

NARRATING AND TEACHING THE NATION

History, Identity, and the Politics of Education in the Great Lakes Region of Africa

HOE VERTELLEN WE HET DE LEERLING?

Geschiedenis, identiteit en de politisering van onderwijs
in het Afrikaanse Grote Merengebied
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

PROEFSCHRIFT

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DENISE BENTROVATO

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Promotor: Prof. dr. B.G.J. de Graaff



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A**bstract**

Evidence from around the world has shown the power of narratives in shaping collective identities and memories, as well as in legitimising present status-quo and future actions – including violence and peace. As effective vehicles for anchoring dominant narratives and discourses in society, education systems have typically functioned as key ideological instruments which have time and again been exploited to mould the identity, views and values of the nation’s new generation. Drawing on three cases from Central Africa, namely Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this thesis aims to complement existing studies on the politics of history, identity and education in contested societies. For each case-study, this research examines the evolution of official discourses from the colonial time until today, and the extent to which these have been institutionalised in curricula and textbooks and in educational policies and practices in an effort to legitimise and consolidate given socio-political systems. Upon demonstrating the strong political grip on narrative construction and propagation, and the relentless ideological mobilisation of history, identity and formal education, the thesis assesses the promises and challenges of re-writing and of teaching and learning the controversial and sensitive history of the nation in the context of delicate political transitions from war, dictatorship and mass violence to sustainable peace and democracy. Guided by a desire to give a voice to young people in the region, the study enriches its inquiry with an analysis of narratives that were collected in the field between 2008 and 2011 among 2,500 secondary school students. Based on an extensive qualitative survey, the study explores young people’s representations of the nation and of its history and destiny, as well as their views on the state of history education in their country. Ultimately, the research points to an urgency to reform education, and in

particular history teaching, with an eye to better responding to the needs of the region's youth and of society as a whole.

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1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Human beings are storytellers: an important part of their existence consists in telling stories about their experiences and the meanings these have for their lives. As vehicles for transmitting experience and meaning, narratives have been a ubiquitous feature in the history of humanity. As observed by Roland Barthes, a key figure in modern literary and cultural theory, '[n]arrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been people without narrative'. In Barthes' view, 'narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.'¹ Echoing Barthes' observation, numerous scholars in various disciplines have underscored the centrality of narratives in human comprehension and expression. M. Freeman and H. White, among others, spoke of a human 'inherent

¹ R.Barthes, 'Introduction to the structural analysis of narratives,' *Image-music-text* (London 1977), 79. On narrative theory, see also H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge introduction to narrative* (Cambridge 2002); M. Bal, *Introduction to the theory of narrative* (Toronto/Buffalo/London 1997); J. Bruner, *Actual minds, possible worlds* (Cambridge/London 1986); *Acts of meaning* (Cambridge/London 1990); S. Chatman, *Story and discourse* (Ithaca/London 1978); P. Copley, *Narrative* (London/New York 2001); P. Atkinson, B. Davies & S. Delamont (eds.), *Discourse and reproduction* (Cresskill 1995); M. Freeman, 'Why narrative? Hermeneutics, historical understanding, and the significance of stories,' *Journal of narrative and life history* 7(1-4) (1997), 169-176; W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *On narrative* (Chicago/London 1981); A. Georgakopoulou & D. Goutsos, *Discourse analysis* (Edinburgh 2004); L.O. Mink, 'Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument,' R.H. Canary & H. Kozicki (eds.), *The writing of history: literary form and historical understanding* (Madison 1978); H. White, 'The value of narrativity in the representation of reality,' *The content of the form: narrative discourse and historical representation* (Baltimore 1987), and, White, 'The historical text as literary artifact,' *Tropics of discourse: essays in cultural criticism* (Baltimore 1978). On the ambiguous distinction between stories and narratives, compare, for instance, Georgakopoulou and Goutsos, Chatman (1978), Abbott (2002) and Copley (2003), and Bal (1997). D. Polkinghorne, 'Explorations of narrative identity,' *Psychological inquiry* 7(4) (1988) 363-7; C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the making of the modern identity* (Cambridge, MA 1989).

inclination to narrativize’ and of a human ‘impulse to narrate’. Similarly, J. Gee argued that, ‘[o]ne of the primary ways – probably *the* primary way – human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in narrative form’² – that is, by ordering disparate events, real or imagined, into coherent and plausible stories, or plots, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Through such inherently selective, subjective and interpretative processes³ of ‘narrativisation’, or, in poststructuralist terms, of ‘emplotment’,⁴ people not only make sense of reality; as Dennis K. Mumby argued in his work on *Narrative and Social Control*, narratives also ‘construct the social reality that constitutes the lived world of social actors’.⁵ Ultimately, as literary critic Barbara Hardy argued, narratives shape much of our life. In her words, ‘[w]e dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative’.⁶

To a great extent, the way people come to understand and act in the world in which they live relies upon the connections narratives craft between the past, the present, and the future: on the one hand, narratives reconstruct the past in search for meaning and purpose in the present; on the other, they anticipate and project the future through what Gee referred to as ‘simulations’ that ‘help us prepare for action in the world’.⁷ In this equation, the way in which the past is framed in people’s narratives appears to be particularly crucial to our understanding and construction of the present and the future. In the preface of *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, an outstanding collection of essays which largely inspired the theoretical understandings underlying the present research, the editor Peter Seixas argued that, ‘[o]ur understanding of the past, or “historical consciousness”, shapes

² J. Gee, ‘The narrativization of experience in the oral style,’ *Journal of education* 167(1) (1985) 11. See also, Freeman (1997), 175; and H. White (1980), 5.

³ As E. Foner explained, ‘the very selection and ordering of some “facts” while ignoring others is itself an act of interpretation’. E. Foner, *Who owns history? Rethinking the past in a changing world* (New York 2002), xvii. Similarly, Munz explained that, ‘[h]istorical narratives are not portraits, mirror images or reports of what actually happened, but reconstructed interpretations.’ P. Munz, *The shapes of time: a new look at the philosophy of History* (Middletown 1977), 217.

⁴ Somers, among others, defined narratives as ‘constellations of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space, constituted by causal emplotment’. M.R. Somers, ‘The narrative constitution of identity: a relational network approach,’ *Theory and society* 23(5) (1994), 616.

⁵ D.K. Mumby (ed.), ‘Introduction,’ *Narrative and social control: critical perspectives* (Newbury Park 1993), 4-5.

⁶ B. Hardy, ‘Towards a poetics of fiction: an approach through narrative,’ *Novel* 2 (1968), 5.

⁷ J.P. Gee, *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (2nd ed.) (New York 2005), 75.

our sense of the present and the future'.⁸ In his contribution, Christian Laville explained this relation by quoting the German philosopher of history Jörn Rüsen. The scholar spoke of two 'decisive functions of historical consciousness' in the present, namely 'practical orientation and identity-building'.⁹ The way we make sense of the past is however not only 'useful' in the present, but also influenced by the present. If the present is typically explained and understood through a recourse to the past, the latter is also commonly (re-)constructed and narrativised according to present needs and concerns – resulting in what C. Giordano called 'actualised history'.¹⁰ In his 1989 work on *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton poignantly suggested that, '[w]e experience our present world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects...We may say that our experiences of the present largely depend upon our knowledge of the past, and that our image of the past commonly serves to legitimate a present social order.'¹¹

Narratives, including 'histories' telling 'what happened' and 'what it means', are not innocent constructions. Narratives and related processes of social construction have been shaped by power and politics. With the aim of buttressing the interests and position of particular individuals and groups, they have been used as powerful tools to legitimise and consolidate allegedly 'natural' socio-political orders, including hierarchies and rules, and social norms and values. As Ronald H. Jacobs pointed out, they have likewise been used 'to challenge power and create social change'¹². Next to playing a legitimising role, narratives have proven to have a strong socialising and mobilising function. Narratives, defined by Steph Lawler as 'interpretive devices through which people represent themselves, both to themselves and to others',¹³ have been instrumental in the construction, refashioning and consolidation of collective identities. Through narrative

⁸ P. Seixas, *Theorizing historical consciousness* (Toronto 2006), i.

⁹ C. Laville, 'Historical consciousness and historical education: what to expect for the first for the second,' Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness*, 176, quoting J. Rüsen, "'Cultural currency": the nature of historical consciousness in Europe,' S. Macdonald (ed.), *Approaches to European historical consciousness: reflexions and provocations* (Hamburg 2000), 78.

¹⁰ C. Giordano, 'The past in the present: actualised history in the social construction of reality,' D. Kalb & H. Tak (eds.), *Critical junctions: anthropology and history beyond the cultural turn* (New York 2005), 53-71.

¹¹ P. Connerton, *How societies remember* (Cambridge 1989), 2-3.

¹² R.H. Jacobs, 'The narrative integration of personal and collective identity in social movements,' M.C. Green, J.J. Strange, & T.C. Brock (eds.), *Narrative impact: social and cognitive foundations* (Mahway 2002), 212.

¹³ S. Lawler, 'Narrative in social research,' T. May (ed.), *Qualitative research in action* (London 2002), 242.

processes entailing what Seyla Benhabib referred to as an ‘inevitable dialectic of identity/difference’,¹⁴ boundaries between the Self and the Other have been variously ‘imagined’ and defined according to given frames of reference – e.g. nation, region, ethnicity, class, gender.¹⁵ In societies around the world, these ‘labels’, which have been central to identity politics, and which, according to Mary Kaldor, have often determined ‘the right to political power and personal security’,¹⁶ have been forged and re-forged based on the telling and re-telling of narratives asserting the community’s shared past and destiny. In an article on *Narrative Tools of History and Identity*, James V. Wertsch underscored the critical role of history in identity-formation. He described narratives about the past ‘as a kind of “cultural tool” in “mediated action” that creates and re-creates identity’.¹⁷ In particular, the collective consciousness of ‘imagined communities’, as Benedict Anderson famously defined them in his seminal work on nationalism,¹⁸ has been founded on the construction and propagation of a collective memory largely composed of mythologised stories of shared greatness and heroism, and of victimhood and suffering – or, in Vamik Volkan’s words, of ‘chosen glories’ and ‘chosen traumas’.¹⁹ Highlighting the centrality of collective memories in present processes of identity-formation, P. Seixas, among others, affirmed that, ‘[a] common past, preserved through institutions, traditions, and symbols, is a crucial

¹⁴ S. Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and difference: contesting the boundaries of the political* (Princeton 1996), 3. As the scholar explained, ‘[s]ince every search for identity includes differentiating oneself from what one is not, identity politics is always and necessarily a politics of the creation of difference.’ See also, M.R. Somers & G.D. Gibson, ‘Reclaiming the epistemological ‘Other’: narrative and the social constitution of identity,’ C. Calhoun (ed.), *Social theory and the politics of identity* (Cambridge 1994), 37-99; and B. Benwell & E. Stokoe, *Discourse and identity* (Edinburgh 2006).

¹⁵ On the relation between narrative and collective memory and identity, see, for instance, L.P. Hinchman & S.K. Hinchman, *Memory, identity, community: the idea of narrative in the Human Sciences* (Albany 1997).

¹⁶ M. Kaldor & R. Luckham, ‘Global transformations and new conflicts,’ *Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Bulletin* 32(2) (2001) 56.

¹⁷ J.V. Wertsch, ‘Narrative tools of history and identity,’ *Culture and psychology* 3 (1997) 5.

¹⁸ B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London 1991). For a discussion on the ‘primordial’ or ‘imagined’ significance of national identity, compare A.D. Smith, *National identity (ethnonationalism in comparative perspective)* (Reno 1993), and Anderson, *Imagined communities*; E. Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (New York 1983), and *Nationalism* (Nora 1990); and E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge 1990).

¹⁹ V. Volkan, *Bloodlines: from ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism* (New York 1997), 48, 82-83. On collective memory and identity construction, see, e.g. M. Halbwachs, *On collective memory* (Chicago 1992); Anderson, *Imagined communities*; Gellner, *Nations*; Connerton, *How Societies*; J.R. Gillis, *Commemorations: the politics of national identity* (Princeton 1994); P. Nora & L.D. Kritzman (eds.), *Realms of memory: rethinking the French past* (New York 1996); A. Barahona de Brito et al. (eds.), *The politics of memory: transitional justice in democratizing societies* (Oxford 2001); D.S.A. Bell, ‘Mythscapes: memory, mythology, and national identity,’ *British journal of sociology* 54(1) (2003) 63-81; P. Ricœur, *Memory, history, forgetting* (Chicago 2004).

instrument – perhaps *the* crucial instrument – in the construction of collective identities in the present.²⁰ Jan Assmann, a leading theorist of the field of Collective Memories Studies, further underscored the largely mythical content of collective narratives by suggesting that ‘myth is the most important medium for “imagination” of community’.²¹ Typically blurring the distance between past and present, these evocatively and emotionally powerful stories have been pivotal in community-building processes. On countless occasions, they have served the purpose of instilling a sense of attachment and loyalty to a ‘natural’ and ‘primordial’ community; of authenticating the ancestral rights of the community (to a homeland), and of proving its high moral virtues and genius; of celebrating its victories and heroes, and of mourning its losses. Pointing to the potency of such historical narratives and of the beliefs they transmit, Seixas underlined their critical implications for the present and the future. In his view, ‘[b]elief in a shared past opens the possibility for commitments to collective missions in the future’. And he continued, ‘[i]ts telling potentially invokes debts of the current generation to its collective forbears, while marking injustices perpetrated by or on others outside the group. In this way the narrative provides a larger justificatory context for collective actions to be taken in response to current challenges.’²²

Owing to the profound implications of their frequently normative and moral content, narratives, as well as the objects, symbols and rituals through which specific images, meanings, lessons and warnings are transmitted and enacted, have been sites of bitter political contestation. In a context in which, according to Peter Lee, ‘[t]here is not one true story about the past, but a multiplicity of complementary, competing, or clashing stories,’²³ struggles for recognition and hegemony of one’s own narratives in the public realm have often been fierce among opposing camps rivalling to control state power and to impose their views and visions on society. In the framework of a competition for power and of a quest for legitimacy, the exercise of one-sided control over ‘the truth’, and over

²⁰ Seixas, *Theorizing*, 5.

²¹J. Assmann, ‘Frühe Formen politischer Mythomotorik. Fundierende, kontrarepräsentistische und revolutionäre Mythen,’ J. Assmann & D. Harth (eds.), *Revolution und Mythos* (Frankfurt am Main 1992), 42.

²² Seixas, 5.

²³ P. Lee, ‘Understanding History,’ Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing*, 129.

the past and its narrativisation in particular, has been a primary concern of political entrepreneurs, including nationalistic, ethnic, and religious leaders. Mindful of George Orwell's dictum according to which, '[w]ho controls the past, controls the future', political elites, supported willingly or unwillingly by cultural elites such as historians,²⁴ have commonly taken great care in crafting, propagating and nurturing single public narratives and 'absolutist' histories with the 'suspect' pretension of objectively recounting the past 'as it really was'.²⁵ Those who have come to dominate and control the State have typically imposed their specific version of reality, a 'grand narrative' that suits their present interests and ideologies,²⁶ and through which they have promoted preferred orders, identities, worldviews, and belief and value systems. Wertsch pointed out that, 'modern states have sponsored the most ambitious effort at creating collective memory ever witnessed'. In such endeavours, he explained, 'states not only attempt to provide their citizens with official accounts of the past, but they also seek to control the particular ways such accounts are used, as well as access to alternative versions.'²⁷ Often, counter-narratives have been ignored or utterly silenced and outlawed, until the occurrence of a radical shift in power relations. As famously argued by Walter Benjamin, 'history is written by the victors'; and, as victors have become losers, history has been expediently re-written, new 'founding myths' and 'collective traumas' have emerged, and new roles and meanings have been assigned, turning heroes into villains, and triumphs into tragedies, and vice versa.

Evidence from around the world has shown how narratives, and especially myths that are rooted in memories of common heroic struggles and of traumatic defeats and historical wrongs linked to perceived or real present dangers, have been powerful forces. While uniting some, they have fuelled conflict and violence

²⁴ For an interpretation of the historian's propagandistic role in society, see H. Zinn, *The politics of history*. 2nd ed. (Urbana 1990). See also, E. Foner, *Who owns the past, rethinking the past in a changing world* (New York 2002). As Eric Hobsbawm rightly warned, historians have been 'primary producers of the raw material that is turned into propaganda and mythology,' and into 'some version of the opium of the people'. E. Hobsbawm, *On history* (New York 1997), 275.

²⁵ W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *On narrative* (Chicago 1981), 2.

²⁶ For discussions on the history of the use of the term 'ideology', see J. Larrain, *The concept of ideology* (Athens 1979); and T. Eagleton, *Ideology: an introduction* (London 1991).

²⁷ Wertsch, 'Specific narratives and schematic narrative templates,' Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing*, 50.

against ‘others’. History and Cultural Studies Professor Elazar Barkan observed that, on numerous occasions, ‘[t]he recounting of history has been exploited to provoke conflict, incite war, and inflame genocides.’²⁸ Exposing ‘the uses and abuses of history’,²⁹ numerous studies have illustrated how the past and its representations have been frequently summoned by political entrepreneurs as a mobilizing force to bolster a group’s identity, to incite grievance and vengefulness, and to justify violence against a demonised out-group in the context of a historical struggle between monolithic categories – between ‘us, the victimised’ and ‘them, the victimisers’. In this regard, the French Historian Marc Ferro denounced what he called a ‘militant’ history.³⁰ In her work *The Balm of Recognition*, the Jewish writer and academic Eva Hoffman too lamented ‘the marshalling of victimological, defensive memory for the purpose of aggression’.³¹ Similarly, in his theorisation of collective violence and memory, Volkan argued that, ‘[a]dopting a chosen trauma can enhance ethnic pride, reinforce a sense of victimisation, and even spur a group to avenge its ancestors’ hurts.’ Ultimately, he suggested ‘[t]he memory of the chosen trauma is used to justify ethnic aggression.’³² Drawing attention to the pervasive use of historical myths in conflict, Alexander Karn observed that, ‘[w]hether we look at the conflict in Israel-Palestine, the longstanding feud between China and Japan or the civil wars and genocides that continue to plague sub-Saharan Africa, it is clear that partisans in these contests seek to weaponize the past in order to legitimate their campaigns and support their claims to moral superiority’.³³ In these violent settings, as David Betz recently argued with specific regard to contemporary insurgency and counter-insurgency, wars are typically coupled with confrontations in ‘the virtual,

²⁸ E. Barkan, ‘History on the line. Engaging history: managing conflict and reconciliation,’ *History workshop journal* 59 (2005), 229. See also, Barkan, *The guilt of nations. Restitution and negotiating historical injustices* (Baltimore 2001).

²⁹ See for instance, the classic work by 19th-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the use and abuse of history for life* (New York 2010), originally published in 1873; Oxford History Professor M. MacMillan, *The uses and abuses of history* (Toronto 2008); P. Friedman & P. Kenney, *Partisan histories: the past in contemporary global politics* (New York 2005).

³⁰ M. Ferro, *The use and abuse of history, or how the past is taught to children*. 2nd ed. (London/New York 2003). See also, Ferro, *L’histoire sous surveillance* (Paris 1985).

³¹ E. Hoffman, ‘The balm of recognition,’ in N. Owen (ed.), *Human rights, human wrongs* (Oxford 1999), 281.

³² Volkan, *Bloodlines*, 78.

³³ A.M. Karn, ‘Depolarizing the past: the role of historical commissions in conflict mediation and reconciliation’, *Journal of international affairs* 60(1) (Fall/Winter 2006) 31.

informational realm in which belligerents contend with words and images to manufacture strategic narratives which are more compelling than those of the other side...'³⁴

Whilst the past has been regularly summoned in conflict situations to justify violence, its re-consideration and re-narrativisation has also been increasingly invoked in the framework of post-war peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.³⁵ S.W. Freedman et al. argued that, '[a] country's history is often a central concern after violent, identity-based conflicts, regardless of where they occur'. In such contexts, they authors continued, 'all sides tend to blame cross-group hatred and ensuing conflicts, at least in part, on past injustice,'³⁶ giving rise to bitter memory and history wars among actors claiming to hold the sole truth about 'what happened'. René Lemarchand pointed out that episodes of mass violence have been particularly contentious. He observed that, '[f]ew events in history are more subject to controversy than the mass killings commonly designated as genocide'.³⁷ In these sensitive and contested settings, attention has been turned to what Ferro called a 'therapeutic' function of history, a history enabling society to respond to the need to confront and make sense of uneasy pasts,³⁸ and to reconcile selective and partisan memories and interpretations of violent and traumatic events through the construction of shared and more nuanced narratives that both reflect and promote the rapprochement of former enemies.³⁹ The 'therapeutic' turn towards the past has been demonstrated by what John Torpey, in his 2003 work on *Politics and the Past*, referred to as a recent pervasive 'preoccupation with past crimes and atrocities' and an 'upsurge of concern with memory, history, and "coming to terms

³⁴ D. Betz, 'The virtual dimension of contemporary insurgency and counterinsurgency,' *Small wars & insurgencies* 19(4) (2008) 510.

³⁵ Barkan, 'History,' 229.

³⁶ S.W. Freedman et al, 'Teaching history after identity-based conflicts: the Rwanda experience,' *Comparative education review* 52(4) (2008) 663.

³⁷ Lemarchand, 'Rwanda. The state of research,' J. Semelin (ed.), *Online encyclopedia of mass violence* (2007), 2 [www.massviolence.org/IMG/article_PDF/Rwanda-The-State-of-Research.pdf] (last accessed on 12/06/2011).

³⁸ Ferro, *The use and abuse of history*, and *L'histoire sous surveillance*; A. Grosser, *Le crime et la mémoire* (Paris 1996); T. Todorov, *Les abus de la mémoire* (Paris 1995); M. Angenot, *L'idéologie du ressentiment* (Montréal 1996); P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoires* (Paris 1997).

³⁹ According to Ricœur, 'It's along the path of critical history that memory encounters the sense of justice'. *Memory, history, forgetting*, 500. See also, D. Newbury, 'Engaging with the past to engage with the future,' *Cahiers d'études africaines* 173-174 (431) (2004) 430-431 [etudesaficaines.revues.org/4684] (last accessed on 04/08/2011).

with the past”.⁴⁰ Coming to terms with a grievous past that stands in the way of reconciliation is nowadays judged crucial to break cycles of violence, impunity and vengeance, and to promote sustainable peace. Conversely, forgetting the past is widely believed to be a perilous business.⁴¹ As South Africa’s former President Nelson Mandela once warned us, ‘nations that do not deal with their past are haunted by it for generations’.⁴² His countryman Law Professor Jeremy Sarkin similarly asserted the imperative obligation to eschew collective amnesia based on the argument that ‘an unresolved past inevitably returns to haunt a society in transition’.⁴³ The expression of such concerns has been coupled with a rapidly growing development of transitional justice, ‘a field of activity and inquiry focused on how societies address legacies of past human rights abuses’.⁴⁴ While Karn lamented a ‘relegation of history to the margins of mediation practice’,⁴⁵ thereby agreeing with Barkan’s contention that conflict resolution efforts only ‘seldom actively address history either as a methodology or as a subject matter that can contribute to reconciliation’,⁴⁶ Law Professor David A. Crocker suggested that within the field of transitional justice, ‘history is a dominant part’.⁴⁷ One of the main aims of transitional justice mechanisms such as truth commissions and criminal tribunals has been to establish accurate and authoritative accounts of the violent past – the ‘truth’ – with an eye to confronting and countering historical denial, misrepresentation and falsification, and to promoting historical justice and reconciliation.⁴⁸ In this sense, as Law Professor Ruti Teitel explained in her work

⁴⁰ J. Torpey (ed.), *Politics and the past: on repairing historical injustices* (Lanham 2003), 1.

⁴¹ P. Ricœur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris 2000), 182.

⁴² N. Mandela, ‘After such crimes, what forgiveness?’, *Civilization* (June/July 1999), 78.

⁴³ J. Sarkin, *Carrots and sticks: the TRC and the South African amnesty process* (Antwerp 2004), 51-52.

⁴⁴ L. Bosire, *Overpromised, undelivered: transitional justice in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Occasional paper series (International Centre for Transitional Justice, July 2006), 4. Citing the Macmillan’s encyclopedia of genocide and crimes against humanity (October 2004).

⁴⁵ Karn, ‘Depolarizing the past,’ 32.

⁴⁶ Barkan, ‘History,’ 229.

⁴⁷ D.A. Crocker, *Reckoning with past wrongs: a normative framework* (June 2004).

⁴⁸ For critical discussions of tribunals’ and TRCs’ ability to establish accurate and even incontestable historical records of conflicts, see among others, R.G. Teitel, *Transitional Justice* (New York 2000); M. Osiel, *Mass atrocity, collective memory & the law* (New Brunswick 1997); M. Minow, *Between vengeance and forgiveness: facing history after genocide and mass violence* (Boston 1998); and P.B. Hayner, *Unspeakable truths: confronting state terror and atrocity* (New York 2001). To such popular transitional justice mechanisms as TRCs and tribunals one must add the more neglected historical commissions. Among the most prominent examples are the commissions that were set up in Europe to investigate issues surrounding WWII, the Holocaust, and the Stalinist era, some of which engaged historians from opposite sides of the conflict to jointly write ‘negotiated’ or ‘parallel’ histories as a way to address historical controversies. Karn, ‘Depolarizing the past,’ 32-33; and Barkan, ‘History,’ 232-233, 235. Such initiatives are based on the belief that the responsibility of historians, certainly in divided societies, is to ‘construct an intelligent and critical

on *Transitional Justice*, the political transitions in which these mechanisms have been embedded represent ‘vivid instances of conscious historical production’.⁴⁹

If (historical) narratives have been constructed, for better or for worse, to respond to present political and social interests and needs, the actual impact of the produced narratives and discourses on society largely depends on the level of dissemination among, and appropriation by, the populace and especially by the younger generations.

Extant scholarship amply demonstrated that dominant views, and their rhetorical-discursive and representational content, have been commonly transmitted from one generation to the next through processes of socialisation that have allowed them to filter into popular consciousness and cultural heritage. Historically, national education systems have proven to be among the most powerful socializing institutions.⁵⁰ Far from being ‘neutral’ bodies, national education systems should be understood as ‘cultural products’ which function in a specific socio-political context and which are susceptible to politically motivated change. They have generally been an integral part of a sophisticated political apparatus geared towards legitimising, preserving and reinforcing a certain status quo. On account of its power to influence processes of identity and belief-formation and to determine the social, civic and moral orientation of the nation’s young generations, formal education has been the object of intense politicisation, whereby the interests and visions of dominant groups have been promoted in the framework of political and social projects aimed at shaping society. As E.A. Cole and K. Murphy argued, it is through formal education that ‘students first come

narrative that separates the rational from popular myths of nationalist histories’ (Barkan, ‘History,’ 231) and ‘that allows for contending voices, that reveals the aspirations of all actors, the hitherto repressed and the hitherto privileged.’ C.S. Maier, ‘Doing history, doing justice: the narrative of the historian and of the Truth Commission,’ R.I. Rotberg & D. Thompson (eds.), *Truth v. justice: the morality of truth commissions* (Princeton/Oxford 2000), 274.

⁴⁹ Teitel, *Transitional justice*, 70. Underscoring the significance of the role of history in transitional justice processes, Teitel’s contended that ‘historical justice’ – defined as ‘collective history making regarding the repressive past’ (69) – is generally at the base of other forms of justice, including retributive, compensatory and restorative justice. For a discussion of historical production through criminal justice, see, among others, L. Douglas, *The memory of judgment. Making law and history in the trials of the Holocaust* (New Haven/London 2001).

⁵⁰ As the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault argued in his classic work on *The archeology of knowledge*, ‘[e]very educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourses with the knowledge and power it carries with it.’ M. Foucault, *The archeology of knowledge* (London 1972).

into contact with official structures of their society, its basic narratives and its values.’⁵¹

Being at the heart of any education system, the curriculum, supported by consistent textbooks, has been an obvious target for political manipulation. This is especially the case for the so-called ‘national subjects’, namely history, geography, civics, social studies, religion, language, literature, arts and music. Renowned scholars on the politics of textbooks, such as M.W. Apple and L.K. Christian-Smith, J. Nicholls, W.E. Marsden, and S.J. Foster and K.A. Crawford,⁵² have shown how state-controlled curricula and textbooks for these subjects have traditionally exercised an ideological and propagandistic function by being employed as potent vectors of hegemonic beliefs, values, and practices. Regularly revised and re-written to suit major (political) interests and needs, these ‘cultural artefacts’⁵³ have functioned as primary vehicles for what powerful groups have considered as legitimate knowledge and as ‘the truth’. In H. Mehlinger’s words, textbooks, in particular, can be seen as ‘the modern version of village storytellers, since they are responsible for conveying to youth what adults believe they should know about their own culture.’⁵⁴ Echoing Mehlinger’s observation, Laville further explained that, through textbooks presenting what Lee referred to as the “‘right’ stories’,⁵⁵ citizens have been moulded and imbued with ‘a sense of inclusion and

⁵¹ E.A. Cole & K. Murphy, *History education reform, transitional justice, and the transformation of identities*. Research Brief (New York: International Center for Transitional Justice 2009), 3; also published in P. Arthur (ed.), *Identities in transition. Challenges for transitional justice in divided societies* (New York: ICTJ 2010), 334-368.

⁵² M.W. Apple & L. K. Christian-Smith (eds.), *The politics of the textbook* (New York 1991); M.W. Apple, *Ideology and curriculum* (Boston 1979), *Education and power* (Boston 1982), *Teachers and texts: a political economy of class and gender relations in education* (New York 1986) and *Official knowledge: democratic education in a conservative age*. 2nd ed. (London 2000); S.J. Foster & K.A. Crawford (eds.), *What shall we tell the children? International perspectives on school history textbooks* (Greenwich 2006); J. Nicholls, *School history textbooks across cultures: international debates and perspectives* (Oxford 2006); and W. Marsden, *The school textbook: geography, history, and social studies* (London 2001). See also, E. Vickers & A. Jones (eds.), *History education and national identity in East Asia* (London 2005); M. Carretero, *Constructing patriotism: teaching history and memories in global worlds* (Charlotte 2011) and M. Carretero, M. Ascensio & M. Rodríguez-Moneo (eds.), *History education and the construction of national identities* (Charlotte 2012).

⁵³ Foster & Crawford, *What shall we tell the children?*, 1.

⁵⁴ H.D. Mehlinger, ‘International textbook revision: examples from the United States,’ *International Schulbuchforschung* 4 (1985) 287.

⁵⁵ Lee, ‘Understanding History,’ 155.

respect for established order’, and have been taught ‘what they should know and even, by extension, what they should think and feel’.⁵⁶

As a primary locus of the politics of history and identity, school history has received prominent scholarly attention. A classic and pioneering publication in this field is M. Ferro’s ambitious work on *The Use and Abuse of History, or How the Past is Taught to Children*. By drawing on fifteen case-studies from across the globe, Ferro illustrated the ideological underpinning of school histories, and their inevitably selective, partisan and frequently purposively distortive representation of the past.⁵⁷ In their more recent publication *What Shall We Tell the Children?*, Foster and Crawford echoed Ferro’s arguments. The two scholars drew attention to the ‘ideological and cultural potency’ of history textbooks. They demonstrated how, in telling stories about the national history and that of other countries, these texts often ‘seek to imbue in the young a shared set of values, a national ethos, and an incontrovertible sense of political orthodoxy.’⁵⁸ The authors showed that, by commonly presenting and enforcing an authoritative and uncontested story line – an ‘official’ version of events, – history textbooks have been instrumental in influencing and controlling how young people have perceived and understood the nation and its past, and how they have viewed various groups both within and outside the country. Transmitted through what Laville called a pedagogy ‘based on telling a story’,⁵⁹ which, in T. Taylor’s words, is ‘focused upon the acquisition of key facts and the commemoration of significant events of national importance’,⁶⁰ school histories have thus served the purpose of inculcating and nurturing what Wertsch referred to as a ‘collective memory grounded in “state-approved civic truth”’.⁶¹ The main purpose being, in L. Hein and M. Selden’s words, to ‘transmit ideas of citizenship and both the idealised past and the

⁵⁶ C. Laville, ‘Historical consciousness and historical education: what to expect from the first for the second,’ Seixas, 166.

⁵⁷ Ferro, *The use and abuse of history*. This work was first published in 1981 in French, and was later translated into English in 1984. Case-studies include, among others, South Africa, India, Iran, Trinidad, the USA, URSS/Russia, Poland, China, and Japan.

⁵⁸ Foster & Crawford (eds.), 1.

⁵⁹ Laville, ‘Historical consciousness,’ 173.

⁶⁰ T. Taylor, ‘Disputed territory: the politics of historical consciousness in Australia,’ Seixas, 219. Levstik spoke in terms of an ‘information exhibition stance’, in which ‘history is acquired as information to be displayed’. Levstik, 71.

⁶¹ J. Wertsch, *Voices of collective remembering* (Cambridge 2002), 71.

promised future of the community’,⁶² textbooks have typically conveyed a ‘usable past’. They have taught a proud and patriotic history which seeks to craft and consolidate a common national identity by celebrating and exalting the nation, its traditions and heritage, and its heroes and triumphs, while also glorifying and legitimising the State and its authority.⁶³

According to Vincent Greany, textbooks’ ‘highly idealised views of one nation or group of people’ have been frequently accompanied by ‘incorrect and inappropriate images about others’.⁶⁴ In some cases, ‘the others’ and their cultural heritage have been simply erased or under-represented in the dominant national tale, thereby turning schooling into a tool of cultural alienation against marginalised identity groups.⁶⁵ In others, these groups have been misrepresented, denigrated, and demonised, and have been the object of bias, prejudice, and negative stereotypes. Such textbook representations, according to available evidence, have negatively impacted social relations by nurturing feelings of arrogance and moral superiority, and of contempt, distrust, fear and even hatred towards ‘the other’. The teaching of history, especially if based on the adoption of a single text firmly and rigidly dictating the state-approved version of the national story, appears as an area that is particularly susceptible to allegations of bias and prejudice.⁶⁶ Sarah Graham-Brown observed that the monopoly of one group on political power often results in ‘the construction of a version of history...which

⁶² L. Hein & M. Selden (eds.), *Censoring history: citizenship and memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*. Asia and the Pacific Series (Armonk/New York 2000), 3.

⁶³ As pointed out by Alan Smith, feelings of nationalism and patriotism have also been encouraged through the ‘hidden curriculum’, for instance through ‘the daily routine of singing the national anthem, raising the national flag, display of leaders’ portraits or celebration of national days.’ A. Smith, ‘The influence of education on conflict and peace building,’ Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011, *The hidden crisis: armed conflict and education* (2010), 2.

⁶⁴ V. Greany, ‘Textbooks, respect for diversity, and social cohesion’, E. Roberts-Schweitzer, V. Greaney, & K. Duer (eds.), *Promoting social cohesion through education: case studies and tools for using textbooks* (Washington D.C.: World Bank 2006), 1-2.

⁶⁵ See, for instance, S. Ahonen, ‘Politics of identity through history curriculum: narratives of the past for social exclusion- or inclusion?’, *Journal of curriculum studies* 33 (2001) 179-194; R. Nasser, ‘Exclusion and the making of Jordanian national identity: an analysis of school textbooks,’ *Nationalism and ethnic politics* 10(2) (2004) 221-249; R. Nasser & I. Nasser, ‘Textbooks as a vehicle for segregation and domination: State efforts to shape Palestinian Israelis’ identities as citizens,’ *Journal of curriculum studies* 40 (2008) 627-650.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Apple & Christian-Smith (eds.), *The politics of the textbook*; E.H. Dance, ‘Bias in history teaching and textbooks’; O. Schuddenkopf, E. Bruley, E.H. Dance & H. Vigander, *History teaching and history textbook revision* (Strasbourg: Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe 1967); M. Reinhard, *L’enseignement de l’histoire et ses problèmes*. 2^e ed. (Paris 1967), 64; L.T. Maes, *Les préjugés et leur influence sur l’enseignement de l’histoire* (Bruxelles 1974).

heightens the role of that group at the expense of others'.⁶⁷ Similarly, Greany stated that, '[t]extbooks sometimes deliberately and systematically exclude counternarratives, especially those of minorities or a defeated people'.⁶⁸ Linda Levstik highlighted the contentious nature of the content of national histories and its possible impact on popular perceptions and attitudes. She concluded that, 'when, how and if groups and individuals are included in the nation's historical narrative is fraught with controversy... individuals and groups left out of historical narratives may perceive themselves and be perceived by others as second-class citizens, cut off from the rights and privileges enjoyed by more favored citizens.'⁶⁹

'Others' have often been marginalised from school histories and from schooling altogether. Education systems have been commonly used to perpetuate not only the views and values of dominant groups, but also their privileged position in society. With the intention of restricting access to power and resources, overt or covert unequal and discriminatory policies and practices have been adopted in numerous cases, thereby severely compromising the future of those excluded from, or marginalised within, the system. A. Smith and T. Vaux observed that inequalities in the education system have been promoted at the level of both 'inputs' and 'outputs'.⁷⁰ The former relates to inequalities in access, resource allocation, and teacher recruitment, training and deployment. The latter includes the promotion of inequality in education performance and qualifications, for instance through segregated identity-based education providing differential educational quality. In addition, access to education has been frequently discouraged by perpetrating and condoning targeted and systematic violence against certain groups.

The mounting literature on the theme of 'education and conflict' has amply illustrated how politicised education systems have been sources of societal

⁶⁷ S. Graham-Brown, 'The role of the curriculum', *Education rights and minorities* (London: Minority Rights Group 1994).

⁶⁸ Greany, 'Textbooks,' 13.

⁶⁹ L.S. Levstik, 'Crossing the empty spaces: New Zealand adolescents' conceptions of perspective-taking and historical significance,' O.L. Davis, E.A. Yeager, & S.J. Foster (eds.), *Historical empathy and perspective taking in the social studies* (New York 2001), 71-72.

⁷⁰ A. Smith & T. Vaux, *Education, conflict, and international development* (London 2003), 26.

tensions insofar as they have fuelled ‘grievances, stereotypes, xenophobia and other antagonisms’.⁷¹ More and more, the growing recognition of the potential and actual negative role of education in conflict has been coupled with efforts at drawing attention to the imperative need to understand such dynamics and relations, to reform and ‘transform’ education systems through a ‘conflict sensitivity’ lens,⁷² as well as to turn schools into tools that could contribute to social cohesion.⁷³ Particular consideration has been expressed with regard to countries emerging from armed conflict. Here, educational reconstruction and reform has been increasingly seen as having the potential to play a valuable and complementary role in dealing with the legacies of war and mass violence alongside such mechanisms as trials, truth commissions, and memorialisation practices.⁷⁴ Although, as observed by Elizabeth Cole, ‘[e]ducation... has been largely absent from the transitional justice discourse’,⁷⁵ the expanding literature on the role of education in reconciliation and transitional justice processes demonstrates a growing consensus on the need and possibilities to connect these two sectors.⁷⁶ In 2009, Julia Paulson suggested that, partly as a result of the

⁷¹ A. Smith, ‘The influence,’ 1.

⁷² Smith & Vaux, 46.

⁷³ On education, conflict and peace, see, among others, K. Bush & D. Saltarelli, *The two faces of education in ethnic conflict* (Florence: UNICEF 2000); L. Davies, *Education and conflict: complexity and chaos* (New York 2004); K. Seitz, *Education and conflict: the role of education in the creation, prevention and resolution of societal crises – Consequences for development cooperation* (Eschborn: GTZ 2004); Tawil & Harley (eds.), *Education, conflict and social cohesion* (Geneva: IBE/UNESCO 2004); P. Buckland, *Reshaping the future: education and post-conflict reconstruction* (Washington D.C.: World Bank 2004); K. Bensalah, S. Bokhari et al., *Education in situations of emergency and crisis: challenges for the new century. Reissue of thematic study* (Paris: UNESCO 2001); J. Wedge, *Rewrite the future - When peace begins. Education’s role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding* (London: Save the Children 2008); S. Nicolai (ed.), *Opportunities for change. Education innovation and reform during and after conflict* (Paris: UNESCO 2009); M. Sommers, *Children, education and war: reaching Education for All (EFA) objectives in countries affected by conflict* (Washington: World Bank 2002); A. Smith, ‘Education in the twenty-first century: conflict, reconstruction and reconciliation’, *Compare* 35(4) (2005) 373-391; J. Paulson, *(Re)Creating education in postconflict contexts: transitional justice, education, and human development* (New York: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009), Paulson (ed.), *Education, conflict and development* (Oxford 2011) and *Education and reconciliation: exploring conflict and post-conflict situations* (London 2011); K.E. Dupuy, *Education for peace: building peace and transforming armed conflict through education systems* (Save the Children Norway/PRIO 2008).

⁷⁴ M. Minow, *Between vengeance and forgiveness: facing history and mass violence* (Boston 1999), 23; and Minow, *Breaking the cycles of hatred. Memory, law and repair* (Princeton 2002), 3.

⁷⁵ E.A. Cole, ‘Transitional justice and the reform of history education,’ *The international journal of transitional justice* 1 (2007) 115. See also, H.M. Weinstein, S.W. Freedman, & H. Hughson, ‘School voices: challenges facing education systems after identity-based conflicts’, *Education, citizenship and social justice (ECSJ)* 2(1) (2007) 42.

⁷⁶ See, for instance, the initiative launched by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, the International Center for Transitional Justice and Harvard Law School. [www.unicef-irc.org/knowledge_pages/resource_pages/children_and_transitional_justice/index.html]. Educational issues have also been integrated in peace negotiations and peace agreements. See the ground-breaking article published in 2008 by K.E. Dupuy, where the author presents a systematic examination of the trends and

increased engagement of transitional justice mechanisms with young people,⁷⁷ recent truth commissions in particular have included the education sector in their investigations into the institutional responsibility in the conflict, as well as in their recommendations for institutional reform.⁷⁸ In recognition of the importance of involving the new generation, several truth commissions and international tribunals have not only addressed, but also interacted with the education sector through outreach programmes aimed at disseminating their findings among young people in order to help them understand the history of the conflict experienced in their country.⁷⁹ Only limited efforts have however been made by such mechanisms to systematically produce didactic material out of their investigative work, and to formally integrate them into national curricula.⁸⁰ According to Paulson, '[t]his demonstrates the difficult and political nature of teaching about

patterns in the inclusion of education in post-Cold War peace agreements. Dupuy, 'Education in peace agreements, 1989-2005,' *Conflict resolution quarterly* 26(2) (Winter 2008) 150-151; Wedge, 8-9 and Save the Children, *Background brief*, 9-10.

⁷⁷ Paulson, *(Re)Creating education*, 14-15. A specific focus on children was for instance an important feature of some of the most recent truth commissions (i.e. Sierra Leone, Timor Leste, Guatemala and Liberia). This focus was embedded in their proceedings through children's participation in statement-taking and hearings, in their report's findings through an analysis of children's role in the conflict, as both victims and perpetrators, in their recommendations through a stipulation of reparations benefiting children, and in their public outreach efforts, specifically targeting children. A specific focus on children has also been an increasing feature of international courts' proceedings and outreach programmes. See, for example, Innocenti Research Center, UNICEF, *Expert discussion on children and transitional justice: background paper* (Florence: Innocenti Research Centre, UNICEF, 2008) [www.unicef-irc.org/files/documents/d-3741-Background-document.pdf] (last accessed on 06/06/2011).

⁷⁸ E.g. Guatemala (1999), Peru (2003), Sierra Leone (2004), East Timor (2005) and Liberia (2009).

⁷⁹ Among the various school outreach activities have been the distribution of informational material in schools, the organisation of awareness raising workshops and of children's radio programmes and quiz competitions, the encouragement to form school clubs, as well as court's visits. See, in particular, the websites of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) [www.icty.org], the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) [www.ict.rg], the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) [www.scs.l.org], and the International Criminal Court (ICC) [www.icc-cpi.int].

⁸⁰ In Peru, the TRC-based curriculum resource Recordándonos was developed by an NGO/university collaboration. See, J. Paulson, 'Executive summary. Truth commissions and national curriculum: the case of the Recordándonos resource in Peru'. Children and Transitional Justice Conference, 27-29 April 2009, co-convened by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre and the Human Rights Program at Harvard Law School [www.unicef-irc.org/knowledge_pages/resource_pages/tj_conference/ex_summary_paulson.pdf] (last accessed on 01/01/2010). In Sierra Leone, a Child Friendly Version for primary schools and a Senior Secondary School Version of the TRC report were developed respectively by UNICEF and by a coalition of local NGOs – the so-called TRC Working Group. See, J. Paulson, *Conflict, education and Truth Commissions: the case of Sierra Leone* (Oxford 2006); and Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone [www.trcsierraleone.org]. In Guatemala, the report has resulted in the curricular material *Social-Historical Context of Guatemala and Educational Reality*. See, E. Oglesby, 'Historical memory and the limits of peace education: examining Guatemala's Memory of silence and the politics of curriculum design,' in E.A. Cole (ed.), *Teaching the violent past: history education and reconciliation* (Washington 2007), 175-202, and Oglesby, 'Educating citizens in postwar Guatemala: historical memory, genocide, and the culture of peace,' *Radical history review* 97 (2007) 77-98.

the violent past, particularly within the officially sanctioned national curriculum.’⁸¹

Overall processes of curriculum and textbook revision have indeed been particularly challenging in the aftermath of war. According to a UNESCO/IBE report on *Curriculum Change and Social Cohesion in Conflict-Affected Societies*, ‘[c]urricular renewal is the crux of the process of reform of school education’.⁸² In a later publication on *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion*, the organisation suggested that any such reform should be undertaken with a concern ‘to avoid reproducing contents that at worst have contributed to conflict and, at best, have done nothing to prevent it.’⁸³ With this concern in mind, post-war societies have often opted for the integration of notions of peace education and human rights in the school curriculum as a way to promote ‘the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.’⁸⁴ While valuing such curricular initiatives, international practice has pointed to the critical importance of proceeding to a more structural reform aimed at withdrawing inaccurate, objectionable and offensive material, and at designing broadly acceptable and inclusive curricula and textbooks through the involvement of representatives from various groups. In light of the role played by textbooks in shaping and perpetuating images of the enemy, this approach was widely and rather successfully adopted in Europe in the wake of the Second World War. Various initiatives were launched across the continent to jointly analyse and revise

⁸¹ See for instance, Cole, *Teaching the violent past*; and Tawil & Harley.

⁸² S. Tawil, A. Harley, & L. Porteous, *Curriculum change and social cohesion in conflict-affected societies* (Geneva: IBE/UNESCO 2003), 8. See also, Buckland, 52-54.

⁸³ Tawil & Harley (eds.), 25.

⁸⁴ S. Fountain, *Peace education in UNICEF*. Working Paper (New York: UNICEF 1999), 1 [www.unicef.org/education/files/PeaceEducation.pdf] (last accessed on 07-06-2011). See also, Sinclair, *Learning to live together: building skills, values and attitudes for the twenty-first century* (Geneva: IBE/UNESCO 2004); and G. Salomon & B. Nevo (eds.), *Peace education. The concept, principles and practices around the world* (Mahwah/London 2002). Practices around the world have differed: while some countries have introduced peace education as a discrete area with its own timetable, others have subsumed it into existing subjects or have integrated peace education notions through the ‘hidden curriculum’ and extra-curricular activities. The term ‘hidden curriculum’ refers here to the conveyed societal values and beliefs which are not formally and explicitly part of the official curriculum. M. Haralambos, *Sociology: themes and perspectives* (London 1981).

textbooks in order to include ‘a more or less harmonious version of the shared history’.⁸⁵ The challenges of building consensus on what to teach children have been particularly daunting in societies recently emerging from intra-state conflict and mass violence. Here, history education reform, a field that has been largely neglected in the discourse and practice of post-war transitional justice and social reconstruction,⁸⁶ has proven extremely complex in such disparate places as Bosnia-Herzegovina,⁸⁷ Northern Ireland,⁸⁸ Israel-Palestine,⁸⁹ Lebanon,⁹⁰ Cambodia,⁹¹ South Africa,⁹² and Rwanda.⁹³ Cole and Murphy explained that, ‘[i]n

⁸⁵ Among these figure the French-German, the German-Czech, the German-Polish, and the German-Israeli Textbook Commissions. The examination of the German case, generally considered to be a success story in its reconciliatory effect towards neighbouring countries and former enemies, has often been compared to the less successful case of Japan. This country, while recently involved in the Japan-Korea and the Korea-China-Japan Textbook Commissions, obstinately refused to face its responsibility for serious crimes committed during WWII in Asia. See the recent collection of essays on historical revisionism in politics, historiography, education, and the media in East Asia by S. Richter (ed.), *Contested views of a common past: revisions of history in contemporary East Asia* (Frankfurt AM/New York 2008). The primary organisations that facilitated such initiatives especially in Europe are UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (GEI), and the European Association of History Educators (Euroclio), as well as Facing History and Ourselves. See, a.o., Council of Europe, *Lessons in history: the Council of Europe and the teaching of history* (Strasbourg: CoE 1999) [www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/Source/Results/General/LessonsinHistory_en.pdf], and *Against bias and prejudice: the Council of Europe's work on history teaching and history textbooks* (Strasbourg 1995) [www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/Source/Results/General/Bias&Prejudice_en.pdf] (last accessed on 25/01/2010); UNESCO, ‘Getting the spin right on history,’ *The UNESCO courier* (Paris: UNESCO 2001) [www.unesco.org/courier/2001_11/uk/education.htm] (last accessed on 27/01/2010); W. Höpken, *Textbooks and conflicts. Experiences from the work of the Georg-Eckert-Institute for International Textbook Research*. World Bank Workshop, March 24 -26th (Washington 2003); F. Pingel, ‘Can truth be negotiated? History textbooks revision as a means to reconciliation,’ *The annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617(1) (2008) 181-198.

⁸⁶ E.A. Cole & J. Barsalou, *Unite or divide? The challenges of teaching history in societies emerging from violent conflict*. Special report (Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace 2006), 2; E.A. Cole, ‘Transitional justice and the reform of history education,’ *The international journal of transitional justice* 1 (2007) 115.

⁸⁷ A. Dimou (ed.), *Transition and the politics of history education Southeast Europe* (Göttingen 2009).

⁸⁸ M.E. Smith, *Reckoning with the past: teaching history in Northern Ireland* (Lanham 2005); and K.C. Barton & A. McCully, ‘History teaching and the perpetuation of memories: the Northern Ireland experience,’ E. Cairns & M.D. Roe (eds.), *The role of memory in ethnic conflict* (New York 2003), 107-124.

⁸⁹ E. Podeh, ‘History and memory in the Israeli education system: the portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict in history textbooks, 1948-2000,’ *History and memory* 12 (2000) 65-100; A. Rohde, ‘Bridging conflicts through history education? A case study from Israel/Palestine,’ S. Alayan, A. Rohde, & S. Dhoub (eds.), *The politics of education reform in the Middle East: Self and Other in textbooks and curricula* (New York 2012), 237-260; and Georg Eckert Institute (GEI), *The texts of “the others”: an Israeli-Palestinian textbook project on the history of the Middle East conflict* (Braunschweig: Georg Eckert Institute 2007) [www.gei.de/index.php?id=schulbuchprojek_israel_palestina&L=1] (last accessed 15/12/2010).

⁹⁰ M. Daher, ‘On the impossibility of teaching history in Lebanon: notes on a textbook controversy,’ Alayan et al. (eds.), *The politics*, 97-111.

⁹¹ Khamboly Dy, ‘A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) . Review of genocide education project,’ Documentation Center of Cambodia (22 April 2007) [www.genocidewatch.org/images/Cambodia_22_Apr_07_A_History_of_Democratic_Kampuchea_1975-1979.pdf] (last accessed on 17/12/2010).

⁹² G. Weldon, *A comparative study of the construction of memory and identity in the curriculum of post-conflict societies: Rwanda and South Africa* (Saarbrücken 2010).

⁹³ See the literature cited in Chapter 2.

countries where the wounds of identity-based conflict are fresh, there are questions about whether, how and at what age children should learn about parts of the nation's past – usually the recent past – that are difficult and expose deeply opposing views.⁹⁴ In such contexts, in which, as Tawil et al. observed, ‘versions of “official history” are often integral to the roots of the conflict’,⁹⁵ history textbooks have regularly been objects of intense contention. While experts have increasingly advocated for a critical and democratic approach to history teaching which favours children's exploration of multiple sources and perspectives,⁹⁶ bitter disputes around the ‘right’ version and the appropriate representation of historical events have been common. Faced with the lack of a widely accepted view on their country's recent violent history and with a fear of unearthing uncomfortable memories that could further destabilise relations, many divided and post-war societies have chosen to exclude sensitive and controversial topics from the school curriculum, thereby failing to respond to the need to adequately explain the conflict to the new generation. The risks involved in leaving the young generation unequipped to handle the violent past has been saliently underscored by Eva Hoffman. In her words,

‘[this] is the generation that inherits the experience of violence as still living memory; and which moulds and converts this remembrance into some form of collective memory or historical knowledge. It is in this crucial interval that the past can be frozen into fixed mythology, or comprehended in its historical complexity; and in which the cycles of revenge can be perpetuated or interrupted. The moment of transmission is important to dwell on, because it is a moment of real danger; but also of genuine hope and possibility.’⁹⁷

Given the serious and profound implications of beliefs related to history and identity, the way young people are instructed and educated about themselves and about the world in which they live, as well as the way they eventually come to understand ‘who they are’, and ‘what happened’ and ‘what it means’, urges

⁹⁴ Cole & Murphy, *History education reform*, 1.

⁹⁵ Tawil & Harley (eds.), 12.

⁹⁶ Cole & Barsalou, *Unite or divide?*, 10. See also, Cole, ‘Introduction: reconciliation and history education,’ Cole (ed.), 1-2.

⁹⁷ Hoffman, ‘The balm’; N. Owen (ed.), *Human rights, human wrongs* (Oxford 2003), 291. See also, E. Naidu & C. Adonis, *History on their own terms: the relevance of the past for a new generation* (Cape Town: Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation 2007).

continued reflection. It is on this premise that the present study has been undertaken.

1.2 Presentation of the study: research questions and objectives

The present research has been undertaken with the aim of contributing to building a deeper understanding of the politics of history, identity, and education, and of the effects of such politicisation on social construction and on dynamics of conflict and peace. By drawing attention to how these processes and dynamics play out in divided and post-war settings, the aim is also to further understand and assess the challenges posed by an uncomfortable and controversial national past, and the approaches adopted by transitional societies to dealing with it, both in and out of school. With an eye to offering new insights on such issues, this study focuses on the relatively neglected African context. A vast literature exists in the separate fields of politics and conflict, history and memory, identity and ethnicity, and education in Africa. Compared to other regions of the world, most notably Europe, Asia and the Middle East, a link between these various disciplines appears not to have been systematically drawn in the extant scholarship on Africa.

For the purpose of the research, this study explores three distinct but deeply interconnected cases in the turbulent Great Lakes Region, namely Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This ‘region in turmoil’,⁹⁸ as Filip Reyntjens recently described it, is notorious for having been the dramatic scene of disruptive colonial rule, violent upheavals and rebellions, authoritarianism and flawed democratic transitions, protracted intra-state and inter-state tensions and armed conflicts – including ‘Africa’s world war’, – and mass violence and genocide. Today, discussions on history, identity and education are most relevant. The region finds itself at an important crossroads, which might

⁹⁸ F. Reyntjens, *The Great African War: Congo and regional geopolitics, 1996-2006* (New York 2009), 10.

determine its chances of successfully breaking the cycle of violence and of building sustainable peace. As wars have officially come to an end, these countries currently share the challenge of having to deal with their past and to re-define themselves in the framework of post-war social reconstruction. The belief underlying this thesis is that, in the process of ‘facing history and ourselves’, the way in which the nation, and its history and identity, are re-imagined and taught to the new generation is crucial to the long-term success of peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, and therefore warrants due consideration.

The study approaches the subject at hand by examining the historical evolution of political discourse in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC from the colonial era up until today, and by analysing the extent to which this discourse has been institutionalised through teaching contents and educational policies and practices throughout time, thereby affecting the nation’s new generation. By doing so, the thesis ultimately aims to better understand and assess the current challenges and opportunities involved in the post-war processes of social, historical and educational reconstruction that are now taking place in these three societies. In a context presenting both risks and chances, the analysis of prominent narratives produced and transmitted in the society has been enriched by drawing attention to the stories recounted by students in the region. Based on the assumption that narratives, in A.P. Kerby’s words, are ‘a primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience and ultimately of ourselves’,⁹⁹ this investigation has been conducted with the conviction that narratives constitute useful analytical tools able to offer crucial insights on individuals and societies, and on their (evolving) perceptions and feelings, including their hopes, fears, grievances, concerns, aspirations, dreams and expectations. As beliefs and perceptions tend to inform and influence attitudes and behaviours, an inquiry into the way the past is understood and framed in societies emerging from violent conflict has the potential to reveal, explain and perhaps anticipate the causes and risks of a relapse into war, and the possibilities of sustainable peace and reconciliation.

⁹⁹ A.P. Kerby, *Narrative and the Self* (Bloomington 1991), 3.

The general questions that have guided the present research can be sub-divided into two main sets of specific questions, each respectively concerning the pre-war and the current post-war years.

The first set of questions is intended to provide the historical context for the exploration of current challenges in the three contested societies under review. First of all, through narrative and discourse analysis, this study aims to investigate the extent to which history and identity, including myths and stereotypes, have been invoked by political entrepreneurs in support of given ideologies and policies both in the colonial and the post-colonial era. Secondly, through an analysis of teaching contents, as well as of educational policies and practices, the research explores the extent to which official views and ideologies have been reflected and institutionalised in the education system in an effort to legitimise and consolidate a given socio-political order, and to shape collective identities and memories according to the understandings of the elites in power. Within this context of analysis, attention is paid to investigating how formal education possibly affected young people's perceptions and attitudes especially towards the authorities, and the Self and the Other.

The second set of questions concerns the more recent period since the 1990s, a time that has been characterised by delicate political transitions from war, dictatorship and mass violence to peace and democracy. Questions regarding the contemporary time explore the extent to which the sensitive issues of history and identity have been summoned and re-addressed in the post-war years, especially in the framework of transitional justice and reconciliation, and the extent to which new official discourses have been reflected in newly reformed education systems, and to what effect. Particular attention is paid to examining the premises, promises and challenges of (re-)writing and (re-)teaching the history of the nation in the aftermath of large-scale violence, and to assessing whether and how school history today deals with the highly controversial topics of identity/diversity and the uncomfortable past. Against the backdrop of typically contested identities and memories, and of bitter post-war controversies around 'the historical truth', this study further aims to investigate and compare how young people today perceive

and represent the nation and its historical trajectory and destiny. Prompted by W.S. Wurzbürger's observation that 'history teaches only the lessons that people choose to learn',¹⁰⁰ one of the core questions that this research seeks to answer is 'what are the lessons that young people have drawn from history?' In the exploration of this question, this study intends to reveal:

- the level of acceptance or rejection of dominant official narratives as they are generally reproduced in the history course. As several authors have pointed out, despite the power of the textbook, what pupils actually come to learn and believe might differ from what is prescribed, and might instead coincide with rivalling unofficial stories;¹⁰¹
- interpretative differences and similarities within and across state borders;
- historical beliefs, including myths, stereotypes and other misperceptions, which might have informed feelings of animosity or solidarity towards certain groups both at national and regional level; and,
- ways in which historical understandings might have shaped current identities and aspirations for the future.

In addition to investigating young people's historical representations and understandings, this thesis aims to examine students' experience with the subject of history. More specifically, it explores their interest for and appreciation of history, their perceptions of the current role of schooling in their historical knowledge, and their overall assessment and suggestions for the improvement of the history course.

Ultimately, the purpose of this research is to draw tentative conclusions and lessons which, on the one hand, could contribute to ongoing scholarly discussions and theorisations, and, which, on the other hand, could help find new directions and inform future action, most notably in the fields of education and conflict

¹⁰⁰ W.S. Wurzbürger, 'The Holocaust meaning or impact,' *Shoa* 2(1) (1980) 15.

¹⁰¹ Apple, 'Culture and commerce of the textbook,' Apple & Christian-Smith (eds.), *The politics*; Foster & Crawford, *What shall we tell the children?*; D. Porat, "'It's not written here, but this is what happened": students' cultural comprehension of textbook narratives on the Israeli-Arab conflict,' *American educational research journal* 41 (2004) 963–96; J.V. Wertsch & M. Rozin, 'The Russian Revolution: official and unofficial accounts,' J. Voss & M. Carretero (eds.), *International review of history education, vol. 2: learning and reasoning in history* (1998) 39–60.

resolution. Most importantly, by bringing emerging challenges and possibilities to light, this study wishes to make a difference for the people living in the Great Lakes Region. By seeking to fill some of the gaps deriving from a scarcity of studies on young people's perceptions in this part of the world, the thesis aspires to eventually serve the needs and interests of the hundreds of respondents (and their colleagues) who shared their views in the hope of being listened to.

1.3 Research methods

1.3.1 Data collection and analysis

In order to answer the questions that are at the core of this thesis, the present study adopted a qualitative approach, and entailed both desk-based and field-based research.¹⁰² Primary and secondary data were collected through three main methods: a desk-based literature review, curriculum and textbook analysis, and a field-based survey.

1.3.1.1 Desk-based literature review

The first set of data derived from an extensive desk-based literature review. This phase proved crucial to understanding the issues relevant to the thesis and to developing its theoretical and analytical framework. Data were drawn from extant Anglophone and Francophone scholarship in such wide-ranging disciplines as History, Politics, Anthropology, Peace and Conflict Studies, and Education.¹⁰³ The consulted literature included scholarly monographs and academic articles in either

¹⁰² On qualitative research, see, for instance, L.M. Given (ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Thousand Oaks 2008); and J.W. Creswell, *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.) (Thousand Oaks 2009).

¹⁰³ In this study, all reported quotes that were drawn from non-Anglophone sources were translated into English by the author. It must be noted that scholarly publications on the region, as well as textbooks and students' essays on which this study relies were largely written in French.

printed or electronic form, as well as documents and reports produced by governmental and non-governmental actors. Online newspaper articles and website entries were also accessed. Besides providing necessary background information and analyses, the literature review allowed to access secondary data, which could be re-processed and re-analysed in the framework of this study in order to answer its specific questions.

1.3.1.2 Curriculum and textbook analysis

The second set of data stemmed from a qualitative analysis of a sample of colonial and post-colonial curricula and textbooks that had been developed throughout the decades to be used in primary and secondary schools in the three countries under review. Accessing this material involved a varying degree of complexity. In some cases, the data collection proved relatively uncomplicated. Curricula that are currently used in Rwanda and the DRC, for instance, could be directly downloaded from the website of the respective Ministries of Education. In other cases, accessing this documentation involved a lengthy search and required travelling abroad. Several old textbooks, notably Congolese manuals that were produced in the 1970s and 1980s, were for example collected in Belgium, namely at the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels and at the library of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren. With their vast inventory of publications specific to the region, these two libraries have been invaluable to the present research. The remaining documents were gathered during field research. They were generally provided by educational officials and history teachers who kindly offered their assistance in a context in which knowing the right person turned out to be crucial.

The collection of the didactic material was followed by a phase of analysis. Drawing on international scholarship on curriculum and textbook research, the review of these ‘cultural artefacts’ relied on a variety of qualitative methodological approaches that were considered to be most relevant to the aims

and objectives of the thesis.¹⁰⁴ On a broad level, for each of the case-studies under review, this research proposes a historical analysis of collected curricula and textbooks. This type of analysis was employed to explore the way in which portrayals of selected issues changed over time – since the colonial era, when schooling was first introduced, up until today. Within this historical framework, the study further resorted to discourse and critical analysis with the aim of seeking to expose the extent to which specific regimes of knowledge have been conveyed by the various elites in power through school teachings. More specifically, through this analytical lens, the thesis has sought to bring to light whose stories were told at each historical juncture and for what purpose, and whose stories were instead neglected or utterly omitted. In order to disclose possible one-sidedness and bias in curricula and textbook portrayals, this research has also heavily relied on content analysis with the intention to assess the value and interpretation attributed to specific historical events and personalities. First of all, with a focus on content coverage and selection, this type of analysis has been applied to identify recurrent and emphasised topics on the one hand, and disregarded and omitted themes on the other hand. Secondly, a more in-depth content analysis has been employed to investigate the informative and explanatory content of school teachings, that is, the way in which selected events have been described, explained, and justified or criticised. As part of this investigation, the thesis has carried out a linguistic analysis of curricula and textbooks with the aim of examining the value-laden terminology used in the descriptions and explanations provided by the didactic material. Whether an event is for instance labelled as inter-ethnic killings or genocide, or as an attack by terrorists or a liberation struggle by freedom fighters, has clear moral implications. Insofar as possible, this study has additionally used hermeneutic analysis in order to seek to expose (hidden) messages and underlying assumptions. It has likewise employed value-

¹⁰⁴ On textbook research, see, among others, F. Pingel, *UNESCO guidebook on textbook research and textbook revision* (Hanover 1999); Pingel, *The European home: representations of 20th century Europe in history textbooks* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe 2000); R. Stradling, *Teaching 20th-century European history* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe 2001); J. Mikk, *Textbook: research and writing* (Frankfurt am Main 2000); P. Weinbrenner, 'Methodologies of textbook analysis used to date,' H. Bourdillon (ed.), *History and social studies – methodologies of textbook analysis* (Amsterdam 1992); and J. Nicholls, 'Methods in school textbook research,' *International journal of historical learning, teaching and research* 3(2) (2003) 1-17 [www.centres.ex.ac.uk/historyresource/journal6/6contents.htm]. See also the work by pioneers in textbook research such as M. Apple and the GEI in Germany.

forming content analysis with an eye to bringing to light the civic, political and social values and attitudes promoted through school teachings. Besides analysing curriculum and textbook contents, attention has been paid to examining the overall pedagogical value of the didactic material. One of the aims of the analysis has been to assess whether schooling encouraged the rote learning of an official truth or whether it conversely promoted rational knowledge based on the acquisition of disciplinary understandings and cognitive skills. For this purpose, the study has reviewed the aims and objectives attributed to the subject of History.¹⁰⁵ It has further resorted to question analysis, namely an examination of the types of questions and activities proposed by the didactic material.

1.3.1.3 Field-based survey

The third set of data was obtained from fieldwork. A copious amount of primary data originated from an extensive qualitative survey that was carried out over a period of four years among young people living and studying in the Great Lakes Region. A pilot survey was conducted in Rwanda in August and September 2008. The exercise was later repeated, although with some adjustments, on two additional occasions: from September to December 2009 in eastern Congo and Rwanda, and in May and June 2011 in Rwanda and Burundi. During fieldwork, a series of informal discussions were additionally held with a number of local key informants in order to gather ulterior data which would help in the preparation, implementation and analysis of the survey, and which could substantiate the findings and conclusions of the research. Among the actors that were consulted during the fieldtrip were prominent historians and education officials, including curriculum planners, school inspectors, school headmasters and prefects, and history teachers.

¹⁰⁵ Attention has also been paid to the value attributed to this course. Important indicators are whether the subject is compulsory or optional, whether it is examined and on what basis, whether it is a distinct or an integrated subject, and issues such as the number of years and hours per week of compulsory study.

On account of the central role of the student survey in this study as well as of its particular intricacy, a more in-depth description of the field research process is here warranted.

1.3.1.4 The field research process: stages in the preparation, implementation and analysis of the survey

The field research process entailed three main stages, namely the preparation, implementation and analysis of the survey.

1.3.1.4.1 Phase I: Preparation

The preparation phase of the survey encompassed a number of core activities. These included: determining the sample, designing the research instrument, and making logistical arrangements ahead of conducting the survey in the field.

1.3.1.4.1.1 Phase I.I: Sampling

The first activity that was carried out in the preparatory phase consisted in determining the surveyed population. The earliest decision that was taken was to target secondary school students. The choice for this particular educational level was motivated by the assumption that, compared to younger pupils, secondary school students were likely to have a better understanding of the topics learned in and out of school as well as a stronger ability to form and clearly articulate their personal views, especially in relation to sensitive and controversial issues. In addition, by targeting this group, which in fact represents merely a small percentage of the overall population in this region, the survey had a chance to gather the perceptions of those among whom tomorrow's leaders are expected to be drawn in the near future.

The decision about whom to reach out to within this group was guided by a wish for the sample to be as inclusive and varied as possible rather than representative

per se. Since the aim was not to make generalisations but to capture a broad spectrum of views among young educated people, the research favoured non-probability sampling over sampling for proportionality. In order to ensure the participation of a diverse surveyed population among the predefined target group, the study resorted to heterogeneity sampling. A purposive sample was chosen to involve a cross-section of young people. They were drawn from a mixture of geographical locations and residential areas, types of schools, ages and educational levels, classes and specialisations, socio-economic backgrounds, and from a range of different identity-groups, e.g. national, ethnic, and religious.

Students were drawn from all secondary school grades, for a total of six grades in Rwanda and Congo, and seven grades in Burundi. These included grades in the lower cycle, whose curriculum is common to all pupils, and grades in the upper cycle, where classes are subdivided into different specialisation streams. The survey involved a pre-determined number of volunteers from each grade. This number was based on a non-proportional quota which aspired to be as inclusive and balanced as possible as far as students' age, gender, and academic interests were concerned.¹⁰⁶ The selected sample in each school aimed to include ten respondents from every grade in the lower cycle, and five respondents from each type of specialisation in the more diverse upper cycle. At the latter level, students were drawn from a variety of streams and related options: scientific (e.g. Math-Physics, Biology-Chemistry), humanistic (e.g. Human Sciences, Languages), pedagogic, and technical and professional (e.g. Accounting, Administration). Depending on the number of offered specialisation streams, between 40 and 100 pupils were selected in each school, with an aspired 1:1 gender ratio. The eventual surveyed population was composed of circa 2,300 boys and girls who were drawn

¹⁰⁶ During the pilot phase in Rwanda, entire classes were randomly selected to participate in the project. At this stage, only three grades were selected: S1, S3 and S6. S1 was selected for two main reasons. First of all, this was the grade at the secondary school level where Rwanda's history was covered as the main topic of study in the history curriculum. Secondly, being the first year of secondary school, students at this school level were expected to be likely to also report the knowledge on their country's history that they had accumulated throughout their primary education. S3 was chosen because it is the last year of the lower secondary school cycle (*Tronc Commun*), where history is a compulsory and examined subject. Involving this grade was expected to enable to assess the historical knowledge of students at the end of the cycle, after they had covered the whole compulsory history programme. S6 was selected for being the last year of secondary school, as well as the last year of the superior cycle, where history is not anymore compulsory. Involving this grade was expected to enable to assess students' historical knowledge at the end of secondary education and before entering a profession or university.

from 32 secondary schools spread over 20 locations across Rwanda, Burundi, and eastern Congo. Born between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s, most respondents were aged between 12 and 19.¹⁰⁷ The survey additionally included a group of circa 200 secondary school graduates from various corners of Rwanda. At the time of the research, this group was participating in the *Ingando* programme, a three-week political education course that was held by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission at the Nkumba Peace and Leadership Centre in Ruhengeri.

After determining the target group, the criteria were set for sampling the schools to be approached. In order to ensure inclusiveness, the research involved students from all three types of schools existing in the region. The first and most substantial category entails the *écoles publiques conventionnées*, namely public schools managed by religious denominations, e.g. Catholic, Protestant, Islamic. The second type consists of the *écoles publiques non conventionnées*, that is, public schools directly managed by the State. Finally, the last category is composed of the less numerous *écoles privées*, namely private schools, which are not subsidised by the State and which are often of lower quality. Regardless of their status, all these schools follow the national curriculum and guidelines prescribed by the State, and are subjected to the pedagogical inspection of the Ministry of Education. The survey involved schools of disparate reputation and performance. Concerted efforts were however made to include some of the most prestigious educational institutions in order to ensure the participation of pupils who were expected to have the best academic preparation in the country.¹⁰⁸ Also, in the hope of increasing the chances of receiving valuable insights from the respondents, precedence was generally given to institutions that had a comparatively better standing.

¹⁰⁷ As will emerge, considerable age discrepancies were typically found in classrooms due to commonly high repetition rates.

¹⁰⁸ Among the selected schools were the *Groupe Scolaire de Butare* (formerly known as Astrida College), i.e. Rwanda's oldest and most well-respected school, which was founded in the 1930s by the Belgians, as well as the prestigious *Lycée du St. Esprit* in Bujumbura (the old College interracial Usumbura), an *école conventionnée* run by the Jesuits, which started its operation under the colonial authorities in 1952.

In selecting the schools, an effort in each country was likewise made to include educational institutions from across the territory. They were drawn from various provinces and localities; from urban, semi-urban and rural areas; from better-served as well as from disadvantaged and poorer regions; from the interior and from border towns; as well as from regions with different local dynamics and exposure to violence and insecurity. Special care was also taken to sample schools in localities of particular historical significance.

In Rwanda, besides the *Ingando* participants, nine schools were selected, for a total of 1,001 respondents. Schools were drawn from each of the country's five provinces, namely Kigali City, and the Southern (S), Northern (N), Eastern (E), and Western (W) Provinces. In each province, one major town was sampled, with the exception of the Western Province. Here, two localities were included in light of their particularly strategic location and historical significance. The selected localities comprise Kigali Town, Butare (S), Gisenyi and Cyangugu (W), Byumba (N), and Rwamagana (E). They were sampled for distinct reasons. Kigali was chosen because of its status as the country's political and economic capital and largest town. Three schools were selected in Nyarugenge District, in the city's heart.¹⁰⁹ The second town, Butare, was chosen on account of being Rwanda's former colonial capital and current cultural and intellectual centre. Among other things, the town houses Rwanda's oldest and most renowned school (the former Astrida College), the National University and the National Museum. Located in 'the heart of the old kingdom',¹¹⁰ Butare is also close to the country's most important historical sites, most notably the royal palace at Nyanza, the traditional capital and former seat of the king. The particularity of both Kigali and Butare additionally derives from the fact that their surrounding areas have historically been home to the largest Tutsi population prior to the genocide in a country that was overwhelmingly Hutu. The 'ethnic' heterogeneity of the two towns starkly contrasted with the situation in the northern regions, such as Gisenyi and Byumba,

¹⁰⁹ Against the backdrop of considerable time and financial constraints in which the fieldwork took place in this initial phase, the school selection was largely determined by their relative proximity both to each other and to my home-base.

¹¹⁰ A. Des Forges *Leave none to tell the story: genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch 1999), 496.

where the population was almost exclusively Hutu prior to the genocide.¹¹¹ The former had an especially remarkable place in Rwanda's history. In stark contrast to the southern area of Butare in particular, which is known for its long history of peaceful Hutu-Tutsi co-existence and for its 'tolerance and moderation',¹¹² the Gisenyi area is notorious for having been the cradle of Hutu extremism and the bastion of the radical Hutu regime during the war and the genocide.¹¹³ The various localities that were sampled for the survey were also chosen on account of their diverse experience with the recent violence. While the entire country was exposed to massive death and displacement, each location was differently impacted by the troubled recent history.¹¹⁴ Among the selected regions were areas that had been particularly affected by the 1990-1993 civil war, such as the northern and eastern areas of Byumba and Rwamagana.¹¹⁵ There also were regions that had been among the hardest-hit during the 1994 genocide, such as the southern and western areas of Butare and Cyangugu,¹¹⁶ Finally, there were regions that had been among the most severely affected by cross-border refugee movements and insurgency in the post-1994 period, such as the western border towns of Gisenyi and Cyangugu, which are respectively contiguous with North and South Kivu's provincial capitals Goma and Bukavu.

¹¹¹ According to the last ethnic census in 1991, over a total population of 7,148,000, the *préfectures* with the lowest percentage of Tutsi (0,5-3%) were those of Gisenyi (21,730), Ruhengeri (3,705) and Byumba (10,805). They were followed by Cyangugu (55, 345), Gitarama (78, 405), Kigali (80, 070), and Kibungo (44 405) (6,9-10,8%); by those of Kibuye (7,125) and Gikongoro (58,155) (12,5-15,1%); and, finally, of Butare (128,145) and Kigali Ville (38,910) (17-17,9%). F. Imbs, F. Bart & A. Bart, 'Le Rwanda: les données socio-géographiques,' *Hérodote* 72-73 (1994) 246-269.

¹¹² Des Forges, *Leave*, 277, 337. The Butare area, in particular, had long been a safe-haven for Tutsi seeking refuge from persecution during the genocide. The area was governed by the country's only Tutsi prefect at that time.

¹¹³ The north-western area was also historically the last one to fall under the control of the central kingdom.

¹¹⁴ P. Justino & P. Verwimp, *Poverty dynamics, violent conflict and convergence in Rwanda*. MICROCON Research Working Paper 4 (Brighton 2008), 11-13 [http://humansecuritygateway.com/documents/MICROCON_Rwanda_povertydynamicsviolentconflict.pdf] (last accessed on 06/04/2012).

¹¹⁵ Byumba, especially, was severely affected by the civil war. Being the first area to be invaded by the Uganda-based RPF during the 1990-1993 civil war, Byumba was reportedly the scene of massive displacement and contested massacres at the hands of the advancing RPF army against the (overwhelmingly) Hutu population.

¹¹⁶ According to government statistics, the former *préfecture* of Butare had the highest number of recorded genocide victims. Republic of Rwanda, Ministry for Local Government, Department for Information and Social Affairs, *The counting of the genocide victims, Final report* (Kigali, November 2002). Also, according to a 2007 NURC report, compared to other areas, the Southern Province experienced 'lower levels of interpersonal trust and a perceived lower ability to work together among citizens'. F. Ndingiza, *Social cohesion in Rwanda: an opinion survey* (Kigali: National Unity and Reconciliation Commission 2007), 4. Cyangugu, together with Gikongoro and Kibuye, was the last area to be 'liberated' by the RPF. Until May 1994, the French-led *Operation Turquoise* had prevented its entrance in the region.

In Burundi, seven schools were sampled across the country, for a total of 465 respondents. The selected locations included: Bujumbura Town, in the country's north-west, on the border with South Kivu; Gitega, in the central province of Gitega; Rumonge, in the south-western province of Bururi, not far from the DR Congo; and Kirundo and Ntega, in the north-eastern province of Kirundo, next to the Rwandan border. Three out of the seven schools were selected in the capital and largest town Bujumbura. This is a town which historically had a large concentration of Tutsi and which, during the civil war in the mid-1990s, was the scene of extreme violence and ethnic cleansing. The schools were situated in three different neighbourhoods. They included the upper-class *quartier* of Rohero, Bujumbura's heart and commercial and administrative centre; the upper-middle class suburb of Gihosha, more to the north; and the poorer and more unsafe residential area of Kanyosha, in the southern part of town. A fourth school was selected in Gitega, the country's former colonial capital and second largest town. Similarly to Butare, Gitega is located in a historically and culturally significant area. Among other things, the town houses the National Museum, numerous historical sites linked to the old monarchy, of which it was the former seat, as well as the country's only national war memorial site. Kirundo and Ntega, where the fifth and sixth school were located, are situated in the country's most disadvantaged province. Partly due to this deprivation, Ntega, in particular, was one of the two communes which were the scene of major disturbances in 1988.¹¹⁷ Finally, the seventh school was sampled in Rumonge, a historically Hutu-dominated region. In 1972, the area was home to a Hutu rebellion which sparked one of the gravest crises in Burundi's post-colonial history.¹¹⁸

In the DRC, sixteen schools were sampled: ten in North Kivu and six in South Kivu, for a total of 999 respondents. In North Kivu, schools were selected in the provincial capital Goma, in the towns of Rutshuru and Kiwanja in Rutshuru Territory, and in the villages of Sake and Kirotshe in Masisi Territory. Due to time and financial constraints, schools in South Kivu were merely selected in the

¹¹⁷ The other commune was Marangara, in neighbouring Ngozi Province.

¹¹⁸ Notice that Bururi Province, in which Rumonge is located, was home to all former Tutsi presidents, who ruled from the mid-1960s until the mid-1990s.

provincial capital Bukavu.¹¹⁹ Goma and Bukavu were chosen for their status as provincial capitals and intellectual centres; the other areas were selected for having recently been the scene of armed confrontations and identity-based violence, including large-scale massacres. Also, they were chosen for their relative accessibility and their proximity to Goma, from where the survey was locally coordinated.

The table and map below present an overview of the geographical distribution of the schools that were sampled in this study.



Map 1. Great Lakes Region

¹¹⁹ In an ideal situation, 4 schools located in the Territory of Uvira would also have been included in the sample. This territory would have been interesting as it hosts a high concentration of Banyamulenge, and as it borders Burundi. Also, it is the territory in South Kivu with the highest number of schools and students.

Geographical distribution of sampled schools	
RWANDA 9 schools + <i>Ingando</i> , 1.001 resp.	Kigali (Nyarugenge district) (3x)
	Southern Province (Butare) (1x)
	Western Province (Gisenyi and Cyangugu) (2x)
	Northern Province (Byumba) (1x)
	Eastern Province (Rwamagana) (2x)
BURUNDI 7 schools, 465 resp.	Bujumbura (Rohero, Gihosha, and Kanyosha) (3x)
	Kirundo Province (Kirundo town and Ntega) (2x)
	Gitega Province (Gitega town) (1x)
	Bururi Province (Rumonge) (1x)
DR CONGO 16 schools, 999 resp.	
North Kivu 10 schools, 692 resp.	Goma (commune of Karisimbi) (2x)
	Rutshuru Territory (Rutshuru town and Kiwanja, Collectivité de Bwisha) (4x)
	Masisi Territory (Sake/Macha and Kirotshe, Collectivité de Bahunde) (4x)
South Kivu 6 schools, 307 resp.	Bukavu (communes of Ibanda and Kadutu) (6x)

Table 1. Geographical distribution of sampled schools

1.3.1.4.1.2 Phase I.II: Designing the research instrument

The next stage in the preparation of the fieldwork entailed designing and finalising the survey instrument, namely a standardised questionnaire (see example in annex).¹²⁰ The preference for a written questionnaire as opposed to interviews or focus groups was determined by a wish to include a larger number

¹²⁰ The hundreds of questionnaires that were handed in by the students are in the author's personal possession and will be used for further research purposes. In the near future, they will be made available to concerned individuals.

of respondents in the limited time available. This choice further intended to allow students more flexibility, freedom, and privacy to reflect on the proposed issues and to openly express their thoughts and opinions without interference.

The six-page questionnaire was composed of twenty-five questions. These were organised into five sections. In the first section, students were presented with eight questions in which they were asked to provide the following background information: their school, grade, and specialisation stream; their gender; their year and place of birth; the year of return to their country in case they had been born abroad; the place where they had grown up and spent most of their lives; and their experience with displacement (i.e. time, place, and reason). In the DRC, where talks about ‘ethnicity’ are not a taboo as in Burundi and especially in Rwanda, the survey included an additional question on identity. Here, the pupils were asked to specify their clan, tribe, and ethnic group.¹²¹ The second part of the questionnaire consisted in a one-page essay-question. The students were invited to summarise the history of their country and of its inhabitants from the origins until today. The third section was composed of ten open- and closed-ended questions in which respondents were requested to rate the level of their knowledge and interest in the subject of history, as well as to list the main sources of their historical knowledge. After prompting the respondents to reflect on their historical knowledge, the fourth part presented students with an open-ended question calling for suggestions on how to improve the teaching of the national history in their country based on their personal experience. Finally, the last section encompassed five open-ended questions on the regional history. The respondents were invited to summarise the history of neighbouring countries and of bilateral relations, as well as to share their opinions on, and experience with these countries and their inhabitants.

The written questionnaire was meant to offer students free rein to openly express their thoughts without interference or objection. The particular design of the survey instrument is believed to have added to this freedom. The survey greatly

¹²¹ Although it might have been compelling from the researcher’s perspective to determine degrees of similarities and differences of views based on students’ ethnic/tribal affiliation, due to the politically and socially sensitive context in which the research was conducted, these could not be assessed. An ethnicity-based analysis of collected narratives should therefore not be expected from the findings of the present study.

privileged open-ended over closed-ended questions. It thereby tried to avoid asking invasive questions and imposing categories and multiple-choice answers that were revealing of the preoccupations of the researcher. By favouring open-endedness, the researcher aspired to limit the influence exercised by the research instrument on students' responses and to prevent closing down potential answers. The very broad and open nature of the essay-questions in particular, which focused on the overall evolution of the national and regional history rather than solely addressing the recent period of violence, permitted to explore students' views on what *they* regarded as being significant. In so doing, the research aimed to build directly on the respondents' ideas and to reflect their understandings as opposed to those of the researcher.

The survey instrument was designed in the country's respective language of instruction. In Burundi and the DRC, the questions were formulated in French; in Rwanda, where the official language recently changed from French to English, the researcher opted for a bilingual questionnaire. The use of international rather than local languages was primarily intended to avoid relying on translators. This would have resulted in a costlier and lengthier process, and would have added an ulterior layer of interference. Based on local advice and on lessons learned during the process of implementation and analysis, the questionnaire was refined several times in order to facilitate its comprehension by the surveyed youth and to improve its relevance.

Once the questionnaire was finalised, an authorisation letter was drafted to the attention of relevant authorities in each of the three countries. In Rwanda, permission from the Ministry of Education was needed in order to be able to conduct research in the field.¹²² An official letter by the ministry had to be presented to the school headmasters prior to conducting the survey. In Burundi and the DRC, where control was found to be much less strict than in neighbouring Rwanda, the survey could instead proceed without much interference from the

¹²² In order to receive permission to conduct field research in Rwanda, the finalised questionnaire, together with a cover letter and a recommendation letter from the University of Utrecht, was submitted to the Rwandan authorities. For the *Ingando* programme, authorisation was instead sought from NURC's Secretary-General.

state authorities. Although the authorities were informed, in these two countries no official letter was issued.

1.3.1.4.1.3 Phase I.III: Organising the logistics of the survey

The logistical preparation of the survey began with hiring local research assistants. In the absence of the researcher, they would act as her substitutes and representatives in the field. Once the assistants were hired, several discussions were held both in person and by telephone and email in order to agree on the organisation and logistics of the survey. Such discussions allowed the researcher to determine a preliminary choice of schools to be contacted as well as to estimate the costs involved in the process (printing, transport, etc.).¹²³ In order to facilitate the assistants' work in the field, written guidelines and explanations were provided on how to adequately proceed.

1.3.1.4.2 Phase II: Implementation

During the phase of implementation of the survey, the preliminarily sampled schools were approached. The questionnaires were subsequently distributed and collected at those schools that had been eventually selected to participate in the exercise. In some areas, these activities were solely conducted by the research assistants. Throughout this stage, regular contact was maintained with the assistants in order to coordinate and monitor their activities. The assistants were requested to report back to the researcher as they travelled to the various schools in their respective countries.¹²⁴

¹²³ Transport to the schools took place through rented car, express bus, taxi minibus services, or motorbike taxis ('*taxi moto*').

