a symptom of the sickness of its civilization (Césaire, 1955). Moreover, due to the lack of constructive human contacts and the presence of relations of domination and submission, the colonizer transforms into a pawn in a destructive machinery that is way bigger than themselves, and the colonized as an instrument of production, leading colonization to be considered as reification. Consequently, Césaire positions himself as a militant for natural, harmonious, and sustainable economies, and as a defender of the para-European civilizations victims of imperialism (Césaire, 1955).

On the other hand, it seems essential in this paper to develop Franz Fanon's theory, which has been developed in several works, including "*Les Damnés de la Terre*" (1961). Indeed, his book, which was censured when published in the US for undermining the internal security of the state, is elaborated to pass on a message to the underprivileged, who not only constitute the proletarians of industrialized states, but also those of poor countries (Cherki in Fanon, 2002). His work is a wake-up call on the state and the future of colonized states (Cherki in Fanon, 2002). In this regard, Fanon is committed to the fight for the Algerian independence and, more broadly, analyses the effects of economic, political and cultural domination on the colonized citizens (Cherki in Fanon, 2002). Furthermore, Fanon considers that fighting against racism is pointless without highlighting the effects of oppression by the dominant culture on the dominated communities and cultures (Cherki in Fanon, 2002). Although it is true that, having been written in 1961, his work examines a certain temporal scope, the essential aspect to underline it that "*Les Damnés de la Terre*" (1961) still constitutes a central academic book in Postcolonial studies. In fact, Fanon's theory can be applied nowadays to the increase of inequalities, the increasingly larger gap between the Global North and Global South, and to the reduction of subjects to the value of objects (Cherki in Fanon, 2002).

Studying more in depth his theory developed in "*Les Damnés de la Terre*" (1961), it is worth stating that, with the main aim of pursuing a complete analysis of the dominance

relationship, Fanon divides his book in several chapters, including the analysis of violence, spontaneity, national consciousness and national culture. Throughout the historical part of the research, the different and main points of his analysis will be aggregated to the study of DRC's colonization and decolonization, in order to complement his pertinent theory to a concrete and demonstrative example.

Finally, in the current international context, it is of crucial importance to mention that Postcolonial Feminism theories have been developed through the prism of Postcolonial and Feminist Theoretical Framework for international relations. One of the main authors in this field has been Françoise Vergès, who develops in her book "*Un Féminisme Décolonial*" (2019) her theory about the struggle of women from the Global South (Vergès, 2019, p.19). Indeed, from her perspective, decolonial feminism goes way further than the struggle for gender equality, as it has, as main aim, to deconstruct racism, sexism, capitalism and imperialism (Vergès, 2019, p.12). Moreover, this particular framework emphasises on the negative effects caused by a temporality, which would only describe liberation in terms of unilateral victory on the other part, as she states that this writing of history turns the story of the struggles of the oppressed into one of successive defeats and not one that exposes the determination of reactionary and imperialist forces to crush all dissent (Vergès, 2019, p. 12-13). In this regard, she highlights on the fact that if a State wants to crush a particular movement, it will use all the means at its disposal, especially the imposition of fear, to repress and divide the oppressed (Vergès, 2019, p.16). In fact, postcolonial feminism analyses the impacts of the imposition of fear by the State as a technique to discipline the colonized people during the colonial slavery, and affirms that the condition of oppression was only possible through the ongoing threat of being tortured or murdered (Vergès, 2019, p.17).

On the other hand, she introduces another essential aspect of postcolonial theories by quoting Frantz Fanon, who said that "Europe is literally the creation of the third World", as it has been built on the plundering of the world's wealth with some sort of desire to erase those people and their countries from the analysis of conflicts, contradictions, and resistances (Vergès, 2019, p.18). Furthermore, she explains that the capitalist narrative is by essence the one of the colonizers, and considers, that the colonies are consubstantial (Vergès, 2019, p.27). In addition, this narrative considers that the decolonisation, which is the specific event or period, has put a definitive stop to

colonialism, which is the process or social movement (Vergès, 2019, p.27-28). Consequently, decolonial feminists dedicate their study to the way in which the racism/sexism/ethnicism complex permeates all relations of domination to contribute to the struggle that started centuries ago for a part of the world's population to affirm its existence (Vergès, 2019, p.19, 27).

It is worth stating that this approach addresses questions in a transversal and intersectional manner, through a multidimensional method that refuses to separate race, sexuality and social classes in mutually excludable categories, and therefore analyses the possible connections between all those aspects, thus avoiding the hierarchisation of the struggles (Vergès, 2019, p. 20, 34-35). Nevertheless, it comes as no surprise to notice that this movement has provoked a violent reaction from the heteropatriarchy, civilisational feminists and Western Government (Vergès, 2019, p.20). This is why, for a long time, Françoise Vergès did not recognize herself as a feminist, but rather as a anticolonial and antiracist militant in the movement for the liberation of women. Indeed, she did not want to be associated with the civilisational feminists, who, by being affiliated to the racial capitalist order, have undertaken the mission to impose a certain ideology regarding Women's Right which contributes to the perpetuation of class, gender and race domination (Vergès, 2019, p.12, 22).

From her perspective, governments from all around the world have used feminism as an antinational and foreign to the "culture of the nation" ideology in order to better repress women (Vergès, 2019, p.23). In this regard, she states that women's rights have become an ideological weapon at the service of neoliberalism, by mostly emphasizing on the defence of freedoms without questioning the content of those liberties (Vergès, 2019, p.30). Furthermore, throughout her work, a profound critic is made regarding civilisational feminism, as it is mentioned that a feminism, that does not fight for gender equality and, that refuses to see how much integration leaves racialised women at the mercy of brutality, violence, rape and murder, is considered as an ally of this systematic problem (Vergès, 2019, p.23). Although it is true that feminism remains based on the division between women and men (a division that precedes slavery), civilisational feminism theories, which have been created together with the colonies, when European feminists analysed their oppression comparing it to the slaves, do not analyse how slavery, colonialism and imperialism act upon this division between men and women, and is therefore profoundly racist (Vergès, 2019, p.29, 31).

Additionally, Vergès (2019, p.49) highlights that, in the hegemonic narratives on the struggle for women's rights, one oversight in particular exposes the refusal to consider the privileges of whiteness because, although for a long time, European women did not have basic civil rights such as the right to vote, they did have the right to own human beings, classified as furniture in their patrimony. Consequently, as long as the history of women's rights is written without taking this privilege into account, and without considering the colonies, it will be misleading (Vergès, 2019, p.49).

Finally, it is of crucial importance to state that postcolonial feminism does not represent neither a "new wave" nor a "new generation" but a new stage in the decolonisation process, which we know to be a long historical process (Vergès, 2019, p.21). Indeed, decolonial feminists reject these segmenting formulas, which segment the long history of the struggles of their elders, indigenous women during colonisation, enslaved women, black women, women in national liberation struggles and subaltern feminist internationalism in the 1950s - 1970s, and racialised women who struggle daily today (Vergès, 2019, p.21).

3. RESEARCH

Chapter 1 – Historical background

1.1. History of DRC's Colonization

Before entering deeper into the research analysis, it seems essential to examine the mechanisms and reasons behind the colonisation of DRC, as well as the context of its decolonization, and how those processes impacted and influenced the political, economic, and social situations in which the country had to evolve from 1960 onwards. Therefore, in this section, a study of DRC's colonisation and decolonization singular processes will be conducted. Then, an analysis of the current situation of the country will be provided.

First of all, it is worth stating that, during the second half of the 19th century, European countries, who had implemented a new economic system based on the progress made with industrialization, became the factory of the world (Phan, 2020, p.95). As a consequence, the mechanised industrial production, as well as the increase in the quantities produced, led to a significant need to source raw materials in rising volumes and then to sell the finished products more abundant themselves (Phan, 2020, p.95). In this context, the “Great Depression” of 1873-1896 further enhanced economic competition and contributed to popularise colonial imperialism (Phan, 2020, p.97). Thus, influenced by the lure of gain and the quest for prestige and power, European countries decided to vigorously resume the colonial expansion in very extended territories, which they persisted in calling “virgin land” (Phan, 2020, p.5, p.91 and p.95). This colonization process, implemented in the name of civilisation and, it was claimed, in the interests of the victims themselves, caused a great deal of aggressions and violences against people and goods (Phan, 2020, p.4). Furthermore, it is important to emphasize on the fact that those colonies that were created at the second half of the 19th century only existed for the benefits and interests of their metropolises, which reserved for themselves the monopoly of the fruits of their exploitation (Phan, 2020, p.2).

In this regard, Belgium was no exception to the rule. Indeed, in 1880s, when Belgium was the second most industrialized country after the United Kingdom, the King of Belgians, Léopold II, stated that “Our borders can never extend into Europe. But colonies play a great part in what can make states powerful and prosperous, it is time

for us to have one too” (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.65). Nevertheless, the political power of the King was, and still is, shared with the government without which he is powerless (La Monarchie Belge, 2023). At that time, the Belgian government allowed independence to the King in exercising his power in the international arena, but when it came to acquire a colony, both the government and the parliament rejected all propositions from Léopold II, as it constituted for them a great loss of money and resources (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.65). In those circumstances, the King response was extraordinary in its simplicity: if the government refused to colonize, he would buy a colony in his own name, using his property right as every other ordinary citizens (De Wael and al., n.d.). Consequently, he created the International African Association in 1876 and, with the authorization of the government, he obtained financial supports to start his colonization process (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.66-67).

