University of Antwerp

Faculty of Social Sciences,

University of Antwerp

Empire in Disgrace

(Post-)Imperial Belgium and the Politics of Shame

Dissertation

PhD thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor in the Social Sciences: Political Science at the University of Antwerp to be defended by:

Zeger Verleye

Supervisor:

Jorg Kustermans

Antwerp, 2024

ABSTRACT

This PhD thesis aims to gain insight into how the politics of shame manifest itself on the state level. A wide range of observers note the presence of shame in contemporary world politics but International Relations (IR) literature has generally refrained from theorizing on this emotion. However, recent contributions that surround the notion of ontological security have engaged with the term 'state shame'. The current dissertation presents several critiques on how this concept has been conceived in this literature and argues for a more grounded notion based on works in feminist studies, the sociology of emotions, and political theory. Rather than an 'inability to narrate the state's sense of Self', state shame is conceived in this dissertation as a narrative on the negative assessment of the state. This understanding informs a comprehensive typology that can intelligibly capture the elaborate and diverse politics of shame on the state level. The novel conceptualisation of state shame-as-a-narrative is grounded in a historical case study of Belgium and its (post-)imperial past. Three specific moments in this history are studied using both structural narrative analysis and interpretative sentiment analysis of parliamentary records, namely the Red Rubber scandal (1903-1908), Congolese independence (1959-1960), and the Lumumba Commission (1999-2002). The novel conception of state shame was able to bring insight into the particular dynamics of these episodes and make original contributions to the historiography of the Belgian empire. In effect, the dissertation concludes that state shame-as-a-narrative has analytical potential for both the discipline of IR and beyond.

De doctoraatsthesis heeft als doel om inzicht te verkrijgen in hoe de politiek van schaamte zich manifesteert op het niveau van de staat. Academici en waarnemers hebben vastgesteld dat schaamte een nadrukkelijke aanwezigheid heeft in hedendaagse politiek. In de studie van Internationale Betrekkingen ontbreekt echter een theoretisch engagement met de emotie. Deze lacune werd recent bijgewerkt door bijdragen rond het concept ontologische veiligheid, die de term 'staatsschaamte' hanteren om een bepaald sociaal mechanisme te benoemen. De thesis bekritiseert dit begrip en beargumenteert een meer gegronde notie op basis van werken in feminisme, sociologie van emotie en politieke theorie. In tegenstelling tot het 'onvermogen om het Zelf van de staat te behouden', maakt deze dissertatie het argument om staatsschaamte te beschouwen als een narratief over de negatieve beoordeling van de staat. Met dit nieuwe begrip wordt een comprehensieve typologie geconstrueerd die op een begrijpbare wijze de complexe en diverse politiek van schaamte op het niveau van de staat kan vatten. Dit theoretische kader wordt empirisch gegrond in een historische analyse van het Belgische (post-)imperiale verleden. Drie specifieke momenten in dit verleden worden bestudeerd aan de hand van een structurele narratieve analyse en interpretatieve sentiment analyse van parlementaire handelingen, namelijk het Rood Rubber schandaal (1903-1908), Congolese onafhankelijkheid (1959-1960) en de Lumumba commissie (1999-2002). De conceptualisering en theorisering van staatschaamte gaf inzicht in de specifieke dynamieken van deze momenten en zorgde voor originele bijdragen tot de historiografie van het Belgische imperium. Zodoende concludeert de dissertatie dat staatsschaamte, begrepen als een narratief over een negatieve beoordeling van de staat, analytische potentieel heeft voor zowel de discipline van Internationale Betrekkingen als daarbuiten.

MEMBERS OF THE DOCTORAL COMMITTEE

Prof. dr. Gert Verschraegen (University of Antwerp)

Prof. dr. Maarten Van Ginderachter (University of Antwerp)

Prof. dr. Ayşe Zarakol (University of Cambridge)

MEMBERS OF THE DOCTORAL JURY

Prof. dr. Julia Costa López (University of Groningen)

Prof. dr. Brent J. Steele (University of Utah)

Prof. Dr. Katrien Schaubroeck (University of Antwerp)

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABAKO	*Alliances des Bakongo* / Congolese Nationalist and centre-right party
BSP-PSB	*Belgische Socialistische Partij – Parti Socialiste belge* / Belgian Socialist party
CD&V	*Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams, Christian democratic and Flemish* / Flemish Christian democratic party
CDH	*Centre Démocrate Humaniste* / Francophone Christian democratic party
CFS	Congo Free State
CRA	Congo Reform Association
CVP-PSC	*Christelijke Volkspartij – Parti Social-Chrétien* / Belgian Christian democratic party
EU	European Union
KP	*Katholieke Partij* / Catholic party
KPB-PCB	*Kommunistische Partij van België – Parti Communiste de Belgique* / Belgian Communist party
LP	*Liberale Partij* / Liberal party
MNC	*Mouvement national Congolais* / Congolese Nationalist and pan-African party
MR	*Mouvement Réformateur* / Francophone Liberal party
Open VLD	*Open Vlaamse Liberaal en Democraten* / Flemish Liberal party
PS	*Parti Socialiste* / Francophone Socialist party
SP	*Socialistische Partij* / Flemish Socialist party
SP.A	*Socialistische Partij Anders* / Flemish Socialist party
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VB	*Vlaams Blok* / Far-right Flemish Nationalist party
VU	*Volksunie* / Flemish Nationalist party

The truth is that any attempt to reconstitute the emotional life of a given period is a task that is at one and the same time extremely attractive and frightfully difficult. But so what?

- Lucien Febvre 1973, 19

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I started this manuscript with the expectation that scientific work happens in isolation. You seclude yourself physically, socially, and emotionally to come to some novel insight or discover a deep truth about the world. Only in this state of isolation, I thought, can a researcher find the focus that is necessary to come to a place of intellectual inspiration, a systematic analysis of data, and rigorous results that inform profound conclusions. It took me a while to realise that this blissful state would never come. During the six years that I have worked on this text, I came to understand that academic research does not live on this exalted plane where researchers float around in their mental castles. The key contributions and insights of this manuscript have all sprouted from interactions with people, whether in the form of commission meetings, international workshops, inspired conversations with friends, contentious personal conflicts, or chance encounters. For this reason, I want to acknowledge the central role that others have had in supporting or inspiring me in this intellectual pursuit. While all the mistakes are to be attributed to myself, the potential soundness of the argument could not have been reached without the help, support, and kindness of a lot of people that have surrounded me throughout this process.

First and foremost, I want to thank my promotor, Jorg Kustermans. I know that he laments the informalisation of academia, so I will keep the emotionality of this expression of gratitude to a minimum. That being said, without Jorg, I would probably still have been a bored teacher who fantasizes about doing a PhD someday. Thank you, Jorg, for saving me from that dull fate and thank you for all your support, inspiring talks, and nonchalant banter. I also had the great fortune of having a PhD commission that consisted of three scholars who perfectly complimented each other in their approach to my work. Gert Verschraegen pointed to my theoretical and conceptual mistakes and challenged me to read and include more sociological works. Maarten Van Ginderachter informed me of my historical errors and pushed me to maintain a high level of nuance and detail in the empirical chapters. Ayşe Zarakol made me think about the international dimensions of the case and inspired me to work with IR theory more profoundly. I want to thank you all for your support and dedicated comments throughout these six years. I am certain

that, without your diligence and commitment, the contribution of this work would not have been nearly as substantive as it is now.

The list of wonderful colleagues whom I had the pleasure of working beside in the past couple of years is far too extensive to include in these acknowledgements. To be clear, this reluctance to mention specific people does not come from a place of laziness but is purely pragmatic. Having worked in academia for over six years has namely brought me in contact with hundreds of people, some of whom I might not remember at this time. It is for this reason, that is to avoid the shame of potentially forgetting someone, that I keep these acknowledgements general. I also want to abstain from the complex politics of selecting 'special mentions' that might bring unwanted hierarchies and tensions among relationships that I have considered largely free of these ordering tactics. With that said, I feel enormous gratitude to have had the chance to work beside such enthusiastic and witty people in a welcoming and supportive department. All members of the AAP, BAP, ZAP, and ATP have, each in their own peculiar way, taught me to be an academic, helped me in my research or teaching, or distracted me to provide brief moments of rest.

There are many moments during the writing of this work that I have felt guilty regarding my friends and family. My obsession with this research has kept me from going to social events, distracted me during important conversations, had me forget birthdays, made me ignore the follow-up of insurance claims, and many more mistakes that I am not proud of. I acknowledge that my deficiency in this regard was problematic at times and I owe a great many apologies to the people that have tolerated my physical, social, and emotional absence. At the same time, I also feel enormous pride and luck regarding the special group of highly particular individuals that have surrounded me throughout the years. Some have bravely endured endless monologues about shame and how it relates to their specific problems, while others have helped with designing the cover or have taken care of me during highly stressful times. My gratitude goes out to all of you, and I hope that you will embrace me back amongst yourselves and help me overcome my self-imposed isolation.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: SHAME, STATES, AND EMPIRE

> I will not let myself be soiled with blood or mud.
>
> \- King Leopold II[1]

The image of the severed hand is a powerful symbol in Belgium's colonial memory. It alludes to Leopold II's rule over his private colony, the Congo Free State (1885-1908), which is infamous for the harsh exploitation of rubber, ivory, and minerals that cost the lives of millions of Congolese. Part of this brutal regime was that local guards had to sever one of the hands of those they shot, to account for the costly bullets that they had used. When they lacked aim or used ammunition for other purposes, the guards resorted to collecting hands from the living. Whistle-blowers photographed Congolese villagers who had their hands severed as a result of this practice and circulated these visceral images in the international press. By 1908, the so-called Red Rubber scandal had brought Belgium to investigate the abuses and annex the Congo Free State to repair its damaged reputation. WWI facilitated, however, the omission of the atrocities from public memory and even the rehabilitation of Leopold II as the genius who had given Belgium a colony.[2] An overall historical silence regarding Belgium's colonial past set in after the formal decolonisation of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, which has only recently been challenged by a more critical narrative. The symbol of the severed hand is, again, circulating and making people aware of the scandalous regime of the Congo Free State and other atrocities in Belgium's colonial past. Recent protests have even led to the desecration, vandalization, and removal of statues of Leopold II. Regardless of his objection, then, Leopold's likeness has become stained, both figuratively and literally, by a crimson shimmer.

Symbols and stories like these relate to state shame. It is a familiar feeling that is expressed when one's state violates human rights, is defeated in a war, has a poor performance in sports,

---

[1] As quoted in Hochschild (2020, 224).

[2] The Red Rubber scandal had profoundly spoiled Belgium's international image. After the German invasion in 1914, however, the 'black sheep of Europe' came be to represented as 'Poor little Belgium'. This shift in international reputation coincided with the need of the new king, Albert I (1909-1934), to restore the image of the royal house. See the Second Interlude for more on this topic.

or is represented by a particularly outrageous public figure. Shame can be articulated regarding such past or present events and signals a negative judgment regarding the state. In other words, it constitutes a political opinion regarding a failure of the state and that this misstep requires a collective response. Expressing state shame can thus generate debates, tensions, and conflicts in interpersonal relationships that even have the potential to become violent. This happens because shame hurts. It is a painful experience that makes one extremely aware of the wrongfulness of the Self, a condition that is so undesirable that it is often coped with in destructive ways. Shame for the state is no different in the pain, disruption, or feelings of helplessness that it can generate. Yet, it is in this way that it can also develop a bond between individuals, as "the country one belongs to is not, as the usual rhetoric goes, the one you love but the one you are ashamed of" (Ginzburg 2019, 35). In effect, shame for the state entails extensive and complex political causes, roles, and effects. The current dissertation is an attempt at understanding state shame and gaining insight into the politics that characterise it.

SHAME FOR THE STATE

Shame is generally understood as a painful subjective experience. The emotion is characterized by a self-conscious gaze which focuses on personal defects or a general belief in one's wrongfulness. This volatile and insubstantial experience is commonly specified in the literature by contrasting it with similar or adjacent emotions. Guilt is, for example, conceived as a "self-punishing anger, reacting to the perception that one has done a wrong or a harm" (Nussbaum 2004, 207).[3] Whereas this emotion indicates that you have done something wrong, shame is the feeling based on the notion that you are wrong (Erikson [1950]1993; Taylor 1985). This focus on wrongful action means that guilt can be redeemed through, for example, confession or apology, which is not feasible for shame. Embarrassment can be described as an uneasy feeling following public transgression (Goffman 1956; Lewis 1995, 73-74; Tracy, Robins, and Tagney 2007, 13-14), which entails a milder pain and more externally focused experience than shame. Humiliation, on the other hand, follows from an intentional public focus generated by an actor that actively aims to expose one's inadequacy, making it an extreme and unbearable variant of shame (Gilbert 1997; Fessler 2007, 183; Steiner 2006). Based on this comparison, shame can

---

[3] Other conceptions of this divide give more extensive analytical arguments. See Lewis (1971), Barrett (1995), Tagney and Dearing (2002). See also the dispute between Karl Jaspers ([1947]2001) and Hannah Arendt ([1964]2003) regarding the meaning of guilt, shame, and responsibility in political contexts.

thus be conceived as a more private and less explicitly expressed sentiment than these other self-conscious emotions.

While contrasting these emotions with shame helps specify the particularity of the latter, it does simplify the elaborate and complicated relationship between these feelings. The borderline between self-conscious emotions is "fuzzier than one might imagine" (Konstan 2006, 102; Tarnopolsky 2010, 157). When having done something wrong, for example, causing a traffic accident, it is expected that the perpetrator comes to feel guilty. At the same time, they can also experience shame for being a poor driver and feel embarrassed or even humiliated if this mishap is brought up in a public setting. This is not to say that self-conscious emotions all relate to a similar experience and that the differences are merely a point of semantics. Rather, what is believed to be wrong can sway between an action, a social situation, or the Self (Wurmser 1981, 206; Morrison 1989, 11-12; Tarnopolsky 2010, 188; Williams, 1993, 92-93). The experience of one of these self-conscious emotions, thus, always potentially involves some of the others.

The particularity of shame is even further complicated when looking at its use and understanding in different linguistic and cultural contexts. In English, the common usage signifies a highly intense crisis emotion that signals a threat (Scheff 2000).[4] This means that it is considered a principally negative experience, which is not necessarily the case in other languages. While sharing an Indo-European root,[5] the Italian and German words for shame (i.e. *vergogna*/*pudore* and *Schande*/*Scham*) also associate humility, shyness, or awe and reverence. In these and similar languages, the words are related to virtues of modesty and courage,[6] religious fear and veneration, and even practices of honour and respect (Scheff 2000, 39-44; Ginzburg 2019, 39). The English word is also rather singular in comparison to the verbal expressions of shame in other language families, such as Sinitic (*diu lian*, *can kui*, *xiu kui* and *xiu chi*)[7] or Arabic (*khajal*, *haya*, *hishmah*, *fadiha*, *'ayb,* and *'ar*).[8] Here, too, some of these notions of shame have more positive connotations while others are more akin to the English

---

[4] However, there is also a casual use of the word in exclamations such as 'what a shame!' or 'it is a shame that'. This expression relates to disappointment, pity, or sympathy and not necessarily to shame.

[5] Namely *skam-* or *skem-,* which is probably connected to the base of *kam, *kem-*, which relates to something being covered up (Klein 1966, 1430). For a more extensive, albeit Eurocentric, discussion on the etymology of shame see Scheff (2000, 39-44).

[6] For an extensive discussion on how these virtues were (or were not) connected to the ancient Greek terms *aidos* and *aischune*, see Cairns (1993), Williams (1993), Konstan (2006), Tarnopolsky (2010), and Ginzburg (2019).

[7] See Bedford (2004).

[8] See Al Jallad (2010).

use (Bedford 2004; Al Jallad 2010). The word 'shame' thus does not indicate a singular affective experience that is universally understood or expressed similarly.

Yet, regardless of its elusive nature and linguistic particularity, shame is a relatable experience that is ubiquitous to intersubjective life. The emotion namely has complex and elaborate social and moral roles that shape the thoughts, bodies, and actions of individuals, even when they are alone. By inspiring a belief in the wrongfulness of the Self, it can specifically bring an individual to act in ways that confirm social norms or beliefs. This desire for social conformity is most notably enforced by the anticipation of shame, as this emotion is projected onto certain social situations which are then anxiously avoided (Goffman 1967). When having done a poor exam, for example, a student will refrain from going to a feedback session in the expectation that the encounter with the teaching assistant or professor will be shameful. At the same time, the feeling of shame can also inspire a reflection on their Self as being judged as wrongful and question whether or not this is a just assessment. That same student might decide to turn up to the feedback session to argue that their grades do not reflect the effort that they have put into the exam. In both instances, the student aims to counter the painful judgment of inadequacy that their failing grade signifies to them and protect their injured Self-image. Shame can thus inform divergent actions regarding social conformity, signifying its complex role in social and moral life.

Shame also figures profusely in political life. It is actively invoked in political discourse, either to denote a problematic situation, to discredit opponents, or even to facilitate national unity (e.g. Ahmed 2014; Muldoon 2017; Ginzburg 2019). These appeals to the emotion are primarily strategic, in that they are aimed at communicating and identifying certain political positions. However, shame is not only used in politics, it is also political in itself. More specifically, it can inspire self-effacement and avoidant behaviour which can obstruct participation in political debates or hinder processes of deliberation. Shame can instil feelings of apathy and cynicism in individuals so that they come to withdraw from the public sphere (Rawls 1971, 440; Tarnopolsky 2010, 3). This is particularly the case with oppressed or disadvantaged groups, as stigmatisation has made them structurally more prone to a sense of being wrong (Goffman 1963; Nussbaum 2004, 174; Locke 2017). At the same time, shame is also considered a crucial socialising tool for developing and reinforcing shared values (Etzioni 2001), mutual respect (Williams 1993), and the recognition of the plight of others (Nussbaum 2004). Shaming practices have even been explored as progressive tools in restorative justice, specifically for making individual offenders come to terms with their actions (Braithwaite 2000).

Shame is all the more political when it pertains to the state. Expressing this emotion towards one's country signifies a political position that suggests certain beliefs and desires regarding the state. In so doing, it relates to specific issues on the collective level and, if these controversies become salient in public opinion, can come to inspire conflict and deliberation among the political elite. There are, however, competing notions in how to approach state shame. On the one hand, social psychological research understands it as a vicarious emotion, in that it denotes an individual emotional experience regarding the actions of the collective that one identifies with (Johns e.a. 2005, 332; Lickel e.a. 2005). In other words, regardless of personal responsibility or participation in the group actions, a feeling of shame is felt.[9] Research that assumes this perspective primarily focuses on identifying the characteristics of this experience and the implications that it has for intergroup behaviour (e.g. Johns, Smader, and Lickel 2004; Dresler-Hawke and Liu, 2006; Leach, Iyer, and Pedersen 2006; Brown and Cehajic, 2008; Berndsen and McGarty, 2012). In effect, it intends to make generalisable claims regarding, for example, the willingness towards political actions when experiencing this vicarious emotion (Cf. Daniels and Robinson 2019). What the feeling specifically signifies for the agents and the concrete political issues and conflicts that they struggle with is, however, rarely explored in this type of research.

On the other hand, state shame has also been discussed in the field of International Relations (IR). The concept figures specifically in works that aim to explain state behaviour during moments of crisis or moral failure (e.g. Steele 2008; Lu 2008; Zarakol 2011; Subotić and Zarakol 2012; Koschut 2021). Authors in this literature conceive states as social entities that are subject to norms in international society, which can coerce them into particular behaviour. As certain practices in world politics correspond with how shame works in intersubjective life, this emotion is used to describe analogous state behaviour. International naming and shaming, state apologies, and hostile actions following diplomatic humiliation are all examples of either social pressures that generate state shame or forms of expressing it (e.g. Steele 2008; Zarakol 2011; Adler-Nissen 2014). Rather than an empirically identifiable feeling, like with the social psychologically inspired research, this perspective uses shame more as a metaphor for a

---

[9] Much can be said about the correlation of shame, individual responsibility, and state actions. The tension between these concepts is best described by Hannah Arendt ([1963]2006, 298): "Political responsibility [...] exists quite apart from what the individual member of the group has done and therefore can neither be judged on moral terms nor be brought before a criminal court…It means hardly more, generally speaking that every generation, by virtue of being born into a historical continuum, is burdened by the sins of the fathers as it is blessed by the deeds of the ancestors."

particular social mechanism (Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 492; Hall and Ross 2015). Yet, what it exactly relates to as an empirical phenomenon lacks extensive theoretical engagement.[10]

The main contribution of this dissertation is that it proposes a novel avenue for conceptualising and theorising state shame. More specifically, it starts from the notion that this concept should be grounded in an analysis of how it is used in empirical reality. Shame is, however, famously misnamed and unspoken, as the complexity of this emotion makes it hard to identify and its painful nature gives individuals pause to be explicit about it. Consequently, the central assumption of this research is that state shame pertains to a narrative on the state. This claim relies on the notion that emotions are projected onto states, even when they do not have the physical capacity to experience them. When a country attacks its neighbour, for example, it is common to explain these actions by referring to emotions such as aggression or vengeance. Emotions are imbued into narratives of states and international politics because they make collective behaviour comprehensible, which is necessary with complex and abstract notions such as interstate violence, international reconciliation, or global hierarchical positions. In other words, emotions are inscribed in state narratives to make sense of the complexities of domestic and international politics. While individuals do not necessarily need to vicariously experience these emotions, they still impart characteristics onto state narratives that are considered particular to these feelings. When a state is considered angry, for example, it is believed to be wronged in some way, perhaps by a particularly insulting diplomatic incident. This belief imparts a certain logic to the political conflict regarding this issue, effectively shaping policy decisions and state behaviour. States are then narrated as being motivated by emotions, regardless if they are physically capable of experiencing them.

This theoretical assumption informs a novel conception of state shame. The latter is conceived as a state narrative that recounts a failure or inadequacy of the state, such as a scandal, a military defeat, a past transgression of human rights, or an imagined inferiority regarding other states. In other words, state shame is a narrative of how the state is judged as being wrongful. The dissertation draws on this conception of state shame to theorise on the politics that characterise it. More specifically, it develops a theoretical framework that can identify and trace various political dynamics and state behaviours that can be associated with state shame. The general

---

[10] Ayse Zarakol and Jelena Subotic (2012) theorize how the emotional, vicarious experience is connected to international social pressure through the notion of cultural intimacy. Chapter Three develops further on this particular understanding and supplements it with insights from other fields. Notable exceptions to the notion that IR research on emotions is mainly focused on the collective experience are the works of Todd H. Hall (e.g. 2015), Robin Markwica (2018), and Seanon S. Wong (2019).

claim is that state shame narratives originate in situations where the state is negatively assessed by an in-group or out-group actor regarding a failure of a self-ideal or social norm. Depending on how this situation is understood, different types of state shame narratives can develop and come to circulate in the respective society. When they reach a point of salience, these narratives are appropriated by political agents and used to further their interests. If this state shame ends up generating discursive conflict among the political elite, it can effectively inspire policy-making and state behaviour. This theoretical framework is contextualized and elaborated on in Chapter Three, with the aim to give insight into how the politics of state shame manifest themselves in the empirical analysis.

EMPIRE AND DISGRACE

The empirical part of the dissertation explores Belgium's (post-)imperial past. In so doing, it engages with the scholarly debate on imperialism and how states deal with its legacy (see Fitzmaurice 2014; Loomba 2015). Empire is commonly used to denote a polity that went beyond its locality through the practice of acquisition of and expansion to other regions (Fisch, Groh, and Walter 1987; Hobsbawm 2012, 75-76; Loomba 2015, 20). This conception coalesces historical empires, such as the Mongolian, Roman, or Inca, with more modern imperial states, such as Britain, France, and Japan. However, the latter type differs significantly from the former. Modern imperial states were characterized by aspects such as beliefs in racial or civilisational superiority, capitalist exploitation, and the instalment of a foreign bureaucratic regime. Older iterations of empire might have had similar characteristics but they did not have the same degree of intensity and societal transformation that the modern form had. A handful of European states, under whom Belgium, were namely capable of formally partitioning the rest of the world between 1880 and 1914. Major regions of the world, in particular Africa and the Pacific, were divided among these countries during international meetings that were hailed for their peaceful and scientific approach (Yao 2022). This phenomenon was described with the term 'imperialism' by contemporaries, as it was perceived as a novelty at the time (Hobsbawm 1987, 60).

These imperial states profoundly reshaped the societies that they dominated. Colonial rulers made and implemented fundamental decisions that affected the lives of the colonized, primarily to serve interests that were defined at the metropolitan centre of the empire (Osterhammel 2010, 16-17). In so doing, European states and their settlers dominated the political, cultural, social,

religious, and economic life of these colonized indigenous societies. This hierarchical relationship continued to exist after formal decolonisation, as former colonizing states are still considered to be among the most wealthy and powerful, while their former colonies consistently rank among the poorest and weakest (e.g. Hardt and Negri 2001; Bhambra 2014; Loomba 2015). The continuity of these hierarchies is telling, at least to some authors, that imperialism did not disappear but was transformed during this postcolonial moment. Globalisation had made concrete territorial sites of power and rigid boundaries obsolete, meaning that it was no longer necessary for there to be an identifiable imperial centre (Hardt and Negri 2001, xii).[11] Previously explicit hierarchies and standards thus became invisible and self-evident in the international order (Saïd 1994, 51; Jameson 2003, 700-701; Gregory 2004, 12; Buzan 2014).

Imperial encounters also profoundly reshaped colonizing societies.[12] In Britain, for example, imperialism strengthened the class system, generated nationalist imaginaries, and inspired new religious identities (Cannadine 2001; Bayly 2004).[13] Belgium, too, was greatly influenced by its imperial interactions with Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi. When Leopold II's private colony was annexed by the Belgian state, it turned the small and neutral country into an imperial power that had considerable international status. Moreover, Belgium's colonies figured widely in its national Self-identity, as they prominently featured in the world expos, were continuously referenced in popular culture, and figured in the everyday lives of people through public statues and street names (Viaene, Van Reybrouck, and Ceuppens 2009; Stanard 2012). Imperialism was thus not an uncomplicated relationship where the colony was profoundly transformed but the European metropoles remained unaffected. The reality of European imperialism was far more complex than that of an "unassailable beast extending its tentacles outward to command and reshape the world" (Stanard 2016, 154). Rather, imperialism comprised "all forces and activities contributing to the construction and the maintenance of *transcolonial empires*" and included "not only *colonial* politics, but *international* politics for which colonies are not just

---

[11] Yet, the argument that the postcolonial moment is just a phase is disputed by the literature surrounding 'the postcolonial predicament'. See Quijano (2000), Samaddar (2018), and Jensen e.a. (2018) on how the postcolonial is understood as a combination of highly contradicting circumstances that can manifest itself in domestic, regional, transnational, and international contexts.

[12] This claim has been disputed by Bernard Porter (2004), at least for the British case. However, the empirical research of this dissertation disagrees with the rather traditionalist argument that empire was a marginal feature for people in the metropole. See Hopkins (1999) and Viaene (2008) for discussions that argue this point in a more substantive manner.

[13] An example of earlier European colonialism influencing the colonizing state is that the collapse of the Aztec and Inca empires and the management of Conquistadores required Spain to develop advanced bureaucratic systems that would inspire organisational changes in Europe (Osterhammel 2010, 29-30)

ends in themselves, but also pawns in global power games" (Osterhammel 2010, 21, italics in original).

The focus of this research is specifically on the elite politics in Belgium because it assumes that state shame only informed state behaviour in this context.[14] As state shame is believed to originate when the state has failed in some regard, the particular context of Belgium's imperial past can be understood as a most likely case. To be clear, shame is not considered to be the central marker of emotional life in the metropole. It is more likely that other emotions, such as pride, courage, enthusiasm, etc. were signalled through imperial propaganda (Stanard 2012). The colonizing state needed to glorify its ownership of colonies to convince their metropolitan and colonial subjects of their civilisation's superiority (Césaire 2001, 35; Memmi [1974]2003, 192; Porter 2004, 20).[15] Yet, colonial settlers, and certainly those that held more progressive beliefs, continuously struggled with constant feelings of shame and guilt. Their life was subtended between the necessity to uphold their so-called idealized position through daily instances of injustice and the self-sacrifice that they never seemed to make (Fanon 1963; Memmi 2003, 191).[16] While these experiences did circulate in the metropole, most notably through literature,[17] the dominant opinion in the imperial centre was one of self-evident supremacy towards the colonies.

An expression of state shame in this context would thus have generated strenuous political conflict. It can be expected that, when the superiority of the collective Self is considered so self-

---

[14] In studying the politics in the metropole separate from those in the colonies, the approach can perpetuate simplistic notions regarding this complex relationship. See Chapter Four for an extensive discussion of these pitfalls. That being said, a future study of state shame could trace how state shame narratives figured in the Belgian colonial regime, how they circulated among colonials and colonized, and how they generated, sustained, or challenged this unequal relationship.

[15] In contrast, it can be assumed that the emotional lives of colonial subjects were more likely characterized by shame. Their subordinate position made them unable to determine their life and selfhood, which was constantly juxtaposed with the domineering presence of an idealized superior master. This shameful position developed into an inferiority complex and a permanent position of alienation, which they did not lose after decolonisation or through migration (Fanon [1952]1988; Memmi 2003). Structural continuities with imperialism sustained beliefs in Western superiority and power, effectively prolonging extant feelings of inadequacy among the former colonized. Beauty standards, for example, are still dominated by Eurocentric paradigms and have generated practices such as skin bleaching or plastic surgery aimed to make subaltern persons of colour look more like their former colonizer (e.g. Charles 2003).

[16] A good example of this dichotomous position can be found in literature. The famous example of Captain Kurz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* ([1899]2006) resembles the prideful colonizer, while the main protagonist, Charles Marlow, signifies the struggle with shame and guilt. A similar example can be found in Belgian literature, with the first position being represented by Jef Geeraerts's semi-autobiographical *Gangreen* trilogy (1968; 1972; 1975), while the latter position can be more found with Adriaan Cafmayer, the protagonist in Paul Brondeel's *Ik, blanke kaffer* ([1970]2019).

[17] The abovementioned *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad (2006) is an example of this. *Max Havelaar, or the coffee auctions of the Dutch Trading Company* by Multatuli ([1868]1995) can be considered an early illustration of these more critical colonial novels.

evident, a narrative on a failure of the state would be especially challenging. Some actors would defend the glorious state Self and its ownership of colonies, while others will come to contest these claims. The politics of state shame can thus be assumed to be more apparent in this context. One episode in the Belgian imperial past is particularly interesting in this regard, namely the aforementioned Red Rubber scandal (1903-1908) that caused the annexation of Leopold II's Congo Free State. While the origin of the Belgian imperial state was atypical because of this controversy, the scandalous nature of this transition would suggest the presence of state shame. Moreover, the annexation generated political conflicts regarding the imperial eligibility of Belgium, which remains one of the major debates in Belgian historiography. This particular episode is analysed in the first empirical chapter of this dissertation (Chapter Five), to understand how the politics of state shame shaped the origin of the Belgian imperial state.

The formal end of colonialism is also a site where state shame would have been apparent. This postcolonial moment entailed that many European states suddenly lost a significant part of their territory and international status. The discourse surrounding this transition was probably imbued with notions of failure and loss, while also attempting to frame the independence of these colonies as a morally righteous act. At the same time, it undoubtedly generated tensions between various factions that wanted to appropriate this situation for their interest. The independence of Congo was even more tense because Belgium hastily accepted its inability to sustain its control over the colony following the riots of 1959. Yet, simultaneously, it actively sabotaged the new Congolese government through financing and supporting separatist movements, effectively leading to the disastrous Congo Crisis (1960-1965) that would leave the country in the hands of the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. The second empirical chapter (Chapter Six) analyses this episode and aims to gain insight into how the formal decolonisation process of Congo was managed by the Belgian political elite.

The imperial legacy has also become a site where state shame is expressed. After decolonisation, the colonial past became framed in narratives of nostalgia, innocence, and heroic martyrdom (e.g. Rosaldo 1989; Gregory 2004, 9-11; Assmann 2006, 218; LaCapra 2014; Jensen e.a. 2018). In the Belgian context, these glorifying myths were accompanied by the gradual silencing of this past and the development of a colonial taboo (Van den Braembussche 1995; 2002). The last few decades have seen a global rise in societal debates regarding the imperial past and its continuing legacies. Some Western audiences have come to express feelings of guilt and shame for this past and desire some form of reconciliation with the victim of their state's imperialism (e.g. Bewes 2011; Ahmed 2014; Bentley 2015; Muldoon 2017;

Hinton and Willemsen 2018, 2; Gutman and Wüstenberg 2023). Demands for restitution, the removal of statues of former colonials, the establishment of 'Sorry Days', apologies, and so on, are all linked to this reflection on the imperial past. The Belgian state has engaged with this colonial shame, most notably following the scandal regarding Belgium's involvement in the murder of Patrice Lumumba, Congo's first Prime Minister. As this controversy led to the establishment of a parliamentary commission and informed an official state apology, it can be expected that state shame was apparent in the political discourse. This episode is discussed in the final empirical chapter (Chapter Seven), which contributes to the debate on the significance of historical apologies.

RESEARCH THEMES

This dissertation primarily aims to contribute to the field of International Relations by grounding the concept of state shame. Yet, the nature of this subject interacts with works from the sociology of emotions, social psychology, feminist studies, critical theory, postcolonialism, empire studies, theory of history, memory studies, transitional justice, ethics, and political theory. The theoretical diversity of this dissertation necessitates a focus on four major research themes. First, it aims to contribute to the debate on how emotions matter in world politics. The emotional turn in IR of the past few decades has generated an overall consensus regarding the notion that emotions matter in international politics. Yet, how they matter has remained the subject of debate (Koschut 2017).[18] Central in this discussion is the issue of how emotions relate to the collective and shape state behaviour (e.g. Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 492; Koschut 2021). The dissertation engages with this debate by arguing for a narrative understanding of state emotions, which connects feminist literature on emotions as narratives with IR theorisation on the state-as-narrative. It elaborates on how emotions are imparted onto state narratives, which in turn shapes and inspires particular state behaviour. By focusing in particular on how shame works, it thus contributes to the debate in the literature by proposing a novel understanding of how emotions can be political in international relations.

---

[18] A brief overview of some debates and contributions is telling of this so-called 'emotional turn': some contributions have brought more insight into this particular issue by centring on general interpersonal mechanics of emotions (e.g. Wong 2019; Cornut 2022; Heimann and Kampf 2022; Hedling 2023), others on the role that visuals and emotions play in subject creation (e.g. de Buitrago 2018; Adler-Nissen, Andersen and Hansen 2019), or their role in the appeal of populist imaginaries (e.g. Kinnvall 2018; Browning 2019; Homolar and Löfflmann 2021). Furthermore, a wealth of contributions focus on methodology and methods (e.g. Bleiker and Hutchison 2008; Hutchison and Bleiker 2014; Koschut 2017; 2020; Clément and Sangar 2018).

Second, the dissertation contributes to the existing scholarship on the politics of shame by developing an argument on how the politics translate to the collective level. Feminist work on this topic has been mainly focused on a broad understanding of politics (e.g. de Beauvoir 1956; Bartky 1990; Nussbaum 2004; Probyn 2005; Ahmed 2014; Locke 2017; Mitchell 2020). More specifically, authors in this theoretical tradition are more invested in how shame forces bodies to act and feel in ways that sustain patriarchal values and norms. The politics of shame towards the state, while sometimes touched upon, is rarely explored in depth by this literature.[19] Works from other disciplines and fields have theorized on the notion of state shame but they lack a comprehensive focus on its politics (e.g. Scheff 2000; Lu 2008; Steele 2008; Pettigrove and Parsons 2012; Muldoon 2017). The goal of this research is to further explore the politics of shame and specify the particular origins, characteristics, effects, and ethics when it is expressed regarding the state. To this end, it develops a theory and method to identify and trace how shame narratives come to inform collective politics.

Third, the research has the aim to further explore the role of shame in the emotional life of empires. Works in history and empire studies have traced the role of emotions in the imperial past (e.g. Abusharaf 2006; Allen and Haggis 2007; Krauel 2013; Fischer-Tiné 2016; Jackson 2018; Lydon 2020). However, shame seems to be a notable absentee in the repertoire of emotions that is being analysed in these works.[20] This is all the more peculiar since it is assumed that "the history of colonial empires has been shaped to a considerable extent by negative emotions such as anxiety, fear and embarrassment, as well as by the regular occurrence of panics" (Fischer-Tiné 2016, 1). The key role of shame in the sociological literature on the development of European modernity, middle-class life, and the process of civilisation would even more indicate its centrality to empire (Cf. Elias 2000; Scheff 2000). The current dissertation aims to elaborate on how this emotion has figured in imperialism and shaped its politics.[21] To this end, it builds on IR theory that attributes a role to shame concerning the management of international status and the narration of the state Self (e.g. Zarakol 2011;

---

[19] The exception to this is Sara Ahmed's (2014) work *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, and in particular the chapter 'Shame Before Others'. However, in this chapter, shame for the state is not identified as a particular category.

[20] An exception to this is the work of Javier Krauel (2013) but he only sporadically identifies the presence of shame. Shar in the edited volume of Harald Fischer-Tiné (2016) does discuss embarrassment, yet shame does not seem to figure. Shame in the postcolonial context, on the other hand, has received more attention, see Bewes (2011).

[21] To be clear, the argument is that the focus on shame can uncover crucial dynamics that other concepts or approaches might have missed. This claim is inspired by an analogous reasoning of Frederick Jameson's focus on capital. See Hardt and Weeks (2000) for a discussion on this approach.

Subotić and Zarakol 2012; Towns and Rumelili 2017; Hägstrom 2021; Naudé 2022). The empirical analysis, in effect, links social scientific theorisation and methodology to contribute to the historical literature on empire and emotion.

Fourth, the dissertation aims to contribute to the study of Belgium's (post-)imperial past. While this particular case has been the subject of extensive debates in the fields of history and postcolonial studies (e.g. Ewans 2003; Ceuppens 2004; Vanthemsche 2012; Goddeeris 2015; Lauro 2016; Bevernage 2018), it does not receive the same attention in IR.[22] The reason for this lies with the dominance of the British and French cases and the rather unique origins and characteristics of Belgian imperialism (Viaene 2008, 747).[23] The goal of this dissertation is to gain further insight into this understudied case by using theories and methods that explain less evident aspects of Belgian imperialism. In particular, its focus on the role of emotions in imperial politics engages with historiographical debates specific to the Belgian case, such as the reluctant imperialist thesis, the management of the independence of Congo, and the significance of post-imperial reconciliation. While not a comprehensive exploration of the coloniality of power (Cf. Quijano 2000; Mignolo and Escobar 2013), this work aims to shed new light on Belgian (post-)imperial history and open avenues for future research on this topic by approaching this past from a novel perspective.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

The remainder of the dissertation develops its central argument over seven chapters. To this end, the next chapter, "Shame in IR: A Genealogy of An Abandoned Concept", provides an extensive discussion of how shame has been conceived in IR discourse. It poses the central theoretical puzzle of this dissertation, namely that shame for the state is ubiquitous in contemporary international and domestic politics but that it has not been systematically theorized. The first part of this literature review presents an analysis of how shame initially featured in mainstream IR theories but then vanished, only to reappear superficially in constructivist literature. In the following section, the chapter discusses the centrality of shame in the theorisation on ontological security, a more existentialist and social-psychological inspired literature that has recently found its way into IR. In effect, the term state shame was introduced in the discipline through this particular literature, although it eventually superseded

---

[22] The exception to this is the work of Kevin C. Dunn (2003).
[23] See, for example, the works of Porter (2004), Magee and Thompson (2010), Gildea (2019), and Sharman (2019).

the term in favour of the more open-ended concept of anxiety. The chapter concludes by criticizing how state shame is used in the IR ontological security literature to argue that this concept still holds analytical potential if it receives more conceptual and theoretical attention.

The core argument of the dissertation is presented in Chapter Three, "State Shame and its Politics". It aims to reconceive state shame through the method of elucidation. This approach traces how a term receives its meaning through practical and common language use (Schaffer 2016). Yet, because shame is often unspoken and misnamed, the practical grounding of this concept requires a base theoretical framework. The chapter develops the latter by first constructing an argument for how emotions can influence state behaviour based on a narrative conception of state subjectivity. This discussion is followed by a general overview of the various characteristics of the individual experience of shame, to specify what characteristics state shame could entail. Based on the latter two discussions, the chapter conceives state shame as a narrative of a negative judgment regarding the state. This understanding constitutes a theoretical framework that relates the notion of the *shame situation* with a typology of state shame narratives. More specifically, the theory argues that shame narratives originate when an agent is placed in a situation where there is a shaming actor (a Self or Other) and a failure to comply with ideals (regarding social norms or personal ideals). The variation in these two factors generates four types of state shame narratives, i.e. *situational*, *narcissistic*, *aggressive*, and *deferential shame*, each of which leads to divergent beliefs and action tendencies. These ideal types function as analytical tools to understand the political processes and state behaviour that characterize state shame. Building on other literature, the expectation is made that agents try to discursively deconstruct or reframe the sources of agency and/or failure. These *politics of state shame* entail that political agents try to influence, both unconsciously and strategically, how their state copes with shame situations.

Chapter Four, "Analysing State Shame: Emotions, States, and Narrative Plots", describes the methodological choices of this dissertation. The first pages are dedicated to explicating some of the ontological and epistemological wagers that ground the empirical research. As this latter discussion necessitates an approach that favours a longitudinal perspective and in-depth focus, the chapter argues for the use of a historical single case study. The claim is made that Belgium as a (post-)imperial state is particularly apt for researching the politics of state shame. Three episodes of this past can be expected to correspond with shame situations that would generate particular state shame narratives, i.e. *the Congo Question* (1904-1908), *Congolese independence* (1959-1961), and *the Lumumba Commission* (1999-2002). The analysis of these

moments is focused on parliamentary debates and uses a structural narrative analysis, which centres on the emplotment of state narratives, and an interpretative sentiment analysis, which pinpoints emotions in discourse. By combining both approaches, the respective empirical chapters give an encompassing perspective on state shame and its politics. Each empirical chapter is preceded by a short interlude to inform the reader of the more general historical context of Belgian imperialism and emphasize key shifts and continuities between the three cases.

The fifth chapter, "The Red Rubber Scandal (1903-1909): Royal Shame and the Origin of the Belgian Imperial Self", gives the history of how Belgium acquired a colony and describes the role of state shame in this process. It first identifies a debate in the literature centred around the 'reluctant imperialist thesis', which argues that Belgian colonialism originated not from an internal desire for colonies but to counter its spoiled international image following the Red Rubber scandal. In contrast, more recent research has argued that there was already a desire in Belgium to annexe Leopold II's colony even before the scandal. The central goal of this chapter is to contribute to the historiographical literature by shedding light on the particular political dynamics that underpin the parliamentary debates regarding the scandal and the annexation of the Congo Free State by Belgium. To this end, it traces the apparent state shame narratives during this episode and finds that there is a notable divergence between the two parliamentary factions. Anti-colonial MPs constructed a narcissistic state shame narrative, which focused on uncovering the abuses and emphasized the tragic complicity of Belgium. Pro-Leopoldian MPs, however, conceived the accusations of the latter as an unpatriotic attack on the state and its King, whom they glorified together with his colonial enterprise. These opposing interpretations of the source and victim of the scandal effectively brought about antagonistic conflict. This situation shifted when Leopold II, responding to the debates on annexation, argued in a public letter that Belgium was not ready to be an empire. His dismissing claim effectively generated a third narrative that was characterised by situational shame and was articulated by more moderate pro-colonial MPs. The narrative acknowledged the atrocities in the Congo Free State as individual mistakes and temporary infractions and argued for Belgium's imperial eligibility by constituting an imperial Self-narrative. As this latter narrative was supported by a majority in parliament, it effectively facilitated the annexation of the Congo Free State by Belgium. In so doing, this research further challenges the reluctant imperialist thesis and gives insight into the origin of the Belgian imperial Self.

Chapter Six, "Congolese Independence (1958-1961): Imperial Narcissism and Belgian Victimhood", sheds light onto how Belgian political elites coped with the decolonisation of Congo. The discussion starts by claiming that the literature is unclear about how the end of the empire was received in Belgium. By analysing state shame narratives and emotions in parliamentary discourse, the chapter finds that MPs constructed a situational state shame narrative directly after the January 1959 riots. Yet, while this narrative kept glorifying Belgium's imperial accomplishments and its contemporary benevolence in allowing Congo to become independent, there was a marked sense of insecurity and negative emotions in the discourse. The advent of the Congo Crisis changed the narrative into the narcissistic state shame type, which conceived the Belgian state as a tragic victim. However, whereas MPs from the Christian democratic and Liberal government parties claimed that the crisis was the responsibility of Congolese leaders, previous governments, the opposition, or external influences, MPs from the Socialist opposition blamed it solely on the current government. The chapter concludes by constructing what it calls the 'imperial victimhood thesis', which claims that the Belgian political elite came to conceive the empire as an unjust – but not entirely faultless – victim of circumstances.

The final empirical Chapter, "The Lumumba Commission (1999-2002): Colonial Shame and the Belgian Post-Imperial Self", gives an account of how Belgium copes with this imperial past. It aims to contribute to the academic debate on the meaning of historical apologies, in particular on whether they facilitate processes of reconciliation or are primarily focused on restoring the national Self of the offending state. To this end, the chapter traces state shame narratives surrounding the Lumumba Commission, a parliamentary research commission that was installed after a nationwide scandal revolving around Belgian complicity in the murder of Patrice Lumumba. The scandal challenged the ethical narrative that the progressive Belgian government aimed to construct around their state's identity. In effect, the empirical analyses indicate that MPs initially assumed a narcissistic state shame narrative when this scandal came out but quickly transformed it into a narrative of the situational type. This account constructed the various actors involved as morally ambiguous characters and conceived their state to be 'morally responsible' for the murder of Lumumba. Key in this regard was the active depoliticisation of the scandal by demanding neutrality, objectivity, a scientific approach, and serenity in the debate. Moreover, whereas MPs initially reasoned along the lines of shame, they came to conceive the issue as a matter of guilt. This evolution effectively facilitated the eventual

apology, which primarily acted to recover Belgium's ethical state Self-narrative and signal the state's progressive image.

The conclusion of this dissertation reflects on whether the conception of state shame as a narrative was able to give insight into the particular cases. It finds that this approach has been productive for uncovering the complex workings of state shame, while also giving insight into key elements of the analysed episodes. The research also indicates further avenues of theorisation regarding this concept and its politics, in particular regarding the shame situation and the origin and role of shaming narratives. Aside from this, the conclusion evaluates the expectations regarding the politics of state shame that were posed at the end of Chapter Three. The empirical research pointed out that these assumptions were accurate, with the added nuance that the theoretical framework does not deliver additional insight into the structural qualities of world politics because of its primarily agentic focus. In the following part, the conclusion proposes some further avenues for theorisation surrounding state shame. It specifically calls for further identifying particular political cultures of shame, investigating how other collective actors practice the politics of shame, theorising the nexus between state shame, narcissism, and vulnerability, and stimulating further research into the end of the politics of shame. The dissertation also sums up its contributions regarding debates in Belgian historiography and projects some of its insights into the current struggle for decolonisation in Belgium. A final part of the conclusion reflects on the ethics of state shame, specifying that an active promotion of these kinds of narratives is ill-advised for generating compassion and sympathy for others or inspire ethical state behaviour. Rather, it makes an argument for preferring the more ethically evocative and universal notion of 'the shame of the world' over the more exclusionary focus of state shame.

CHAPTER 2. SHAME IN IR: GENEALOGY OF AN ABANDONED CONCEPT

Shame seems out of place in the realm of world politics. If anything, it is *shamelessness* that is believed to guide the actions of states in international affairs. Observers of world politics often note the flagrant defiance and transgression of rules in international law by hegemonic or rogue states (e.g. Samnotra 2020). Genocide, mass sexual violence, foreign interventions, civilian casualties, torture, state terrorism, and other violations of international norms are enacted with a sense of impunity and sometimes even blatant self-righteousness. Moreover, when confronted with past or present transgressions, representatives or leaders of these states often ignore or deny these claims and at times even retort by referring to their accuser's hypocrisy for having done similar acts themselves. The self-effacing reflection that shame implies seems, generally speaking, to be rather absent in international politics.

Researchers in International Relations (IR) and the politics of emotion have, however, observed that shame is far more prevalent in world politics than has previously been assumed (Harkavy 2000; Barkan 2000; Danchev 2006; Zarakol 2011; Adler-Nissen 2014; Youde 2014; Snyder 2019; Ilgit and Prakash 2019; Schaefer 2020; Lethi and Pennanen 2020; Koschut 2021; Browning, Joenniemi, and Steele 2021; Bassan-Nygate and Heimann 2022; Naudé 2022; Gökcan Kösen and Erdoğan 2022; Welch 2023). Empirical research also points to the importance of this emotion as a motivator or obstructor for state apologies regarding past atrocities (e.g. Zarakol 2011; Bentley 2015; Muldoon 2017), the felt necessity for revenge after a humiliating defeat (e.g. Harkavy 2000; Saurette 2006; Brodersen 2018; Homolar and Löfflmann 2021), or as a key mediator for international normative pressure (e.g. Towns and Rumelili 2017; Welch 2023). Aside from that, recent studies into populism have also indicated that populist leaders explicitly and actively counter shame by finding it antithetical to the greatness of their nation (e.g. Snyder 2019; Schaefer 2020; Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benítez-Castro 2021). In short, shame seems to be more ubiquitous in contemporary international and domestic politics than intuitively assumed.

Regardless of the observation that shame is widespread in current politics, its role and significance remain undertheorized in the field of IR. While several IR scholars have reflected

on the importance of this emotion, these discussions are often focused on specific qualities of shame and how they relate to particular issues or debates in the literature (e.g. Harkavy 2000; Saurette 2006; Lu 2008; Ilgit and Prakash 2019; Koschut 2021). Other authors have used insights from broader scientific debates on shame to understand particular social dynamics within or between states, yet also in these works the emotion is rarely treated holistically. The emphasis is either placed on the socialising function of shaming during norm deviation (e.g. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Lebovic and Voeten 2006; Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999; Friman 2015), taboo enforcement (e.g. Tannenwald 2005), or state stigmatization (e.g. Zarakol 2011; Subotić and Zarakol 2012; Adler-Nissen 2014). Moreover, shame is often simplified in these discussions, both on the level of phenomenology and on the politics that it can generate. Regardless of the attention that this emotion has received in IR, there has not been a dedicated discussion on how shame can be understood comprehensively in world politics.

The goal of this chapter is to expose and criticize the central assumptions regarding shame in IR and expose key conceptual disputes (Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 503). To this end, it constructs a genealogy on the "logical spaces and their succession in time" (Bartelson 1996, 7) regarding shame in IR. The key assumption regarding this approach is that scientific concepts are never neutral or permanently stable. A genealogy aims to discern when and how the researched notion has been imbued with certain meanings and political roles. Regardless of this deconstructive approach, concepts are still deemed the principal theoretical tools that guide our apprehension of the world (Guzzini 2005; Berenskoetter 2017; Krickel-Choi 2022). This chapter thus uses the genealogical approach to participate in the permanent search to clarify and calibrate one of these tools by explaining how taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the concept of shame in world politics were constructed. The conceptual inquiry leads to a critical evaluation of the concept's current use with the purpose of developing more insight into its contingency and epistemic commitments (Bevir 2008).

First, the chapter gives a cursory overview of how shame became excised from classic realist theories of IR in favour of a more rationalist and systemic understanding of international politics. Shame was eventually re-introduced in IR constructivism as an implicit assumption regarding social pressure but did not receive theoretical attention. The chapter subsequently turns to a discussion on the role and meaning of shame in the specific literature on ontological security and how the concept changed when it was introduced in IR. Based on a broader criticism regarding ontological security scholarship, five critiques are formulated regarding this particular conception which, in turn, challenge the analytical and explanatory potential of state

shame. The chapter nevertheless concludes by arguing for the further deepening and specification of this concept as it offers the capacity for a parsimonious explanation of various practices in world politics. In so doing, it primes the subsequent chapter's aim to propose a more grounded and less ambiguous conception of state shame and give insight into its particular politics.

SHAME IN MAINSTREAM IR

Mainstream theories of IR do not consider shame to be a potential motivator for state action in international politics. Most notable in this regard is the implicit assumption of shamelessness in the theoretical tradition of (neo)realism. Theorists that ascribe to this approach expect, to a point, that states do not abide by international rules unless it is in their interest. Other theories of IR, such as liberal institutionalism or the English School, are more inclined to understand world politics to be subject to norms but do not attribute a significant role to shame in this regard. This absence is vested in the dominant notion in these traditions that states are rational unitary actors that act out of self-interest, a conception that became influential in the 1950s with the quintessential writings of Hans Morgenthau (1946) and its further development by Kenneth Waltz (1979; 1986). States are, following their conception as autonomous actors, impervious to shame because of their essential disconnectedness from their peers (Mason 2010, 405). Furthermore, IR scholars in this theoretical tradition assume that the nature of world politics is anarchic and unprincipled, and thus subsequently amoral. They thus come to argue that states do (or should) not have the restraint or ethical reflection that is believed to be characteristic of shame. Any psychological factors, after all, are marginal to variables that relate to the structure of the international system or the security dilemma (Harkavy 2000, 346). Shame thus seems irrelevant to these theoretical traditions.

What is remarkable, however, is that the discourse of preeminent classical realists – the progenitors of this particular conception in international relations – is scattered with references to shame and adjacent emotions (see Niebuhr 1935, 78; 82; Machiavelli 1965; Thucydides 2009).[24] While not central in their argument, the presence of the emotion does indicate that these scholars believed it had some role to play in politics between nations or during political

---

[24] For some texts that go a bit deeper into these claims, see Donnelly (2004, 66-67; 178-180), Schuerman (2009, 59), Ross (2013), and Pashakhanlou (2017).

decision making. Even in the famous Melian dialogue of Thucydides (2009, 306), the representative for Athens claims:

> "Often enough men with their eyes still open to what they are in for are lured on by the seductive power of what they call 'honour': victims of a mere word, they deliberately bring on themselves a real and irretrievable disaster, and through their own foolhardiness incur a more shameful loss of honour than pure misfortune would have inflicted. If you are sensible you will avoid this, and take the view that there is no disgrace in yielding to a great city which offers you moderate terms — alliance and retention of your own land on payment of tribute."[25]

That their adversary can be spared a 'more shameful loss of honour' and that there is 'no disgrace' in parting from their sovereignty and joining the Athenian empire, implies that shamefulness, at least according to Thucydides' account, was an important factor for the Athenians to take into consideration when trying to persuade the Melians. It is the eventual destruction of the Melians, regardless of their honourable resistance, that effectively informed the theoretical and ethical principles of IR realism. If justice exists, realists claimed on the basis of this dialogue,[26] then it exists only by the grace of the powerful (Forde 2002, 72). It follows, then, that ethical and normative constraints, which are a necessity for the judgement associated with shame and guilt, would only make "good outcomes less likely" (Lebow 2020, 3). Also, any domestic negative self-evaluation by the victorious hegemon would be considered self-defeating, masochistic and going against the state's prevailing self-interest.[27]

The absence of shame in IR theory also originates from the dominant belief in the rationality of actors in international politics (Crawford 2000, 117). Separating emotion from reason has deep

---

[25] The Greek term Αἰδώς or Aidos is often translated as shame but the ancient Greeks had a broader conception of what this term meant. It was also used to denote a feeling that kept individuals from doing wrongful deeds and inspired humility in privileged people when they were confronted with the destitute and misfortune of others. See Locke (2016, 4), Scheff (2000), Cairns (1993) and Williams (1993) for more extensive discussions on Aidos.

[26] According to Richard Ned Lebow (2020, 32; 183-184; 2003; see also Erskine and Lebow 2012) this interpretation of Thucydides is too simplistic. Thucydides' work was not meant to inspire a nihilistic notion of how there is an unchanging nature to international politics, which leaves no room for justice. Rather, Lebow claims, the point of his history of the Peloponnesian War was meant to act as a reminder to the Athenians of the pain and trauma of this period. It could offer them a means to "work through its meaning for their lives and society" (Lebow 2020, 32)

[27] These painful feelings might characterize the tragic life of the weak and defeated, but the focus of realism was always more on the victor rather than the defeated (Harkavy 2000). As such, the study of the humiliation of defeat remained for a long time an understudied subject in IR, which has been rectified to some extent (see e.g. Harkavy 2000; Saurette 2006; Homolar and Löfflmann 2021).

roots in social science[28] and modern philosophy[29] but this was not necessarily the case at the advent of IR. During the interbellum, only some IR scholars, a particular group of the so-called 'idealists',[30] approached IR as a positive science akin to the natural sciences (Kahler 1998, 920). Their positivist approach to world politics would, however, lose its influence after the Second World War. Modernist and liberal materialist beliefs in the ability of human reason to overcome passions and facilitate social progress were challenged by the ideological character of the Cold War (Ibid.). Specifically, the modernist hope for collective reason to triumph over folly was crushed by the ideological Manicheism of the US and USSR. At the same time, the emigration and integration of pessimist European realists into US academia meant that a renewed focus was placed on man's irrationality (Williams 2008). This informed an initial sceptical focus on the scientific study of politics, best illustrated by Morgenthau's Scientific Man versus Power Politics (1946).

However, this pessimist thinking was gradually superseded by "individualistic and ahistorical premises of liberal exceptionalism" (Ross 1991, 473), a particularly dominant belief in the socio-political environment of the post-war US. It converged on an essentialist understanding of the enlightened subject with the value of neutrality as central to science, effectively conceiving actors as utilitarian, rational and self-maximizing (Ringmar 1996; Kinnvall 2007; 2015, 160).[31] This conception found its way into US academia, which favoured a scientific approach to the study of international politics. Spearheaded by Waltz's Theory of International Politics (1979), the analytical shift from human nature to environmental factors as the 'ultimate cause' also meant the adoption of rationality as a central necessity for understanding international relations (Sterling-Folker 2006, 237). In effect, this transition allowed the introduction of rationalist approaches from economy and game theory in the discipline. Emotion, and thus also shame, became irrelevant to the study of international politics, although they were often still implicitly assumed (Crawford 2000).

The re-introduction of shame in IR discourse came with the rising influence of IR constructivism in the 1990s. As a more sociologically inspired approach, constructivism shifted the analytical focus towards conceiving international politics as constituted by ideational factors

---

[28] This bias was already present with Max Weber (1947, 92).
[29] Kant is often considered to be the originator of this view (source).
[30] Most notably, these were Charles Merriam, Harold Lasswell, and Quincy Wright.
[31] In addition, this conception also reified the so-called 'malestream' of liberal theory (Hay 2002). More specifically, "common attributes of states, such as independence, strength, autonomy and self-help, resemble the characteristics of the Hobbesian 'rational economic and sovereign' man – a man who is disembodied, ageless, sexless and transcendent of historic particularity" (Kinnvall 2015, 160).

such as ideas, values, cultures, and identities. One of the central contributors to this approach, Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, argued in his seminal work, *World of Our Making* ([1989] 2013) that hegemony, hierarchy, and heteronomy are distinct structures in world politics that are constituted onto the repeated behaviour by agents in the form of instructive, directive, and commitment rules (Ibid. 121). Building on a discussion of Ruth Benedict's (1946, 222-227) terminology of guilt, shame, and fear cultures,[32] Onuf passingly claims that violating a rule results in these emotions (Onuf 2013, 122-123). Similarly, in their article on international norm dynamics, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) argue that states follow norms that are associated with their identity because these standards for behaviour act as sources of pride and self-esteem. In short, states maintain a consistent Self-identity by keeping to certain normative behaviour which, in turn, grants them confidence to act in international politics. Social norms are, in so doing, also sustained through the punishing prospect of disapproval and stigma by others when they are violated. In short, norm-breaking behaviour among states can generate shame, guilt, and embarrassment (Ibid., 903).[33]

This claim became an implicit assumption, as research in norm dynamics came to focus primarily on the act of 'naming and shaming', a process of "moral consciousness-raising" (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999, 237) often employed by the human rights community for bringing pariah states into the fold. According to this literature, norm entrepreneurs intentionally try to bring reputational costs to states that transgress norms by pointing them out on the international stage. Yet, regardless of the emotion figuring in the literature's moniker, the naming and shaming literature does not elaborate on the politics of shame. Whereas the ideal goal of naming and shaming is to make individual policymakers of targeted governments feel shame for their transgressions (Friman 2015, 3), expressing the emotion is not a requirement for them to understand and act upon the threat of naming and shaming to their state's status in international community (Weisband 2000; Risse and Ropp 2013). Shame is, consequently, more of a metaphor for a state's rational reflection on its reputation costs and status management (Ilgit and Prakash 2019).[34]

---

[32] This refers to the anthropological concept that certain cultures can be categorized in their approach to behaviour governance regarding law, rule, and etiquette. For the theoretical basis of this argument, see Benedict (1946), Kluckhohn, (1960) and Mead (1937).

[33] They make this claim based on the work of Jon Elster (1989) on social order.

[34] Moreover, Friman (2015, 44) claims that "for the naming and shaming concept to be useful, it should not depend on the actual psychological state of the target".

An additional critique regarding the use of shame in orthodox constructivist literature is its assumed connection to socialisation. The theory of Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) argued that states are socialised in the international community through processes of shaming. It presumes a causal link that conflates norm internalisation with socialisation, which, in turn, is believed to warrant compliance with said norm (Zarakol 2014).[35] Shame was thus superseded by the principle of rational persuasion that builds on Habermas' theory of communicative action (Cf. Risse-Kappen 1995; Weisband 2000). However, states do not necessarily comply with international norms, even though they internalized them. These states, often belonging to the Global South, are considered pariahs in international society for their continuing transgressing behaviour. More recent research has argued that non-Western states internalized the notion of having a stigma, or 'spoiled identity', because of their dissimilarity with the dominant Western international order (Zarakol 2011; 2014; Adler-Nissen 2014). This shameful attribution made them formally internalise Western norms to be admitted to this community, effectively implying that they never domestically complied with them (Checkel 2007). The process of stigmatisation should thus be taken into account in how international society originated and was sustained.

Shame is, thus, either absent or superficially assumed in mainstream IR theories. By conceiving states as autonomous actors that solely aim to maximise their self-interest, (neo)realist scholars imbue and ascribe these polities with a complete lack of reverence towards international norms. In their view, shamelessness is an expected quality of states, which validates a cynical and tragic view of international politics that considers transgressive state behaviour as unavoidable and even desirable to some extent.[36] Liberal and English School scholars might not share this perspective but they generally do not interact with the emotion of shame. While some constructivists did conceive a role for shame in their theorisation, their conception appears to not transcend that of a rational reflection of states on their social status in the dominant world order. In effect, their perspective can end up reifying global hierarchies and validating coercive attempts of hegemons to impose their norms onto weaker states. To be clear, the claim here is

---

[35] Additionally, this ahistorical understanding of the social dynamics of world politics reproduces the hierarchies in the international system by considering non-compliance to be endogenous (i.e. states do not comply with norms because of faulty socialisation) and compliance to be exogenous (i.e. states that do comply do so because of external validation).

[36] To some extent, ontological security literature has similarly reproduced these tragic and cynical views. See Rossdale (2015), Browning and Joenniemie (2015), Kinnvall and Mitzen (2020), and Delehanty and Steele (2009).

not that shamelessness in international affairs does or should not exist[37] but that shame warrants more theoretical attention to understand key social phenomena and processes in world politics.

ONTOLOGICAL (IN)SECURITY AND SHAME

A growing body of work in IR considers shame to be a more fundamental notion for understanding state behaviour (e.g. Steele 2008; Zarakol 2010; 2011; Subotić and Zarakol 2012; Adler-Nissen 2016; Browning 2019; Ilgit and Prakash 2019; Lethi and Penannen 2020; Hagström 2021; Naudé 2022). These scholars are not interested in shame in the narrow sense,[38] for example as it is expressed by individual leaders during public apologies or other forms of remorse, but approach the emotion from a so-called macro or communitarian perspective (Koschut 2020). This approach has most notably been used by authors that engage with the notion of ontological security,[39] which assumes that a state, or any actor for that matter, is primarily concerned with the need to "maintain consistent self-concepts" (Giddens 2006, 3; Steele 2008). State behaviours that are otherwise considered to be irrational, such as costly humanitarian actions or unwinnable wars, are thus understood and explained as strategies or coping mechanisms for securing a state's sense of Self. The role of shame is considered to be key in this process. However, both the role and meaning of shame are subject to tensions in the literature of ontological security between various and divergent approaches.

At its core, ontological security is based on an existentialist perspective on life, in that it draws from the notion that human existence is fundamentally contingent (de Beauvoir [1944]2020, 106). When the subject becomes aware of this inherent contingency, it triggers anxiety about whether their life is meaningless (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 245). Important in this regard is that the experience of anxiety is notably different from fear (Rumelili 2015a; 2021). Drawing from the writings of Søren Kierkegaard ([1844]1980), Sigmund Freud (1920), and Martin Heidegger ([1927]1996), anxiety is argued to be directionless and inherent to 'everyday being' (or *Dasein*) and 'being cast into the world' (or *Geworfenheit*), while fear is directed towards a

---

[37] See Jill Locke (2016) for an exploration of the latter claim in contemporary society. Future research could explore the tensions between shame and shamelessness in international politics.

[38] As would be the case in the 'naming and shaming' literature (Cf. Friman 2015, 3) or more individualist approaches to emotions in politics. See Ilgit and Prakash (2019) for an extensive critique of this approach.

[39] To clarify, the 'ontological' aspect of this name does not refer to the philosophical study of being. Ontological in this sense only denotes the sense of being, which one wants to secure by maintaining continuity of Self and surroundings.

clearly identified subject.[40] Unlike fear, anxiety is not an emotion, but rather a "generalized state of the emotions of the given individual" (Giddens 1984, 61), also referred to as a fundamental mood (Ringmar 2017; 2018; Cupać 2020; Rumelili 2021). In effect, it is a prior condition in which fear, as well as a range of other emotions and behaviours, are rooted (Elpidorou and Freeman 2015; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 245). This multifinality of anxiety is a consequence of the individual's desire to avoid or resolve their awareness of the contingency of Self (Krickel-Choi 2022). The effects of anxiety are thus unpredictable, in that it can lead both to a reaffirmation of a sense of normalcy and status quo or act as a source for change (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 245; Krickel-Choi 2022).

The conceptual origin of ontological security lies with the seminal work of the existentialist psychiatrist Ronald David Laing,[41] *The Divided Self* ([1960]1990). Laing constructed this concept to explore schizophrenia as a subjective experience. In particular, he intended to give an insight into the anxieties and dangers that are associated with this mental illness and how patients attempt to deal with them. The term 'ontological security' is used by Laing to denote a state of being where the Self is experiencing security on an existential level, or, in his own words, an ontologically secure person (Ibid., 39),

> "may have a sense of his presence in the world as a real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person. As such, he can live out into the world and meet others: a world and others experienced as equally real, alive, whole, and continuous. Such a basically ontologically secure person will encounter all the hazards of life, social, ethical, spiritual, biological, from a centrally firm sense of his own and other people's reality and identity."

Ontological security thus implies a feeling of comfort with the Self and the world that the individual inhabits. Though they might be subject to bouts of anxiety at times, as this is part of 'everyday being' (Cf. Krickel-Choi 2022), their existence as a Self would not be questioned. In contrast, an ontologically insecure individual is one "whose experiences may be utterly lacking in any unquestionable self-validating certainties" (Laing 1990, 39). The existential anxieties

---

[40] I want to thank Job Vossen for pointing this out to me.
[41] Laing bases himself, among others, on the existentialist philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

and dangers that are particular to this experience cause, in turn, unique coping strategies that can explain why patients dealing with schizophrenia behave the way they do.[42]

Laing's conceptualization of ontological security was picked up by the prominent sociologist Antony Giddens in his 1991 book *Modernity and Self-identity* to aid his inquiry into late modern mechanisms of Self-identity. He conceived anxiety as a permanent state of being, effectively conflating it with the experience of ontological insecurity (Krickel-Choi 2022, 12). In so doing, Giddens connected ontological security to 'practical consciousness',[43] indicating that individuals provide 'answers' to possible questions about the Self through day-to-day practices. Rather than reflective cognitive processes, these answers are based on unconscious emotional commitments. This brings him to argue that "the ordinary conventions of day-to-day life […] brackets out questions about ourselves, others and the object-world which have to be taken for granted in order to keep on with everyday activity" (Giddens 2006, 38). Moreover, Giddens conceives ontological security as the acceptance of the reality of Self and Others and Self-identity[44] (Ibid, 55). By emphasizing the role of Others in the development of ontological security, Giddens departs from the psychological agent-centred approach of Laing and implies that ontological security seeking is principally social in nature. In other words, he argues that consistent Self-concepts cannot be attained without social interaction.

In Giddens' conceptualisation, ontological security and the day-to-day routines that support it are inextricably linked to unconscious emotional commitments. More specifically, the experience of having a 'protective cocoon' is based on fundamental feelings of trust that an individual develops during childhood. Shame 'eats away' at the trust that lies on the basis of this experience because it is fundamentally linked to the fear of abandonment[45] (Giddens 2006,

---

[42] In effect, Laing had constructed the concept of ontological security primarily to contrast it to its pathological insecure counterpart. He thus mainly develops the latter and leaves the former to be discovered by others. Still, the divide between these two concepts remains obscure and needs more fleshing out. See Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi (2020) and Krickel-Choi (2022) for extensive discussions of this point.

[43] This latter notion provides 'answers' to possible questions about the Self through day-to-day practices. However, rather than reflective cognitive processes, these answers are based on unconscious emotional commitments. The coupling of ontological security to practical consciousness hails from Harold Garfinkel, Søren Kierkegaard, Erik Erikson, D.W. Winnicott, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Sigmund Freud, Harry Stack Sullivan, Erving Goffman, Martin Heidegger, George Herbert Mead, Charles Taylor, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Helen Lewis, and Heinz Kohut.

[44] Giddens (2006, 54) defines Self-identity as "the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography". This dissertation follows this understanding but acknowledges the difficulty of separating identity from similar and related concepts such as personality, psyche, and ideology (Lebow 2016, 28-29; Naudé 2022, 29; Krickel-Choi 2022b). See Krickel-Choi (2022a) for a more in-depth treatment of how Giddens conceived Self-identity.

[45] The chaos that roams outside the comfort of ordinary conventions is likened by Giddens (2006, 38) to the Kierkegaardian notion of *dread*, or "the prospect of being overwhelmed by anxieties that reach to the very roots of our coherent sense of `being in the world'".

67). To be clear, Giddens does not consider shame to be the negative equivalent of trust, nor does he argue that it is an experience that has to be avoided at all costs. He views shame as "anxiety about the adequacy of the narrative by means of which the individual sustains a coherent biography" (Ibid., 66). This experience is thus a significant threat to trust and can even be a potentially destructive force, effectively generating ontological insecurity. However, Giddens follows Heinz Kohut (1971) and Erik Erikson ([1950]1993) in arguing that shame is also a necessary feature in the psychological development of an individual, as it counters narcissistic tendencies through the necessary acceptance of imperfections and limitations of the Self (Giddens 2006, 69). In turn, this can bring the individual to the antitheses of shame, namely feelings of pride or self-esteem, which according to Giddens (2006, 67) gives "confidence in the integrity and value of the narrative of Self-identity".

SHAME IN IR ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY

This notion of ontological security has been eagerly applied to the subject of world politics, in particular by scholars who identify themselves as constructivists.[46] Jef Huysmans (1998), Bill McSweeney (1999), Ian Manners (2002), and Catarina Kinnvall (2004) were the first to introduce the concept of ontological security in IR. Yet, the concept started gaining more following in IR with Jennifer Mitzen's (2006) application of Giddens's conception of ontological security to (partially) explain the security dilemma. To argue this claim, Mitzen relied on a structural understanding of the workings of ontological security (Zarakol 2010, 7). She specifically argues that, just like an individual, a state experiences its Self as a whole and continuous entity to realize a sense of agency (Mitzen 2006, 342). This state Self-identity is constructed upon the intersubjective meanings that constitute international society and necessitates the recognition of Others (Zarakol 2010, 7). To put it differently, the ontological security-seeking behaviour of states is based on routinized relationships with others, which will be maintained by states as they ground their Self-identity, even if these routines are potentially harmful to them. Applied to the security dilemma, the need to maximise ontological security explains why states do not escape dilemmatic conflict, as they prefer dangerous routines that contribute to ever-escalating conflicts over losing ontological security (Mitzen 2006).

---

[46] Notably, the influential constructivist theorist Alexander Wendt already mentioned the concept in his 1994 article on collective identity formation, see Wendt (1994). However, he did not elaborate on what meaning or function ontological security might have for state behaviour.

Shame did not feature in the writings of Mitzen but was introduced in later work on ontological security by Brent Steele (2008). Whereas Mitzen emphasizes the external sources of ontological security, namely routinized relationships, Steele argues that Giddens puts more weight on the need for a consistent biographical narrative (Ibid., 18). More specifically, the sense of continuity, stability, and order that an agent desires can only be achieved through constructing stable "stories of the Self" (Ibid., 10-12). In this sense, a biographical narrative would function as the encompassing framework through which common events and interactions are understood. Day-to-day routines support this framework, as they bring the biographical narrative into practice, but do not constitute the psychological basis for ontological security. In contrast to Mitzen, Steele argues for a more 'agent-centred' approach and primarily builds on insights from psychology (Zarakol 2010, 7). Because the stability of the agents' narrative is a central feature of ontological security for Steele, so does the emotion that can threaten it.

Analogous to Giddens, Steele primarily uses the term 'shame' as a shorthand to denote the anxiety[47] that originates from the disparity between a state's Self-narrative and its Self-identity (Browning 2019; Steele 2008, 2-3). In other words, this state shame is the tension that is caused by the inability of a state to narrate how it sees its Self. When states experience shame, according to Steele, they are compelled towards social action, or state behaviour that is commonly described as moral, humanitarian, or honour-driven. Rather than compelled by the international context, such as through the influence of norms or regimes (Cf. Mitzen 2006), these actions are considered to be rational pursuits that principally serve Self-identity needs (Steele 2008, 2-5). The origins of these actions do not lie in a challenge to the routines of the state but instead in their ability to narrate their sense of Self. In other words, if a state encounters a situation that challenges the image that it has of itself, for example, an accusation of past human rights transgressions for a liberal Western state, it will commit to an action that would rectify its Self-identity, which in the case of the previous example would typically be a public apology (Steele 2008, 5; Innes and Steele 2014). Thus, rather than the result of an external, normative influence, such actions of states originate from an interrogation of their sense of Self and their estimation of the potential costs and benefits for their identity.