¹²⁴ In the case of the participants from *Ingando* as well as from the Schools of Debate programme in which several sampled schools were partaking at the time of the survey (see further in text), the researcher could count on the assistance of NURC's and IRDP's staff respectively, and of their local facilitators.

1.3.1.4.2.1 Phase II.I Approaching preliminarily identified schools

The first step in the implementation phase consisted in approaching the preliminarily sampled schools in order to seek the collaboration of the school authorities. Each first visit entailed making introductions with school headmasters and prefects, explaining the purpose and scope of the study and the content of the questionnaire, and answering questions. Some reluctance and concerns were expressed by a couple of school heads, especially in relation to a fear of overloading pupils with additional work. Despite their reservations, nearly all authorities eventually confirmed their interest in taking part in the research project. Discussions were subsequently held to agree on the logistics and timeline of the next step, namely the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. General guidelines were proposed to the school authorities on how to proceed (see next paragraph). A degree of flexibility and of attentiveness to their preferences and suggestions was however necessary to implement the project.

1.3.1.4.2.2 Phase II.II Distributing and collecting the questionnaires

Either on the same day or within a couple of days from contacting the schools, the locally produced questionnaires were distributed in the selected classes in accordance with the established quota outlined earlier. Prior to starting the distribution of the papers, the researcher and/or the research assistants visited the sampled classes in order to explain the purpose and content of the questionnaire, and to subsequently find volunteers among both boys and girls who wished to participate in the survey.¹²⁵ Once the volunteers were identified (by raising their hands), participants were randomly selected while making sure that the principle of gender balance was respected. According to the preference expressed by the respective school authorities, the questionnaires were either filled out at the school during school hours or before or after class, or, alternatively, outside the school in the afternoon or in the weekend. When the forms were filled out at the school, the task, which was estimated to take about one hour, took place under the

¹²⁵ In some of the poorest areas, most notably in North Kivu, pupils who participated in the survey were rewarded with sweets and biscuits.

supervision of the assistant, a teacher or the prefect, who then directly collected the questionnaires at the end of the exercise. In cases in which the researcher and/or research assistants were obliged to leave the papers behind to be filled out in their absence, multiple visits to the school were often necessary in order to gather as many forms as possible.

1.3.1.4.3 Phase III: Analysis

1.3.1.4.3.1 Phase III.I Data digitalisation and analysis

The phase of data collection was followed by the time-consuming stage of data digitalisation and analysis. The database that was used for this purpose was Microsoft Access 2007. Through this programme, one master table was created to store and organise the data that had been collected in the three countries. After inserting the responses of each student into a numbered table, tens of queries were produced from the master table in order to analyse the data. The data, which for the most part consisted in students' statements and arguments, were primarily the object of a qualitative content and narrative analysis. The aim was to gain an overall appreciation of the perceptions, understandings, beliefs, experiences, attitudes, concerns and priorities of young people in the region. The collected data was not subjected to coding and to a quantitative content analysis. Exposing statistical differences among the responses provided by various groups was not considered to be particularly relevant in the framework of the current research.

The analysis of students' historical narratives, in particular, was guided by an appositely developed analytical framework. This was also used in the examination of official and dissident historical accounts that have circulated in the region since the colonial time until today. In the investigation of how respondents framed and understood the nation and its past, present and future, a number of general items were identified as being especially useful. In the analysis of the expository, explanatory, and argumentative content of the narratives, attention was paid to the emphasis, word choice, and tone adopted by the students. The analysis inspected their fact statements, points of view, interpretations, assessments, and personal value judgements. Special consideration was given to exploring the pupils'

recognition of historical significance, trends and patterns, continuity and change, causes and effects, and links between past and present. The research examined the lessons they drew from history and the moral underpinning and implications of such lessons, i.e. what has been and what should be. When possible, a second level of analysis was applied to examine the students' conceptualisation of history, and, in particular, their level of openness to alternative narratives.

Guided by such general questions, the analysis turned to the students' specific narratives with the aim of discovering basic plots and patterns of thinking and their relation to dominant or alternative storylines. On a broader level of analysis, the examination of the students' responses sought to identify main narrative structures and most recurrent topics, i.e. what pupils chose to tell and to emphasize. A subsequent, deeper level of analysis involved organising the copious data around two main thematic clusters, each composed of various topics and sub-topics. Rather than being pre-defined, the most relevant analytical categories were gradually identified through an empirical and practical approach which relied on inductive analysis. The first main thematic cluster concerned the representation of *identity and diversity in the context of the nation*. The main sub-topics that emerged within this theme regarded the categorisation and characterisation of the country's inhabitants. The second and more substantial thematic cluster concerned the representation of *the evolution of the national history and of the country's internal social and political relations*. This cluster covered the following topics and sub-topics:

- social life and relations in the ancient times;
- change in the colonial era, and its immediate and long-term effects;
- processes and actors of decolonisation and the transition to independence;
- key political developments in the post-colonial period, with a focus on the recent wars and mass violence; particular attention is given to the analysis of their nature, origins and causes, circumstances and dynamics, actors involved and their role – i.e. of responsibility, victimhood, and heroism, – and consequences;

- achievements and challenges in the political, economic, and social spheres in the present time, and their relation to the past; and, finally,
- views and attitudes towards the future, including concerns and priorities, and prospects, expectations and suggestions for the way forward.

A comparative, cross-country analysis of students' narratives further allowed the research to examine and compare young people's representations of the history of each other's country in order to identify interpretative similarities and divergences at the regional level. For this purpose, the same analytical framework and thematic organisation were used to juxtapose the analysis of national accounts to the analysis of narratives collected across the border.

1.3.2 Challenges and constraints, and opportunities and successes

The research that was carried out as part of this study has been a both turbulent and exciting undertaking, marked by challenges and constraints, and by opportunities and successes. Its final product is the outcome of a continuously evolving process that was at times dictated by necessity and at times prompted by emerging chances and growing ambitions. Its thematic and geographical focus, as well as its objectives and methodology, significantly changed and expanded since the beginning of the research project as a result of the circumstances in which it took place.

Overall, the conditions in which the study was conducted were far from ideal. Throughout the research work, various difficulties were encountered, causing frustration and disappointment.

The first main constraints were of financial nature. In the first year and a half of the project (2008-2009), the researcher was an unpaid external doctoral fellow at the University of Utrecht (UU). During this initial phase, the project merely relied on the researcher's own limited funds. The practical implications of these constraining circumstances were considerable. In order to be able to finance the

research, this could not be conducted as a full-time activity as wished. Also, due to the insufficient resources, the scope of the study had to be limited despite the ambitions of the researcher.

At first, the proposed research project was circumscribed to Rwanda. The intention was to explore the relationship between education, conflict, and peace in this country, with a focus on history teaching before and after the genocide. From a methodological perspective, the study was meant to be primarily a desk-based research entailing a comparative analysis of pre- and post-genocide history curricula and textbooks. Within six months from the start of the project, a two-month fieldtrip was conducted in Rwanda. The aim was to collect the necessary material and to carry out interviews with local historians and educational officials. The field visit was prompted by the announcement that new history curricula and textbooks would shortly be made available to schools, thereby lifting the moratorium on the teaching of Rwandan history which had been established in the immediate aftermath of the genocide. Counter to the researcher's expectations, the launch of the didactic material was (indefinitely) postponed. Only old textbooks and curricula could therefore be collected during the fieldtrip. Faced with the impossibility of gathering all the needed data, the decision was soon taken to alter the objectives of the study by adding a new dimension to the original research project. In the field, preparations were rapidly made to organise a survey in various secondary schools in the country. The primary aim was to investigate young people's general understandings of Rwandan history prior to the introduction of the newly designed course, as well as to capture their thoughts and opinions on how this history could best be taught to the new generation.¹²⁶ The choice of conducting such a survey eventually added enormous value to the study: the setback of having come too early to the field turned out to be a great opportunity to assess and evaluate, through an analysis of students' answers, the state of history teaching and learning at an important historical juncture. By the

¹²⁶ Thanks to the support of the Kigali-based Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP), to which I was affiliated during my field research in 2008, this initial sample was soon expanded to also include participants from schools involved in IRDP's Schools of Debate programme, through which monthly youth debate forums are organised on issues of national interests (especially related to democracy and the rule of law). IRDP, *Schools of debate, annual report 2007* (Kigali 2008).

spring of 2009, the enthusiasm deriving from this experience prompted the researcher to seek to expand the geographical scope of the research by including other case-studies in the Great Lakes Region. The most obvious choice among the various countries in the region was neighbouring Burundi, a country which has much in common with Rwanda. A few months later, the decision was taken to also encompass the case of the DR Congo.¹²⁷ By this time, funds had finally been secured through a two-year grant that was awarded to the researcher by the UU Research Institute for History and Culture in autumn 2009. Inevitably, the initial research questions and methodological approaches drastically evolved in order to respond to the need to streamline the research.

Once embarked on this more ambitious project, the enthusiasm of the researcher was occasionally curtailed by new challenges that were faced both in Burundi and in the DRC.

In Burundi, a major setback consisted in an initially unsuccessful attempt to carry out the survey in the field. The research assistant that had been hired in 2009 to support the logistical implementation of the survey disappeared a few months later with the funds he had been provided with to cover printing and transport costs. Contact was finally re-established in early 2010 after numerous trials. The assistant vaguely explained that all questionnaires had been lost during what he described as a turbulent election period. In spring 2011, the survey could eventually be re-organised thanks to the support of a new, impeccable and experienced assistant, whom the researcher had met during a consultancy job at UNESCO Headquarters a few months earlier.

The fieldwork in eastern Congo was hampered by rampant insecurity. In the midst of tensions and ongoing fighting, the sampled locations were largely inaccessible or were felt to be too unsafe to reach without running excessive risks. For this reason, the researcher found it wise to entirely entrust the data collection in these areas to a local research assistant who was familiar with the context. After various

¹²⁷ Although the researcher explored the option of adding the two case-studies of Uganda and Tanzania, the idea was eventually abandoned due to time constraints.

consultations, this crucial task was assigned to an experienced and well-respected headmaster of a secondary school in Rutshuru. He had grown up in the region and had a vast network of connections with local education officials and school authorities. In a setting in which banditry and robberies are a regular occurrence, the decision to delegate this part of the work was also motivated by a concern that travelling with a ‘white person’ could have attracted undesired attention and put the assistant at further risk. As it turned out, in the DRC, as well as in Burundi, being a ‘white person’, or working for a white person, was generally associated with ‘having money’. On various occasions, this belief manifested itself in requests for monetary compensation by school authorities, especially in the poorer rural areas.

Despite the considerable challenges encountered during the research, the overall process and eventual outcome of the survey proved greatly satisfying and rewarding. The successful completion of the survey relied to a great extent on the dedicated work of the research assistants. This success relied even more on the inputs provided by the hundreds of young people who kindly volunteered to partake in the project. The quality of their contributions significantly varied among students, as well as among classes and schools. Numerous respondents made a clear effort to fill out the questionnaire to the best of their abilities, thereby providing insights of tremendous value to the research. Conversely, various contributions unfortunately proved to be remarkably poor, especially among pupils in the lower grades. Instead of summarising their historical knowledge, a number of respondents limited themselves to presenting a list of topics or a chronology. This list was often introduced by sentences such as ‘*je connais:...*’ (‘I know:...’) or ‘*j’ai étudié...*’ (‘I have studied...’). Several pupils even wrote down whole chunks of chapters they had dealt with in the history class. Their responses sometimes patently resembled each other. In cases in which the questionnaires were left at the school to be filled out, the answers had most probably been either copied from students’ notebooks or directly dictated by the teacher. While these answers regrettably failed to convey the respondents’ personal understandings and views, they were nonetheless valuable for two main reasons. Firstly, they provided important information on the actual content taught by history teachers in the

classroom. Secondly, they demonstrated a generalised adoption of a traditional teacher-centred pedagogy and of a presentation of events as *faits accomplis*. The genuineness of the views conveyed by the students might thus have occasionally been compromised by the influence exercised by the teacher. It is also possible that young people's openness and honesty in sharing their insights might have been hampered by additional factors. When discussing the issue of anonymity of the questionnaires, for instance, the prefect of a public school in Rwanda challenged the researcher by asking, 'do you really believe that the students will tell you what they really think? That's not in Rwandan culture.'¹²⁸

The low quality of some contributions is likely to have also stemmed from the nature of the survey instrument. First of all, its formulation in an international language, while advantageous on the one hand as outlined earlier, had the downside effect of resulting in rather poorly written answers by young people whose language skills proved considerably weak. Students often showed limited language proficiency as a result of the abrupt switch of language of instruction from a local to an international idiom at the primary school level. This was manifest in significant deficiencies in expression and in considerable errors in syntax, grammar and spelling. Due to their limited language proficiency, the younger respondents in particular, as well as students in rural areas and in schools that scored poorly in national exams, seemed to have difficulties in understanding some of the questions and in formulating their answers. Occasionally, answers had to be discarded altogether from the analysis due to their irrelevant, incoherent, and sometimes fully illegible content. A second possible reason for the students' poor contributions relates to the considerable length of the questionnaire and to the level of concentration and critical thinking it required. Several respondents only partly filled out the questionnaires. Their answers were sometimes limited to the first couple of pages or to the closed-ended and shorter questions. A third factor that might have affected the quality of the responses is the timing of the survey. Due to logistical problems, the fieldwork in Rwanda and Burundi could only be conducted towards the end of the school year. The survey was thus carried out at a

¹²⁸ Interview, Kigali, 26 August, 2008.

busy time of approaching tests and exams, with which students and teachers were primarily concerned.¹²⁹ In the DRC, instead, the survey was carried out at the beginning of the school year. This period was more favourable in that students and teachers were not yet worrying about examinations. It was however relatively disadvantageous from a logistical point of view as it coincided with the rainy season. In the rural areas especially, bad weather, combined with bad road conditions, sometimes considerably obstructed the assistants' smooth transfer from one school to the other, causing substantial difficulties in the implementation of the survey.

The survey was overall a successful endeavour which added much value to the original research project. Due to time constraints, the researcher was unfortunately unable to follow up the survey with a desired organisation of Focus Group Discussions which would have allowed an in-depth exploration of key issues that had emerged from the survey.

1.3.3 Ethical issues

This study's methodological section cannot end without mentioning all-important issues related to the ethics of conducting research in fragile settings. Throughout the research process, the survey, in particular, was carried out with full awareness of the highly sensitive and delicate context in which it took place. Due regard was given to the fact that the societies from which the respondents were drawn had been severely affected by recent conflict and mass violence, by the acute experience of loss and grief, and, to a large extent, by continuing suffering and severe trauma, as well as by fear, mistrust and resentment. Within these societies, one can find survivors, perpetrators, widows and widowers, formerly displaced people and returned refugees, prisoners, ex-prisoners and ex-combatants, as well as vulnerable children, such as former child-soldiers, street children, and (war) orphans.

¹²⁹ In Burundi and in DRC, the school year starts in September and ends in July. In Rwanda, it begins in January and ends in October/November.

Great sensitivity is warranted when doing research in such settings, especially when children and young people are directly involved. In recognition of the need to minimize the risk of causing harm, the involvement of this group in the study's survey required to adhere to the highest ethical standards.¹³⁰

A number of measures were taken in order to act in compliance with the ethical obligations felt by the researcher. The researcher's greatest preoccupation consisted in the fear of distressing pupils in the process of encouraging them to think and write about a largely sensitive and controversial history of abuse, of which many had a personal experience and dramatically felt its consequences. In an attempt to reduce the risk of upsetting the young respondents, a conscious choice was made to design the questionnaire in such a way as to avoid to directly and explicitly confront the respondents with possibly uncomfortable questions about the recent violence. Instead, as illustrated earlier, queries about the national and regional history were formulated in broad terms, leaving it to the students to decide what to tell and how to convey their thoughts. By referring to the history of the country and of its *inhabitants* from the *origins up until today*, the essay-questions were at the same time phrased with an eye to prompting students to address controversial issues related to origins and identity, and to the recent troubles. Despite the caution with which the proposed questions were formulated, the researcher recognised the likelihood for any reference to the region's history to involve recollecting traumatic events, which could lead to re-living distressing emotions. With this understanding, the researcher and her assistants consulted local actors, including the school authorities, in order to identify and assess any concerns in relation to the questionnaire, as well as to gain reassurance on the feasibility of conducting the proposed survey without causing harm to the students. Besides seeking the full support of the (school) authorities, it was made sure that the survey was carried out with the informed consent and willing participation of the pupils. Before distributing the questionnaires among the volunteers, time was taken to provide students with basic explanations on the

¹³⁰ On ethical issues in research with vulnerable children, see, among others, J. Gabarino, F. Stott & Faculty of Erikson Institute, *What children can tell us: eliciting, interpreting and evaluating information from children* (San Francisco/Oxford 1990); V. Morrow & M. Richards, 'The ethics of social research with children: an overview,' *Children & society* 10 (1996) 90-105.

identity of the researcher and her assistant(s), and on the nature, scope, purpose, and intended use of the survey and of the overall research. Among other things, the pupils were reassured that their answers would be anonymous and would only be used for private research purposes that were unrelated to the government or the school. Once the context of the survey was presented, an opportunity was given to the pupils to ask questions for further clarification before agreeing to participate.

Overall, through the survey in particular, this study hopes to fulfil the researcher's strongly felt obligation to empower young people in the region by offering them an opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions. In the process, great respect was shown for the insights provided by the respondents. They were recognised and appreciated as valuable informants, and were assured that their voices would be carefully listened to and acknowledged by the researcher by including and reflecting them in her final work. While careful not to raise unrealistic expectations, the researcher made clear to the pupils that one main ambition of her work was to draw attention to their insights and to thereby serve the interests of the region's new generation. Through the hundreds of pages that follow, this thesis represents a first response to this pledge.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter 1, which includes the present section, offers an introduction to the three case-studies that are at the core of this research. The chapter started by outlining some of the general issues that have been commonly raised in scholarly discussions on the topic of history, identity, and education, especially in relation to divided, conflict-ridden and post-war settings. It subsequently delineated the general and the specific research questions that have guided this study, as well as its objectives, purpose and significance. Before illustrating the outline and organisation of the thesis, the chapter described the methodological approaches and analytical instruments it employed, its

constraints and limitations, and several prominent ethical issues that marked the research.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 present respectively the three case-studies of Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC. Each chapter is comprised of five sections. The first sketches the country's historical background in order to situate each case-study in its specific context. The three subsequent sections explore the politics of history, identity and education in the colonial, post-colonial and post-war periods, respectively. For each period, the study outlines and analyses the content of official discourses and the nature of the education system, with a focus on school teachings and educational structures, policies and practices. Dedicated to the particularly complex post-war period, the fourth section proposes an exploration of prominent historical controversies and competing meta-narratives, most notably in relation to the issues of identity and conflict. It then reviews recent initiatives that have been undertaken to deal with the contested past and to reform the education system, and in particular history teaching. Each case-study ends with a section presenting the results and analysis of the student survey. This section exposes the ways in which respondents in each country represented their nation and its past. It subsequently juxtaposes these national representations to portrayals of this same history provided by students from neighbouring countries.

Chapter 5 further draws on the results of the field-based survey by reporting young people's views on the state of history teaching and learning in their country, as well as their suggestions for reform.

The thesis ends with Chapter 6. This final chapter includes a summary of the main findings of the present study. It also advances a number of tentative conclusions and recommendations.

2 Rwanda

2.1 Historical background: a brief chronology of Rwanda's political history

Rwanda, often referred to as the 'land of a thousand hills', is a small landlocked and densely populated country in Central Africa. It shares borders with Burundi in the south, the DRC in the west, Uganda in the north, and Tanzania in the east. In 2011, national statistics estimated its predominantly young and rural population to amount to over ten million people.¹ The culturally and linguistically homogeneous people of Rwanda, the so-called Banyarwanda, are composed of three groups: Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. No longer registered in national censuses since 1994, these identity groups have been historically described as constituting respectively 84%, 15%, and 1% of the population. Their history, as will be brought to light throughout this chapter, has been the object of intense debate, contention, and polemics among local actors as well as among foreign observers.

Drawing on broadly accepted scholarly theories, the following three paragraphs in this introductory section will present a brief chronology of Rwanda's political history. Its aim will be to provide the reader with an overall picture of the

¹ According to national statistics published in 2012, '[a]bout 85% of the Rwandan population live in rural areas', '54% of the population are aged 19 years or younger', and 'about 83% still under 40 years of age'. Republic of Rwanda, National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, *The third integrated household living conditions survey (EICV 3) – Main indicators report* (Kigali, February 2012), 28 [www.statistics.gov.rw/publications/third-integrated-household-living-conditions-survey-eicv-3-main-indicators-report] (last accessed on 08/07/2012).

country's main historical developments in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras.

2.1.1 The pre-colonial period²

Rwanda's ancient history is a matter of great contention. Controversy has been rife especially with regard to the origins and meanings of the designations Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa in the pre-colonial era.³ This fundamental disagreement is manifest in the variety of terms employed in the extant literature to refer to these categories. Among them are such terms as races, ethnic groups, social classes, castes, and tribes.

According to archaeological studies, human settlement in present-day Rwanda dates back to thousands of years ago. By all accounts, Rwanda's first inhabitants were the forest-dwelling hunter-gatherer pygmy Twa. Much disagreement remains with regard to the migrations that later supplanted these groups. Various hypotheses have been developed on this subject. For decades, interpretations of Rwanda's ancient history were dominated by colonial theories on origins and migrations. These theories held that the settlement of the Twa had been followed first by the arrival of Bantu Hutu agriculturalists from the west, and later by the migration of a distinct race of Nilotic Tutsi pastoralists from the northeast. The latter event was associated with a foreign conquest and a subsequent political, economic and cultural domination of the Tutsi over the earlier settlers. Available scholarship today largely discredits these suppositions. Latest archaeological and anthropological findings have pointed to the complex, multiple, and continuous nature of pre-colonial migrations, to a concomitant process of cultural integration

² On pre-colonial Rwanda, see, a.o., M. d'Hertefeldt, A.A. Trouwborst & J.H. Scherer, *Les anciens royaumes de la zone interlacustre méridionale: Rwanda, Burundi, Buha* (Tervuren 1962); J. Vansina, *L'évolution du royaume du Rwanda des origines à 1900* (Brussels 2000), and *Antecedents to modern Rwanda: the Nyiginya Kingdom* (Madison 2004); J.-P. Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa: two thousand years of history*. Translated by S. Straus (New York 2003), originally published in French as *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs: deux mille ans d'histoire* (Paris 2000); C. Newbury, *The cohesion of oppression. Clientship and ethnicity in Rwanda (1860-1960)* (New York 1988); A. Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'ethno-histoire du Rwanda* (Butare 1972).

³ On the issue of ethnicity, see, J.-L. Amselle & E. M'bokolo (eds.), *Au coeur de l'ethnie. Ethnie, tribalisme et Etat en Afrique* (Paris 1985).

of migrant groups,⁴ to the gradual development of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa as social and political constructs rather than primordial identities, as well as to the recent origins of Tutsi dominance and ‘ethnic’ antagonism in Rwandan society. The exact origins of the crystallisation of these identities and of the transformation of their relations remain contested. Whereas the theory espoused by the current Rwandan government maintains that Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa were fluid socio-economic groups of little salience which were transformed into antagonistic ethnic identities during the colonisation,⁵ a theory that is more widely accepted among scholars today holds that these identities had great social and political significance already prior to the arrival of the Europeans.

As far as Rwanda’s political history is concerned, the available literature traces the country’s origins back to one of the kingdoms that were established in the Great Lakes region centuries ago. According to the abundant corpus of oral traditions, the Kingdom of Rwanda, depicted by some as ‘the greatest and the most complex’ in the region,⁶ was founded by the Tutsi Nyiginya clan in the 13th century and was gradually unified since the 16th century. First located on the shores of Lake Mohazi in the east, it was later re-organised around Nduga, in central Rwanda, from where it expanded through military conquest and alliance. The apex of Rwanda’s territorial expansion was reached in the 19th century during the reign of King Kigeri IV Rwabugiri. This monarch is known for having established a highly centralised ‘state’ that encompassed most of the territory of present-day Rwanda. Small kingdoms ruled by *roitelets*, including independent Hutu principalities, continued however to exist in the northwest and southwest up until the 20th century. Next to consolidating the power of the central monarchy, Rwabugiri is recognised by much of the scholarly literature as the king who introduced a more rigid social stratification between Hutu and Tutsi. Reportedly, during his reign, the old practice of pastoral clientelism or vassalage, the so-called *ubuhake*, became a prominent form of social hegemony of the cattle-rich Tutsi. This consisted in a

⁴ There seems to be evidence of the fact that assimilationist practices were not unilateral. Practices as the institution of the semi-divine king, of the powerful Queen Mother, of the royal drums, as well as many rituals seem all to be of Hutu origin.

⁵ Social status was mostly ascribed at birth. Opportunities however also existed for both groups to change their affiliation depending on their accrued or decrued level of wealth.

⁶ C. Wrigley, *Kingship and state: the Buganda dynasty* (Cambridge 1996), i.

patron-client relationship whereby a client (*mugaragu*) provided several services to a more powerful individual (*shebuja*) in return for access to cattle and land and for protection.

2.1.2 The colonial period⁷

Rwanda was one of the last African countries to be colonised by European powers. After its successful resistance against the penetration of Arab slave-traders, Rwanda was assigned to the Germans during the scramble for Africa that was formalised at the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885. In the 1890s, the territory was integrated into *Deutsch Ost-Afrika*, together with Burundi and Tanganyika (modern-day Tanzania). Count von Götzen was the first European to visit Rwabugiri's court in 1894. Groups of missionaries followed, spearheaded by the White Fathers. In 1899, King Yuhi IV Musinga, who had replaced Rwabugiri's heir Rutalindwa following the 1896 Rucunshu coup, signed a treaty through which he accepted a German protectorate over the kingdom. During World War I, in 1916, Rwanda was occupied by Belgian troops who were stationed in the Belgian Congo. Together with neighbouring Burundi, the kingdom was formally conferred to the custody of Belgium in 1923 under the mandate of the League of Nations. In the wake of World War II, in 1946, Ruanda-Urundi became a UN Trust Territory under Belgium's administrative authority.

In governing the colony, the Belgians followed in the footsteps of their German predecessors. Supported by the Catholic hierarchy in Rwanda,⁸ the colonial power adopted a policy of indirect rule which relied on the Rwandan central court.⁹ Between 1926 and 1936, the new rulers launched a series of sweeping administrative reforms which deeply affected Rwandan society. In 1933, the colonial administration introduced ethnic identity cards as part of an infamous politics of 'divide and rule'. The documents were distributed based on an arbitrary

⁷ On Rwanda's colonial history, see F. Reyntjens, *Pouvoir et droit au Rwanda. Droit public et évolution politique, 1916-1973* (Tervuren 1985); R. Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (New York 1970).

⁸ I. Linden, *Christianisme et pouvoirs au Rwanda (1900-1990)* (Paris 1999).

⁹ While the colonizers relied on the traditional hierarchy, they did not refrain from removing from power unruly local authorities. In 1931, King Yuhi V Musinga, who had replaced Rwabugiri's son King Mibambwe IV Rutalindwa in the 1896 'Rucunshu coup', was dethroned and replaced by his young son Mutara III Rudahigwa.

racial census. This rigidly classified the local population into Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa according to physical measurements (e.g. height, and nose and skull sizes) and possession of cattle.¹⁰ The classification of the population into three ‘ethnic’ groups was accompanied by efforts at strengthening the Tutsi aristocracy through reforms which enforced a ‘Tutsification of the chiefship’. This consisted in replacing existing Hutu chiefs with Tutsi chiefs based on the premise that the Tutsi belonged to an allegedly superior race of natural rulers, the so-called Hamites.¹¹ In addition to discriminatory policies towards Hutu chiefs, the colonial period was marked by the increasing imposition of forced labour (*uburetwa*) and *corvées* on a predominantly Hutu peasantry. These measures were implemented under the supervision of the new local chiefs, some of whom were reportedly responsible for instances of despotism and abuse.¹² These practices are widely believed to have had the effect of crystallising social identities and of further polarising and antagonising Rwandan society.

In the midst of rising tensions, Rwanda’s first political parties were founded in the 1950s. Among them was the Hutu Social Movement (MSM), later renamed MDR-Parmehutu (*Mouvement Démocratique Républicain-Parti de l'Emancipation du Peuple Hutu*). Promoter of a Hutu ethno-nationalism, this party vowed for the liberation of the Hutu from a double colonisation – of the Belgians and of the Tutsi – and for the instauration of democratic majority rule. Its leader, Grégoire Kayibanda, was among a group of Hutu intellectuals who had bitterly denounced the dominant position of the ‘Tutsi race’ in Rwandan society in the famous Hutu Manifesto published in 1957.¹³ Parmehutu’s main opponent was UNAR (*Union Nationale Rwandaise*). This party was mainly composed of monarchist Tutsi who called for Rwanda’s immediate independence under a constitutional monarchy.

¹⁰ P. Uvin, *Aiding violence: the development enterprise in Rwanda* (West Hartford 1998), 16-17; and M. Mamdani, *When victims become killers: colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton 2001), 88.

¹¹ According to Vidal, in 1959, 43 of 45 chiefs and 549 of 559 *sous-chefs* were Tutsi. C. Vidal, *Sociologie des passions: Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris 1991), 25. E.R. Sanders, ‘The Hamitic hypothesis: its origin and function in time perspective’, *Journal of African history* 10 (4) (1969) 521-532.

¹² Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*; Newbury, *The cohesion*; Reyntjens, *Pouvoir*.

¹³ F. Nkundabagenzi, *Le Rwanda politique (1958-1960)* (Brussels 1961), 20-29. The publication of this document came in reaction to a disclaimer by the Supreme Council of Ruanda which had denied the existence of ethnic inequalities.

Other notable parties included APROSOMA (*Association pour la Promotion Sociale des Masses*) and RADER (*Rassemblement Démocratique Rwandais*).

In the context of a power struggle between Hutu- and Tutsi-dominated parties, Rwanda experienced the first in a sequence of instances of mass violence. The attack against a Hutu sub-chief by a group of young Tutsi political activists led to a cycle of retaliatory actions. The violence rapidly spread across the country as organised groups of Hutu bent on revenge committed pillage, arson and murder, driving Tutsi chiefs from their position of power. Thousands died as a result, while tens of thousands fled abroad. Among the many Tutsi exiles was King Ndahindurwa, the successor of King Rudahigwa, who had mysteriously died in Bujumbura in 1959. The uprising, which came to be known as ‘1959 revolution’ or ‘social revolution’, inaugurated a political transition to Hutu majority rule. Reportedly, the ‘legal coup’ through which the Tutsi chiefs were deposed, had been encouraged and supported by the colonial authorities, who had converted to the Hutu cause once confronted with the increasingly anti-colonial overtones of an emancipated Tutsi elite.¹⁴ In the wake of the uprising, events developed at a frantic pace. Following the formation of a temporary government headed by Prime Minister Kayibanda, the colonial authorities organised the country’s first-ever communal elections. They were overwhelmingly won by Kayibanda’s Parmehutu. In 1961, the overthrown monarchy was officially abolished in a referendum. The Republic was subsequently proclaimed, headed by the Hutu Dominique Mbonyumutwa as its provisional president. On July 1, 1962, Rwanda gained independence under the leadership of its first elected president, Kayibanda.

¹⁴ Col. G. Logiest, *Mission au Rwanda* (Brussels 1988).

2.1.3 The post-colonial period

2.1.3.1 The First and the Second Republic (1962-1990)

Rwanda's post-colonial era has been a largely troubled period marred by spiralling conflict and violence.

Since the Tutsi mass exodus in 1959-1961, a series of unsuccessful incursions were carried out into Rwanda by groups of refugees based in neighbouring countries. Most notably in 1963-1964 and 1966-1967, the authorities responded to the cross-border raids of the so-called *Inyenzi* rebels (literally, cockroaches) by launching violent reprisal attacks against Tutsi within Rwanda. The violence killed thousands, driving thousands more into exile. Under Kayibanda, the Tutsi were also victim of systematic discrimination and marginalisation. This marginalisation was institutionalised through a quota system that favoured the Hutu majority in the allocation of educational and employment opportunities. The First Republic was likewise marked by growing authoritarianism, nepotism, and corruption on the part of the President and his entourage, mainly composed of Hutu from Southern Rwanda. Within a few years from his rise to power, Kayibanda's regime had created a one-party state and eliminated all political opposition.

Following a new wave of Tutsi violence in 1973, which had been motivated by a wish to galvanise a polarised Hutu majority around a common menace,¹⁵ Kayibanda's regime was overthrown on July 5 by a military coup led by the Northerner Hutu Major General Juvenal Habyarimana. The newly founded Second Republic soon came to be dominated by Habyarimana's party MRND (*Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement*). In creating a new one-party state, regionalist practices were once again employed, this time favouring Hutu individuals from the north-western prefectures of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri. After a period of relative political stability and economic growth,

¹⁵ The 1973 anti-Tutsi violence in Rwanda took place in the wake of the 1972 anti-Hutu persecutions in Tutsi-ruled Burundi.

tensions rose in the late 1980s in a climate of economic decline and of growing criticism against state corruption, nepotism and authoritarianism. Against a backdrop of mounting public discontent, in July 1990 the president announced political reforms and a transition to multiparty democracy. Few months later, the country was attacked by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebel army predominantly composed of Uganda-based Tutsi refugees who had been forced into exile.¹⁶

2.1.3.2 The war and the genocide (1990-1994)¹⁷

The war broke out on October 1, 1990. Supported by France, Belgium and Zaire (today DR Congo), the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) quickly managed to push the RPF back into Uganda. The fighting continued for three years despite a series of cease-fires. Meanwhile, domestic pressure forced Habyarimana to legalise multiparty politics and to form a coalition government with the opposition.¹⁸ As the regime felt increasingly threatened, thousands were harassed, arrested, and assassinated. At the same time, ethnic tensions were incited through inflammatory rhetoric which aimed to undermine negotiations with the RPF. In August 1993, peace accords were finally signed in Arusha, Tanzania. They were rejected by the so-called ‘Hutu Power’, a political faction mainly composed of hard-liners from the MRND and from the new radical party CDR (*Coalition pour la Défense de la*

¹⁶ This movement was born in 1979 under the name of Rwandese Alliance for National Unity (RANU). Its aim was to find a solution to the plight of Rwandan refugees. In the early 1980s, their predicament worsened when the Ugandan regime of President Milton Obote expelled thousands of Rwandan refugees and their descendents, while, at the same time, the Rwandan government refused them to return home. In 1987, RANU became the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

¹⁷ Among the most noteworthy general works on the war and genocide, see A. Des Forges *Leave none to tell the story: genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999); C. Braeckman, *Rwanda: histoire d'un génocide* (Paris 1994); G. Prunier, *The Rwanda crisis: history of a genocide* (New York 1995); J.-P. Chrétien, *Le défi de l'ethnisme: Rwanda et Burundi 1990-1996* (Paris 1997); P. Erny, *Rwanda 1994. Clés pour comprendre le calvaire d'un peuple* (Paris 1994); J.-C. Willame, *Aux sources de l'hécatombe rwandaise* (Paris 1995); F. Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise* (Paris 1994); Reyntjens & S. Marysse, *L'annuaire des Grands Lacs* (Paris); A. Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda: 1993-1994* (Lille 1995) and *Rwanda: de la guerre au génocide: Les politiques criminelles au Rwanda (1990-1994)* (Paris 2010); D. De Lame, *A hill among a thousand: transformations and ruptures in rural Rwanda* (Madison 2005); J. Pottier, *Re-imagining Rwanda: conflict, survival, and disinformation in the late twentieth century* (Cambridge 2002); N. Eltringham, *Accounting for horror: post-genocide debates in Rwanda* (London 2004); C.C. Taylor, *Sacrifice as terror: the Rwandan genocide of 1994* (New York 1999); L. Melvern, *A people betrayed: the role of the West in Rwanda's genocide* (London 2000) and *Conspiracy to murder: the Rwandan genocide* (London 2004); P. Uvin, *Aiding*; Mamdani, *When victims*; S. Straus, *The order of genocide: race, power, and war in Rwanda* (Ithaca 2006).

¹⁸ J. Bertrand, *Rwanda, Le Piège de l'histoire. L'opposition démocratique avant le génocide (1990-1994)* (Paris 2000).

République). Among other things, the agreement called for the establishment of a transitional government and of a unified army under the supervision of the 2,500-strong UN peacekeeping force UNAMIR (United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda).

The Arusha Accords collapsed in April 1994 with the onset of a genocide which brought the two factions back to war. The mass violence was sparked by the mysterious shooting down of the plane carrying President Habyarimana and his Burundian counterpart Ntaryamira on April 6 as it prepared to land at Kigali. Blamed on Tutsi insurgents, the assassination unleashed, within a few hours, a systematic and well-coordinated rounding up and killing of Tutsi and of hundreds of ‘moderate Hutu’ affiliated to opposition parties. Among the first victims were Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana and other members of the coalition cabinet that had been established in 1992. At the forefront of the killing mobs were units of the FAR, the Presidential Guard, and the notorious *Interahamwe* militias (literally, ‘those who fight together’). They were directed by an extremist interim government which had taken control of the state apparatus after the death of the President. These militant forces were supported by countless ordinary citizens who had been mobilised by local officials and state-sponsored hate media to participate in the mass killings in the name of self-defence. Civilians were for instance called upon to man the numerous roadblocks that had been erected across the country to prevent the Tutsi ‘enemies’ from escaping persecution. As the international community looked away and withdrew following the death of ten Belgian peacekeepers,¹⁹ the Rwandan population was decimated in a time span of hundred days, mainly with machete blows. During the genocide, between 500,000 and one million people died. Millions more were displaced both inside and outside the country.

The massacres came to an end with the military victory of the RPF. After capturing Kigali on July 4, the RPF took control of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, bastions of ‘Hutu-Power’ forces. As the RPF advanced and declared victory on

¹⁹ On April 21, 1994, UNAMIR’s personnel in Rwanda was reduced to a derisory number of 270. It was only on June 22 that the UNSC officially acknowledged the massacres as genocide.

July 18, around two million Hutu, including *génocidaires* and innocent civilians, fled across the border in fear of retribution. The vast majority poured into neighbouring Congo, where they settled in militarised refugee camps. Accusations of complicity have been levelled in the context of this mass displacement against the French interim peacekeeping mission code-named ‘Turquoise’. According to critics, after lending considerable support to Habyarimana’s army, French troops enabled many armed genocide perpetrators to flee the country by creating a safe-zone in south-western Rwanda. As will be outlined in Chapter 4, from then on, eastern Congo became a main battleground of both inter-state and intra-state violent conflict.

2.1.3.3 The post-genocide period and the Third Republic (1994-2010)

In July 1994, the RPF set up an interim coalition Government of National Unity. The coalition was headed by a Hutu president and a Hutu prime minister. Reportedly, real control was however retained by the RPF. In 2000, President Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu who was later arrested and sentenced for allegedly compromising state security, resigned due to a political conflict. He was replaced by the powerful Defence Minister and Vice President Paul Kagame, a Tutsi who had been at the forefront of the rebellion. In 2003, the first post-genocide elections were overwhelmingly won by Kagame and the RPF. This victory was reiterated in parliamentary and presidential elections in 2008 and 2010 respectively. The record of Kagame and the RPF in Rwanda has been the object of much controversy. On the one hand, they have been credited by some with guaranteeing peace, stability, rapid economic growth, and improved social indicators. On the other, they have been increasingly accused of authoritarianism and of being responsible for human rights abuses, including war crimes.

Under the new leadership, a process of reconstruction, peacebuilding and reconciliation was launched to respond to the daunting task of re-building and re-uniting a country that had been ravaged by war and genocide. In its endeavours, Rwanda has been heavily supported by a remorseful international community.

One of the greatest challenges faced by post-genocide Rwanda has been the massive repatriation of Hutu refugees from Congo. As suspect *génocidaires* returned home, the government sponsored mass arrests and prosecutions in an effort to pursue justice as a precondition for reconciliation.²⁰ As will be discussed in this chapter, the level of success of the Rwandan government in helping Hutu and Tutsi to live together again is today a matter of contention.

Owing to its tragic experience, Rwanda is today an obligatory reference in discussions on sectarian mass violence. After having remained largely unnoticed for a long time, since the mid-1990s the country has become the object of a deluge of studies that have sought to describe and explain a phenomenon that seems to defy all reason.²¹ These studies have among other things investigated the role of various actors in the genocide, such as the media,²² the churches,²³ the international community,²⁴ and the RPF.²⁵ They have outlined the local²⁶ and regional²⁷ dynamics of the violence. They have furthermore explored the causes

²⁰ In only three years, over 100,000 suspects were imprisoned.

²¹ For an (already outdated) overview of the state of research on Rwanda, see, in particular, R. Lemarchand, 'Rwanda. The state of research', J. Semelin (ed.), *Online encyclopedia of mass violence* (2007) [www.massviolence.org/IMG/article_PDF/Rwanda-The-State-of-Research.pdf] (last accessed on 10/11/2011). A mounting body of eyewitness literature, written by both Tutsi survivors of the genocide and Hutu survivors of massacres in DRC. Among these are, respectively: Y. Mukagasana, *La mort ne veut pas de moi* (Paris 1997) and *Les Blessures du silence. Témoignages du génocide au Rwanda* (Paris 2001); and, B. Umutesi, *Surviving the slaughter: the ordeal of a Rwandan refugee in Zaire* (Madison 2004), and M. Niwese, *Le peuple rwandais un pied dans la tombe: Récit d'un réfugié étudiant* (Paris 2001). See also the testimonies collected by foreign observers reporting accounts of survivors and perpetrators, e.g. Straus, *The order*, and J. Hatzfeld, *Machete season: the killers in Rwanda speak* (New York 2005) and *Antelope's strategy: living in Rwanda after the genocide* (New York 2009). A number of films have also been produced about the Genocide, including *Hotel Rwanda*, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, *Sometimes in April*, and *Shooting Dogs*.

²² Chrétien, et al., *Rwanda: les médias du génocide* (Paris 1995); and A. Thompson (ed.), *The media and the Rwanda genocide* (London 2007).

²³ J.D. Bizimana, *L'Église et le génocide au Rwanda: les Pères Blancs et le négationnisme* (Paris 2001); T. Gatwa, *The churches and ethnic ideology in the Rwandan crises 1900-1994* (Milton Keynes 2005); T. Longman, *Christianity and genocide in Rwanda* (New York 2010); F. Rutembesa et al., *Rwanda. L'Église Catholique à l'épreuve du génocide* (Greenfield Park 2000).

²⁴ L. Melvern, *A people betrayed: the role of the West in Rwanda's genocide* (London 2000) and *Conspiracy to murder: the Rwandan Genocide* (London 2004); R. Dallaire, *Shake hands with the devil: the failure of humanity in Rwanda* (Toronto 2003); M. Barnett, *Eyewitness to genocide: the United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca 2002); S. Power, *"A problem from hell": America and the age of genocide* (New York 2002); D. Kroslak, *The role of France in the Rwandan genocide* (London 2007); A.J. Kuperman, *The limits of humanitarian intervention: genocide in Rwanda* (Washington 2001).

²⁵ Des Forges; Prunier, *The Rwanda crisis*; Lemarchand, 'Genocide in the Great Lakes: Which genocide? Whose genocide?', *African studies review* 41(1) (1998) 3-16.

²⁶ J.-P. Kimonyo, *Rwanda: Un génocide populaire* (Paris 2008); and O. McDoom, *Rwanda's ordinary killers: interpreting popular participation in the Rwandan genocide*. Crisis States Programme Working Paper no.77 (London 2005).

²⁷ R. Lemarchand, *The dynamics of violence in Central Africa* (Philadelphia 2009); and F. Reyntjens, *La guerre des Grands Lacs: alliances mouvantes et conflits extraterritoriaux en Afrique Centrale* (Paris 1999).

of mass participation, including socio-economic inequalities and poverty,²⁸ overpopulation and land pressure,²⁹ and a virulent ethno-national ideology;³⁰ as well as the measures that have been taken to deal with the past.³¹ Despite the vast literature that has been prompted by the genocide, numerous questions remain unanswered and open to speculation.

The present study aims to complement existing research by exploring an area of inquiry that has received comparatively limited scholarly attention. The next three sections in this chapter build upon the extant literature on Rwanda with a view to demonstrating the interface between the politics of history, identity and education and its relation to conflict and peace. The thesis draws especially on research that has been conducted on the role of manipulated memories and identities in Rwandan history, and on the evolution of the country's national education system.³² Supported by the evidence provided by existing studies, the following paragraphs will examine the evolution of ideological and historical discourses in Rwanda from the colonisation until today. For each of the three historical periods under review, namely the colonial era, the time of the two Republics, and the post-genocide years, this chapter will subsequently examine the extent to which official discourses have been reflected and institutionalised in the national education system, thereby shaping collective memories and identities. The study will complement and enrich the rather scant literature on the matter by proposing an in-depth analysis of pre- and post-genocide history curricula and textbooks. It will additionally offer an examination of hundreds of historical narratives that were collected in the field among the country's new generation.

²⁸ Uvin, *Aiding violence*.

²⁹ C. André & J.-P. Platteau, 'Land relations under unbearable stress: Rwanda caught in the Malthusian trap,' *Journal of economic behavior & organization* 34 (1998) 1-47; and M. Verpoorten, *Leave none to claim the land. A Malthusian catastrophe in Rwanda? IOB Working Paper* (Antwerp 2011).

³⁰ Chrétien, *Le défi*; Des Forges; Mamdani.

³¹ See references in Chapter 2.4.2, including E. Stover & H.M. Weinstein (eds.), *My neighbor, my enemy: justice and community in the aftermath of mass atrocity* (New York 2004); P. Clark & Z.D. Kaufman (eds.), *After genocide: transitional justice, post-conflict reconstruction, and reconciliation in Rwanda and beyond* (New York 2009); and S. Straus & L. Waldorf (eds.), *Remaking Rwanda: state building and human rights after mass violence* (Madison 2011).

³² The analyses and arguments proposed in this chapter heavily rely on the work of prominent scholars who have written on such issues. They most notably include J.-P. Chrétien, A. des Forges, N. Eltringham, R. Lemarchand, C. Newbury, M. Mamdani, J. Vansina, and C. Vidal, as well as A. Obura, J.-D. Gasanabo, and P. Erny.

2.2 Ideology, historiography and formal education in colonial Rwanda

2.2.1 Ideology and historiography in colonial Rwanda

The colonial period in Rwanda was marked by ideological constructions that radically transformed Rwandan traditional society. At the centre of the colonial view of Rwandan society was the notorious Hamitic hypothesis. In his landmark study *When Victims Become Killers*, Mahmood Mamdani described the Hamitic hypothesis as ‘an ideological perversion’ which soon became the ‘grand colonial discourse’.³³ This theory was based on biblical and medieval myths on Ham’s curse by his father Noha. Their interpretation and the purpose of their evocation evolved throughout the centuries. In the 16th century, the interpretation of this myth, according to which the ‘Negro was the accursed descendent of Ham’, had served to legitimise the Atlantic slave trade.³⁴ Two centuries later, this same myth was re-interpreted to account for the unexpected discovery of instances of civilisation on the ‘Dark Continent’, most notably in Egypt. Europeans, spearheaded by the colonial official John Hanning Speke, claimed that the so-called Hamites were a superior and civilising Caucasian race which was responsible for all progress in Africa. In 1955, the Senegalese scholar Cheick Anta Diop summarised the historical evolution of the Hamitic hypothesis by highlighting how, ‘according to the needs of the cause, Ham is cursed, blackened, and made into the ancestor of the Negroes...On the other hand, he is whitened whenever one seeks the origins of civilisation.’³⁵

³³ Mamdani, 35, 16.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

The highly centralised Rwandan Kingdom with which the first Europeans came into contact at the end of the 19th century was deemed to be a prime example of Hamitic civilisation. Based on the observation of essentialist physical, socio-economic, and moral ideal-types, the European visitors associated the Tutsi to the allegedly superior foreign Hamitic race, ‘the great “civilizers” of Africa’.³⁶ The Hutu were viewed as subjugated masses of racially inferior Negroid Bantu, and the Twa as a ‘tribe of dwarfs’.³⁷ The Tutsi were considered to be ‘more intelligent, more active, more capable of understanding the idea of progress and even more likely to be accepted by the population’. For this reason, the argument went, ‘[t]he government must work mainly with them’.³⁸

The substantial support that these theories found in (pseudo-)scientific scholarship contributed to their potency. Colonial authorities soon mobilised missionary knowledge on Rwanda with the intention of guiding and ‘scientifically’ justifying ‘race policies’ that were meant to be at the base of their politics of indirect rule. A number of studies were prepared by ‘expert’ White Fathers for this purpose. Their findings were presented to the Belgian authorities in the form of a consolidated document drawn up in 1916 by the head of the Catholic Church in Rwanda, Monsignor Léon Classe.³⁹ Historiography, in particular, played a conspicuous role in the scientific anchoring of the colonial ideology. Among the prominent missionary-historians who lent scientific credence to the Hamitic hypothesis in Rwanda were Albert Pagès with his *Un Royaume Hamite au Centre de l’Afrique* (1933), and Luis de Lacger with *Ruanda* (1939). Authors of an ‘ethno-histoire’,⁴⁰ these actors have been depicted by contemporary scholars as the ‘founders of

³⁶ Ibid., 86.

³⁷ As reported by C. Vidal, Von Götzen, for instance, wrote about a ‘tribe of dwarfs’ (the Twa) and a multitude of “Bantu Negroes,” the Hutu, in a “servile dependence” of the Watussi, “foreign caste.” He described Rwanda as a ‘country administered and “exploited until the draw blood by the Watussi”.’ *Sociologie*, 23. See also, Ministère des Colonies, *Rapport sur l’administration belge du Ruanda-Urundi* (1925), 34, qtd. in J.-P. Harroy, *Le Rwanda, de la féodalité à la démocratie (1955-1962)* (Brussels 1984), 26 ; and Harroy’s testimony, *Rwanda: souvenirs d’un compagnon de la marche du Rwanda vers la démocratie et l’indépendance* (Brussels 1984). For a list of statements on colonial beliefs on Rwanda’s traditional society, see also Eltringham, *Accounting*, 16-17.

³⁸ L. Classe, ‘Pour moderniser le Ruanda’, *L’essor colonial et maritime* (1930) 489, qtd. in L. de Lacger, *Ruanda* (Kabgayi 1959), 523-4. As maintained by Vidal, European accounts had erroneously generalised to the entire country the unrepresentative political and socio-economic situation of the central kingdom. Noble Tutsi, namely Tutsi individuals belonging to the royal lineages associated with the court, merely represented a tiny fraction of the entire Tutsi population. Vidal, 23-24.

³⁹ Mamdani, 88.

⁴⁰ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 69.

Rwandan historiography’,⁴¹ as ‘the first ethnologists’ of Rwanda, and, as such, as ‘the first ideologues of colonisation’.⁴²

Mamdani illustrated the close relationship between, on the one hand, the racial ideology and guiding dogma of the colonial state – referred to by Jean-Pierre Chrétien as ‘Hamitism’ –, and, on the other hand, a ‘complicit’ colonial historiography. The Ugandan academic underscored the effectiveness with which ‘power had mapped the parameters within which scholars had pursued knowledge of Rwanda’. According to Mamdani, ‘[i]f power *classified* the population of Rwanda into three “races” – Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa – then scholars accepted race as a transhistorical reality and wrote the history of Rwanda as a history of the coming together of three races.’⁴³ Similarly, Claudine Vidal highlighted how, in the absence of any substantial difference within the Rwandan population, history had been used by the colonial power to promote a ‘historical elaboration of ethnicity’ and a construction of Tutsi and Hutu as ‘pseudo-historical personalities’.⁴⁴

The ‘complicit’ role of colonial history-writing in consolidating racial ideologies into historical truths played out in two main ways.

Colonial scholarship ‘essentialised’ and ‘racialised’ Rwanda’s traditional society by constructing its ancient history around what Liisa Malkki called ‘myths of foundation and precedence’.⁴⁵ Defined by Chrétien as a ‘pseudo-historical fiction’,⁴⁶ colonial historiography wrote a race-centred history of Rwanda which recounted a tale of successive migrations. This portrayed the pygmy Twa as the

⁴¹ Vidal, 45.

⁴² Mamdani, 87.

⁴³ Chrétien further stated that, ‘[i]f power assumed that migration was central to the spread of civilization, particularly of statecraft, in Africa, then scholarship became preoccupied with the *search for origins*.’ *Le défi*, 42-43.

⁴⁴ Vidal, 21. See also, C.K. Mulinda, ‘La généalogie de l’idée du peuplement du Rwanda: considérations sur l’autochtonie ou l’allochtonie des rwandais,’ F. Rutembesa et al. (eds.), *Peuplement du Rwanda: enjeux et perspectives. Cahiers du Centre de Gestion de Conflits* 5 (Butare 2002), 49-72 ; F. Rutembesa, ‘Le discours sur le peuplement comme instrument de manipulation identitaire,’ Rutembesa et al. (eds.), *Peuplement*, 73-102; J. Semujanga, ‘Formes et usages des préjugés dans le discours social du Rwanda,’ F. Rutembesa, J. Semujanga & A. Shyaka (eds.), *Rwanda: identité et citoyenneté* (Butare 2003), 13-32; A. Twagilimana, *The debris of Ham: ethnicity, regionalism, and the 1994 Rwandan Genocide* (Lanham 2003).

⁴⁵ L.H. Malkki, *Purity and exile: violence, memory, and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago 1995), 59.

⁴⁶ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 358.

country's first inhabitants, the Hutu as agriculturalist Bantu and as the second group of settlers, and the Tutsi as pastoralist Hamites who had migrated to Rwanda more recently, thereby supplanting those who were depicted as autochthonous populations.

Besides racialising existing identities through a recourse to the theme of autochthony and foreignness, colonial historiography antagonised these re-invented categories by reducing Rwanda's ancient history to a 'secular racial duel' between Hamites and Bantus.⁴⁷ At the centre of this antagonist view of Rwandan history was a theory that described the coming together of the three 'races' in terms of a conquest and of a secular subjugation and assimilation of the autochthonous people, portrayed as '*serviteurs*', by the noble and superior Tutsi, presented as '*seigneurs*'.⁴⁸ In accordance with a belief in the civilisational superiority of the aristocratic Tutsi race, Rwanda's highly sophisticated kingdom was seen as a Tutsi creation. As suggested by Vidal, according to this version of history, 'everything would have been the work of the royal dynasty and of princes, surrounded by the pastoral nobility.'⁴⁹ In this sense, she argued, the colonial historiography of ancient Rwanda had greatly supported the ideology of the Tutsi-dominated court.⁵⁰

Scholars such as Vidal and Jan Vansina observed that the 'elitist' and court-centred representation of the ancient history of Rwanda was the result of a close collaboration between European historiographers and Rwandan historiographers and historiologists associated to the court.⁵¹ A particularly crucial role in the construction and popularisation of this aristocratic and largely mythical history was played by the first and most influential of Rwandan historians: Abbé Alexis Kagame. According to Vidal, the exceptional influence of this intellectual, whose dynastic history came to be widely understood as the history of Rwanda as a whole, derived from his unique position of proximity both to the royal court and to the colonizers. Kagame, who was a descendent of a notable lineage of ritualists,

⁴⁷ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 86.

⁴⁸ Vidal, 23-24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵¹ Vansina, *Antecedents*, 5, and Vidal, 56.

the *abiru*, as well as a White Fathers' disciple, became an intermediary figure between these two worlds.⁵² Considered as the specialist of dynastic traditions and as the only depositor and decryptor of the royal secrets, Kagame was believed to 'incarnate the memory of the ancient kingdom'.⁵³ As such, his literary productions eventually dominated ethnologic studies on Rwanda.⁵⁴

While noteworthy, Kagame's oeuvre has been strongly criticised by prominent contemporary scholars such as Vidal and Vansina. They denounced his subjectivity, partisanship, political *engagement*, and his accessory practice of the historical discipline.⁵⁵ In particular, Kagame has been accused of reproducing and propagating the official ideology and history of the Tutsi royal court, on which the historiography of Rwanda came to be based. According to Vansina and his colleague David Newbury, an intense politics of history had been practised by Rwanda's ruling elites both before and during the colonisation with the aim of legitimating their position of power and their actions.⁵⁶ In his pioneering monograph on the early history of Rwanda, Vansina underscored 'how exceptional the role of history has been in the ideology of Nyiginya royalty'. In the scholar's view, the extraordinarily vast corpus of oral sources linked to the kingdom demonstrated 'the formal character and the thoroughness of the hold of the Nyiginya court over the production of history'.⁵⁷ Several authors have further highlighted how, during the colonial time, local oral traditions were manipulated and reinterpreted by court ideologues with an eye to aligning them with the Hamitic discourse on which their renewed privileged position was founded within

⁵² On Kagame's background, see Vidal, *Sociologie*, 45-61, and 'Alexis Kagame entre mémoire et histoire,' *History in Africa* 15 (1988) 493-504; and M^{er} Frédéric Rubwejanga, 'Alexis Kagame, l'homme,' *Education science et culture* 20 (June 1988), 'Alexis Kagame: l'homme et son œuvre,' Actes du colloque international à Kigali, du 26 novembre au 2 décembre 1987.

⁵³ Vidal, 43, 50. His expertise was soon largely recognised and his work amply cited by White Fathers such as L. Delmas (in his *Genealogie de la noblesse (les Batutsi) du Ruanda*, Kabgayi 1950) and A. Pagès (in *Au Ruanda, sur le bords du lac Kivu (Congo belge), Un royaume hamite au centre de l'Afrique* (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge 1933). See also the appreciation of Kagame's work by M. D'Hertefeldt & A. Coupez in, *La royauté sacrée de l'ancien Rwanda. Texte, traduction et commentaire de son rituel* (Brussels: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale 1964).

⁵⁴ Vidal, 54.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 50-51. Critics also referred to Kagame's manipulation of sources, particularly in relation to chronology. Vansina, 4-12; Vidal, 43, 45-50; as well as D. Newbury, *The land beyond the mists: essays on identity and authority in precolonial Congo and Rwanda* (Athens, Ohio, 2009), 19.

⁵⁶ According to Vansina, the royal court had employed 'historical remembrance' as the 'ultimate legitimation' of its position of power since 1780. 5, 90-95.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-5. The scholar counted 'over 300 historical tales and 1975 different dynastic poems, among others, as well as the only considerable body of ritual texts known in Africa.' 221, note 2.

a system of indirect rule.⁵⁸ Kagame's work, which appeared to be predominantly aimed at illustrating, defending, and exalting the royal court and the Tutsi aristocracy, reconstructed an idealised history of the kingdom which reproduced European clichés and stereotypes favourable to the Tutsi elites. Kagame's endorsement of the 'Hamitic myth' and of the thesis of Tutsi foreignness and superiority clearly emerges in his first historical synthesis and one of his most renowned publications: *Inganji Karinga* (the Victorious Drum) (1943). Here, the Rwandan scholar appropriated the image of the Hamitic Tutsi coming from Abyssinia between the 10th and 11th centuries with their long-horned cattle and their advanced civilisation, eventually subjecting the Hutu to their authority.⁵⁹ His later work *Code des Institutions Politiques du Rwanda Précolonial* (1952) represents another prime illustration of the tendency of Kagame's oeuvre to reflect the views and aspirations of the Tutsi elites and to adamantly defend their cause.⁶⁰ In this publication, the scholar revealed himself as an ardent nationalist and monarchist.⁶¹ At its core was a plea for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy and for relying on traditional institutions and 'customary laws'.⁶² Despite the criticism, as pointed out by Vansina a decade after the genocide, Kagame's legacy 'is still rooted in the general historical consciousness of Rwandans and it still dominates the perception of Rwanda's history'. According to Vansina, the continued influence of Kagame's writings partly resulted from the fact that 'his *Abregés* [his second synthesis] were and still are textbooks used in many schools.'⁶³

⁵⁸ While holding that the Tutsi monarchy and aristocracy had sacred origins, royal myths originally made no mention of the supposed foreign origins of the Tutsi. Mamdani, 79-80. According to several authors, the thesis of Tutsi superiority was further reinforced by manipulating old local myths, notably the foundational myths related to Gihanga, the legendary founder of the Rwandan kingdom. During the colonial era, the founder came to be associated with the 'Hamitic' Tutsi. Chrétien, *Le défi*, 14. See also, Lemarchand, *Ethnicity as myth: the view from Central Africa* (Copenhagen 1999), 8.

⁵⁹ Vansina, *L'évolution*, 14-15. The same influence is discernible in Kagame's book *Les organisations socio-familiales de l'ancien Rwanda* (Brussels 1954). Here, the author adopted the term 'race' to distinguish the three groups out of which the Rwandan population is composed, as well as the term 'Hamites' to refer to the Tutsi. 7-36. See also, Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'ethno-histoire du Rwanda* (Butare 1972), 22-23.

⁶⁰ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 20, 68-69; Vidal, 59-60. Kagame, *Code des institutions politiques du Rwanda précolonial* (Bruxelles 1952).

⁶¹ Prunier, *The Rwanda crisis*, 58, and Vansina, *Antecedents*, 7-8, respectively.

⁶² Presumably to facilitate this transition from traditional to modern organisation à l'europpéenne, Kagame undertook a 'europeanisation' of pre-colonial Rwanda by assimilating pre-colonial traditional practices to practices ruled by modern law. Vidal, 44, 54.

⁶³ Vansina, 4.

Ultimately, as summarised by A. des Forges,

*'In a great and unsung collaborative enterprise over a period of decades, Europeans and Rwandan intellectuals created a history of Rwanda that fitted European assumptions and accorded with Tutsi interests. The Europeans provided a theoretical, teleological framework and the Rwandans provided the supporting data to describe the progress of Rwanda to the height of its power at the end of the nineteenth century. [T]hese mutually supportive historians created a mythic history to buttress a colonial order.'*⁶⁴

In Vidal's view, it was eventually in this particular version of Rwandan history that 'Tutsi and Hutu imagined to discover the truth of their ethnic passions.'⁶⁵

2.2.2 The institutionalisation of the official discourse through the education system: history teaching and education policy in colonial Rwanda

Mamdani once observed that, while '[t]he Hamitic hypothesis was not articulated with reference to Rwanda only', it was solely in Rwanda (and Burundi) that it 'retained a political potency decades later.'⁶⁶ Here, according to the scholar, the Hamitic theory had evolved from an 'intellectual construct' into an 'institutional construct'. During the colonisation, this racial discourse had guided policy-making processes and had been translated into a set of institutions and reforms 'that the ideology inspired, in which it was embedded, and which in turn reproduced it'.⁶⁷

Available evidence points to the important role played by schools in reproducing and reinforcing the colonial racial ideology and the system of indirect rule. The interface between colonial ideology and schooling is demonstrated by the centrality of the Catholic Church in the fields of historiography and education during the colonial time. Acting as 'both the brains and the hands of the colonial state' in the formulation and institutionalisation of 'Hamitism',⁶⁸ the White Fathers were also the founders of the first Western-style schools in Rwanda and

⁶⁴ Des Forges, 45.

⁶⁵ Vidal, 44.

⁶⁶ Mamdani, 35, 87.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

‘the leading authorities in the field of educational and cultural policy.’⁶⁹ According to Mamdani, during the colonial time, ‘the creation of a school system that could act as a womb of racial ideology was a priority.’⁷⁰ As will be illustrated in the two paragraphs below, through divisive historical teachings and discriminative educational policies favouring the Tutsi, the colonial education system served both to crystallise identities that had been constructed as ‘existential ethnic groups’ and to actualize the fabricated myth of Tutsi superiority.

2.2.2.1 School teachings

Before independence, the study of Rwanda’s history was not systematically included in the school curriculum.⁷¹ As was common practice in colonised countries, school teachings privileged the history of the *métropole* and of Western Europe. In the colonial time, the manuals used in Rwandan schools consisted in Belgian schoolbooks ‘adapted to the mentality and capacities of the indigenous people,’ whose thinking process was considered to be ‘slower and more painful’.⁷² According to Jean-Damascène Gasanabo, the first secondary school curriculum integrating the study of the national history was proposed as late as 1961 by the *Secretariat National de l’Enseignement Catholique* (SNEC). Suggested topics included the consecutive settlement of the three ‘*ethnies*’, the succession of Rwandan kings and especially Rwabugiri’s conquests, the Rucunshu war, the German and Belgian colonisation, and the evangelisation. A lack of relevant schoolbooks had nevertheless reportedly continued to hamper the teaching of Rwandan history in schools.⁷³

⁶⁹ Vidal, 25. See also, P. Erny, *L’école coloniale au Rwanda, 1900-1962* (Paris 2002); and J. Walker-Keleher, ‘Reconceptualizing the relationship between conflict and education: the case of Rwanda,’ *PRAXIS: The Fletcher journal of human security* 21 (2006) 35-53.

⁷⁰ Mamdani, 89.

⁷¹ Gasanabo reports that, during the colonial time, notions of Rwandan history were conveyed through the course ‘*Causerie*’ and through the Kinyarwanda and French courses. J-D. Gasanabo, *Mémoires et histoire scolaire: le cas du Rwanda du 1962 à 1994*. Ph.D. thesis (University of Geneva 2004), 76. During the pre-colonial time, the young generations were introduced to their historical heritage by the larger community, mainly during private talks or vigils through official, private or popular literature. Erny, *De l’éducation traditionnelle à l’enseignement moderne au Rwanda, 1900-1975*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Lille III, 1981.

⁷² Quotes respectively by Frère Gérulphe, ‘Note historique du Groupe scolaire, 1929-1954,’ *Servir* 1 (1955) 27-28, and by de Lacger, *Ruanda*, 590. Reportedly, these schoolbooks remained in place well after Rwanda’s independence. A. Obura, *Never again: educational reconstruction in Rwanda* (Paris: UNESCO IIEP 2003), 101.

⁷³ Gasanabo, *Mémoires*, 76-77.

Although the study of Rwandan history did not receive much attention under colonial rule, educational institutions in the country are deemed to have contributed to popularising the racial and elitist history that had been produced by colonial ideologues.⁷⁴ This argument has been raised by some of the most prominent experts on Rwanda. Des Forges, for instance, spoke of a ‘distorted’ national history that ‘was shaped in Rwanda and packaged in Europe, and then delivered back into the school-rooms of Rwanda by European or European-educated teachers’.⁷⁵ Along similar lines, Vidal pointed out that colonial myths, ‘first practiced by Europeans, were taken over by Rwandans, taught, related, internalised, until they constituted a body of beliefs shared by an educated minority.’⁷⁶ The efficacy of colonial education in instilling colonial historical beliefs and clichés about Hamitic Tutsi and Bantu Hutu was likewise underscored by Chrétien. According to the French scholar, it was especially in the minds of the educated youth that these were perpetuated.⁷⁷ In a context of ‘cultural colonialism’ that was soaked with racial ideology and paternalism,⁷⁸ he argued, history teachings had nourished essentialist and antagonistic racial identities among the country’s few educated elites, ultimately leading to their profound ‘cultural alienation’. While a Hamitic consciousness was cultivated among young Tutsi, a Bantu consciousness was nurtured among young Hutu. The creation of this polarised consciousness that was both taught and practised was reportedly accompanied by the development of distinct attitudes among the two groups. On the one hand, elitist vanity and a ‘spirit of “natural aristocracy”’⁷⁹ were encouraged among the Tutsi. As poignantly stated by Mamdani, made foreign to their country and ‘[n]ourished on a steady diet of Hamitic supremacy (...) [they] were appointed chiefs as if by birthright’.⁸⁰ On the other hand, feelings of

⁷⁴ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 24, 69; Des Forges; and Vidal.

⁷⁵ Des Forges, 45. Racist clichés associating the Tutsi to a race born to rule were also reproduced in the school bulletin *Servir*. See, for instance, an exaltation of the Tutsi ‘natural aristocracy’ in M. Piron, ‘Les migrations hamitiques,’ *Servir* 6 (1948) 280-283, qtd. in Chrétien, *Les médias*, 87.

⁷⁶ Vidal, 21.

⁷⁷ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 16.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 26-27. See also, Gatwa, who referred to mission schools in the colonial time as ‘wombs of racial ideology’. *The churches and ethnic ideology*, 84. Erny further suggested that the missionary school insisted on nurturing passive virtues such as humility, obedience, submission, resignation and duty. Also, he reported that, in order to enforce the assimilation of such values, the use of the whip and the *chicotte* was widely adopted. Erny, *L’école* 118.

⁷⁹ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 14.

frustration and a complex of inferiority are believed to have been fuelled among the Hutu: excluded from their own history and looked down upon, they were largely denied a prospect of social promotion.⁸¹ In the next paragraph, it will be illustrated how this exclusion, which served to perpetuate a fundamentally unequal system, was mainly realised through discriminative educational policies favouring the Tutsi.

Vidal's findings are particularly insightful with regard to the relation between a school-nurtured historical consciousness and attitudes towards the 'other'. In 1991, Vidal published a sociological study of the Rwandan crises of 1959 and 1973, in which she explored popular and intellectual representations of the Rwandan past. In her research, the scholar concluded that the internalisation of the colonial racial ideology and of its Manichean image of an eternal and almost natural racial antagonism between 'noble pastoralist Tutsi' and 'commoner agriculturalist Hutu' was the prerogative of the educated strata that had been taught a written '*histoire-ressentiment*'.⁸² It is to this history that she attributed a crucial role in inspiring virulent racial attitudes. Vidal reported a stark contrast between the attitudes of uneducated masses on the one hand, and of educated and Westernised individuals, on the other hand, both of whom had participated in anti-Tutsi pogroms. According to her analysis, the popular masses, whose oral traditions diverged from colonial historiographical constructions, did not blame their dissatisfaction on the entire Tutsi population. It was instead among the ranks of educated Hutu that ethnic passions and resentment prevailed and that the most resolute and virulent militants were recruited.⁸³

⁸⁰ Mamdani, 89, and 90-92.

⁸¹ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 240.

⁸² Vidal, 19; 26, 33-34.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 14, 21. Popular narratives seem to have only made reference to antagonisms and power struggles between and within dominant factions rather than between Hutu and Tutsi.

2.2.2.2 Educational structures, policies and practices

Education in colonial Rwanda, as reported by Mamdani, was largely organised ‘around an active knowledge’ of ethnic identities.⁸⁴ John Rutayisire et al. argued that colonial education had functioned as ‘a divisive instrument’ which had ‘stressed differences between Hutu and Tutsi pupils, putting them into categories in and out of school’.⁸⁵ An important role in this regard was played by educational policies and practices.

Various sources have demonstrated that ethnicity was a central factor in determining admission to colonial schools and the allocation of educational opportunities. In the first half of the 20th century, policies explicitly gave priority to the education of children of Tutsi chiefs and wealthy families.⁸⁶ The colonial authorities’ wish to privilege Tutsi education and to reserve this allegedly ‘noble race’ the best educational opportunities was realised through the establishment of a two-tier segregationist system.⁸⁷ Reportedly, young Hutu were generally provided with a basic education that was primarily meant to prepare them for manual labour.⁸⁸ Their Tutsi counterparts, instead, were offered a ‘superior’ ‘assimilationist education’ in special schools and in special classes in order to orient them towards a career in the colonial administration as state auxiliaries.⁸⁹ Joseph Gahama illustrated the segregated and unequal nature of the colonial education system in the 1920s. As he reported, ‘taught to the Tutsi, arithmetic and

⁸⁴ Mamdani, 88.

⁸⁵ J. Rutayisire et al., ‘Redefining Rwanda’s future: the role of curriculum in social reconstruction,’ S. Tawil & A. Harley (eds.), *Education, conflict and social cohesion* (Geneva: UNESCO/IBE 2004), 332, and ‘Rwanda: synopsis of the case study’ (Geneva: UNESCO/IBE 2003).

⁸⁶ Obura, *Never again*, 101-119, 219-220; S.J. Hoben, *School, work and equity: educational reform in Rwanda*. African research studies 16 (Boston 1989); and P. Erny, *L’enseignement au Rwanda après l’indépendance (1962 – 1980)* (Paris 2003). According to Bourgeois, also in the pre-colonial time young wealthy Tutsi were privileged over *petits Tutsi*, Hutu and Twa. Bourgeois suggested that wealthy Tutsi were exclusively admitted to the Rwandan traditional school, *Itorero*, where they were trained to become *intore*, i.e. the elite. R. Bourgeois, *Banyarwanda et Barundi*. (Brussels 1957), 295.

⁸⁷ This policy was strongly advocated by key religious figures, such as the White Fathers Schumacher and Classe. In 1927, Classe declared, ‘we have in the Tutsi youth an incomparable element for progress’ Vidal, 25; I. Linden, *Church and revolution in Rwanda* (New York 1977), 161; Gatwa, 84-85.

⁸⁸ Newbury, *The cohesion*.

⁸⁹ Mamdani, 88. While Rwanda’s first school, which opened in Nyanza in 1905, targeted the sons of chiefs, since 1907 special schools were set up with the official aim of ‘reaching the sons of the chiefs Batoutsu’. Such schools were opened in Nyanza (1912), Kabgayi and Rwaza (1913), Kigali (1914 and 1916), Save (1917), and Rwamagana (1919). A significant event reported by Mamdani was the decision taken by the White Fathers ‘to move the school in Nyanza to Kabgayi on the grounds that “in Nyanza there were many sons of the Hutu being recruited.”’ 89. See also, Gatwa, 85.

French were replaced with singing classes for the Hutu; and whereas a course in natural sciences was mandatory for the former, this was optional for the latter'.⁹⁰

The case of the *Groupe Scolaire d'Astrida* is paradigmatic of the privileged position of the Tutsi in the field of education. This school, which opened in the early 1930s, was the most prestigious educational institution in Ruanda-Urundi as well as the only existing secondary school besides Catholic seminaries. Augustin Mariro argued that, while this school generally 'prioritised admission of the children of dignitaries', 'only sons of chiefs or Tutsi were authorised to enter the senior secondary stream specializing in administration, the section reserved for future chiefs' (*section des candidats-chefs*).⁹¹ Here, the distinction between chiefs' sons and other pupils was further highlighted through a practice requiring the former to wear white instead of khaki uniforms.⁹² Available statistics show that, from the day of its foundation until 1959, Tutsi pupils greatly outnumbered their Hutu counterparts. Reportedly, this exclusive institution 'had no Rwandan Hutu enrolled up to 1945, as opposed to 3 Hutu from Burundi and 46 Tutsi from both territories'. A decade later, in 1954, among the registered pupils were '3 Rwandan Hutu, 16 Burundi Hutu, 3 Congolese, and 63 Tutsi (from both Rwanda and Burundi)'.⁹³ Pointing to a systematic discrimination, Pierre Erny and Catherine Newbury reported that among the criteria determining children's admission to this school was a minimum height of 1.40m. This procedure was supposedly meant to lessen Hutu's chances of entering the Astrida College and accessing positions of power within the state apparatus.⁹⁴ Erny additionally suggested that low school enrolment rates among the Hutu were justified at the time by depicting this group as inept or disinterested in studying.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ J. Gahama, *Le Burundi sous administration Belge: la période du mandat 1919-1939*. 2nd ed. (Paris 2001), 257. I. Linden also highlighted how ethnic segregation in Save in 1928 was manifested in Tutsi teachers teaching Tutsi pupils, and allegedly more mediocre Hutu teachers teaching Hutu children. I. Linden, *Church*, 163-164.

⁹¹ A. Obura, *Staying power: struggling to reconstruct education in Burundi since 1993* (Paris: UNESCO/IIEP 2008), 62, citing A. Mariro, *Burundi: de la nation aux ethnies ou la naissance d'une élite tribalisée* (Dakar: BREDA UNESCO 1998), 51.

⁹² Gahama, 259.

⁹³ See Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 138. Chrétien reported that, between 1932 and 1957, the ratio between Rwandan Tutsi and Hutu was of circa 80:20. *Le défi*, 68, 153. See also, Prunier, *The Rwanda crisis*, 33; Walker-Keleher, 'Reconceptualising,' 37-38.

⁹⁴ Erny, *L'école*, 109; and Newbury, *The cohesion*.

⁹⁵ Erny, 102.

Feelings of ‘native superiority’ among the Tutsi and a ‘resentment of exclusion’ among the Hutu,⁹⁶ which had been nurtured in schools through the overt and hidden curriculum, found expression a few years prior to the achievement of independence. Against the backdrop of increasing competition for scarce educational and employment opportunities, superiority-inferiority complexes deriving from Manichean teachings and structural inequalities led to a strained relationship between Hutu and Tutsi educated elites.⁹⁷ In 1957, nine Hutu intellectuals, who had been formed at the *Grand séminaire* at Kabgayi, issued the famous *Bahutu Manifesto*, calling for Hutu emancipation. Originally titled *Notes on the Social Aspect of the Racial Native Problem in Rwanda*, this document denounced a political, socio-economic and cultural monopoly of the Tutsi ‘race’ and proposed sweeping reforms to end ‘racial inequality’.⁹⁸ In the manifesto, concerns surrounding Hutu discrimination in education occupied a prominent place. ‘The problem’, according to the document’s authors, ‘is above all a problem of political monopoly which is held by one race, the Tutsi; political monopoly which, given the totality of current structures becomes an economic and social monopoly; political, economic and social monopoly which, given the *de facto* discrimination in education, ends up being a cultural monopoly, to the great despair of the Hutu who see themselves condemned to remain forever subaltern manual labourers...’.⁹⁹

On the eve of independence, the colonial racial discourse was bestowed with a new political purpose. In the words of Nigel Eltringham, ‘the discourse of “Bantus and Hamites” no longer justified indirect rule, but the ambitions of a new educated class.’¹⁰⁰

The next section will move to examining the relationship between politics, ideology, and historiography as it played out under the leadership of a newly empowered Hutu elite in the wake of independence. It will subsequently analyse

⁹⁶ Vidal, 36.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 71, and *Rwanda*, 88-89, 211-212.

⁹⁹ Cited in Mamdani, 116.

¹⁰⁰ Eltringham, 19-20.

the implications of the post-colonial politics of history and identity for the education system of independent Rwanda until the 1994 genocide.

2.3 Ideology, historiography and formal education in post-colonial Rwanda

2.3.1 Ideology and historiography in post-colonial Rwanda

In the early 1960s, Rwanda experienced a radical political transition. The country transitioned from colonial rule to independence. In the process, the ‘Tutsi monarchy’ was replaced by the establishment of ‘a Hutu republic’. Despite these drastic transformations at the political level, an analysis of ideological and historical discourses reveals a remarkable degree of continuity between colonial and post-colonial grand-narratives.

Headed by a Hutu elite that had been formed in Catholic seminaries, the First Republic was founded on Hutu nationalism and on a racialised understanding of the nation, of the Republic, and of democracy. At the core of the new entity and of its ideology was a continued acceptance of a racial view of Rwandan society and history. This view portrayed the Hutu as the autochthonous Bantu majority and the Tutsi as a foreign invading and feudal Hamitic minority.¹⁰¹ Guided by an ideology of ‘ethnism’ and ‘antihamitism’,¹⁰² the First Republic introduced what Chrétien described as an ‘ethno-democratic’ system,¹⁰³ which openly favoured the Hutu,

¹⁰¹ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 343.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 242-243. In the same book, the ideology of ‘ethnisme’ and ‘antihamitisme’ (59) are also referred to as ‘idéologie dominante interlacustre’ (377), ‘idéologie d’autochtonie raciale’, ‘idéologie essentialiste’ (244), ‘véritable fascisme contemporain’ (46) ‘nazisme tropical’ (57) or ‘nazisme bantou’ (60), ‘totalitarisme ethniste/raciale’ (197, 344), ‘racisme ethnique’ (341), and ‘racisme admis comme politiquement correct’ (383).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 365-366.

defined as ‘*le peuple*’, over the Tutsi ‘in the name of justice’.¹⁰⁴ According to the scholar, the new system was based on a ‘confusion of democracy with racial arithmetic’; it was founded on an ‘assimilation of the Hutu component to a natural political majority, democratic by birth, and the Tutsi component to a minority that is equally hereditary, a priori eager for privileges’.¹⁰⁵ Through a discursive manoeuvring that was meant to justify the new socio-political system of Hutu dominance, the ‘Hamitic’ Tutsi, previously considered as a superior and dominant race born to rule and to hold a privileged position, had thus turned into a foreign minority that was, on that account, not entitled to certain fundamental rights.

History, or, better, mythico-histories, continued to be at the core of the new state ideology. They constituted a major stake in efforts to control the representation of the past and to justify present and future predicaments. A review of the propaganda of MDR-Parmehutu in the 1960s and of MRND/CDR-Hutu Power in the early 1990s reveals the abundant ideological mobilisation of a politicised and absolutist history by political entrepreneurs.¹⁰⁶ Sometimes explicitly urging the population not to forget their history, newspapers, in particular, were fraught with historical references, analogies and clichés, which intended to remind the population of the ‘right’ history of Rwanda. In a context marked by a political (ab)use of history by Hutu ideologues, Rwandan intellectuals and academics reportedly played a significant role in authenticating and propagating historical clichés in support of the official ideology and of state policies.¹⁰⁷ As the late Catholic priest, journalist, and human-rights activist André Sibomana observed in 1999, it was perhaps ‘not a coincidence that one of the brains behind Hutu extremist ideology, Ferdinand Nahimana [Director of Programmes of the infamous *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM)] was a historian’.¹⁰⁸

A set of recurrent historical themes appeared central to the ideology on which the post-colonial state was founded. The state propaganda amply appealed to

¹⁰⁴ Mamdani, xiii, 34.

¹⁰⁵ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 57, 365-366.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 148, 347-353, 359.

¹⁰⁷ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 97, 109.

¹⁰⁸ A. Sibomana, *Hope for Rwanda: conversations with Laure Guilbert and Herve Deguine* (London 1999), 81.

Rwanda's pre-colonial history in order to demonstrate the primordialism of ethnic difference and antagonism in Rwandan traditional society. To support their arguments, state ideologues profusely invoked a still resonant colonial (pseudo-)scholarship.¹⁰⁹ According to Eltringham, the views of the historians of the colonial time, including the Tutsi monarchist Abbé Kagame, continued to reverberate in post-colonial Rwanda through their 'continuous acceptance, reiteration, reinterpretation *and* refutation'.¹¹⁰ The new ruling elites recycled the Hamitic theory and its racial imagery, reinterpreting its premises and implications according to their vested interests. The result was a 'striking metamorphosis' illustrative of the blatant malleability of mythical histories in Rwanda.¹¹¹ In the past, the Tutsi elites had found their pride and privilege in the belief that their natural superiority and dominance were founded on the greatness of their Hamitic ancestors. The Hutu elites later used that same history to depict their group as a victim of conquest and secular oppression, humiliation and exploitation at the hands of foreign invaders.¹¹² Articles, radio broadcasts, and satirical cartoons did not hesitate to reproduce colonial racial clichés and stereotypes to promote what Chrétien described as a 'cult of difference'.¹¹³ Accentuating an image of threat that warranted constant vigilance on the part of 'the Hutu people', the Tutsi were time and again depicted as innately cunning, malicious, hypocritical, arrogant, ungrateful and tyrannical. They were portrayed as 'a vicious and dangerous race for the Bantu people'. The Tutsi were seen as 'the secular enemy, the oppressor, the killer'.¹¹⁴

In extremist propaganda and speeches, the more recent history was likewise invoked. State propagandists alluded especially to the 'Social Revolution' of 1959. This watershed event, described by Chrétien as the 'essential reference of

¹⁰⁹ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 95, and *Le défi*, 361.

¹¹⁰ Eltringham, 186. See also Vidal on the continued popularity of Kagame's largely uncontested work. *Sociologie*, 55.

¹¹¹ Lemarchand, *Ethnicity*, 7-11. Prunier similarly spoke of 'two versions of the [same] myth'. *The Rwanda crisis*, 80-81.

¹¹² Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 56, 134, 162. See also Vidal, 35, 60-61; and Erny, *L'enseignement*, 35. Similarly, Lemarchand observed that, in the post-colonial time, '[w]hat Europeans naively perceived as a superior brand of human was better seen as the embodiment of the worst in human nature: cruelty and cunning, conquest and oppression. Where missionaries invoked Semitic origins, as a source of racial superiority, Hutu ideologues saw proof of foreignness'. Lemarchand, *Ethnicity*, 10-11.

¹¹³ See Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 361, 37 ; 151-162.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77, 151, 162, 335; Chrétien, *Le défi*, 36, 361; and Eltringham, 67.

Hutu “conscientisation”¹¹⁵ was retrospectively depicted by the post-colonial regimes and the hate media as ‘the founding victory’ of the Hutu people.¹¹⁶ According to the official discourse, in 1959 the Hutu people had put an end to four hundred years of tyrannical Tutsi rule, thereby finally restoring a legitimate ‘democratic’ system. This foundational moment of the Hutu Republic and of democracy was extensively celebrated and commemorated in extremist propaganda, for instance through songs by the Rwandan singer Bikindi. Among them were *Wasezereye* (‘You said goodbye’) and *Bene Sebahinzi* (‘Sons of the father of the cultivators’), which were regularly broadcast and paraphrased on radio RTLM.¹¹⁷ Several observers have highlighted the mythical nature of the official portrayal of the Revolution. Eltringham, among others, pointed to the distorted representation of the 1959 events as a popular and ‘spontaneous’ ‘liberation struggle’ of the Hutu from the Tutsi. The scholar underscored its striking elision of the decisive Belgian involvement in the events as well as its erroneous generalisation of an image of oppressive Tutsi hegemony.¹¹⁸

With the purpose of ‘establishing a climate of permanent revolution’, as Chrétien put it, the extremist propaganda warned against the menacing prospect of losing the gains of 1959 and of returning to despotic Tutsi rule.¹¹⁹ Placed within the context of what was portrayed as a long history of Tutsi oppression and resulting ethnic conflict, the war of the 1990s was depicted as a final struggle (*Simusiga*) between Good and Evil.¹²⁰ In order to mobilise the population for this ‘final revolution’, numerous historical analogies with the 1959 period were drawn to create a semblance of continuity with the past. Analogies were drawn between the founders of the Revolution and of the First Republic (MDR-Parmehutu) and the leaders of the MRND-CDR-Hutu Power. The intention was to claim the

¹¹⁵ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 112.

¹¹⁶ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 39.

¹¹⁷ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 119-121, 341-358. The song *Bene Sebahinzi* was fraught with references to erudite historiography, including A. Kagame’s, and to historical episodes and figures of Rwanda’s pre-colonial and colonial history. According to Chrétien, while such erudite history was not part of Rwanda’s popular culture, Bikindi became acquainted with Kagame’s work during his two years of university studies in literature.

¹¹⁸ As pointed out by Eltringham, while the state rhetoric denounced a previous monopoly on power by the Tutsi race as a whole, in reality only a tiny fraction of this group held positions of power. Eltringham also referred to a depiction of the revolution as a liberation from a ‘double colonialism’ – at the hands of the Tutsi and of the Europeans. 35, 41, 44-47, 81.

¹¹⁹ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 113. See also, Mamdani, 230-233.