Moreover, when Henry Morton Stanley, a British explorer who had travelled to the current DRC, hitherto unknown to Europeans, and who mapped the area between 1874 and 1877, came to Léopold II with a proposition to acquire the current DRC to exploit its unlimited commercial opportunities, map the region and put an end to slavery, the King saw an opportunity of expansion and decided to finance Stanley for him to colonize the area (de Broux & Piret, 2019). Consequently, between 1879 and 1884, Stanley carried out a second travel to the region to start the process and, upon his return, the territory was named the Independent State of Congo (SCI) and was declared property of the King of Belgians (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.23-24). This property was confirmed at the international arena by the Berlin Conference, that occurred from the 15th of November 1884 to the 26th of February 1885 (Acte général de la Conférence de Berlin, 1885).

During this conference, that the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck convened to prevent the colonization process from running out of control, the fourteen participants recognized the existence of the International Association of Congo, that succeeded to the International African Association, as well as his authority over the region of the current DRC (Phan, 2020, p.24 and p. 120). Furthermore, the commercial liberty in the Congo Basin and the prohibition to pursue the slave trade were also at the centre of discussion (Phan, 2020, p.120). Indeed, the first article of the Berlin Conference stated, in its Article 1, that “the commerce of all nations will enjoy complete freedom”, and, in its Article 5, that “Any power exercising or to be exercising sovereign rights in the

above-mentioned territories shall not grant therein any monopoly or privilege of any kind in commercial matters” (Acte général de la Conférence de Berlin, 1885). Additionally, the Conference also established, in its Article 6, that “All Powers exercising sovereignty or influence in the said territories undertake to ensure the preservation of the indigenous populations and the improvement of their moral and material conditions of existence”, and, in its Article 9, that “slave trade is prohibited” (Acte général de la Conférence de Berlin, 1885). Nevertheless, Léopold II implemented forced labour in his colony, and his local representants were authorized to conduct systematic abuses, such as murder, mutilation and torture, to the local populations that were reluctant to obey (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.25).

It is worth highlighting that, in colonizing the DRC, Léopold II did not have to inform the government of the development of his enterprises in the region, as it was agreed that the institution could not interfere (de Broux & Piret, 2019). Thus, under the control of the administration of Léopold II, the ISC will develop at the commercial, agricultural, mining, urbanism, sanitary and educational level (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.74). Moreover, the construction of the first African railway constituted an investment in infrastructure that opened up an outlet for the products of Central Africa, such as rubber, copper, diamonds and gold, which allowed the companies founded by the King and supported by a few Belgian entrepreneurs to finance this colonisation industry (De Wael and al., n.d.). Nevertheless, those economic benefits for Belgians came at a significant cost for the indigenous populations, who had to harvest materials by forced labour for the Royal Estate or private rubber companies, and who were tortured, mutilated and killed in case of unproductivity or rebellion (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.25).

Despite the engagement of several ethnic groups in a guerrilla war (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.84), and more broadly the fierce resistance put up by the natives to the invasion of the Europeans until the start of the First World War (Phan, 2020, p.123), the Belgian colonizers elaborated simple techniques to force populations to work for them. One of them was to take women and children as hostages in concentration camps in order for men to be forced to work and liberate their loved-ones in return for ivory and rubber (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.91). Once and if women and children were liberated, men became useless, and even obstacles to production, as they knew Belgians hostage-taking tactics, and therefore had to be killed (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.91). Moreover, another quite known and controversial practice was that of the "severed hands", which

was implemented to justify every bullet used by caporals in charge of the rentability of local populations and avoid poaching or resale practices (De Wael, and al., n.d.).

On the other hand, when analysing the economic organization of the ISC, it is important to underline that the territory was divided into two economic zones: one owned by licensee companies, such as the ABIR, the “*Société Anversoise*”, the “*Compagnie du Kasai*” and the “*Comité special du Katanga*”, who could exploit their territory in exchange of a tax to pay to the King, and the State-owned area, which was the property of Léopold II himself (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.90-91). Furthermore, it is worth noting that, at the beginning of the commercial exploitation, the authorities sent by the King implemented a bonus system, which constituted in receiving a higher quantity of money for having produced more ivory and rubber, and at the lowest cost possible, no matter the means used (de Broux & Piret, 2019). Indeed, as colonies needed to cost the least possible to their metropolises and to be as much as possible autonomous from the colonizers’ financing and investments (Phan, 2020, p.222), this method incentivized authorities to produce more and more, therefore reaching the self-funding of ISC.

It comes as no surprise to state that this situation of violation of human rights was known from the Belgians and the international community (De Wael and al., n.d.). Meanwhile only few Belgian citizens believed in it, the international community, and especially the United Kingdom and the United States took matters in their own hands and asked for the implementation of a commission of enquiry, which Léopold II ended up sending to ISC (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.107 and p.113). Based on the conclusions of this report, Léopold II proposed to reform his regime, but it was not taken seriously and not accepted by the Belgian government, which decided, after two years of debate to take over the ruling of the ISC, renamed the Belgian Congo, and to take charge of its administration (De Wael and al., n.d.). Consequently, the 15th of November 1908, the Parliament voted the annexation of ISC, a colony that had lost half of its population in twenty-three years, and established a more “traditional” colonial system (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.26 and p.114).

1.2. The Belgian Congo

With this change in administration, the populations’ situation improved gradually. Indeed, Belgian authorities decided to improve education in its colony, which resulted

in a enrolment rate of children aged 6-14 years of 12% in 1940 and of 37% in 1954, placing the Belgian Congo at the same level as Italy in that time period (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.127). Moreover, at the primary level of education, the Belgian Congo was the only colony where local languages were taught, and where the entire educational system was free during the 1950s-1960s (Defosse, n.d.). With 42% of literate school-age population, the colony was far ahead from other African countries (Defosse, n.d.). Furthermore, the secondary level of education, which was at first focused on professional and technical studies, developed in the 1950s secondary schools of general studies for Black people and, at around the same time, two universities were established in the country for both Black and White students (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.128). As a consequence, there were seventeen graduates on the eve of independence, and four years later, the Congo had the most university graduates in Africa (Defosse, n.d.).

Regarding the health care system, the development of quality sanitary services were conducted in the country, mostly by private enterprises and, from 1946 onwards, every student was subject to a medical exam in their school (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.129, p.144 and p.147). Moreover, in 1960, the country enjoyed a performant healthcare infrastructure system, and the medical personnels' formation was far better than in any other African country, leading Africans to travel to the Belgian Congo to receive healthcare, according to the official position of the Chancellor Uronya Ngadjole. Finally, the country also enjoyed great infrastructure improvements in terms of railway and road and, due to the discovery of mining resources in Katanga, it became among the world's largest copper and diamond producers (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.27-28 and p.148).

Nonetheless, it is also essential to highlight that the local populations did not have any political rights in their own land (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.129). Indeed, an apartheid method had been implemented so that Black people could not live in the same neighbourhoods as the Whites, and could not enrol in the police forces, among other restrictions (de Broux & Piret, 2019). Finally, although the Article 2 of the Colonial Charter of 1908 established that "No one may be compelled to work for the account and benefit of companies or individuals", forced labour, especially in the mines, continued in various forms until the beginning of the Second World War (de Broux & Piret, 2019).

1.3. DRC's Decolonization

Bearing all this in mind, it is also worth analysing RDC's process of decolonization, as, meanwhile it has been carried out by the local populations who had decided to take their destiny into their own hands (Phan, 2020, p.127), the country's decolonization process has taken a different path from other colonies. First of all, it is of crucial importance to state that some external factors and circumstances have influenced nationalist movements that, later on, represented the principal actors in decolonizing their territory. The first historical event that had this impact was the First World War, when the relations between colonies and metropolises were first put into perspective (Phan, 2020, p.129). Indeed, the war tremendously affected the European countries' economies, as well as their populations (Phan, 2020, p.129), but it also gravely impacted the colonies who got doomed into a war in which they did not feel to have their place (Phan, 2020, p.129), and where they had to participate into the war effort with both material and human resources, without receiving any type of compensation at the end of the conflict (Aránguez, 2017). Moreover, it has to be underlined that the first time the principle of self-determination of people, determining factor in the constitution of colonial nationalisms, appeared was in the fifth of the Fourteen Points elaborated by W. Wilson and exposed in a speech on the 8th of January 1918 (Aránguez, 2017). This particular point represented the first element that motivated local colonial communities toward the fight for emancipation from their colonizers, as it stated that:

“A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined” (Wilson, 1918).