---

[47] Anxiety is considered by Giddens (1984, 61) a "generalized state of the emotions of the given individual". Moreover, it is "fear which has lost its object through unconsciously formed emotive tensions that express 'internal dangers' rather than externalised threats" (2006, 45), and generates repression and its behavioural symptoms, rather than the other way around.

For Steele, shame functions as an internal, subjective motivator for states, which compels them towards actions that are believed to counter the threat to their Self-identity. However, other authors have contended that state shame should not be seen as strictly internally generated and experienced.[48] Following Catarina Kinnvall's (2004) interpretation of ontological security, Ayşe Zarakol (2010; 2011) takes a middle ground concerning the sources of ontological security, and as such, works with an approach that makes state shame more complex. Specifically, this position assumes that ontological security is a fundamental search for narrative stability about the state Self (Zarakol 2010, 7). However, states, just like individuals, always define their Self through interactions with others, making Self-representations impossible to separate from representations of others (Kinnvall 2004, 749). In this sense, both state Self-identity and shame are co-constituted by the agent's interrogation into its Self as well as its relations to Others. The Self-narrative of a state is, then, both a product of domestic factors and its place in international society. State shame would thus be indicative of how the country places itself in world politics and how it connects its international and domestic Self-image (Subotić and Zarakol 2012, 916).

More recent theorization on ontological security in IR has emphasized anxiety rather than shame[49] (e.g. Steele and Subotić 2018; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020; Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi 2020; Rumelili 2020; 2021; Eberle and Daniel 2022; Krickel-Choi 2022). In effect, the internal diversity in ontological security literature further developed because of the productive and rich interaction with both existentialist and post-structuralist thought (Krickel-Choi 2022). A particular line in this body of work has used Lacanian psychoanalysis to explore how states and other actors conceive and develop their Self and the social reality surrounding them (e.g. Epstein 2011; Kinnvall 2018; Eberle 2019; Browning 2019; Naudé 2022). Lacan's understanding of the split subject that experiences a permanent "lack of an essentialized encompassing identity" (Kinnvall 2015, 164) allowed for a more internally differentiated understanding of the state, effectively countering state monism. The Lacanian subject's desire to feel more united and complete informs a focus on fantasy and imagination, which in the case of states entail, for example, nationalist ideals of wholeness and homogeneity (Eberle 2019).

---

[48] For an overview of this divide see Krickel-Choi (2022).

[49] As mentioned in the previous section, anxiety is more central to the existentialist groundings of ontological security. As anxiety generates a broad spectrum of emotions, it also offers more options for analysis. However, since anxiety is in itself not an emotion, but more akin to a 'mood' (Rumelili 2021; Ringmar 2017; 2018) a deeper analysis of the politics and state behaviour that follows anxiety requires dedicated theorization and conceptualization of emotions that are generated by anxiety and ontological (in)security more generally.

Emotions are key to Lacan's notion of symbolic order and the actor's longing for a stable mode of subjectivity, which corresponds with the subject's desire to counter the inherent lack that they experience (Lacan 1988; Fattah and Fierke 2009; Kinnvall 2018, 532). In so doing, the research that focuses on this particular conceptual and theoretical framework accords emotions, or emotionality, a central role in their analyses.

In contributions focused on state narcissism (Hagström 2021; Naudé 2022), shame has found a resurgence. These works hint at a more radical understanding of the politics that the emotion can inspire. Most notably, the research of Linus Hagström (2021) puts feelings of pride and shame central to Self-securitizing processes, which are mediated by narcissistic narratives of the state. In other words, pride and shame define the narcissistic Self-identification and Self-security-seeking of great power states but they interact in a variety of ways with the narratives of the latter (Ibid., 5). The narrative of shame, in particular, is aimed at emphasizing the weakness of the state and the shame that this fear generates (Ibid., 6). As such, the greatness of the Self remains always assumed, regardless of the existence of these feelings of shame (Cf. Nussbaum 2004; Tarnopolsky 2010; Ahmed 2014, 109; Muldoon 2017). Shame can thus also be conceived as a narrative, rather than as an emotion as such. This conception implies that the meaning and role of shame might be more subject to politics than is generally assumed by earlier theories on ontological security.

CRITICIZING SHAME IN IR ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY

The previous discussion has indicated the rich conceptual development of shame in IR constructivism from its initial understanding as a social mechanism for interstate conformity (Cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) to the 'inability to narrate the state's sense of Self' (Cf. Steele 2008). This has brought new insights into the social and political roles of the emotion of shame in world politics. Yet, whereas the previous discussion has shown that shame has significant analytical and explanatory potential for state behaviour, its current conception is unclear and fundamentally flawed. By defining it as the 'inability to narrate the state's sense of Self', it denotes an absence (i.e. 'inability') of empirically qualifiable behaviour (i.e. state Self-narration). Not only does this preclude any attempt at capturing particular behaviour, but since this definition includes any possible action as part of state shame's phenomenology, it also fails to give more insight into why this specific behaviour is enacted.

As the current conception of state shame is rooted in the theorisation surrounding ontological security, it is also susceptible to the broader critiques that have been levelled against this approach. The most damning claim against ontological security scholarship has been that it validates status quo-seeking behaviour by focusing on how states maintain their sense of Self (Browning 2016; Browning and Joenniemi 2016; Berenskötter 2020). This particularly relates to a tendency in this literature to understand the state Self as something that can attain stability and 'wholeness' which, in effect, legitimizes the state of affairs. Ontological security scholarship has also been criticized for obscuring power relations and ordering tactics (Rossdale 2015) and sustaining a problematic one-sided understanding of political identity (Lebow 2016). In short, the focus of this literature on state Self-securitization makes it forgo the layered politics that characterize this phenomenon.

These critiques also hold true for how state shame is conceived in this literature. It acts as a central social mechanism that maintains the status quo by compelling states to secure their sense of Self. States want to avoid this 'inability to narrate the sense of Self' or aim to regain the validation to restore the existing situation. State shame thus leaves little room for agency or as a potential for social change. Yet, some states wilfully explore and even offer rectification for shameful episodes in their past (e.g. Branscombe and Doosje 2004; Bentley 2015; Daase e.a. 2015; Bagdonas 2018). Others actively engage and even celebrate past defeats and commemorate heinous crimes as a part of their state's sense of Self (Hagström 2021). There are also those states that resist this shame and actively refute it (Zarakol 2011; Adler-Nissen 2014; Subotić 2018), making it a far less one-sided social mechanism than is assumed. Building on these broader issues, this chapter argues that five specific qualities of state shame can be critiqued and necessitate substantive conceptual work.

First, it is unclear how state shame relates to anxiety in IR. On the one hand, Steele (2008, 2-3) uses state shame as a metaphor to signify the anxiety about a state's inability to narrate its sense of Self. In this sense, the concept denotes anxiety and is not an emotion in and of itself.[50] On the other hand, more recent theorisation has conceived shame as an emotional projection of anxiety (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 249) or a related emotion to this mood (Krickel-Choi 2022, 7). These conceptions thus hold that shame is an emotion that has its origin in anxiety but is both ontologically and phenomenologically different. Moreover, the added difficulty of

---

[50] Yet, Steele is rather confusing, in that he later discusses the results of research into vicarious shame, or shame that is experienced by individuals who feel like actions affect them, even if they were not personally present (Steele 2008, 54). In effect, it can be questioned whether Steele uses state shame as a metaphor, or as a collective emotion.

separating state emotions from state narratives that express emotions (Cf. Hagström 2021) raises the question of whether state shame is a 'popular emotion' in and of itself (Hall 2015) or a narrative projection of emotion onto the state. The relationship between anxiety and shame is thus problematic and, as a result, one could raise fundamental questions about the particularity of state shame and what this concept specifically denotes.

Second, the literature is in doubt whether shame or ontological insecurity more generally (Adler-Nissen 2016, 34), is caused by specific or more chance events.[51] On the one hand, the ontological security literature generally assumes that life is contingent (Steele 2008, 164), implying that shame is an unforeseeable phenomenon, making its causality something that cannot be theorized upon (Hagström 2021, 3). On the other hand, the case has also been made that shame is a more predictable phenomenon as it occurs in particular circumstances. There is empirical research that would suggest that there is some form of structural pattern to be discerned regarding the causes of state shame (Cf. Zarakol 2011; Epstein 2012; Subotić and Zarakol 2012; Adler-Nissen 2014; Brassett, Browning, and O'Dwyer 2021). Moreover, certain identifiable 'external shocks' such as power transitions, scandals, global financial crises, or transnational migration are believed to cause ontological insecurity (Subotić and Steele 2018; Ejdus 2018; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2018, 828; Arfi 2020), implying that this can also be the case for state shame. There is, then, a need to further develop upon the emergence of state shame to fully understand its role and significance in international politics.

Third, the current conceptualisation of state shame cannot account for the divergent and contradicting effects that it has been attributed with.[52] On the one hand, Steele (2008) argues that states are compelled towards social actions as a result of shame.[53] These actions, such as humanitarian aid or apologies, are seen as solutions to threats for the state Self and are believed to absolve the tensions that these states experience. On the other hand, other research has suggested that state shame can generate paralysis (Flockhart 2016), avoidance behaviour (Lupovici 2012), denials of wrongdoing, feelings of resentment (Zarakol 2010; 2011; Browing 2019), hostile bravado (Adler-Nissen 2014), or even potentially inspire interstate violence (Harkavy 2000; Saurette 2006; Browning and Joenniemi 2016; Homolar and Löfflmann 2021).

---

[51] Some authors have claimed that this is irrelevant. More specifically, "Shame may arise endogenously, exogenously or through intersubjective pressures, but the source of the shame is less important than its effects on the state to try to rectify the resulting imbalance between behaviour and self-narrative" (Youde 2014, 429). Other authors state that shame causes anxiety, rather than the other way around (von Essen and Danielson 2023).

[52] A similar problem can be identified with the focus on anxiety. See Krickel-Choi (2022) and Lebow (2016).

[53] It is important to note that Steele does not consider this an unquestionable causal relationship but approaches it from the notion of contingency.

The literature effectively reproduces the often returning constructivist problem of codetermination, namely that a concept simultaneously explains both stability and change without clarifying what drives agents to one or the other (Flockhart 2016, 801; Krickel-Choi 2022, 11). In so doing, the ambiguity regarding this divergence in different coping behaviours diminishes the analytical and explanatory potential of state shame.[54]

Fourth, the variety in social and moral categories of state shame is underexplored. Conceptualisations of shame in psychological and sociological research generally discuss the emotion's Janus-faced nature (Thomason 2018). Moreover, both classic and novel analyses of shame have almost all based themselves on or proposed typologies of shame that differ significantly from each other in their social and moral role (e.g. Lewis 1971; Kemper 1978; Scheff 2000; Barbalet 2001; Severson 2018; Mitchell 2020). Recent contributions to political philosophy on the role of shame in democratic politics have also argued for analytically separating distinct types of shame to explore and understand the ethical and political roles of the emotion (e.g. Nussbaum 2004; Tarnopolsky 2010). In effect, how state shame is conceptualised in the ontological security literature obscures the wide variety of social and moral roles that it can have in world politics.[55] This means that it is not only necessary to claim that shame is ubiquitous in international relations, but also to identify how it plays a significant role.[56]

Finally, a discussion surrounding the ethics of state shame is non-existent in IR. In the debates on shame in philosophy, criminology, sociology, and political theory, various positions regarding the emotion's dangerous, yet necessary role in social life can be identified (e.g. Braithwaite 2000; Nussbaum 2004; Tarnopolsky 2010; Jacquet 2015; Locke 2016). When this emotion is felt by a victim or a perpetrator, then it ought to provoke ethical discussions that surpass mere reflections on what this exposes about the emotion's link to power and status. In contrast, the implicit normative consensus in IR literature assumes that ontological security is held to be desirable, both by the analysed state agents and the analysing scholars. Ontological insecurity, and thus shame, on the other hand, is conceived as an issue that has to be resolved

---

[54] Admittedly, Zarakol (2010; 2011) does give an explanation, namely that the state's status in international politics determines how it copes with shame and norm socialisation/stigmatisation. Yet, this explanation does not account for the full range of behaviours that are discussed here.

[55] Ilgit and Prakash (2021) and Koschut (2021) are not part of the ontological security literature but they do conceive a typology of shame based, respectively, on Martha Nussbaum (2004) and John Braithwaite (2000).

[56] This argument is made in analogy to the "go beyond the 'emotions matter' approach" (Koschut 2017, 482).

(Browning 2016; Browning and Joeniemi 2016).[57] In so doing, this status quo-validating perspective avoids a normative consideration of the transformative but also reactionary politics that state shame can inspire to.

CONCLUSION

The current chapter presents a genealogy of shame in IR literature. It first established and criticized the implicit assumption of shamelessness in the IR traditions of (neo)realism and (neo)liberalism and how orthodox constructivism presumed shame as a simplified principle behind norm socialisation. In assuming that states either lack the capacity for shame or that it purely refers to a rational deliberation on status management, these approaches fail to capture and explain key processes in international politics and reify and validate the current international order. The literature on ontological security developed a more in-depth discussion of shame in world politics, in that it is conceived as a state's inability to narrate its sense of Self. Yet, its current conception and use remain ambiguous regarding the particularity, emergence, divergent effects, social roles, and ethics of state shame.

By ending on these five critiques, it can be concluded that this concept is both unwieldy and seemingly unsubstantial. This begs the question of whether state shame produces "a thoughtful ordering of empirical reality" (Weber 1999, 160) or if it generates more issues than it aims to clarify. Why develop further on this notion if it seems untenable? How can it capture particular state behaviours when it denotes the absence of empirically qualifiable actions? Why not focus on a broader concept such as anxiety? And why use it if it cannot explain the wide variety of behaviours that are believed to be encompassed by it? These questions, while reasonable, forgo the analytical and explanatory potential that the concept of state shame offers. More specifically, this concept can contribute to IR in two substantive ways.

First, as an emotion, rather than a mood or 'generalized state of being' (Cf. anxiety), shame is empirically more tangible and resonates with particular empirical phenomena in world politics that are otherwise difficult to explain in a parsimonious way. Specific practices such as state apologies or reconciliation work are intuitively linked but also dynamics of violence following humiliation, bouts of policy paralysis, and general avoidance of a political issue regarding past

---

[57] Other researchers have formulated that anxiety or ontological insecurity can be desirable. See Rumelili (2015b), Browning (2018), Untalan (2019), and Gustafsson (2021).

wrongdoing, all somehow make more sense when discussed in light of this emotion. Shame seems to be a more grounded notion in social life, a more 'experience-near concept' as Clifford Geertz (1983, 57) would call it. Practitioners and observers use it more naturally and effortlessly to denote situations, practices, beliefs etc., and it would be understood by others when it is used. In short, state shame is a concept that is based on a tangible experience in world politics.

Second, the discussion of state shame as a concept exposes deeper-lying tensions and taken-for-granted assumptions in the discipline. The goal of a genealogy is not necessarily to expose issues with a concept and, subsequently, reconstruct it to achieve a more 'scientific' definition (Cf. Sartori 1984). Rather, the aim is also to link and expose the debates that surround them (Guzzini 2005, 496). It is through this genealogical research that reflections are made regarding the meta-theoretical context, which opens up further conceptual disputes. This, in turn, can generate more understanding of the world (Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 503). In so doing, the subsequent theorisation regarding the concept not only hones the conceptual toolkit of the discipline but also (dis)entangles debates that lie at the core of its attempts at theory (Schaffer 2016). There is thus value in reconceiving state shame as a concept, as it provides an impetus to question what it means to apprehend and capture broader truths about world politics.

CHAPTER 3. STATE SHAME AND ITS POLITICS

The central goal of the current chapter is to reconceive state shame and theorise its politics. To this end, it constructs a theoretical framework that can trace the various aspects of state shame and infer its origins, social roles, and political effects. The central argument of this theory is that state shame refers to a narrative on the social status of a state. Building on the notion that states are narrated into existence, it is assumed that emotions can be projected onto the state Self and, in so doing, act as motivations and justifications for political action. State shame narratives are specifically generated by a situation where a state is conceived to be negatively assessed by an agent (either a Self or Other) regarding a certain failure (either failing a Self-ideal or a social norm). Depending on how political agents conceive this shame situation, they construct one of four types of shame narrative, namely situational, narcissistic, aggressive, or deferential shame, that each inform different coping and defence mechanisms. This typology is an analytical tool that identifies narrative competition between political agents who aim to maintain or change narratives on the shameful status of their state. By using this theoretical framework, the subsequent empirical chapters can expose the politics of state shame and give insight into how one state shame narrative becomes hegemonic and informs certain state behaviours.

The chapter begins with a brief note on how it approaches the reconceptualization of state shame. This discussion is followed by a clarification of how emotions play a role in international politics. Next, it delves into psychological and sociological studies of shame and gives insight into the variety of characteristics and roles of the emotion. Based on the previous two discussions, the subsequent section argues for understanding state shame as a narrative on the state's social status. This conception brings the chapter to argue for conceiving a theoretical framework surrounding the shame situation, which offers explicit expectations regarding the emergence, social roles, and effects of state shame. It then elaborates on the characteristics of the four types of state shame narratives and how each of them inspires distinct state behaviours. To conclude, some preliminary expectations are made regarding the politics of state shame in the final section.

Social science concepts can be reconceived in two ways. The first, and most common, approach is reconceptualization. This method builds on John Locke's (1998, 683) advice to "strip all... terms of ambiguity and obscurity" to secure universal agreement regarding the facts under examination (Robinson 1962, 69). In effect, theoretical concepts are assumed to directly reflect social facts or, at least, ought to aspire to this ideal (Schaffer 2016). Reconceptualization is the scientific practice of reconstructing the meaning of a concept in such a way that it more adequately denotes objective reality (Ibid., 4-5). The approach is thus primarily aimed at providing a researcher with an accurate delineation of the social phenomenon that they are aiming to empirically describe or explain. When applied to this research, the method of reconceptualization would inform an extensive consultation of scholarly work with the aim of making state shame a universally applicable concept that can objectively capture specific social phenomena. Various methodological objections can be made regarding this approach but the more pertinent problem is that the scope of the concept in this dissertation is unclear. As the previous chapter argued, there is a need to understand state shame in a more comprehensive way to capture the variety of phenomena that are attributed to it. The approach of reconceptualization would, however, require making *a priori* arbitrary judgements on what state shame could denote. In effect, the novel understanding of the concept could then, again, come to exclude certain expressions or behaviours.

The alternative approach to reconceiving social science concepts is elucidation (Schaffer 2016).[58] This hermeneutical method starts from understanding concepts as intersubjective conventions that are embedded in a socio-political and historical context (Schütz 1956; Ish-Shalom 2021). In particular, the scientist and their scientific tools are not believed to transcend language and its social conventions, moral values, and political effects.[59] Elucidation specifically aims to engage with this commonality in the terms of reference that both scientists and their research subjects use to make the social world intelligible (Taylor 1971, 27, in

---

[58] This approach is primarily based on the philosophical writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein ([1953]1986) and J. L. Austin (1970). See Schaffer (2006; 2016) for an overview of how these philosophers informed this particular approach.

[59] This position is informed, on the one hand, by Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1986) concept of *Sprachspiel* or language-game, which refers to the interwovenness of language and reality in that linguistic constructs only have a meaning as a result of the 'game' that is dictated by the context. On the other hand, it also interacts with his critique of the naturalist approach to social science concepts and tools, namely "One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it" (1986, 48, par.144).

Schaffer 2016, 7). This entails that the approach centres on exposing similarities and differences in how concepts are understood in both everyday and academic contexts (Bevir and Blakely 2018, 10). In practice, it traces the various meanings and uses of the concept in lived practice and commits to an explicit discussion of the correspondence and differences between the academic and common understanding of the term. These differences are identified "without either reifying them or branding them as ineradicable" (Taylor 2017, 43; Gadamer [1986]2004). The point is to gain insight into how people make sense of the social world and not to reduce the complexity of this world by reproducing extant social categories or labels. Because of this dedicated focus on the complex relationship between scientific concepts and the reality that they aim to capture, this approach seems more adequate for the current research. In effect, the primary goal of this dissertation is to elucidate state shame by providing both an analysis of how the concept is understood in scholarly terms (see Chapters Two and Three) and an empirical study of how it is used in lived practice (Chapters Five, Six, and Seven).

The aim of this research is thus to engage in a dialogue between the concept of state shame and how it is expressed, performed, understood, and narrated in empirical reality. To facilitate this dialogue, the current chapter presents a theoretical framework that argues for specific expectations and propositions regarding state shame and its politics. The goal of this framework is not to present a universalist understanding of the concept nor have the desire to offer a generalisable theory. Rather, its aim is to act as a starting point, an opening statement that initiates an intelligible and consistent dialogue with the empirical analysis.[60] This open-endedness allows for the theoretical discussion to cultivate both the variety and particularity of state shame while also approaching it as the complex phenomenon that is assumed to be. Simultaneously, the theoretical framework also acts as a site where otherwise implicit conceptual or theoretical choices and assumptions are made transparent. The goal of the current chapter is then to explicitly discuss what state shame could entail to supply a nuanced but systematic focus to the subsequent empirical analyses.

---

[60] In other words, to observe "what we *can't* say" (Austin 1970, 190) it is necessary to first indicate or frame what that something that we cannot say, could entail. There is an analogy of this approach with both genealogy (Bartelson 1996, 7-8), *Begriffsgeschichte* (Koselleck 1982) and onomasiology (Geeraerts 2002).

A grounding assumption for the concept of state shame is the notion that states have emotional lives. The current chapter further elucidates this assumption and presents a novel argument about how a state can be endowed with emotions without conceiving it as a unitary agent with a stable sense of Self. Key in understanding this claim is by situating the contentious debate in constructivist and ontological security scholarship on how emotions can be attributed to states. At its core, the divide can be traced back to the issue revolving around state personhood, or the state-as-a-person debate, which places scholars in opposition to each other on whether states can be conceived as real persons or in only treating states 'as if' they are persons (Ringmar 1996, 440; Kranke and Roos 2010, 1057-1058; Lerner 2020; Naudé 2022, 54).[61] Whereas there are no clear dividing lines between these positions, it can be generally assumed that the proponents of the former line of reasoning do conceive the state as capable of experiencing emotions. These authors typically build on the theorization of Alexander Wendt (1999; 2004) regarding state personhood and subjectivity. More specifically, this assumption conceives states as "purposive actors with a sense of Self" (Wendt 1999, 194). States are thus believed to be social constructs, in that they are constituted by discourses, collective identities, collective memories, and narratives (Ibid., 219), while also being unitary actors that cannot be reduced to a collection of individuals (Ibid., 197). Wendt argues this by employing the Durkheimian principle of 'emergence', or the notion that ideas are more than the sum of their parts, just like with complex systems of the physical kind (Sawyer 2002, 234; Wendt 2004, 302).

The subjectivity of a state, or of any actor for that matter, consists primarily of "narratives, of stories that constitute our diverse experiences as those of a coherent Self" (Wendt 2004, 313). Simply put, states are narrative constructs surrounding a collective, a 'We', that is positioned against an Other, a 'Them' (Somers and Gibson 1994; Ringmar 1996). Individuals use these stories and categories to define their membership to the collective which, in turn, constitutes their respective personal and collective identities.[62] These state Self-narratives are reified in social interaction, where other actors recognize and acknowledge the state as a subject (Subotić and Zarakol 2012, 917). State subjectivity is, then, based on narratives of the state Self that are

---

[61] For an overview of this debate, see Lerner (2020), Ejdus and Rečević (2020), Naude (2022), Steele (2019; 2022), and Krickel-Choi (2022, 5).

[62] To clarify, the claim is here that, "It is within this notion of the self as the other that my state-person is situated: the state as it is conceived of here is both the alien other against which individual human persons construct their selves and a representation of the self that is refracted to individual persons. […] And it is the impossible ideal self that individuals aspire toward, but never attain." (Naudé 2022, 64)

intersubjectively recognized. Building on this latter argument and the notion of collective memory, Wendt (1999, 225; 2004, 311-314) ascribe to states a collective consciousness that enables group-level cognition, not unlike a superorganism such as a beehive.[63] In effect, Wendt accords states with a sense of Self that makes them function as if they are a person (Wendt 1999, 225).

Regardless of the notion that states have a sense of Self, Wendt concludes that states can only experience emotions through the bodies of their constituent members. However, later theorisation built on the narrative conception of state subjectivity to ground the claim that states do exhibit attitudes similar to emotions. More specifically, a state Self-narrative constitutes a so-called 'national habitus' (Subotić and Zarakol 2012, 918), which is an internalized set of structured and structuring dispositions that collectively limit the thoughts and behaviours of state subjects (Heaney 2013).[64] It is in this national habitus that the collective consciousness of the state becomes manifest (Subotić and Zarakol 2012, 918). Because of this shared subjectivity, emotional reactions can be attributed to states without them being reduced to behavioural responses by individuals. In sum, states are capable of having emotions as they possess a collective consciousness through this national habitus.[65]

Yet, the claim that states are unitary actors, let alone have a single collective consciousness, is disputed in more recent theorization on the state Self in constructivist and ontological security literature (e.g. Lebow 2016; Adler-Nissen 2016; Vieira 2018). These critiques do not necessarily discount the presence of a national habitus and the associated collective memories and habits that support it, but they challenge the notion that a singular, unitary, and stable state Self can manifest itself through it. More specifically, the critiques base themselves on social psychological, postcolonial, Lacanian, or symbolic interactionist thought to argue that the state Self is, in fact, essentially incomplete, fragile, and deeply social (e.g. Epstein 2010; Kinnvall

---

[63] Although Wendt (2004, 314) remained initially sceptical of the existence of state consciousness, this sparked a particular debate regarding the notion of whether a state is a person (see, e.g., Wendt 2004; 2006; Neumann 2004; Jackson 2004; Kustermans 2011).

[64] This national habitus should not be considered an alternative concept for a stable and unchanging *Volksgeist* or the vague notion of 'national identity' that generates specific emotional responses (Malesevic 2011; Heaney 2013, 255-256). A national habitus is not a reified thing but a process that cannot be essentialised.

[65] The emotions that are attributed to the state should be analytically separated from what Todd Hall (2015) calls 'state emotions'. These are phenomena where state agents actually *act out* emotions, meaning that they express them in behaviour that is recognized as being emotional. State emotions are characterized by properties and feeling rules that are distinctly different from individual and popular feelings (Hall 2015, 26) and do not necessarily imply that they are shared by the rest of the population. A famous example of such emotional behaviour is the 1970 Warschauer Kniefall where the West-German Chancellor Willy Brandt expressed remorse and shame regarding the Nazi atrocities of WWII.

2015; 2018; Lebow 2016; Adler-Nissen 2016; Hagström 2021; Naudé 2022). The state Self is thus not a fixed, singular, or stable narrative, meaning that different state identities can prevail in different contexts.[66] As such, state Self-securing becomes a social process, i.e. "security-as-becoming"[67] (Cash and Kinnvall 2017, 269), where narratives are used to overcome the instability and incoherence of the state Self (Eberle 2019; Vieira 2018; Hagström 2021).

This understanding of the state Self as fragmented and fragile sweeps away the traditional argument that states are capable of experiencing emotion (Cf. Lebow 2016). Namely, as there is no singular state Self, what constitutes its collective consciousness? Rather than resuscitate the latter concept, this chapter presents a novel argument on how states can be attributed with emotions without the assumption of them being a unitary actor with a stable sense of Self. Key in this regard is the notion of national habitus from a bottom-up, 'everyday' perspective (Cf. Edensor 2002; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008; Innes 2017). According to Jonathan Heaney (2013, 257), a national habitus is "the process by which the relational and historical matrix within which an individual is enmeshed becomes part of the individual's becoming, and thereby structures the individual's actions". Nationhood is thus not a concrete and delineable group but something that an individual feels and does, a "nation-ness" (Ibid.). The shared habits and memories that this national habitus generates, in turn, bring individuals to speak and write the state into existence (Cf. Epstein 2011, 341–42; Beyen 2013). Symbols and rituals are organized and elaborated by polities in a variety of ways but most notably through an "affectively charged and mobilizing narrative" (Assmann 2006, 217; Aalberts e.a. 2020). Shared memories and habits come to act as means through which collective emotions cut across individuals and forge meaningful associations between them (Ross 2006, 199; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 400). In sum, an individual's thoughts and behaviours are structured by their national habitus which, in turn, facilitates the permeation of emotions that affectively constitute their national identities.

This conception of collective emotions does not assume that all state subjects share the same affective experience. Rather, the shared memories and habits constitute an emotional space where feelings towards the state exist. This space has been denoted by the terms 'emotional community' (Hutchison 2016; Koschut 2020) or 'community of feeling' (Berezin 2002, 44-45;

---

[66] This specific claim can be argued from a symbolic interactionist or Lacanian approach. For the former, see Adler-Nissen (2016). See also Alexandria Innes (2017) for a more in-depth connection between the collective Self and emotions and Marco Vieira (2018) for a more focused discussion on the Lacanian Self as applied in IR's ontological security literature.

[67] This position can counter the status quo bias that is common in ontological security research as it places an emphasis on self-securitizing processes rather than reifying the political goals of subjects (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020).

Williams 1993, 80), and acts as a site where "citizens enact and vicariously experience collective national self-hood". It is through this community of feeling that emotions regarding the state can arise and facilitate, for example, the support for a military intervention in a foreign conflict or public outrage towards a national scandal. Additionally, individuals are subject to feeling rules that guide them into experiencing appropriate emotions (Hochschild 1979; Koschut 2020, 86). During times of crises and conflict they will rely on these familiar social standards and scripts, as this eases their existential stressors. In effect, collective emotions, and the standards of behaviour that surround them, generate social conformity and come to shape both individual and collective bodies through their circulation[68] (Ahmed 2014, 15; Pettigrove and Parsons 2012, 508).

States require that these communities of feeling come to legitimize their existence. Similar to the Lacanian subject, the state Self is continuously produced, challenged, and reproduced through emotional dynamics and is in a permanent state of becoming (Kinvall and Mitzen 2018; Arfi 2020, 291; Krickel-Choi 2022, 10). Because the Lacanian subject always strives for 'wholeness' to make up for its 'lack', it constructs fantasies and imaginations that obfuscate their inherently split and ever-changing Self (Kinnvall 2018; Eberle 2019; Eberle and Daniel 2022). The state is permanently constructed as a unitary actor through such notions as founding myths, construction of monuments and commemorative rites, beliefs in a homogeneous national identity, or fantasies of attaining complete sovereign autonomy (Anderson [1983]2006; Bhabha 1990; Cash and Kinnvall 2017, 268). These ways of ordering and amplifying political memories effectively arouse, appropriate, or suppress shared emotions that are being circulated in the community of feeling that they target. In so doing, they shape the national identities and memories that individuals come to hold.

Yet, the dominant understanding of state Self is essentially contested by competing communities of feeling. These 'arenas of emotions' act as sites where citizens, interest groups,

---

[68] As Lucien Febvre (1973, 14) put it, "emotions are contagious". They bring "together large numbers of people acting sometimes as initiators and sometimes as followers, finally reached the stage where they constituted a system of inter-individual stimuli which took on a variety of forms according to situation and circumstance, thereby producing a wide variety of reactions and modes of sensibility in each person" (Ibid., 14-15). Effectively, Febvre develops an argument similar to the one that is claimed in this research, as "the harmony thus established and the simultaneity of the emotional reactions thus guaranteed, proved to be of a kind that gave greater security or greater power to the group; utility thus soon justified the constitution of a veritable system of emotions. The emotions became a sort of institution. They were controlled in the same way as a ritual. Many of the ceremonies practised by primitive peoples [sic] are simulated situations with the obvious aim of arousing in all, by means of the same attitudes and gestures, one and the same emotion, welding them all together in a sort of superior individuality and preparing them all for the same action" (Ibid. 15).

state representatives, etc. try to enact, assert, and change their understanding of the state Self (Berezin 2002, 44-45). Political agents like activists, lobby groups, politicians, and the like, attempt to build on feelings that are circulating such as indignation, fear, pride, and so on, to service their political or psychological needs. In effect, they use means such as rituals, symbols, and narratives to mediate, neutralize or amplify extant emotions in this community of feeling and bring the state towards particular actions (e.g. Wolf 2011, 118; 2017, 11; Hall 2015, 25). Importantly, these politics of emotion can be enacted in both a conscious and unconscious manner. Strategic use of emotions in state actions is neither uncommon, apolitical or epiphenomenal. Rather, they act as key drivers in political contexts and policy processes and can make some political actions more viable than others (Ross 2006, 200; Hall 2015; Hagström 2021, 6).

The above-described dynamics are a permanent feature of political life but become more important during a period of generalized, heightened emotions in this community of feeling towards the state. Researchers in ontological security studies refer to this moment as 'existential anxiety', as opposed to the 'normal anxiety' that is more a permanent state of being (Krickel-Choi 2022). The former is caused by particular events and crises that profoundly question the parameters of the state Self (Ejdus 2018). In experiencing this existential anxiety, state subjects believe that their site of belonging (i.e. their state's sense of Self) is challenged, which they cope with by discursively expressing discontent, fear, disgust, and so on. Political agents, in turn, try to interact with these extant emotions by, both strategically and unconsciously, inscribing recognizable emotional markers into their discourse so that they resonate with their constituents or community (Cf. Lebow 2016, 28; Gustafsson and Hall 2021). These affectively charged and mobilizing narratives about the state can become widely and uncritically reproduced in various communities of feeling and eventually reach the status of common sense (Solomon 2015; Hagström 2021, 6). The goal of these political agents is, generally speaking, to influence how the state deals with existential anxiety and steer it towards behaviour that they deem desirable.

SHAME AS AN EMOTION

The next step in elucidating state shame is the clarification of shame as an emotion. To reiterate, the goal is not to come to an essentialist definition of shame, nor to make an attempt to 'capture the whole elephant' (Cf. Nathanson 1987) by exposing key characteristics that are universally

applicable. Rather, this discussion aims to construct a conceptual scheme that acts as a starting point for the dialogue with the empirical sources.[69] It gives a broad insight into the phenomenology, social and moral roles, cultural logic, and effects of shame by bringing together psychological and sociological literature. Although these conceptions have been conceived with individuals' experiences in mind, they can be used as ex-ante assumptions and expectations for more macro approaches (Hall 2015, 32; Koschut 2020, 82). Before going into this discussion, however, two important considerations should be borne in mind.

First, shame is generally denoted as an emotion. There is no scientific consensus on what this latter concept exactly refers to, making it essentially contested (Dixon 2012; Jeffrey 2014, 32). Other terms, like affect, sentiment, feeling, mood, and passion, are often linked to emotion to indicate either specific characteristics or are conceived as more encompassing concepts (Munezero e.a. 2014). To avoid conceptual complexity, the discussion will not engage in this debate and assume that emotions are subjective experiences regarding a specific object that are accompanied by changes in body and behaviour. The aim of the study is namely not to explore state shame as an emotion (i.e. what characterizes its experience), as that would be the subject of a (social) psychological study. Rather, it focuses on what it does (i.e. its politics, Cf. Ahmed 2014, 4). It is thus not crucial to make a strict division between various terms or use them to describe various qualities, as this does not serve the central goal of this dissertation.

Second, shame, like any emotion, is characterized by both a bodily experience and a cognitive state regarding that experience. Contemporary theorists on emotions (e.g. Reddy 2004; Solomon 2007; Kingston 2008; Tarnopolsky 2010; Ahmed 2014) have argued that it is untenable to consider emotions as either fully physical or ideational. A binary understanding of body and mind fails to adequately capture the complexity and elaborate nature of emotions. Instead, it is proposed to "theorize the connections between feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and practices in ways that evade the static and binary categories of inner/outer, reason/emotion, mind/body, and public/private" (Tarnopolsky 2010, 10). Emotions are also culturally distinct, in that their characteristics, experiences, and expressions can only be properly understood if considered in their own particular social, spatial, and historical context. Rather than considering shame as a universal marker for a shared affective phenomenon, then, it is used in this

---

[69] To be clear, the characteristics of shame that are discussed here are primarily informed by a Western understanding of shame. While the research acknowledges that a truly 'global' study of emotion requires non-Western voices and conceptions of shame (see Yong 2020), the empirical research is on a case where Western conceptions would dominate. The necessity for other and more diverse perspectives on state shame is argued in the conclusion.

discussion as a signifier that cannot be conflated by a single meaning that transcends its socially lived-in and embodied context. Any discussion on shame warrants a comprehensive and tactful approach to all these various facets.

Yet, regardless of this fluidity, there is something to be said about the particularity of shame's phenomenology. The general consensus in the literature is that shame is a social[70] (e.g. Williams 1993; Scheff 2000) and self-conscious emotion (e.g. Tracy, Robins, and Tagney 1995; Agamben 1999, 107). The experience of shame is commonly characterized by an intense feeling of pain, a burning sensation, a blushing face, the image of being naked,[71] or the desire to hide and disappear. These descriptions are telling of the particularity and unique meaning that the emotion can have. Building on several studies done with infants, experimental psychological research has placed the origin of shame with a response to abandonment. More specifically, newborns show behaviour and bodily response reminiscent of shame when primary caregivers do not respond with interest to their desiring gaze (Tronick 1989; Cook 1991). That infants experience a painful feeling from this is explained by their dependence on the attention of primary caregivers for their survival.[72] When being ignored in their need for attention, in effect, the child becomes aware of its own frailty and will protect itself by returning to the foetal position.[73]

In the development towards adulthood, the experience of shame becomes embedded in social life, as the need for recognition becomes externalised and projected onto others. This entails that shame starts operating through a supposition of an Other's view. More specifically, when experiencing shame, the individual assumes the view of a different actor, who makes a

---

[70] Shame has featured in the works of prominent academics in sociology and psychology because of its important social role (e.g. Georg Simmel, Norbert Elias, Erving Goffman, Richard Sennett, Helen Lynd, see Scheff 2000).

[71] The association of shame with nudity is highly significant. According to Emmanuel Levinas (1982, 87): "What appears in shame is therefore precisely the fact of being chained to oneself, the radical impossibility of fleeing oneself to hide oneself from oneself, the intolerable presence of the self to itself. Nudity is shameful when it is the obviousness of our Being, of its final intimacy. And the nudity of our body is not the nudity of a material thing that is antithetical to the spirit but the nudity of our entire Being, in all its plenitude and solidity, in its most brutal expression, of which one cannot not be aware. […] What is shameful is our intimacy, that is, our presence to ourselves. It reveals not our nothingness but the totality of our existence … What shame discovers is the Being that *discovers* itself." See Giorgio Agamben (1999, 104-106) for a more extensive discussion on this particular quality.

[72] This has been studied by the 'still-face experiments' where infants and their primary caregivers first practice mirroring, after which the caregiver stops responding emotionally to the infant. The psychologists monitoring this experiment identified numerous responses with the child that are particular to shame. See Tronick (1989) and Cook (1991) for more on this experiment.

[73] This intuitive reflex is perpetuated in adulthood. When experiencing embarrassment, guilt, shame, or humiliation, people tend to hunch their back and cross their arms, amongst other similar behaviours corresponding with the foetal position.

judgement of the Self (Barbalet 2001, 103). The view that is assumed, makes the individual see themselves as if they were this Other. Put succinctly by Sara Ahmed (2014, 106), by feeling shame, "I expose to myself that I am a failure through the gaze of an ideal other". This Other can be a factual or imaginary witness, a real or fantastical person, an individual or a collective, and so on. However, they are always in some sense idealized, which originates from the importance that the individual ascribes to them. At the same time, in being "'an ideal' that binds me to another who might be assumed to be 'with me' as well as 'like me'" (Ibid.), this ideal Self connects the individual to a community where they have a sense of belonging. The experience of shame is, then, the affective cost for not abiding by "the scripts of normative existence" (Ibid., 107).

Some of these scripts end up as idealized standards that evaluate the actor's achievements and behaviours. This "aspirational ideal image" (Cratsley 2016, 346) constitutes the narcissistic desire of humans to merge the Self with an idealized object so as to attain "autonomy, identity, uniqueness, competence, and perfection" (Morrison 1989, 64; Nussbaum 2004). When one unavoidably fails in this search for fulfilment – that is, when they realise their imperfection – they experience shame (Lewis 1971; Kohut 1971; 1977). Moreover, this experience is so severe that it gives rise to new narcissistic constructs to eliminate and eventually deny their shame (Morrison 1989, 66). This is, in part, the reason why shame is so ubiquitous and yet rarely outspoken. Other reasons include the fear of reifying shame by making it public (Ibid.) and the existence of feeling rules that suppress all emotions in the public sphere and prefer the expression of guilt over shame, which is believed to be dominant in modernized societies (Elias 2012; Hochschild 1979). Additionally, the dialectical relationship between shame and narcissism resonates with core tensions in humanness, namely that we struggle with our existence as a finite being that has to satisfy narcissistic demands and expectations (Erikson 1993; Nussbaum 2004, 174).

This process informs how shame generates social conformity. Although it is often argued that guilt is more effective in changing the behaviour of individuals (Cf. Arendt 2000; Nussbaum 2004), shame is in fact more likely to pull persons towards social expectations (e.g. Barbalet 2001, 103; Elster 1999; Braithwaite 2000; Tarnopolsky 2010, 188). This latter claim is based on the meaningfulness that is attributed to the ideal Other's gaze and the subsequent Self-evaluation and Self-reflection that it gives cause to. The focus on the Self brings individuals to self-regulating and adjusting behaviour so as to conform to normative expectations (Tracy and Robins 2007, 5-6). However, shame does not only retroactively make individuals adjust their

behaviour to this ideal Other's judgement, the memory of this painful experience also acts as a deterrent for normative transgressions (Goffman 1956).

Individuals can also be made to feel shame through the social practice of shaming. It implies that an Other explicitly judges a Self that, according to the former, has failed to uphold some form of ideal (Morrison 1989, 15). The public nature of this practice can make the accused feel embarrassed or humiliated, as their flaw is being exposed for the benefit of the accuser. They experience an intense feeling of negative validation, which sweeps away their self-esteem and activates the dynamics of Self-protection. This practice is considered to be a tool to actively police social conformity as it aims to change the behaviour of the accused so that they act according to normative scripts (Thomason 2018, 13). Importantly, if this negative judgment is internalized following repeated and historical interactions, the shamed agent acquires a stigma, or a mark of shame (Goffman 1963). The identity or behaviour that is considered to be different from the societal norm[74] leaves them permanently spoiled, even if they would act according to the norm (Ibid.).

When individuals feel shame, they are sometimes compelled towards restorative actions, which can be rituals such as apologies or compensating behaviour like being intensely focused on the desires and expectations of others (Retzinger 1995). These are primarily aimed at reaffirming the relationship between themselves and the ideal Other (Morrison 1989; Scheff 2000). In so doing, shame can play a central role in maintaining relationships with significant Others by correcting hubristic desires and narcissistic Self-conceptions or by facilitating emphatic insight into the lives of Others (Kohut 1977; Williams 1993; Tangey, Stuewig and Mashek 2007, 345; Tarnopolsky 2010; Thomason 2018). At the same time, these also aim to restore the sense of Self that has been challenged by the experience of shame (Nussbaum 2004). Restorative actions can, thus, also be instrumentalized to tend to a 'narcissistic wound' without having the intended aim of restoring a relationship or generating more empathy for the Other.

Similarly, shame can also give cause to ego or narcissistic defences such as denial, undoing, isolation, sublimation, projection, and displacement (McAdams 1998, 1125-1127; Baumeister, Dale and Sommer 1998).[75] These means are employed to secure the sense of Self that is being

---

[74] The impossibility of abiding by the norm is illustrated by a famous quote by Erving Goffman (1963, 128), stating that "[I]n an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, and a recent record in sports".

[75] Shame refutation can also take the form of flattery, in that the agent recognizes the shamefulness of the situation and assumes the view of the Other in such a way that they do not reveal any inadequacies (Tarnopolsky 2010, 19).

challenged by shame. Shame, then, does not always lead to conformity (Tarnopolsky 2010, 191; Goffman 1963).[76] Moreover, it can prompt its opposite by inspiring behaviour that challenges the place of the actor in the social bond and even the bond itself (Scheff 2000). This defence does not only lead to consequences for Others but can also severely impact the Self. When repeatedly and intensely experienced, shame can generate such acute self-hate within an individual that it can develop negative spirals that lead to self-harm and even suicide (e.g. Nussbaum 2004; Probyn 2004; Ahmed 2014). These reflexes stem from the desire to end the intolerable psychic pain and suffering experienced by the negative Self-evaluation and to escape from the Other's gaze (Lester 1997).[77]

In so doing, shame has divergent roles in social and political life. On the one hand, its link with social conformity makes it a crucial socialising tool for developing and reinforcing shared values (Etzioni 2001). The experience of this emotion is also believed to be a key step in developing mutual respect, as shame challenges narcissistic notions of omnipotence and can compel individuals to recognize the Other and their suffering (Williams 1993; Nussbaum 2004). Shaming practices are then considered key for issues of justice, both for making individual offenders come to terms with their actions (Braithwaite 2000) as well as for coercing collectives to change their transgressive behaviour and facilitate reconciliation after war, mass violence, or genocide (Lu 2008; Friman 2015; Koschut 2021). On the other hand, shame can instil individuals with a negative Self-image, which can generate apathy and cynicism towards participation in public life (Rawls 1971, 440). When this feeling is felt repeatedly, for example through historical interactions of shaming, then this fuels and facilitates structural processes of social exclusion (Goffman 1963; Nussbaum 2004, 174; Locke 2017). This systematic erosion of self-esteem effectively obstructs some individuals and groups from participation in politics, which, in turn, reifies social inequalities (Tarnopolsky 2010, 3).

---

[76] It has been argued that, when the narcissistic tendencies of the Self are more compelling than the normative scripts or the ideal Other's gaze, the shamed actor might consistently deal with shame in a nonconforming way, giving cause to pathological and anti-social behaviour (Kohut 1977; Morrison 1989).

[77] The death of the Self can be conceived as both a defence against and a restorative action following shame. In short, suicide protects the Self from harm as it avoids further confrontation with the wrongfulness of the Self. There are significant cultural differences in how this is perceived and understood. For example, cultures that attribute a lot of importance to the dignity and respect of the family consider suicide as a legitimate way to restore the honour of the family after a shameful transgression.

The theoretical framework of this dissertation assumes that state subjectivity is constituted of state Self-narratives, which are imbued with emotions that circulate in the communities of feeling regarding the state. Emotions can thus be projected onto state narratives, effectively conceiving states as subjects that are capable of experiencing emotions, regardless if they physically can. The notion that the state is feeling or ought (not) to feel shame informs state agents on how the state needs to behave. In so doing, the politics of state shame can entail all possible qualities, roles, and behaviours that are associated with the emotion of shame. In short, state shame denotes a particular sort of narrative on the state that relates in some way or another to how shame works.[78] Whereas the ontological security literature conceives the concept as 'the state's inability to narrate its sense of Self' (Steele 2008), state shame is held here to imbue a particular emotional logic or structure to a narrative on the state.

The origin of state shame is generally believed to be located with status and power dynamics of the state. More specifically, a dominant or unquestioned state Self and its conception of the surrounding world can become challenged by crises, tragedies, or scandals (Johnson, Basham, and Thomas 2022). The interpretation of these events, and the meaning with which they are ascribed, can undermine extant narrative parameters that constitute state identities. During this moment of anxiety, communities of feeling come to be formed that interact with this existential challenge. Political agents present themselves in response to this situation as actors who translate, arouse, appropriate, manage, and suppress emotions that circulate in these communities of feeling. Power is key in this process, as these agents need to be capable of claiming a Self and Other as emotional and endowing this emotionality with particular meanings and values (Ahmed 2014, 4). When such actors engage with emotions that circulate in the communities of feeling, they also construct competing narratives on the state Self. In other words, events are selected, linked with each other, and interpreted in meaningful stories about the state (Cornell 2000). This narrative construction is consistent with the particular political goals and psychological needs of these agents. The process also works top-down, in that personal beliefs, memories, and emotions of political agents can inform narratives about the state, which they aim to make dominant in society. In so doing, these state narratives constitute official discourses, inform domestic and international policies, are imbued in

---

[78] A similar argument can be found in Sara Ahmed's *Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014). However, the focus of this latter work is on how shame circulates in political situations. The current dissertation aims to clarify what shame for the state signifies.

monuments, commemorations, or other symbols, rituals, practices that can act as means to construct or sustain official and collective memories (Lebow 2016, 27-28).[79] Shame can thus figure as an emotion that is being embedded in (one of) the narratives to describe the particular feeling that the state is, or ought to, experience. State shame, in short, denotes a narrative of a challenge of the state Self.

As shame is a social and self-conscious emotion, state shame might not only be present during extreme moments of existential anxiety but also as a response to more common social pressures. The state is exposed to extant social hierarchies, norms, and identities in international politics. One of these dynamics is that states, and other international actors, continuously comparatively assess themselves and others, which normatively orders them into having a social status (Towns and Rumelili 2017; Zarakol 2017). This position mediates the social pressures which channel their respective behaviour, both in national and international politics. The performances of states are continuously assessed through formal (e.g. technical rankings), informal (e.g. diplomatic interactions at summits[80]), internal (e.g. national media), and external (e.g. reports of INGOs) means and tools. State shame narratives originate during negative assessments, either accompanying the communication of the judgment or as a reaction to it. This means that state shame is a narrative of how the state Self is negatively judged in comparison to an idealized Self or Other. It is, in other words, a narrative on a negative appraisal of the state's social status.

Yet, the preceding section has argued that shame is a complex emotion. There is a large variety of phenomenological expressions, roles, and effects that have been attributed by psychologists and sociologists, who struggle to conflate them into one single term. The rich understandings, concepts, and processes that it is connected to, indicate that the emotion is multifaceted and that state shame might be too. This would imply that there is variation in how state shame narratives are constructed and how states cope with them. The basis of this variation can be understood in divergent ways, prompting extensive typologies that build on psychological, sociological, or ethical assumptions (Cf. Kemper 1978; Braithwaite 2000; Nussbaum 2004; Tarnopolsky 2010). As the goal of this chapter is to construct a comprehensive theoretical framework of state shame, the choice is made to base the typology on a syncretic argument that combines these various understandings.

---

[79] For more on the illocutionary and perlocutionary politics of memory narratives, i.e. the communicative effects and the way they change how agents think and act, see Peter Verovšek (2016).
[80] Telling of this is the 'international packing order' at UN diplomats. See Pouliot (2011).

Such a comprehensive typology of shame can be found in the work of Jack Barbalet (2001). He builds on the theory of Theodore Kemper (1978) and the collaboration of the latter with interaction ritual theorist Randall Collins (1990) on how emotions are influenced by power and status to fuse various perspectives on shame. Here it is key to understand that Kemper (1978) considers shame to originate from status loss, especially where there is an initial expectation for status gain. The attribution of loss, or who or what is the cause of the failure of status gain (Kemper and Collins 1990), informs how shame is coped with. Barbalet (2001) proposes here that how a person experiences and copes with shame depends on their conception of the particular social situation that they find themselves in.[81] In other words, a person finds themselves in a *shame situation*[82] when they understand that their status[83] is challenged. This person comes to perform their understanding of the social situation to other actors, regardless if this act is done consciously or unconsciously, or if they effectively succeed in their display (Alexander 2004, 529-530). Building on this perspective, this chapter argues that state shame narratives are believed to bifurcate based on how political agents understand the situation in which their state is placed. This situation is made intelligible by analytically, and thus not ontologically, separating two key components that inform different means of coping with shame.

The first component is the attributing actor or the *source of assessment*. The loss of status or prestige can be attributed to the Self or an Other. On the one hand, the shame situation can be understood as the Self being assessed by an agent that is identified as the Self, part of the Self or as a member of the wider in-group. In the case of a state, this could, for example, be an MP or a domestic journalist who brings out a scathing report on human rights abuses in the state's military. A close ally could also take up this role since friendship and trust do exist between states (Koschut and Oelsner 2014).[84] On the other hand, the reason for the loss of status can be

---

[81] This claim is based on the notion that there is "a constant effort of the mind to limit its horizon, to turn away from what it has a material interest in not seeing" (Bergson [1934]1946, 160). In effect, only when one conceives of themselves as being (a)shamed, makes one feel as such. While this claim might be more difficult to argue regarding the feeling of shame with individuals, since shame often emerges unconsciously and instantly, it seems plausible to assume this logic with collective shame.

[82] The concept of shame situation is borrowed from Christina Tarnopolsky (2010), who uses it to indicate the separate stages of a shame refutation. However, it is argued here that it is also suited for understanding the particular phases of any experience of shame.

[83] Kemper and Collins (1990, 32) understand status as a relational notion of "acceptance and positive association".

[84] States are also less likely to criticize their friends and allies but if they do, the shamed actor is more likely to agree with the critique. See Terman and Voeten (2018).

attributed to an agent that is considered an Other, an outsider, or as a member of an out-group. For a state, this can be a minority or disadvantaged group that criticises how the state treats them or an INGO that spearheads an international naming and shaming campaign against a particular discriminatory policy. The sources of assessment can thus vary between *Self* and *Other*[85] (Barbalet 2001, 122). As a side note, shame is characterized by an acute awareness of the Self and can effectively lead to a more entrenched notion of this Self and those that supposedly belong to the in-group. Every actor that is not conceived as part of the community of feeling, will be conceived as part of an out-group. Whether this actor is conceived as part of the former or the latter can significantly impact how shame is experienced and, in turn, inform the behaviour of the shamed agent.

The second component refers to whether the failure of the Self is believed to be against prevailing social norms or Self-ideals (Barbalet 2001, 123; Lethi and Pennannen 2020, 89). What one believes about the Self finds its origin in social norms, but there is a difference as to how the *source of failure* is conceived by the respective agent. On the one hand, shame can originate because the actor believes that they did not behave according to dominant normative scripts in their respective society or particular social context. A state can, for example, observe that it transgressed international standards regarding climate change or that its representatives failed to maintain diplomatic etiquette. On the other hand, shame can originate from the actor's belief that they failed some idealized notion that is considered to be an inherent part of their Self. These can be, for example, imagined traits of the nation-state or prominent political beliefs that the state holds in high regard. The sources of failure can thus vary between *Social norms* and *Self-ideals* (Barbalet 2001, 123). The variations in these two components generate a matrix that categorizes four different types of shame narratives (see Table 1).

---

[85] It might be a bit confusing to use 'Other' in this way since an Other can also be significant (see previous section). Yet, this particular term does link up to the process of Othering that can be generated by a shame situation. For a discussion of how the Self/Other dynamic can be conceived as both dialectical and dialogical, see Der Derian (1987), Neumann (1996, 55-56), and Lebow (2008 474-479). In general, this thesis assumes that the Self/Other dynamic is a boundary-producing speech act that reproduces an undeniably Western binary (Dallmayr 1996; Onur and Nicolaidis 2013). At the same time, shame is a Self-conscious experience that brings an intense focus to the boundary between Self and Other, effectively producing this binary in one of its most extreme forms.

Table 1. The shame situation, based on the social typology of shame by Jack Barbalet (2001, 123).

		Source of assessment	
		Self	Other
Source of failure	Social norms	situational shame	aggressive shame
	Self-ideals	narcissistic shame	deferential shame

These types are analytical tools, meaning that they are abstractions that are used to make the complexities of the real world understandable. They are not realistic descriptions of any particular narrative but they help understand why state shame is neither a singular nor comparable phenomenon. As heuristic devices, these types only crystallize aspects of state shame that best expose when and where power gets into the story, as power does not enter the story once and for all but is present at different times and from different angles. Power can, for example, shape the effective content of the narratives, in that the political status quo can be challenged or validated by these narratives. The performance of the narratives, or how they are displayed to an audience of observers (Alexander 2004; Rai 2015), can also be a stage where power is key. Who gets to express these critical accounts on the state Self, but also how and when they are displayed, is central in their circulation and political effects.

There are also significant differences as to how an individual or a state manages this shame situation. It would be problematic to uncritically project it onto the state and assume that the mechanisms would work similarly (Ross 2006; Hall 2015). To this end, empirical research is necessary to explore the various ways in which these types of shame narratives are present. There are, however, some considerations that can already be made regarding this translation of one level of analysis to another. First, when an individual finds themselves in a shame situation, they go through a moment of recognition and a moment of response (Tarnopolsky 2010, 57). States can go through similar phases but there are significant differences in timing and agency. Whereas the moment of recognition and reaction is often immediate for an individual, a state can be suspended in its existential anxiety for a longer period of time. This means that there is time and agency for deliberation, reflection, strategic positioning, and so on, which is less an

option for an individual.[86] Individuals also experience shame affectively, which is not necessarily the case with state shame. The state might be considered to be in a shame situation, yet citizens can distance themselves from experiencing shame vicariously, for example by dissociating themselves from the state or by feeling indifferent regarding the subject at hand. The state still copes with being in a shame situation for which political agents, depending on how they conceive the sources of assessment and failure, construct one of the four following types of shame narratives.

Situational shame

Situational shame[87] is a shame narrative that originates from a shame situation where a failure of a social norm is negatively assessed by the Self. More specifically, the state is made aware of a norm transgression by a state actor or someone believed to be part of the state Self. An example of this could be an official inquiry into the state's problematic past or a respected member of the scientific community who expresses disagreement with how the country is run. The failure is conceived as a wrongful, but temporary, transgression that has to be understood as caused by a particular situation, rather than a wrongful intention, hence 'situational' shame (Barbalet 2001). While there might not be any material consequences, if there are any, they are conceived as superficial or limited in their cost. Coping and ego defence strategies that can be connected to this type of shame narrative are rationalisation, for example arguing that the relevant actors were unaware of the norm, and some forms of undoing, like ruminations on counterfactuals (Baumeister, Dale and Sommer 1998, 1096).

The situational state shame narrative understands the state's Self not to be fundamentally challenged, as the failure will not act as a permanent negative evaluation of the Self. However, their social status does need to be mended through a reparative action like an apology or a restitution of material losses. The action is, however, aimed at getting outside respect,

---

[86] To be clear, an individual can experience shame for a long period of time. This claim only refers to the moment of perplexity, not shame in general. Additionally, it can also be argued that the timing is dependent on the type of state shame that is experienced, as the situational type is short-lived while narcissistic shame can extend over a couple of decades.

[87] This type can best be illustrated with an individual example. Imagine going to a high-class restaurant only to notice that you fail to meet the particular dress code that is demanded of patrons. You will feel out of place not because of a wrongful action, but because you sense that you do not belong. To cope with this situation, you can mention that you were not informed about the dress code or you can apologize and ruminate about how you could have avoided this situation. To be clear, this does not exclude the experiences of guilt or embarrassment but the person will still experience themselves as being out of place.

admiration, and recognition for the state's legitimate place in the international order, allowing it to maintain a positive Self-image (Cf. Lewis 1971; Barrett 1995). This means that the goal of restorative behaviour is not necessarily to sympathize with the victims of their actions (e.g. Trouillot 1995; Muldoon 2017). Because of the propensity to apologize or perform similar acts of remorse, this type of shame is closely connected to, and often conflated with, the experience of guilt (Konstan 2006, 102; Tarnopolsky 2011, 157). The difference between a narrative of state guilt and one of situational shame can be separated by the narrative's direction of concern, namely if it is focused on the Self (situational shame) or the Self's action (guilt). Depending on the particular cultural context, it can be expected that guilt and shame will be referred to interchangeably in these state narratives.

Narcissistic shame

Narcissistic shame[88] is a shame narrative where the Self is made aware of transgressing Self-ideals by an actor that is conceived as part of their Self or in-group. The narcissistic state shame narrative evokes an intense realisation that the state has had an inflated sense of Self, which was based on narcissistic fantasies and hubristic beliefs. Whereas the latter initially served as a source of pride, the excessive attribution of status to the Self comes to be seen as unwarranted (Kemper 1978). The narrative, in other words, recognizes the wrongfulness of the Self. This kind of realisation was, for example, present in the US at the end of the Vietnam conflict, where the involvement of their country was conceived as problematic and the loss as indicative of the inflated notion of the capabilities of the US (Hagström 2021). In so doing, this kind of narrative recounts the disillusionment in the state Self being morally acceptable, which is characterized by an intense feeling of loss and pain and the management of a sense of vulnerability. The narcissistic state shame narrative thus conceives the state as a fragile actor that is trying to reconcile with its wrongfulness.

The narrative triggers a reflection on the state Self and what its legitimate social position should be. This vulnerability, while having a place in international and domestic politics (Cf. Nussbaum 2001; Beattie and Schick 2013), is often resolved by a search for a new sense of security. In effect, this existential search can lead to a renewed Self-narrative and, potentially,

---

[88] For example, when someone claims to be a skilled musician (which may or may not be the case) but fumbles during a jam session, they might reconsider their Self-narrative (i.e. 'being a skilled musician') or practice frantically before performing again to become what they claim to be.

the active repositioning of its place in the world. It can inspire actions that aim to restore relations with other actors and make them commit to genuine care for victims as a consequence of their previous beliefs and behaviour (Cf. Braithwaite 2000; Nussbaum 2004; Koschut 2021). Since the narcissistic shame narrative entails a fragile and searching state Self it can give cause to such coping behaviours as isolation, to protect the process of repair, and, potentially, sublimation. This latter defence mechanism entails the transformation of a fantasy or desire into a more socially accepted activity or belief (Baumeister, Dale and Sommer 1998, 1103). Because of the fragility that this shame narrative implies, there is always a need to be delicate regarding further actions and discourses. As the example of the US involvement in the Vietnam War indicates, a narcissistic shame narrative undoubtedly inspired some towards a pacifist position and promoted an isolationist US. However, as the fragility of this type of narrative implies, it was easily superseded by new or other narcissistic fantasies about the US (Hagström 2021).

Deferential shame

Deferential shame[89] is a shame narrative where the Self is assessed by an Other for not being committed to their Self-ideals. The assessing agent is not just any actor that is not part of the in-group but one with a higher social status, which in the case of states would be for example a regional hegemon, an idealized country, or an international leader like the Pope. Their negative judgment is considered warranted and focused on dismantling a fantasy or narcissistic desire regarding the Self that is believed to be false (Barbalet 2001). In effect, the deferential state shame narrative conceives the state as deficient and unworthy of pride. The state Self is thus narrated in a manner that agrees with the gaze of the idealized Other and, as such, can lead to the relinquishing of a part of the dominant conception of the state Self (Cf. Morrison 1989, 63). It is a form of submission that is expressed in its most extreme form by conquered states or polities that have been aggressively coerced into specific behaviour. It would not be surprising to find this type of narrative in Russia after the fall of the USSR or with states that have been branded as being 'failed'. If the deferential state shame narrative is often repeated and becomes

---

[89] For example, when someone who conceives themselves as progressive is shamed for expressing racist views, they will conceit this claim. However, when the experience is repeated all too often or in ways that they disagree with, the formerly progressive actor might come to resist the negative judgment and, potentially, develop more reactionary views.

part of common sense, it becomes a stigma. In so doing, deep-seated feelings of inferiority towards other states will be sustained (Goffman 1963; Adler-Nissen 2014).

The deferential state shame narrative implies that the state submits itself to the will of the Other and acts in a way that mirrors the latter's desires and expectations. In giving up their sovereignty, whether formally or informally, there are no specific actions or coping mechanisms that can be connected to this particular narrative. However, the assumption can be made that it informs a general sense of melancholia (Cf. Gilroy 2005) and resentment (Cf. Scheff 2000). Deferential shame does not necessarily lead to the internalization of the idealized Other's gaze (Zarakol 2014). As the state comes to conceive their position to be radically different from the idealized Other, they might come to hold the notion that they can never amount to the same standard. In effect, such a difference might fuel reflection of the own position and can develop into a source for later refutation of the deferential position. This resentment might fuel an aggressive state shame narrative that ends up challenging the Other and feeding a new state Self-narrative based on narcissistic fantasies and antagonistic desires.

Aggressive shame

Aggressive shame[90] is a shame narrative that originates when a Self is believed to be negatively assessed by an Other for transgressing a social norm, effectively challenging its place in the social and moral world. The member of an out-group or a different international actor is believed to shame the state because they did not follow the normative scripts of international society. However, the aggression originates primarily from the idea that the Self's narcissistic beliefs and fantasies are questioned by an actor that is unwarranted to do so. The negative judgment is then understood as a coercive act to challenge, even change, the Self and force it towards conforming behaviour (Barbalet 2001). Instead of diminishing the narcissistic fantasies and beliefs, the aggressive shame narrative feeds a grandiose notion of Self and the hatred for the assessing Other (Kinnvall 2015; Andrews e.a. 2015; Lacan, 1978). An example of this can be found regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, as aggressive shame narratives have developed in both camps, effectively stimulating tensions and impeding further reconciliation (Pettigrove

---

[90] An example of this experience is that of a married couple where one partner feels taunted by their significant other regarding their ability to clean the house. Because they are held up to the standards that their partner finds desirable, they feel challenged in their place in the world (i.e. they are 'pushed out of their own house') and will respond through what they feel are reciprocate actions, such as being overly fixated on the cleaning mistakes of the Other.

and Parsons 2012). Importantly, the assessing agent can effectively be constructed as an Other by the aggressive shame narrative. Aggressive state shame narratives namely inspire a close identification of Self and its difference, even oppositeness, from the Other. This would, in turn, act as a centripetal force for the community's Self-identification.

Rage, anger, shame, contempt, and humiliation are linked in the narrative and are used to justify aggressive actions. In so doing, the narrative will show similarities with narcissistic rage,[91] namely the total lack of empathy towards the source of assessment which can be manifested as a grudge, spite, anger, or even vengeance (Kohut 1972; Morrison 1987; Harkavy 2000). As this state shame narrative defends the state Self in the most explicit way, it also holds the more recognizable coping mechanisms such as avoidance, active refutation, externalized aggression, or hypercriticism.[92] Apart from these ways of coping, the narrative can also inspire ego defences such as denial and projection[93] (Baumeister, Dale and Sommer 1998, 1090). In so doing, aggressive shame inspires and facilitates conflict escalation and general feelings of hate towards Others, both individuals and groups, by feeding irreconcilable narratives (Cf. Lewis 1971; Retzinger 1991; Scheff 2000; Harkavy 2000; Pettigrove and Parsons 2012).

THE POLITICS OF STATE SHAME

The narrative understanding of state shame, and the theorisation that the conceptual scheme generates, is an analytical tool that sheds light onto complex and interlinked processes. It does not realistically describe how such narratives should look like but it gives insight into why states might behave the way they do. As such, there is no theoretical pretension regarding its explanatory power, at least just yet. The theoretical framework acts as a starting point for interacting with the lived practices that will be encountered in the empirical analyses. Additionally, the typology offers an insight into the politics of state shame. In artificially crystallizing political dynamics, the typology exposes when and where power is introduced and makes its mark. One of the central aims of the empirical analysis is to determine when structural power comes into play, how political agents can enforce agency, and how state shame can lead

---

[91] Although it is not evident to analytically separate the particular dynamics of shame-induced hatred from that of other forms, the general assumption is that aggressive shame is primarily centred around securing the sense of Self.

[92] Hypercriticism refers to being acutely focused on how the Other behaves and criticizing them on every minor misstep. See Baumeister, Dale and Sommer (1998, 1090).

[93] Projection refers to a mechanism that involves perceiving the Other as having a negative trait that the Self is – inaccurately – believed not to have. See Baumeister, Dale and Sommer (1998, 1090).

to political change. However, some aspects of these dynamics can already be qualified based on the literature and the previous discussion.

First, the sources of assessment and failure can be reframed by political agents. The latter are capable of shaping who is conceived as a Self or an Other through a variety of discursive strategies such as scapegoating, vilification, or identification.[94] Likewise, sources of failure can be discursively framed as externally imposed social norms but also as inherent to the state or particular community of feeling. The interpretation of the shame situation can thus act as a site of agency for political actors. However, there are limits to the amount of leeway that the shame situation allows (Somers and Gibson 1994, 73). That the sources of assessment and failure are discursively constructed, and can thus be de- and reconstructed, does not mean that they are easily adjustable or are allowed to be adjusted without difficulty. Notions of Self and Other, and prevailing social norms and Self-ideals are deeply ingrained social constructs that are linked to the national or group-specific habitus and their particular memories and habits. Political agents who want to change sources of assessment and failure thus encounter robust notions that are profoundly obvious and familiar to many. How this negotiation takes place will be one of the principal focal points of the empirical analysis.

Second, structural inequality and hierarchy in international relations mediate how states cope with a shame situation. What this means for the narrative competition is that, for one, social status can determine the tenacity of narcissistic beliefs and desires regarding the state Self (Hagstrom 2021; Naude 2022). A great power state or hegemon will, for example, have a more grandiose conception of Self and thus more confidence regarding its own assessment. In the opposite case, a lesser or subaltern power can be coerced into accepting the negative appraisal out of fear of severe repercussions, which can effectively lead to structural shaming or stigma (Zarakol 2014). Moreover, a state's historical relationship can also influence how it receives international negative assessment (Zarakol 2011; Subotić and Zarakol 2012). If the state conceives itself as being at the 'heart' of the liberal international order, for example, it will concede more quickly to social pressures following international criticism. Negative past experiences with international society or a subaltern position in it can, in contrast, lead to a

---

[94] To be clear, othering is a complex process and can serve many purposes in that "persons will identify positively with some aspects of other person' identities and will seek to emulate these 'desirable' qualities" but "it may still be possible for a person to reject some aspects of an other with whom it identifies positively, criticizing this very same other for their perceived faults" (Naudé 2022, 67-68).

proneness of shame refutation. The empirical analyses will also focus on how these international status tensions figure in and inform state shame narratives.

Third, state shame narratives can bring about both political change and sustain the status quo. While political identities or discourses might not be infinitely malleable, the shock of having a challenge to the sense of Self can offer an opportunity to reimagine alternative understandings of how the world works (Zembylas 2019; Untalan 2020). It allows for a moment of hybridity where boundaries that were previously placed are questioned and can be realigned. Shame, in this sense, can be considered a revolutionary emotion (Cf. Marx [1843]1967; Deleuze 1995; Honneth 1995, 164; O'Donnell 2017; Gros 2021).[95] However, the potential for change that a moment of existential anxiety offers does not need to be overstated, as existing narratives always constrain the capacity for adaptation (Connolly 2014; Subotić 2016; Vieira 2016; Eberle and Handl 2020; Krickel-Choi 2022, 8). It is for this reason that "change is only possible to the extent that it can be accounted for within one's biographical narrative" (Krickel-Choi 2022, 14), a narrative that is, at the same time, continuously rewritten and reshaped to accommodate present needs (Lebow 2016, 24). To sum up, existential anxiety, and by extension state shame, can act as a precondition for both creative social change and for maintaining a status quo (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 247; MacDonald 2010, 289; Sasley 2013, 150). The empirical analysis will focus on what makes state shame facilitate either social change or sustain the status quo.

Finally, the ethical roles of state shame are particular to the context. Both IR and the literature on the politics of shame have a problematic penchant to simplify shame's inherent moral ambiguity by only emphasizing the 'dangerous' *or* the 'necessary' role of shame in social life (Tarnopolsky 2010, 7). It is equally problematic to argue that there would be a 'good' and 'bad' form of shame in political life (Cf. Nussbaum 2004),[96] as this Manichean categorization severs the emotion's moral role from its particular social context. In so doing, it is assumed that state shame, or any emotion for that matter, has the possibility to be both vicious or virtuous in

---

[95] Karl Marx commented briefly on shame's revolutionary potential in his letter to Arnold Ruge, stating that shame is an antidote to self-deception and that: "This, too, is a revelation, although a perverted one. It is a truth that at least teaches us to recognize the hollowness of our patriotism, the unnatural character of our government, and to turn our faces away in shame. Smiling, you look at me and ask, 'What is gained thereby? No revolution results from shame.' I answer, 'Shame already is a revolution.' Shame actually is the victory of the French Revolution over German patriotism by which the Revolution was conquered in 1813. Shame is a type of anger, introverted anger. And if a whole nation were to feel ashamed it would be like a lion recoiling in order to spring." (Marx 1967, 204).
[96] Ironically, Christina Tarnopolsky (2010), on whose work this critique is partially based, falls into the same trap by designating 'flattering shame' and 'Socratic respectful shame' to be less fortuitous in politics than the more balanced 'Platonic respectful shame'.

politics regardless of its phenomenological characteristics (Cf. Tarnopolsky 2010, 6; Locke 2016, 169).[97] For example, narcissistic state shame challenges unfounded beliefs and narcissistic fantasies about the state's Self but this would not necessarily imply that the new sense of state Self is morally 'good'. A state could develop a sense of humility, but could equally lead to an exaggerated sense of unimportance that makes them withdraw from international politics altogether. Situational state shame might be fitting for an accident at sea between two navies, yet completely inappropriate regarding a past genocide. Similarly, deferential state shame can be considered ethically warranted in response to an international naming and shaming campaign, or problematic when it is seen as the result of prolonged stigmatization. Although aggressive state shame might be questionable in most cases, it may have merit in the situation where a superpower tries to shame a smaller state into compliance (Cf. Pettigrove and Parsons 2012). Consequently, understanding the politics of state shame does not mean identifying whether a state copes with the shame situation in a 'good' or 'bad' way but focuses on how states deal with state shame and how political agents attempt to influence this.

<h2 style="text-align:center">CONCLUSION</h2>

The central goal of this chapter was to ground state shame and propose a theoretical framework with the aim of making a more suitable theoretical tool for IR. To this end, it discussed how states relate to emotions and what particular qualities have been attributed to shame in general to clarify what state shame might entail. The main contribution of this chapter is that it conceives state shame as a narrative of the state's social status. This understanding specifies the particularity, emergence, and effects of state shame, effectively countering the critiques that have been levelled in the previous chapter against the concept's current use in the literature. Based on this conception and the notion of the shame situation, a typology was developed of four state shame narratives that fundamentally differ in how they conceive the source of assessment and failure that characterises a shame narrative. These types, namely situational shame, narcissistic shame, aggressive shame, and deferential shame, give insight into how there might be a politics to state shame, which the chapter briefly touched upon.

---

[97] To be clear, the argument is not that devastating and painful emotions such as humiliation or disgust are morally desirable. The reasoning follows a more sociological position, in that emotions play a complex role in social and political life and their ethical meaning should be interpreted according to their particular context rather than from a universalist principle.