¹²⁰ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 137-8, 321, 326; Eltringham, 66.

legitimacy of those who were presented as the heirs of the celebrated revolution. Analogies were also drawn between the monarchist rebels of the 1960s and the RPF. With the aim of demonstrating the persistent Tutsi threat posed to the legitimate status quo, the RPF rebels were portrayed as aspiring to avenge their forefathers and to regain power.¹²¹ As stated by Eltringham, these anachronistic constructions represent clear instances of political attempts to ‘blend the old with the new so that their lethal ideologies will be effective and make sense to people’.¹²²

Occurrences in Tutsi-ruled Burundi – ‘Rwanda’s false twin’¹²³ – were used in extremist rhetoric as well in order to warn against the Tutsi danger and to prove their inherent malevolence. References were made to the ‘genocide’ of educated Hutu in 1972 and to the assassination of Burundi’s first-ever Hutu president in 1993. These tragic events were presented by the Rwandan hate media of the 1990s as a tangible proof of the existence of a Tutsi plan to exterminate the Hutu elites in order to subjugate ‘the people’. Their ultimate goal, according to Hutu propagandists, was the establishment of a great Hima-Tutsi empire in the region.¹²⁴

Besides national and regional history, world history was likewise evoked by Hutu extremists to support their cause. With the aim of providing historical justification for the killings that had been encouraged in the 1990s, the hate media suggested comparisons with for example the French Revolution and WWII. In an analogy with WWII, the RPF and the notorious *Interahamwe* were respectively compared to the Nazis and to the heroic anti-Nazi resistance.¹²⁵

The distorted historical narratives that were disseminated in Rwanda in the first half of the 1990s are deemed to have played an important role in awakening, nurturing, and deepening divisive feelings of ethnic belonging, in engendering

¹²¹ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 130, 215, 300; Eltringham, 90, 148.

¹²² Eltringham, 50. Citing A. Hinton, *Annihilating difference: the anthropology of genocide* (Berkeley 2002), 11.

¹²³ C.P. Scherrer, *Genocide and crisis in Central Africa: conflict roots, mass violence and regional war* (Westport Connecticut/London 2002), 219.

¹²⁴ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 39, 162-175, and *Le défi*, 332.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 333.

fears and mistrust, and in inciting violence. In her 1999 publication *Leave None to Tell the Story*, Des Forges suggested that,

*‘Rwandans take history seriously. Hutu who killed Tutsi did so for many reasons, but beneath the individual motivations lay a common fear rooted in firmly held but mistaken ideas of the Rwandan past. Organizers of the genocide, who had themselves grown up with the distortions of history, skillfully exploited misconceptions about who the Tutsi were, where they had come from, and what they had done in the past. From these elements, they fueled the fear and hatred that made genocide imaginable’.*¹²⁶

Chrétien’s analysis echoed Des Forges’ observation. He affirmed that the largely anachronistic and scientifically unsound accounts that had been formulated by extremist pseudo-historians were centred on a dangerous ‘rhetoric of “victimisation”’.¹²⁷ The aim of this rhetoric, according to the scholar, was to ‘remind the racial red thread of Tutsi malignancy’ and the ‘secular suffering’ of the Hutu.¹²⁸ Ultimately, Chrétien argued, this propaganda had wanted to suggest ‘the a priori innocence of the Hutu and the general culpability of the Tutsi’ with an eye to legitimising and condoning anti-Tutsi violence as an act of popular self-defence.¹²⁹

2.3.2 The institutionalisation of the official discourse through the education system: history teaching and education policy in post-colonial Rwanda

The ethnisism that had been propagated by the Rwandan State after independence invested all modern domains of society. As will be demonstrated in the next paragraphs, the education sector was no exception. In function of its capacity to regulate access to modernity, wealth, and power, this sector was a major stake and one of the social domains that were most critically re-shaped by the politics and ideology of the new regime. To a great extent, school teachings and educational policies, structures, and practices once again came to reflect and to contribute to consolidating a newly established socio-political order.

¹²⁶ Des Forges, 31. See also the same author on pages 73, 81-82; Chrétien, 217-248, and *Le défi*, 41-42, 162, 174, 182, 184, 316, 325; Mamdani, 230-233; and Uvin, ‘Prejudice, crisis and genocide in Rwanda,’ *African studies review* 40(2) (1997) 102.

¹²⁷ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 358.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 358, and *Rwanda*, 292, 333-336.

¹²⁹ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 233, 335.

2.3.2.1 School teachings

The literature review that was conducted for the purpose of this thesis revealed the centrality of history in both the colonial and post-colonial official discourse. Despite a continued political obsession with the past, the systematic study of the national history in Rwandan schools was significantly delayed.

In the wake of independence, history teaching continued to be primarily concerned with the outside world despite efforts at nationalising education. Although Rwandan history was integrated into the curriculum, its study was hindered by a lack of teaching material.¹³⁰ During the First Republic, no specific textbooks were produced by the Ministry of Education (MoE). The 1971 publication of *Introduction à l'Histoire du Rwanda* marked a turning point. Written by the Belgian priest and history teacher Roger Heremans, this 64-page booklet was later adopted by the MoE as the first official textbook for secondary schools on Rwanda's history from the origins until independence.¹³¹ With the establishment of the Second Republic, new history curricula were introduced: in 1975 for secondary schools and in 1980 for primary schools.¹³² During Habyarimana's presidency, efforts were made to support the study of the national history with teaching materials that followed the curriculum. In 1977, the MoE published its first teacher guide on Rwandan history, i.e. *Histoire, 1^e année du TC* (85pp). More textbooks were issued in the 1980s. Several *livres du maître* were published for the primary school level between 1982 and 1985. They subsumed the study of history, geography and civic education.¹³³ As opposed to civics, which focused on presenting and exalting Habyarimana's party MRND, the study of the national history in primary schools ended with the First Republic. Two new books were also produced for the secondary school level. These included *Histoire*

¹³⁰ Gasanabo; and F. Rutembesa, 'Les récits du peuplement du Rwanda et la manipulation identitaire,' *Le génocide de 1994. Idéologie et mémoire. Etudes rwandaises* 9 (Butare 2005) 7-37.

¹³¹ Gasanabo, 109.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 103-104. The curriculum revision took place within the framework of an overall school reform that was announced by President Habyarimana in August 1973. Implemented in 1979, this reform introduced, among other things, an 8-year primary school system. Also, it turned *Kinyarwanda* into the language of instruction for the entire primary level. Erny, *L'enseignement*.

¹³³ The manuals had a length varying from 14 to 96 pages. They were developed by teams of three to four people and were published by the *Direction générale des études et recherches pédagogiques* of the Ministry of primary and secondary education (MINEPRISEC). Gasanabo.

du Rwanda I^{ère} partie (1987, 150p) on the pre-colonial time, and *Histoire du Rwanda II^{ème} partie* (1989, 168p) on the colonial and post-colonial periods until 1975 (henceforth abbreviated as *Histoire I* and *II*).¹³⁴ The last changes that were introduced before the 1994 demise of the Second Republic included the revision of the junior secondary school curriculum in 1991/1992.¹³⁵

Authors who have investigated educational issues in Rwanda have often suggested that, under the two Republics, history education largely reflected the rhetoric of the Hutu regimes.¹³⁶ Showing a degree of continuity with the colonial time, educational institutions in independent Rwanda functioned as privileged instruments for the propagation of the state ideology and of the official historical narrative of the nation. In her analysis of Rwanda's post-genocide educational reconstruction, Anna Obura argued that, through the curriculum, learning material and teachers' inputs, the pre-genocide school system had reproduced and reinforced the 'official, stereotypical, simplistic and erroneous version of Rwandan history'.¹³⁷ In line with the state ideology, schools appear to have disseminated a view of the past which highlighted ethnic division and tension in historical perspective, and which provided historical justification for the professed differences and the dominant power of the Hutu.

¹³⁴ The two manuals were produced by V. Sinseyimfura of the History Section of the *Direction des Programmes de l'Enseignement Secondaire*. The 150-page *Histoire I* covered the sources of Rwanda's history (pp1-8), the history of settlement (pp9-23), the civilisation and organisation of Rwandan traditional society – with reference to the concepts of ethnic group, clan, tribe, lineage (pp24-33) as well as to economic and spiritual life (pp93-147), – and Rwanda under the Nyiginya dynasty (1312-1896) (pp34-92). *Histoire II*, instead, covered Rwanda under German and Belgian administration (pp1-36 and pp37-143), and independent Rwanda until 1975 (pp144-168). The manuals further included an outline of general and specific objectives, syntheses, evaluation questions, and a bibliography, as well as documentary texts, illustrations and maps.

¹³⁵ The new curriculum foresaw the study of 'pre-colonial Rwanda' and of 'Rwanda under the colonisation'. Topics included German occupation and administration, the arrival of missionaries, WWI, the country's political, economic and cultural organisation under the Belgians, and the revolution and independence. Republic of Rwanda, MINEPREREC, *Session de formation accélérée des enseignants des 1eres années du secondaire* (Kigali July 1991). Gasanabo. This curriculum revision once again occurred in the framework of an overall school reform launched in 1991, which, among other things, re-introduced a 6-year primary school system. See also, A. Mubashankwaya, 'L'enseignement de l'histoire au secondaire: bilan et perspectives,' D. Byanafashe (ed.), *Les défis de l'historiographie rwandaise* (Butare: Editions de l'Université Nationale du Rwanda 2004), 351-352, 357.

¹³⁶ Rutayisire et al, 'Redefining'; Rutembesa, 'Les récits'; Republic of Rwanda, Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire/ Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique et de la Culture, *La politique et la planification de l'éducation au Rwanda* (Kigali: MINEPRISEC/MINPRISUPRES 1995); E. Mutabazi, 'En quoi l'enseignement de l'histoire avant le genocide a-t-il contribué à la souffrance à l'école au Rwanda?', *Les collectifs du Cirp 2* (2011) 103-116.

¹³⁷ Obura, 101.

Gasanabo's analysis of Rwanda's pre-genocide history curricula and textbooks is particularly insightful in this regard.¹³⁸ Among other things, the scholar reported this subject's strong concern with the theme of ethnicity.¹³⁹ The topics that were addressed in the history course are revealing of this preoccupation. They included: the origins, settlement and specific activities of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa; a distinction between Hutu and Tutsi principalities before the creation of Rwanda; the relations between the Tutsi monarchy and the colonial rulers; the pastoral clientship contract *Ubugake*; and the decolonisation process, with a focus on the 1950s elections, the Hutu Manifesto, and the causes and consequences of the Hutu Revolution.¹⁴⁰

Building on Gasanabo's study, the following paragraphs will review the content of the French-written secondary schoolbooks especially, most notably *Histoire I* and *II*. Particular attention will be devoted to examining these books' portrayal of some of the most sensitive and controversial topics in Rwandan history. The analysis will be organised into three sections. They will respectively explore the representation of Rwanda's pre-colonial identities and social relations, of the colonisation and the 1959-1962 events, and of the two Republics.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ See also, Gasanabo, 'L'holocauste et le génocide comme thème d'enseignement à l'école: le cas du Rwanda,' Paper presented at the Conference Learning and Remembering : The Holocaust, genocide and state organised crime in the twentieth century, Berlin, March 12-15, 2003.

¹³⁹ Gasanabo, 103-104.

¹⁴⁰ Other topics included: Rwandan traditions, the kingdom's creation and expansion, and the reigns of various kings; the arrival and realisations of missionaries, and of the Germans and the Belgians; and the period of decolonisation and the country's achievement of independence. According to Mubashankwaya, the 1975 secondary school history curriculum was organised into 'Ancient Rwanda (X-XIX centuries),' 'Modern Rwanda: the colonial period (1900-1959),' and 'Contemporary Rwanda (1959-1962)'. With regard to ancient Rwanda, topics included 'the first inhabitants,' 'the first kingdoms,' and 'the arrival of Ethiopid peoples,' followed by 'the constitution and expansion of Rwanda' and its civilisation and organisation. As for the colonial period, the curriculum included the arrival of the first Europeans, the Rucunshu coup, WWI, the German and Belgian colonisation, and the evangelisation of Rwanda. The curriculum further covered the 'Revolution', the Republic (i.e. its creation and organisation), and the country's independence and subsequent problems.

¹⁴¹ References and quotes from primary school textbooks and the TC book have been drawn from Gasanabo's study. They will be referred to with the abbreviations P5, P6, P8, and TC. For the complete titles, see bibliography. The primary school manuals P5 and P6 are in the possession of the author. The remaining two could not be retrieved. The basic level of Kinyarwanda knowledge of the author of the present study was enough to enable her to follow the Kinyarwanda-French translation provided by Gasanabo.

2.3.2.1.1 *The pre-colonial time: identities, origins and migrations, and ‘inter-ethnic’ relations*¹⁴²

In pre-genocide textbooks, Rwanda’s traditional society was described as being composed of three distinct ‘*ethnies*’. They were also referred to as ‘three socially different and hierarchical groups’. These groups were said to differ in their origins, time of arrival in Rwanda, and primary socio-economic occupation. The emphasis on origins and migration is clearly illustrated in the learning objectives of a chapter on the ‘*Premiers peuplements du Rwanda*’ which features in *Histoire I*. Here, pupils were expected to be able ‘to give the order of arrival of the different populations of Rwanda’; ‘to describe the formation of the first Hutu kingdoms’; ‘to determine the origins of the Tutsi populations’; and ‘to determine the technique used by the Tutsi populations for their settlement.’¹⁴³ In line with the official portrayal of the pre-colonial time, *Histoire I*, as well as *Histoire II*, recounted a history of successive migrations and settlement. Hunter-gatherers Twa from the Central African forests were represented as Rwanda’s first inhabitants. According to the textbooks, their settlement on the territory had been followed ‘between the 7th and the 10th century’ by the arrival of Bantu agriculturalist Hutu from West Africa, i.e. Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria. The Tutsi, described as slender and tall pastoralists,¹⁴⁴ were portrayed as Rwanda’s last settlers. This group was believed to have arrived ‘between the 10th and the 14th century’ from ‘North-East Africa, Sudan or Ethiopia’ like akin groups, such as ‘the Tutsi of Burundi, the Hima of Uganda and Tanzania, the Masai of Kenya’.¹⁴⁵

While accepting old colonial theories on origins and migration, pre-genocide textbooks seemed to take distance from the extremist belief in the foreignness of the Tutsi and in the existence of an eternal ethnic conflict. *Histoire I* refuted the hypothesis which associated the arrival of the Tutsi with a bellicose conquest by racially superior and civilizing Hamites. According to the manual, ‘[t]heir small

¹⁴² These topics were presented in all secondary school textbooks and in P6 and P8. P6, 133, 135 ; P8, 97; Heremans, 19; TC, 25; *Histoire I*, 9, 14; *Histoire II*, 68-69, 68-76. See also Gasanabo, 114-127.

¹⁴³ *Histoire I*, 9.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18

¹⁴⁵ *Histoire I* spoke of divergent hypotheses with regard to the origins of the Tutsi. It however reported a consensus with regard to the time of their arrival in Rwanda. *Histoire I*, 18-19; P6, 137; Heremans, 21-22.

numbers and their lack of cohesion would not have favoured a warlike entry.¹⁴⁶ The textbooks spoke of a rather peaceful and unproblematic ‘slow infiltration’ and subsequent cultural assimilation of the Tutsi.¹⁴⁷ Pre-colonial relations among the three ‘ethnic groups’ which constituted the ‘Banyarwanda’ were portrayed as harmonic and symbiotic rather than conflictual.¹⁴⁸ *Histoire I* nevertheless alluded to a pre-colonial condition of Tutsi domination. The author explained that,

*‘Rwandan traditional society is composed of three ethnic groups called: Abatwa, Abahutu, Abatutsi. These three groups share the sentiment of forming one people, the Banyarwanda, living in one country, Rwanda As the three groups lived together, they came to appreciate and complete each other in their mores and in their professions. Since the arrival of the Tutsi in the country, they adopted the language and certain customs of the sedentary farmers. Little by little, they [the Tutsi] managed to dominate them...’*¹⁴⁹

The document mentioned a gradual seizure of Hutu land by the Tutsi.¹⁵⁰ This process was reported to have been accomplished by the Tutsi not through brute force, but through their cattle, described as ‘a source of wealth’ and ‘[t]heir main instrument of domination’. The manual referred in particular to the *Ubugake* pastoral clientship system.¹⁵¹ According to the textbook, the expansion of Tutsi kingdoms had resulted from a practice of exchange of land and services in return for cattle by the agriculturalist Hutu, who had thereby turned into ‘a vast clientele’ of the pastoralist Tutsi.¹⁵² Conveying a primarily negative image of *Ubugake*, post-colonial textbooks presented this form of clientelism as an increasingly abusive and ‘very demanding’ and ‘inhumane’ system through which powerful and wealthy cattle-owners (*seigneurs*) used to urge their clients’ unconditional ‘obedience’ and ‘submission’. As reported by the manuals, this degenerated

¹⁴⁶ *Histoire I*, 18-19.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 19, 38. See also, Heremans, 22, 58; and P8, 99.

¹⁴⁸ P8 and Heremans.

¹⁴⁹ *Histoire I*, 128.

¹⁵⁰ One primary school textbook instead spoke of a conquest of Hutu territories by the Tutsi (‘the Tutsi conquered the territories of the Hutu’). P8, 99. Another depicted the Tutsi as the founders of *Rwanda rwa Gasabo*, who had been later assisted by the Hutu in the expansion of the kingdom. In the words of this manual, ‘the Tutsi obtained plots and pastures in exchange for livestock products. From these pastures, they created a first territory which they called Rwanda (...) the Hutu followed them and became their collaborators and helped them in the conquest of other territories’. P6, 137. See also, *Histoire I*, 99 ; *Histoire II*, 68-69. *Histoire I* also reminded that the king was considered to transcend ethnic differences (‘the king does not belong to any of the country’s three *ethnies*’). 132.

¹⁵¹ *Histoire I*, 98.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 20, 95.

practice had eventually led to a condition of ‘enslavement’, ‘economic exploitation’, and ultimately ‘political domination’.¹⁵³

Remarkably, while *Histoire I* adopted the concept of *ethnies* to refer to Twa, Hutu and Tutsi, it simultaneously criticised this terminology.¹⁵⁴ The textbook described the categorisation of the Rwandan population in *ethnies* as outdated. According to the manual, applicable in the ancient context to refer to peoples that had successively settled in Rwanda, this categorisation had to be considered ‘inadequate’ in the present time. A re-conceptualisation was deemed necessary based on the argument that these ‘social groups’ had eventually come to share the same language, culture, territory, and organisation. In the words of the author,

‘This term could be understood at the time of the initial settlement of Rwanda since each community lived entrenched within its barriers ... Nowadays, there is no language barrier between the different social groups, nor cultural or morphological specificity typical of the Twa, Hutu or Tutsi (...) The division operated and the classification adopted to designate the three groups should be reconsidered. The term "ethnic group" should be reserved to the historical vocabulary of ancient Rwanda because, applied to the situation of the moment, it only serves to convey confused and more or less artificial ideas.’¹⁵⁵

In the early 1990s, several changes were introduced. At the junior secondary level, the new curriculum removed references to the history of settlement and to ethnic groups and tribes. The revised course insisted on Rwanda’s territorial expansion and its traditional civilisation and organisation, with a focus on the notions of clan and lineage. As pointed out by Gasanabo, allusions to the three groups’ distinct origins and characteristics continued however to be present in other curricula and in textbooks.¹⁵⁶

2.3.2.1.2 *The colonisation and the 1959-1962 period*¹⁵⁷

The various textbooks that were produced under the Two Republics sketched a rather positive image of the role of missionaries and colonial authorities in

¹⁵³ Ibid., 129. See also, *Histoire II*, 68-76; Heremans, 34; and P5, 155.

¹⁵⁴ *Histoire I*, 25, 30-31.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 31 The textbook also introduces the notions of clans, lineages, and tribes. The third concept was said to be irrelevant in the Rwandan context.

¹⁵⁶ Gasanabo, 110-111.

¹⁵⁷ See also, Gasanabo, 127-144.

Rwanda's development and modernisation. This is the case especially with regard to the social, economic and cultural spheres. Among other things, *Histoire II* referred to 'a great socio-cultural *œuvre*' that had been promoted by Christian missionaries, 'animated by the same desire to lift the Rwandan people out of ignorance'.¹⁵⁸ Their educational activities, for instance, were lauded as a 'noble enterprise of empowerment of the Rwandan people'.¹⁵⁹ As reported by Gasanabo, a primary school textbook further exalted the Christian churches as 'promoters and holders of equality and justice'.¹⁶⁰

A more critical tone was employed in the political domain. *Histoire II* underscored, for instance, the brutality of the violence that had accompanied the colonial suppression of internal dissidence, as well as the unfairness of the territorial loss that had been imposed on the kingdom. With regard to the policy of indirect rule, the textbook included rather ambiguous comments. This policy was depicted as 'a pure lie'. According to the manual, the Belgians were the real power-holders.¹⁶¹ In the newly established order, local authorities were deemed to have merely functioned as 'faithful instruments of the colonial power'.¹⁶² While highlighting the complicit but subdued role of local chiefs, *Histoire II* also stressed the contribution of colonial reforms to the 'reinforcement of the Tutsi hegemony' and to the bolstering of 'feelings of ethnic belonging'.¹⁶³ Rather than a deliberate colonial strategy, the consolidation of Tutsi dominance in Rwandan society was portrayed as an *unintentional* result of the country's re-organisation and modernisation that had been promoted by the colonial authorities. In the words of the textbook authors, '[w]ithout realizing it, the Belgian administration strengthened the control of the Tutsi rulers over the peasant masses to such a

¹⁵⁸ *Histoire II*, 79.

¹⁵⁹ P5, 129, 143; *Histoire II*, 56-67, 73-93. With regard to the evangelisation efforts, *Histoire II* stated that 'the missionaries showed exceptional courage in front of the lukewarmness and hostility of these leaders' who had been 'refractory'. 77. In this respect, Heremans, seemed to salute the 1931 Belgian deposition of King Musinga in favour of Rudahigwa. He depicted the period that followed as the beginning of 'the glorious years' and of the 'truly extraordinary drive of almost an entire people towards Christianity'. 50.

¹⁶⁰ P5, 152. Gasanabo also observed that no criticism was levelled, for instance, against the practice of forced labour. This, instead, appeared to be legitimated as a necessary practice for the country's development.

¹⁶¹ *Histoire II*, 38-39, 101.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 102.

degree that it made it intolerable.’¹⁶⁴ An apologetic stance towards the colonial authorities was likewise adopted in Heremans’ book. The author presented the removal of Hutu chiefs from positions of power as ‘the result of a double complot of the Tutsi and of the Catholic Church’. Their later return to power was depicted as the fruit of a realisation by the Belgian authorities of the unfairness of a situation of marginalisation to which the majority had been illegitimately subjected. In Heremans’ words,

*‘Until 1952, all management positions were occupied by Tutsi. (...) Towards the end of the colonial period, the Belgian government increasingly understood that it was not possible to continue to remove from power the majority of the population.’*¹⁶⁵

With regard to the 1959-1962 troubles, pre-genocide textbooks pointed the finger at the ruling Tutsi aristocracy – alternatively referred to as traditionalist Tutsi or conservative monarchists. The Tutsi leadership and their UNAR party were accused of ‘obscuring the existence of the Hutu-Tutsi problem’, of demanding immediate independence ‘so that the Tutsi maintained their power’, of favouring the establishment of a ‘feudal monarchy’,¹⁶⁶ and of refusing to accept democratic change and reform.¹⁶⁷ Against this backdrop, *Histoire II* seemed to legitimate what was typically described as a ‘revolution’ or ‘jacquerie’ (i.e. a peasant revolt).¹⁶⁸ Its outbreak was primarily blamed on an uncompromising Tutsi aristocracy determined to preserve its position of power and privilege,¹⁶⁹ as well as on UNAR’s provocations and intimidations. Against this backdrop, a violent response by ‘the people’ was deemed inevitable.¹⁷⁰ According to *Histoire II*, ‘faced with such obstinacy, there really remained only one solution. It was the revolution...’¹⁷¹ In the textbooks, UNAR’s ‘negative position’ was presented in

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 101.

¹⁶⁵ Heremans, 48.

¹⁶⁶ *Histoire II*, 112.

¹⁶⁷ P5, 157, 160; *Histoire II*, 109-110, 141. Here a distinction was made between the conservative UNAR and progressive Tutsi who later founded the RADER party. Heremans, 55.

¹⁶⁸ *Histoire II*, 127; P5, 159; P8, 133.

¹⁶⁹ P5, 159; P8, 133; TC, 8; Heremans, 48; *Histoire II*, 109. Gasanabo reported that in textbooks for P5 and P8, ‘*ubuhake* is cited as one of the distant causes of the revolution’. P5, 160; and P8, 133.

¹⁷⁰ According to a textbook, ‘[t]he people began to kill, to pillage, to set fire, to hunt certain Tutsi chiefs’. P5, 16; P8, 135.

¹⁷¹ *Histoire II*, 110, 126.

opposition to the stance held by rival parties, notably the emerging Hutu elites.¹⁷² Their manifesto was depicted as a ‘rather moderate’ document proposing ‘democratic’ and ‘egalitarian’ ideas, which had been taught in Rwandan schools and seminaries by the Belgians. Together with the colonisers, Hutu leaders were said to have ‘fought for justice and democracy’ and to have been ‘determined to work hard to bring down this monarchy that was no longer wanted’.¹⁷³ The textbooks generally praised the positive role eventually played by the Belgian administration in support of the emancipation of the Hutu. The colonial authorities were commended for their efforts at promoting democratisation. They were lauded for their commitment to suppressing the monopoly and privileges of the ruling Tutsi aristocracy they had initially supported, to favouring the long marginalised Hutu masses through ‘a reversal of power relations’, and to introducing measures that alleviated intolerable demands on ‘the people’.¹⁷⁴ According to *Histoire II*, thanks to such changes, ‘from a feudal society, the country was heading towards a real democracy’.¹⁷⁵

Histoire II exalted the ‘Rwandan revolution’ as a ‘victory of democracy over the arbitrary’ following a conscientisation of the Rwandan people.¹⁷⁶ At the same time, it presented the 1959 troubles as a ‘real disaster’. ‘For the first time,’ the manual explained, ‘the Hutu and the Tutsi waged a war without mercy’.¹⁷⁷ In the author’s words, the consequence of this ‘popular insurrection’ had been ‘the tearing apart and the lack of cohesion between the different social groups that make up the Rwandan nation’.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² Notice that *Histoire II* also referred to a positive role by certain Tutsi elites. In its words, [a] minority of Hutu and Tutsi intellectuals became aware of the problem and of the deep malaise that already raged in the country’. 53. On Parmehutu, see, *Histoire II*, 109-110, 115; as well as P5, 162; P8, 134; TC, 8.

¹⁷³ P5, 152; and *Histoire II*, 113.

¹⁷⁴ P5, 164 and 153; P8, 135; Heremans, 54; TC, 9; *Histoire II*, 101, 129-130, and 75. The textbooks reveal some disagreement as to the main promoter of the abolition of *Ubugake*, i.e. King Rudahigwa or the Belgian authorities. Compare: *Histoire II*, 72 ; TC, 15; and P5, 155.

¹⁷⁵ *Histoire II*, 104, 108; P5, 153-154.

¹⁷⁶ *Histoire II*, 137, and 154.

¹⁷⁷ As recounted in the manual, ‘[t]hese rumours [of Mbonyumutwa’s death] provoked a great wave of revenge which immediately spread across the country. For the first time, the Hutu and Tutsi waged a war without mercy. There were hundreds of dead and thousands of wounded. Many houses were burned and large masses of people were displaced. Several properties were looted or damaged. It was a real disaster.’ *Histoire II*, 126-127.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

2.3.2.1.3 *The Two Republics*¹⁷⁹

The textbooks that were produced under Habyarimana's regime celebrated Parmehutu's victory and praised its achievements. Pre-genocide manuals, notably *Histoire II*, exalted the former government's efforts to advance economic and socio-cultural development, democratisation, and social equality and justice in Rwanda. *Histoire II* mentioned, among other things, the promotion of merit-based access to education and employment. It however omitted all allusion to the quota system that had been introduced in these two sectors.¹⁸⁰

The celebration of the First Republic was accompanied by a demonisation of its 'enemies'. In the textbook, a strong emphasis was placed on outlining the menace posed by the 1959 Tutsi refugees to Rwanda's national security and territorial integrity. These refugees were depicted as 'Inyenzi terrorists', 'invaders', and 'enemies' of the Republic, who 'had chosen the path of exile'.¹⁸¹ They were accused of having destabilised the country through 'lugubrious activity', including assassinations, armed robberies, and especially through an 'aggression' that was aimed at 'crushing the young republic and at restoring the monarchy'.¹⁸² Their militant actions were depicted as the cause of violent and deadly reprisals against numerous Tutsi living inside Rwanda. Among the victims were innocent people suspected of complicity, who had been killed or forced into exile.¹⁸³ The textbook further underscored the refugees' primary responsibility for the internal violence by alluding to an otherwise rather peaceful cohabitation of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda. According to the manual, the latter 'had more or less accommodated themselves to the new situation, that is to say, to the Hutu hegemony'.¹⁸⁴

While the advent of the First Republic was celebrated, negative portrayals of Kayibanda's regime were included in school teachings insofar as they served to legitimate the military coup that had overthrown it. In the textbooks developed during the Second Republic, the coup was portrayed as a righteous action that was

¹⁷⁹ See also Gasanabo, 144-148.

¹⁸⁰ *Histoire II*, 154, and Heremans, 57.

¹⁸¹ *Histoire II*, 152.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 146, 167.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

aimed at re-establishing national peace, unity, and public order following the 1973 ‘tragic events’ and violent ‘troubles’ against educated Tutsi, which the regime had been incapable of managing.¹⁸⁵ The coup, described as a ‘bloodless “moral coup d’état”,’ was additionally depicted as having ended the moral degeneration of certain leaders of the First Republic.¹⁸⁶ The demise of these politicians was justified by denouncing their betrayal of the ‘noble’ ideals of the revolution through their practices of nepotism and regionalism which had been pursued at the expense of the interests of the popular masses.¹⁸⁷ Against the backdrop of increasingly intolerable circumstances, the intervention of the National Guard, which *Histoire II* portrayed as the ‘guarantor of the national peace and territorial integrity’, was legitimised by presenting it as a patriotic acceptance of responsibility in the face of ‘permanent insecurity, political division, and a fratricidal war’.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Habyarimana’s party found legitimation in its representation as ‘the only possible means to guarantee the *oeuvre* of pacification, reconciliation and national unity’. The MRND was exalted as ‘the only political body able to gather within it all the forces of the country without any discrimination of religious, ethnic, regional and social nature’.¹⁸⁹ Having legitimated the establishment of the Second Republic, pre-genocide textbooks subsequently praised the new government’s achievements. The manuals underscored the State’s unrelenting efforts to promote internal peace and democracy, socio-economic and cultural development, as well as regional cooperation and international solidarity.¹⁹⁰

The textbook analysis presented above tells volumes about the nature and aims of school teachings sanctioned by Habyarimana’s regime before the genocide. Testimonies gathered among Rwandans about their school memories constitute an additional source of information which permits to further grasp the impact of such teachings on people’s psyche. Particularly valuable in this regard is a collection of

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 158-159.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 166.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 158.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 159.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 161.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 166.

testimonies that was published in 2001 by the British NGO African Rights.¹⁹¹ Experiences recounted by teachers and other school personnel confirmed the divisive nature of Rwanda's pre-genocide school teachings, as well as the current existence of a widespread belief in the direct link between such teachings and the genocide. According to one teacher,

*'The contents of the history course, which used to be taught in primary schools, had a direct bearing on the genocide of 1994. It concentrated exclusively on ethnic divisions [...]. The children used to learn them by heart as if they were the gospel truth. They are in fact the misconceptions which are at the very root of the genocide.'*¹⁹²

Similarly, a primary school headmaster recounted how, '[i]n the past the history taught was nothing short of divisive propaganda. It was mainly focused on the history of migrations, of the ethnic groups, the majority and the minority, etc.'¹⁹³ The divisive nature of such teachings was also underscored by a Kigali Institute of Education (KIE) graduate. He reported that, in the pre-genocide period, students were taught that 'the group they belong to must dominate the other and eat alone the national cake [...], that their ancestors had been dominated and abused by the ancestors of the other group – enhancing revenge.'¹⁹⁴ In a contribution to a 2004 publication on the challenges of Rwandan historiography, history teacher M. Mubashankwaya reiterated the bias and selectiveness that used to characterise Rwandan school history. He argued that, 'the history of Rwanda learnt until now in our schools left indelible marks on this youth within which the country always drew its elite'.¹⁹⁵ The author underscored how the largely partisan history that had been taught before the genocide had led to pupils' truncated and mostly negative image of their country's past. Mubashankwaya suggested that, of their country's history, many Rwandans who had been educated in the pre-genocide period uncritically recalled especially, 'Rwanda's wars of expansion, the wickedness of one or the other component of Rwandan society, or simply the misdeeds of the

¹⁹¹ African Rights, *The heart of education. Assessing human rights in Rwanda's schools* (Kigali 2001).

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 27.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 42. An interviewee approached by Gasanabo recounted how his daughter had once told him that, '[o]ur teacher said that the Tutsi were wicked, that they beat the Hutu, that they humiliated them. The Tutsi did nothing; it's the Hutu who worked for them. You understand dad, the Tutsi were really nasty. I think we should change and give up being Tutsi'. 164.

¹⁹⁵ Mubashankwaya, 349.

colonisation or of the institution of “ubuhake”.¹⁹⁶ These comments and conclusions on the impact of pre-genocide history teaching on Rwandan society appear to contradict the main objectives of the history course as they were stated for instance in *Histoire I*. Besides the promotion of patriotism and international solidarity and understanding, the course officially aimed at the eradication of ‘feelings of racism, chauvinism and of all forms of xenophobia’.¹⁹⁷

In many respects, the contents and objectives of the history curriculum overlapped with the civics course that was taught at that time. The study by African Rights suggested that this school subject was formulated with a particularly strong ideological bias. The organisation reported how this course used to exalt the ‘democratic Hutu republican government’ and its triumph against the old ‘oppressive Tutsi monarchy’.¹⁹⁸ An interviewee confirmed the divisive effect of the teachings that had been imparted through the civics course, as well as their echoing in the political propaganda that was disseminated outside the classroom. In his words, this course ‘contributed enormously to radicalizing ethnic identities and of course what was taught in the civics course was repeated in the popular political gatherings where the song was the triumph of republicanism over the monarch, of the Hutu over the Tutsi’.¹⁹⁹

The propagandistic power of formal education was reportedly reinforced by a traditional teacher-centred pedagogy.²⁰⁰ According to available evidence, rather than encouraging independent and critical thinking, this approach privileged a passive form of education which was based on frontal lectures and rote learning.²⁰¹ The primacy of students’ memorisation of state-sanctioned knowledge appears manifest in the nature of the narrative and evaluation questions that can be found in pre-genocide history textbooks. They presented a single version of history – a ‘*histoire événementielle*’ centred on a series of facts and dates, – which

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 351.

¹⁹⁷ *Histoire I*, x.

¹⁹⁸ African Rights, 9.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰⁰ H.M. Weinstein, S.W. Freedman & H. Hughson, ‘School voices: challenges facing education systems after identity-based conflicts,’ *Education, citizenship and social justice* 2(1) (2007) 64; and F. Muhimpundu, *Education et citoyenneté au Rwanda* (Paris 2002), 154-155.

²⁰¹ Emy, *L’école*, 38-43, 99.

students were required to copy from the blackboard and to learn by heart. Opportunities for debating complex and controversial issues in the classroom were instead disregarded. Through such practices, schools thus proved to be effective tools for indoctrination and assimilation of state-sponsored ideologies.

The interface between politics and education which emerged from the analysis of textbooks as well as from Rwandan testimonies is further demonstrated by a review of extremist media of the early 1990s. The numerous excerpts reproduced by Chrétien in his groundbreaking study on the Rwandan *médias de la haine* revealed the hate media's strong concern with educational issues. The political and ideological preoccupation with history teaching in particular clearly comes to light in a number of issues of *Kangura Magazine*.²⁰² In its issue n.8, for instance, this propaganda tool criticised the school curriculum for its too prominent focus on the Tutsi dynasties and for its outrageous neglect of the Hutu Revolution.²⁰³ The notorious 'Hutu commandments', released in *Kangura* n.6, are also relevant in this regard. While article 6 asserted the need to guarantee the numerical predominance of the Hutu in the education sector, article 10 declared a duty to teach all Hutu at all levels about the 1959 Social Revolution and the 1961 Referendum, as well as about the Hutu ideology. Whereas all Hutu were urged to widely propagate and teach this ideology, those who dared to condemn a fellow Hutu for doing so were to be considered as traitors.²⁰⁴

Available evidence seems to suggest that the State's profuse educational efforts to convey its ideological and historical discourse deeply affected people's collective consciousness and memory. State teachings are deemed to have contributed to reversing a previous superiority-inferiority complex, to encouraging a sense of collective belonging and of grievance among Hutu pupils, as well as to inciting feelings of mutual distrust, suspicion and resentment within society.²⁰⁵ The efficacy of formal education in spreading mythico-historical teachings and

²⁰² Notice that *Kangura* was published by the state-owned *Regie de l'imprimerie scolaire*. Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 30-31.

²⁰³ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 140.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁰⁵ F.-X. Bangamwabo et al., *Les relations interethniques au Rwanda à la lumière de l'agression d'octobre 1990 – Genèse, soubassement et perspectives* (Ruhengeri 1991), 130.

stereotypes and in promoting ethnic hatred has been exposed by Vidal. In recounting her first-hand experience of the 1973 troubles, the scholar reported the existence of strong feelings of contempt and racial hatred between Hutu and Tutsi students in the 1960s and 1970s, and the particular virulence that she had observed among these youth in 1973. Vidal found that,

*'About the Other, everything was denigrated, his physiognomy, his way of eating, talking, his origin. These mythologised traits, which composed a hateful portrait, were stereotypes imported from a history that students did not read – it might be recalled these consisted in scholarly works which were not easily available – but which were circulated by teachers and by the public.'*²⁰⁶

If teaching contents apparently contributed to fuelling division and tension in pre-genocide Rwanda, an equally important role in this respect was played by educational policies and practices which reflected the state ideology.

2.3.2.2 Educational structures, policies, and practices

At the policy level, the most direct implication of the state ideology for the education sector consisted in a reversal of the structural inequality and exclusion that had characterised colonial schools.²⁰⁷ This was accomplished through the introduction of a policy of ethnic quota (as well as of regional and gender quota), which meant to regulate access to the scant educational opportunities available at the post-primary level.²⁰⁸ Based on a 'theoretical national population of 90 per cent Hutu, 9 per cent Tutsi and 1 per cent Twa',²⁰⁹ this system, which officially

²⁰⁶ Vidal, 40.

²⁰⁷ Following independence, the colonial education system was transferred nearly intact to the new political entity. Only few changes were introduced. These included a declaration expressed in the 1962 Constitution on the gratuity and compulsoriness of primary education, a process of nationalisation, as well as several curricular reforms. Until 1961, education had not been compulsory as the Belgian colonisers seem to have regarded too much education as potentially dangerous to their position of power. Erny, *L'école*, 83; and Weinstein et al., 'School voices', 55. For statistics on enrolment rates in the 1960s-1970s, see, Erny, *L'enseignement*, 118, and V. Ozinian & J. Chabrilac, *Profil du système éducatif au Rwanda* (Paris: UNESCO 1976).

²⁰⁸ This policy was referred to as *iringaniza*. This term, according to L. McLean-Hilker, 'roughly translates as "social justice".' 'The role of education in driving conflict and building peace – the case of Rwanda,' Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011, *The hidden crisis: armed conflict and education* (2011), 6, note 10. See also, Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 90, and *Le défi*, 80-82, 164.

²⁰⁹ B. Cooksey, *Basic education sector review* (Kigali 1992), 18.

aimed to compensate for past injustices against the Hutu, discriminated against the Tutsi by reducing their chances of social mobility.²¹⁰

Despite the new measure, the legacy of Hutu discrimination in education persisted under the First Republic, becoming a source of great frustration among this group. This legacy was manifest in the disproportionate numbers of Tutsi reported in higher educational institutions and in employment in modern sectors.²¹¹ Hutu passions were soon mobilised against educated and qualified Tutsi by a tottering regime wishing to galvanise support among a divided Hutu community. With the aim of ‘verifying’ the respect of ethnic quotas, a massive purge and persecution was instigated in February-March 1973 against those who were denounced as being too numerous in secondary and tertiary educational institutions and in public and private offices. During the purge, lists of Tutsi were reportedly drawn up by so-called ‘Committees of Public Safety’ and hung on walls to demand their immediate departure.²¹² As mentioned earlier, Vidal’s research on the 1973 events revealed an almost exclusive adherence to the anti-Tutsi movement by ‘the minority of clerks and *assimilés*’ as opposed to the popular masses. According to the scholar, ‘the events of 1973 had... shown that the ethnic ideology retained its virulence among the “modern” sections of the country.’²¹³ The primary involvement of students in the 1973 violence is also recorded in Erny’s 2003 publication *Jeunesse d’hier au Rwanda*. Erny reported the testimonies of several Tutsi university students recalling the incessant insults, threats, and harassment of which they had been victim.²¹⁴ One of them recounted being ‘violently assaulted in his bed by schoolmates in the dormitory’ and receiving ‘threatening anonymous

²¹⁰ Bangamwabo, *Les relations*, 300-306; Erny, *L’enseignement*; MINEPRISEC, *Des disparités ethniques et régionales dans l’enseignement secondaire rwandais: des années 1960 à 1980* (Kigali 1986); A. Mugesera, *Imibereho y’Abatutsi kuri Repubulika ya mbere n’iya kabiri (1959-1990)* (Kigali 2004), 309, 312-313; Muhimpundu, *Education*; Obura; and Rutayisire et al.

²¹¹ Vidal, 37-38; and Chrétien, ‘Hutu et Tutsi au Rwanda et au Burundi,’ J.-L. Amselle & E. M’Bokolo (eds.), *Au cœur de l’ethnie: ethnies, tribalisme et État en Afrique* (Paris 1985), 158-159.

²¹² Chrétien, *Le défi*, 73, and *Afrique des Grands Lacs, 2000 ans d’histoire* (Paris 2003), 268-269; Eltringham, 21; F.-X. Munyarugerero, *Réseaux, pouvoirs, oppositions, la compétition politique au Rwanda* (Paris 2003), 135-136; Prunier, *The Rwanda crisis*, 60-61; and Reyntjens, *Pouvoir*, 501-504.

²¹³ Vidal, 39.

²¹⁴ Erny, *Jeunesse d’hier au Rwanda: textes d’écoliers et d’étudiants recueillis entre 1974 et 1976: matériaux pour une psychologie* (Paris 2003), 156-165.

letters inviting [him] to leave the institution if [he] wanted to save [his] skin'. In the end, he explained, he 'could do nothing but flee'.²¹⁵

Following the demise of Kayibanda's regime few months later, a more rigorous implementation of what was presented as an 'equitable' quota system became one of the main priorities of the new government. The stated aim of this measure was to put an end to the persistent ethnic disequilibrium and favouritism in the education system and to promote the democratisation of the sector. More than in previous years, merit, which was determined by unpublished examination results, came to be strictly measured by ethnic group.²¹⁶ According to Mugesera, in 1962-63 Tutsi in secondary education represented 36% of all students; by 1973-1974, their proportion had been drastically reduced to a national average of 8%. Tutsi enrolments were particularly low in the almost exclusively Hutu provinces of Ruhengeri, Byumba and Gisenyi.²¹⁷ A testimony reported by Gourevitch additionally referred to a practice of 'reverse meritocracy', whereby Tutsi students 'with the lowest scores were favored over those [Tutsi students] who performed best'.²¹⁸ As suggested by African Rights, bribery was often the only avenue available to young Tutsi to access post-primary education.²¹⁹

The implementation of ethnic-based admission policies was facilitated and monitored through the institutionalisation of procedures and mechanisms that required students' compulsory ethnic identification. Numerous testimonies confirm that, during the first days of school, pupils were asked to identify themselves by their ethnic affiliation, for instance by raising their hands, by

²¹⁵ Ibid., 161, 163. See also, P. Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: stories from Rwanda* (New York 1998), 66-67.

²¹⁶ According to Hoben, in the determination of pupils' access to post-primary education 'entrance examination was only one of several screens and not necessarily the most important'. *School*, 106. This policy was part of the education reform of 1979. This was designed to 'ruralize, vocationalize, and democratize education', as well as to nationalise education by promoting the local language and culture. Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 90, and *Le défi*, 80-82, 164.

²¹⁷ Mugesera also reported low Tutsi enrolment rates at the tertiary level. In 1982-83, Tutsi students at the National University of Rwanda (NUR) amounted to only 6.6%. *Imibereho*. AS for the primary level, according to official statistics on school enrolments in 1989/1990, Hutu, Tutsi and Twa pupils accounted for 89.9%, 9.4% and 0.2%, respectively. Republic of Rwanda, MINEPRISEC, *Statistique de l'enseignement 1989/1990* (Kigali 1990), 63, in Obura, 44.

²¹⁸ Gourevitch, *We wish*, 66.

²¹⁹ African Rights, *The heart*, 71.

standing up, and by dividing themselves into groups. A primary school teacher interviewed by African Rights recounted how,

*'Before the genocide, each pupil's ethnic origin was recorded on his or her school registration form. At the beginning of each academic year, racist Hutu teachers used to call out the Tutsi students only, making the point that the rest of the class were Hutus. The Tutsis often felt bad about standing up because the rest of the class had a bad image of them.'*²²⁰

Inevitably, such practices had the effect of strengthening young people's awareness of their ethnic difference. According to various first-hand accounts, it was often in the classroom that young Rwandans were first confronted with questions of ethnic belonging, of which many had until then been unaware.

As mentioned in the previous section, during the 1990-1994 crisis, the issue of educational access was occasionally evoked by the Hutu extremist media in an effort to awaken and mobilise feelings of anger and frustration among the Hutu population. Time and again, extremist newspapers, spearheaded by *Kangura*, lamented the large representation of Tutsi in educational institutions.²²¹ This same extremist position was held by intellectuals, such as M. Balibutsa, Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ruhengeri. This Hutu academic vehemently defended the legitimacy of the quota system, which had been officially abolished by the new cabinet in the early 1990s.²²²

Since the early 1990s, a degree of change in both discourse and practice started to be introduced. Brought to a halt by the outbreak of the genocide in 1994, a process of radical change took off in the wake of this tragic event.

²²⁰ African Rights, *The heart*, 68. See also, Erny, *L'école*, 56-57; Gasanabo, 163-165; Rutayisire et al, 332; L. McLean-Hilker, 'Everyday ethnicities: identity and reconciliation among youth in postgenocide Rwanda,' Ph.D. thesis (Brighton: University of Sussex, 2009); Walker-Keleher. According to the testimony of a government minister, when he was a student, '[t]he teacher asked us [the class] to stand in two lines face to face. He asked if we looked the same. We laughed because we had the same life, traveled to the same school, wore the same clothes. The teacher told us we were not the same: he compared our heights and noses. Then our class was divided: long noses on one side, flat noses on the other. We had not been aware of our ethnic identity...but after this incident we no longer played together with banana leaf footballs.' M. Hodgkin, 'Reconciliation in Rwanda: education, history and the State,' *Journal of international affairs* 60(1) (2006) 201 [jia.sipa.columbia.edu/files/jia/199-210_hodgkin.pdf] (last accessed on 06-07-2011). Testimonies collected in informal conversations in the framework of the present study confirmed these experiences.

²²¹ *Kangura* n.6, n.8, n.13, n.26, n.29, n.33, n.40, *Kangura International* n.10, *Ikindi* n.22, *Zirikana* n.6. In Chrétien, *Rwanda*, 36, 108, 146-148, 151, 157, 233, 260, 325.

²²² *Ibid.*, 107, 335; and *Le défi*, 81, 334-335; Eltringham, 83, 192.

2.4 Ideology, historiography and formal education in post-genocide Rwanda

2.4.1 Ideology and historiography in post-genocide Rwanda

In the immediate aftermath of the genocide, the political leadership that came to power following the RPF's military victory took clear distance from the ethnicist discourse of the old regime. A new ideology was formulated, centred on the adage of 'unity and reconciliation'. This broke with a politics that had defined the nation in ethnic terms and that intended to shape and reinforce a Hutu consciousness. The incumbent government committed itself to surmounting ethnic divisions by outlawing references to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa categories. Its stated mission was to rebuild a 'new Rwanda' around an inclusive civic and national identity based on the concept of Rwandanness.

The post-war political juncture has been marked by a persistent ideological appeal to history. The change of regime has been accompanied by the construction and vigorous propagation of a new official historical narrative which is today presented as the only truthful account of the country's past. Largely unifying and nationalist, the current narrative starkly contrasts with the formerly official and now competing narrative held by Hutu extremists. A major interpretational shift has taken place whereby heroes have turned into villains and vice versa, and new meanings and moral connotations have been assigned to key historical events. Such a re-interpretation has concerned especially issues related to identity and the history of the conflict.

At the core of the new official discourse are an idealisation of the ancient time and a demonisation of the colonisation. Today, the country's pre-colonial history is

summoned to prove the primordial unity of the Rwandan nation rather than the primordial differences and antagonisms between Hutu and Tutsi. Instead of being depicted as a time of occupation and feudal oppression of the autochthonous Bantu Hutu majority by a ‘foreign’ Hamitic race of Tutsi invaders, the pre-colonial period is now extolled as a golden age of unity and harmony among people who considered themselves as belonging to a single Rwandan nation-state. This unity manifested itself in shared language, culture, clan relations, territory and feelings of loyalty to the king. According to this narrative, ethnicity and ethnic conflict did not exist in ancient Rwanda. Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, so the argument goes, were not distinct and antagonistic ethnic or racial groups as the colonisers and the previous regimes had wanted people to believe. They were instead flexible socio-economic and occupational identities of little salience, which were characterised by symbiotic relations. Whilst romanticising the ancient times, the official discourse emphasises the culpability of the colonisers in engendering conflict in Rwanda’s traditional society. The former colonial authorities are currently accused of having deliberately created division and tension through the introduction of ethnicist discourse and practices which proved fatal. In the words of President Kagame, ‘[t]he different sections of Rwandans, Bahutu, Batutsi and Batwa, are and were, until the colonial adventure, Banyarwanda – or Rwandan people.’²²³

Rwanda’s more recent past has also been re-assessed. A new interpretation has been advanced with regard to the 1959 events. Rather than a national triumph that had brought democracy and social justice, this watershed moment is now portrayed as a terrible national tragedy. Instigated and supported by the colonisers

²²³ Speech pronounced at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco on March 7, 2003. P. Kagame, ‘Beyond absolute terror: post-genocide reconstruction in Rwanda,’ U. Shankar Jha & S. Narayan Yadav, *Rwanda: towards reconciliation, good governance and development* (New Delhi 2003), 114. The government’s position was made clear at a 1996 conference that was held in Kigali to present an evaluation study on *The international response to conflict and genocide*. On this occasion, discussions largely focused on the manner in which Rwandan history was portrayed in the report. In his opening speech, former President Bizimungu condemned colonial distortions and their direct role in the genocide. He referred in particular to Tutsi and Hutu characterisations as ‘Hamite/Bantu, noble/lowly, invader/oppressed, cattle-keeper/cultivator, aristocrat-lord/peasant slave, intelligent-cunning/ simplistic-stupid’. Government officials subsequently criticised the report’s arguments on the pre-colonial existence of ethnic tensions, instead underscoring that divisions had resulted from the colonial crystallisation of socio-economic classes into ethnic groups through the introduction of ‘ethnic’ cards. United Nations, Office of the Resident Co-ordinator, *Rwanda. United Nations situation report* (Kigali 1996), 33-34 [repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/5319/2241.pdf?sequence=1] (last accessed on 29/08/2010).

who resented the Tutsi elites' demands for immediate independence, this turning point is currently described as marking the beginning of a history of Tutsi discrimination, oppression and persecution. Blame for the post-colonial violence is primarily placed on the 'political calculation and manipulation' by selfish, corrupt, despotic and racist regimes under foreign influence (e.g. of Belgium and France).²²⁴ As for the 1994 genocide, the official history rejects as false and outrageous the theory according to which the violence had been the result of a spontaneous outburst of popular rage following the RPF's 'war of aggression' and assassination of the President. Today, the massacres are depicted as the culmination of a long and zealously planned genocide against the Tutsi. According to the government rhetoric, during the 'Tutsi genocide' over one million innocent and defenceless civilians were killed by countless merciless *génocidaires* who had been brainwashed by hate-mongering propaganda. President Kagame directly implicated the former colonial power and the local Hutu elites in the post-colonial violence. In 2003, he declared that, '[o]nce terror and mass murder were introduced in 1959 under the auspices of the Belgian Administration, subsequent regimes tried genocide in their exercise of power. The period 1959-1994 is indeed a history of genocide in slow motion.'²²⁵ As he further explained, the '[g]enocide started in 1959, then 1963, 1966, 1967, 1973, 1993, 1994.'²²⁶ In assigning responsibility for the tragic events, the official discourse denounces the failure of the international community to intervene and end the violence. Conversely, it praises the RPF for its critical role in ensuring a return to peace and normalcy. The official narrative no longer depicts the RPF as an aggressor and a murdering force

²²⁴ S. Buckley-Zistel, 'Nation, narration, unification? The politics of history teaching after the Rwandan genocide,' *Journal of genocide research* 11(1) (2009) 40.

²²⁵ Kagame, 'Beyond absolute terror'. In Kagame's words, '[t]he 1994 genocide was the result of a 100-year betrayal by the state, failure in the colonial and post-colonial governments' mandate to protect and defend all citizens. It is, therefore, a failure that has both external and local dimensions. The external policies relate to the German and Belgian colonial policies that, like elsewhere in Africa, created ethnic, tribal or clan divisions as an instrument of colonial rule. The local factors, on the other hand, became predominant after independence in 1962 when the local elite became tools of continuing colonial type of policies, this time for their own benefit. Once terror and mass murder were introduced in 1959 under the auspices of the Belgian Administration, subsequent regimes tried genocide in their exercise of power.' Qtd. in B. Oomen, 'Donor-driven justice and its discontents: the case of Rwanda,' *Development and change* 36(5) (2005) 901 [www.ucr.nl/about-ucr/Faculty-and-Staff/Social-Science/Documents/Barbara%20Oomen/001_Oomen%202005%20Donor.pdf] (last accessed on 03/06/2010).

²²⁶ Kagame, qtd. in R. Jere-Malanda, 'Interview with Paul Kagame,' *New African magazine* (July 2000), cited in Eltringham, *Accounting for horror*, 36, and in Eltringham, 'Debating the Rwandan genocide,' P. Kaarsholm (ed.), *Violence, political culture and development in Africa* (Oxford 2006), 79.

that had committed abominable crimes against innocent Hutu, including genocide.²²⁷ This movement is now exalted for having heroically fought and defeated the murderous Hutu regime through a righteous ‘liberation war’. The RPF is acclaimed for having successfully liberated the country by putting an end to the Tutsi genocide and to the dictatorship of the former regime. The incumbent leadership is also lauded for its enormous achievements in rebuilding the country and the nation. Claiming to have broken with a longstanding history of ‘bad leadership’, the new rulers have widely advertised their successful attempts to promote justice, unity and reconciliation, good governance and democracy, and progress and development, in the interest and to the benefit of all Rwandans.

Today, this historical account dominates the public domain. Various channels have been employed by the government to propagate its official narrative.²²⁸ Among them are public speeches, government documents,²²⁹ the media, as well as transitional justice mechanisms (e.g. memorialisation practices and trials), and educational structures. In addition to schools, the educational structures that have been employed by the State for this purpose include the so-called *Ingando*, or ‘solidarity camps’. Run by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), this notable tool of propagation of the government’s discourse has provided for the ‘re-education’ of large sections of the Rwandan society. These have included Hutu ex-combatants, returning refugees, released prisoners, community leaders, and students.²³⁰

²²⁷ Chrétien, *Rwanda*, and, *Le défi*.

²²⁸ Buckley-Zistel, ‘Nation’; Freedman et al., ‘Teaching History after identity-based conflicts: the Rwanda experience,’ *Comparative education review* 52(4) (2008) 663-690, and ‘Teaching history in post-genocide Rwanda,’ Straus & Waldorf (eds.), *Remaking Rwanda*, 297-315.

²²⁹ See, for instance, Republic of Rwanda, *The unity of Rwandans: before the colonial period and under colonial rule; under the First Republic* (Kigali: Office of the President of the Republic 1996); and A. Shyaka, ‘La refondation de l’identité nationale inclusive et réconciliatrice – la rwandanité – est un excellent vecteur de la citoyenneté effective,’ *Le conflit rwandais. Origines, développement et stratégies de sortie* (Kigali: NURC 2004), 43 [www.grandslacs.net/doc/3834.pdf] (last accessed on 16/05/2009). The official narrative is also reflected in a number of other domestic publications, such as *Cahiers lumières et société*.

²³⁰ *Ingando* has been the most visible of NURC’s civic education programmes. See, C. Mgbako, ‘Ingando solidarity camps: reconciliation and political indoctrination in post-genocide Rwanda,’ *Harvard human rights law journal* 18 (2005) 201-224; Penal Reform International, *From camp to hill: the reintegration of released prisoners* (Kigali 2004) [www.penalreform.org/research-on-gacaca-report-vi-from-camp-to-hill-thereintegration-of-released-pris.html] (last accessed on 15-03-2009); J. Kearney, ‘A unified Rwanda? Ethnicity, history and reconciliation in the Ingando Peace and Solidarity Camp,’ J. Paulson (ed.), *Education and reconciliation: exploring conflict and post-conflict situations* (London 2011), 151-177; S.M. Thomson, ‘Re-education for reconciliation: participant observations on the Ingando camps,’ S. Straus & L. Waldorf (eds.), *Remaking Rwanda*, 331-339. On NURC’s work, see Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR),

The government's intensive educational efforts appear to have resulted in a generalised acceptance of the new official discourse as the true history of Rwanda.²³¹ The genuineness of this seemingly widespread endorsement and appropriation of the state narrative by the Rwandan population has however been questioned by several observers on account of the top-down imposition of this narrative and of a strictly enforced 'censorship of alternative accounts'.²³² Existing studies have revealed a situation whereby, although echoed in the public sphere, the regime's 'definite ideas about Rwandan history...are not in harmony with those held by many Rwandans'.²³³ Reportedly, alternative versions have continued to circulate more or less clandestinely within Rwanda, and more freely abroad. According to the arguments raised by several observers, under the surface, perceptions of the 'truth' in post-genocide Rwanda largely differ between Hutu and Tutsi, as well as among survivors, perpetrators, and returnees.²³⁴

The official account of the country's past not only seems to clash with the views held by many Rwandans; it also appears to partly contradict available evidence. Contemporary scholarship on Rwanda supports the government's narrative to some degree as it rejects some of the arguments reproduced in colonial and pre-genocide narratives. At the same time, scholarship largely questions, criticizes, and discredits the currently hegemonic discourse. In a particularly disapproving tone, René Lemarchand recently contended that the Rwandan government

Evaluation et études d'impact de la Commission Nationale pour l'Unité et la Reconciliation (CNUR) (Kigali 2005), 7-8. See also, NURC, *The road towards unity and reconciliation. Ten years after (1994-2004)* (Kigali 2004), 12; and Buckley-Zistel, 'Dividing and uniting. The use of "citizenship" discourses in conflict and reconciliation in Rwanda,' *Global society* 20(1) (2006) 101-113.

²³¹ See for instance, the results of the 'National History Essay, Poetry and Song Writing Competition' that was organised by the NGO Never Again International in Rwanda in 2004. In this contest, 3,000 secondary and tertiary school students were asked to elaborate on the following question: "Based on the history of Rwanda, what can we the youth do so that genocide should never happen again?". Never Again International, 'Outcomes of the youth competition organised by Never Again in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide' (Kigali 2004) [www.neveragaininternational.org/documents/Eassys.pdf] (last accessed on 08/07/2010).

²³² S. Buckley-Zistel, 'Nation,' 31.

²³³ Freedman et al., 'Teaching,' 665.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*; Eltringham; T. Longman & T. Rutagengwa, 'Memory, identity, and community in Rwanda,' Stover & Weinstein (ed.), *My neighbor, my enemy*, 162-182; McLean-Hilker, 'Young Rwandans' narratives of the past (and present),' Straus & Waldorf, *Remaking*, 316-330; C. Newbury & D. Newbury, 'A Catholic mass in Kigali: contested views of the Genocide and ethnicity in Rwanda,' *Canadian journal of African studies* (33)(203) (1999) 292-328; Pottier, *Re-imagining*; Straus, *The order*. Freedman et al., for instance, reported their finding of inconsistencies between the official narrative and beliefs expressed by several educational stakeholders, especially on issues of ethnicity. The authors reported a belief among Hutu interviewees in the pre-colonial existence of ethnicity. 'Teaching', 676-677.

‘continue to manipulate the historical record for the sake of an official memory’²³⁵ – a memory which he described as ‘thwarted’, ‘manipulated,’ and ‘enforced’.²³⁶ Similarly, Johan Pottier and Filip Reyntjens spoke of a ‘disinformation’ campaign orchestrated by the government for the purpose of maintaining itself in power.²³⁷

Accusations of historical manipulation and falsification that have been levelled against the current government have concerned, first of all, its representation of Rwanda’s pre-colonial and colonial history. As mentioned in the historical overview at the beginning of this chapter, scholars today have to a large extent debunked old theories on origins and migration. They have furthermore confirmed the critical role of the colonisation in amplifying and racialising divisions in Rwandan society. Doubts, however, have been raised about the scientific accuracy of the government’s characterisation of pre-colonial Rwanda as a nation-state with an established national consciousness and of colonisation as the source of all societal tensions. In various works, the purported image of a condition of ancient unity disrupted by external forces has been described as a ‘myth’ and a ‘nostalgic utopia’.²³⁸ Recent scholarly findings have for instance pointed to the government’s disregard of the pre-colonial existence of regional differences, of entrenched Hutu-Tutsi divisions, as well as of factional rivalry, violence, exploitation and oppression, especially under Rwabugiri’s reign. Also, research has revealed a neglect of the crucial role of complicit local elites, including Tutsi chiefs, in implementing colonial exploitative practices for their own advantage.

Criticism has been especially harsh towards the government’s account of the more recent violent past. The official discourse has been condemned for promoting a Manichean representation of the war and of the genocide which generalises guilt and victimhood along ethnic lines.²³⁹ In order to establish a clear-cut distinction

²³⁵ Lemarchand, *The dynamics*, 105.

²³⁶ Lemarchand, ‘Genocide, memory and ethnic reconciliation in Rwanda,’ *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 2006-2007* (Paris/Antwerp 2007), 21-30, adopting concepts developed by Ricœur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris 2000).

²³⁷ See in particular Pottier’s chapter ‘For beginners, by beginners: knowledge construction under the Rwandese Patriotic Front,’ 109-129; and Reyntjens, *The Great African War: Congo and regional geopolitics, 1996-2006* (Cambridge 2009).

²³⁸ Vansina, *Antecedents*, 199.

²³⁹ According to Brauman et al, ‘every Hutu is suspect since his ethnic community is responsible for the genocide’, and ‘only the Tutsi qualify as victims’. R. Brauman, S. Smith, & C. Vidal, ‘Politique de terreur et

between Hutu perpetrators and Tutsi victims, the government has reportedly obscured the suffering of the former and the crimes of the latter.²⁴⁰ Critics have denounced a situation whereby the Tutsi are currently recognised as the only genocide victims. This one-sided acknowledgment of suffering appears manifest in the official replacement of the more generic expressions of ‘Rwandan genocide’ and ‘genocide and massacres’ with the more specific term of ‘genocide against the Tutsi’. Observers have furthermore contested the government’s theory about a longstanding existence of a Tutsi extermination plan,²⁴¹ as well as its official estimates of genocide victims and perpetrators. Genocide victims are widely reported to have been circa 800,000 as opposed to over one million,²⁴² perpetrators are estimated in the hundreds of thousands rather than in the millions as suggested by several authorities.²⁴³ While underscoring Hutu massive participation in the violence, the official narrative has appeared remarkably silent with regard to Hutu victims and survivors who suffered at the hands of Hutu

privilège d’impunité au Rwanda,’ *Esprit* (2000) 156. Similarly, Lemarchand and Niwese spoke of an assumption according to which ‘only Hutu have blood on their hands, and only Tutsi blood.’ R. Lemarchand & M. Niwese, ‘Mass murder, the politics of memory and post-genocide reconstruction: the cases of Rwanda and Burundi,’ B. Pouligny, S. Chesterman & A. Schnabel (eds.), *After mass crime: rebuilding states and communities* (New York 2007), 178.

²⁴⁰ Brauman et al., ‘Politique’; J. Burnet, ‘Whose genocide? Whose truth? Representations of victim and perpetrator in Rwanda,’ A. Hinton & K.L. O’Neill (eds.), *Genocide: truth, memory, and representation* (Durham 2009), 80-110, and *Genocide lives in us: amplified silence and the politics of memory in Rwanda*. Dissertation. University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill 2005); Lemarchand, ‘Coming to terms with the past: the politics of memory in post-genocide Rwanda,’ *L’observatoire de l’Afrique Centrale* (July 23, 2000); Longman, ‘Memory, justice, and power in post-genocide Rwanda,’ Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 2, 2006; Pottier, ‘Escape from genocide: the politics of identity in Rwanda’s massacres,’ V. Broch-Due (ed.), *Violence and belonging: the quest for identity in post-colonial Africa* (New York 2005), 195-213.

²⁴¹ See, for instance, A. Guichaoua, *Rwanda: de la guerre au génocide: Les politiques criminelles au Rwanda (1990–1994)* (Paris 2010). While the scholar recognised the occurrence of anti-Tutsi speeches and actions as early as 1959, he argued that the genocide was effectively organised and set in motion by the interim government only after Habyarimana’s assassination. Bitterly contested by the current government, this argument has been denounced as ‘negationist’. See also J.K. Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-Etat à l’Etat garnison* (Paris 2002).

²⁴² Compare, on the one hand, Republic of Rwanda, Ministry for Local Government, Department for Information and Social Affairs, *The counting of the genocide victims, Final report* (Kigali 2002), and E. Kagire, ‘World figures to light candles during 15th genocide commemoration,’ *The new times* (2009); and, on the other, Lemarchand, ‘Rwanda: the rationality of genocide,’ *Issue: a journal of opinion* 23 (1995) 8-11, and Reyntjens, ‘Estimation du nombre de personnes tuées au Rwanda en 1994,’ S. Marysse and F. Reyntjens (eds.), *L’Afrique des grands lacs Annuaire 1996–1997* (Paris 1997), 179–86. While the government estimated 1,074,017 victims, of whom 94% Tutsi, according to Reyntjens, nearly half of the number of victims suggested by the government were probably Hutu victims of RPF crimes. 182. See also P. Péan’s revisionist theory, according to which Tutsi victims amounted to ‘only’ 280,000 and Hutu victims to ‘over one million’ since 1990s. P. Péan, *Noires fureurs, blancs menteurs: Rwanda 1990-1994* (Paris 2005), 177. He also depicted the Tutsi as ‘one of the most deceitful races under the sun’. *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁴³ The number of Hutu perpetrators was estimated by some government officials to amount to 3 million. The often cited figures suggested by Straus instead estimated genocide perpetrators around 175,000-215,000. Of these, no more than 10% were believed to account for most of the killings. Straus, ‘How many perpetrators were there in the Rwandan genocide? An estimate,’ *Journal of genocide research* 6(1) (2004) 94.

extremists and of Tutsi individuals. In this sense, Lemarchand spoke of a ‘hijacking’ and ‘assassination of Hutu memory’, purposely ‘airbrushed out of history’.²⁴⁴ Numerous foreign observers have questioned especially the virtuous and immaculate official portrayal of the RPF. On the one hand, the state narrative exalts the RPF as a liberator and a saviour, thereby playing on a ‘genocide credit’ on which it bases its legitimacy.²⁴⁵ On the other, the state rhetoric seems to absolve the RPF from all responsibility for the violence. According to critics, the official storyline obscures and dismisses accounts on the fate of the tens of thousands of innocent Hutu who were reportedly massacred by RPF soldiers both during and after the genocide. Most notably, the RPF has been implicated in human rights abuses committed during military operations in Rwanda (e.g. in Kibeho in 1995, and in the North in 1997),²⁴⁶ as well as in neighbouring DRC (e.g. during the First Congo War in 1996-1997).²⁴⁷ In Congo, in particular, its acts against Rwandan Hutu refugees have often been characterised as genocidal. Despite the considerable evidence brought to support these allegations, the state rhetoric has utterly denied the systematic and widespread nature of the alleged crimes. At best, the dominant discourse in Rwanda has justified the RPF actions in the name of national security in a context in which, according to Lemarchand, its (Hutu) victims have been ‘conveniently lumped together as “genocidaires”’.²⁴⁸ Insofar as an acknowledgment of RPF victims has been

²⁴⁴ Lemarchand, ‘Genocide, memory and ethnic reconciliation,’ 21.

²⁴⁵ Reyntjens, ‘Rwanda, ten years on: from genocide to dictatorship,’ *African affairs* 103(411) (2004) 177. See also, Lemarchand, *The dynamics*; and Vidal, ‘Les commémorations du génocide au Rwanda,’ *Les temps modernes* 613 (2001) 1-46.

²⁴⁶ Several reports claimed the death of 5,000 innocent Hutu in the 1995 operation that closed the Kibeho IDP camp, as opposed to the regime’s figure of 300. Evidence has also suggested the death of at least 16,000 civilians in operations that were launched in Northern Rwanda in 1997 with the aim of responding to cross-border attacks by DRC-based Hutu rebels. See Lemarchand, *The dynamics*, 73; Prunier, *Africa’s world war* (Oxford 2009), 37-42; Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 175-176; Vidal, ‘Les humanitaires, témoins pour l’Histoire,’ *Les temps modernes* 627 (2004) 92-108; Des Forges, 726-729. Des Forges mentioned the UN-commissioned Gersony Report, according to which tens of thousands of Hutu were massacred by the RPA in Rwanda in only a few months in 1994.

²⁴⁷ These killings, which are estimated to have cost 200,000 lives, were perpetrated in the framework of military operations which were aimed at dismantling Rwandan refugee camps that were functioning as training camps and arrear bases for insurgent attacks by *genocidaires*. See in particular, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003* (New York: UNOHCHR August 2010) [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ca99bc22.html] (last accessed on 07/10/2010); and Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 80-102. The Rwandan army’s prolonged presence in the DRC has additionally been denounced as largely having economic and expansionist purposes. See also Lemarchand, *The dynamics*, 17-19.

²⁴⁸ Lemarchand, ‘The politics,’ 6.

pronounced, reported excess deaths have been typically explained away by describing them as a regrettable but inevitable side-effect of a righteous struggle against the *génocidaires*, or, alternatively, as the result of the deeds of a handful of renegade individuals who acted in violation of RPF policies, for which they had been punished. The RPF virtuous self-portrayal has been additionally blemished by accusations of its shared responsibility for the genocide. According to its fiercest critics, the RPF struggle was a selfish and irresponsible act which was aimed at gaining power at all costs and which eventually played a crucial role in creating the conditions conducive to mass violence. Much of the blame for the genocide has been apportioned to the RPF's violent insurgency and to its alleged shooting down of President Habyarimana's plane. Such acts are deemed to have inevitably sparked anti-Tutsi sentiments and violence.²⁴⁹ This view has been expressed, among others, by Lemarchand. In the scholar's understanding, today there is a need to recognize that 'Hutu and Tutsi were victims of a calamity for which responsibility is shared by elements of both communities.'²⁵⁰

With regard to the present time, the government's plea for a return to a primordial de-ethnicised condition has received mixed reactions.²⁵¹ Commended by some as a strategy to overcome ethnic divisions and to promote peaceful co-existence, the government's unitarist discourse and identity politics have been denounced by others as being both self-serving and dangerous. The so-called policy of 'enforced ethnic amnesia',²⁵² namely the rejection of an apparently still salient form of

²⁴⁹ A.J. Kuperman, 'Provoking genocide: a revised history of the Rwanda Patriotic Front,' *Journal of genocide research* 6(1) (2004) 79; Prunier, *Africa*, 15; Reyntjens, *Trois jours qui ont fait basculer l'histoire* (Paris 1995) ; A.J. Ruzibiza, *Rwanda. L'histoire secrète* (Paris 2005), 10. In 2006, President Kagame was accused by the French magistrate J.-L. Bruguière of having orchestrated Habyarimana's assassination. A recent French investigation dismissed these charges. 'Paul Kagame allies "did not shoot down plane" that sparked Rwanda genocide,' *The telegraph* (10/01/2012) [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/rwanda/9006201/Paul-Kagame-allies-did-not-shoot-down-plane-that-sparked-Rwanda-genocide.html] (last accessed on 11/01/2012). See also, Lemarchand, 'Genocide, memory and ethnic reconciliation,' 23, and 'The politics,' 4-5.

²⁵⁰ Lemarchand, 'The politics,' 5.

²⁵¹ Buckley-Zistel, 'Nation,' 48. Buckley-Zistel, 'Transitional justice, national memory and history teaching in Rwanda,' ECAS, Uppsala, 2011, 12. In a different article, the scholar commented that, while the country has often been depicted by observers as a time-bomb threatened by simmering tensions, '[p]retending peace is a common, and widely accepted, practice in Rwanda'. Buckley-Zistel, 'Remembering to forget: chosen amnesia as a strategy for local coexistence in post-genocide Rwanda,' *Africa* 76(2) (2006) 145.

²⁵² Lemarchand, 'The politics,' 8.

identity among many Rwandans,²⁵³ has been viewed as a scheme to conceal the current political and military supremacy of a minority of Tutsi returnees from Uganda.²⁵⁴ Also, critics consider this policy to be an obstacle to genuine reconciliation. As commented by Lemarchand,

*'The imposition of an official memory, purged of ethnic references, is not just a convenient ploy to mask the brutal realities of ethnic discrimination. It institutionalizes a mode of thought control profoundly antithetical to any kind of inter-ethnic dialogue aimed at recognition and forgiveness. This is hardly the way to bring Hutu and Tutsi closer together in a common understanding of their tragic past.'*²⁵⁵

In discussions on the theme of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda, numerous observers have pointed to the negative effects of an official discourse which has been reproduced and institutionalised through unequal and politicised transitional justice mechanisms. As will be shown in the next paragraphs, official memorialisation practices and trials that were set up to deal with the violent past and to heal the nation are widely believed to have hindered the reconciliation process. By focusing on Tutsi genocide victims while being oblivious of Hutu victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity, such practices reportedly deepened ethnic polarisation, thereby countering the supposedly cohesive function of the regime's unification discourse and policies.

²⁵³ See, e.g., Burekley-Zistel, 'Nation,' 47, and 'Remembering,' 131. During a conference attended in Kigali by the author of this dissertation on 24/07/08, interesting discussions took place on various issues, including ethnicity. On this occasion, a Tutsi genocide survivor stated that, 'if you don't talk about ethnicity, because of which people have been killed, and which is consequently 'viscerally experienced', then you took fundamental identities away... it takes time to digest, it takes time to say one is simply Rwandan. As a Tutsi survivor, I believe in it, but it takes time'. In response, Senator Mugesera declared, 'Why do people talk about ethnicity? Ethnicity was used to get power, and it should be devalued. There is nobody proud of being a Tutsi survivor.'

²⁵⁴ M. Dorsey, 'Violence and power-building in post-genocide Rwanda,' R. Doom & J. Gorus (eds.), *Politics of identity and economies of conflict in the Great Lakes Region* (Brussels 2000), 311-348; International Crisis Group, *Rwanda at the end of the transition: a necessary political liberalisation* (Nairobi/Brussels 2002); Lemarchand & Niwese, 'Mass murder', and Lemarchand, 'The politics of memory in post-genocide Rwanda,' P. Clark & Z. Kaufman (eds.), *After genocide: transitional justice, post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation in Rwanda and beyond* (Oxford 2007), 65-76; Reyntjens, 'Rwanda, ten years on'. Also, according to Buckley-Zistel, '[i]n contrast to the previous Hutu-dominated regimes, which assimilated ethnic and political majority and excluded the Tutsi, the RPF-dominated regime founds its legitimacy on an anti-ethnic project of national restoration and a radically transformed founding discourse which only works to obscure the predominance of Tutsi in all domains of society.' 'Nation,' 47.

²⁵⁵ Lemarchand, 'Genocide, memory and ethnic reconciliation,' 30.

2.4.2 The institutionalisation of the official discourse through transitional justice processes and mechanisms: memorialisation and trials

2.4.2.1 Memorialisation

In Rwanda, the genocide has been assigned a central place in the new official historical narrative. As Lisa Moore suggested, today this tragic event functions ‘as the starting point and culmination of Rwanda’s history’.²⁵⁶ Its memory, as zealously shaped by the government, is omnipresent. Since the end of the genocide, pervasive memorialisation practices, including annual commemorations, frequent solemn reburial ceremonies, and ubiquitous memorial sites, have imposed a grip on a past which the current government has been eager to recount.²⁵⁷ Evidence seems to suggest that such mechanisms have assumed an important pedagogical function in Rwandan society by conveying and consolidating a definite memory of this tragedy.

Through their numbers and specific design, Rwanda’s memorial sites in particular demonstrate the government’s willingness to keep the memory of the genocide alive. In addition to ‘crosses, mass graves and memorial gardens’,²⁵⁸ several memorials, such as the exceptionally graphic Murambi Genocide Memorial Centre, consist of ravaged and blood-stained buildings in which victims’ unburied or exhumed remains are publicly displayed.²⁵⁹ By favouring what Vidal described as a ‘*voyeurisme du cadavre*’,²⁶⁰ Rwanda’s crude memorial sites seem to support

²⁵⁶ L.M. Moore, ‘(Re)covering the past, remembering trauma: the politics of commemoration at sites of atrocity,’ *Journal of public and international affairs* 20 (Spring 2009), 55 [www.princeton.edu/jpia/past-issues-1/2009/3.pdf] (last accessed on 20/10/2011). See also, Longman, ‘Memory, justice, and power,’ 2.

²⁵⁷ Commemorations are held each year during the official mourning period from April 7 to July 4. They are organised by the government in collaboration with the genocide survivors’ association IBUKA (literally ‘remember’). For an overview and description of memorial sites in Rwanda, see genocidememorials.cga.harvard.edu, chs.univ-paris1.fr/genocides_et_politiques_memorielles, www.museum.gov.rw, and www.kigalimemorialcentre.org.

²⁵⁸ K. Doughty, ‘Memorials, human remains and controversy in post-genocide Rwanda,’ *Anthropology news* [www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2011/08/31/memorials-human-remains-and-controversy-in-post-genocide-rwanda] (last accessed on 12/10/2011).

²⁵⁹ As reported by Moore, at Murambi, ‘the bodies of hundreds of victims have been preserved in lime powder so that they still depict their original positions of violation from when they were massacred.’ 55.

²⁶⁰ Vidal, ‘La commémoration du génocide au Rwanda. Violence symbolique, mémorisation forcée et histoire officielle,’ *Cahiers d’études africaines* 175 (2004) 560 [etudesafriques.revues.org/4737] (last accessed on 03/08/2011). Here, the author questioned the impact of government’s crude memorialisation practices on reconciliation.

the government's discourse on the war and genocide. In line with the narrative that has been propagated by the State, these sites appear as strong physical reminders of the enormous human loss and of the victims' innocence and excruciating agony, of the wickedness of the perpetrators, of the international letdown and complicity,²⁶¹ and of the RPF's heroism.

Whereas most memorials in Rwanda are largely implicit in conveying this narrative, its most explicit formulation can be found at the Kigali Memorial Centre at Gisozi.²⁶² Inaugurated on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the genocide, this memorial starkly contrasts with other sites, 'which are raw, unmediated and intended for a local audience'.²⁶³ The site, which houses the remains of over 250,000 genocide victims, includes a permanent multimedia exhibition, a documentation centre as well as an education centre. According to the centre's website, its education team has been 'working with schools and the Ministry of Education to help utilise the Kigali Memorial Centre as a resource for the new national curriculum, examining lessons from the genocide, human rights and responsibilities, and supporting "civic education"'.²⁶⁴ On account of its explicit educational function, A. Sodaro described it as 'one of the latest examples of what has become an international trend in commemorating genocide and atrocity: the memorial museum'. This mechanism, according to Sodaro, 'seeks to not only remember, preserve, and document the past, but also to educate future generations to prevent genocide and human rights abuses and create a more democratic future'.²⁶⁵ The memorial's pedagogic function is exercised especially by its permanent exhibition. Introduced by a section on other genocide cases worldwide, the exhibit recounts the history of Rwanda following a temporal

²⁶¹ Moore reported that, 'at the Murambi Technical School Memorial, signposts located around the periphery of the memorial indicate where the French "Operation Turquoise" troops played volleyball with the *Interahamwe* militias while the corpses were still freshly massacred.' 55.

²⁶² See www.kigalimemorialcentre.org (last accessed on 21/10/2011).

²⁶³ A. Sodaro, 'Remembering for the future? Genocide remembrance at the Kigali Memorial,' *Irmgard Coninx Stiftung transnational roundtables on memory politics* (Berlin 2009).

²⁶⁴ The website further explains that, '[s]urvivors of the genocide are trained as guides at the Centre and, together with the professional education staff, will play an important role in telling the story, in conjunction with the aims of the national curriculum.' In its educational task, staff at the memorial also recognise that, '[o]ne key challenge of the educational methodology is to adopt an approach that, while truthful and accurate, does not accuse or alienate a large proportion of the students.' [www.kigalimemorialcentre.org/old/education/index.html] (last accessed on 21/10/2011).

²⁶⁵ Sodaro, 'Remembering,' 2.

repartition into a ‘Before’ (‘Path to genocide’), a ‘During’ (‘The 100 day Genocide’), and an ‘After’ (‘The aftermath’).²⁶⁶ Rwanda’s history as narrated at Gisozi strikingly reflects the content of the official discourse. With regard to the pre-genocide period, a strong emphasis is placed on educating the public about the root causes of the genocide, namely the colonial legacy and the post-colonial propaganda.²⁶⁷ As for the genocide itself, its horrors are vividly communicated through various avenues, including panels, recorded testimonies, photographs, video images, displays of weaponry and victims’ clothing. A particularly emotional component of the exhibit is dedicated to the memory of children victims of the genocide.²⁶⁸ In describing the dynamics of the genocide, the memorial employs a rather Manichean tone. At Gisozi, Rwanda in 1994 is portrayed as having ‘turned into a nation of brutal, sadistic, merciless killers, and of innocent victims – overnight’.²⁶⁹ In this simplistic portrayal of the events, no distinction is made, for instance, between zealous *génocidaires*, motivated by hatred, ambition or greed; those who killed under duress or driven by fear; ‘heroes’ who actively resisted extremism and risked their lives to save their Tutsi

²⁶⁶ The website presents the history of Rwanda in eleven sections, namely: Roots (Colonial time); Church, politics and race; Political landscapes (Path to a ‘Final Solution’); RPF invasion; Peace process; Propaganda; Eve of genocide (Something big); The genocide (‘Apocalypse’); The world watches (International response); Post-genocide justice; and (Long-term) Consequences. [www.kigalimemorialcentre.org/old/genocide/rwanda.html].

²⁶⁷ The narrative propagated by the Kigali Memorial Centre strongly emphasises the determinant role played by the colonisers and the Church in the conflict and violence in Rwanda. It thereby portrays the Rwandan people as a whole as a victimised nation at the hands of foreign actors. In its words, ‘[w]e had lived in peace for many centuries, but now [with the arrival of the colonisers] the divide between us had begun ...’ According to this narrative, besides racializing and politicizing identities, the Belgians had ‘encouraged the drafting in 1957 of the Hutu Manifesto’. Also, in its understanding, ‘[o]ver 700,000 Tutsis were exiled from our country between 1959-1973 as a result of the ethnic cleansing encouraged by the Belgian colonialists.’ With regard to the ‘civil war’, the narrative explains that the RPF invaded Rwanda after ‘many peaceful efforts’ to convince the old regime to welcome these refugees back into their country. According to the website, the RPF attacked Rwanda ‘to reclaim a homeland, and to force the government of President Juvenal Habyarimana into a power-sharing agreement’. However, they had been contained due to foreign, and in particular French, assistance to the FAR. As for the genocide, although without explicitly blaming Habyarimana’s assassination on Hutu extremist elements, the website seems to allude to this conclusion by reporting *Kangura’s* predictions of this event prior to its occurrence, as well as by underscoring the immediacy of the setting up of roadblocks and of the killings. It additionally states that, ‘[t]here was no ethnic war. There was civil war. But the genocide happened and it was something different.’ Space is also dedicated to describing the planned, systematic, and brutal nature of the genocidal violence of 1994, as well as to mentioning the inadequacy of the international response.

²⁶⁸ See also, Sodaro, ‘Politics of the past: remembering the Rwandan genocide at the Kigali Memorial Center,’ E. Lehrer, C.E. Milton & M. Eileen Patterson (eds.), *Curating difficult knowledge: violent pasts in public places* (New York 2011), 72-90.

²⁶⁹ www.kigalimemorialcentre.org/old/genocide/rwanda/thegenocide.html.

neighbours; and innocent civilians who were forced into exile and who witnessed the violence committed by the advancing rebel army.²⁷⁰

In a context in which Rwandan society has been neatly separated into ‘merciless killers’ and ‘innocent victims’, the official discourse and the practice of national mourning seem to have attributed these two opposite roles to Hutu and Tutsi respectively. First of all, any ambiguity with regard to the identity of the victims of the 1994 massacres was cleared by replacing the expressions ‘Rwandan genocide’ and ‘genocide and massacres’ with the expression ‘genocide against the Tutsi’.²⁷¹ Consistently, as reported by Moore, ‘the signs marking national memorials are being rewritten from *Le génocide* to read *Le génocide de Tutsi*.’²⁷² Secondly, while emphasising the Tutsi identity of the genocide victims, Rwanda’s national mourning activities and the official memory they seek to promote have shown a blatant neglect of the suffering of the Hutu victims of this tragedy.²⁷³ Three groups of Hutu victims in particular seem to have been largely forgotten and unfairly represented in the narrative that is produced through official memorialisation practices. The first group consists of those Hutu who actively opposed the genocide. With respect to this group, the dominant narrative has been criticised for mentioning only *en passant* the killing of so-called ‘moderate Hutu’ or ‘Hutu of the opposition’ during the genocide.²⁷⁴ The official discourse has been additionally blamed for being markedly silent with regard to reported cases of ordinary Hutu who risked or lost their lives as they resisted genocidal orders and sought to protect and save fellow Rwandans.²⁷⁵ A handful of Hutu have

²⁷⁰ See, Lemarchand, ‘Genocide’, 29; and ‘The politics,’ 3.