On the other hand, those Fourteen Points also included the necessity to create an international organism, later called the League of Nations which, according to Phan (2020, p.106), should have given more importance to the colonies in the international relations at that time.

Then, it is also worth stating that, during the interwar period, from 1918 to 1939, progress can be observed regarding the anti-imperialism and nationalism in territories under the control of colonizers (Aránguez, 2017). In fact, the stock market crash of

1929 that concluded in the Great Depression of 1929 slowed down the world economy, and the demand and prices for raw materials by industries collapsed (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.137). Consequently, as Belgium and its colony were both export-oriented, the impact was bigger and allowed the Congolese to start considering its colony as way less credible to control them (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.137). Furthermore, during the Second World War, nationalist currents intensified, pushed by several factors, such as the Atlantic Charter (Aránguez, 2017), that occurred on the 14th of August 1941 and which states in its 3rd Article that “they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them” (Atlantic Charter, 1941), or the loss of prestige of the colonial powers (Aránguez, 2017).

At the end of the Second World War, the United States, who positioned clearly against colonization, decided to clearly assume its role as a dominant power (Phan, 2020, p.136) and celebrated the San Francisco Conference from the 25th of April to the 26th of June 1945 to elaborate the Charter of the United Nations, which was ratified on the 24th of October 1945. In this Charter, which constitute the foundation stone in the creation of the United Nations, the question of peoples' self-determination was put back on the table through several articles, such as the Article 1.2, which states that “to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace” (United Nations, 1945), as well as the Articles 73 and 74, who respectively state that:

“To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace” (United Nations, 1945)

“Members of the UN also agree that their policy in respect of the territories to which this Chapter applies, no less than in respect of their metropolitan areas, must be based on the general principle of good-neighbourliness, due account being taken of the interests and well-being of the rest of the world, in social, economic, and commercial matters”. (United Nations, 1945).

From the colonial nationalisms' perspective, those principles represented the legal framework to justify their fight for emancipation. This was accentuated with the

elaboration and ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Aránguez, 2017).

1.4. International Conferences for the Right of Self-Determination

Nevertheless, it is the organization of two specific conferences that clearly impacted the development of colonial nationalisms and self-determination movements. The first one was the Colombo Conference from the 28th of April till the 2nd of May 1954, promoted by India, Pakistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, with the aim of stimulate the importance of colonial nationalisms in Asia to reach independence (Aránguez, 2017), which provoked an acceleration in those movements' actuations for emancipation in Africa (Phan, 2020, p. 151). Then, the second one was the Bandung Conference which occurred in Indonesia five years before the RDC's independence, in April 1955. There, twenty-nine countries from Asia, Middle-East and Africa who had reached independence gathered to condemn colonialism and promote the self-determination of people, under the observance of countries who still had not reach independence (Aránguez, 2017; Phan, 2020, p.151).

Therefore, understanding the importance of nationalist movements driven by native elites whose leaders had been closely related to the European values (Aránguez, 2017) is essential in examining RDC's decolonization process. Those leaders did not implemented nationalist political parties unconsciously and spontaneously (Aránguez, 2017). Indeed, Fanon explained this formation in "*Les Damnés de la Terre*" (1961, p.40), by stating that those parties "cannot be the result of a magical operation or a natural tremor". On the contrary, they were created in a reflective manner that was influenced by all the circumstances previously mentioned. According to Fanon (1961, p.48), this occurred when "the colonised discovers that a colonist's skin is no more valuable than a native's skin, which causes that all the new and revolutionary self-assurance of the colonised follows from this".

1.5. The Self-Determination Process of DRC

Naturally, this realization and the following implementation of nationalist parties also occurred in the Congolese territory through the creation of two organizations: the ABAKO, or Bakongo' Associations, led by Joseph Kasavubu, the first President of the Republic of Congo, and the MNC, or Congolese National Movement, led by the future Prime Minister Lumumba (Brassinne de La Buisserie & Dumont, 2010). Moreover, two syncretistic movements, Kimbanguism and Kakism, appeared, influenced by American Protestant missionaries (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.133). Those political associations and syncretistic movements wanted an immediate access to independence, which was vividly denied by the Belgian authorities, who stated, among other things, that it was way too quick and too soon. Nevertheless, Fanon (1961, p.73) reminds us that "not long before that, their slowness, their laziness, their fatalism were affirmed and criticized". Therefore, to access to their demands, the MNC established from 1959 to 1960 very efficient non-violent strategies to reach independence, constating in boycotting official ceremonies, tribunals, the administration, as well as to refuse to pay their taxes (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.137).

In this context, the Belgian administration started to realize that the country was losing its colony, which constituted a quite shocking fact as, in the minds of almost all colons, the colonization process was a permanent factor, unless they were the ones to decide to go (Phan, 2020, p.57). Therefore, in those circumstances, and pushed by the international superpowers, the US and the USSR, Van Blissen, a Belgian university professor, published in 1955 a document named "Thirty-year plan for the political emancipation of Belgian Africa", where he established that the best time period to decolonize the Belgian Congo was in the 1980s or 2000s, in order to leave time to create an intellectual elite in the future independent country to manage it (Brassinne de La Buisserie & Dumont, 2010). Nonetheless, the independence of French colonies accelerated the process (Bella-Canta, 2017, p. 166). Consequently, in 1957, the Belgian authorities accepted to organize local elections, and, at the beginning of 1960, a meeting was set up between Congolese independentists and delegates from the Belgian Parliament and Government in Brussels to plan the independence (Brassinne de La Buisserie & Dumont, 2010). However, due to the late implementation of educational policies in the Belgian Congo, when the independence was declared on the 30th of June 1960 (Bella-Canta, 2017, p. 166), there were only thirty university

graduates in the country, who constituted the most enlightened faction of the new state which is characterised by its small number, its concentration in the capital, and the type of its activities: trade, farming, liberal professions (Fanon, 1961, p.146).

In this new independent parliamentary state, named the First Republic of Congo, the MNC, with Lumumba at its head, gained the national elections with 65% of seats in Parliament, leading the party's leader to become the first Prime Minister of the country (Brassinne de La Buissière & Dumont, 2010). Moreover, Kasavubu is named President of the Republic of Congo, and Mobutu, who will gain importance later on, will be assigned to the post of Chief of Staff with the rank of Colonel (Brassinne de La Buissière & Dumont, 2010). From that moment on, the country will suffer for a period of five years an internal political crisis, with two provinces who will declare secession, the US and the USSR apportioning material and financial support to enter into a civil war, a first coup d'état from Mobutu, the flight of the last Belgian citizens from the Republic and the intervention of Belgium to protect its people, and of the United Nations, through the Blue Helmets, to restore peace in the state (Bella-Canta, 2017, p. 21, p.30. p.160-162). Lumumba, after only 67 days as Prime Minister, got dismissed from his position and ended up being beaten and tortured in a public place in Léopoldville, and assassinated by Belgian officers (Bella-Canta, 2017, p. 31 and p.169-171).

1.6. The Dictatorship of Mobutu

After a succession of government for a few years, Mobutu orchestrated, on the 24th of November 1965, a second coup d'état and, with the consent of Western countries, overthrew President Kasavubu (Brassinne de La Buissière & Dumont, 2010). He proclaimed himself President, the liberator of the Black people, the Father of the Nation, and implemented an authoritarian and nationalist regime that lasted for thirty-two years, until 1997 (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.21 and p.176). On the other hand, as Fanon mentioned in his work (1961, p.97), the new country was in the hands of the new team, but in reality, everything has to be taken over and rethought. As a consequence, from 1971 on, Mobutu started to take a series of measures to detach the country from any Occidental influence, while keeping a close diplomatic relationship with the Western Bloc (Brassinne de La Buissière & Dumont, 2010). He ended up renaming the country the Zaïre Republic, as well as most cities, including Léopoldville, that became Kinshasa, and Stanleyville, that became Kisangani, and he obliged his citizen to

change name and adopt an African one, at the expense of their Western name (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.33, p.172 and p.191). Additionally, he implemented a new currency and a new constitution, voted in a referendum that was officially approved by 98% of the voters, as a part of his principal policy throughout his ruling: the Zaireanization, or nationalisation of the commercial property and real estate, of the country in 1974 (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.34 and p.185). In reality, while this measure was officially part of an effort to reclaim the national economy and redistribute the wealth, it was largely the biggest political failure the regime has lived (Chancellor Uronya Ngadjole, 2022).

At the political level, the dictatorship Mobutu implemented favoured the only a few people close to him who took advantage of the nationalisation of resources, and corruption became one of the main characteristics of the regime (Brassinne de La Buissonnière & Dumont, 2010). Furthermore, since the suppression of the Prime Minister function in 1966, he held a virtual monopoly of executive power, and controlled the legislative and judicial branches, so that the unitary and centralised state increasingly resembled that established under the Belgian Congo (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.183 and p.191). On the other hand, at the diplomatic level, considering the Cold War context, relations with Belgium were in a good place, as well as with the Western Bloc, as the Zaïre Republic constituted for the Western countries a form of anti-communist rampart in Africa (Bella-Canta, 2017, p. 34 and p.37). This neutralism, according to Fanon (1961, p.79), is a “creation of the Cold War that allowed underdeveloped countries to receive economic assistance from both sides, and did not enable to any of the parties to provide adequate assistance to underdeveloped regions”.