In proposing this novel conception of state shame, the current chapter contributes to IR theory in three ways. First, it develops upon a relatively obscure concept that has acted as an implicit or taken-for-granted assumption in multiple works on international norm dynamics, status, stigma, and ontological security (Cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 1999; Towns and Rumelili 2017; Adler-Nissen 2014; Steele 2008). It thus hones the theoretical toolkit of IR and corrects some of the blind spots that are ingrained in this literature. Second, it offers a perspective that goes beyond the ontological security-insecurity dichotomy. This theorisation shifts the focus away from the more dominant mechanical view on Self-securitisation (Cf. Rossdale 2015; Lebow 2016; Krickel-Choi 2022) by emphasizing the contingent politics of state Self-narration. Thirdly, this chapter entangles numerous debates and literature on emotions in IR that rarely seem to interact with each other. More specifically, by building on the interplay between political emotions, state narratives and status management, the current chapter presents a more comprehensive view of the emotional side of international politics.

The chapter also contributes to the broader academic debate on the politics of shame. This ever-expanding subject in feminist studies (Probyn 2004; Ahmed 2014; Mitchell 2020), classical studies (Williams 1993; Cairns 1993; Tarnopolsky 2010), and moral and political philosophy (Nussbaum 2004; Hutchison 2010; Locke 2016; Thomason 2018), has informed the central view that shame is not only a subject of politics (i.e. shame in politics) but also is political in itself (i.e. shame as politics). However, this literature rarely discusses how the emotion works on higher levels of analysis. The current chapter can be seen as a starting point for theorising how the politics of shame work on the collective level. Secondly, it presents an extensive typology of what state shame could entail by engaging with various understandings and debates in sociology, political thought, and IR. In coalescing various conceptions of shame that are being conceived as oppositional in the current literature, this typology – based on Kemper (1978), Kemper and Collins (1990), and Barbalet (2001) – is both succinct and complex. Third and finally, the narrative understanding of state shame that is presented in this chapter extends the role that shame can have in politics. By not equating it with vicarious emotion, state shame-as-a-narrative informs a broader view of its politics.

To conclude, the conceptual and theoretical work of this chapter is not a finished exercise. Rather, the more humble aim is for it to be an initial effort to pry open a broader debate on what state shame can signify and what state behaviour can be connected to it. The three empirical chapters of this dissertation are geared towards this particular goal and should be primarily read with this aim in mind. This does not mean that the manuscript will conclude with a conception

of state shame that is empirically 'tested' and thus universally viable. The goal of conceptual elucidation is to provide a situated insight into the complexity of the concept and how it relates to intricate social phenomena. In so doing, the aim is to stimulate future research regarding this concept, which ought to focus on further elucidating and grounding this concept in other contexts and give insight into the various politics that can be inspired by state shame. Before coming to the discussion of the lived practices and meanings of shame, however, it is necessary to divulge how this theoretical framework is going to be applied in the empirical chapters.

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSING STATE SHAME: EMOTIONS, STATES, AND NARRATIVE EMPLOTMENT

The empirical study of state shame presents a methodological challenge. This latter concept namely shares the conceptual 'slipperiness' of the emotion of shame. In short, the painful nature of shame makes it rarely explicitly outspoken and its phenomenological complexity means that it is often conflated with other emotions (Lewis 1971; Elias 2000; Scheff 2000).[98] State shame is subject to similar challenges of systematic study as it relates to a critical position regarding the state. This opinion can be inconvenient, imprudent, or downright dangerous to express, effectively making its articulation and performance highly mediated by social desirability. Consequently, the anticipation of disapproval regarding state shame makes people communicate it in more subtle and implicit ways. The previous chapter also argued that state shame-as-a-narrative can be expressed in contradicting ways and be denoted with other terms than shame. These methodological challenges make the empirical analysis of state shame an uneasy exercise as it necessitates both a comprehensive and a discerning approach (Fischer 2018, 371-372).

Fortunately, recent contributions to the methodology and methods of emotions in both IR and other fields have struggled with similar issues, effectively making this complex task somewhat more feasible (e.g. Hutchison and Bleiker 2014; Crawford 2014; Koschut e.a. 2017; Clément and Sangar 2018; Van Rythoven and Sucharov 2020). Ranging between quantitative approaches to ordinary language interviews and aesthetical analysis, the proliferation of these methods has given researchers the means to study emotions systematically (Ilgit and Prakash 2019). Yet, regardless of these sophisticated methods to study emotions in political contexts, the literature has thus far not constructed a clear methodological position on how one can capture an elusive, unspoken, misnamed, and analytically difficult-to-separate phenomenon

---

[98] Moreover, researching shame has an affective toll on the researcher, as any investigation into this emotion exposes them to the fragility of their own being and can generate a hypercritical view of the Self (Fischer 2018).

such as state shame. In effect, the empirical study of state shame requires extensive and precise methodological framing.

The current chapter constructs a methodological framework for this thesis by first presenting some key ontological and epistemological considerations that substantiate the empirical study of state shame. Following this discussion, an argument is proposed for a historical single case study. The specific claim here is that the theoretical framework can be comprehensively assessed by an in-depth analysis of complex longitudinal dynamics and their outcomes. To this end, the case of Belgium's empire and postcolonial remorse is considered a most likely scenario for the presence and political significance of state shame. Because of the notoriously violent and atrocious colonial past and the difficulty of dealing with it, negative state Self-narratives – and thus state shame – can be expected to be present in this historical context. Central to this historical case are three particular moments where state shame is expected to be especially apparent, namely the Red Rubber scandal (1903-1909), Congolese independence (1958-1961), and the Lumumba Commission (1999-2002). Two interpretative methods, namely structural narrative analysis and interpretative sentiment analysis, are employed to disclose state shame in debates of the Belgian parliament during these three episodes. The first method is employed to trace narratives on the state and identify how, why, and when they change through their emplotment. This effectively captures state shame narratives and provides a means to gauge the narrative competition and surrounding politics. Interpretative sentiment analysis is used to map the various political emotions that are expressed during and regarding the changes in state narratives. Documenting these emotions gives insight into what importance political agents attributed to these narrative changes and the politics of representation surrounding emotions in political settings. In combining these two methods, the empirical analysis can bring insight into the politics of state shame. Before concluding, the chapter discusses more practical considerations regarding the focus on parliamentary debates and the source material.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is typical for literature on IR methodology to make a strict dichotomy between so-called 'positivist' and 'interpretivist' approaches. While this distinction can be productive for some discussions, the methodological position of the current research is better clarified with more specific terminology. The reason for this lies in the particularity of the methodological puzzle, which necessitates the clarification of how one studies something that cannot be clearly defined,

which neither positivism nor interpretivism give adequate answers to. In effect, this requires an engagement with ontological and epistemological assumptions that lie at the core of scientific research. For one, the assumption is made that knowledge production is not separated from the social context. This position has been termed 'mind-world monism' as it considers that the mind of the researcher does not transcend the world that it is studying[99] (Shotter 1993, 73-79; Jackson 2011, 35-36). In so doing, it assumes that there are no extant stable objects that can be simply described or recorded, implying that the practical experience of the researcher is always present in their work (Wittgenstein 1986). According to this perspective, the goal of empirical scientific practice is then not to describe and explain a reality that is 'out there' but to systematically order 'the facts of experience' in a meaningful way (Weber 1949). Rather than universal laws, the focus comes to rest on understanding how theory links up various factors that come together in particular cases and generate historically specific outcomes. In other words, this perspective informs researchers to produce knowledge about the world by creating analytical narratives that help them make sense of what, why, and how something occurred (Suganami 2008; Bevir and Blakely 2018, 10).

A second, and perhaps more crucial for this research, consideration is how the world and its distinct phenomena can be known. The key epistemological assumption here is that researchers cannot know things that transcend their understanding. In other words, knowledge can only be produced regarding experientially and empirically observable things. This epistemological position, called 'phenomenalism'[100] (Jackson 2011, 36), would inform the view that any research that aims to generate insight into objects that are in principle unobservable is both impossible and unnecessary. While empirically difficult to capture, shame and state shame can be considered observable. Shame is psychologically and socially experienced, bodily expressed, and verbally articulated in a large variety of ways and means. State shame is a similar phenomenon in that it is highly relatable and experience-near. Simply put, something might be difficult to empirically discern but that does not make it unobservable (Cf. Febvre 1973).

Key in this regard is, then, the means through which the world becomes knowable. The analysis of the social world, like any other scientific approach, requires instruments and tools that facilitate a systematic focus and disclose insights that surpass the self-evident. Such a tool was

---

[99] As opposed to the more traditional 'mind-world dualism', which is best illustrated with the Cartesian split between the knowing scientist and the known object. See Jackson (2011, 44-59).

[100] The other position is termed transfactualism, which allows for transcending experience and observation to capture deeper processes and generative factors to knowledgeable facts (Ibid., 36-37).

developed in the previous chapter, in that the ideal typical typology of state shame narratives is an artificial construction that aims to correspond with reality (Weber 1973, in Kuckartz 1991, 45). Yet, this theoretical framework does not specify how these narratives can be known in empirical analysis, as it only makes inferences about what state shame could be. The study of state shame thus necessitates an accompanying analytical framework that can identify how it is expressed in lived practices. As the previous chapter argued that state shame is a narrative, it follows that linguistic articulations of shame for the state ought to be identifiable. The variety of state shame narratives, however, also indicates the presence of certain emotional narrative logics (i.e. the characteristics of the four types), which also needs to be ascertained. It is by locating these two qualities in discourse that the study of state shame can identify state shame narratives and their politics. The rest of this chapter will make the argument for a method that combines various markers to triangulate the presence of state shame.

However, before coming to the construction of this method, it is necessary to indicate that the combination of these ontological and epistemological assumptions cumulate in a methodological position that considers theory building open-ended and devoid of universalist principles and beliefs.[101] The end goal of the dissertation is thus not to claim that it has constructed a general theory on state shame but to have argued for a meaningful lens on a specific phenomenon. This allows the research to theorize on how various factors, from ideal typical to eventful contingencies, come together in particular cases and generate historically specific outcomes (Jackson 2011, 114). Rather than 'transcending reality' to study it, the dissertation thus assumes that scientific knowledge is believed to be "a matter of organizing past experiences so as to forge useful tools for the investigation of future, as-yet-unknown situations" (Jackson 2011, 37 discussing Dewey 1910, 126-127).

A consequence of these methodological assumptions is also that research is always generated by a particular historical and socio-political context (Taylor 2017). Since the researcher does not transcend reality, their research is informed by desires and necessities that exist in the wider societal context (Weber 1949). The research question of this dissertation, for example, could only have originated in a historical moment and context where shame for the state is a notion that made sense. Moreover, an analysis of state shame written in 19th century China would have likely differed substantially from the current work, or from a study that is done a hundred

---

[101] This is a position that correlates with what Patrick Jackson (2011) terms 'analyticism'. Since it does not serve this particular chapter to delve deeper into the particularity of this methodological position, the discussion will remain rather superficial regarding the more philosophical claims that Jackson makes.

years from now. The subject position of the researcher, i.e. their particular tacit background understanding of what it is to be human, thus informs emphases on certain features, factors, actors, etc. that scholars with different backgrounds might focus less on. Rather than an absolute relativist position, this kind of argument assumes that, regardless of the variations in how understanding is translated by and for different audiences, truth claims still have to hold up to scrutiny (Taylor 2017, 40). This work should, thus, not be conceived as the bearer of absolute truths but as a situated narrative that aims to bring understanding to state shame and explain how it relates to particular phenomena (Suganami 2008; Bevir and Blakely 2018, 10).

<div align="center">

HISTORICAL SINGLE CASE STUDY

</div>

These methodological positions are abstract but they guide and inspire further choices regarding the practical design of the research. A first choice is to use a single case study approach. The specific aim of the research is to assess whether the theoretical framework makes sense, which necessitates a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of its inferences. A single case study approach facilitates such an analysis as it provides a dedicated focus on a particular unit of analysis. The case itself is not strictly delineated as it is an analytical construct that gradually develops "through our efforts to theorize the phenomena that we study" (Soss 2021, 85). In so doing, the permanent insipient state of the case drives the researcher to continuously reflect on broad and encompassing questions about their object of study (Geertz 1973, 23).[102] Practically, this means that a single case study is an ongoing research activity where the researcher tries to make sense of the particular by theorizing on a more general and abstract level. It is then implied that this approach allows for a shift in what the case can be a case of. In other words, single case study analysis promotes an iterative dialogue between general research questions, particular claims regarding the single case, and broad theoretical expectations and contributions (Ragin 1992, 10). The explorative nature of the current dissertation requires such a permissive, but also challenging, approach.

Because this single case study aims to assess whether the theoretical framework makes sense, the case selection needs to follow the 'most likely' principle. In other words, the case has to be representative of the general phenomenon that the typology wants to capture. This principle does not assume that there is a case in the 'real world' that is essential to any kind of social

---

[102] Or, as William Blake ([1905]2002, 88) would say it, this focus on the particular makes one "see a world in a grain of sand".

phenomenon. Rather, it considers some units of analysis to be more telling of the phenomenon that the research aims to capture than others. The case is thus selected based on its probable correspondence with the theory. This way, the research can confirm that the theoretical expectations are plausible in an ideal scenario (Flyvbjerg 2006). In effect, if the theoretical framework does not work in the context where it is most likely to work, then it would not work for scenarios that are less than ideal. The most likely case concerning the central subject of this dissertation would thus be a situation where state shame and its politics are expected and apparent.

The methodological discussion also informs the choice of a historical case. State shame is undoubtedly entangled with complex issues as it relates to norm transgressions and other state behaviour that is considered to be problematic. A historical approach offers a more nuanced perspective to such moral and political dilemmas as it discusses issues that are different from, and even disconcerting for, current ethical beliefs. On the one hand, this kind of approach allows the inclusion of various perspectives and the development of sufficient contextualisation of the issues at hand. On the other hand, a historical account also emphasizes the humanity of the actors who are tackling these dilemmas (Taylor, 2017, 46-47). This "openness to the Other" (Gadamer 1986, 367) is not meant to invoke empathy for perpetrators and their transgressive behaviour. Rather, it is aimed at confronting the reader with the very human origins of immense misery and its denial. A historical account of state shame can thus simultaneously estrange self-evident ethical beliefs and construct a more nuanced perspective on a complex problem.

State shame is also believed to be the result of longitudinal processes. In effect, to trace the origin, political conflicts, and effects of state behaviour of these narratives would entail extensive attention to the particular context in which they are narrated. As shame narratives can develop and transform over longer periods of time, it is also very likely that they become imbued with different role(s), practices, and particular politics that change throughout time. The long-term dynamics of state shame can only be captured by using a diachronic analysis of both their contexts and their articulation. In effect, a historical single case study approach provides the depth of analysis, dedication to context, and longitudinal perspective that the study of state shame and its politics requires.

THE CASE OF BELGIUM AND ITS (POST-)IMPERIAL PAST

As far as most likely cases go for the presence of state shame, the particular history of Belgium's empire seems like a surety. The small central European country has had a notably atrocious and violent colonial past, which has garnered both international and domestic controversy. Belgian colonialism is particularly notorious due to Leopold II's brutal regime in the Congo Free State. However, the state's paternalist exploitation of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi and its current difficulty in coping with this past are also telling of state shame and its politics. These controversies are not only considered to be problematic in contemporary times but have been sites of scandals, crises, and international conflicts at various points in time (Cf. Van den Braembussche 2002; Van Beurden 2009; Bevernage 2011; 2018; Vanthemsche 2012; Monaville 2015; Hunt 2016). In so doing, there is an expectation of the presence of state shame regarding Belgium's empire, making it a most likely case where the theoretical framework would be applicable.

Three additional reasons are important regarding this choice. The first reason is that a small European country like Belgium would be less restricted to cope with a shame situation in various ways. In short, small powers "have a more emancipated experience because their level of anxiety is reduced to their constrained agency" (Steele 2008, 69). This freedom is not shared by, for example, a non-Western country, as they are more exposed to stigmatizing conditions that generate particular dynamics (e.g. Zarakol 2014; Adler-Nissen 2014; Untalan 2020, 5). Moreover, a superpower tends to hold narcissistic fantasies about itself (Hagström 2021), making it more likely to approach shame situations in less varied ways. The second reason is that this particular history has received little interest in IR.[103] Exploring this under-researched case with a novel perspective can thus also inform a critique, challenge, and reformulation of the existing literature and societal debate. The third reason is more pragmatic, in that one overarching theme, namely the colonial past of Belgium, helps with maintaining topic consistency and keeps the contextualisation within limits. Additionally, the affinity of the author, but also a gradual development of knowledge with the reader, regarding the particular cultural, historical, and socio-political context of this case allows for more in-depth interpretations and discussions.

---

[103] The exception to this is Kevin C. Dunn's (2003;2004) and Valérie Rosoux's (2014) work.

The choice for Belgium's imperial past and postcolonial reflection does have some caveats. For one, the country is notorious for its fragmented linguistic communities and political system. It can thus be argued that there are competing communities of feeling that rarely communicate or interact with each other, which complicates the case. However, the theoretical framework does not necessitate, nor assume, the unity of the national habitus or community of feeling. Regardless of the complexity of the case, thus, its analysis would still be effective for assessing the theoretical framework. Second, in selecting a Western state, this research might fall into the Eurocentric trap of methodological nationalism, which relates to the problematic practice of uncritically assuming that the European nation-state is the central tool for understanding the imperial past (Chakrabarty 1992). To avoid this trap, the research actively tries to abstain from 'narrating the nation' by stressing the porousness and transformativeness of the state Self.[104] In so doing, it aims to preventively counter assumptions of unity and exceptionalism by focusing on state narratives, narcissistic fantasies and myths, and the specific agents that produce these narratives.[105]

The (post-)colonial history of Belgium is too vast for an analysis that aims to trace an empirically challenging object. Three specific episodes are considered particularly apt for studying state shame: the transfer of the Congo Free State to Belgium following the international human rights campaign spearheaded by Roger Casement and E.D. Morel (e.g. *The Red Rubber scandal, 1903-1909*); the chaotic decolonisation of Congo that evolved in the Congo Crisis (e.g. *Congolese independence, 1958-1961*); and the parliamentary inquiry into Belgium's involvement in the murder of the former Congolese Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba (e.g. *the Lumumba Commission, 1999-2002*). The reason to limit the discussion to these three moments is to go in-depth into the political debates regarding these issues and dedicate a focus to the particular dynamics of shame. Additionally, they can act as sites of comparison and reflection regarding the application of the ideal typical model. These episodes were also selected for being located at the specific moments when state shame is most

---

[104] Even if it would narrate the nation, it does so not in an especially positive light. Analysing how states are conceived as failing does seem corrosive to the notion of the state as an all-powerful actor. While this might seem like a denial of methodological nationalism intuitively, even negative narratives of the nation do reify it (Hägstrom 2021). In effect, it is quite possible that this trap cannot be avoided in a straightforward way when analysing states.

[105] Clinically removing all of the traces of methodological nationalism would, however, not be feasible for this kind of research. In short, 'state shame' in itself can also be understood as a reification of the state as a central actor. The focus on these narratives and not on those regarding other actors does imply some bias towards conceiving shame for the state as more significant than other kinds of phenomena. Yet, the dissertation does not hold that this ought to be the case, it merely aims to gain an understanding regarding state shame and its politics.

expected.[106] It is during these occasions that the colony, or the colonial past, was a particularly significant issue in the political life of the metropole (Vanthemsche 2012).[107] In being consecutive moments of extensive political conflict regarding failures of the Belgian state, these episodes are thus ideal sites for identifying how state shame narratives inspire political conflict and state behaviour. To fill in the history before and between these episodes, each empirical chapter will be preceded by a short interlude, informing the reader of the general historical context of this case.

Before concluding this discussion, it is key to address the challenges that are associated with studying an imperial and postcolonial context. First, the introduction already discussed some of the conceptual issues with the terminology of 'empire' and 'postcolonial'.[108] These definitions set limits to what can be understood as an empire and how its end is conceived (Cf. Loomba 2015; Bhambra 2014). In so doing, the conceptual choices of this dissertation frame the research in a way that excludes broader and more entangled experiences of colonialism. While these limiting choices were intended for the sake of clarity, they can inform more simplistic readings of this complex relationship. The challenge here is to be vigilant of using overly reducing terminology and include various perspectives to maintain nuance. A second, but somewhat related, issue revolves around the primary focus on the metropole. The emphasis on the centre of empire is associated with the traditional approach to imperial history, which conceived strict dichotomies regarding colony and metropole (Cooper and Stoler 1997; Stanard 2016). In contrast, the current research does not conceive the elite politics in Brussels as being 'outside' of the complex relationship of domination with the colonies. It is rather a microcosm inside this wider web of entangled events, processes, and structures.[109]

---

[106] See Chapter One for a more extensive argumentation on why these three cases were picked.

[107] There are two exceptions to this, namely the Second World War and the recent Congo Commission. In the former case, the colony and colonialism were discussed in a positive light, so it does not represent the most likely scenario for the presence of state shame. The Congo Commission was erected in 2020 following the BLM protests, published its report in 2021 and failed to come to a resolution in 2022. Although the latter case would be ideal for this research, the study was already in its final year when the commission concluded. One article and essay were however published on this commission as side projects, see Azabar and Verleye (2023) and Verleye, Azabar, Brouwers, and Verheyen (2023).

[108] Empire was defined as comprising "all forces and activities contributing to the construction and the maintenance of *transcolonial empires*" and includes "not only *colonial* politics, but *international* politics for which colonies are not just ends in themselves, but also pawns in global power games" (Osterhammel 2010, 21, italics in original). Similarly, the postcolonial or post-imperial context refers to the particular moment in time when these forces and activities stopped defining a particular imperial centre and made a territorial centre of power and rigid boundaries obsolete (Hardt and Negri 2001, xii).

[109] A postcolonial critique can be formulated regarding this choice, as it does not 'let the subaltern speak' and reiterates the colonized as a marginal subject (Cf. Spivak 1985). While this critique is valid, the research could not study the latter position adequately.

A final challenge lies in studying the imperial past and the postcolonial present as a member of the dominant group in the post-imperial state that is analysed.[110] It is key for this kind of research, both regarding the methodological considerations and the particularity of the case, to acknowledge that the researchers' subject position generates tacit background understandings about this subject. In so doing, this bias informs blind spots and emphasises certain features, factors, actors, and other facets of this issue that will differ from people with positions that do not share the same privileges (Taylor 2017, 40).[111] The point here is not to relativize the current research but to be transparent about the presence of implicit biases that inform the research design and analysis of this particular case. At the same time, "Where an interpretation comes from does not determine where it can be impelled to go" (Geertz 1973, 23). This scientific maxim expresses a belief that, regardless of the background of the researcher, their perspective can contribute to the general search for the understanding of reality (Vattimo 2016).

ANALYSING STATE SHAME

The practical objective of the empirical research is to document and map state shame during these three episodes regarding Belgian imperialism and colonial remorse. As is argued in the previous chapter, state shame is empirically located in emotions that are projected onto the state and the state narratives that these inform. This projection thus occurs in the discursive realm, where agents articulate and represent the social world through language (Fairclough 2003, 26). The state is conceived in this realm as an emotional being, which is expressed by linguistic constructs and conventions. In so doing, the discourse of political agents constitutes states as subjects which are informed by distinct emotional logics and can, in turn, inspire and shape particular state behaviour. This focus on the discursive construction of state subjectivity and emotionality uncovers the intersubjective construction and the politics of representation

---

[110] It can be argued that the discussion on state shame in this context allows for some leeway regarding the subject position of the researcher. The argument here parallels that of Timothy Bewes (2011, 1) stating, "What better reason to write, asks Gilles Deleuze, than the shame of being a man? What better reason, one might add, than the shame of being born a European, of having been raised at the chilly hearth of an empire in decline by a family whose ancestry includes, within living memory, a history of Christian mission in the 'Third World'? What better reason to write than the shame of living and working within the bounds of the largest political, economic, and military power in the world?"

[111] For one, it is telling of the researcher's subject position that the choice of the case is Western and does not engage with the perspectives of the colonized subjects or other actors involved in the complex construction of the colonial state. Although this was a conscious choice, namely that the researcher lacked the capabilities to include these non-Western perspectives in an acceptable and meaningful way, it does reproduce an overbearing Eurocentric focus on this topic. This is all the more problematic in the Belgian context, where "White Belgians still dominate the debates on the colonial past" (Ceuppens 2018, 16).

surrounding emotions and state narratives (Koschut 2017, 5; Lebow 2020, 23). In short, the analysis is thus directed at documenting and tracing the projected emotions and competing state narratives as they are articulated in the discourse. To this end, it is required to design a method that can trace both political emotions and state narratives and document the changes and continuities in their composition. Rather than focus on one comprehensive method, this dissertation combines two approaches that supplement and augment each other.

Structural narrative analysis

The most straightforward method for tracing state narratives is through narrative analysis. This method considers a narrative as "a story with meaning, characters, and a plotline" (Subotić 2016, 610) through which "we make sense of ourselves and our world, and it is on the basis of these stories that we act" (Ringmar 1996, 66).[112] In other words, narratives are meaningful stories that make actions and practices possible (Bevir 2006). It is assumed that narratives share a common "grammar", in that they are characterized by rules about how events are linked in a sequence (Barthes 1975, 251). The analysis of these stories is an interpretative exercise where the focus lies on discerning and reconstructing patterns and dilemmas in processes of meaning-making by agents. The major advantage of narrative analysis for this research is that it gives insight into the intersection between the state's Self-narrative, Self-identity, and behaviour (e.g. Khoury 2018; Subotić 2016; Ringmar 1996). Moreover, as a syncretic approach, it allows the researcher to go in-depth into how these social constructs and actions are represented and conceived as meaningful.

To adequately gauge diachronic changes in narratives, it is necessary to analytically separate particular types. More specifically, there needs to be a means to identify when actors make a significant shift in their narration. By focusing on the plot that an agent uses to structure their narrative, it is assumed that the changes in the narrative can be more adequately identified and qualified (Khoury 2018, 383). A plot, or narrative type, is the causal logic behind a sequence of events, which gives a story its coherence and consistency (Frye 1957; White 1973). Plots

---

[112] To document and analyse narratives, one needs to take account of how they are constructed (Khoury 2018). Specifically, a narrative is selective in organizing and prioritizing events, showing in effect the significance that is given to certain aspects (Ricoeur 2005). This is done either by directly giving these events prominence, or implicitly assuming their central role and importance. Narratives are then structured by inaugural, transitional and ending moments (White 1987). Finally, narratives are also characterized by a plot, which is an organizing principle of the preceding components (Khoury 2018, 371; Frye 1957).

need to be selective, as they exclude some events or characters and emphasize others (Dunn 2003, 64). Consequently, how the agent structures the narrative, will effectively uncover what assessment they make of the situation that they are in. If there is a shift in the situation, they will also imbue the narrative with a change in its emplotment.

According to classic structural narrative analysis, narratives are generally constructed along four basic plot structures, namely 'romance', 'tragedy', 'comedy' and 'satire' (Frye 1957; White 1973).[113] These various types are, generally speaking, discernible in practice, although they also combine in subtypes, for instance, a romantic comedy, or tragic satire (Ringmar 2006, 404). Originating from esthetical analyses of works of art, each of these types has particular characteristics to their structures, roles of actors, and situations of actions and events (Dunn 2003, 65). IR scholars have used these four basic plot structures to understand state behaviour, policy choices and policy change (e.g. Ringmar 2006; 1996; Khoury 2018; Kuusisto 2019). This literature assumes that state narratives are inherently 'messy' and incongruent in their emplotment, certainly in comparison to a more poetic product such as a novel or a work of history (Cf. White 1973). In other words, although political actors mediate and formalize their speeches, their narratives are not as in-depth or consciously constructed and are not necessarily coherent or consistent with the different plot types. Nevertheless, these plot types are heuristic tools that offer a means to gauge the changes and differences in narratives.

Table 2. Type of state shame and their corresponding plot type.

Situational shame	Aggressive shame
Comedic plot	Romantic plot
Narcissistic shame	Deferential shame
Tragic plot	Satiric plot

---

[113] This typology is based on Khoury's (2018) and Ringmar's (2006) interpretations of the theory of Northrop Frye (1957) and Hayden White (1973). Some argue that there are more narrative types, such as 'epic plots' (Khoury 2018, 380; White 1973) but these are often combinations of the four basic plot types.

The qualities of the various plot types also relate to different state shame narratives (see Table 2.). While this connection should not be assumed as absolute, some expectations can be formulated based on either ideal type. For one, a romantic plot is characterized by a progressive trajectory where the hero transcends the world of experience and is liberated from it (White 1973, 8). It structures a narrative as a triumph of good versus evil in a world where conditions seem to be changeless. In other words, the moral lines are always clear-cut and remain this way. The dramatic development of a romance is often structured along three stages, namely the perilous journey of the hero, which is followed by the inevitable struggle or conquest of the enemy and finalizes with the exaltation of the protagonist (Ringmar 2006, 404). In a romantic plot, the antagonist is always represented as the absolute opposite of the hero, as they are mutually exclusive and unable to reconcile with each other.[114] It is based on this clear divide between friend and enemy that the romantic plot type corresponds with the aggressive state shame narrative. More specifically, the latter narrative is expected to originate when a Self is believed to be negatively assessed by an Other for transgressing a social norm, effectively challenging its place in the social and moral world. It is reasonable to assume that this challenge to the Self's narcissistic beliefs and fantasies by an actor that is unwarranted to do so, constructs morally absolute categories regarding the Self and Other. In turn, this bolsters narcissistic and essentialist conceptions of the Self, imagining themselves to be an unquestioned and flawless hero.

In contrast, a tragic plot has a regressive trajectory that ends in the recognition of wrongdoing by the tragic hero (Khoury 2018, 375). The protagonist of this type of story is characterized by an inherent defect or a weakness, such as pride or ambition, that they typically are not conscious of at the onset of the narrative. After rebelling against the established order of the world, the flawed hero is confronted with their inability to change it (Ringmar 2006, 405). In effect, regardless of their good intentions, they would realize their wrongful Self and need to retire from the world. A tragedy, maybe counterintuitively, thus also offers a partial liberation from the world, as there is a new conscience and understanding towards the laws that govern the world that the tragic hero inhabits (White 1973, 9; Lebow 2020, 23). It can be expected that a narcissistic shame narrative will be constructed along a tragic plot. More specifically, the former is a narrative where the Self is made aware of transgressing ideals by an actor that is conceived as the Self or part of the Self. Similar to the tragic hero, the state Self in this type of

---

[114] Characters that were not considered to be enemies, however, could reconcile, but this is a borrowed feature of a comic plot, indicating a romantic comedy or comedic romance.

narrative is conceived as realising its wrongfulness with which it tries to come to terms. A narcissistic state shame narrative would thus recount a disillusionment with the state Self, characterized by an intense feeling of loss and pain that is echoed by a tragic plot. Moreover, this type of narrative constructs a Self that copes with this unwarrantedness by assuming a more humble position in the world, something a tragic hero also aspires to.

The trajectory of a comedic plot[115] is similar to that of a romance, with the difference that it starts from a regressive course and shifts towards a progressive one and ends in a reconciliation between friends and foes. It is "an account of oppositions and misunderstandings which in the course of the narrative are resolved thanks to some fortuitous intervention" (Ringmar 2006, 406). The final scene of the comedy is a festive occasion, which terminates the dramatic changes and transformations that the characters go through (White 1973, 406). This ritual feast is a celebration of the new order, which is a new situation that was acquired through the reconciliation of the forces at play in the world. However, the comedic narrative still excludes parties in the end, namely obstructing characters that caused the regression or stand in the way of the eventual reconciliation (Ibid.). A situational shame narrative would be most likely structured along a comedic plot line. This type of narrative originates from a shame situation where a failure of a social norm is negatively assessed by the Self, implying that the transgressive nature of the Self is but temporary. In so doing, such a narrative will conceive a state Self that is not inherently transgressive. Like a comedic hero, the state Self is believed to be morally undefined and can thus come to a point of reconciliation with a significant Other. Key in reaching the renewal of the social bond is some form of restorative act, such as an apology or a restitution of some sort. A situational state shame narrative would thus entail a projected hope that this restorative action would come to a reconciliation, effectively leading to some form of harmonious future. This type of narrative would thus include some belief towards a comedic ending, that would absolve the state Self of its wrongfulness.

Finally, a satiric plot is characterized by having no true trajectory or agency for the characters. It is parasitic on the other types in the sense that it turns them upside-down, or deconstructs them, to deflate the pretensions of the other narratives and argue that protagonists are incapable of manifesting their own will (Khoury 2018, 379). It is "a drama dominated by the apprehension that man is ultimately a captive of the world rather than its master, and by the recognition that,

---

[115] Importantly, a comedic plot might have the connotation of being intended for purposes of humour, but it does not necessarily have this function nor effect as a type of narrative emplotment. Comedic in this sense refers to the development of the plot, not the genre of fiction that induces laughter.

in the final analysis, human consciousness and will are always inadequate to the task of overcoming definitively the dark force of death, which is man's unremitting enemy" (White 1973, 9). In this sense, satire looks ironically at the other plot types and proclaims the ultimate inadequacy of their vision of the world. A deferential shame narrative can be expected to be constructed along this type of plot. More specifically, this type of narrative originates when the Self is assessed by an Other for not being committed to their Self-ideals. This generates a notion that the Self is deficient and unworthy of pride in contrast to an idealized Other. The pain that is felt for this deferential position is dealt with in a variety of ways, often not characterized by one outspoken coping mechanism. More characteristic is that it cynically resents any notion of morality. In effect, the deferential state shame narrative would be more telling of an emplotment that inverts comic, romantic, or tragic narratives through irony and self-derision. This would entail the emphasis on the powerlessness of the state Self and – to some extent – can feed a refutation of the shameful situation that the state has gotten itself into.

Importantly, this assumed conflation of the emplotment types and the shame narratives is purely tentative. Contextual and temporal factors have to be taken into account about how these interpretative frames relate to one another. The main goal of this analysis is, then, to identify competing state narratives during the three episodes of Belgian imperialism. These moments are expected to be characterized by narrative moves and countermoves that include plot changes, which signify a competition between various state identities of political agents (Khoury 2018, 370). Specifically, when states end a period of mutual conflict or experience a crisis, they need to change the narrative that they tell about themselves (Subotić 2016; Ringmar 1996). In order not to lose face by creating a too forceful break with the traditional narrative, they strategically emphasize some parts of the narrative and deactivate others (Subotić 2016, 611). To expose why political agents select some parts of the narratives over others, it is crucial to include in the analysis how responsibility for wrongdoing is discussed and which political emotions are expressed (Khoury 2018, 384). In distilling both these elements from the texts, the analysis gains insight into the politics that surround the narrative competition that is considered part of state shame.

Interpretative sentiment analysis

Analysing emotions in political settings requires some additional attention regarding their instrumental use by political actors and the means through which they can be identified.

Regarding the first point, it is generally assumed that politicians and activists express emotions both unconsciously and instrumentally. For this research, there is no need to analytically separate these two, since the goal is to gain insight into the politics of state shame, not into the authenticity of its articulation. By being explicit about certain emotions, but implicit about others, political actors reveal whether they are willing to accept the political ramifications of expressing these emotions. It is in expressing these emotions that political actors articulate how the state feels, should feel, or is going to feel about a particular situation (Khoury 2018, 384). The emotions that are being discursively projected onto the state are thus telling of how political actors believe it should cope with a challenge, crisis, tragedy, scandal, and so on, regardless if it has an unconscious or instrumental origin. For example, that US President George Bush emphasized anger and disgust in his discourses following the attacks on 9/11, rather than grief or worry, is telling of how he coped with the narrative change that the US was going through, namely from unquestioned superpower to victim of terror (Ringmar 2006).

To identify emotions in texts, this research uses an interpretative sentiment analysis (ISA). This method identifies the presence and meaning of emotions in speech acts and the behaviours that are referred to on the textual level (Markwica 2018). It combines a more deductive sentiment analysis, which starts from a general taxonomy of emotion signs, and an interpretative approach that focuses on more inductive dialogue between the signs and the texts. Distinct social psychological cues are used to construct the taxonomy and act as an initial means to systematically track emotions in texts. In particular, this research focused on indicators for shame, embarrassment, anger (Retzinger 1995; Scheff 2000; Barbalet 2001; Tracy, Robins, and Tagney 2007), fear pride, hope, humiliation (Gilbert 1997; Fessler 2007, 183; Steiner 2006; Markwica 2018), disappointment (Little 2017) and guilt (Lu 2008; Branscombe and Doosje 2004). These emotions have been selected based on their general association with shame in the literature. Aside from this deductive approach, additional emotions and emotional attitudes, namely serenity, courage, disgust, indignation, joy, and so on, were inductively included in the analysis when their presence was found to be significant. Including these emotions meant that, at some points in the analysis, the coding scheme had to be revisited and started anew. As the analysis was text-based, it simply meant rereading the texts that had already been coded before.

Following the general structure of interpretative sentiment analysis, the cues for all emotions were categorized according to their explicit (use of words that explicitly or figuratively refer to emotions), implicit (indirect references to emotions, in the form of syntactical and contextual indicators), cognitive (or direct references to the conduct of others that give insight into their

thinking impulses) or behavioural expression (direct references to the conduct of actors that show behavioural impulses). This generates an analytical framework that allows for systematic analysis (see Table 3.). [116] To be clear, the four categories do not have any meaning beyond providing the analysis with a transparent and systematic structure. There is, in other words, no essential quality to the categories. The results of this analysis were coded using Nvivo to manage and interpret the data. More specifically, the procedure of 'open coding' was practiced, which breaks down and clusters data in meaningful expression. This means that, after coding, the data were reread, analysed, and linked together multiple times to disclose patterns in both state narratives and emotions. The code 'pride' was, for example, conflated with the code 'honour' in the research of Chapter Five. This conflation occurred because the rereading of the datasets had indicated that these terms were used interchangeably by MPs. The empirical analyses that are presented in Chapter Six and Seven, however, did not show a similar conflation of these terms. In so doing, recurring themes, discursive elements, or emotional markers were collapsed into categories that were specific for each respective empirical chapter.

<div align="center">SOURCE MATERIAL</div>

The most suitable site for finding emotions and narratives regarding the state are legislative bodies such as parliaments, as they act as discursive arenas where MPs communicate their particular political cognition and rhetorically compete for their causes and interests (van Dijk, 1997, 34; Salgado 2021). It is in this institutional context that politicians also individually perform their beliefs before an audience of peers, with the aim of convincing them and their constituents to support a particular idea (Rai 2015). Although MPs are an elite who produce their discourses through complex interelite interactions (van Dijk, 1997), it is assumed that elites – to some extent – share unconscious dispositions with their constituencies and the general population (Ross 2006, 199; Subotić and Zarakol 2012). These shared dispositions make MPs susceptible to the communities of feeling that are present in their society, which they try to mediate, shape, and appropriate for their cause. In short, by mapping the narratives and emotions expressed by Belgian MPs, this research gains insight into the way the state coped with state shame.

---

[116] This schema is based fully on the method of analysis of Markwica (2018, 103) and augmented with additional descriptions of emotions from Retzinger (1995), Little (2017), Lu (2008), Tracy, Robins, and Tagney (1995).

The focus on parliamentary debates, however, does limit this research to some extent. For one, it can only discuss whether and how MPs conceived state shame and cannot disclose how these state shame narratives were more generally present in society. Although this does narrow the comprehensiveness of the empirical research, the central goal of the dissertation is not to discuss how societies cope with state shame but how it originates, is mediated in political conflicts, and leads to particular political outcomes. A parliamentary discourse is, then, not considered a representative site for the emotions, anxieties, and narratives that are present in society but is nonetheless a highly relevant 'arena of emotion' that engages with such phenomena (Cf. Berezin 2002, 44-45). Moreover, the speeches and performances of MPs also have a formal and highly processed nature, problematizing to what extent the emotions that they express are 'genuine' or 'staged'. This critique is evaded by centring on how emotions are attributed to states in discourse and performed by MPs, regardless if they are expressed intentionally or unconsciously.

The principal data for this research comes from proceedings of the Belgian federal parliament that are accessible through an online database.[117] Rather than focus on the general parliamentary discourse, the emphasis is placed on contentious debates in the general assembly. The proceedings of this body will be analysed for every episode for three to four years, as this research understands state shame-as-a-narrative as a longitudinal process, which requires a commitment to tracing long-term dynamics. Every chapter will explicate the reason for its particular chronology and period of analysis. Any documents related to the debates, such as commission reports, interpellations, or formal questions, are included in this analysis. To help scan this extensive source material, keywords specific to the episode were used to pinpoint relevant debates in the proceedings. These debates were then read and analysed multiple times to discern both the various state narratives, their emplotment, and the presence of political emotions. At times, a more general discourse analysis was employed to focus on discursive elements that proved notable for the particular narrative.

Aside from the parliamentary proceedings, this research consults additional sources such as newspaper articles and popular non-fiction literature.[118] Reading and analysing these works mainly acted as a support for reconstructing and understanding the dominant narrative and

---

[117] These proceedings can be consulted online: https://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/index.cfm?language=nl
[118] Most notably, Roger Casement (1904), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1909), Jef Geeraerts (1968; 1972; 1975), Paul Brondeel ([1970]2019), Ludo de Witte (1999), Adam Hochschild (1998), Jacques Brassine and Jean Kestergat (1991) and Verlinden (2002).

political context of the particular episode. The analysis of these external sources is also intended to generate a level of 'saturation' with the cultural and historical context, which is considered key for any discourse analysis. Every episode has also been amply documented by secondary historical literature. This is particularly the case with the issue regarding the Congo question, which, to this day, receives the most academic and popular attention in Belgium and abroad. The classic works of Jules Marchal (and under his pseudonym A.M. Delathuy) on E.D. Morel (1985) and the research commission (1988) are of central importance here. Regarding the Congolese independence, the secondary literature will primarily rest on the analyses of Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem (1998), Guy Vanthemsche (2011), and Mathieu Zana Etambala (1999; 2008). The chapter on the Lumumba Commission cannot build as much on classic works of secondary literature as it is the most recent of the three episodes but employs the extensive contributions on the debate regarding the problematic use of history by the commission (e.g. Bustin 2002; Thsonda 2004; Bevernage 2011).

CONCLUSION

The central goal of this chapter has been to explicate the methodology and methods of this dissertation. It first discusses how state shame can be studied when it is generally believed to be unspoken or conflated with other terms and practices. To this end, the chapter expands on key ontological and epistemological assumptions of this dissertation. The argument is made that there are no extant stable objects that can be simply described or recorded in social scientific research. In effect, researchers do not need to produce universalist claims about the world but can also limit themselves to analytical narratives that help make sense of reality. The notion that state shame is difficult to identify does not mean that it is unobservable. Rather, it necessitates an accurate instrument that can uncover and triangulate various elements of this phenomenon. These methodological positions inform the choice for a historical single case study, as this approach brings a dedicated focus to a nuanced and longitudinal phenomenon. The goal of this empirical analysis is not to 'test' the theoretical framework but to assess whether it makes sense. To this end, the case selection is based on the 'most likely' principle, for which Belgium's empire and colonial remorse are considered suitable. More specifically, three episodes related to this case, the Red Rubber scandal, the Congolese independence, and the Lumumba Commission, are selected as key moments where state shame would be expected to have been articulated.

The chapter then develops upon the central methods to analyse competing state shame narratives and help identify when and how they change. First, in using structural narrative analysis, the four central types of emplotment, romantic, comedic, tragic, and ironic, are used as heuristic tools to analytically discern the various state shame narratives and gauge when they change. An interpretative sentiment analysis is used to systematically capture and map emotions in the discourse. This approach builds on deductive markers for emotions and the gradual inclusion of other inductive signs and emotions in texts. In combining these two methods, empirical research can triangulate the presence of state shame narratives and their politics. Finally, the chapter described its focus on parliamentary debates and some practical choices regarding the source material.

Table 3. Interpretative Sentiment Analysis Schema, as based on Markwica (2018).

Emotion	Explicit signs		Implicit signs		Cognitive sign	Behavioural sign
	Verbal markers[119]	Figurative markers	Syntactical indicator	Contextual indicator		
Fear	Afraid, anguish, worry, horror	Getting wet feet, soiling one's pants	Exclamations, short/aborted sentences, hesitation	Facing physical or psychological threats	Bias towards danger cues; adherence to known procedures; less open to new ideas; bias in favour of low-risk solutions	Flight, fight, or freeze
Anger	Annoyance, angry, furious	Blowing up, boiling, heat,	Exclamations, rhetorical questions	Being blocked or offended	Sense of power or invulnerability,	Removing the obstacle or

---

[119] In contrast to the ISA of Markwica (2018), this analysis opts for a simplified model with regards to the descriptive emotion terms. Specifically, there is no additional coding for emotional intensity. The reasoning behind this, is that the results of the analysis were too meagre to include this additional level of coding. This diminishes the potential of the analysis to go in-depth into the logic of affect. However, this is not the goal of the research.

					confidence, superficial reasoning, high-risk bias	punishing the offender
Hope	Aspiration, wishing for something, longing	Grasping at straws, keeping one's spirits up	Exclamations	Wishing to reach a valued goal	Cognitive flexibility, creative thinking, selective focus on positive information	Reinforced willpower, sustained energy
Pride	Pleased with oneself, proud, glory	Holding one's head high	Exclamations	Being responsible for a valued outcome or for being a valued person	Moderate pride: self-enhancing bias; intense pride: overconfidence about abilities	Moderate pride: determination to further succeed; intense pride: aggressive and intimidating behaviour

Humiliation	Disrespect, demeaning, humiliating	Pushed down, lowering		Being demeaned or degraded		Withdrawing or resisting
Shame (Scheff 2001; Nussbaum 2004)	Embarrassment, ashamed, mortified	Come to terms, Having a bad conscience	Constructive shame: Oversoft, fragmented speech, pause, hesitation, laughed words Narcissistic shame: See anger	Coming to terms with failing an ideal	Constructive shame: Narcissistic shame: Mitigation, abstraction, denial, defensive, verbal withdrawal, distraction, projection, fillers	Hiding behaviour, blushing, control: a. Turning in, biting, or licking the lips, biting the tongue. b. Forehead wrinkled vertically or transversely. c. False smiling (Ekman & Freisen, 1982) or other masking behaviours. d. Fidgeting.

Guilt (Lu 2008, 370; Nussbaum 2004, 208)	Embarrassed, guilty, disgraceful	Being responsible for wrongdoing, having done something wrong		Coming to terms with wrongdoing	Apologetic attitude	
Disappointment (Little 2017, 201)	discontent, displeased, frustration	Let-down, setback, failure		Failing to reach a valued goal		

FIRST INTERLUDE. LEOPOLDIAN IMPERIALISM AND THE CONGO FREE STATE ATROCITIES

Belgian imperialism has a long and complex history and needs to be situated in a broader political, economic, and cultural context. The goal of this interlude is to give a concise history of the dynamics that created this context and preceded the conflict that is central to the first empirical chapter. This history starts with the general observation that a marked enthusiasm for imperialism swept the European continent in the late 19th century (Hobsbawm 1987). It set in motion a process that would shape international politics for the coming centuries. This colonial zeal originated from global shifts in power and structural changes that occurred in the world economy between the middle of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century (Osterhammel 1999, 31). More specifically, through the development of capitalism and the first industrial revolution, economic conditions developed that inspired beliefs of expansionism (Hobsbawm 1987, 79; Loomba 2015, 22). A burgeoning competition in industrial production had brought about the need for new consumer markets and resources, which were believed to be only available in overseas territories. The simultaneous development of modern nationalism and the civilization paradigm would constitute the drive of European nations to remake the 'uncivilized' world into their image (Dunn 2003, 51; Buzan 2014). Having a colony would, on the one hand, boost the national morale but on the other hand externalise violent consequences of nationalism to the outside of Europe (Hobsbawm 1987, 142; Ansiaux 2006, 25). Finally, religious and cultural-scientific notions of Western-European superiority would facilitate the rationale behind colonialism and fuelled the so-called 'age of imperial humanitarianism' (Barnett 2011; Turda and Quine 2018, 38). Although the political and economic conditions were necessary conditions for the development of modern European imperialism, the expansionist drive found its origin in this combination of Christian missionary zeal and racial superiority (Dunn 2003, 48).

The Kingdom of Belgium gained its independence following an uprising against the United Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1830. Although it had some history with colonial ventures before its independence, Belgium would have no colonies to its name when its borders were

drawn. As a typical 19th-century monarch, the first King of Belgium, Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1790-1865), would make many eager attempts to change his country's lack of colonial possessions. The prime reason for his enthusiasm, aside from personal grandeur, was that he believed that the newly established country desperately needed a "more robust national spirit" (Juste 1868, 194, as quoted in Ansiaux 2006, 63). According to him, Belgium was small and insignificant as a country and inhabited by parochial and small-minded people (Ewans 2002, 15). His drive to acquire a colony for his country would bring him to support more than fifty colonial ventures, mainly during the middle part of his reign (ca. 1839-1850). These undertakings were highly eclectic in their focus, ranging from commercial trade posts at the Rio Nuñez River in present-day Guinee to attempts at founding colonies in the Republic of Texas and Crete (Ansiaux 2006; Maselis 2005). With no exception, all these prospective colonies ended in a fiasco.

Although Leopold I received avid support from Belgian military officers, entrepreneurs, and investors for his colonial prospects, the Belgian government, parliament, and public opinion were generally indifferent towards such expansionist beliefs (Ewans 2002, 15). This disinterest was not based on any ethical principles that dismissed imperialism. Rather, Belgian statesmen generally held on to the liberal economic belief that colonialism would imply the imposition of tariffs and a rise in international protectionism (Vandersmissen 2011, 10), which could damage Belgium's highly industrialized export economy. These liberal beliefs also instilled a wariness towards the costs and risks of the monarch's colonial ventures, as they might upset the fiscal balance (Ewans 2002). Moreover, Belgium was founded as a buffer state against France and, as such, was constitutionally bound to its neutrality (Vandersmissen 2011, 11). This restriction made statesmen practice political restraint towards any interference with foreign politics. The historical national imagination of Belgium also rested on the notion that the country was itself a victim of imperialism, as the nation's territory had been occupied by a succession of great powers (Ewans 2002). In effect, Leopold I's colonial ambitions were generally met with an absence of political and public interest or broad support.

Leopold II (1835-1909) shared his father's imperialistic ambitions. He too held the notion that "a country with no overseas properties or activities is not complete" (Le Febvre de Vivy 1955, 19 as quoted in Stengers 1997, 261), showing his profound devotion to developing the Belgian national spirit. Moreover, the humiliating 'amputation' of Limburg and Luxemburg as a part of the 1839 peace accords with the Netherlands fuelled his need to aggrandize Belgium (Viaene 2008, 753-754). The drive of Leopold II to own a colony was also informed by his passion for

entrepreneurship, which made him "a firm, and one might almost say a religious, believer in the economic profits of colonial exploitation" (Stengers and Vansina 2004, 317). Leopold was already arguing for, and fantasizing about, Belgian colonialism before his coronation in 1865 but his first serious attempts began in the early 1870s (Thielemans and Vandewoude 1982; Vandersmissen 2011, 8). Whereas his mind was first set on Southeast Asia, most notably the Philippines, Fiji, North Borneo, and New Guinea, his ambitions would gravitate towards Central Africa. Influenced by scholars of economic geography, Leopold II set his mind to explore the area of the Congo River and its estuaries. After the 1876 International Geographical Conference in Brussels, the King established the Association Internationale Africaine (AIA), along with a slew of other societies with both or either geographical and 'humanitarian' goals (Stengers 1997, 263). In effect, by establishing these institutions outside the framework of the Belgian state, Leopold could evade the political and judicial restraints that were constitutionally imposed on him.

With support from the other members of the AIA, Leopold enlisted the famed adventurer Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904) to survey and prospect the region surrounding the Congo basin. During his expedition, Stanley would establish stations and conduct treaties with local rulers. That these leaders were not familiar with writing, European languages, or the European practices of treaty-making and contracts, was believed not to invalidate these treaties as official transfers of sovereignty to the AIA (Ewans 2002, 72). With his foothold in place, Leopold saw an opportunity to consolidate his power in the Congo-basin. In the following years, the AIA lost significance in favour of the *Association Internationale du Congo* (AIC), which would become the main vehicle for the acquisition and consolidation of territory in Congo.[120] Yet, this institution was not an independent state, making it at risk of being superseded by claims made by other European countries, most notably Britain, France, and Portugal. Leopold thus turned his attention to the powers of Europe, in an attempt to recognize and legitimise the AIC's claim over the Congo-basin (Ibid.).

---

[120] Notably, the AIA was the institution that was listed on the treaties made with Congolese leaders, making the transition of sovereignty to the AIC legally problematic. This issue was, however, never raised by contemporaries.

With the aim to settle international disputes regarding the European colonization of Africa and counter the Arab slave trade,[121] the Berlin Conference (1884-1885) was organised.[122] Leopold used this forum to validate his colonial venture in the Congo-basin, which he did with both audacity and strategic calculation. In their desire to ensure the neutrality of the Congo-basin, and to avoid further disputes regarding the claims, Britain, Germany, and the United States supported the AIC's territorial sovereignty (Ewans 2002, 98). Not only because it already had a foothold, but it was also the only way that this area would be kept out of the hands of the French (Ibid.). The French and the Portuguese, however, did not look favourable to this proposal. To convince them, Leopold proposed deceptive agreements that would exchange territories and left his expanse to the South-East of the Congo basin open-ended.[123] In effect, the Berlin conference eventually led to the outcome that the AIC, and thus Leopold, had received "a colony in the heart of Africa some 900,000 square miles in extent, about eighty times as large as Belgium and some one twelfth of the total land mass of the continent" (Ibid., 101).

The colony would be named the Congo Free State, for Leopold II was obliged by the Berlin conference to keep the region a free trade zone, an obligation that he tried to circumvent from the onset. Although legally run by the AIC, in practice the Congo Free State was centrally ruled by Leopold as the *Roi-Souverain* (Ewans 2002, 105). He dominated all branches of the colonial administration, from the courts to the organisation of the *Force Publique*, the gendarmerie and military force. However, this did not mean that it was profitable. Because of the necessity of Congo to be fiscally self-supporting, Leopold invested a large amount of his funds into the colony. By 1888, his vast wealth no longer sufficed and he needed financial support. Leopold received a financial injection, first from a lottery loan, then from a Belgian grant, and finally in

---

[121] This moral goal was primarily put in place to justify the ideology of paternalist, racist, cultural superiority that was present at the conference. Remarkably, Leopold II used an aggressive state shame narrative regarding the Arab slave trade to justify his conquest by stating that: "The slavery which is still continued over a considerable portion of the African Continent is a plague-spot which all friends of civilisation must desire to see obliterated . . . The horrors of this state of things, the thousands of victims which the slave trade causes to be massacred every year, the still greater number of perfectly innocent beings who are brutally dragged into captivity and condemned wholesale to hard labour for life . . . [We must act to end this] odious traffic, which is a disgrace to the age in which we live, and to tear away the veil of darkness which still hangs over Central Africa." (quoted in Banning 1877, 162–3 in Dunn 2003, 48).

[122] The direct cause for the Berlin Conference was the British-Portuguese treaty of 26 February 1884 that closed off the Congo estuary for other European powers (Vangroenweghe 2004, 16). This worried France and Germany, prompting them to organise an international conference.

[123] This strategy of the '*ajouté*' implied that Leopold could expand his territory at will, which would eventually lead to his acquisition of the mineral-rich region of Katanga, to the great detriment of Cecil Rhodes and Great Britain (Ewans 2002, 100, 108).

the form of an official state loan from Belgium, to which the Congo Free State would be the collateral (Stengers and Vansina 2004, 318). In 1895, the colony started to become profitable when the *Régime domanial* was erected. This system declared all 'vacant land', and its respective yield, property of the state.[124] It would bring in enormous profits to the colonial state through the sudden surge in demand for rubber following the invention of the bicycle and automobile.

The expedition of Stanley and the consolidation of the Congo Free State were characterized by extreme violence against native populations. More specifically, under the blue and yellow starred banner, extensive campaigns were held against the Arab trade empires, mutinies in the Force Publique suppressed, and revolts of all kinds subdued with brutal force (Vangroenweghe 2004, 10). The Congolese did not simply assume the power and legitimacy of the Congo Free State and actively resisted where they could. Yet, to the rest of the world, the consolidation of Leopold's colony was conceived as a *conquête pacifique* (Ibid.). The Congo Free State had to, at all times, legitimate its presence in Africa to international society, which it did by emphasizing its humanitarian goals and civilisation mission.

Although this consolidation process was brutal and cost numerous lives, it would be the predatory economy based on the extraction of rubber and ivory that would lead to the infamous atrocities against the Congolese. The state's income was based on a labour tax imposed on its subjects, who needed to dedicate an undetermined amount of time to the extraction of rubber, ivory, or any other goods that were deemed profitable. Although the colonial state owned all these products, Leopold had given concessions to certain companies, such as the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company or the *Société Anversoise du Commerce au Congo*, to help with the extraction (Stengers and Vansina 2004, 339). Yet, the taxation rate in labour was unfixed, and the state and company agents that were tasked to collect the rubber and ivory were being paid on commission. This led to large-scale systematic exploitation, which, in turn, generated resistance and insurrection among the Congolese. While the violence cost numerous lives, the intense demands for labour simultaneously stifled agriculture in the region, effectively leading to food shortages. The death toll was intensified by the brutal system of porterage and the epidemics caused by troop movements and people fleeing from the violence towards dense tropical forests, making them exposed to unknown diseases (Ibid., 340). Leopold II's colonial

---

[124] This system effectively nullified the principle of free trade in the colony, as all property that was of interest (mainly ivory and rubber) was harvested in previously 'vacant' land (Stengers and Vansina 2004, 319).

venture led to an intense decline in the population and welfare of the Congolese people. The economic predation, dehumanization, and negligence of the Congo Free State would come to light, generating international outrage.

While Belgium was connected to Leopold's colonial venture from the onset, it was not considered to be a veritable empire until after the annexation of the Congo Free State. The takeover process would galvanize after protests against Leopold II's regime gained momentum around 1903, culminating in an international human rights campaign headed by the Congo Reform Association (Pavlakis 2016; Bevernage 2018). The accusations of systemic violence, widespread abuses, and deep-seated corruption met with hostile opposition and disdain, a dynamic that sustained a political conflict that would be at the centre of Belgian politics for more than four years (Delathuy 1985; Ewans 2002; Viaene 2009, 45).[125] Gradually, the abuses in Leopold's private colony became acknowledged and reconceived as a 'social question' which had to be solved through an active colonial policy (Bevernage 2018). Annexing the Congo Free State was, then, unavoidable. Belgium christened its new colony as the 'Belgian Congo' on November 15th 1908 and assumed its position among other European empires. However, having to deal with the aftermath of Leopold's exploitative system and nefarious affairs regarding his colony's financial affairs, the inauguration of the Belgium empire was shrouded by international scandal and disgrace.

---

[125] The issue would cause the downfall of the Catholic government of De Smet de Naeyer II (1899-1907), lead to the firing of a chief of staff and became the central theme for the contested national elections of 1908 (Viaene 2009, 45).

CHAPTER 5. THE RED RUBBER SCANDAL (1903-1909): ROYAL SHAME AND THE ORIGIN OF THE BELGIAN IMPERIAL SELF

> In voting for national honour, those who have allowed all these infamies to occur will have authorized new ones. Their reward will be remorse and shame. Unfortunately, this shame will fall on Belgium and this will not restore the lives of the thousands of victims that the minotaur will have devoured in the meantime.
>
> - Stanislas Lefranc, 16 April 1908[126]

Belgium became an imperial state following the international and domestic crisis surrounding the 'Red Rubber' scandal. As the quote of the legal scholar Stanislas Lefranc illustrates, this process was a profound challenge to the Belgian state's sense of Self. What is particularly puzzling regarding this episode in Belgium's imperial history is that a neutral country, with no notable previous tradition[127] or desire for having a colony, nonetheless became a colonizing state. The traditional explanation for this remarkable turn of events is the so-called 'reluctant imperialist thesis' (Ewans 2002; Thielemans and Ewoud 1982). It argues that Belgian imperialism did not originate from an internal drive or desire for colonies but as a consequence of the international pressure regarding the Red Rubber scandal coming from the UK, US, and France (Stanard 2012, 7). More specifically, the only reason why the Belgian public agreed to the eventual annexation of the Congo Free State was "to repair the situation in the Congo and simultaneously free Belgium from the bad name it had ('undeservedly') received" (Bevernage 2018, 206). According to this thesis, then, international pressure was the constitutive factor for

---

[126] As quoted in *Hand. Kamer*, 16/04/1908, p. 1483.
[127] Belgium did have some links to past colonialism (see the first interlude), but to speak of a tradition would be an overstatement. The colonial failures of Leopold I, the bankrupt Ostend company, and the colonialism-by-association during its union with the Netherlands were not conceived as part of a special 'colonial custom' associated with the Belgian national Self.

the origin of the Belgian empire, while domestic actors generally remained reluctant towards embracing the colonial venture.[128]

Recent contributions to the historiography on this particular episode have challenged the validity of the reluctant imperialist thesis. More specifically, historians of the so-called 'imperial turn'[129] have denounced this thesis as it gave a semblance of altruism to the colonizer (Stanard 2012, 8; 2016, 166). They claim that this narrative of reluctance allowed Belgium to avoid taking up its responsibility for past colonial atrocities by attributing the Belgian state some deferential powerlessness regarding its former colonial status. This later notion is contradicted by research that indicates the existence of a so-called 'colonial party', a loose movement of Belgian elites and the public that identified themselves with Leopold's colonial project and held expansionist beliefs (Viaene 2008; 2009). The presence of this colonial party gave legitimacy to the annexation of the Congo Free State and countered the assumption of the reluctant imperialist thesis that there was no attraction or enthusiasm in Belgium for colonialism (Bevernage 2018, 206; Viaene, Van Reybrouck, and Ceuppens 2009). In effect, these newer contributions attribute more credence to these domestically formed beliefs and desires in explaining the origin of Belgian imperialism.

However, the question remains as to how these domestic beliefs came to inform the annexation of the Congo Free State. That this imperial narrative was present, in other words, does not explain why it gained political significance and became a key driver for making Belgium an empire. The theoretical perspective of this dissertation can bring insight into this particular puzzle by focusing on the development of inflated notions of Self, i.e. the narcissist fantasies and desires associated with imperialism, and their challenge, i.e. state shame. By particularly focusing on strategies of state Self-securitization, state narrative adaptation, policy change, and state behaviour, the theoretical framework of state shame can shed light on the origin of the Belgian empire. To this end, the current chapter revisits this particular episode in Belgian imperial history and sheds light onto why Belgian political elites came to conceive an imperial

---

[128] This understanding of the origin of Belgian colonialism is similar to claims made in various works in International Relations (IR) and Empire studies, specifically by authors that emphasize the 'weakness' (Sharman 2019) or 'absent-mindedness' (Porter 2004) of imperialists. In contrast to the common assumption that imperialistic support was pervasive in domestic societies, these contributions show that international dynamics and interactions with locals were more central to empire (e.g. Neumann and Welsh 1991; Subrahmanyam 1997; Dunn 2003; Porter 2004; Bayly 2004; Welsh 2017; Sharman 2019). That Belgium came to be a colonizing state without having a master plan thus seems to be in line with this literature.

[129] Generally speaking, this constitutes research that considers imperial or colonial policy as embedded in broader tensions and issues that the respective states had to deal with. See Viaene (2008) and Vanthemsche (2012).

Self-narrative and how this became dominant. Simultaneously, it aims to link up with the broader goal of this dissertation by gaining insight into the particular political dynamics of state shame. The aim is to expose the previously described conceptual framework of this dissertation to a concrete case study and evaluate whether it brings meaningful insight into the case.

More specifically, the current research analyses parliamentary debates during the 'Red Rubber' scandal from the perspective of the politics of shame. Conceiving (state) shame as a narrative on a particular social position of the state, the conceptual framework centres on how political agents conceive of a shame situation by discursively identifying a source of agency (a Self or an Other that shames) and a source of failure (failing internal ideals or external standards). The different constellations of how these factors are conceived by political agents generate four types of shame narratives, namely situational, narcissistic, aggressive, and deferential shame, each inspiring and informing particular social dynamics and behaviour. The politics that this generates is traced by both a structural narrative analysis, to identify differences and changes in the plots of state narratives, and an interpretative sentiment analysis, to assess the significance that political agents attach to these narratives and their changes. These analyses are applied to Belgian parliamentary debates between 1903-1908 on the topic of the Congo Free State and its annexation.[130]

The chapter finds that MPs recognized that Belgium was placed in a shame situation but that pro-colonial and anti-colonial factions held varying interpretations of the sources of agency and failure. Anti-colonial MPs emphasized a tragic state Self where their state had failed in securing constitutive aspects of its sense of Self by allowing the atrocious exploitation of Congo to occur. In corresponding with the narcissistic state shame narrative, this inspired a politics of shame that centred on exposing the wrongfulness of the Self and accounting for the transgressions regarding Self-ideals. The state narrative of pro-colonial MPs, on the other hand, was characterized by a romantic plot that glorified Belgium's honour and its contribution to the Congo Free State. In matching with an aggressive state shame narrative, their politics of shame focused on refuting accusations of wrongdoing and emphasizing the greatness of the state Self. These conflicting interpretations of the shame situation facilitated an antagonistic conflict that pushed each faction into becoming ever more zealous in their politics of shame. Yet, the origin of Belgium's imperial narrative does not lie with this particular conflict but with a public letter

---

[130] The analyses did not continue after April 1908, for reasons of focus. More specifically, after this particular point in time, parliamentary debates focused mainly on the royal scandals that followed the annexation of the Congo Free State.

from Leopold II, which claimed that Belgium was not ready to be an imperial state. In response, both pro-colonial and moderate MPs began arguing for their country's greatness and imperial eligibility, effectively inflating their country's Self. An imperial narrative became embedded into the nation's historical development, connecting it to its current economic leading position and its future greatness as an imperial state. The opposition could not counter this imperial narrative effectively, as it even convinced previously virulent anti-colonial MPs. In effect, the pro-colonial faction was able to make an imperial state narrative hegemonic which facilitated the annexation and formation of the Belgian Congo.

The chapter will proceed by first introducing the historical context of the scandal, with a distinct focus on the domestic and international dynamics that preceded it. After this general discussion, the text turns to the narrative analysis of the parliamentary debates during the Red Rubber scandal up until the annexation of the Congo Free State. Rather than keeping the focus purely on the variety of narrative plot structures that this situation generated, the wider discourse is also included in the analysis to identify dynamics that facilitated an imperial narrative. Following this extensive discussion, the chapter turns to the results of the interpretative sentiment analysis which traces and interprets the general emotionality of MPs and the prevalence of shame, embarrassment, guilt, and pride. To conclude, the chapter summarizes and discusses the results of the two analyses by reflecting on the origins of Belgian imperialism and the particular politics of shame that were present during this episode.

ORIGINS OF THE BELGIAN IMPERIAL SELF

Imperial reluctance

In the mid to late 19th century, the national narrative of Belgium was based on a fairly coherent conception of the nation's past. More specifically, the hegemonic discourse among patriotic Belgian historians placed the origin of the nation with the Gallic-Germanic *Belgae* that fought Julius Caesar.[131] This historical representation made the national union precede the political union and was meant to develop what would be called *L'âme belge*.[132] Additionally, Belgium's

---

[131] In his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, Caesar mentioned that the so-called *Belgae* were the 'bravest of all the Gauls' which undoubtedly instilled a sense of pride among citizens of the newly created state. The rest of the quote ('because they are furthest from the civilization and refinement of [our] province') is often strategically left out. See Dubois 2008, p. 24.

[132] Most notably argued by the famous Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, who aimed to show that Belgium was a glorious and proud nation. See Degn, Hansen, Magnussen, and Rasmussen 2004, 138.

road to independence was consistently conceived as "one long struggle to protect the medieval liberties of the Flemish and Brabant cities against the subsequent foreign conquests to which the country was subjugated" (Beyen and Majerus 2008, 284). These images and clichés were widely disseminated by official propaganda and came to constitute a particular Belgian national identity (Vanthemsche 2012, 58). Notably, the Belgian Revolution of 1830 figured in this national narrative as a final battle that ended foreign occupation and became the starting point for a new history, one written by the nation itself (Stengers 1981). This historical master narrative thus represented the nation as a victim of past subjugation and never as a homogenous driving force (Beyen 2013, 83).[133] Belgium's identity in the 19th century was thus constructed through imperial victimization, which meant that imperialism was not only frowned upon, it was also believed to be incongruent with the Belgian Self.

Moreover, imperialism would also contradict dominant political beliefs in Belgium. Although there was a notable sense of patriotism, the distinct liberalism that constituted the Belgian revolutionary project was ingrained with anti-state sentiments (Beyen 2013, 83). The belief that the state should not be overbearing, originated from the opposition to the liberal policies of the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II and the despotic and Protestant rule by the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Notably, these anti-state sentiments were shared by both Catholics and Liberals, the two main political factions that would dominate political life in Belgium for most of the 19th century. This anti-statism led to a central paradox for Belgian state-building (Ibid.) but also meant that politicians were not keen on promoting imperialism.

Aside from the incongruence with the Belgian national narrative and anti-statism, the dominant discourse on political economy in Belgium also implied a disapproval of colonial ventures. The rapid industrial development by the middle of the 19th century, and certainly its technological leadership in the iron and wool industry, had made Belgium's political and economic elite ardent proponents of bringing down trade barriers to open up new foreign markets (Abbeloos 2008, 109; Vandersmissen 2011, 10-11). Although the belief in other European countries was that colonies could meet this demand for new consumers, the particular interpretation of economic liberalism in Belgium held that colonies would create new boundaries for trade between countries. Additionally, Belgian colonial ventures before the Congo Free State,

---

[133] This belief would set the stage for the 'reluctant imperialist thesis' and the 'innocence thesis' in the later historical imagination of Belgian imperialism as it acts as an *Ohnmachtsgarantie*, or "the alibi that one cannot be held responsible for the evil if one lacked the power to prevent or stop it". See Bevernage 2015, 339 and Stengers 1981.

including those before independence, had all ended in disaster (Ansiaux 2009). In effect, these past experiences instilled a sense of distrust among the political and economic elite of Belgium towards the profitability and proper management of colonies (Vandersmissen 2011, 11). The risks and expenses of colonial initiatives were thus not believed to be worth their trouble (Vanthemsche 2012, 16).

Belgium was also constitutionally bound to political neutrality. It was erected as a buffer state against France, a role which it had inherited from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands and needed to uphold after its secession (Vandersmissen 2011, 11). This constitutional neutrality required statesmen to practice political restraint towards any interference in foreign politics.[134] Such diligence was necessary because of ever-heightening tensions in Europe, in part due to the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1871) and the subsequent scramble for Africa. These tensions, but also the fact that Belgium was a small and militarily weak state, meant that military conflicts, or any meaningful international actions, were actively avoided (Coolsaet 2014). Aside from that, an external attack, most likely by France, was always feared by the political elite. To guarantee its survival, then, Belgium had to make sure that other European states would come to its aid, meaning that its strategic neutrality had to be maintained at all costs (Vandersmissen 2011, 11).[135]

Royal ambitions and Belgian colonial involvement

In effect, when Leopold II began his search for a colony, Belgian authorities and business elites reacted with distrust and opposition (Vanthemsche 2012, 18). Although it is difficult to gauge the enthusiasm of public opinion for Leopold's colonial venture, it is safe to say that many Belgians were not overly enthused about their King's imperial ambition. The antipathy of the elites further worsened after Leopold's Association Internationale du Congo (AIC) was given sovereignty over the Congo-basin at the Berlin conference (1884-1885) and became known as the Congo Free State. In consolidating the borders of the Congo Free State, Leopold came into

---

[134] Because of this restraint and the dominance of the economic liberalism, the foreign policy of Belgium was mainly consular in nature, rather than diplomatic.

[135] Regardless of these objections to colonialism in Belgium, there were, of course, individuals who participated freely and eagerly in the colonial ventures of other states. Either being attracted to the sense of adventure, a search for scientific discovery, or a desire for missionary work, Belgian citizens (and also citizens of the pre-independence polities) were active in 19th-century imperialism. In short, Belgians were not 'locked up' in their state and did also participate in imperialism, although never systematically supported by the Belgian state until the 1880s. See Vanthemsche 2012, 16-17 and Stols 1981.

direct conflict with other European states, which attracted unwanted diplomatic enmity for Belgium (Ibid., 22). Aside from that, the King's ambitious goals to occupy the mineral-rich Katanga and to reach the banks of the Nile River involved him in high-stakes international games, heightening the fear of military conflict (Ewans 2003).

However, the Belgian elite opposition towards Leopold's colonial venture would gradually subside in the following years.[136] Illustrative of this change were the loans that the Belgian government would issue out to the Congo Free State. While the King had hoped to amass a great fortune through his colonial enterprise, his dream of riches quickly became a financial nightmare. In 1888 a lottery loan was granted to support his project, which brought in several millions (Stengers and Vansina 2004, 318). Although not uncontroversial (Oosterlinck, Blocher, and Gulati 2020, 58, fn. 54), the loan did generate millions for Leopold, indicating that there was no strong opposition among the general population. As this loan proved to be insufficient for saving the Congo Free State from bankruptcy, the King received two additional loans in 1890 and 1895 from the Belgian state. Importantly, a clause of the 1890 loan stated that Belgium was given the right to annex the Congo Free State by 1901 if Leopold was not able to repay his debt (Gardner 2013, 135).[137] In addition to allowing the King to take charge over another state and freely enlisting Belgian soldiers for exploits in the Congo Free State, this willingness to offer the King multiple loans effectively pulled Leopold's colony into the political life of Belgium (Vanthemsche 2012, 22, fn. 23).

By the turn of the century, the political and economic elite of Belgium had taken over the colonial initiative from Leopold (Viaene 2008; Vanthemsche 2012, 22). To make the Congo Free State profitable, Leopold had issued concessions to companies that would extract ivory, valuable minerals, and rubber. These concessionary companies were not all Belgian, but most of them were, and, as such, they also employed countrymen. These men, but also other colonial veterans, would return to Belgium with a profound admiration for Leopold II and the fallen pioneers, in turn disseminating myths, symbols, and martyrs that would feed colonial

---

[136] Why this occurred, is difficult to discern from secondary literature. It can be argued that the depression of 1873-1874, which triggered the change from Liberal to Catholic governments, had a notable effect. As the Catholic governments represented more protectionist and centralist beliefs, it might point towards a gradual shift in the discourse on political economy. Another explanation is that Leopold II was able to dominate the narrative on the Congo and thus present it as a great opportunity (Dunn 2003, 24-25).