²⁷¹ These terms are respectively translated in Kinyarwanda as ‘*itsembabwoko n’itsembatsemba*’ and ‘*jenoside yakorewe aba Tutsi*’. Burnet, ‘(In)Justice: truth, reconciliation, and revenge in Rwanda’s *Gacaca*,’ A Hinton (ed.), *Transitional justice: global mechanisms and local realities after genocide and mass violence* (New Brunswick 2010), 103.

²⁷² Moore, 55.

²⁷³ As denounced by Brauman et al. in a 2001 article on genocide commemorations in Rwanda, ‘[t]he official history of genocide makes no reference to Hutu victims or Hutu survivors, or those who saved Tutsi lives at their own peril.’ 155. See also, Vidal, ‘La commémoration’. According to the author, official ceremonies have been characterised by a violent climate marked by accusations leveled by Tutsi survivors against Hutu individuals or by global stigmatisations of an entire ‘ethnic’ group.

²⁷⁴ This expression has been criticised by several authors. Eltringham, for instance, underscored the limitations of this term, which ‘fails to communicate the pro-active resistance these actors demonstrated.’ 97.

²⁷⁵ V. Jefremovas, ‘Acts of human kindness: Tutsi, Hutu, and the Genocide,’ *Issue: a journal of opinion* 23 (1995) 28-31; Longman, ‘Genocide and socio-political change: massacres in two Rwandan villages,’ *Issue: a journal of opinion* 23 (1995) 18-21; D. Newbury, ‘Understanding genocide,’ *African studies review* 41 (1998) 80-82.

nonetheless been officially, although controversially, recognised as heroes, most notably during a celebration at the Kigali Genocide Memorial on July 18, 2004. The second group includes innocent Hutu who were caught up in the genocidal violence, many of whom were killed or forced to a life of extreme hardship in exile. The third and last category consists of the numerous innocent Hutu victims who were reportedly massacred both during and after the war and the genocide, either in individual revenge killings or systematically by RPF troops.

According to critics, the selective official memory of the genocide and the imposed amnesia and lack of mourning with regard to the Hutu victims of Rwanda's tragic recent history have hindered the goals of national unity and reconciliation. The state narrative is believed to have led to the construction of two separate ethnic memories as a result of a discourse that seems to have homogenised disparate experiences of the genocide along ethnic lines. By presenting Rwanda's post-colonial history as a history of continuous Tutsi persecution from 1959 until 1994, a shared status of victimhood has been crafted among the Tutsi community, including both genocide survivors and returnees. At the same time, by denying due recognition to the suffering of members of the Hutu community as well as to their acts of resistance against Hutu extremists, the entire group seems to be attributed a collective image of relentless perpetrators. As an unintended consequence, a Hutu collective memory of shared victimhood is likely to have emerged in response to the perceived injustice. Concerns with regard to the suppressed memory of the Hutu and their unrecognised right to truth and mourning surfaced during the national summit on unity and reconciliation that was organised by the NURC in the year 2000. These concerns were voiced by a Hutu participant in particular. He declared,

'We do not say it loud enough, but the question of Hutu memory is a prerequisite for people to sit together and honestly discuss the real problems of the country, because as only one part of the population of Rwanda is authorised to mourn its dead, to scream its distress, without the other part being able to mourn as well, reconciliation will have to wait'.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ Vidal, 'La commémoration,' 583, quoting 'Sommet sur la réconciliation: un premier pas concluant mais prudent,' *afp*, Kigali, 20 October 2000.

Vidal suggested that this lack of recognition of Hutu victimhood had led to a refusal by some to ‘share the pain’ of Tutsi genocide survivors, notably during genocide commemorations.²⁷⁷ The words of a Rwandan woman reported in 2004 by Longman and Rutagengwa appeared to confirm this attitude. The interviewee, who ‘lost two children to disease in a refugee camp outside Bukavu’, explained that,

‘For me, to commemorate the genocide, I don’t find it useful. Even those [implying the repatriated Tutsi] who did not see the genocide, when they talk about it all the time, it makes it seem like it will happen again... When others go to the site to commemorate, I stay home and think about what I have lost. What happened to me has no place in this [official] commemoration, because my children died differently and elsewhere.’²⁷⁸

While suppressed in Rwanda, the existence of parallel memories of the genocide and the lack of a sharing of suffering have vividly come to light outside the country. Every year, newspapers report how in Belgium, for instance, which hosts the largest Rwandan community in Europe, separate and competing gatherings have taken place to commemorate the events.²⁷⁹

2.4.2.2 Trials and the pursuit of justice

Echoing the criticism against Rwanda’s official memorialisation practices, observers have denounced the judicial strategies through which the RPF-dominated government has dealt with the violent past. Its approach to justice has too been seen as supporting the official narrative of the war and genocide.

Since the immediate aftermath of 1994, the colossal endeavour to pursue justice against genocide perpetrators has been at the centre of the government’s efforts to

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 582.

²⁷⁸ Longman en Rutagengwa, 174.

²⁷⁹ Commemorative events have been held both on April 7, in commemoration of the ‘Tutsi genocide’ (organised by the Rwandan embassy and the organisation ‘IBUKA Mémoire et Justice’), and on April 6, in commemoration of *all* the victims of the ‘Rwandan genocide’ (organised by movements that have been associated to exiled Hutu). Gasana Ndoba, ‘Le travail de mémoire au Rwanda: enjeux et défis,’ Pole Institute, *Le devoir de mémoire au Nord Kivu : enjeux et défis* (Goma 2008), 19. ‘Commémorations concurrentes du génocide rwandais à Bruxelles’, *La libre Belgique* (03/04/2011) [www.lalibre.be/actu/belgique/article/652590/commemorations-concurrentes-du-genocide-rwandais-a-bruxelles.html] (last accessed on 4/10/2011).

reckon with the recent violent past.²⁸⁰ Next to domestic special chambers as well as prosecutions by third countries, this task has been fulfilled by two main mechanisms. The first is the ad hoc International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), based in Arusha, Tanzania. Created by the UN Security Council in 1994, the ICTR was mandated with prosecuting individuals who carried the highest responsibility for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity that had been perpetrated throughout 1994 both in Rwanda and abroad.²⁸¹ As of April 2013, seventy-five cases had been completed.²⁸² The second instrument is the *gacaca* court system. Its mandate has been to investigate and prosecute crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes which were committed in Rwanda between October 1990 and December 1994. This re-invented traditional and grassroots conflict resolution mechanism was formally introduced in 2001 to respond to the ineffectiveness, inefficiency and slowness of international and domestic justice. Through its twelve thousand courts, *gacaca* has enabled to process over one million cases, thereby promoting what Bert Ingelaere called ‘mass accountability for mass crime(s).’²⁸³ Also, it contributed to uncovering much of the truth about what happened during the genocide at the local level. Truth-finding was facilitated by the process’ inherently participatory and accessible nature as well as by a system of plea-bargaining which was aimed at encouraging large-scale confessions in exchange for penalty reduction.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ For an overview of the various legal processes, see, e.g., Clark & Kaufman (eds.), *After genocide*; and Des Forges & Longman, ‘Legal responses to genocide in Rwanda,’ Stover & Weinstein (eds.), *My neighbor, my enemy*, 49-68. For a study on Rwandan attitudes towards justice and reconciliation, see T. Longman, H.M. Weinstein, & P.N. Pham, ‘Connecting justice to human experience: attitudes toward justice and reconciliation in Rwanda,’ Stover & Weinstein (eds.), 206-225. On memory, identity and reconciliation in Rwanda, including popular views on reconciliation, prosecution, forgiveness, acknowledgment, reparation, and other transitional justice-related issues, see Longman & Rutagengwa, 163-182.

²⁸¹ OHCHR, *Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the prosecution of persons responsible for Genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of Rwanda and Rwandan citizens responsible for Genocide and other such violations committed in the territory of neighbouring states, between 1 January 1994 and 31 December 1994* [www.ohchr.org/english/law/itr.htm] (last accessed on 27/09/2011).

²⁸² www.unictr.org/Cases/tabid/204/Default.aspx. See also, E. Mose, ‘Main achievements of the ICTR,’ *Journal of international criminal justice* 3 (2005) 920-943.

²⁸³ Ingelaere, ‘Changing lenses and contextualizing the Rwandan (post-)genocide,’ *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 2006-2007* (Paris 2007), 408.

²⁸⁴ C. Ntampaka, ‘Le retour à la tradition dans le jugement du génocide rwandais: Le gacaca, justice participative,’ *Bulletin des séances/Académie royale des sciences d’outre-mer* 48(4) (2002) 419-455.

Especially abroad, both the ICTR and *gacaca* have been criticised for their unequal and politicised application of justice.²⁸⁵ These mechanisms have been accused of pursuing a victor's justice which exclusively dealt with the genocide and Hutu perpetrators, while largely exempting RPF soldiers and Tutsi individuals from investigation and prosecution.²⁸⁶ In this sense, Longman argued that, 'when it comes to justice, ethnicity continues to matter' in post-genocide Rwanda.²⁸⁷ With regard to the ICTR, human rights organisations such as ICG, as well as scholars such as Reyntjens and Des Forges, pointed out that this mechanism never prosecuted a single case against members of the RPF.²⁸⁸ *Gacaca*, too, has been criticised for functioning as a state-controlled forum of discussion which solely addressed crimes perpetrated against Tutsi. Klaas de Jonge suggested that, 'during the *Gacaca* meetings the few Hutu who wanted to discuss killings by the RPA/RPF were often not allowed to speak about their suffering'.²⁸⁹ Because of its selectiveness, this mechanism is suspected to have countered the goals of peace and reconciliation. Instead of promoting mutual understanding, recognition, trust and empathy, *gacaca* is believed to have led to increased alienation of the general

²⁸⁵ Critics have additionally denounced the failure of this mechanism to comply with international human rights law and principles, especially the guarantee of the right to fair trial, including the right of defence and representation of the accused. Moreover, critics have underscored the faultiness of the *gacaca* process in relation to the competency, independence and impartiality of the courts. See e.g., African Rights, *Gacaca justice: a shared responsibility* (Kigali 2003); Amnesty International, *Rwanda: the troubled course of justice* (London 2000) and *Rwanda: Gacaca: a question of justice* (London 2002); and A. Corey and S.F. Joireman, 'Retributive justice: the Gacaca courts in Rwanda,' *African affairs* 103 (2004) 73-89.

²⁸⁶ P. Clark, *The Gacaca courts, post-genocide justice and reconciliation in Rwanda: justice without lawyers* (New York 2010); HRW, *Justice compromised. The legacy of Rwanda's community-based Gacaca* (New York 2011); Ingelaere, "Does the truth pass across the fire without burning?" *Transitional justice and its discontents in Rwanda's Gacaca courts* (Antwerp 2007); Lemarchand, *The dynamics*, 89-91; Penal Reform International, *Integrated report on Gacaca research and monitoring: pilot phase January 2002 - December 2004* (Kigali 2005); Prunier, *Africa*, 12-24; J. Sarkin, 'The tensions between justice and reconciliation in Rwanda: politics, human rights, due process and the role of the Gacaca courts in dealing with the genocide,' *Journal of African law* 45(2) (2001) 161; Thomson, *Resisting reconciliation: state power and everyday life in post-genocide Rwanda* (Halifax 2009); S. Vandeginste, 'Les juridictions *gacaca* et la poursuite des suspects auteurs du génocide et des crimes contre l'humanité au Rwanda', *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 1999-2000* (Paris 2000), 77, 88.

²⁸⁷ Longman, 'Memory,' 4. As the author explained, '[p]eople know that in Rwanda today, whether or not they will be held accountable for crimes during the war is determined by their ethnicity and the ethnicity of those they attacked.'

²⁸⁸ According to various sources, although investigations were initiated by Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte, they were eventually abandoned due to pressure from the Rwandan government. Longman, 'Memory,' 23. See also a 2008 open letter from HRW Executive Director, Kenneth Roth, to the ICTR Prosecutor regarding the prosecution of RPF crimes. HRW, 'ICTR: Address Crimes Committed by the RPF. A Letter to the ICTR Prosecutor,' 11/12/2008 [www.hrw.org/news/2008/12/12/ictr-address-crimes-committed-rpf] (last accessed on 03/10/2011). See additionally the negative perceptions among the Rwandan population as reported by Des Forges & Longman, 49-55; and Longman et al., 'Connecting,' 214.

²⁸⁹ K. De Jonge, 'PRI's research on *Gacaca*,' 4 [www.penalreform.org/files/Klass%20de%20Jonge_Gacaca.pdf] (last accessed on 19/10/2011). See also, Longman, 'Memory,' 25.

population, and to have fuelled fear, mistrust, conflict, and violence in the society.²⁹⁰ The *gacaca* process seems to have reinforced the heightened ethnic divide which found expression in the refusal by some Hutu to participate in the commemoration of Tutsi genocide victims. Reportedly, *gacaca* sessions have been similarly marked by a disinclination among the Hutu population to actively participate in the meetings to denounce fellow Hutu and to uncover the truth about crimes committed against their Tutsi neighbours.²⁹¹ The *gacaca*'s potential to unveil the truth about the tragic events appears to have been limited by a self-censorship of people silently protesting against what they perceived to be an unfair and imposed process. This potential is deemed to have been further compromised by a widespread culture of silence among witnesses and survivors fearing reprisals by fellow Rwandans, whether Hutu or Tutsi.²⁹² As explained by Lemarchand, in post-genocide Rwanda, 'setting the record straight is a dangerous activity'.²⁹³ Consequently, critics have argued, a big gap exists between, on the one hand, the discourse on the genocide that has been formulated by the regime and which has been supported by top-down truth-seeking mechanisms, and, on the other hand, popular experiences and views, which have instead remained largely untold.

According to numerous observers, the historical record and the collective memory produced by Rwanda's judicial mechanisms remain 'partial' and 'one-sided' in that they only include a truth that is consistent with the official discourse. The

²⁹⁰ Burnet, '(In)Justice'; A. Chakravarty, *Surrendering consent: the politics of transitional justice in post-genocide Rwanda* (Ithaca 2009); Corey & Joireman, 73-74; Ingelaere, "Does the truth"; Longman et al., 'Connecting'; Longman & Rutagengwa; PRI, *Research report on Gacaca courts: Gacaca and reconciliation - Kibuye case study* (Kigali 2004), 13, and *The contribution of the Gacaca jurisdictions to resolving cases arising from the genocide. Contributions, limitations and expectations of the post-Gacaca phase – Final monitoring and research report on the Gacaca process* (London 2010); M. Rettig, 'Gacaca: truth, justice and reconciliation in postconflict Rwanda?' *African studies review* 51 (2008) 25-50; Thomson, 'The darker side of transitional justice: the power dynamics behind Rwanda's Gacaca courts,' *Africa* 81(3) (2011) 373-390; L. Waldorf, 'Mass justice for mass atrocity: rethinking local justice as transitional justice,' *Temple law review* 79 (2006) 1-87. Notice that, with the introduction of *gacaca*, insecurity rose as the process has been marked by threats and murders of survivors, witnesses and judges.

²⁹¹ PRI, *Research*, 13.

²⁹² In some cases, the accused appear to have either told half truths in order to minimise their role, or to have utterly denied any involvement, portraying accusations as acts of revenge for old familial disputes. PRI, *Research*, 13. According to de Jonge, former head of mission for PRI in Rwanda and coordinator of PRI *Gacaca* research from 2001 until 2005, '[a]lthough a significant number of detainees made confessions, it is widely believed that these testimonies are only partial, admitting minor crimes, and blaming some people for complicity—mostly those already deceased or 'disappeared' after the genocide—while keeping silent on the involvement of others.' De Jonge, 'PRI's research', 3.

²⁹³ Lemarchand, 'Genocide,' 25-26. See also, Vidal, 'La commémoration,' 579.

stories of the non-genocide victims, and in particular of the victims of crimes committed by the RPF, are excluded from this truth, thereby safeguarding the RPF's righteous image. Trials are believed to have in so doing contributed to a collective amnesia of this side of the story while at the same time ensuring the establishment of a thorough record of the crimes committed by members of the former regime and by Hutu individuals against the Tutsi. Eventually, by massively arresting and prosecuting genocide suspects, the Rwandan justice system has supposedly helped to consolidate a belief in the generalised guilt of the Hutu.²⁹⁴

Critics have argued that it was due to the RPF's wish to bury the truth about its crimes that the possibility of establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was immediately discarded in favour of one-sided mass prosecution of genocide perpetrators.²⁹⁵ Against this backdrop, André Guichaoua recently concluded that, '[t]he memory war will continue because the work of truth-seeking has not been brought to completion'.²⁹⁶

Open dialogue in a context of guaranteed freedom of speech, in which different experiences and views are shared and recognised, has been frequently mentioned as the best way forward towards a common understanding of the tragic past and towards reconciliation. This, according to government's critics, is far from being the case. Today, various studies suggest that a departure from a dominant practice of strictly controlled narrative production is unlikely to occur any time soon. Many concerned observers have exposed a situation whereby a monopoly on the

²⁹⁴ Longman, 'Memory'.

²⁹⁵ Des Forges & Longman, 61; J.K. Sebarenzi, 'Rwanda: the fundamental obstacles to reconciliation,' *Global security and cooperation quarterly* 3 (2002) [www.ssrc.org/gsc/newsletter3/sebarenzi.htm]; and Vandeginste, *A truth and reconciliation approach to the genocide and crimes against humanity in Rwanda*, Working paper (University of Antwerp 1998). The option of establishing a TRC was advocated, among others, by Sarkin in 'The tensions'; 'Preconditions and processes for establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda: the possible interim role of Gacaca community courts', *Law democracy and development* (1999) 223-238; and 'Promoting justice, truth and reconciliation in transitional societies: evaluating Rwanda's approach in the new-millennium of using community-based Gacaca tribunals to deal with the past', *International law forum* 2(2) (2000) 112-121. Sarkin reported that the 1993 Arusha Accords included an article (art. 16) provided for the establishment of an International Commission of Inquiry 'to investigate human rights violations committed during the war'. Sarkin, 'The necessity and challenges of establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda', *Human rights quarterly* 21(3) (1999) 767-823. Although this provision was not implemented, several commissions of inquiry were set up both abroad – by the UN, the OAU, and the French and Belgian parliaments – and in Rwanda.

²⁹⁶ Guichaoua, *Rwanda*, 583.

truth and ‘a narrative closure on the interpretation of the past’²⁹⁷ are being zealously guaranteed and rigorously enforced by the new regime through an increasingly wide range of repressive legal constraints. Analysts have pointed the finger, in particular, at a series of laws that have been recently introduced in Rwanda on broadly defined concepts of ‘divisionism’, ‘revisionism’, ‘negationism’, and ‘genocide ideology’.²⁹⁸ These laws have been reportedly used as tools to criminalise all deviation from the official discourse on history and identity, as well as to discourage any questioning of the government’s policies and human rights record. Organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and International Crisis Group have lamented the restricted freedom of speech legally enforced by the Rwandan government. According to Susanne Buckley-Zistel, ‘[i]n case of offence, individuals are threatened or arrested, newspapers closed down, political parties banned, NGOs prohibited and even international organisations expelled.’²⁹⁹ Several authors condemned the abuse of the memory and legacy of the genocide promoted by the current regime through its politicised invocation of the peril of ‘divisionism’ and ‘genocide ideology’. Longman, for instance, concluded that, ‘[t]ragically, the genocide itself has been used by the current regime as a cover to allow it to violate human rights’.³⁰⁰ Similarly, Lemarchand argued that the genocide has been exploited as ‘a unique

²⁹⁷ Buckley-Zistel, ‘Nation,’ 46. Quoting S. Cobb, the author defines narrative closure as the ‘process through which narratives seal off alternative interpretations to themselves.’ S. Cobb, ‘Narrative perspective on mediation. Towards the materialization of the “storyteller” metaphor,’ J.P. Folgner & T. Jones (eds.), *New directions in mediation. Communication research and perspectives* (Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi 1994), 54.

²⁹⁸ Divisionism or sectarianism, for instance, is described as ‘the use of any speech, written statement or action that divides people, that is likely to spark conflicts among people, or that causes an uprising which might degenerate into strife among people based on discrimination...’ Law no. 47/2001, *Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda*, Year 41, no. 4, February 1, 2002. In the past few years, parliamentary investigations have been conducted, which revealed the rampant presence of genocide ideology in society, and specifically in schools. Ad hoc Parliament Commission on Genocide Ideology, *Genocide ideology* (Kigali 2004). In 2006 the Senate published a study on the genocide ideology and strategies for its eradication. V. Biruta, *Rwanda: genocide ideology and strategies for its eradication* (Kigali: Republic of Rwanda/ The Senate 2006). This describes genocide ideology as ‘a set of ideas or representations whose major role is to stir up hatred and create a pernicious atmosphere favoring the implementation and legitimisation of the persecution and elimination of a category of the population’. A Commission for the Fight Against Genocide was created in 2007, and a law criminalizing genocide ideology was passed in 2008 (Law N.18/2008 of 23/07/2008, Article 3). See, HRW, *Law and reality: progress in judicial reform in Rwanda* (New York 2008), 41-43.

²⁹⁹ Buckley-Zistel, ‘Nation,’ 46. Also, authors such as Reyntjens, Des Forges, and Prunier, who accused the RPF of having committed serious crimes, endured heavy criticism from the Rwandan government and were declared *personae non gratae*. For a critical view of state restrictions on freedom of speech, see, *inter alia*, L. Waldorf, ‘Censorship and propaganda in post-genocide Rwanda,’ Thompson (ed.), *The media*, 404-416; and ICG, *Rwanda at the end of the transition*.

³⁰⁰ Longman, ‘Obstacles to peacebuilding in Rwanda,’ T.M. Ali & R.O. Matthews (eds.), *Durable peace: challenges for peacebuilding in Africa* (Toronto 2004), 76.

opportunity to legislate ethnic identities out of existence’ and ‘to ban almost any type of organised opposition’.³⁰¹

As will be illustrated in the next section, the politicisation that has invested Rwanda’s transitional process has extended to the education sector. Like memorialisation and judicial practices, educational institutions appear to have functioned as important vectors of today’s official discourse.

2.4.3 The institutionalisation of the official discourse through the education system: education policies and history teaching in post-genocide Rwanda

In the aftermath of the genocide, the new government was confronted with major challenges in the field of education. The violent events that crippled Rwanda in 1994 severely debilitated the sector: much of the infrastructure had been damaged or destroyed;³⁰² most teachers had been killed, displaced or imprisoned;³⁰³ and many school children had been traumatised by the experience of violence, loss, and displacement.³⁰⁴ During this period, schools were among the main sites in which mass violence was perpetrated. Bearing testimony to this tragedy is the Murambi Technical School, now a national memorial site. In April 1994, tens of thousands were slaughtered on its premises. Obura recounted how ‘[l]ocal leaders

³⁰¹ Lemarchand, ‘The politics’, 1.

³⁰² According to Rwanda’s government, up to 65% of all schools were damaged during the genocide. MINEPRISEC/MINESUPRES, *Actes de séminaire sur l’assistance d’urgence et la reconstruction du système éducatif au Rwanda* (Kigali 1994). The same devastation hit the National University, the National Library, the National Archives and the offices of the Ministry of Education. Obura, 49. The violence resulted in the nearly total dissipation of material, financial and human resources. N. Cantwell, *Starting from zero: the promotion and protection of children’s rights in post-genocide Rwanda, July 1994-1996* (Florence: Innocenti Research Centre, UNICEF, 1997), 17.

³⁰³ According to Freedman et al., in the aftermath of the genocide, more than 75% of all Rwandan teachers were unaccounted for in schools as a result of the violence. S.W. Freedman et al., ‘Confronting the past in Rwandan schools,’ E. Stover & H.M. Weinstein (eds.), *My neighbor, my enemy*, 250.

³⁰⁴ A survey conducted by UNICEF in the immediate aftermath of the genocide revealed that as many as 70% of interviewed children had witnessed killings or violent injury. L. Gupta, *Exposure to war related violence among Rwanda children and adolescents: a brief report on the National Baseline Trauma Survey*. UNICEF Trauma Recovery Programme (Kigali 1996). See also R. Neugebauer et al., ‘Post-traumatic stress reactions among Rwandan children and adolescents in the early aftermath of genocide,’ *International journal of epidemiology* 38(4) (2009) 1033-1045. According to a study by R. Akresh and D. de Walque, such exposure to violence had significantly affected children’s educational achievements. ‘Armed conflict and schooling: evidence from the 1994 Rwandan genocide,’ *HiCN Working Papers* 47 (2008) [www.hicn.org/papers/wp47.pdf] (last accessed on 06/05/2010). Severe trauma was also reported among teachers. In an interview with African Rights, a teacher survivor of the genocide testified his difficulties to still teach while he could not forget when ‘[his] students ran after [him] during the genocide, wanting to kill [him]’. Another teacher expressed his discomfort ‘standing in front of a class containing children of the *génocidaires* and having to teach them’. African Rights, *The heart*, 68, 73.

had called people to schools...“to keep them safe”, and the people had been massacred there, by teachers... and by fellow pupils’.³⁰⁵ Teachers, traditionally seen as influential and authoritative community leaders, acted as main instigators and organisers of the genocide.³⁰⁶ According to Obura, the role played by Rwanda’s schools in the conflict and violence resulted in a generalised erosion of faith in the education system. As she reported, parents had been reluctant to bring their children back to school in the immediate aftermath of the genocide.³⁰⁷

In the wake of the war, the incumbent government made significant efforts to quickly reconstruct and rehabilitate the dilapidated system.³⁰⁸ The restoration of educational provision was presented by the MoE as a ‘powerful strategy of social normalisation and progressive pacification of the country’.³⁰⁹ Based on a belief in the connivance of Rwanda’s pre-genocide schooling in the violence, a number of educational reforms were also gradually introduced by the government with a view to transforming Rwandan schools into instruments of peace, reconciliation, and development. These reforms addressed both educational policies and practices, and school teachings.

2.4.3.1 Educational structures, policies and practices

At the level of educational policies and practices, the post-genocide government has shown a strong commitment to breaking with a history of ethnic and regional division, discrimination and favouritism. Its stated aim has been to guarantee inclusive and equal educational opportunities to all Rwandans. This objective has been pursued through various means. Among other things, pupils’ and staff’s regional and ethnic identification has been abolished and discrimination has been

³⁰⁵ Obura, 57.

³⁰⁶ If many educated people had been involved in the violence, the bulk of the genocide militias was reportedly comprised of unemployed and undereducated youth. Des Forges, 129; African Rights, *Rwanda*, 56; M. Sommers, *Fearing Africa’s young men: the case of Rwanda*, Social development papers, Conflict prevention and reconstruction, paper No. 32 (Washington D.C.: World Bank 2006) [www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC21389.pdf] (last accessed on 26/09/2010).

³⁰⁷ Obura, 56-57.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 56. See also, K. Kumar et al., ‘Rebuilding post-war Rwanda: the role of the international community,’ Study 4, *The international response to conflict and genocide: lessons from the Rwanda experience* (Washington 1996), 31-34.

³⁰⁹ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Professional Training, *Shared values and promoting a culture of peace in Rwanda. Conference report* (Kigali: MIJESCAFOP, October 1998), 22-23 [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001230/123072mo.pdf] (last accessed on 04/11/2011).

outlawed. Access to primary education has been made available to every child in the framework of a commitment to achieve the international goals of Universal Primary Education, Education for All, and gender parity.³¹⁰ At the secondary and tertiary levels, admission is now transparent and determined by merit.³¹¹ Also, a nine-year tuition-free basic education was recently introduced with the intention of further widening access to post-primary schooling. Demonstrating a concern for inclusiveness, the new government additionally issued a trilingual policy in order to cater for the needs of a highly diverse school population which had originated from the massive repatriation of a large Anglophone Diaspora.³¹² This policy prescribed the compulsory study of English besides Kinyarwanda and French, as well as the possibility for pupils to choose French or English as their language of instruction.³¹³

State policies promoting equal educational opportunities have been largely praised. A number of concerns have however been raised. A first concern regards the effects of the above-mentioned language reform. Reportedly, its unintentional consequence has been the establishment of a segregated system: this separated the Anglophone returnees from Uganda, who are mostly Tutsi, from other, Francophone, students who instead grew up either in Rwanda or in the Diaspora in the DRC or Burundi.³¹⁴ In 2008-2009, a radical change was introduced when English became the only language of instruction from the upper-primary level onwards.³¹⁵ This policy inevitably came at a heavy price for the Francophone

³¹⁰ As reported in various studies, school enrolments have significantly increased since the end of the genocide. See, the World Bank, *Education in Rwanda: rebalancing resources to accelerate post-conflict development and poverty reduction* (Washington: World Bank 2004); Republic of Rwanda, *Economic development and poverty reduction strategy 2008-2012* (Kigali: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning 2007); Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, *Education sector strategy plan 2008-2012* (Kigali: MINEDUC 2008), and *Indicators in the education system* (Kigali: MINEDUC 2008).

³¹¹ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research, *Education sector policy* (Kigali: MINEDUC 2003), 4 [planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Rwanda/Rwanda%20Education%20Sector%20Policy%20July%202003.pdf] (last accessed on 11/11/2011); Obura, 58, 61; Freedman et al., 'Confronting', 255. Transparency and accountability are today ensured through the Rwandan National Examination Council [www.rnec.ac.rw].

³¹² For an in-depth discussion on the issue of Rwandan refugees and education, see L. Bird, *Surviving school: education for refugee children from Rwanda 1994-1996* (Paris: UNESCO/IIEP 2003).

³¹³ MINEDUC, *Education sector policy*, 14, 23-24; and Obura, 88.

³¹⁴ Walker-Keleher, 46; McLean-Hilker, 'The role,' 11-12.

³¹⁵ In addition, the status of French in the curriculum has been reduced by making this subject elective and non-examinable. This policy was introduced in a context of soaring diplomatic relations with France as well as of Rwanda's membership in the East African Community (since 2007) and in the British Commonwealth (since 2009).

majority, affecting the equality of educational opportunities and thereby risking to fuel tensions.³¹⁶ A second concern has been expressed with regard to the current allocation of bursaries to genocide survivors through the *Fonds National pour l'Assistance aux Rescapés du Genocide* (FARG). Evidence suggests that this practice has created considerable disparities and tensions between 'FARG children' and 'non-FARG children'. Given that FARG beneficiaries are primarily Tutsi, these tensions have to a large extent coincided with an 'ethnic' divide.³¹⁷

2.4.3.2 School teachings: historical reconstruction, and curriculum and textbook revision

In the aftermath of the genocide, the reform of educational policies was accompanied by a substantial revision of teaching contents. In post-genocide Rwanda, old curricula and textbooks were immediately repudiated for conveying a distorted and antagonistic view of Rwandan history and society. The existing materials were deemed in need of a rigorous review and adaptation to the values of the new era.³¹⁸ According to former Minister of Education R. Murenzi, in the pre-war curriculum 'there was too much about human differences and too little about human similarities. Too much about collective duty and too little about individual responsibility. Too much about the past and too little about the

³¹⁶ According to recent studies, less than 15% of the Rwandan population is fluent in French and less than 5% in English. B.L. Samuelson & S.W. Freedman, 'Language policy, multilingual education, and power in Rwanda,' *Language policy* 9(3) (2010) 191-215 [gse.berkeley.edu/faculty/swfreedman/10samuelson_freedman.pdf] (last accessed on 07/08/2011). See also, A. Obura & L. Bird, 'Education marginalisation in post-conflict settings: a comparison of government and donor responses in Burundi and Rwanda,' Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010 (2009), 10; and McLean-Hilker, 11-12.

³¹⁷ H. Rombouts, 'Women and reparations in Rwanda: a long path to travel,' R. Rubio-Marin (ed.), *What happened to the women? Gender and reparations for human rights violations* (New York 2006), 214-251; IRDP, 'Sustaining peace in Rwanda: voice of the people' (Kigali 2003) [www.grandslacs.net/doc/3654.pdf] (last accessed on 06/02/2010); Walker-Keleher, 46; McLean-Hilker, 'Everyday ethnicities', 'The role,' and 'Identity and reconciliation among Rwanda's urban youth,' Policy working paper (Brighton: University of Sussex 2011).

³¹⁸ Evidence seems to suggest that, in the aftermath of the genocide, old teachings continued to be taught in Hutu refugee camps across the border. According to the 2001 Machel report on *The impact of war on children*, 'many refugee schools left unassisted by the international community came under the control of the ousted Rwandan government that had been responsible for the 1994 genocide. They used the opportunity to teach Hutu youth a curriculum intended to prolong the ethnic divide.' Similarly, Marc Sommers reported that, '[r]eserved for young Rwandan Hutu refugee elites, it was widely assumed that the schools emphasised the sort of ethnically based version of Rwandan history that provided the rationale for ethnic genocide.' G. Machel, *The impact of war on children: a review of progress since the 1996 United Nations report on the impact of armed conflict on children* (London 2001), 102; and M. Sommers, 'Emergency education for children' (Cambridge: Mellon-MIT Program on NGOs & Forced Migration, MIT, 1999), 7 [web.mit.edu/cis/www/migration/pubs/mellon/1_children.pdf] (last accessed on 05/05/2011).

future'.³¹⁹ Today, the focus of the national curriculum appears to have significantly shifted.

In line with the president's belief that '[p]eople...can be taught to be good',³²⁰ a new mission has been entrusted to Rwandan schools. Schools are now expected to promote a culture of democracy, peace and respect of human rights, and to prepare children to be responsible and unprejudiced citizens.³²¹ In addition, schools have been considered as an important instrument in the fight against the genocide ideology.³²² In accordance with this new mission, the curriculum has been revised to integrate notions of peace and reconciliation into various subjects. Also, a commitment has been made to train teachers with a view 'to turn[ing] them into artisans of peace education'.³²³ While a peace education programme does not exist in Rwanda despite attempts to produce one,³²⁴ revised civics and political education courses have functioned as the principal carrier subjects of peace education notions.³²⁵ In the introduction of the political education curriculum, this subject is presented as being 'based on the culture of peace'. Its stated aim is to 'teach pupils positive attitudes, in order to know their rights and duties...to put forward unity, truth and justice, peace and reconciliation, and conflict resolution, which will help us attain true development'.³²⁶ A culture of peace has been likewise promoted at the tertiary level. In 1999, the National University of Rwanda (NUR), once made a site of discrimination, violence and genocide,

³¹⁹ National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), *Report of the National Curriculum Conference* (Kigali: NCDC 2002), 2; and Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research, *National curriculum development centre 6-year plan: 2003 to 2008* (Kigali: NCDC 2003), 31.

³²⁰ P. Kagame, qtd. in Gourevitch, 224.

³²¹ MINEDUC, *Report of workshop seminar on revising and harmonizing the teaching programme for primary-school education* (Kigali 1996), 6. The objective of education as formulated by the ministry is 'to train people free of ethnic, regional, national and religious prejudices' who are 'conscious of human rights and responsibilities ... [and] conscious also of their membership to the international community'. See also, MIJESCAFOP, *Shared values*, 22-23.

³²² The Senate's document on *Genocide ideology and strategies for its eradication*, for instance, stated that, '[f]ighting the ideology of genocide has to be done through activities such as fighting ignorance through school as well as family education'. 162.

³²³ MIJESCAFOP, 22-23.

³²⁴ A UNICEF-sponsored pilot programme in Education for Peace was launched in 1997. S. Fountain, *Peace education*. Obura, however, reported to have found no trace of this programme. Obura, 77-79; NCDC, *National Curriculum*, 33.

³²⁵ Obura, 67, 77-79.

³²⁶ African Rights, *The heart*, 10; M. Sinclair, *Learning to live together: building skills, values and attitudes for the twenty-first century* (Paris: UNESCO 2004), 34.

established a Conflict Management Centre (CMC). Today, the centre offers master programmes in peace and development, and in genocide studies.³²⁷

Compared to other school subjects, history has been a particularly challenging area of reform. The old course was immediately rejected because ‘devised in an era when the past was evoked to mobilise a Hutu ethnic consciousness’.³²⁸ In 1995, a temporary moratorium on the teaching of the national history was put in place until a revised version of this history could be agreed on. A long process of concomitant historical reconstruction and curriculum and textbook revision followed. It is only recently that this process culminated in the official re-introduction of the subject in Rwandan schools.

2.4.3.3 Academic historical reconstruction

In light of the presumably negative role played by historiography and history teaching in fuelling division and tension, a thorough re-examination, demystification, and update of the national history was immediately recognised by concerned Rwandans as being of paramount importance in the wake of the genocide.³²⁹ The aspiration was for the Rwandan people to achieve a common and objective reading of the past, as well as to regain ownership over a history that had long been dominated by old colonial myths and stereotypes. On the eve of the new era, frequent calls were made to replace the ‘false’ ‘ethnacist’ history that had been propagated by the former regimes with a more ‘truthful’ and unifying account of the nation.³³⁰

³²⁷ A. Karakezi Urusaro, ‘African universities and social reconstruction: what mission and what strategies? The case of the Conflict Management Centre of the National University of Rwanda’, *African sociological review* 7(2) (2003) 95-112; ‘NUR to launch Genocide course’, *The new times* (22/08/2008) [www.newtimes.co.rw/news/views/article_print.php?i=&a=8917&icon=Print] (last accessed on 22/08/2008); and personal communication with CMC staff.

³²⁸ African Rights, 3.

³²⁹ Based on the belief that ‘the distortion of history led to genocide’ (22), some teachers interviewed by African Rights concluded that it was preferable not to teach history at all rather than to use the old manuals that were impregnated with divisionism. Reference was made, in particular, to *Histoire du Rwanda* (1989) and to R. Heremans’ *Introduction à l’histoire du Rwanda* (1971). African Rights, 27. The central role of historical discourse in dividing the country was strongly argued by N. Eltringham and S. Van Hoyweghen. In their views, ‘the genocide would not have occurred if there had been agreement within Rwandan society about common history and membership status to that very society.’ N. Eltringham & S. Van Hoyweghen, ‘Power and identity in post-genocide Rwanda,’ R. Doom & J. Gorus (eds.) *Politics of identity*, 222.

³³⁰ NCDC, *National curriculum*, 34.

The challenges involved in such an undertaking were not underestimated. The Rwandan scholar Eugène Ntaganda pointed to these challenges by underscoring the exceptional manipulations to which Rwandan history had been subjected. In a 2002 article on the controversial matter of Rwanda's settlement, the author explained that, '[t]he history [of Rwanda] has been the subject of polemical interpretations, approximations and simplifications of which there are few examples as caricatural as this in the history of ex-colonies'.³³¹ John Rutaysire et al. added that the daunting task of rewriting the national history in an objective and inclusive manner had been inevitably compounded by the highly divided and traumatised nature of Rwandan post-genocide society. Multiple and often antagonist memories that partly derived from a longstanding politics of history appear to have competed with each other,³³² with perceptions of the 'truth' largely differing on the basis of identity.³³³ According to C. Newbury, 'not surprisingly in such a polarised atmosphere, historical reconstruction is itself highly contested.'³³⁴

Today, writing on Rwanda is considered a 'perilous business', especially when it comes to the issue of identity and the history of the conflict. Several analysts have alluded to a constant risk of being accused of pro-Tutsi or pro-Hutu partisanship. Eltringham, among others, affirmed that, in post-genocide Rwanda, 'desired impartiality is almost impossible to achieve. However creative (and careful) a writer attempts to be there will always be room for accusations of bias towards one side or the other.'³³⁵ Allegations of pro-Tutsi or pro-RPF bias have targeted

³³¹ E. Ntaganda (former Scientific Coordinator at CCM), 'Editorial', *Peuplement du Rwanda. Enjeux et perspectives. Cahiers du Centre de Gestion des Conflits* 5 (Butare 2002), 6.

³³² On the politics of history, see, Buckley-Zistel, 'Dividing'; Eltringham, *Accounting*; Jefremovas, 'Contested identities: power and the fictions of ethnicity, ethnography and history in Rwanda,' *Anthropologica* 39(1-2) (1997) 91-104; Lemarchand, 'Genocide in the Great Lakes', 'Genocide, memory and ethnic reconciliation'; Lemarchand & Niwese; C. Newbury, 'Ethnicity and the politics of history in Rwanda,' *Africa today* 45(1) (1998) 7-24; Vansina, 'The politics of history and the crisis in Central Africa,' *Africa today* 45(1) (1998) 37-44.

³³³ Rutaysire et al., 315-374.

³³⁴ Newbury, 'Ethnicity,' 9. See also, Eltringham, 149-151.

³³⁵ Eltringham, 'The blind men and the elephant. The challenge of representing the Rwandan genocide', P. Caplan (ed.), *The ethics of anthropology: debates and dilemmas* (London/New York 2003), 106. Prunier, among others, once referred to the 'perilous business' of writing on Rwanda in a post-genocide context that he described as an 'ideologically loaded climate of Rwanda-watching where every writer is closely scrutinised for the most minute and coded sign of pro-Hutu or pro-Tutsi sympathies'. *The Rwanda crisis*, 357. Similarly, Jefremovas argued that, 'Rwandan history is a minefield' and 'navigating the waters of Rwandan and Burundian representations of history and ethnicity is a treacherous undertaking'. V. Jefremovas,

the works of such prominent authors as Colette Braekman, Gérard Prunier, Philip Gourevitch, and, especially, Chrétien.³³⁶ The French scholar has been often criticised for replicating the RPF's official rendering of the facts. According to Lemarchand, Chrétien's arguments largely demonised the Hutu and justified the RPF's actions, while being oblivious of the RPF's onus of responsibility and of Hutu suffering.³³⁷ At the other end of the spectrum are the revisionist and negationist writings by pro-Hutu observers, most notably Charles Onana and Pierre Péan. Péan's work, in particular, has been described as 'a notoriously tendentious effort to rewrite the history of the genocide as a Tutsi-engineered plot'.³³⁸ Lemarchand as well, together with a few other foreign scholars and journalists, has been pointed the finger at by several observers, including Chrétien, for holding a pro-Hutu bias.³³⁹ To a great extent, polemics seems to have prevailed over a dispassionate scientific dialogue. As regretted by Lemarchand, polemical discourse has greatly compromised the potential role of scholarship towards unravelling and mediating the existing 'meta-conflict', and towards contributing to a better understanding of the past and ultimately to social cohesion and reconciliation in Rwanda.

It is in this highly politicised and polarised environment that a number of debates and initiatives were organised in Rwanda with the aim of collaboratively

'Traacherous waters: the politics of history and the politics of genocide in Rwanda and Burundi,' *Africa* 70(2) (2000) 298. Mamdani as well, in a chapter on the origins of Hutu and Tutsi, argued that, '[i]n the inflamed atmosphere of postgenocide Rwanda studies...[d]epending on one's point of view, each gets tagged as pro-Hutu or as pro-Tutsi.' 41. In his revised edition of *The Rwanda crisis* (1997), Prunier commented on accusations levelled by one reviewer against his 1995 edition (R. Govaerts, *SAIS review* (Summer/Fall 1996), 199-201). The accusation of being 'remarkably soft in his treatment of the RPF' was recognised by Prunier as being 'largely true and to a degree understandable' given the 'enormous (and largely unconscious) temptation to present in a favourable light any social or political force that can provide some sort of a moral counterpoison' to the 'massive evil' represented by the genocide. Prunier, 365.

³³⁶ Lemarchand, 'Rwanda,' 7-9.

³³⁷ African Rights, *Rwanda: death, despair and defiance* (London 1995); Braeckman, *Rwanda* (1994); Prunier, *The Rwanda crisis* (1995); and Gourevitch. Notice that Braeckman's view of the RPF became more critical in her later publication *Les nouveaux prédateurs: Politique des puissances en Afrique Centrale* (Paris 2003). Also, Prunier's second edition of *The Rwanda crisis* (1997) added a chapter recognizing RPF's responsibility. In this respect, a major exception among the early post-genocide writings was the balanced and solidly grounded HRW report by Des Forges.

³³⁸ C. Onana, *Secrets du génocide rwandais: enquête sur les mystères d'un président* (Paris 2002); and Péan, *Noires fureurs*. Another tendentious work was published in 2009 by C. Davenport & A. Stam, 'What really happened in Rwanda?,' *Miller-McCune* (2009) [www.miller-mccune.com/politics/what-really-happened-in-rwanda-3432/] (last accessed 08/04/2011). The authors labelled the 1994 events as a politicized rather than as genocide. Also, they claimed that most victims had possibly been Hutu, and not Tutsi. See also negationist statements by the *Association des rescapés du génocide des réfugiés rwandais en République Démocratique du Congo*, quoted in Lemarchand, 'The politics,' 3.

³³⁹ See, for instance, Chrétien, *Le défi*, 307-388.

discussing, analysing and rewriting the country's history. Embedded in a strictly controlled setting, such historiographical endeavours resulted to a large extent in a confirmation and reproduction of the official discourse.

A first major initiative took place in the framework of a series of reflection meetings that were held at the Office of the President from May 1998 to March 1999. Next to 'problems regarding democracy, justice, economy and security', the examination of history and the unveiling of 'the TRUTH' received a prominent place.³⁴⁰ One of the recommendations that were formulated in the final report highlighted the need to clarify Rwandan history, including its 'bad events'. The aim was to achieve a common reading of the past, to counter the divisionist ideology that had been taught since the colonial time, and to promote initiatives that would reinforce national unity.³⁴¹ In response to these concerns, a 13-people Committee was set up by former President Bizimungu in June 1998. This body, which was mainly composed of national political figures from various parties, was chaired by the two prominent historians Gamaliel Mbonimana and Paul Rutayisire. Its mandate was revealing of a clear political orientation. The committee was expected to examine the historical evolution of Rwanda's unity and to suggest ways to promote unity among Rwandans today. The final result of the discussions, which were held twice a week for almost a year, was the 1999 publication *The Unity of Rwandans - Before the Colonial Period and Under the Colonial Rule - Under the First Republic*.³⁴² To a large extent, this text reproduces the official historical discourse. The document traces the causes of the 'genocide against the Tutsi' back to the colonial disruption of Rwanda's ancient unity and to the post-colonial perpetuation of externally imposed divisions. According to the report, genocide had been committed in 1959-1960, 1963-1964, 1973, and finally during 'the terrible genocide of Tutsi in 1994'.³⁴³ Although this narrative seems to

³⁴⁰ P. Bizimungu, *Report on the reflection meetings held in the Office of the President from May 1998 to March 1999* (Kigali 1999), 11 [www.grandslacs.net/doc/2378.pdf] (last accessed on 11/11/2011).

³⁴¹ Ibid., 13.

³⁴² Republic of Rwanda, *The unity*. The topics addressed in this study include: the relations between Rwandans before and during the colonial period; forced labour under Belgian colonial rule; the decolonisation process (1952-1962); the origins and relations between Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa; suggestions for actions to promote unity among Rwandans; the coming to power and the rule of Parmehutu, and the end of the First Republic.

³⁴³ Ibid., 52. The document, however, also referred to 'genocide and massacres'. 57.

echo the government's position on Rwanda's past, the study presents a more nuanced picture than the official view that is often criticised by foreign scholars. Among other things, the document acknowledges the transformation of relations under Rwabugiri. It also recognises both the 'critical' responsibility of colonial actors in 'Rwanda's misfortune' and the 'obvious' role of Rwandans.³⁴⁴ Adding an analysis of the regional dynamics of the conflict, its authors likewise draw a link between the 1973 'troubles' in Rwanda and 'the genocide of Burundi Hutus' in 1972.³⁴⁵ With regard to the 'ethnicity question', the text recognises the existence of various theories on the origins and relations of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. It then concludes that, regardless of which theory is accepted as being accurate, 'the Banyarwanda must understand that maintaining themselves prisoners of their belonging to ethnic Hutu, Tutsi and Twa groups is one of the big obstacles standing in their way to development'.³⁴⁶

In the same period, between 1998 and 1999, debates on the history of Rwanda were held in various other circles. During a conference on the culture of peace which was organised in October 1998 by the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Professional Training (MIJESCAFOP), participants called for the creation of 'a formal forum for the restitution of the scientific truth of Rwanda's history'.³⁴⁷ Simultaneously, a group of academics at NUR proposed writing a new history which would allow Rwandans to face the past and to 'reconstruct our society'.³⁴⁸ The Rwandan scholars stressed the urgent need to fill the 'big gap between what is written and the reality' and to 'correct' history before it 'inspires another genocide'.³⁴⁹ Two national seminars were eventually held in Butare in December 1998 and October 1999 respectively. Their purpose was to collectively examine and revisit the country's controversial past with a view to rewriting and teaching a

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 57.

³⁴⁵ According to the document, '[t]he fact that some Burundian refugees were on the Rwandan territory increased the will of some politicians to avenge their "fellow Hutus".' Ibid., 88.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 58.

³⁴⁷ Other recommendations that were advanced on this occasion relate to the promotion of a culture of peace through formal and informal education programmes, the commissioning of a comparative genocide study aimed at preventing the recurrence of the violence, and the construction of genocide memorials. MIJESCAFOP, *Shared values*.

³⁴⁸ Comment by a conference participant. Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Comment by Byanafashe, reported in the transcripts by Hopes on the Horizon Rwanda [www.pbs.org/hopes/rwanda/transcript.html] (last accessed on 09/11/2010).

‘new history of Rwanda’. The initiative was guided by a wish to ‘depoliticize the history of Rwanda in some of its sequences by clearing it, in all transparency, impartiality and objectivity, of fallacious hypotheses and political falsifications in order to finally achieve the greatest possible historical truth.’³⁵⁰ The product of the two seminars, which bundled a number of contributions by various participants, was the 2004 publication of two volumes on *Les Défis de l’Historiographie Rwandaise*. The publication was edited by the Rwandan History Professor D. Byanafashe and was sponsored by UNESCO.³⁵¹

The first seminar was titled ‘Political changes in 1959. Was it a revolution or not?’. On this occasion, a number of controversial historical topics, spearheaded by the 1959 events, were discussed by some fifty attendees.³⁵² A review of the conclusions presented in the seminar report reveals their striking resemblance with the arguments advanced by the government. In particular, the report confirmed the following theses:

- the ancient settlement of the country, and the existence of a pre-colonial nation-state and of an integrated society;
- the crucial role of the colonial authorities both in ethnicising the society and in encouraging the 1959-1962 ‘revolution’;
- the portrayal of the ‘revolution’ as a tragedy and as ‘an uprising against one part of the population itself occupied!’ (by the Belgians);

³⁵⁰ Byanafashe (ed.), *Les défis de l’historiographie rwandaise. Tome 1: Les faits controversés* (Butare: Editions de l’Université Nationale du Rwanda, June 2004), 11. See also, *Les défis de l’historiographie rwandaise, Tome 2: La ‘révolution de 1959, mythe ou réalité’?* (Butare: Editions de l’Université Nationale du Rwanda, August 2004).

³⁵¹ Byanafashe (ed.), *Les défis, Tome 1*. Contributors included twenty Rwandans, namely: eight historians (D. Byanafashe, P. Rutayisire, G. Mbonimana, F. Rutembesa, R. Nkaka, F. Mubashankwaya, P.C. Kalimba, A. Rufangura), one archeologist (C. Kanimba Misago), one museologist (E. Kamuhangire); four linguists (J. Semujanga, L. Nkusi, C. Kayumba, F.X. Gasimba); one sociologist (J. Nizurugero), one psychologist (J.D. Ndayambaje), one jurist (B. Kanzayire), one economist (A. Mugesera), as well as the ancient vice-president of the National High Council (M. Kayihura) and a former chief (P.J. Mungarurire). *Les défis, Tome 2* included eight authors, i.e. six historians (Byanafashe, Mbonimana, Rutembesa, Kalimba, Nkaka, M.C. Kabwete), one sociologist (T. Murasandonyi), and one philosopher (O. Ugirashebuja).

³⁵² On this occasion, participants discussed issues related to methodology and chronology; settlement, nation-state, and borders; traditional relations; colonisation and evangelisation; political changes and their nature (1959-1994, in particular 1959-1962); and the genocide in 1994.

- the inadequacy of the term ‘Rwandan genocide’ as opposed to ‘Tutsi genocide’, and the faultiness of the ‘double genocide’ theory and of the thesis of a ‘spontaneous popular rage’.³⁵³

Reportedly, several exiled Hutu intellectuals who had not attended the seminar criticised the debate for being biased and unrepresentative of Hutu views. According to former Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu, a true revolution had taken place in 1959, through which the Rwandan people had succeeded in overthrowing an exploitative and oppressive Tutsi feudal system. He further suggested that denying such a reality would not change the fact that ‘[t]his humiliation has not left the mind of the Hutu’.³⁵⁴

Following animated discussions on whether there had been a ‘revolution’ in 1959, a second seminar was convened specifically on the ‘(Political) changes in Rwanda between 1959 and 1962’. Its main purpose was to clarify roles and responsibilities in the events that had marked these turbulent years.³⁵⁵ According to Mbonimana, the intention of the seminar was to bring people together to discuss and reach consensus on this watershed period based on the available evidence. The scholar underscored the need for the discussions to recognise the complexity of the situation. He referred to ‘the fact that there were killings, the fact that Tutsis collaborated closely with the colonial powers, the fact that the Tutsis who were in power in the Royal Court did not fully consider the claims of the Hutus, the fact that in 1960 the Tutsis were exiled for 30 years, the fact that in 1982 they were rejected ... The fact that there have been intermarriages’.³⁵⁶ At the end of the seminar, a number of recommendations were formulated. One of them called for the creation of ‘a national commission for the review and revision of the history of Rwanda’ under the auspices of NUR’s History Department. The expectation was

³⁵³ Byanafashe (ed.), *Les défis, Tome 1*, 7-11.

³⁵⁴ According to a former Rwandan diplomat, C. Karake, ‘[m]y grandfather was the serf of a Tutsi lord. When he became old, it was my father who replaced him’. Qtd. by Hopes on the Horizon Rwanda, ‘Transcript’.

³⁵⁵ Faced with disagreements among the participants as to whether the term ‘revolution’ represented a positive change and rather a radical change that could be either positive or negative, at the seminar participants convened to refer to the 1959 events as ‘political change’. Byanafashe, qtd. by Hopes on the Horizon Rwanda. See, *Les défis, Tome 2*.

³⁵⁶ Qtd. by Hopes on the Horizon Rwanda.

for such a commission to write a new history of Rwanda that would serve as a reference work for the elaboration of history textbooks.³⁵⁷

Shortly after the President's Office reflection meetings and the two NUR seminars, the matter of history was re-addressed at the NURC Summit in 2000. During the event, participants reiterated the longstanding ideological distortion of history. They further identified the existence of divergent historical interpretations as 'a factor of division'. The most divisive topics reportedly were the 'ethnic' identities and the 1959 'Hutu Revolution'.³⁵⁸ Once again, a number of recommendations were formulated, calling for a need to re-write and teach a new history of Rwanda with the aim of promoting unity and reconciliation. More specifically, the Summit's recommendations articulated the urgency to: '[w]rite the history of the country on the basis of extensive research so that Rwandans can learn the truth about their history; [t]each history so that Rwandans can be reconciled on the basis of a true unity; [a]void globalisation in the analysis of history; [and to] [t]each history in all schools as soon as possible'.³⁵⁹ On this occasion, former President Bizimungu underlined the importance of national ownership in such endeavours. As he declared, '[t]he history of Rwanda concerns primarily the Rwandese'.³⁶⁰

In response to the many recommendations made since the second half of the 1990s, in 2006 a group of NUR academics was hired by NURC's Civic Education Department on behalf of the President's Office. They were commissioned to write a new history of Rwanda and to produce a handbook that would also serve as a

³⁵⁷ See also, Gasanabo, 78-79.

³⁵⁸ Based on the 1998-1999 high-level discussions at the Office of the President, as well as on popular consultations, history and its role in the conflict and in unity and reconciliation was one of the themes that were selected for discussions during the 2000 National Summit on Unity and Reconciliation. Other themes included security, justice and poverty. National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), *Rapport sur le Sommet National d'Unité et de Réconciliation* (Kigali 2000), 39, 42-47 [www.usip.org/files/file/resources/collections/commissions/Rwanda99-Reports/Rwanda99_Report_summit.pdf] (last accessed on 11/11/2011).

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 42-47, and 41. Other recommendations included: to integrate unity and reconciliation, and patriotism programmes into the education system; to promote a culture of peace, including positive Rwandan values; to encourage the elderly to teach the younger generation about the ancient unity of Rwandans and of its destruction by the colonisers. 41. Eight years later, in an interview given to IRIN in August 2008, the then Secretary General of NURC, Fatuma Ndagiza, stated the continuing challenge posed by history to reconciliation, and reiterated the 'need to rewrite history so that its teaching is not manipulative but rather serves as a lesson'. 'RWANDA: Sustainable peace key to post-genocide reconciliation', *IRIN* (Kigali 26 August 2008) [www.irinnews.org:80/report.aspx?ReportID=79996] (last accessed on 15/10/2011).

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

manual to be used in schools.³⁶¹ At the time of the field research in summer 2011, this voluminous synthesis was finally about to be made available to the public after various delays.³⁶² Prior to its release, informal talks with several Rwandans revealed their low expectations towards this work. The historiographical project was believed to have been crippled by political engagement and to therefore be doomed to be fundamentally biased. In the book introduction, the project coordinators directly confronted possible accusations of writing Rwanda's history from a 'Tutsi perspective'. In defiance of the expected criticism, the authors underscored the publication's rigorous application of a critical methodology as a guarantee of highly professional standards.³⁶³

In addition to the official projects outlined above, noteworthy historiographical initiatives were launched by the well-respected local NGO Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP). Following broad popular consultations, in 2003 IRDP renewed calls to scientifically investigate the past and to solve existing controversies. The historical topics that were identified as being most contested in Rwanda regarded the themes of migrations and settlement, the political events of 1950-1962, and the 1990-1994 war and genocide.³⁶⁴ In order to shed light on such issues, IRDP commissioned a group of historians to conduct research on Rwandan history.³⁶⁵ Their work resulted in three main publications.³⁶⁶ Their appreciation is

³⁶¹ The group of scholars included Byanafashe (coordinator), Rutayisire, Joseph Jyoni wa Karega, Kanimba Misago, Mbonimana, and Kalimba.

³⁶² D. Byanafashe & P. Rutayisire (eds.), *Histoire du Rwanda: des origines à la fin du XXe siècle* (Kigali : NURC/ NUR 2011). The topics covered are: the sources of Rwandan history, the prehistory and settlement, the Rwandan Kingdom from the origins until the 19th century, Rwanda under German and Belgian colonisation, Rwanda under the First and Second Republics, the Tutsi Genocide, and Rwanda during the transition.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 'Introduction,' 12. In the general conclusion, this belief is reiterated as follows: '[t]he rigorously professional exploitation of different sources enables to dismantle myths and ideologies that have made the history of Rwanda an ideological history, rich in all kinds of controversies, almost all deliberately oriented towards falsification and manipulation.' 693. In the introduction, the coordinators underscored the urgency of scientifically investigating and writing the national history, to which this project responded. In their words, '[w]e cannot postpone this exercise or wait others to do it for the Rwandans. It is indeed dangerous to leave for a long time a vacuum which risks being filled by the myths or lies that have destroyed the Rwandan social fabric or by divisionist or negationist ideas, the negative role of which is well known.' 12.

³⁶⁴ Fourteen main issues emerged during the popular consultations organised by IRDP. The role of history in the genocide was one of the four identified priority issues, besides the genocide, economic development, and the rule of law and justice.

³⁶⁵ A working group of about thirty people was formed. Three historians (P. Rutayisire, G. Mbonimana and A. Gatera) were eventually selected to carry the research forward.

³⁶⁶ IRDP, *Histoire et conflits au Rwanda* (Kigali 2005); *Rwandan Tutsi genocide: causes, implementation and memory* (Kigali 2005); *Histoire et conflits au Rwanda: changements sociaux et politiques de 1946 à 1962* (Kigali 2008).

demonstrated today by their inclusion as key bibliographic references in the newly designed curriculum and teacher guide for Rwandan history.

As will be outlined in the next paragraphs, the process of historical reconstruction that has taken place in Rwanda since the mid-1990s has been accompanied by a long process of history curriculum and textbook revision that only recently culminated in the *de facto* re-introduction of this subject in Rwandan schools.

2.4.3.4 History curriculum and textbook revision

In the wake of the genocide, the teaching of Rwandan history in schools was suspended.³⁶⁷ This decision was taken as early as 1995 on the occasion of the National Conference on Education Policy and Planning. The understanding reached at the conference was that,

'The greatest weakness of Rwandan education thus was its content (...). History and civics schoolbooks at all levels of education tried to justify a discriminatory policy. Popular education was diverted from its original objectives. Indeed, instead of eradicating ignorance among the population, a system of propaganda and of incitement to ethnic and regional hatred was put in place by skilfully exploiting the ignorance of the population'.³⁶⁸

The report further declared that,

'Education has failed to prevent or avoid the war, the massacres and the genocide in our country. There is therefore no doubt that the contents of education, curricula and teaching materials must be revised.'³⁶⁹

At the conference it was convened that the process of curriculum reform would have to take into account the imperative need to promote an 'education for justice, peace and human rights' and to advance national reconciliation.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ According to a school inspector interviewed in the framework of this research in 2008, while the teaching of Rwandan history was suspended at the primary level, it was made optional at the secondary level.

³⁶⁸ Republic of Rwanda, MINEPRISEC/ MINPRISUPRES, *La politique et la planification de l'éducation au Rwanda* (Kigali 1995), 16.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁷⁰ MIJESCAFOP, *Shared values*, 22-23. The new mission that history teaching in particular was to be entrusted with was outlined in an exposé on 'The contribution of History to the culture of peace, tolerance, democracy and human rights' that was presented by a member of the UNESCO National Commission during a 2001 workshop. On this occasion, participants underscored the delicate nature of teaching Rwanda's history in the early post-genocide context, and the need to reach consensus on the contents to be taught and to train teachers. G. Murekumbanze, 'La contribution de l'Histoire à la culture de la paix, à la tolérance, à la démocratie et aux droits de l'homme,' Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Rwandan National

Despite the urgency with which these needs were articulated, considerable delays marred the revision process due to a lack of consensus on *what* and *how* to teach.³⁷¹ A first step towards re-introducing the teaching of the national history in Rwandan schools was the publication of revised syllabi in the second half of the 1990s. New government's directives were issued in 1996 and again in 2000 for the upper secondary level, in 1997 for the upper primary level, and in 1998 for the lower secondary level.³⁷² Awaiting consensus, these documents consisted in simple lists of topics devoid of detailed contents and guidelines. As observed by Gasanabo, the content of the newly designed course, although rather vague, appeared to greatly diverge from the pre-genocide curricula, especially at the secondary level. First of all, in addressing Rwanda's pre-colonial history, all references to ethnicity or tribe, as well as to successive migration waves of Twa, Hutu and Tutsi, were removed. Secondly, in its treatment of the colonial time, the new curriculum introduced the topics of forced labour and taxes. It thereby emphasised the colonial responsibility in creating or strengthening inequalities and social discontent. Thirdly, with regard to the 1959-1962 period, the new curriculum no longer underscored the 1959 revolution, the Bahutu Manifesto and the victory of Parmehutu. It instead insisted on the violence, the socio-political troubles, the illegal destitution of UNAR's Tutsi and Hutu authorities, and the crisis of national unity which had marked these watershed years. Fourthly, as far as post-colonial Rwanda is concerned, instead of glorifying the First and Second Republics, the syllabus included references to the dictatorship of the *parties uniques* Parmehutu and MRND. It highlighted their politics of ethnisism, regionalism, exclusion and impunity, as well as the unresolved refugee problem. Finally, in relation to the more recent violent past, the curriculum mentioned the

Commission for UNESCO (CNRU), *Rapport général du séminaire-atelier de formation des coordinateurs des écoles associées de l'UNESCO au Rwanda* (Kigali, 31 May - 1 June 2001), 12 [www.grandslacs.net/doc/2971.pdf] (last accessed on 11/07/2010).

³⁷¹ In 2002, MINEDUC recommended starting to reform history teaching by incorporating into the curriculum those themes on which consensus could be reached, while temporarily suspending the teaching of particularly sensitive and controversial topics. *Rapport sur la conférence nationale du curriculum du 14 au 15 mai 2002*, in Gasanabo, 79. The aim, according to the Ministry's *Education sector policy* was to teach 'the true history of Rwanda'. 4.

³⁷² Upper-primary Civic Education programmes were also revised in 1997, and again in 2002. The Political Education programme for the upper secondary level was revised in 1999. This reform followed a series of seminars that were held on the revision and harmonisation of secondary and primary school curricula in April-May and September-October 1996, respectively. United Nations, *Rwanda. United Nation situation report* (Kigali 1996).

1990-1994 war (i.e. its causes, course, the Arusha Accords, and Habyarimana's death) and the genocide (i.e. its preparation, course, and consequences). It further cited the government of national unity, and the necessity to restore national unity and external relations.³⁷³ Confirming the challenges of teaching the national history in Rwandan schools, the 1996 and 1998 curricula included three noteworthy recommendations. The authors advised Rwandan educators to 'teach only established facts and discard hypotheses e.g. African migrations before 1000 AD'. They also stressed the need to form 'a team of experts to review the existing books and correct the history of Rwanda', and to 'organise urgently seminars on the history of Rwanda for all history teachers in the country.'³⁷⁴

Despite the publication of revised curricula, a virtual moratorium was apparently maintained in Rwandan classrooms. Lacking adequate references, training, and guidance, teachers had reportedly been reluctant to take it upon themselves to decide what to teach about the country's past. According to available evidence, teachers commonly avoided addressing highly sensitive issues. They have instead been found to either focus on aspects of the national history which were 'safer ground', or to omit this topic altogether and to exclusively deal with world and, especially, European history.³⁷⁵ Similar challenges were encountered in teaching the newly introduced courses of civics and political education, which also covered the topics of ethnic divisionism and the genocide. African Rights reported that, left to their own devices, teachers had to rely on old exercise books, newspapers articles, and leaflets produced by NGOs.³⁷⁶ In 2004, Freedman et al. observed persisting discomfort in addressing controversial aspects of the national history in the classroom, especially in relation to issues of origins and ethnicity.³⁷⁷

³⁷³ See also, Gasanabo, 80-83.

³⁷⁴ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education/ Direction of Studies and Pedagogical Research, *History teaching programme: humanities section* (Kigali: Division of Programmes for Studies of Secondary Education, April 1996), 50; and *Ordinary level history programme* (Kigali, August 1998), 28.

³⁷⁵ Obura, 3, 18, 99-106; and Weinstein et al., 56.

³⁷⁶ African Rights, *The heart*, 9-21. The challenges faced by educators have been poignantly illustrated by a secondary school teacher. In an interview, he said that in the political education curriculum, "[t]here is a chapter on the genocide with the sub-headings: "Preparation; Planning; Execution and The End of the Genocide and Liberation of the People of Rwanda." And he continued by rhetorically asking, "How can one approach such topics without references?" Ibid., 40.

³⁷⁷ As reported by the authors, '[t]wo-thirds of our interviewees (67 percent) said, at some point in their interview, that they felt that the topic of ethnicity should be ignored in the schools, while about half (48

Confronted with a situation where ‘so little was known’, teachers were found to ‘want facts’ and to feel a ‘strong need for “truth” about any narratives that entered the classroom’.³⁷⁸ Two years later, research conducted by IRDP confirmed the continued challenges faced by Rwandan teachers as well as their wish for official guidelines. A teacher who was interviewed by IRDP explained that, ‘[w]ithout reference books, the teacher must document himself to teach what goes in the government’s line’.³⁷⁹ In informal conversations that were held in 2008 in the framework of the present study, several teachers and school directors demonstrated unresolved feelings of distress and unease with the still largely unsettled issue of history teaching. The director of a secondary school in Kigali outlined the difficulties encountered by teachers today. He explained that, in the absence of official schoolbooks on Rwanda’s history, ‘teachers must manage with whatever they find, including curricula, articles, books, their personal experience, and what they might recall from their own school time.’³⁸⁰ The testimony brought by the director of a primary school in Kigali is particularly telling of the challenges related to teaching the sensitive national history in the absence of appropriate guidelines. As he recounted,

*‘We try to teach it, although there are some teachers that abstain from addressing some chapters of the history of Rwanda because of the difficulties attached to it. The issue of ethnicity is for instance a matter of great controversy. I was once asked by a teacher in my school to give a class on this chapter because she did not know how to approach the subject. Although I am not proficient in history, I have done my own research on the issue. I found that some people think Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa are ethnic groups, but that in reality they were just social classes and it was especially the Belgians that transformed them into ethnic groups’.*³⁸¹

Echoing some of the findings that will be presented in Chapter 5, IRDP also reported the dissatisfaction of several students, including genocide survivors and returnees, with a situation whereby the national history had been insufficiently taught or not taught at all. For the former, ‘the absence of information on the genocide is an insult’; for the latter, the failure of schools to adequately address

percent) said that it should be addressed and 25 percent voiced both points of view (Freedman et al. 2004, 56–57).’ ‘Teaching,’ 678-679.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 677.

³⁷⁹ IRDP.

³⁸⁰ Personal communication, prefects of studies of two secondary schools in Nyarugenge, Kigali, 29/08/08.

³⁸¹ Personal communication, primary school in Nyamirambo, Nyarugenge, Kigali, 22/08/08.

Rwandan history had regrettably deprived them of an opportunity to learn about their native country.³⁸²

A significant turning point was marked by the launch of a history resources development project in 2003. The project was developed by the American NGO Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO), in partnership with UC-Berkeley Human Rights Center, NUR, and the Rwandan National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC).³⁸³ The initiative was prompted by a Berkeley's study which had revealed an increasing impatience with the government's failure to lift the moratorium despite the recognised potential of history teaching towards promoting social reconstruction.³⁸⁴ The project brought together a group of over forty teachers, historians and government officials, led by the distinguished Rwandan historian Byanafashe. Their collaborative work resulted in the 2008 publication of the secondary school history resource book *The Teaching of History of Rwanda: A Participatory Approach*.³⁸⁵ The publication included materials and sample lessons on four controversial historical cases which had been developed based on democratic pedagogy. As part of the project, guidelines were also developed and teacher seminars organised on participatory and democratic teaching methods.³⁸⁶ In a recent report, the former American partners documented that introducing a democratic pedagogy and a critical methodology that would

³⁸² IRDP, 'The issue of teaching history,' *Histoire et conflits*, 347. Also, as reported by IRDP, according to teachers' testimonies, ethnicity appeared to be a determinant factor of pupils' interests. According to the author, 'Hutus will ask more questions about the reasons why kings were always Tutsis. Tutsis will show more interest on the causes of exile of king Kigeli V Ndahindurwa, the death of king Mutara III Rudahigwa.' 348. Citing African Rights, *The heart*, 23-24. See also, Gasanabo, 'L'histoire à l'école au Rwanda-post-génocide: défis et perspectives,' *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 24 (2002), 81.

³⁸³ FHAO is an NGO which provides 'support to educators and students...in a critical examination of history, with particular focus on genocide and mass violence' (www.facinghistory.org/campus/reslib.nsf/sub/aboutus/historymission).

³⁸⁴ Freedman et al., 'Confronting'; Weinstein et al.

³⁸⁵ Republic of Rwanda, MINEDUC/University of California, *The teaching of history of Rwanda: a participatory approach. For secondary schools in Rwanda: a reference book for the teacher* (Kigali: MINEDUC/NCDC/University of California 2006) [www.hrcberkeley.org/specialprojects] (last accessed on 11/11/2011).

³⁸⁶ Freedman, Weinstein & Longman, 'Education for reconciliation: creating a history curriculum after genocide.' Final narrative and financial report (Berkeley 2007), 14-18. By 2008, 250 teachers had been involved in the project. In a context in which 'honest and direct discussion of Rwandan history was potentially fraught with danger' (682), teachers were introduced to a technique of 'distancing' as an entry-point to 'discussing personally highly emotional and controversial topics through the lens of distanced material.' As the authors explained, '[b]y talking through a fable or a poem or another history, we then moved toward making connections to Rwanda.' 680.

encourage open debate and multiperspectivity in history had faced significant resistance in post-genocide Rwanda.³⁸⁷

Practical constraints such as large classes, scarce teaching materials, and traditional examinations, were not the only factors hindering the application of democratic teaching methods in Rwanda. Their application was reportedly also obstructed by a fear among Rwandan teachers to embrace the new methodology, especially when it came to discussing ethnicity in the classroom. Teachers seemed to fear that applying these methods when dealing with sensitive issues could provoke tensions and possibly lead to renewed violence. They likewise proved to be wary of a risk of being accused of harbouring and propagating the ‘genocide ideology’ and of thereby endangering the national unity. Caution among the school personnel heightened following the 2007 release of a parliamentary report which had brought to light alarming levels of genocide ideology in several secondary schools around the country. During the enquiry, several teachers were found guilty of using old history and language textbooks which were believed to incite divisionism and hatred.³⁸⁸ The condemned books were subsequently confiscated by the MoE because supposedly conveying the extremist discourse associated to the former regimes.³⁸⁹ In the context of growing zero-tolerance

³⁸⁷ Freedman et al., ‘Education’; ‘Confronting’; ‘Teaching’; and Weinstein et al.

³⁸⁸ Of the 32 schools visited by the Commission, 26 were found to be undermined by genocide ideology. In March 2008, *The New Times* spoke of ‘damning revelations on the extent of genocide ideology in some schools, with some secondary schools registering 97 percent cases of the ideology.’ Concomitantly, the then Minister of Education faced accusations of possibly harbouring genocide ideology due to her passivity in front of the alarming situation. J. Buyinza & F. Mutesi, ‘Genocide ideology? Lawmakers form another ad-hoc commission,’ *The new times* (21/03/2008). See also, BBC News, ‘Rwanda “still teaching genocide”’ (17/01/2008) [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7194827.stm] (last accessed on 04/08/2010); and See also, M. Bineta, ‘La lutte contre l’idéologie génocidaire paralyse les enseignants,’ *Syfia Grands Lacs* (27/03/2008) [syfia-grands-lacs.info/index.php5?view=articles&action=voir&idArticle=935] (last accessed on 24/05/2010). In an informal conversation held in Kigali in 2008, a NURC staff member explained that ‘the genocide ideology was found everywhere in the country and included both teachers and students’. According to the interlocutor, ‘students tend to get the ideology from the school, their parents or their community’. Based on the understanding of the primary role of educators in transmitting such ideology, NURC specifically targeted teachers as a strategy to fight against it. Another staff member recounted how, ‘during the NURC sessions, teachers seemed not to know many historical facts, especially the pre-colonial history of unity. They only knew what the colonial historiography propagated, which focused on ethnic differences, different origins, while they were not aware of our similarities. We bring them some historical facts. We went to schools around the country to teach about Rwandan unity, reconciliation, and government policies.’ Asked about how the sensitive issue of ethnicity is being addressed, he stated that, ‘personally I don’t tell them to forget they are Hutu, Tutsi or Twa, but we make them understand that such an attitude will not help them, that it is much more beneficial to see themselves as Rwandans.’ Personal communication, Kigali, 18/08/08.

³⁸⁹ According to the Rwandan parliamentarians, since ‘the ideology is taught from textbooks used since the previous regimes’, they should be eliminated. Bineta, ‘La lutte’. In a conversation held in summer 2008, a teacher at a Kigaly-based secondary school confirmed that, while world history was taught and examined, the

towards the circulation of illegitimate narratives in educational institutions, the American organisations reported having been faced with ‘increasing narrowness of perspectives’ among the project participants.³⁹⁰ They also regretted a distancing from the project by what they depicted as an increasingly authoritarian and repressive government.³⁹¹ In a 2008 article, the authors commented that, ‘[t]he inability to discuss issues of identity, the distortions of a history that the government wishes to tell, the constraints against teaching students how to be critical thinkers, and, above all, the fear of productive conflict have profound implications for the establishment of a healthy democracy’ and for the prospects of achieving ‘sustainable, positive peace’ in Rwanda.³⁹² Speaking of an inevitably ‘flawed’ history teaching, Freedman et al. lamented the dangerous continuation of a tradition of ‘unquestioning acceptance of common lessons’ in a setting in which there is ‘no room for multiple points of view’.³⁹³

It is against this backdrop that, in 2008 and 2010, the MoE finally published new history curricula for the lower and upper secondary school levels, respectively.³⁹⁴ Recently, the secondary school history course has additionally been supported by the first didactic materials ever produced since the end of the genocide. These most notably include the 2010 teacher’s guide *The History of Rwanda. A Participatory Approach* (168pp), the title of which is reminiscent of the 2008 American-sponsored resource book. As for the primary level, history is no longer taught as a standalone subject. Historical notions are now integrated into a newly designed course in Social Studies.³⁹⁵

teaching of Rwandan history, especially since the parliamentary report and the confiscation of all books, had been officially banned from secondary schools, awaiting new curriculum and textbooks that were due for publishing the following year. Personal communication, Kigali, 28/08/08.

³⁹⁰ Freedman et al., ‘Teaching,’ 685. This changed attitude was manifest, for instance, in calls for prudence made by a participating historian as well as in the labelling of ‘ethnicity and stories of origin a “taboo subject”’ by seminar participants. 679. As suggested by the authors, ‘[i]n Rwanda, the policy of denying the reality of ethnicity and the inability to discuss ethnicity comfortably make it hard for everyday citizens to process what happened during the genocide and to talk about lingering fears and dangers. Unless that policy is addressed and remedied, the teaching of Rwanda’s history will be flawed, and the potential for further destructive conflict will remain a concern.’ 685.

³⁹¹ Both the MoE and the NCDC director were subsequently replaced. According to Freedman et al., after having initially ‘refused to use the allocated money for printing the training materials... [the new minister] began his own project. Ibid., 685-686; Weinstein et al., 64-65; and Freedman et al., ‘Confronting’, 260-262.

³⁹² Ibid., 684-685.

³⁹³ Ibid..

³⁹⁴ They were respectively implemented since 2009 and since 2011.

³⁹⁵ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, NCDC, *Social Studies curriculum, grade 1-6* (88pp).

In the paragraphs below, the present study proposes an analysis of the new educational material. The aim is to bring to light some of the most prominent changes that have been introduced since the 1990s.³⁹⁶ The analysis explores issues related to the authorship, structure and organisation of these documents, as well as the pedagogic approaches, aims and contents which they outline. It subsequently examines in more detail the representation of the national history as presented in post-genocide curricula and textbooks, with a focus on some of its more controversial and sensitive topics.

2.4.3.4.1 General remarks on post-genocide curricula and textbooks

i. Authorship

A preliminary comparison between the history curricula of 1996-1998 and 2008-2010 revealed a first difference at the level of authorship. Overall, the newest curricula appear to be more transparent about the identity of their authors, as well as to include a larger and more varied range of contributors.

The 1996 programme was silent on the identity of its authors. The 1998 version instead reported having been developed by a six-member History Commission chaired by the Rwandan Historian G. Mbonimana.³⁹⁷ Compared to the curricula of the 1990s, the latest curricula of 2008 and 2010 list a much larger number of authors, i.e. eighteen and thirteen respectively. The two teams encompassed supervisors, curriculum developers, teachers, and academic consultants, including two NUR historians, among whom was Professor Byanafashe.³⁹⁸ For the most

³⁹⁶ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education/ Direction of Studies and Pedagogical Research, *History teaching programme: humanities section (also Languages section)* (Kigali: Division of Programmes for Studies of Secondary Education, April 1996) (63pp); and Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education/ Direction of Studies and Pedagogical Research, *Ordinary level history programme* (Kigali, August 1998) (31pp). Compared to the Humanities/ Languages sections, the curriculum for the TTC has a reduced coverage of the study of history (38pp). Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education/ NCDC, *History program for Ordinary Level* (Kigali: MINEDUC, August 2008) (81pp); and, Ministry of Education/NCDC, *History program for Advanced Level. Secondary school* (Kigali, June 2010) (65pp). NCDC, *The history of Rwanda: a participatory approach – Teacher's guide for secondary schools* (Kigali: NCDC, 2010).

³⁹⁷ 1998 curriculum, 29.

³⁹⁸ Participants in the 2008 version included two supervisors (Charles Gahima and Augustin Gatera from NCDC), 4 curriculum developers, 9 teachers from various schools in the country, and 3 consultants, including two historians from NUR and one from KIE. Participants in the 2010 version included the same two supervisors, 3 of the 4 curriculum developers, and 8 instead of 9 teachers, of whom 7 were the same ones.

part, it were these same authors who participated in the writing of the 2010 teacher's guide *The History of Rwanda*.³⁹⁹

ii. Structure and organisation

Compared to the curricula of the 1990s, the latest versions of these documents present a more comprehensive and detailed structure. They go beyond a mere specification of selected topics and objectives.⁴⁰⁰ The current curricula include the following features:

- an outline of general aims and orientations, and general objectives for each grade;
- various chapters and topics, and relative time allocation;
- a three-column chart detailing specific objectives, content, and teaching and learning activities (TLAs);
- a list of methodological notes, including teaching and learning aids, and a description of the evaluation/assessment approach to be adopted; and,
- bibliographic references.

A review of the references mentioned in the post-genocide curricula revealed significant changes. Of the 26 and 11 publications included respectively in the bibliographic list in the 1996 and 1998 curricula, none concerned the national history.⁴⁰¹ Today, of the ca. 50 references that are listed in the latest curricula, nearly half address Rwanda's history. The large majority of these publications cover the pre-colonial and colonial periods.⁴⁰² Conversely, works on Rwanda's more recent history are largely absent. In the 2008 version, apart from two

³⁹⁹ All the 15 Rwandans who participated in the drafting of the guide had also participated in the development of the 2008 curriculum. Participants included a coordinator and a supervisor, three curriculum developers, and ten secondary school teachers.

⁴⁰⁰ The 1996 curriculum, in particular, failed to specify general objectives per class, time allocation, number of chapters, and TLAs. At times, the document presented mistakes and an illogical structure.

⁴⁰¹ In the 1996 and 1998 curricula respectively, bibliographic references included sixteen and three publications on world/European history, and ten and eight on African history. 1996 curriculum, 60-63; 1998 curriculum, 29.

⁴⁰² On pre-colonial Rwanda, references include colonial literature by A. Kagame, Maquet, D'Hertefeldt, de Heusch, and Coupez, published mainly in Brussels and Tervuren in the 1950s-1970s. The most recent work mentioned in the 2008 curriculum is B. Muzungu's *Histoire du Rwanda pré-colonial* (Paris 2003). On Rwanda's colonial history, the works mentioned are mainly publications from the 1970s.

historical syntheses by Kagame (1975) and Lugan (1997),⁴⁰³ only three titles are listed in the bibliography in relation to the post-colonial time. The focus is primarily on the genocide, and, more specifically, on the hate media and on the failure and complicity of the international community.⁴⁰⁴ With regard to the controversial past, the 2010 curriculum added three recent publications by IRDP. These deal with the Rwandan conflict, the 1946-1962 events, and the genocide.⁴⁰⁵

Today, the 2010 teacher's guide *The History of Rwanda* constitutes a new key source for teachers. The study of the national history proposed in the guide is organised around seven themes, each sub-divided in several units. Together, they cover the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Every unit outlines a series of objectives, methodological notes, and contents, and includes an evaluation section with correct answers. A number of complementary notes as well as coloured and unreferenced maps, pictures and tables, are provided to supplement the recounted narrative. The document ends with a list of 168 suggested publications for further reading. While extensive, this list appears to exclude works that are critical of the government.

iii. Pedagogic approach

As demonstrated by the newly introduced TLAs, the latest curricula seem to adopt a learner-centred and participatory pedagogic approach. Based on the understanding that 'history is not an evangelical speech', the curricula claim to nurture students' critical thinking skills.⁴⁰⁶ The suggested TLAs include individual research projects, group work, class discussions, and field trips.⁴⁰⁷ Under the guidance of the teacher, learners are expected to actively participate in the teaching and learning process. Pupils are required not only to describe given facts,

⁴⁰³ Kagame's *Un abrégé de l'histoire du Rwanda de 1853 à 1972* (Butare 1975) and Lugan's *Histoire du Rwanda. De la préhistoire à nos jours* (Vitry Bartillat 1997).

⁴⁰⁴ Chrétien (1995); and Dallaire (2003) and Willame (1996).

⁴⁰⁵ IRDP, *History and conflicts, Amatekan'amakimbirane, Genocide of the Tutsi*. Another addition consisted in the work by Kanimba Misago and Van Pee on *Rwanda its cultural heritage, past and present* (Kigali: Institute of National Museums of Rwanda 2008). 78.

⁴⁰⁶ 2008 curriculum, 73. See also 2010 curriculum, 60.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 18-20.

but also to observe, compare, analyse and synthesize, as well as to brainstorm and debate in the classroom. A strong emphasis is placed on encouraging students to analyse causes, consequences, changes, advantages and disadvantages, and achievements and failures. In order to support this more active and critical approach to history education, teachers are urged to resort to a variety of teaching aids, including documents, photos, pictures, maps, films, vestigial materials, and the internet. Educators are likewise advised to organise visits to places of historical significance, such as the national museum, and historical, archaeological and memorial sites.⁴⁰⁸ Next to a participatory methodology, the new curricula are characterised by the adoption of a competence-based approach which promotes not only knowledge, but also skills, values and attitudes.⁴⁰⁹

Although the objectives and activities stated in the curriculum appear to privilege an active learning process, the nature of the assessment favoured in this subject is not reflective of an adherence to the professed participatory and critical methodology. The evaluation questions presented in the teacher's guide, in particular, appear to be primarily focused on facts. Contrary to what is widely understood as good practice, the emphasis in history teaching in Rwanda continues to be placed on testing absorbed knowledge rather than on nurturing students' critical thinking and analytical skills.

iv. Aims of history teaching

A review of both the old and new curricula reveals a strong understanding of the aims of history teaching as being geared towards the development of civic and social attitudes. Among the four general objectives of history education that are

⁴⁰⁸ In the 1996 and 1998 curricula, the methodological notes underscored the importance of chronology, of locating events in time and space, of hierarchy (order of importance), of the use of didactic material, of actualisation (establish links/similarities between past and present events), and of 'resurrection' of the past through lively teaching. Among the methods mentioned were interrogation, inciting and transmission methods. Memory, comprehension, analysis and synthesis were again at the centre of continuous evaluation, with possible questions being open, true-or-false, multiple choice, filling-in questions and maps, and drawing graphs and tables. Notice that, spelling mistakes aside, the 1998 curriculum appears to be written in better English than the 1996 document.