Furthermore, at the economic level, the country, who had be hugely impacted by the economic crisis of 1973, caused by the fall in copper prices and the rise in oil prices, suffered from an increase in corruption and inflation (Brassinne de La Buissonnière & Dumont, 2010). Mobutu worsen the situation by importing instead of modernizing the country’s agriculture that, given its climate, could easily support itself (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.35). As a consequence, meanwhile the country was, and still is, in natural resources such as copper, gold and diamonds, and that Mobutu amassed a fortune of 5 billion dollars, a huge portion of the population still lived in poverty (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.172). Moreover, the implementation of a “compulsory civilian service” in 1973 worsen their conditions of living, as it looked like the forced labour imposed by the colonial power (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.196), which is something that Fanon emphasized

(1961, p.116), as he stated that “paradoxically, the national government's behaviour towards the rural masses is reminiscent of colonial power in some respects”.

At the end of the Cold War, Mobutu lost most of his Western allies and both internal and external pressures regarding violations of human rights affected his regime (Brassinne de La Buisserie & Dumont, 2010). Consequently, Zaïre Republic's President announced, in his Democratization Speech of the 24th of April 1990, a series of reforms, including the implementation of multipartyism, the organization of national elections within two years and the creation of a new constitution (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.40 and p.197). Nonetheless, his international credibility improved with the Rwanda Genocide, when he accepted to welcome in Ituri around 1.5 million refugees who were fleeing the country (Chancellor Uronya Ngadjole, 2022). Moreover, in the context of the First Congo War, from 1996 to 1997, negotiations occurred between Mobutu and Kabila, the leader of the AFDL, in May 1997, but those did not conclude in an agreement for the President to stay in power (Bella-Canta, 2017, p. 200). Thus, on the 17th of May 1997, the AFDL, supported by Canada and the United States, among others, occupied Kinshasa, Laurent Désiré Kabila proclaimed himself president and the Zaïre Republic became the Democratic Republic of Congo (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.21, p.42 and p.200). However, this change of President did not improve the political conditions in DRC, as Kabila was as autocratic and corrupted as his predecessor (Brassinne de La Buisserie & Dumont, 2010). Thus, in 2001, the President was assassinated by one of his bodyguards and, since then, a democratic transition has been implemented, with free elections in 2006 and 2011 (Bella-Canta, 2017, p.21).

1.7. DRC's current situation

Finally, it seems of crucial importance to examine the situation in which DRC stands nowadays at the political, economic and social levels. Indeed, as the authorities have implemented a new Constitution in 2006 (Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements de la RDC, 2023), it is worth analysing the possible changes and impacts it caused in this past decade. Therefore, this part of the paper will be firstly dedicated to the study of DRC's political situation, using the Corruption Perception Index, elaborated by Transparency International, the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, and the Fragile State Index, conceived by the Fund for Peace. Then, an analysis of DRC's economy will be provided, using the country's GDP and

GNP, as well as the inflation rate. Finally, a focus on the social quality of living will be made, using the Human Development Index, and the GINI index. Moreover, it is important to state that there are a great amount of other essential indexes that need to be taken into account in getting the complete picture of a country's situation. Nevertheless, due to its limited scope, this paper will not examine all of them and will only focus on the previously mentioned indexes.

First of all, it is important to state that, in 2006, DRC has adopted a new Constitution that establishes the institutional provisions for the country to apply a functioning and independent Rule of Law in democratic administrations, as well as a series of articles dedicated to fundamental rights and freedoms that ensure the harmonious functioning of state institutions, counter any attempt at dictatorial drift, guarantee a good governance, fight against impunity and safeguard the democratic changeover (Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements de la RDC, 2023). Moreover, the Constitution also establishes that DRC is a unitary and decentralized republic with a semi-presidential regime (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021), which implies the existence of a President, which is the Head of State and the nation's representative, and of a Prime Minister, currently Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères de France, 2021), who is named by the President among the parliamentary majority and takes responsibility before the National Assembly, who can adopt a motion of censure if necessary (Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements de la RDC, 2023).

Furthermore, the President, which is, since 2019, Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021), is elected through universal suffrage for a five year period in order to ensure compliance with the Constitution and is the guarantor of national independence, territorial integrity, national sovereignty and respect for international treaties (Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements de la RDC, 2023). On the other hand, the Parliament is composed of two Chambers, the National Assembly and the Senate, and hold the important work of voting the laws and controlling the government (Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements de la RDC, 2023). Additionally, the Constitution also proclaims the independence of the judiciary, whose members are managed by the Superior Council of the Magistracy, composed of magistrates (Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements de la RDC, 2023).

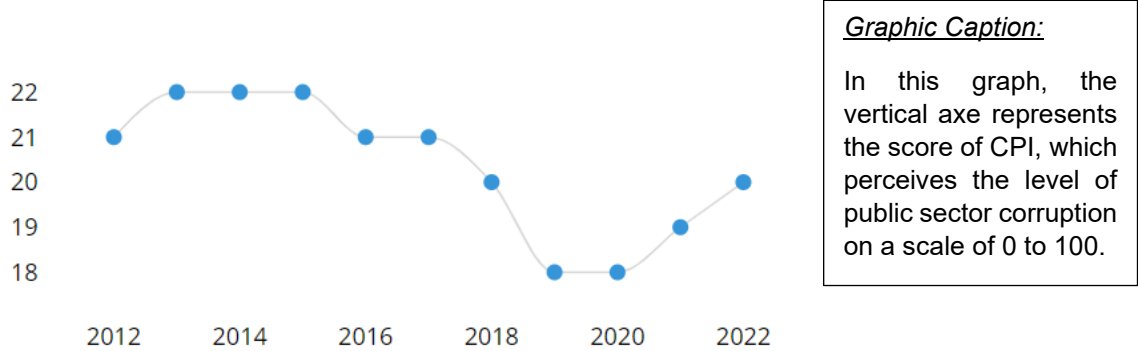
At the internal political level, it is worth mentioning that DRC has lived, in 2019, the first pacific transition of its history, when the current President has been elected through more democratic and universal elections (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021). Since then, a new social contract seems to be emerging between the state and its citizens, through the expansion of free primary education, increased transparency and public sector reforms, and a focus on conflict prevention and stabilisation in the East (Banque Mondiale, 2022). Indeed, the East region of DRC has been destabilised by the action of numerous armed groups, notably the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Islamist militiamen from Uganda, active in North Kivu and Ituri (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021). The activity of these groups, perpetrators of abuses and often involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources, is causing a serious humanitarian crisis, with more than 5 million internally displaced persons and 20 million people acutely food insecure (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021).

Moreover, at the regional and international political level, DRC belongs to the Economic Community of Central African States, to the Community for the Development of Austral Africa and to the African Union, for which the country assured the presidency in 2021 (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021). It is also worth highlighting the presence of the UN since 1999 through its mission named MONUSCO, who has deployed around 17000 workers, principally in the East region of DRC (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021). Furthermore, the European Union has underlined the initiatives taken by President Tshisekedi to respond to the will for change expressed by the Congolese people and has encourage the authorities to pursue their efforts in this regard (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021).

When analysing the country's political situation, the first noteworthy index is the CPI. With a score of 20/100 in 2022, improved by one point since 2021, the country has been ranked at the 166th position among 180 countries by Transparency International (2022). Nevertheless, what is very interesting to analyse in this case is the evolution of DRC's score over the past few years. As it can be seen in the Figure 1 below, since the pacific transition operated in 2019, the country is on an increasing path regarding the improvement of transparency and the end of corruption, although it is true that the numbers are still extremely low.

FIGURE 1 – EVOLUTION OF CPI OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS

Score changes 2012 - 2022



Transparency International. (2022). *Corruption Perception Index*. Transparency.org. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/cod>

Moreover, another important set of indexes is delivered by the World Bank in the form of the WPI (2022). It is first worth emphasizing of the general tendency of those indicators to be extremely low, which clearly highlights the political difficulty in which the authorities have to act nowadays. Nevertheless, it is also of crucial importance to underline the improvements in several indicators over the past five years, including “Voice and Accountability”, “Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism”, and the “Rule of Law”. Apart from those, the “Regulatory Quality” has been kept constant and the “Government Effectiveness” has been declining, which constitutes quite an important problem when highlighting its primary role in implementing changes in DRC.