[137] In 1895, the Congo Free State was reported to be nearly bankrupt. A scandal ensued, which generated demands for immediate annexation. However, Socialist, Liberal and some Catholic MPs resisted because they were promised beforehand that they could choose whether to annex the state in 1901. See Stengers and Vansina 2004, 324.

propaganda (Stanard 2012, 12; Vanthemsche 2012, 58). Aside from companies, investors were also coming to see the opportunities of the Congo Free State.[138] Large public and private works became funded after the rubber exploitation generated enormous profits for Leopold. On the religious level, the Catholic church became the main driver of the civilizing mission by the end of Leopold's reign. The missionaries that were sent to educate the local population on the merits of Christianity were mainly Belgian. Although protestant missions were also present, Leopold favoured Catholic missionaries as the former were more critical towards his exploitative regime. Finally, the colonial project also awakened an interest in scientists, educators, curators, and other active members of the Belgian metropolitan population (Ibid.). In short, a Belgian 'colonial party' had formed that appropriated Leopold's project even before it became officially known as the 'Belgian Congo' (Viaene 2008).[139]

Initial accusations

News on the inhumanities in Leopold II's colony leaked out regularly. The first reports, published in 1890, were by George Washington Williams, an African-American emancipationist who had taken a tour through the Congo Free State. Following his travels, he wrote an open letter condemning the state's authorities for "conniving in murder, slavery, expropriation and sexual excesses" (Ewans 2002, 175). This letter was met with a discrediting counterattack by Leopold II, one of his preferred methods to deal with public criticism (Stanard 2012, 42), completely silencing the accusation. Other whistle-blowers followed in the 1890s, mainly English and Swedish missionaries like Grattan Guinness or Edvard Sjöblom, who reported on the brutal practice of cutting off hands and the use of the chicotte.[140] These initial critiques were all effectively countered by Leopold either through smear campaigns or direct mediation.

Yet, the missionaries' accusations generated some distrust among European states about how Leopold was running his personal colony. This distrust would primarily find some foothold in Britain, leading the British government to halt the recruitment of British colonial subjects as mercenaries and workers by the Congo Free State. In part due to the persuasiveness and charm

---

[138] They remained, however, distrustful of Leopold. Only when Belgium came to annex the Congo Free State did they inject significant capital into the colony.

[139] Foreign reporters often referred to it as the 'Belgian Congo' even before it was annexed. See Stengers and Vansina 2004.

[140] Also called *fimbo* of *Sjambok*, a whip made from the hide of a hippo.

of the Belgian king, no investigations followed or actions were taken by other countries. More importantly, however, were the international tensions that were created by an impending conflict between Britain and France on the Nile issue (Ewans 2002, 180). Siding with the critique on the Congo Free State might further exacerbate this already tense situation and, potentially, drive Leopold to grant the right of preference of his colony to the competing state (Ibid.).

Although Leopold's colony did trouble Belgian public opinion at times,[141] the issues were more of a financial and fiscal nature. In general, the accusations against the Congo Free State were either not registered by the press or represented as political ploys by British agents directed against Leopold (Delathuy 1985, 93). The sole exception to this rule was the confession of Louis Lacroix, a former agent of the *Anversoise* trust who spoke of the atrocities to avoid accusations of his participation in them, which was avidly commented on in Belgian newspapers (Vangroenweghe 1985). This generated a divide between the so-called *Congolâtre* and *Congophobe* press, the latter of which gave a platform to notable Belgian critics of Leopold's colonial project. Members of the Socialist and Liberal parties, most notably Emile Vandervelde and George Lorand, would raise several questions in parliament regarding issues with the colonial system and the effect it could have on Belgium (Ewans 2002, 184; Delathuy 1985). Their critiques were, however, parried by the Catholic government, as the latter argued that the Congo Free State was sovereign and independent and thus none of their business. Aside from Vandervelde and Lorand, there was also a small group of reformers headed by Félicien Cattier, a professor of colonial law, and A. J. Wauters (Ewans 2002, 170). However, their campaigns proved not to be as successful as their British counterparts.

---

[141] Two notable episodes generated scandal among the Belgian population. In 1895, the Congo Free State was reaching bankruptcy, generating the demand for annexation following the 1890 loan. Although this demand would not be followed through, it would resurge in 1901. At that point, there was a controversial vote in parliament to approve the extension of the clause about the 1890 state loan that Leopold had received. The Congo Free State was to be annexed if Leopold was unable to repay the loan after ten years, which became clear that the King would not do. This Bill, proposed by the esteemed statesman August Beernaert, proposed to annex the Congo Free State in two years. However, he was only supported by members of the Socialist party and some radical liberals. The Bill eventually failed. The main point of worry was that this acquisition could upset the fiscal balance of Belgium and make them responsible for a colony that was considered to be unprofitable. The Bill became the template for the debate on the eventual take-over of the Congo Free State between 1906 and 1908. See Ewans 2002, 170-171.

At the turn of the century, two central figures, E.D. Morel and Roger Casement, became the driving forces behind an international campaign that denounced the Congo Free State. Morel, a British journalist, developed an interest in exposing the crimes of Leopold's colony and the hollowness of the King's 'humanitarianism' through his previous occupation as a shipping clerk. After finding out that the accounting of the concessionary companies in the Congo Free State indicated that there were gross imbalances and abuses, he concluded that the colony was robbed in a systematic way.[142] The movement that Morel had set up gradually generated more traction throughout the years, mainly through his widely read newspaper articles, controversial pictures, and influential books (Ewans 2002, 189; Barnett 2011, 29). These works spurred public indignation and led to a heated debate in the House of Commons beginning in May 1903. The questions that were posed to the British government would eventually compel it to enlist Roger Casement, the British Consul to the Congo Free State, to write a report on the veracity of the accusations that were made against Leopold (Ewans 2002, 191-92).

Casement, who had already criticized the administrative system of the Congo Free State in previous years, travelled inland and conducted extensive interviews with both locals and colonial settlers. In his travels, he observed the brutality of Leopold's regime and reported that Morel's accusations were genuine, although not without paying tribute to the Belgians and praising the benefits of colonialism (Ewans 2002, 195-196). The accusation, thus, did not alter the social identity of Congo but did challenge the Self-image that Leopold II and his cronies had created for themselves (Dunn 2003, 56). By the time his damning report came out on 15 February 1904, Leopold had already set up a propaganda campaign, backed by the Belgian government, parliament, and press. The goal of this campaign was to control the perception of the Congo Free State and discount Casement's report, mainly by defaming the author (Ewans 2002, 205-206; Stanard 2011, 42). Casement responded to this propaganda by teaming up with Morel and establishing the Congo Reform Association, which would become the central vehicle of the human rights campaign against Leopold's regime. Attracting celebrities such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Mark Twain, and Anatol France, the Congo Reform Association would

---

[142] To be clear, any colony was robbed systematically. Morel held the Eurocentric, racist, and colonial notion that there was a 'right way' to colonize a country, i.e. the British approach, and that Leopold's colony did not abide by these norms. See Ewans 2002, 188.

be at the helm of an international 'naming and shaming'-campaign that some consider to be the first in world history (Pavlakis 2016).[143]

In contrast to popular belief, Leopold would not be immune to these critiques. Around 1896, he would write to one of his trusted advisors that "if there are abuses on the Congo, we must stop them" and "these horrors must end or I will retire from the Congo. I will not be spattered with blood and mud; it is essential that any abuses cease" (van Eetvelde as quoted in Ewans 2002, 181). In response, Leopold enlisted a 'Commission for the Protection of the Natives' to monitor the abuses that he was accused of. This turned out, however, to be an empty gesture to silence the critics (Ewans 2002, 181). Many scholars observed that Leopold's actions and responses during the Red Rubber scandal, but also at other moments, were characterized by both contradiction and profound cynicism. In effect, following this dissertation's theoretical assumptions about ontological security, it could be argued that Leopold was principally focused on maintaining his inflated sense of Self rather than countering the abuses.[144]

As an effect of Leopold's countercampaign, a highly defensive narrative developed in Belgian public opinion against the allegations of Morel and Casement (Delathuy 1985, 93). Similar to the response to the initial accusations, the Congo Reform Association was conceived to be a political ploy by so-called 'Liverpool Merchants' that wanted to incorporate the Congo Free State into the Commonwealth. The origin of this anti-British narrative can be traced to the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Because of linguistic and historical ties, Belgian public opinion openly sided with the Boer Republics. The belief was that the British had stolen the gold from Transvaal and now they were coming after the Congolese rubber (Ibid.). As such, the dominant narrative in Belgium on the accusations of atrocities in the Congo Free State was, at first, evasive and did not acknowledge any wrongdoing of their King.[145]

Leopold, in the meantime, had formulated a response to the Casement report, arguing that it was faulty and partial (Ewans 2002, 207). This claim, however, gave commentators the

---

[143] If not the first, the campaign was influential in exposing the hypocrisy of imperial humanitarianism. More specifically, "The atrocities in the Congo tapped into a longstanding issue that confronted all those who identified with the abolitionists: there was a thin line between slave labor and some forms of "free labor," and many colonial powers tolerated slavery in everything but name. What made such systems of servitude particularly appalling to many abolitionists and their inheritors was that these imperial labor systems had the declared purpose of removing all forms of gross exploitation." (Barnett 2011, 73).

[144] Although beyond the scope of this chapter, this understanding of Leopold's actions would indicate some form of pathological narcissism. Other behaviours and beliefs of the King do point in a similar direction. However, more research is needed to effectively determine whether this psychological trait can be attributed to Leopold.

[145] This corresponds with a romantic plot, effectively indicating an aggressive state shame narrative. However, no sources were analysed to base this claim.

argument that he should, then, organize a commission that could settle the matter once and for all. Leopold was forced to agree with this demand as he had difficulty containing the international and domestic pressure. In effect, the Congo government established the 'Commission on the Inquiry into the Rubber Atrocities', also known as the Janssens Commission[146] and tasked it with validating the observations of Casement. It consisted of three commissioners who were widely regarded as trustworthy and impartial observers,[147] although all three were in some way connected to and hand-picked by Leopold (Bevernage 2018, 230). Nevertheless, the conclusion of their five-month excursion[148] to the Congo Free State was that Casement's report was valid.[149]

The commission's report received notable, but short-lived, media attention in Belgium and Britain when it was published in November 1905. It did not arouse public indignation in Belgium, although, within political, legal, and academic circles, the report was seen as a serious condemnation of the Congo Free State (Ewans 2002, 216; Bevernage 2018). Together with subsequent books by Cattier and other critics, it spurred parliamentary debates and brought about motions that suggested state intervention and the eventual annexation of the Congo Free State. In these debates, Belgian MPs made "a clear disassociation from Leopold's activities and an emphatic rebuff for Leopold himself" (Ewans 2002, 218). More specifically, "condemnation of the Congo regime was no longer overwhelmingly external, voiced against a background of Belgian indifference or resentment" (Ibid., 218-219). The international pressure had thus led to an increase in domestic attention and the desire of Belgium's elected representatives to involve themselves with Congo. However, "what was at stake was less the fate of the Congo than the authoring of a set of international norms for a projected international (civil) community" (Dunn 2003, 54). The focus of the Belgian political elite, thus, remained to some extent always vested in the international.

---

[146] Named after its commission president, Edmond Janssens.

[147] These were: Edmond Janssens, Attorney General of the Belgian court of cassation, who would act as the commission's president; Giacomo Nisco, an Italian baron who presided over the court of appeal in Boma (the capital of the Congo Free State); and Edmund de Schumacher, a Swiss judge who headed the department of justice in Lausanne, a Swiss canton. Bevernage 2018, 209.

[148] The commission travelled to the Congo Free State between October 1904 and February 1905 where they held witness hearings on steamboats and went on short excursions in local villages to observe the effects of the colonisation and the rubber extraction. Ewans 2002, 210-211.

[149] Although the commissioners generally agreed on the validity of the accusation, there were serious tensions and disagreements between them on the matter of recommendations (Ewans 2002, 213). Effectively, their report became a compromise between the eclectic opinions of the commissioners, making it overly vague and confusing. They also had to submit their report to Leopold, who personally made extensive editorial alterations (Bevernage 2018, 211). Because of its confusing content, it generated several contradictory readings in the media (Ibid., 217).

The goal of this section is to trace Belgian state narratives in parliamentary debates during the Red Rubber scandal. It aims to describe how MPs (re)constructed their state's sense of Self and how it led to the origin of the Belgian imperial Self-narrative. This inquiry centres around a structural narrative analysis with a distinct focus on narrative plots, namely comedic, tragic, romantic, and ironic, as these story structures give insight into the construction of agents' identities and social positions (Khoury 2018, 383). The section also discusses more general changes in the discourse, using elements from discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003) to capture and link broader discursive changes within the social-historical context. The reporting of the analysis is structured chronologically, starting with the initial debates regarding the accusations of Morel (ca. 1903). After discussing how the Janssen Commission report was received (early 1906), the analysis goes into the debates regarding annexation (late 1906) and ends with describing the Belgian imperial Self-narrative during the royal financial scandals (1907-1908).

Antagonism and patriotism (July 1903 – January 1906)

Parliamentary debates in the first years of the Red Rubber scandal were characterized by an antagonistic narrative competition. An anti-colonial faction[150] and a pro-Leopoldian group (which sided with the Catholic government) clashed repeatedly, not only on their interpretation of what was going on in the Congo Free State and the nature of the accusation but also regarding the use of fundamental concepts such as patriotism, humanity, or sovereignty. Central to this conflict is that the CRA's accusation had generated particular tensions between these two groups regarding the interpretation of their country's indictment and what it meant for Belgium's place in the world. For the anti-colonial MPs, the challenge did not originate from the state's own actions but because of its close association with Leopold and his colony. The pro-Leopoldian group, on the other hand, reasoned that the accusations were lies and exaggerations that were part of a campaign to discredit the King's great work out of international competition or jealousy. Consequently, two opposing state narratives were apparent in parliamentary discourse.

---

[150] These MPs were, most notably, the socialists Emile Vandervelde and Célestin Demblon, and the radical liberals Georges Lorand and Paul Janson.

Anti-colonial MPs expressed a state narrative that was primarily characterized by a tragic plot. Specific to this type of emplotment is the emphasis on how a well-intentioned but hubristic agent comes to realise their wrongdoing and the subsequent need to come to terms with their transgressive Self. Both Vandervelde and Lorand would periodically describe the Congo Free State as "a great effort accomplished by our compatriots" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1903, 1714) and generally agreed that Belgium had helped Congolese society by abolishing Arab slavery, spreading the light of Christianity, conducting public works, improving hygiene, and curbing alcoholism in Central Africa. In so doing, the Belgian state was conceived as an agent that had meant well in participating in Leopold's colonial venture. Nevertheless, they did argue that the atrocities that were being committed were by the hands of Belgians (*Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1903, 1714; 02/07/1903, 1743) and that Leopold's exploitative system had generated the opposite of what Belgium wanted to achieve or associate itself with (i.e. general corruption and a new system of slavery). In losing the respect of its peers (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1743), Belgium was conceived as a tragic figure that had to recognize its wrongdoing. The "disbelief and outrage" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1903, 1714) among Belgians were thus understandable reactions to the allegations of the atrocities in Leopold's colony as they fundamentally clashed with how they conceived their nation's Self-identity. In effect, the anti-colonial MPs held a narcissistic state shame narrative that conceived of a wrongful Self that was assessed negatively by an in-group (i.e. a cosmopolitan progressive elite) regarding a failure to sustain a Self-ideal (i.e. respect for humanity).

The state narrative of the anti-colonial MPs, however, also had a comedic inflection. More specifically, Belgium was not conceived as an inherently flawed well-intentioned agent but as one that was misled by villains, namely Leopold II and his cronies. The onus of the wrongdoing thus lay with the King and his henchmen in government and parliament (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1774) who had actively deceived the Belgian people and its representatives. While Belgium could still rectify its spoiled identity, they believed that the King and his cronies could not. Moreover, the state could still rectify the state's spoiled identity by taking up responsibility and repairing the situation. The anti-colonial MPs argued that Belgium had to directly intervene in halting the atrocities to reconcile its tarnished international image (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1743). According to them, Belgium could and should do something, such as sanction the Belgian citizens who had participated in the atrocities or support an official inquiry into the atrocities (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1768). In so doing, they hoped their state would end up being forgiven by the rest of the world. This belief in a harmonious ending is also

characteristic of a comedic plot, in that it signifies a future where the conflicting agents come to reconcile. In effect, while the narcissistic state shame narrative was dominant, there were also elements in the narrative that pointed towards situational shame. In conceiving the Self as only situationally tragic, and thus not inherently so, and by conceiving a betterment in the faith of Belgium, the shame situation could be resolved.

In contrast, pro-Leopoldian MPs held a state narrative characterized by a romantic emplotment. Typical of this narrative was that Belgian colonialists and King Leopold were conceived as heroic characters who brought glory to Belgium. As the colonisation of the Congo-basin was a "great work of civilization" (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1743), it acted as a site of national pride and honour for Catholic and more conservative Liberal MPs (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1772; 1774; 1776; 1779; 1780; 02/07/1903, 1738; 1741; 1743; 03/07/1903, 1765; 09/03/1905, 909; 911; 918; 919; 921). Consequently, anyone who dared to claim otherwise was suspect, most notably Belgian deputies that "used their talent for a foreign campaign" (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1741) were to be found "unmannerly and abhorrent" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1772). The villains in this romantic narrative were Vandervelde and Lorand, whose antipatriotic "lies and slander" (*Hand.* Kamer 20/02/1906, 720) were informed by 'Liverpudlian merchants' and other foreign agitators. While the Belgian MPs were believed to act out of their anti-patriotism, anti-colonialism and republicanism, the foreign campaign was held to be motivated by envy regarding the success and greatness of the Congo Free State (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1743). To the pro-colonial faction, Belgium was thus conceived as undeservedly shamed by "denigrating" (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1741) and external "attacks" (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1747; 03/07/1903, 1772; 1776; 1777; 1779; 1780; 1781; 09/03/1905, 918) that dishonoured Belgium in front of the world.

Pro-Leopoldian MPs countered the accusations of their adversaries by arguing that the eyewitness accounts pointed to 'individual occurrences' and that this did not question the honour and commitment of all the officers of the Congo Free State (*Hand.* Kamer 09/03/1905, 919). In so doing, the atrocities were often relativized as things that happen in all colonies, and "even in our civilized Europe" (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1745), and could thus not figure as serious arguments against the Congo Free State. The true perpetrators, according to Catholic MP Charles Woeste, were the native *Capitas*[151] who were "yesterday barbarians, today still

---

[151] Capitas were African auxiliaries that were used to occupy Congolese villages in an attempt of the Congo Free State to gain a foothold. See Stengers and Vansina (1997, 340).

semi-barbarians" (Ibid., 1746). In effect, the imperfections of the Congo Free State were considered "inherent to any human enterprise" (Ibid.). The only way to deal with this issue was, then, to continue with the great work and return to the order of the day (Ibid., 1747). In sum, they countered the challenge to Belgium's place in the moral world by denying any wrongdoing, refusing the need for reparative action, and praising the glory and autonomy of the Congo Free State. The pro-colonial MPs thus constructed an aggressive state shame narrative, as they centred on refuting the shame situation and claiming that the moral failure is neither that of the country itself nor even a failure *an sich*.

Acknowledgment and wrongdoing (February 1906 – October 1906)

These latter two narratives would remain dominant until the report of the Janssen Commission, which conducted an inquiry into the allegations of Casement, became the subject of parliamentary debate on February 20th 1906.[152] Because of the report's ambiguity, the resulting discussion ended up reproducing but also transforming the antagonistic conflict of the previous years. The opposition argued that the report affirmed the systematic abuses claimed by the Casement inquiry. In contrast, the government and the Catholic majority countered by emphasizing that the report praised the good qualities of the Congo Free State and expressed good faith in that it would implement the reforms that the commission proposed. Yet, following the publication of the commission's report and that of books[153] that used its data, there were notable changes in the discursive conflict between both parliamentary groups.

First, both groups observed 'unanimity' in the debates and believed that the discussion needed to come to a fortuitous end. Vandervelde would state that parliament "should be unanimous, without distinction of opinion, to stigmatize such a regime" (*Hand.* Kamer 28/02/1906, 799), in which he was joined by Lorand who claimed that there is a "unanimous sentiment" (Ibid., 802) about the disapproval of the abuses in the Congo Free State. Auguste Beernaert, an eminent Catholic Minister of state, also agreed that there "is a point on which we are unanimous; socialists, liberals, Catholics and government" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/03/1906, 814). Moreover, the Liberal MP Paul Hymans argued that "there is one point on which there is

---

[152] The commission had published its report on November 5th 1905, it is unclear why there was a delay in the debate.
[153] These were, most notably, *Etude sur la situation de L'Etat Indépendant du Congo* by Félicien Cattier (1906) and *La Question Congolaise* by Arthur Vermeersch (1906).

unanimous agreement between the State of the Congo, the Belgian government, the Belgian parliament: the colonial regime currently practised in the Congo is tainted with serious defects and calls for indispensable corrective measures" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/03/1906, 828). There was thus a sense of agreement that the report had found abuses. Yet, where the opposition argued that the report had proven that they were systemic, the majority kept claiming that they were individual. The latter nevertheless acknowledged that something had to be done. This claim of unanimity was not only rhetorical but also practical as the Catholic MP Joris Helleputte held that the "conclusion of this debate has much greater significance if an order of the day was voted unanimously by the Chamber, instead of being voted by a majority against a minority" (Ibid., 830).

Secondly, all MPs emphasized the necessity for impartiality. Vandervelde would argue that "this is a question which should be studied by us in an objective manner" (*Hand.* Kamer 20/02/1906, 728). Moreover, the report was praised for this particular quality, in that its "impartiality and conscience" (*Hand.* Kamer 20/02/1906, 726; 28/02/1906, 795) was never in doubt (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 28/02/1906, 795; 01/03/1906, 815; 825). This same absence of bias was also demanded of the MPs when reading the report, as de Smet de Naeyer asked: "to do so calmly and impartially, to keep all passion out of their judgment [...] in taking note without bias" (20/02/1906, 732). In so doing, the ensuing debate led to accusations that the opposition was believed to be partial to a particular reading. Paul de Favereau, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed that Vandervelde had given "a speech in which grievances were presented with bias and regrettable exaggerations" (*Hand.* Kamer 20/02/1906, 729). He was joined by Woeste, who held that the debate had become biased because it disregarded the greatness of the Congo Free State (*Hand.* Kamer 27/02/1906, 788).

A third change in the discourse was that MPs all expressed an urgency regarding the necessity for a solution. To the opposition, the seriousness was not only in regards to ending the atrocities but also with the financial issues that were amounting to the Congo Free State. The lend-rent system of Leopold[154] worried Vandervelde in that there would be "a heavy responsibility in allowing a situation to worsen every day, the consequences of which the Belgian people will have to bear later" (*Hand.* Kamer 20/02/1906, 726). Even more so "because the factitious and

---

[154] Leopold would use the Congo Free State's profits as bases for numerous loans that he would use for real-estate projects and investments in Belgium (the Antwerp Central station, the Royal Galleries in Ostend, the Museum of the Belgian Congo in Tervuren, etc.) and elsewhere (Villa des Cèdres in cap Ferrat and the Villa Leopolda in Villefranche-sur Mer).

temporary prosperity of the Congo State depends exclusively on the system of oppression suffered by the natives" (Ibid.). This sense of urgency was also shared by both the government and the Catholic majority but they were less worried about these supposed financial issues and more about resolving the distress caused by the report. Beernaert stated that "these delays are more than excessive" and that "it is important to stop this as soon as possible, by determining under what conditions these colonies would be administered and financially organized" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/03/1906, 814). Whereas for the opposition there was a clear choice, namely "we reform it or put it to reform"[155] (*Hand.* Kamer 20/02/1906, 726), the majority was more in favour of placing the initiative with the Congo Free State.

Finally, Belgium and the Congo Free State gradually became represented as historically connected.[156] Both moderate Liberals and the pro-Leopoldian majority would often represent the founding of the Congo Free State by Leopold as originating from the King's patriotism (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 28/02/1905, 822; 28/11/1906, 63; 66; 29/11/1906, 80; 05/12/1906, 124-125). Patriotism would also be key in unifying the country on this issue, in that the Congo Free State should not become a site of conflict between Belgians (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 14/12/1906, 238) and that the intense or 'passionate' feelings should become moderated by some level of indifference or impartiality (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 03/12/1907, 151). This was meant to overcome the party politics that were destabilizing the debates on finding a solution for the issue at hand.

These discursive changes meant that the two dominant state narratives altered their plot structure in a subtle but profound way. The anti-colonial opposition kept a tragic emplotment to its state narrative, in that it focused primarily on the wrongdoing but gradually came to emphasize more comedic elements. Belgium's responsibility in the atrocities, for example, was still central but the commission's report was believed to have generated unanimity and brought

---

[155] His speech on this matter tells of how influential the Russian experience was to the socialists then: "Now, gentlemen, this system must disappear; it is doomed to disappear. […] The only question that remains today is the question of where the reform will come from. Will it be made by the Independent State of the Congo itself, or by the intervention of the powers or finally by the initiative of Belgium? By the Independent State itself! In this regard, I have the deep conviction that the Congo Free State is powerless to reform itself. The example of Russia, like the example of the Congo Free State, proves that absolutism does not reform itself; we reform it or put it to reform." (*Hand.* Kamer 20/02/1906, 726)

[156] When MPs, most notably Liberal or Catholic moderates, came to speak of the possibility of taking over Leopold's colony, they would interchangeably use the words 'annexion' and 'reprise' as synonyms. Although the common use of this word can be translated as 'retaking' or 'recovery' (see Brachet and Kitchin 1873, 311), in a legal context it relates to the more general notion of a take-over (See van Hoof, Verbruggen, and Stoll 2001, 22, 281; 944, 13729). Aside from this specific usage, which did occur in the sources, other legal usages of the term 'reprise' relate more to the common understanding of the term (See Ibid. 812, 11812; 845, 12279; 851, 12358; 944). The use of the latter understanding would indicate that the Congo Free State's take-over was conceived as a Belgian work that would come to return to its original owners but the analysis was inconclusive on how MPs exactly used this concept.

forth the solution to resolve the issue. In so doing, the necessity for restorative action was conceived as self-evident and urgent for the opposition. There was also some sense of trust in the capacity of Belgium to clear its name by approaching the issue objectively and with full clarity.[157] Their state Self-narrative then came to gravitate towards a conclusion where all parties involved would be in agreement with a solution to the 'Congo question'. The anti-colonial MPs thus gradually shifted from a primarily narcissistic state shame narrative to one that was more vested in situational shame.

Moderate MPs of the Liberal and Catholic parties came to develop a similar state shame narrative but with less emphasis on Belgium's part in the wrongdoing or the systemic nature of the abuse. They would recognize and underline that the Congo Free State had accomplished great things (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 28/02/1906, 806; 01/03/1906, 815) but that measures were necessary to counter the atrocities. Although they were confident that the Congo Free State would implement these reforms, they did find it reasonable that "Belgium wants to enlighten itself" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/03/1906, 828) by asking amicably for information. Annexation would be a future possibility and, as such, it would require the Belgian state to go into this colonial adventure with all possible information. Moreover, the annexation of the Congo Free State was conceived to be a future that was desired, informing a clear comedic plot to their state Self-narrative. An emphasis was placed on the temporality and rectification of the wrongdoing, effectively corresponding highly with a situational state shame narrative.

The pro-Leopoldian group gradually lost its majority in parliament in favour of the moderate pro-colonial faction. Regardless, the former still had its champions, namely the government and, most notably, Catholic mainstays Charles Woeste and Henry Carton de Wiart. While their state narrative remained romantic in its plot structure, it did become more imbued with ironic twists. Carton de Wiart would, for example, argue that "[w]hen we discover a failure or an error in a person in whom we are invested, in a work that we love and that we sincerely want to see prosper, we note the abuse, no doubt, but we are distressed by it, we do not enlarge it" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/03/1906, 815). The opposition was believed to give in "to the temptation to overwhelm the adversary under the weight of this fault, after having exaggerated its seriousness" (Ibid.). Aside from this, they emphasized that the Belgian state is powerless regarding any reforms in the Congo Free State, in that it is "not within our competence" (*Hand.*

---

[157] This is in contrast with the promise of the Congo Free State to implement the recommendations of the Janssen Commission (*Hand.* Kamer 01/03/1906, 823).

Kamer 28/02/1906, 808). Annexation would also solve nothing for the atrocities, as Woeste would sarcastically claim that the Belgian state could "extend a magic wand over it [the Congo Free State], and ensure the protection of the native wherever he is" (*Hand.* Kamer 27/02/1906, 789). These ironic inflections point towards a gradual shift in their aggressive state shame narrative to one of deferential shame. In brief, as they noticed that their narrative had lost dominance, they came to consider themselves as being negatively assessed regarding their Self-ideals, which they accepted but also resented.

The end of this series of debates, however, marked a return to the previous antagonistic conflict that destroyed the hopes for unanimity among MPs. Following an intense discussion on the use of either of two words (i.e. 'request' or 'demand' the Congo Free State for more information), the minister decided to leave the debate, prompting the opposition to proclaim that "we are witnessing a miserable spectacle, that of a head of government who, in a debate that interests humanity, does not hesitate to throw himself into the swamps of dishonesty to escape to a vote of parliament" (*Hand.* Kamer 02/03/1906, 844) and that the minister "had the sad courage to break the unanimity that had been achieved in this House" (Ibid.). Regardless of this turbulent end, there was a general understanding and commitment in the discourse that something had to be done and that Belgium could and should act regarding the abuses. What was more significant is that the idea of annexation, and that even Vandervelde was believed to support it,[158] had become a foreseeable event and policy to which Belgium had to prepare itself.

Annexation and imperialism (November 1906 – December 1906)

In reaction to the commission's report, Leopold publicly commissioned the Congo Free State secretary-general on June 3rd 1906 to implement 24 reforms based on the recommendations made by the report. With this text, he included a letter stipulating that the annexation of the Congo Free State to Belgium would only occur when he deemed it "favourable" (quoted in Delathuy 1985, 429). For now, he considered neither his country nor his colony to be ready for annexation (Vangroenweghe 1985, 305). Parliamentary debate on this controversial letter followed in November later that year. Leopold's attitude was considered disdainful and was not only criticized by the anti-colonial opposition but now also by moderates, spearheaded by the Liberal MP Paul Hymans. The central subject of the two-week-long debate was whether

---

[158] Although he clarified that he was "not at all" a convert to this project (*Hand.* Kamer 01/03/1906, 823). He would come to change his opinion later.

Belgium had the right to annex the Congo Free State and how it would assume its sovereignty over the colony. At the end of the debate, an overwhelming majority of MPs had decided to draft a law that would specify the colonial governance over Congo, the so-called 'Colonial Charter'. Even Vandervelde, a staunch anti-colonial critic from the first hour, had come to claim that "it would be a formidable responsibility […] to break with the Congo Free State" (*Hand.* Kamer 07/12/1906, 155).[159] By the end of 1906, then, the Belgian political elite had decided that their country was destined to become an empire.

The imperial narrative that appeared during this two-week-long debate was constituted on four simultaneous changes in the broader discourse. First, moderate and pro-Leopoldian factions came to emphasize that the Congo Free State had effectively countered the abuses by pushing for reform. The reforms were considered necessary but also proof of the humanitarian intentions of the Congo Free State (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 29/11/1906, 88; 30/11/1906, 101; 11/12/1906, 176). In short, by installing the commission and wilfully following the report's recommendations, the Congo Free State had shown that it could be trusted and that it had lamented the abuses. The atrocities that had occurred were unanimously denounced, but also seen as part of the process of "introducing civilization into barbarous countries" (*Hand.* Kamer 29/11/1906, 88). In effect, as the Liberal Jules Renkin stated:

> "If we had the means to suppress them [the abuses] as if by the wave of a magic wand, which of us would hesitate? But the work of civilization is less easy. Such a means does not exist and among those that are recommended, such as the abandonment of Congo or the recall of our officers, I foresee that it would harm the country, I do not see how it would benefit the Negroes." (*Hand.* Kamer 30/11/1906, 95)

Put differently, the transgression was considered unavoidable in the difficult process of lifting the native Congolese from their 'primitive state'. The reforms that the Congo Free State was implementing, were believed to show its commitment to bettering the life of its subjects and, as such, absolved it from its wrongdoing. While the anti-colonial opposition held that these reforms were insufficient and attempted to distance Belgium from the Congo Free State (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 07/12/1906, 155), the dominant discourse in parliament represented it as a moral

---

[159] Footnote that explains or discusses the shift or 'click' that Vandervelde went through.

actor that deserved "the respect and sympathy of the entire universe" (*Hand.* Kamer 04/12/1906, 110).

A second discursive change was that the annexation of the Congo Free State was conceived as part of the historical trajectory of the Belgian nation. Illustrative of this change is that in these later debates the term '*reprendre*'[160] became used interchangeably with '*reprise*'. In so doing, MPs started to argue that their country had always been connected to practices and histories of colonization, contrary to the preceding master narrative on the origin of Belgium. This belief was held by all parliamentary factions, at least to some extent. The groups that were in favour of annexation emphasized Belgium's experience with colonialism, both with regards to Leopold's colony as through its previous union with the Netherlands (*Hand.* Kamer 29/11/1906, 80).[161] They also stressed that colonisation is part of "the historical evolution of peoples" (*Hand.* Kamer 06/12/1906, 145), wherein Belgium had a role to play. More specifically,

> "our nation was called to bring to a vast African territory the teachings of science,
> the benefits of progress, the lights of faith. Belgium will not shy away from its duty,
> it will be faithful to its traditions, and it will bring forth, in the night of barbarism
> and error, the torch of truth and Christian civilization." (*Hand.* Kamer 06/12/1906,
> 145-146)

Belgian historical colonialism was often connected with missionary work or its leading role in "world commerce"[162] (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 30/11/1906, 94; 95; 102; 12/12/1906, 182). This 'national genius'-thesis was also argued by the anti-colonial opposition, although they emphasized the more recent nature of the Belgian colonial desires. Vandervelde stated that "the three greatest testimonies of national spirit that the Belgian people had given for twenty-five years were the organization of the Workers' Party, the development of agricultural cooperation and the enhancement of the Congo Free State" (*Hand.* Kamer 07/12/1906, 153). Similarly, Lorand argued that "among the Belgians, colonial aptitudes have greatly developed" (*Hand.*

---

[160] In this particular context, the word meant 'to take back'.
[161] The loss of colonial relations following the separation between Belgium and the Netherlands was lamented. Moreover, it is set in an "era of timidity and sterile regrets" (*Hand.* Kamer 29/11/1906, 80). Interestingly, some MPs even connected their personal family history to the nation's. Beernaert, for example, stated that he was an avid fan of colonial policy "because, in the eighteenth century, it was a Beernaert who directed the great company of Ostend, so unfortunately sacrificed, alas, by the government of the time" (*Hand.* Kamer 06/12/1906, 141).
[162] Although Leopold's colonial project was scripted using the ideology of religious salvation, it was commerce and trade that were believed to be the main vehicles of civilisation in Congo (Dunn 2003, 47-48). See François (2007) for an overview of the religious critique on, and of, the infamous Jesuit missions.

Kamer 12/12/1906, 187), which had mainly developed under the King's initiative (*Hand.* Kamer 14/12/1906, 232).

A third noticeable change in the discourse was the unquestioned and often emphasized greatness of Belgium. Leopold's demand to keep the *Domaine de la Couronne* his private possession had generated the notion among MPs (and, according to them, Belgian public opinion) that the King did not trust Belgium with adequately governing his colony. To the moderate Catholic MP Jules Van den Heuvel, it seemed that "the King does not intend to cede the entire sovereignty to us, and wishes to reserve a share in it", something he deemed "inadmissible" (*Hand.* Kamer 29/11/1906, 81). It clashed with the "independent spirit" (*Hand.* Kamer 30/11/1906, 102) of Belgians and their legitimate claims to sovereignty of their future colony (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 28/11/1906, 70; 11/12/1906, 172). Notably, such claims gave rhetorical strength to the position that Belgium was more than fit to be an empire. For example, Hymans, a pro-colonial Liberal MP, posed:

> "why be wary of Belgium? Do we really believe that the Belgian people, whose history we know, are less able to govern a colony than Holland, or Portugal, or even great powers that we manage to beat on the level of commerce?" (*Hand.* Kamer 28/11/1906, 71)

While this discursive strategy was used mainly by pro-colonial MPs, the anti-colonial faction did not counter this by denying the greatness of their country. In contrast, they often explicitly stressed that Belgium did not need a colony to be considered great, or as Lorand proclaimed:

> "It seems to me, gentlemen, that we owe our marvellous economic activity, our unique situation in the world to the hard work of all Belgians [...] and to the admirable lesson of energy which, since 1830, has been given to the world by our country. It is [thanks to] all the laborious, economical life, all the intelligent productive activity of our Belgian bourgeois and our working classes which, by a truly prodigious effort of collective work, have made the very small Belgium, without colonies and before there was even mention of the Congo, the first nation in the world from the industrial, agricultural and commercial point of view, from the point of view of all expressions of economic activity." (*Hand.* Kamer 14/12/1906, 234)

In effect, the debates on whether Belgium was capable of annexing the Congo Free State generated an emphasis on the greatness of Belgium, and whether it should become a colonizer

or not. It could be argued that this facilitated the belief among pro-colonial MPs that their state had some 'civilisational' quality that it could impart to the Congolese natives.

The fourth discursive change was that of an ever-present international gaze. Aside from a continued obsession with the English press and politics, the discourse became characterized by a profound focus on "the opinion of the world" (*Hand.* Kamer 07/12/1906, 155). Whether Belgium was entitled to "the recognition of the world" (*Hand.* Kamer 04/12/1906, 110) for its part in spreading civilization, or that "almost all of Europe telling us that we must take responsibility for the government of the Congo" (*Hand.* Kamer 06/12/1906, 142), all factions in parliament felt that the decision to annex the Congo Free State was tied to their country's place and future in international politics. On the one hand, the annexation generated anxiety about the unwanted international tensions that it could provoke (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 30/11/1906, 94). On the other hand, the Congo Free State also "forced us to see beyond our frontiers, and to some extent escape from the local spirit by which we are consumed" (*Hand.* Kamer 07/12/1906, 153). Vandervelde believed that "if we receive any interest in international life, it is partly due to the Congo" (Ibid.). The prospect of owning a colony entailed thus both a threat to Belgium's current international position and opportunities for rising in rank. Yet, importantly, pro-colonial MPs felt the need to stress that the annexation of the Congo Free State was not the result of external pressures but a sovereign decision. As Woeste claimed, "Belgium and the State of the Congo will choose their hour without any pressure, without any foreign intervention" (*Hand.* Kamer 30/11/1906, 94).

These four discursive changes facilitated and constituted an imperial Self-narrative which represented Belgium as a nation destined to become and worthy of an empire. Characteristic of this imperial discourse was the metaphor of 'broadening the nation's horizon' (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 29/11/1906, 86; 30/11/1906, 95; 06/12/1906, 141). This expansionist figure of speech implied that the goal of this national expansion was to "multiply our commercial and political activity" (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 28/11/1906, 65; 12/12/1906, 182; 11/12/1906, 170) and have "material advantages" (*Hand.* Kamer 30/11/1906, 100). In this sense, imperialism was held to be an extension of both the Belgian Self-identity as primarily a trading nation and the self-glorifying notion of their commercial and industrial leadership position. Additionally, Belgium was also meant to broaden its horizon to deliver native Congolese "the civilization that we bring to them" (*Hand.* Kamer 06/12/1906, 138). This was conceived as the 'light of Christianity', rightful governance, and all matters of progress of that time (e.g. science, technology, education). Notably, the MPs were knowledgeable of the destruction that this civilizing mission

could bring, giving examples of the treatment of Native Americans, Australians, or New Zealanders (*Hand.* Kamer 06/12/1906, 138). Yet, as Beernaert would claim, "bad examples are not made to be followed" (Ibid.) and that "the Belgians understand the duties that a superior culture imposes on civilized peoples against the lower races" (*Hand.* Kamer 30/11/1906, 95).

Also key to this imperial Self-narrative was the belief that the Belgian public desired and needed a colony. The Catholic MP Joris Helleputte claimed that "a noble people, of a generous nation" was meant "to create, in a word, in the centre of Africa - desolate land, land of darkness, land of blood, land of mourning - an empire worthy of us!" (*Hand.* Kamer 12/12/1906, 183). Moreover, having a colony "would be a powerful stimulant of national energy" (*Hand.* Kamer 28/11/1906, 65) and the experience with Leopold's project has made Belgians "more enterprising, more active, that we have looked further afield" (*Hand.* Kamer 12/12/1906, 182). The annexation gave way to reverberations "in the very heart of the Nation" developing a "confidence in greater destinies to which our economic conditions make it our duty to aspire and to which energetic and determined labour gives us the right to aspire" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/12/1906, 170). In an attempt to counter this imperial Self-narrative, the anti-colonial opposition stressed the indifference and "reserve" (*Hand.* Kamer 28/11/1906, 73) of public opinion regarding the annexation. Yet, this did not temper the dominant narrative. At the end of the debate, Minister de Smet de Naeyer concluded by saying that "we can hope one day to approach the first rank [in world politics], it is thanks to the greater energy that we will have acquired by the practice of the colonial policy" (*Hand.* Kamer 14/12/1906, 239).

This imperial narrative conceived Belgium as an actor that overcame its limitations, its small size and the historical lack of autonomy, and that had to assume a leading role in the world. The glorification and inflation of the state Self was emphasized through the existence of an Other, most notably Morel, that aimed to shame Belgium. Yet, this Other was not as significant in the imagination of the historical trajectory and colonial destiny that was conceived. The claims of Morel and his clique, being 'exaggerations' and 'lies and slander', did not matter in the grand scheme of Belgium's ascension to greatness. Annexing the Congo Free State was considered to be an important step in this glorious future: a sovereign and autonomous decision by the state that would make Belgium transcend its past modest Self and secure its true place in international politics. The Congo Free State, on the other hand, was conceived as an endeavour that had to overcome enormous difficulties, namely the challenging and costly civilisation process and the international shaming campaign. Although abuses had taken place, they were conceived as temporal infractions that were not meant to have happened. By agreeing to implement the

reforms that the Janssen Commission had proposed, in other words, the Congo Free State had proven that it was a moral actor that could be associated with the Belgian state. In short, the imperial narrative radically opposed the ethical anxiety that had developed after the initial accusations. Pro-colonial MPs had, put simply, countered shame with pride.

Royal scandal and the birth of the Belgian Congo (January 1907 – April 1908)

Before the parliamentary debate had concluded, Leopold, in a surprising move to avoid further international critique, had notified his ministers that Belgium needed to annex his colony as soon as possible.[163] The government conceded to his demands and presented him a treaty draft for the takeover on January 3rd 1907. Included in its conditions was that the Belgian state agreed to the obligations of the Congo Free State and to respect the latter's existing foundations and concessions (Delathuy 1985, 503). In the meantime, a special parliamentary commission, the so-called 'commission of XVII', would work out the Colonial Charter, a document which would later form the legal basis for the annexation. On November 28th 1907, the Belgian government signed the treaty to annex the Congo Free State, which did not lead to any notable debate, apart from a few technical remarks or discussions (Ibid., 551).

However, when the appendix to the treaty was published, it indicated that the *Domaine de la Couronne*, then renamed the *Foundation de la Couronne*, remained operational as a state within a state.[164] The subsequent national and international critiques following this disclosure, together with inquiries regarding Leopold's financial constructions to siphon off the Congolese wealth to his cronies dominated the debates on the Congo Free State (Ewans 2002, 227). They would even lead to contentious discussions about 'special funds' regarding the annexation,[165] effectively bringing about an alteration of the design of the Colonial Charter to limit the royal power over Congo (Delathuy 1985, 563). Regardless of this royal scandal, however, both the pro-colonial and anti-colonial factions conceived the annexation as inevitable. In effect, the

---

[163] His reasoning was that, even if it would become a Belgian colony, he would still rule over Congo as he had always done (Delathuy 1985, 502).
[164] Additionally, Leopold erected a plethora of other organisations that would siphon off any Congolese and Belgian possessions to his cronies. This even though he had promised to dissolve the *Foundation de la Couronne* if the Belgian state paid him 50 and 45.5 million francs (Delathuy 1985, 619).
[165] Namely Belgium had to agree to pay 95.5 million francs to annexe a colony with enormous debts without any prerequisites (Delathuy 1985, 563).

Charter and treaty were approved on August 20th 1908 by a parliament that, although divided, showed little interest or political conflict regarding it.

The imperial narrative remained ever-present during parliamentary discussions. According to François Schollaert, the new Prime Minister, annexation would mean that "the Belgians will be able to forget their divisions and remember only the future prosperity and greatness of our country" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/04/1908, 1384). Moreover, he believed that "we have the right to pursue in colonization an idea of profit, but we must first of all think of drawing the unfortunate peoples of the Congo from the darkness of barbarism" (*Hand.* Kamer 15/04/1908, 1449). This is telling of how, since the end of 1906, the debate had become a "constructive discussion on colonialism as a social question which demanded rational and forward-looking reform rather than a discussion on blame and guilt" (Bevernage 2018, 223). The abuses were relativized, even by moderate voices that were previously more critical. For example, the Christian democrat Georges Cousot claimed that:

> "The nation that perhaps best understood the usefulness of colonial enterprises did not escape the harshest criticism. When it is claimed that Belgium is incapable of colonizing, it is good to show that at the beginning of all colonization, that is to say during the period of occupation, atrocities or abuses were committed. But they are no more considerable with us than they have been elsewhere." (*Hand.* Kamer 16/04/1908, 1497)

While MPs from the opposition would still refer to the abuses, critiques towards the Congo Free State changed from being virulently anti-colonial to a pro-colonial agenda that wanted to resolve the 'Congo Question' (Bevernage 2018, 223). Exemplary of this shift is the figure of Vandervelde, who came to support the annexation in favour of "a rational system of colonialism" (*Hand.* Kamer 20/02/1906, 719).[166]

The imperial narrative also gradually became less focused on emphasizing Belgium's eligibility for imperialism and turned towards more practical aspects involved with the colony. The Catholic MP Charles de Broqueville would go even further by stating:

---

[166] However, he would not be present during the parliamentary vote for the annexation of the Congo Free State to not have to vote against the party line (Delathuy 1985, 563). The gradual change of the Socialist party from being opposed to imperialism to seeing the Belgian Congo as a noble humanitarian cause can be attributed to Vandervelde. He often acted as a bridgebuilder between the colonial enthusiasts and the Socialist party, facilitating the eventual 'patriotic reformism' (Viaene 2009, 53) or 'reformist colonialism' (Van Ginderachter 2007, 232).

"Gentlemen, at a time when nations have to decide their destinies, it would be madness to relegate their material interests to the background in order to obey a feeling of national pride, however legitimate this feeling may be. What we therefore have to examine above all is the intrinsic and practical value of the vast colonial field which the tireless perseverance of the Head of State has made available to Belgium." (*Hand.* Kamer 15/04/1908, 1460)

To pro-colonial supporters, it became a necessity to think about these urgent colonial matters, as these issues began to impose themselves on the Belgian political agenda. Practical and technical discussions also diverted the attention away from the incrimination of their King and meant that Belgium, in designing a 'scientifically run' model colony, could save its face internationally (Bevernage 2018, 224).

INTERPRETATIVE SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

The discussion of state shame in lived practice requires additional analysis of the emotions that are projected onto the state by political agents. In focusing on the politics of emotion during political debates, this kind of analysis gives insight into how these agents manage and interact with challenges to and competing conceptions of the state. Moreover, political agents come to express particular emotions to signal their position regarding rival conceptions of their state's sense of Self (Khoury 2018). By analysing these emotions in the discourse, the current section aims to shed light on the significance that political agents attribute to narrative changes and the coping mechanisms that political agents employ. The goal of the current section is, then, to gain further insight into the politics of shame by tracing and interpreting emotions in the discourse of MPs during the Red Rubber scandal. To this end, the section starts with describing the general emotional management during the debates, which was characterized by a remarkable feeling rule. The two subsequent parts of the analysis are primarily focused on the predominant emotions of shame and pride.

Generally speaking, the parliamentary debates during the Red Rubber scandal were characterized by a high amount of emotion words.[167] MPs were inclined to express and identify emotions and comment on the general emotionality of the situation, whether they were signalling genuine affective experiences or were using them as rhetorical tools. This prevalence of emotions showed that Belgian MPs were, during these particular parliamentary debates, subject to a remarkably strict feeling rule (see Hochschild 1979). Namely, pro-colonial MPs, and certainly Catholic politicians, systematically described anti-colonial activists or MPs as being 'emotional' or 'passionate' (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1741; 1743; 03/07/1903, 1771; 1779; 1781; 09/03/1905, 918; 20/02/1906, 730; 28/02/1906, 793; 28/02/1906, 808; 01/03/1906, 816; 818; 28/11/1906, 72; 30/11/1906, 92; 94; 11/12/1906, 174; 15/04/1908, 1452; 1458; 1459). This was meant to denote the latter as naïve, in that they were empathetic to emotional appeals, as well as biased, seeing as they could not remain 'neutral' to the accusation. In contrast, the pro-colonial MPs had to remain 'passionless' to emphasize their impartiality (*Hand.* Kamer 20/02/1906, 732; 28/11/1906, 71; 12/12/1906, 182; 03/12/1907, 150; 03/04/1908, 1332; 16/04/1908, 1495; 22/04/1908, 1543), implying that there was a felt necessity to suppress emotions and consider them unwanted and unwarranted (Hochschild 1979, 557).

Surprisingly, the anti-colonial opposition would, at times, refer to themselves as being 'passionate' (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1751; 28/02/1903, 820; 09/03/1905, 910; 06/12/1906, 148; 07/12/1906, 153; 22/04/1908, 1538). Their passion originated from both 'humanitarian feelings' (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1748; 16/03/1905, 982; 28/02/1906, 793; 01/03/1906, 818; 824; 30/11/1906, 92; 04/12/1906, 108; 16/04/1908, 1482) and hearing about the pitiful plight of the indigenous Congolese (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1764; 30/11/1906, 95; 12/12/1906, 183; 16/04/1908, 1498). In expressing this emotionality, they aimed to position themselves against the 'indifference' of the pro-colonial factions. Lorand, for example, stated that he was "surprised, gentlemen, that apart from our honourable socialist colleagues, no one here thinks of being moved by this situation" (*Hand.* Kamer 16/03/1905, 982; see also *Hand.* Kamer 14/12/1906, 236). That they were described as emotional did not, however, imply that others could determine how they felt. When a pro-colonial MP had argued that Vandervelde's anti-

---

[167] Some feelings were commonly expressed as part of the particular parliamentary discourse of that time. In particular, MPs often mentioned 'astonishment' and 'honour' but not in a sense to report to the actual emotion. They figured respectively as a figure of speech and as a way to introduce or discuss their colleagues. Most of the utterings of these specific emotion words were thus excluded from this analysis.

colonial motivations were based on envy and malcontent, he claimed that they "do not have the right to judge the emotions that move me [to be anti-colonial] (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1779; see also: 09/03/1905, 912-913).

The boundary between the 'emotional' anti-colonial opposition and the 'dispassionate' pro-colonial faction was kept quite strict. Following the conceptual framework of this dissertation, it can be argued that the ethical anxiety generated by the scandal led pro-Leopoldian and pro-colonial MPs to exude some sense of control. By presenting themselves as impartial and passionless, they probably aimed to sustain the consistency of their state Self-narrative. The anti-colonial opposition might, contrastingly, make use of their emotional representation to emphasize the tragic nature of their state narrative, signalling disagreement and urgency regarding the situation to produce the necessity for reparative action. Although this feeling rule was apparent, conflicts would sometimes occur regarding emotionality. For example, when Prime Minister Schollaert asked that parliament "must not bring passion" in the debate, Janson reacted by stating that "we have no passion", which was sided by the radical socialist Céléstin Demblon who quipped "It is the right-wing that is passionate, in the bad sense of the word" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/12/1907, 151). These reactions against the feeling rule occurred when the government could not maintain its image of impartiality, in particular when Leopold's financial corruption was discussed.

In so doing, the feeling rule facilitated the discursive construction of an Other and a Self by differentiating the anti-colonial opposition from the pro-colonial majority. Whereas the former was constituted by a shared affective disgust regarding the abuses ('horrors', 'atrocities'), they conceived their opponents as being indifferent towards this suffering. The Other was then constituted on their lack of emotional response regarding a transgression, while the Self denoted a group that had the appropriate ethical reaction. For the pro-colonial faction, the feeling rule helped construct an in-group of MPs that shaped their identity around notions of composure, neutrality, and self-control. Their Other was a collective of actors that did not exhibit these traits, which made them suspect in their allegiance to the state (i.e. their patriotism, their foreignness). For this reason, it can be argued that the feeling rule was both a symptom of and a contributing factor to the antagonistic conflict that characterized the debates.

Aside from this highly particular emotion management, the discourse during the Red Rubber affair also contained other projections of emotionality. First, Belgian public opinion was often described as being 'passionate' or 'emotional', both in a positive (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903,

1779; 01/03/1906, 819; 30/11/1906, 93; 11/12/1906, 170; 172; 11/12/1906, 174) and a negative sense (*Hand.* Kamer 30/11/1906, 100; 04/12/1906, 108; 12/12/1906, 183; 12/12/1906, 190; 03/04/1908, 1337; 15/04/1908, 1448; 1460; 22/04/1908, 1534). It was either seen as highly enthusiastic regarding the prospect of owning a colony or represented as anxious about the risks connected to this endeavour. For example, Hymans held that "we understand the emotions of public opinion" regarding the problems and financial misgivings involved with the annexation (*Hand.* Kamer 28/02/1908, 933). In line with the feeling rule, however, he did emphasize that "it is important that we [as MPs] must keep our composure" (*Hand.* Kamer 28/02/1908, 933). The general anxiety that the scandal had generated was thus also observed by MPs. Second, the objects of emotionality, both of the MPs and the public were either the abuses or the content of Leopold's letter (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 28/11/1906, 64; 29/11/1906, 78; 30/11/1906, 98; 101; 04/12/1906, 108). These two subjects, not surprisingly, signified the main scandals regarding the annexation during this period. Finally, unanimity of the Chamber of Representatives was often considered to be based on a shared sentiment (*Hand.* Kamer 02/03/1906, 841; 844; 06/12/1906, 139; 142; 11/12/1906, 174; 12/12/1906, 189; 17/05/1907, 1019; 12/07/1907, 1523; 28/02/1908, 932). It implied both the general notion of agreement as well as the belief that there was some shared affective basis for this accommodating attitude. Unsurprisingly, it was often proclaimed in the debates that took place in 1906, when the Janssen report was discussed and the annexation was agreed upon.

Shame, embarrassment, and guilt

Shame was both explicitly and implicitly present in the discourse during these debates.[168] The anti-colonial opposition often verbally expressed it regarding the abuses and the exploitation of the native Congolese (*Hand.* Kamer 27/02/1906, 785; 28/02/1906, 802; 01/03/1906, 824; 14/12/1906, 236; 03/04/1908, 1337; 16/04/1908, 1483; 22/04/1908, 1536; 30/11/1906, 97). Henri Colfs, a Christian democratic MP,[169] described the abuses as a "stain inflicted on our

---

[168] Also in political documents outside the debates, shame was a notable emotion expressed. Stanislas Lefranc, an attorney of the Congo Free State wrote in three highly critical pamphlets that, "In voting for national honour, those who have allowed all these infamies to occur will have authorized new ones. Their reward will be remorse and shame. Unfortunately, this shame will fall on Belgium and this will not restore the lives of the thousands of victims that the minotaur will have devoured in the meantime." (quoted in Hand. Kamer, 16 April 1908, p. 1483). Aside from Lefranc, Leon van der Elst, chief negotiator of the Belgian state for the takeover of the Congo Free State, expressed that "Not to take it [Congo] back would be a temporary shame, not knowing how to administer it would be a definitive shame" (quoted in Thielemans and Ewoud 1982, 45).

[169] At that point in time, the Christian democrats in Belgium were not a separate party but were a faction within the Catholic party. During this particular episode, the Christian democrats were split, some seeing the opportunities

national honour, which […] has spread to the point that history, I say it with difficulty and with shame, will keep the memory" (*Hand.* Kamer 27/02/1906, 791). Shame was most often implicitly signalled regarding the notion that the abuses had put Belgium in a compromising international position by challenging the country's honour (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1743; 1747; 03/07/1903, 1763; 1766; 1767; 1781; 28/02/1905, 819; 821; 822; 09/03/1905, 909; 911; 914; 16/03/1905, 982; 20/02/1906, 720; 725; 27/02/1906, 787; 28/02/1906, 794; 795; 802; 01/03/1906, 824; 825; 29/11/1906, 78; 79; 06/12/1906, 142; 28/02/1908, 933; 03/04/1908, 1334). Additionally, it was also mentioned when discussing the lack of free commerce in the Congo Free State (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1766; 09/03/1905, 914; 14/01/1908, 391),[170] and the involvement of the government and other pro-colonial politicians with the financial corruption of Leopold (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1764; 03/07/1903, 1772; 20/02/1906, 722; 01/03/1906, 827; 03/07/1903, 1774; 03/04/1908, 1337; 22/04/1908, 1546). This proclivity to acknowledge shame indicates that anti-colonial MPs conceived their state as subject to narcissistic shame. In brief, their explicit projection of shame onto Belgium signals a realisation of a wrongful notion of Self, experiencing pain and sadness because of this Self-judgement. This understanding compelled them to make their conception of the Belgian state reflect onto its Self and its place in the world. Effectively, the Red Rubber scandal generated a challenge to the dominant Belgian state narrative, which shaped a new conception of state Self that was able to account for its wrongdoing.

In contrast, the pro-colonial faction did not often use explicit verbal markers for shame. If they did, then it was to denote the "odious, abominable practices of cannibalism and human sacrifices" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1767) and "shameful superstitions" (*Hand.* Kamer 27/02/1906, 788) of the native Congolese (see *Hand.* Kamer 12/12/1906, 183). More common were implicit markers on how the accusations were experienced as "denigrating" (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1741; 20/02/1906, 733; 28/02/1906, 806) and as external "attacks" (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1747; 03/07/1903, 1772; 1776; 1777; 1779; 1781; 09/03/1905, 918; 20/02/1906, 728; 27/02/1906, 789; 28/02/1906, 805; 29/11/1906, 83; 86; 87; 30/11/1906, 94; 95; 04/12/1906, 112; 115; 23/04/1908, 1570) that dishonour Belgium in front of the world (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1780; 27/02/1906, 780; 784; 01/03/1906, 818; 28/11/1906, 64; 04/12/1906, 112; 06/12/1906, 142). The opposition was believed to "drag in the mud" (*Hand.* Kamer

---

for spreading Christianity, others lamenting the oppression and potential for transgression that colonies could pose. MPs that held the latter opinion were Colfs and Adolf Daens.
[170] Not coincidentally a topic of pride for Belgians (see infra).

28/02/1906, 803) the grand Congolese work through lies and slander fed to them by external agitators such as Morel. In so doing, the accusation could generate unwanted effects for Belgium, making their interpellations and campaigns "clumsy or odious" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1772).[171] To the anti-colonial faction, Belgium was thus conceived as undeservedly shamed, which makes their conception of their state Self subject to aggressive shame. Simply put, they believed that their state was judged negatively by an Other, which challenged the place of their state Self in the broader moral world. This negative judgment is conceived as a coercive act ('attacks') to challenge, even change, the Belgian Self and force it towards concessions in its policy regarding the Congo Free State. In being compelled to secure and defend the state Self, the pro-colonial faction denied the transgression and actively refuted any wrongdoing.

These explicit and implicit markers in the discourse remained remarkably constant. The most notable change regarding shame was the practice of and reactions against shaming. At the beginning of the debates, the pro-colonial faction shamed the opposition to refute what they conceived to be the shaming of Belgium. Their preferred strategy in this regard was to target the 'patriotism' of the anti-colonials. Aside from that, more patronising insults were also commonplace. Prime Minister de Smet de Naeyer, for example, stated that "if the honourable Mr Lorand were not such a hardened anti-Congolese, I would be tempted to say that he is a negro who will never be whitewashed!" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1771). Although shaming would remain present, it would become less prevalent during the discussion on the Janssen report, when all sides stressed 'unanimity' and 'impartiality'. Moreover, the tone and direction of the insults would change, as the pro-colonial faction stressed that MPs from the opposition were successful in their shaming. Exemplary of this change is the discourse of Woeste, a harsh and often insulting MP, who would state that:

> "None of those who attack the work of the Congo could have conceived it. None of these, had he conceived it, would have succeeded in executing it. None of these would have had the authority, the prestige, the resources, the insight, the consistency needed to bring it to a successful conclusion. And yet today we see men rise against it, seek to denigrate it and strive to discredit it in public opinion!" (*Hand.* Kamer 29/11/1906, 83)

---

[171] Also shameful to some Catholic MPs was that the contribution of the missionaries to civilizing the Congolese was often discredited by the accusation (*Hand.* Kamer 27/02/1906, 780; 781; 782; 28/02/1906, 793).

While the anti-colonial opposition was conceived as a shaming actor, they only occasionally used this practice explicitly against either Leopold or their opponents. Their focus lay more on exposing the wrongdoing and pushing for reforms. Yet, they would practice shaming more regularly and excessively at the end of the debates, in particular regarding the assumed involvement of the government and the Catholic party in Leopold's corruption. Nicknames such as "*les Congolais*" (*Hand.* Kamer 15/04/1908, 1440) were often used to denote the old pro-Leopoldian crowd, who were conceived to be part of a "coterie" and "colonial camarilla" (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 28/11/1906, 74; 29/11/1906, 78).

Markers for embarrassment were present in the discourse but not in the same dominant way as shame. At the beginning of the debates, the anti-colonial opposition described their interpellation as embarrassing for the government (*Hand.* Kamer 20/12/1904, 377; 28/02/1905, 814; 27/02/1906, 784; 28/02/1906, 799; 14/12/1906, 239; 16/04/1908, 1484), whereas the pro-colonial faction considered the accusation to be an exaggeration, effectively embarrassing the MPs that would support it (*Hand.* Kamer 01/03/1906, 817). At times, the emotion was used to describe the international situation where Belgium found itself, in that it was historically and *de facto* connected to the Congo Free State, but had neither full oversight nor any means to intervene (*Hand.* Kamer 29/11/1906, 77; 06/12/1906, 143; 11/12/1906, 175). Regardless of these uses, embarrassment was, in general, more often employed to denote the personal experience of MPs rather than projected upon the Belgian state.

Guilt was never expressed with explicit verbal markers but there were significant implicit markers present in the discourse. The most apparent were comments on Belgium's conscience (*Hand.* Kamer 28/02/1905, 821; 20/02/1906, 728; 28/02/1906, 794; 06/12/1906, 138; 14/12/1906, 233) and responsibility (*Hand.* Kamer 09/03/1905, 910; 20/02/1906, 720; 722; 723; 724; 725; 726; 729; 28/02/1906, 797; 800; 801; 01/03/1906, 820; 827; 828; 28/11/1906, 67; 71; 72; 73; 74; 29/11/1906, 87; 06/12/1906, 141; 144; 11/12/1906, 176; 14/12/1906, 232; 235; 28/02/1908, 932; 934; 15/034/1908, 1459). Whereas the former indicated more of a reflective plea of the anti-colonial faction,[172] the matter of responsibility was subject to significant debate. On the one hand, anti-colonial MPs argued that "the public opinion of the world [ascribes us] the responsibility for the abuses which have been noted in the Congo" (*Hand.* Kamer 14/12/1906, 235) and demanded that the government should not "play the role

---

[172] As such, it would not be exclusive to the emotion of guilt but is more part of the grey area between guilt and shame.

of Pontius Pilate by washing its hands of the blood of our brothers shed on the land of Africa" (*Hand.* Kamer 27/02/1906, 791). On the other hand, the government responded by stating that "we have neither duty nor responsibility on this account" (*Hand.* Kamer 28/02/1906, 807), or that "we intend to make a very clear distinction between those who have acted in the Congo with a view to true civilization and those who have been guilty or accomplices of the acts of cruelty observed" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/03/1906, 829). Regardless of this debate regarding responsibility, guilt was not apparent in the discourse because Belgium was rarely conceived as an active agent in the wrongdoing. Moreover, as Vandervelde would say, "We cannot be held responsible before the opinion of the world, without having any means of acting ourselves and of exerting reform on the institutions of the Congo" (*Hand.* Kamer 07/12/1906, 155).

Honour and pride

Pride was explicitly connected to state narratives during the debates (*Hand.* Kamer 30/1/1906, 94; 03/04/1908, 1334; 15/04/1908, 1448; 16/04/1908, 1480). It was mainly expressed by the pro-colonial faction, who often projected national pride onto the Congo Free State. Not only did they directly describe it as an object of pride (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1772; 1774; 1776; 1779; 1780; 27/02/1906, 783; 28/02/1905, 806; 01/03/1906, 819; 820; 28/11/1906, 64; 29/11/1906, 79, 81; 30/11/1906, 95; 04/12/1906, 108; 110; 118; 06/12/1906, 144; 11/12/1906, 169-170; 14/01/1908, 391; 16/04/1908, 1481; 1492) they also profusely glorified Leopold and the civilisational work of his colony (*Hand.* Kamer 02/07/1903, 1738; 1741; 1743; 03/07/1903, 1765; 09/03/1905, 909; 911; 918; 919; 921; 20/02/1906, 721; 723; 724; 732; 27/02/1906, 782; 789; 791; 28/02/1906, 793; 802; 803; 01/03/1906, 814; 818; 824; 29/11/1906, 79; 93; 30/1/1906, 94; 98; 04/12/1906, 110; 117; 05/12/1906, 124; 06/12/1906, 143; 130; 14/12/1906, 238; 28/02/1908, 933). In so doing, the pro-colonial faction often connected pride to feelings of national honour and courage. More specifically, they would describe it as "a pearl" (*Hand.* Kamer 30/1/1906, 94) and that "parliament, nation and King, have the right to be proud of it" (*Hand.* Kamer 28/11/1906, 67). The source of this pride was the courage and "heroism" of the Belgian nationals who had performed their duty as soldiers (*Hand.* Kamer 16/03/1906, 978; 982; 01/03/1906, 821; 15/04/1908, 1448), the work of missionaries (*Hand.* Kamer 27/02/1906, 783; 30/11/1906, 102), or colonizers in general (*Hand.* Kamer 06/12/1906, 143; 11/12/1906, 170). In effect, the emphasis on pride corresponds with the pro-colonial faction's understanding of Belgium's position in the shame situation. They imbued their state narrative with pride as an

antithesis to the shaming of the opposition, effectively (re)claiming Belgium's place in the moral world.

While the anti-colonial opposition did, at times, express pride regarding the leading role of Belgium in world commerce or even to the Congo Free State for its humanitarian and civilisational work, they also connected pride to the notion that Belgium was not a colonizer. For example, Lorand stated that:

> "Gentlemen, reflecting on what colonial policy was like in other countries, seeing the abuses, the horrors, the scandals to which it gave rise everywhere (you have just seen a display of it at the Reichstag which is really not meant to encourage a self-respecting people to enter this path), we could be happy and proud until now to note that Belgium had known how to conquer such a great place in the world, without ever having had anything like it to reproach itself for, in remaining unscathed from the necessary flaws of colonial policy. It would be sad for our country if it were to stop being like this." (*Hand.* Kamer 14/12/1906, 235)

This particular argument was, however, rarely picked up or commented on by other MPs. The expression of pride with the anti-colonial opposition was less straightforward than what the pro-colonial faction was signalling. For example, they considered themselves proud patriots for pointing out the abuses of their country (*Hand.* Kamer 14/12/1906, 236; 09/03/1905, 911; 28/02/1906, 799; 804; 808) unlike the 'unjust pride' of the pro-colonial opposition, who worked to "resuming the succession of their master, leaving the country only the debris of a work exhausted in its resources" (*Hand.* Kamer 28/11/1906, 75). Their ambiguity regarding the pride of Belgium was further complicated by their belief that their country's honour was brought into peril by the abuses (*Hand.* Kamer 03/07/1903, 1764; 28/02/1905, 799; 822; 09/03/1905, 919; 28/11/1906, 72). As such, what was there to be proud about?

The anti-colonial opposition thus looked to the annexation with mixed feelings. A part of them believed that it would "wreak havoc in our country which would forever threaten those qualities of vigour and pride which are, throughout history, the prerogative of our populations" (*Hand.* Kamer 29/11/1906, 79), while others held that "the Belgian Congo will make us forget the shame, the miseries and the crimes of the Leopoldian Congo!" (*Hand.* Kamer 07/12/1906, 156). The annexation was thus not an end to shame, nor would it generate pride immediately, as Congo would necessitate reforms and large-scale social policy. In effect, whereas the pro-colonial faction unequivocally imbued their Belgian state narrative with pride, the anti-colonial

opposition held onto a state narrative that conceived a state Self that had to cope with the consequences of shame to come to a position of pride.

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

The current chapter set out to bring insight into the origin of the Belgian imperial Self. To reach this goal, the chapter presented an analysis of state narratives and political emotions in the parliamentary debates surrounding the Red Rubber scandal. The chapter finds that, in the initial phase, both pro-colonial and anti-colonial MPs recognized that Belgium was placed in a shame situation but that they conceived different sources of agency and failure. Agreeing with the accusations by Morel and Casement, anti-colonial MPs believed that their conception of the Belgian state Self was challenged because their state had allowed and facilitated the atrocious exploitation of Congo. This made anti-colonial MPs construct their state narrative along a tragic plot, in which Belgium acted as a tragic figure that had good intentions towards Congo but ended up contributing to and benefitting from Leopold's exploitative system. They explicitly and implicitly expressed shame regarding the horrific and systemic abuses in Leopold's colony, indicating that the wrongdoing was serious and not a temporary infraction. As a consequence, they urged Belgium to realise that its honour and international position had become challenged by its association with the Congo Free State. Based on these findings, the argument is made that this initial state narrative of the anti-colonial MPs corresponds with the narcissistic state shame. While there were some comedic elements to their state narrative, such as the situational nature of the tragic character of Belgium and their calls for superficial restorative actions, the narrative remained primarily indicative of narcissistic state shame. The politics of shame of these anti-colonial MPs was thus centred on exposing the wrongfulness of the state Self and for it to account for the transgressions.

Pro-colonial MPs, on the other hand, assumed that the accusation had originated from an Other, namely Anglo-Saxon and left-wing anti-colonial activists, that aimed to discredit the Congo Free State. In effect, they conceived the claims of systemic abuses as attempts to challenge the Belgian Self and coerce it into changing its policy towards the Congo Free State. This compelled the pro-colonial faction to actively refute the shaming and to secure their state's sense of Self and position in the world. Consequently, they explicitly expressed pride and honour regarding the Belgian contribution to the Congo Free State. Their state narrative came to be characterized by a romantic plot that glorified Belgium's honour and its contribution to

the Congo Free State. In this narrative, the state was conceived as a heroic character that had to defend itself against villainous agents but would ultimately triumph in securing its glorious destiny. Belgium was thus conceived along the lines of an aggressive state shame narrative, which implies a politics of shame that is mainly focused on refuting the shame of the Other and defending their state's honour.

The publication of the Janssen Commission report created some momentary appeasement between the two groups and generated a more moderate pro-colonial narrative. The MPs that held this latter narrative acknowledged the presence of abuses but they trusted the Congo Free State to implement reforms to counter these temporary and 'individual' atrocities. In their narrative, Leopold's colony was seen as a comedic actor who had come to secure its moral character by rectifying the transgression. This comedic understanding of the state corresponds with the situational state shame narrative, as it conceived the failure of the state as temporary and that it was geared towards resolving this temporary shame situation. In short, the politics of shame of the moderate pro-colonial faction focused on accepting the presence of abuse but countering the accusation of systematic wrongdoing, emphasizing the great potential of Leopold's colonial endeavour, and aiming for pragmatic solutions for the issue at hand.

It was, however, with the public letter of Leopold II that there was a notable change in the narrative competition regarding the annexation of the Congo Free State. The King's claim regarding Belgium's imperial eligibility was conceived as disdainful and met with indignation among more moderate MPs. In effect, it informed an imperial narrative that praised Belgium's greatness and colonial pedigree, as opposed to the wrongful mismanagement of the Congo Free State done by the King. In effect, this established a Belgian imperial narrative based on expansionist and colonial thoughts and beliefs that were gradually circulating in Belgian society. Imperialism was imbued in Belgium's historical trajectory and leading place in world commerce, both fomented the nation's glorious destiny as an empire. While this did not mean that the narrative competition had closed on a consensus, the imperial narrative had become dominant and was presented as self-evident. Anti-colonial MPs, in going along with countering Leopold's disdain and praising of Belgian greatness, did not present an alternative conception of the Belgian state Self-narrative. In so doing, the shaming of Leopold triggered a self-glorifying reaction that facilitated the annexation of the Congo Free State.

This chapter contributes to the literature on Belgian imperialism in two ways. First, it complements recent critiques of the reluctant imperialist thesis by explaining why the Belgian

imperial narrative became politically significant for the parliamentary elite. Although imperial reluctance might describe a broad position that predated the Red Rubber scandal, this research has argued that the majority of Belgian MPs came to desire their country's involvement in Congo to further its future path of glory. Due to limiting the timeframe of the analysis to 1908, future research is tasked with exploring the later development of the Belgian imperial narrative and how it came to inform the nervousness in the colonial administration and the state's obsession to attain a "model colony" (Viaene 2009, 59; Hunt 2016). Furthermore, this study can inspire comparative analyses of imperial narratives in Belgium and in the rest of Western Europe. Such a perspective can shed light onto broader dynamics, shared characteristics, and notable differences in how modern European imperialism came to be envisioned and performed.