⁴⁰⁹ In the Social Studies course, competences are sub-divided into learning to know (knowledge), learning to do (skills), learning to be (values), and learning to live together (attitudes towards others). *Social Studies curriculum*, 21-22.

outlined in the latest curricula in particular, two fall under this category of aims.⁴¹⁰ They appear to be greatly concerned with promoting peace and good citizenship. The first stated aim is '[t]o live in harmony with others without ethnic distinction, religious distinction or other form of discrimination and exclusion that have caused problems in society like Tutsi genocide of 1994 (sic)'. The second is '[t]o promote the culture of peace, tolerance, reconciliation and patriotism among students in order to transform them in to (sic) good citizens.'⁴¹¹ Of the two remaining objectives, one concerns the development of general skills, namely the capacity '[t]o do his/her work with critical thinking';⁴¹² the other is related to the acquisition of substantive knowledge and disciplinary dispositions, i.e. '[t]o discover various human experiences'.⁴¹³

The aims and objectives of history education as understood by the MoE are likewise made clear in the teacher's guide. In its section on 'The importance of learning History', the social and civic relevance of this school subject is again underscored. Overall, according to the volume, while it 'sharpens our critical sense', learning history 'helps know the past, understand the present, and prepare for a better future'. More specifically, the guide argues that history allows to 'understand the nature of ... problems' and to 'avoid any errors' of the past. Furthermore, the study of history is presented as promoting moral values and justice, as well as 'mutual understanding, tolerance and peaceful co-existence' by educating pupils about the history, culture and values of different peoples. The guide additionally underlines the importance of studying history on account of its capacity to promote patriotism and nationalism. In its words, the study of history,

⁴¹⁰ 2008 curriculum, 6; 2010 curriculum, 3, 5.

⁴¹¹ Similarly, the 1998 curriculum included the following social and civic aims: '[t]o inculcate a culture of solidarity, interdependence, patriotism, tolerance and good relationship among the people'; 'to avoid any form of divisionism, regionalism, ethnicism and any other form of discrimination'; 'promote a culture of peace, democracy, free from any form of violence'. 3.

⁴¹² The 1996 curriculum mentioned the capability 'to make research, make critical judgement of events', and 'to develop a spirit of research, criticism and reasoning'. 2.

⁴¹³ i.e. '[t]o help the student develop an enquiry into human experiences' (1998 curriculum, 3), '[t]o sharpen the student's curiosity on different human experiences' (1996 curriculum, 2), as well as '[t]o help the student understand the evolution of his/her society and other societies' (1998 curriculum); '[w]idening the students knowledge in the world history from antiquity to the present day' (1996 curriculum); '[t]o help the student know the past to understand the present'; '[t]he student should be historically educated and be able to discern the truth from lies and know the reality of man's past' as well as '[t]o inculcate an appreciation of the importance of safe guarding historical data, sites and monuments' (1998 curriculum).

'instils in us a patriotic and nationalistic spirit. This spirit develops as we learn about our heroes and their heroic acts. We can quote here an example of King KIGELI IV RWABUGILI who is responsible for the expansion of Rwanda's frontiers. This will prompt pupils to emulate such examples in the defense of their country'.⁴¹⁴

v. Content and its organisation

The recent curriculum reform introduced radical changes at the level of teaching contents and their organisation. A geographical approach which dealt subsequently with the history of Rwanda, Africa, and the world has now been replaced with a more chronological and cross-regional approach.

In the old curricula, the study of the national history was condensed in the first year of the lower secondary level (S1). It was then largely repeated in the last year of the upper level (S6). Today, the study of Rwandan history is instead organised across the three years out of which the lower and upper cycles are respectively composed. In each cycle, the pre-colonial history is taught in the first year (in S1 and S4); the colonial history in the second year (in S2 and S5, and partly in S6); and the post-colonial history in the last year (in S3 and S6) (see table 2 below). Thanks to this new organisation, more hours are now allocated to the study of the national history. In the lower cycle, where history is a compulsory subject, the hours suggested for teaching about the country's past have increased from 54 (in 1998) to 77 (in 2008). While the time allocated to the study of the pre-colonial period has been reduced (from 32h to 23h), the hours dedicated to the colonial and post-colonial eras have significantly increased (from 12h to 30h, and from 10h to 24h, respectively). As for the upper cycle, where history is only taught in the humanities sections, a comparison cannot be drawn based on the information provided by the curricula due to a lack of specified time allocation in the 1996 document.

⁴¹⁴ NCDC, *The history of Rwanda* (henceforth abbreviated as 'TG'), 6-7.

Level	Old curriculum (1996 and 1998)	New curriculum (2008 and 2010)
S1	<i>Rwandan history</i> (pre-colonial, colonial and independent Rwanda)	<i>Pre-colonial Rwandan history</i> , and Africa until the 18 th c. (prehistory, ancient civilisations, and states and empires)
S2	African history until 1950s (pre-history, ancient civilisations, state and empires, the slave trade, and the 19 th and 20 th c.)	African and <i>Rwandan history</i> in the 19 th and 20 th c. (<i>colonial time</i>), and Western history in 19 th c.
S3	World contemporary history in the 19 th and 20 th c. (ending with the regional history of decolonisation)	Asian history in 1850s, and contemporary history in the 18 th c. (World Wars, decolonisation, and <i>independent Rwanda</i>)
	<u>Humanities sections</u>	<u>Humanities sections</u>
S4	World history and African history until the early colonial time (in teacher training colleges (TTC): <i>Rwandan history</i>)	Ancient time, Middle Ages, and Modern history <i>until the 19th c.</i> (European/world, African and <i>Rwandan</i>)
S5	World contemporary history (1789-1945) and Africa's colonial history (1884-1960), including several Rwandan topics (in TTC: World history and African colonial history)	Contemporary history in the 19 th and 20 th c. (until the early colonisation)
S6	Contemporary history (from 1945) and <i>Rwandan history</i> (1800-1994) (in TTC: Africa's decolonisation)	Africa's and <i>Rwanda's colonisation (Belgian), decolonisation and post-colonial history</i>

Table 2. Topics presented in post-1994 History curricula

At the secondary level, notions of Rwandan history have been conveyed in schools also through Political Education (PE).⁴¹⁵ The PE curriculum was revised in 2008. One of the fourteen general objectives of this course was '[t]o understand the political history of Rwanda and the need to defend the national independence'.⁴¹⁶ Extensively covered especially in S2, the study of Rwanda's political history through this subject was primarily aimed at comparing issues of governance and human rights in historical perspective (e.g. before and after the genocide). The overall intention was to educate young people about the importance of such values as good governance, unity, patriotism, and human rights, as well as to sensitise them to a civic responsibility to actively contribute to

⁴¹⁵ Notions on the national history were taught also in S3 through Geography in a section on historical sites.

⁴¹⁶ Another objective was '[t]o contribute to the preservation of good values within the Rwandan culture and the integration of positive aspects from without.' Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education/NCDC, *Political Education curriculum for secondary schools* (Kigali: MINEDUC, December 2008) (35pp), 4.

the triumph of these values.⁴¹⁷ In 2008/2009, the PE curriculum was supplemented by a two-volume reference guide for teachers (449pp).⁴¹⁸ Although the course was soon after eliminated from the school curriculum, this publication is likely to have remained a key reference for history teachers today.

As for the primary school level, since 2008/2009, Rwandan children have learnt about their country's history through the Social Studies course, especially in the last school year (P6). Organised around the central cross-grade theme of 'Unity, co-operation and development',⁴¹⁹ this course offers an introduction to the study of Rwandan history from the ancient times to the post-genocide era.⁴²⁰

It is relevant to note that, through the study of African history, which is addressed in all secondary school grades, students in Rwanda are provided with a few notions on the sub-regional history. Topics mentioned in the history curriculum include the region's pre-colonial kingdoms, states and empires,⁴²¹ the Atlantic and

⁴¹⁷ While mainly taught in S2, in S1, a section is presented on Rwanda's traditional society, i.e. its founders, administrative and political organisation, and positive traditional values. Also, in a module on human rights and international humanitarian law, a TLA explains that, '[t]hrough group discussions or by means of dialogue, [teachers should] allow students to identify some cases of violation of HR and IHL in the history of Rwanda or elsewhere in the world'. 8. Several notions, such as the decolonisation and the liberation war, are likewise present in S5.

⁴¹⁸ Republic of Rwanda, MoE/NDCCD, *Political education for secondary schools - A guide to political education. Daily life skills for secondary schools in Rwanda* (Kigali 2008, reprinted in 2009), *Book 1* (for lower secondary, 182pp) and *Book 2* (for upper secondary, 267pp). As reported in the book, '[t]he organisation of themes and modules does not fully correspond to the chapters of the political education course as presented in the curriculum.' 8. This guide was elaborated by NCDC in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Apart from curriculum developers, participants (47 for Book 1 and 42 for Book 2) included members of institutes of higher education, ministries, national commissions, religious dominations, and international organisations, as well as teachers for the second volume only. Participants in the development of the first volume included a 3-member coordination/supervision team, 25 curriculum developers, 12 other participants (from NURC, KIE, ICRC, Conférence Episcopale du Rwanda, Ministry of Gender and Women in Development, National Commission for Human Rights, and secondary schools), and 7 consultants from KIE. As for the second volume, participants included the same coordination team, 1 facilitator, 23 curriculum developers (largely the same), 3 teachers, 4 experts (from NURC, NCHR, Migeprof, Mineduc), 7 other participants (NURC, MINEDUC, Inspectorate General of Education, Rwanda Muslims Association, ICRC, Eglise Adventiste du 7eme jour, and Protestant Council of Rwanda), and one consultant from KIE.

⁴¹⁹ This theme is addressed in each of the six grades at progressively enlarging geographical levels – respectively, the home and the village, the school and the community, the sector, the district, the province, and the country.

⁴²⁰ History-related topics include the pre-colonial organisation; the origins, causes and impact of German and Belgian colonisation, as well as acts of anti-colonial resistance; the course of and roles in the decolonisation process and the achievement of independence; Kayibanda's First Republic; the meaning, causes, consequences and end of the genocide, and its aftermath (with a focus on the reconciliation process 'based on justice'), as well as a comparison with other such instances. With regard to historical themes, the competence 'Learning to know' requires knowledge of the effects of colonisation as well as the genocide. The competences 'Learning to do' and 'Learning to be' instead require understanding and demonstrating leadership qualities.

⁴²¹ I.e. the Kongo Kingdom (Lunda and Luba, were instead present only in the old curriculum), Burundi, Buganda and Bunyoro, East African coastal sultanates, Zanzibar, the Nyamwezi, and Ngoni migration.

East African slave trade,⁴²² Western explorations,⁴²³ colonial systems and instances of collaboration and resistance,⁴²⁴ the decolonisation,⁴²⁵ and the process of regional integration.⁴²⁶ Until its recent suppression, the PE course too dealt with the history of Africa before and after independence. Besides themes related to Africa's pre-colonial and colonial organisation and its independence movements,⁴²⁷ the curriculum addressed the topic of wars in Central Africa, including their causes and consequences, as well as the issue of human rights protection.

2.4.3.4.2 Content analysis: Rwandan history according to post-genocide secondary school history curricula and textbooks

This section proposes an in-depth analysis of the contents of the history course with regard to the country's ancient and recent past. The analysis is based on a review of the recent curricula and, in particular, of the 2010 history teacher's guide (henceforth also abbreviated as TG). This section aims to bring to light the extent to which school history in post-genocide Rwanda has reproduced the official discourse of the current authorities. For this purpose, the next four paragraphs examine this material's representation of the pre-colonial and colonial eras, of the decolonisation and the 1959 events, of the time of the two Republics, and of the war, the genocide, and their aftermath.

⁴²² I.e. Tippu Tip, Mirambo, and Msiri.

⁴²³ I.e. Stanley and Livingstone.

⁴²⁴ The former included Mutesa I of Buganda, and Lenana of Masai. The latter included Msiri in the DRC, Kabalega in Bunyoro, and Maji Maji in Tanzania. Mwezi Gisabo, Mwanga, Abushiri, and Ngoni were present in the old curriculum.

⁴²⁵ I.e. political parties and their leaders, and elections and independence in the DRC and Kenya. The cases of Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania were mentioned in the old curriculum.

⁴²⁶ E.g. CEPLG.

⁴²⁷ I.e. in DRC and Tanzania.

	Rwanda's national history in post-genocide curricula and teacher's guide (secondary education)
<p>Pre-colonial Rwanda 23h in S1 (2008) vs. 32h in S1 (1998) (+20h in S4 (2010))</p> <p>TG: 'Formation of the kingdom of Rwanda' (20pp); 'Civilisation of ancient Rwanda' (20pp): tot 40pp (preceded by a general introduction into the discipline (14pp))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sources of Rwandan history * Pre-history and ancient population/settlement * Origins, formation and expansion of the Kingdom of Rwanda until the 19th c. *The civilisation of ancient Rwanda (social, cultural, political, military and economic organisation)
<p>Colonial Rwanda 30h in S2 (2008) vs. 12h in S1 (1998) (+ 20h on German colonisation in S5 and 30h on Belgian colonisation and decolonisation in S5 (2010))</p> <p>TG: 'Rwanda under German colonisation 1897-1916' (20pp); 'Rwanda under Belgian administration 1916-1962' (33pp): tot. 53pp</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Rwanda during German colonisation (Rwanda's contact with the outside world, German occupation and administration, the coming of missionaries, the First World War in Rwanda, and assessment of German colonisation) *Rwanda under Belgian colonisation (Belgian military occupation, mandate, and trusteeship, colonial reforms and transformations, steps in the decolonisation including the 1959 events, and assessment of Belgian colonisation)
<p>Independent Rwanda 14h on I and II Republic + 10h on War and Genocide in S3 (2008) vs. 10h S1 (1998), and again in S6 (1996) (no time allocation) (+ 14h on I Rep, 25h on II Rep, 14h on War and Genocide in S6 (2010))</p> <p>TG: 'The First Republic (1962-1973)' (15pp); 'The Second Republic (1973-1994)' (12pp): tot 27pp; 'The Liberation War 1990-1994 and Genocide against the Tutsi' (16pp); (of which 4pp on the war, 3pp on the genocide, and 8pp on the 'Achievements of the Government of Rwanda after Genocide')</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The First Republic (political, economic and socio-cultural evolution, and assessment of achievements and failures) * The Second Republic (political, economic and socio-cultural evolution, and assessment of achievements and failures) * The war and the genocide (causes, course, and consequences, and the efforts of the Government of National Unity)

Table 3. Rwanda's national history in post-genocide curricula and teacher's guide

2.4.3.4.2.1 Pre-colonial history

The post-genocide history curricula and the TG extensively cover Rwanda's pre-colonial history. In relation to this period, the documents only vaguely address the controversial Twa, Hutu and Tutsi identities. In describing the social organisation of traditional Rwanda, the focus in the curricula is on the concepts of family, lineage, and clan. Conversely, all references to Twa, Hutu and Tutsi are omitted. Across the TG chapters on Rwanda's ancient times, these identity groups are

explicitly mentioned only once, *nota bene*, in quotation marks. Here, they are defined as ‘social classes’.⁴²⁸ More frequently, the text refers implicitly to these identities in terms of ‘social categories’ and ‘so-called ethnic groups’. No explanation is further provided as to the nature and meaning of these categories in the pre-colonial period.⁴²⁹ With regard to the origins of the Rwandan population and its settlement on the country’s territory, the guide briefly acknowledges the controversial nature of the topic. While the manual does not provide answers on the matter, it clears all doubts about old colonial hypotheses. In the TG, Western theories on the successive migrations of Twa, Bantu, and Hamitic are utterly discarded as ‘invented’ and ‘erroneous’ facts.⁴³⁰

As far as the ancient social relations are concerned, the didactic material puts great emphasis on outlining old practices and traditions which appear to demonstrate the population’s cohesion, solidarity, and symbiosis in the pre-colonial time.⁴³¹ Placed in this context, the controversial *ubuhake* system is presented in a predominantly positive light. In describing this form of ‘social, political and economic dependence’,⁴³² the guide underscores its ‘not obligatory’ nature and its foundation ‘on the principle of individual liberty’. Also, it underlines the fact that this practice ‘quite often generated special relations and sentiments of affection, faithfulness and respect between the patron and the client’. Insofar as a negative side of the *ubuhake* contract is recognised, this acknowledgement refers only to its termination or breach and not to its inherent nature. According to the guide, ‘Ubugabo had its own inconveniences because

⁴²⁸ In a section on the traditional (military) education and training ‘Itorero’, the guide describes Hutu, Tutsi and Twa as ‘social classes’. In its words, ‘all Rwandan social classes participated in this “itorero”, “Tutsi”, “Hutu” or “Twa”. It was not a monopoly of any single social class.’ And it continues, at Itorero, young sons of chiefs ‘learnt and practiced such values as: generosity, courage, patriotism, the moral responsibility, self-discipline, the quality of being a man (ubugabo) etc...’ TG, 51.

⁴²⁹ In the Social Studies curriculum, Rwandan traditional society is described as having been characterised by ‘[o]ne language. One culture. One God’ and organised in ‘clans and social classes’. The latter, according to the guide, ‘were grouped according to their occupation, e.g. agriculturalist, cattle keepers, handcraft.’ 78.

⁴³⁰ TG, 26.

⁴³¹ One of the objective reported in the 2008 curriculum was to ‘show the elements which prove the existence of social cohesion’, 11. In a PE section on Rwanda’s traditional society, the curriculum also emphasises the traditional positive values of justice and reconciliation, unity and patriotism, moral integrity (“Ubugabo, ubupfura”), and peaceful resolution of conflicts. 7.

⁴³² Here, *Ubukonde*, or ‘clientelism based on land’ is also mentioned. This is said to have been clan/lineage-based. 56. The 2008 and 2010 curricula, as well, mention *Ubutwita* and *Ubudehe*, respectively.

once the patron-client contract was broken the client could be a victim of injustice and violence from the patron.’⁴³³

A strong emphasis is further placed on illustrating and celebrating the greatness and power of the Rwandan kingdom.⁴³⁴ Particular attention is paid to outlining the territorial expansion of ancient Rwanda, whose borders used to encompass considerable sections of today’s DRC and Uganda. In order to show the extent and stages of Rwanda’s expansionist process, as many as four maps are reproduced in the TG. One of them features on the book cover.⁴³⁵ In the account, two kings are especially exalted: Ruganzu II Ndori, described as the ‘founder of national unity’,⁴³⁶ and, more so, Kigeli IV Rwabugiri, depicted as ‘a great administrator’ and ‘a great conqueror’.⁴³⁷ Besides praising Rwanda’s monarchs, the history course glorifies the kingdom’s army for its ‘bravery and patriotism in different wars of conquest’.⁴³⁸ According to the guide, ‘[t]he army is one of the factors that made Rwandans a formidable people, feared and respected by her neighbours...The Rwandan army was organised in such a way that it could not be defeated.’⁴³⁹

While presenting an overall idyllic image of the ancient times, the new history course also specifies a number of ‘difficulties’ that had marked this period. These include the occurrence of factional conflict – i.e. the ‘sad events’ and ‘coup d’état’ of Rucunshu⁴⁴⁰, – wars with neighbouring countries, environmental hazards, and

⁴³³ TG, 55.

⁴³⁴ Presenting two different chronologies by Vansina and Kagame, the TG sub-divides Rwandan monarchic history into four periods after the kingdom’s foundation (‘mystic period’), namely the formation, consolidation, great expansion (18th-19th), and modern Rwanda. 28-30.

⁴³⁵ The map on the book cover reproduces the situation in 1896. It shows ‘the greatest extent of Rwanda’ compared to the present-day boundaries. *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-33. In the guide, Ruganzu Ndori is said to have ‘annexed’ Idjwi and ‘conquered’ North Kivu and Bufumbira.

⁴³⁷ Rwabugiri is said in the TG to have ‘exercised his authority over the whole Rwandan territory,’ and to have expanded the kingdom ‘as far as Lake Edward’. The guide also states that, ‘by the time of his death there was no more internal opposition like he had inherited at his reign.’ 34. In a new history textbook, Rwabugiri is portrayed as a brave and loving king, and his reign as an extraordinary period signalling the apex of Rwanda’s ancient past. E. Bamusananire & D. Ntege, *New junior secondary history book 1* (Kampala, n.d.), 29-31.

⁴³⁸ TLA, 2008 curriculum, 18; and TG, 31.

⁴³⁹ TG, 50.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35, 63.

certain old beliefs and practices. No allusion is instead made to instances of internal conflict or tensions within Rwandan society.

2.4.3.4.2 Colonial history

Concerning Rwanda's colonial history, the emphasis, especially in the newest curricula, is placed on describing and assessing the political, economic, social and cultural transformations that occurred during the different phases of German and Belgian colonisation.⁴⁴¹ In a 2008 TLA, a critical approach seems to be embraced, which encourages an analysis of both the positive and negative impact of the colonisation on Rwanda's traditional society. Here, the curriculum prompts the teacher to '[o]rganise a debate showing the good things and bad things that were done by the colonialists'.⁴⁴² Overall, however, the assessment provided by both the curricula and the TG appears predominantly negative, particularly when it comes to Belgian colonial rule.⁴⁴³

In the current history course, the German colonisation seems to receive a mixed assessment.

The TG cites several positive contributions made by the Germans at the level of infrastructural, economic, social, and cultural development in Rwanda.⁴⁴⁴ The image of German colonial rule is subsequently tarnished by condemning some of its misdeeds. The guide refers to the brutal and indiscriminate military campaigns of 'pacification of the North' and to the introduction of forced labour. According to the TG, during their campaigns, the Germans 'went burning anything they met. The result was massive famine which followed and this aggravated the situation for survivors of the German repression.' The guide adds that, '[a]t that time, [people] were also being obliged to provide food for them.'⁴⁴⁵ In addition to such

⁴⁴¹ These phases include: German occupation and military administration (1897-1906); German administration: protectorate, and indirect rule; WWI in Rwanda; Belgian military occupation (1916-1926); Belgian mandate (1926-1946); and Belgian trusteeship (1946-1962).

⁴⁴² 2008 curriculum, 43.

⁴⁴³ In the 2008 curriculum, for instance, teachers are advised to '[a]sk students to point out the achievements of German administration in Rwanda', as well as to '[s]tart a conversation with learners criticising the reform enterprises of the Belgian colonisers'. 39-40.

⁴⁴⁴ TG, 71-73. The TG also speaks of missionaries' achievements in the fields of education and health, knowledge production on Rwandan culture and language, and agriculture. 69-70.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

abuses, the manual underscores the kingdom's considerable territorial loss and the dispersal of its population that had resulted from the externally imposed border demarcations.⁴⁴⁶ The TG explains that, 'Rwanda lost a part equal to one half of its actual size. The Island of Ijwi, Bwishya and Gishari were annexed to Belgian Congo while Bufumbira went to Uganda.'⁴⁴⁷

The TG hints at the controversial issue of collaboration; at the same time, it omits all reference to cases of heroic anti-colonial resistance. First of all, the text traces the origins of the odious colonial rule to King Musinga's consent to relinquish the kingdom's sovereignty by signing a 'pact' that placed Rwanda under German Protectorate. In the guide, the circumstances and motives of the king's decision are not clearly outlined, thereby leaving unaddressed questions related to the reasons why Musinga accepted submission to foreign rule.⁴⁴⁸ While ambiguous towards the king's role in the advent of the colonisation, the TG openly acknowledges the collaborative stance of local chiefs. This stance is explained by claiming these actors' wish to retain power. In the authors' words, 'traditional chiefs who were happy to be retained in their authority collaborated with the colonial authorities to strengthen colonial power'.⁴⁴⁹ Considering the nationalistic tone that characterises much of its narrative, it is remarkable that the document falls short of criticising such collaborative attitudes. Instead, in the context of an abusive system of indirect rule, the booklet underscores the limited role of the local authorities as opposed to the primary responsibility of 'the whites'. 'In most cases', according to the authors, 'the locals were given implementing roles while the decision making was basically reserved for the Whites'. To a large extent, indigenous chiefs thus appear to be exculpated on account of their subaltern position of power vis-à-vis the dominant foreigners.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁴⁷ As the guide continues, '[d]uring the fixation of those frontiers using maps, neither local realities nor the structure of the local population were taken into account.' 66. According to the Social studies curriculum, one of the consequences of colonisation had been to have '[e]nded Rwandan territory expansion'. 78.

⁴⁴⁸ The TG merely states that, 'Captain Ramsay managed to make king Musinga accept to cede the sovereignty of Rwanda to the Germans'. 63-64.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 71.

Compared to the period under German administration, transformations that were introduced at the time of the Belgian Mandate are the object of a more extensive and detailed coverage in the history course.

From a positive perspective, the curricula and the TG all recognise the socio-economic progress that was promoted by the Belgians. They mention the construction of schools, churches, and hospitals, and the introduction of technical improvements in the agriculture sector. Although acknowledging such externally driven advancement, the TG explicitly denies the colonisation any praise for it. In the guide, positive colonial achievements in Rwanda are downplayed by underscoring their ‘accidental’ and ‘limited’ nature, as well as their reliance on Rwandan and Congolese resources as opposed to Belgian financial means. The document further stresses the primarily selfish rather than altruistic motives behind all colonial action. According to the authors, ‘Belgium did all to favour the interest of the Coloniser at the expense of the colonised country’.⁴⁵¹

In the TG, transformations that occurred in the political sphere are portrayed in a particularly negative light. The course highlights Belgium’s interference in Rwanda’s internal affairs and the consequent weakening of this once powerful kingdom. The extent of foreign meddling in Rwandan affairs is illustrated by mentioning the colonial dethronement of the unruly Musinga following his opposition to colonial and missionary activities.⁴⁵² The course additionally cites the abolition of traditional institutions and the further demarcation of the country’s boundaries.⁴⁵³ The curricula also strongly emphasise the policy of divide and rule and of ‘Tutsisation’ which was introduced with the Morthan reform of 1926-1932. The 2008 curriculum explains that the established system ‘favour[ed] some groups more than the others’ and, in so doing, ‘laid a basis for Genocide in Rwanda’.⁴⁵⁴ The TG elaborates on the identity of those who were either favoured or marginalised by this ‘discriminatory’ reform. In contrast to the arguments of the

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 109. The tone of the 2008 curriculum is less negative. According to the document, pupils should learn that ‘that the Belgian programs had good intentions or objectives but it was different in practice’. 45.

⁴⁵² Ibid., 86. In relation to King Musinga, the 2008 curriculum expects teachers to ‘[j]ustify the passive resistance of Musinga before the changing of the reforms initiated by the colonisers and slow destruction of the Kingdom.’ 40.

⁴⁵³ I.e. Gisaka affair and 1919 Orts-Milner convention.

⁴⁵⁴ 2008 Curriculum, 41.

extremist rhetoric, the guide does not generalise such roles along ‘ethnic’ lines. It rather alludes to a granting of privileges along social lines and to the application of the imposed marginalisation as cutting across the three identity groups. The manual takes distance from theories according to which the Tutsi had been collectively privileged by the Belgian administration. The authors explain that colonial policies ‘excluded the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa of modest background in favour of the Tutsi from well to do families.’ By doing so, colonial policies had reportedly ‘contributed to the destruction of unity among Rwandans and provoked frustration in a big part of the population which had lost hope of holding administrative positions.’⁴⁵⁵ The guide not only debunks the ‘erroneous’ theory of ‘a Tutsi monopoly of power’ by circumscribing local powerful circles to a restrained group of wealthy Tutsi individuals. It also seems to downplay the role and power of this group within the new system of indirect rule. The argument put forth by the authors holds that ‘through this reform, the traditional chiefs lost their power because they now performed their duties under duress of being dismissed if they performed poorly.’ According to the manual, ‘[t]hey became pure and simple agents of the Belgian colonial administration.’⁴⁵⁶ Once again, as mentioned earlier in relation to collaboration under German rule, by stressing the involuntary and subordinate nature of the role of traditional authorities, the TG thus appears to exempt local chiefs from any responsibility for actions they undertook at the service of their masters’ interests. This is particularly true with regard to the implementation of colonial exploitative practices, including forced labour (*uburetwa*) and compulsory crops and taxes, which occurred under the supervision of local chiefs. According to the guide, the pre-colonial practice of *uburetwa*, which under colonial rule had become increasingly oppressive, eventually compromised ‘traditionally good relations’ between the local chiefs, who had been ‘used’ by the colonisers, and the popular masses, who had been intolerably exploited.⁴⁵⁷ While failing to critically analyse the responsibility of the local

⁴⁵⁵ TG, 88.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 86. The guide further explains that, ‘[t]he abolition of the function of the traditional chiefs of land, cattle and army resulted in the exclusion of the Twa, Hutu and Tutsi of modest means from power and led to some quarters terming the arrangement “Tutsi monopoly” of power.’ 88.

⁴⁵⁷ In the authors’ words, ‘[t]he forced labour known as “uburetwa” in Kinyarwanda existed much before colonialism. It was in form of services...With colonisation, came imposition of new and many tasks...This meant services rendered in kind by the masses to the chiefs and not remunerated or just slightly

authorities in the denounced abuses and injustices sponsored by the colonisers, the guide underlines the prominent role of the king in the process that led to the abrogation of such lamentable practices. The document explains that in the colonial time the traditionally cohesive *ubuhake* ‘had become a cause for economic stagnation and it was likely to become a major source of social disturbances’. It is for this reason that *ubuhake* was abolished by King Rudahigwa, ‘while Belgium was still hesitant’.⁴⁵⁸ Author of the abolition of this abusive and destabilising practice, the king is additionally praised in the TG for his efforts ‘to resolve the ethnic problem which had arisen owing to Belgian administration manipulation’. Rudahigwa’s actions towards this goal included the creation of ‘a Committee to study the MuTutsi-Muhutu social problem’.⁴⁵⁹ No further clarification is given as to the way in which this measure was supposed to contribute to the resolution of the externally provoked ‘ethnic problem’.

2.4.3.4.2.3 The decolonisation and the 1959 events

The TG presents a sombre image of the events leading up to the country’s independence. In relation to this part of the national history, students today are expected ‘to find out that Rwanda’s independence was achieved with pain and difficulties’. They are furthermore required to know that the ‘decolonisation in Rwanda exacerbated ethnic divisions originally initiated by Belgian colonizers (sic).’⁴⁶⁰

In the various post-genocide history curricula, the 1959 events occupy a central place in the context of the decolonisation. Different expressions, all with negative connotations, are used to refer to these controversial occurrences. Post-genocide

remunerated...Those on forced labour saw in the colonial administration, a power that was oppressing them and that exploited them constantly using chiefs and subchiefs with whom they had already [always?] been having traditionally good relations.’ Ibid., 92-93.

⁴⁵⁸ The teacher ‘asks who abolished “ubuhake”’. Ibid., 100, 104.

⁴⁵⁹ In the evaluation section, the guide formulates the question: ‘[w]hat measures were taken by King Mutara III Rudahigwa to resolve the ethnic problem which had arisen owing to Belgian administration manipulation?’ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁶⁰ Here, the guide reproduces an unreferenced extract of a political speech of that time. This states that, “[w]e are all Rwandans...we are all brothers and sisters. We must all unite and work together instead of creating divisions between ourselves...”, Ibid., 103.

curricula variously speak of this period in terms of ‘[s]ocio-political troubles’, ‘political violence’, a ‘Rwandan crisis’, or, more vaguely, of ‘[u]nusual things that happened in 1959’.⁴⁶¹ They thus take distance from an understanding of the 1959 events as a social or Hutu ‘revolution’. Discussions are included on the causes, course, and consequences of the events. Roles of responsibility in the violence are clearly delineated. In accordance with the official view, the source of what is portrayed as a time of distress is traced to the divisionism that had been promoted by colonial and post-colonial political entrepreneurs. In the 2010 curriculum, fingers are pointed at colonial manipulations and at ‘political leaders [who] divided people according to ethnic differences’.

Echoing the content of the curriculum, the TG mainly blames the 1959 troubles on the Belgian authorities and on Hutu elites. The guide’s portrayal of this period reproduces the government’s view on the externally orchestrated nature of the ‘revolution’. Conversely, it distances itself from the formerly official interpretation of the events as a legitimate and genuinely popular uprising that had been organised against an oppressive ‘Tutsi’ oligarchy. In line with the current state rhetoric, the manual highlights the role of the Belgians in mobilizing the Hutu elite to write what ‘they’ called a ‘Hutu Manifesto’ and to protest against a so-called Tutsi monopoly on power. The authors depict this as a shrewd strategy that was meant to counter the local authorities’ demands for independence. This foreign interference, according to the TG, eventually ‘creat[ed]’ a longstanding ‘Hutu-Tutsi conflict’.⁴⁶²

In the context of the Hutu-Tutsi conflict engendered by the coloniser, the guide outlines a situation of shifting alliances. In its words, ‘the Colonial administration decided to switch sides and join the ranks of the Hutu’.⁴⁶³ This comment, which implies the colonisers’ previous alliance with ‘the Tutsi’ as opposed to ‘the Hutu’,

⁴⁶¹ These expressions are found, respectively, in the 1996, 1998, 2010, and 2008 curricula.

⁴⁶² TG, 103.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 104. The 2010 curriculum refers to a ‘[t]ransfer of allegiance from the Tutsi to the Hutu. A myth or a reality?’. 53.

appears to contradict the guide's earlier cautious suggestion about a connivance between the colonial masters and a privileged group of wealthy Tutsi.

The local actor that features prominently as the new ally of the Belgians is Parmehutu. In a disapproving tone, the movement is described as an 'ethnically formed' and 'highly partisan' party. Parmehutu, depicted as 'the darling child of the Belgian Trusteeship', is portrayed in a political struggle against the nationalist UNAR, which instead 'was feared by the colonial administration'.⁴⁶⁴ Besides underscoring the connivance between Parmehutu and the colonisers, the TG tarnishes the image of this party by blaming it for the 'devastating' 1959 events. The guide traces the origins of the events back to the violent incidents, or 'planned revolution', which had been sparked by members of Parmehutu as well as of Aprosoma. Their actions were directed 'against the Tutsi and members of UNAR', among whom were also several Hutu. According to the TG, these provocations had led to a violent reaction, or a 'failed' 'counter-revolution', by UNAR's members 'against the principal leaders of Parmehutu and Aprosoma'. In addition to assigning the primary responsibility for the violence to Parmehutu and Aprosoma, this description of the events emphasises the larger scope and the political and 'ethnic' nature of the violence committed by these two movements, as opposed to UNAR's targeted actions against the leaders of the rival parties. Once again, the guide reiterates the negative middling of the former colonial power in the unfortunate events that besieged Rwanda at the dawn of the colonisation. The authors explain that it was 'with the complicity of the Belgian power', and 'assisted by Colonel Logiest',⁴⁶⁵ that the 'Coup de Gitarama' eventually took place, illegally dismissing local authorities in favour of Parmehutu members.⁴⁶⁶

The guide's assessment of the Belgian colonisation reveals a strong focus on blaming the former colonial power for much of the internal troubles experienced

⁴⁶⁴ TG, 104-105.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 104-106.

⁴⁶⁶ The 1996 curriculum refers to '[t]he Tutsi and Hutu partisans of UNAR' in favour of 'Hutu and Tutsi non-partisans of UNAR'. 50. The 2010 curriculum instead speaks of the '[d]estitution of Tutsi authority and Hutu partisans of UNAR'. 54.

since the late 1950s. In the history course, Belgium's negative role in Rwandan history is deemed to have consisted in failing to prepare Rwandans for independence,⁴⁶⁷ as well as in irrevocably dividing the population by collaborating with one or the other group. Eventually, the guide argues, Belgian actions directly led to 'the first upheaval in Rwanda in 1959' and ultimately to 'the genocide against the Tutsi' in 1994. The authors show a clear understanding of the 1959 events as a fatal watershed moment which inaugurated four decades of division and tension. They suggest that, '[s]ince that time, ethnic division had continued to ravage the country which (sic) culminated into genocide (sic) against the Tutsi of April-July 1994.'⁴⁶⁸

2.4.3.4.2.4 The First and the Second Republic

In the new curricula and the TG, the analysis of the fundamental transformations that accompanied the colonial era is followed by a description and assessment of Rwanda's political, economic, and socio-cultural evolution under the two Republics. Contrary to the curricula of the 1990s, which overlooked the positive realisations of the previous governments, the newest material includes discussions on both the achievements and the failures and challenges that marked this period.

With regard to the achievements of the former regimes, the history course recognises a number of positive developments that had been promoted at the infrastructural, institutional, socio-economic, and diplomatic levels. This acknowledgment aside, the topics mentioned in the curricula point to a predominantly negative depiction of this historical juncture.⁴⁶⁹ In Rwandan schools today, the post-colonial era under the successive rule of Parmehutu and the MRND is portrayed as a period of bad governance. In the curricula, this era is associated to monopartism and dictatorship, and to the institutionalisation of ethnic and regional discrimination in favour of Hutu from the South and from the

⁴⁶⁷ The TG speaks of a 'deliberate lack of will by Belgium to train Rwandans intellectually [which] went hand in hand with the quasi-refusal to prepare Rwandans for political internal self rule.' TG, 109.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ While the general tone used in the TG towards the previous regimes was overwhelmingly negative, a curious positive remark was included with regard to the MRND. This was depicted as 'a "party State" whose objective was to unify, stimulate and intensify all efforts of all Rwandan people with a view on enhancing economic, social and cultural development in an atmosphere of national peace and unity.' TG, 128.

North respectively. The TG extensively explains that the ‘ethnicism’ and ‘regionalism’ that had marked this period were manifest in a ‘flawed’ quota system which was based on ‘injustice and incompetence’.⁴⁷⁰ The guide draws a direct link between such policies and the genocide. The authors argue that the ‘deplorable exclusion’ of the Tutsi and of Hutu from the South during the Second Republic not only ‘constituted a serious violation of human rights’; it also ‘went a long way into preparing for the culmination into genocide in 1994’.⁴⁷¹

The post-genocide history course emphasises the instability and insecurity that had marred the two Republics. According to the material, this period was marked by an unresolved refugee question, which had manifested itself in a series of *Inyenzi* attacks. It was also characterised by widespread violence and impunity. The curricula mention the ‘[p]hysical elimination of internal opposition’,⁴⁷² notably of UNAR and RADER leaders in the 1960s. They additionally cite the perpetration of ‘Tutsi massacres’.⁴⁷³ In line with the official discourse, the TG associates the massacres committed under the First Republic with ‘[t]he beginning of Genocide against the Tutsi’. Under this heading, a section in the guide accuses Kayibanda’s regime of having resorted to unrestrained ‘State terrorism against the entire BaTutsi’ in retaliation for the *Inyenzi* attacks.⁴⁷⁴ The TG thus takes clear distance from the pre-genocide materials, in which accusations of terrorism had instead been levelled against the *Inyenzi*. The guide further underscores the longstanding genocidal practices that had targeted the Tutsi community. It explains that the worst of such instances of state violence occurred in 1963-1964, when ‘systematic horrendous (sic) massacre (sic) characteristic of genocide and

⁴⁷⁰ The TG elaborates on this topic by including extensive tables on post-colonial discrimination in schools and in other sectors. TG, 116, 135-138.

⁴⁷¹ TG, 134. In an evaluation question that was quite exceptional in its eliciting of students’ personal opinions, the document asks: ‘[a]ccording to you, what kind of feelings could such criteria provoke in some categories of Rwandans?’ Ibid., 133. As also stated in a 2008 TLA, ‘[t]hrough exchange of ideas with learners define regionalism and ethnicism and show how they were (sic) conducted up to Genocide’. 64-65.

⁴⁷² 1996 curriculum, 52. According to the TG, the opposition was eliminated through ‘intimidation, arbitrary arrests, physical violence’. TG, 114.

⁴⁷³ 2010 curriculum, 56.

⁴⁷⁴ According to the guide, ‘[a]fter every “Inyenzi” attack, Tutsi inside the country would be killed. Those who would survive would seek asylum outside the country.’ The TG highlights the impunity that had accompanied the terroristic attacks by the State. In its words, ‘[t]hese crimes had emanated from the top ranks of the State and so nothing was done to bring the culprits to book.’ TG, 116-117.

ethnic cleansing were perpetrated against BaTutsi'.⁴⁷⁵ The subsequent 1973 violence, as well, is blamed on Kayibanda's renewed recourse to 'ethnic cleansing'. The guide recounts that this divertive strategy, which was meant 'to hide the [Hutu] divisions' by mobilising anti-Tutsi passions, eventually failed to achieve its objective. Soon, the TG comments, '[t]he Bahutu of the North started to resent and fight the Bahutu of the Central part of the country',⁴⁷⁶ leading to a coup and the fall of the First Republic.

2.4.3.4.2.5 The war, the genocide, and their aftermath

In today's Rwanda, the highly sensitive and controversial topics of the recent war and genocide are addressed in the history course. To a great extent, their representation in post-genocide educational material reflects the government's storyline.

The terminology used to refer to these events varies across the curricula. With regard to the 1990-1994 war, the terminological variation is minimal. All documents present the RPF's military campaign as a 'liberation war'. The only exception can be found in the 2008 curriculum. This simply refers to 'the war'.⁴⁷⁷ As for the 1994 mass violence, the curricula of the late 1990s speak of 'Genocide and Massacres' or simply of 'the Genocide'.⁴⁷⁸ In accordance with the government's discourse, the newest curricula instead refer more specifically to 'the Tutsi Genocide of 1994'.⁴⁷⁹

In dealing with the war, the curricula address its causes, course, and consequences. Its causes are primarily traced back to Habyarimana's bad

⁴⁷⁵ '...in Bugesera and Bufundu in the Prefecture of Gikongoro. More than 10,000 people were massacred in cold blood'. Here, the TG speaks of the First Republic's 'poor management of different crises'. Ibid, 115. The 1996 Curriculum instead refers to the 'bloody repression' perpetrated in Gikongoro and Bugesera. 51.

⁴⁷⁶ TG, 117.

⁴⁷⁷ 1996 (p54), 1998 (p10) and 2010 curricula (p58), and TG (p139). The 2008 curriculum instead merely speaks of 'the war'. 70.

⁴⁷⁸ 1996 (p54) and 1998 (p10) curricula, respectively. Also, the Social Studies curriculum speaks of 'the Genocide of 1994'. 81.

⁴⁷⁹ This is also referred to as '[t]he 1994 genocide against Tutsi'. 2008 (p70) and 2010 (p58) curricula. Here, a methodological note specifies that, '[f]or some historical themes, for example 'genocide' it is better not to treat such a subject during national mourning period i.e. during April - July so that learners will not be traumatised.' 2008 curriculum, 76; 2010 curriculum, 62.

governance. The curricula first of all point the finger at the government's mismanagement of a pressing refugee question. In an apparent bid to explain and justify the RPF's invasion in 1990, the course emphasises the refugees' hardship in exile and their rejection by the countries of asylum and of origin. The curricula also stress a situation of hardened dictatorship and discrimination which was manifest in the state repression of all political opposition.⁴⁸⁰ According to the authors, the regrettable situation urged action 'to safeguard the rights to life and freedom'.⁴⁸¹ In a context of justification of the RPF's war, a methodological note in the TG seems to encourage general attitudes of understanding and appreciation towards a military response to injustice. In the note, teachers are invited to 'prompt students to understand the fundamental (sic) essence of taking up arms to fight for the respect of the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms (sic), the right to develop as well as the right to the mother land.'⁴⁸² After placing the invasion against a backdrop of prevailing injustice, the guide underlines the righteousness of the RPF's motives for starting the war. The TG explains that under the leadership of the 'National Hero' Rwigema,⁴⁸³ '[t]he RPF wished to re-establish national unity in Rwanda, establish true democracy and put an end to the question of refugees and dictatorship which characterised the 1st and 2nd republics'.⁴⁸⁴ While exalting the aims and goals of the invasion, the guide appears careful not to tarnish the image of the now ruling RPF. The document omits all allusion to the civilian human losses that today are widely reported to have taken place during the RPF's various military campaigns. In describing the course of the war, the TG additionally blames Habyarimana's regime for the constant obstruction, violation, and resulting failure of the Arusha Peace process. According to the guide, after signing the Arusha accord, Habyarimana declared that the document was a 'mere piece of paper rubbish'. In defiance of the peace pledges made at the negotiation table, he also 'openly expressed congratulations

⁴⁸⁰ I.e., through imprisonment, assassinations, torture. TG, 140.

⁴⁸¹ 2008 curriculum, 70. For a review of the causes of the invasion as explained in the TG, see 140-141. Proposed teaching aids for this chapter include: texts on the peace negotiations, a documentary film on the RPF military campaigns, and pictures of 'the Principal National Heroes'.

⁴⁸² TG, 139. That being said, one of the objectives reported in the 2008 curriculum for S3 (which also deals with the two World Wars) is '[t]o show the disadvantages of the war and interest of future preventions of war'. 52.

⁴⁸³ TG, 139.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

to the Interahamwe killer militia of his MRND Party on the massacres they had just committed'.⁴⁸⁵

A review of the material developed in the 1990s and 2000s exposes a significant evolution of their contents. The curricula of the 1990s merely included a discussion on the definition and consequences of the genocide. The latest versions instead provide a more extensive and detailed coverage of this part of the country's recent past. Today, the lesson dedicated to this topic encompasses the following elements:

- i. a definition of 'genocide' as opposed for instance to 'massacres',⁴⁸⁶ and a comparison with other instances of genocide around the world;
- ii. an analysis of its causes, with a focus on the genocide ideology;⁴⁸⁷ this is presented as still persisting today in the form of negationism and revisionism;⁴⁸⁸
- iii. a description of its stages, i.e. the 'Planning and execution of extermination of Tutsi and Hutu that opposed to (sic) the genocide ideology',⁴⁸⁹
- iv. a review of the responsibility of various actors in the genocide, including the state, the international community, religious confessions, the media, and the local population;⁴⁹⁰ and,
- v. an assessment of its political, economic, social, and cultural consequences.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 142-143. As explained by the TG, after 1993 Arusha Accord, 'the "Broad-based Transition Government" failed to take off because Habyarimana refused to swear in the new government and Parliament in which RPF was to be part of.' 142. The 2008 curriculum mentions the massacres in Bigogwe, Ngororero, Bugesera. 71.

⁴⁸⁶ In a TLA, the 2008 curriculum asks to '[d]ifferentiate the inter-ethnic massacres and Genocide'. 71. Similarly, in the PE (p11) and SS (p81) course respectively, one of objectives of the section on the genocide was 'to distinguish Genocide from the other massive violations of the Human Rights', and between genocide and 'large scale massacres'. The TG defines the concept of genocide as 'a deliberate, systematic extermination of a human group for diverse reasons: ethnic, religious, regional, social and political'. 144.

⁴⁸⁷ 2008 curriculum, 71-72. The SS curriculum mentions such causes as bad governance and bad leadership, and the impact of colonisation. 81.

⁴⁸⁸ As recommended in a 2010 TLA, 'the teacher guides learners to identify the manifestations of negationism of genocide ideology in their community'. 58-59.

⁴⁸⁹ See also the brief chronology presented in the TG, 145-146.

⁴⁹⁰ In a TLA, the 2008 curriculum recommends that students, '[w]ith a discussion, establish the responsibilities of each actor in the preparation and execution of Genocide'. 72. Notice the rephrasing of this activity in the TG: '[t]hrough discussions in small groups, establish responsibility for each actor in the preparation and execution of genocide *against the Tutsi*' (italic added by the author). TG, 144.

From the 2008 curriculum and the TG it transpires that teaching about the genocide in today's Rwanda is primarily geared towards the prevention of a recurrence of the violence. Its aim, as defined in a TLA reported in the curriculum, is to 'tell [children] that it should never happen again.'⁴⁹²

Overall, the representation of the history of the conflict and of the genocide shows a marked resemblance with the arguments of the current official discourse. The official view is particularly evident in a paragraph in the TG which deals with the 'Distant causes' of the genocide. The recounted narrative situates the roots of the Tutsi genocide in the colonial time. The causes of the violence are traced back to the policy of divide and rule which had ethnicised the Tutsi and Hutu 'social categories'. The Belgians, especially, are deemed responsible for 'the first pogroms and massacres of 1959': *they* 'encouraged the Hutu to turn against the Tutsi'. The subsequent violent events of the 1960s and 1970s, depicted as 'massive killings of Tutsis' (or 'Tutsi massacres') and more generally as a crisis of national unity, are instead blamed directly on the government and its 'bad leadership' and 'poor governance'. The two post-colonial regimes are accused of having 'promoted divisionism created by colonialists'. The authors denounce the regimes' 'indoctrination of part of the population with extremist, genocidal ideology', notably through the media.⁴⁹³ The TG summarises its view on the root causes of Rwanda's troubled history with these words:

⁴⁹¹ In S2, the PE course also dealt with the genocide, including its '[d]efinition, Preparation (roles of the media), Execution, Stopping genocide and the liberation of Rwandan people, and Consequences'. 10-11.

⁴⁹² 2008 curriculum, 72. Among the teaching aids recommended for this lesson are films and pictures of genocide memorials. TG, 139.

⁴⁹³ On account of its comprehensiveness in reproducing the government's view of the history of the conflict and the genocide, the passage of the TG on the 'Distant causes' of the genocide is worth being mentioned at length. As the guide explains, '[t]he 1994 Genocide against Tutsi was a result of long process of violence, hate, injustice and division among Rwandans. It has roots from the colonial period. During this period, the colonial masters both German and Belgians deliberately applied a policy of divide and rule. The European colonisers took the Tutsi and Hutu as two distinct ethnic groups instead of looking at them as two social categories. With time, the Hutu came to internalise these divisionist European concepts. The Belgian colonisers encouraged the Hutu to turn against the Tutsi and this resulted in the first pogroms and massacres of 1959. From this time Rwanda refugees started seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Between 1961 and 1967, some of these exiles operated some incursions and attacks inside the Rwandan territory. The Government of the First Republic reacted by massive killings of Tutsis who had remained in the country. In 1973, other Tutsi massacres took place. Because of bad leadership during the first and the second Republic of Rwanda, leadership that promoted divisionism created by colonialists, the social fabric was torn and the national unity was highly compromised. Moreover, independent Rwanda experienced poor governance. It was

'Rwanda has had a troubled past caused by internal divisions. It all began when the colonial administration divided the society along ethnic lines in order to weaken it and thereby make its dominance possible. The post-colonial Kayibanda and Habyarimana administrations intensified this policy of divide and rule, and devised policies to marginalize and disenfranchise large sections of the community.' ... 'it can be firmly said that the distant causes of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi were: ethnic and regionalism policy, bad governance coupled with indoctrination of the population and the bad role played by an irresponsible press in the hands of power brokers'.⁴⁹⁴

The TG subsequently acknowledges Habyarimana's assassination as a key event which marked the 'immediate circumstances' of the violence.⁴⁹⁵ According to the guide, this incident signalled 'the beginning of genocide against the Tutsi and the killing of some Hutu who did not approve the government's political extremism.'⁴⁹⁶ In the text, responsibility for this still controversial event is assigned to Hutu extremists. The guide reports that the 'shooting was blamed to (sic) the President's own henchmen, led by Colonel Bagosora.' To support this argument, the TG refers to the contested official investigation into the events. 'This information,' the guide explains, 'was unearthed by the Mutsinzo led (sic) commission of inquiry'.⁴⁹⁷

Roles of responsibility, victimhood, and heroism in the mass violence are also clearly delineated in the history course. Blame is apportioned to 'the media and genocide planners', who incited the violence, and to 'soldiers of the presidential guards and Interahamwe militias', who carried out the 'systematic' killings. In the guide, only few names of culprits are mentioned. Fingers are pointed at Habyarimana's MRND government for having planned and executed the massacres.⁴⁹⁸ More specifically, the guide names Prime Minister Jean Kambanda and interim President Théodore Sindikubwabo for having incited hatred and for having called for a 'final solution'.⁴⁹⁹ With regard to the issue of victimhood, as

characterised by indoctrination of part of the population with extremist, genocidal ideology. It was marked by a divisionist press which preached ethnic hatred.' TG, 146.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 151.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 149.

⁴⁹⁶ Elsewhere in the text, the guide states that, '[t]his marked the beginning of the long planned genocide in which over one million souls perished.' Ibid., 145.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 142.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 149.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 144-145.

we have seen, the newest material speaks first of all of Tutsi genocide. It nonetheless recognises both the Tutsi population and Hutu opposition leaders as the victims of the repression.⁵⁰⁰ No mention is instead made of ordinary Hutu who lost or risked their lives while resisting orders to kill their neighbours. While circumscribing the direct victims of the 1994 massacres to a restricted group within society, the TG seems to convey a sense of collective victimhood when describing the consequences of the genocide. Here, the Rwandan nation as a whole appears as the victim of this ‘human disaster’ that had been caused by the *génocidaires*. In the authors’ words, ‘[a]lmost the entire population was either internally displaced or had been forced to flee to neighbouring countries by the perpetrators of the genocide’.⁵⁰¹ In the context of an apparent struggle between Good and Evil, the guide unambiguously ascribes a heroic role to the RPF. According to the guide, the RPF soldiers ‘stopped the genocide everywhere they scored victory over the genocidal forces.’⁵⁰²

Following a description of Rwanda’s recent troubled history, the TG moves to outline and praise the efforts and achievements made by the post-genocide government in rehabilitating a destroyed country and a ‘scarred nation’.⁵⁰³ Among the reported efforts is the promotion of good governance and democracy, national security, unity, reconciliation and justice, economic and social development, gender equality, and good diplomatic relations.⁵⁰⁴ The TG highlights the overall success of the government’s policies: it concludes that the Rwandan people today ‘live together in greater harmony and mutual respect than ever before.’

With regard to the issue of national security, the manual includes a few observations on the much criticised military campaigns that were conducted by

⁵⁰⁰ The 2008 curriculum speaks of an ‘extermination of Tutsi and Hutu opposition to the Genocide ideology’. 71-72.

⁵⁰¹ TG, 149. The TG further mentions such consequences of the genocide as: numerous cases of mutilations, HIV/AIDS, and traumatism; considerable numbers of widows and orphans, as well as of prisoners; extensive infrastructural and environmental destruction and economic decadence; and a tarnished national image.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 146.

⁵⁰³ In a methodological note, the TG requires students ‘to list down all the achievements of the Government of National Unity.’ 139; 149.

⁵⁰⁴ E.g. institutional reconstruction and decentralisation; refugee repatriation and DDR; and the promotion of meritocracy, Universal Primary Education, and free basic education. According to the TG, based on the understanding that ‘there can be no reconciliation without justice’, efforts by the government in this field had been ‘among its highest priorities’. 151.

the RPF in the immediate aftermath of the genocide. The guide refers to the security threat posed by ‘[r]emnants of the murderous Interahamwe and ex-FAR...looting property and harassing, raping and killing survivors of the genocide’. It subsequently underscores the particularly serious menace posed by the militant *génocidaires* that were harboured in refugee camps in the Kivu, from where they were attacking Rwanda ‘on a daily basis’.⁵⁰⁵ In line with an overall tendency to justify the government’s actions, the TG appears to legitimise and praise Rwanda’s military intervention in the DRC. In the authors’ words, ‘[w]hen the refugee settlements were dismantled the security situation improved slightly. However, it was only when the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA), now RDF began operations to seek and destroy Interahamwe and ex-FAR bases in the DRC in 1998 that peace and security were fully restored.’⁵⁰⁶ In relation to these operations, the guide omits all reference to human rights violations and crimes that were reportedly committed by RPA/RDF soldiers. Instead, the book argues that, ‘[t]he RDF maintained a high standard of discipline’.⁵⁰⁷

The TG appears particularly critical of the international community. Its authors highlight the irresponsible and even complicit role of some humanitarian NGOs in the violence. They suggest that these organisations not only ‘were not really interested in the moral and political rehabilitation work’; they had instead also ‘mingled themselves into the unfortunate events of the time.’⁵⁰⁸

In the three sections above, this chapter has illustrated that in the course of the decades, Rwanda experienced a remarkable evolution of its official discourse on history and identity. Time and again, the intense politics of history and identity to which the country has been regularly subjected deeply affected the education system. Conform past practices, schools today continue to be employed by the elites in power as means to shape the collective consciousness of the young generation. In the next section, this chapter will report some of the main findings

⁵⁰⁵ According to the TG, after the RPF’s victory, the massacres ‘were being exported to refugee camps and the Congolese part of the Kivu’. 150.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 148.

of the survey that was conducted among secondary school students between 2008 and 2011. Against the backdrop of a highly politicised setting in which little tolerance has been shown towards accounts that diverge from the official line, the following paragraphs will analyse the students' representations of their country's past and present. The analysis will enable to assess the government's success in enforcing its views and visions on the nation's young generation. In a subsequent section, the views expressed by Rwandan respondents will be compared to those presented by young people in neighbouring Burundi and DRC. The main purpose of this comparison will be to explore the extent to which Rwandan narratives are echoed or challenged across the border.

2.5 Representing Rwanda's past and present: an analysis of young people's views and perceptions

In Rwanda, a total of 1,001 young people participated in the field-based survey that was conducted between 2008 and 2011. Participants included 495 boys and 474 girls. 32 respondents did not specify their gender. They were drawn from nine secondary schools located across the country. They also included a group of secondary school graduates who in 2009 were attending an *Ingando* camp (see map 2). Of the 814 surveyed students, 304 were enrolled in the lower cycle and 510 in the upper cycle. The latter were enrolled in scientific, humanistic, pedagogic or technical streams. The surveyed pupils were born either before, during or after the genocide. Most were born between 1988 and 1995. At the time of the survey, they were aged between 13 and 20. Due to the considerable age discrepancies that characterise Rwandan classrooms today, among the participants

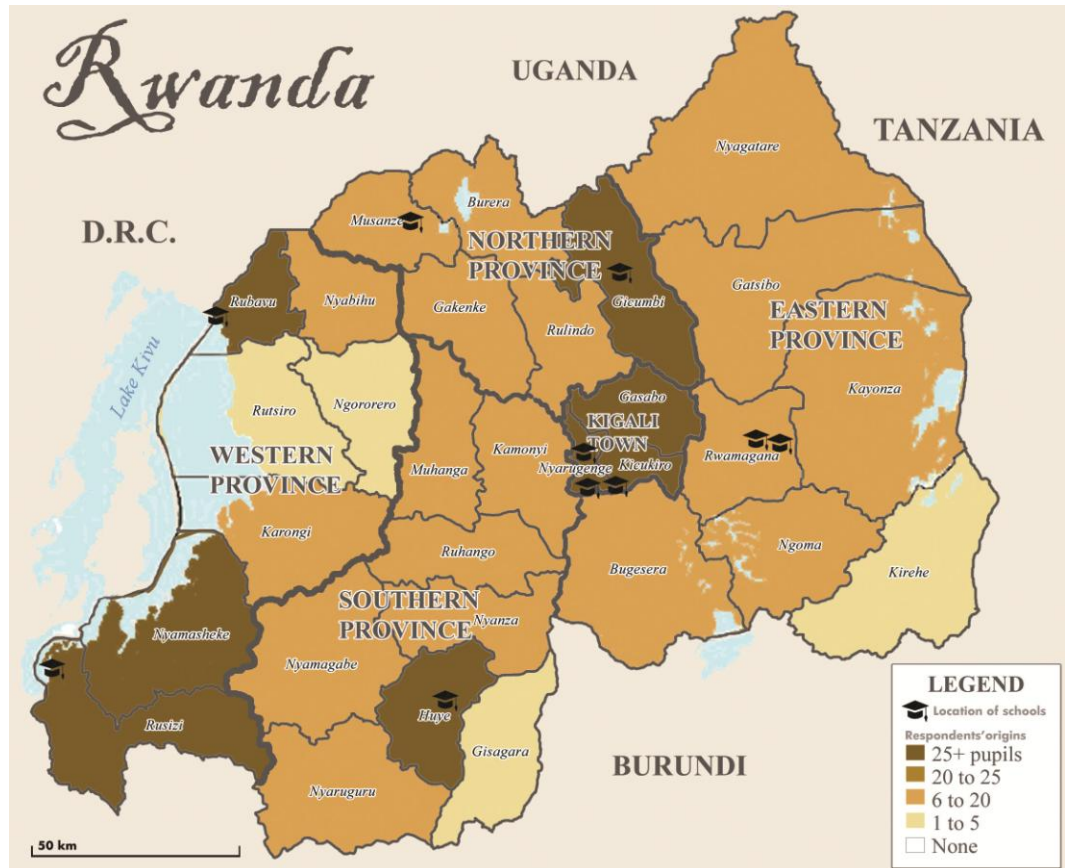
were also a few students as young as 11 and as old as 34.⁵⁰⁹ The remaining 187 *Ingando* participants were all born before 1994. Their year of birth varied between 1963 and 1993. Most were born between 1984 and 1988 and were aged between 21 and 25.

Demonstrating the pervasive impact that the conflict had had on people's lives in Rwanda, a large number of respondents reported that they or their family had experienced forced displacement in the past. According to the information provided by the students, many had been displaced during the genocide. Others had instead relocated either before the genocide, especially in 1959, or after the genocide. Those who had been displaced before the genocide most probably were mainly Tutsi. Those displaced after the genocide, especially to the DRC, were most probably mainly Hutu. On average, circa one in every six respondents was born abroad as a result of displacement. Returnees accounted for 16% of all respondents. 77% were instead born in Rwanda, mostly in Kigali. The remaining 7% did not specify their place of birth.⁵¹⁰ The main countries of birth outside Rwanda were neighbouring Uganda (ca. 5%), where most Anglophone students came from, as well as Burundi (ca. 5%) and the DRC (ca. 4%).⁵¹¹ While many respondents appeared to have directly experienced violence and/or displacement, among the participants were most likely also numerous children of genocide victims and survivors, of former refugees, and of genocide perpetrators and (former) detainees, who had lived the tragedy in a more indirect manner. Against the backdrop of these varied experiences, young people's memory and reading of the events were expected to largely differ from one another. Contrary to such expectations, the collected narratives revealed the existence of rather homogeneous views of the country's past and present among Rwanda's young generation.

⁵⁰⁹ Respondents were born between 1976 and 1999. Age differences in the surveyed classes varied from a minimum of three years to a maximum of thirteen years, with an average of six years. Poverty, according to older students, was a major cause of their delayed education.

⁵¹⁰ The percentage of pupils born abroad was particularly high among respondents surveyed in schools in Kigali in 2008. Here, as many as 20% were born in neighbouring countries. Of the remaining respondents, about 57% were born in Kigali city, and about 18.5% outside the capital city.

⁵¹¹ Other countries that were mentioned were Tanzania, Kenya, Guinea, Togo, South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe, and the USA.



Map 2. Students' origins and school distribution

2.5.1 The history of Rwanda according to Rwandan students

2.5.1.1 General remarks on the structure and content of the narratives

2.5.1.1.1 Structure of the narratives

A review of the national tale recounted by Rwandan students exposed the adoption of a rather common structure across the collected narratives. The analysis revealed a nearly unanimous acceptance of a temporal division into pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial time.⁵¹² The colonisation thus appeared pivotal in the students' structuring of the national history. To a large extent, the

⁵¹² More sporadically, this temporal structure was replaced by a division into ancient and modern Rwanda, or, alternatively, into antiquity, middle ages, and modern and contemporary times.

country's historical trajectory was also clearly seen as consisting of a pre-genocide and a post-genocide period, hence pointing to the centrality of this tragic event in the historical consciousness of Rwanda's new generation.

The students' accounts were not typically organised around specific key dates. Only two dates recurred in almost all Rwandan essays: 1962, the year of independence, and 1994, the year that marked the unfolding of the genocide. 1959 was also frequently cited, although to a lesser extent. With the notable exception of 1962 and 1994, historical dates that marked key political transitions in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras were mentioned very rarely.⁵¹³ Similarly, prominent historical personalities, spearheaded by Rwandan kings and presidents, featured as mere details in the overall tale of the nation rather than as elements around which this was constructed.⁵¹⁴ Students' limited consideration for the context in which historical events took place was accompanied by common chronological confusion and inconsistencies. A repeated mistake consisted in stating that it was after WWII rather than during WWI that the Belgians had replaced the Germans as the new colonial authorities in Rwanda. In addition, in various questionnaires, Belgium was mentioned before Germany when listing Rwanda's former colonisers. Several other respondents mentioned either only Belgium or, more rarely, only Germany in their accounts of the colonisation.⁵¹⁵

2.5.1.1.2 Overview of the content and topics of the narratives

Rwandan accounts tended to be rather comprehensive from a temporal point of view. They usually covered the entire national history, from the pre-colonial time to the post-genocide period.

⁵¹³ Students only rarely mentioned the stages of German and Belgian colonisation and key dates during this period. Merely a couple of respondents cited the Berlin Conference, the arrival of European explorers and missionaries, the German military and later civil administration, the Belgian occupation during WWI, and the time of the mandate and the trusteeship.

⁵¹⁴ In this regard, students sometimes included a list of successive presidents, i.e. Mbonuyutwa, Kayibanda, Habyarimana, Sindibubwabo, Muzungu and Kagame. This list, however, did not always appear to be comprehensive or chronologically correct.

⁵¹⁵ A couple of students also confused the Belgian colonizers with the French.

The collected narratives typically started by mentioning the foundation of the kingdom by Gihanga and its subsequent territorial expansion from Gasabo.⁵¹⁶ References to other specific events and personalities in Rwanda's ancient history were largely omitted. With the notable exception of the kingdom's founder, and, to a lesser extent, of the most recent monarchs (Rwabugiri, Musinga, and Rudahigwa), the names of Rwanda's 'many' kings and their accomplishments were very rarely cited.⁵¹⁷ With regard to the pre-colonial time, most attention was paid to describing the kingdom's political, economic, and socio-cultural organisation. Similarly, the narration of Rwanda's colonial history primarily focused on outlining the changes that were introduced by the '*blancs*', the emphasis being on their negative impact. The subsequent decolonisation period and the time between 1962 and 1994 did not receive prominent attention in students' accounts. When addressed, this historical juncture was presented as a mere appendix to the 'bad' colonial time. Often, essays utterly omitted discussions on this part of the national history. They instead jumped from the colonisation to the genocide, thereby typically underscoring a direct causal relation between the two events. Finally, with almost no exception, narratives ended with an overly positive depiction of the post-genocide era and of the recovery.

Overall, Rwandan narratives did not generally consist in detailed lists of historical facts, dates, and personalities. To a great extent, their content appeared rather analytical and explanatory as opposed to be merely factual. The emphasis in the narrativisation was commonly placed on seeking to explain the origins of the genocide, and on demonstrating the current break with the 'bad' past. In their representation and explanation of Rwandan history, the collected accounts however showed a too great homogeneity to be the fruit of students' independent and critical thinking. With only few exceptions reporting alternative narratives, the analysis provided by Rwandan respondents strikingly overlapped with the government's interpretation of the events. This seems to prove the success of the State in transmitting its official memory to the new generation and in eradicating the dominant narrative of the former regimes from people's consciousness.

⁵¹⁶ In two essays, the kingdom's foundation was situated in the 16th century.

⁵¹⁷ Only a handful of students specified that Rwanda had known thirty-two kings.

The prevailing historical version recounted by the surveyed students reproduced the government's idea of a pre-colonial era of peace, unity and solidarity. According to young people's dominant narrative, the Rwandan nation had been deliberately divided into Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa by the colonisers through a policy of 'divide and rule' which aimed to weaken the once powerful kingdom in order to better rule over its new subjects. Following independence, the divisionist ideology was reportedly embraced by bad leaders and became the source of a longstanding conflict which culminated in the 1994 (Tutsi) Genocide. Rwandan students stressed that the international community had passively stood by as over one million people were being killed. It was thanks to the very Rwandan RPF *Inkotanyi* that the genocide came to an end and that the country was liberated from a dictatorial and murderous regime. In the eyes of the surveyed population, President Kagame and his party had demonstrated a strong commitment to good governance. They were overwhelmingly seen to have successfully promoted and ensured peace, unity, reconciliation, democracy, and development for all Rwandans. In sum, either explicitly or implicitly, students typically presented Rwanda as having experienced both a 'good' history, coinciding with the pre-colonial and the post-genocide times, and a 'bad' history, spanning from the European colonisation to 1994.

Despite this broadly accepted version of the national past, a certain lack of clarity appeared to exist on a number of controversial matters. These most notably concerned the two sensitive themes of identity and of the conflict and the genocide.

2.5.1.2 Identities in Rwanda: definition, origins, meanings and today's relevance of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa categories

In telling the history of Rwanda, only few students omitted all allusion to the controversial Hutu, Tutsi and Twa identities. In such essays, these categories seemed to be completely airbrushed out of history. A couple of responses revealed a clear discomfort in talking about an issue which today is largely considered a taboo in the country. While acknowledging the existence of these identities, two

students, in particular, refused to pronounce these terms. Instead, they left three blank spaces which, in the context of their narration, undoubtedly referred to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa.

A wide array of concepts was used to define these groups. Students spoke of clans, social classes, races, ethnic groups, socio-economic ethnic groups, tribes, political identities, or, more generally, of species and parts. The apparent uncertainty in defining these identities was most evident in a number of cases in which given definitions were later erased or written off and replaced with different terms. The doubts and hesitation that were widely found in Rwandan classrooms in this respect might not be surprising in a context in which open discussions on Hutu, Tutsi and Twa have been discouraged. This state of affairs might be revealing of a sense of wariness on the part of the pupils, and possibly of the teachers, in relation to what is permitted in the public sphere. The respondents' answers likewise seemed to disclose a considerable lack of clarity on the meaning of these categories. As will be shown in the next paragraphs, the more elaborated accounts differed in their explanation of the origins and nature of these identities, and in the understandings they conveyed of the factors that had historically determined group affiliation. Several students acknowledged the pre-colonial existence of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa and their fundamental transformation during the colonial time. Many others instead insisted rejected such identities as a pure colonial invention.

2.5.1.2.1 Identities in the pre-colonial time

As a general rule, students' accounts of Rwanda's ancient past omitted references to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Often, pupils explicitly underscored the pre-colonial lack of distinctions among the population. Two respondents respectively pointed out that in this period 'Rwandans were all the same'; 'we belonged to the same Rwandan *ethnie*'.⁵¹⁸ While several narratives emphasised the homogeneity of the population, others acknowledged the existence of social differences not related to

⁵¹⁸ R714 and R667.

ethnicity. The traditional society was said by some to have encompassed ‘many’ clans (e.g. Abanyiginya, Abasinga, etc.).⁵¹⁹ Showing once again widespread terminological confusion, these identities were sometimes erroneously referred to as tribes, races or social classes.⁵²⁰ Rwanda’s ancient society was occasionally also described as being composed of three socio-economic groups: ‘the farmers, the herders and the potters’.

The pre-colonial existence of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa was explicitly mentioned in a small minority of accounts. These identities were variously defined as ethnic groups, races, classes, or, to a lesser extent, as tribes. Sometimes, they were more generally described as parts or categories. In a couple of cases, the Kinyarwanda word *amoko* was likewise used to refer to these groups. This is a term which in Kinyarwanda designates any ‘category’ of things. While traditionally employed to refer to Rwandan clans, this concept has since the colonial time been also used as an appellation for ethnic groups and races. Irrespective of the terminology employed, most such essays reported group affiliation to have been determined by occupation, i.e. agriculture, cattle-breeding, and pottery-making, as well as by level of wealth. Various students clarified that wealth was traditionally measured by the number of cows owned. Ten cows were often believed to have been the benchmark for belonging to the Tutsi category. A couple of respondents further underscored the flexible nature of these pre-colonial identities. They referred to the possibility of social mobility based on accrued or lost fortune. According to this minority of essays, despite the existence of internal differences, Rwandan pre-colonial society was characterised by unity and peace. One student explained that, in the ancient times, ‘we were the same: even if the *ethnies* existed before colonialism, it was not a problem to any Rwandan because they felt the same and all loved each other’.⁵²¹ Similarly, another respondent argued that, ‘these categories didn’t matter because they helped each other without division and conflict’.⁵²²

⁵¹⁹ Only few students specified that Rwandan clans amounted to eighteen.

⁵²⁰ According to a student from Cyangugu, while clans used to be important identities in the past, they had been forgotten by Rwandans after independence. R748.

⁵²¹ R666.

⁵²² R547.

The students' historical narratives demonstrated the large success of the current government in eradicating 'erroneous' colonial beliefs from the memory and historical consciousness of Rwandan people. Only two respondents reproduced the now rejected theories on the different origins and successive settlement of Twa, Hutu and Tutsi on Rwanda's territory.⁵²³ In the words of one of them, 'Rwanda has been occupied by inhabitants of different origins: history begins with the potter-hunters Twa, secondly the Hutu farmers and thirdly the Tutsi herders'.⁵²⁴ The contested issue of settlement was otherwise widely omitted in young people's accounts. A few students explicitly took distance from what they perceived to be 'false' hypotheses and pure 'lies'.⁵²⁵ They discarded these theories by insisting on the common origins of the Rwandan people. Two respondents mentioned Rwandans' common Bantu identity, the origins of which were respectively situated in Nigeria and Niger.⁵²⁶ Five others highlighted Rwandans' shared descent from the common ancestor Gihanga, 'founder' of the nation, or from Kanyarwanda, son of Gihanga. One of these respondents explained that, '[f]rom the origins, Rwanda was a peaceful country of a thousand hills with its united population coming from a single father Gihanga, who created Rwanda'.⁵²⁷

2.5.1.2.2 Identities in the colonial time

In line with the official discourse, the vast majority of students emphasised the crucial role of the colonisers in transforming Rwandan traditional society. Depending on whether or not Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were believed to have existed in the pre-colonial time, perceptions seemed however to differ with regard to the extent of the colonial transformations. The lack of clarity on the issue came to light in the variety of answers that were collected in the field. Students' uncertainty also patently emerged from a number of inconsistent and contradictory statements which were revealing of a state of confusion on this

⁵²³ R211, R833.

⁵²⁴ R568.

⁵²⁵ One student declared, 'I don't know the origins of Rwandan people because there is no proof, but I consider these ideas to be lies, and that we have the same origins'. R541.

⁵²⁶ R753.

⁵²⁷ R763; R401.

controversial matter. The account by one pupil in particular is illustrative of young people's confused thoughts with regard to these identities. In her words,

'in the pre-colonial period, there were three ethnic groups; the king was Tutsi, but these ethnic groups were brought by the colonizers. During the colonisation there was the beginning of the knowledge on ethnicity and on the origin of the Rwandese, which are false teachings'.⁵²⁸

Echoing the discrepancies encountered in students' representations of the traditional society, narratives employed a multitude of terms to describe the nature of colonial classifications. Respondents variously spoke of an imposed separation of Rwandans into three races, *ethnies*, *amoko*, classes, social groups, clans or, more rarely, tribes. In some cases, the population was more generically said to have been separated into parts, groups, categories, kinds of people, or simply 'into three'. Once again, regardless of their lexical choices, respondents generally cited economic occupation and level of wealth as the main criteria on which colonial categorisations had been based.⁵²⁹ One student explained that, during the colonial time, '[a]ll farmers (*abahinzi*) were labelled as Hutu, all cattle-breeders (*aborozi*) as Tutsi, and all potters and hunters (*abahigi*) as Twa'.⁵³⁰ The few essays that acknowledged the pre-colonial existence of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa as socio-economic groups tended to underscore the role of the colonisation in transforming traditional social classes into ethnic groups, races (determined by physical appearance),⁵³¹ or, more rarely, tribes.⁵³² Occasionally, these three terms and their relative adjectives ('ethnic', 'racial' and 'tribal') were used interchangeably,⁵³³ thus blurring their semantic difference. Consequently, when referring to the divisionist ideology on which Rwanda's post-colonial violence had reportedly been based, students respectively spoke of a problem of 'ethnism', 'racism', or 'tribalism'.

⁵²⁸ R748.

⁵²⁹ As explained by a student, 'the Tutsi were those rich, with many cows; the Hutu were at the second place, the only farmed or had few cows; and, finally, the Twa constituted the 'third state' and a neglected population, who did not have any cows.' R812.

⁵³⁰ R978.

⁵³¹ According to a student, the colonisers 'started calling Tutsi those who were very slender, and Hutu those who were 'big and strong' (R464); 'they separated the Rwandese by measuring their noses' (R548).

⁵³² Three students respectively recounted that, 'these categories were classes and were transformed into *ethnies*' (R386); 'on the basis of their way of life, these categories were divided into ethnic groups, from where the birth of conflicts among them' (R555); and, that 'those considered more intelligent were called tutsi, and the least intelligent were called Twa' (R921).

⁵³³ R473.

As will be illustrated in the next section, irrespective of the students' understanding of the nature of the social transformations undergone under colonial rule, the imposed change was widely believed to have ultimately resulted in the destruction of Rwandans' ancient unity and in the division and polarisation of the nation.

2.5.1.2.3 Identities today

The survey revealed young people's considerable confusion and disagreement with regard to the definition and meaning of the concepts of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa throughout Rwandan history. Conversely, wide consensus was found on the irrelevance and banality of these identities in the present time. All members of the population in the country are now considered to be, and to have originally always been, *just* Rwandese. According to the dominant narrative recounted by the students, Rwandans are one people: they share a common origin, language, culture and religion. As many underscored, Rwandans had lived side by side in harmony and solidarity for centuries before the arrival of the Europeans.

2.5.1.3 The evolution of Rwandan history: explaining the origins and dynamics of conflict and mass violence

2.5.1.3.1 The pre-colonial time: a golden age of peace, unity, and solidarity

Regardless of whether the ancient existence of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa was denied or acknowledged, social relations in pre-colonial Rwanda were unanimously described as being characterised by such positive values as unity, harmony, solidarity, cooperation and patriotism. One respondent explained that, '[b]efore, Rwandans had a good relationship and lived together without problems: they were united, they loved each other like brothers and sisters, and they worked and ate together in harmony'.⁵³⁴

⁵³⁴ R425.

The students' representations of the ancient times commonly emphasised those social and cultural traditions which demonstrated the solidarity that had existed among Rwandans before the colonisation.⁵³⁵ They cited such practices as marriage as well as 'gifts' of cows and land (an implicit reference to *ubuhake* and *ubukonde*)⁵³⁶ through which social bonds were created and strengthened. According to various accounts, the nation's strong social cohesion was also displayed during wars with external enemies. One respondent recounted that, 'Rwandans were one people working together for a common objective: to defend and enlarge the kingdom'.⁵³⁷ It was thanks to their sense of commonness and their patriotic spirit that Rwandans, led by valiant kings, had managed to turn what originally was a small kingdom into a large, powerful, and well-organised state. Several respondents mentioned the name of King Rwabugiri in particular. This 'famous hero' was praised for his 'great military force and intelligence'.⁵³⁸ Reportedly, his exceptional skills had enabled him to 'successfully expand the kingdom's borders to the west until Goma in the DRC, and to the north until Mbarara in Uganda'.⁵³⁹

Wars against neighbouring peoples were said to have been frequent and continuous. The occurrence of internal conflict or war was instead rarely recognised. When mentioned, their existence and gravity were typically downplayed. Incidents of factional conflict, notably the 1896 Rucunshu coup or 'civil war', were portrayed as anomalies. A few students added that, in the event of a conflict within the community, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, such as the *gacaca* courts, were in place to prevent its escalation and to restore friendly relations.

⁵³⁵ Students referred to religion, rites and ceremonies, e.g. *Ryangombe*, *nyabingi*, (*imana*), *abazimu*, *kubandwa*, *umuganura*, *guterekera*, *kuracuza*.

⁵³⁶ According to two students, 'Rwandans helped each other, for example, by giving a cow or field to the poorer' (R175); 'the practices of *ubudehe* and *ubukonde* ensured solidarity among Rwandans' (R548).

⁵³⁷ R856. Another student stated that, 'Rwanda always tried to invade other kingdoms and to expand its territory' (R395). This point was also raised by a student who reported the adage introduced by King Cyirima II Rujugira, according to which 'Rwanda attacks but it's not attacked' ('*u Rwanda ruratera ntiruterwa*') (R965).

⁵³⁸ R178.

⁵³⁹ R834.

While the ancient times were widely presented in idyllic terms, a number of regrettable aspects were cited by a minority of students when describing this period. Besides mentioning the occurrence of external and internal conflict, several accounts underscored the autocratic nature of the traditional political system. They alluded to an absolute and hereditary rule of the king that clashed with democratic principles.⁵⁴⁰ The identity of the powerful Rwandan kings was rarely indicated. Only a couple of students specified the kings' affiliation to a same 'clan' or 'a same rich family', and, more specifically, to the Nyiginya dynasty or to the Tutsi category.⁵⁴¹ In contrast to the pre-genocide discourse, this rare acknowledgment was never accompanied by an image of Tutsi domination and oppression. In addition to referring to conflict and dictatorship, several essays derogatively portrayed the pre-colonial era as a time marked by a condition of 'ignorance', 'inferior mentality' and 'low civilisation'.

2.5.1.3.2 The colonial time: the role of colonisation in Rwanda's history, and in the creation of conflict

In Rwandan narratives, the colonisation was assigned a central place in the history of the country. Accounts of this period typically focused on outlining the radical political, economic and socio-cultural transformations that had been introduced by 'the whites' or 'the foreigners'. These colonial transformations were widely considered to have changed Rwandan society forever.

Numerous respondents recognised some of the benefits that had derived from the contact with the Europeans. The arrival of the Europeans in Rwanda was sometimes associated with the advent of 'progress' and 'civilisation'. Advantages included the introduction of schools, hospitals, technology and infrastructure.⁵⁴² The construction of churches as part of the European evangelisation mission received mixed reactions. Several students referred to the expansion of Christianity in a positive light. According to one respondent, with the coming of

⁵⁴⁰ In contrast, one student in particular underscored that 'in Rwanda, there wasn't really an absolute power like in other countries. The king was assisted by others, such the queen, the abiru, the chiefs abatware (of the army, cattle and land), and the military. R664.

⁵⁴¹ E.g. R268.

⁵⁴² Only one student mentioned that Kigali was founded by Kandt. R967.

the Europeans, Rwandans ‘finally began to pray to the true god’.⁵⁴³ Others instead spoke of a forceful imposition of the Christian faith and of a concomitant destruction of traditional culture and customs.⁵⁴⁴

Despite the positive acknowledgments, the tone of the students’ narratives on the colonial period was predominantly accusatory. Bad governance, bad leadership, dictatorship, injustice and a loss of freedom were commonly said to have characterised this era. A number of examples were given to illustrate the ‘bad politics’ of the colonisers. Several respondents highlighted their forefathers’ hardship that had resulted from forced labour and exploitation.⁵⁴⁵ The most critical narratives recounted how the white people had ‘terrorised’ their ancestors, treating them ‘like animals’ and ‘slaves’. One pupil pointed out that the imposed humiliation extended to the highest echelons of the local hierarchy. He underscored the loss of authority of the traditional leadership by suggesting that, ‘even the king was dominated by the whites’.⁵⁴⁶ The extent of the monarchy’s submission to the new ‘real’ power-holders was highlighted by a couple of students who reported that the colonisers had not refrained from deposing authoritative figures who had shown an uncooperative stance. They mentioned, for instance, the forced exile of King Musinga to the Congo, ‘due to the terrorisation and intimidation by the Whites’.⁵⁴⁷ Two students additionally attributed to the white people the responsibility for the mysterious death of King Musinga’s successor Rudahigwa in Burundi in 1959. According to various essays, Rwanda’s loss of autonomy and freedom that found expression in the considerable colonial mingling in the kingdom’s internal affairs was likewise demonstrated by the external imposition of a substantial shrinkage of its territory in favour of

⁵⁴³ R469.

⁵⁴⁴ According to one student, ‘the colonisers wanted to destroy our culture’. R698. Another respondent spoke of the imposition of baptism on King Musinga. R.832.

⁵⁴⁵ One respondent reported that, ‘the colonizers treated Rwanda as if it was their own country. Those who did not comply with their orders were severely punished’. R781. According to another student, ‘they stole our wealth and destroyed our economy’. R428.

⁵⁴⁶ R756. According to one student from the same school, ‘the whites did not remove the king but they essentially governed the country’. R762.

⁵⁴⁷ According to one respondent, ‘the colonisators killed the kings that fought against their divisionist ideologies’. R597.

neighbouring countries (i.e. DRC, Uganda, and Tanzania).⁵⁴⁸ For many, this unilateral act constituted an outrageous affront to Rwandan sovereignty.⁵⁴⁹ Rwandan narratives appeared remarkably silent with regard to the process that had led to this loss of sovereignty. Only three students, for instance, mentioned King Musinga's acceptance of a treaty with the Germans which had signalled the official beginning of the colonisation. One of them highlighted Musinga's ignorance and *naïveté* in signing a deceitful 'pact of friendship' with the cunning Germans.⁵⁵⁰ The other two stressed the king's vain resistance against a prevailing foreign army before giving in to their demands.⁵⁵¹

When it comes to the various changes that were introduced by the colonisers, the main emphasis in the students' narratives was placed on the colonial destruction of the 'astonishing' national unity, which for a long time had stood in the way of foreign domination. One respondent explained that,

*'Thanks to the ancient organisation, unity and military strength, no one could separate Rwandans, but little by little the Belgians divided us and destroyed our primitive unity and solidarity and our good culture and positive values by convincing them that they were not the same'.*⁵⁵²

It is especially through the successful implementation of divisive practices that the arrival of the 'whites' was believed to have marked a dramatic turning point in the country's historical trajectory.

The way in which the vast majority of respondents seemed to make sense of their country's recent violent history coincided with the current official discourse. Their narratives revealed a firm belief in the primary responsibility of the colonisers in sowing the seeds of conflict and hatred among Rwandans. Direct and explicit

⁵⁴⁸ Students mentioned Idjwi, Bwisha, Gishari, Ndorwa, Bufumbira, and Buha. One respondent recounted that, 'in order to punish Rwanda, which was strong and united, they made it very small.' R914.

⁵⁴⁹ One student mentioned the dispersion of Rwandans across the newly established borders and the separation of families as a result of this colonial decision. R160.

⁵⁵⁰ In his words, 'the king accepted the entry of white because he was ignorant. He signed a deceitful pact of friendship with the German, but in reality Rwanda had lost its independence'. R842. Another student recounted that, 'the whites came with objects that the Rwandese did not know in order to create a deceitful friendship'. R894.

⁵⁵¹ According to one of them, 'Musinga tried to chase the colonies but failed because his soldiers were too weak'. R924.

⁵⁵² R757. Another student explained that, 'historically, it was very difficult to separate Rwandans. Thanks to the great organisation of the kingdom, the colonisers had taken a long time to colonise Rwanda'. R752.

links between the colonial policy of ‘divide and rule’ and the genocide were frequently drawn. The collected accounts typically portrayed the colonial introduction of ethnic or racial differentiation and segregation as the source and root cause of conflict and ultimately genocide in Rwanda. In the respondents’ views, the role played by the ‘whites’ in creating internal division and tension had mainly consisted in spreading ‘false teachings’. These fallacious beliefs were variously referred to as ‘bad ideology’, ‘genocide ideology’, ‘hypocrisy’, and, more specifically, as ‘ethnism’, ‘racism’, or ‘tribalism’.⁵⁵³ As mentioned earlier, the pupils’ understanding of the extent of the colonial transformation of local identities greatly varied. Accounts were however unanimous in underscoring the polarisation and antagonisation, or the ‘change of mentality’, that had resulted from colonial actions. One of the most comprehensive narratives in this respect reported that,

*‘The whites, who wanted to take advantage of our national resources, began to separate the Rwandese and to plant conflicts and hatred in the population. They began to say that the Tutsi is taller and has a long nose, that he comes from Ethiopia, breeds cows and that it is only he who rules; they said that the Hutu are short, with short noses, that they come from Chad, and cultivate; and that the Twa are potters who live in the forest and come from the Congo. This is when Rwandans began to hate each other and to fight and kill their brothers and sisters. This is the source of the genocide’.*⁵⁵⁴

In contrast to the large emphasis placed on the role of colonial fabrications in transforming local identities and relations, the discriminatory practices (against the Hutu in particular) which had accompanied such colonial teachings were greatly ignored by the respondents. Only one student alluded to such practices. She reported that ‘some *ethnies* were favoured and others were excluded from economy, politics, and education’.⁵⁵⁵ Although exceptional in her outspokenness, this pupil abstained from specifying the identity of those who had been privileged and those who had instead been discriminated against. The students’ essays thus overlooked a situation of inequality which had been an important cause of the growing frustrations that had eventually found a violent expression in 1959. The

⁵⁵³ A student, for instance, stated that, ‘the hutu killed the tutsi because there was no love between them due to the fact that the colonisers had taught them bad things’. R743.