FIGURE 2 – POLITICAL OVERVIEW THROUGH THE WORLDWIDE GOVERNANCE INDICATORS



World Bank. (2022). *WorldWide Governance Indicators*. WGI-Interactive Data Access. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports>

Focusing on the economic perspective, it is first of all essential to say that DRC is the biggest country in Africa, and possesses a great amount of natural resources, such as cobalt and copper, as well as a great hydroelectric potential, a huge biodiversity and the second biggest rainforest of the planet (Banque Mondiale, 2022). Nevertheless, the country is one of the five poorest nations in the world, with, in 2021, a GDP of 55,09 billion of dollars, a GDP per capita of 587,6 dollars and an inflation rate of 10,9 percent (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021). As a consequence, in 2021, around 64 percent of the state's population, representing 60 million people, were living with less than 2.15 dollars per day (Banque Mondiale, 2022). In this regard, it is of crucial importance to study the history of the country's economy, which has been greatly impacted by the economic crisis during the 1973-1988 period, with a growth of 0,03 percent and an inflation of 57,6 percent, but also by the political instability between

1989 and 2001 (Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements, 2019). Consequently, although it is true that, since the beginning of this century, the Congolese economy has gone through an economic recovery, due to the improvement of security conditions in DRC, the country still suffers tremendously from every economic and humanitarian crisis due to its huge dependency on raw materials and mining industries (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021). To fight this structural pitfall, the government has implemented a National Strategic Plan of Development in order to diversify the state's economy and avoid this very dangerous dependency to one specific sector (Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements, 2019).

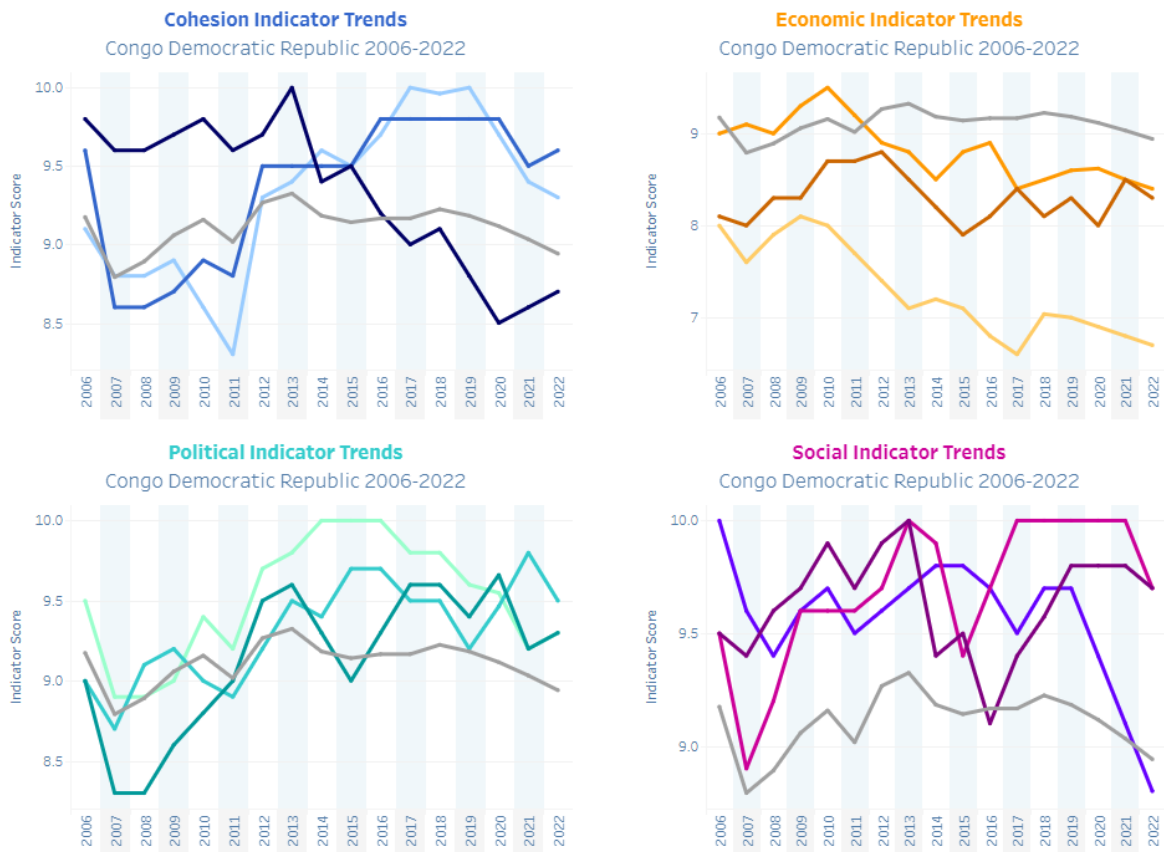
Nonetheless, the country, whose main clients are China, with 43 percent of its total exportations, Zambia, with 24 percent, South Korea, with 8 percent and Belgium, with 3,3 percent, and main suppliers are China, with 20 percent of its total importations, South Africa, with 18 percent, Zambia, with 11 percent, and Belgium with 6 percent (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021), has seen its economic growth increase from a 6,1 percent in 2021 (Banque Mondiale, 2022) to a 8,5 percent in 2022 (Ecofin, 2023). Indeed, this growth is due to a bigger mining production than expected (Ecofin, 2023), as well as to the increase in prices due to the War between Russia and Ukraine (Banque Mondiale, 2022). However, this price increase is also exercising a significant pressure to the country's inflation rate, so that it is important to keep in mind that the Congolese economy remains vulnerable to the prices fluctuations caused by geopolitical conflicts, pandemics, among others (Banque Mondiale, 2022).

Lastly, it is also worth examining the social quality of living in the country. In fact, with a population of 90,794 million people in 2021 (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021), it is of critical importance to analyse the social aspect in DRC. According to the World Bank (Banque Mondiale, 2022), the country was ranked 174th in 2023 for the HDI, with a score of 0,48 (WiseVoter, 2023). This is a consequence of decades of conflicts, of structural vulnerability, of almost non-existent development (Banque Mondiale, 2022), and of epidemic that touch frequently the country (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France, 2021). Moreover, as mentioned above, most of the country's population does not receive any of the profits made by selling raw materials and natural resources (Banque Mondiale, 2022).

As a consequence, the GINI Index of DRC is of 42,1 over 100, where the highest number corresponds to a greater level of inequalities (WiseVoter, 2023). Finally, although it has been improving over the last few years, with an increase from 52 percent to 78 percent between 2000 and 2017, the access to education also constitutes a significant issue for the state's population, as its quality is extremely low and the percentage of children who go through primary school is only of 67 percent (Banque Mondiale, 2022). Furthermore, only 16,8 percent of women finish secondary school, which cause a gap in income when working in the labour market (Banque Mondiale, 2022).

As a conclusion, it is possible to highlight that DRC's current situation, although in an improvement process, still constitutes a threat for its citizens and for the well-being of the country. The FSI, elaborated by Fund for Peace, constitutes a pertinent representation when overviewing a country situation. Before going deeper into the analysis of this Index, it is worth mentioning that FSI works with the lowest numbers being the best, and the highest one, close to 10, being characteristic of an extremely miserable situation in the country. Therefore, as you can see in Figure 3 below, the overall tendency is for DRC to be around 9 over 10, which is quite a dreadful situation. At the political level, the public services are extremely badly graded, with a 9,5, while state legitimacy and the respect for human rights are graded with a 9,3. Then, at the social level, both the tension caused by refugees and the democratic pressure are ranked with a 9,7, which also depict an alarming situation. Finally, the economic indicators are overall a little better, as the economy as a whole is graded with a 8,3 and the economic inequalities with a 8,4. Nevertheless, the country still suffers, in every aspect of its functioning, from a tremendous fragility.

FIGURE 3 - THE FRAGILE STATES INDEX BY FUND FOR PEACE



Fund for Peace. (2023). *Fragile State Index*. Fragile States Index.

Retrieved March 28, 2023, from <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>

Graphic Caption:

Average of all indicators

<p>Cohesion Indicator Trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fractionalized Elites Group Grievance Security Apparatus 	<p>Political Indicator Trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Services Human Rights State Legitimacy
<p>Economic Indicator Trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Inequality Economy Human Flight and Brain Drain 	<p>Social Indicator Trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees and IDPs Demographic Pressure External Intervention

Chapter 2 – Reparation Policies and the Current position of Belgian authorities toward DRC

Bearing in mind DRC's colonization, decolonization and current situation, it is now worth analysing the concept of reparation policy and its differences with a recognition policy in order to be able to examine the possibility of its application later on. Therefore, this chapter will focus on defining a reparation policy, in comparison with a recognition policy. Then, a practical study of the reparation policies implemented by Germany toward Namibia will be conducted with the main aim of identifying a possible pattern in its exertion. Finally, an investigation will be operated regarding the current state of negotiations among Belgian authorities and between them and DRC's representatives. This study will have as main objective to determine the possibility of following Germany's pattern in implementing reparation policies toward its ex-colony.