Second, the role of international pressure in the origin of Belgian colonialism should neither be over- nor underestimated. The literature has long overvalued the importance of either the Congo Reform Association, Roger Casement's report, or the diplomatic actions of the British government as key causes for the origin of the annexation of the Congo Free State by Belgium. At the same time, recent contributions to the debate on the origin of Belgian imperialism have primarily focused on how the Belgian domestic elite became invested in Leopold's colonial venture. This research has indicated that imperial beliefs regarding Belgium only became politically significant after the letter of Leopold. Simultaneously, the MPs arguing for Belgium's imperial eligibility were also fixated on their country's spoiled identity and international position. The international gaze thus never really subsided and was crucial in feeding the belief that Belgium's greatness needed to be defended. While this research does not aim to be conclusive of the debate regarding the origin of Belgian imperialism, it does indicate that the imperial narrative was principally generated with how the political elite managed the state shame situation that their country had found itself in. Future research could explore the more intricate links between the domestic colonial beliefs and desires in Belgium and international pressures and influences. In so doing, more scholarly attention should go to the transnational exchange and competition between European imperial narratives.

The chapter also brings four observations with regard to the conceptual framework of this dissertation. First, the four types of state shame narratives act as useful tools to understand lived practice and disclose various processes of meaning-making by political agents. The various types do seem to mix, entailing that the ideal types sometimes become clumsy instruments to wield. Nevertheless, they give insight into complex positions in a political setting and bring

focus onto the politics surrounding Self-securitisation, on both the state and the political group level. Second, the notion of the state shame situation gave insight into the particular causality of this case, namely the importance of Leopold's letter and its reception. This means that the conceptual framework allows for bringing insight into the causality that the shame situation generates. Moreover, the debate following the letter tells of how the source of assessment can shift, indicating that this category is more fluid and particular to the situation than assumed. Third, the narrative competition during this case indicates that the politics of state shame can lead to antagonistic conflict as to the reaching of a consensus. Key in this regard is, on the one hand, the influence of just one or two individual agents, such as Vandervelde, Loran, Hymans, and Woeste, in constructing and sustaining a state narrative. On the other hand, the case is also telling of how important unforeseen events are (such as Leopold's letter) for these political agents to appropriate different elements of the extant narratives for their particular purposes. Finally, this analysis is telling of the difficulty in countering a narcissistic state shame narrative. More specifically, the anti-colonial MPs were not able to construct a state narrative that could compete with the inflated notion of Belgian greatness that the pro-colonial side was advocating. An alternative would be to counter this narcissistic imperial fantasy by shaming Belgium but this would run the risk of creating a shame situation where they could be conceived as an Other. In effect, this warrants a discussion on how the politics of state shame manifest themselves when a narcissistic state narrative is dominant.

SECOND INTERLUDE. COLONIAL PROPAGANDA AND BELGIAN IMPERIAL NARCISSISM

The political significance of the Belgian imperial Self-narrative shifted in time. This interlude situates some of these shifts and simultaneously bridges the historical gap between the origin of the Belgian Congo and its formal end. Key in this regard is that, by his death on December 17 1909, Leopold II had become a disgraced figure. While he had retreated from public life to evade criticism and sustain some notion of decorum, the press nevertheless kept uncovering scandals surrounding him and his legacy. The Congolese atrocities were, at least after the King's passing, not at the centre of this unwanted media attention. Rather, his lowborn mistress, Blanche Delacroix,[173] the estrangement from his daughters Louise and Stéphanie, and the endless array of under-the-table financial constructions of the *Fondation de la Couronne*[174] were at the heart of these later scandals. Painting a picture of a morally destitute and fiscally irresponsible ruler, Leopold's image, and by extension, that of the entire Belgian royal house was severely tarnished (Delathuy 1985, 610). Even the royal burial, traditionally a moment of national unity, was shrouded in scandal and contestation (De Spiegeleer 2019).

Belgium, likewise, had lost its previously faultless and innocent character through its involvement in the Red Rubber scandal. While the political elite were able to secure Belgium's claim on the Congo and its general moral sense of Self by conceiving their colonial venture as a 'social question' (Bevernage 2018), a sense of nervousness remained apparent (Hunt 2016; Lauro 2021). Some scholars have argued that anxiety remained present, up until the independence of Congo. More specifically, the "traumatic shadow of the first colonial regime" (Lauro 2021, 327) gave way to a conscience that was "stifled by the hunger for self-affirmation" (Viaene 2009, 59). As the Belgian colonial state originated from this state of nervousness, it

---

[173] Also known as Caroline Lacroix or Baroness Vaughan. She was the most notorious mistress of Leopold II, in part for being a sixteen-year-old sex worker from Paris when they met. Leopold showered her with gifts, real estate, and titles. At the end of his life, he had married her and favoured her as heir to his wealth over his two estranged daughters.

[174] While the *Fondation de la Couronne* (previously *Domaine de la Couronne*) had its origin as a means to manage the Congolese holdings of Leopold II, it developed into owning large tracts of lands and buildings in Belgium. The political scandals surrounded the ownership and management of this private fund.

meant that "Congo became a nervous state" (Hunt 2016, 1). Moreover, in colonial discourses of other European imperial powers the imagery of 'Belgian barbarity' had become commonplace, implying that Belgians were illegitimate bearers of civilisation because of their involvement in the Congolese atrocities (Dunn 2003, 51). In discursively excluding Belgium from the 'civilizational standard', European international society was able to (re)affirm its moral legitimacy and that of its imperialist practices (Buzan 2014). Simultaneously, other imperial states could confirm their nation's civilisational superiority or imperial humanitarianism by comparing their colonialism with that of Belgium (Dunn 2003, 51; Barnett 2011, 73). The loss of prestige also spoiled Belgium's identity as a commercial powerhouse and a country that had prided itself on its strict understanding of the rule of law. In particular, the country wrestled with its association with the financial mismanagement of Leopold and the general notion that the Congo Free State was poorly run as a state (Viaene 2009, 45).

To sum up, Belgium had become the black sheep of Europe and many Belgians held nostalgia for 'la petite Belgique' (Viaene 2009, 60). King Albert I, Leopold's nephew and successor, set out to rehabilitate the image of Belgium and its royal house. Although his attitude towards his uncle's colony is unknown,[175] he disapproved of the effects that it had generated (Delathuy 1982, 610). Before his coronation, Albert travelled to the Belgian Congo to acquaint himself with the immense territory he would come to reign over.[176] The specific goal of his trip was to familiarize himself with the various problems of colonial rule and for him to understand first-hand how Leopold (mis)managed Congo (Thielemans and Ewoud 1982, 45; Beuttner 2016. 166). Simultaneously, the royal excursion acted as a public relations stunt where Albert could emphasize the 'genius of Leopold' in granting Belgium a colony. This set into motion the rehabilitation of his uncle's image, which was sided by the gradual development of a hegemonic narrative on the abuses. In line with the discourses that the previous chapter has identified, politicians and public figures would come to acknowledge that there had been abuses but that these were eliminated immediately (Vanthemsche 2012, 26). Gradually, these admissions of abuse disappeared in the discourse as they were being sided by justifications or arguments that obfuscated the atrocities of the Leopoldian Congo (Ibid.).

---

[175] Even in his travel diary or letters he would hide his personal opinions. However, he did express that it was "painful" generating a "dark mood" (Thielemans and Ewoud 1982, 50).
[176] To clarify, the Colonial Charter had limited the competencies of the Belgian monarch regarding the Belgian Congo. While parliament would have some say about colonial policy, after 1914 the Colonial Council would become the principal agent (Viaene 2009, 52). Regardless, the colony would remain intensely connected to the dynasty.

Moreover, through the association with the new King, Belgian colonialism gained a 'progressive' image (Viaene 2009, 52). Albert's support for reform had generated the belief that a new course was taken and that the atrocities were something of the past (Ewans 2002, 236). This notion was amplified by the gradual easement between colonialism and socialism of the previous years. The socialist *patron* Emile Vandervelde was central in building this bridge by reframing the Congo as a humanitarian and social project, eventually leading to progressive support for the Belgian colony (Viaene 2009, 53; Bevernage 2018). While this new framing became more dominant, the situation in Congo remained one of oppression and exploitation similar to the Leopoldian regime. Atrocities were not committed to the same degree of magnitude, however not because of the 'sweeping reforms' that were signalled after the Belgian government gained the concessions and rescinded the monopolies of the rubber exploitation companies (Ewans 2002, 236). As the demand and supply for Congolese rubber dwindled and eventually disappeared from 1906 onwards, there was little left for company agents or militia to exploit the Congolese over.

The period that was figured as the low point of Belgian colonialism is generally considered to be the high point of modern European colonialism (Hobsbawm 1987; Osterhammel 2010). On the eve of Franz Ferdinand's assassination, the world was dominated by vast European empires at the height of their power. However, while World War I did not facilitate a notable wave of decolonisation as World War II would, nor would it be as global as the latter, it did usher in global processes and practices that profoundly impacted the institution of European imperialism. The colonies, for one, would act as important locations for battlefields and frontlines during the war. They were more small-scale in comparison to the extensive trench warfare in Western Europe and the massive battlefields in Eastern Europe but were nevertheless important for morale and war strategy (Stanard 2011, 188). Colonies also supplied valuable resources to the mother countries to sustain the war effort, although not to the same extent as during WWII. This meant that the economic and strategic importance of colonies to imperial states increased, which steered colonial policy towards more industrialisation and civilisational development. Aside from that, some imperial powers enlisted non-Western soldiers in their armies to fight or support the war in Europe. To the former, this meant that they could earn respect and be recognized as patriots of their colonial state, prompting them to expect political rights after their service (Dendooven 2018; 2019). That they did not receive these rights after WWI led to resentment and frustration, fuelling demands for political autonomy and active rebellion against the colonial state. Similarly, seeing white men perish in a barbarous war

questioned the narrative of European superiority and challenged the psychological element of colonial oppression (e.g. Fanon 1967; Memmi 1974).

The First World War would also reverse Belgium's image as a perpetrator to that of the victim (Viaene 2009, 59). More specifically, the black sheep of Europe had turned into 'Poor Little Belgium' following the German invasion of 1914.[177] This new international identity and status followed the traumatic invasion and occupation, which made Belgium reposition itself in international society. At the same time, the 'Rape of Belgium' challenged Belgium's integrity and strength, compelling it to emphasize the honour of the Self (Steele 2008, 96). During and after World War I, the Belgian Congo was one of the main vehicles of this message of honour, illustrated by the avid construction of statues and memorials of colonial veterans[178] (Stanard 2011, 188). At the same time, the *Force Publique* also showed itself crucial in de African battlefields of the First World War, most notably during the battle of Tabora (1916). These colonial war efforts were used in propaganda to show the Belgian contribution to the war and its success in the spread of civilisation[179] (Ibid., 211). The war was thus opportunistically used to counter the stigma that had been generated by the Red Rubber scandal.

While the Belgian Congo was an asset to the Belgian war effort economically speaking, it was not as significant as it would be during the Second World War (Ewans 2002, 236-237). Not for a lack of trying, as the mining and foodstuffs companies were desperate to find new workers to boost production. To this end, they resorted to forced labour and had the colonial state demand a poll tax, which forced the Congolese into a monetary economy. These measures, together with the continuing land alienation and the imagery of the metropole being overrun, led to revolts during and after the war (Ibid., 237-238). This substantiated the long-running fear that Germany might see a chance to adjoin the Belgian Congo to its own African colonies. In contrast, the military successes of the Force Publique in German Eastern Africa would eventually expand the Belgian empire with the region Rwanda-Urundi. Whereas these were

---

[177] The notion of Belgian barbarity was still somewhat present in other imperial discourses, more specifically in the UK (see Dunn 2003).
[178] Leopold II also invested in this kind of propaganda, for similar purposes but different motivations. See Stanard (2011) for a discussion on this.
[179] Often the concept of *civilisation* was used in opposition to the German *Kultur* during this propaganda. See Stanard (2011, 211).

officially considered mandate zones of the League of Nations, Belgium *de facto* incorporated them as provinces in the Belgian Congo.[180]

After the First World War, collective amnesia had set in (Vanthemsche 2012, 26). The propaganda and glorification of both Leopold II and Albert I had segmented the notion of the Belgian empire in street names, statues, and widespread memorials in the public sphere (Stanard 2011; Verschaffel 2009). This glorification of the colonial project and colonial veterans would foment the *esprit coloniale* and the patriotic pride that was felt for the Belgian Congo[181] (Verschaffel 2009, 68). It thus became commonplace for Belgians, but also validated by outsiders, to identify themselves as being 'superior' colonizers, primarily accredited to them for their diligence (Stanard 2016, 171). Economic and political elites proclaimed their undisputed worship of Leopold II while completely ignoring the former King's ignominious final years (Vanthemsche 2012, 26; Beuttner 2016, 167). Following the necessity to emphasize the greatness of the Belgian Self after the destruction of the World War, the notion that it could have been a wrongful actor in the past was incommensurable with the triumphant national Self-identity. As such, the amnesia regarding the Congolese atrocities did not only originate with the imperial narrative after the Red Rubber scandal but also acted as a way to protect the dominant fragile but glorifying Belgian Self.

Economic interests were also at play. Investments in Belgian Congo from public and private sources rose spectacularly after World War I in both infrastructure and industry. While Leopold II might have been the 'genius founder' of the colony, it would be Belgium's reputation as a commercial nation that would facilitate the economic growth of Congo. More specifically, the facilitation of funds by the *Société Générale* meant that lucrative mining operations in Katanga put Belgian Congo as one of the world's leaders in the production of copper, tin, diamonds, gold, manganese, cobalt, radium, and uranium (Ewans 2002, 237). Following this newly found wealth and commercial interest in the colony during the interwar period, Belgium came to emphasize the paternalist 'trusteeship' of Congo (Viaene 2009, 58). Central to this approach was the focus on bringing civilisation to the natives, or at least signalling this intent. This so-called 'compassionate colonialism' included the organisation of medical services and primary

---

[180] The governance was very similar to that of the Belgian Congo, with the difference that there was a more active racial policy in supporting a strong divide in superiority between Hutus and Tutsis and a preference for economically developing Rwanda.

[181] However, the Belgian Congo did not hold a central position in the Self-imagination of Belgium. As certain sources show, Congo was always placed as an addition to the national Self-representation rather than to be at the heart of it (see Verschaffel 2009, 73).

education through intense collaboration with the Catholic church (Ewans 2002, 241-242). However, the educational and medical development was rather modest up until the Second World War (Vanthemsche 2012, 30). Companies such as the *Union Minière* would provide housing and social services on factory farms, together with other programs aimed to sustain their workforce.[182] While conceived as being implemented for purposes of civilisation, these initiatives were primarily meant to generate docile and healthy workers to not lose the investment that the companies had made in training them.

The Second World War had a major impact on the colonial empires. On the one hand, large parts of Southeast Asia, Northern Africa, and Sub-Sahara Africa were either conquered by the Axis or the Allies or sided with a different regime than that of the metropole. Colonial rule was, in so doing, challenged and in some cases even supplanted, implying that "white men and their states could be defeated, shamefully and dishonourably" (Hobsbawm 2012, 211; 212; 216). This informed the colonized that they could take control and heralded an intensification of the process of decolonization, effectively inspiring various anti-colonial and nationalist movements. The struggle for independence of the latter coincided with the growing lack of confidence among imperial states to maintain their dominions following the economic hardship caused by the economic crisis in the 1930s and WWII. On the other hand, the colonies provided their metropole with raw materials and other economic support, played an important part in wartime psychology, diplomatic weight, and military capacity, as it gave them a strategic edge (Vanthemsche 2012, 122). This meant that, after the war, the colonies were seen as crucial parts of the empire that needed to be maintained in some shape or form, while also being more capable of autonomous rule. To be clear, the belief in this autonomy was mainly granted to the white settlers who controlled the colonies or, in some cases, the Westernized elites. Indigenous populations were generally considered unfit for self-rule.

So too would the Belgian Congo come to figure as a crucial asset for Belgium during the Second World War. Although the Force Publique would participate in military operations, such as the battle at Saio against the Italians in 1941, the significance of Congo was primarily established at the economic and political level. As the metropole was overrun by German forces, the colony became essential for the continuity of the Belgian government (Vanthemsche 2012, 42). King Leopold III, the son of Albert I who had succeeded him in 1934, surrendered to the invaders

---

[182] These factory farms were also commonplace in Belgium up until the beginning of the twentieth century. Whereas unions were able to counter such exploitative institutions in Belgium itself, they were considered to be a proper approach to civilizing Congolese workers.

while the Belgian government exiled itself to London. That the Belgian Congo remained independent meant that it was still under the control of the Belgian government and thus part of the Allied sphere and war effort (Ibid., 121). Most notably, its vast resources were essential for supplying the Americans and the British with the means to continue their production of weapons and ammunition (Ibid., 130). Not only were Congolese copper and other metals significant, but its reserves of uranium would supply the necessary basis for the atomic bombs that were used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In so doing, World War II increased the importance of the Belgian Congo for Belgium, presenting it as stable and prosperous through propaganda like motion pictures and pamphlets (Stanard 2011). Life in the colony itself was far removed from that image. Since the Colonial Charter there had been no institutional change between the colony and the metropole, generating resentment among Belgians that had settled in Congo. They demanded more autonomy since their situation was comparable with that of other white colonials in all but their political rights (Vanthemsche 2012, 82-83). During the first year of the war, there were also profound tensions between various factions within Congo that either sided with neutralist, royalist, or Allied positions[183] or between Belgian politicians, businessmen, and foreign dignitaries (Ibid., 129-132). Aside from this conflict, the intense and ever-heightening production rate to feed the war machine also put enormous pressure on the African workers (Stanard 2011, 220). Their living conditions had somewhat improved but remained rather low up until the latter half of the 1940s (Vanthemsche 2012, 30). Consequently, they often resorted to strikes and protests to voice their frustration, becoming the feeding bed of the later decolonization.

---

[183] This contention would even lead to an attempted, but at the end aborted, military coup.

CHAPTER 6. CONGOLESE INDEPENDENCE (1958-1961): IMPERIAL NARCISSISM AND BELGIAN VICTIMHOOD

> In the absence of guidelines and directives in the weeks following January 4, 1959, the prestige of the Belgian administration in Africa suffered irreparable damage.
>
> - King Baudouin I, 18 February 1960[184]

Belgium abruptly lost its empire. The situation in the Belgian Congo had grown contentious from 1956 onwards as anti-colonial ideas and tensions were spreading among *évoluées* and in broader Congolese society (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987, 103). These calls for independence and frustrations with the colonial regime eventually culminated in full-scale riots and violent revolts in early January 1959, which, almost immediately, forced the Belgian government to agree to a process of decolonisation. The protests and the demand for emancipation came as a shock to many Belgians, as Congo was represented in the post-WWII period as thriving, complaisant, and tranquil (Stanard 2017). More specifically, successes in economic productivity, health services and education, albeit they were modest advances, were used to characterize Congo as a true 'model colony' in the Belgian imperial imagination (Hodgkin 1956, 48-50; Vanthemsche 2012, 30-32). The Congolese, who were conceived as complacent and docile colonial subjects in official propaganda, were also believed to be immune to calls for nationalism and self-government. In effect, the 1959 riots profoundly challenged these racist and colonial fantasies, effectively questioning the imperial narrative that Belgium had carefully cultivated over the past five decades. As the quote of King Baudouin I indicates, this 'loss of prestige' was felt in a quite tangible way. The formal decolonisation process ended on the 30th of June 1960, meaning that Belgium had to part with its model colony within a mere 18 months.

The literature on this particular episode in Belgian imperial history is unclear on how the decolonization of Congo changed the imperial Self-identity of the Belgian state. Authors have

---

[184] As quoted in Dumoulin (2012, 41). King Baudouin I made this statement during a royal council.

mainly focused on explaining either the origin of the calls for independence, the haste with which Belgium departed from Congo, or the causes and scope of the Congo crisis (e.g. Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987; Etambala 1999; 2008; Dunn 2004; Vanthemsche 2012; Namikas 2013). There are, however, two theses that seem to be in dispute. The paternalist thesis argues that the Congolese independence did not lead to a profound change in the imperial narrative. This thesis is rooted in the observation that the predominance of the paternalist doctrine clouded any belief in the possibility of Congolese self-rule. More specifically, Belgian policymakers' belief in the subservience of '*Notre Congo*' made them blind to any resistance to the colonial status quo (Ewans 2002, 242-243; Dumoulin 2012, 23). The riots and the subsequent Congo Crisis were then considered by Belgian politicians to be proof of the 'barbarity' of the Congolese and the inability to civilise them (Dunn 2003; 2004). This racist and bigoted understanding safeguarded the Belgian imperial Self by promoting a narrative of ingratitude, regarding the notion that the Congolese were disdainful of all the good Belgium had done, and a narrative of innocence, which assumed that Belgium had no part in the violence that erupted after the independence (Dunn 2004, 132; Verbeeck 2019, 4). The paternalist thesis argues, then, that Belgium retained its narcissistic sense of Self through dissociation and refutation of wrongdoing.

Other authors have claimed that the riots of January 1959, and the subsequent process of Congolese independence, did profoundly challenge the Belgian imperial Self. This is partially based on the marked discrepancy between, on the one hand, the mounting tensions in Congo, and the rose-covered colonial propaganda that was disseminated in the metropole. The colonial authority of the Belgian Congo was already significantly challenged by the socio-economic development of Congo (Cooper 2005, 204-230), the nervousness regarding miscegenation (Hunt 2016), the rising significance of *Évolues* (Tödt 2012, 5), and the backfiring colonial policy of more control over Congolese society and white settlers (Stanard 2017).[185] Regardless, Belgium kept disseminating a carefully constructed positive image of the colony in the metropole to cope with this nervousness. The riots destroyed this fantasy and profoundly questioned the dominant imperial narrative. Central to this disillusionment was the fear of a

---

[185] The socio-economic development of Congo, and more particularly the rise in urban population and the expansion of the monetary economy, had started to undermine the colonial order (Cooper 2005, 204-230). Africans and white settlers started to mix, challenging notions of the superiority of the latter, which, in turn, caused anxieties in the administration. This nervousness was further exacerbated by the presence of Évolues who were originally meant to act as a sort of edifice of the Belgian colonial order (Tödt 2012, 5). In response to their anxieties, the colonial state reacted by tightening its grip and control over Congolese society and white settlers (Stanard 2017). This backfired and exposed them to the failure of their capabilities and heightened their anxieties (Hunt 2016).

violent struggle for independence, like the one France fought in Algeria, as Belgium was believed not to have the capabilities to engage in such a conflict successfully (Vanthemsche 2012, 92).[186] The fear for inadequacy fuelled feelings of uncertainty, concern, discouragement, helplessness, and defeatism (Etambala 2008, 189; Van Beurden 2015, 311; Vanthemsche 2012, 89-90) which propagated a narrative of disaster that made Belgium recede from having anything to do with its former colonies. According to the thesis of profound loss, the Belgian Self was deeply challenged by the riots and generated existential anxiety about the future of the state. The independence of Congo would, thus, have been conceived as a forced hand and the imperial narrative had to go through a notable change.

There is thus some unclarity on how the end of the formal empire was managed by Belgium. The current chapter aims to bring insight into the identity dynamics that this turbulent moment in Belgian imperial history generated by studying the politics of state shame. More specifically, the goal is to explore whether the Congolese riots and calls for independence created a shame situation for Belgian MPs. Because Belgium conceived itself as a 'model colonizer', the argument can be made that the turbulent decolonisation process would have been a site where state shame was present. To this end, the chapter traces the narrative competition and emotional politics of this particular episode by using a structural narrative analysis, which identifies the comedic, tragic, romantic, and ironic plots of narratives, and an interpretative sentiment analysis. These analyses aim to indicate the presence of state shame narratives – namely situational, narcissistic, aggressive, and deferential shame – which, in turn, give insight into the politics of state shame. In so doing, the chapter contributes to the historical literature by shedding light on the specific consequence of the Congolese decolonisation process on Belgium's imperial state narrative. Aside from that, it also explores the analytical potential and limits of this theoretical and conceptual framework by elucidating how the politics of state shame manifests itself when a narcissistic state narrative is apparent.

The chapter starts with some historical context on Belgium's late imperial narrative and the origin of the Congolese decolonisation. A subsequent part presents the results of the structural narrative analysis, which finds that, directly after the January 1959 riots, MPs constructed a dominant comedic narrative that corresponds with the situational state shame type. Notably, this narrative also kept expressing the narcissistic glorification of the Belgian empire. By

---

[186] However, not all policymakers agreed. Some thought that this comparison was incorrect and was telling of the ignorance in Belgian politics about the situation in Congo.

focusing more intently on the broader discourse, the analysis finds that this sustained effort to uphold the imperial narrative was accompanied by a marked discourse of insecurity regarding the process of decolonisation. With the advent of the Congo Crisis, the analysis marks a change towards a more tragic understanding of the Belgian state. However, whereas MPs from government parties claimed that the crisis was the responsibility of Congolese leaders, previous governments, the opposition, or external influences, MPs from the opposition blamed it solely on the current government. Regardless of the tragic inflection, however, both narratives conceived Belgium as having become a victim that, while being unjustly accused of aggression, only desired a harmonious bond with Congo. The interpretative sentiment analysis further indicates that the episode was characterized by a high degree of emotionality, anxiety, and negative emotions regarding the decolonisation of Congo. In response to this existential threat, however, MPs juxtaposed positive emotions to cope with the extant anxiety and sustain the narcissistic imperial narrative. This implies that the paternalist thesis and the thesis of profound loss are both untenable. In the conclusion, the chapter makes an argument for what it calls the imperial victimhood thesis, which claims that the Belgian political elite came to conceive the empire as an unjust – but not entirely faultless – victim of circumstances.

THE BELGIAN IMPERIAL SELF IN DISTRESS

Imperial pride and narcissism

At the end of WWII, Congo was held to be an integral part of Belgian Self-identity (e.g. Vanthemsche 2012, 80; Viaene, Van Reybrouck, and Ceuppens 2009). The international Self-image of Belgium was profoundly shaped by its ownership of Congo, as "it had moved beyond its physical and economic limitations to take its place amongst the larger, stronger nations of Europe, such as France, Britain, and Germany" (Dunn 2003, 29). Moreover, the dependence of Belgium on its colony during the war warranted its strategic, economic, and political role in Belgian society. By that time, colonial imagery and rhetoric had begun to saturate Belgian daily

life through circulation in comic books,[187] foodstuffs,[188] literature,[189] art,[190] movies,[191] and statues in public spaces[192] (Jacquemin 1991; Tousignant 1995; Viaene, Van Reybrouck, and Ceuppens 2009). Through these means, Congo was 'sold' to the Belgian public, which was kept mindful of their country's empire and its successes (Van Beurden 2009, 302; Stanard 2011). Although there are doubts in the literature about the pervasiveness of the imperial acceptance of Belgian society (e.g. Ewans 2003; Vanthemsche 2012), even these authors agree that Belgian Congo was commonly considered to be a "natural extension of Belgium" (Vanthemsche 2012, 80).

The imagination of both Belgium and Congo was, thus, narrated, praised, and justified through their relationship (Dunn 2003, 62). A central characteristic of this relationship was that it was principally conceived through the lens of paternalism.[193] It meant that the indigenous Congolese society would be radically overhauled along a grand vision of Belgian design (Ibid., 187-188). No African elite could be formed or no political rights should be granted until the population had reached the conditions for a 'good Catholic life', industrial productivity, and a subordinate role in modern society (Hodgkin 1956, 51). All this had to be provided by a ruling element of Belgian society, whether it was the church, business, or the state. Following this paternalist conception, the relationship between Congo and Belgium was imagined through the family metaphor. In short, Belgium acted as a 'father' that raised its 'child' from indigence.

---

[187] E.g. *Tintin au Congo* by Hergé (1931/1946) and *L'aventure des Belges* by Louis Haché (1957)

[188] Surprisingly, this was often in the realm of sweets. For example, chocolate by Côte D'Or or Chocolates Jacques (Dunn 2003, 69), candy such as Carabouya, and cookies of Matadi by Delacre (see Viaene, Van Reybrouck, and Ceuppens 2009).

[189] There were both pro-colonial novels, e.g. by Frans Demers (real name: Frans Deckers), Sylva de Jonghe, Gerard Walschap, but also more critical works, e.g. Cyriel Buysse, Henri Van Booven, Piet Van Aken. See Rugwiza Kanobana (2021).

[190] See Van Beurden (2015) for an overview of this imagery and the politics surrounding Congolese culture.

[191] E.g. *Congo* (1942), *L'Équateur aux cents visages* (1948), *Bwana Kitoko* by André Cauvin (1955), *Guérir sous les tropiques* (1946), *Sans Tam-Tam* (1949) by Hélène Schirren and Guillaume Linephty. See Van Schuylenbergh (2021) or Grieveson and MacCabe (2011) for an overview.

[192] See Verschaffel (2009) and Stanard (2011).

[193] Paternalism was the name that Belgians preferred. Thomas Hodgkin (1956, 52) describes it aptly as originating from a Platonic ideology: "Platonism is implicit in the sharp distinction, social and legal, between Belgian philosopher-kings and the mass of African producers; in the conception of education as primarily concerned with the transmission of certain unquestioned and unquestionable moral values, and intimately related to status and function, in the belief that the thought and behaviour of the mass is plastic, and can be refashioned by a benevolent, wise and highly trained élite; that the prime interest of the mass is in welfare and consumer goods – football and bicycles – not liberty; and in the conviction that it is possible, by expert administration, to arrest social and political change."

Considering itself a particularly strict ruler,[194] Belgium represented itself as "the pervasive, omnipresent (and omnipotent) father figure in the Congolese spatial domain" (Dunn 2003, 71).

Moreover, the Belgian Congo had, since 1908, become an object of national pride (Vanthemsche 2012, 141). Successes in the colony showed how Belgium had arrived at the pinnacle of modernity, mastering both nature and society in spreading Belgian civilisation (Dunn 2003, 62). The Leopoldian heritage, and in particular the international critique regarding it, had spurred Belgium to compensate for its lack of legitimacy as an empire (Dunn 2003; Vanthemsche 2012, 58). In countering this spoiled identity, the colonial state had committed itself to clear its name by striving for a higher level of social services than in any other African colony (Hodgkin 1956, 52). Belgian colonialism had to become "faultless" (Vanthemsche 2012, 139), supposedly making the Congolese immune to the burgeoning nationalism in the rest of Africa (Van Beurden 2009, 302). Simultaneously, the Congolese were, because of this commitment to 'welfare colonialism', also more subject to regulation and supervision by the European settlers than anywhere else in Africa. The international critique had, moreover, made Belgium overly weary of foreign involvement in its colony, prompting it to close the Belgian Congo off from the world, both for outsiders and insiders (Stanard 2017, 16).[195] In so doing, Congo represented a central site of mastery and control in the Belgian national narrative.

In having this representation, Congo contributed to and constituted the Belgian international grandeur and acted as a means for national glorification (Vanthemsche 2012, 53; 57). The exaggerated pride that was felt, in combination with the conception of the Belgian colonial state as an omnipotent father and its 'faultlessness', sustained and fed the narcissistic imperial narratives of Belgium. It was observed that "the Belgian public drew substantial vicarious satisfaction from the successful image of the Congo and basked in the complacent glow of its own myths about imposing achievements in Africa" (Young 1965, 20). Such self-glorifying beliefs were also explicitly present regarding the royal family, engendering a symbolic inflation

---

[194] The colonial state had adopted the moniker of Stanley, *Bula Matari* ('Breaker of Rocks'), to describe itself. In so doing, it communicated to its African 'children' that terror, discipline and control were the primary means through which they would be raised (Dunn 2003, 71).

[195] Telling of this isolation is the conversation that the American journalist Richard Wright had with a young Japanese colleague: "'We know nothing about Africa in Japan,' he said. 'Yet Africa is a vast continent.' 'Even we of the West know but little of certain parts of Africa,' I told him I recommended some titles for him to read. 'What about this Belgian Congo?' he asked. 'I can't tell you a thing,' I said. 'I've never been there and I've never in my life met a man from the Belgian Congo.' 'Why?' 'The Belgians do not allow them out,' I informed him. He stared and fell silent." (Wright 1956, p. 80-81).

of the images of King Leopold II and King Baudouin (Vanthemsche 2012, 58; 98-99).[196] The 1955 visit of the latter, and certainly the 1958 World Expo, glorified Belgium's ability to impose civilisation and praised its mastery in making Congolese life "more civilized and agreeable" (Dunn 2003, 62; see also Beuttner 2016, 168). Belgium's imperial Self imagination was, thus, imbued with notions that excessively glorified the national Self and its capabilities.

Although the imagination surrounding the colony was important to Belgian Self-identity, the Congo itself was not so well-known in the metropole. The vague and general notions that were present were mainly based on official discourse and propaganda (Vanthemsche 2012, 80).[197] In so doing, the interest of the metropole in the colony should not be overstated. Congo was probably a concept that was peripheral to the daily lives of many Belgians. What should also not be exaggerated, however, is the notion that Belgium had significant control over the colony itself. The omnipotence of the colonial state was purely based on the narrative that it disseminated to 'sell' Congo to the Belgian population (Stanard 2011). Only minimal reports of Congolese defiance against Belgium reached the metropole, in large part because of the colonial state's firm hold over the means for disseminating dissent. In addition, the Belgian press was, generally speaking, not focused on issues in Congo and in line with the paternalist doctrine (Stanard 2017, 17). This blindness to the situation in the colony, the predominance of official pro-colonial discourse, and well-ingrained paternalist beliefs about the beneficial nature of Belgian colonialism constituted the imperial imagination of the late colonial period of Belgium.

Challenges to imperial omnipotence

The end of the Belgian empire coincided with the high point of the 'pacification democracy' or consociationalism in Belgian political culture (Vanthemsche 2012, 35). This meant that complex and encompassing political issues were negotiated by party elites who attempted to

---

[196] Baudouin was granted the moniker of *Bwana Kitoko* ('handsome man' in Swahili). His portrait was widely distributed throughout Congo at the time of his visit, which led to some sort of deification where all problems in Congo would be addressed and resolved by the King (Etambala 1999, 18-20).

[197] It has been argued, in line with the reluctant imperialist thesis, that this shows the disinterest and general dissatisfaction with Belgium's imperial status among its citizenry (Cf. Ewans 2003; Vanthemsche 2012, 78-81). Yet, in a 1956 survey, Belgian respondents answered favourably (86.3%) to the question of whether "the Belgian presence in the Congo [is] useful for Belgium" (Vanthemsche 2012, 80). Similar percentages were given for questions regarding the legitimacy of the Belgian presence in the Congo and the usefulness of this presence for the Congolese. During this period in time, Belgians were overwhelmingly in agreement with the official discourse and imperial Self-narratives.

find a delicate balance between the various government partners (Lijphart 1977). It originated as a means to pacify the various tensions in Belgian society, most notably on the topics of religion, regional identity, and class. Highly politicized issues like the expansion of the voting franchise to women and the further development of the welfare state were all managed through this institutionalized system to avoid strained, disruptive, and centrifugal conflict. Contentious challenges to established narratives, practices, positions, and relationships were thus attempted to be resolved in a negotiated, balanced, and controlled fashion.

Belgian colonialism did, however, get politicized during the 1950s. After the 1954 election, where the long-dominant Christian democratic party lost to its Socialist and Liberal rivals, a conflict erupted on education in Congo (Vanthemsche 2012, 85-86). Following the example in the metropole, a 'school war'[198] had flared up around the establishment of a university in the colony. The conflict ended with the foundation of two universities, a Catholic one in Leopoldville (contemporary Kinshasa) and a liberal one in Elizabethville (contemporary Lubumbashi). This compromise did not, however, prevent further politicization. The Belgian Socialist and Liberal parties, and later the Christian democrats, would erect satellites of their parties in the colony, a process that was also repeated by the trade unions (Ibid., 86). In effect, this aided in politically organising the Congolese population, who saw the process as an opportunity to further their emancipation (Etambala 2008, 67-98).[199] Some Belgian politicians lamented the politicization of Congo, as they feared that the once tranquil colony was now tainted by the strained politics of its metropole.

Yet, Belgian politicians were more worried about external threats to the colony. In recalling the international reaction to the Leopoldian atrocities, policymakers were reluctant, even "frightened" (Vanthemsche 2012, 136) of outside political control over Congo. This reluctance for outside interference was quite notable. For example, while Belgium was one of the strongest advocates regarding European unification, they were alarmed about what this would come to mean for their hold on Congo. Furthermore, Belgium's allied position with the US informed

---

[198] Belgium has had a recurring political conflict between Catholic and state-sponsored schools. The first 'school war' (1878-1884) was triggered by the Liberal government that put into law that every county had to have at least one state-sponsored school, which the Catholic party rejected. The second 'school war' (1950-1958) erupted following the increased demand for secondary schools after WWII. Whereas Christian democratic governments granted more subsidies to Catholic schools, the Socialist-Liberal government that was elected in 1954 opted for cutting subsidies to the latter and erecting more state-sponsored schools. This led to protests and political conflict, but was, in the end, resolved by the pluralist compromise of the 'Schoolpact' in 1958.

[199] Although Congolese politicians did not want to sculpt their party landscape in the same way as Belgium had done. They had witnessed the sectarianism and centripetal conflict that emanated from this situation.

the Cold War fear of communist involvement and subterfuge in the colony (Gijs 2016, 274). That Congolese were believed to be insusceptible to nationalism did not counter the anxiety for the *red peril*. In effect, the communist fear acted as the perfect ploy to promote Belgian interests and dominance (Ibid.).

The threat regarding political interference in, and even forced abdication of, Congo did not only emanate from the USSR. The US was also conceived as a real risk in this regard. These fears were also not completely unfounded. Its anti-colonial attitude, partly ideological and economical in origin, partly as an effort to outdo the USSR in its support for decolonisation, worried Belgian policymakers (Vanthemsche 2012, 137).[200] Critiques towards the Belgian colony were mounting in the US, mainly centring around the observation that the Congolese, while better off than most Africans on the economic level, were lagging far behind in cultural and political development (Dunn 2003; Vanthemsche 2012, 138). Activists and journalists would also often recall the Leopoldian atrocities, pointing to the continuities (but also the development) of the Belgian system. The ever more hegemonic position of the US in global affairs would eventually bring it to become an ever more dominant actor regarding Congo (Dunn 2003, 85-86).

Belgium, but colonizers more generally, was also criticized at the UN General Assembly by young nations and countries from the Eastern Bloc (Vanthemsche 2012, 138). After having liberated themselves from Western colonialism or any other form of outside dominion, these states aimed to discredit and overthrow the Belgian paternalist style of rule and encourage the Congolese in their fight for independence (Dunn 2003, 98). As a result, Belgium was conceived as a "diehard supporter of old-style colonialism" (Vanthemsche 2012, 140) and, subsequently, suffered from diplomatic isolation during the 1950s. It attempted to bring other colonial powers, specifically the UK and France, to form an alliance that could resist international critiques. Yet, even in this relationship, it would figure as the partner that was extremely resistant to foreign influence (Ibid., 139).

The myopic view centred around the belief that the main threat would come from foreign intervention, meant that the focus of Belgian policymakers was fixed on the external (Vanthemsche 2012, 140). Narcissistic beliefs ingrained in the Belgian imperial narrative were

---

[200] Moreover, during WWII these fears were believed to be confirmed. US diplomats and other foreign policy officials openly discussed changing the status of Africa in an effort to swing the war balance in their favour (Vanthemsche 2012, 137).

most likely sustained by this fear of external influence. The self-glorification would be reiterated as counterarguments against any possible claim for foreign intervention, prompting Belgian civilisation and its particular style of colonialism as superior and beneficial for Congo. Yet, the belief in external threats also had the effect that the internal dynamics and changes in Congo were completely obscured by Belgian policymakers and took them by surprise (Ibid., 140). Up until the riots and violent protests of January 1959, the Belgian state did not doubt its colonial omnipotence within the colony.

Congolese resistance and Belgian anxiety

In the meantime, the Belgian colonial state existed in a permanent state of "nervousness" or anxiety (Hunt 2016; Stanard 2017). Congolese resistance against the Belgian colonial order was continuous, whether it was open rebellions, strikes, or small day-to-day acts of defiance. Additionally, the fears of miscegenation and race-mixing would permanently occupy the colonial administration (Lauro 2021). The anxiety was only exacerbated by the economic recession following the Korean War (1950-1953). This economic turmoil generated hardship and unemployment, heightening the already present tensions regarding colonial inequality, injustice, and oppression (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987, 99; Ewans 2002, 243). While all Congolese experienced these conditions, there was a slight difference between, on the one hand, farmers, labourers, and unskilled workers, and, on the other hand, the évolués. Whereas the former was forced to cultivate crops, had to perform compulsory labour, were taxed heavily, and worked in dire conditions, the latter had to deal with discrimination and humiliation at their low-ranking white-collar jobs and daily life in the city (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987, 99). Regardless of different socio-economic conditions, these groups agreed on the demand for political emancipation (Ibid., 100).

The socio-economic tensions would be at the backdrop of the struggle for Congolese independence but other, probably more decisive, factors would foment the calls for sovereignty. Three aspects have been argued as being key in this regard, namely the tradition and memory to resistance against colonial rule, the revolutionary potential of messianic churches,[201] and the development of urban associations (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987, 100). About the former, the rebellions and revolts of the past eight decades against Belgian colonialism had become part of

---

[201] The most important of this one being the *Eglise de Jésus-Christ sur la terre par le Prophète Simon Kimbangu*.

the narrative culture in Congo just like they were in other colonies (Fanon 1963, 114). These memories secured a sense of competence in the Congolese to resist the colonizer and gave them confidence in their bid for emancipation. New religious movements came up around the 1920s and presented prophetic visions that challenged the established order, mainly by affirming the coming of a new world, one without white domination (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987, 102). Finally, the development of a network of associations between évolués and Congolese workers facilitated the organisation and a feeding bed for resistance to the colonial order.

These factors made the anxiety of Belgian authorities soar. Socio-economic developments had pushed Congolese *en masse* to urban life, in which they were joined by Europeans who sought out the prosperous colony after WWII (Vanthemsche 2012; Stanard 2017, 5). This new situation prompted the colonial state to a new desire for "inspecting, blocking, and channelling movement" (Hunt 2016, 207). Moreover, the figure of the évolué also came to elicit anxiety for its eroding influence on the colonial distinctions between the African and the European (Tödt 2012, 5). Originally, the évolué had been the symbol of Belgian colonialism, following the principle of *pas d'elites, pas d'ennuis* (Dumoulin 2012, 34). *Ennuis* nevertheless ensued when the évolués began resenting how they were treated by the colonial administration. Their calls for reform and better treatment fed the anxiety of Belgian Congo's late colonial regime, by some authors and contemporaries described as a 'nervous' state (Lauro 2011, 117; Thomas 2011, 13; Hunt 2016, 1; Stanard 2017).

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment when resistance against the Belgian colonial order became a struggle for independence. Most authors have coined the 1956 *Manifeste de Conscience Africaine* by, amongst others, Joseph Malula, Joseph Ileo, and Joseph Ngalula, as the turning point for the call for Congolese political emancipation (Etambala 1999; 2008; Vanthemsche 2012). In response to this more moderate manifesto, the political group Abako (*Alliances des Bakongo*) formed and presented a more radical anti-colonialist view (Etambala 2008, 71). Headed by the nationalist leader Joseph Kasavubu, the association had started gaining a lot of traction in Congolese politics (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987, 103). Similar parties started to form, mainly centred around an ethnic or regional basis and diversifying themselves on how they envisioned the future of Congolese institutions (nationalist, regionalist, unitarian, federalist, etc.) (Vanthemsche 2012, 91). One of the more notable of these parties was the MNC (*Mouvement National Congolais*), headed by Patrice Lumumba.

Regardless of the development of parties, the Congolese would only be granted suffrage after an 'educational process' that was not clearly determined in time (Vanthemsche 2012, 83-84). There was a first step in the granting of suffrage in December 1957, when municipal elections were held in three major cities, Leopoldville, Elizabethville, and Jadotville (contemporary Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, and Likasi) where white and black communities could elect their own councillors. Abako won notably in Leopoldville, cementing its crucial place in Congolese politics at that time. This led to a further radicalisation of Congolese politicians, who likely felt supported in their bid for more political autonomy following the tour of President Charles de Gaulle of the French colonies in Africa (Etamabla 2008, 126). During this tour, de Gaulle promised further autonomy for the French dominions and citizenship to all (Ewans 2002, 243; Mutamba Makombo 1998, 63). Moreover, some Congolese politicians were able to meet up with other independence movements during the Pan-African conference in Ghana in December 1958 (Mutamba Makombo 1998, 62-63). This further radicalized Congolese politicians, and certainly Lumumba, who had been rather moderate up until that moment (Etamabala 2008, 79-91).

The radicalization of Congolese politics was characterized by anti-colonial and nationalist narratives. Whereas they were first voiced by Kasavubu, these narratives would become part of the trademark discourse of Lumumba. His speeches were imbued with references to the colonial exploitation of the past eighty years, linking up to the shared memories of brutalization, discrimination, exploitation, and repression (Dunn 2003, 74; 77). Similar to Kasavubu, Lumumba would include anti-colonialist and (pan-)African nationalist elements in his discourses to emphasize the importance of unification under one common cause and flag. In so doing, he actively disseminated counternarratives to the "idiotic superiority complex" (Lumumba 1958, as quoted in Etambala 2008, 130) of the colonial state, challenging its imperial omnipotence and self-glorification. Belgians viewed these disruptive narratives with suspicion and conceived Lumumba as an unstable and dangerous radical (Dunn 2003, 77). In effect, they would turn him and Kasavubu into scapegoats for many of the tensions during the late colonial period (Willame 1997, 189–195; Dunn 2003, 84; Etamabala 2008).

The 1959 Leopoldville riots and the failure of Belgian omnipotence

The frustrations with the colonial status quo culminated in the January 1959 riots in Leopoldville. On the morning of January 4th, several incidents of violence against white settlers

occurred (Etamabala 2008, 179-180). These were unrelated but telling of the tense situation in the capital city. Abako had a meeting planned at the local YMCA later in the day but cancelled it because of a denied permit. While the organisers tried to abate the angry and dissatisfied public that had gathered there, tensions began to run high when the police got involved (Ibid., 160). Several arrests were made, further heightening the agitation of the crowd. A fragment of disgruntled Abako supporters fused with groups of riled-up football fans, local gangs, and scores of unemployed Congolese, erupting into a full-scale riot and looting that lasted for three days, with violence directed against white settlers and among the rioters themselves[202] (Ibid., 161). To contain the violence, the governor-general mobilized the *Force Publique* and a battalion of Belgian paratroopers that were stationed nearby. The latter would not be used to put down the riots but mainly to protect white settlers and their neighbourhoods.[203]

The riots had both great material and political effects. The damage was estimated to be around 400 million francs, mainly sustained by merchants whose stores and magazines were plundered. Moreover, the riots generated insecurity about the Congolese economy, in turn leading to capital flight and a crash in the real estate market (Etambala 2008, 189). The economy plummeted, causing more hardship and unemployment. Additionally, the struggle for political emancipation had become a central issue that concerned all Congolese following the riots. Checks and controls were now a daily affair, together with reports on coercive actions by the colonizer to maintain order (Ibid., 195-196). Incidents and civil disobedience, consequently, proliferated in Congo and led to the increasing popularity of nationalism (Nyunda ya Rubango 1980; Fierlafyn 1990; Dunn 2003, 74; Vanthemsche 2012, 90). One of the direct consequences of the riots was the arrest of Kasavubu and other leaders of Abako, as they claimed to have held an illegal meeting and riled up protesters. As no proof for these claims existed, even pointing to the opposite, the incarceration of the Abako leaders further exacerbated the tensions between the colonial authorities and the colonized (Etambala 2008, 181). Congolese people radicalized and the call for independence became ever louder.

In Belgium, the riots came as a shock. Congo was often represented as an "oasis of peace" (Etambala 2008, 189), which was now disturbed by this violence and political struggle. Whereas the reports on the riots were first moderating, their scale and significance were

---

[202] The death toll shows the balance notable tilting towards more violence among Congolese rioters. Some sources point to 47 deaths, while others double or even believe it to be tenfold. There were no reported deaths among white settlers, only wounded and molested. See Etambala (2008).
[203] Regardless, this was the first intervention of Belgian troops in Congo. See Etamabala (2008, 165).

gradually exposed in the media. It became clear to many politicians to bring forth an initiative that gave some perspective to the future of the colony. Notably, the literature often describes this moment as being an "icy shower" (Dumoulin 2012, 34) or a "disillusionment" (Van Beurden 2009), while other authors emphasize that the riots did not effectively challenge the paternalist beliefs regarding Congo. Rather, they were proof that an "inherently savage and barbaric race" (Dunn 2003, 73) could not be uplifted from its destitute state. That the riots challenged the Belgian imperial narrative can be expected, yet its impact and significance remain unclear.

<div align="center">**STRUCTURAL NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**</div>

The goal of this section is to trace Belgian state narratives in parliamentary debates during the formal decolonisation of Congo and the advent of the Congo Crisis. By focusing on how the emplotment of these narratives, construed as either comedic, tragic, romantic, or ironic, this analysis can uncover how MPs (re)constructed their state's sense of Self. Moreover, these story structures give insight into how agents conceive the identity of their political party, their social positions relative to each other, and the meaning of the events that transpire (Khoury 2018, 383). The current section also employs a more marked focus on the general discourse to uncover more deep-seated dynamics in the language of the MPs. To this end, the research uses elements of discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003) to capture and link changes in discursive expressions. The focus is primarily placed on the representation of the decolonisation process of Congo and how it is evaluated by MPs. This section is structured chronologically, starting with the initial responses in parliament after the January 1959 riots up until the first notable shift in the dominant narrative in November. Before going into these narrative changes, a subsequent subsection delves deeper into certain elements of the parliamentary discourse to uncover the underlying anxieties and insecurities of the Belgian MPs regarding the decolonisation process. The final part of this analysis presents both insights into how a narrative competition developed in the Belgian parliament and sums up the general observations of this section.

Unanimity and comedic dominance (January 1959 – October 1959)

The Belgian parliament held a special session in response to the riots in Congo. After a summary of the events and some general statements by the Christian-democrat Minister of

Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, Maurits Van Hemelrijck, the Belgian parliament unanimously voted on erecting a commission of inquiry into the origin and effects of the riots.[204] Meanwhile, the political climate in Congo turned revolutionary, urging the government towards immediate action. Only a week after the riots, the King officially proclaimed on the radio that Congolese independence was unavoidable and that the decolonisation procedure, as designed by the Belgian parliament, would soon be underway. Notably, parliamentary discussions between January and November 1959 were characterized by a general consensus regarding Congolese independence. Although discussions would sometimes lead to political conflict, they were rarely antagonistic. Because of this unanimity, a dominant narrative had formed almost instantaneously. This dominant narrative, while multifaceted and at times contradictory,[205] was construed along a comedic plot.

Telling of this particular emplotment is how the Belgian Self was construed during these initial debates. The imperial narrative of Belgium was continuously glorified, as there was no doubt that it was "a leading nation" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 9) that should receive all praise for making Belgian Congo "the most envied colony in the world" (*Hand.* Kamer 19/03/1959, 13). Antoon Spinoy, a socialist MP, made it clear that "it is indisputable that our compatriots have achieved remarkable achievements in the last decades in Congo" (*Hand.* Kamer 22/04/1959, 23), which the Christian democrat Jean Debucqouy further specified by claiming that "Belgium has put an end to the tribal wars in the Congo; it put an end to slavery; it conquered tropical diseases; it has reduced infant mortality" (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 18). Crucial in this component of the plot is the belief in the civilizing work of Belgium. Minister De Schryver conceived that his state had "to fulfil its task of civilization for the well-being of the population in all regions of Congo" so that it "can look back with confidence on the many achievements for its sons and daughters" (*Hand.* Kamer 13/01/1959, 9). He continued by stating that this "mission of civilisation" effectively testified "to the world of the honesty and selflessness of their country" (Ibid., 10). In effect, this narration indicates that the Belgian state was conceived as a well-intentioned protagonist.

In this dominant narrative, the process of independence was conceived as the logical next step in Belgian colonialism. Prime Minister Eyskens, for one, claimed that, "thanks to the degree of

---

[204] The commission would leave for Congo on January 14, 1959, and return on January 27. It published a report, which would be discussed in parliament on April 21, 1959.

[205] The reason for this multifacetedness, is rather straightforward: if it was to be considered unanimous and telling of the national unity of the Belgian policy, all parties needed to narrate it in a way that would correspond with their discourse. This generated a large variety of narrations, but the general structure of the narrative remained similar.

development achieved by the Congolese population after more than half a century of civilizing work under the high leadership of our Kings, it is possible to take a new step on the road to progress" (*Hand.* Kamer 13/01/1959, 7). He was joined by his Minister De Schryver who stated that "the declaration testifies to the country's determination to fully assume its moral responsibility in Africa and to stubbornly continue the civilizing work begun by the Great Prince Leopold II" (*Hand.* Kamer 13/01/1959, 10). The independence was thus seen as "a wonderful opportunity" where younger generations could "work together, in a spirit of national unity, in order to put the crown on that wonderful work already accomplished by the Belgians in Congo and make it to be a complete success" (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 11). Yet, as the Liberal MP Charles Jacques Janssens would state, the "independence should not have the effect of compromising the beneficial effects of the civilizing work that Belgium and the Belgians have been carrying out there for more than a half-century" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/03/1959, 20). Regardless of the civilising work of Belgium, then, the Congolese should not be considered agents capable of continuing it.

There were some MPs who nuanced the greatness of Belgium. The nuancing was often linked with a valuation of Congolese culture. The socialist MP Hendrik Fayat, for example, makes the point that "in their civilization is there not something of value? In their art sense, something that many connoisseurs point out as very valuable?" (*Hand.* Kamer 22/04/1959, 19). He continues by stating that it is "regrettable […] how whites have neglected to take an interest in the native languages and how great misunderstandings have developed precisely because the means to understand each other more and better was not used" (Ibid.). The main critique, however, would often come from the communist party, spearheaded by Gaston Moulin, who would lament that "the Congolese elite would be the one who would have abandoned their own mores and customs; it would be the one that would have adopted a civilization that is not its own" (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 16). To them, the Western civilisation that was forced onto the native Congolese was detrimental to the latter's self-worth and sovereignty. They did not, however, critique Belgian colonialism in a profound way during this point in the parliamentary debates.

Apart from these nuances and critiques regarding the civilisational value of the Belgian colonial project, other MPs did at times nuance the imperial Self of Belgium. Yet, these were often superficial claims or used as rhetorical tools to get a particular point across. In so doing, these notions of weakness or of being 'imperfect' were effectively used to emphasize the

exceptionalism of the Belgian colonial project. The claim of the pro-colonial[206] Liberal MP, Ernest Demuyter, is illustrative of this rhetorical strategy (*Hand.* Kamer 22/04/1959, 17),

> "I know that no human work is perfect, but to a certain extent, we come back to the unpleasant way of acting which I described in my note appended to the report of the Commission of Inquiry. We don't seem to realize enough that pettiness, which is a bad adviser in any area, is even more so when it comes to big things like the Belgian presence in Central Africa."

Even the origin of Belgian colonialism was narrated in a way that both nuanced the imperial Self but also segmented its exceptionalism. Fayat (*Hand.* Kamer 22/04/1959, 21) pointed out that,

> "the origin of our management in Africa is not to be found in the desire of the Belgian people, as such, to engage in colonial enterprises. At one point, the Belgian people accepted an African mission because, in a vote of general criticism of the Congolese policy at the time, it appeared that the best way to promote the interests of the natives lay in democratic control by the parliamentary institutions of the Belgian people themselves. And now that the time of preparation for independence has arrived, it is more imperative than ever that we also maintain that tried and tested foundation of our African policy as a guarantee of the success of the evolution that has started."

It is notable that this historical view has a parallel with the so-called 'reluctant imperialist' thesis (see Chapter Five). Just like the latter, the claim by Fayat emphasizes the lack of enthusiasm of Belgians for colonialism. This made them, in his eyes, better colonizers because of the democratic way that the interests of the natives were promoted. Except for the communist critiques, thus, all nuances of the Belgian imperial Self eventually served the narrative of Belgian greatness and exceptionalism.

Yet, the narrative also held that Congo and Belgium were in danger. MPs narrated that the situation in Congo was severe, both with regards to the riots and to the tensions that drove the call for independence, and almost continuously emphasized the gravity of the situation. The riots had sparked lengthy discussions on their causes, bringing MPs to emphasize the effective

---

[206] Demuyter would be the only Belgian MP who would actively argue and vote against Congolese independence. His discourses were always imbued with paternalist beliefs and was a fervent advocate for the idea of the Belgian-Congolese community.

challenges to the Belgian Congo's colonial order. The causes that they identified were imbued with paternalist beliefs, such as the inherent 'demagoguery' of Congolese politicians (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 4), or external processes that were out of their control, such as propaganda (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 20) or the developments in Congo-Brazzaville and the rest of Africa (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 4).[207] In short, the responsibility for the riots lay with actors other than themselves or processes that they could not foresee, implying that Belgium was conceived as generally innocent with regards to the direct causes of Congolese independence.

This danger was also conceived as a threat of violence. The fear was that Congo would spiral into a conflict similar to Algeria (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 9; 11; 21/04/1959, 13) or Indonesia (*Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 21) which could threaten the reputation and influence of Belgium in the world (*Hand.* Kamer 25/06/1959, 31; 13/02/1959, 13; 01/07/1959, 4). During these debates, there was an overall focus on the international (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 3; 5; 7; 15; 20/05/1959, 7; 25/06/1959, 31), its influence on the Congolese situation (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 12; 23/04/1959, 20), and the world's 'opinion' (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 13; 01/07/1959, 4). In contrast to this external gaze, the MPs envisioned the international to be a site for positive comparison[208] or where they could project desires for a "beneficent and humanitarian policy in the world" (*Hand.* Kamer 22/04/1959, 18). In short, the gaze of the outside looking in was often conceived as threatening but the outward looking gaze was generally considered positive.

At times, however, MPs would discuss the riots as being caused by mistakes that Belgium, or certain Belgian politicians or parties, had made in colonial governance. Most notably, they argued that a crisis of authority had originated following the transposing of the internal rivalry of Belgium onto Congo (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 4; 23/04/1959, 23), which aroused opposition from ethnic groups or tribes (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 8). In other words, the political divisions within Belgium (most notably the religious conflict and pillarization) were to blame for the tensions in Congo. The Liberal MP Hilaire Lahaye also argued that "we have

---

[207] These were held to be both internal to Congo, such as the rise in unemployed "idlers" (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 4; 23/04/1959, 21), the 'demagoguery' of some Congolese politicians (i.e. ABAKO) (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 4), a mounting clash between traditional chefs and a new political class (*Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 11), and even the cultural self-appreciation of university-educated Congolese (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 21), as being external, such as propaganda (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 20) things happening in Brazzaville and French-speaking Africa (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 4), the pan-African conference in Accra (Ibid., 4), and the pressures from neo-colonialism from the US and the USSR (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 22).
[208] Some MPs, for example, compared the living conditions and segregation of African-Americans and the Congolese in favour of the latter (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 22; 01/07/1959, 24).

perhaps exaggerated our merits and our qualities as administrators of the Belgian Congo" so that "our errors were significant and the measures to be taken too decisive for me not to point out that we were silent on certain causes" (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 12). Yet, as the Christian Democrat Andre Dequae claimed "everyone knew and knows that there are certain tensions in the Belgian Congo", and "that a germ, a beginning of problem, was developing all over Congo" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 18). This would indicate that, at least to some MPs, Belgium faced adversity because of its own wrongdoing.

MPs further identified other dangers on the horizon that could destabilize the process of independence and threaten the 'great work' of Congo. Charles Jacques Janssens, a Liberal MP, warned his colleagues that "no more mistakes can be made that could irreparably compromise the civilizing work that our compatriots have accomplished in our African territories" (*Hand.* Kamer 13/01/1959, 11). Or, according to Lahaye (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 13):

> "The policy of force, at the time of Accra, is the worst policy, because it would inevitably lead to bloodshed and, further, to the loss of the Congo, the total loss. It would lead to the destruction of Belgian assets in Africa and the ruin of all our institutions there. The politics of force would mean the end, the disappearance of all traces of our presence in Africa for seventy-five years. Everyone sees how dangerous this attitude is. It proceeds from the most indisputable racism: it is irrational, affective, it is moreover imbecile in its conception and its application."

Yet, the danger did not only lie in imposing too much force upon the Congolese, but also too little. This point was brought forth by the socialist Spinoy who claimed that "there is no greater danger, no greater malady that can threaten Congo than pursuing a policy that would consist in yielding to all questions and all protests that are made" (*Hand.* Kamer 22/04/1959, 27). Louis Major, also a socialist MP, would argue that "one of the great dangers of today is that various leaders, who probably mean well and think they are called to fulfil that task, but only take their own view into account and mainly look at their personal position" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 20). This paternalist distrust of the Congolese meant that the Belgian government had to design a balanced policy, one that would both satisfy the need for independence in Congo and save it from potential negative effects that its sovereignty could generate.

The final component of the dominant narrative was the obvious conclusion that "we must remain in Congo", because independence for the Congolese "remains a formidable task to fulfil" (*Hand.* Kamer 22/04/1959, 24). Moreover, all MPs agreed with the undisputed

expectation that the future relationship between Belgium and Congo would be friendly and brotherly (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 13/01/1959, 8; 17/02/1959, 23; 18/03/1959, 21). The socialist MP Georges Housiaux would project that "it is by bringing full clarity to the events of Léopoldville that we hope we will avoid the adventures that others have experienced and that, in a Congo where the wounds will be healed, we will favour the establishment of a greater fraternity" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 9). This projection of future amicable relations implies a harmonious, comedic ending to the independence process where all characters reconcile or come together in joyful celebration.

In effect, the comedic emplotment of this dominant narrative would indicate that the MPs dealt with the initial steps of the Congolese decolonisation by constructing a situational state shame narrative. The concurrence with this type of state shame relates specifically to how the shame situation is conceived as being temporary, the Self as being well-intentioned, and the belief in maintaining a future relationship. In so doing, the MPs dealt with the challenge to the Belgian imperial narrative by conceiving it as but a momentary infraction, or even an expected result, to an otherwise noble venture. This does beg the question as to how challenging the Congolese calls for independence were to the Belgian imperial Self. To this end, it is necessary to expose broader tendencies in the discourse of the MPs.

Coping with wrongdoing (January 1959 – October 1959)

Although the previous analysis indicated some sense of acceptance and elation among the MPs, a broader discourse analysis shows they were in fact less confident than they appeared. More specifically, to counter the insecurity that the independence process had generated, MPs used five coping strategies in the discourse. The first was the necessity for 'clarity' that every faction in parliament advocated for during all steps of the process. It was used to denote how MPs needed to deal with the problem at hand (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 6; 12), what was going on in Congo (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 10; 13/01/1959, 11; 17/02/1959, 12; 19/03/1959, 13; 21/04/1959, 6; 01/07/1959, 11; 13; 23; 24), the intentions of Belgium (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 11; 12; 13/01/1959, 9; 12; 18/03/1959, 19; 21; 19/03/1959, 14; 14/04/1959, 7; 21/04/1959, 7; 16; 17; 19; 22/01/1959, 19; 27; 28; 31; 33; 01/07/1959, 7; 8; 11; 12; 15; 18; 19), and what the report of the commission of inquiry indicated (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 6; 15; 22/04/1959, 18). The main goal of this discursive strategy was to avoid, at all costs, any "misunderstandings or ambiguity" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 12; 03/02/1959, 26), as these

were considered dangerous and could potentially tip the balance that was needed so that Belgium could rectify its wrongdoing. In so doing, the necessity of clarity helped mediate the anxiety that was apparent during this process.

Linked to the latter strategy was the notion of being 'careful'. This second strategy assumed that the entire process of Congolese independence was "a delicate and difficult issue" (*Hand. Kamer* 14/04/1959, 7; 11) that needed to be approached with due diligence as no "artificial political tensions ought to be conceived, certainly not by us" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 22). Lahaye would further argue that MPs needed to "be careful, for the good of Belgium and the Congo, not to create an atmosphere of nervousness or discord around his action" (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 11). This is telling of the disruption that was felt regarding the dissolution of the Belgian empire, a process that was considered sensitive to both Congo and Belgium.

A third strategy was that whatever the policy would become, the timing of its rollout was considered crucial. Any delay would lead to a "bitter surprise" (*Hand.* Kamer 14/04/1959, 5), or, as the socialist MP Larock would argue, "if the decisions to be taken in this direction are not faster, more precise, better explained than that of last week, it is to be feared that the execution of the new government policy will not inspire more confidence in the Congo than in Belgium" (*Hand.* Kamer 24/04/1959, 7). This would effectively become a topic on which the socialist and communist opposition could shame the government, emphasising that any hesitancy would enlarge the danger of upsetting the situation in Congo:

> "The situation is serious; no one doubts it. Six months after the government statement, tension has grown stronger in Congo. This is the result of procrastination, hesitation, and lack of audacity. Breaking promises, however modest, is a very dangerous thing. Your current attitude may further aggravate the tension." (*Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 15)

To avoid any delay, and thus potentially worsening the already grave situation, MPs continuously called for the urgency of both the government and parliament in the decolonisation process.

A fourth discursive strategy that was employed by the supporters of the dominant narrative was that everyone who tried to disrupt this delicate balancing act would be berated with hypercritical remarks and aggressive retorts. The principal sufferers of this treatment would be the communist party, ABAKO, Joseph Kasavubu, and Patrice Lumumba. Whereas the communist party would receive taunts that referred to the atrocities by the USSR in Hungary or China in

167

Tibet (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 11; 13/01/1959, 13; 21/04/1959, 16), the latter three were often treated as scapegoats for disrupting the "climate of trust" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/03/1959, 17) or being "extremists" (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 4). During these initial debates, the resentment against the Congolese scapegoats was thus mainly geared towards their believed role in either the riots or in the instability of the political climate in Congo.

The final discursive strategy was the reliance on and necessity of the Belgian parliament to remain united and unanimous regarding the process of Congolese independence. This debate "concerns all of Belgium" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 2) and, following the unanimity of the Chamber of Representatives, has acquired a "national character" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 12). The government and its majority reasoned that the problem could only be resolved by having this national unity, as this would "only be possible under those conditions to give evidence of authority, responsibility and work ethic before blacks" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 23). Yet, these calls for unity and unanimity were also a topic of political conflict, as the opposition often felt like they were kept out of the loop with certain decisions, making them effectively question the government's commitment to this policy (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 6). The necessity of a policy of national unity was, however, never questioned by any faction.

Challenges and narrative competition (November 1959 – July 1960)

While the dominant narrative generally remained the same, it did become subject to two particular challenges between November 1959 and July 1960. First, riots and other acts of resistance against colonial oppression became more prevalent in Congo and tensions between the Baluba and Lulua developed into a full-scale ethnic conflict. These developments sparked major concerns about the situation in Congo in the Belgian parliament, compelling Housiaux to state that "anxiety reigns in Belgium; disorder is spreading in Africa" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 2). The cause for this lawlessness in Congo was squarely put with Congolese actors such as Abako or the MNC for calling on "uneducated Congolese who are unable to control their feelings sufficiently" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/11/1959, 10). With regards to the Baluba-Lulua conflict, Lahaye argued that it was led on by "the tribal hatreds which still slumber in the heart of each native and which only ask to be awakened on the occasion of independence" (*Hand.* Kamer 04/11/1959, 2), implying that these riots proved the essential barbarity of the Congolese (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 17/11/1959, 6; 7; 8; 16/03/1960, 2). More precisely, "political maturity, […]

168

no one will deny it — and let us be honest with ourselves in it — is yet to be found in the hearts, in the souls, in the minds of the natives, who will soon have to decide on the future of their country" (*Hand.* Kamer 17/11/1959, 7).

Meanwhile, the "people in Belgium are seized with terror" because of the "bloody question mark [that] hangs over that formerly peaceful African sky" (*Hand.* Kamer 07/06/1960, 40). This nervousness informed the MPs that Belgium needed to act like a "father who maintains the peace within a family made up of children from multiple beds" (Ibid.). Prime Minister Eyskens would state that:

> "Belgium would be seriously failing in its duties if, in the present circumstances, we refused to take the necessary measures to remedy this situation. The worst accusation Congo could ever make against Belgium would be to have left the Congolese a country with shaky administrative and judicial structures, as well as in a disorderly situation. We do not wish that we could be blamed for this. That is why it has seemed indispensable to us to ensure the presence of government authorities on the spot in Léopoldville." (*Hand.* Kamer 17/05/1960, 2)

This discourse tells of how the Belgian political elite believed that Belgium's honour was on the line as to how it would react to the challenge of anti-colonial violence. Yet, their primary reaction was to maintain the continuity with the policy set out in January 1959 in managing these problems (*Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 10; 17) and that "calm and calmness are needed to help build a modern State with a young people" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/11/1959, 11). In line with this previous policy, the primary response of the Belgian parliament to these acts of violence in Congo was to set up commissions of inquiry. The challenge that this violence posed to the dominant narrative was, then, dealt with by reinforcing the story that they had been telling all along.

The second challenge to the dominant narrative was several conflicts between the majority and the socialist opposition. The government had emphasized national unity regarding the policy on Congolese independence, making that all major decisions were discussed with the three largest parties (Christian democrat, Liberal, and Socialist). However, when Maurits Van Hemelrijck was replaced by August De Schryver as Minister for Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi on the 3rd of September, the socialists were left out of this decision. This caused some indignation among the latter, developing into a continuous issue of trust (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 3). Furthermore, the socialist faction had proposed the idea of organising a round

table, which would be "a special committee […] to which representatives of all the Congolese parties would be invited, and in which the Belgian parliament would be fully associated" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 19). Although this proposal was effectively implemented by the government to facilitate the Congolese independence process, it was not acknowledged by the majority that this proposal was socialist in origin, causing again resentment among the opposition (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 15/12/1959, 11). These tensions led the socialists to deviate from the unifying and unanimous politics that the government had set out to maintain.

The main accusations from socialist MPs were that the government was practising 'bad politics'[209] (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 03/11/1959, 27; 05/11/1959, 21; 17/11/1959, 11) and that the Christian democrats were using the situation to their party's benefit. Housiaux would claim that "I am amazed to note that while all Belgians must adopt wise solutions for the Congo, the will of the P.S.C. [the Christian democrat party] seems to be to take partisan advantage of all these questions" (*Hand.* Kamer 04/02/1960, 10). His colleague Brunfaut further emphasized the uniqueness of the "partisan coups, with dangerous consequences for the parliamentary system" that were being performed during these debates (*Hand.* Kamer 31/05/1960, 28). Yet, these accusations were met with similar retorts by Christian-democrats. Janssens, for example, charged that "if the socialist group imagines that it will, through its manoeuvres of systematic obstruction, succeed in stirring up public opinion against the government and its majority […], I believe that it is making a false calculation, that it is seriously mistaken" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/02/1960, 12).

The true challenge that they posed to the dominant narrative was, however, the issue of responsibility regarding the tensions that were developing in Congo and the potentially failing policy. Socialist MPs would claim that their party "cannot be blamed in that regard, because it has always had very little, if any, to say in the Belgian Congo" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/05/1960, 4). More specifically, Collard would claim that:

> "at no time, nor for years, have we "pushed" the Congolese to demand independence or, to put it another way, have we created, organised, developed or instigated, in the Congo, campaigns, movements, any organizations which, openly or clandestinely, would have pushed the Congolese people to ask for their independence" (*Hand.* Kamer 16/03/1960, 27).

---

[209] This notion was first introduced by communist MPs, who would often use it to denote the government's policy towards Congo. However, it soon was used repeatedly by Socialist MPs as well.

Members of the majority parties responded to this challenge by, on the one hand, bitterly countering these claims. Lefevre reminded the opposition that "during the last forty years the Socialists have repeatedly participated in the government, and even managed the government several times" and argued that "it is really a childish argument on the part of the Socialist party to declare here repeatedly that it bears not the slightest responsibility for the Congolese politics of the last five years because it has not had a Colonial Secretary during that period" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/05/1960, 6). In dissenting from the policy of national unity, Eyskens made it clear that "the government will take all its responsibilities and the country will judge you" (05/11/1959, 21). On the other hand, the majority kept stressing the necessity for unanimity, reiterating the dominant narrative and appealing to the socialists (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 03/11/1959, 9-10; 04/11/1959, 4; 08/03/1960, 15; 03/02/1960, 15). Remarkably, socialist MPs would also keep defending the ideal of unanimity throughout these discussions (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 2; 02/03/1960, 17; 03/05/1960, 5; 03/05/1960, 9) and even their communist colleagues would come to argue for the importance of national unity (*Hand.* Kamer 15/12/1959, 17). In so doing, the dominant narrative was maintained but the opposition already began removing themselves from the consensus surrounding this narrative.

Aside from these challenges, the dominant narrative steadily changed in three aspects. First, there was a shift in the mistakes that MPs believed the Belgian state had committed. Whereas the previous focus went to mistakes regarding the causes for Congolese independence, at this point the attention went to the "spiritual failure" (*Hand.* Kamer 04/11/1959, 18) regarding language politics,[210] the lack of guarantees that were given to colonials (*Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 4-5), the breakdown of authority and prestige of the colonial administration (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 4-5, 6; 17/05/1960, 4), and the lack of political and academic development of the Congolese (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 10; 16/02/1960, 6; 07/06/1960, 38; 07/06/1960, 47). These mistakes were particularly mentioned near the end of the parliamentary debates, initially by the opposition, but gradually also by members of the government. Yet, regardless of this change in the representation of the wrongdoing, its solution (i.e. the policy) was always retained as the only way forward.

---

[210] This related to the fact that Belgian administrators were not able to understand the native Congolese and that there were no facilities for teaching Dutch-speaking Flemish children in the colonial education system.

The second aspect that changed in the dominant narrative is that the international gaze and Belgium's status became more important.[211] On the one hand, MPs of the opposition emphasized what other states might think of Belgium, following the previously mentioned mistakes (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 17/11/1959, 9; 10; 17). De Sweemer, for example, worried that "incidents could arise which would cast a false light on Belgium abroad and which would undermine Belgium's prestige in the U.N." (*Hand.* Kamer 07/06/1960, 41). Moreover, he mentions regarding the process of independence that the "whole thing has found bad press in the world" and illustrates this with Swiss, Portuguese and US news articles that question the Belgian measures (Ibid., 42). On the other hand, the comparison with the international is often also self-gratifying. While praising the colonial work of Belgium is continuous with the dominant narrative, the focus came to be placed on the comparison (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 23). To illustrate, De Schryver declared that "it is even more important to achieve this unique example in Africa and in the world of seeing a colonial regime pass with a minimum transition to a regime of independence" (*Hand.* Kamer 02/03/1960, 19). In so doing, "we must, in fact, prove that it is possible for a small people to rise morally even beyond previous experiences" (Ibid.). Demuyter would add that Belgium's "humanitarian works have brought Congo to a degree of civilization that many African countries envy" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/04/1960, 14).