⁵⁵⁴ R961.

⁵⁵⁵ R666.

survey exposed an ulterior shortcoming in young people's representations of the dramatic changes experienced in their country since the colonial time. While the primary blame for Rwanda's troubles was apportioned to outsiders – 'the colonisers', 'the whites', or, more specifically, the Belgians, – narratives fell short of critically examining the role of Rwandan actors. Local responsibility was either utterly obscured or significantly downplayed. In the latter case, the objectionable actions of local agents were portrayed as the direct result of colonial ruse which had induced fellow Rwandans to turn against each other. Insofar as a degree of local responsibility was recognised, students blamed the 'ignorance' of local actors in blindly accepting malicious colonial schemes.⁵⁵⁶ This belief is nowhere better illustrated than in the accounts of the violence that broke out at the dawn of independence.

2.5.1.3.3 The 1959 events and the achievement of independence

In students' accounts, the year 1959 was often presented as a key date in Rwanda's history. It is at this particular historical juncture that the externally inculcated conflict was said to have turned violent for the first time.

This controversial period was differently defined across the collected narratives. Often, the 1959 events were described as an instance of civil war, or, more rarely, as a racial war. In several accounts, the respondents depicted the events as marking the beginning of a genocide which had culminated in the 1994 tragedy.⁵⁵⁷ References to the once much-celebrated 'Hutu revolution of 1959' were included in only two essays, *nota bene*, in quotation marks.⁵⁵⁸

The degree of clarity in delineating roles of victimhood and responsibility in the violence that marked this period also varied. This often depended on the school or

⁵⁵⁶ According to one respondent, 'Rwanda was a united country before the arrival of the 'whites'. Because of this unity of Rwandans, the whites could not convince them to subjugate themselves to the newcomers, and decided to tell them to hate each other because they were different. Because of their ignorance, Rwandans believed it and started to hate each other. The hatred expanded and the Hutu started torturing and killing the Tutsi.' R498.

⁵⁵⁷ According to one student, 'the genocide had started in 1959-1994'. R487.

⁵⁵⁸ R553, R834. In one case, the events were instead referred to with the local metaphor of '*muyaga*'. R692.

class attended by the respondent. In some cases, the actors involved in the violence were indistinctly referred to as ‘Rwandans’. According to two pupils,

‘In 1959, a group of Rwandan peoples started to chase away and kill the other’.

*‘In 1959 many Rwandans were killed’.*⁵⁵⁹

In other cases, the respondents explicitly portrayed ‘the Tutsi’ as the victims of persecution by actors whose identity was not revealed. As articulated by one of these students,

*‘In 1959 the Tutsi were killed because of their ethnicity, while others fled abroad’.*⁵⁶⁰

In yet other essays, roles of both victimhood and responsibility were assigned along ‘ethnic’ lines. Two accounts are illustrative of this view:

‘In 1959, the Tutsi were massacred and chased away by the Hutu’.

*‘In 1959, the Hutu prepared the ideology of genocide to kill all the Tutsi, but this objective was not totally achieved. The conflicts continued under Habyarimana, resulting in the genocide of 1994’.*⁵⁶¹

Regardless of whether the identity of the victimizers was specified, the ultimate responsibility for the events was commonly apportioned to the colonisers. The ‘whites’, who were portrayed as the main instigators of the violence, were accused of having incited the Hutu to turn against the Tutsi after having deliberately cast the latter in a bad light. A particularly detailed essay clearly summarised this view. In the words of this student,

‘It is the colonizers who implanted the conflict between those whom they called Hutu and Tutsi. They taught divisionism and hatred to the Rwandan people by saying that the Tutsi came from somewhere else, and that they had ruled the country and enslaved the Hutu for a long time, although the Hutu were the majority. So, in 1959 the Hutu, encouraged by the whites to fight against the Tutsi to rule themselves and to have their wealth, decided to hunt and kill the Tutsi. After independence, the Hutu revolted, they killed the Tutsi. Really, it’s a shame. Killings happened since 1959, again in 1973, and up until 1994, when

⁵⁵⁹ R734, and R839.

⁵⁶⁰ R660.

⁵⁶¹ R954, R662.

*there were more than one million people killed in the genocidal violence due to this ideology.*⁵⁶²

The extract above alludes to a conscious *decision* of the Hutu to persecute the Tutsi under the influence of colonial teachings. Another interesting account of the 1959 events seemed instead to partly excuse the Hutu perpetrators by describing the violence as an action committed under pressure from the ‘whites’, who wished to hold on to power. This respondent explained that, ‘[t]he Hutu who were subjected to the dominance of the whites began to massacre their Tutsi brothers because the whites did not want to see them reclaim their independence’.⁵⁶³ By situating the massacres within the framework of a colonial plan to hinder Rwanda’s decolonisation process, this statement also pointed to a political manoeuvring by the colonisers during the country’s transition to independence.

Belgium’s crucial involvement in this transition was underscored by one student in particular. He stated that, ‘the Belgians have established Rwanda as a state, not a kingdom, by removing the kings and by installing the president’.⁵⁶⁴ Besides revealing an imprecision in contrasting the term ‘state’ (rather than ‘republic’) to ‘kingdom’,⁵⁶⁵ this assertion underlines the exclusive responsibility of outsiders for the end of the monarchy and the instauration of the Republic. No acknowledgment is here made of the role played by local actors in the events. A primary and active role of ‘Rwandans’ themselves in ending the monarchy and the colonisation was only sporadically stated. One of the few respondents who recognised local agency in the events reported that, ‘[t]he Rwandans drove away the king and also the whites’.⁵⁶⁶

In line with the current official rhetoric, young people’s accounts of this period largely abstained from celebrating Rwanda’s anti-colonial struggle. The emphasis was mainly on the violence that had characterised the events leading up to independence. Only a few exceptions were found. Among them were essays that spoke of a ‘revolt’, ‘fight’ or ‘war’ against the colonisers, as well as of

⁵⁶² R659.

⁵⁶³ R478.

⁵⁶⁴ R467.

⁵⁶⁵ This student presumably believed that a kingdom cannot per definition also be a state.

⁵⁶⁶ R934.

independence heroes and independence movements. A handful of students mentioned the heroism of King Rudahigwa, who had called for independence before being killed by the Belgians. Others highlighted the role of prominent political parties in the country's independence struggle, notably Aprosoma, UNAR, and RADER. In ambiguous terms, one respondent described the transition to independence as 'a liberation given to those who didn't ask for it'. This statement probably alluded to Hutu leaders (as opposed to nationalist parties), who had not been at the forefront of the independence movement and who had instead coalesced with the Belgians.⁵⁶⁷

2.5.1.3.4 The post-colonial time: the role of post-colonial regimes in the building up of the conflict

The period between independence and 1994 did not receive much attention in young people's historical accounts. This neglect was manifest in the infrequent references to key historical events, such as the 1973 coup which had ended the First Republic. When this period was addressed, the tone tended to be exclusively negative. The emphasis was placed on highlighting the role of post-colonial regimes in the Rwandan conflict. In most cases, this role was presented as having been one of co-responsibility in fuelling internal conflict and hatred through the perpetuation of the 'bad ideology' of the 'whites'. One student underscored that those responsible are 'not only the white, but also the bad leaders who have followed the bad doctrine of the whites'.⁵⁶⁸ In rare cases, responsibility for the violence was attributed solely to the post-independence governments.⁵⁶⁹

Fingers were pointed primarily at former President Habyarimana, described by one student as 'the president of the Hutu'.⁵⁷⁰ To a lesser extent, blame was likewise apportioned to Habyarimana's predecessor Kayibanda and his party MDR-Parmehutu. Their 'wicked' governments were widely accused of bad

⁵⁶⁷ R408. This student also stated that, despite this 'liberation', 'colonisation continued until the genocide'. It is unclear here whether, when talking about a continuous colonisation, the respondent meant the perpetuation of a condition of dependence of Rwanda from the Western world, or the continuation of colonial practices and a Tutsi state of subjugation under the two Hutu Republics.

⁵⁶⁸ R523.

⁵⁶⁹ E.g. R463.

⁵⁷⁰ R447.

governance and bad leadership. They were denounced for having promoted what one respondent defined as ‘*anti-valeurs*’. These included dictatorship and absolutism, selfishness, favouritism and nepotism, and, in particular, regionalism and ethnism.⁵⁷¹ Most often, post-colonial regimes were condemned for having perpetuated divisive colonial teachings and policies that had stressed differences among Rwandans. The regimes’ promotion of regional differences was relatively neglected: only one student underscored the existence of a regional opposition between *abanyenduga* people from the South and *abakiga* people from the North.⁵⁷² The collected essays more commonly highlighted a prevailing division and opposition between Hutu and Tutsi. They were respectively described by a few respondents as Rwanda’s majority and minority group. In portraying post-colonial relations between the two groups, students often emphasised the discrimination to which the Tutsi had been subjected. A couple of accounts referred to the curtailing of this group’s rights to education and employment, which had been practised through the implementation of an unfair quota system. One respondent spoke of this system in terms of a ‘corrective democracy’, which he understood as a ‘bad democracy’.⁵⁷³ More frequently, the pupils mentioned the regimes’ recurrent denial of Tutsi’s right to life. They also cited the State’s rejection of the right to return claimed by Tutsi refugees who had fled persecution. As various respondents pointed out, this situation of injustice eventually led to the refugees’ invasion of Rwanda and the consequent fall of Habyarimana’s regime.⁵⁷⁴

2.5.1.3.5 The genocide: definitions and characterisations (nature and causes), circumstances, and actors and their roles (responsibility, victimhood, and heroism)

The 1994 genocide was a topic that was nearly omnipresent in the students’ accounts of the recent past. This event typically functioned as the axis around which Rwandan narratives were constructed. The analysis of the students’

⁵⁷¹ R366.

⁵⁷² R841.

⁵⁷³ R590.

⁵⁷⁴ According to one student, ‘Habyarimana’s government fell because of its refusal to solve the problems of the refugees, of inequality and discrimination within the country’. R771.

representations of this sensitive period offered interesting insights into the way in which the violence is understood and made sense of by young Rwandans today.

2.5.1.3.5.1 Definitions and characterisations

The analysis of young people's narratives of Rwanda's recent past revealed a variety of ways in which the 1994 events were defined by the surveyed population.

In the students' essays, the violence was nearly unanimously recognised as 'genocide'. In the rare cases in which the G-word was avoided, the events were variously defined in terms of 'massacre', 'extermination', and 'war' or 'conflict'. Occasionally, the words 'genocide' and 'war' were used interchangeably or simultaneously. A few students for instance spoke of 'war of genocide'.⁵⁷⁵ The frequent association of the genocide with a war raises questions about young people's understanding of the connection between what in fact are two parallel events rather than one and the same occurrence. In only a handful of essays was a distinction between the war and the genocide made clear. The clearest delineation of the sequence of these two distinct events was presented by one girl. She explained that, '[t]he Tutsi refugees in neighbouring countries organised themselves to return, resulting in another war. As they entered Rwanda, there was the organisation of the genocide by Habyarimana's regime to crush the Tutsi'.⁵⁷⁶

While most respondents referred to the 1994 violence in terms of 'genocide', significant discrepancies were found among the various expressions that were used to further describe this occurrence. Numerous students highlighted the temporal dimension of the events by speaking of 'genocide of 1994'. Others emphasised their geographical scope by referring to the 'genocide of Rwanda' or the 'Rwandan genocide'. A third group of essays underscored the actors involved. They spoke of 'genocide of the Rwandans', 'genocide between Tutsi and Hutu', or, more specifically, 'genocide of the Tutsi'. Narratives that employed the expression 'Tutsi genocide' sometimes reproduced the official discourse

⁵⁷⁵ R357.

⁵⁷⁶ R503.

according to which the genocide had started in, or had been planned since, 1959. Speaking of either a prolonged genocide or a sequence of various genocides, these accounts portrayed the 1994 events as ‘the great genocide’, ‘the final genocide’, or ‘the last phase of Tutsi persecution’. Remarkably, the more generic expressions that presented the genocide as a ‘Rwandan’ event in which Rwandans had killed each other, were more frequently used than the now official expression of ‘Tutsi genocide’, which instead clearly denotes the Tutsi as its sole victims. As will be illustrated later in the text, despite the terminological divergences, most essays presented the Tutsi as the primary victims of the genocide.

The above-mentioned characterisations of the 1994 events were occasionally complemented with various adjectives which further qualified this time of violence. The event was described with words such as ‘bad’, ‘unfortunate’, ‘dreadful’, ‘terrible’, ‘catastrophic’ and ‘unforgettable’. It was likewise portrayed as marking a period of ‘decadence’ and ‘very high wickedness’. Vivid depictions of the ‘terrible’ nature of the violence were not found in the collected essays. Also, narratives recounting the respondents’ personal experience during this period were extremely uncommon. This is astonishing, considering the startling scope of the violence and the pervasiveness of its consequences. Only a few exceptions were encountered. Two respondents in particular reported that,

‘In 1994 we experienced a bad time that I will never forget in my life because this is the first time that I saw a person kill another while they are both Rwandan’.

‘I remember many things. Even now we live with the people who killed my mother, but today we are already reconciled with my neighbour’.⁵⁷⁷

2.5.1.3.5.2 Circumstances: the war and Habyarimana’s assassination

Young people’s accounts of the genocide strongly emphasised its root causes, namely the colonial divisionist ideology and its perpetuation by the two post-colonial regimes. Conversely, the more immediate circumstances of the genocide, notably the RPF war and the assassination of Habyarimana, were often neglected.

⁵⁷⁷ R860, and R369.

The disregard for the immediate context of the genocide was likewise manifest in the essays' frequent omission of the start and end dates of this violent occurrence.

2.5.1.3.5.2.1 The war

The genocide assumed a central place in the students' accounts of their country's history. The preceding and simultaneous war that the RPF had launched from Uganda in 1990 was instead often overlooked.⁵⁷⁸ When mentioned, the event was generally characterised as a righteous and heroic 'liberation war'. The motives that were believed to have guided the refugees' decision to start a military campaign against Habyarimana's government revealed an exclusively positive understanding of their intentions and ambitions. The refugees' invasion was justified with a wish to 'return to their native country and to develop it after 30 years of forced exile due to bad politics by Hutu'. It was additionally explained with a desire to 'fight against the politics of divisionism and the genocide ideology', 'to defend Rwandans and to stop the genocide', and, finally, 'to restore good relations' and 'to bring equality, democracy, and unity and reconciliation'.⁵⁷⁹ Such heroic role was generally assigned to the RPF rebel movement as a whole. Only a handful of narratives specifically named the late leader of the rebellion, Fred Rwigema. In these few cases, Rwigema was depicted as a patriotic hero and his death on the battlefield as an unfortunate event.

2.5.1.3.5.2.2 Habyarimana's assassination

The controversial assassination of former President Habyarimana was often omitted in the students' essays. When mentioned, this event was recognised as having signalled the beginning of the genocide. Hardly any detail was provided on this crucial event. Across the collected narratives, allusions to the issue of responsibility for this crime were for instance nearly inexistent. Two accounts stood out for their more extensive recounting of this incident as well as for their markedly divergent explanations of the president's murder and of its significance.

⁵⁷⁸ One student mistakenly associated the RPF rebels, previously organised into the Rwandan Alliance of National Unity (RANU), with the monarchist UNAR party of the 1950s. In his words, 'the refugees in Uganda, who formed a military group called UNAR directed by Rwigema, attacked Rwanda to halt the genocide.' R835.

⁵⁷⁹ R603; R770; R582.

The first of these accounts was told by a student from Gisenyi, who had been a refugee in the DRC between 1994 and 2000. In accordance with the official narrative, this respondent legitimised the RPF's invasion and blamed the Hutu for Habyarimana's assassination. In his words,

'Tutsi refugees wanted to return, but Habyarimana said the country was full and that there was no space for them. So, they decided to enter by force attacking Byumba in 1990. Habyarimana went to Arusha to sign an agreement so that the refugees could return, but the Hutu were very angry about this decision and they shot down his plane while he was returning from Arusha. As they had prepared the genocide well in advance, they started killing the Tutsi'.⁵⁸⁰

The second account was exceptional in that it was the only narrative that starkly diverged from the government's storyline. This essay explained the violence that had been perpetrated against the Tutsi by highlighting the anger of the Hutu for the alleged killing of their president by the power-seeking Tutsi. Remarkably, this narrative was not articulated by a Rwandan student; it was instead recounted by a Congolese pupil from Goma who, at the time of the survey, was living and studying in Gisenyi. In his words,

'When one enters history, the Hutus say that the cause of the problem was the assassination of their President Habyarimana in the plane by the Tutsi who had killed him in order to govern the country. This is why the Hutu got mad at the Tutsi, killing them'.⁵⁸¹

2.5.1.3.5.3 Actors and their roles (responsibility, victimhood and heroism)

The students' accounts of the genocide included discussions on the actors and their roles in the violence. Young people referred to the role of the general population, the State and its apparatus, the international community, and the RPF.

a) *The general population: Rwandans, and Hutu, Tutsi and Twa*

Similar to their representations of the 1959 events, the students' narratives varied in their degree of outspokenness on the roles of victimhood and responsibility in

⁵⁸⁰ R840.

⁵⁸¹ R851.

the 1994 tragedy. In relation to this issue, the collected accounts can be categorised into six main groups.

A first group of essays described Rwandans in general as the principal actors in the violent events of 1994. These accounts highlighted the internecine nature of the violence by referring to a ‘genocide between us’ during which ‘Rwandans were killing each other’. The choice to speak of ‘Rwandans’ in general seemed to be primarily dictated by a wish to avoid admitting the existence of ‘ethnic’ distinctions within Rwandan society. A sense of unease with the issue of identity and of responsibility and victimhood clearly emerged in narratives that vaguely hint at the persecution of ‘one group by another group’, without specifying the identity of the victimizer and of the victimised. A case in point is one pupil’s account of what she described as a ‘genocide of the Rwandans against the other Rwandans’. According to this student, in 1994, ‘the Rwandans have killed the other Rwandans, and a little bit later the other Rwandans stopped the killings’.⁵⁸²

A second group of narratives recognised Hutu and Tutsi as the main actors in the violence. They however omitted attributing roles of victimhood and guilt to one or the other community. These students often spoke of an ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial war’ between Hutu and Tutsi, whereby some ‘had tried to kill those who were not of the same race’.⁵⁸³

A third group of essays was characterised by a recognition of the Tutsi as the victims of the violence and by the omission of references to the identity of those responsible for the massacres. As reported in one of these accounts, ‘[i]n the genocide, one category (the Tutsi) were persecuted and killed’.⁵⁸⁴ This condition of Tutsi victimhood generally referred to the killings that took place within Rwanda. One narrative in particular also underscored the plight of Tutsi refugees abroad. This respondent, whose family members had been refugees in Uganda

⁵⁸² R693. In one case, a student included a reference to gender issues by stating that ‘men killed women and children, and women killed men and children’. R507.

⁵⁸³ R490.

⁵⁸⁴ R588.

since 1959 and who himself was born in Nyakivale refugee camp, recounted that ‘[f]or a long time, one group (Tutsi) was displaced out of its country. Some were killed and other displaced in 1959. It took them 38 years to come back’.⁵⁸⁵

A fourth group of narratives, rather considerable in number, delineated roles of victimhood and responsibility along ‘ethnic’ lines. These accounts unambiguously stated that ‘(the) Hutu killed (the) Tutsi’.⁵⁸⁶ They often included generalising terms, thereby seemingly implicating the entire Hutu community in the perpetration of the ‘Tutsi genocide’.

A fifth group, composed of only a couple of essays, alluded to the role of the Twa in the genocide. Here, the Twa were typically portrayed as co-perpetrators in violent acts which had been mainly committed by Hutu against Tutsi. According to one respondent, ‘[a]fter the colonisers had created hatred between us, the Rwandans of one part of the Hutu killed the people of one part of the Tutsi, and the Twa people helped the Hutu to kill the Tutsi’.⁵⁸⁷

A sixth and last group consisted in rare narratives which presented a more balanced and less black-and-white picture of the 1994 events. Among these essays were accounts which avoided generalising guilt by underscoring that (only) ‘some’ Hutu had perpetrated the violence.⁵⁸⁸ This set of answers also encompassed the very few narratives that alluded to victims other than the Tutsi. One student, for instance, spoke of ‘many victims, especially among the Tutsi’, thereby implying that victims could be counted among other groups as well.⁵⁸⁹ A handful of respondents specifically mentioned ‘the moderate Hutu’ or ‘the Hutu of the opposition’ as having been among the victims of the massacres that took place in 1994.⁵⁹⁰ Conversely, not a single essay referred to ordinary Hutu who had lost

⁵⁸⁵ R765.

⁵⁸⁶ R749.

⁵⁸⁷ R715.

⁵⁸⁸ R536.

⁵⁸⁹ R507.

⁵⁹⁰ R455. The expression ‘the Hutu of the opposition’ was used by a student whose essay stood out for its detailed nature and for mentioning topics that were largely or utterly neglected by other respondents. Among these topic were: the League of Nations, Logiest’s role in the ‘Social Revolution’ and in the independence process, the death of Burundi’s President Ntaryamira in Habyarimana’s plane crash, the exile of many

or risked their lives trying to save their neighbours. Also, showing a neglect of Hutu victims, the collected essays exposed a remarkable silence in relation to Hutu civilians who had been killed during or after the war by RPF soldiers, or who had been forced to a life of misery in Congolese refugee camps.

Irrespective of whether the identity of the victims and perpetrators of the violence was delineated, a thorough and critical examination of the role of the general population in the massacres, as well as of their motives, was utterly missing in the students' narratives. While the emphasis in explaining the conflict and the genocide was primarily placed on the role played by the divisionist ideology, only few accounts mentioned, for instance, such factors as people's greed, selfishness, poverty, and ignorance as reasons why the killings occurred. A couple of students, instead, underscored the senseless nature of the violence. They highlighted that many had lost their lives 'for nothing' and 'for no reason'.

b) The State and its apparatus

The post-colonial authorities, and especially Habyarimana and his government, were frequently portrayed as the organisers and instigators of the genocide. The former authorities were said to have prepared the genocide 'little by little', particularly 'since 1959'. They were reported to have either encouraged or forced the population to perpetrate mass killings by preaching divisionism and hatred. In the words of two respondents,

'After independence, the ideology introduced by the whites did not leave the memory of the Rwandese. The genocide against the Tutsi took place because other people (Hutu and Twa) were taught by their leaders to hate the Tutsi under the pretext that they are not Rwandans and that they are rich, so that they can have their wealth after killing them'.

'After the colonisation, the ones called Hutu continued to be taught that the Tutsi were their enemies, that they were not the same, and they accepted that'.⁵⁹¹

Rwandans after 1994 and their return in 1996-1997, the post-1994 infiltrations by DRC-based refugees/génocidaires, and the public execution of a number of top-génocidaires in 1998. R210.

⁵⁹¹ R539, and R798. According to one student, 'in 1959, one part called Tutsis started to be hated by Hutus due to the bad politics of Kayibanda. In 1994 there was a genocide against the Tutsi due to the bad politics under the leadership of Habyarimana and of his part of the people, the Hutus.' R745.

Accounts were silent with regard to the means used by the previous ‘bad leaders’ to convey the ‘genocide ideology’ and to instigate the killings. Only one student, for instance, vaguely alluded to the notorious role played by the extremist media as she mentioned the publication of ‘Habyarimana’s ten Hutu commandments’.⁵⁹² Another blatant omission in relation to the role played by the state apparatus in the organisation and implementation of the genocidal plans concerned the state army and its affiliated militias. One exception in this respect was a statement which referred to the ‘training and distribution of weapons among some political parties such as the Interahamwe’.⁵⁹³

c) The international community

Fiercely criticised by the current government, the role played by the international community was only sporadically addressed in the students’ narratives. In line with the official discourse, the respondents who referred to the international community underscored its negative role in the genocide. They pointed to the either passive or active involvement of external actors. Several students lamented that the world had miserably failed to intervene to stop the violence. They recounted how people in the world had cowardly chose to look away as the genocide was unfolding ‘in front of their eyes’.⁵⁹⁴ Others stressed the complicit role of Western powers, especially France, in encouraging the genocide.⁵⁹⁵ The nature and extent of France’s responsibility in the genocide varied across Rwandan narratives. One student, for instance, reported that the genocide had been prepared by France and executed by Rwandans.⁵⁹⁶ Another pupil stated that the violence had been perpetrated by ‘the Hutu, with the help of France and even the UN’.⁵⁹⁷ The extent of France’s support in the preparation and perpetration of the genocide was specified in one essay in particular. According to this narrative,

⁵⁹² R518.

⁵⁹³ R556.

⁵⁹⁴ R666.

⁵⁹⁵ R447.

⁵⁹⁶ R415.

⁵⁹⁷ R363.

‘the French had also been the instigators of the genocide by distributing weapons to kill the Tutsi’.⁵⁹⁸

d) *The RPF*

Across Rwanda, the surveyed youth showed no doubt about the heroic role of the RPF *Inkotanyi* in the country’s recent history. The collected essays commonly underscored that the genocide had come to an end thanks to the RPF’s military intervention and victory. One student explained that, ‘with the help of our God, Kagame and Fred Gisa Rwigema (unfortunately dead) stopped the massacre and won the war against the State’.⁵⁹⁹ Despite the recognised historical significance of the event, the date of this triumph was rarely cited by the pupils.

The RPF was widely depicted as a saviour not only of the Tutsi, but of the entire Rwandan nation. One student, among many, thanked the former rebels and current President Kagame, ‘because they are the ones who by arriving stopped the genocide in Rwanda and won the war against the State, and in so doing saved the Tutsi and the Rwandans in general’.⁶⁰⁰ In a somewhat more sombre tone, another respondent stated that ‘[t]he RPF arrived a bit late, but eventually they managed to defeat the villains and imprisoned the *génocidaires*’.⁶⁰¹ Only a few students recounted that numerous *génocidaires*, notably the ex-FAR and the Interahamwe, had fled to neighbouring countries, especially to the DRC.⁶⁰² In accordance with an overly positive depiction of the RPF, allusions to crimes reportedly committed by its soldieres in Rwanda and abroad were absent in the students’ accounts of the recent past.

Throughout this section, the present study has brought to light a tendency among the surveyed youth to embrace the government’s official discourse on the genocide. Several narratives distinguished themselves for their particularly

⁵⁹⁸ R835. As reported by a student, ‘I heard from adults that the genocide was caused by the French’. R856.

⁵⁹⁹ R945. In a number of cases, the way the genocide and the war had ended was omitted altogether, moving directly to praising the government’s post-genocide efforts.

⁶⁰⁰ R790.

⁶⁰¹ R837.

⁶⁰² R594. Generally overlooked in Rwandan narratives on the national history, this fact was more often recounted in essays on the regional history (see Chapter 4.5.2).

comprehensive reproduction of the state-sanctioned view of the origins, causes, nature, and actors of the violence. According to one such example,

'The killings of the Tutsi began in 1959, but in 1994 it was very unfortunate, catastrophic. The Hutu killed nearly 1 million Tutsi in a genocide that lasted 100 days, and this happened because of the bad government and of the racial segregation caused by the whites. Finally, the RPF came and fought against the genocide'.⁶⁰³

2.5.1.3.6 *The aftermath of the war and genocide, and the present time*

In their description of the aftermath of 1994, Rwandan respondents often mentioned the 'many' and 'grave' consequences of the genocide. Although the Tutsi were sometimes explicitly depicted as the victims of the violence, its consequences were widely believed to have affected all Rwandans. Narratives thus seemed to highlight a current state of shared victimhood of the entire nation. As one pupil pointed out, '[a]t the moment, we have a lot of disadvantages of the genocide for all Rwandans'.⁶⁰⁴

The surveyed youth mostly alluded to the enormous human loss suffered during the genocide. In most cases, the respondents vaguely referred to the 'many' deaths that had been caused by the violence. More exact figures were occasionally cited. These essays usually spoke of (circa, nearly, or more than) one million victims. These victims were mainly referred to as 'people' or 'Rwandans'. Two students provided higher estimates, namely 1,5 million and over 2 million. In addition to highlighting the massive death that had resulted from the violence, young people occasionally drew attention to the existence of numerous orphans, widows, displaced people and prisoners. They likewise mentioned the high levels of traumatism and HIV/AIDS as well as of poverty that had affected Rwandan society in the wake of the genocide. Young Rwandans finally showed a strong concern for the shattered image of Rwanda abroad due to its association with the genocide.

⁶⁰³ R847.

⁶⁰⁴ R579.

Observations on the catastrophic impact of the genocide on Rwandan society were generally accompanied by a great appreciation of the colossal endeavours and the superb achievements of the RPF-led government. With almost no exception, respondents lauded the government's successful efforts at reconstructing the country and at promoting peace and security, unity and reconciliation, democracy and social justice, and development and prosperity. Young people's descriptions of the post-genocide era were dominated by an omnipresent tribute and expressions of gratitude towards the new authorities. Their commitment to good governance and good leadership was presented as starkly contrasting with the 'bad' practices of the previous regimes. Young people in Rwanda extolled especially President Kagame. He was depicted as a good, clever and respected head of state. His re-election in 2010 was seen by some as being a function of generalised feelings of satisfaction with Kagame's leadership and with its impressive record in instilling new life in the country. The renewal of Kagame's presidential mandate was expected by one hopeful respondent to 'add even more beautiful things'.⁶⁰⁵

A widespread belief in the radical positive changes introduced by Kagame's government was revealed by the exceptionally optimistic depictions of the country's current situation. Present-day Rwanda was widely portrayed as a peaceful country. According to one respondent, '[t]oday, peace is everywhere in Rwanda'.⁶⁰⁶ Another student added that his nation had come so far as to contribute to bringing peace and security to other African countries through its participation in peacekeeping missions. Rwanda was also described as a united and reconciled country, where there are 'no divisions or discrimination'.⁶⁰⁷ Drawing a comparison with the past, one student declared that,

'before, Rwandans were divided into three parts and it was necessary to know where you belonged. Today, there are no Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. We are one people ('Turumwe'), we are all Rwandans again'.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁵ R145. As reported by a respondent, 'today, the people of Rwanda are happy with the government. We thank the authorities for having governed us well.' R786.

⁶⁰⁶ R116.

⁶⁰⁷ R387. As reported by another student, 'today, there are no teachers who oblige children to hate each other'. R276.

⁶⁰⁸ R734. Another respondent declared that, 'today there are no ethnies or separation within Rwandans and this must/may be the example for other countries all over the world: re-unite first to win'. R715.

The return to a primordial unity was underscored by two other students according to whom, '[t]oday we are re-united again' and '[n]ow Rwandans live in peace and unity like before'.⁶⁰⁹ Rwandans today were said 'to live together, without any problem'.⁶¹⁰ One account highlighted the success of the government's politics of reconciliation. She reported that, 'now those who lost their family are starting to forgive'.⁶¹¹ The Gacaca courts were attributed a place of importance among the strategies introduced by the government to promote reconciliation. More rarely, respondents mentioned other mechanisms such as the ICTR, NURC, the NURC school clubs and *Ingando*, the community service programme for detainees, the commemorations, and the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide. These mechanisms were presented as instruments through which the government had worked towards preventing a new genocide by fighting against its ideology. Specifically, the State was deemed to have demonstrated a commitment to educating and changing the mind of the population.⁶¹² As explained by one respondent,

*'[i]n the past Rwandans had been bad, but now they change slowly because our government makes a big effort. Today, 'Never Again' has become our motto and we are fighting so that the genocide is never forgotten'.*⁶¹³

One of the few more critical narratives that were collected in Rwanda acknowledged a still widespread adherence to the genocide ideology. This student regretted the existence of rampant 'hypocrisy' among the Rwandan population despite the positive efforts made by the government.⁶¹⁴

Next to enjoying peace and reconciliation, present-day Rwanda was generally said to be characterised by good governance, democracy, and social justice. Students referred to the successful promotion of human rights, equal opportunities in education and employment, women emancipation, anti-corruption and transparency, and decentralisation. Also, they emphasised the astonishing progress

⁶⁰⁹ R867 and R546.

⁶¹⁰ R676.

⁶¹¹ R645.

⁶¹² A student also mentioned the existence of 'special measures to fight against those who can perturbate Rwandan security'. R734

⁶¹³ R756.

⁶¹⁴ R474.

made by the government in quickly developing the country and in promoting prosperity. They commended the government's heavy investment in the fields of technology, economy, infrastructure, and social services. Thanks to the efforts made for instance in poverty reduction and job creation and in revamping housing, education, and health provision, the life of ordinary people in Rwanda was believed to have considerably improved.⁶¹⁵

Rwandan students not only expressed great satisfaction with the current progress in reconstructing the country and in rebuilding the nation. They also showed tremendous confidence in the future as well as a profound sense of patriotic pride and commitment towards the wellbeing of the nation. Rwanda was depicted as having finally turned a sad page of its history. The present time was portrayed as a 'new beginning', or a 'good end', which was based on a re-discovered spirit of solidarity.⁶¹⁶ Whereas a better future was still a hope for some, for others it was an absolute certainty. Optimistic views were distinctively expressed by three students in particular. They declared that,

'After the genocide, Rwandans have started a new journey of life. Today Rwandans are reconciled and united towards a fantastic 2020 Vision of development, and Rwanda has become a wonderful and exemplary country in Africa and in the world'.

'After all the bad past, Rwandans have worked together, under the government's good leadership, to change the history of our country in good history and to build a new Rwanda, a country of peace, happiness and 1000 hills... no one can break our progress today'.

*'Now things are better than ever...Rwanda is becoming a great nation...Rwanda is new; even if we had a bad history now everything has changed and Rwandans are ready to be world changers'.*⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁵Students mentioned government's efforts in road construction, transport and communication, provision of water/electricity, construction of hospitals and modern homes (*bayi bayi nyakatsi*), cow policy for the poor (*girinka munyarwanda*), promotion of Millenium Development Goals, Education for All, universal basic education, merit-based access to higher education and employment, fight against social or regional segregation.

⁶¹⁶ R795.

⁶¹⁷ R776, R621, R471. A respondent declared that 'today we have much confidence and we are satisfied with our progress. Now we are all working hard to counter all the problems caused by the colonisation.' R354. As recounted by another student, 'now Rwandans live in peace and unity like before, and they love each other. Now Rwandans are all the same and think about going very far in the development because they have the hope to live better than before because with love nothing is impossible'. R827.

A couple of respondents reached out to the outside world moved by a concern to restore the tarnished image of the country abroad. One student from Kigali stated that, '[p]eople may think that here in Rwanda we still have the genocide. Now I invite all people of the world to come and see the progress of Rwanda'.⁶¹⁸ Similarly, another pupil proudly maintained that, '[i]f they came, every foreigner will want to stay here forever'.⁶¹⁹

Often, narratives ended by summoning the population to continue working together to promote peace and development in the country. In one essay, Rwandans were urged to 'put their hands together and be one'.⁶²⁰ Another student more firmly called on her countrymen's patriotism by 'demand[ing] that the Rwandese accept their duty to love their country, to be heroes and to protect it against the enemies'.⁶²¹ A couple of respondents specifically addressed certain social groups within the society. A student, among others, called upon 'us the youth to work to solve our problems'.⁶²² A few others addressed the refugees who had not yet returned to Rwanda despite the government's instructions to do so. As affirmed in one essay, 'we want all those who are still in Congolese forests to return and help construct the country'.⁶²³

One particular narrative stood out for taking exceptional distance from the overly positive views commonly expressed by Rwandan students. Starkly diverging from a dominant focus on positive change, this account acknowledged the persistence of internal conflict in Rwandan society. This was seen as the result of a perpetual situation of injustice, which for decades had been promoted through a manipulation of history that was aimed at maintaining certain groups in power. While particularly outspoken on issues of identity and power in relation to the past, the tone with regard to current dynamics and relations of power was only vaguely critical. In the words of this student,

⁶¹⁸ R98.

⁶¹⁹ R15.

⁶²⁰ R987.

⁶²¹ R750.

⁶²² R54.

⁶²³ R532.

'Before independence, most of the kings were Tutsi; after independence, the country was ruled by Mbonyumutwa, Kayibanda, Habyarimana who were all Hutu and who favoured the development of the Hutu, but until now the stories are hidden. Everyone who has taken power does not tell the real stories and promotes his personal interest. When one analyses the situation, one can see that there is economic change but politically there is no great difference between the past and the present, which still causes internal conflicts'.⁶²⁴

This section has so far illustrated the views held by young Rwandans on their country's past and present. The next paragraphs will examine and compare the narratives recounted by Burundian and Congolese students on the history of their Rwandan neighbours in order to identify similarities and differences across the three countries.

2.5.2 The history of Rwanda according to Burundian and Congolese students

The present section will examine the history of Rwanda as was represented by young people from across the border. Following the structure that was adopted in the analysis of Rwandan narratives, this section will start by providing a few general remarks on the content of Burundian and Congolese accounts of Rwanda's history. It will subsequently propose a more in-depth analysis of young people's views on this history as well as on Rwanda's present time. Particular attention will be drawn to their representations of the two controversial themes of identity, and of the conflict, the genocide and their aftermath.

2.5.2.1 General remarks on the content of the narratives

Upon being invited to narrate the history of Rwanda, several Burundian and Congolese students admitted having limited knowledge on the subject. Various explanations were given for this state of affairs. One Burundian student, for instance, blamed education for having failed to adequately inform her on the topic. Another respondent lamented the general lack of documentation on the history of Rwanda, except for the theme of the genocide. One Congolese pupil

⁶²⁴ R797.

instead justified his lack of knowledge on Rwandan history by underscoring its irrelevance for Congolese nationals. He declared, ‘I don’t know about it because I am not Rwandan’.⁶²⁵ A curious view was provided by another Congolese respondent. He affirmed not to know well this country ‘because if you arrive in Rwanda to do some research, you risk being imprisoned: it’s a great danger that must be avoided’.⁶²⁶ Despite a recognition of the exiguous nature of their knowledge of Rwanda’s history, Burundian and Congolese pupils provided copious and insightful data.⁶²⁷

In the students’ accounts, four topics figured prominently.⁶²⁸ The respondents mainly referred to the country’s colonisation, its independence, the genocide, and its aftermath. In the framework of discussions on the genocide in particular, references to ethnic relations and to the Hutu-Tutsi conflict abounded across the collected essays. In comparison with other periods, Rwanda’s pre-colonial past was addressed only to a much lesser extent, mostly in Burundi. Here, the focus was on the kingdom’s political organisation and its military expeditions in the region.⁶²⁹

Rwanda’s most cited historical figures were the country’s heads of state. Current president Kagame was the most commonly named. Occasionally, Burundian and Congolese students referred to several Rwandan kings. They were spearheaded by Rwabugiri and Rudahigwa. The former was mentioned in the context of bilateral

⁶²⁵ C453.

⁶²⁶ C165.

⁶²⁷ The richest regional account on Rwandan history was written by a Burundian student who was born in Rwanda from Rwandan parents. This presented a particularly rich chronology of Rwandan history, from 1300s until 1994. B134.

⁶²⁸ In their historical narratives, essays included frequent references to the country’s geography and economy. They mentioned its location, borders, surface, landscape, capital city and important towns, demography, as well as official languages and religion. Students also referred to Rwanda’s current membership in the Commonwealth and in the EAC.

⁶²⁹ Topics included the prehistoric life, migrations and settlement; the political organisation of the kingdom (said by two students in Burundi to have been ruled by the Tutsi Nyiginya dynasty), and expansionist wars, especially under King Rwabugiri. With regard to the kingdom’s political organisation, ancient Rwanda was depicted in several Burundian accounts as an absolutist monarchy characterised by a highly hierarchical structure headed by a powerful *mwami* assisted by a system of triple chieftaincy. As for Rwanda’s expansionist wars, Burundian respondents in particular mentioned the numerous wars that had been fought between the Rwandan and the Burundian kingdoms in this period, e.g. in the current province of Kirundo, where many Rwandans were said to have been killed. Also, a Congolese student mentioned a story about a competition between Rwabugiri and his soldier Rwanyonga to kill the king of Bunyabungo in eastern Congo. These two figures were depicted as Tutsi and Hutu, respectively.

wars;⁶³⁰ the latter in the context of the decolonisation. Rudahigwa, in particular, was depicted, in Burundi and Congo respectively, as the leader and ‘hero’ of Rwanda’s independence, and as a ‘martyr’ of the anti-colonial struggle.⁶³¹ Among Rwanda’s key historical dates, the most frequently cited were the year of independence in 1962 and of the genocide in 1994.⁶³² Chronological confusions and mistakes were again not missing: the former event, for instance, was sometimes situated in 1960 or 1961, especially in the DRC; the latter in 1993 or 1995, especially in Burundi. Another prominent factual mistake consisted in pinpointing England or France as Rwanda’s former colonial powers.⁶³³

2.5.2.2 Identities in Rwanda

In Burundian and Congolese accounts, Rwanda’s inhabitants were generally referred to as ‘the Rwandan people’ or ‘the Rwandese’. They were often described as people sharing the same language and culture. One Burundian student underscored the cultural as well as the ‘racial’ unity of Rwandans by depicted here neighbours as belonging to ‘one single race which speaks one single language’.⁶³⁴ In contrast to narratives that highlighted this unity, others mentioned the Hutu and the Tutsi as making up the country’s population. The existence of the Twa was instead overlooked in most essays. Furthermore, one Burundian student erroneously mentioned the Ganwa category, the existence of which is in fact a unique feature pertaining to the Burundian context.

Much like in Rwanda, a multiplicity of concepts were used to define the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa categories. These divergences confirmed the considerable lack of clarity on the nature and origins of these identities among young people in the region. Usually defined in terms of *ethnie*, especially in Burundi, these categories were also variously referred to as tribe, race, and, more generally, as peoples. Contrary to Rwandan narratives, in Burundi and the DRC these categories were

⁶³⁰ Among the kings that were mentioned were Rwabugiri, Yuhi Mazimpaka, and Yuhi Gahindiro. One Burundian student also mentioned Rwanda’s current king’s exile in the USA (Kigeli).

⁶³¹ A considerable number of Burundian students instead attributed this role to the Burundian Prince Rwagasore.

⁶³² Only few students specified the exact month and day of the start of the killings, as well as their duration.

⁶³³ Several Congolese students believed Americans to be the country’s new colonisers today.

⁶³⁴ B243.

never portrayed as clans, or as socio-economic classes, a definition that was instead widely accepted in Rwanda.

The cross-border analysis of students' representations of identity issues in Rwanda revealed a resemblance of Burundian accounts with the Rwandan dominant version, and a stark divergence of Congolese narratives from Rwandan and Burundian mainstream views. Contrary to their counterparts, Congolese essays exhibited a considerable degree of acceptance of colonial and extremist racial theories among the country's young generation. Several accounts, for instance, referred to Twa, Hutu, and Tutsi as '*Pygmées*', '*Bantu*', and '*Nilotiques*' or '*Hamites*' respectively. While the first two terms were found in a couple of Rwandan narratives, references to the terms 'Nilotic' and 'Hamitic' were inexistent in the essays collected in Rwanda. Also, as opposed to Rwandan accounts, which typically emphasised the common origins of Rwandans and their longstanding pre-colonial unity and peaceful coexistence, various Congolese students maintained that Hutu and Tutsi had historically been two separate and antagonistic groups which had different origins and had been in conflict since time immemorial. This rather widespread view among Congolese respondents held that the Tutsi had come from North Africa. They were thought to have descended from Egypt or Ethiopia, and to have reached Rwanda travelling along the river Nile – according to some, after having sold their country. As the narrative goes, upon their arrival in Rwanda, the Tutsi had encountered the Hutu. On account of their earlier settlement on the territory, the latter were occasionally depicted as 'the natives' (*les originaires*) and 'the owners' of Rwanda. They were considered by some as 'the real Rwandans'.⁶³⁵ Only one essay explicitly described both groups as 'Rwanda's autochthonous peoples'.⁶³⁶ One Congolese student went so far as to suggest the supreme and irrefutable legitimacy of Hutu claims on Rwanda by presenting the situation of presumed Hutu autochthony as a divine plan. In his words, 'Rwanda is the country of the Great Lakes which God has prepared for the true Rwandans, who are the Hutu'.⁶³⁷ Whereas the Hutu were

⁶³⁵ C675.

⁶³⁶ C547.

⁶³⁷ C798.

portrayed as Rwanda's autochthonous people, the Tutsi were often depicted as 'invaders'. According to these accounts, the Tutsi 'aggressors' had eventually succeeded in dominating the Hutu, whom they arrogantly considered as inferior people. One student summarised this view as follows:

'Rwanda is a country that was once occupied by the Hutu, but, with the arrival of the Tutsi, the situation turned disastrous: it was as if the devil had appeared. The Tutsi people are problematic people because they want to gain the property of others'.⁶³⁸

In the DRC, the term 'Nilotic' was sometimes used to refer not only to the Tutsi, but also to Rwandans in general. Consequently, the various (colonial) stereotypes that were frequently associated with the 'Nilotic' Tutsi were often employed to describe all Rwandans. In outlining the typical Rwandan physiognomy, for instance, several Congolese accounts characterised the country's inhabitants as 'tall and slender people'.⁶³⁹ With regard to Rwandan socio-economic occupations, while a Congolese student distinguished Tutsi and Hutu by stating that 'the Tutsi raise cattle and the Hutu are farmers',⁶⁴⁰ others depicted all Rwandans as being predominantly 'pastoralist and nomadic people'.⁶⁴¹

While widespread in the Congo, references to the topic of origins and migrations in the Rwandan context were practically absent in accounts that were collected in Burundi. Here, as in Rwanda, the tendency was to underscore Rwanda's pre-colonial unity and to ascribe much of the responsibility for the Hutu-Tutsi divide to the colonial powers. Only one essay was found to recount a history of successive migratory waves of Twa, Hutu and Tutsi, and to describe the Tutsi as 'herders of Nilotic origin'.⁶⁴² A different story was told by another Burundian student. According to this pupil, the pygmy Twa had been overrun by the Bantu migration; in the student's view, this event later resulted in the progressive organisation of the Hutu as farmers and of the Tutsi as herders.⁶⁴³

⁶³⁸ C786.

⁶³⁹ C376.

⁶⁴⁰ C123.

⁶⁴¹ C154.

⁶⁴² B143.

⁶⁴³ B45.

2.5.2.3 *The conflict and the genocide in Rwanda*

The genocide was the topic that was most commonly mentioned in Burundian and Congolese accounts of Rwandan history. This event was widely seen as having tragically marked the history of this country and of the region as a whole.

As in Rwanda, various terms were used to refer to this period. The 1994 violent events were described as ‘genocide’, ‘(civil) war’, ‘conflict’, ‘killing(s)’, ‘massacre(s)’, and ‘crisis’ (merely in Burundi). They were likewise characterised in terms of ‘unfortunate period’, ‘difficulties’, ‘drama’, and ‘hecatomb’. Two Burundian students employed the local expressions *Itsembatsemba n’itsembabwoko* (‘mass killing and genocide’ in Kinyarwanda) and *Ihonyabwoko* (‘genocide’ in Kirundi). The respondents often underscored the brutality that had marked this period. Young people in the region spoke of the ‘machete blows’ by which many had been killed ‘like animals’ and ‘like snakes’. They also drew attention to the many women who had been raped ‘without mercy’.⁶⁴⁴ A large variety of adjectives were used to illustrate the gravity of the event. The event was portrayed as ‘important’, ‘unforgettable’, ‘unfortunate’, ‘terrible’, ‘catastrophic’, ‘grave’, tragic’, ‘cruel’, ‘atrocious’ and ‘genocidal’. It was also described as ‘shocking’ and ‘incomprehensible’. In depicting the genocide in Rwanda, one Burundian student highlighted its unparalleled level of cruelty on the African continent. She pointed out that, ‘[t]his incident, which has deeply marked the country, is recognised worldwide as the cruellest genocide of all times in Africa’.⁶⁴⁵ According to the moralising view of a Congolese respondent, the extraordinarily barbarous nature of this occurrence ‘demonstrated the wickedness of the Rwandese’.⁶⁴⁶ A second set of adjectives revealed young people’s understanding of the main causes and actors of the crisis by pointing to its ‘ethnic’, ‘inter-ethnic’, and, less frequently, ‘tribal’ or ‘racial’ nature. Occasionally, the crisis was portrayed as a ‘political’, ‘social’, or ‘socio-political’

⁶⁴⁴ One student mentioned the events occurred during the genocide at ‘*les grand hotel du Rwanda*’, probably referring to the movie ‘Hotel Rwanda’. B165.

⁶⁴⁵ B143.

⁶⁴⁶ C365.

event. Several narratives elaborated on the causes and actors of the conflict and violence experienced in Rwanda.

Two main factors were identified as the cause of the Rwandan conflict. In Burundian accounts especially, the violence was explained with the existence of ethnicity and ethnic differences and divisions in the country. Although to a lesser extent than in Rwanda, various Burundian students traced the roots of the conflict and violence back to the colonial policy of ‘divide and rule’. Colonial powers were said to have introduced ethnic distinctions with the aim of breaking the country’s unity. Also, the colonisers were accused of having fuelled tensions between Hutu and Tutsi by treating the latter as a different and superior race.⁶⁴⁷ In Congolese accounts, references to the colonial role in the conflict were absent. Distinctions and divisions were deemed to have preceded the arrival of the whites. The second identified cause of the violence was the existence of a perpetual power struggle between Hutu and Tutsi. According to one Congolese student, the two groups ‘always fight over the country’s ownership’.⁶⁴⁸

As for the actors involved, a couple of respondents described the war and the genocide in terms of a confrontation between two political actors, namely the RPF *Inkotanyi* and the *Interahamwe*. In most Burundian and Congolese accounts, the main opponents in the conflict were the Rwandan people, and, more specifically, the Hutu and the Tutsi. In the former case, essays referred to ‘the genocide of the Rwandans’; in the latter, they spoke of ‘the genocide between Tutsi and Hutu’. The ‘ethnic’ confrontation was often portrayed in generalising terms, as one diametrically opposing ‘*les Hutu*’ and ‘*les Tutsi*’.

Regional narratives were not unanimous in ascribing roles of victimisers, victimised and heroes to the actors involved. In some cases, through the use of such expressions as ‘*génocide des Rwandais*’ and ‘*génocide entre Tutsi et Hutu*’, and of the verb ‘*s’entretuer*’ (i.e. to kill each other), accounts tended to blur roles of responsibility and victimhood. In these narratives, the genocide appeared to be

⁶⁴⁷ B76.

⁶⁴⁸ C715.

portrayed as a massacre in which Rwandans in general, or Hutu and Tutsi in particular, were fighting one another, killing each other in what seemed to be perceived as a symmetric civil war. In other essays, roles of victimhood and responsibility were more clearly delineated. Once again, while Burundian accounts tended to reflect the dominant Rwandan version of the events, Congolese narratives appeared to greatly differ from the views generally held by their eastern neighbours on such roles.

In Burundi, as in Rwanda, a condition of Tutsi victimhood was often underscored. The Tutsi identity of the victims was frequently made clear by using the expression ‘genocide against the Tutsi’. In Burundi, merely one essay alluded to the Hutu victims of the 1994 massacres. These victims were defined as ‘non-extremist Hutu’ as opposed to Hutu extremists. The identity of the perpetrators was only sporadically mentioned. These few narratives pointed the finger at the Hutu community as a whole by speaking of massacres committed by ‘Hutu against Tutsi’. More rarely, accounts circumscribed the role of responsibility in the violence to ‘some’ Hutu. In the words of one student, ‘some Tutsi have been killed by some Hutu’.⁶⁴⁹ Only one pupil blamed specifically Habyarimana’s regime for preparing and executing the genocide.⁶⁵⁰ In Burundian accounts of the war, the RPF was often presented as having had the merit of liberating the country from a murderous regime. In contrast to the Rwandan essays, a couple of Burundian students blemished the otherwise heroic image of the RPF by tracing the outbreak of the violence to the rebels’ invasion in 1990. One pupil, for instance, spoke of a Tutsi ‘revolt’ that had precipitated the violence. She however also acknowledged the responsibility of the former regime in failing to address the pressing refugee question as it refused to ‘have a dialogue’ with the refugees.⁶⁵¹ One account was particularly explicit in its accusation against the Tutsi and the RPF. This respondent recounted that Rwanda had been ‘invaded by the Tutsi coming from the north, which created a bloody war between Hutu and Tutsi in 1962, date of the

⁶⁴⁹ B86.

⁶⁵⁰ B269.

⁶⁵¹ B371.

independence, until 1994, with Kagame's RPF'.⁶⁵² It is unclear here whether the mention of the northern origins of the Tutsi invasion alluded to Uganda as the arrear base of the RPF, or, rather, to the old belief in the origins of the Tutsi in Egypt, in Northern Africa. The ambiguity of this statement is compounded by the student's curious dating of the beginning of the bloody ethnic war, as he depicted it, in 1962. This particular year was probably mentioned to underscore the protractedness of the conflict throughout the entire post-colonial period until 1994. Remarkably, responsibility for the assassination of Habyarimana and of his Burundian counterpart Ntaryamira, which was identified by some as the precipitating factor and the direct cause of the genocide, was not assigned by any Burundian respondent. The sole exception in this regard was the assertion by a student who blamed this action on 'unknown people'.⁶⁵³

Compared to the dominant narrative in both Rwanda and Burundi, respondents in the DRC presented a starkly contrasting view. Placed within the framework of an age-old competition for power, responsibility for the conflict and violence in Rwanda seemed to be primarily attributed to the Tutsi. The role of colonial powers and post-colonial regimes was instead utterly overlooked. Rather than being the target of accusations, former President Habyarimana was in fact depicted by two students as 'a good president', 'beloved by all Rwandans'.⁶⁵⁴ His assassination was widely seen as the immediate and direct cause of the recent violence in the overall context of an ethnic power struggle. Among the Congolese students who mentioned this event there seemed to be no doubt or disagreement about the fact that Habyarimana had been killed by the Tutsi rebels, or simply by 'the Tutsi', in order to gain power at all costs. Together with the rebels' alleged assassination of the Hutu president, their invasion of Rwanda was believed to explain the genocide. Two accounts clearly convey this view:

'In 1994, under President Habyarimana, a rebellion came from Uganda led by the current President, who wanted to seize power and caused the death of Habyarimana'.

⁶⁵² B324.

⁶⁵³ B129.

⁶⁵⁴ C301, C595.

'The Tutsi, who didn't like the way of ruling of the Hutu, made a coup d'état, which provoked the genocide on 07-04-1994. After the assassination of President Habyarimana, the Hutu, those of the presidents' tribe, wanted to avenge his death, triggering the genocide'.⁶⁵⁵

The latter statement takes distance from the argument according to which the genocide was the result of a plan that had long been orchestrated by the former regime. The excerpt seems rather to suggest that the genocide constituted the spontaneous act of the Hutu seeking revenge for the murder of their president by the Tutsi. In another account, the Tutsi, described as 'very cunning',⁶⁵⁶ were not only accused of killing the President; they were also accused of committing massacres against the Hutu with the aim of taking over *their* country. In the words of this student,

'The Tutsi used the massacre to take possession of the country and to expel its real owners'.⁶⁵⁷

This excerpt describes the Hutu as the victims of Tutsi perfidy. As in Burundi, only one Congolese student mentioned the killing of 'moderate Hutu' during the genocide.⁶⁵⁸ No allusion was made to the identity of the perpetrators of the violence committed against this group.

Accused of having provoked the genocide and of having perpetrated massacres against Hutu civilians, Kagame's RPF was not celebrated in Congolese essays for its heroic role in 'liberating' the country. The only exception in this regard was the account by a student who described the RPF war as an action aimed at 'liberating the Tutsi people'⁶⁵⁹ – *nota bene*, the Tutsi and not the country as a whole. This statement thus seemed to imply a condition of Tutsi victimhood that preceded the 1990 invasion. In Congolese as well as in Burundian essays, little was otherwise recounted on the antecedents of the war and of the genocide.

⁶⁵⁵ C945, C756. Another student stated that, '[i]n order to take Rwanda, the Tutsi killed President Habyarimana'. C254.

⁶⁵⁶ C17.

⁶⁵⁷ C91.

⁶⁵⁸ C830.

⁶⁵⁹ C703.

A considerable number of Rwandan respondents had referred to the unremitting Tutsi discrimination and persecution that had characterised the country's history since 1959. Congolese accounts were particularly silent in this respect. Only two among them mentioned the 'ethnic violence of 1959' as the precursor or beginning of the more recent and larger Tutsi massacre of 1994. These were also among the very few Congolese essays that had defined the 1994 massacres in terms of 'genocide against the Tutsi'. In Burundi, the 1959 events were mentioned more frequently. They were variously defined as a 'social revolution', as 'troubles' between UNAR and Parmehutu, as an (ethnic) 'war', as 'the beginning of ethnic discrimination', or as 'genocide' (against the Tutsi). One Burundian student reported of two genocides having taken place in Rwanda: one in 1959 and one in 1993 (sic). Without specifically referring to the events in 1959, three other respondents more generally spoke of cyclical anti-Tutsi massacres, of perpetual insecurity, and of ethnic problems which had culminated in the 1994 genocide.

In describing the end of the war and of the genocide, both Burundian and Congolese narratives often mentioned the RPF as the victor of a struggle which was largely seen as having opposed Hutu and Tutsi. In Congolese essays, 'the Tutsi' in general, rather than the RPF, were occasionally said to have prevailed. Led by Kagame, this group as a whole was portrayed as having eventually succeeded in taking over the country for the first time since independence, thereby forcing the Hutu to flee their land and to find refuge especially in the DRC. Three extracts are particularly illustrative of this view:

'The Tutsi defeated the Hutu and confiscated their country'.

'When the situation reversed itself, the Hutu took refuge in the DRC'.

'The Tutsi power-holders seek to drive the Hutu out of the country. The defenceless Hutu therefore forcefully looked for a place in the Congo'.⁶⁶⁰

In the third statement in particular, the Hutu appear as defenceless victims of the new, threatening Tutsi power-holders. Driven out of their ancestral homeland, the Hutu refugees still remaining in the DRC, called 'survivors' by one student, were

⁶⁶⁰ C335, C543, C345.

depicted in one essay as ‘the sworn enemies of the current occupants of their land’.⁶⁶¹ One Congolese respondent alluded to an otherwise omitted role of the international community in the genocide. She stated that, ‘when there was the war in Rwanda and people were killing each other, the French allowed them to enter into the DRC.’⁶⁶²

It is at this specific temporal juncture that the national histories of Rwanda and the DRC appeared to dramatically converge in Congolese accounts. As will be illustrated in Chapter 4.5.1, the DRC was overwhelmingly presented by Congolese students as having borne the brunt of the Rwandan conflict following the massive exodus of Hutu refugees into their country. The Congo and its population were thus attributed the role of the ultimate victims in what was part of Rwandan history. The transnational nature of the 1994 genocide and of its consequences was clearly outlined by one respondent. She explained that, [t]he genocide caused the refuge of the population in the DRC, which has caused the war here *chez nous*’.⁶⁶³ More specifically, the Rwandan conflict was considered to be the cause of two main sources of recent insecurity in eastern Congo. These included the troubles provoked by the militarised Rwandan Hutu refugees, now FDLR, and the cross-border military campaigns conducted by the new Rwandan army to hunt down this group.⁶⁶⁴

2.5.2.4 The aftermath of the war and genocide, and the present time in Rwanda

In both Burundian and Congolese essays, discussions on the aftermath of the genocide abounded.

In Congolese accounts, such discussions tended to concentrate on the impact of the genocide on the Congo itself.⁶⁶⁵ To a lesser extent, they included references to its consequences for Rwanda and its population. Congolese as well as Burundian

⁶⁶¹ C423.

⁶⁶² C895.

⁶⁶³ C243.

⁶⁶⁴ C276. As stated by a student, ‘After having chased them, they continued to look for them here in our place and they made us suffer too.’ C389.

⁶⁶⁵ Two students for instance recounted that, ‘Rwanda experienced a genocidal war which had an impact also here in the DRC’; ‘the Genocide in Rwanda touched us as well; it makes us suffer today because of the FDLR.’ C243, C154.

respondents mentioned first of all the ‘many deaths’ that had resulted from the violence. More exact figures were provided in a few essays. Some discrepancy was found in the two countries. In the DRC, the number of victims was estimated to be 800,000 or 1 million; in Burundi, they were believed to be circa or more than 1 million. One Burundian essay stood out as it spoke of ‘millions’ of victims. As hinted at in the previous paragraph, Congolese accounts, in particular, also emphasised the massive displacement of Rwandan Hutu after 1994 as an additional consequence of the war and genocide. More sporadically, respondents referred to widespread suffering and destruction, and to the many wounded and orphans. Especially in Burundi, several pupils drew attention to the broken relations and the trauma and psychological distress with which Rwandans had had to cope in the aftermath of the violence. Burundian accounts included a few comments on the issue of remembering. This tragic part of the country’s history was said by some to be still engraved in the minds of Rwandans, for good or for bad.⁶⁶⁶ One student, for instance, underscored the importance of preserving the memory of this sad event with a view to preventing its recurrence. She reported that, ‘this genocide is remembered in Rwanda every year so that it will not happen again’.⁶⁶⁷ Another respondent underlined the difficulty of dealing with this memory. In her understanding, ‘people in Rwanda are struggling to live with the memory of this tragic event of 1994’.⁶⁶⁸ It is possibly in relation to the memory of the atrocities and its deterring effect that a Congolese student portrayed the genocide as the reason for Rwanda’s current stability. In his words, ‘[t]hanks to the genocide, Rwanda is today a country that is well-organised because every person that could be harmful to society is already scared’.⁶⁶⁹

With regard to Rwanda’s present time, perceptions collected among Burundian and especially Congolese respondents were not as homogenous as those found among their Rwandan counterparts. Rwandan students had presented an overwhelmingly positive depiction of today’s state of affairs. They had highly

⁶⁶⁶ According to three students, ‘[Rwanda] has known a big genocide which is always unforgettable for the Rwandans ;’ ‘even now they remember this war’ ; ‘they have never forgotten their history’.

⁶⁶⁷ B254.

⁶⁶⁸ B290.

⁶⁶⁹ C809.

praised the post-genocide efforts and achievements of the RPF-led government. Students in the region appeared instead to be rather divided on the issue.

One group of respondents, especially in Burundi, concurred with the dominant Rwandan discourse in presenting an overly positive image of the current situation. Rwanda was perceived to have been able to close a dark chapter of its history and to have successfully moved on towards a better future. According to two Burundian students, Rwandans had learned an important lesson from the genocide. In their words,

'This country has learned a great lesson. Now all that is behind them and they have tried to rebuild their country together in the best possible way, developing at great speed'.

*'Their development shows that the genocide has taught them something. They do not want the genocide to happen again because it has destroyed many things'.*⁶⁷⁰

Most of the praise for the positive developments in the country was apportioned to the Rwandan government. Much credit was specifically given to President Kagame and his RPF party. They were believed to have demonstrated good and strong leadership, and to have worked for the interest of the country and its people.⁶⁷¹ Their merits consisted not only in having stopped the genocide, but also in having turned Rwanda into a peaceful and developed country, and into a powerful state at the regional level. As summarised by one Burundian student, 'Kagame has lifted the country out of the crisis by developing it in all domains, political, economic and social'.⁶⁷² In the political sphere, the new leadership was commended for having broken with the past by promoting peace and security, as well as good governance, democracy, and the rule of law.⁶⁷³ Proof of the government's success was the current absence of war, the existence of strict

⁶⁷⁰ B311, B187.

⁶⁷¹ As recounted by three students, 'currently the country is ruled with an iron fist which has enabled a large economic boom'; 'from what I heard the authorities are quite strict and severe but they have made the country progress'; 'democracy exists, but the higher order must be respected'. C812, B230, B96.

⁶⁷² B55.

⁶⁷³ A number of Rwandan laws were mentioned, especially in relation to children (the interdiction to get married before the age of 18, as well as to exceed three children per family), the environment (the interdiction to use plastic bags), immigration (the interdiction to enter the country without Rwandan authorisation), and corruption (strict anti-corruption policies). In this respect, comparisons were made with the current situation in the Congo. One student, for instance, stated that, 'a Rwandan minister can not have a Hummer or a luxurious vehicle, but what is the case of the DRC?' C954.

regulations, the widespread respect of the law and of the environment, and the lack of corruption. In the economic domain, students widely admired the country's impressive development, its technological progress and modernisation, and its poverty reduction strategy.⁶⁷⁴ With regard to the social domain, respondents mentioned the State's successful promotion of national unity and reconciliation. The overall positive changes in Rwanda were perceived by Burundian students to be the result of the leadership's success in uniting the nation by abolishing ethnicity and by putting aside ethnic differences. One respondent well encapsulated this belief. In her words,

'President Kagame brought a remarkable and exemplary change to Rwanda. This has been possible thanks to a president who has managed to unite the nation by ignoring ethnic differences and by focusing on the future of the nation'.⁶⁷⁵

Under Kagame's leadership, Rwandans were deemed to have developed exceptional feelings of patriotism, nationalism, and solidarity which had been the driving force behind their leap forward.⁶⁷⁶ This situation of improved relations was likewise underscored by one Congolese student in particular. She observed that,

'Today Rwandans want reconciliation between them and they are one people. Hutu and Tutsi are living together and begin to marry between themselves'.⁶⁷⁷

Several students expressed admiration and astonishment towards their neighbours' tenacity and patriotism, and towards their consequent impressive progress in spite of the difficult past they experienced.⁶⁷⁸ For this reason, Rwanda was exalted by a couple of Burundian respondents as a model and an example for their country and the entire region. According to one of these essays,

⁶⁷⁴ With regard to progress, Congolese students mentioned, for instance, Rwanda's focus on English and ICT in schools, and the good quality of education; more and more people opening a bank account; and good roads and new buildings. A few students expected Rwanda to become one of the most developed and advanced countries on the continent.

⁶⁷⁵ B249.

⁶⁷⁶ I.e. love for their country, attachment to and pride in their identity, including in their culture and language.

⁶⁷⁷ C745.

⁶⁷⁸ One student, for instance, described Rwanda as 'a country haunted by his past, but courageous and patriotic, which is trying to heal the wounds of genocide and to elevate the country.' B389.

'Rwanda and its people can teach Burundi how they proceeded to reach this apogee. We must learn from them'.⁶⁷⁹

A few Congolese also alluded to the many efforts made by the Rwandan government to deal with the refugees and the *génocidaires*, by whom their own country had been deeply affected. They mentioned initiatives that had been promoted to encourage the unarmed repatriation of Rwandan refugees and ex-combatants, and to track down and bring to justice those responsible for the genocide by means of the *gacaca* courts and the ICTR.⁶⁸⁰ A couple of Congolese respondents highlighted their country's contribution to these two objectives. They alluded in particular to the work of the DRC's National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reinsertion (CONADER) and to the extradition of genocide suspects. While emphasising the Congolese assistance provided to Rwanda on this front, a few among them regretted their neighbours' refusal to extradite Nkunda, 'Congo's aggressor'.⁶⁸¹ On the matter of justice, one Congolese essay additionally reported the then breaking news of France's arrest of Chief of Protocol Rose Kabuye for her alleged complicity in Habyarimana's assassination. This incident, according to this respondent, had led to 'a serious misunderstanding between Rwandans and the French'.⁶⁸²

In stark contrast with the positive image sketched above, a group of Burundian and Congolese students presented a more negative view of the current situation in neighbouring Rwanda. In their opinion, present-day Rwanda was still a problematic country. While the surveyed population seemed to widely recognise the remarkable accomplishments of the new government in re-organising and developing the country, criticism was raised with regard to the reportedly undemocratic and dictatorial nature of the regime. These accounts denounced especially the silencing of the opposition and the general lack of freedom of expression imposed by the current authorities. One Burundian student believed that, 'Rwandans have no freedom to proclaim and show what they really have in

⁶⁷⁹ B98.

⁶⁸⁰ The latter issue was also mentioned by two Burundian students. B100, B195.

⁶⁸¹ C298.

⁶⁸² C991.

their heart'.⁶⁸³ Concerns were likewise expressed about the existence of simmering ethnic tensions which could potentially result in a new civil war. These accounts warned against the endurance of unrelenting feelings of mistrust, animosity, and hatred within the society, as well as against a situation of inequality between the two main ethnic groups.⁶⁸⁴ The observed unfairness was underscored by a Burundian pupil according to whom, 'the country is ruled by a dictatorial regime that does not favour all Rwandans'.⁶⁸⁵ Another respondent referred more specifically to the repression of the Hutu by the regime. In his words, '[i]n Rwanda there isn't total freedom. Kagame simply repressed the Hutu *ethnie*'.⁶⁸⁶ Whereas several students denounced a monopoly on power enforced by Kagame and his party, others, especially in the DRC, highlighted the existence of a Tutsi oligarchy now in control of the government. A Congolese pupil affirmed that, 'today, power belongs to the Tutsi, who still treat the Hutu in a demeaning way'.⁶⁸⁷ In recognition of the risks posed by such a situation, a Congolese respondent advised Rwanda to reform the government in a way that would guarantee inclusiveness for the sake of peace. She suggested that, 'the government should be composed of all races so that the people who find themselves abroad can return to Rwanda'.⁶⁸⁸ An additional recommendation that was advanced by yet another Congolese student was for Rwanda to pursue a fairer justice. He vowed for prosecuting President Kagame, *nota bene* in Belgium, for the crimes he had allegedly committed.⁶⁸⁹

Irrespective of the either positive or negative assessment of Rwanda's current situation, numerous expressions of solidarity towards their neighbours were collected among Burundian and Congolese students alike. These included best wishes as well as calls for peace, unity and love. In the words of one young Congolese,

⁶⁸³ B200.

⁶⁸⁴ According to two students, 'in the wake of the genocide of 1994, the Rwandese have no love among themselves'; 'today they are false friends because they have killed each other.' B296, B108.

⁶⁸⁵ B309.

⁶⁸⁶ B60.

⁶⁸⁷ C205.

⁶⁸⁸ C604.

⁶⁸⁹ C581.

*'I wish my neighbours all the best in their endeavours towards building a better future. May all their efforts lead to a future of peace and prosperity.'*⁶⁹⁰

2.6 Summary and conclusion

The present chapter explored the evolution of ideological and historical discourses in Rwanda since the colonial time until today. It further examined the extent to which such discourses have been reflected and institutionalised in the education system in the course of the decades. The chapter ended by presenting an analysis of narratives that were collected in the field with an eye to grasping the views and understandings held by the young generation on the country's history in today's highly politicised climate.

The literature review and analysis that was conducted for the purpose of this study brought to light the interface between the politics of history, identity, and education in Rwanda. In particular, it highlighted the complicit role of historiography and education in political and social engineering projects designed by dominant elites. The study illustrated how the nation's turbulent history has been a matter of great contention and an important stake for political entrepreneurs. Throughout the decades, the national history has been told and re-told by successive regimes and by their opponents according to their political agendas. The research further demonstrated how, in every instance of regime change, the formulation and propagation of a new ideological and historical discourse has been consistently accompanied by a reform of educational policies and teaching contents in support of the newly established status quo.

In the colonial period, the ideology and guiding dogma of the state was the so-called 'Hamitism'. This associated the Tutsi to a branch of the allegedly foreign and superior Hamitic race which was believed to be born to rule over the racially

⁶⁹⁰ C111.

inferior Bantu Hutu and pigmy Twa. Historiography played a conspicuous role in scientifically anchoring this ideology. Relying on manipulated oral traditions which exalted the royal court and legitimated the position of power of the Tutsi aristocracy, colonial scholarship essentialised and antagonised Rwanda's traditional society by constructing its ancient history around myths of precedence and around the themes of autochthony and allochthony and of racial superiority and domination. Supported by pseudo-scholarship, the Hamitic discourse was translated into a set of institutions and reforms which tended to favour the Tutsi over the Hutu. Formal education proved to be a crucial domain in this respect. During this time, formal education was systematically used in support of Belgium's colonial policy of divide and rule which crystallised Hutu and Tutsi identities while favouring the Tutsi elite in the framework of a system of indirect rule. The latter group received preferential treatment at the level of both educational access and teaching contents. Discriminative policies granted young Tutsi access to the best educational opportunities. At the same time, biased and Manichean historical teachings propagating a myth of Tutsi superiority imbued Tutsi pupils with a sense of pride and arrogance in their allegiance to a natural aristocracy destined to rule over the 'inferior Negroes'.

In the wake of the country's independence and of the violent demise of the Tutsi oligarchy, an ideology of Hutu nationalism and anti-Hamitism became the dogma of the newly founded Republic. In accordance with the new ideological discourse, the national history was re-written by the dominant Hutu political elite with an eye to supporting an ethnicist politics that was aimed at legitimising its position of power vis-à-vis the Tutsi minority. Influenced by colonial ethnography, the official historical narrative propagated a belief in the primordialism of ethnic differences and antagonisms, as well as an ideology of Hutu victimisation. The official discourse condemned the longstanding 'tyranny' of the Hamitic Tutsi minority and celebrated the 1959 'social revolution' as a victorious 'liberation struggle' that had brought democracy and social justice to Rwanda. The later 1990-1994 war with the RPF was portrayed by Hutu propagandists as a final struggle between Good and Evil. In the context of this struggle, Tutsi bloodshed was denied or at most justified as the result of an outburst of popular rage following the 'war of

aggression' by a power-thirsty and murderous Tutsi rebellion. Once again, schools significantly contributed to anchoring the new official discourse in society and to supporting dominant interests. Divisive and discriminatory practices were consolidated, this time favouring the Hutu majority. Concerted efforts were made to prioritise Hutu education through a newly introduced quota system. Also, the government attempted to imbue the new generation with its ideology by conveying school teachings which emphasised 'ethnic' differences and which legitimised the regime in place. For this purpose, the authorities relied on curricula and textbooks which highlighted the themes of ethnicity, origins and migrations, and which recounted a history of Tutsi domination and oppression that had ended with the 1959 Hutu revolution. They further underscored the menace posed by the 'terrorist' Tutsi refugees, and the achievements of the Second Republic in stabilising and developing the country.

In the post-genocide period, Rwanda embarked upon a long process of simultaneous historical reconstruction and education reform in the framework of the country's overall post-war reconstruction.

Various debates were organised in the country with the aim of re-assessing the national history and of achieving a common and objective reading of the past which could be taught to the new generation. On these occasions, notable controversies were addressed. They included questions related to identity and ethnicity, origins and migrations, the nature of traditional relations and the impact of colonisation, the decolonisation process and the 'Hutu Revolution', the 1990-1994 war and genocide, and their aftermath. As reported by critics, an honest appraisal of such controversies was obstructed by an intense politics of history promoted by the incumbent authorities. Since the mid-1990s, a new official historical narrative has been vigorously propagated as the only lawful account of the country's past. This narrative claims to replace a false ethnicist history with a truthful and unifying account of the nation – an account that emphasises national unity while denying the existence of ethnic differences in Rwandan society. In stark contrast to the old discourse, the past is summoned today to prove both the irrelevance and the danger of the now outlawed 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' labels. In line

with this goal, the current government has promoted a view of the past which insists on the ancient unity of the old Rwandan nation and which underscores the colonial responsibility in engendering internal division and conflict. By perpetuating ethnicist colonial practices, post-colonial regimes are blamed by the new power-holders for having inaugurated four decades of bad governance and violence. In a context in which the more recent past is often invoked to lay bare the historical victimisation of the Tutsi, the 1959 watershed is currently portrayed as a national tragedy which marked the beginning of a history of systematic Tutsi discrimination, persecution, and ultimately genocide. In this narrative, blame is apportioned to the colonisers, the former Hutu regimes and their followers, as well as to a passive and even complicit international community. Conversely, the RPF is highly praised for its heroic ‘liberation war’ against the murderous regime, as well as for its enormous achievements in rebuilding the country and the nation. Critics have denounced the historical bias of teachings which seem to be primarily intended to maintain the current elites in power. The fiercest criticism has concerned this narrative’s simplistic and one-sided representation of the war and genocide. It more specifically relates to its silence with regard to the crimes reportedly perpetrated by RPF soldiers against Hutu civilians.

Today, the government’s account of the nation’s past and present dominates the public domain. Among the channels that have been used by the government to propagate its official discourse are schools. In the wake of the war and genocide, the education system was assigned a key role in the service of the state policy of ‘national unity and reconciliation’. Although critics have raised questions as to the extent of the government’s success in this regard, one cannot ignore the laudable efforts made to reform the system. The government has worked to address a longstanding legacy of inequality and division in the education sector through policies designed to outlaw discrimination and to widen access to merit-based education. Additionally, it has taken steps to transform schools into peacebuilding tools through a revised curriculum that stresses positive values, including peace, national unity, good citizenship and democracy. In the framework of curriculum change, teaching the national history has proven to be a particularly challenging and contested issue in post-genocide Rwanda. In 1995, a moratorium was put in

place following the repudiation of old educational materials. The new generation was consequently left without any guidance to make sense of the past. After more than a decade of uncertainty, clear directives have recently come from the state on how to approach the subject. The analysis of newly developed history curricula and didactic materials, and in particular of the 2010 guide *The History of Rwanda*, brought to light what schools are expected to tell children about the nation's past. Conform to the current government's story-line, today's school history idealizes the ancient past by emphasizing the social cohesion of Rwanda's traditional society and by omitting references to ethnicity and successive migrations. It underscores the colonisers' primary responsibility in destroying Rwandans' ancient unity and the role of post-colonial regimes in exacerbating externally-imposed divisions and in inaugurating a history of anti-Tutsi violence and discrimination. The new history further seeks to legitimise the RPF's invasion as a 'Liberation War' that ousted a dictatorial and murderous regime and that halted the 'Tutsi genocide'. In an effort to consolidate the legitimacy of the new government, the narrative also amply praises its achievements in rebuilding the nation. Overall, the analysis demonstrated a concern to educate young people to abandon old ethnocentric views and to embrace a proud national identity and a commitment to unity and reconciliation. At the same time, it brought to light a clear interest to inculcate common lessons at the expense of a critical methodology in history teaching.

As a result of a tightly controlled process of historical reconstruction and of intensive educational efforts, the Rwandan population, including the young generation, appears to have widely embraced the new official narrative as the true history of Rwanda. The survey that was conducted among Rwandan students revealed their almost unanimous reproduction of canonical representations of the past. In accordance with the official history of the current government, students emphasised the ancient unity and solidarity of Rwandans, the shared traditional practices that favoured social cohesion, and a largely critical and negative view of the colonial enterprise and of the two Republics. Responsibility for the conflict and the genocide was attributed to the Belgian authorities and bad leaders, while images of heroism were associated with the RPF liberators. With respect to the present and the future, views were overly positive and optimistic. Students

showed national pride and confidence in the authorities and the Rwandan people. Alternative versions of ‘the truth’, which are believed to have continued to clandestinely circulate within society, were mostly absent from the collected essays. Only a handful of respondents, for instance, reproduced old theories on the different origins and the successive arrival of Twa, Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda. Demonstrating a degree of discomfort and uncertainty about a topic that is a taboo today, the research also found evasive and confused answers with regard to these identities and their relations in the ancient times. Whether or not young people genuinely accepted the hegemonic discourse, the findings of the survey confirmed the government’s success in propagating and inculcating the official knowledge among the new generation.

Almost two decades after the genocide, the government’s efforts at turning the page have been met with mixed reactions. While Rwanda has visibly embarked on a process of reconciliation and nation-building, fears exist today that prospects of internal instability and violence might not be unthinkable in the near future. Specifically, the imposition of a single and one-sided historical account and the censorship of alternative narratives on the past and the present have been warned against as a recipe for disaster. Justified by the government as a necessity to prevent renewed violence, this ‘absolutist’ approach is believed by critics to have countered the attainment of its stated objectives. This approach is deemed to have allowed fears and concerns to thrive underground, thereby putting the country at risk of a future violent resurgence of repressed sentiments. In recognition of the central role of an absolutist history and of an ideology of victimisation in instigating conflict and violence, the way forward towards long-term peace, observers have argued, is the promotion of a critical reflection on the past. They have stressed the importance of promoting open dialogue in a context of guaranteed freedom of speech, in which different experiences and views are shared and recognised. This process is deemed to be able to lead to a necessary shared understanding of the past and to the construction of an inclusive collective memory that is widely and genuinely embraced by the population. With regard to the education sector, against the backdrop of its past implication in societal conflict and violence, its reconstruction and reform presented an opportunity to

favour national reconciliation and democratisation processes. Although several positive steps have been taken to transform formal education from a conflict-ridden and violent system to a peace-building tool, there still appears to be considerable room for improvement. In particular, the promotion of a reformed history course which is based on a democratic and participatory approach and on a critical exploration of multiple perspectives should be a priority. Schools should allow and encourage students to critically and constructively explore, analyse and discuss multiple historical accounts, instead of merely inculcating an official history and a definite truth. Formal history teaching might in so doing have an important role to play in the consolidation of a peaceful and democratic society. As the Rwandan society is closing a dark chapter in its history, an honest reflection on the past by the new generation is key to the goal of “never again”.

Voices in favour of a change of direction are loud. The question remains as to whether post-genocide Rwanda is ready to expose itself to, and to positively deal with, the inevitable challenges posed by democracy. In the immediate aftermath of mass violence caution might be warranted. In the longer run, however, any society that wishes to rebuild itself on a solid foundation in order to avert a relapse into violent conflict will eventually have to respond to the imperative need to openly and genuinely face its past. As Dominick laCapra once warned, ‘[w]hat is not confronted critically does not disappear; it tends to return as the repressed’.⁶⁹¹

⁶⁹¹ D. laCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: history, theory, trauma* (Baltimore 1996), 65.

3

Burundi

3.1 Historical background: a brief chronology of Burundi's political history

Burundi is a small landlocked and densely populated country in Central Africa. It borders Rwanda to the north, the DRC to the west, and Tanzania to the east and south. The country has often been compared to its northern neighbour Rwanda on account of their largely similar social structure and history. Like Rwanda, Burundi has a population of approximately ten million, which is predominantly young and rural, as well as culturally and linguistically homogenous.¹ Here too, the population is composed of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, as well as of a princely category of so-called Ganwa. Their history, as Chrétien once described it, has been 'complex, at times obscure and often tragic'.²

In the next paragraphs, this chapter will present a brief overview of Burundi's political history from the pre-colonial time up until today.

¹ Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung, *Datenreport 2012 der Stiftung Weltbevölkerung. Soziale und demographische Daten weltweit* (Hannover 2012), 6-7 [www.weltbevoelkerung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Datenreport/Datenreport_2012.pdf] (last accessed on 08/08/2012).

² Chrétien, 'Les années 1960 et 1970. Des luttes de factions à l'obsession du massacre,' *Burundi, l'histoire retrouvée: 25 ans de métier d'historien en Afrique* (Paris 1993), 447.

3.1.1 The pre-colonial period³

The ancient history of Burundi, like that of Rwanda, has been the subject of great controversy. Here as well, colonial literature reduced the millenary history of the country's settlement to a scheme of successive migratory waves of pygmy Twa, Bantu Hutu and Hamitic Tutsi. Various referred to as antagonistic social classes, ethnic groups, tribes, casts or races, these identity groups were portrayed as each having specific physical, socio-economic and moral qualities. Specifically, Burundian Tutsi, as their Rwandan counterparts, were depicted as a foreign minority that belonged to a superior and civilising race of Hamitic pastoralist warriors. This 'race of lords' was believed to have conquered, subjugated, and exploited the indigenous majority of agriculturalist Bantu, turning them into a 'race of serfs'.⁴ According to colonial theories, this civilising Hamitic conquest had coincided with the founding of the Burundian kingdom. In this sense, Mworoha et al. spoke of a 'severe confusion between political history and the history of settlement'.⁵ Similarly pointing to the extensive degree of colonial manipulation of Burundi's ancient history, Chrétien once suggested that, "traditional" Burundi ... has been manipulated to such an extent that the reconstitution of its pre-colonial history is not easy."⁶

Although such colonial hypotheses have not ceased being embraced and propagated, they have now been widely discredited. Today, most experts agree on the millenary cultural unity and the generally peaceful relations characterising this predominantly agro-pastoral society, in which Hutu and Tutsi cohabited and largely shared similar lifestyles and life conditions. As opposed to the situation in

³ On pre-colonial Burundi, see in particular, E. Mworoha (ed.), *Histoire du Burundi: des origines à la fin du XIX^e siècle* (Paris 1987) and Mworoha, *Peuples et rois de l'Afrique des Lacs. Le Burundi et les royaumes voisins au XIX^e siècle* (Dakar/Abidjan 1977); C. Guillet & P. Ndayishinguje, *Légendes historiques du Burundi* (Paris 1987) and L. Nduricimpa & C. Guillet (eds.), *L'arbre-mémoire. Traditions orales du Burundi* (Paris 1984); as well as Chrétien, *Burundi, l'histoire retrouvée*, 'Première partie: Dynamiques du passé. Quand les tambours battaient pour le sorgho,' 19-103, and *The Great Lakes of Africa. Two thousands years of history* (New York 2003).

⁴ H. Mayer, *Les Barundi. Une étude ethnologique en Afrique orientale* (Paris 1984). Originally published in German with the title *Die Barundi* (1916), this work is a classic reference for Burundi's pre-colonial ethnography and history.

⁵ Mworoha (ed.), *Histoire du Burundi*, 132.

⁶ Chrétien, 'Les fratricide légitimés,' *Burundi*, 437.