2.1. Definitions: Recognition Policy and Reparation Policy

Over the past decade, reparations policies have been increasingly considered as a way of obtaining compensations for the damages done and the violations of human rights perpetuated during the colonization times. Indeed, reparations policies have been seen as a bridge between law and justice, or a way of surmounting the limitations of Colonizer's laws and its failures to consider and respond to the need for justice of the Colonized (Cunneen, 2005). Nevertheless, it is of crucial importance to state that reparation policies constitute a much broader concept than a simple financial compensation (Cunneen, 2005). Indeed, according to Van Boven (cited in Cunneen, 2005), reparation policies encompass five components that are needed for the good application of this arrangement. The first aspect worth mentioning is the necessity of acknowledgment and apologies, or, in other words, the need to settle the truth about colonial history, through testimonies or commemoration of the events, and to ask for forgiveness for the violations of human rights committed in colonial territory (Cunneen, 2005). In this regard, it is also essential to provide a guarantee against repetition (Cunneen, 2005), which includes the perpetuation of neo-colonial discriminations at the economic level. Then, measures of restitution of the stolen cultural patrimony as well as of rehabilitation through mental health care, for example, also constitutes two crucial steps in the implementation of those policies (Cunneen, 2005). Finally, although the loss, grief and trauma cannot be entirely compensated, financial compensation

must be provided to the victims and/or their descendants as a recognition of the responsibility of the harm caused (Cunneen, 2005).

On the other hand, it is worth stating, as it may have been understood from the definition above, that reparation policies cannot be implemented without recognition policies, and that for recognition policies to be effective and reach its objective of recognizing the horrors committed, reparation policies are fundamental (Cunneen, 2005). According to Balaton-Chrimes and Stead (2017), discussion about the implementation of recognition policies have been present in the international arena for a few decades, since the publication of “The Politics of Recognition” from Charles Taylor in 1994 and Honneth’s book on “The Struggle for Recognition”, in 1996. It has been described as a mean to acknowledge social struggles and introduce a political project of reconciliation, multiculturalism and development (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017). In defining a recognition policy through the postcolonial perspective, scholars question the fact that recognition policies actually augment freedom, both for humans and collective minorities (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017). Meanwhile freedom for colonized peoples is not possible without a recognition of their colonial past, and is therefore an instrument for individual and collective freedom and a necessary condition of equality and justice, they state that those recognition policies actually do not improve freedom, but diminish it (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017). Indeed, they argue that applying recognition policies would reduce opportunities of self-realisation, which, in turn, would lessen their freedom (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017).

One the other hand, it is also of crucial importance to state that, according to Markell (cited in Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017), recognition policies can strengthen and pursue the hierarchical international system, especially when ex-colonizer states constitute the recognising agent. Indeed, they examine a branch that has not been deeply studied when stating that “struggles over recognition are not conflicts between “diversity” and “equality” but among groups with tremendous inequalities in power and resources (James Tully, cited in Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017). As a consequence, when not considering these relations of power and domination, recognition policies do not succeed in alleviating inequalities (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017). This can be related to the concept of coloniality of power, which states that race is the most basic criterion for the classification of peoples, and that the hierarchies created on this basis

serve only the interests of western capitalism through the fortification of unjust division of labour for people of colours (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017).

As a consequence, many scholars, including Simpson, Coulthard (cited in Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017), reject the idea that recognition policies can provide equality and self-realisation of indigenous people and ameliorate colonialism's negative effects, mostly because of relations and structures of power in the international arena. Nevertheless, establishing reparation policies, together with recognition policies, as both are indissociable, on an equal level between the ex-colonizers and the ex-colonized, can be an extremely useful resource to reconcile people and to start over on equal basis (Cunneen, 2005). This must be implemented with a non-judgement of the past by the standards of today, and should not accuse the current government for the past mistakes (Cunneen, 2005). Rather, it should be conducted by taking into consideration both negative and positive outcomes of the colonial and postcolonial processes (Cunneen, 2005).

2.2. Analysis of the reparation policies implemented by Germany in Namibia.

As Germany was the first ex-colonizer country to recognize and implement reparation policies, this case seems to be worth mentioning. Indeed, in 1884, Germany installed itself in Namibia, which was at that time called the South-West Africa (Bruendel, 2016; Copper, 2006; Fontenaille - N'Diaye, 2015). This enormous territory was inhabited by different ethnic groups, including the Herero and the Namas, who suffered what is considered nowadays as the first genocide of the twentieth century (Copper, 2006). Thus, from 1884 to 1919, when the Versailles Treaty withdrew all German's colonies from its possession, a number of more or less violent but influent people governed the area in the name of the Chancellor Bismack (Bruendel, 2016; Copper, 2006; Fontenaille - N'Diaye, 2015). Indeed, from Heinrich Göring, who obtained the protectorate agreement from the Herero, to Curt von François and Theodor Leutwein, who tried to negotiate violently with the different ethnic groups to counter the rebellion, the General von Trotha, who ordered the execution of all Herero, and Freidrich von Lindequist, the incarceration of the Namas in the first draft of what will later on be the model used for the concentration camps during the second World War, the colonization period was marked by a series of violent decisions and actions that led the colony to lost almost all its indigenous population by the end of 1907 (Fontenaille - N'Diaye,

2015). Moreover, from 1904 to 1908, the atrocities perpetuated against the Herero and Namas constituted what can today be called a genocide, as almost three quarters of both ethnic groups' population were decimated (Bruendel, 2016).

It is worth underlining that the Herero and Namas' genocide share a quantity of similarities with the Holocaust during the Second World War. From planned and systematised extermination to forced labour and the presence of concentration camps, both ethnic groups' genocide constitute essential historical events to be remembered (Bruendel, 2016). Nevertheless, the main difference between the two is that the memory of the Holocaust is easier to assume at the historic responsibility level, as it is considered as a one time and uncommon mistake that do not put in question the nature of the German nation (Bourbeau, 2016). As a consequence, Germany has accepted to implement both recognition and reparation policies toward the State of Israel, meanwhile is has occulted the Herero and Namas' genocide for decades (Bourbeau, 2016; Copper, 2006). This amnesia can be justified by two factors. The first one is the official historical discourse, who minimizes Germany's implication in the colonial process, as it only went on for less than half a century, although it constituted the fourth biggest colonizer in terms of territory (Bourbeau, 2016). Thus, the general conception of Germany as a colonial power it that it did not actually constitute an expansionist state due to its briefness (Bourbeau, 2016). Additionally, the second factor is, as already mentioned above, the possible connections that can be established between this genocide and the Holocaust (Bourbeau, 2016). On the other hand, it is also of crucial importance to state that the Namibian government has not been inclined to fight for recognition and reparation policies from Germany, as the country is extremely divided in ethnic groups and, consequently, did not constitute an important subject to most of the authorities (Bourbeau, 2016). Therefore, until the 2000s, genocide's memory only subsisted in Herero's tradition and identity (Bourbeau, 2016).

Nowadays, it is worth saying that, although Namibia does not have any political relevancy for Germany, the latter maintains special diplomatic relations with its ex-colony, especially regarding cooperation for development (Bruendel, 2016). Indeed, in order to defuse the compensation question, Germany granted a development aid with the consequent budget of 800 million euros between 1990 and 2015 (Bruendel, 2016). Nonetheless, the German authorities did not mention the country's colonial past until the centenary of the massacre in 2004, when the Minister of Economic Cooperation,

Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul travelled to Namibia and apologised, in her name only, as official apologies would have led to compensation claims (Bruendel, 2016; Fontenaille - N'Diaye, 2015, p.181 and 192). Moreover, in 2007, descendants of the von Trotha family asked for forgiveness in the name of their ancestor (Fontenaille - N'Diaye, 2015, p.182) and, from 2011 onwards, Germany started returning skulls of genocide victims that had been taken to the European country for analysis and study (Bourbeau, 2016). In 2015, the logical next step constituted for Germany to qualify the atrocities committed against the Herero and Namas as a genocide, taking as a comparison the Armenian genocide from the Turks (Bourbeau, 2016). This recognition policy implied the start of negotiations for the implementation of reparation policy outside of the international judicial system, as the crimes that occurred before genocide was enacted cannot be judged as such (Bourbeau, 2016; Copper, 2006).

Therefore, Ruprecht Polenz and Zed Ngavirue started a negotiation process in September 2015, involving the Hereros and Namas, for Germany to establish a sort of “mini-Marshall Plan” to bring development aid to the impacted ethnic groups (Bourbeau, 2016; Copper, 2006; Ministère Fédéral des Affaires Étrangères d’Allemagne, 2018; Wieder, 2021). Finally, in 2021, after five years of intense negotiations, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas, has recognized the genocide and asked, in the name of Germany, for forgiveness (Wieder, 2021). In this regard, a reparation policy has been implemented including, among other things, the establishment of a development aid program of 1.1 billion euros to be distributed in a period of thirty years for the financing of infrastructures, health care system, and education in the impacted communities (Wieder, 2021).