During this point in time, the independence of Ruanda-Urundi also became part of the parliamentary debate. Because Belgium had acquired this colony through an officially sanctioned mandate of the League of Nations, and later the United Nations, there were some notable differences in how they envisioned this transition. First, Belgium did not represent itself as a 'father' but rather as a 'guardian' (*Hand.* Kamer 10/11/1959, 7; 8; 17/11/1959, 6). This meant that it had a far more technical and distancing language about the governance of this independence process. For example, Belgium had to "exercise general, political and administrative supervision over the territory over all powers and over all public persons, aimed in particular at maintaining order, good government, respect for human rights and protection of minorities" (*Hand.* Kamer 10/11/1959, 7). Second, while some MPs focused on the correctness of their country's mission (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 17/11/1959, 4; 18/11/1959, 2), there was a general acceptance of the fact that some mistakes had been made (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 17/11/1959, 5; 6;

---

[211] An additional, albeit short-lived focus, went to the – not entirely unjustified fear – that the French state would take over Congo as soon as Belgium relinquished its claim over its colony (see *Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 2; 14; 10/03/1960, 4).

07/06/1960, 43). Third, there was, other than with Congo, the active desire to involve international players, more specifically the UN, in the process and ask for their aid (*Hand.* Kamer 17/11/1959, 4; 5).

The final change in the dominant narrative is that the situation of Congo after independence was becoming more of an object of anxiety. There was still some optimism among some MPs of the majority parties. Catholic MP Ludovic Moyersoen stated, for example, that "Congo is better prepared than most other African countries" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 23). Others felt that a national crisis or a dictatorship would follow after the 30th of June (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 03/02/1960, 14; 08/03/1960, 4; 03/05/1960, 15). The main threats for the future of Congo were conceived as being the "extension of unemployment, that of a youth without school and jobless" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 5; 18), the power hunger of "a few 'strong men'" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 4), and interventions by "foreign powers who may not have the same concern as us for the well-being of the Congolese and the safeguard of democracy" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 14). The anxiety for these futures all originated from Belgian (in)actions, whether it was caused by how the Round Table was going (*Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 7; 08/03/1960, 17) or because of the lack of preparedness of the Congolese leaders (*Hand.* Kamer 10/03/1960, 25). In general, the hope for a harmonious future was rest assured, but the belief that this was the most likely outlook was severely challenged.

Tragedy and crisis (July 1960 – August 1960)

The weeks running up to the official independence ceremony on June 30th 1960 were rather uneventful in the Belgian parliament. Although there had been some antagonism coming from the opposition and a few pro-colonial MPs, it seemed as if the transition from empire to post-empire was expected to be tranquil. This would change with the infamous independence ceremony in Kinshasa. During the public part of the proclamation, King Baudouin held an opening address with a paternalist speech that glorified Belgium's colonial project and the genius of Leopold II, conceiving Congo's independence as the end result of the exceptional personality of the latter (Gerard-Libois and Verhaegen 1961, 318). Additionally, he emphasized the beneficiary aspects of Belgian colonialism for Congo and the "complete harmony and friendship" between the two states (Ibid.). This narrative was repeated by President Joseph Kasavubu, albeit somewhat more focused on the future. Prime Minister Lumumba, however, took to the stage with a scathing anti-colonial and anti-racist discourse. Denouncing the harsh

discrimination during Belgian colonialism, he countered the paternalist message of the King. Furthermore, Lumumba emphasized the Congolese struggle for independence, conceiving Belgium as a past opponent rather than a benevolent friend (Lumumba 1960 as quoted in Turner 2010, 1633). The King felt scandalized after this speech and expressed his wish to leave Kinshasa as soon as possible. Lumumba agreed, however, to deliver a more moderate address during the official lunch following the proclamation, in an effort to reconcile with the King (Turner 2010, 1625). Regardless of this appeasement, the public shaming of Baudouin had turned the Congolese Prime Minister into the principal scapegoat of all the chaos and turmoil that would follow.[212]

The Congo crisis (1960-1965) would ensue only a few days after the independence ceremony. On July 5th the Congolese army mutinied following the refusal of Lieutenant-General Émile Janssens to Africanise the military ranks (Ndaywel E Nziem 2012).[213] The mutineers were not solely targeting Belgian expatriates, but because of attacks on the latter, the Belgian government felt justified to intervene militarily on the 10th of July. Simultaneously, the mineral-wealthy province of Katanga unilaterally proclaimed its independence under President Moïse Thsombe, a regime that was avidly supported by Belgian authorities and industry (Vanthemsche 2012, 202). The province of Kasai would do the same about a month later, spearheaded by Albert Kalonji Ditunga. In reaction to Belgium's intervention and support for the secessionist movements, the Congolese government broke diplomatic ties with its former metropole. The UN Security Council responded to these tensions by sanctioning an intervention to manage the violence and the potential for domestic and international conflict. Regardless of these intentions, the UN involvement both mediated and exacerbated the crisis, to the point that Mobutu Sese Seko, an officer in the army, could assume dictatorial control over Congo.

The impact of the first few months of the Congo crisis had a significant effect on the Belgian Self on two levels. First, Belgian MPs represented the crisis as a 'tragedy' and their country as a victim of the situation. When hearing about the mutiny and the casualties, they emphasized the horrors of the crisis and the victims (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 2; 3; 7; 12; 13; 17/08/1960, 5). The focus of the discussion, however, came to be placed on the tragedy that these acts

---

[212] A sidenote has to be made that Lumumba's speech was not met with outright scandal in the Belgian parliament. It did play a role for some MPs of the majority to distrust the Prime Minister, but others talked rather mitigatingly about the address as "a serious verbal prank" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 40).
[213] Janssens had addressed his troops to clarify that he would not allow any promotion for Congolese soldiers to become officers. He reportedly wrote on a blackboard that *Avant indépendance = après indépendance* (before independence = after independence) and claimed that the politicians had lied to the soldiers about it being different (see Vanthemsche 2012, 202; Ndaywel E Nziem 2012).

entailed for Belgium (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 24). The Liberal president of the Chamber, Paul Kronacker, for example, stated that "European women and children have been subjected to brutal assaults by Congolese mutineers, and that some of our compatriots have suffered mortifying humiliation" and that while Belgium was "pursuing a policy of unparalleled generosity in Congo" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 2). Demuyter continued in his pro-colonial discourse by stating that "our country is going through one of the most tragic and humiliating phases in its history" (Ibid., 12) because of "the policy of abandonment practised in the Congo" (Ibid., 13). Yet, the tragedy would not only be for Belgium, as Lahaye claimed that "the empire is lost, okay, and those responsible will beat their chests, but there is more to it", as "the events in the Congo are threatening the entire black continent and the peace of the world may be shaken" (Ibid., 8). In a certain sense, this tragic Self-conception signified a change in the Belgian imperial Self, namely the transition from a superior principal to a victimized agent.

Yet, this new state Self-conception did not mean that Belgium could not intervene as if it was still an empire. Not only did it need to save and secure its expatriates, but it also needed to restore order in Africa as "our honour as a civilized people which could be very severely judged" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 9). The state had to intervene to, as Eyskens would claim, "carry out a purely humanitarian work" (*Hand.* Kamer 14/07/1960, 18). Regardless of these 'generous' and 'humanitarian' intentions, Belgium was accused of "not only encroachment but, to add insult to injury, of aggression!", which meant that there was "all the more reason for our cause to be flawless!" (*Hand.* Kamer 14/07/1960, 10; 12). In defence of Belgium's intervention, the socialist Lucien Harmegnies commented that:

> "If you really are a parliamentarian worthy of the name, you will agree with us that it is not possible for such accusations to be based on mere presumptions! When Belgium has, in good faith, given independence to the Congo, it can no longer be accused of imperialism or colonialism. To claim that it practices a policy of aggression is indecent in the present circumstances. I tell you in all sincerity. And you know that I am not to be counted among the 'rabid anti-communists' whose game you are trying to play!" (*Hand.* Kamer 14/07/1960, 16)

As is indicated in the last sentence of the previous quote, the origin of this negative judgement was unilaterally believed to be originating from the USSR[214] (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 14/07/1960,

---

[214] The focus on the external shows the narrative continuity with the period preceding the riots, which was notably absent during the independence process. This change might be interesting for further research.

14). More specifically, Eyskens had claimed that the USSR was spreading the rumour that "the Belgian government made transfer bands of common law criminals in the Congolese cities to start the incidents" (*Hand.* Kamer 17/07/1960, 4). This led to the belief that the Soviet Union had a hand in influencing the mutinies of the Congolese army and in commissioning the UN intervention (*Hand.* Kamer 14/07/1960, 9; 14; 17/07/1960, 4; 18/08/1960, 40). In short, there was a representation of Belgium as an agent caught in a tragic situation, that, while it was trying to tend to its wounds, became unjustly accused of aggression.

A second change in the Belgian Self was the narrative competition that ensued regarding the subject of responsibility for causing the crisis. Socialist MPs uniformly and consistently blamed and shamed the government, and more specifically Ministers Van Hemelrijck, De Schryver, Ganshof van der Meersch, and Prime Minister Eyskens. The faults of the government that the opposition identified were respectively the disregard of critiques raised over General Janssens (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 5; 10; 16; 14/07/1960, 9), not preparing or choosing the Congolese leaders properly (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 12; 13; 14/07/1960, 14; 17/08/1960, 2), hesitating to take action during the crisis (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 12; 17/08/1960, 2; 18/08/1960, 37), failing in implementing the policy that was set out from January 13, 1959 (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 21; 33; 37), and agreeing to military intervention (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 38). By committing these faults, the government had essentially treated the Congolese independence as a "wager" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 5). Their narrative was thus that, since the beginning, the government had mismanaged the Congolese independence process, responsibilizing them for placing Belgium into the current tragic situation.

The MPs of the majority parties responded to these allegations of wrongdoing by stressing the collective responsibility of the parliament or the "insane behaviour of certain leaders of Léopoldville"[215] (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 6). Lefevre, for example, argued that "it should be emphasized that, notwithstanding a few implementing measures, that responsibility is a collective one, not only of parliament but also of the entire nation" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 6). Moreover, "if this policy could be pursued by the government with ample support from the

---

[215] There was a clear double standard in this regard. At the beginning of the riots, many MPs argued that the Congolese leaders had acted with "political maturity and courage, a sense of responsibility who deserve our trust and support" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 6; see also 2; 3; 14/07/1960, 6; 7). Yet, Lumumba and Kasavubu (to a lesser extent) were considered as acting "unfair" towards Belgium (*Hand.* Kamer 14/07/1960, 4; 18/08/1960, 9) and as potentially dangerous for the stability of Congo (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 7; 17/08/1960, 4). Moreover, the ideological label of Lumumba was also a subject of conflict among MPs, where socialists considered him "a glory of the Liberal International and we socialists have turned away from that alliance" (*Hand.* Kamer 17/08/1960, 18) while others framed him as a socialist (see e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 20).

opposition, it is because it corresponded to the wish and will of the Belgian people" (Ibid.). The faults in Belgium's policy were also parried by De Schryver and Eyskens by pointing at their long-term nature, such as the preparation of the Congolese leaders (*Hand.* Kamer 17/08/1960, 5; 18/08/1960, 8; 27). Lahaye and Janssens would, however, make even more extreme counteraccusations, namely that the Socialist party has "enormous" responsibilities because of them not being a "strong and vigilant" opposition (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 2), leading them to "forget a little too easily the blunders, the imprudences and the errors that they themselves have committed" (Ibid., 24).

This antagonistic shaming between the majority and opposition would find its high point in a session on the 18th of August 1960. Spinoy countered the allegations towards his party by categorically denying any fault of his party by stating that "neither the B.S.P. [Belgian Socialist Party], as such, nor any of its leaders were ever consulted on government initiatives on Congolese politics" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 17). He was joined by Van der Elst, who claimed that "the spokesmen of the majority, yesterday and today, have presented a representation that must lead the country into the delusion that the government has made no mistakes – this shows the lack of preparation and the unprecedented and unimaginable frivolity with which the government has acted" (Ibid., 37). Ending the session, the Christian democrat Charpentier retaliated by claiming that:

> "As for the Socialist and Communist opposition, it is not up to them that I will
> trust, because the fault of the Ministers of African Affairs was, precisely, to give in
> to the thoughtless and destructive theses of Belgian socialist circles, in relation to
> the most agitated Congolese and the least mature for the management of public
> affairs. Without the socialists, the Congolese failure would have given way to
> success, as in many other countries which, this year, are emancipated in order, as
> in Katanga, where the pusillanimity of the Belgian government has not had the same
> consequences, mainly because non-socialist Congolese have shown energy and
> foresight, with, finally, the technical assistance of our government." (*Hand.* Kamer
> 18/08/1960, 46)

In effect, no party wanted the onus of the national shame placed on them, as they believed that they were not responsible, either solely (the majority) or completely (the opposition). Or, in the words of the Liberal MP Janssens, "It must be assumed that each of the traditional parties will not only try to clear its own responsibilities but also to prove that it has nothing to reproach

itself for" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 24). Despite the tragic position of Belgium, it had thus not become a tragic agent in a tragic world. More specifically, it was not solely due to its own impertinence that it had lost its place in the world, but also because of the actions of others. The narrative, in other words, fused elements of a tragic plot into a comedic one.

Telling of this tragic-comedic narrative is how all sides stressed the importance of unity, unanimity, and solidarity. This "to promote the well-being of Congo and Belgium" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 7), "restore the situation" (Ibid., 13), and prove that "we are still civilized people" (Ibid., 8). The idea of a united national approach was thus still held in high regard, certainly when dealing with the situation at hand. Moreover, MPs, and in particular socialists, worried about what this crisis meant for the future of Belgium and its relationship with Congo. Larock, for example, conceived the situation in Congo as "one of the toughest trials" in Belgium's history, "and this trial is not over" (*Hand.* Kamer 17/08/1960, 15). Schot lamented that "pure gold suddenly turned into vile lead" and that "everything that was good turned bad" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 40). The main worry of the opposition was, at least at first, that "the safety of our fellow citizens be ensured" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 4) but later changed to the continuing involvement of Belgian people in the duties of Congo, or as Spinoy stated:

> "However dark are the circumstances in which we live and how murky the events, how much they haunt and worry us about the possible future, about the further evolution, yet we, as responsible people for the future of our nation and those also feel responsible for the future of the Congolese Nation ask what we should do for our compatriots who take their place to resume their work in Congo." (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 23)

The MPs of the majority, on the other hand, agreed with the notion that the situation was serious both in Congo and in Belgium but they retained the belief in a future harmony with their country's former colony. Minister De Schryver, for example, expressed that "the hurricane which has passed and which is passing in acute form over the Congo at the moment will last— hopefully—not too long" (*Hand.* Kamer 17/08/1960, 9). Key in this regard was "the duty and the feeling of a real and deep solidarity" for the sacrifices that would be made "by the whole nation" for the evacuation of the Belgian expatriates and other Europeans (*Hand.* Kamer 14/07/1960, 7). Moreover,

> "The Congo must be rebuilt with the help of the United Nations and the Congolese people and also, I am sure, with the collaboration of the Belgians. When the

campaign of mistrust, animosity and hatred has finally been able to subside, we will continue not to forget the undeserved fate that has been that of the Belgians, but we will know how to draw on our past and our love for the population, deceived by certain leaders, the will to make truth triumph over error and to assume for the benefit of our Congolese brothers' new tasks to help them in their social ascent in peace and freedom." (*Hand.* Kamer 17/08/1960, 9)

This perspective on the future was also expressed by Wigny, who claimed that "our foreign policy has been realistic and, moreover, has had its vision" and that "we do not prepare the future with grudges, animosity, selfishness or exclusive concern for current events" (*Hand.* Kamer 17/08/1960, 13). In short, the future of Belgian involvement in Congo was not dependent on Congo's wishes but on Belgium's vision. Notably, near the end of the parliamentary debates on this topic, the latter conception of the future was also shared by the Socialist opposition. Collard stated, for example, that "it is certain that there remains a potential of sympathy, of possibilities of collaboration in the Congo, all the more so since it is not slanderous to declare that if Belgium needs the Congo, the Congo still has much need of Belgium" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 35).

To sum up, whereas the initial dominant narrative was conceived along a comedic emplotment and simultaneously glorified the superior and 'generous' Belgian empire, the start of the Congo crisis had changed the Belgian Self to that of a victimized humanitarian state. That Belgium had made mistakes was clear to all MPs, but the responsibility for the faults and wrongdoing that had caused the crisis was placed either solely onto the government by the opposition, or partially onto the Congolese leaders, previous governments, the opposition, or external influences by the government. Yet, regardless of this narrative competition, both sides agreed to a dominant tragic-comedic state Self, highlighting that Belgium had made mistakes, none of them unforgivable, and would eventually end up in a harmonious relationship with Congo. Although there were some variations, ranging from romantic quips and retorts of the majority or the Socialist opposition to ironic laments by pro-colonial MPs, in general, the tragic-comedic emplotment remained dominant. This implies that the shame situation was still narrated by a situational state shame narrative but with a more pronounced emphasis on how the wrongdoing affected the Self. Moreover, both the opposition and the government parties actively distanced their group's Self from any direct wrongdoing, effectively sustaining their innocence in this turmoil. These findings correspond partly with the thesis on the paternalist thesis, as it complicates who is considered to be innocent.

The goal of this interpretative sentiment analysis is to gauge how Belgian MPs coped with the challenges of the decolonisation process of Congo. More specifically, by mapping the political emotions that MPs express in parliamentary debates, this analysis can identify changes in how they evaluate the situation of their country. The assumption here is that emotions are expressed in political arenas to signal particular positions and communicate evaluations of situations. An interpretative sentiment analysis gains insight into this process by both deductively and inductively gathering data on political emotions. In effect, the current discussion aims to gain insight into how Belgian MPs emotionally manage challenges to their state's Self-identity. The section is structured thematically, with the first part dedicated to the discussion on how the parliamentary discourse was characterized by a marked presence of emotionality and anxiety. A subsequent subsection discusses the presence of emotions that signal positivity, namely love, joy, pride, serenity, and courage. The analysis concludes with a discussion of negative emotions such as fear, anger, disappointment, humiliation, shame, and guilt.

Emotionality, anxiety, and nervousness

During the current episode, MPs from all parties were keen to express sensitivity and emotionality of themselves, others, or the situation at hand. In other words, MPs did not conceive of one side being more 'objective' or less 'emotional' than themselves, indicating that there was no particular emotion rule regarding the expression of emotion in parliament at that time. What did stand out as a feeling rule in the parliamentary discourse, albeit to a lesser degree, was the desire to not make the debates 'passionate' (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 18/03/1959, 20; 18/04/1959, 7; 25/02/1960, 9; 05/05/1960, 6; 09/06/1960, 24; 17/08/1960, 2; 17). The rule was not meant to discourage the mention of emotions but was used particularly to avoid a potential delay or give debates "a partisan character" (*Hand.* Kamer 09/06/1960, 24). Although it was only superficially present during these debates, the anti-passionate feeling rule aligns with the discursive elements of urgency and national unity that characterized the dominant narrative.

The most telling aspect about general emotionality was the conception of the Congolese as being 'emotional' or struggling with a 'psychological problem'[216] (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959,

---

[216] This corresponds with the colonial and gendered belief that "emotionality reflects weakness in racialized and gendered ways, whereas control over emotions marks masculinity and 'whiteness'" (Philpose 2007, 61).

5; 20; 01/07/1959, 4; 6; 24; 03/11/1959, 19; 20; 23; 24; 04/11/1959, 13; 15; 16; 05/11/1959, 3; 7; 19; 18/11/1959, 7; 15/12/1959, 12; 14; 02/03/1960, 15; 16; 08/03/1960, 3; 5; 22; 23; 10/03/1960, 15; 19; 25; 16/03/1960, 8; 13; 16; 20; 07/06/1960, 45; 47; 16/06/1960, 8; 11/07/1960, 9; 17; 14/07/1960, 8; 9; 20/07/1960, 31; 17/08/1960, 5; 11; 18/08/1960, 8; 18). More specifically, Belgian MPs discussed the Congolese as feeling "bullied, despised, reviled" (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 12) or as having "pride, a national feeling, a desire to learn and a thirst for justice and freedom" (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 16). These emotions were not necessarily conceived as problematic but could potentially challenge the independence process, certainly if they were felt by "poorly educated Congolese who cannot control their feelings sufficiently" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/11/1959, 11). In a more general sense, the problem surrounding Congo was deemed by MPs as being essentially 'psychological' or, as Moyersoen argued:

> "the problems of independence are mainly psychological problems. The problem presents itself as that of a mass appearance and so it had to be solved psychologically and politically first. It is true what has been said here, and it would be of no avail to put forward legal considerations or arguments of a purely economic nature against the sentiments expressed by the Congolese." (*Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 23)

Regardless of these observations and claims, the mentioning of this so-called psychological problem of the independence process was often superficial and general and was never meant to inspire actual measures or changes in government policy. In so doing, the Congolese were construed as an inherently emotional group and, because of this, psychologically geared towards being uncontrollable. The racist belief that the Congolese population was "above all emotional" (*Hand.* Kamer 17/08/1960, 19) meant that the July 1960 riots were seen as proof of their continuing barbarity and unfitness to rule autonomously. Whereas it was previously mentioned as a problem that could be solved by independence, the emotionality of Congolese was afterwards believed to be unchanging.

Finally, there was, to a lesser degree, also a projection of emotionality onto the Belgian nation and public opinion (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 2; 02/03/1960, 13; 08/03/1960, 14; 07/06/1960, 38; 17/08/1960, 15; 20). This group was notably not conceived as troubled by emotions such as the Congolese public but 'moved' by particular actions or issues, to which the MPs had to react to. For example, the riots in Congo (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 13/01/1959, 10; 22/04/1959, 18; 03/02/1960, 12) or the issue of sending soldiers to Congo (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer

04/11/1959, 7) were issues that MPs believed to stimulate Belgian public opinion, which they needed to voice. Another particular aspect that was discussed in this way was the connection between the Belgians and Congolese, which was believed to be "on the basis of emotional ties" (*Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 23). In short, rather than assuming that Belgians were inherently emotional like the Congolese, they were conceived as justified and reactive in their feelings.

Aside from this general position towards emotionality, there were also more particular terms used to denote similar meanings though with more specific usages. In the discourse, the terms 'anxiety', 'panic', and 'insecurity' were often used to describe the feeling regarding the general situation (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 22; 03/11/1959, 19; 05/11/1959, 19; 02/03/1960, 18; 24; 08/04/1960, 18; 10/04/1960, 21; 15/04/1960, 5; 03/05/1960, 14; 17/05/1960, 5; 07/06/1960, 47; 50; 09/07/1960, 17; 22/06/1960, 19; 06/07/1960, 24; 11/07/1960, 12; 14; 17; 14/07/1960, 14; 17/08/1960, 4; 10; 19; 20; 21; 18/08/1960, 8; 17; 28; 37). There was, however, a noted discrepancy between who was deemed eligible for these emotions or emotionality and what words were used to denote this feeling. More specifically, whereas the Congolese were described to be under the influence of "social ulcers" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 5), "disorder" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 4) and "anxiety" (*Hand.* Kamer 07/06/1960, 49), the white settlers were seen more subject to "anguish" (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 14) and "panic" (*Hand.* Kamer 07/06/1960, 49). There was also noticeably more concern for the feelings of insecurity of the latter than for the former.[217]

A final concept that was often used to denote the emotional tensions of the moment was the term 'nervous'. While it is referenced in the literature as being a key term (Hunt 2011; 2016, 5; Lauro 2011, 117), in the Belgian parliamentary discourse there were no clearly discernible general patterns in its usage. At some moments it was used to describe Leopoldville or the urban environment in Congo (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 3; 4; 01/07/1959, 21), while at other times it was more used to indicate a state of mind (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 17/02/1959, 13; 01/07/1959, 7; 16/03/1960, 8). This latter meaning was both to reference to the mental state of MPs (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 5) as to the causes of the January 1959 riots (Ibid.), even in the same speech. Moreover, the explanation for this nervousness ranged from "the temperature in the Congo is quite warm, so that the spirits move very quickly and therefore

---

[217] As a side note, MPs would also express their own or their colleague's insecurity, anxiety or panic. See (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 5; 14/04/1959, 7; 21/04/1959, 13; 05/11/1959, 4; 10/11/1959, 9; 25/11/1959, 10; 15/12/1959, 4; 03/02/1960, 14; 18/02/1960, 5; 6; 08/04/1960, 14; 23; 26; 16/04/1960, 3; 9; 16/04/1960, 22; 23/04/1960, 17; 03/05/1960, 10; 11; 17/05/1960, 4; 07/06/1960, 43; 46; 48; 53; 09/07/1960, 18; 20; 24; 25; 15/06/1960, 26; 06/07/1960, 39; 11/07/1960, 5; 14/07/1960, 12; 16; 18; 17/08/1960, 15; 18/08/1960, 18; 23; 27; 39)

there is more nervousness" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 21), to it being "precisely the mark, of the old colonialist spirit […] to react so nervously, as if on edge, before the attitude of a Congolese, member of the Council of Legislation, in whom one does not find the submissive Negro of the past" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/11/1959, 3). In short, MPs imbued the term with a large variety of meanings, indicating it as a relatable signifier but with a superfluous significance.

Positive emotions

Parliamentary discourse contained a variety of positive emotions being projected at both the Belgian state, Congo, the independence process, and the future of the relations between the metropole and its colony. For one, some MPs actively professed their love for Congo and the Congolese (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 13/01/1959, 9; 18/03/1959, 22; 23; 17/11/1959, 12; 17; 08/03/1960, 5; 24; 07/06/1960, 38; 44; 17/08/1960, 9). This was mainly expressed by pro-colonial MPs such as Demuyter and Lahaye, who would oftentimes also indicate to the rest of the MPs that the Congolese loved Belgium (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 04/11/1959, 20; 08/03/1960, 7; 14; 16/03/1960, 17; 28/04/1960, 14; 31/05/1960, 26; 07/06/1960, 45). Similarly, MPs from all factions often emphasized the joy that they felt regarding the relationship between Belgium and Congo (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 04/11/1959, 17; 25/11/1959, 23; 03/02/1960, 12; 02/03/1960, 24; 08/03/1960, 20; 10/03/1960, 25; 16/03/1960, 5; 07/06/1960, 47; 51). The professing of love and joy signified a legitimation of the colonial rule of Belgium and the 'emotional ties' that ran between Belgium and Congo and indicated how MPs assumed a harmonious bond that needed to be maintained and would facilitate their future relationship.

Belgium was thus believed to be worthy of love and, more precisely, pride (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 22/04/1959, 23; 23/04/1959, 7; 23; 25; 26; 04/11/1959, 2; 9; 15; 05/11/1959, 2; 9; 17/11/1959, 7; 14; 17; 18/11/1959, 2; 08/03/1960, 23; 14/07/1960, 7; 18/08/1960, 24; 31). More precisely, the recipient of pride was predominantly the Belgian colonial policy and the state's current approach to the independence of Congo. The general claim was that "we should be proud of what our fathers did" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 3), for example in health service or education, where Belgium went "beyond everything that has been achieved in neighbouring countries" (*Hand.* Kamer 20/05/1959, 7). Moreover, Congo's independence was placed firmly into the national history and honour of Belgium (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 13; 23/04/1959, 25; 11/07/1960, 2), as evidenced by this statement of Hilaire Willot (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 25):

"For having fiercely defended our independence at times, we Belgians understand better than anyone that men, black or white, want to have the right one day to the independence for their country and to freedom for each of them. Our work cannot be limited to granting independence to Congo. It must be continued and aim to give the millions of Congolese freedom on different levels, human, social, intellectual, moral and spiritual. We must have the formal assurance that this will be so, otherwise, we would be committing cowardice towards those who have gone before us. We are proud to participate in this task, which aims, as King Baudouin said, to ensure that: "continuing these noble aims, our firm resolution today is to conduct, without disastrous procrastination, but without inconsiderate haste, the Congolese people to independence in prosperity and in peace"."

In short, the active participation of Belgium in the Congolese independence process was not only considered evident because of Belgium's history ('having fiercely defended our independence at times') but also part of the national pride to support to guide the Congolese down this historic path. In so doing, Housiaux claimed, "The great Congolese epic of our country will end in the admiration of the people" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/03/1959, 21). The pride that MPs expressed during these parliamentary debates was thus firmly entrenched in the belief that Belgium had contributed valiantly to civilisation and was now guiding Congo to the next step in its societal development. In effect, while Belgium had committed some errors and mistakes in its colonial past, the overall judgment was one of pride.

Yet, to earn this pride, Belgian MPs also needed the independence process to go as planned, for which they believed a serene and calm atmosphere to be a necessity (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 9; 13; 19; 03/11/1959, 27; 13/01/1959, 7; 03/02/1959, 26; 14/04/1959, 6; 02/03/1960, 16; 16/03/1960, 20; 17/05/1960, 8; 22/04/1959, 19; 24; 30; 01/07/1959, 13; 21; 22; 03/11/1959, 10; 11; 26; 10/11/1959, 8; 17/11/1959, 7; 15/12/1959, 9; 03/02/1960, 8; 02/03/1960, 26; 08/03/1960, 5; 10/03/1960, 3; 7; 19; 16/03/1960, 5; 03/05/1960, 8; 13; 17/05/1960, 6; 7; 9; 24/05/1960, 9; 07/06/1960, 37; 38; 45; 11/07/1960, 3; 17/08/1960, 4; 9; 18/08/1960, 16). They did not only believe that the debate had to be serene but they desired themselves and their colleagues or the government to maintain calm and dignified throughout this process (*Hand.* Kamer 10/03/1960, 7; 22/04/1959, 25; 01/07/1959, 21; 03/11/1959, 19; 08/03/1960, 26; 08/01/1959, 2; 14/04/1959, 6; 04/11/1959, 10; 11; 05/11/1959, 10; 17/11/1959, 7; 04/05/1960, 58; 63; 11/07/1960, 2; 18/08/1960, 31; 21/04/1959, 10; 11; 01/07/1959, 21; 05/11/1959, 3; 02/03/1960, 24). Moreover, when moments of crisis occurred, such as the riots or other

challenges, the MPs also praised the members of government and colonial administration who had to deal with these situations as being 'cold-blooded' (*Hand.* Kamer 13/01/1959, 9; 04/11/1959, 16; 18/03/1959, 20; 01/07/1959, 25; 23/04/1959, 6; 17/11/1959, 3; 11/07/1960, 17; 17/08/1960, 11; 13). This contrasted notably with the lack of serenity of the Congolese, whom the Belgian politicians believed they had to bring to order, to get them to a calm mindset (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 3; 4; 8; 9; 10; 13/01/1959, 10; 18/03/1959, 16; 17; 18; 18/03/1959, 21; 01/07/1959, 23; 03/11/1959, 10; 04/11/1959, 3; 4; 21; 17/11/1959, 3; 17/11/1959, 13; 18/11/1959, 3; 15/12/1959, 7; 02/03/1960, 23; 17/05/1960, 2; 25/05/1960, 35; 07/06/1960, 45; 11/07/1960, 13; 17/08/1960, 15; 18/08/1960, 28).[218] Consequently, the Congolese were seen as emotional beings that needed to be rendered calm for the independence process to be or remain serene.

It is with the emotion of courage that we see the most notable shift in its usage. Throughout the debates, the necessity for courage and 'cold-bloodedness' of the Belgian government and parliament regarding the independence process remained constant (*Hand.* Kamer 18/03/1959, 20; 21/04/1959, 13; 15; 18; 19; 22/04/1959, 22; 23/04/1959, 23; 25; 01/07/1959, 13; 28; 03/11/1959, 10; 04/11/1959, 16; 17; 22; 08/03/1960, 14; 27; 17/05/1960, 9; 07/06/1960, 40; 11/07/1960, 5; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 14/07/1960, 5; 7; 12; 17/08/1960, 11; 13; 18/08/1960, 29; 31; 33; 36). It was necessary to "have the courage to expel all those, white and black, who refuse to walk in your new ways" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 5), or "we must have the courage, at this historic moment for both countries, from the events of January 4, to draw the necessary conclusions to create a new State alongside the other States in Africa" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 21). Yet, certainly after the riots of January 1959, courage was also needed to accept responsibility for some wrongdoing (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 8; 13/01/1959, 12; 01/07/1959, 13; 18/08/1960, 38). Housiaux, for example, stated that "we are all responsible to some extent" for the riots, and that we "must have the courage to tell this to ourselves" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 8). When the riots of July 1960 occurred, however, the objects of courage were specifically the (local) Congolese leaders (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 4; 6; 14/07/1960, 3), the Belgian victims (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 7; 17; 14/07/1960, 18), and the Belgian soldiers that intervened (*Hand.* Kamer 14/07/1960, 6; 13; 17/08/1960, 4; 10;

---

[218] At times they also needed to convince themselves and others that the Congolese were, in fact, calm (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 11; 13/01/1959, 13; 10/11/1959, 8; 17/11/1959, 5; 15/12/1959, 12; 16/03/1960, 13; 03/05/1960, 4; 8; 9; 17/05/1960, 7; 01/06/1960, 2; 07/06/1960, 40; 50; 11/07/1960, 3; 14/07/1960, 14; 18/08/1960, 17; 40). Yet, these claims did not counter the essentially 'emotional' nature of the Congolese, they were more used to describe the latter as momentarily calm.

18/08/1960, 24). Here we see the transition of the narrative that focused on the Belgian state as the dominant agent into a victimized agent.

A final notable positive emotion was hope. Not only was there hope expressed towards parliamentary support for the Belgian government policy (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 5; 01/07/1959, 7; 10/03/1960, 4; 18/08/1960, 28), but it was also directed at Congolese leaders (*Hand.* Kamer 10/03/1960, 6; 25/05/1960, 35; 21/04/1959, 6; 16/03/1960, 5). Belgian MPs were also keen on hoping that Belgium did not do anything that could jeopardize the independence process in any way (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 8; 10/03/1960, 19; 11/07/1960, 15; 17/08/1960, 2). Certainly, they wanted to believe that "we can still keep hope that so many sacrifices will not have been in vain" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 15). Yet, perhaps more intriguingly, throughout the debates, MPs consistently expressed hope towards maintaining close relations with Congo (*Hand.* Kamer 18/03/1959, 20; 21; 21/04/1959, 18; 22/04/1959, 19; 20/05/1959, 14; 40; 03/11/1959, 15; 08/03/1960, 18; 10/03/1960, 4; 03/05/1960, 12; 18/08/1960, 6; 9). Even after the riots of July 1960, it was believed that Belgium retained "the right to hope for good economic relations with this country" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 9), and "remain for us the objective of legitimate hopes because of the place that we deserve to take back in order to continue […] the activities that we have undertaken there in so many vital sectors" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 6). In short, the presence of hope confirms the narrative desire for a harmonious bond at the end of the independence proceedings and that they would not be considered as wrongful if this failed.

Negative emotions

MPs imbued the independence process with negative emotions. For one, they projected fear on the consequences of the government's policy (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 19/03/1959, 14; 21/04/1959, 14; 22/04/1959, 22; 17/11/1959, 11; 15/12/1959, 4; 03/02/1960, 7; 8; 08/03/1960, 20; 16/03/1960, 4; 9; 10; 03/05/1960, 15; 17/05/1960, 9; 07/06/1960, 43; 47; 11/07/1960, 6). The hope for future amicable bonds was outweighed by "a great fear […] of seeing this immense empire disintegrate" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/03/1960, 17) and that "soon, I fear, with internationalization and foreign and antagonistic interventions, the possibilities of initiative and action will elude us more and more" (*Hand.* Kamer 14/07/1960, 12). Any mistake in the government policy would thus potentially challenge the honour of Belgium (see in particular *Hand.* Kamer 17/11/1959, 5; 10/03/1960, 18; 18/08/1960, 35; 39), indicating that its imperial

Self was being threatened by its actions. This means that the Belgian MPs conceived their state as the primary agent but were fearful of committing wrongdoing as this would potentially endanger their state's sense of Self. Additionally, fear was also projected onto the white settlers in Congo (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 4; 08/03/1960, 26; 15/03/1960, 5; 03/05/1960, 14; 07/06/1960, 39; 11/07/1960, 3) or in the colony in general (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 01/07/1959, 11; 17/11/1959, 12; 14; 22/12/1959, 33; 08/03/1960, 23; 03/05/1960, 5; 14; 17/05/1960, 4; 5; 14/07/1960, 14). The independence process was thus conceived as something that was not unilaterally positive and fortuitous but as something that could upset a delicate balance.

Part of the threat to this balance was also the feelings of the Congolese. Rather than fear, the particular negative emotions that were projected onto the colonial subjects were disappointment (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 19/03/1959, 14; 22/04/1959, 24; 03/02/1960, 14; 15/12/1959, 9; 07/06/1960, 38), indignation[219] (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 3; 21/04/1959, 11; 22/04/1959, 19; 23/04/1959, 4; 23/04/1959, 8; 9), and anger (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 3; 23/04/1959, 8; 05/11/1959, 3; 18/11/1959, 5; 15/12/1959, 3; 11/07/1960, 15; 17/08/1960, 10; 02/03/1960, 26). Regarding the first, MPs of the opposition used the feelings of disappointment that the Congolese might feel to discredit the government policy or the behaviour of some Belgian politicians. However, it was also used to foreshadow future troubles. Housiaux, for example, claimed that the Congolese might experience what he called "the era of disappointments", or the moment when they "will realize that independence does not automatically contain the economic and social improvements that we had hoped for" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/03/1960, 19). This would, then, result in resentment and indignation towards Belgium, potentially jeopardizing the desired future harmonious bond with Congo. In so doing, Belgium was also conceived as being indignant but mainly about the treatment of its citizens during the July 1960 riots (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 2; 14/07/1960, 6; 9; 18). The council president, Kronacker, would even start the emergency session by stating that "with undisguised indignation, the country has learned that, at a time when Belgium is pursuing a policy of unparalleled generosity in the Congo, European women and children have been subjected to brutal assaults by Congolese mutineers, and that some of our compatriots have suffered aggravating humiliations" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 2).

---

[219] Indignation was also often expressed by MPs towards other MPs, to indicate a disdain for particular points of view or style of arguing. This is a more common feature in emotions in parliamentary discourse and less particular to this case.

Notably, the riots in Congo were often conceived of as originating from the anger and humiliation of the Congolese. The MPs understood and empathized with these sentiments regarding the colonial state. Collard would, for example state that "faced with these realities, which contrasted cruelly with the hope that was aroused in them on January 13th, the Congolese people noted, with bitterness at first, then with anger, that the government […] was paradoxically incapable" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/11/1959, 20). After the July 1960 riots, Wigny would even state that the situation gave "rise to legitimate anger" and that "I understand and respect this anger" (*Hand.* Kamer 17/08/1960, 11). It was conceived that the feeling of humiliation that the Congolese had to endure was the basis of this anger (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 3; 12; 22/04/1959, 19; 23; 01/07/1959, 24). Or, as Minister Van Hemelrijck stated:

> "It therefore remains true, as has already been stated here immediately after the events in Léopoldville, that defective human relations are the basis of the dissatisfaction that caused the events in Léopoldville. As civilization progresses, the slightest humiliation is felt more deeply, and since it is precisely the most evolved who are currently at the forefront of thought in the Congo, it is they who are most affected by those small humiliations, after all, which are the result of conscious social relations as they exist today." (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 3)

Yet, this understanding for the humiliating discrimination of the Congolese did not continue throughout the parliamentary debates. Certainly during the final sessions, after the July 1960 riots, the feeling of humiliation was more projected onto Belgium and the Belgian settlers who had to escape (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 2; 12; 17/08/1960, 15; 40).

While humiliation was expressed explicitly at times, shame and guilt remained unspoken in parliamentary discourse. However, this does not mean that these emotions were absent, as the implicit markers for these emotions were highly present. There was, firstly, a notable tendency to discuss past errors of Belgium (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 12; 22/04/1959, 17; 18; 01/07/1959, 8; 12; 03/11/1959, 19; 01/07/1959, 24; 03/11/1959, 24; 17/11/1959, 13; 18/11/1959, 5; 15/12/1959, 8; 03/05/1960, 6; 07/06/1960, 47; 14/07/1960, 9). In other words, they identified that the state had done something wrong. One of the most present mistakes that MPs believed were done by the Belgian state was that it had not prepared the Congolese state for independence (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 13/01/1959, 11; 21/04/1959, 7; 05/11/1959, 10; 17/11/1959, 6; 07/06/1960, 47). Regret was often expressed at past (*Hand.* Kamer 23/04/1959, 5; 17/11/1959, 7; 13; 03/03/1960, 7; 08/03/1960, 27; 07/06/1960, 41; 45; 47) or current mistakes

in the making (*Hand.* Kamer 18/03/1959, 19; 23; 14/04/1959, 11; 21/04/1959, 16; 22/04/1959, 21; 01/07/1959, 11; 14; 03/11/1959, 21; 05/11/1959, 9; 05/11/1959, 17; 15/12/1959, 12; 03/02/1960, 3; 03/05/1960, 9; 04/05/1960, 57; 05/05/1960, 5; 17/05/1960, 6; 31/05/1960, 26; 28; 07/06/1960, 44; 16/06/1960, 24) such as delays (*Hand.* Kamer 15/12/1959, 11; 15; 03/02/1960, 5; 08/03/1960, 5; 10/03/1960, 20; 16/03/1960, 27; 12/07/1960, 12).[220] Notably, these wrongdoings were mostly conceived as temporary issues that could be resolved or dealt with accordingly. At times, however, the conception of the nature of these mistakes was conceived to be linked to the Belgian state Self. Lahaye, for example, claimed that:

> "We have perhaps exaggerated our merits and our qualities as administrators of the Belgian Congo: everything was constantly going to get better and better. Public opinion was to know nothing but praise. Accordingly, a good public servant should only report progress and applaud whatever a Minister or Governor-General decided." (*Hand.* Kamer 21/04/1959, 12)

Belgium had thus overestimated itself and needed a true "turning point" (*Hand.* Kamer 22/04/1959, 22). Other MPs would go even further by stressing that the cause for these mistakes was not temporary but was inherent to the Belgian state. Van der Elst, for example, claimed that "Belgium, which after more than a century failed to give a satisfactory solution to the Flemish-Walloon problems in its own country, has also failed to fulfil the task it has taken on in Africa, because of mental impotence" (*Hand.* Kamer 04/11/1959, 17). Certainly, after the independence of Congo, this belief in the inherent wrongness of Belgium was expressed. Lahaye lamented by stating that:

> "Today we suffer the loss of the African bet, whose roll of the dice, far from showing a square of aces, only shows a series of errors. First of all, the error of Congolese unity and the disorders with abuse and looting. Then, the end of our presence in the Congo. Finally, our international position, weakened by the decisions of the Security Council and the abandonment of some of our NATO partners." (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 1)

As one of the two major pro-colonial MPs, Lahaye would also "regret - yes, I do not hide it from you at this moment - to have been so often right in predicting to you the sad fate that

---

[220] Regret was also often expressed regarding the victims of the riots (*Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 2; 9; 13; 22/04/1959, 19; 01/07/1959, 11; 03/11/1959, 11; 05/11/1959, 7; 16/03/1960, 5; 11/07/1960, 9; 17/08/1960, 6; 18/08/1960, 3; 10; 14).

would be reserved for us in wanting to show so much haste, so much haste in the emancipation of our colony" (*Hand.* Kamer 11/07/1960, 7). In short, although the focus was often on mistakes that were seen as temporary, the feeling of there being something inherently wrong with the Belgian Self was also present.

When it came to the matter of responsibility, however, we see a different story unfold. On the one hand, Belgian politicians claimed their state's responsibility for these mistakes (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/01/1959, 8-9; 21/04/1959, 12; 22/04/1959, 17; 01/07/1959, 13; 11/07/1960, 15; 18/08/1960, 20). It can be argued that, in these distinct cases, Belgian MPs expressed some form of guilt regarding past mistakes in the governance of Congo as responsibility can be felt for wrong*doing* (guilt), not *being* wrong (shame). Yet, the issue of responsibility for mistakes was not always approached as such. MPs would oftentimes shame one another, either from the opposition to the government, or vice versa, in being accountable for wrongdoing. Collard, for example, would argue that "the reluctance, the procrastination, the clumsiness that caused disarray, doubt and then anger in minds that, on the contrary, had to be rallied; who is responsible for this? Not us, of course!" (*Hand.* Kamer 03/11/1959, 20). Similarly, the government would retort by, for example, stating that "socialists definitely have a short memory and they forget a little too easily the blunders, the imprudences and the errors that they themselves have committed" (*Hand.* Kamer 18/08/1960, 24). This back and forth of attributing or distributing responsibility, implies a politics of shame that centres on the desire to avoid being seen as the (sole) agent of failure. Taking responsibility would then be seen as not an honourable thing to do but more as a way to lose the political position of their party.

To sum up, the interpretative sentiment analysis indicates that MPs expressed anxiety regarding the loss of the Belgian Congo. The decolonisation process was thus conceived and evaluated as a notable challenge to the Belgian state and how it conceived its Self. This closely corresponds with the thesis of profound loss. However, two observations nuance this thesis. For one, Congolese people were conceived as being inherently emotional, either as being racially more inclined towards passions or as situationally subjected to anger and humiliation. In matching with the claim of the innocence thesis on the widespread belief of the Congolese being inherently 'immature' and 'barbarous', it implies that both claims coincide. Second, the anxiety and fear that MPs expressed were countered by sentiments of pride, love, courage, and hope. The profound loss of the Belgian Congo was thus coped with by imbuing the state with these emotions, that effectively aimed to secure and reify the Belgian state's Self-identity. Most notably, whereas pride was initially expressed to sustain the narcissistic imperial narrative, it

dissipated after the July 1960 riots in favour of serenity, courage, and hope. These results indicate a marked change in the conception of the Belgian imperial Self, as it shifted from a state that inspired pride to one that required courage and hope.

CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed to clarify how Belgium coped with the loss of empire. It identified two competing theses in the literature on this subject. On the one hand, the paternalist thesis claims that the dominant paternalist and racist beliefs in Belgium conceived the 1959 and 1960 riots as being exemplary of the inherent immaturity and barbarity of the Congolese. As the latter implied that the Congolese could never be 'truly civilized', their demands for independence were thus also conceived as an ingrateful rejection of all the good Belgium had and could have done. Any responsibility for frustrations with the colonial state or the violence that erupted during and after the decolonisation was thus not to be attributed to Belgium, effectively claiming the Belgian state as innocent in all of this. On the other hand, the thesis of profound loss holds that Congo had become intimately entangled with the Belgian Self-identity as it signified a prestigious accomplishment and was also continuously propagated as such. In having to part with its 'model colony' in an unexpected and turbulent way, the decolonisation process generated profound feelings of loss and posed an existential threat to the Belgian sense of Self.

The analyses of this chapter have nuanced both theses. For one, the structural narrative analysis found that a dominant narrative formed nearly instantly after the special session of the Belgian parliament following the riots in Leopoldville. This comedic narrative conceived the Belgian state Self as being wrongful to some degree but with the firm belief that the relationship between Belgium and Congo would remain intimate. In effect, it corresponds with a situational state shame narrative, where wrongdoing of the state Self is acknowledged as temporary and conceives of a restoration of the social bond following an act of reconciliation. The presence of this type of state shame narrative effectively challenges the paternalist thesis to some degree, as the acceptance of having made mistakes in the past – however superficial – disagrees with its claim regarding Belgium's innocence. Simultaneously, the dominant narrative was also characterized by an active glorification of the Belgian empire. This sustained an inflated sense of Self, which indicates that the imperial fantasies persisted and validated to some degree the paternalist thesis. However, an additional analysis of the representation of the decolonisation

191

process points to the presence of a marked sense of insecurity during this initial phase. MPs emphasized the need for clarity, carefulness, timing, unity, and unanimity, which indicates that the independence process was considered volatile and that Belgium was in a fragile position. In effect, both the paternalist and the profound loss theses do not seem to fully correspond with the observations on the period directly after the 1959 riots.

The dominant narrative changed gradually due to events transpiring in Congo and tensions between the majority and the opposition, although it retained its general comedic plot structure. Only with the advent of the Congo Crisis did the parliamentary consensus dissipate and give way to a notable narrative change. MPs came to attach a more tragic understanding to the social position of the Belgian state, as it was conceived as having become a victim that, while being unjustly accused of aggression, still desired a harmonious bond with Congo. This Self-conception corresponds with a peculiar combination of a narcissistic and a situational state shame narrative, as the tragic Self relates to the former while the desire for reconciliation pertains to the latter. The thesis of profound loss seems to be validated by this finding, as it indicates a notable shift in the Belgian Self-identity as it was conceived by the MPs. However, the Congo Crisis also heightened the tensions between the opposition and majority parties, effectively generating a narrative competition. While MPs from the opposition blamed the deterioration of the situation in Congo and the reputational damage to Belgium as being the full responsibility of the current government, MPs from government parties claimed that this was the responsibility of, respectively, inexperienced Congolese leaders, previous governments, the opposition, or external influences. Although this observation links up with the narrative of innocence that is claimed by the paternalist thesis, it also challenges this notion by indicating that it depended on who was believed to be innocent. In effect, the structural narrative analysis seems to demonstrate that the loss of the Belgian empire was not managed along the lines of either of the two dominant theses in the literature.

The results of the interpretative sentiment analysis do indicate a more complex understanding of the identity dynamics during the process of Congolese decolonisation. For one, the parliamentary discourse during this episode was notably characterized by a high degree of emotionality, anxiety, and negative emotions regarding the decolonisation process. Rather than dissociation, these results show that MPs noted that this situation could prove to be a significant challenge for their state. This agrees with the base notion of the thesis of profound loss and implies a challenge to the Belgian state Self. Yet, instead of resisting the challenge or deferentially assuming a new identity, the Belgian MPs expressed pride regarding the

independence process of Congo by conceiving it as the intended result of Belgian colonialism. This meant that they could keep expressing pride and love towards the past colonial venture and effectively sustain and reproduce the imperial narrative. Simultaneously, to cope with the anxiety of this challenge to the Belgian state Self, MPs signalled the emotions of courage and serenity to communicate the need to remain calm and composed. While these latter emotions kept being expressed after the Congo Crisis, pride had notably dissipated. This indicates that the Belgian imperial narrative came into a new phase, one where Belgium was not considered a glorious colonizer but an unjustly treated victim.

With this 'imperial victimhood thesis', the chapter sheds light on how the loss of empire was managed by Belgian MPs. The specific claim of this thesis is that the decolonisation process did pose a notable challenge to the Belgian imperial narrative, as is indicated by both the presence of insecurity and anxiety in the discourse. Yet, whereas the riots only inspired a minor alteration to the Belgian Self-identity, i.e. in narrating the demands for and process of independence as an intended result, the Congo Crisis effectively implicated Belgium in its failure as a colonizer. Rather than acknowledging their past inflated sense of Self and active missteps regarding the decolonisation of Congo, it inspired a narrative of weakness, i.e. that they too were a victim of the circumstances. Simultaneously, a narrative competition erupted among MPs of the majority and opposition to pass on the blame to one another. This implies that there was a narrative of innocence but no dominant understanding of who was considered blameless.

The chapter contributes to the historical literature by giving insight into the narrative competition, emotional dimensions, and Self-securing politics during the late Belgian empire. However, more research needs to be done on how these dynamics relate to the military and political intervention of Belgium in Congo and later neo-colonial policies. The imperial victimhood narrative could also be further researched regarding the colonial taboo and amnesia that characterize the public debate in Belgium to this day. Moreover, this chapter also gave insight into the micropolitical dimensions of the Congolese independence process and how the Belgian imperial narrative transformed. Yet, further research could focus more on the changes and continuities in this imperial narrative and explore its more intricate characteristics. An additional call can be made for more comparative work on late imperial narratives and the challenges of decolonisation.

Aside from these insights into the historical case, the current chapter makes three observations regarding the politics of state shame. First, a state shame situation generates a site where a narcissistic state Self can be (re)produced by both narratives of greatness and weakness (Cf. Hagström 2021). More specifically, the decolonisation process of Congo challenged the Belgian imperial narrative but also facilitated its transformation into the notion of Congolese independence as an intended outcome (i.e. greatness) or Belgium as an imperial victim (i.e. weakness). Second, the structural narrative analysis indicated that narrative competition can develop even with the same type of state shame narrative. This implies that the politics of state shame surpass conflicts based on differing interpretations of the shame situation and can thus also relate to particular social positions, political interests, and conflicts regarding elements of the same dominant narrative. Third, the analysis indicates that a state Self might not be conceived as a perpetrator, even if wrongdoing is acknowledged. In this case, particularly, Belgium was conceived as victimized and, at the same time, as an actor who had made mistakes. State shame narratives are thus multifaceted constructs that can simultaneously express accountability, Self-glorification, and aggrievance.

THIRD INTERLUDE. DECOLONISATION AND THE COLONIAL TABOO

While formal rule over Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi had ended, Belgium retained Self-glorifying narratives on its colonial past. The goal of this interlude is to give a concise overview of the dynamics that would gradually change these narratives and facilitate more critical perspectives on this past. Belgium was rather late with this shift. Between 1945 and 1975 most European empires had ended their formal rule. This postcolonial moment was principally created by anti-colonial resistance, which set processes of political sovereignty in motion in the Global South and signalled a marked change in global politics (Boehmer and de Mul 2012, 8). The latter shift was facilitated by the economic frailty of the imperial states and the development of a US-led global economy (Osterhammel 2010, 116). This meant that, while the formal political bonds had disappeared, the economic relationship between the former colony and metropole did not lose its patron-client dynamic. The rising global interdependency created new dynamics and logics of rule that reproduced extant colonial hierarchies and effectively obstructed former colonies from fully using the freedom of action that they had acquired. Colonial regimes, in other words, were replaced by an informal system of rule that became autonomous to political control (Hardt and Negri 2000). In so doing, the decolonisation wave of 1945-1975 facilitated and coincided with a restructuring of the international order and the start of the Cold War (Mazower 2013). While the international liberal order that came out of this process came with new opportunities and challenges, continuities with the colonial past seem to persist.

The aftermath of the decolonisation of Congo is illustrative of these broader developments in world politics. More specifically, the July 1960 mutiny, and certainly the Belgian military intervention that followed, destabilized the political climate of Congo. Because the US did not want to intrude on the Belgian sphere of influence or disrupt NATO, the Congolese elite enlisted the help of the United Nations to evict the Belgian troops from their country (Dunn 2003, 90). While Lumumba was trying to resolve the mutiny of the *Force Publique*, the provinces of Katanga and Kasai seceded with the military and technical support of Belgium. As the UN tried to intervene in the Congo Crisis by setting up a dialogue between the various groups involved, rather than by using force, Lumumba turned to the USSR for help (Haskin 2005, 5). This would

signal to the West that the Congolese Prime Minister had switched sides and became an assassination target of the CIA. As a result, Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba because of his turn to the Soviets, while the latter did the same to his president (Vanthemsche 2012, 95). This institutional crisis caused an opportunity for Colonel Mobutu, who proclaimed army rule and seized absolute power in the coming years. The assassination of Lumumba on 17 January 1961, done on the order of Katangese officials but supported by Belgian troops and politicians, would figure as a symbolic low point of the Congo Crisis.

Meanwhile, in Belgium, the Congo Crisis generated internal strife among the various political factions and even the royal house (Vanthemsche 2012, 96). The main object of controversy was the Katangese secession, which fuelled confusion and inspired not one but many conflicting policies regarding the ensuing crisis. Regardless, the neo-colonial intervention and the debacle around decolonisation were not used as internal political weapons as the atmosphere of national catastrophe dictated some sense of decorum (Ibid., 95). Belgian involvement in the Congo Crisis was, however, widely condemned by the international community (Verbeeck 2019, 3). In effect, Belgium's prestige and Self-image had received a notable blow due to its interventionist policies, to the point that its embassies were attacked following the assassination of Lumumba (Dunn 2003, 85; Klep 2007, 3). It was only with the new coalition government of 1961 that Belgium came to realign its African policy and began to rescind its blatant neo-colonial intervention. Central Africa would remain a key problem in Belgian diplomacy in the following years and decades, such as the independence process of Rwanda and Burundi, but not be central anymore in Belgium's internal politics (Vanthemsche 2012, 98).

The UN operation in Congo came to an end in 1964, with the result of a reunified Congo but without preparing the country for self-administration (Haskin 2005, 6). As a result, Mobutu was effectively able to re-establish his military rule by 1965 and remained in power until he died in 1997. His dictatorship of the newly named Zaire was characterized by rampant corruption and exploitation, earning it the title of a 'kleptocracy', or rule by stealing. In effect, Zaire became one of the poorest countries in Africa because of this system, regardless of its mineral wealth. The US, Belgium and France accommodated Mobutu's reign by donating financial and military aid to keep the Congolese dictator in the Western camp during the Cold War (Haskin 2005, 6). Yet, the relations between Congo and Belgium were ambiguous (Rosoux 2014; Monaville 2015, 69). The tense relationship was caused by, on the one hand, Belgium trying to maintain its economic and political interests and, on the other hand, Mobutu playing out the competing frames of Belgians as either neo-colonial oppressors or benefactors (Rosoux 2014, 25).

Belgium did not, however, end its financial and military support to the Mobutu regime, which is evidenced by the military interventions during the Shaba wars (1977; 1978). In effect, up until the late 1980s, Belgium remained closely invested in its former colony.

A change set in after the end of the Cold War. On the one hand, Belgian economic interests had subsided in Zaire and did not outweigh the difficulty of maintaining diplomatic ties with the increasingly unstable region (Rosoux 2014, 26). On the other hand, the political climate in Belgium had shifted towards one that was more favourable towards emphasizing human rights. Primarily supported by the Flemish Socialist party, SP and later SP.a, the notion of 'African ownership' was conceived as a means to avoid neo-colonial attempts at controlling the former colonies (Ibid. 26-27). This policy inspired, however, the disastrous withdrawal of the Belgian UN Blue Helmets in Rwanda in April 1994, which led to the entire departure of the UN force and the facilitation of the Rwandan genocide. An additional effect of the latter was that the US withdrew its aid in the early 1990s to Mobutu, because of his problematic actions regarding the Rwandan genocide. In effect, the rebel leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila was able to topple the dictator with the help of Rwanda, Uganda, and Angola as a result of this international power vacuum. In trying to consolidate the – again – renamed Democratic Republic of Congo, Kabila set off 'Africa War I' which meant the renewed involvement of the UN. While the conflict was already spiralling out of control, Kabila was assassinated and replaced with his son, Joseph Kabila.

During this time, Central Africa and the colonial past of Belgium had gradually disappeared into the background of Belgian consciousness. Just like in other empires, a historical silence was set in following the independence of the former colonies, one that was policed by a historical taboo and maintained through colonial amnesia (Trouillot 1995; Van den Braembussche 1995; 2002). The Belgian colonial past became scarcely referenced in official addresses and met with increasing indifference among Belgians (Rosoux 2014, 20). While this process has its own dynamics, the colonial past was generally superseded by internal tensions in Belgium, which were ever more demanding the political focus of the former metropole. The linguistic division between the French-speaking Walloons and Dutch-speaking Flemish in particular developed into a political conflict that gained centre stage from the 1960s onwards. Subsequent constitutional reforms managed the internal conflict by diffusing powers to autonomous language communities and regions. Simultaneously, economic difficulties, political rivalries, and institutional problems began pushing the colonial past further away from the public eye. If Belgium's colonialism was discussed, then it was systematically framed in

terms of nostalgia by the *Anciens du Congo* or in general notions of colonial innocence (Arens 2018; Giordano 2019; Verbeeck 2019).

CHAPTER 7. THE LUMUMBA COMMISSION (1999-2002): COLONIAL SHAME AND THE BELGIAN POST-IMPERIAL SELF

"Lumumba,

the god of the Albinos

sat down on your corps as on a toilet"

I wrote thirty years ago,

and only now it slowly comes to light

how Lumumba was destroyed.

How the police inspector Gerard Soete

worked the body

with a saw and sulfuric acid.

"Until nothing remained", he says.

Nothing remained? He ripped out two golden teeth and kept them.

"As a souvenir," he says. Eighty years old

he swung them in the North Sea.

Nothing remains?

Soete, illiterate, butchering mercenary,

think of the Argonauts

who sailed in the Mediterranean

looking for the Golden Fleece.

They tore the teeth from the mouth of the Dragon

and sowed them in the sand

and the teeth spawned

one hundred warriors with axes and spears

and they lined up in rows.

And this night they come by your bed.

-    Hugo Claus, 8 November 1999

Colonial shame is commonly understood as the feeling of remorse for a colonial legacy.[221] It manifests itself in various ways, such as in the restitution of stolen or pillaged artefacts, the institutionalisation of Sorry Days, or in broader societal interest in the colonial past. When these sentiments are expressed in an international setting, for example with an official state apology, it often signifies a new direction in the relationship between a former colonizing state and its prior colony. In the literature on interstate apologies, these expressions of regret are frequently discussed as key rituals in state identity formation (Bentley 2015, 627; Tavuchis 1991, 7). Specifically, it is argued that state apologies symbolically transform the identity of states because they make them reflect on their historical narrative (Bagdonas 2018, 775). Post-imperial states, in particular, are compelled to fundamentally revise their national history by denouncing their glorious colonizing past and assuming the role of the self-repenting transgressor. An apology then signals this identity change towards the former colony, which in turn can generate processes of reconciliation (Barkan 2000; Hutchison and Bleiker 2008; Lind 2008; Verdeja 2017, 235).

However, studies of post-colonial reconciliation in particular have pointed towards a contrasting claim, namely that expressions of colonial remorse are enduringly characterized by the colonial legacy (e.g. Stoler 2016, 345; Bentley 2015). According to these scholars, such acts of remorse are not transformative experiences for the post-imperial state nor do they reconfigure the relationship with their former colony. Rather, they promote the prevailing Self-identity of the former colonizing state and reassert dominant norms and hierarchies in international society (Bentley 2015). State apologies that envision colonial reconciliation, it is argued, mainly serve to restore the national Self and progressive Self-narrative of the post-imperial state rather than offer solace to the victims (Muldoon 2017; Ahmed 2004). In short, colonial shame does not fundamentally affect the post-imperial state, or if it does, it mainly functions as a way to rectify the former colonizer's state Self.

---

[221] This concept is also sometimes used to denote the shame that both the formerly colonized person and the former colonizer feel about their past or present inferior or superior status. However, no standardized use exists for this concept in academic literature. In this research, it will primarily be used to describe the feelings of remorse of a former colonizing state towards its imperial past.

This ambiguity regarding the meaning of colonial shame begs the question. How does it affect a post-imperial state Self? This research explores the particular state shame situation regarding the colonial past to deepen the understanding of what it signifies for the post-imperial state Self-narrative. More specifically, it gives an insight into how political elites of post-imperial states reflect on their state's imperial past and the way that this narrative competition influences the dominant conception of state Self-identity. To this end, the chapter can capture key emotional and narrative dynamics associated with colonial shame that have until now been assumed and remain unclear and delve deeper into the politics that surround this issue. Assessing the political role and meaning of state shame concerning the colonial past also gives insight into broader characteristics of state shame and its politics. In particular, the academic debate around colonial shame engages with numerous tensions that exist in the conceptual framework of this dissertation. The nexus between narcissistic fantasies and narcissistic shame, and the ethics and politics that are involved here, is especially productive regarding the case of colonial shame.

The empirical side of this research consists of an in-depth narrative and interpretative sentiment analysis of how Belgian political elites coped with the state shame situation regarding its colonial and postcolonial past. This case study specifically investigates the political debates surrounding the Lumumba Commission (1999-2002), a key moment in the history of Belgium's struggle with its imperial legacy. As Hugo Claus' poem at the beginning of the chapter illustrates, this episode was particularly scandalous for the Belgian state. The foundation of a parliamentary research commission was preceded by a nationwide scandal revolving around Belgian complicity in the murder of Congo's first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961). This accusation sharply challenged the Self-narrative of the progressive Belgian government, compelling the latter to rewrite a part of the state's biographical narrative to secure their intended identity transformation by reconciling with Congo.

The results of the empirical analysis indicate that the experience of colonial shame compels the post-imperial state towards acts of remorse that are believed to restore their conception of Self-identity and simultaneously increase their perceived honour. State agents recount past atrocities of their state together with their contemporary reflexive actions, which is considered proof and an affirmation of their state's progressive Self. Colonial shame, at least in this case, is thus not fundamentally destabilizing for the dominant sense of Self of the Belgian state. In effect, this finding validates the more pessimist reading of the role of colonial shame. The chapter also indicates that the politics to state shame entails that it can be translated into different emotions, such as guilt in this case, to reach particular goals.

The chapter first discusses a general overview of the narratives on Belgium's colonial past before the Lumumba Commission and how they became challenged by the scandal surrounding Belgian complicity in the murder of Lumumba. In the following section, the results of the structural narrative analysis are reported in describing how Belgium's Self-identity was challenged and secured through the adoption of a dominant narrative that was constructed along a comedic plot. The subsequent part describes the narrative shift that facilitated the apology and the securing of the Belgian state Self. Before concluding the chapter, the results of the interpretative sentiment analysis indicate both the presence of positive emotions and the gradual reframing of the state shame as an issue of guilt.

BELGIUM AS A POST-IMPERIAL STATE

The colonial taboo and narratives of civilization and innocence

Belgium is a relative latecomer in critically reflecting on its colonial past (Goddeeris 2015, 435). This late interaction has been attributed to a number of unique characteristics of Belgian colonialism and its domestic disunity. For one, Belgium did not give preferential migration status to citizens of Congo/Zaire, Rwanda, or Burundi which effectively meant that there was no demographic exchange between the metropole and the colonies until the 1980s. Belgians thus rarely came into contact with other narratives or experiences regarding their imperial legacy through a lack of a visible diaspora community (Verbeeck 2019, 4; Monaville 2015, 73). The predominantly elitist nature of the colonial enterprise and the relatively small Belgian presence in Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi also made the memories too personal to become part of public knowledge. This had the supposed effect that the colonies had little discernible impact on Belgium's popular culture and daily life (Ewans 2002).[222]

Some scholars argue that the political and linguistic divide between Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels has also obstructed the development of a common national identity or memory culture (Goddeeris 2015; Verbeeck 2019). Because of the national imaginary's disunity, it is argued, that Belgium lacked the solid foundation for a collective memory of the colonial past. While there were public celebrations of the colonial past, in particular during anniversaries, they were gradually marginalized in the 1970s and 1980s (Monaville 2015, 62). In effect, Belgian memory

---

[222] This is contested by other authors, see Vincent Viaene, David Van Reybrouck and Bambi Ceuppens, *Congo in België: Koloniale cultuur in de metropool* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009).

culture became characterized by a colonial taboo or amnesia (e.g. Vanden Braembussche 1995; 2002; Monaville 2015; Bobineau 2017) as Belgians remain generally indifferent and silent about their country's imperial legacy to avoid disapproval by others (Van den Braembussche 2002, 40). Notably, although the country is in many ways divided, the silence towards the legacy of colonialism is generally shared among all linguistic communities and political sides (Ibid., 39).[223]

When the imperial past did come up, two narratives dominated the discourse before the Lumumba scandal erupted in 1999. The hegemonic narrative was the paternalist notion that Belgium had been a good colonizer, bringing civilization, progress, and enlightenment to the 'dark heart' of the African continent (Verbeeck 2019). Originating from former colonials and other actors, it presented colonial officials and missionaries as heroes who supported and helped the 'uncivilized' local populations. Moreover, it conceived Belgium as being the expert and specialist on Central African politics (Monaville 2015, 69-70). This narrative was so well-ingrained that, as late as 2006, there were still middle school textbooks that glorified and justified the colonial presence of Belgium in Central Africa (Vanthemsche 2007, 90). In effect, Belgians reflected on the colonial past with a sense of nostalgia and regretted the loss of the colonies.

Paired with this more general neo-colonial narrative was the so-called 'innocence thesis' (Verbeeck 2019, 4).[224] This second narrative argued that Belgium could not be held responsible for the political turmoil and socioeconomic downturn that followed after the decolonization of Congo. More specifically, after the sudden decolonisation in June 1960, large-scale protests, Belgian- and American-backed secession and nationwide army riots led to civil war. Subsequent military interventions by Belgium and the UN further destabilized the already weakened Congolese state and plunged the country into the Congo Crisis (1960-1965). The climactic high point of this period was reached when former Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who had personified decolonization, was assassinated on 17 January 1961. Only a few months after his inauguration, Patrice Lumumba was deposed and imprisoned after he countered the decision of President Kasavubu to dismiss him from the government. Eventually, Lumumba, together with two fellow political prisoners, Joseph Okito and Maurice Mpolo, was flown out to Katanga, a secessionist state that was backed by Belgium and which was virulently opposed

---

[223] This has started to change recently, see Bobineau (2017).
[224] Fantasies of innocence are common regarding the colonial past or racism in general (see Wekker 2016).

to Lumumba's policy (de Witte 2002). During the flight, the three men were tortured with extreme brutality, only to be followed by more abuse after they had landed in Elisabethville. Both Katangan and Belgian officers participated in this abuse (Ibid.). That evening, Lumumba, Okito, and Mpolo were executed by a Katangese firing squad that was commanded by Belgian nationals. Belgium officially denied complicity when the assassination of Lumumba was confirmed a few weeks later (Klep 2007).

Regardless of the active role that Belgian state officials played in the assassination of Lumumba and in creating the turbulence during Congo's decolonization, Belgians were told, and eagerly believed, that their state had nothing to do with these events. Their state was an innocent bystander that had to powerlessly witness horrible atrocities committed by Africans against Africans (Verbeeck 2019, 4). The murder of Lumumba, for example, was framed as an internal affair between Katangese secessionists and Congolese nationalists (Bustin 2002, 542).[225] Although there was some suspicion among Belgians regarding the complicity of countrymen in the assassination of Lumumba, the belief remained that these men were merely under orders from African officials (Ibid.).

The challenge of the Lumumba Commission

The Lumumba Commission (2000-2002) originated in the context of a gradually growing discontent among the Belgian population towards their political elite in the 1990s (Van den Braembussche 2002). This dissatisfaction was generated by numerous scandals regarding corruption, incompetence, and negligence of state officials, such as the Dutroux affair or the Dioxin crisis (Ibid., 51-52). As a result of the discontent with the 'old' political system, the federal elections of 1999 resulted in an electoral majority of Liberal, Socialist, and Green parties, effectively ending the forty-year streak of Christian democratic-led governments. The progressive coalition began its legislature by claiming to represent a 'new political culture' in domestic politics. Internationally, the government presented itself as "the driving force of the international community" (Rosoux, 2014, 27) by actively promoting human rights and practising 'ethical diplomacy'. Moreover, the government had purposely geared its foreign policy towards Africa and more specifically Congo. Their troubled former colony would become the spearhead of Belgium's ethical diplomacy, even though their relationship had

---

[225] The innocence thesis was also actively defended by former colonizers, Jacques Brassine even defended a PhD thesis that made this claim. See Jacques Brassine and Jean Kestergat (1991).

soured in the past decade and that the Belgian expertise regarding Congo was hardly noteworthy. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louis Michel, even desired the role of mediator in the Second Congo War (1998-2003) which was spiralling into an ever larger and complex conflict (Ibid.). After the consecutive scandals of the preceding years and the disastrous retreat from Rwanda, which had effectively helped spark the 1994 genocide, Michel was determined to give Belgium its international 'réveil'.

When Ludo de Witte, a Belgian sociologist, published his book *De moord op Lumumba* [The Murder of Lumumba] in 1999, this turn towards a new Self-identity was challenged. In his book, de Witte argues that the Belgian state had direct responsibility and an important role in the assassination of Lumumba. Specifically, the book uncovered the motivations and actions of particular individuals in Belgium's political establishment who wilfully and consistently appealed for the physical elimination of Lumumba and directly aided in his murder. The book accused Belgian authorities of various assassination attempts, of sending reports and orders to "solve the Lumumba-problem" (de Witte 2002, 170) and enlisting government agents to cover up any complicity in the murder in the following decades. Regarding this last accusation, de Witte revealed how certain institutions had funded and facilitated an "academic cover-up operation" (Ibid., 21)[226] to absolve Belgium of any guilt in the matter. It was the explicit objective of de Witte's book to deconstruct this prevailing claim and uncover how Belgium was directly involved in these events (Bustin 2002, 542).

Importantly, de Witte also implicated the former King, Baudouin I (1930-1993), by exposing that he knew about the assassination. His point was not, however, to solely accuse particular individuals or institutions but to identify the chain of command and show how the very top of the Belgian political system was involved. It has been argued that his specific targeting of the political system was instrumental in bringing about the subsequent scandal, exactly because of the already widespread indignation in Belgian society towards the political elite (Bustin 2002, 542). However, regardless of the already existing mistrust against the state, the accusation by de Witte did not instantly lead to a scandal. The book was initially published in Dutch, so it was primarily picked up by Flemish media. Although there was some public discussion in response to the publication of the book, it only became a state shame situation once the popular documentary series *Histories* aired an episode that was based on the research of de Witte. Gerard Soete, the Belgian Chief of Police in Katanga who was commissioned to dispose of the

---

[226] See Brassine and Kestergat (1991).

bodies of Lumumba, Okito, and Mpolo, featured in the documentary. During his interview, he proudly showed the golden teeth and finger bones he had pulled from the corpse of Lumumba. When the media attention that followed his testimony became too much for him, Soete claimed that he had discarded his macabre keepsakes in the North Sea. Much to his dismay, this act only generated more indignation in the press, causing a nationwide scandal.