Rwanda at the end of the 19th century, in pre-colonial Burundi hierarchies of power and privilege seem to have cut across ‘ethnic’ groups and to have been largely determined by kinship, clan, and clientage ties.⁷ According to more recent research, political power at that time was shared between a dominant Ganwa aristocracy – ‘the supreme holders of power and privilege’,⁸ composed of the rival Bezi and Batare royal lineages, – and a few influential Tutsi and Hutu families. Together, these groups ruled over the general peasant population, the *abanyagihugu*. A clientship contract (*ubugabire*) often regulated relations between the more and the less powerful, respectively the patron (*shebuja*) and the client (*mugabire*). Contrary to colonial theories, according to which *ubugabire* was a form of oppressive feudalism between Tutsi masters and Hutu servants, it is now broadly accepted that such roles did not necessarily coincide with ‘ethnic’ identities, and that contracts were not forcibly imposed on clients, but sought after in exchange for protection. In the words of Lemarchand, Burundi’s traditional society was ‘a highly complex society, in which ethnic affiliations were by no means the most reliable indicator of social ranking.’⁹

With regard to the country’s ancient political history, oral traditions seem to trace the origins of the Burundian kingdom back to the end of the 17th century,¹⁰ when the territory was unified by the ‘founding king’ Ntare I Rushatsi.¹¹ Among Ntare I’s seven successors¹², Kings Ntare II Rugamba and Mzezi II Gisabo occupy a particularly prominent place in the country’s pre-colonial history.¹³ Their reigns

⁷ They have been described as social identities which were determined by a hereditary professional vocation, i.e. pastoralism, agriculturalism, hunting-gathering and pottery-making, and exercise of political power. See, e.g., J. Gahama, & A. Mvuyekure ‘Jeu ethnique, idéologie missionnaire et politique coloniale. Le cas du Burundi,’ Chrétien & Prunier (eds.), *Les ethnies ont une histoire* (Paris 2003), 303-324; Chrétien, ‘Les identités hutu et tutsi,’ *Burundi*, 317 ; Mworoha et al.; Lemarchand, *Burundi: ethnic conflict and genocide*.

⁸ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰ Ntare is said to have unified two pre-existent political entities: one in the South (the so-called ‘Burundi de Nyaburunga’ of the lineage of Ntwero, Nsoro and Jabwe) and one in the North (founded by Ntare Karemera).

¹¹ Ntare Rushatsi literally means hirsute lion. His origins have been an issue of debate. Based on the presumed locations of the birth of the royalty either in the South or in the North of the country, traditional accounts have been sub-divided into a larger group, called ‘Cycle du Nkoma’, and a smaller group, called ‘Cycle de la Kanyaru’.

¹² Burundian monarchs are today widely reported to have amounted to eight, i.e. two cycles of four kings under the names of Ntare, Mwezi, Mutaga and Mwambutsa respectively. As will be explained later in this chapter, a now discredited dynastic chronology claimed the succession of sixteen Burundian kings (for a total of four royal cycles), consequently situating Ntare’s reign at the beginning of the 16th century.

¹³ With the exception of Ntare Rushatsi, existing oral traditions are largely silent with regard to the kings of the first cycle. Sources are instead more abundant on the monarchs of the second cycle, i.e. Ntare Rugamba

are considered to have marked the kingdom's apogee as they expanded and consolidated its borders, and efficiently re-organised its administration.¹⁴ Towards the end of Gisabo's reign, after having managed to push back Zanzibari slave traders, the kingdom was faced with natural calamities and power struggles between Batare and Bezi lineages.¹⁵ It was also under his rule that Burundi was first visited by European explorers¹⁶, missionaries, as well as by German troops, which eventually 'conquered' the kingdom.

3.1.2 The colonial period¹⁷

During the scramble for Africa at the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, Burundi, like Rwanda, was conferred to Germany. It was however not until 1896 that Germany launched a military campaign to conquer Gisabo's kingdom.¹⁸ The incursion ended in 1903 with the signing of the Kiganda Treaty, which marked the king's capitulation and the effective start of Burundi's colonisation.

During WWI in 1916, Burundi came under the control of Belgium. After a six-year-long military occupation, the Belgian colonisation of Ruanda-Urundi became official in 1923, first under a League of Nations' Mandate and since 1946 under UN Trusteeship.¹⁹ In administrating the colony, Belgium opted for a system of indirect rule, which exploited existing power structures. With the aim of rationalising the administrative organisation of the new territory, between 1929

(1796-1850), Mwezi Gisabo (1850-1908), Mutaga Mbikije (1908-1916), and Mwambutsa Bangiricenge (1916-1966).

¹⁴ Towards the end of Ntare II's reign, the kingdom was composed of i) territories that were under the control of the Batare princes, which accounted for about three quarters of the entire kingdom; ii) the domains of the king, called *ivyibare*, which were mainly located in the Muramvya region at the core of the kingdom, and which were ruled through Hutu or Tutsi families of various lineages; iii) territories ruled by Hutu or Tutsi chiefs directly appointed by the king, called *batware nkebe*, which were concentrated in the North-west, the North-east, and the Imbo area; iv) and territories ruled by Bataga princes (descendants of Mutaga Gisabo) in the extreme South and in the North-east.

¹⁵ The Batare and Bezi lineages were the descendants of Ntare II and Mwezi II, respectively.

¹⁶ Among Burundi's explorers were Burton, Speke, Livingstone, Stanley, and Baumann.

¹⁷ On the colonial period, see in particular W.R. Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi, 1884-1919* (Oxford 1963); J. Gahama, *Le Burundi sous administration Belge: la période du mandat 1919-1939*. 2nd ed. (Paris 2001); Chrétien, *Burundi, l'histoire retrouvée*, 'Deuxième partie. Ambiguïté de la modernité coloniale,' 107-310.

¹⁸ The Germans allied themselves with the king's enemies, i.e. rebels Maconco and Kilima. Later, they put an end to Kilima's attempts at conquering the north-western regions from the central power.

¹⁹ Rwanda and Burundi were ruled by the Germans since 1896, and through two separate Residences since 1905. Since 1916, they were ruled by the Belgians under the name of Ruanda-Urundi. During this period, a number of obligations were imposed on the colonised population, including taxes, corvées, portage, and compulsory crop cultivation. These led to a number of anti-colonial revolts between 1912 and 1934.

and 1933, a sweeping reform was implemented, which significantly reduced the number of existing chiefdoms, thereby gradually eliminating Hutu chiefs in favour of Ganwa princes, and, to a lesser extent, of Tutsi chiefs.²⁰ In the same period, the colonial rulers introduced ‘ethnic’ identity cards, which remained in place up until independence. As opposed to neighbouring Rwanda, where ‘ethnic’ tensions had started to build up in the face of Tutsi favouritism, in Burundi it was especially the Ganwa ruling class which appears to have been the primary target of popular resentment.²¹

In the context of the country’s decolonisation, a number of political parties were founded in 1959. Among them, three main political tendencies could be identified, all supporting the perpetuation of the monarchy. These included nationalist parties calling for immediate independence, such as Prince Louis Rwagasore’s *Union pour le Progrès National* (Uprona);²² democratic parties favouring a more gradual attainment of independence, such as the *Parti Démocrate Chrétien* (PDC);²³ and popular parties demanding the end of feudalism and the rule of ‘the people’ (i.e. the Hutu), such as the *Parti du peuple* (PP), the Burundian equivalent of Rwanda’s Parmehutu. Following communal elections in 1960, which were won by democratic and popular parties, parliamentary elections in 1961 instead resulted in an overwhelming victory of Uprona. On October 13, 1961, only one month after his appointment as Burundi’s first Prime Minister, Rwagasore was assassinated under obscure circumstances.²⁴ What followed was a violent witch-hunt of partisans of the opposition, including the hanging of PDC leaders Ntidendereza and Biroli for their alleged role in the murder. Shortly after, in January 1962, the so-called ‘Kamenge riots’ broke out, resulting in the killing of three Hutu trade-

²⁰ Under colonial rule, the number of chiefdoms in Burundi dropped from 133 in 1929 (with 27 Hutu chiefs, 30 Tutsi, 35 Bezi and 41 Batare) to 35 in 1945 (with no Hutu chief, 10 Tutsi, 17 Bezi and 8 Batare). Gahama, 104.

²¹ Chrétien, ‘Dix ans d’indépendance (1962-1972): de la monarchie à la République. La montée de l’ethnisme et du régionalisme,’ J.-P. Chrétien & J.-F. Dupaquier, *Burundi 1972, Au bord des génocides* (Paris 2007), 16; C. Deslaurier, *Un monde politique en mutation: le Burundi à la veille de l’indépendance (1956-1961)*. Ph.D. dissertation. Paris 1, 2002, 311.

²² Prince Rwagasore was the son of King Mwambutsa (Bezi lineage).

²³ PDC leaders Ntidendereza and Biroli were the sons of Pierre Baranyanka, a Batare chief who was close to the colonial administration.

²⁴ Rwagasore was apparently ‘shot by a Greek gunman in a PDC plot’, likely with Belgian support. According to Lemarchand, ‘[e]xactly what role Belgian administrators may have played in this tragedy remains unclear’, but ‘it is reasonable to assume that certain Belgian functionaries actively encouraged the PDC leaders to go ahead with their plans.’ *Burundi*, 54-55.

unionists at the hands of members of Uprona's youth wing, the *Jeunesse Nationaliste Rwagasore* (JNR).²⁵

Pointing to the critical impact of Rwagasore's assassination on Burundi's historical trajectory, Lemarchand once poignantly argued that, '[p]erhaps no other event has weighed more heavily on the destinies of Burundi. With the death of Rwagasore disappeared an extraordinarily popular figure whose posthumous image has now reached mythical proportions.'²⁶

3.1.3 The post-colonial period²⁷

3.1.3.1 Independence and the constitutional monarchy (1962-1966)²⁸

On July 1, 1962, Burundi gained independence from Belgium. In stark contrast to the political situation in Rwanda, where a so-called 'social revolution' had led to the establishment of a Hutu-dominated republic based on a system of 'ethnic democracy', Burundi transitioned to independence as a constitutional monarchy under King Mwambutsa and under an 'ethnically' mixed government that was composed of Tutsi, Hutu and Ganwa.

Despite having experienced a more promising start if compared to its northern neighbour, independent Burundi was soon marked by an increasingly tense climate. From 1963, a bitter power struggle emerged within Uprona, the dominant party.²⁹ At the same time, while in the early 1960s divisions between Hutu and

²⁵ This incident is perceived as a dramatic watershed moment in the country's history, 'the first in a series of crises leading to a sharp polarisation of ethnic feelings.' Ibid., 59.

²⁶ Ibid., 54.

²⁷ See also, S. Ntibantuganya, *Une démocratie pour tous les Burundais: de l'autonomie à Ndadaye, 1956-1993* (Paris 1999). On Burundi's various crises, see, among others: J-P. Chrétien, A. Guichaoua & G. Lejeune, *La crise d'août 1988 au Burundi*, Cahiers du CRQ N° 6 (Paris 1989); Chrétien, *Le défi de l'ethnisme. Rwanda et Burundi: 1990-1996* (Paris 1997); J-P Chrétien & M. Mukuri (eds.), *Burundi. La fracture identitaire. Logiques de violence et certitudes 'ethniques'* (Paris 2002); A. Guichaoua (ed.), *Les crises du Rwanda et du Burundi: 1993-1994* (Paris 1995); Lemarchand, *Burundi: ethnic conflict and genocide* (Cambridge/New York 1996) and *Burundi: ethnocide as discourse and practice* (New York 1994); and E. Ngayimpenda, *Histoire d'un conflit politico-ethnique* (Bujumbura 2004).

²⁸ See, among others, M. Manirakiza, *La fin de la monarchie burundaise (1962-1966)* (Brussels 1990).

²⁹ Two rival factions came to oppose each other: on the one hand, the Casablanca faction, which was largely Tutsi and close to non-aligned powers (headed by the Ganwa Muhirwa), and, on the other, the largely Hutu and pro-Western Monrovia faction (headed by the Hutu Mirerekano).

Tutsi in Burundi had not been as prominent as in Rwanda, in 1964-1965 ‘ethnic’ tensions began rising here as well.³⁰ The first major incident was the assassination of Hutu PM Pierre Ngendandumwe in January 1965.³¹ In the same year, following King Mwambutsa’s refusal to form the government proposed by the newly elected Hutu-dominated parliament,³² a group of Hutu officers attempted a coup against the monarch, who fled abroad. The following days, hundreds of Tutsi were massacred in Muramvya province.³³ A violent state repression ensued, which resulted in numerous arrests and killings of Hutu. Among the victims of the repression were prominent Hutu leaders (such as Paul Mirerekano³⁴), army officers, as well as an estimated five thousand civilians. As pointed out by Chrétien, having marked the first-ever ‘ethnic’ mass killings in Burundi’s history, the year 1965 signalled ‘a decisive rupture’ in Hutu-Tutsi relations.³⁵

In this increasingly violent climate, the country experienced a number of radical changes. Most notably, after the suspension of the Constitution in 1966, the function of Prime Minister was entrusted to Michel Micombero, a Tutsi military man from Bururi and from the Hima clan. At the same time, King Mwambutsa’s son, Prince Charles Ndizeye, succeeded his father as Burundi’s new monarch under the title of Ntare V. In this period, political pluralism was abolished and replaced by a single-party system marked by Uprona’s monopoly. As argued by Chrétien, this historical juncture marked the triumph of a new ‘model’ advocated

³⁰ Tensions in Burundi grew partly as a consequence of the dramatic events that had occurred in Rwanda at that time. Chrétien reports that, in 1965, more than 50,000 Rwandan Tutsi refugees lived in Burundi. From where, in 1963, they launched an insurgency into Rwanda. Chrétien, ‘Les années,’ 450.

³¹ Ngendandumwe was assassinated by a Rwandan refugee who at that time was employed at the U.S. embassy.

³² Instead, King Mwambutsa formed a government headed by a Ganwa prince of Bezi origins, L. Biha. According to observers, this decision was taken in the context of a series of measures that had been unilaterally introduced by the monarch with the aim of guaranteeing his entourage’s influence.

³³ Massacres were perpetrated in the communes of Bukeye, Busangana and Bugarama. As reported by Lemarchand, Muramvya was ‘home of the hard-core Hutu opposition’. *Burundi*, 71.

³⁴ According to Lemarchand, Mirerekano was ‘one of the most prestigious figures of the Hutu opposition,’ and a martyr of the Hutu cause. *Ibid.*, 58.

³⁵ Chrétien, ‘Les années,’ 452. Chrétien defined this historical juncture as a ‘decisive moment ... when Burundi engaged quite clearly in the logic of the Rwandan syndrome and in a spiral of recurrent massacres.’ Chrétien, ‘The recurrence of violence in Burundi. Memories of the “catastrophe” of 1972,’ J.-P. Chrétien & R. Banégas (eds.), *The recurring Great Lakes crisis. Identity, violence and power* (London 2008), 29. As the scholar explained, the violence had irrevocably resulted in the crystallisation of Tutsi fears of a prevailing ‘Rwandan model’, on the one hand, and of Hutu shattered expectations of political participation, on the other hand. *Ibid.*, 452.

by Tutsi militants, namely a ‘security policy’ which was legitimised through a discourse on ‘national unity’.³⁶

3.1.3.2 The First Republic of Micombero (1966-1976)

After a series of incidents, on November 28, 1966, Micombero abolished the monarchy through a military coup and proclaimed himself President of the First Republic. Assisted by a National Revolutionary Council composed of military officers, Micombero appointed a new government headed by the Secretary-General of Uprona. Various movements associated to the single-party emerged, including the youth movement *Jeunesse Révolutionnaire Rwagasore* (JRR). Among the main priorities of the new government was the promotion of unity and development.³⁷ According to several observers, the national unity proclaimed in the official discourse was a mere illusion which masked the hard reality of rising political, regional, clanic and ethnic divisions.³⁸ Reportedly, between 1969 and 1972, power and wealth came to be gradually concentrated in the hands of the so-called ‘*groupe de Bururi*’, a small clique of Tutsi-Hima individuals from the South. At the same time, tensions had also deepened between the Tutsi and the Hutu elites,³⁹ leading to a situation of predominant ‘ethnic’ antagonism in Burundi’s political and social life.⁴⁰ According to Chrétien, while the former group was determined to counter the peril of a Rwandan-like scenario of Hutu mobilisation and domination and of Tutsi violence and marginalisation, the latter instead feared the prospect of further Hutu repression at the hands of a ‘Tutsi apartheid’ which needed to be overthrown.⁴¹

³⁶ Chrétien & Dupaquier, *Burundi 1972*, 22; Chrétien, ‘La démocratisation face aux intégrismes ethniques au Rwanda et au Burundi,’ *Burundi*, 485.

³⁷ The government’s priorities were reflected in the State’s new motto ‘*Ubumwe, Ibikorwa, Amajambere*’ (‘Unity, Work, Progress’). This motto had replaced the old adage of ‘*Imana, Umwami, Uburundi*’ (‘God, King, Fatherland’). A new flag was also introduced and made obligatory in 1967 in schools and at provincial administrative offices. This replaced the old flag, which was characterised by a drum and a sorghum ear, symbols of the royalty.

³⁸ Chrétien & Dupaquier, 49.

³⁹ Chrétien & Dupaquier referred to Hutu and Tutsi as ‘banal identities on the hills [which had] become taboo in the capital’. 28.

⁴⁰ Chrétien, ‘The recurrence,’ 32. Similarly, Lemarchand argued that, ‘[f]rom a society characterised by complex sociopolitical hierarchies, Burundi has now become greatly simplified, consisting of separate and mutually antagonistic ethnic aggregates. In a time of crisis, Hutu and Tutsi emerge as the only relevant defining characteristics of group identities, reducing all other social roles to phenomena or marginal social significance’. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 14.

⁴¹ Chrétien, ‘Les fraticides,’ 431.

Several major crises irrevocably marked the First Republic. These included a number of executions in 1969 following the discovery of an alleged Hutu plot, as well as the arrest in 1971 of leading Tutsi opponents from the Banyaruguru clan who had been accused of conspiring to overthrow the Republic and to restore the monarchy. The incident that however most dramatically distinguished the First Republic consisted in the so-called ‘events’ of April 1972 – also referred to as ‘*ikiza*’ (‘catastrophe’) or as ‘*fléau*’ (‘curse’).⁴² In the context of a dubious return and execution of the deposed and exiled King Ntare V,⁴³ a Hutu-led insurgency⁴⁴ and a violent uprising were organised in southern Burundi, and in particular in the Hutu-dominated regions of Rumonge and Nyanza-Lac, with the aim of overthrowing the ruling Tutsi minority. Thousands of Tutsi perished in the violence, including most of Burundi’s civil and military authorities. In retaliation, in the ensuing weeks, the Tutsi-dominated security apparatus, assisted by the JRR, perpetrated widespread and systematic massacres against Hutu across the country, especially in Bururi. The primary targets of the repression were the educated and the wealthy. During what has been described by some as ‘genocide’, 100,000-300,000 Hutu disappeared, while 200,000 sought refuge abroad. Highlighting the massive scale of the violence, Lemarchand argued that, by August 1972, ‘almost every educated Hutu was either dead or in exile.’⁴⁵ In the words of Chrétien, *ikiza* was, ‘after the massacres of 1963-64 in Rwanda, the second founding moment in the logic of genocide in the Great Lakes region,’⁴⁶ one which deeply traumatised an entire nation.

⁴² On the 1972 crisis, see in particular Chrétien & Dupaquier, and various publications by Lemarchand, including: ‘The Burundi genocide,’ S. Totten, W. Parsons & I. Charny (eds.), *Century of genocide: critical essays and eyewitness accounts* (New York/London 2004), 321-337; ‘Le génocide de 1972 au Burundi: les silences de l’histoire,’ *Cahiers d’études africaines* 167(3) (2002) 551-567; *Burundi: ethnic conflict and genocide* (Cambridge/New York 1994); *Selective genocide in Burundi* (London: Minority Rights Group 1974); ‘The Burundi killings of 1972,’ J. Semelin (ed.), *The online encyclopedia of mass violence* (2008) [www.massviolence.org/PdfVersion?id_article=138] (last consulted on 19/08/2011). See also, United Nations, Commission on Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, *Revised and updated report on the question of the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide*. B. Whitacker, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1985/6 (2 July 1985); and M. Manirakiza, *Burundi: de la révolution au régionalisme. 1966-1976* (Brussels 1992).

⁴³ Ntare’s return to Burundi was most probably organised by Minister Simbananiye with the aim of staging a plot by monarchist opponents of the regime. Ntare was reportedly executed by members of the regime.

⁴⁴ Among the rebels apparently were some Congolese from the Bembe community.

⁴⁵ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 97.

⁴⁶ Chrétien, ‘The recurrence,’ 33.

3.1.3.3 The Second Republic of Bagaza (1976-1987)

On November 1, 1976, a coup led by Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, another Tutsi-Hima officer from Bururi, overthrew President Micombero and established the Second Republic. Similar to Habyarimana's Second Republic in Rwanda, Bagaza's regime was marked by the promotion of considerable developmental efforts which came to greatly overshadow 'ethnic' issues. The latter in fact continued to be obscured through a discourse on 'national unity' which had found expression in the banning of all references to ethnicity. While the regime professed unity, under Bagaza's rule, power was further consolidated into the hands of the President and the 'Bururi group', leading Lemarchand to describe the Second Republic as 'the epitome of Tutsi ethnocracy'.⁴⁷ Also, although peace was maintained during this period – as demonstrated by the lack of major incidents of mass violence, – ethnic, regional, and clan divisions and tensions deepened, in conjunction with increased corruption, nepotism, and authoritarianism.⁴⁸

3.1.3.4 The Third Republic of Buyoya (1987-1993) and Ndadaye's presidency (1993)

Against the backdrop of growing popular dissatisfaction and international criticism, Bagaza was overthrown on September 3, 1987, by Major Pierre Buyoya, another Hima military man from Bururi.⁴⁹

In August 1988, the establishment of Burundi's Third Republic was followed by a new outbreak of violence in the two highly deprived North-eastern communes of Ntega and Marangara.⁵⁰ According to available evidence, the 1988 crisis began with a Hutu uprising. This resulted in the massacre of hundreds of Tutsi at the hands of Hutu peasants who had been manipulated by extremist propaganda

⁴⁷ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 114.

⁴⁸ A primary manifestation of the increasing lack of freedom during Bagaza's Second Republic was the introduction of restrictive measures on religious practices in the context of an attack against the Church.

⁴⁹ Buyoya quickly proceeded to normalize relations with the Church, the international community and neighbouring countries, as well as to reintroduce a certain degree of freedom and to fight corruption and nepotism. Power, however, largely remained in the hands of members of the former regime.

⁵⁰ According to Lemarchand, this region had been particularly 'vulnerable to the propaganda of exiled Hutu politicians'. *Burundi*, 122. See also, Chrétien et al, *La crise*. This study was based on interviews that were conducted by the authors among the population in the region one month after the 1988 events.

spreading rumours about an impending repetition of the 1972 tragedy.⁵¹ In response, the army conducted a brutal repression which killed between 5,000 and 20,000 Hutu, forcing another 45,000-60,000 to find refuge in neighbouring Rwanda.⁵²

Under increasing domestic and international pressure in the wake of the 1988 events, Buyoya's government stepped up the implementation of a politics of 'rebalancing and dialogue'.⁵³ This re-orientation encompassed the establishment of an ethnically mixed government headed by a Hutu Prime Minister as well as the inclusion of a larger number of Hutu into the State institutions according to a principle of ethnic balance and equal representation.⁵⁴ For the first time in more than two decades, the 'ethnic question' was thus openly acknowledged. In this new setting, a policy of national unity and reconciliation was introduced to deal with this long neglected question. In 1991, a Charter of National Unity was adopted by referendum. This was followed in 1992 by the promulgation of a new Constitution that established a multi-party system, and which condemned ethnic sectarianism and discrimination. Underground political parties, such as the Front for Democracy in Burundi (Sahwanya-Frodebu), were recognised, and new ones were founded. Conversely, ethnically-based parties were outlawed. Among these was the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (Palipehutu), a militant movement which was born in Tanzanian refugee camps in the 1970s, and which occasionally threatened the stability of the country by staging cross-border incursions into Burundi. In November 1991, Palipehutu launched assaults in Cibitoke and Bubanza in western Burundi,⁵⁵ as well as in Bujumbura. Once again, these attacks, which caused hundreds of casualties among the Tutsi, were followed by the perpetration of massacres against hundreds, if not thousands, of suspect Hutu by the army.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 118.

⁵² Amnesty International, 'Burundi: killings of children by government troops' (London 1988).

⁵³ Chrétien, 'La démocratisation,' 489.

⁵⁴ That being said, according to Lemarchand, Tutsi individuals continued to dominate administrative positions, especially at the higher echelons of power. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 166.

⁵⁵ The two provinces of Cibitoke and Bubanza, close to the Rwandan border, were, according to Lemarchand, 'a highly receptive milieu for the ideas and activities of the Palipehutu'. *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁶ The estimated number of victims of the army repression ranges from the official figure of 551 to about 3,000. See, B. Erler and F. Reyntjens, *Les événements de novembre-décembre 1991 au Burundi: rapport*

In June 1993, the Burundian nation was called on to participate in the country's first democratic legislative and presidential elections since the 1960s. These resulted in an overwhelming victory of Frodebu, and in the appointment of its leader, Melchior Ndadaye, as Burundi's first-ever Hutu President.⁵⁷

3.1.3.5 The war (1993-2003) and the transition (2001-2005)

On October 20-21, 1993, a group of Tutsi soldiers staged a (failed) coup in Bujumbura, thereby killing most of the political leadership, including President Ndadaye.⁵⁸ In response, tens of thousands of Tutsi, as well as several Hutu supporters of Uprona, were massacred across the country in what some have described as a 'Tutsi genocide' orchestrated by Frodebu authorities.⁵⁹ Within a couple of days, the Tutsi-dominated army engaged once again in widespread anti-Hutu repression, most notably in the central provinces of Karusi, Gitega and Ruyigi. Overall, the violence resulted in 80,000 deaths, 200,000 internally displaced people (mainly Tutsi), and 600,000 refugees (mainly Hutu). What ensued was a long and brutal civil war, which, despite its gravity, as Barbara Vignaux pointed out, largely remained 'in the mediatic shadow of the Rwandan tragedy.'⁶⁰

In January 1994, in a context of severe insecurity which precluded the organisation of popular elections, Cyprien Ntaryamira, a Hutu of Frodebu, was proclaimed interim President. Only few months later, on April 6, Ntaryamira died in the same plane crash that killed Rwandan President Habyarimana. He was later

d'une mission d'enquête (Brussels 1992); and, Iteka, *Rapport d'enquête sur les événements tragiques de novembre 1991* (Bujumbura 1992).

⁵⁷ In the parliamentary elections, Frodebu was particularly popular in the northern half of Burundi (especially in Cibitoke, Bubanza, Ruyigi and Karuzi, with >80%), as well as in the southern tip in Makamba, and found the least support in Bujumbura and Muramvya (<60%), and in Bururi and Rutana (<70%). See, Reyntjens, 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating: the June 1993 elections in Burundi,' *Journal of modern African studies* 31(4) (1993) 563-583. Major reshufflings in the public function followed: Tutsi were largely replaced by Hutu.

⁵⁸ See, Human Rights Watch, *Rapport de la commission internationale d'enquête sur les violations des droits de l'homme au Burundi depuis le 21 octobre 1993*, Rapport final (New York/Washington 1994).

⁵⁹ According to a 1996 UN Commission of Inquiry, in October 1993, the Tutsi had been victims of 'acts of genocide'. United Nations International Commission of Inquiry for Burundi. *Final report*. UNICIB/CEINUB (New York, 23 July 1996).

⁶⁰ B. Vignaux, 'Un conflit aux dimensions régionales. Spectre de génocide au Burundi,' *Le monde diplomatique* (October 2004) [www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2004/10/VIGNAUX/11556] (last accessed on 27/09/2011).

replaced by Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, another Hutu of Frodebu. In 1994-1995, ethnic cleansing operations were conducted in Bujumbura, which, from late 1993, had come under the control of young extremist Tutsi militias, such as the notorious *Sans Echecs* (Without Failure) and *Sans Défaite* (Without Defeat). As a result, the capital city largely became a Tutsi safe-haven, with the exception of the northern suburbs, notably Kamenge, where the Hutu tended to be concentrated. Violence also did not spare the rural areas, where the army was fighting against Hutu rebel groups, such as Palipehutu-FNL, Frolina, and CNDD-FDD.

In 1996, a new coup brought Buyoya back to power, allegedly with the intention of restoring order in the country. A number of measures followed, including the suspension of the 1992 Constitution, the restriction of political activities, and the condemnation of those responsible for the 1993 violence. The war against the insurgents, however, continued unabated, especially in the western provinces.⁶¹ In response, Buyoya's government promoted massive military deployment,⁶² as well as the establishment of so-called 'regroupment camps'.⁶³ As explained by Reyntjens, 'officially aimed to protect the population', these camps were in fact 'an anti-insurrection measure seeking to deprive the rebels from the active support from which they benefited.'⁶⁴

Under international pressure,⁶⁵ peace talks were initiated in Tanzania in 1998.⁶⁶ On August 28, 2000, the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi was signed by all major political actors, with the notable exception of two Hutu rebel groups: Pierre Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD and Agathon Rwasa's FNL.⁶⁷ The Accord foresaw, among other things, the cessation of hostilities, the

⁶¹ As reported by Reyntjens, the worst-hit provinces were Makamba, Bururi, rural Bujumbura, Bubanza and Cibitoke. According to the author, 'a total of between 5000 and 10000 civilians may well have been killed in 1997.' Reyntjens, *The great African war*, 175.

⁶² Faced with insurrections, the regime increased defence expenditures, launched a vast military recruitment campaign, introduced obligatory military service for students, and encouraged the establishment of 'civilian self-defence'.

⁶³ Regroupment camps are estimated to have hosted hundreds of thousands of people in the late 1990s. Ibid., 172.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 175.

⁶⁵ Buyoya's politics was condemned by the international community. An embargo was put in place, which was lifted in 1999.

⁶⁶ Peace negotiations were conducted under the leadership of Nyerere and later of Mandela. Also, a new Constitution was promulgated in the same year.

⁶⁷ Besides the CNDD-FDD and the FNL, another group that contested the accords was the Tutsi organisation *Puissance d'autodéfense* (PA).

demobilisation of combatants, and the establishment of a three-year transitional government according to a principle of political and ethnic alternation.⁶⁸ In the framework of the peace agreement, ethnicity was institutionalised by establishing the allocation of 60% and 40% of parliamentary seats to Hutu and Tutsi respectively and their equal representation in the Senate and in the security forces. Also, the accords established a system whereby the President would be assisted by two Vice-Presidents of different ethnic and political affiliation.⁶⁹ In accordance to a model that foresaw the alternation of Tutsi and Hutu Presidents and Vice-Presidents, after eighteen months at the head of the newly established transitional government, President Buyoya, a Tutsi of Uprona, was replaced in 2003 by his Vice-President, Domitien Ndayizeye, a Hutu of Frodebu.

Despite the peace accords, intense fighting continued between the army and the non-signatory rebel groups. It was only in November 2003 that the war officially came to an end following the signing of a Global Ceasefire Agreement in Pretoria between the transitional government and the main rebellion, the CNDD-FDD.

3.1.3.6 The post-transitional period: Nkurunziza's mandate (2005-2010)

In 2005, general elections were won by the former rebel movement CNDD-FDD and its leader Nkurunziza, a Hutu from Ngozi. His five-year mandate was marked both by several positive achievements, especially in the social domain,⁷⁰ and by authoritarian tendencies, human rights abuses, and corruption scandals. Despite a Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement that was signed in 2006, this period was likewise characterised by a precarious security situation which was mainly caused by the militant activities conducted by the last remaining rebel movement, the Palipehutu-FNL, especially on the outskirts of Bujumbura. After years of

⁶⁸ During the transition, the first-ever African Union peacekeeping force (AMIB), led by South Africa, was deployed in Burundi in April 2002. In 2004-2006, AMIB was replaced by a 5,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission (ONUB).

⁶⁹ The Accords also provided for the symbolic representation of the Twa in National Assembly and the Senate. Ethnicity in Burundi, however, is not mentioned in administrative documents.

⁷⁰ Among the most popular measures introduced by the new government were free primary education and free healthcare for pregnant women and their babies. As part of these social policies, hundreds of schools and health centres were built.

instability, conditions finally improved in 2009, following the signing of a new accord.

In 2010, new, violence-ridden elections were held, which resulted in a contested victory of Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD.⁷¹ At the time of writing, the situation appears to be one of 'constant low-level violence and political instability', as well as of rising tensions, especially between the now ruling CNDD-FDD and the FNL.⁷²

While its 'false twin' Rwanda has been the subject of much scholarly discussion in the wake of its genocide, Burundi and its history seem to have attracted comparatively little attention from the academia. As a result, public knowledge on this country remains limited. The aim of the case-study proposed in this chapter is to contribute to a further understanding of the Burundian context by drawing attention to the dynamics through which the politics of history, identity and education played out in this country in the turbulent Great Lakes region. Partly building on the available literature produced by the few existing experts on Burundi, the next three sections of this chapter will attempt to demonstrate the relationship between ideology, historiography and education in this setting. Echoing the structure adopted for the Rwandan case-study outlined in Chapter 2, the paragraphs below will examine the evolution of ideological and historical discourses in Burundi from the colonisation until today. Again, for each of the three historical periods under review, namely the colonial era, the time of the three Republics, and the war and post-war years, the thesis will further explore the extent to which official discourses shaped the national education system in the course of the decades. In order to complement the extant literature, this chapter will in particular analyse pre-war and post-war history curricula and textbooks as well as narratives that were collected among young Burundians about their country's past and present times.

⁷¹ The party's first victory in the communal elections was however contested by the major opposition parties. Organised into the coalition *Alliance des Démocrates pour le Changement* (ADC-Ikibiri), these parties decided to withdraw from the elections. This decision resulted in an overwhelming CNDD-FDD majority in parliament, and in the re-election of the sole candidate Nkurunziza.

⁷² IRIN, 'Burundi: An escalation, not an anomaly' (Bujumbura 21/09/2011) [www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportID=93777] (last accessed on 21/09/2011).

3.2 Ideology, historiography and formal education in colonial Burundi

3.2.1 Ideology and historiography in colonial Burundi

In Burundi, as in Rwanda, historiographical production during the colonial time appears to have been primarily guided by ideological rather than scientific preoccupations.⁷³ Here too, its aim was to justify Belgian ‘race policies’ that favoured an allegedly dominant minority in the framework of a system of indirect rule. Although to a lesser extent than in Rwanda, the colonisers adopted the ‘Hamitic theory’ as a lens to interpret Burundi’s ancient history and society, and as a basis to determine positions of power. Conform to the Hamitic clichés, administrative reforms were introduced in the 1930s, which resulted in the gradual replacement of existing Hutu chiefs with Ganwa and Tutsi.⁷⁴

Pointing to an intense politics of history that had been practiced in the colonial era, prominent historians brought to light a blatant ideological manipulation of Burundian oral traditions in support of the Hamitic myth. Chrétien, for instance, observed that, in this period, ‘[t]he entire traditional history of the royalties is

⁷³ Colonial literature on Burundi include: P. Ryckmans, *Dominer pour servir* (Brussels 1931); J. Gorju, *Face au royaume hamite du Rwanda, le royaume frère de l’Urundi* (Brussels 1938); J. Sasserath, *Le Ruanda-Urundi, étrange royaume féodal* (Brussels 1948); and J. Hiernaux, *Les caractères physiques des populations du Ruanda et de l’Urundi* (Brussels 1954). See also, J. Ghislain, *La féodalité au Burundi* (Brussels 1970).

⁷⁴ In 1929, Burundi had 133 chiefs. Among them were 27 Hutu and 30 Tutsi. Together, they accounted for 43% of all chiefs. The remaining 57% were Ganwa. In 1954, following administrative reforms that were introduced by the Belgians, the total number of chiefs was reduced to 35 chiefs. Of these, 26 were Ganwa, 9 were Tutsi, and none was Hutu. Chrétien, ‘Les identités hutu et tutsi. Perspectives historiques et manipulations politiques,’ *Burundi*, 324. See also, Chrétien, ‘Manipulations de l’histoire, manipulations des identités et violence politique: les enseignements du cas burundais,’ B. Jewsiewicki & J. Letourneau (eds.), *Constructions identitaires: questionnements théoriques et études de cas* (Quebec City 1992), 11-29.

rewritten according to this racial logic'.⁷⁵ Similarly, Mworoha et al. argued that, '[t]he country's authentic traditions have had to bow to this ideology of "races", alongside the reshaping of society and power.'⁷⁶ According to Chrétien, this manipulation occurred mainly in the shadow of Burundi's northern neighbour, whose clear hierarchical structure, headed by a few influential Tutsi families, was exalted for its apparent conformity to the colonial discourse. As argued by the French historian, the intention at that time was 'to culturally and politically integrate Burundi into the space of "Ruanda-Urundi" under Belgian trusteeship, within which the dominant model was Rwanda'. For this purpose, he commented, colonial historiography had proceeded to a "rwandanisation" of Burundian history', the aim of which was to link the Burundian aristocracy to the prestigious, and allegedly Hamitic, Rwandan Nyiginya dynasty.⁷⁷ According to Chrétien, this 'rwandanisation' mainly consisted in a re-interpretation and manipulation of the 'tales of origin' of the Burundian kingdom and of its presumed founder Ntare Rushatsi in the light of Rwandan oral traditions.⁷⁸ Illustrative of this manipulation was the presentation of Ntare's arrival in Burundi as the manifestation of a Hamitic conquest by a warrior who was related to the founding hero of the Nyiginya dynasty, i.e. Gihanga.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 14. Chrétien's criticism of the application of the Hamitic theory to Burundi's historiography can also be found in: 'Les deux visages de Cham,' P. Guiral & E. Temime, *L'idée de race dans la pensée politique française du XIXe siècle* (Paris 1977), 171-199; 'Traditions et historiographie sur les origines du royaume du Burundi,' C.C.B, *La civilisation ancienne des peuples des Grands Lacs* (Paris/Bujumbura 1981), 254-270; 'Du hirsute au Hamite. Les variations du cycle de Ntare Rushatsi, fondateur du royaume,' *Burundi*, 343-377; and 'Nouvelles hypothèses sur les origines du Burundi,' Nduricimpa & Guillet (eds.), *L'arbre-mémoire*, 11-52.

⁷⁶ Mworoha et al., 111-114.

⁷⁷ Chrétien, 'Les traditionnistes lettrés du Burundi à l'école des bibliothèques missionnaires (1940-1960),' *Burundi*, 382. Chrétien highlighted that oral sources in Burundi were more informal, and much less structured and detailed than in Rwanda. Chrétien, 'Le mwami Ntare. Le héros fondateur d'une protonation,' *Burundi*, 54. According to Lemarchand, '[c]ompared with Rwanda, Burundi is a country where historicity carries a relatively little weight and where narrative evidence is notoriously malleable.' Similarly, Vansina suggested that, in Burundi, '[t]he political system did not favour historical memory... history was of no interest at the court so there were practically no historical accounts.' Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 18-19, quoting J. Vansina, *Oral tradition as history* (Madison 1985), 115.

⁷⁸ As reported by Chrétien, these tales have been at the centre of historiographical debates around the age of the dynasty, and Ntare's geographical origins and ethnic identity. *Ibid.*, 381. Mworoha et al. also pointed out that these accounts had a political dimension and a legitimizing function before the arrival of the colonisers. As the authors commented, these 'tales of origin' 'claim to explain and legitimize the political influence of this and that lineage or the ritual function of this and that sanctuary.' 110.

⁷⁹ Gorju, 9-13; Chrétien & J.-L. Triaud, *Histoire d'Afrique: les enjeux de mémoire* (Paris 1999), 296. The thesis of the Nyiginya origins of Ntare was accepted by several authors in the 1940s-1950s. See, for instance, E. Simons, *Coutumes et institutions des Barundi* (Elizabethville 1944); P. Schumacher, 'Urundi,' *Aequatoria* 12 (1949) 129-132 [www.aequatoria.be/04common/020publications_pdf/aequatoria%201949.pdf] (last accessed on 05/08/2011); J.B. Adriaenssens, *Histoire du Ruanda-Urundi* (Burasira 1951); and R. Bourgeois, *Banyarwanda et Barundi*, I, *L'ethnographie* (Brussels 1957). Gorju embraced this theory after believing, first,

As in Rwanda, a key role in the development and entrenching of the Hamitic myth was played by European missionaries, in collaboration with local actors who were close to the missionary-historiographers and to the colonial administration. With regard to the former, if Mgr Leon Classe had been a crucial figure in promoting the Hamitic ideology in Rwanda, in Burundi a similar role was later played by Urundi's Vicariate Mgr Gorju. Gorju's application of the Hamitic theory to the Burundian context is revealed especially in his masterwork *Face au Royaume Hamite du Ruanda, le Royaume Frère de l'Urundi* (1938) – the title of which echoes Pagès' earlier work on Rwanda, *Un Royaume Hamite au Centre de l'Afrique* (1933). Pointing to the great significance and impact of this publication on the historiography and on public knowledge of Burundi at that time, Chrétien spoke of it as a 'true gospel of Francophone interlacustrine historiography ... [which] was later known in all parishes and seminary libraries'.⁸⁰ As for the local actors, a prominent role in shaping Burundi's historiography was played by the influential Ganwa Batware chief Pierre Baranyanka. He was a close ally of the Belgian administration, who had been educated at the country's first school for chiefs' sons. At that time considered to be 'the historian of Urundi', chief Baranyanka had managed to exercise a considerable influence by presenting himself for forty years as a '*grand traditionniste*' and as a keeper of the royal secrets.⁸¹ According to Chrétien, as well as to Mworoha et al., by offering 'possibly slanted information' to European missionary-historiographers,⁸² the chief had effectively contributed to associating the Burundian aristocracy to the Rwandan Tutsi monarchy, in particular by presenting Ntare as Gihanga's son.⁸³ In

in an invasion of Burundi by the founding hero of various kingdoms in Western Uganda and North-western Tanzania, i.e. Ruhinda (*Entre le Victoire, l'Albert et l'Edouard* (Rennes 1920), and, later, in the Hutu origins of Ntare (Gorju, 'Quinze jours en montagne,' *Les missions catholiques* (1928), 185-187). The theory linking Burundi's dynasty to Ruhinda was first developed by Van der Burgt in his 1903 *Le Dictionnaire français-kirundi*. In order to assimilate Ntare to Ruhinda, Van der Burgt advanced the hypothesis of a long dynastic chronology, composed of four cycles of four kings (for a total of sixteen instead of eight Burundian kings). Their origins were placed in the 16th century instead of at the end of the 17th century. See Chrétien, 'Découverte d'une culture africaine et fantômes d'un missionnaire. *Le Dictionnaire français-kirundi* du Père Van der Burgt (1903) entre ethnographie, exégèse biblique et orientalisme,' *Afriques* 1 (2010) n.p. [afriques.revues.org/363] (last accessed on 04/08/2011).

⁸⁰ Chrétien, 'Les traditionnistes,' 397; and *Le défi*, 16.

⁸¹ Chrétien, 'Féodalité ou féodalisation sous le Mandat belge,' *Burundi*, 200.

⁸² *Ibid.*

agreement with Rwandan historian Kagame, Baranyanka also sought to glorify and assert the role of his country and the antiquity of the Burundian royal family vis-à-vis the Rwandan dynasty by re-launching a now discredited dynastic chronology that placed the kingdom's origins in the 16th century rather than at the end of the 17th century.⁸⁴ In sum, as in Rwanda, in colonial Burundi a two-sided political use of history was made: while, on the one hand, the Europeans were seeking legitimisation for their theories and policies in a coherent manner throughout the region, on the other hand, influential local actors intended to legitimize their position of power within the new system of indirect rule in the integrated territory of 'Ruanda-Urundi'.⁸⁵

Mworoha et al. argued that, '[t]hese hypotheses had become almost official on the eve of Independence'.⁸⁶ As will be illustrated in the next paragraph, the education system, both through its teaching contents and its policies and practices, significantly contributed to officialising and institutionalizing these theories throughout the colonial time.

3.2.2 The institutionalisation of the official discourse through the education system: history teaching and education policy in colonial Burundi

Although to a lesser extent than in neighbouring Rwanda, the colonial racial ideology that was anchored in pseudo-historical interpretations of the country's past eventually came to shape Burundi's newly established education system. In fact, in a context in which Western schooling became one of the main criteria in the recruitment of the new local political elite in the wake of the 1930s reforms, the largely Church-run education sector appears to have played a key role in supporting, reproducing and reinforcing both the colonial system of indirect rule

⁸³ Chrétien, 'Les traditionnistes,' 383; and 'Du hirsute,' 364. As reported by the scholar, Chief Baranyanka had come in contact with Rwandan oral traditions during a meeting with Rwandan 'traditionnistes' that was organised by White Father Schumacher at the Rwandan royal court at the beginning of the 1930s.

⁸⁴ This hypothesis, which maintained the existence of four instead of two cycles of kings, was embraced by H. Meyer, R. Bourgeois and A. Kagame. Under the colonial administration, this chronology became the official version. Mworoha et al, 131-132.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 111-114.

in which it was embedded and the racial ideology on which this system was founded.⁸⁷

3.2.2.1 School teachings

With regard to colonial school teachings, the existent literature on Burundi appears rather meagre. The few studies that do address this issue seem to point to a significant role played by such teachings in spreading, inculcating, and crystallising racial myths, prejudices and stereotypes.

Chrétien, for instance, reported that, during this period, schools, as well as parishes, had been vectors of ‘a memory of erudite pretension’, ‘which poisoned the minds of young Burundians’.⁸⁸ The historian cited the example of the 1958 *Essai d’Histoire du Burundi*, a 49-page booklet written by the White Father and seminary teacher J. Keuppens.⁸⁹ According to Chrétien, this manual on the national history, which apparently was the first to have ever been used in Burundian schools and seminaries, largely reproduced colonial pseudo-historiographical theories. Specifically, this publication taught pupils about the successive settlement of ‘Negritos, eastern Bantus and semitised Hamites’ in the region,⁹⁰ and about the conquest of the agriculturalist Bantu Hutu by the foreign pastoralist Tutsi, ‘Hamites who came from Western Asia’. Echoing chief Baranyanka’s arguments,⁹¹ the booklet traced this Hamitic conquest and the (Nyiginya) origins of the Burundian royal dynasty back to the 16th century.⁹² According to various observers, such as Pascal Rutake and Joseph Gahama, and Nicéphore Ndimurukundo and Augustin Mariro, such colonial teachings had significantly contributed to the interiorisation of the Hamitic ideology and to the

⁸⁷ Here as well, education was in the hands of Catholic missions. Gahama, ‘Un enseignement abandonné aux missions catholiques,’ *Le Burundi sous administration belge*, 243. Since 1928, education was entrusted to Belgian Catholic congregations, although subsidised by the State.

⁸⁸ Chrétien, ‘Pour une histoire sociale de l’Afrique des Grands Lacs’, E. Mworoha, S. Ndayirukiye & M. Mukuri (eds.), *Les défis de la reconstruction dans l’Afrique des Grands Lacs* (Bujumbura 2010), 9.

⁸⁹ This booklet was published by the Presse Lavigerie of the White Fathers.

⁹⁰ Chrétien, ‘Introduction. Le Burundi entre les voix du passé, les drames du présent et les clichés médiatiques. Métier d’historien et quiproquos de «l’Afrique traditionnelle»,’ *Burundi*, 9-10.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, ‘Pour une histoire’, 10; ‘Les traditionnistes,’ 398.

⁹² *Ibid.*, ‘Du hirsute,’ 345. Besides *Essai d’histoire du Burundi*, another important history manual was the already mentioned *Histoire du Ruanda-Urundi*. This booklet was produced in 1951 by Father J.B. Adriaenssens for his pupils at the seminary of Burasira. As Keuppens’ booklet, this manual affirmed the thesis of the Rwandan origins of Ntare and of four dynastic cycles. *Ibid.*, 362-363.

development of entrenched superiority and inferiority complexes among Tutsi and Hutu pupils respectively.⁹³ Pointing to the effectiveness of colonial school teachings and written literature in popularising the Hamitic myth among Burundi's educated elites, Chrétien argued that 'the culture of race only affected a minority of *évolués*'.⁹⁴ As he reported, in stark contrast to the situation that could be found among people on the hills, these selected elites appeared to have been imbued with a deeply rooted racist knowledge and a racialised historical consciousness.⁹⁵

Observers such as Maurice Mazunya and Chrétien suggested that, in addition to inculcating and reinforcing collective 'ethnic' identities among the educated elites, colonial teachings also influenced pupils' attitudes by encouraging their assimilation into Western culture, as well as a sense of respect and obedience towards the authorities.⁹⁶

3.2.2.2 Educational structures, policies and practices

As revealed by available studies, a crucial role in promoting and crystallising the Hamitic ideology in colonial Burundi had also been played by educational structures, policies and practices. Existing evidence seems to suggest that, if royal myths claiming to explain and justify the origins of Ganwa/Tutsi dominance were validated by pseudo-scientific literature and were reflected in the education

⁹³ P. Rutake & J. Gahama, 'Ethnic conflict in Burundi,' O. Nnoli (ed.), *Ethnic conflicts in Africa* (Dakar: CODESRIA 1998), 87; N. Ndimurukundo, 'Scolarisation des élites et renforcement de la conscience ethnique,' Guichaoua (ed.), *Les crises*, 135; A. Mariro, *Burundi: de la nation aux ethnies ou la naissance d'une élite tribalisée* (Dakar: UNSECO/BREDA 1998), 49-51.

⁹⁴ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 154; and 'Les traditionnistes,' 398.

⁹⁵ On the hills, the '*ivya kera*' (literally, 'things of the past') were based on oral traditions that focused on the adventures of kings and princes, and which largely contradicted colonial theories. Chrétien, 'Pour une histoire,' 9. See, A.A. Trouwborst, 'L'ethnographie du Burundi pendant l'occupation belge...L'œuvre de Georges Smets (1881-1961),' *La civilisation ancienne des peuples des Grands Lacs* (Paris 1981), 283-294; J. Vansina, *La légende du passé. Traditions orales du Burundi* (Tervuren 1972); and Guillet & Ndayishinguje (eds.). According to Chrétien, oral traditions pointed to several conclusions, namely the existence of two cycles of kings; Ntare's origins in Southern Buha, conform to the Nkoma cycle; and the silence in the oral traditions with regard to Ntare's ethnic group – although some versions seemed to link him to the Hutu Bahanza lineage. Chrétien, 'Les traditionnistes,' 381-2.

⁹⁶ According to Mazunya, colonial education was largely aimed at inculcating 'the art of behaving as a "civilised" man and the respect for the authority'. M. Mazunya, 'Du civisme à la citoyenneté dans les manuels d'éducation civique au Burundi,' Colloque internationale *Le manuel scolaire: d'ici et d'ailleurs, d'hier à demain*. Montreal 11/14 April 2006 [www.unites.uqam.ca/grem/colloque/communications/12avril/41mazunya.html] (last accessed on 04/09/2011). Similarly, Chrétien spoke of a 'cultural colonialism' characterised by 'intellectual mimetism' and 'pedagogic formalism'. *Le défi*, 26-27.

system through school teachings, these beliefs also found practical expression in educational policies that effectively re-produced and strengthened a local hierarchy which was predominantly composed of a Ganwa/Tutsi elite.

In her 2008 study on educational reconstruction in post-1993 Burundi, Obura, among others, confirmed this argument by suggesting that, during the colonial time, Rwanda and Burundi shared ‘similar structures and inequitable practices in the education sector’.⁹⁷ Reportedly, this sector was characterised by a two-track and segregated education system. On the one hand, the masses, mainly Hutu, were generally offered a ‘*petite formation*’ in mission schools. These institutions privileged basic literacy and numeracy in Kirundi, as well as vocational, and moral and religious education.⁹⁸ On the other hand, the sons of chiefs were provided a separate elite education in special government schools.⁹⁹ The first of such schools was created at the court of King Mwambutsa in Muramvya, ‘in the image of the school of Nyanza created at the court Musinga’ in Rwanda.¹⁰⁰ Their aim, as explained in a colonial report issued in 1927, was to ‘produce elites “imbued with our civilizing concepts”’.¹⁰¹

Despite the similarities with Rwanda, several scholars, such as Lemarchand, Greenland and Gahama, highlighted the lower degree of educational segregation and discrimination that was perpetrated in colonial Burundi.¹⁰² Gahama, for instance, observed that, in contrast to the school in Nyanza, which was almost exclusively attended by Tutsi pupils, official primary schools in Burundi did not clearly favour one group over others.¹⁰³ As he reported, in the 1920s, enrolment figures in these schools, where pupils were registered in such categories as ‘sons

⁹⁷ A. Obura, *Staying power: struggling to reconstruct education in Burundi since 1993* (Paris: UNESCO/IIEP 2008), 58.

⁹⁸ Chrétien, ‘Une révolte en 1934: les racines traditionalistes de l’hostilité à la colonisation,’ *Burundi*, 263.

⁹⁹ E.g., in Usumbura and in Gitega. Gahama, 245.

¹⁰⁰ This school was later transferred to Gitega. Chrétien reported that, while in 1929 literate chiefs amounted to 25% of all pupils, in 1934, they amounted to as many as 49%. ‘Féodalité,’ 209; and ‘Une révolte,’ 254.

¹⁰¹ Qtd. in Chrétien, ‘Une révolte,’ 254.

¹⁰² Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (New York 1970); J. Greenland, *Western education in Burundi 1916-1973: the consequences of instrumentalism* (Brussels 1980); and Gahama.

¹⁰³ Gahama, 247. As reported in the *Rapport de l’administration belge du Ruanda-Urundi* in 1929, in 1928 the *école de chefs* in Muramvya was attended by 177 pupils, among whom, ‘67 were Tutsi, 53 Hutu, one mulatto, one Asian, 5 sons of soldiers, and 50 sons of chiefs or belonging to the high aristocracy of the *bafasoni*.’ The report continued, ‘[t]he Muramvya school is far less attended by the sons of chiefs than its analogue in Rwanda, and the influence of the Court is far less evident.’ 53.

of chiefs, Tutsi, Hutu, sons of soldiers, half-castes, and Asians',¹⁰⁴ showed a general balance among Hutu and Tutsi students, as well as a less prominent presence of chiefs' sons (mainly Ganwa) among their attendees.¹⁰⁵ The different level of segregation promoted by educational policies in colonial Rwanda and Burundi also emerges from the enrolment records of the Rwanda-based Astrida College. As mentioned in Chapter 2, for several years this had been the only post-primary institution, besides the seminaries, which had formed the future local cadres of both countries.¹⁰⁶ Chrétien reported that, whereas Tutsi students greatly dominated the number of Rwandan attendees, Burundian pupils, including Ganwa, Tutsi and Hutu, were rather equally represented at Astrida until 1942.¹⁰⁷ It was only at a later stage, especially between 1948 and 1954, that a gradual process of marginalisation of Burundian Hutu was implemented in favour of Tutsi pupils.¹⁰⁸ In this increasingly discriminatory context, Hutu children wishing to pursue post-primary studies are reported to have mainly attended Catholic seminaries, either in Burundi or in Rwanda, as well as teacher training colleges.¹⁰⁹

According to several observers, discriminatory practices, which to some extent had limited the educational opportunities of the Hutu and had largely forced them into modest professions,¹¹⁰ eventually helped to consolidate the afore-mentioned complexes of superiority and inferiority. In Gahama's words, '[a]lthough less

¹⁰⁴Gahama, 258-259.

¹⁰⁵ In the largest school, at Gitega, Hutu pupils represented the majority. *Ibid.*, 257-260.

¹⁰⁶ This college also admitted few Congolese pupils. As reported by Mworoha, at independence in 1962, besides the *groupe scolaire d'Astrida*, secondary schools in Burundi included two seminaries, four institutes of *enseignement général*, and seven teacher training colleges. E. Mworoha, *Enquête-sondage dans 10 écoles secondaires de Bujumbura à propos de la situation de l'enseignement de l'histoire au Burundi*, presented at the *Journée d'échanges entre les auteurs et les professeurs du secondaire de l'Histoire* (17-21 February 2003). While secondary education was introduced in the mid-1950s, tertiary education was established only after independence. Due to the largely insufficient colonial education, at the dawn of independence, very few cadres had been formed. Chrétien, *Le défi*, 27, 154, and Mworoha, *Enquête-sondage*; 12; H. Rwantabagu, *Education in Burundi: an evolutionary perspective* (Bujumbura 2008), 18.

¹⁰⁷ In Burundi post-primary education was largely the monopoly of Ganwa's sons in particular, as well as of a minority of wealthy Tutsi and Hutu. As reported by Chrétien, the Ganwa were seen by Resident Ryckmans as the 'breeding ground of the "new" real elite, "pool of candidates whom we can educate".' 'Feodalité,' 202. They were also the targets of popular revendications in the late 1950s. Chrétien, 'Pour une histoire sociale,' 13.

¹⁰⁸ Chrétien, 'Les identités,' 324-237, and *Le défi*, 153; and J.M.V. Ruterana, *Le groupe scolaire de Butare. Mémoire de licence* (Ruhengeri 1987), 131, 134.

¹⁰⁹ In Burundi, Hutu pupils attended the *petit séminaire* de Mugeru, which provided an education equivalent to that in Astrida. In Rwanda, they attended the *grands séminaires* de Kabgayi and Nyakibanda. Gahama, 255-256. Reportedly, these alternative channels of post-primary education bred an aggrieved Hutu counter-elite, resulting in a bitter conflict between Astridians and seminarists in the aftermath of Burundi's independence. Greenland, 110.

¹¹⁰Obura, *Staying*, 63-64.

important than in Rwanda, discrimination in schools in Burundi is based on an ideology of race which portrayed the Baganwa and the Batutsi as intelligent people on one side, and the Hutu as mediocre on the other'.¹¹¹ Similarly, Ndimurukundo argued that, 'the Tutsi felt valued by their mythical status that is put into practice through access to school and to the Public Service'.¹¹²

As far as the Twa are concerned, as reported by Obura, they appear to have 'hardly figured in the development of education in Ruanda-Urundi'.¹¹³ According to J.M. Sindayigaya, during this period, the Twa, 'the most excluded of all excluded people in Burundi', 'had no access to schools'. As he recounted, 'the rare Twa children who managed to get into school had problems all the time with the other children.'¹¹⁴

Moving away from the time of the colonisation, the next section will examine the relationship between ideology and historiography as it played out in Burundi in the wake of independence. It will subsequently analyse the implications of the post-colonial politics of history and identity for the education system of independent Burundi until the 1993 civil war.

¹¹¹ Gahama, 257.

¹¹² Ndimurukundo, 128.

¹¹³ Obura, 93.

¹¹⁴ J.M. Sindayigaya, *Grands Lacs: démocratie ou ethnocratie* (Paris 1998), qtd. in Obura, 189. See also C. Nditije, *Enquête sur la situation des enfants Batwa*. Rapport Provisoire (Bujumbura: MEN/UNICEF 2003), 1. As for girls education, this was belated, as well as segregated. Its main aim was to educate the future wives of chiefs and dignitaries formed at Astrida, and to form female auxiliaries. Gahama, 256; and Ndimurukundo, 128.

3.3 Ideology, historiography and formal education in post-colonial Burundi

3.3.1 Ideology and historiography in post-colonial Burundi

3.3.1.1 Official discourse

In the wake of independence, political realities in Burundi and in Rwanda largely mirrored each other. A common denominator, however, was the obsessive political and ideological appeal to the past and the propagandistic use of history by both the regimes in power and their respective oppositions. In this sense, Chrétien argued that, in both post-colonial Rwanda and Burundi, ‘history has become an issue of political debate’. As he observed, ‘[t]he fundamental texts produced in Rwanda as well as in Burundi, both by the State and by opposition movements, all encompass long retrospective chapters, each wanting to settle scores with the past and to assert its historical view.’¹¹⁵

As illustrated in Chapter 2, in independent Rwanda, the discourse of the Hutu Republic, which was born out of a virulent Hutu nationalism, largely represented a continuation of colonial ethno-histories that opposed an autochthonous Bantu majority to a foreign and dominant Hamitic minority. These master-narratives had served as the foundation of a new socio-political system that openly favoured the Hutu on the basis of an ethnic understanding of the nation, the Republic and of democracy. In antithesis to Rwanda’s ethnicist ideology, which was applied through the introduction of a system of ethnic quota, Tutsi-dominated regimes in Burundi propagated a unitarist ideology, under the motto ‘we are all Burundi’. In

¹¹⁵ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 20.

line with this ideology, ethnic references were outlawed and criminalised as a form of tribalism and divisionism. This policy resulted, in particular, in the abolition of colonial ethnic identity cards, which instead had remained in place in Rwanda. According to critics, the official discourse on national unity, defined by B. Ndarishikanye as the ‘protective theme of the minority’,¹¹⁶ was primarily intended to allow the undisturbed consolidation of a ‘system of apartheid’ by a Tutsi-Hima minority from Bururi, and the systematic exclusion of the Hutu from all major spheres of life.¹¹⁷ This argument was poignantly articulated, among others, by Lemarchand. In his view, by creating an ‘illusion of ethnic harmony’, and ‘[b]y abolishing ethnic “otherness” as a socially relevant frame of reference, Tutsi regimes removed the critical issues of ethnic hegemony and discrimination from the realm of legitimate debate.’¹¹⁸

Similar to Rwanda’s ethnicist ideology, the unitarist discourse that was propagated in Burundi at the same time, and which remarkably resembles Rwanda’s post-genocide official account today, made extensive reference to the past, although in starkly contrasting ways. Here, the ideological appeal to history largely served to support the regimes in place by proving the irrelevance of ethnicity in the Burundian context, as well as the danger it posed to society. With this intention, the official history focused primarily on presenting an idyllic picture of the country’s pre-colonial time. Rather than a period of ethnic divisions and conflict, the ancient era was described as ‘a pre-democratic and peaceful golden age’,¹¹⁹ marked by unity and harmony.¹²⁰ This primordial national unity was underscored by describing Burundian traditional society as being composed of only one people, which shared the same culture and language, and which was ruled by one king. According to this view, divisions and tensions only emerged after the arrival

¹¹⁶ B. Ndarishikanye, ‘La conscience historique des jeunes Burundais,’ *Cahiers d’études africaines* 38(149) (1998) 137. Similarly, Chrétien spoke of a ‘Tutsi security policy’. *Le défi*, 58. See also, Chrétien, ‘Les identités,’ 330.

¹¹⁷ Ndarishikanye, 144. Reportedly, ethnically based inequalities were furthered not only through an ideology of unity, but also through an ideology of socio-economic development, which, in reality, mostly benefited the elite in power. See also L. Reyckler, T. Musabyimana & S. Calmeyn, *Le défi de la paix au Burundi: théorie et pratique* (Paris 1999), 79; and Lemarchand, ‘Le génocide de 1972,’ 557.

¹¹⁸ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 32.

¹¹⁹ C. Thibon, ‘Les origines historiques de la violence politique au Burundi,’ Guichaoua (ed.), *Les crises*, 23-44.

¹²⁰ See for instance, Republic of Burundi, Ministry of Information, *Livre blanc sur les événements survenus aux mois d’avril et mai 1972* (Bujumbura 1972).

of the white colonisers as a result of their policy of ‘divide and rule’. Ethnicity was thus depicted as a mere foreign invention that belonged ‘to the dustbin of colonial historiography’.¹²¹ In its exaltation of the ancient past and its demonisation of colonisation, the official discourse called for a return to the former, while it also greatly celebrated historical personalities that had distinguished themselves for their patriotism and bravery in fighting against foreign domination. These figures included, in particular, King Gisabo and his warriors *abadasigana* (a term appropriated by Uprona militants), as well as Uprona’s founder and national hero Prince Rwagasore.¹²²

While political references to the more distant past were exploited primarily to demonstrate the ancestral unity of Burundians, the way in which the more recent post-colonial past was addressed, or rather not addressed, is revealing of a political interest to obscure the existence of ethnic issues in Burundi’s contemporary society. This obscuration was most blatantly manifest in the denial and official amnesia with regard to the various violent crises that had engulfed the country after independence, particularly the 1972 *ikiza*. According to Chrétien and Dupaquier, for a long time, the most subtle reference to this crisis had been discouraged by threats of severe punishment, including imprisonment and ‘disappearance’. As a result, as argued by the two authors, the level of fear to speak up was such that, during this period, ‘parents had to be even wary of their children and their imprudent language’.¹²³ While references to this crisis were thus effectively outlawed, according to Lemarchand, the State had also simultaneously put in place ‘a vast enterprise of disinformation’, a ‘conspiracy of silence’, and a dangerous ‘negationism’ around what he described as ‘Hutu genocide’.¹²⁴ As the scholar explained, the official discourse as was presented in the state propaganda of that time dissimulated the violent army repression and concealed its scope and ethnic nature through a disinformation campaign that targeted especially the international community – itself accused of conducting

¹²¹ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 9.

¹²² Chrétien & Dupaquier, 474. Chrétien, ‘Les identités,’ 329.

¹²³ Chrétien & Dupaquier, 465.

¹²⁴ Lemarchand, ‘Le génocide de 1972,’ 551, and 558-559.

smear campaigns in support of neo-imperialist aims.¹²⁵ On this occasion, while utterly denying the existence of an ethnic conflict between Hutu and Tutsi, the government pointed the finger at an external conspiracy by ‘criminals’ – also referred to as ‘rebels’, ‘terrorists’, ‘aggressors’, ‘traitors’, ‘enemies of the people’ and ‘of the fatherland’, ‘gravediggers of the people’, and ‘agents of evil’.¹²⁶ The actions of these wrongdoers were portrayed as an attack on the nation that had been aimed both at overthrowing the regime and at exterminating the Tutsi. In this context, the State was presented as a ‘saviour’, while its mission of so-called ‘pacification’ was depicted as a necessary, targeted and successful act of self-defence against ‘barbaric and genocidal’ attacks. The righteousness of this defensive act was underscored by presenting its victims as ‘guilty’ individuals and as ‘defeated rebels’.¹²⁷ As for the excess deaths that were denounced by the international media, they were variously justified as inevitable ‘blunders’ or as the result of uncontrollable popular rage and panic. Lemarchand additionally pointed out that, while the official discourse was utterly silent with regard to the atrocities that had been committed by the State against Hutu civilians, it also greatly inflated the number of Tutsi victims,¹²⁸ thereby depicting this wave of anti-Tutsi violence as the latest of such incidents in a genocidal thread that had started in 1965.¹²⁹ As highlighted by Chrétien and Dupaquier, if the immediate responsibility for this and the other crises was apportioned to ‘rebels’, the deeper roots of the violence, as mentioned earlier, were traced back to the colonial destruction of cohesion in a society that had traditionally ignored tribalism and genocide. In the words of the

¹²⁵ State propaganda included the radio *La Voix de la Révolution*, the daily bulletin *Flash-Infor* of the Ministry of Information, the official weekly bulletin *Ubumwe*, as well as the *Livre blanc sur les événements survenus aux mois d’avril et mai 1972* of the Ministry of Information. This document was distributed in June 1972 by the Burundian delegation to the UN. Here, the rebellion was depicted as part of a conspiracy of the Belgian Christian syndicates, in line with those of 1965 and 1969. See Chrétien & Dupaquier, 315-317.

¹²⁶ As observed by Burundian historian R. Ntibazonkiza, during the first days of the crisis, the state radio presented three versions of the rebellion. It successively spoke of a ‘monarchic’, ‘imperialist’, and finally ‘tribalist’ conspiracy, pointing the finger respectively at Tutsi opponents, foreign aggressors, and Hutu rebels. R. Ntibazonkiza, *Au Royaume des seigneurs de la lance. Une approche historique de question ethnique au Burundi, tome 2* (Brussels 1993), 145.

¹²⁷ Chrétien & Dupaquier, 145. The 67-page *Livre Blanc* dedicated only three sentences to the killings of the Hutu. According to the document, ‘[o]nly the guilty have been punished’. *Ibid.*, 357. Similarly, on August 10, 1972, the state radio maintained that, ‘there never was a war, only the perpetrators of the massacres of May have been killed’. *Ibid.*, 318.

¹²⁸ As reported by the authors, *Flash Infor* estimated the number of casualties to be as high as 50,000, as opposed to a more realistic number of 1,000-2,000. Chrétien & Dupaquier, 280.

¹²⁹ According to this narrative, Burundian Tutsi had already been the target of a genocide in 1965 and of ‘an attempted genocide’ in 1969. In Lemarchand, ‘The Burundi killings,’ 9.

state propaganda, '[o]f the Barundi citizens, the colonisers managed to make Hutu and Tutsi [...] and convinced the former of the need to kill the latter.'¹³⁰

A significant change in the orientation of the official ideology came during the Third Republic at the turn of the 1990s. In this period, the visible, but long denied, identity issues ceased being a taboo. Ethnicity was in fact recognised and institutionalised within the framework of a politics of unity and reconciliation, which resulted, first and foremost, in the establishment of an ethnically mixed government of national unity.¹³¹ The historical vision of the new Republic emerges in particular from the report that was produced in 1989 by a commission that had been set up to study the issue of national unity. This document presented a largely retrospective content, which included discussions on the historical and socio-cultural foundations of Burundi's national unity, on the causes and manifestations of internal divisions, and on possible solutions for the future.¹³² While acknowledging the importance of this official report in its unprecedented recognition of the existence of a Hutu-Tutsi problem in contemporary Burundi, Lemarchand underscored the cautious and half-hearted nature of the change in the official discourse as presented in this pivotal text.¹³³ In an accusatory tone, the scholar described the report as 'an extraordinary mélange of truths and untruths, of exhortations and warnings, of historical facts and glaring omissions.'¹³⁴ More specifically, he accused this document of representing "'a defense and illustration" of the official Tutsi position on the Hutu-Tutsi conflict.' In Lemarchand's view, its one-sidedness and tendentiousness were a proof of Tutsi dominance both in the

¹³⁰ See accusations of an exogenous and imperialist plot by Belgians and Americans, aimed at destroying Burundi's secular nation-state levelled by the then Minister of Interior and Justice A. Shibura, 'La falsification de l'histoire du Burundi,' *Intore* 19 (28 April 1995), 1-2, 5-9; and 'Origine et nature du conflit entre Hutu et Tutsi au Burundi. Reconstitution des principaux faits historiques' [www.tutsi.org/origine.htm] (last accessed on 26/08/2011).

¹³¹ This politics also found expression in the creation of an ethnically balanced commission which was charged with studying the issue of national unity and which elaborated the *Charte de l'Unité* (1991); in the formulation of a new constitution (1992) which largely insisted on the safeguard of national unity; as well as in the composition of an anthem of national unity and in the construction of unity monuments in all provincial and communal capitals.

¹³² Government of Burundi, *Rapport de la Commission nationale chargée d'étudier les questions d'unité nationale* (Bujumbura 1989).

¹³³ Lemarchand's analysis partly corresponds to the criticism leveled by Palipehutu, whose counterarguments Lemarchand depicted as being equally biased. *Burundi*, 146.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

commission and in the overall state hierarchy.¹³⁵ As highlighted by the critic, the text, first of all, cautiously spoke of ‘union of elements’, thus omitting the use of ethnic labels.¹³⁶ As for its understanding of the conflict, the document primarily blamed the colonial state for the divisions that it had introduced in a traditionally united population, as well as for its involvement in the ‘disastrous’ murder of Rwagasore.¹³⁷ While it traced the origins of the conflict back to the colonial time, the report also accused ‘selfish’ and ‘self-serving politicians,’ both Hutu and Tutsi, who, after independence, ‘took advantage of colonial stereotypes to undermine the age-old unity of the Burundian people.’ With regard to the post-colonial crises, Lemarchand denounced the document for presenting the most embarrassing historical distortions and omissions, the effect of which was to underplay Tutsi responsibility. In particular, he observed that, while it portrayed the 1965 attempted Hutu coup as having had ‘a catastrophic effect on national unity’, the text omitted references to crucial preceding events that had led to this act, namely the assassination of Hutu PM Ngendandumwe and King Mwambutsa’s rejection of the results of parliamentary elections that had been largely won by Hutu candidates. Similarly, while the 1972 and 1988 massacres were mentioned in the report, the presentation of their background remained vague, especially with regard to the causes that led to the Hutu uprisings.¹³⁸

3.3.1.2 Dissident discourse

The official ‘Tutsi’ discourse outlined above was soon challenged by a rival ‘Hutu’ narrative and counter-propaganda which had emerged among the radical opposition in exile, spearheaded by Palipehutu. As pointed out by Chrétien,

¹³⁵ Ibid., 139. See also an article published in 2009 on the website www.abarundi.org, which is linked to the CNDD-FDD. The author of this article depicts the work of the commission as apparent propaganda of the regime in place, echoing ‘the usual discourse of Burundian and foreign historians, some of whom made a particular effort to justify the massacres and exactions of the military regimes towards the Hutu population.’ E. Bizimana, ‘Commission Vérité et Réconciliation au Burundi: relever les défis d’une société fortement polarisée’ (Bujumbura 10/11/2009) [burundi-info.com/spip.php?article1132] (last accessed on 07/07/2011).

¹³⁶ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 135. Similarly, the Charter for National Unity recognised the existence of what it defined as ‘diverse component parts of the Burundian population.’ *Charter for National Unity*, Art. 84, qtd. in F. Reyntjens, *Burundi: breaking the cycle of violence* (London: Minority Rights Group 1995), 9.

¹³⁷ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 24.

¹³⁸ With a view to ending the conflict, the report recommended to condemn violence, a generalisation of guilt, and discrimination, as well as to avoid confusing ‘political majority’ with ‘ethnic majority’. This confusion, according to the document, would represent ‘a denial of the Burundian nation and a misconception of democracy’. Government of Burundi, *Rapport*, 3, qtd. in Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 135.

instead of insisting on the concepts of ‘nation’, ‘unity’ and ‘anti-imperialism’, this counter-narrative emphasised the concepts of ‘democracy’, ‘people’, and ‘majority rule’.¹³⁹ If the discourse on unity was reportedly meant to ensure the power and privileges of a historically dominant and otherwise threatened minority, conversely, the opposing discourse on democracy was intended to support a claim on the legitimate power of a historically excluded ‘ethnic majority’. The latter discourse is best outlined in Palipehutu’s manifesto *Persecution of the Hutu of Burundi*, a ‘historiographical pamphlet’, as Chrétien described it, which was written by its late leader Rémi Gahutu.¹⁴⁰ While antithetic to the official ideology, this dissident narrative showed a similar preoccupation with the past.

Before articulating Palipehutu’s view on the country’s history, Gahutu opened his booklet by challenging the veracity of the regime’s historical account of the nation and by calling for an inter-generational transmission of the truth about the past. In the Preface, the author declared:

*‘We urgently demand that the Hutus of Burundi who read this book teach their children the exact truth about their subjugation. The goal of this document is to remove the misunderstandings and falsifications of Burundian history that have been encouraged by certain corrupt members of the blood-soaked Tutsi regime...’*¹⁴¹

As hinted at in these introductory lines, Gahutu’s subsequent presentation of the course of the national history was characterised by a Manichean vision of Burundi’s past, whereby the Hutu were portrayed as recurrent innocent victims of Tutsi perfidy since time immemorial. In this sense, Liisa Malkki defined Palipehutu’s discourse as a ‘mythico-history’, which ‘represented, not only a description of the past, nor even merely an evaluation of the past, but a subversive recasting and reinterpretation of it in fundamentally moral terms’.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Chrétien, ‘Les fratricides,’ 442-443.

¹⁴⁰ R. Gahutu, *Persecution of the Hutu of Burundi* (n.p., n.d.). See also documents produced by Meproba, a group of Hutu students from Burundi living in Belgium (e.g. *Voie du progrès*). This narrative was also propagated through Palipehutu’s Radio Bohoza.

¹⁴¹ Gahutu, *Persecution*, 1.

¹⁴² L.H. Malkki, *Purity and exile: violence, memory and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago 1995), 54. Lemarchand defined the concept of ‘mythico-history’ as ‘a mixture of fact and fiction designated to offer each community retrospective validation of its own interpretation of the genesis of ethnic conflict.’ *Burundi*, 19.

First of all, in its discourse, Palipehutu seemed to be particularly obsessed with the pre-colonial past. In its presentation of this period, Gahutu's pamphlet utterly rejected the regime's ideology on Burundi's ancestral unity and harmony. Instead, this movement largely reproduced old colonial racial theories in a way that strikingly resembled the narrative of Rwanda's Hutu extremist propaganda, by which it had been clearly influenced.¹⁴³ Specifically, Palipehutu's discourse, defined by Chrétien as 'an ideology of racial autochthony',¹⁴⁴ emphasised the primordial nature of 'racial' difference and conflict in Burundian traditional society. Here, the Bantu Hutu (and the pygmy Twa), who were described as the old 'occupants' and legitimate owners of Burundi, were said to have been subjugated and exploited by the Hamitic Tutsi since the arrival of Ntare Rushatsi.¹⁴⁵ The latter were portrayed as 'foreigners', invaders, and feudal 'oppressors' from Egypt or Ethiopia who had succeeded in their domination plans 'during four centuries' thanks to their innate cunningness, trickery, and secrecy. According to Gahutu, 'the Hutu have lost a country which was rightfully theirs,' and had been reduced to 'a state of servitude'.¹⁴⁶ In order to be able to 'retake their country', the Hutu were encouraged 'to strengthen their own identity'.¹⁴⁷ Conversely, the concept of national unity that had been purported by Burundi's various regimes was discarded, and denounced as a shrewd strategy aimed at secretly perpetuating the Tutsi hegemony. It is in this sense that Gahutu, in a bid to prove the continuity between past and present unfair practices against the Hutu majority, condemned 'the injustice and the killings hidden behind the concept of unity'.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ See, Gahutu, 2-6. Chrétien, *Le défi*, 2, and 'Burundi. Entre histoire, mémoire et idéologie. A propos de quelques ouvrages récents,' *Cahiers d'études africaines* 38(150-152) (1998) 648.

¹⁴⁴ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 59.

¹⁴⁵ Chrétien & Dupaquier, 110.

¹⁴⁶ Gahutu, 9.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁴⁸ According to Gahutu, since their arrival in Burundi, the Tutsi had sown discord between Hutu and Twa, introducing ethnic divisions and disrupting societal harmony. '*Depuis que le Burundi existe, c'est le Hutu qui a fait le défrichement et fait des cultures suivant la succession des saisons. Il vivait en bonne harmonie avec les Twa. Les Tutsi sont ensuite venus dans le pays et y ont amené du bétail. Ils ne rêvaient que semer des querelles et la zizanie dans ces populations qu'ils ont trouvé sur place. Pour ce faire, ils se sont appuyés sur le contrat de clientèle (ubugabire) car celui qui acceptait ce contrat méprisait ses frères hutu et twa. C'est de cette façon que les divisions ethniques se sont installées dans ce pays. Face à ces divisions entre les Hutu et les Twa, les Tutsi ont, grâce à leur fourberie, pris le pouvoir après avoir trompé les Hutu en leur disant que celui qui devait gouverner était celui qui était né avec des semences dans son poing (...)* Burundais,

The hidden Hutu killings mentioned by Gahutu referred in particular to the 1972 events, a theme that dominated Palipehutu's accounts of the more recent past. Contrary to the situation within Burundi, where the successive Tutsi-dominated regimes had enforced historical amnesia with regard to this crisis, Burundian refugees abroad were found to hold on to these tragic memories, on which their common consciousness and destiny came to be largely founded.¹⁴⁹ As Chrétien and Dupaquier highlighted, the virulent Hutu propaganda that was forged and propagated by Hutu 'intellectuals' in exile presented a version of the 1972 events which starkly contrasted with the accounts that had been diffused by the official propaganda in Burundi. This counter-narrative emphasised the state-sponsored massacres of as many as 500,000 Hutu. Conversely, it played down and even justified the anti-Tutsi killings that had been perpetrated by the rebellion. Its victims were said to have been limited to only a few Tutsi families who had been killed as a result of 'popular rage' stemming from the abuses they had committed against the Hutu people. In the most extreme of cases, the overall reality of the rebellion was utterly denied. Here, the rebel attacks were depicted as a simulation by the State, or as the result of manipulations and provocations that had been orchestrated by the regime in order to create the conditions for the implementation of a secret extermination plan against the Hutu – the so-called 'Simbananiye Plan'. This genocidal plan, which was supposedly aimed at achieving a 'demographic equalisation of the "ethnies"', has been described by Chrétien and Dupaquier as an 'ideological invention' and as 'one of the founding myths of the extreme violence in Burundi in the 1980s and 1990s'.¹⁵⁰ As highlighted by the two scholars, references to an ancient history of injustice and subjugation of the Hutu people were regularly used to support Hutu militants' attempts to justify their

Burundaises, vous venez d'entendre que dès l'arrivée des Tutsi au Burundi, les Hutu et les Twa n'ont jamais eu le temps de respirer.' Qtd. in M. Mukuri, 'Quand une mémoire en cache une autre: la superposition des mémoires au Burundi indépendant,' Colloque Celat, Université de Laval, Québec, 2002 [www.celat.ulaval.ca/histoire.memoire/histoire/cape1/mukuri.htm] (last accessed on 09/08/2011).

¹⁴⁹ Thibon, 'Les origines', 71.

¹⁵⁰ Chrétien & Dupaquier, 328. Rejected by the two authors, these allegations have been reproduced in academic literature such as, W. Weinstein, *Historical dictionary of Burundi* (New York 1978), 35; Reyntjens, 'Burundi 1972-1988. Continuité et changement', *Cahier du Cedaf* (Brussels 1989), 6; R. Ntibanzonkiza, 143, 183. See also, S. Ntibantugnanya, *Une démocratie pour tous les Burundais. Vol. 1 : de l'autonomie à Ndadaye, 1956-1993* (Paris 1999), 108.

actions as striving towards the final ‘liberation’ of the Hutu and as furthering the ‘defence of democracy’.¹⁵¹

According to several observers, this dissident ‘Hutu’ historical discourse was effectively preserved in Tanzanian refugee camps that were controlled by Palipehutu. Here, what Marc Sommers called ‘refugee-historians’¹⁵² appeared to have been remarkably successful in keeping alive a traumatic collective memory of longstanding Hutu victimhood, as well as the fear of a looming and long-planned Hutu extermination. As brought to light by Malkki in her outstanding study on historical narratives in exile, in the 1980s Palipehutu’s discourse dominated camp life in Mishamo.¹⁵³ In particular, refugees at Mishamo were found to largely reproduce Palipehutu’s theories on Bantu Hutu autochthony and Hamitic Tutsi allochthony. In the camp, the Tutsi were widely depicted as conquerors, oppressors, and parasites who did not belong ‘to the “nation” in its pure, “natural” state’.¹⁵⁴ Also, the dominant camp narrative was reportedly characterised by the overwhelming memory of the 1972 genocidal violence and of forced exile. This crisis was typically presented as the culmination of a long history of Hutu persecution and discrimination which had started in the pre-colonial time and had continued in compliance with the supposed ‘Simbananye Plan’.¹⁵⁵ In line with Palipehutu’s Manichean vision of Burundian society, while the Tutsi ‘race’ was demonised and dehumanised, the Hutu were exculpated and victimised. Accordingly, whereas the violence perpetrated by the Tutsi was presented in vivid and even sickening tones,¹⁵⁶ the violence committed by the insurgents, as well as Tutsi acts of solidarity towards Hutus, were ignored. According to observers such as Simon Turner, the coherence in the narratives that were recounted with apparent spontaneity by Malkki’s informants pointed to a

¹⁵¹ Chrétien & Dupaquier, 110. See Meproba propaganda *Voie du progres*.

¹⁵² M. Sommers, *Fear in Bongoland. Burundi refugees in urban Tanzania* (New York 2001), 42-43.

¹⁵³ The situation in Mishamo was found to starkly contrast with the situation observed in the less isolated camp of Ulyankulu and in Kigoma town. Here, Burundian refugees seemed to be more preoccupied with making a living in the present time rather than dwelling on the past. As pointed out by S. Turner, ‘[t]here is no doubt that the social conditions of the refugees in exile play a big role in shaping their understanding of national history.’ S. Turner, ‘Representing the past in exile: the politics of national history among Burundian refugees,’ *Refuge* 17(6) (1998) 23.

¹⁵⁴ Malkki, 93.

¹⁵⁵ According to Sommers, a strong memory of the 1972 violence was also held by Burundian self-settled urban refugees in Dar-es-Salaam. *Fear in Bongoland*.

¹⁵⁶ Malkki 91.

structural sensitisation campaign through which the refugees were ‘educated’ about the national history.¹⁵⁷ This same awareness campaign, according to Turner, was also conducted clandestinely inside Burundi in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a result, the scholar argued, ‘many Hutu were well aware of their history, thanks to Palipehutu cadres.’¹⁵⁸

Turner observed that, in the 1990s, new ideologies had been developed by the Hutu opposition as a result of the afore-mentioned changes in the national political milieu as well as in the dominant discourse within Burundi. As mentioned earlier, this period was marked by a process of democratisation and by a partial recognition of ethnicity, the use of which was however prohibited in political programmes. In this context, the newly dominant Hutu party Frodebu took distance from Palipehutu’s ethnicist discourse in order to avoid accusations of tribalism that could lead to its disqualification from legitimately participating in the national political life. Instead of emphasizing the themes of ‘liberation, nationalism, and Hutu unity’ that were dear to Palipehutu’s rhetoric, Frodebu chose to focus on the concepts of democracy and human rights. Based on field research, Turner concluded that the evolving national political setting had been accompanied by a ‘shift from an essentialist to a pluralist discourse’ in Tanzanian camps. Next to a radical narrative close to Palipehutu positions, which, in the 1980s, was found to be hegemonic among 1972 Burundian refugees, in the 1990s Turner revealed the existence of a new, more moderate competing narrative that was held especially among 1993-1994 refugees, who were generally supporters of the CNDD (Frodebu’s ‘successor in exile’). In stark contrast to Palipehutu’s rhetoric, as he reported, the narrative recounted by CNDD leaders in Lukole camp appeared to largely adhere to the official historical discourse on Burundi’s pre-colonial unity and on the colonial origins of the Hutu-Tutsi conflict.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Turner. See also, Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 27-28; and Gourevitch, ‘The poisoned country,’ *New York review of book* (June 1996), 62.

¹⁵⁸ Turner, 26.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. See also, Turner, *Politics of innocence: Hutu identity, conflict, and camp life* (Oxford 2010). Notice that, not dissimilarly from the rhetoric used by the former regime with regard to the Hutu massacres in 1972, during the recent civil war, the Tutsi massacres that were perpetrated in 1993 by Frodebu and associated militia were justified with such expressions as ‘popular resistance’, ‘small rage’ and ‘liberating violence’. Chrétien, *Le défi*, 176. Once again, claimed death estimates greatly diverged, from a preposterous figure of

3.3.2 The institutionalisation of the official discourse through the education system: history teaching and education policy in post-colonial Burundi

In the section above, evidence was brought to demonstrate how discourses on history and identity have been central to both official and dissident political propaganda and to ideological efforts aimed at ‘educating’ the public about ‘the truth’. While it is unclear whether propaganda in Tanzanian camps influenced formal refugee education, evidence seems to suggest that the ideology of Burundi’s post-colonial regimes significantly shaped the national education system. As will be illustrated in the present section, under the three Republics, the politicisation of education was once again manifest both in the content of school teachings and in educational policies and practices.

3.3.2.1 School teachings

The literature review that was conducted in the framework of the present research revealed a scarcity of studies analysing or commenting on the content of Burundi’s post-colonial school teachings. One exception consisted in a 1998 paper by Angelo Barampama, a former Burundian teacher.¹⁶⁰ According to the author, despite several reforms that were pursued after independence, history curricula and textbooks took little distance from the time of European colonisation.¹⁶¹ Demonstrating a failure to break with the colonial past, schooling in independent

25,000 advanced in early 1994 by certain Frodebu supporters, to the inflated figure of 500,000 suggested in late 1993 by the ministry of telecommunications. Ibid., 171.