2.3. Current situation of recognition and reparation policies in Belgium.

Considering Germany as an established example of the application of reparation policies, it is now essential to put the focus on the analysis of the current situation of Belgium in this regard, which is surprisingly well advanced. Indeed, many efforts have been made to start the recognition and reparation processes, including a renovation of the Royal Museum of Central Africa of Tervuren in order to put the focus on a postcolonial vision (Pungu, 2014), as well as the elaboration of decolonial guided visits of Belgian public places by the Colonial Memory Collective to alleviate colonial negation from the Belgian population (Njall Soiresse, 2017). Moreover, following the

“Black Lives Matter” mobilisation in spring 2020, Belgian universities have decided to undertake an academic decolonisation and to elaborate new teaching policies to facilitate the recognition of the country’s past and to nullify the current omerta in this regard (Declercq, 2021). The King of Belgians has also been acting in this sense, by visiting DRC for the first time in his twelve years of ruling with the main aim of expressing regrets for the crimes committed by his ancestor and to strengthen the relations between the two countries (Lungumbu, 2022). Meanwhile some question the utility of such visit to DRC and criticize the lack of apologies from the King, others hope that it will constitute the first step on the on the path to reconciliation (Lungumbu, 2022).

On the other hand, it is of crucial importance to examine the role of the Federal Parliament, as, it has established in June 2020 a Special Commission for the Colonial Past in Congo, conformed by independent experts whose objective was to highlight the historical facts that occurred both in the ISC and in the Belgian Congo and to redact reparation policies to be voted by the Parliament (Braeckman, 2021). On the basis of reports from experts, numerous auditions, meetings and written contributions, 128 recommendations have been formulated for all Belgian authorities by Wouter De Vriendt, the President of the Commission. The first part of this document aims at reinforcing the existence of academic research and university teachings to fill the enormous information gap in colonial historiography (De Vriendt, 2022). Then, it also emphasizes on the importance to facilitate economic cooperation between Belgium and DRC, by improving the educational system in the African state, by facilitating the access to scholarships between the two countries and by providing DRC educational institutions with an easy and complete access to all information Belgian universities have in their possession in this regard. Moreover, another important aspect is the access to archives. In this regard, the Special Commission advises all Belgian institutions to improve and digitalize their archives, from the Defence, to the Church, the Kingdom’s archives, the Royal Palace, the Ministries’ archives and companies and private records. Finally, this part ends with the presentation of recommendations regarding the help and national recognition that need to be provided to Métis people who were victims of segregation, as well as regarding the recognition of Belgium’s implication in Lumumba’s assassination and the establishment of a proper compensation for the Congolese soldiers who fought during the First and Second

World War, through the creation of commemorative places and expositions, among others (De Vriendt, 2022).

The second part is certainly the most interesting one, as it develops the recommendations necessary to implement recognition and reparation policies. Although it is clearly mentioned in the document that the outcome of this reparation process may still be some way off, it must be carried out in consultation with DRC and its citizens (De Vriendt, 2022). As its recognition policies constitute the first step in implementing reparation policies, the Special Commission recognizes the many harms that have been done to the Congolese people that still have repercussions in today's society, "condemns the colonial regime as a system based on exploitation and domination, which was based on an unjustifiable relationship of inequality characterised by paternalism, discrimination and racism and which gave rise to crimes and humiliations" and "apologises to the Congolese people for the colonial domination and exploitation, the violence and atrocities, the individual and collective human rights violations during this period, and the racism and discrimination that accompanied them" (De Vriendt, 2022). It also plans to foster the cooperation for development directed essentially to the populations, and recommend to institute a national day of commemoration of the colonial past to raise awareness among Belgians (De Vriendt, 2022). Nevertheless, it is specified that this recognition does not imply legal responsibilities.

Finally, the recommendation document underlines the importance of returning all the goods that were stolen during the colonial times and for the authorities to invest in sustainable relations between DRC and Belgium, based on equality, dialogue and mutual respect in the international arena (De Vriendt, 2022). Nonetheless, although 120 recommendations made consensus among the Belgian political parties, the document elaborated by De Vriendt did not reach the presentation phase in front of the Parliament, due to the lack of consensus on those eight other points among the socialists and ecologists on the one side, and the liberals on the other (Demeestere, 2022). While the socialists and ecologists blame the liberals to have sabotaged the Commission's work out of colonial dogmatism, the latter rejected firmly to apologize according to what was established in the recommendation 69, as it would create two opposed groups with the victims on the one side and the guilty on the other (Demeestere, 2022). Indeed, the Belgian caricatural collective imaginary considers the

colonial period as flourishing for DRC and associates the state's economic, social and political difficulties to the postcolonial period, where there were only chaos and failure (Tshitungu-Kongolo, 2020). Therefore, from the conservative point of view, who has lacked reassessment of this erroneous perspective, the Commission should have stuck to the king's words, who recognized the atrocities without implying any judicial responsibility and reparation policies (Demeestere, 2022). However, as Mauzé (2018) states, looking away will not heal the wounds of history and, according to him, it is essential to break with old subordinate relationships through a common narrative that would integrate a critical analysis of Congo's colonisation (Mauzé, 2018).

Chapter 3 – Analysis of the potential impact of reparation policies on the development of DRC:

Considering all the information developed above, it is now worth examining the potential impacts that reparation policies would have on the development of DRC. As there is almost no literature in this regard, this section will be based on the 128 recommendations proposed by Wouter De Vriendt (2022) and the impacts that those would have had on DRC's development, although they haven't been passed by the Parliament. Nevertheless, before going deeper into the subject, it is important to state that, according to Evans-Pritchard and Gouby (2012), a huge difference exists between the reparation policies ordered by a tribunal or voted by a Parliament and the development aid, as the reparations have as main objective to bring recognition and support to the victims, while development aid is a continuous process to help communities improve their living conditions. Indeed, as they state, "Victims need reparation for the crimes they suffered, but they also need development assistance as citizens of Congo. However, there is a risk that reparations would substitute for development aid that people would normally expect anyway" (Evans-Pritchard & Gouby, 2012). Therefore, this difference must be limpid in the establishment of reparation policies, in order not to suppress the development aid provided to the country (Evans-Pritchard & Gouby, 2012).

Bearing this in mind, the first important impact of reparation policies is the improvement of the educational system. As a matter of fact, the recommendations would have set out a program for the academic research to focus on filling out the gap in the colonial and postcolonial history to understand the role of different entities in the atrocities committed, in order later on to provide the results found to the large public, both in Belgium and in DRC (De Vriendt, 2022). Moreover, it would have sought to improve the internet infrastructures with the aim of implementing a database to share academic research as well as archives among the two countries. This database would have been part of a broader structural collaboration to promote multidisciplinary work on issues related to colonisation between the two countries' universities, that would also have included the reinforcement of the university scholarship policy and the facilitation of visas granting for researchers. Finally, the recommendations would also have permitted the inclusion of colonialism and slavery in the Belgian educational curriculum, as well as the creation of a common manual for teaching the colonial history

to primary and secondary school students. All of these policies would have been beneficial for DRC, it would have risen awareness among the Belgians and allowed for a dialogue and a recognition for their part towards DRC as victims of colonization. Furthermore, it would have enriched the Congolese academic field and permit the elaboration of far-reaching works.

Secondly, those recommendations would have had a tremendously positive impact the diminution of discrimination of Congolese people in Belgium, due to the recognition of the segregation and discrimination that they suffered and the implementation of inclusive policies in the labour market, among other factors. Additionally, the implementation of a National Action Plan against racism would have allowed them to be included properly in the community. While this does not have a direct impact on DRC, its population, as well as populations from all other countries, would have benefited from it, as it has been proven that racism in constitute a systematic barrier in people's self-development. On the other hand, according to the official position of Uronya Ngadjole (2022), the establishment of reparation policies would have allowed the cooperation among institutions for the development of useful competencies to manage the country's internal and external affairs correctly. Nevertheless, as he highlights, this cooperation must be carried out together as equals, avoiding any form of paternalism in the approach (Uronya Ngadjole, 2022).

Finally, those policies would have fostered the development aid from Belgium in DRC, in order to improve, among other aspects, the country's infrastructures and people's condition of living (De Vriendt, 2022). It would also have had an impact of economic cooperation among the former colony and colonizer, forecasting investments of Belgian citizens and enterprises while condemning the commercial exploitation of resources, especially in the mining sector, which would lead to an increase of DRC profits. This, in turn, would resonate in the international arena, allowing DRC to be considered as an economic partner in equality of conditions with other states and improving its state of "neo-colonized" country.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this paper, the main objective was to accept or refuse the following hypothesis: “reparation policies implemented by Belgium will have a positive impact on DRC’s development and position in the international arena”. To do so, the analysis first focused on the history of DRC colonization and decolonization processes. From this part of the paper, it can be emphasized is that both King Leopold II and Belgium, from the very beginning of their actions as a colonial power, have put obstacles in DRC’s way in organizing itself as a sovereign country, in function of the European country own interests. In this sense, a denial regarding the atrocities that occurred in DRC has been legion among Belgians authorities and citizens, who in turn considered the colonial period as a prosper time for the ex-colony, meanwhile the postcolonial period has been constituting of a chaos due to the inability of Congolese authority to rule over their own country.

This caricatural perspective, which has spread among Western powers, has hugely impacted DRC that has been, over the past fifteen years, trying to bounce back in spite of its systematic conflict in the Kivu region, among others. In this regard, a new constitution has been implemented in 2006 with the aim of reshaping Congolese institutions by exercising a better rule of law, diminishing corruption and forecasting the separation and independence between the executive, legislative and judicial institutions. Nonetheless, as it has been underlined by the different indexes used in this paper, the state’s current situation remains critical, and a lot of improvements need to be conducted in order for the country’s stability to be effective.