However, the scandal only turned into a political issue when a member of the extreme right-wing Flemish nationalist party (Vlaams Blok) brought it to parliament. Rather than a genuine demand for apology, the right-wing politician used this scandal as an opportunity to discredit the Belgian state and the royal house (de Villiers 2004, 198). The official response of Louis Michel to this question was at first evasive. This was considered an "unsatisfying" response by commentators in the national media, as it was seen as a continuation of the reluctance of the state to comment on the issue, and a more substantial reaction was demanded (Reynebau 03/11/1999, 29; Nijssen 05/11/1999, 6). When the question was again brought before parliament, Michel promptly stated that the government would be open to a parliamentary research commission to investigate the Belgian complicity in the murder of Lumumba. Moreover, if the research confirms the accusations against the Belgian authorities, "the current government would necessarily have to take steps both to apologize to […] the families, the Congolese people and Mr Lumumba's tribe, and tries, if possible, to compensate in one way or another" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/12/1999, 10-11). Rather than external demands, and in line with the central expectation of this research, it was internal dynamics that made Belgium reflect on its colonial past.

NARRATIVE CONSENSUS AND COMEDIC EMPLOTMENT

The narrative that originated with the Lumumba scandal differed significantly from the 'innocence-thesis' that preceded it. Whereas the latter narrative conceived Belgium as a puppet of international dynamics, unable to intervene in Congo's escalating instability and violence,[227] Ludo de Witte's book accused Belgium of creating the post-independence turmoil in Congo. In this romantic narrative, Belgium was not a tragic hero who had to helplessly endure the loss of

---

[227] See Verbeeck (2019). It could be argued that the innocence narrative had an ironic emplotment (see the similarities with the sarcastic/deferential claims by the right-wing in the former chapter) but the narcissistic fantasy that is connected to it indicates that this narrative should not be conceived as a shame narrative. Although it might have originated as an answer to a shame situation, at this point in time, it did not have the connotation of failure that his considered characteristic of a shame narrative.

its colonies and assume the role of a horrified spectator when Congo went down a spiral of violence and instability. Rather, it was an antagonist who actively and consciously worked towards destabilizing Congo to safeguard its interests. Belgium's main act of villainy was that it had secretively ordered the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the main Congolese protagonist. In other words, whereas Lumumba and Congo were conceived as tragic-romantic heroes, Belgium played the role of the villain. The book of de Witte is thus not a state shame narrative but rather a shaming narrative that critically assesses the Belgian state Self.

The first parliamentary debate on the topic began with statements of MPs from different political parties who supported the accusation of de Witte (*Hand.* Kamer 08/12/1999, 6-8). They praised de Witte's work and argued that Belgium had acted horrendously, describing the state's past actions as "appalling" and "physically repulsive", and that there was "no doubt" about its past neo-colonial aspirations (bid., 6). In their eyes, the book of de Witte had presented enough proof that Belgium had acted wrongfully and recounted their state's past actions along the same tragic story arc that de Witte had constructed. These initial reactions, in effect, point to a narcissistic state shame narrative, as the past state Self was construed as being wrongful and is telling of the disillusionment towards the belief in the moral goodness of the Belgian state. This narrative contrasts notably with the subsequent reply of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louis Michel, as he appealed for restraint towards the incrimination of the state. He argued that the book by de Witte was "an interpretation" (Ibid., 9) and that Belgian complicity had not yet been proven. However, he did consider the issue "extremely serious" (Ibid.), which made him offer his support for a historical commission.

Notably, the initial belief in de Witte's thesis would promptly dissipate towards a generally tentative position that considered Belgian complicity in Lumumba's murder as a "possibility" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 16) or a "mystery" (Ibid., 22) in subsequent sessions. This history had to be approached as a 'grey zone' that needed "clarity" (*Hand.* Kamer 09/12/1999, 26), which would be obtained by a research commission that was headed by historians and other experts. The commission thus became entrusted with a scientific "search for truth" to counter the "wild stories and myths" that surrounded the murder (*Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 16). When selecting the experts, some MPs pressed the need for the inclusion of a Congolese or African scholar. However, parliament eventually favoured four Belgian historians, Luc De Vos, Emmanuel Gerard, Jules Gérard-Libois, and Philippe Raxon with a Congolese political scientist, Jean Omasombo, acting as an 'ad hoc' member. This choice generated controversy in Congo, as it effectively excluded them from the truth-finding process. The reasoning behind

excluding Congolese experts was the paternalistic belief that they could not be neutral regarding this issue. In effect, the necessity for 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' of Belgian MPs actively depoliticized the intense moral and political issues that were at the core of Belgium's complicity in the murder of Lumumba. The scientification of the issue would also place the main political work with the researchers and eventually influence the approach and conclusion of the final report (Bevernage 2011).

Although there were some prominent disputes at the beginning and end of the parliamentary debates, MPs maintained a notably consistent and unchallenged narrative during the Lumumba Commission. This consistency in the narrative can be explained by the 'unanimity' or 'consensus' between the majority and opposition that characterized the politics of the Lumumba Commission (de Villiers 2004, 214; Bustin 2002, 545). Notably, the new hegemonic narrative was distinctly characterized by three features. First, Belgium was attributed to a morally complex character. The narrative explicitly condemned any possible wrongdoing that the state might have done but did not necessarily view Belgium as an irrevocable villain.[228] It was, for example, argued that "we have done great things in Congo, but also less pleasant business" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/12/1999, 6), and that there were "things we could be proud of, and things that we can be less proud of" (22/12/1999, 15). Even when Belgium's past actions were denounced, MPs generally held the opinion that the current policy towards Congo was "outstanding" (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 10-11; 20-21; 22; 23; 29; 05/02/2002B, 3; 15; 40-42). Louis Michel's ambitious Africa policy was especially praised by both the majority and the moderate opposition. From the onset, the Lumumba Commission was linked to this policy and was inscribed into a progressive story arc where Belgium actively returned to the Central-African region to promote human rights, democracy, and peace (*Hand.* Kamer 23-02-2000, 19). The foundation of the Lumumba Commission was believed to be exemplary of the country's unquestionable morality and efforts to improve itself *and* international society.

A second feature was that Congo or Lumumba were not free of criticism. Whereas the opponents of the commission would actively vilify Lumumba, the proponents of the commission would sometimes question his 'mythic' status. For example, it was claimed that "he too had blood on his hands", or that he was "controversial" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 22;

---

[228] Moreover, during certain discussions, Belgium's complicity in the murder was also minimized, as indicated by remarks such as "making a mistake is human" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 22) and that further research would clear up "ambiguities" (*Hand.* Kamer, 23/02/2000, 19) in the country's past. The importance of the political context in 1960-1961, such as the Cold War, the turbulent Congolese civil war or strikes and riots regarding the 'Unity law', was also used to mitigate the political interventions of Belgium in Congo.

05/02/2002A, 12; 30; 05/02/2002B, 16; 40). The Congolese political class of the time was also criticized for "only thinking about themselves" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 22) with regard to the political destabilisation that followed Congolese independence. These critiques of Lumumba and Congo were not common, as Lumumba was also praised, but they do indicate that the characters of the narrative, i.e. Belgium, Congo, and Lumumba, were not conceived as universally 'good' or 'bad'.

A final characteristic of the dominant narrative was the expectation that Belgium and Congo would eventually reconcile as a result of the Lumumba Commission (*Hand.* Kamer 15/02/2000, 6; 23/02/2000, 16; 19; 05/02/2002A, 37; 05/02/2002B, 19; 54). This urge towards reconciliation was already present in the opening statements of the MPs. Regardless of praising the quality of de Witte's work, they believed that the issue had to be researched further by a parliamentary commission or independent historians, as it would be a good thing to "clean up historically, scientifically" the colonial past and "come to terms" with it (*Hand.* Kamer 08/12/1999, 6). The belief existed that further researching this issue offered "an ideal opportunity to make the past belong to the past", and with an apology, Belgium's Africa policy could be "carried out in an honest and correct manner" (Ibid., 7). To sum up, the MPs were convinced that, by admitting to their state's past wrongfulness and showing a willingness to confront itself with this past, Belgium and Congo would reconcile.

These three characteristics of the dominant narrative about the Lumumba Commission are telling of a comedic plot, effectively telling of a situational state shame narrative. More specifically, the transgression is conceived as temporary by a well-intentioned protagonist who believes reconciliation with the victimized Other can be obtained through a reparative action. Whereas the subject matter would imply a tragedy, the way that the characters were conceived and the imagined harmonious ending thus does not correspond with a tragic narrative structure. The comedic plot is, however, not ideal typical in this narrative. A characteristic feature of this narrative type is that there rests a sense of commonality between the opposing characters, an amicable or familial bond making their antagonism not a transhistorical conflict between essentialist 'heroes' and 'villains' as would be the case of a romance or tragedy (Khoury 2018, 378). Although this commonality would be evident for states who share a colonial past, the debates on the Lumumba Commission rarely recalled the 'historical' relationship between

Belgium and Congo.[229] The presence of this lack of commonality can be attributed to the Belgian historical taboo and amnesia with regard to its colonial past and is indicative of enduring colonial attitudes towards Congo.

An additional ambiguous feature of the dominant narrative is the belief that the commission had to remain "careful" (*Hand.* Kamer 15/02/2000, 4) in its workings and conclusions. In effect, MPs argued that the subject matter – "a man has been killed" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 16) – dictated some sort of decorum and that it might further destabilize the already war-torn Congo (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 16; 15/01/2001, 5; 6; 31/01/2001, 2; 6; 10; *Hand.* Kamer, Commission of Foreign Affairs 15/02/2000, 6). The reasoning behind this concern remained obscure but some MPs expressed the racist beliefs that the testimonials or conclusions might inspire unwanted "passions" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 16) and "race conflicts" (*Hand.* Kamer 15/01/2001, 6) among the Congolese. In effect, these responses were believed to threaten the chance for reconciliation, which the commission actively wanted to reach.

WRONGDOING, APOLOGY, AND COMEDIC RELIEF

The report of the Lumumba Commission submitted that Belgium was "morally responsible" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 16) for the assassination of Lumumba and his compatriots Mpolo and Okito. This specifically meant that the direct order and execution of the aforementioned was executed by Katangese authorities but that the Belgian state had shown "a blatant disregard of precaution and lack of respect for the rule of law" (Ibid., 17). In other words, the commissioned research established that there was no direct political interference by the Belgian state, as there was no written evidence of a direct order from Belgian officials to the Katangese authorities who authorized the execution. The accusation of de Witte was thus disproven and Belgium was effectively absolved of direct political complicity in the murder of Lumumba.

However, the research did identify four actions by Belgian state agents that would make them, at least partially, responsible for the murder. First, Belgian intelligence operatives had devised two unsuccessful assassination plots against Lumumba. Second, the Ministers of African Affairs and Foreign Affairs had aided in the organisation of the transport of Lumumba to Katanga. As they were well aware of the political tensions between the former and the latter,

---

[229] Their relations were sometimes described as being "special", but this does not necessarily imply that the two countries have something in common. See e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 12.

the officials knew that Lumumba's life would be at risk if he were transported to Katanga. Third, these Belgian ministers did not ask for guarantees concerning Lumumba's well-being and physical integrity or insist that he be treated in accordance with human dignity and receive a normal trial. Fourth, the Belgian King had been notified that Lumumba's life was in danger but had given no sign of disapproval or concern about this news. These four (in)actions had directly or indirectly aided in the assassination of Lumumba and thus revealed Belgium's "lack of care and respect for the rule of law" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 16) as well as its disregard for "international law" (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 35-36; 05/02/2002B, 22-23; 46).

The Lumumba Commission chose to describe this culpability as a 'moral' responsibility. There was, however, no consensus about what it meant to be 'morally' responsible. On the one hand, MPs who were disappointed in the conclusions criticized the use of this term as it was "imprecise" and the "fruit of consensus" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 24; 05/02/2002B, 5; 6; 14; 15; 48). In effect, it was considered proof that the Lumumba Commission did not go far enough in its conclusions (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002B, 6). On the other hand, proponents of this terminology countered by saying that the concept specifically aimed at the broader intentions of agents and their indirect consequences (Ibid., 35). Moreover, as legal responsibility needed hard evidence to prove complicity (Ibid., 22-23) and political responsibility "would only hold one person responsible in this case" (Ibid., 48), moral responsibility seemed to be the only way of really identifying the wrongdoing of Belgium. The choice for moral responsibility was thus geared towards finding the state culpable in the broadest sense of the word. Thus, instead of wanting to absolve their state of any kind of wrongdoing, parliament explicitly desired their state to be found responsible, even when the commissioned research had not concluded direct involvement.

Based on its report, the commission made political recommendations to the government. However, these mainly concerned dysfunctions in the Belgian political system rather than any actions that had to be undertaken towards Congo. The only recommendation that was made towards the latter was that the government needed to "draw the appropriate conclusions as well as take action on the basis of the present document and debate" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 17-18). Importantly, this needed to happen "within the framework of its international actions" (Ibid.). The speech of the rapporteur ended by expressing the hope that the Lumumba Commission had given "clarity on the subject of the tragic events and that this will contribute to a better understanding between the two peoples" (Ibid., 18).

Among the MPs that had supported the Lumumba Commission, there was a general sense of achievement about the report. Although some expressed disappointment, the majority was unanimous in accepting the commission's conclusions. The historians and other experts were generally praised for their valuable work and it was claimed that the Lumumba Commission set an example for future parliamentary research commissions, as the undertaking was considered to be the perfect balance between science and politics (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 20; 34; 05/02/2002B, 44-45). It was also an example for other post-imperial states that needed to deal with their colonial past because by "giving more clarity on the murder and circumstances that have led to this act, the commission has contributed to coping with the past and resolutely choose for the future" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 21). The results of the experts would "help us avoid old mistakes" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002B, 4) and give the country the possibility to "distance itself from the climate of the times" (Ibid., 18). The government could thus "start with a clean slate" (Ibid., 45) to implement its voluntarist Africa policy as the foundation of the commission was a clear signal for reconciliation towards Congo (Ibid., 19).

However, the idea of an apology was not generally agreed upon and generated some discussion and discontent among both proponents and opponents of the commission. Socialist and Green MPs felt it to be appropriate to apologize for the Belgian complicity (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002B, 5), as the research had proven the wrongfulness of Belgian state agents. It was thus clear that a state apology as a symbolic act and an "engagement towards the Congolese community" (Ibid., 27) needed to follow. In contrast, some Christian democratic MPs were not convinced of the need for an apology, as they believed that the conclusions of the Lumumba Commission proved Belgium's "moral responsibility", but that Congo owned the "real and effective responsibility" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 25).

The main contentious issue was that some politicians demanded a reciprocal apology by Congo for the mistreatment, murder, and rape of Belgian citizens during the riots that followed Congolese independence.[230] They believed that an apology by Congo for the abuse of former colonizers was appropriate and that the official apology for the Belgian complicity in the assassination of Lumumba was the perfect opportunity for President Joseph Kabila to do the same for Belgian victims (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002B, 55). In effect, by demanding a reciprocal

---

[230] This narrative originated from the publication of a 2002 book by Peter Verlinden, *Weg uit Congo* [Gone from Congo], a work that was composed of various testimonials of former colonizers who were abused and had to flee during the riots. This tragic narrative generated a lot of media attention and was picked up by some moderate and extreme right-wing politicians to criticize the recommendations of the commission. For a parliamentary debate on this issue, see e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 21.

apology, the opposition effectively desired an equal distribution of blame. This indicates that they too desired the reconciliation but believed that the wrongdoing had to be equally distributed between Belgium and Congo for them to reconcile.

At the end of the final session, Louis Michel publicly apologized to the family members and Congolese people for the moral responsibility of Belgium in the murder of Lumumba, Okito, and Mpolo. Afterwards, he expressed the commitment of the Belgian state to the Congolese people and announced that it would fund the Patrice Lumumba Foundation.[231] This expression of colonial remorse would receive domestic and international endorsements and praise. Moreover, the sons of Lumumba, François and Roland, who were present during the final debate, gave their blessings on the commission's results and the apology of Michel. In a press conference directly after the parliamentary debate, François Lumumba stated that the commission and the subsequent apology "testifies to the political courage and deserves felicitation", and that they "were prepared to turn the page" (Timmerman 06/02/2002, 4).

It can be argued that the apology was a 'festive occasion', a moment of celebration that heralded the reconciliation between Belgium and Congo. MPs emphasized that there was still a lot to be done but that the commission had nonetheless signalled a new future for the relations between the two countries. In this way, the apology separated the past and the present of Belgium and purified the state of its responsibility for the murder of Lumumba (Trouillot 2000). However, the apology would receive sharp critiques from the right-wing opposition (e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002B, 51-53; Beirlant 06/02/2002, 4) and author Ludo de Witte (Timmerman 04/02/2002, 8). Congolese newspapers and the Congolese government would also respond ambiguously, as they would call it a courageous gesture to apologize but an inexpensive way to cope with this past.[232] Nevertheless, the apology effectively silenced further inquiry into or reflection on this past. It seems that, at least for Belgium, this 'dark page of the past' has been turned.

---

[231] This foundation has still not been erected.
[232] Because of the lack of access to the archives of these newspapers, there are no direct references for these responses. The claims were, however, echoed in Belgian newspapers, see s.n. 07/02/2002A; s.n., 07/02/2002, 6; s.n. 07/02/2002, 8.

The change towards a comedic narrative is also reflected in the results of the interpretative sentiment analysis. A first but notable observation is that the debates on the Lumumba Commission were generally characterized by explicit disapproval of emotions. The origin of this anti-emotional disposition lies in the objectivism and neutrality of MPs. Specifically, MPs wanted to avoid "political passions" (*Hand.* Kamer 09/12/1999, 26) and demanded that the debates and work of the Lumumba Commission would remain in an atmosphere of 'serenity'.[233] Serenity was primarily conceptualized as 'dispassionateness', 'relinquishing political interests' and 'subtlety' during the debates. What this call for serenity signifies, is that MPs found the issue difficult to discuss and required some form of distance between themselves and the anxiety present in the community of feeling. What was generally noticeable, however, was that negative emotions, such as guilt and anger, were far more countered or remained generally unspoken, than emotions such as hope or courage.

Second, the emotional terms regarding the Lumumba Commission shifted notably between the debates. During the initial parliamentary debates, two groups expressed specific political emotions. On the one hand, MPs who were convinced of the accusation of de Witte expressed guilt and shame,[234] although mainly in figurative or implicit phrases.[235] For example, the Belgian involvement in the murder was described as a "horror" (*Hand.* Kamer 08/12/1999, 5), which the state needed to "come to terms with" (Ibid., 6). Moreover, they argued that parliament had to "dare to take up responsibility for the past" (Ibid., 7), which suggests that they believed the effort to research their country's discrediting past to be costly but just. This corresponds with their initial tragic narrative, as it was based on the accusation of de Witte. The proponents of the Lumumba Commission thus conceived the scandal as harmful to Belgium's conception of its Self-identity but believed that the state needed to overcome this.

On the other hand, Christian democratic MPs who opposed the accusation of de Witte expressed fear, anger, and indignation. Although these emotions were mainly expressed implicitly, they were explicitly discussed by other MPs as "political passions" (*Hand.* Kamer 09/12/1999, 26). What aroused the 'passions' of the Christian democrats was the "deep fear" (Ibid., 25) that the

---

[233] The connection of this particular emotion to the topic also occurs in academic literature. See Vangroenweghe 2004, 21.

[234] These two emotions are difficult to analytically separate in discourse when they are expressed implicitly or figuratively.

[235] Specifically, they would make use of proverbs such as "come to terms with the past" or "come clean with the past", see e.g. *Hand.* Kamer 08/12/1999, 6.

research would be a "political manoeuvre" and a "torpedo" (Ibid.) against their party. This concern informed a sense of indignation and anger among the Christian democratic MPs, as they felt that their party was not treated correctly. In effect, they responded to this mistreatment by harshly criticizing and ridiculing Ludo de Witte and the Lumumba Commission (Ibid., 25-26). The opposition thus felt that the research into the past was not just at all and would primarily be harmful to their party and state. It is noteworthy that it was these emotions that were primarily countered by calls for serenity.

The emotions regarding the debates had noticeably shifted when MPs voted for the establishment of the Lumumba Commission a few months later. During the session preceding the vote, there was a widespread consensus among MPs about the goals of the parliamentary inquiry. It can be assumed that this consensus weakened the negative emotional dispositions towards the Lumumba Commission. Whereas implicit and contextual references towards shame and guilt were still present,[236] they were expressed in modifying and mitigating terms, such as referring to Belgian complicity in the murder as a "possible mistake" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 25) or an "ambiguity from the colonial past" (Ibid., 19). A plausible explanation for this restraint towards Belgian complicity is that the parliamentary research commission first needed to determine Belgium's wrongdoing. Any expression of guilt or shame would thus be premature.

The presence of more positive emotions, mainly pride and hope, during the voting of the Lumumba Commission further indicates that the research had become less threatening to MPs. These positive emotions also reveal that MPs had reason to believe that the research would be somehow beneficial. Specifically, some MPs expressed pride with regards to the foundation of the Lumumba Commission, believing that it would "augment the level of morality" (*Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 21) and that, because of this, they could hold their heads held high "in the face of the world" (Ibid., 19). Aside from being proud of the effort to come to terms with the past, hope was recurrently expressed about the idea that "turning a painful page" would lead to "a cleansed relationship between Congolese and Belgians" (Ibid., 16). In effect, the frequency with which the inevitable reconciliation with Congo was proclaimed, shows that it was considered a valuable goal to the MPs that they hoped to reach.[237]

---

[236] The actions would still be discussed as "so cruel, so brutal, so monstrous" and "criminal", see *Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 19.

[237] Aside from that, there was also the remarkable belief that it would help with the conflict in Congo in one way or another, see *Hand.* Kamer 23/02/2000, 22; 25.

During the discussions on the Lumumba Commission's report, there was a final change in the emotional demeanour of MPs. Both guilt and shame were more directly expressed during these final debates. Although the difference between the emotions was difficult to analytically separate as explicit verbalizations remained exceptional[238], there was a notable rise in contextual indicators of guilt. As the commissioned research had shown that Belgium was morally responsible for the murder, MPs would argue that (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002B, 22-23):

> "[…] moral guilt extends the responsibility of the facts of the murder to the circumstances. While establishing a political responsibility poses a certain risk that the matter would be historicized and the debt would be placed almost exclusively with the former government, the scope of that moral debt is very wide and clearly includes a question to the current government to take her responsibility."

MPs thus reasoned in terms of "taking up responsibility" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002A, 21), which is characteristic of guilt, rather than shame. As Belgium's wrongdoing had been exactly determined by the research, there were clear transgressions to feel guilty about. Moreover, the notion that further violations of these norms would not occur, as is telling of guilt, was also present as MPs believed that they would avoid these "old mistakes" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002B, 5) and make the Lumumba Commission a "lesson for the future" (Ibid., 3).

On the other hand, positive emotions, mainly pride, courage, hope, and joy, were more prominent. Pride was primarily felt about the "terrific" (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002B, 54) and "pioneering work" (Ibid., 7) of the Lumumba Commission. Its approach, namely a symbiosis between politics and science, was a source of praise and joy for the MPs, hoping that future parliamentary research commissions would work similarly. Looking back at the accomplishments of the Lumumba Commission, MPs glorified the courage that it took for parliament to "dare open up this difficult page in our political history" (Ibid., 29). An MP even proclaimed that it "may even be the first time that a parliamentary commission of inquiry has examined its own colonial past" (Ibid., 29). In general, these final debates were characterized by a hope towards a better future and that "the Lumumba Commission can be the basis of a new dialogue [between Belgium and Congo], based on equality and mutual respect" (Ibid., 25).

---

[238] This contrasts with a similar case in Australia. Where Australian politicians explicitly called for shame during the Stolen Generation scandal, Belgian MPs did not verbally refer to this emotion. See Ahmed (2014) and Muldoon (2017).

In contrast, some MPs of the majority also explicitly expressed disappointment about the concise and unclear conclusion and policy recommendations of the Lumumba Commission. Because of the high hopes regarding the report, MPs who were in favour of the commission felt that it did not go far enough. Moreover, the absence of Congolese or African experts made them feel that it was a missed opportunity for interstate collaboration (*Hand.* Kamer 05/02/2002B, 20). They connected this disappointment with a call for courage to continue the work and expressed hope towards further research (Ibid., 30). Additionally, some conservative dissidents expressed disappointment with the discussions and debates on the complicity of King Baudouin in the murder as they felt that these debates were unjustly discrediting the Belgian head of state (Ibid., 16). Yet, this did not mean that the Lumumba Commission itself was flawed, but that its conclusions were used improperly. Similarly, moderate and far-right Flemish nationalists expressed disappointment because they felt that there was not enough attention for the Belgian victims who fell to the violent aftermath of the Congolese independence.

CONCLUSION

This research set out to elucidate the particular dynamics of colonial shame. Based on a narrative and interpretative sentiment analysis of how Belgian political elites dealt with the Lumumba Commission, the study presents three key observations regarding colonial shame in this case. First, Belgian MPs initially coped with the shame situation that the book of de Witte had instigated by construing a narcissistic state shame narrative. The accusation of the book resonated with a community of feeling that signalled distrust towards the Belgian state and effectively challenged the beliefs of the MPs in the inherent morality of their country. However, the narcissistic state shame narrative was quickly abandoned for a narrative that was more in line with the situational state shame type. More specifically, supporters of the government connected their state's past actions to its present initiatives. A new comedic narrative recounted the Belgian complicity in the assassination of Lumumba along a regressive curve but conceived the contemporary reflection on this 'dark page in the past' as a progressive turn in their nation's Self. The characters in this comedic narrative, Belgium and Congo, were discussed as morally complex actors who would eventually reconcile. It was assumed that this presupposed reconciliation between Belgium and Congo could only follow after an apology, which would separate Belgium's transgressive past from its progressive and ethical present.

Secondly, the narrative change was facilitated through calls for objectivity and serenity that actively depoliticized the issue. Proponents of the new government demanded a serene debate to avoid 'political passions' and suggested a scientific approach to refrain from extensive and contentious discussions. While these calls for serenity and objectivity are not objectionable in principle, they do function as a means to shape a contentious political and ethical issue. In this case, they can be understood as discursive responses to the anxiety that the state shame situation had generated. Aside from soothing contentiousness, calls for serenity and objectivity also signal a procedure to manage and control the issue. At the same time, these principles effectively stunted the moral and political conflict regarding Belgium's involvement in the murder of Lumumba by placing the political work with the commission experts (Bevernage 2011). In the end, Belgium's reflection on its colonial past was depoliticized to cope with the anxiety that had caused the reflection in the first place.

Thirdly, the apology was facilitated by a gradual change towards a discourse of guilt. Although it was not explicitly discussed in the debates, the moral mechanism that this emotion implies, namely that Belgium had *done something wrong*, rather than it *was wrong*, and that it should rectify this wrongdoing, became prevalent near the end of the commission. This was the result of the commissioned research coming to a close, which specified the wrongdoing of Belgium. The presence of this mechanism of guilt in the discourse made an apology appropriate and instrumental in attaining the presupposed reconciliation between the two states.[239] MPs who were proponents of the government believed that, through an apology, Belgium could repair the harm it had done to Congo, which would, in turn, bring the latter to reconcile with the former and absolve the Belgian state of its part in this atrocity. Concurrently, this generated feelings of pride and courage among MPs, as their state had gained honour by complying with its new ethical Self-identity.

Based on these particular findings, it can be concluded that this chapter generally validates the pessimist side of the debate in the literature on colonial shame. More specifically, the commissioned inquiry and apology by the Belgian state originated from internal dynamics to secure the state's sense of Self. In challenging the Belgian state Self, the book by de Witte

---

[239] This echoes the debate between Hannah Arendt ([1964]2000) and Karl Jaspers ([1947]2001) regarding collective guilt. The latter argued that the signalling of guilt by the state acts as a form of recognition of the wrongfulness of past actions and expresses collective responsibility. However, Arendt counters this notion by stating that an expression of collective guilt evades the individual's feeling of guilt. Instead of the latter emotion, Arendt believes that shame is a more appropriate emotion to feel as it acknowledges the shared responsibility in this regard (Zembylas 2019, 308).

effectively generated a state shame situation which could have set the stage for a significant change in Belgium's Self-identity and state policy. Yet, rather than changing the state's Self-identity towards generating more humility and self-awareness, the politics of state shame that surrounded the commission ended up largely resecuring the extant state Self. By apologising for the state's vague 'moral responsibility' for a temporary transgression, namely, the left-leaning government was able to condemn the former state and simultaneously promote its current progressive and ethical Self. As the past Self was deemed wrongful, in other words, the wrongness also lay in the past (Cf. Bevernage 2015).

This research has also identified three additional qualities to the politics of state shame. The first is that a state shame situation originates only when a shaming narrative becomes politicized. This case study shows that the issue became political only when the shaming narrative of de Witte was picked up by the wider public through the documentary. The causality of state shame thus comprises the process that a shaming narrative is made salient in the extant community of feeling through its politicization, whether this occurs through an international human rights campaign (Chapter Five), social mobilisation (Chapter Six), or a mediatized scandal (this chapter). Second, the politics of state shame can be translated into other emotional politics when this serves the dominant narrative. As this case showed, the discourse shifted from a politics of shame to one of guilt and pride, so that the government parties could secure their progressive and ethical state Self-narrative. Although the conceptual framework of this dissertation allows and even assumes that state shame becomes translated into other emotions, this case has indicated that the emotional shifts occur primarily to serve dominant narratives. Third and finally, the end of a state shame situation can be situated with a festive moment that secures the new state Self. The comedic belief in the harmonious reconciliation during this case facilitated the apology, which, in turn, secured the progressive and ethical state Self-narrative of the left-leaning government. Rather than bringing about a sustained reconciliation between Belgium, Congo, and the relatives of Lumumba, the apology was a symbolic act that celebrated the onset of the new state identity that the government tried to promote. In succeeding with this goal, the case implied that the politics of state shame end, especially in the case where a situational state shame narrative is dominant, with the validation of a new narcissistic state fantasy.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION: SHAME AND (POST-)IMPERIAL POLITICS

The central goal of this dissertation was to gain insight into the politics of state shame. In presenting a study that combines a comprehensive theoretical discussion and various empirical case studies, the hope is that this goal has been met. The research began with the observation that state shame is ubiquitous in contemporary politics but that the concept is either generally absent in IR's theoretical traditions or overly simplified. In making the argument that a complex understanding of this concept is more empirically grounded than its alternatives in current IR literature, the choice was made to ground state shame through empirical research. As the particular phenomenology of state shame informs that it is often misidentified and unexpressed, grounding this concept required the construction of a theoretical framework that guided the empirical analysis. This framework is based on the conception of state shame as a narrative regarding a negative assessment of the state. The latter originates from a shame situation, where agents recognize and respond to an actor that judges the state based on a failure about social norms or personal ideals. Depending on how this shame situation is conceived, one of four different types of state shame narratives are generated, each with its particular characteristics. The empirical analysis aimed to study if and how this ideal typical model brings more insight into political situations. To this end, the dissertation analysed the specific case of how Belgian political elites coped with challenges regarding their state's imperial status. The focus was placed on three cases, namely the Red Rubber scandal (Chapter Five), Congolese Independence (Chapter Six), and the Lumumba Commission (Chapter Seven).

While these empirical analyses have indicated that there is still much to be uncovered about the workings of state shame and the particular case of Belgium's (post-)imperial past, the dissertation has shed light on some key dynamics. For one, the research has brought insight into the emergence, politics, and effects of state shame narratives. In particular, it has shown how political actors perform during a shame situation, how these narratives come to inform state behaviour, and how state shame can lead both to political change and reaffirm the status quo. Moreover, the theoretical framework has also contributed to insights into the empirical case regarding the origins of the Belgian imperial narrative, the identity dynamics surrounding the formal decolonisation of Congo, and the Self-securing politics that characterized the Lumumba

221

Commission. Aside from demonstrating the analytical potential of the theoretical framework of state shame, the analyses have also indicated the limits of this model and where additional theorization is required. The final pages of this dissertation will be dedicated to further specifying these conceptual, theoretical, and empirical contributions and reflecting on the ethics of state shame and its politics.

GROUNDING STATE SHAME

The theoretical framework of this research is an elaborate ideal type that tries to capture the complex workings of state shame. Rather than 'test' this conception and assess whether it corresponds with reality, the dissertation aimed to gain insight into how state shame works in lived practices and processes of meaning-making. For one, the theoretical framework was built around the notion that state shame is based on a narrative. This conception proved to be a productive way of approaching state shame. On a theoretical and empirical level, it was particularly effective in avoiding the penchant in the literature to conceive of state shame either as a purely vicariously felt collective emotion or as a metaphor for an interstate social mechanism. As these understandings restrict the phenomenology of state shame to an individual experience or a social mechanism, they limit both theoretically and empirically the insights onto the politics that surround the emotion. The narrative understanding of state shame, however, is capable of linking these various levels of analysis with other characteristics of the emotion without essentialising or reducing its complexity. In so doing, it can explain how individuals can come to vicariously feel shame towards the state while also avoiding necessitating this affective experience for the narrative to be salient or even explicitly expressed in a community of feeling. This understanding also explains how state shame informs state behaviour, yet while avoiding an overly mechanistic conception through the focus on political debate and how this comes to inform state actions.

Following this narrative understanding of state shame, the theoretical framework constructed an ideal typical model based on the so-called shame situation. This latter concept was used to identify how an agent socially constructs the negative assessment of their Self. In qualifying how this shame situation can be varyingly understood based on the source of assessment (Self or Other) and failure (external norms or Self-ideals), divergent expressions and action tendencies of state shame were made intelligible. The specific types of state shame, namely situational, narcissistic, aggressive, or deferential, were key in maintaining the complexity of

222

state shame but simultaneously making sense of its elaborate workings. These types closely corresponded with the narratives that were analysed in the empirical cases. For example, the anti-colonial claims by Vandervelde and Lorand (narcissistic shame), their pro-Leopoldian counterparts (aggressive shame), the narrative of moral complicity of the Lumumba Commission (situational shame), or the belief in imperial victimhood following the 1960 riots in Congo (deferential shame). These interpretative schemes helped uncover and understand political dynamics that were particular to the historical cases and shed light on the causes and effects of state shame. In doing so, the theoretical framework has performed remarkably well as a conceptual tool for better understanding the specific dynamics of state shame.

However, it reached its limits in two respects. First, it became clear during the analyses that the sources of assessment (Self or Other) and failure (social norms or Self-ideals) were not the most straightforward interpretative elements. While they helped in identifying the different state shame narratives during the theoretical and conceptual work, at the empirical level they proved sometimes to be too abstract and indiscernible. More specifically, while it was possible to identify the Self or Other in the discourse, it was at times difficult to assess who or what was conceived as the main agent.[240] This does not mean that it is meaningless to make this categorisation, it only exemplifies that discursive practices, in reality, are far more complex than any analytical concept can easily capture. Likewise, it was rarely possible to distinguish between social norms and Self-ideals. As these two categories were primarily analytical in nature, it makes sense that this rather theoretical division was not apparent in lived practice. What did seem to be more easily discernible regarding the source of failure was its timing, namely that it could be conceived as either temporary (i.e. situational and aggressive shame) or permanent (i.e. narcissistic and deferential shame), if it required a sense of urgency (i.e. narcissistic and situational shame) or hesitancy (i.e. aggressive and deferential shame), or at least if it had shorter- or longer-term effects.

A second issue was that shaming narratives required more explicit theorisation. While the theoretical framework did identify these narratives and their emplotment, it was limited in capturing more particular characteristics and dynamics. Future research can elaborate more thoroughly on this topic but this discussion can already expand on some expectations. For one, shaming narratives can be thought of as originating from a position that sees a particular issue

---

[240] The exception to this rule is during moments of scapegoating, where the Other is very clearly identified (e.g. Chapter Five: Morel, Casement, Vandervelde, Lorand; Chapter Six: Lumumba).

as problematic and argues that it requires a profound change or a specific redemptive action by the state. For a shaming narrative to affect state behaviour, it must resonate with a community of feeling and gain salience through a tragic event, public scandal, or some form of mass media exposure. During this circulation, a shaming narrative needs to be understood as a negative assessment, otherwise it will either remain in obscurity or be misunderstood as, for example, a falsehood or a means of gaining attention. In engaging with this shame situation, political agents will appropriate and possibly transform the shaming narrative so that it corresponds with their political interests and goals. The ensuing narrative competition will determine whether the shaming narrative becomes dominant, adjusted to accommodate political interests, countered, or completely ignored. Operationalising this understanding of shaming narratives with regard to cases in various domains, such as during scandals or ongoing contentious international issues, could expose more complex political dynamics and characteristics of these particular narratives. Further research can be done in tracing the production, dispersal, and translation of shaming narratives into political contexts.

To conclude this subsection, the hope is expressed that future research can further calibrate the narrative understanding of state shame and the theoretical framework that has been employed here. One potential avenue for further research is that the current dissertation only studied the narrative conception of state shame and its politics in the particular cultural and political context of a Western democratic state dealing with its imperial past. In so doing, an analysis where this theoretical framework is applied to, for example, non-democratic states or countries in the Global South, might reveal more particular characteristics of state shame. A comparative analysis could also indicate conceptual biases of the current theoretical framework and expose culturally and contextually specific understandings of state shame. Moreover, it could eventually facilitate the construction of competing, and potentially more grounded, theories on state shame. The four types of shame narratives can likewise be explored with more focus through further conceptual, theoretical, and empirical research into their particularity and politics. In so doing, future studies could focus on how shame narratives come to be adjusted throughout time and specify what these shifts indicate about the political role of these narratives and how they relate to memory and history. The four types of shame narratives can also be used to explore other contexts where collective shame might be narrated, such as sexual abuse scandals of the Catholic Church or the boy scouts, corruption scandals of political parties, and legal cases against the government. Moreover, the focus can be placed more on how victims and disadvantaged communities narrate their shame and what the emplotment exposes about

their particular social position. Theoretically inclined researchers could further explore whether and how other key analytical and political concepts are connected to the shame situation, and state shame in general, such as time,[241] scandal, and solidarity. Finally, the interlinking of other emotions and their politics, namely guilt, disgust, courage, humiliation, dignity, serenity, hate, pride, and many others, with the theoretical framework of state shame can lead to productive research in IR and the sociology of emotion.

REVIEWING THE POLITICS OF STATE SHAME

Four general expectations regarding the politics of state shame were presented at the end of Chapter Three, which the empirical analyses have both confirmed and challenged. The first expectation was that the sources of assessment and failure could be reframed by political agents. While the previous discussion has indicated that these two interpretative elements were sometimes difficult to discern, they were undeniably subject to reconfiguration by political agents. First, the dimensions of Self and Other, or which actors were identified with the Belgian state and who were not, were clearly politically contested. This is illustrated by how the anti-colonial opposition was deemed 'unpatriotic' and in league with external forces (i.e. the 'Liverpudlian merchants') during the Red Rubber scandal. However, the categories of Self and Other could change quite radically, which is most notably illustrated by the figure of Leopold II. As the King's social position seemed to shift completely during the debates on the annexation of the Congo Free State, it showed that the Self/Other category can be profoundly flexible during shame situations. In so doing, state shame acts as a site where Self/Other categories, at least in elite political contexts, can be profoundly realigned. Moreover, the reconfiguration of Self and Other was an ongoing process that could shift quite rapidly and radically. The analysis of Chapter Five, for example, showed that when the report of the Janssens Commission had come out, and certainly after Leopold's public letter, the patriotism of Vandervelde and Lorand was not questioned anymore while the King was vilified. Future research can explore how events come to create these particular dynamics and how this relates to the particular causality of state shame.

The sources of failure were also highly contested by MPs. Whereas no discursive conflict could be discerned regarding the failure of externally imposed social norms or state Self-ideals, the

---

[241] Some work in psychoanalysis and philosophy has engaged with this topic but only regarding shame on the individual level. See Hinton and Willemsen (2018).

determining of the exact wrongdoing fuelled highly contentious and even antagonistic debates between parliamentary factions. The debates regarding the sources of failure were notably apparent during the analyses of the Red Rubber scandal and the Lumumba Commission, as these issues inspired dedicated inquiries to investigate the nature of the state's failure. In the chapter on Congolese independence, on the other hand, the sources of failure remained rather undisputed up until the eruption of the political conflict between the Socialist opposition and the majority parties. This indicates something critical about the timing of the shame situation. More specifically, agents are capable of reconceiving their former claims regarding sources of failure and assessment when an event presents them with a strategic opportunity. These events do not necessarily create a new shame situation (in that there is no new phase of recognition) but challenge the response to the initial negative assessment. In other words, when political actors see an opportunity in realigning themselves with the shame situation, they reconstruct existing shame narratives which can, in turn, generate an additional or new narrative competition.

A second expectation was that structural inequality and hierarchy in international relations would mediate how states cope with a shame situation. Because of the single case study approach, the empirical analysis did not generate profound insights regarding the influence of international structures regarding the politics of state shame. Although Belgium did shift in its status and position throughout the period of analysis, the analyses did not offer grounds for adequate comparison to come to specific conclusions regarding how the state shame narratives are embedded or related to Belgium's place in the international hierarchy. Second, the theoretical framework is currently designed to be more agency-focused, which means that it does not have a dedicated focus on structural elements of political conflicts. It is here, then, that the understanding of state shame as a narrative fails to capture a key element of the politics that it tries to capture. The theoretical framework can thus be further developed to amend this discrepancy by theorizing how international status and power dynamics play a role in facilitating the various state shame narratives.

However, what the empirical analysis did expose about international structures regarding the politics of state shame, is that hierarchy and status are narrated differently during shame situations. While this is not an entirely novel contribution (e.g. Zarakol 2011; Suzuki 2017; Towns and Rumelili 2017), the connection to the theoretical framework of this dissertation brings more understanding about how this narration happens. The use of the typology gives insight into shifts in how political agents conceive the status of the state in divergent ways and

how narrative competitions between these agents inform policy processes. The literature namely assumes that political agents are compelled to actively engage with the international status of their state following the challenge of their state's sense of Self (Steele 2008). Yet, in Chapter Five, the narration of Belgium's imperial status preceded and even facilitated, the annexation of the Congo Free State. Even before the Belgian state acquired material or legal proof of its imperial status, it was already convincing itself of having this social position. Similar processes were observed in Chapter Six (between the 1959 and 1960 riots) and Chapter Seven (the narration of friendship between Congo and Belgium). This raises questions about how state shame facilitates the narration of hierarchy and how this impacts the processes of status acquisition and policy actions that succeed it. Linked with the observation that urgency and temporality were always a subject of discussion regarding these processes, future research could elaborate on the intersection between the politics of time, status narration, international hierarchy, and state shame.

The third expectation was that state shame narratives could bring about both political change and sustain the status quo. Two of the cases, namely the Red Rubber scandal and Congolese independence, indicate how state shame narratives bring about political change. The analyses of these cases correspond with the expectation that state shame situations generate a moment of hybridity and offer the potential to change the state's sense of Self. What the change ended up being in these cases, namely the rise of an imperial Self and a narrative of imperial victimhood indicates that the identity change does not need to strongly coincide with apparent biographical narratives. In both cases, there was some dissonance between the older master narratives on Belgium, illustrated by the jump from a 'reluctance' towards colonialism to imbuing the state Self with an imperial pedigree and other narcissistic fantasies (Chapter Five) and the shift from the omnipotent imperial state to the innocent victim of anti-colonial aggression (Chapter Six). State shame thus offers an opportunity for political agents to emphasize different elements of state narratives and construct novel state Self-conceptions that can partially conflict with previous beliefs. They do, however, need to logically narrate this change in such a way that it accommodates present needs. In the case of Chapter Seven, a change in the Belgian Self had already been proclaimed, namely Belgium's new political culture and international *réveil*. The response to the shame situation during this scandal had to correspond with this new Self-narrative for the political elites that supported the latter. State shame narratives can thus also be inscribed in extant politics of Self-securing by the state and reaffirm the status quo that the dominant political agents want to maintain.

The final expectation held that the ethical roles of state shame are particular to the context. All three cases show that the politics of state shame can have the potential of being both ethically laudable and questionable, even regarding the opinions of the time. To keep this brief, as the final subsection of this conclusion will more profoundly engage with the ethics of the politics of state shame, any shame narrative – regardless of its ethical nature – could be appropriated to serve political ends. During the Red Rubber scandal, for one, the narcissistic state shame narratives of the anti-colonial opposition would signal the need for political intervention and facilitate the eventual annexation of the Congo Free State by Belgium.[242] The analysis of the Lumumba Commission also indicated that the tragic and horror-struck realisation of some MPs regarding their country's involvement in the murder would facilitate the apology, which effectively led to the fantasy that this past had been adequately dealt with. Notably, during this issue, the Flemish nationalist party Vlaams Blok would also express narcissistic state shame narratives, at least at the start of the debates. However, their intention was mainly to shame the Belgian state and, in so doing, question its morality and necessity rather than make the case for a debate on past colonial wrongs. At the final debates, they would assume a position that corresponds more with aggressive shame by demanding an apology from the Congolese state for the treatment of the former colonizers during the 1960 riots. These illustrations do not serve the purpose of claiming that even ethical stances are, in the end, somehow self-serving or harmful. They are purely meant to remind oneself that it is key to remain reflective regarding narratives on complex ethical issues and be vigilant regarding their appropriation.

RETHINKING THE POLITICS OF STATE SHAME

The analyses also uncovered new characteristics of the politics of state shame that inspire further avenues for theorisation. A first observation is that the analyses indicated that there is a hegemonic way for Belgian political agents to deal with shame situations. More specifically, the dominance and recurrence of comedic narratives, and thus situational shame, signals that Belgian political culture seems to be characterized by a belief in the state as a morally ambiguous actor that can be guided towards ethical behaviour. It can take responsibility regarding past wrongdoings, absolve itself from these wrongs, and take the step towards a more

---

[242] This argument runs similar to Berber Bevernage's (2018) claim regarding the progressive narrative on the Congo Free State becoming a 'social question' that had to be resolved through annexation.

just civic culture (Booth 2020, 44).[243] In so doing, this conception of the Belgian state exhibits characteristics of a liberal individual, that evoke "the subject of the market, the subject of civil or criminal law, the ego of psychology, and indeed, the ultimate subject of liberal individualism, an individual united by the memory of past actions yet unburdened by any history that precedes its consciousness" (Trouillot 2000, 179; see also Hay 2002; Kinnvall 2015). This inclination towards situational shame can be categorised as a 'liberal politics of shame',[244] or a political position where shame situations tend to be resolved through redemptive rituals, sided by the belief in the pedagogical qualities of these processes (i.e. the idea of 'learning from one's mistakes'). The goal for the agent is primarily to absolve the Self of its injustices and serve its present or future needs. This might be the basis for an argument that can explain the particular centrality and role of scandals, crises, apologies, and tragedies in contemporary Western politics.

Based on this argument for a liberal politics of shame, the analyses also give some, albeit more superficial, arguments to indicate competing ideological penchants in dealing with state shame. It was, for example, noticeable that narcissistic state shame narratives were more often expressed by progressive MPs and in particular those that held some affiliation or appreciation with radical beliefs such as Emile Vandervelde, Léon Furnémont, Célestin Demblon (Chapter Five), and Gaston Moulin (Chapter Six).[245] While speculative, this could be because of Marxist beliefs in the revolutionary potential of shame (see Marx 1967; O'Donnell 2017) or a progressive inclination of distrustfulness towards the ethical potential of capitalist states. Alternatively, this could also be ascribed to their particular political position, namely that they were in the opposition during these cases, making them assume a narrative that is often more critical towards the status quo. Regardless of this nuance, the argument could be made for a 'revolutionary politics of shame',[246] which would manage the shame situation through a focus on fault finding and emphasizing the injustices suffered. The emphasis will be placed on the shared moral world of the perpetrators and victims, which is believed to constitute a community of justice (Paine 1998; Booth 2020, 48; 49). In so doing, this political position would be based

---

[243] An analogy can be made with how Karl Jaspers ([1947]2001) conceives collective guilt and responsibility.
[244] See the work of Debbie Lisle on failure (e.g. 2018) for a similar argument on 'a liberal way of failing'. Additionally, this could be linked to the 'post-traumatic growth' literature, where trauma is believed to be overcome to generate a more successful or moral individual. See, for example, Weiss and Berger (2010).
[245] In Chapter Seven this would be Ludo de Witte, who identifies (and was identified as such in parliamentary debates) with a far-left ideology. However, because he is not an MP and was the author of the primary aggressive shaming narrative regarding Belgium's involvement in the murder of Lumumba, rather than a narcissistic state shame narrative, he does not seem suited in this list.
[246] This term is already used by Michalinos Zembylas (2019) and Aislinn O'Donnell (2017).

on the notion that the actor's or collective's Self is inherently problematic and that the specific issue is exemplary of this wrongfulness.[247] Resolving the issue, thus, entails a radical restructuring, whether of the actor itself or society in general.

In contrast, conservative, radical right, and right-wing populist MPs tended to refute shame situations through aggressive state shame narratives. During the Red Rubber scandal, the pro-Leopoldian faction consisted of conservative bulwarks such as Charles Woeste and Henry Carton de Wiart. The debate regarding Congolese decolonisation was characterised by Catholic and conservative liberal MPs who singularly praised the colonial past and refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing. During the Lumumba Commission, Herman Van Rompuy, a Christian democratic MP at the time, would claim that "the importance of the case-Lumumba is nil" and even actively refuse to read the book of Ludo de Witte (Reynebau 2000; Van Bockstael 1999). The argument for a 'conservative politics of shame' is that they are characterized by a refusal to deal with shame situations and aim to defend the morality of the Self, at least until there has been internal validation of the wrongdoing such as a commission. The shame situation can thus only be dealt with by preserving the honour of the Self through unquestioned affirmation or by processes of self-reflection.

While these ideal types require more theoretical and empirical attention, they do further complexify the politics of shame by identifying more subtle political dynamics and adding another layer to its theorisation. In this respect, the dissertation has also shown that it can be productive to think about the politics of shame on a more collective level of analysis and specify what these politics could entail. The analyses have indicated that there is a marked role of shame in determining state behaviour, namely through emotional logics that are imbued into state narratives. It begs the question as to how this translates to other collective actors, in particular NGOs, religious institutions, and companies. The expectation can be proposed that similar shame narratives will be constructed but perhaps characterized by their particular politics or penchant towards particular narrative emplotments. This argument regarding shame on the collective level could also benefit from further research into the prevalence of shame narratives in the everyday, in particular in documentaries and popular non-fiction work but also broad

---

[247] This radical politics of shame can also be associated with Rousseau's thought regarding the state of nature. More specifically, the notion that civilisation corrupted the blissful and virtuous state of nature through its facilitation of unhealthy kinds of Self-love (i.e. pathological narcissism) implies the necessity of shame to counter this unwarranted sense of Self. The return to the state of nature would thus require a constant focus on the wrongness of this Self and the necessity to return to an 'authentic' or 'true' state of being.

fictional material.[248] In gaining more insight into how state shame narratives are propagated, sustained, and challenged in popular culture, this kind of research could explore the broader links between or particular dynamics of historical silence, taboo, and the politics of emotion in the everyday.

The theoretical connection between shame, narcissism, and vulnerability is also a nexus that can inspire future research in IR and beyond. Research on the dynamics of narcissism in international politics is already finding traction (e.g. Hägstrom 2021; Naudé 2022) but additional focus can be placed on how differing types of narcissism, such as grandiose and vulnerable, can expose more significant tensions in the politics of state Self-narration. A different specification of this concept is the notion of the 'narcissism of minor differences' that could explore the "dread of sameness" in world politics (see Freud 1930; Blok 1998; Figlio 2018, 7). More specifically, this reasoning builds on the Freudian belief that interpersonal antipathy hails from the identification of sameness. Individuals cope with this observation by developing delusions of difference, effectively inspiring hierarchies and violence. Research invested in the aetiology of violence can explore whether this notion can shed a novel light on international dynamics of violence and how state shame can act as a challenge to these narcissistic fantasies and desires of difference.[249] Similarly, state shame could also have a meaningful interaction with the literature on vulnerability in IR (e.g. Beattie and Schick 2013). Narcissistic state shame narratives namely conceive the state Self as being vulnerable and require it to come to terms with this. Yet, narratives that corresponded with this type lend themselves to strategic appropriation or were easily countered by narratives that secured the state Self. Research in IR could engage with the tensions between the challenge of narcissistic fantasies and the development of vulnerability by exploring how state shame plays a role in the management of this sensitive position. Additionally, other researchers could focus on reconceiving the theoretical framework of this dissertation to link up vulnerability, state narcissism, state shame, hybridity, interstate violence, and the rise of populism.

A final avenue for theorisation is the end of the shame situation. While the pragmatic argument can be made that shame situations conclude when shame narratives are no longer narrated, a more theoretical-imbued response is needed to understand what might bring this about. For one,

---

[248] In the case of Belgium, these could be exemplified by the documentaries '*Kinderen van de kolonisatie/collaboratie*' [children of colonisation/collaboration] or the books of Hugo Claus that deal with collaboration.

[249] A particularly productive way of thinking in this regard could be the linking of Girard's understanding of violence and social organisation (e.g. Girard 1988) to the debates on Hobbesian thinking in IR.

shame situations seemed to end when the response to the wrongfulness was deemed adequate by the MPs so that their attention could be turned into a technical discussion (Chapter Five). This meant that, at least for the political agents that constructed the dominant shame narrative, the issue seemed to be resolved. A different end was observed in Chapter Six, when a new state Self-narration of imperial victimhood imposed a hegemonic silence, or taboo, onto the subject of the colonial past. Chapter Seven showed that this silence of the past resurged after an 'abortive ritual', or a symbolic action that reaffirmed the sense of Self (Tavuchis 1991; Trouillot 2000). The shame situation was thus concluded when political agents believed that they either resolved the negative assessment of their state or that they considered it politically inopportune to engage with it further. Future studies can identify other ways in which political agents end shame situations by further exploring the links of state shame, memory, trauma, historical silence, stigma, taboo, and transitional justice.

SHAME AND THE BELGIAN EMPIRE

The research also contributed to Belgian historiography. For one, Chapter Five traced how an imperial narrative became politically significant in the Belgian parliament. In contrast to the reluctant imperialist thesis and corresponding with more recent research, the analysis of the Red Rubber scandal exposed that Belgian MPs only started narrating their country as being eligible for imperialism after Leopold II's controversial letter. The theoretical framework of this dissertation was also able to shed light onto why these specific narcissistic fantasies and desires became so dominant, namely as part of an aggressive shame reaction and refutation of the claim that Belgium would not be worthy of being an empire. In so doing, this particular case research contributes to the literature by bringing insight into how and why Belgian imperialism came to be imagined by the political elite. Additionally, the analyses showed that the eventual annexation of the Congo Free State was not solely a response of Belgian MPs to manage the spoiled identity of their state but also acted as a confirmation of Belgium's imperial eligibility. The annexation was thus a clear expression of imperial desire, effectively disproving the reluctant imperialist thesis. Future research can explore how the Belgian imperial narrative developed in the following years and potentially link it with the claim in the literature regarding Belgium's 'nervousness' regarding its imperial status and how this relates to the shifts in international position and image after WWI (Cf. Hunt 2016). Other works can also elaborate on the imperial master narrative itself and specify how state shame refutation mediated the

'selling of the Congo' (Cf. Stanard 2012) and created particular narcissistic fantasies and desires.

Chapter Six explored the impact of the calls for independence and the effective decolonisation in Congo on Belgian imperial Self-narration. Previous research claimed that the Belgian political elite either conceived the riots as proof of the inherent barbarity of the Congolese or that the decolonisation process was conceived as a profound loss. Alternatively, the chapter entangled both these theses by claiming that Belgian MPs came to conceive their empire as a victim. The specific explanation is that the 1959 riots generated a comedic understanding of the decolonisation, in that MPs accepted some wrongdoing but mainly believed in the inherent goodness of Belgium. Projecting the idea that Congo and Belgium would remain close allies was also part of this narrative. The 1960 revolt, however, challenged this latter notion and generated the narrative that conceived the Belgian state as a victim that was unjustly accused of aggression. Meanwhile, a narrative competition erupted among MPs of the majority and opposition to pass on the blame for the Congo Crisis to one another. In so doing, the chapter contributes to the historical literature by giving insight into the narrative competition, emotional dimensions, and Self-securing politics during the late Belgian empire. Further research can elaborate on how this position of imperial victimhood relates to Belgium's neo-colonialism during and after the Congo Crisis and its involvement in the murder of Lumumba. Additionally, it could focus on how the narrative competition could be connected to the development of the colonial taboo and amnesia that dominated the following decades (Cf. Van den Braembussche 1995; 2002; Bobineau 2018). The exploration of this case through the lens of state narcissism, vulnerability, memory, and Self-securing politics seems to be a rich avenue for further research. Finally, more comparative work on late imperial narratives can give insight into the significance and role of demands for independence, decolonisation, and neo- and postcolonial practices resulting from these shifts in international status.

Aside from these specific contributions to the literature on Belgian imperialism, the dissertation also sheds light on how Belgium has since dealt with its colonial past. Chapter Seven contributed specifically to the historiographical debate surrounding the Lumumba Commission and the broader literature on historical apologies. While the focus of the current literature is mainly on the significance of the commission, the analyses of this dissertation primarily emphasized the Self-securing politics of the Belgian political elite. For one, it identified that MPs believed that the work of the commission and the apology would generate a reconciliation between Belgium and Congo. The issue surrounding the murder of Lumumba thus had to be

actively depoliticized through calls for objectivity and serenity. In turn, this would generate a discursive change towards guilt, which facilitated the apology. The guiding principle for the MPs was the securing of the moral Self of Belgium, which was the main goal of both the commission and the apology. Aside from this insight into the historical case, the analysis also challenges the notion that historical apologies offer a hybrid moment where there is potential for change (Cf. Untalan 2019). As these abortive rituals tend to originate from comedic narratives, and thus situational shame, they do not intend to significantly change the narcissistic Self-conception of the state. Rather, the analysis shows that hybridity is not achieved through the assumed fantasy of future reconciliation. This insight figures as a call for future research to revisit the political conditions that are necessary to attain such a hybrid moment during Self-securing politics.

In exploring the role of shame narratives in the Belgian (post-)empire, the research also gave insight into the emotional life of empire. The expectation was, justly so, that the dominant emotions regarding the colony and the imperial state Self were primarily pride, courage, and enthusiasm. While this research has not contradicted this expectation, it did expose the presence and political role of feelings of anxiety, shame, guilt, and fear. Imperial life was thus not characterized by a general sense of serenity and prideful joy as nostalgic narratives seem to conceive. Further research can study how this undulating anxiety of empire manifested itself in various imperial states and, perhaps, transcended their respective national contexts. Moreover, it can compare the Self-securitizing strategies of imperial states and theorize how these practices and ideas have continued or transformed in the postcolonial moment. The exploration of shame narratives has also generated insight into how the metropole and the colony are intimately entangled. On the one hand, this research has indicated that political elites in the metropole were emotionally invested in the affairs in the colonies, at least during these highly politicized issues. Regardless of the 'absent-mindedness' of imperialists, then, they did feel emotionally connected with the colony (Cf. Porter 2004). On the other hand, the parliamentary discourse that this research analysed was telling of how MPs systematically needed to (re)produce the relationship with the colony. Whether it was a legally separate entity, a historical part of Belgium (Chapter Five), a self-evident extension of the Belgian state, a glorious offspring of Belgium's tutelage (Chapter Six), a former colony, or a future friendly nation (Chapter Seven), the imagination surrounding the relationship of Belgium with Congo, but also Rwanda and Burundi, was constantly being reimagined (Cf. Dunn 2003). Further study

can focus on how emotions in state narratives transformed throughout time and informed the development of the Belgian imperial state and its later offshoots.

POST-IMPERIAL SHAME AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DECOLONISATION

Aside from contributing to the historical literature, the research presented in this dissertation also gives insight into current political dynamics regarding Belgium's colonial past. Providing a history of state shame regarding this issue can inspire a reflection on the contemporary politics and debates on postcolonial reconciliation. To give some context, since the 2002 apology for the country's involvement in Lumumba's murder, the colonial past has become more prominent in Belgian politics (Verleye, e.a. 2023). It would, however, take until 2010 for the colonial past to again become politically salient.[250] Central to the renewed interest was the 50th anniversary of Congolese independence, which sparked a brief moment of *Congomania* in Belgian media, generating non-fiction and fiction books, documentaries, and tv-segments (Goddeeris and Kiangu 2011).[251] This increase in cultural material effectively made critical narratives on Belgium's past imperialism more common in Belgian society (Bobineau 2018). Notably, the anniversary celebration in Congo was to be attended by the Belgian King Albert II and Queen Paola. Their presence acted as a symbolic representation of the historical nature of the ceremony and the bond between the countries. However, Joseph Kabila's questionable record regarding corruption and human rights violations did turn the royal attendance into a contentious issue in the Belgian press.[252] As this brief controversy subsided, so too did the attention to the colonial past.

The past five years have seen a remarkable increase in debate on Belgium's colonial past. Key moments in this regard were the 2018 reopening of the AfricaMuseum, the 2019 apology of Charles Michel to the Métis-children, and – most notably – the May 2020 Black Lives Matter protests (Azabar and Verleye 2023). As a result of the latter, King Filip I publicly expressed his

---

[250] The primary exception to this was the critical speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karel De Gucht (Open VLD), during his visit to Congo in 2004. His controversial claim was that Congo does not have a political class that can rule the country properly, a point that he would repeat throughout his mandate. This speech would create diplomatic tensions between the two countries and was widely considered to be inappropriate about the conduct of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[251] The most notable publication was *Congo: The Epic History of a People* by David van Reybrouck (2010), which recounts major episodes in the history of Congo through interviews with ordinary and notable Congolese. The popularity of the book was considered to be a milestone in Belgium's process of dealing with the colonial past, as it exposed Belgians to this history in an accessible, albeit criticized, format.

[252] Even more attention went to the jewels that Kabila's wife, Olive Lembe di Sita, gifted to Queen Paola, as this donation exemplified the stark contrast between the poverty of Congo and the wealth of the ruling class.

'deepest regret' regarding the acts of violence and cruelty in the Congo Free State and advised parliament to take further initiatives regarding this topic. A parliamentary commission was appointed, the so-called Congo Commission, to study "the Congo Free State and the colonial past of Belgium in Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, the impact thereof, and the response that this requires" (Bijzondere Commissie Koloniaal Verleden 2022, 2). Ten experts[253] were enlisted to facilitate the work of the commission by writing an extensive report which included an overview of Belgium's colonial and postcolonial history and the individual recommendations by the experts. After this research was concluded, the commission aimed to draft a resolution on an apology and other measures for reconciliation in 2022. Yet, after a – supposed – intervention by the royal family and the Liberal parties (OpenVld and MR), some commissioners resisted the notion of an apology as this could risk future demands for financial restitution. This failure of the Congo Commission has, again, brought a standstill to political actions regarding Belgium's reckoning with its colonial past (Azabar and Verleye 2023).

The theoretical framework of this dissertation can give some understanding of the cyclical coming and going of interest in Belgium's colonial past. More specifically, the crux of the explanation lies with the predominance of situational state shame in Belgian politics. It implies that any wrongfulness of the Belgian state, and certainly with regards to its past imperialism, is treated as if it is something that can be resolved. Typically, this entails that the Belgian parliament assigns the issue to a commission to study and discuss it, which would then recommend some form of redemptive action, after which reconciliation is expected. This was the case with the Lumumba Commission, the Rwandan genocide, the Métis-children affair, and the Congo Commission. The main aim of all these cases was to resolve the anxiety that the shame situation had generated for Belgium. This, in turn, sustained certain fantasies like the notion that Belgium can absolve itself from this past or that the current state can be disconnected from its past Self. These fantasies have effectively blinded Belgian political agents to the material needs of the victims and made them turn to other issues at hand.[254] In the cases where the narrative competition did not end with an apology, such as the 50th anniversary of Congolese independence or the 2018 reopening of the AfricaMuseum, the argument can be made that these issues were not considered salient enough in the community of feeling. In so doing, political

---

[253] Mathieu Zana Etambala, Gillian Mathys, Elikia Mbokolo, Anne Wetsi Mpoma, Mgr. Jean-Louis Nahimana, Pierre-Luc Plasman, Valérie Rosoux, Martien Schotsmans, Laure Uwase, and Sarah Van Beurden.
[254] The fact that the Lumumba fund (which was one of the promises following the apology) is still not operational, as well as the prolonged struggle regarding the material demands of the Métis-children, are illustrative of the reluctance and difficulty of the Belgian state to engage with the material demands of its victims.

agents did not consider the shame situation to be politically opportune and did not engage with shaming narratives for their political goals.

The politics of state shame can also give insight into the failure of the Congo Commission. Just like with other moments where the Belgian colonial past gained attention, a situational state shame narrative became dominant during this issue. More specifically, the BLM protests of May 2020 generated a shame situation where political agents, namely the King and the Belgian parliament, appropriated the issue because they conceived it to be salient in their community of feeling.[255] The King's expression of regret, the establishment of a commission, the enlisting of experts to write a report and formulate recommendations for reconciliation, and the expectation of an apology and some other redemptive actions, all indicate the presence of a comedic understanding of the shame situation. This is telling of the liberal politics of shame that currently define the political culture of Belgium. Yet, attaining a harmonious conclusion of the shame situation failed because of the reopening of the narrative competition by political agents. The fantasy of the desired reconciliation thus dissipated and was replaced by silence, as if there was nothing to be gained for the political agents by continuing this antagonistic conflict. Crucial in this regard was that certain dynamics of the colonial taboo were maintained, such as the necessity to depoliticize the debate on the imperial past and to keep the discussion technical or academic (Azabar and Verleye 2023).

A final observation can be made regarding emotionality towards the Belgian colonial past. All analyses indicated that emotions or 'political passions' were engaged with in various ways but the most notable emotional management happened through the demands for 'serenity' and 'neutrality'. These notions were uttered to signal the necessity to make the parliamentary discussion objective, scientific, or technical. As the demands for serenity and neutrality have also returned in the current discussions regarding the colonial past (Verleye, e.a. 2023), a pattern can be discerned regarding their specific political role and function. Chapter Seven argued that they were principally used to depoliticize the contentious societal debate by placing the political issue with technical, legal, and academic experts. This implies that the calls for serenity and neutrality are discursive markers that shape how the issue ought to be managed, namely not

---

[255] What is even more remarkable is that the subject of the BLM protests was not purely the colonial past of Belgium but also the continued discrimination, structural inequality, and racial injustice that persons of colour suffer. These issues were effectively side-lined in favour of dealing with the colonial past, which was considered to be somehow more salient or pressing. In effect, it could also be argued that MPs believed that the issue of Belgium's colonial past could find more support among the Belgian public than antiracist measures. See Verleye e.a. 2023 for a more extensive discussion on this topic.

through contentious debate but via rational deliberation and a scientific approach. While the latter has a role to play in the discussion on Belgium's colonial past, this penchant towards neutrality and serenity is problematic. It is principally aimed at making the complex issue politically manageable and comprehensible, and not to facilitate a collective reflection on the colonial past. This raises important questions about why this issue cannot be the site of explicit political conflict and whether this perhaps points to the continuing existence of the colonial taboo in Belgium (Verleye, e.a. 2023; Azabar and Verleye 2023). Further research can explore which actors, institutions, or policies sustain the latter historical silence and how it stifles the current debate. Moreover, future studies can theorize how this taboo is challenged and what role state shame narratives have with regard to *lieux de memoire*, public history, and political positioning on this topic.

THE ETHICS OF STATE SHAME

The dissertation has engaged with various moral issues that are associated with shame and its politics. By way of conclusion, this final part reflects on the ethics of state shame and presents preliminary thoughts and questions that, perhaps, can reconfigure some of the debates that surround this topic. Firstly, as this research discussed the political roles of shame in processes of moral judgement and during deliberations on collective wrongdoing, it has engaged with the ethical significance of emotions for international politics. This latter topic has inspired debate, specifically surrounding the observation that rationalist solutions often fall short of motivating effective action towards global and urgent problems.[256] Invoking emotions, it seems, is required to encourage people to involve themselves in debates surrounding such ethical issues. Moral judgments need to be, at least in part, based on feelings, as it is only through affective experience that compassion and sympathy for Others can be attained. The search for justice for both oneself and others is, for example, believed to arise from a feeling of indignation (e.g. Ranulf [1938]1964) or revenge and resentment (Nietzsche [1887]1992; Weber [1922]1978). In short, emotions are believed to "play an indispensable role in the practical application of ethics to moral dilemmas in international politics" (Jeffery 2014, 2).

---

[256] An example of this can be found with regards to Peter Singer's *A Life You Can Save* (2019). This rationalist cosmopolitan account has motivated readers to donate a great deal of money through the principle of effective altruism. However, Singer wonders "why the wealthy do not give more and what can be done to motivate action" (Jeffery 2014, 2).

Yet, this research has discussed that state shame is problematic for serving ethical goals or for being used to resolve moral dilemmas. The theoretical chapter already argued that shame is broadly understood to be a Janus-faced emotion that holds both a necessary but also dangerous role in social life (e.g. Tarnopolsky 2010). Glorifying shame and shaming hold moral risks, not in the least by stimulating self-congratulatory and moral naïve beliefs (Thomason 2018, 197). State shame is similarly multifaceted and highly context-dependent in how it inspires engagement with moral dilemmas. It can be appropriated by any side of a contentious or antagonistic debate and come to fuel violence or encourage scapegoating and vilification. At the same time, state shame is an indispensable element of contemporary political life. It counters excessive inflation of the state Self by challenging exaggerated beliefs, narcissistic fantasies, and untenable desires and informs collective responses when scandals erupt, historical silences are questioned, and tragedies ensue. By engaging with the wrongfulness of the collective Self, state shame is, in other words, necessary and ubiquitous to a contemporary democratic state. Yet, regardless of this important role, the potential for problematic appropriation nevertheless warrants a careful approach to the explicit invocation of state shame for stimulating international or domestic ethical positions. While state shame is a necessary feature in contemporary politics, in other words, its imprudent promotion seems ill-advised for generating compassion and sympathy.

Secondly, because the ethical significance of state shame is suspect, it ought to be navigated in a way that harnesses its necessary role but avoids its dangerous qualities. This can be found in an ethical position that is based on what Primo Levi terms 'the shame of the world'.[257] In his final work, *The Drowned and the Saved* (Levi [1988]2013),[258] which analyses and reflects on his experiences at Auschwitz, Levi describes the willed ignorance of German soldiers towards the suffering that was happening before them. Other than the shamelessness of the latter,

> "It was not possible for us, nor did we want, to become islands; the just among us, neither more nor less numerous than in any other human group, felt remorse, shame and pain for the misdeeds that others and not they had committed, and in which they felt involved, because they sensed that what had happened around them in their

---

[257] Similar positions can be found in the work of Emmanuel Levinas ([1962]2002), Jean-Paul Sartre ([1943]2003), and Hannah Arendt ([1945]1994). See O'Donnell (2017) for a discussion of the similarities between these conceptions and Gilles Deleuze's reading of Levi. See also Manu Samnotra's (2020) work on 'worldly shame', which builds on Arendt's conception of shame and connects it with the notion of worldliness to construct a practical ethos.

[258] To be clear, Levi had a reductive understanding of the emotion, equating shame with guilt (2013, 76). See Giorgio Agamben (1999, 88) for a discussion of this tension in the work of Levi.

presence, and in them, was irrevocable. It would never again be able to be cleansed; it would prove that man, the human species – we, in short – were potentially able to construct an infinite enormity of pain; and that pain is the only force that is created from nothing, without cost and without effort. It is enough not to see, not to listen, not to act." (Levi 2013, 92)

This shame for being human, or 'the shame of the world', emphasises the awareness one might have of being complicit in the suffering of the Other. It aims to expose our interdependence to each other and forces us to *see* that which is intolerable (Deleuze 1995). Importantly, it does not assume that one is guilty, as the responsibility still ought to be placed with the direct perpetrators (Arendt 1994, 150-151). The shame of the world calls upon us to not look away from collective failing but to acknowledge it. It emphasizes that we need to accept our relative individual powerlessness and create a sensitivity towards Others that allows us to understand the potential that concrete situations offer us (O'Donnell 2017, 21). In so doing, this position erases the fragmenting Self/Other divide that shame can amplify or place a focus on. The shame of the world is thus a more profound tragic conception of reality, which makes wrongfulness transcend the necessity of a principal character and shifts it to an existential condition. Through this estrangement, one comes to feel vulnerable, frail and acutely aware of the limits of our capabilities and place in the world, almost to the point of impotence. Yet, in facilitating this complex understanding of reality, the shame of the world position also informs us where, when, and how we can act appropriately.

Because the shame of the world is focused on collective wrongfulness, it counterbalances the state-centredness in state shame. More specifically, when confronted with the latter, the invocation of the shame of the world would urge us to not focus on securing the state Self. Unlike a state shame narrative, it aims to acknowledge the suffering of the victims of the state and not be indifferent regarding our own complicity in creating this situation. The shame for the world commands us to see and acknowledge the misery that collective action can create or has brought into the world and not elicit a direct response to defend the state. Afterwards, one ought to actively search and recognize those who are being disadvantaged through the actions of the state and find a way to promote their healing. It is from this point that one can come to experience a "sense of international solidarity" (Arendt [1945] 1994, 154) in that it opens us up towards the Other and counters our indifference. In effect, the shame of the world, as an ethical alternative to state shame, generates compassion and sympathy for Others while retaining their dignity and avoiding Self-glorification.

Third, and finally, this shame of the world should not be invoked regularly. Since the exposure of atrocities, tragedies, crises, and scandals has become a daily occurrence, the use of this ethical position lies at risk of becoming a permanent perspective. In effect, as the intolerable has become a banal phenomenon, one can question the practical viability of the shame of the world (Deleuze 1995, 169-170). The feeling of powerlessness that it inspires can become overwhelming and even inspire nihilism or cynicism regarding the performance of agency towards critical issues and moral dilemmas. This is, perhaps, the reason that this ethical position, and its promise of international solidarity, has not yet found a political expression that is remotely adequate (Cf. Arendt 1994, 154). However, rather than assume that the shame of the world has become an untenable position, this current situation calls for a radical shift in how we relate to Others. By engaging with more affective complexity towards Others, we could namely counter the banality of the intolerable. It is in (re)learning the intricacies of emotions, that we might bolster ourselves against the amorphous conditions of contemporary moral life, while still embracing the fragility of goodness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Chapter Five

Hand. Kamer 1902-1903, July 1, 1903.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0022/K00221781/K00221781.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1902-1903, July 2, 1903.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0022/K00221805/K00221805.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1902-1903, July 3, 1903.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0022/K00221833/K00221833.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1903-1904, March 29, 1904.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0022/K00223659/K00223659.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1904-1905, December 20, 1904.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00230453/K00230453.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1904-1905, February 28, 1905.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00230901/K00230901.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1904-1905, March 9, 1905.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00231001/K00231001.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1904-1905, March 16, 1905.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00231071/K00231071.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1904-1905, Juni 21, 1905.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00231798/K00231798.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1904-1905, November 8, 1905.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00232298/K00232298.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1904-1905, November 9, 1905.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00232312/K00232312.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1905-1906, January 31, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00232992/K00232992.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1905-1906, February 20, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00233152/K00233152.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1905-1906, February 22, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00233184/K00233184.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1905-1906, February 27, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00233212/K00233212.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1905-1906, February 28, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00233212/K00233212.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1905-1906, March 1, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00233248/K00233248.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1905-1906, March 2, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00233270/K00233270.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1905-1906, March 23, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0023/K00233494/K00233494.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, November 28, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240200/K00240200.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, November 29, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240214/K00240214.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, November 30, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240228/K00240228.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, December 4, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240240/K00240240.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, December 5, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240258/K00240258.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, December 6, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240274/K00240274.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, December 7, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240290/K00240290.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, December 11, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240302/K00240302.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, December 12, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240318/K00240318.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, December 14, 1906.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00240356/K00240356.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, March 22, 1907.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00241000/K00241000.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, May 10, 1907.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00241112/K00241112.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, May 15, 1907.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00241130/K00241130.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1906-1907, July 12, 1907.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00241654/K00241654.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, November 19, 1907.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00242262/K00242262.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, December 3, 1907.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00242393/K00242393.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, January 14, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00242633/K00242633.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, February 28, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243181/K00243181.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, March 5, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243241/K00243241.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, March 17, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243359/K00243359.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, March 26, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243483/K00243483.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, March 31, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243517/K00243517.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, April 1, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243537/K00243537.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, April 3, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243571/K00243571.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, April 10, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243651/K00243651.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, April 15, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243689/K00243689.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, April 16, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243715/K00243715.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, April 22, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243767/K00243767.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1907-1908, April 23, 1908.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0024/K00243799/K00243799.PDF

Chapter Six

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, January 8, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571089/K00571089.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, January 13, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571104/K00571104.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, January 20, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571149/K00571149.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, February 3, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571242/K00571242.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, February 17, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571398/K00571398.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, February 18, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571422/K00571422.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, March 18 afternoon session, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571810/K00571810.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, March 19, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571834/K00571834.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, April 14, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571884/K00571884.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, April 21, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571950/K00571950.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, April 22 afternoon session, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00571985/K00571985.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, April 23, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00572017/K00572017.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, April 28 afternoon session, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00572065/K00572065.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, May 20 morning session, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00572337/K00572337.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, May 20 afternoon session, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00572348/K00572348.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, June 25, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00572834/K00572834.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, July 1 morning session, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00572891/K00572891.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, July 1 afternoon session, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00572899/K00572899.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, July 7 afternoon session, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00572935/K00572935.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, November 3, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00573000/K00573000.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, November 4, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00573030/K00573030.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1958-1959, November 5, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0057/K00573052/K00573052.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, November 10, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581251/K00581251.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, November 12, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581262/K00581262.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, November 17, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581278/K00581278.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, November 18, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581296/K00581296.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, November 24, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581333/K00581333.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, November 25, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581357/K00581357.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, November 26, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581384/K00581384.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, December 15, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581473/K00581473.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, December 17, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581513/K00581513.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, December 22 afternoon session, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581562/K00581562.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, December 23, 1959.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581590/K00581590.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, January 13, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581682/K00581682.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, January 14, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581701/K00581701.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, January 27 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581831/K00581831.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, January 27 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581843/K00581843.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, January 28, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581870/K00581870.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, February 3, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581916/K00581916.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, February 4, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00581942/K00581942.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, February 16, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582050/K00582050.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, February 18, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582099/K00582099.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, February 25, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582167/K00582167.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 2 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582223/K00582223.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 3, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582242/K00582242.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 8 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582276/K00582276.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 8 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582286/K00582286.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 10, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582358/K00582358.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 15 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582388/K00582388.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 16 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582426/K00582426.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 16 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582436/K00582436.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 17, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582470/K00582470.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 22 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582489/K00582489.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 22 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582500/K00582500.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 23 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582540/K00582540.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, March 24, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582591/K00582591.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, April 28, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582969/K00582969.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 3, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00582993/K00582993.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 4 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583022/K00583022.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 4 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583071/K00583071.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 5, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583101/K00583101.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 10 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583132/K00583132.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 10 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583164/K00583164.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 17, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583251/K00583251.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 24, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583370/K00583370.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 25 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583380/K00583380.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 25 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583394/K00583394.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 31 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583428/K00583428.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, May 31 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583443/K00583443.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, June 1 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583467/K00583467.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, June 2, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583537/K00583537.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, June 7 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583628/K00583628.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, June 9, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583782/K00583782.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, June 14 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583838/K00583838.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, June 15 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583906/K00583906.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, June 16, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583939/K00583939.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, June 21 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00583996/K00583996.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, June 22 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584037/K00584037.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, July 5 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584162/K00584162.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, July 6 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584217/K00584217.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, July 6 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584217/K00584217.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, July 7 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584259/K00584259.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, July 11, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584305/K00584305.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, July 12, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584324/K00584324.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, July 13, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584347/K00584347.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, July 14, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584375/K00584375.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, July 20, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584394/K00584394.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, August 17, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584426/K00584426.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, August 18 morning session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584448/K00584448.PDF

Hand. Kamer 1959-1960, August 18 afternoon session, 1960.
http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0058/K00584458/K00584458.PDF

Hand. Kamer, 1999-2000, March 2, 2000.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip046.html

Hand. Kamer, 1999-2000, December 9, 1999.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip020.html

Hand. Kamer, 1999-2000, January 18, 2000.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip033.html

Hand. Kamer, 1999-2000, December 22, 1999.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip030.html

Hand. Kamer, 1999-2000, February 23, 2000.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip044.html

Hand. Kamer, 1999-2000, February 24, 2000.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip045.html

Hand. Kamer, 2000-2001, January 18, 2001.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip103.html

Hand. Kamer, 2000-2001, January 25, 2001.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip105.html

Hand. Kamer, 2001-2002, February 5, 2002.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip204.html

Hand. Kamer, 2001-2002, February 5, 2002.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip205.html

Hand. Kamer, 2001-2002, February 21, 2002.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/PCRI/html/50/ip209.html

Hand. Kamer, Commissie voor de Buitenlandse Betrekkingen, 1999-2000, December 8, 1999.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/html/50/ic068.html

Hand. Kamer, Commissie voor de Buitenlandse Betrekkingen, 1999-2000, February 2, 2000.
https://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/html/50/ic108.html

Hand. Kamer, Commissie voor de Buitenlandse Betrekkingen, 2000-2001*,* January 31, 2001. https://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/html/50/ic372.html

Hand. Kamer, Commissie voor de Buitenlandse Betrekkingen, 2000-2001*,* May 16, 2001. https://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/html/50/ic478.html

Hand. Kamer, Commissie voor de Buitenlandse Betrekkingen, 2001-2002*,* March 25, 2002. https://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/html/50/ic701.html

Hand. Kamer, Commissie voor de Buitenlandse Betrekkingen, 2001-2002*,* June 5, 2002. https://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/html/50/ic775.html

Voorstel tot oprichting van een parlementaire onderzoekscommissie belast met het vaststellen van de precieze omstandigheden waarin Patrice Lumumba werd vermoord en van de eventuele betrokkenheid daarbij van Belgische politici en voorstel tot oprichting van een parlementaire onderzoekscommissie belast met het onderzoek naar de moord op Patrice Lumumba, *Parl.St.* Kamer, Commissie voor de Buitenlandse Betrekkingen, 1999-2000, 15 February 2000, nr. 0312/003. http://www.dekamer.be/FLWB/PDF/50/0312/50K0312003.pdf

Beirlant, B., "Regering pleit Boudewijn vrij" *De Standaard*, February 6, 2002. https://share.belga.press/news/10d824be-6c04-4728-9db6-593d323f4577?searchText=%22Regering%22%20AND%20%22pleit%22%20AND%20%22Boudewijn%22%20AND%20%22vrij%22

Claus, H., "Lumumba's gebit", *De Standaard*, November 8, 1999. https://share.belga.press/news/01f26751-3703-4662-8c8e-648590395a67?searchText=%22Lumumba%22

Nijssen, K., "Buitenland-boeken op de Boekenbeurs", *Het Belang van Limburg*, November 5, 1999. https://share.belga.press/news/00bcd3fc-d021-4745-90b1-197a86d2cda5?searchText=%22%5C%22Buitenland%5C-boeken%22%20AND%20%22op%22%20AND%20%22de%22%20AND%20%22Boekenbeurs%22

Reynebau, M., "Hij was maar een neger", *Knack*, November 3, 1999. https://share.belga.press/news/d68b50d0-dcca-425f-bd1c-f405ae5b9930?searchText=%22Hij%22%20AND%20%22was%22%20AND%20%22maar%22%20AND%20%22een%22%20AND%20%22neger%22

s.n., "Les félicitations de Kinshasa, mais …", *La Libre Belgique*, February 7, 2002. https://academic.gopress.be/sb7xefbu2t/

s.n., "Congo vraagt herstelbetaling voor Lumumba", *De Standaard,* February 7, 2002. https://share.belga.press/news/537d477f-1d5a-41ef-b1e3-611062c269ec?searchText=%22Congo%22%20AND%20%22vraagt%22%20AND%20%22herstelbetaling%22%20AND%20%22voor%22%20AND%20%22Lumumba%22

s.n., "Les félicitations de Kinshasa", *L'Avenir*, February 7, 2002. https://academic.gopress.be/eft2juz4w7/

Timmerman, G., "Ludo De Witte wil niet als 'lumubaloog' door het leven gaan", *De Morgen,* February 4, 2002. https://share.belga.press/news/f62c1f12-ecb6-4c18-86a6-986b4a6d9145?searchText=%22Ludo%22%20AND%20%22De%22%20AND%20%22Witte%22%20AND%20%22%22

Timmerman, G., "Belgisch excuus voor moord op eerste Kongolese premier. Financiële Wiedergutmachung via op te richten Fonds Patrice Lumumba", *De Morgen,* February 6, 2002. https://share.belga.press/news/2141672e-59ad-4a5a-8791-bd04cb2c06ec?searchText=%22Belgisch%22%20AND%20%22excuus%22%20AND%20%22voor%22%20AND%20%22moord%22%20AND%20%22op%22%20AND%20%22eerste%22%20AND%20%22Kongolese%22%20AND%20%22premier%22

SECONDARY SOURCES

Abbeloos, J.-F. (2008), "Belgium's Expansionist History between 1870 and 1930: Imperialism and the Globalisation of Belgian Business", in: Lévai, C. (ed.), *Europe and Its Empires*, Pisa: Plus, pp. 105-127.

Abu-Loghod, L. (2016), *Veiled Sentiments, Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society,* Oakland: University of California Press.

Abusharaf, R. M. (2006), "'We Have Supped So Deep in Horrors': Understanding Colonialist Emotionality and British Responses to Female Circumcision in Northern Sudan", *History and Anthropology,* 17(3): 209-228.

Adler-Nissen, R. (2012), "Diplomacy as Impression Management: Strategic Face-Work and Post-Colonial Embarrassment", Working paper, Consulted at SSRN on 20/11/2023: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2284791.

Adler-Nissen, R. (2014), "Stigma Management in International Relations: Transgressive Identities, Norms, and Order in International Society", *International Organization*, 68(1): 143–76.

Adler-Nissen, R. (2016), "The Social Self in International Relations: Identity, Power and the Symbolic Interactionist Roots of Constructivism", *European Review of International Studies*, 3(3): 27–39.

Adler-Nissen, R., Andersen, K. E., and Hansen, L. (2019), "Images, emotions, and international politics: the death of Alan Kurdi", *Review of International Studies*, 46(1): 75-95.

Agamben, G. (1999), *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive,* New York: Zone Books.

Ahmed, S. (2014), *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Alexander, J. C. (2004), "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy", *Sociological Theory*, 22(4): 527-573.

Al Jallad, N. (2010), "The concept of 'shame' in Arabic : bilingual dictionaries and the challenge of defining culture-based emotions", *Language design: journal of theoretical and experimental linguistics*, 12: 31-57.

Allen, M. and Haggis, J. (2007), "Imperial Emotions: Affective Communities of Mission in Protestant Women's Missionary Publications, c. 1890–1920", *Journal of Social History*, 41(3): 691–71.

Anderson, B. (2006), *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso.

Ansiaux, R. R. (2006), Early Belgian Colonial Efforts: The Long and Fateful Shadow of Leopold I, Unpublished PhD-thesis.

Arendt, H. (2000), *Responsibility and Judgment*, New York: Schocken books.

Arendt, H. (2003), "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility", in: Arendt, H. & Baehr, P. (eds.), *The Portable Hannah Arendt*. London: Penguin Books, pp. 146–156.

Arendt, H. (2006), *Eichmann in Jerusalem, A report on the Banality of Evil*, London: Penguin Classics.

Arfi, B. (2020), "Security qua existential surviving (while becoming otherwise) through performative leaps of faith", *International Theory*, 12(2): 291-305.

Assmann, A. (2006), "Memory, individual and collective", in: Goodin, R. E. and Tilly, C. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 210-224.

Austin, J. L. (1970), *Philosophical Papers*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Azabar, S. and Verleye, Z. (2023), "Van diepe spijt naar stilte, Over het falen van de Congocommissie en het voortbestaan van het koloniale taboe in België", *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* [to be published].

Bagdonas, Ą. (2018), "Historical State Apologies", in: *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945* edited by Bevernage, B. and Wouters, N., pp. 775-799, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Barbalet, J. M. (2001), *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure, A Macrosociological Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barkan, E. (2000), *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Barnett, M. (2011), *Empire of Humanity, a History of Humanitarianism*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Barrett, K. C. (1995), "A functionalist approach to shame and guilt", in: Tangney, J. P. and K. W. Fischer (Eds.), *Self-conscious emotions: The psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride*, New York: Guilford Press, pp. 25–63.

Bartelson, J. (1996), *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barthes, R. (1975), "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative", *New Literary History* 6(2): 237-272.

Bartky, S. L. (1990), *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, New York: Routledge.

Bassan-Nygate, L. and Heimann, G. (2022), "Dealing with guilt and shame in international politics", *International Relations* 0(0): 1-23 [online first].

Baumeister, R. F., Dale, K., and Sommer, K. L. (1998), "Freudian Defense Mechanisms and Empirical Findings in Modern Social Psychology: Reaction Formation, Projection, Displacement, Undoing, Isolation, Sublimation, and Denial", *Journal of Personality*, 66(6): 1081-1124.

Bayly, C. A. (2004), *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914, Global Connections and Comparisons*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Beattie, A. R. and Schick, K. (2013), *The Vulnerable Subject, Beyond Rationalism in International Relations*, Houndmills, Bastingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian.

Bedford, O. A. (2004), "The Individual Experience of Guilt and Shame in Chinese Culture", *Culture and Psychology*, 10(1): 29-52.

Bell, C. (2009), *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Benedict, R. (1947), *The chrysanthemum and the sword,* London: Secker & Warburg.

Bentley, T. (2015), "The sorrow of empire: Rituals of legitimation and the performative contradictions of liberalism", *Review of International Studies*, 41(3): 623-645.

Berenskoetter, F. (2017), "Approaches to Concept Analysis", *Millennium*, 45(2): 151-173.

Berezin, M. (2002), "Secure States: Towards a Political Sociology of Emotion", *The Sociological Review*, 50(2): 33-52.

Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. (1991), *The Social Construction of Reality, A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Penguin books.

Bergson, H. (1946), *The Creative Mind*, New York: Philosophical Library.

Berndsen, M. and McGarty, C. (2012), "Perspective taking and opinions about forms of reparation for victims of historical harm", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(10): 1316-1328.

Betts, R. F. (2004), *Decolonization*, Routledge: New York.

Bevernage, B. (2011), "History by Parliamentary Vote: Science, Ethics and Politics in the Lumumba Commission", *History Compass,* 9(4): 300-311.

Bevernage, B. (2015), "The past is evil/evil is past: On retrospective politics, philosophy of history, and temporal Manichaeism", *History and Theory*, 54(3): 333-352.

Bevernage, B. (2018), "The making of the Congo question: truth-telling, denial and 'colonial science' in King Leopold's commission of inquiry on the rubber atrocities in the Congo Free State (1904–1905)", *Rethinking History*, 22(2): 203-238.

Bevir, M. (2006), "How Narratives Explain", in: Yanow, D. and Schwartz-Shea, P. (eds.), *Interpretation and Method,* New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 281-290.

Bevir, M. and Blakely, J. (2018), *Interpretative Social Science: An Anti-Naturalist Approach*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bevir, M. and Kedar, A. (2008), "Concept Formation in Political Science: An Anti-Naturalist Critique of Qualitative Methodology", *Perspectives on Politics*, 6(3): 503-517.

Bewes, T. (2011), *The Event of Postcolonial Shame*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Beyen, M. (2013), "Who is the Nation and What Does It Do? The Discursive Construction of the Nation in Belgian and Dutch National Histories of the Romantic Period", in: Dunthorne, H. and Wintle, M. (eds.), *The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the Low Countries*, Leiden: Brill, 67-85.

Beyen, M. and Majerus, B. (2008), "Weak and Strong Nations in the Low Countries: National Historiography and its 'Others' in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", in: Berger, S. and Lorenz, C. (eds.), *The contested nation : ethnicity, class, religion and gender in national histories*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 283-310.

Bhabha, H. K. (ed.) (1990), *Nation and Narration,* London: Routledge.

Bhambra, G. K. (2014), *Connected Sociologies*, London: Bloomsbury.

Bijzondere Commissie Koloniaal Verleden (2022), *Inleiding en vaststellingen van de experten*, s.l.: de kamer.be.

Blake, W., W. B. Yeats (ed.) (2002), *Collected Poems*, London: Routledge.

Bleiker, R. and Hutchison, E. (2008), "Emotional Reconciliation, Reconstituting Identity and Community after Trauma", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11(3): 385-403.

Blok, A. (1998), "The Narcissism of Minor Differences", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 1(1): 33-56.

Bobineau, J. (2017), "The Historical Taboo: Colonial Discourses and Postcolonial Identities in Belgium", *Werkwinkel*, 12(1), pp. 107-123.

Boehmer, E. and de Mul, s. (2012), "Introduction: Postcolonialism and the Low Countries", in: Boehmer, E. and de Mul, S. (eds.), *the Postcolonial Low Countries, Literature, Colonialism and Multiculturalism,* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 1-22.

Booth, W. J. (2020), *Memory, Historic Injustice, and Responsibility*, New York: Routledge.

Brachet, A. and Kitchin, G. W. (1873), *An Etymological Dictionary of the French Language*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Braithwaite, J. (2000), *Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Branscombe, N. R. and Doosje, B. (2004), *Collective Guilt, International Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brassett, J., Browning, C. S., and O'Dwyer, M. (2021), "EU've Got to Be Kidding: Anxiety, Humour and Ontological Security", *Global Society*, 35(1): 8-26.

Brassine, J. and Kestergat, J. (1991), *Qui a tué Patrice Lumumba?*, Paris: Duculot.

Brodersen, R. (2018), *Emotional Motives in International Relations: Rage, Rancour and Revenge*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Brondeel, P. ([1971]2019), *Ik, blanke kaffer*, Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Vrijdag.

Brown, R. and Cehajic, S. (2008), "Dealing with the past and facing the future: Mediators of the effects of collective guilt and shame in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38(4): 669-684.

Browning, C. S. (2016), "Ethics and Ontological Security" In: *Ethical Security Studies: A New Research Agenda*, Nyman, J. and Burke, A. (eds.), Abingdon: Routledge, 160–73.

Browning, C. S. (2018) "'Je suis en terrasse': Political Violence, Civilizational Politics, and the Everyday Courage to Be", *Political Psychology*, 39 (2): 243–61.

Browning, C. S. (2019), "Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32(3): 222-244.

Browning, C. S., and Joenniemi, P. (2016), "Ontological security, self-articulation and the securitization of identity", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 52(1): 1-17.

Buettner, E. (2016), *Europe after Empire, Decolonization, Society, and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bustin, E. (2002), "Remembrance of sins past: unravelling the murder of Patrice Lumumba." *Review of African Political Economy*, 29(93-94): 537-560.

Buzan, B. (2014), "The 'Standard of Civilisation' as an English School Concept", *Millennium*, 42(3): 576-594.

Cairns, D. L (1993), *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cannadine, D. (2001), *Ornamentalism, How the British Saw Their Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Casement, R. (1904), *Correspondence and Report from his Majesty's Consul at Boma respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo*, London: Harrison and Sons.

Cash, J. and Kinnvall, C. (2017), "Postcolonial bordering and ontological insecurities", *Postcolonial Studies,* 20(3): 267-274.

Césaire, A. (2001), *Discourse on Colonialism*, New York: Monthly Review Press.

Ceuppens, B. (2004), *Congo made in Flanders?: koloniale Vlaamse visies op "blank" en "zwart" in Belgisch Congo*, Gent: Academia Press.

Chakrabarty, D. (2000), *Provincialising Europe*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Charles, C. (2003), "Skin Bleaching and the Deconstruction of Blackness", *IDEAZ*, 2(1): 42-54.

Checkel, J. T. (2007), *International institutions and socialization in Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Christis, J. (2001), "Luhmann's theory of knowledge: beyond realism and constructivism?", *Soziale Systeme*, 7(2): 328-349.

Clément, M. and Sangar, E. (2018), *Researching Emotions in International Relations, Methodological Perspectives on the Emotional Turn*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cohen, J. (2012), *Globalization and Sovereignty: Rethinking Legality, Legitimacy, and Constitutionalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Conrad, J. ([1899]1995), *Joseph Conrad: Three Novels, Heart of Darkness, The Secret Agent, The Shadow Line*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Cook, D. R. (1991), "Shame, attachment, and addictions: Implications for family therapists", *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 13(5): 405-419.

Coolsaet, R. (2014), *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek 1830-2015*, Leuven: Van Halewyck.

Cooper, F. (2005), *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cooper, F. and A. L. Stoler (1997), *Tensions of Empire, Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cornell, S. (2000), "That's the Story of Our Life", in: Spickard, P. and Burroughs, W. J. (eds.), *We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 41-56.

Cornut, J. (2022), "Emotional Practices and How We Can Trace Them: Diplomats, Emojis, and Multilateral Negotiations at the UNHRC", *International Studies Quarterly*, 66(3): sqac048.

Cratsley, K. (2016), "Revisiting Freud and Kohut on narcissism", *Theory & Psychology*, 26(3): 333-359.

Crawford, N. (2000), "The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on emotion and Emotional Relationships", *International Security*, 24(4): 116-156.

Crawford, N. (2014), "Institutionalizing passion in world politics: fear and empathy", *International Theory*, 6(3): 535-557.

Crawford, N. C. (2002), *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization and Humanitarian Intervention*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cupać, J. (2020), "The Anxiety Dilemma: Locating the Western Balkans in the Age of Anxiety", *Journal of Regional Security*, 15(1): 7-38.

Dallmayr, F. R. (1996), *Beyond Orientalism, Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter*, Albany: State University of New York Press.

Danchev, A. (2006), ""Like a Dog!": Humiliation and Shame in the War on Terror", *Alternatives, 31(3): 259-283.*

Daniels, M. A., and Robinson, S. L. (2019), "The Shame of It All: A Review of Shame in Organizational Life", *Journal of Management*, 45(6): 2448-2473.

de Beauvoir, S. (1956), *The Second Sex*, London: Jonathan Cape.

de Beavoir, S. (2020), *What is Existentialism?*, Bungay, UK: Penguin Books.

de Buitrago, S. R. (2018), "Grasping the Role of Emotions in IR via Qualitative Content Analysis and Visual Analysis", in: Clement, M. and Sangar, E., *Researching Emotions in International Relations Methodological Perspectives on the Emotional Turn*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 303-324.

De Villiers, G. (2004), "Histoire, justice et politique." *Cahier d'études africaines,* 173-174: 193-220.

De Witte, L. (2002), *De Moord op Lumumba*. Leuven: Van Halewyck.

Degn, I., Hansen, L. V., Magnussen, A., and Rasmussen, J. R. (2004), "The Construction and Deconstruction of Nation and Identity in Modern Belgium", in: H. L. Hansen (ed.), *Disciplines and Interdisciplinarity in Foreign Language Studies*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, pp. 131-150.

Delathuy, A. M. [Marchal, J.] (1988), *De geheime documentatie van de Onderzoekscommissie in de Kongostaat*, Berchem: EPO.

Delathuy, A.M. [Marchal, J.] (1985), *E.D. Morel tegen Leopold en de Kongostaat*, Berchem: EPO.

Delehanty, W. K. and Steele, B. J. (2009), "Engaging the narrative in ontological (in)security theory: insights from feminist IR", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22(3): 523-540.

Deleuze, G. (1995), *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus: Captialism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

Der Derian, J. (1987), "Mediating estrangement: A theory for diplomacy", *Review of International Studies*, 13(2): 91-110.

Dewey, J. (1910), *How we think*, Mineola: Dover Publications.

Dixon, T. (2012), "'Emotion': The History of a Keyword in Crisis", *Emotion Review*, 4(4): 338-344.

Donnelly, J. (2004), *Realism and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Doyle, A. C. (1909), *The Crime of the Congo*, New York: Doubleday, Page and Company.

Dresler-Hawke, E. and Liu, J. H. (2006), "Collective shame and the positioning of German national identity", *Psicología Política*, 32: 131–153.

Drulak, P. (2006), ''Reflexivity and Structural Change,'' in: Guzzini, S. and Leander, A. (eds.) *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and His Critics*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 138-157.

Dubois, S. (2008), "The Making of Nations in Belgium and Western Europe in Historical Perspective (Fifteenth-Twentieth century): National Ideology, Ethnicity, Language and Politics", in: N. R. Slocum-Bradley (ed.), *Promoting Conflict or Peace through Identity*, Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, pp. 21-40.

Dumoulin, Michel (2012), *Du Congo belge à la République du Congo, 1955-1965*, Brussels : Outre-Mers.

Dunn, K. C. (2003), *Imagining the Congo, the international relations of identity*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Dunn, K. C. (2004), "Narrating Identity: Constructing the Congo During the 1960 Crisis", in: Goff, P. M. and Dunn, K. C., *Identity and Global Politics*, *Empirical and Theoretical Elaborations*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 123-143.

Eberle, J. (2019), "Narrative, desire, ontological security, transgression: fantasy as a factor in international politics", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 22: 243-268.

Eberle, J. and Daniel, J. (2022), "Anxiety geopolitics: Hybrid warfare, civilisational geopolitics, and the Janus-faced politics of anxiety", *Political Geography*, 92: 1-9.

Eberle, J. and Handl, V. (2020), "Ontological Security, Civilian Power, and German Foreign Policy Toward Russia", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 16(1): 41-58.

Eco, U. (2015), *How to Write a Thesis*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Edensor, T. (2002), *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, Oxford: Berg.

Ejdus, F. (2018), "Critical situations, fundamental questions and ontological insecurity in world politics", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 21: 883-908.

Ejdus, F. and Rečević, T. (2020), "Ontological Insecurity as an Emergent Phenomenon, Bottom-Up Securitization of Migration in Serbia", *European Psychologist*, 26(1): 29-44.

Elias, N. (2000), *The Civilizing Process*, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Elpidorou, A. and Freeman, L. (2015), "Affectivity in Heidegger I: Moods and Emotions in Being and Time", *Philosophy Compass*, 10(10): 661-671.

Elster, J. (1989), *The Cement of Society, A Study of Social Order*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Elster, J. (1999), *Alchemies of the Mind: Rationality and the Emotions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Epstein, C. (2011), "Who Speaks? Discourse, the Subject, and Identity in International Politics", *European Journal of International Relations*, 17(2): 327–50.

Epstein, C. (2012), "Stop Telling Us How to Behave: Socialization or Infantilization?", *International Studies Perspectives*, 13(2): 135-145.

Erikson, E. (1993), *Childhood and Society*, London: Paladin Grafton Books.

Erskine, T. and Lebow, R. N. (2012), *Tragedy and International Relations*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Mcmillan,.

Etambala, Z. (1999), *Congo 55-65 : van Koning Boudewijn tot president Mobutu*, Tielt: Lannoo.

Etambala, Z. (2008), *De teloorgang van een modelkolonie: Belgisch-Congo (1958-1960)*, Leuven: Acco.

Etzioni, A. (2001), *The Monochrome Society,* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ewans, M. (2002), *European atrocity, African catastrophe: Leopold II, the Congo free state and its aftermath*, London: Curzon Press.

Fairclough, N. (2003), *Analysing Discourse, Textual analysis for social research*, London: Routledge.

Fanon, F. (1963), *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press.

Fanon, F. (1988), *Black Skin, White Masks,* London: Pluto Press.

Fattah, K. and Fierke, K. M. (2009), "A Clash of Emotions: The Politics of Humiliation and Political Violence in the Middle East", *European Journal of International Relations*, 15(1): 67-93.

Febvre, L. (1973), "Sensibility and history: how to reconstitute the emotional life of the past", in: Burke, P. (ed.), *A new kind of history, from the writings of Febvre*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 12-26.

Fessler, D. M. T. (2007), "From Appeasement to Conformity: Evolutionary and Cultural Perspectives on Shame, Competition, and Cooperation", in: Tracy, J. L., Robins, R. W., Tagny, J. P. (eds.), *The Self-Consciousness Emotions, Theory and Research*, New York: Guildford Press, pp. 174-193.

Fierlafyn, L. (1990), *Le discours nationaliste au Congo belge durant la période 1955-1960*, Brussels: Centre d'étude et de documentation africaines.

Figlio, K. (2018), "The dread of sameness: social hatred and Freud's 'narcissism of minor differences'", in: Auestad, L. (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and politics, Exclusion and the Politics of Representation. Theoretical Reflections*, New York: Routledge, pp. 29-46.

Finnemore, M. and Sikkink, K. (1998), "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change", *International Organization*, 52(4): 887-917.

Fisch, J., Groh, D., Walther, R. (1987), "Imperialismus", in: Brunner, O., Conze, W., and Koselleck, R. (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, Historisches Lexikon zur politish-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland, Band 3 H-ME*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, pp. 171-236.

Fischer-Tiné, H. (ed.) (2016), *Anxieties, Fear and Panic in Colonial Settings, Empires on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fitzmaurice, A. (2014), *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500-2000*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Flockhart, T. (2016), "The problem of change in constructivist theory: Ontological security seeking and agent motivation", *Review of International Studies*, 42(5): 799-820.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006), *"*Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2): 219-245.

Forde, S. (2002), "Classical Realism", in: Nardin, T. and D. R. Mapel (eds.), *Traditions of International Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 62-84.

Fox, J. E. and Miller-Idriss, C. (2008), "Everyday Nationhood", *Ethnicities*, 8(4): 536-576.

François; W. (2007), "De onderzoekscommissie voor Congo (1904-1905) en de missies van de jezuïeten", *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 37(1-2): 79-142.

Franke, U. and Roos, U. (2010), "Actor, structure, process: transcending the state personhood debate by means of a pragmatist ontological model for International Relations theory", *Review of International Studies*, 36(4): 1057-1077.

Freud, S. (1920), *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis,* New York: G. Stanley Hall.

Freud, S. (1930), *Civilisation and its Discontents*, London: Hogarth Press.

Friman, R. H. (ed.) (2015), *The Politics of Leverage in International Relations, Name, Shame, and Sanction*, Bastingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Frye, N. (1957), *Anatomy of Criticism, four essays*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gardner, L. (2013), "Fiscal Policy in the Belgian Congo in comparative perspective", in: Frankema, E. and Beulens, F., *Colonial Exploitation and Economic Development, The Belgian Congo and the Netherlands Indies Compared*, London: Routledge, pp. 130-152.

Geeraerts, D. (2002), "The scope of diachronic onomasiology", in: Agel, V., Gardt, A., Hass-Zumkehr, U., and Roelcke, T. (eds.), *Das Wort. Seine strukturelle und kulturelle Dimension. Festschrift für Oskar Reichmann zum 65,* Tübingen: Niemeyer, pp. 29-44.

Geeraerts, J. (1968), *Gangreen 1, Black Venus*, Brussel: Manteau.

Geeraerts, J. (1972), *Gangreen 2, De goede moordenaar*, Brussel: Manteau.

Geeraerts, J. (1975), *Gangreen 3, Het teken van de hond*, Brussel: Manteau.

Geertz, C. (1973), *The interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books.

Gerard-Libois, J. and Verhaegen, B. (1961), *Congo 1960*, Brussel: CRISP.

Gibney, M., Howard-Hassmann, R. E., Coicaud, J.-M., and Steiner, N. (eds.) (2009), *The Age of Apology, Facing Up to the Past*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Giddens, A. (1984), *The Constitution of Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Giddens, A. (2006), *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Gijs, A-S. (2016), "Fighting the red peril in the Congo. Paradoxes and perspectives on an equivocal challenge to Belgium and the West (1947–1960)", *Cold War History* 16(3), pp. 273-290.

Gilbert, P. (1997), "The evolution of social attractiveness and its role in shame, humiliation, guilt and therapy", *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 70(2): 113-147.

Gildea, R. (2019), *Empires of the Mind, The colonial past and the politics of the present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gilroy, P. (2005), "Multiculture, Double Consciousness and the 'War on Terror'", *Patterns of Prejudice*, 39(4): 431–43.

Ginzburg, C. (2019), "The Bond of Shame", *New Left Review*, 120: 35-44.

Girard, R. (1988), "Generative Scapegoating", in: Hamerton-Kelly, R. (ed.), *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, Rene Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 73-105.

Girard, R. (1989), *The Scapegoat,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Go, J. and Lawson, G. (2017), *Global Historical Sociology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goddeeris, I. and Kiangu, S. E. (2011), "Congomania in Academia, Recent Historical Research on the Belgian Colonial Past", *Low Countries Historical Review*, 126(4): 54-74.

Goddeeris, I. (2015), "Postcolonial Belgium, The Memory of the Congo", *Interventions*, 17(3): 434-451.

Goffman, E. (1956), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press.

Goffman, E. (1963), *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Gökcan Kösen, M. and Erdoğan, E. (2023), "'Now we are whole:' humiliation, shame and pride in Aliyev's discourse on the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 23(3): 571-588.

Gregory, D. (2004), *The Colonial Present*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Grieveson, L. and C. MacCabe (2011), *Empire and Film*, Houndmills, Bastingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gros, F. (2021), *La honte est un sentiment révolutionnaire*, Paris: Albin Michel.

Gustafsson, K. (2021), "Why is Anxiety's Positive Potential so Rarely Realized? Creativity and Change in International Politics", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24(4): 1044–1049.

Gustafsson, K. and Hall, T. H. (2021), "The Politics of Emotions in International Relations: Who Gets to Feel What, Whose Emotions Matter, and the "History Problem" in Sino-Japanese Relations", *International Studies Quarterly*, 65(4): 973–984.

Gustafsson, K. and Krickel-Choi, N. C. (2020), "Returning to the roots of ontological security: insights from the existentialist anxiety literature", *European Journal of International Relations*, 26(3): 875-895.

Gutman, Y. and Wüstenberg, J. (eds.) (2023), *The Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism*, London: Routledge.

Guzzini, S. (2005), "The Concept of Power: a Constructivist Analysis", *Millennium*, 33(3): 495-521.

Haché, L. (1957), *L'aventure des Belges*, Brussels: De Visscher.

Hagström, L. (2021), "Great Power Narcissism and Ontological (In)Security: The Narrative Mediation of Greatness and Weakness in International Politics", *International Studies Quarterly, 65*(2), 1-12.

Hall, T. and Ross, A. A. G. (2015), "Affective Politics after 9/11", *International Organization*, 69(4): 847-879.

Hall, T. D. (2015), *Emotional Diplomacy: Official Emotion on the International Stage*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Hall, T. D. and Ross, A. A. G. (2015), "Affective Politics after 9/11", *International Organization*, 69(4): 847-879.

Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2001), *Empire*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Hardt, M. and Weeks, K. (2000), *The Jameson Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Harkavy, R. E. (2000), "Defeat, National Humiliation, and the Revenge Motif in International Politics", *International Politics*, 37(3): 345-368.

Hay, C. (2002), "What's 'Political' About Political Science?", in: *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, Houndmills, Bastingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Heaney, J. G. (2013), "Emotions and Nationalism: A Reappraisal", in: Demertzis, N. (ed.), *Emotions in Politics: The Affect Dimension in Political Tension*, London: Pallgrave Macmillan, pp. 243-263.

Hedling, E. (2023), "Emotional labour in digital diplomacy: perceptions and challenges for European diplomats", *Emotions and Society*, 5(1): 29-47.

Heidegger (1996), *Being and Time*, Albany: State University of New York Press.

Heimann, G. and Kampf, Z. (2022), "The Benefits of Friendliness: The Consequences of Positive Interpersonal Relations for Interstate Politics", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 18(2): orac001.

Hergé (1962), *Les avontures de Tintin reporter du « Petit Vingtième » au Congo*, Brussels: Casterman.

Hidalgo-Tenorio, E. and Benítez-Castro, M.-A (2021), "The language of evaluation in the narratives by the Magdalene Laundries survivors: The discourse of female victimhood", *Applied Linguistics*, 42(2): 315-341.

Hinton, L. and Willemsen, H. (2018), *Temporality and Shame, Perspectives from Psychoanalysis and Philosophy*, New York: Routledge.

Hobsbawm, E. (2012), *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, London: Abacus.

Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds.) (2012), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hochschild, A. (2020), *King Leopold's Ghost, A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Houghton: Mariner Books.

Hochschild, A. R. (1979), "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure", *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3): 551-575.

Hochschild, A. R. (2003), *The Commercialization of Intimate Life, Notes from Home and Work*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hodgkin, T. (1956), *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*, London: Frederick Muller.

Homolar, A. and Löfflmann, G. (2021), "Populism and the Affective Politics of Humiliation Narratives", *Global Studies Quarterly*, 1(1): 1-11.

Honneth, A. (1995), *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hopkins, A. G. (1999), "Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History", *Past and Present*, 164: 198–243.

Hunt, N. R. (2016), *A Nervous State, Violence, Remedies and Reverie in Colonial Congo*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Hutchison, E. (2010), "Trauma and the Politics of Emotions: Constituting Identity, Security and Community after the Bali Bombing", *International Relations*, 24(1): 65-86.

Hutchison, E. (2016), *Affective Communities in World Politics, Collective Emotions after Trauma*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hutchison, E. and Bleiker, R. (2014), "Theorizing emotions in world politics", *International Theory*, 6(3): 491-514.

Huysmans, J. (1998), "Security! What Do You Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier", *European Journal of International Relations*, 4(2): 226-255.

Ilgit, A. and Prakash, D. (2019), "Making Human Rights Emotional: A Research Agenda to Recover Shame in 'Naming and Shaming'", *Political Psychology*, 40(6): 1297-1313.

Innes, A. (2017), " Everyday Ontological Security: Emotion and Migration in British Soaps", *International Political Sociology*, 11(4): 380-397.

Innes, A. J. and Steele, B. (2014), "Memory, Trauma and Ontological Security" in: Resende, E. and Budryte, D. (eds.), *Memory and Trauma in International Relations*: *Theories, Cases and Debates,* Oxon: Routledge, pp. 15-29.

Ish-Shalom, P. (2021), *Concepts at Work: On the Linguistic Infrastructure of World Politics*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Jackson, P. T. (2004), "Hegel's House, or 'People are states too'", *Review of International Studies*, 30: 281-287.

Jackson, P. T. (2011), *The Conduct of Inquiry of International Relations*, London: Routledge.

Jackson, W. (2018), "The Private Lives of Empire: Emotion, Intimacy, and Colonial Rule", *Itinerario*, 42(1): 1-15.

Jacquemin, J-P (ed.) (1991), *Racisme Continent Obscur: Clichés, Stereotypes, Phantasmes à propos des noirs dans le Royaume de Belgique,* Brussels: CEC.

Jacquet, J. (2015), *Is shame necessary? New uses for an old tool*, New York: Pantheon Books.

Jameson, F. (2003), "The end of temporality", *Critical Inquiry,* 29(4): 695-718.

Jameson, F. (1984), "Periodizing the 60s", *Social Text*, 9-10: 178-209.

Jameson, F. (2002), *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a socially symbolic act*, London: Routledge.

Jaspers, K. (2001), *The question of German guilt*, New York: Fordham University Press.

Jeffery, R. (2014), *Reason and Emotion in International Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jensen, L., Suárez-Krabbe, J., Kroes, C., and Pecic, Z. L. (eds.) (2018), *Postcolonial Europe, Comparative reflections after the empires*, London: Rowman and Littlefield.

Johns, M., Schmader, T., and Martens, A. (2005), "Knowing is half the battle: Teaching stereotype threat as a means of improving women's math performance", *Psychological Science*, 16: 175–179.

Johns, M., Smader, T., and Lickel, B. (2004), "Ashamed to be an American? The role of identification in predicting vicarious shame for anti-Arab prejudice after 9–11", *Self and Identity*, 4(4): 331-348.

Johnson, J. M., Basham, V. M., and Thomas, O. D. (2022), "Ordering disorder: The making of world politics", *Review of International Studies*, 48(4): 607-625.

Kahler, M. (1998), "Rationality in International Relations", *International Organization*, 52(4): 919-941.

Kanobana, S. R. (ed.) (2021), *Zwarte Bladzijden, Afro-Belgische reflecties op Vlaamse (post)koloniale literatuur*, Amsterdam: De Geus.

Mitchell, K. (2020), *Writing Shame: Contemporary Literature, Gender, and Negative Affect,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Keeler, W. (1983), "Shame and Stage Fright in Java", *Ethos* 11(3):152-165.

Kemper, T. (1978), *A Social Interactional Theory of Emotions*, New York: John Wiley.

Khoury, N. (2018), "Plotting stories after war: Toward a methodology for negotiating identity." *European Journal of International Relations,* 24(2): 367-390.

Kierkegaard, S. ([1844]1980), *The Concept of Anxiety, A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kingston, R. (2008), *Public Passion: Rethinking the Grounds for Political Justice*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Kinnvall, C. (2004), "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security", *Political Psychology*, 25(5): 741-767.

Kinnvall, C. (2007), *Globalization and Religious Nationalism in India, The Search for Ontological Security*, London: Routledge.

Kinnvall, C. (2015), "The Postcolonial has Moved into Europe: Bordering, Security and Ethno-Cultural Belonging", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(1): 152-168.

Kinnvall, C. (2018), "Ontological Insecurities and Postcolonial Imaginaries: The Emotional Appeal of Populism", *Humanity & Society*, 42(4): 523-543.

Kinnvall, C. and Mitzen, J. (2018), "Ontological Security and Conflict: The Dynamics of Crisis and the Constitution of Community", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 21(4): 825–35.

Kinnvall, C. and Mitzen, J. (2020), "Anxiety, fear, and ontological security in world politics: thinking with and beyond Giddens", *International Theory*, 12(2): 240-256.

Klein, E. (1966), *A comprehensive etymological dictionary of the English language, Vol. 2 L-Z*, Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Kluckhohn, C. (1960), "The moral order in the expanding society", in: Kraeling, C. and Adams, R. (eds.), *City invincible*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 391-404.

Kohut, H. (1971), *The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders*, New York: International Universities Press.

Kohut, H. (1977), *The Restoration of the Self*, New York: International Universities Press.

Konstan, D. (2006), *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Greek Literature*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Koschut, S., Hall, T. H., Wolf. R., Solomon, T., Hutchison, E., Bleiker, R. (2017), "Discourse and Emotions in International Relations", *International Studies Review*, 19(3): 1-27.

Koschut, S. (2020), "Communitarian emotions in IR: constructing emotional worlds", in: Van Rythoven, E. and Sucharov, M. (eds.), *Methodology and Emotion in International Relations, Parsing the Passions*, London: Routledge, pp. 79-96.

Koschut, S. (2021), "Reintegrative shaming in international relations: NATO's military intervention in Libya", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 25(2): 497-522.

Koschut, S. and Oelsner, A. (eds.) (2014), *Friendship in International Relations*, Houndmills, Bastingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Koselleck, R. (1982), "Begriffsgeschichte and social history", *Economy and Society*, 11(4): 409-427.

Krauel, J. (2013), *Imperial Emotions, Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-Siecle Spain*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Krickel-Choi, N. C. (2022a), "The Concept of Anxiety in Ontological Security Studies", *International Studies Review*, 24(3): 1-21.

272

Krickel-Choi, N. C. (2022b), "State personhood and ontological security as a framework of existence: moving beyond identity, discovering sovereignty", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 1-19.

Kuckartz, U. (1991), "Ideal Types or Empirical Types: the Case of Max Weber's Empirical Research", *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology/Bulletin de Méthodology Sociologique*, 32(1): 44-53.

Kurowska, X. and Reshetnikov, A. (2021), "Trickstery: pluralising stigma in international society", *European Journal of International Relations*, 27(1): 232-257.

Kustermans, J. (2011), "The state as citizen: state personhood and ideology", *Journal of International relations and Development*, 14(1): 1-27.

Kuusisto, R. (2019), *International Relations Narratives, Plotting World Politics*, Oxon: Routledge.

Lacan, J. (1988), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lacan, J. (1998), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, London: Hogarth.

LaCapra, D. (2014), *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.

Laing, R. D. (1990), "The Divided Self, An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness", London: Penguin Books.

Lauro, A. (2011), "Maintenir l'ordre dans la colonie-modèle. Notes sur les désordres urbains et la police des frontières raciales au Congo Belge (1918-1945)", Crime, History & Societies, 15(2), pp. 97-121.

Lauro, A. (2016), "Suspect Cities and the (Re)Making of Colonial Order: Urbanization, Security Anxieties and Police Reforms in Postwar Congo (1945–1960)", in: Campion, J. and Rousseaux, X. (eds.), *Policing New Risks in Modern European History*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 57-85.

Lauro, A. (2021), "Violence, anxieties, and the making of interracial dangers, Colonial surveillance and interracial sexuality in the Belgian Congo", in: Schields, C. and D. Herzog (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism,* London: Routledge.

Leach, C. W., Iyer, A. and Pedersen, A. (2006), "Anger and Guilt About Ingroup Advantage Explain the Willingness for Political Action", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(9): 1232–1245.

Lebovic, J. H. and Voeten, E. (2006), "The Politics of Shame: The Condemnation of Country Human Rights Practices in the UNCHR", *International Studies Quarterly*, 50(4): 861-888.

Lebow, R. N. (2008), "Identity in International Politics", *International Relations*, 22(4): 473-492.

Lebow, R. N. (2016), *National Identities and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lebow, R. N. (2020), *Ethics and International Relations, A Tragic Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lerner, A. B. (2020), "What's it like to be a state? An argument for state consciousness", *International Theory*, 13(2): 260-286.

Lester, D. (1997), "The Role of Shame in Suicide", *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior,* 27(4): 352-361.

Lethi, M. and Penannen, H.-R. (2020), "Crises of the West: Liberal Identities and Ontological (In)Security", in: Lethi, M., Penannen, H.-R. and Jouhki, J. (eds.), *Contestations of Liberal Order: The West in Crisis?*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 61-98.

Levi, P. ([1988]2013), *The Drowned and the Saved*, London: Abacus.

Levinas, E. ([1962]2002), *On Escape*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Levinas, E. ([1935]1982), *De l'évasion*, Montpellier: Fata Morgana.

Lewis, H. B. (1971), *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, New York: International Universities Press.

Lewis, M. (1995), "Embarrassment: The emotion of self-exposure and evaluation", in: Tracy, J. L., Robins, R. W., Tagny, J. P. (eds.), *The Self-Consciousness Emotions, Theory and Research*, New York: Guildford Press, pp. 198–218.

Lickel, B., Schmader, T., Curtis, M., Scarnier, M., and Ames, D. R. (2005), "Vicarious Shame and Guilt", *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 8(2): 145-157.

Lijphart, A. (1977), *Democracy in plural societies: A comparative exploration,* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Lind, J. (2008), *Sorry States, Apologies in International Politics*, New York: Cornell University Press.

Lisle, D. (2018), "Failing worse? Science, security and the birth of a border technology", *European Journal of International Relations*, 24(4), 887–910.

Little, A. (2017), "Fear, hope and disappointment: Emotions in the politics of reconciliation and conflict transformation." *International Political Science Review* 38(2): 200-212.

Locke, J. (2016), *Democracy and the Death of Shame: Political Equality and Social Disturbance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loomba, A. (2015), *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, London: Routledge.

Haché, L. and Dumont, G. H. (1957), *L'Aventure des Belges*, s.l: De Visscher.

Lu, C. (2008), "Shame, Guilt and Reconciliation after War", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11(3): 367-383.

Luhmann, N. (1995), *Social Systems*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

Lupovici, A. (2012), "Ontological dissonance, clashing identities, and Israel's unilateral steps towards the Palestinians", *Review of International Studies*, 38(4): 809-833.

Lydon, J. (2020), *Imperial Emotions: The Politics of Empathy across the British Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Machiavelli, N. (1965), *Chief Works, and Others*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Magee, G. B. and Thompson, A. (2010), *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850–1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Malesevic, S. (2011), "The chimera of national identity", *Nations and Nationalism*, 17(2): 272-290.

Manners, I. (2002), "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2): 235-258.

Markwica, Robin (2018), *Emotional Choices, How the Logic of Affect Shapes Coercive Diplomacy,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marx, K. (1967), *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, New York: Doubleday.

Maselis, P. (2005), *Van de Azoren tot de Zuidpool, Alle Belgische kolonies in de zes continenten (1451-1916), het ontstaan, het verhaal, de communicatie (prefilatelie),…,* Roeselare: Roularta books.

Mason, M. (2010), "On Shamelessness", *Philosophical Papers*, 39(3): 401-425.

Mazower, M. (2013), *Governing the World, The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present*, London: Penguin books.

McAdams, D. P. (1998), "The Role of Defense in the Life Story", *Journal of Personality*, 66(6): 1125-1146.

McSweeney, B. (1999), *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mead, M. (Ed.) (1937), *Cooperation and competition among primitive peoples*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Memmi, A. (2003), *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, London: Earthscan Publications.

Mercer, J. (1995), "Anarchy and identity", *International Organization*, 49(2): 229-252.

Mercer, J. (2014), "Feeling like a state: social emotion and identity", *International Theory,* 6(3): 515-535.

Mignolo, W. D. and Escobar, A. (2013), *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Mitzen, J. (2006), "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma", *European Journal of International Relations,* 12(3): 341-370.

Monaville, P. (2015), "A Distinctive Ugliness, Colonial Memory in Belgium", in: Rothermund, D. (ed.), *Memories of Post-Imperial Nations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 58-75.

Morgenthau, H. J. (1946), *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Morrison, A. P. (1989), *Shame, The Underside of Narcissism*, New York: Routledge.

Muldoon, P. (2017), "A reconciliation most desirable: Shame, narcissism, justice and apology", *International Political Science Review*, 38(2): 213-226.

Munezero, M., Montero, C. S., Sutinen, E., and Pajunen, J. (2014), "Are They Different? Affect, Feeling, Emotion, Sentiment, and Opinion Detection in Text", *IEEE Transactions on Affective Computing*, 5(2): 101-111.

Mutamba Makombo, J. M. (1998), *Du Congo-Belge au Congo Indépendant, 1940-1960: Emergences des « évolués » et genèse du nationalisme,* Kinshasa: IFEP.

Namikas, L. (2013), *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo, 1960-1965.* Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Nathanson, D. L. (Ed.) (1987), *The many faces of shame,* New York: Guilford Press.

Naudé, B. (2022), *Revisiting State Personhood and World Politics, Identity, Personality and the IR Subject*, New York: Routledge.

Ndaywel È Nziem, I. (2012), *Nouvelle Histoire du Congo. Des origines à la République démocratique,* Bruxelles: Le Cri.

Neumann, I. B. (1996), *Self and Other in International Relations*, *European Journal of International Relations*, 2(2): 139-174.

Neumann, I. B. (2004), "Beware of Organicism: The Narrative Self of the State", *Review of International Studies*, 30(2): 259-267.

Neumann, I. B. and Welsh, J. M. (1991), "The Other in European self-definition: an addendum to the literature on international society", *Review of International Studies*, 17(4): 327-348.

Niebuhr, R. (1935), *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, New York: Harper & Brothers.

Nietzsche, F. (1992), "On the Genealogy of Morals", in: *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, New York: Random House, pp. 451–599.

Nietzsche, F. W. (1997), *Daybreak, Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nietzsche, F. W. (2006), *The Use and Abuse of History*, s.l.: Cosimo Classics.

Noble, G. (2005), "The discomfort of strangers: racism, incivility and ontological security in a relaxed and comfortable nation", *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26(1): 107-120.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2001), *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2004), *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nzongola-Ntalaja, G. (1987), *Revolution and counter-revolution in Africa: Essays in contemporary politics,* NJ: Zed Books.

O'Donnell, A. (2017), "Shame Is Already a Revolution: The Politics of Affect in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze", *Deleuze Studies*, 11(1): 1-24.

Onar, N. F. and Nicolaidis, K. (2013), "The Decentring Agenda: Europe as a post-colonial power", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48(2): 283-303.

Onuf, N. (2013), "Recognition and the constitution of epochal change", *International Relations*, 27(2): 121-140.

Oosterlinck, K., Blocher, J., and Gulati, M. (2020), "Why Did Belgium Pay Leopold's Bonds?", *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 83(1): 49-70.

Osterhammel, J. (2010), *Colonialism, A Theoretical Overview*, Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers.

Paine, T. (1998), *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pashakhanlou, A. H. (2017), *Realism and Fear in International Relations, Morgenthau, Waltz, and Mearsheimer Reconsidered*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pavlakis, D. (2016), *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement, 1896-1913*, London: Routledge.

Pettigrove, G. and Parsons, N. (2012), "Shame: A Case Study of Collective Emotion", *Social Theory and Practice*, 38(3): 504-530.

Philipose, L. (2007), "The Politics of Pain and the End of Empire", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 9(1): 60–81.

Plamper, J. (2015), *The History of Emotions, An Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Porter, B. (2004), *The Absent-Minded Imperialists, Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Portocarero, H. (2021), *De zwarte handel*, Antwerpen: Manteau.

Pouliot, V. (2011), "Diplomats as permanent representatives, The practical logics of the multilateral pecking order", *International Journal*, 66(3): 543-561.

Probyn, E. (2005), *Blush: Faces of Shame*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Quijano, A. (2000), "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America", *Nepantla: Views from the South*, 1(3): 533-580.

Ragin, C. C. (1992), "Introduction: Cases of 'What is a case'", in: Ragin, C. C. and Becker, H. S. (eds.), *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-18.

Rai, S. M. (2015), "Political Performance: A Framework for Analysing Democratic Politics", *Political Studies*, 63(5): 1179-1197.

Rancière, J. (2000), *La Partage Du Sensible: Esthétique Et Politique*, Paris: La fabrique éditions.

Ranulf, S. (1964), *Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology: A Sociological Study*, New York: Schocken Books.

Rawls, J. (1971), *A Theory of Justice,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Reddy, W. M. (2004), *The Navigation of Feeling, A Framework for the History of Emotions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Retzinger, S. M. (1995), "Identifying Shame and Anger in Discourse", *American Behavioral Scientist*, 38(8): 1104-1113.

Renders, L. (2021), *De Mislukking van de Beschavingsmissie, Het Nederlandstalige Congoproza van 1960 tot 2020*, Hasselt: Gramadoelas.

Ricoeur, P. (2005), *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Ringmar, E. (1996), *Identity, interest and action, A cultural explanation of Sweden's intervention in the Thirty Years War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ringmar, E. (2006), "Inter-Textual Relations, The Quarrel Over the Iraq War as a Conflict between Narrative Types", *Cooperation and Conflict* 41(4): 403–421.

Ringmar, E. (2017), "Outline of a Non-Deliberative, Mood-Based, Theory of Action", *Philosophia*, 45: 1527-1539.

Ringmar, E. (2018), "What are public moods", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 21(4): 453-469.

Risse, T., Ropp, S. C., and Sikkink, K. (1999), *The Power Of Human Rights, International Norms and Domestic Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Risse-Kappen, T. (1995), "Reden ist nicht billig. Zur Debatte um Kommunikation und Rationalität"*, Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen,* 2(1): 171-184.

Rosaldo, R. (1989), "Imperialist Nostalgia", *Representations*, 26: 107-122.

Rosoux, V. (2014), "The Two faces of Belgium in the Congo: Perpetrator and Rescuer." *European Review of International Studies* 1(3): 16-38.

Ross, A. A. G. (2006), "Coming in from the Cold: Constructivism and Emotions", *European Journal of International Relations*, 12(2): 197-222.

Ross, A. A. G. (2013), "Realism, emotion, and dynamic allegiances in global politics", *International Theory*, 5(2): 273-299.

Ross, D. (1991), *The Origins of American Social Science*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rossdale, C. (2015), "Enclosing Critique: The Limits of Ontological Security", *International Political Sociology*, 9(4): 369-386.

Rumelili, B. (2015a), "Ontological (In)Security and Peace Anxieties: A Framework for Conflict Resolution", in: Rumelili, B. (ed.), *Conflict Resolution and Ontological Security: Peace Anxieties*, London: Routledge, pp. 10–29.

Rumelili, B. (2015b), "Identity and desecuritisation: the pitfalls of conflating ontological and physical security", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 18(1): 52-74.

Rumelili, B. (2021), "[Our] age of anxiety: existentialism and the current state of international relations", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24(4): 1020-1036.

Rumelili, B. (2020) 'Integrating anxiety into international relations theory: Hobbes, existentialism, and ontological security', *International Theory*, 12(2): 257–72.

Saïd, E. W. (1994), *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Random House.

Salgado, R. S. (2021), "Emotions in European parliamentary debates: Passionate speakers or un-emotional gentlemen?", *Comparative European Politics*, 19(4): 509-533.

Samaddar, R. (2018), *Karl Marx and the Postcolonial Age*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Samnotra, M. (2020), *Worldly Shame: Ethos in Action*, New York: Lexington Books.

Sartre, J.-P. (2003), *Being and Nothingness*, New York: Routledge.

Saurette, p. (2006), "You dissin me? Humiliation and post 9/11 global politics", *Review of International Studies*, 32(3): 495-522.

Sawyer, R. K. (2002), "Durkheim's dilemma: Toward a sociology of emergence", *Sociological Theory,* 20(2): 227–247.

Schaefer, D. O. (2020), "Whiteness and civilization: shame, race, and the rhetoric of Donald Trump", *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 17(1): 1-18.

Schaffer, F. C. (2016), *Elucidating Social Science Concepts, An Interpretivist Guide*, New York: Routledge.

Scheff, T. J. (2000), *Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War*, Lincoln: iUniverse.

Scheuerman, W. E. (2009), *Hans Morgenthau*, *Realism and Beyond*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Schieffelin, E. L. (1985), "Anger, Grief, and Shame: Toward a Kaluli Ethnopsychology", in: White, G. M. and Kirkpatrick, J. (eds), *Person, Self, and Experience: Exploring Pacific Ethnopsychologies*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 168–82.

Schütz, A. (1954), "Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences", *Journal of Philosophy*, 51(9): 257–273.

Severson, E. (2018), "A time for shame: Levinas, diachrony and the hope of shame", in: Hinton, L. and Willemsen, H. (eds.), *Temporality and Shame, Perspectives from Psychoanalysis and Philosophy*, London: Routledge.

Sharman, J. C. (2019), *Empires of the Weak, the real story of European expansion and the creation of the new world order*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Shotter, J. (1993), *Cultural politics of everyday life*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Singer, P. (2019), *The life you can save, How to do your part to end world poverty*, New York: Random House.

Snyder, J. (2019), "Backlash against human rights shaming: emotions in groups", *International Theory*, 12(1): 109-132.

Solomon, R. C. (2007), *True to our Feelings: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Solomon, R. C. (2008), "The Politics of Emotion", in: Kingston, R. and Ferry, L. (eds.), *Bringing the Passions Back in: the emotions in political philosophy*, UBCPress: Vancouver, pp. 189-208.

Solomon, T. (2015), *The Politics of Subjectivity in American Foreign Policy Discourse*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Solomon, T. (2019), "Rhythm and Mobilization in International Relations", *International Studies Quarterly,* 63(4): 1001-1013.

Somers, M. R. (1994), "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A relational and network approach", *Theory and Society*, 23(5): 605–649.

Somers, M. R. and Gibson, G. D. (1994), "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity", in: Calhoun, C. (ed.), *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity,* Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 37-99.

Soss, J. (2021), "On Casing a Study versus Studying a Case", in: Simmons, E. S. and Smith, N. R. (eds.), *Rethinking Comparison, Innovative methods for qualitative political inquiry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 84-106.

Spivak, G. C. (1988), "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in: Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 271–313.

Spivak, G. C. (1999), *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason, Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Spruyt, H. (1996), *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stanard, M. (2012), *Selling the Congo: A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism,* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Stanard, M. (2017), "Revisiting Bula Matari and the Congo Crisis: Successes and Anxieties in Belgium's Late Colonial State", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 46(1): 144-168.

Stanard, M. G. (2012), *Selling the Congo: A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism,* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Stanard, M. G. (2016), "The colonial past is never dead. It's not even past: Histories of Empire, Decolonization, and European Cultures after 1945", in: Rudolph, H. and Metzig, G. M. (eds.), *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy from the 15th to the 20th Century*, Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenburg, pp. 151-174.

Steele, B. J. (2008), *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-identity and the IR State*, Oxon: Routledge.

Steele, B. J. and Subotic, J. (2018), "Moral Injury in International Relations", *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 3(4): 387-401.

Steiner, J. (2006), "Seeing and being seen: Narcissistic pride and narcissistic humiliation", *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 87(4): 939-951.

Stengers, J. (1981), "Le Mythe des dominations étrangères dans l'historiographie belge", *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 59: 382-401.

Stengers, J. (1997), "De uitbreiding van België: tussen droom en werkelijkheid"*,* in: Janssens, G. e.a. (eds.), *Nieuw licht op Leopold I & Leopold II: het Archief Goffinet*, Brussel: Koning Boudewijnstichting, pp. 261-284.

Stengers, J. and Vansina, J. (2004), "King Leopold's Congo, 1886-1906", in: Fage, J. D. and Oliver, R. (eds.), *Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 6*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 315-358.

Sterling-Folker, J. (2006), "Lamarckian with a vengeance: human nature and American international relations theory", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 9: 227–246.

Stoler, A. L. (2016), *Duress, Imperial Durabilities in our Times,* Durham: Duke University Press.

Stols, E. (1981), "Kolonisatie en dagelijks leven van de hedendaagse tijd (1830–1940)", *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis*, 64(3–4): 237–59.

Subotic, J. (2016), "Narrative, Ontological Security, and Foreign Policy Change", *Foreign Policy Analysis,* 12(4): 610-627.

Subotic, J. and Zarakol, A. (2012), "Cultural intimacy in International Relations", *European Journal of International Relations,* 19(4): 917-918.

Subrahmanyam, S. (1997), "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia", *Modern Asia Studies*, 31(3): 735-762.

Suganami, H. (2008), "Narrative Explanation and International Relations: Back to Basics", *Millennium*, 37(2): 327-356.

Suzuki, S. (2017), "'Delinquent Gangs' in the International System Hierarchy", in: Zarakol, A. (ed.), *Hierarchies in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 219-240.

Tagney, J. P. and Dearing, R. L. (2002), *Shame and Guilt*, New York: Guilford Press.

Tangey, J. P., Stuewig, J., and Mashek D. J. (2007), "Moral Emotions and Moral Behavior", *Annual Review of Psychology,* 58(1): 345-372.

Tannenwald, N. (2005), "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use", *International Organization*, 53(3): 433-468.

Tarnopolsky, C. (2010), *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants, Plato's Gorgias and the Politics of Shame*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tarnopolsky, C. (2010), *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants, Plato's Gorgias and the Politics of Shame*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tavuchis, N. (1991), *Mea Culpa, A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Taylor, C. (2017), "Understanding the other: a Gadamerian view on conceptual schemes", in: Glanert, S. and Girard, F., *Law's Hermeneutics: Other Investigations*, London: Routledge, pp. 34-47.

Taylor, G. (1985), *Pride, Shame, and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Terman, R. and Voeten, E. (2018), "The relational politics of shame: Evidence from the universal periodic review", *The Review of International Organisations*, 13(1): 1-23.

Thomas, M. (2011), "Intelligence Providers and the Fabric of the Late Colonial State", in: Dülffer, J. and M. Frey (eds.), *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 11–35.

Thomason, K. K. (2018), *Naked: the dark side of shame and moral life*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Thsonda, J. O. (2004), "Lumumba, drame sans fin et deuil inachevé de la colonisation", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 173-174(1-2): 221-261.

Thucydides (2009), *The Peloponnesian War,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tödt, D. (2012), "Les Noirs Perfectionnés: Cultural Embourgeoisement in Belgian Congo during the 1940s and 1950s", *Working Papers des Sonderforschungsbereiches,* 640.

Tousignant, N. (1995), *Les manifestations publiques du lien colonial entre la Belgique et le Congo Belge (1897-1988)*, Unpublished PhD-thesis.

Towns, A. and Rumelili, B. (2017), "Taking the pressure: Unpacking the relation between norms, social hierarchies, and social pressures on states"*, European Journal of International Relations*, 23(4): 1-24.

Tracy, J. L., Robins, R. W., Tagny, J. P. (eds.) (2007), *The Self-Consciousness Emotions, Theory and Research*, New York: Guildford Press.

Tronick, E. Z. (1989), "Emotions and emotional communication in infants", *American Psychologist*, 44(2), 112–119.

Trouillot, M.-R. (1995)*, Silencing the Past, Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Troulliot, M. R. (2011), "Abortive Rituals: Historical Apologies in the Global Era", *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies,* 2(2): 171-186.

Turner, T. (2010), "Patrice Lumumba's Speech at the Proclamation of Congolese Independence", in: Bonhomme, B. and C. Boivin (eds.), *Milestone Documents in World History*, Dallas: Schlager Group, pp. 1624-1636.

Untalan, C. Y (2020), "Decentering the Self, Seeing Like the Other: Toward a Postcolonial Approach to Ontological Security", *International Political Sociology,* (14)1: 40-56.

Van Beurden, S. (2009), *Authentically African: Arts and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture,* Athens: Ohio University Press.

Van den Braembussche (1995), 'The Silenced Past. On the nature of historical taboos.', in: W. Wrzoska (ed.), *Swiat historii. Festschrift for Jerzy Topolski,* pp. 97-112.

Van den Braembussche, A. (2002), "The Silence of Belgium: Taboo and Trauma in Belgian Memory." *Yale French Studies* 12: 34-52.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1997), "Political Discourse and Racism: Describing Others in Western Parliaments." in Riggins, S. H. (ed.), *The Language and Politics of Exclusion, Others in Discourse*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 31-64.

Van Ginderachter, M. (2007), "Social Democracy and National Identity: The Ethnic Rift in the Belgian Workers' Party (1885–1914)", *International Review of Social History*, 52(2): 215-240.

van Hoof, D. C., Verbruggen, D., and Stoll, C. H. (2001), *Elsevier's legal dictionary*, Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Van Reybrouck, D. (2010), *Congo. Een geschiedenis,* Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij.

Van Rythoven, E. and Sucharov, M. (eds.) (2020), *Methodology and Emotion in International Relations, Parsing the Passions*, Oxon: Routledge.

Van Schuylenbergh, P. (2021), "Le Congo belge sur pellicule, Ordre et désordres autour d'une décolonisation (ca. 1940- ca. 1960)", *Revue d'histoire Contemporaine De l'Afrique*, 1(1): 16-38.

Vandersmissen, J. (2011), "The king's most eloquent campaigner... Emile de Laveleye, Leopold II and the creation of the Congo Free State", *BTNG*, 41(1-2): 7-57.

Vangroenweghe, D. (1985), *Leopold II & Kongo*, Brugge: Vangroenweghe, D.

Vangroenweghe, D. (2004), *Rood Rubber, Leopold II en zijn Kongo*, Leuven: Van Halewyck.

Vanthemsche, G. (2007), "De historiografie van het Belgische kolonialisme in Kongo", In: Vanthemsche, G., de Metsenaere, M., and Burgelman, J.-C., *De Tuin van Heden. Dertig jaar wetenschappelijk onderzoek over de hedendaagse Belgische samenleving*, Brussels: VUBPress, pp. 417–456.

Vanthemsche, G. (2012), *Belgium and the Congo, 1885–1980*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vattimo, G. (2016), *Of Reality, The Purposes of Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Verbeeck, G. (2020), "Legacies of an imperial past in a small nation. Patterns of postcolonialism in Belgium", *European Politics and Society*, 21(3): 292-306.

Verhaegen, B. (1999), "Communisme et anticommunisme au Congo (1920–1960)", *Brood en Rozen*, 4(2): 113-127.

Verleye, Z. Azabar, S., Brouwers, R., and Verheyen, P. (2023), "De luide roep van Black Lives Matter: erkend maar onbeantwoord", *Tijdschrift Sociologie* [to be published].

Verlinden, P. (2002), *Weg uit Congo, Het drama van de kolonialen,* Leuven: Davidsfonds.

Verschaffel, T. (2009), "Congo in de Belgische zelfrepresentatie", in: Viaene, V., D. Van Reybrouck, and B. Ceuppens (eds.), *Congo in België: Koloniale cultuur in de metropool*, Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, pp. 63-80.

Verovšek, P. J. (2016), "Collective memory, politics, and the influence of the past: the politics of memory as a research paradigm", *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4(3): 529-543.

Viaene, V. (2008), "King Leopold's Imperialism and the Origins of the Belgian Colonial Party, 1860–1905", *Journal of Modern History*, 80(4): 741-790.

Viaene, V., Van Reybrouck, D. and Ceuppens, B. (2009), *Congo in België: Koloniale cultuur in de metropool*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Vieira, M. A. (2016), "Understanding Resilience in International Relations: The Non-Aligned Movement and Ontological Security", *International Studies Review*, 18(2): 290-311.

Vieira, M. A. (2018), "(Re-)imaginging the 'Self' of Ontological Security: The Case of Brazil's Ambivalent Postcolonial Subjectivity", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 46(2): 142-164.

von Essen, H. and Danielson, A. (2023), "A Typology of Ontological Insecurity Mechanisms: Russia's Military Engagement in Syria", *International Studies Review*, 25(2): viad016.

Waltz, K. (1979), *Theory of International Politics*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Waltz, K. (1986), "Reflections on theory of international politics: A response to my critics", In: Keohane, R. (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Weber, M. (1947), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* New York: Oxford University Press.

Weber, M. (1949), *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

Weber, M. (1973), *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen: J. Winkelmann.

Weber, M. (1978), *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Weber, M. (1999), "Die 'Objektivität' Sozialwissenschaftlicher und Sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis", in: Flitner, E. (ed.), *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Potsdam: Internet-Ausgabe, pp. 146–214.

Weisband, E. (2000), "Discursive Multilateralism: Global Benchmarks, Shame, and Learning in the ILO Labor Standards Monitoring Regime", *International Studies Quarterly*, 44(4): 643-666.

Weiss, T. and Berger, R. (2010), *Posttraumatic Growth and Culturally Competent Practice*, *Lessons Learned from Around the Globe*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Wekker, G. (2016), *White Innocence – Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Welsh, J. M. (2017), "Empire and Fragmentation", in: Dunne, T. and Reus-Smit, C. (eds.), *The Globalization of International Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 145-164.

Wendt, A. (1994), "Collective Identity Formation and the International State", *The American Political Science Review*, 88(2): 384-396.

Wendt, A. (1999), *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wendt, A. (2004), "The state as person in international theory", *Review of International Studies*, 30(2): 289-316.

White, H. (1973), *Metahistory*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Wieviorka, M. (1992), "Case studies: history or sociology", in: Ragin, C. C. and Becker, H. S. (eds.), *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 159-172.

Williams, B. (1993), *Shame and Necessity*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Williams, M. C. (2008), *Realism Reconsidered, The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wimmer, A. and Schiller, N. G. (2002), "Methodological nationalism and the study of migration", *European Journal of Sociology*, 43(2): 217-240.

Wittgenstein, L. (1986), *Philosophical investigations,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wolf, R. (2011), "Respect and disrespect in international politics: the significance of status recognition", *International Theory*, 3(1): 105-142.

Wolf, R. (2017), "Identifying Emotional Reactions to Status Deprivations in Discourse", *International Studies Review*, 19(3), 481-508.

Wong, S. S. (2019), "Stoics and Hotheads: Leaders' Temperament, Anger, and the Expression of Resolve in Face-to-Face Diplomacy", *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 4(2): 190-208.

Wright, R. (1956), *The Color Curtain*: *A Report on the Bandung Conference*, Cleveland: World.

Wurmser, L. (1981), "Das Problem der Scham", *Jahrbuch der Psychoanalyse,* 13: 11–36.

ya Rubango, N. (1980), *Les principales tendances du discours politique zaïrois (1960–1965)*, Brussels: CEDAF/ASDOC.

Yao, J. (2022), "The Power of Geographical Imaginaries in the European International Order: Colonialism, the 1884–85 Berlin Conference, and Model International Organizations", *International Organization*, 76(4): 901-928.

Yong, C. (2020), "Global Emotion Studies in IR, Embracing non-Western voices", Eun, Y.-S (ed.), *Going beyond Parochialism and Fragmentation in the Study of International Relations*, London: Routledge, pp. 113-133.

Youde, J. (2014), "Shame, ontological insecurity and intercountry adoption", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 27(3): 424-441.

Young, C. (1965), *Politics in the Congo: Decolonization and Independence,* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Young, C. and T. Turner (1985), *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Zarakol, A. (2010), "Ontological (In)security and State Denial of Historical Crimes: Turkey and Japan", *International Relations*, 24(1): 3-23.

Zarakol, A. (2011), *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zarakol, A. (2014), "What made the modern world hang together: socialisation or stigmatisation", *International Theory,* 6(2): 311-332.

Zarakol, A. (2017), *Hierarchies in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zembylas, M. (2019), "'Shame at being human' as a transformative political concept and praxis: Pedagogical possibilities", *Feminism & Psychology*, 29(2): 303-321.

Zevnik, A. (2021), "Anxiety, subjectivity and the possibility of emancipatory politics", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24(4): 1050-1056.