Then, after having analysed the definitions of both reparation and recognition policies, and after having examined the situation of Germany, which has, after more than six years of negotiations, implemented reparation policies toward Namibia and recognized the genocide and atrocities that the authorities committed at the time toward the Herero and Namas ethnic groups, a study of the current state of the process of voting reparations policies in Belgium has been conducted. Although it has been noted that both Congolese and Belgian memories regarding the colonial times constitute deforming mirrors of a more complex reality, as Tshitungu Kongolo states (2020), positive improvements from the Belgian authorities’ side could be noted. Moreover, it is clear that, from DRC’s perspective regarding development and its position in the international arena, the implementation of reparation policies, including recognition

policies, constitute a greatly positive aspect in placing the state as an equal to its former colonizer and changing the world's perspective on this currently considered neo-colonial state. Nevertheless, due to a clear lack of political will from Belgian authorities, and especially the liberals, and the reluctance in this official discourse of DRC, embodied by Uronya Ngadjole (2022), it seems evident to state that there is still a great deal to be done in order to reach the voting of reparation policies. In this regard, the discourse of DRC's authorities represents an essential aspect in implementing those policies because, as Fanon (1961, p.100) states,

“we will not accept that aid to underdeveloped countries constitute a ‘charity sister programme’. This aid must be the consecration of a double awareness, both by the colonized that is to them and by the capitalist powers that they must pay. If, out of unintelligence, the capitalist countries refused to pay, then the implacable dialectic of their own system would take care of suffocating them.”.

Therefore, coming back to the hypothesis of study, and considering all what has been mentioned previously, it can be accepted. Nonetheless, some reservations must be made, as it will not constitute a reality unless both countries' authorities consider these reparation policies as an essential step to move forward in the colonial and postcolonial history. Indeed, without political will from both sides, as well as without willpower from institutions and medias, it will not be possible to progress in the way of a country and society's decolonisation (Njall Soiresse, 2017). To conclude, as this work has been realized as a contribution to the broad topic that is the implementation of reparation policies to counter the neo-colonial system in place in the international arena, it seems of essential importance to analyse the impact of the implementation of reparation policies on both the ex-colonising and the ex-colonised states, in order to construct a bigger picture composed of different perspectives of international relations. Furthermore, examining this topic through other academic disciplines constitutes an important factor of understanding of this issue. Thus, this work, which is an original analysis of the topic at hand, would need to be further studied in future academic papers, such as a Master Thesis or a PhD Thesis.

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6. ANNEXES

6.1. Annex I

Interview with Roger-Archange Uronya Ngadjole, Chancellor at the Democratic Republic of Congo's Embassy, conducted on the 22nd of December 2022.

The first part of this interview focuses on the postcolonial influence of Belgium in DRC.

Question 1: Does the Belgian colonisation still constitute a burden on the country's political institutions? If so, why? If not, when do you estimate this burden was allayed?

In 1956, when the Van Bilsen Plan was introduced, which was a thirty year plan for the emancipation of the "Belgian Africa", Belgium was not prepared to authorize the DRC's independence, and was obliged to do so. What was very complicated for the European country was to leave behind the economic benefits provided by the DRC. Therefore, even after DRC's decolonization, Belgium continued to influence the mining unions.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to highlight that, in every phase of Congo's political history, there have been both ups and downs, including during the Belgian dictatorship. Indeed, when Belgians left the country, they had developed a series of infrastructures, which constituted a good thing. Indeed, when the country got its independence, it was among the advanced countries of Africa (in terms of education with universities, health care centres, etc.). Nevertheless, there were no structure or diligent political class to take over, as no one was actually formed to handle the country's public life. As a consequence, the authorities could not maintain and develop the already existing infrastructures.

In the years between 1960 and 1964, the country is suffering from political destabilization and rebellions. The confusion is enormous. This will lead Mobutu, a Congolese military, to take over on the 24th of November 1965. In this coup d'état, Belgium's responsibility is clear, as the country had been at the origin of tensions, executions and killings that lead the country to be in this political instability. Consequently, litigations appeared between the two nations, as the Congolese evaluated that financial reclamations could be made toward the Belgian occupying properties. In the following years, two other main crises occurred under President Kabila, and the unfreeze of diplomatic relations only occurred with Sassou-Nguesso,

the current President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Moreover, it is important to note that, during the 1990s, under the Republic of Zaire, Belgium stopped the implemented structural cooperation because of the killings at the University of Lubumbashi.

Moving back to current time, in the mid of December 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed a cooperation agreement for 2023 – 2027. The main Congolese reclamations include a structural cooperation to help develop political institutions. Nonetheless, the “Special Commission of the Colonial Past” concluded by a big failure, as the liberals refused to vote a report including this type of “excuses”.

Question 2: Does a postcolonial influence still exists at the political, economic, and social levels?

Yes, there is still an economic influence from Belgian authorities in Congo.

It is important to say, nonetheless, that during Mobutu’s ruling and the Zaireanization of 1973 – 1974, due to the nationalisation of enterprises in the country, there were not that much Belgian companies in DRC’s territory. Moreover, no economic aid was provided, but a cooperation to development in some sectors.

Nowadays, in practice, 250 million were given during five years, for an amount of 50 million per year. This budget had to be allocated to the formation to entrepreneurship and employment, to the development of a conscience of culture for the youth, to basic education, to social protection for health care, to sustainable agriculture and dietary security, and to fight against gender-based violence and impunity. Finally, it is important to say that the budget has increased over the years, as a few decades ago, it was clearly not that high.

Question 3: Decades later, is the population still affected by the atrocities committed during the Belgian colonisation in DRC? How does the population see this very dark period of its history?

The Democratic Republic of Congo has suffered tragedies for a long time now. With around 10 million of death, a rebellion that lasted four years right after the independence, the establishment of the MONUK program by the UN, the political instability that has taken roots in the institutions, etc., the country has not been in good

circumstances to take off economically, politically, socially and on the international arena.

Furthermore, it is worth saying that, in 1994, Congo was the only country to welcome refugees that were running from the genocide in Rwanda, as every other country in the region had refused to welcome them. Today, the country is footing the bill for it, as between 1996 and 2022, there were about 7 million deaths in the country, a huge number of internal migration, the creation of around a hundred of armed groups, including M23, which is supported by Rwanda and has caused many atrocities, etc.

Nevertheless, one of the main problems nowadays in Congo is the management of coltan, as foreign countries come, exploit the region's soil and end up selling the coltan as if it were its, even though it is the property of Congo.

Therefore, in order to move forward in a positive direction, DRC needs to take charge of itself in order to avoid impunity, corruption, as well as to implement good governance practices. It is a matter of responsibility, as after sixty years, things cannot stay that way.

Question 4: What has been the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement in DRC?

The movement did not have a particular changing effect in DRC. It was only another realization to conscientize a bit more the masses. Indeed, the statutes had already been removed in DRC. This represents a day-to-day fight in the country, and, therefore, this movement did not have much revolutionary effect. The people did not need to wait for this movement to make revendications.

Nevertheless, nowadays, the headquarters of the African Union was built by China. No African country took the initiative to build it sooner. This is unacceptable and shows the need for every African country to implement good governance practices and to take responsibility for their own future, because the means and resources are already there.

It is a certainty that Africa is going to be the next continent on top of all else. The tendency of developed countries to set prices for buying in developing countries has been changed by the creation of the OPEP. Occident is looking for its own interests, so Africa must do the same. And first of all, the different countries must focus on the

economies, which have been destroyed by the nationalization of big companies with people with no formation in charge.

The second part of this interview focuses on the Recognition policies implemented by Germany towards Namibia:

Question 1: Does the public institutions and the population need recognition for what happened during the Belgian colonisation? Is there a need among citizens for the crimes committed by Belgium (genocide, crime against humanity, etc.) to be recognized in the international arena?

The king of Belgian citizens has already expressed his regrets both in Belgium and in Congo. In the “Special Commission for the Colonial Past”, some consider that it is enough, as the country has recognized, through the King, having played a role in slavery.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to see what the actual results of this Commission are, in order to see what Belgium is actually recognizing.

Question 1.1 and Question 1.2: If so, do you think the recognition could put an end to the economic and political dependency that DRC suffers from nowadays? If not, why is the need of being recognized as a victim not necessary for your country?

Yes and no. DRC needs to take this matter into its own hands and implement good governance policies internally. But, on the other hand, sending some experts to teach the authorities to conduct themselves with transparency and responsibility could be needed.

Question 2: Do you think a development plan, as the one elaborated by Germany toward Namibia, could be an appreciable and necessary help in DRC, especially regarding the access to education, the improvement of women’s rights, the improvement of infrastructures, etc.?

It is not an obligation. If Belgium considered that it can accompany DRC in a partnership between equals, it can be helpful. But it is clearly not an obligation.