¹⁶⁰ A. Barampama, ‘Apprendre à vivre ensemble grâce à l’enseignement de l’histoire et de la géographie au Burundi: idéal et limites,’ *Rapport final du colloque sur le thème apprendre à vivre ensemble grâce à l’enseignement de l’histoire et de la géographie*. 12 Juin 1998, Genève, Suisse. Organisée conjointement par le Bureau International d’éducation et l’Université de Genève, 53-64 [www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/publications/free_publications/Histgeo.pdf] (last accessed on 12/08/2011).

¹⁶¹ In the wake of independence, Burundi underwent a reform in 1973 which ‘Kirundised’ and ‘ruralised’ education. Based on this reform, a new curriculum was produced in 1983, and reviewed in 1990. The primary school curriculum was proposed at the *Colloque national sur les programmes de l’enseignement primaire* in August 1989 and approved through a Ministerial Ordinance. République du Burundi. Ministère de l’Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire. Bureau d’Education Rurale, *Programme des écoles primaires du Burundi* (Bujumbura, September 1990).

Burundi continued to privilege the study of the outside world and to neglect the national history.¹⁶²

While the teaching of Burundi's history was long overshadowed by a prominent emphasis on the external world, the little that was taught about the country's past appears to have been carefully selected by the State in accordance with its official discourse. Obura, for instance, observed that, compared to Rwanda's pre-genocide schoolbooks, which were characterised by divisive content, in Burundi 'the textbooks designed in the 1970s and printed in the 1980s had nothing objectionable in them'. On the contrary, she remarked, 'they spoke of national unity, the brotherhood of man, the unifying, and the rich cultural heritage of all Burundians.' Textbooks and teacher's guides of that time largely focused on celebrating a glorious ancient past, omitting any reference to the troubled recent history and to major social and political issues.¹⁶³ As reported by Barampama, in a context in which the major concerns of the Burundian political leadership consisted in the legitimisation of the regime and the promotion of national unity, issues related to ethnicity, including the history of origins and settlement, of Hutu-Tutsi relations, and of the violent post-colonial crises, were censored because of the threat they posed to the established 'apartheid' system.¹⁶⁴

The institutionalisation of the official unitarist discourse through formal education clearly emerges from the secondary school teacher guide *Histoire du Burundi* (henceforth also abbreviated as 'TG'). In the paragraphs below, this section will review and analyse the contents of this didactic material. After a brief introduction, the analysis will examine the guide's coverage and representation of Burundi's history with a view to discerning some of main themes and arguments proposed by the government to be conveyed to the country's young generation.

¹⁶² The new curriculum mainly covered the ancient civilisations (i.e. Roman, Greek, Egyptian and Middle-Eastern), Western history (i.e. of France, Belgium, Germany, and the United States), and African history (i.e. the history of great kings and of Western- and Southern African empires, the Great Lakes region, as well as the colonisation and the struggle for independence).

¹⁶³ Obura, 106. The author, however, also reported to have found a reference book for secondary school history teachers, which addressed the theme of origin and migration in Burundi. 286.

¹⁶⁴ Barampama, 54. According to the former teacher, '[a]ddressing issues related to ethnicity is considered as doing "politics" and, indirectly, subversion' (61) – a crime that was reportedly punished by 'imprisonment - if not by death' (55).

3.3.2.1.1 General remarks

The teacher guide *Histoire du Burundi* was developed by the MoE's *Bureau d'Etudes des Programmes d'Enseignement Secondaire* (BEPES) during the Second Republic. First published in 1978, it was revised in September 1987, just a few days before the fall of Bagaza's regime.¹⁶⁵ Compared to the 1978 edition, this typewritten document, which included a few hand-written corrections and drawn maps, presented several novelties. First of all, it proposed the use of participatory teaching methods. Secondly, it revised and enriched the manual's content based on recent scientific research. Among its main sources was the 1987 scholarly publication *Histoire du Burundi. Des origines à la fin du XIX^e siècle*, a major historiographical project that had brought together a team of eight Burundian and French academics coordinated by Mworoha in close collaboration with Chrétien and Gahama.¹⁶⁶ Against the backdrop of a belated start of scientific historical research in Burundi and of a consequent lack of adequate reference works and didactic materials on the country's history,¹⁶⁷ this publication represented an important turning point. Aimed in particular at Burundi's secondary school teachers, this reference work was intended as a 'manual of general history' which synthesised recent findings on the national pre-colonial past. Thirdly, the revised

¹⁶⁵ Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *Histoire du Burundi* (Bujumbura: BEPES 1978) ; and Bureau d'Études des Programmes d'Enseignement Secondaire (BEPES), *Histoire du Burundi. Livre du Maître, Classe de 7e*. 2e édition (Bujumbura, Septembre 1987). Its topics correspond to those mentioned in the latest history curriculum for the secondary level, issued in 1992. République du Burundi. Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire, *Programmes d'Histoire, Section Histoire* (Bujumbura, August 1992).

¹⁶⁶ E. Mworoha et al., *Histoire du Burundi: des origines à la fin du XIX^e siècle* (Paris 1987). The work includes numerous original texts, survey transcripts, maps and various illustrations, and references. This publication has been criticised among others by A.A. Trouwborst. The scholar depicted it as being largely a tribute to the country's kings, in accordance with the regime's attempts at 'establish[ing] a link to the glorious royal past of the country'. According to Trouwborst, while the discourse that was reported in such historiographical work exalted the monarchy and presented the kingdom as the main symbol of national identity and national unity, the primary target of its critical remarks were the Ganwa, portrayed as oppressors and colonial collaborators. A.A. Trouwborst, 'Burundi as a kingdom: a changing cultural identity,' M. van Bakel, R. Hagesteijn, & P. van de Velde (eds.), *Pivot politics: changing cultural identities in early state formation processes* (Amsterdam 1994), 278. Besides Mworoha's *Histoire du Burundi*, other sources mentioned in the TG were the *Cahiers d'histoire du Département d'Histoire* of the University of Burundi, and *Culture et Société*, the journal of the *Centre de Civilisation Burundaise* linked to the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture.

¹⁶⁷ According to Chrétien, besides the largely biased ethnographic works that had been produced by missionaries and colonial administrators, on the eve of Burundi's independence only a handful of texts on Burundi could be considered as being worthy of the historical discipline. These included: J. Vansina, 'Notes sur l'histoire du Burundi,' *Aequatoria* (1) (1961) 1-10 (on the dynastic chronology); P. Ryckmans, *Une page d'histoire coloniale. L'occupation allemande dans l'Urundi* (Brussels 1953) (on the German administration); and L. Roger, *Ruanda-Urundi, 1884-1919* (Oxford 1963) (on colonial borders). Chrétien, 'Introduction,' *Burundi*, 9.

edition of the manual re-organised its content and chapters based on an internal periodisation of the country's history. The national history was now organised into 'five main periods', namely: 'Prehistoric Burundi', 'Pre-dynastic Burundi', 'Burundi's sacred monarchy', 'Burundi under foreign domination', and 'Burundi after independence'.¹⁶⁸

3.3.2.1.2 Pre-colonial history

The most substantial part of the 178-page textbook was dedicated to Burundi's pre-colonial history (88pp). Here, a predominant focus was placed on the period of the sacred monarchy (63pp). This spanned from the foundation of the kingdom by Ntare Rushatsi, which was situated in 1700 in accordance with the short dynastic chronology,¹⁶⁹ to Mwezi Gisabo's defeat against the Germans in 1903. The period of the sacred monarchy was presented as a crucial time in the national history. In the manual's view, this historical juncture corresponded to 'two centuries of political and social construction, and of formation of the national consciousness', which eventually led to Burundi's evolution into 'a true nation-state with a cultural and linguistic unity'.¹⁷⁰ In its presentation of the pre-colonial era, the TG adopted a largely celebratory tone, clearly echoing the official discourse propagated by Burundi's post-colonial regimes.

The exaltation of the ancient time concerned, first of all, Burundi's kings. Much of the praise was directed especially at the two monarchs who marked the kingdom's apogee, namely Ntare Rugamba and Mwezi Gisabo. They were both lauded for their 'intelligence' and their 'ability'. In the TG, Rugamba was depicted as Burundi's greatest monarch. According to the manual, thanks to his exceptional military and administrative qualities, Rugamba oversaw an extraordinary

¹⁶⁸ Following an introductory chapter on the discipline of History and the concept of civilisation, the TG encompasses five chapters, each covering one of the '*cinq grandes périodes*'. Each chapter starts by specifying its pedagogic objectives, suggested materials, relevant lexicon, and how the overall lesson should proceed, and ends with a synthesis of the topics it covered and with an evaluation section.

¹⁶⁹ With regard to the 'issue of the royal cycles', the guide accepted the two-cycle theory as being more scientifically sound. It instead rejected the four-cycle theory, which it described as deriving from false arguments that had been elaborated by Van der Burgt on the foreign origins of Burundi's political organisation. While it maintained 1700 as the date of the foundation of the kingdom, it also mentioned A. Kagame's chronology, which located the beginning of the dynasty towards the 15th century. TG, 45.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

territorial expansion and political consolidation of the kingdom, as well as its development into a powerful and feared state in the region.¹⁷¹ As reported by the guide, in this period, ‘Ntare Rugamba’s troops make absolutely tremble neighbouring regions’, establishing ‘a hegemony of Burundi in the region’.¹⁷² With regard to Gisabo, while his reign was recognised as having been affected by numerous adversities, including factional rivalries, natural calamities and foreign invasions, the king was largely eulogised for his heroic defence of Burundi against the Arab irruption.¹⁷³ Speaking of ‘a fierce and successful resistance’, the booklet recounted how ‘the Barundi distinguished themselves by defeating Rumaliza’s troops in 1880’.¹⁷⁴ In line with the overall positive tone used to present this period, the TG subsequently underscored that, despite the eventual defeat against the Germans, which had led to the kingdom’s loss of sovereignty, ‘Mwezi Gisabo will remain a worthy monarch of Burundi until his death in 1908’.¹⁷⁵ At this point, the guide further reminded its readers that Burundi had been the last kingdom in the region to fall under foreign domination, thanks, among other things, to the unity of its people.¹⁷⁶ Proudly, the TG declared that, for a long time, ‘no people had ever succeeded in subjugating Burundi’.¹⁷⁷

Besides paying tribute to the kings, the TG also exalted Burundi’s ‘brilliant’ traditional civilisation. More particularly, it celebrated the unity, solidarity and complementarity that had characterised social relations for five (!) centuries. In its words, ‘[g]athered around their kings, the Barundi, during these five centuries, have constituted a united people, speaking the same language, Kirundi, which has been used to express an extremely refined culture and which underlies an ideal of life “ubuntu ubupfasoni” and agro-pastoral activities across the hills.’¹⁷⁸ Among other things, in a context in which various traditional practices were largely depicted as demonstrating the unity and solidarity among ‘the Barundi’, the

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 74.

¹⁷² Ibid., 70, 74. Particular attention was here paid to the successive wars conducted against the Rwandan kingdom. In this regard, the guide also explained that, following numerous confrontations, ‘[b]oth countries saw the futility of attacking each other given the balance of power’. 73.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 76.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 79-81.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 83.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 124.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 86. The guide further underscored the ancient love for and the advantage of collective work. 101.

controversial clientship contract *ubugabire* was portrayed in an exclusively positive light. This was described as a form of beneficial ‘mutual assistance’, which involved a gift in cattle in exchange for certain services.¹⁷⁹ Strikingly, the TG presentation of Burundi’s traditional society omitted references to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Here, the focus instead was on such corporate entities as the family, the lineage, and the clan.¹⁸⁰ The only exception in this regard was a map extracted from one of Chrétien’s publications, which reported the delegation of administrative power to ‘hutu and tutsi *fidèles*’ in certain regions.¹⁸¹ As for the Ganwa, they were described as Burundi’s ‘noble class’.¹⁸² The primacy of the theme of unity in the TG’s presentation of the pre-colonial period was made particularly clear in a section that outlined the ‘course’ of a lesson on Burundi’s social organisation. Here, teachers were explicitly requested to encourage students’ discovery of the antiquity and foundations of the unity among Burundians. In the TG’s words,

Teachers help students discover that all the Burundi form a united people.

Ask students to recall since when the Burundian people are united.

Help discover these factors of unity: the same language, the same culture, the same social and economic relations.

*Ask students to illustrate these factors with examples from everyday life.*¹⁸³

3.3.2.1.3 Colonial history

The colonial era was the second most substantial theme covered in the manual. Of the 55 pages that were dedicated to describing this period, 45 addressed the Belgian colonisation.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 103, 116.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 116-117. The guide also minimised the current salience of clans, explaining that relations today are created at the level of profession and neighbourhood.

¹⁸¹ Map extracted from Mworoha et al., 72.

¹⁸² TG, 86.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 94.

Overall, the period ‘under foreign domination’ was portrayed as a time of misfortune. While it acknowledged the socio-economic contributions made by the newcomers, the TG depicted European colonial rule in Burundi as a selfish, negligent, paternalistic, and oppressive type of governance.¹⁸⁴ More specifically, according to the guide, this time had been characterised by ‘brutal’ and ‘barbaric’ military expeditions, which had involved pillage, arson and murder;¹⁸⁵ by a loss of sovereignty and territory;¹⁸⁶ by hardship and even death deriving from injustice and oppression, and from exploitation, forced labour, ‘systematic spoliation’ and abuse;¹⁸⁷ and, finally, by the eradication of traditional values as well as by ideological manipulations.¹⁸⁸ In particular, the booklet referred to the Belgian destruction of Burundians’ unity and solidarity through a colonial policy of divide and rule. In the words of the TG, ‘[t]he colonizer knew well that the national unity jeopardised the colonial domination’.¹⁸⁹ That is why, ‘[t]he colonizer laid the foundations of the division of the population’.¹⁹⁰ As a result, ‘the bonds of mutual aid and solidarity were broken.’¹⁹¹ The guide further recounted how the colonisers had ‘opposed the chiefs to their subjects, the chiefs among themselves, and the population among itself.’¹⁹² In reference to a worsening of relations between the local authorities and the population, in particular, while the blame was clearly apportioned to the Belgians, local chiefs appeared to be largely exculpated from any responsibility in the exploitation and abuse of the popular masses, which they supervised in their new function as colonial agents. According to the TG, ‘the “indigenous” authorities did nothing but follow the orders of the Belgian authorities’, the new ‘real’ power-holders.¹⁹³ Also, the colonisers were accused of having fuelled tensions between Ganwa princes, thereby favouring the Batare lineage, e.g. chief Baranyanka and his son Birori.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁸⁵ According to the guide, the colonisers, whose entire politics ‘consists in making their interests prevail’ (126), proceeded to ‘raid cattle, burn the royal estates, massacre the king’s supporters’ (121).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 133.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 130, 139.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 119.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 174.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 124.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 139.

¹⁹² Ibid., 122.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 157.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 124-125, and 168-169.

3.3.2.1.4 Decolonisation

Burundi's more recent history was largely omitted from the textbook. The last topic to be briefly addressed in the guide concerned the country's decolonisation. Of the 178 pages, only 5 covered this period, with a focus on Uprona's electoral victory, Rwagasore's assassination, and the achievement of independence.

At the core of this section was a celebration of the independence struggle of the Barundi.¹⁹⁵ In a context in which the colonisers were accused of having sown division among the population, the TG underscored the resilience of Burundian nationalism, which had led to the country's liberation from foreign oppression. In its words, '[t]he nationalist spirit thus survived the colonial domination'.¹⁹⁶ More specifically, the guide paid tribute to Uprona. Depicted as being 'among Africa's truly nationalist parties',¹⁹⁷ Uprona was praised for its crucial contribution to the country's achievement of independence, without which Burundi would have continued to be subjected to foreign domination. As declared by the TG, 'Burundi liberates itself from the colonizer thanks to the UPRONA party which campaigns for the national independence'.¹⁹⁸ In a bid to highlight this party's nationalist and non-discriminatory nature, the guide further explained that the political objective of Uprona was to 'lead all the Barundi, without ethnic, social or religious distinction, to independence'. As underscored in the manual, a particular role in this respect had been played by Uprona's leader and Burundi's national hero, Prince Rwagasore.¹⁹⁹ Emphasising his ability to coalesce Burundians from all backgrounds behind the nationalist cause, the TG declared that, 'Prince Rwagasore was a great politician who enjoyed immense popularity among all of Burundi's social classes'.²⁰⁰ While these two extracts were the only ones to speak of 'ethnic distinctions' and 'social classes', as mentioned earlier, no direct references to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were found in the entire guide.

¹⁹⁵ According to the guide, '[i]n the beginning, the Barundi suffered in silence the oppressive colonial rule, but later, since 1959, they will say no to the injustice, contempt, exploitation and the pressure of the colonizers'. 158.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁹⁷ Other such parties were Nyerere's TANU in Tanzania and Lumumba's MNC in the DRC.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 29, and 7.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

If Uprona was extolled for its role in spearheading Burundi's independence struggle, the image of its political opponents appeared particularly negative. In its description of the decolonisation period, the TG emphasised the collaboration between the opposition parties and the colonisers. The PP, for instance, was portrayed as a party that 'wanted to be friend with the Belgians'. Similarly, Birori's PDC was described as 'the fierce enemy of UPRONA' and a 'party at the service of the Belgian cause'. The unheroic image of these actors was reinforced by presenting the elections that had led to the PDC's victory as 'flawed' and by depicting the subsequently established government as a 'puppet' government that had been 'put in place by the Belgians'.²⁰¹ Also, it was on political opponents 'at the service of the Belgians' that Rwagasore's assassination was blamed.

Following this short presentation of Burundi's decolonisation, the TG dedicated less than one third of a page to the proclamation and celebration of independence.²⁰² The last page of the guide reproduced the national anthem that had been aired on the radio at that time to announce the achievement of independence – an anthem that has remained unchanged up until today.²⁰³

Burundi's subsequent history was almost completely omitted from the guide's narrative. References to this particularly controversial and sensitive period were limited to a list of few significant events, which were reported in an introductory historical overview at the beginning of the TG. Here, the guide mentioned the end of the monarchy, the establishment of the First and Second Republics, and the end of the latter by a Military Committee of National Salvation in 1987 (date of the publication of the textbook). For a treatment of the more recent events, the book referred teachers to newspapers such as *Le Renouveau*, *Ubumwe*, and *le Burundi en image*.²⁰⁴ If, as pointed out earlier, references to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa did not figure in the entire text, similarly, in line with the official discourse, the TG excluded all mentions of Burundi's various violent crises.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 177.

²⁰² Here, the guide mentioned the hissing of the new flag and the airing of the new national anthem on the radio, which had announced this achievement. Ibid., 178.

²⁰³ Ibid. 179.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 28.

Whereas post-colonial school teachings have been silent on Burundi's recent violent past, the violence itself, as highlighted by several authors, has had a strong pedagogical function in Burundian society. Echoing Lemarchand's description of the crises as a 'traumatic...learning experience',²⁰⁵ Ndimurukundo argued that, in a context of imposed amnesia on the country's troubled history, '[i]n the postcolonial period, it is mainly the ethnic wars that are at the base of racist lessons'. As he explained, these violent experiences 'only exacerbate ethnic consciousness, especially among the more educated'.²⁰⁶

The analysis of *Histoire du Burundi* proposed above illustrated the politicisation of history teaching in post-colonial Burundi. In addition to history, a school subject that was strongly influenced by the state ideology in this period was the course of civics (*civisme*). As suggested by Mazunya, this subject, which was sometimes sarcastically dubbed '*cours de suivisme*' (literally, 'course of followership'), mainly served to promote a personality cult of the President, 'Father of the Nation', among Burundi's young generation. As in Rwanda, the '*suivisme*' that was encouraged through this course, and through schooling more in general, was supported by a teacher-oriented pedagogy which favoured pupils' assimilation of state-sponsored knowledge and values as opposed to their critical thinking.²⁰⁷

3.3.2.2 Education structures, policies and practices

As shown above, post-colonial school teachings in Burundi appeared to be largely positive and unifying. Their credibility however was undermined by the harsh reality of sustained ethnic discrimination, humiliation, and violence. In an overall discriminatory and oppressive context, educational policies and practices are widely reported to have played a crucial role both in perpetuating a system of 'Tutsi' apartheid and of systematic marginalisation of the Hutu, and in reinforcing an old superiority-inferiority complex.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 177.

²⁰⁶ Ndimurukundo, 130.

²⁰⁷ Obura, 224

²⁰⁸ Ndimurukundo, 133.

Various authors have pointed to the educational discrimination to which the Hutu in particular had been subjected since the colonial time and throughout the post-colonial period, especially during the Second Republic.²⁰⁹ Obura, for instance, spoke of a ‘long history of discrimination in the education sector’, which tended to favour the Tutsi over the Hutu.²¹⁰ Underscoring the effects of this longstanding predicament, Obura argued that, ‘Hutu were significantly less educated than Tutsi by the time of independence and relatively even less qualified after three decades of independence.’²¹¹ As observed by several commentators, educational marginalisation proved to be a particularly efficacious strategy to limit Hutu opportunities to participate in the country’s political, social and economic life. A. Mariro, for example, suggested that, ‘the education system was the preferred mechanism for creating and perpetuating injustice and exclusion’.²¹² Similarly, Sady Noël explained that, ‘[i]t is in the education sector that ethnic discrimination remains the most effective because its paralysis has consequences that affect all sectors of national life ... Moreover, a people deprived of education is doomed to misery, isolation, silence and submission’.²¹³ On account of its extensive effects, the chronic educational exclusion of the Hutu has often been depicted as being at the root of Burundi’s post-colonial conflicts. In a 2000 report on the state of the country’s education system, Tony Jackson argued that, ‘[t]he serious distortions in access to education lie at the heart of the problem of “exclusion” in Burundi, and are one of the primary causes of the conflict.’²¹⁴ An analogous argument has been made by Obura. In her view, ‘exclusion from education has been a critical factor

²⁰⁹ Reychler et al. argued that it was especially after 1972 that ‘education became the focus in the scramble for social gains’. *Le défi de la paix*, 93-94. Similarly, according to Kay, discrimination in the education system became ‘a hallmark of the Second Republic’. R. Kay, *Burundi since the genocide* (London: Minority Rights Group 1987), 7. See also Weinstein, *Historical dictionary*, 53.

²¹⁰ Obura, 260.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

²¹² Mariro, *Burundi*, 49, 90. Similarly, a document produced by the CNDD depicted the education sector as ‘the instrument of choice of the apartheid politics practiced since the colonial period by the State in favour of the Tutsi’ as well as ‘the most divisive (*déchirant*) sector in Burundian society’. Commission Permanente d’Etudes Politiques (COPEP / CNDD-FDD), *La nature du conflit burundais: cocktail politique d’intolérance et d’hypocrisie* (June 2000), 35 [www.cndd-fdd.org] (last accessed on 19/06/2011).

²¹³ S. Noël, ‘Des signes du tribalisme invétère des tutsi dans les établissements scolaires au Burundi: situation et témoignages’ (Brussels 1988), 36 [www.burundi-agnews.org/agnews_signestribalismetutsietablisscolaires1988.htm] (last accessed on 19/06/2011).

²¹⁴ T. Jackson, *Equal access to education: a peace imperative for Burundi* (London: International Alert 2000), 25 [www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED453338.pdf] (last accessed on 06/08/2011).

in fuelling conflict in Burundi' as this has often been considered 'as the source of all other inequities in the nation'.²¹⁵

In Burundi, where the existence of ethnicity was utterly denied, the mechanisms that were reportedly employed to enforce Hutu discrimination in the education sector fundamentally differed from the practices that had been simultaneously used in Rwanda to marginalise the Tutsi. As Obura pointed out, '[w]hile in post-independent Rwanda social discrimination was overt, in Burundi the mechanisms were covert.'²¹⁶ Local observers such as Ndimurukundo and Barampama further explained that, instead of relying on an institutionalised system of quotas, which in Rwanda penalised the Tutsi on the basis of their numerical inferiority, in Burundi the Hutu were systematically excluded from higher levels of education through several secretive practices.²¹⁷

To a great extent, Hutu school enrolments and advancement were apparently kept in check through a covert strategy of ethnic filing and filtering. Reportedly, the implementation of such practices was enabled by the establishment of a highly centralised administration and a non-transparent examination system.²¹⁸ According to a CNDD report issued in the year 2000, after having 'tutsified' the school personnel, including school directors, inspectors and teachers,²¹⁹ the Ministry of Education had sent confidential directives to these cadres requesting them to secretly register students' ethnicity in order to enable identity-based filtering through the manipulation of examination results.²²⁰ As schooling was expanded in the 1980s, a discrete filtering system was apparently maintained with the aim of directing students towards different professions according to their ethnic identity. Reportedly, while Hutu students were largely oriented towards

²¹⁵ Obura, 26.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ndimurukundo, 130; Barampama, 60, quoting B. Kiraranganya, *La vérité sur le Burundi* (Québec 1977), 64.

²¹⁸ H. Cochet, *Burundi: la paysannerie dans la tourmente. Eléments d'analyse sur les origines du conflit politico-ethnique* (Paris 1996), 75; Reyhler et al., 94-95. Obura reported that '[b]efore 1989 no individual primary school examination scores were published'. 65-66.

²¹⁹ Ibid.; and Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 109. According to the COPED-CNDD report mentioned above, in 1989, 93% of all primary and secondary school directors and inspectors were Tutsi. 21

²²⁰ COPED-CNDD, 35; and Jackson, *Equal access*, 28. This practice was confirmed by Lemarchand, according to whom, 'what became known as *l'affaire des statistiques ethniques*' played a decisive role in the rising of tensions prior to the outbreak of the 1988 crisis in Ntega and Marangara. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 123; and Chrétien, 'Les identités,' 32.

technical, vocational and teacher education, and thus to subaltern and poorly paid occupations, Tutsi students were found to dominate prominent university faculties such as Law and Economics.²²¹

Ethnic filtering is also reported to have been favoured through policies affecting private educational institutions which had generally catered for the needs of those who had been excluded from state-controlled public schools.²²² The aforementioned CNDD report argued that, by nationalizing the country's six *petits séminaires* in the 1980s, the government managed to further reduce Hutu chances of accessing university.²²³ Lemarchand additionally suggested that Hutu children had been simultaneously deprived of even the most basic educational provision as a result of the government's suppression of the Catholic-run *yaga mukama*, i.e. literacy centres which were mainly attended by young unschooled Hutu in the rural areas.²²⁴ The scholar maintained that the decision to close down these centres was dictated by a wish to eliminate educational opportunities that were beyond state control. In Lemarchand's understanding, these had 'rais[ed] the specter of another generation of church-educated school-children who might in time challenge Tutsi supremacy.'²²⁵ In addition to discouraging private education, according to the CNDD report, since 1973 the government had further limited Hutu access to education through the reintroduction of school fees, which had made the costs of schooling particularly prohibitive for this socially disadvantaged group.²²⁶

Another factor that seems to have contributed to reducing Hutu chances of school advancement consisted in a condition of regional inequality in both educational provision and quality. Several authors, such as Ndimira and Ndimurukundo, reported a generally better educational provision at all levels in the Tutsi-dominated regions of Muramvya, Bururi and Bujumbura. Statistical data

²²¹ See 1992-1993 statistics presented by P.-F. Ndimira, 'Le système éducatif et le processus démocratique au Burundi,' Guichaoua (ed.), *Les crises*, 142.

²²² Noël, 'Des signes,' 1.

²²³ COPED-CNDD, 35.

²²⁴ Chrétien, 'Eglise et Etat sous la II République. Un *Kulturkampf* à l'africaine,' *Burundi*, 465. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 113-114.

²²⁵ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 112.

²²⁶ COPED-CNDD, 31-32.

reproduced by Ndimira illustrated how this inequality had resulted in staggering regional discrepancies in school enrolments. In the 1970s-1980s, for instance, Bururi disproportionately accounted for circa 25% of all secondary school enrolments in the country.²²⁷ According to Obura, ‘Tutsi’ regions were likewise characterised by a higher education quality which stemmed from better teacher provision and longer school-days. Conversely, ‘Hutu’ regions were reportedly confronted with a problem of ‘overcrowded classrooms in a double shift system’ which significantly reduced school hours and ‘direct contact with teachers.’²²⁸

Several observers additionally highlighted the effects of language education policies on ethnic inequality. The CNDD report, in particular, argued that Hutu secondary school enrolments had been kept in check since 1973 through a reform which had ‘kirundised’ (as well as ‘ruralised’) primary education across the country, with the exception of the highly Tutsi-populated provinces.²²⁹ The authors maintained that this reform had lessened the chances of Hutu pupils to pass the national examination for entry into secondary education, which was held in French, thereby resulting in disproportionate success rates among children studying in Tutsi-dominated regions.²³⁰ The effect of this language reform on Hutu educational performance was likewise underscored by Lemarchand, although in somewhat different terms. His understanding was that, in a context in which all Hutu elites had been eliminated in 1972, ‘[b]y insisting on the use of Kirundi as the sole medium of instruction in primary and post-primary schools, the Second Republic restricted access to the language of the elites to those “privileged” families where parents already spoke French, in short to Tutsi

²²⁷ Ndimira, ‘Le système,’ 141; Ndimurukundo, ‘Scolarisation’, 132-133, and ‘Disparités dans la scolarisation de la région Est du Burundi,’ J. Gahama & C. Thibon (eds.), *Les régions orientales du Burundi: Une périphérie à l’épreuve du développement* (Paris 1994), 511-534. According to Ndimira, in 1991-1992, the percentage of enrolled children at the primary level was over 90% in Bururi and Muramvya and nearly 80% in Bujumbura. It was instead less than 50% in Musinga and Kirundo. At the secondary level, in the 1970s-1980s, whereas Bururi accounted for ca. 25% of all enrolled students, Kirundo accounted for only 2%. Ndimira, 147-151.

²²⁸ Obura, 64 citing Cochet, *Burundi*, 75.

²²⁹ See also, B. Nahimana & D. Nizigiyimana, *General perspectives for the development of education in Burundi* (Bujumbura 1983), 7. As explained by Rwantabagu, ‘[t]he Reform ruralised the curriculum through the introduction of... practical subjects... preparing pupils for productive life in their own community rather than for higher levels of formal education.’ *Education*, 3.

²³⁰ COPED-CNDD, 35. The report also acknowledged the fact that Tutsi who were living outside these three privileged regions were equally victim of unequal practices.

families’.²³¹ According to Obura, against the backdrop of such unfavourable conditions, feelings of resignation among Hutu parents towards their children’s poor school performance represented an ulterior reason for the markedly low enrolments of this group in post-colonial Burundi.²³²

While the above-mentioned mechanisms and conditions appear to have played a significant role in limiting Hutu school enrolments in independent Burundi, a main explanation for the striking under-representation of this group in the education system can be found in the state of insecurity to which educated Hutu had been subjected. Harassment and outright massacres of Hutu students, teachers, school directors and educated professionals took place recurrently throughout the post-colonial period, with the effect of reproducing a Tutsi ‘intellectual apartheid’.²³³ As in Rwanda, educational institutions themselves, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels, had been the scene of inter-ethnic tensions and brutal violence.²³⁴

The most notorious case of violence that was committed against educated and semi-educated Hutu occurred during the 1972 crisis. According to various sources, in 1972, this group had been the victim of an ‘intellectual genocide’. Allegedly, the violence was perpetrated in compliance with a plan that had been drawn up by former Minister of Education Simbananiye with the aim of decapitating a potential counter-elite.²³⁵ Testimonies collected among survivors and witnesses recount how Hutu students were attacked by their Tutsi counterparts and beaten to death; how groups of soldiers and JRR members irrupted into classrooms and called Hutu pupils based on lists drafted by Tutsi schoolmates, sometimes under the active supervision of teachers. Many were taken away in trucks, never to return.²³⁶ Lemarchand highlighted the immense scale of the 1972 massacres. As he reported, ‘[a]lmost all the Hutu elite was

²³¹ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 109.

²³² Obura, 66.

²³³ Barampama, 52, 61.

²³⁴ Enrolments at all levels dropped dramatically following the 1972 crisis, especially in the provinces most affected by the violence (i.e. Bubanza, Muyinga and Ngozi). Rwamarucitse, 110; and Ndimurukundo, 130-131.

²³⁵ Rossel, 39. Similarly, the rebellion that preceded the Hutu massacres was conducted by several students, with the support of local schoolteachers. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 93.

²³⁶ Greenland, 120; and Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 97-99.

killed, including most of the students at the University of Bujumbura, the technical high schools, the top [senior] secondary schools and teacher training institutions and, as noted, even children in primary school'.²³⁷ Many Hutu teachers were also killed in the massacre, while others left the country or decided to abandon their profession.²³⁸ The scholar further underscored the extensive and long-term effects of the violence. In his words, '[f]or the next fifteen years, only Tutsi were qualified to gain access to power, influence, and wealth,' thereby 'reinforc[ing] significantly the position of educated Tutsi as a dominant class.'²³⁹ This predicament is deemed to have been further favoured by the psychological trauma that was caused by the events. R. Kay, for instance, spoke of 'the reluctance of many Hutu parents, mindful of the pattern of the killings in 1972, to allow their children to submit themselves for the higher level.'²⁴⁰ Similarly, Sommers reported that, '[a]fter massacres in 1972 decimated Burundi's population of educated Hutus, many Burundian parents pulled their children out of schools'. As explained by a teacher he interviewed, "[Refugee] parents will say, 'Those who go to school will be killed. It must happen!' They just don't know when."²⁴¹ In schools, such fears were apparently sustained among the few remaining Hutu students through rumours of impending violence.²⁴²

Although to a lesser extent than in 1972, Burundi's educational institutions and their population were also deeply affected by the country's subsequent crises.²⁴³ In

²³⁷ Lemarchand, 'Le génocide de 1972,' 555, in Obura 60. See also, CNDD-COPED, 27.

²³⁸ Cochet, 74.

²³⁹ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 103. As highlighted by Gahama and Ndimira, the long history of unequal access to education and of consequent unequal professional experience in the state apparatus resulted in a situation whereby, following the major reshuffling that invested the education sector in the overall process of power change that was inaugurated in the wake of FRODEBU's electoral victory in 1993, the cadres of this Hutu-dominated party found themselves to be lagging behind the generally more qualified cadres of the Tutsi-dominated UPRONA. J. Gahama, 'Limites et contradictions du processus de démocratisation au Burundi,' in Guichoua (ed.), *Les crises*, 84; and Ndimira, 142-143, 152-153. Pointing to this continuing legacy, in the mid-1990s Lemarchand stated that, '[t]oday any visitor to Bujumbura cannot fail to notice the overwhelming preponderance of Tutsi in clerical, managerial, and other relatively lucrative jobs', given that, 'the only qualified applicants for positions of responsibility in the private and public sectors were Tutsi.' Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 164.

²⁴⁰ Malkki, 36, quoting R. Kay, *Burundi since the genocide* (London: Minority Rights Group 1987), 7. See also Weinstein, 53.

²⁴¹ Sommers, *Emergency education*, 12

²⁴² Noël, 1; Reyhler et al., 98; and Ndimurukundo, 131.

²⁴³ According to Lemarchand, after the decapitation of the Hutu educated elites in 1972, many of the few Hutu who had managed to get secondary or tertiary education despite discriminatory practices 'were either killed or forced into exile during the 1988 and 1991 massacres'. *Burundi*, 164.

1988, ethnic tensions rose in schools, especially in Ntega and Marangana.²⁴⁴ Lemarchand partly explained these mounting tensions with a competition for educational opportunities in a particularly deprived region.²⁴⁵ According to Noël, in this period, Tutsi JRR Committees were set up in schools, fuelling ethnic hatred among students and forcing the departure of the Hutu.²⁴⁶ Two years after the 1991 crisis, during which the school population was not spared,²⁴⁷ educational institutions once again became a major battlefield and place of violence.²⁴⁸ As reported by Cochet, ‘[i]n the 1993 pogroms, when tens of primary and secondary Tutsi schoolchildren were killed, there seemed to be a sense of revenge for the killing of [Hutu] secondary students in 1972 and for all the peasant families who never saw a single one of their children pass the primary leaving examination and get into secondary school from that time on’.²⁴⁹ During the civil war, massacres also took place at the national university in 1995. On this occasion, tens, if not hundreds, of Hutu university students were slaughtered, while many others fled abroad.²⁵⁰ In an open letter to Nelson Mandela in 2000, a number of exiled Burundian students, who called themselves ‘survivors of the massacres of June 11 to 12 1995 at the University of Burundi’, affirmed that this institution ‘has been and is, after the army, an actor of no lesser importance in all the tragedies that have imbrued our country in blood’. The connivance between the education system and the army during the civil war was further underscored by Reyntjens. As he reported, faced with insurrections, ‘[d]uring the period 1996-1997, the army probably doubled in size..., mainly by recruiting from secondary schools and institutes of higher education.’²⁵¹

In the next section, this chapter will examine the role of discourses on history and identity in the wake of the outbreak of Burundi’s recent civil war in 1993 and in subsequent processes of peacebuilding and reconciliation. It will then explore the

²⁴⁴ CNDD-COPED, 38.

²⁴⁵ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 122.

²⁴⁶ Noël, 1.

²⁴⁷ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 155

²⁴⁸ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 171.

²⁴⁹ Cochet, 76.

²⁵⁰ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 190 ; Barampama, 61. See also a testimony by A.A. Nyamitwe, *J’ai échappé au massacre de l’université du Burundi, 11 juin 1995* (Paris 2006).

²⁵¹ Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 171.

extent to which such discourses and the overall context in which these have been embedded have affected the education sector, and in particular its policies and teaching contents.

3.4 Ideology, historiography and formal education in post-war Burundi

3.4.1 Ideology and historiography in post-war Burundi

In the historical overview provided at the beginning of this chapter, the 1993 crisis was shown to have evolved into a decade-long civil war between government forces and Hutu rebel groups. The dynamics that led to the end of the war and the path chosen to deal with the conflict in Burundi starkly differed from developments in neighbouring Rwanda. As outlined in Chapter 2, the war and genocide in Rwanda ended with the one-sided military victory of the RPF. The RPF's subsequent rise to power was accompanied by the formulation of an ideology centred on the adage of 'unity and reconciliation'. In line with this ideology, the new power-holders outlawed 'ethnic' labels and propagated a largely unifying and nationalist official history. Conversely, in Burundi, the war ended with a negotiated settlement, the 2000 Arusha Peace Agreement. Among other things, the accords recognised and institutionalised ethnicity through the introduction of a system of ethnic quota in political institutions and in the security sector. Contrary to the state of affairs in Rwanda, in Burundi, references to 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' are not a taboo today, although they remain a sensitive topic. Also, as opposed to the situation in Rwanda, where an 'absolutist' history was crafted by the government at the expense of alternative versions, in Burundi an official

narrative has not been strictly imposed. Instead, history remains a highly contested and debated matter. To this day, conflicting accounts of the national past have continued to openly compete in the public realm, often along ‘ethnic’ lines.

The present section will illustrate the general contents of the competing memories and histories that have thrived in Burundi, largely to the effect of deepening the chasm between ‘ethnic’ communities. It will then review the actions that have so far been taken to respond to the need to bridge existing interpretational divergences and to re-write a common history for the purpose of promoting national peace and reconciliation.

3.4.1.1 Parallel and antagonistic memories and histories as an obstacle to unity and reconciliation

As shown in the previous sections, Burundi has known a long history of ideological mobilisation of the past. Throughout the decades, political entrepreneurs repeatedly invoked and manipulated history in support of their ideologies and their claims to power. In a context in which interpretations of the past have been at the centre of bitter ideological confrontations between opposing camps, parallel and antagonistic memories and histories of Burundi’s conflict have emerged, both along ethnic and political lines. Several observers have drawn attention to a situation whereby Hutu and Tutsi have held on to competing and long-lived memories of victimisation and martyrdom. Chrétien, for instance, highlighted how, before the outbreak of the civil war in 1993, whereas the Tutsi mainly remembered the 1965 Tutsi violence (as well as the 1959-1964 massacres in neighbouring Rwanda²⁵²), the Hutu held on to the memory of the massacres of which they had been victims in 1972.²⁵³ Nurtured by virulent propaganda and sustained through the propagation of rumours of an imminent threat of extermination,²⁵⁴ such collective traumas had the inevitable effect of mobilizing

²⁵² Rwanda was depicted by Lemarchand as ‘a preeminent *lieu de memoire*’ for both Hutu and Tutsi. Lemarchand, 30. Similarly, anti-hutu violence in 1972 and 1993 in Burundi is believed to have influenced anti-tutsi violence in 1994 in Rwanda. Chrétien & Dupaquier, 10.

²⁵³ Chrétien, ‘Les identités,’ 331.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, *Le défi*, 40-42, 162, 175-176, 475.

passions against the demonised ‘Other’.²⁵⁵ The pivotal role played by latent and manipulated memories of mass violence in the reproduction of vicious cycles of fear, hatred, and revenge came to the fore especially in 1993. The wave of Tutsi violence that was perpetrated in 1993 has been largely explained with the traumatism of 1972 among Hutu and with a desire for retribution for the suffering endured by their family and community. Testimonies that were collected by an international commission of inquiry are revealing of a clear relationship between memories of past traumas and renewed communal violence. As unequivocally stated by two Hutu perpetrators, ‘[s]ince 1972 it is our blood that has been shed’; if ‘[i]n 1972 they had us; they will no longer have us’.²⁵⁶ Pointing to an intergenerational cycle of violence, Vignaux as well reported that, ‘among the butchers of 1993 were orphans of 1972’.²⁵⁷ Inevitably, distinct memories of violence and martyrdom eventually contributed to the crystallisation of two separate collective identities, of which such memories have become the main markers. In this respect, Chrétien and Dupaquier poignantly observed that, in contemporary Burundi, ‘Hutu and Tutsi no longer identify with economic vocations or hypotheses on their respective origins, but essentially with the recollection of previous massacres and the fear of future killings dreaded for themselves or their children.’²⁵⁸ As a result, according to Nindorera, irrespective of whether or not ethnicity in Burundi really exists in historical and scientific terms, it is a reality today that cannot be neglected.²⁵⁹

In the wake of the civil war, parallel and antagonistic memories have remained a source of division and tension in Burundi. As the country has embarked on a fragile transition from violent conflict to durable peace, the existence of partisan recollections and representations of the past, which are nowadays propagated

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 174; Chrétien, ‘Le clivage ethnique. Les jeux du pouvoir, de la peur et de la «race»,’ Chrétien et al., *La crise d’août 1988*, 48-51; and ‘Les identités,’ 331. See also, Lemarchand, *Burundi*, Xxviii; Mukuri, ‘Quand une mémoire’; République du Burundi, *Rapport des consultations nationales sur la mise en place des mécanismes de justice de transition au Burundi* (Bujumbura, April 2010), 11 [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/BI/RapportConsultationsBurundi.pdf] (last accessed on 07/08/2011).

²⁵⁶ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, xiv. See also, Lemarchand, ‘The Burundi killings of 1972,’ 2; and Chrétien, *Le défi*, 163.

²⁵⁷ Vignaux, ‘Un conflit.’

²⁵⁸ Chrétien, *Le défi*, 174. See also Chrétien, ‘Le clivage,’ 48-51’ and Lemarchand, *Burundi*, Xxviii.

²⁵⁹ E. Nindorera, ‘L’ethnisation du politique: phénomène rétrograde ou solution originale?’, *Regards croisés* 16 (2006) 37-41.

especially through extremist pro-Hutu and pro-Tutsi websites, has been recognised as a major challenge and obstacle to the achievement of reconciliation and the construction of a strong national consciousness.

According to several authors, in post-war Burundi, history has remained a matter of bitter contention between opposite camps claiming a monopoly on the ‘truth’ and accusing each other of historical falsification.²⁶⁰ As poignantly stated by Turner, ‘[t]he right to tell this national history is a highly contested domain in Burundi. All parties to the conflict are eager to tell “the truth” about what actually has happened and is happening in their country’.²⁶¹ As a result, competing and conflicting accounts of the country’s past openly co-exist today. Vandeginste explained the current co-existence of fundamentally different ‘truths’ by arguing that, in Burundi, ‘[v]ery factual data are presented differently, using different terminology, providing different interpretations, referring to different contextual explanatory factors, and this very often occurs along ethnic lines.’²⁶² Such interpretations, typically associated to either a Hutu or a Tutsi discourse, often reveal a convenient selectiveness in their arguments and an omission or manipulation of uncomfortable truths.²⁶³ Drawing attention to this state of affairs, Lemarchand lamented the ‘extraordinary combination of misperceptions, selective sifting of evidence, and denial of historical facts ... [which] to this day stands in the way of a dispassionate assessment of the Burundi situation’.²⁶⁴

In recognition of the central place of history in ideological discourses throughout the Great Lakes Region, Chrétien underscored the delicateness of the historical profession in dealing with this part of the world. He referred in particular to the challenges related to *l’histoire immédiate*, a field of research that operates in a setting in which historical interpretations are most influenced by emotionally

²⁶⁰ See for instance, Mukuri, ‘L’avenir du passé burundais: recours au bassin mémoriel,’ *Au cœur de l’Afrique* 66(1) (2000) 41-53; and T. Manirambona ‘Les Burundais, ballotés entre “mémoire” et “histoire”. Qui croire, qu’écrire?’ *Iwacu* (17/06/2011) [www.iwacu-burundi.org/old/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3308:au-burundi-qui-est-historien-ou-pas-&catid=65:le-burundi-au-fil-de-l’actualité&Itemid=264] (last accessed on 04/08/2011).

²⁶¹ Turner, ‘Representing,’ 23.

²⁶² S. Vandeginste, ‘Transitional justice for Burundi: a long and winding road,’ K. Ambos, J. Large & M. Wierda (eds.), *Building a future on peace and justice: studies on transitional justice, conflict resolution, and development* (Berlin/Heidelberg 2009), 398.

²⁶³ Chrétien, ‘L’histoire,’ 89, 91, 92; COPED/ CNDD-FDD, 4.

²⁶⁴ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, xxvii.

charged collective memories, present interests, and propaganda.²⁶⁵ As in post-genocide Rwanda, historians and other scholars of Burundi have inevitably been caught in the crossfire. Expected by political entrepreneurs to provide scientific support for their claims,²⁶⁶ both national and foreign intellectuals have been frequently accused of failing to remain objective and impartial when analysing Burundi's history. In accordance with 'parallel Hutu and Tutsi memories', academics have been pointed the finger at for having 'written as Hutu [and] as Tutsi and not as scientists.'²⁶⁷ In line with what Lemarchand described as 'characteristic trends in the thinking of Hutu and Tutsi intellectuals',²⁶⁸ observers argued that, today, 'one can easily identify the ethnic group of the author based on the content of his book'.²⁶⁹ Deploring the current situation, in a recent article, D. Manirakiza highlighted the responsibility of Burundian intellectuals in propagating a dangerous 'ethnism' through their partisan representations of the country's past.²⁷⁰

Confirming the extension of a political 'meta-conflict'²⁷¹ to the academic arena, Manirakiza brought to light the existence of diametrically opposed theories espoused by Tutsi and Hutu intellectuals.²⁷² Largely echoing the pre-war arguments of the official and the dissident propaganda respectively, the post-war views held by these two 'intellectual' camps appear to significantly diverge on issues related to identity and origins, and, especially, on the Burundian conflict – its origins, causes, dynamics, actors and their roles, and death estimates.

²⁶⁵ Chrétien, 'L'histoire,' 89, 91, 92.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 'Burundi. Entre histoire,' 639.

²⁶⁷ Ngenzirabona, 'Burundi: l'heure de la commémoration collective n'a pas encore sonné', *Burundi megainfo* (03/05/2011), reporting on a workshop organised in Bujumbura in May 2011 by the *Centre d'alerte et de prévention des conflits* (Cenap) and the *Association pour la mémoire et la protection de l'humanité contre les crimes internationaux* (Amepci) on the theme 'Victims of the Burundian conflict of 1972 and beyond: taking a step further towards selective memories for a selective commemoration.' [burundi-megainfo.blogspot.com/2011/05/burundilheure-de-la-commemoration.html] (last accessed on 23/08/2011).

²⁶⁸ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, Xxix-xxx.

²⁶⁹ Cenap, *Traiter du passé et construire l'avenir. La place de l'histoire dans la thérapie collective* (Bujumbura, May 2010), 18.

²⁷⁰ D. Manirakiza, 'Libertés académiques et responsabilité sociale des intellectuels burundais. Le piège de l'ethnisme.' Colloque international: *Libertés académiques et responsabilité sociale des universitaires et des chercheurs en Afrique: quels nouveaux défis?* 9-11 March 2010, Oran (Algeria) [www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/Desire_Manirakiza.pdf] (last accessed on 12/08/2011). See also, Manirakiza, 'Les intellectuels burundais face au piège de l'ethnisme,' *African sociological review* 15(1) (2011) 20-48.

²⁷¹ i.e. 'the conflict about the nature of the conflict'. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 17-33.

²⁷² The author mentioned for instance the works by R. Ntibazonkiza (Hutu), and M. Manirakiza and Sindayigaya (Tutsi).

With regard to the theme of identity and origins, conflicting discourses have either affirmed or negated the traditional relevance of ethnicity. Whereas ‘Hutu’ arguments have presented ethnicity as a natural, primordial, and relevant form of identity in Burundian society, ‘Tutsi’ arguments have instead denounced it as a dangerous and irrelevant colonial fabrication that irrevocably destroyed the secular unity of the Burundian nation.²⁷³

The discursive opposition on the origins of ethnicity coincides with a disagreement on the origins of ethnic conflict in Burundian society. These have been variously situated in either the pre-colonial or the colonial time. In its analysis of the history of the Burundian conflict, the ‘Hutu’ discourse has emphasised the primordial existence of a conflictual relationship between Hutu and Tutsi, which had found expression in a secular domination and oppression of the former. Conversely, the ‘Tutsi’ discourse has stressed the role of colonial rule in creating divisions and conflict in a traditionally united and harmonious society. Here, the Burundian nation as a whole is presented as the victim of deliberately harmful actions by external forces.²⁷⁴ As summarised by Lemarchand, ethnic conflict in post-colonial Burundi has thus been simplistically portrayed either ‘as a carryover of historical antagonisms’ or ‘as the direct outcome of colonial rule’.²⁷⁵

While disagreements have persisted on matters related to ethnicity and the origins of the conflict, controversies have been the most acute with regard to the more recent and sensitive past.²⁷⁶ The issue of genocide, with special reference to the two major crises of 1972 and 1993, has been particularly contested. In a context in which, as Lemarchand observed, ‘the term genocide...has repeatedly been hurled

²⁷³ Chrétien, ‘L’histoire,’ 89, 91, 92.

²⁷⁴ On the origins of the conflict, compare Mworoha et al. with R. Ntibazonkiza, *Au royaume*; M. Mbonimpa, *Hutu, Tutsi, Twa. Pour une société sans castes au Burundi* (Paris 1993), 9-25; A. Barampama, *Le problème ethnique dans une société africaine en mutation. Le cas du Burundi* (Freiburg 1978), 8-56; and A. Nsanze, *Le Burundi contemporain. L’Etat-nation en question (1956-2002)* (Paris 2003). Nsanze criticised the official discourse ‘blaming the colonisation for the misfortunes of independent Burundi’. According to Nsanze, ‘[e]ach time Burundi has dug mass graves to bury Hutus, responsibility has been laid upon this Belgium, which sowed hatred throughout the colonial period.’ In so doing, the scholar argued, there has been a tendency to evade the responsibility of the post-colonial regimes, ‘who did nothing to correct the errors of the colonizers’. A. Nsanze, ‘Le deuil du passé est-il possible?’, *Cahiers d’études africaines* 173-174 (2004) 422 [etudesafricaines.revues.org/4678] (last accessed on 04/08/2011).

²⁷⁵ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 19-26.

²⁷⁶ Chrétien, ‘L’histoire,’ 89, 91, 92; and Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 19-26.

by one up against another',²⁷⁷ Burundian intellectuals have reportedly failed to provide truthful and balanced analyses. In representing Burundi's various post-colonial crises (i.e. 1965, 1972, 1988, 1991, and 1993), authors have often adopted simplistic, Manichean, and uncompromising views that reduce the country's complex history to a tale of victimisation, legitimisation and justification, and scapegoating. A number of elements appear to have characterised such antagonistic views. These include:

- i) the presentation of one ethnic group as an absolute victim and as a 'martyred community',²⁷⁸ whose losses are emphasised and inflated;
- ii) the denial or the justification of this group's violent acts, whose victims are omitted, downplayed and/or explained away through a rhetoric of legitimate self-defence, inevitable collateral damage, or spontaneous popular rage and panic; and,
- iii) the attribution of the primary responsibility for the violence to the opposite camp, presented both as the instigator of the crises through acts of provocations and manipulations, and as a relentless executioner of a longstanding extermination plan.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Lemarchand, *Burundi*, xxvi.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁷⁹ On the 1965 crisis, compare M. Manirakiza, *La fin de la monarchie*, 102, and J.M. Sindayigaya, *Sortir de la violence au Burundi* (Bujumbura 1991), with Ntibazonkiza, *Au royaume*, Vol. 2, 67. On the 1972 events, compare M. Manirakiza, *Burundi*, and B.F. Kiraranganya, *La vérité sur le Burundi: L'unité et la démocratie au Burundi: témoignage* (Québec 1977), as well as the article by D. Rutamucero, 'Deuxième acte: le génocide contre les Tutsi de 1972' on tutsi.org [www.tutsi.org/rutamucero208408.pdf] (last accessed on 19/08/2011), with Ntibazonkiza, vol.2, 181-183, and Nsanze, *Le Burundi*, 121. On 1993, compare P. Siriba, *Le génocide contre les Batutsi du Burundi: les indicateurs et les problèmes qui lui sont liés* (unpublished 1997), with Centre d'Analyse et d'Action pour le Burundi (CAAB), 'Burundi: quand le génocide et des crimes contre l'humanité deviennent un «fonds de commerce»' (Brussels 1999) [repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/4119/2304.pdf?sequence=1] (last accessed on 05/06/2011). Also, compare the analysis of the conflict presented by tutsi.org, 'Origine et nature du conflit entre Hutu et Tutsi au Burundi' and by COPED/CNDD-FDD, *La nature du conflit burundais*. According to the former, 'the Burundian crisis is the result and product of exogenous factors of which Hutu and Tutsi are all together victims'. According to the latter, the conflict can be summarised as followed: '- (1) political provocations (annulment of elections each time the results are not to their liking as in 1965 and 1993, assassination of prominent political leaders as Prime Minister Pierre Ngendandumwe in 1965 and President Ndadaye in 1993); - (2) scuffles or provocations by the Tutsi secret services in rural areas as in Ntega and Marangara in 1988; - (3) subsequent Hutu reactions of self-defence possibly growing into an insurrection that goes beyond the provocative act *sensu stricto*; - (4) military intervention to evacuate Tutsi from a well-circumscribed area to be completely razed; - (5) hunting down of all educated or the few wealthy Hutu throughout the country (selective genocide); and finally - (6) sham national reconciliation and/or democratic transition.' 41-42.

If, as phrased by Mukuri, ‘the Burundian “reality” is differently perceived and disseminated by Burundians’,²⁸⁰ foreign scholars have willingly or unwillingly become entangled in the ongoing disputes around the ‘truth’. Although expected to offer more neutral analyses of ‘the Burundian reality’, foreign academics have been frequently accused of Hutu or Tutsi partisanship. On various occasions, their writings have been bitterly condemned by observers, including fellow scholars, for their alleged subjectivity, selectiveness, omissions, anachronism, simplism, unilateralism, and even outright forgery. Most notably, accusations and counter-accusations have been part of a longstanding quarrel between Chrétien, prime exponent of a so-called ‘*école historique burundo-française*’, and his critics, especially Lemarchand and Reyntjens. This ‘school’, supposedly composed of scholars linked to the former Tutsi regimes, has often been accused of proximity to the old official discourse and of historical falsification.²⁸¹ Reyntjens, for instance, criticised Chrétien for claiming ‘the monopoly on the scientific truth on Burundi’, while in fact presenting biased interpretations of Burundi’s history in an attempt to ‘provide “scientific” support to the government’s position’.²⁸² Similarly, Lemarchand cited the work of Chrétien and of his school as the prime example of a rather ‘subtle form of disinformation (that) involves Western social scientists in giving an aura of scientific respectability to the “regime of truth” with which they happen to be associated’.²⁸³ On their part, both Reyntjens and

²⁸⁰ Mukuri, ‘Recours à la pratique du deuil,’ 427.

²⁸¹ See Lemarchand, ‘L’école historique burundo-française: une école pas comme les autres’, *Revue canadienne des études africaines* 24(2) (1990) 235-248; and ‘Réponse à Jean-Pierre Chrétien,’ *Revue canadienne des études africaines* 25(3) (1991) 468-470; Chrétien, ‘Burundi: le métier d’historien: querelle d’école?’, *Revue canadienne des études africaines* 25(3) (1991) 450-467; and Reyntjens, ‘Du bon usage de la science: l’école historique burundo-française,’ *Politique africaine* 37 (1990) 107-112. See also COPED/CNDD-FDD, 10-11. Among the supposed Burundian exponents of this ‘school’ is the Tutsi historian Mworoha. He was the first secretary of the JRR under Micombero and Uprona’s secretary-general under Bagaza. Lemarchand depicted him as ‘the second most powerful figure of the regime’ during the Second Republic. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 108.

²⁸² Reyntjens, ‘Du bon usage,’ referring to J.-P. Chrétien et al., *La crise d’août 1988*.

²⁸³ Among other things, the French historian has been accused of occulting a real Tutsi-Hutu problem by presenting it as a mere colonial imposition; of primarily incriminating the Hutu in the country’s various crises by overlooking supposed Tutsi ‘provocations’ that had prompted Hutu reactions; as well as of characterizing the 1972 events as a double genocidal project, which had been orchestrated not only by the State against Hutu but also by Hutu rebels against Tutsi. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 33, 127-128, and ‘l’école’; and Reyntjens, ‘Du bon usage,’ 109-111. The divergencies of views among these scholars are particularly evident in their different portrayals of the 1972 crisis. Chrétien & Dupaquier summarised the 1972 events as having encompassed ‘an attempt – almost aborted – to exterminate the Tutsi by a Hutu rebellion, then a methodical state retaliation with a “genocidal” character as well, against the Hutu elite and literate’. They spoke of ‘a double “genocidal” temptation imposed on their people by small urban elites wishing to capture the state’. 9-

Lemarchand have been accused of siding with the Hutu cause and of holding Hutu extremist positions.²⁸⁴

3.4.1.2 *'Devoir de mémoire, devoir d'histoire'*: memorialisation and historical reconstruction

3.4.1.2.1 *Memorialisation*

In the face of a sensitive and controversial history about which, as stated in a 2010 report, 'the truth has long been the object of divergences between Hutu and Tutsi',²⁸⁵ opinions in Burundi seem to differ as to the adequacy of publicly addressing the past. Today, whilst some fear that confronting the past might endanger reconciliation efforts by re-opening old wounds, others, instead, consider such a process to be a necessary condition for long-lasting peace. The co-existence of these conflicting views was reported by Ingelaere in a 2009 paper which examined popular expectations on transitional justice. They were summarised by the author with two Kirundi expressions that he had frequently encountered in his survey: "*Nta kuzura akaboze*" ("one does not have to dig up what has been buried/is rotten") and "*ibuye ryaserutse ntiryica isuka*" ("the stone uncovered will not damage your hoe in the future"). Overall, Ingelaere's study revealed a more widespread wish to bury the past based on the argument that, '[b]ringing "bad experiences" into the open would have negative consequences.'²⁸⁶ The existence of divergent popular attitudes on this matter was likewise reported in 2010 by the local NGO Cenap. On the one hand, the research

10. Lemarchand criticised Chrétien and Dupaquier's presentation of the crisis. He contrasted the crimes committed by the rebels – depicted as more 'improvised', 'indiscriminate', 'uncoordinated', 'widely scattered', 'piecemeal', and lacking 'a coherent genocidal ideology' – with the crimes committed by the State – instead more 'organised, systematically implemented and carefully planned', as well as 'carefully targeted'. Lemarchand, 'The Burundi killings of 1972,' 6. In his view, '[t]o see in the killings of approximately one thousand Tutsi by scores of rural insurgents manipulated by a handful of radicalised intellectuals a parallel with the planned extermination of anywhere from 200,000 to 300,000 Hutu carries little conviction, no matter how much genocidal intent might be read in the anti-Tutsi sloganeering of the Hutu rebels.' 9-10.

²⁸⁴ See for instance Chrétien's description of Lemarchand's 1994 publication as a provocative work (an '*essai pamphletaire*') characterised by a polemical and militant tone. Chrétien, 'Burundi. Entre histoire,' 645.

²⁸⁵ Cenap, *Traiter du passé*, 23. Cenap pointed to a widespread use of the words 'lie' and 'truth' in the society. In line with racial colonial stereotypes, several observers have described the practice of lying as a typical Tutsi cultural trait. According to Ntibazonkiza, for instance, '[i]n the scale of values, truth is not a dominant feature the eyes of the Tutsi. Concealment, untruths, oblique style, prudent reservation are virtues!' Ntibazonkiza, Vol.2, 179.

²⁸⁶ B. Ingelaere, *Living together again. The expectation of transitional justice in Burundi: a view from below*, IOB Working Paper (Antwerp 2009), 6.

team found a preference for historical silence and amnesia and for a future-oriented approach. Opinions collected among this first group pointed to a belief in the futility and counter-productivity of discussions on the past. In the words of an interviewee, '[t]hat's the past, it is useless to go over it again'. This view was echoed by another Burundian, who observed that, 'the truth will not resurrect the lost loved ones'. According to another interviewee, talking about the past would in fact only inflict new suffering, 'rubbing salt into one's wounds'. On the other hand, the team collected opinions which affirmed the necessity of addressing the sensitive past in order to prevent the recurrence of violence. As articulated by a respondent, 'the crisis of 1993 is a logical continuation of that of 1972 and if nothing is done to clarify what happened, we can expect another conflict in the future'.²⁸⁷

Whereas views largely differ among the population, most scholars agree on the importance of facing history in the aftermath of violence and injustice. In an article published in 2002, for instance, Lemarchand spoke of 'the imperative necessity of a duty of memory', with particular reference to the 1972 'Hutu genocide'.²⁸⁸ In his various works, the academic drew attention to a continued lack of official efforts to rehabilitate what Chrétien once described as a 'latent' while also 'stifled and shrouded' memory of the 1972 victims.²⁸⁹ While Lemarchand underscored the unrecognised suffering of Hutu victims, Chrétien and Dupaquier instead called for a more inclusive 'duty of memory'. In their recent groundbreaking publication on this crisis, the authors regretted the traumatic 'denial of suffering, of mourning, of the reality lived in fact by everyone',²⁹⁰ which had resulted from a 'double occultation' imposed by both camps.²⁹¹ In their view, whereas '[t]he Hutu victims of the "repression"... did not receive proper mourning' despite widespread awareness of their ordeal, 'the Tutsi victims of the first "rebellion" did not – and do not – even exist for the majority of Burundians and for foreign observers.' This official amnesia with regard to the

²⁸⁷ Cenap, 11.

²⁸⁸ Lemarchand, 'Le génocide de 1972'.

²⁸⁹ Chrétien & Dupaquier, 81.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 470.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

1972 crisis is manifest today in the absence of memorial sites commemorating this event.²⁹² As Lemarchand pointed out, this situation contrasts with the recognition of the 1993 massacres as a ‘Tutsi genocide’.²⁹³ This acknowledgment, made official by a 1996 UN report which spoke of ‘acts of genocide against the Tutsi minority’,²⁹⁴ is symbolised by the most well-known among the very few memorial sites existing in Burundi. This consists in a monument that was erected in Kibimba to commemorate the slaughter of dozens of Tutsi students and teachers in October 1993.²⁹⁵ Conversely, while the assassination of President Ndadaye, ‘hero of democracy’ and Hutu martyr *par excellence*, is being remembered through a yearly commemoration day and a monument in Bujumbura, Lemarchand highlighted that the Hutu victims of the army repression have not received due recognition.²⁹⁶ This argument was reiterated in an article published in 2008 on the pro-CNDD-FDD website Abarundi.org. Here, the author called for a ‘duty to remember’ the Hutu victims fallen ‘since 1965’. The article denounced the impossibility for the Hutu community to publicly mourn its dead as demonstrated by the reported desecration of a temporary memorial that had been erected to commemorate the 1995 massacre of Hutu students at Mutanga university campus. According to the website, the memorial had been looted ‘by

²⁹² Chrétien & Banégas, *The recurring Great Lakes crisis*, 34. See also, Chrétien & Dupaquier, 81-82.

²⁹³ Lemarchand, ‘La mémoire en rivale de l’histoire,’ *Cahiers d’études africaines*, 173-174 (2004) 431-434 [etudesafriques.revues.org/index4685.html] (last accessed on 13/11/2011).

²⁹⁴ United Nations/ Security Council, *Rapport de la commission internationale d’enquête chargée d’enquêter sur l’assassinat du Président du Burundi, le 21 octobre 1993, ainsi que les massacres qui ont suivi*, S/1996/682 (New York 22/08/1996), par. 496 [www.usip.org/files/file/resources/collections/commissions/Burundi-Report.pdf] (last accessed on 07/05/2011). The commission established that acts of genocide had been perpetrated against the Tutsi by some Hutu, organised by the party in power, FRODEBU. Also, it implicated senior army officials in Ndadaye’s assassination, and denounced the ensuing violent repression conducted by elements of the security forces as well as by some Tutsi civilians against the Hutu community. Confined to investigating the 1993 events, the report recommended conducting further inquiries into previous violent incidents. The recommendations referred in particular to 1972, ‘when, according to all reports, a systematic effort was made to exterminate all educated Hutus’. Par. 498.

²⁹⁵ These students were taken from their school and burnt alive in a nearby petrol station. A second monument was later built in the same province (Itaba commune) in the memory of the ca. 200 (Hutu) victims of the 2002 massacres that had been committed by the army during fighting against the CNDD-FDD. Another noteworthy memorial site is the *mausolée des martyrs de la fraternité* located in Buta (Bururi province). This was erected in memory of 40 students of the *Petit Séminaire* who had been killed in 1997 by a group of rebels after having refused to separate according to their ethnic affiliation. See Z. Bukuru, *Les quarante jeunes martyrs de Buta (Burundi 1997)* (Paris 2004). Other memorial sites were built to commemorate the death of non-Burundians in incidents of violence that occurred in the country. These include a memorial site built to remember the ca. 160 Congolese/Banyamulenge refugees, victims of a 2004 attack in Gatumba (see www.gatumbasurvivors.org), and a recent monument in Bujumbura in memory of six UN agents who were killed between 1994 and 2004. ‘Burundi – UN day. UN agencies dedicate UN’s Day to 6 agents killed in Burundi’ (25/10/2010) [Binub.turretdev.com] (last accessed on 09/09/2011).

²⁹⁶ Lemarchand, ‘La mémoire’.

those who never want the living to be reminded of this category of victims of the national tragedy'.²⁹⁷

In defiance of calls to favour an inclusive *devoir de mémoire*, Burundians today seem to show a lack of shared collective memory and memorialisation. Although some have acknowledged the occurrence of a 'double genocide' – against the Hutu in 1972 and against the Tutsi in 1993,²⁹⁸ – a tendency has remained whereby each group only speaks of its own genocide, and remembers and mourns its own dead separately, at different times and venues.²⁹⁹ Often, such one-sided and exclusive commemorations have been inscribed in a competition for recognition. Opposing camps have not refrained from claiming the primacy of their own suffering, while depicting the commemoration of the suffering of the 'other' as an attack on the dignity of their own victims and as a form of revisionism. Reportedly, this 'memory war' has involved separate associations which have advocated for the recognition of one or the other group as genocide victims.³⁰⁰ In this context, while a common commemoration day has not yet been introduced, the only existing national memorial site, which was recently built in Gitega in memoriam of all the victims of post-colonial violence in Burundi, remains inaccessible to the public.³⁰¹ Bitter controversies on the appropriateness of this project have continued to this day. Discussions on this regard have opposed its promoters, notably the ruling CNDD-FDD, and its critics, including opposition leaders and civil society representatives. The former have presented this initiative as an important step towards the implementation of the Arusha Accords and the promotion of reconciliation. The latter have instead denounced the lack of

²⁹⁷ 'Profanation d'un mémorial au campus universitaire de Mutanga' (Bujumbura 08/10/2008) [www.abarundi.org] (last accessed on 05/09/2011).

²⁹⁸ Vignaux.

²⁹⁹ D. Manirakiza explains that while some Hutu commemorate the 1993 crisis on October 21 (date of Ndadaye's assassination), most Tutsi commemorate the crisis on October 22 at Bub (Kibimba). 'Libertés académiques,' 9-10.

³⁰⁰ Among these are the Association *AC-Génocide Cirimoso* and the *Association des Rescapés de l'Université du Burundi*. They have been accused respectively of advancing the Tutsi and the Hutu cause. In a recent article published on burundi-agnews.org, *AC-Génocide Cirimoso* (see acgenocide.com) is described as a 'revisionist far-right organisation of Bahima Barundi'. 'Burundi: Le Professeur Emile Mworoha et le génocide de 1972' (17/05/2011) [www.burundi-agnews.org/index.php/societe/histoire/genocide-du-burundi/1295-burundi-le-professeur-emile-mworoha-et-le-genocide-de-1972-] (last accessed on 07-/09/2011).

³⁰¹ The memorial site presents the inscription 'Never Again' ('*Plus jamais ca!*'). Pointing to the pedagogical function of the monument, another inscription affirms that, 'in so doing, young people and the future generations are educated by seeing this'.

necessary preconditions for the establishment of a common memorial site. In particular, they have advocated for the need to prioritise truth-seeking efforts and to conduct popular consultations prior to the realisation of this project. In the most extreme of cases, critics have utterly condemned the construction of a unique monument for all the victims of the war based on the argument that such an initiative would disrespect the real victims by confusing them with their killers.³⁰²

Since the memorialisation of past violence has been considered risky but necessary, voices have been raised in favour of a scientific reconstruction of the past through a recourse to critical history. On account of its capacity to provide contextualising and balanced analyses which refuse one-sided truths and simplistic generalisations, the historical discipline has been deemed able to play a critical role in confronting and reconciling selective and antagonistic memories that have been at the core of Burundi's ethnic tensions and violence. The importance of restoring the historicity of traumatic events was maintained, among others, by Chrétien and Dupaquier. In their publication on the 1972 events, the two authors declared that 'the memory of bloodshed is at the heart of the conflicts and that this nourishes antagonism if it is not put into historical perspective.'³⁰³ Similarly, Lemarchand referred to a need to 'reconcile memory and history' and 'to free the collective memory from the delusions of mythicohistories'.³⁰⁴ These authors therefore suggested a scientific clarification of the past and of the numerous 'grey areas' that continue to characterise public knowledge on Burundi's post-colonial crises would be crucial to countering the unabated

³⁰² Among the critics was the president of AC. Génocide-Cirimoso, Prof. Venant Bamboneyeho. He denounced this initiative as 'a monument to negationism'. A. Nzeyimana, 'Burundi/Politique: Quand les partis politiques mettent en péril les accords d'Arusha' (20/01/2011) [www.burundiflash.com/spip.php?article694] (last accessed on 01/09/2011); 'Monument national pour les morts burundais depuis 1965: le FORSC interpelle le gouvernement' (29/08/2010) [www.iwacu-burundi.org] (last accessed on 01/09/2011); and Cenap, 9-10. The importance of establishing the truth around Burundi's various crises as a precondition to moving towards a shared collective memory and commemoration was recently expressed during a workshop organised in Bujumbura in 2011 by Cenap and Amepci on the theme 'Victims of the Burundian conflict of 1972 and beyond'. Ngenzirabona, 'Burundi: l'heure de la commémoration'.

³⁰³ Chrétien & Dupaquier, 471.

³⁰⁴ Lemarchand, 'Le génocide de 1972,' 551, and *Burundi*, 187.

circulation of dangerous rumours, lies, myths, and of revisionist and negationist theories.³⁰⁵

Against the backdrop of a growing popularity of transitional justice discourse and practice on the world scene, observers have increasingly expressed a wish for the promotion of an open and inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue on the national history which would expose and reconcile existing points of view, and eventually establish ‘the truth’ about the conflict.³⁰⁶ In response to such aspirations, collective investigative initiatives were recently launched in Burundi with a view to supporting the post-war process of peacebuilding and reconciliation.

3.4.1.2.2 Historical reconstruction through transitional justice mechanisms

In a climate in which, according to a recent ICTJ briefing, ‘all camps considered each other as aggressors-oppressors’,³⁰⁷ ‘history’ was included in Burundi’s peace process. The importance of history and its reconstruction in the country’s process of peacebuilding and reconciliation was most notably acknowledged in the 2000 Arusha Peace Agreement, the cornerstone document of the transition.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Chrétien & Dupaquier, 289. In 2008, Lemarchand observed that, ‘[d]ivergences in scholarly interpretations of the 1972 tragedy revolve around the concept of genocide’. He pointed out that, ‘to this day, scholars disagree as to whether the 1972 killings should be described as a double genocide, a selective genocide, a genocide or a case of ethnic cleansing run amok.’ The scholar further mentioned several obscure facts with regard to the circumstances in which the 1972 massacres occurred and around which controversies persist. These include: the identity of the leaders of the rebellion, their social bases, the number of insurgents (with estimates ranging between 4,000 and 25,000), the participation of Congolese elements in the rebellion, and the number of victims caused both by the rebellion (estimated to range between 5,000 and 30,000) and by the State repression (ranging between 100,000 and 300,000). For these last figures, compare Kiraranganiya, *La vérité*, 79, and Nsanze, *Burundi: Le passé au présent. La République contre le peuple, 1966-1993* (Nairobi 1998), 157.

³⁰⁶ Mukuri, ‘Recours,’ 426-427. Nindorera further argued that efforts should be made to reduce the antagonistic nature of historical narratives and to ensure that historical disagreement ceases being a source of conflict and a reason to perpetrate human rights abuses. Nindorera, ‘Crises identitaires et revendications politiques: le cas du Burundi,’ Pole Institute, *Les identités meurtrières: faire face aux défis posés par nos murs psychologiques et idéologiques, Regards croisés* 12 (2004), 41-43 [www.pole-institute.org/documents/regard_identites.pdf] (last accessed on 06/07/2011).

³⁰⁷ ICTJ, ‘Le processus de justice de transition au Burundi. Défis et perspectives’, ICTJ Briefing (18/04/2011), 5 [ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Burundi-Processus-de-Justice-2011-French.pdf] (last accessed on 01/08/2011).

³⁰⁸ République du Burundi, *Accord d’Arusha pour la paix et la réconciliation au Burundi* (Arusha 28/08/2000) [democratie.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/Burundi.pdf] (last accessed on 05/08/2011). The document was composed of five protocols: ‘Nature of the Burundian conflict, problems of genocide and exclusion and solutions,’ ‘Democracy and good governance,’ ‘Peace and security for all,’ ‘Reconstruction and development,’ and ‘Guarantees for the application of the accord’.

The recognition of the centrality of history in the conflict and its resolution clearly emerges from the introduction of the peace agreement with a chapter on the ‘Nature and historical causes of the conflict’. Here, the document presented a two-page historical overview as part of a preliminary analysis of the history of the conflict as agreed by the signatory parties.³⁰⁹ In its account of the national history, this section largely reproduced the classic image of an idyllic pre-colonial past and of a demonised colonial time. In accordance with the hegemonic discourse, the text strongly emphasised the ancient unity, cohesion and peaceful cohabitation of the Barundi people. Although it noted the existence of unjust traditional practices that affected *all* social categories, the document explicitly negated the pre-colonial occurrence of ethnic conflict. The origins of this conflict were instead traced back to the colonial era. In the recounted narrative, the colonisation was blamed for having destroyed Burundi’s positive cultural values and social cohesion through a policy of divide and rule. In particular, the colonisers were accused of having promoted racist beliefs, which they had institutionalised through the introduction of ethnic identity cards and through practices of ethnic favouritism and discrimination. The narrative further exalted Prince Rwagasore for his crucial role in Burundian history. The prince was depicted as a charismatic political figure who had managed to ensure a peaceful transition to independence and to avoid the risk of violent ethnic confrontations in a context of increasing colonial divisionist manoeuvres and provocations. With regard to the more recent and controversial post-colonial history, a rather neutral stance emerged from the brief presentation of this period. In the document, Burundi was described as a country which, in the wake of independence, had experienced what was portrayed as a political conflict with ethnic dimensions. Here, the Hutu and Tutsi ‘ethnic communities’ were both recognised as having been victims of exclusion and violence, including acts of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Rather than outlining the details of the various crises that had dramatically marked the post-colonial time, the historical overview presented in the negotiated agreement ended with an acknowledgement of the existence of divergent views on the interpretation and significance of the events. As it declared, ‘opinions differ

³⁰⁹ Ibid., protocol I, ch. I, art. 1-4.

when it comes to interpreting these phenomena and the influence they have had on the current political, economic and socio-cultural situation of Burundi as well as their impact on the conflict'.³¹⁰

The Arusha Accords provided for the creation of investigative mechanisms that could shed light on the violent past. Specifically, the accords called for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), of an International Judicial Commission of Inquiry (IJCI), and, if deemed necessary, of an International Criminal Court.³¹¹ The stated aims of these investigative undertakings included qualifying the crimes that had been committed since independence, establishing roles and responsibilities, and identifying victims and perpetrators. The proposed TRC mandate, in particular, revealed a strong concern with promoting historical reconstruction and historical reconciliation. As stipulated by the accords, the TRC was entrusted a mission to clarify the entire history of the country, 'going back as far as possible in order to inform Burundians about their past', and 'to rewrite Burundi's history so that all Burundians can interpret it in the same way'.³¹² A desire to promote a shared collective memory among Burundians was further demonstrated by a provision to establish a national monument and a commemoration day for all the victims of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.³¹³

Despite the apparent evidence of an official willingness to face the violent past, up to the time of writing, the attainment of truth, justice and redress has largely

³¹⁰ Ibid., protocol I, ch.I, art. 3.2, 15-16.

³¹¹ Ibid., protocol I, ch. II, art. 6. Following a 2005 UN report (the so-called Kalomoh report), the provisions that had been declared in Arusha were abandoned in favour of the establishment of a TRC and the creation of a special chamber that would be integrated into the national judicial system. United Nations/ Security Council, *Rapport de la mission d'évaluation concernant la création d'une commission d'enquête judiciaire internationale pour le Burundi*, S/2005/158 (11/03/2005) [bnub.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=RfEjH8hejpk%3D&tabid=2974&language=en-US] (last accessed on 09/09/2011).

³¹² Ibid., protocol I, ch. II, art. 8, 23. The accord that was later signed between the government and the FNL-Palipehutu in 2006 also included a provision for the establishment of a commission to re-write the history of Burundi. Gouvernement du Burundi - Palipehutu-FNL, *Accord de principes de Dar es Salaam en vue de la réalisation de la paix, de la sécurité et de la stabilité durables au Burundi* (22/06/2006), art. 1 ('L'histoire du Burundi et la question ethnique'). Also, these accords stipulated a new milder name for the TRC, i.e. *Commission Vérité, Pardon et Réconciliation*.

³¹³ Ibid., prot. I, ch.II, art. 6, 18. Provisions were also made to grant mass temporary immunities and *de facto* amnesties for politically motivated crimes. Prot. II, ch. II, art. 22, para. 22, (c). These provisions were later extended to all CNDD-FDD leaders and combatants as well as to all government security forces by the 2003 GCA Pretoria Protocol on Outstanding Matters.

remained a chimera. In a 2007 article on the country's 'long and winding road towards transitional justice', Vandeginste argued that, although 'Burundi did not officially decide to forget the past', it had failed to adequately deal with it.³¹⁴ As he explained, '[t]he truth about the past has not been told, hardly anyone had been held accountable for the crimes that were committed and victims are left without any reparation for the injury suffered.'³¹⁵ In the same year, the *Priority Plan for Peacebuilding* that was submitted by the Burundian government to the UN Peacebuilding Commission expressed the belief that the continuing lack of mechanisms that would help the country to come to terms with its violent past represented a major obstacle to national reconciliation.³¹⁶ Since then, some progress has been made. Following tortuous negotiations with the UN in 2006-2007³¹⁷ and the subsequent organisation of National Consultations in 2009-2010,³¹⁸ the creation of the long-awaited TRC is expected to take place in 2013. In order to prepare the start of the operations of this institution, in June 2011, the President nominated an ethnically mixed technical committee, mostly composed of political personalities.³¹⁹ In October 2011, the committee released a draft law on the TRC. The document proposed a two-year mandate which tasked the commission with examining Burundi's post-colonial history from 1962 to 2008 with an eye to shedding light on 'all serious acts of violence perpetrated during conflicts of a political and/or ethnic nature.' Since its release, the draft law has been criticised both by local and foreign actors. In particular, great concerns and

³¹⁴ Vandeginste, 'Transitional justice for Burundi,' 400.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 394. See also Vandeginste, *Stones left unturned. Law and transitional justice in Burundi* (Antwerp 2010). In 2004, for instance, a TRC law was passed but was never implemented.

³¹⁶ United Nations/ PBSO and Burundi Joint Steering Committee, *Plan prioritaire pour la consolidation de la paix au Burundi, Note stratégique*, ch. 2.3.1 and 2.3.3 (February 2007), 8-9 [www.leburundi.net/download/plan_consolidation_paix.pdf] (last accessed on 12/08/2011).

³¹⁷ In the framework of discussions and negotiations on the issue of transitional justice, while UPRONA declared the need to simultaneously establish a TRC and a Special Tribunal, the CNDD-FDD gave precedence to the promotion of reconciliation and forgiveness through a TRC as opposed to justice through a tribunal. Uprona, *Mémoire du parti Uprona sur la mise en place de la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation et le Tribunal Spécial* (Bujumbura 17/04/2007); and CNDD-FDD, *Mémoire du parti Cnnd-Fdd sur la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation et le Tribunal Spécial* (Bujumbura 05/05/2007).

³¹⁸ Consultations were organised among nearly 4,000 people. Among other things, the collected views pointed to a widespread desire to deal with the violent past, as well as to establish the truth in order to achieve reconciliation. *Rapport des consultations*, 66-67, 111-112. Several non-official and scientific exercises were also conducted to collect popular views on similar issues. See in particular, the afore-mentioned 2009 report by Ingelaere, *Living together again*, as well as J. Crawford & E. Pauker, *Ready to talk about the past: a survey of knowledge and attitudes toward transitional justice in Burundi*. BBC World Service Truth and Search for Common Ground (December 2008). The latter research reiterated the large support for the establishment of a TRC and a general willingness to speak out about the conflict.

³¹⁹ The members of the committee included four Hutu and three Tutsi.

scepticism have been raised about the independence of this future truth-seeking mechanism. Contrary to the wishes expressed during the National Consultations, the proposed legislation foresees the presidential nomination of an 11-member TRC, which will be composed solely of Burundian nationals and which will include representatives of political parties.³²⁰

At a time when the prospects for the establishment of the TRC were apparently starting to materialise, an article that was published on abarundi.org in 2009 echoed concerns regarding the identity of the authors of the ‘truth’ that was expected to be written as part of this process. In a context marked by the existence of multiple and often contradictory histories, the article underscored that, ‘rewriting the History of Burundi proves necessary, but the question that lingers consists in knowing who will write this history acceptable to all Burundians?’³²¹

3.4.1.2.3 Academic historical reconstruction: the historiographical project Ecriture de l’Histoire du Burundi

Prior to the Arusha Peace Agreement and its recognition of the role of history both in the conflict and in its resolution, calls had been made to deal with the controversial past in a fair and objective manner. In the midst of the war in 1995, a government commission that was tasked with preparing a national debate on Burundi’s fundamental challenges had acknowledged the problematic existence of divergent historical views as well as a tendency to hold biased interpretations of the past along ethnic lines. According to the commission’s report, ‘the reading of history and the assessment of the events seem to be made through the distorting prism of ethnisism which, by globalisation or negative solidarity, leads to a simplification, reduction of diabolism or adulation, which block the spirits while it

³²⁰ ‘No timeline for truth in Burundi’, *International justice tribune* (09/05/2012) [www.rnw.nl/international-justice/article/no-timeline-truth-burundi] (last accessed on 16/05/2012).

³²¹ Bizimana, ‘Commission Vérité et Réconciliation au Burundi’. In presenting the problem of conflicting historical interpretations held by Tutsi and Hutu academics, the author revealed a blatant pro-Hutu stance. In particular, he accused Tutsi historians of reproducing the misleading formerly official discourse, of exonerating their *ethnie* from all responsibility for the troubles, and of maliciously placing all blame on the Hutu and the colonisers. According to the author, ‘those Hutu who dare present the hidden face of the history of Burundi are automatically accused of being extremists or simply *génocidaires*’.

annihilates objectivity...'.³²² Based on this acknowledgment, the need for 'a common reading of the history of Burundi' was expressed two years later at a round-table on the Burundian peace process.³²³ In the same year, participants at a UNESCO Conference on Burundi's future called for a mobilisation of national and foreign historians to re-write the country's history. In 1999, this recommendation resulted in the official launch of the UNESCO-sponsored historiographical project *Ecriture de l'Histoire du Burundi* (see timeline summarised in Table 4 at the end of this paragraph).³²⁴

With an initial mandate of three years, this largely overlooked collaborative undertaking was expected to lead to the publication of a 600-page reference book on the 'General History of Burundi from the origins until 2000'.³²⁵ As outlined in available project documents, its contributors included more than sixty academics, supervised by a 12-member international Scientific Committee and by a group of coordinators.³²⁶ Designed for the general public, the intended manual was primarily meant to serve Burundi's secondary school history teachers. They were presented as 'the first users of the envisioned book'. The strong pedagogic dimension of the project was further demonstrated by the foreseen development of a primary and a secondary school textbook that would be based on the authors'

³²² République du Burundi, *Rapport de la commission technique chargée de la préparation du débat national sur les problèmes fondamentaux du pays* (Bujumbura, December 1995), 43.

³²³ Gahama, 'Les principaux défis lancés au processus de paix au Burundi,' Colloque international *Démocratie, bonne gouvernance et développement pour une paix durable dans la Région des Grands Lacs. Contribution des universités et des universitaires* (Bujumbura, 18-22 May 1998), 99 [www.grandslacs.net/doc/1068.pdf] (last accessed on 09/09/2011).

³²⁴ See various project documents, including: E. Mworoha, 'Historique du projet' (Bujumbura 17-21 February 2003); P. Ngarambe, 'Projet «Écriture de l'histoire du Burundi». Note sur l'état d'avancement des travaux' (Bujumbura 21/05/2004); 'Plan d'action relatif à la réalisation d'un ouvrage sur l'histoire générale du Burundi et d'ouvrages destinés à l'enseignement primaire et secondaire' (Nairobi 22/06/1999); 'Plan d'action 2003-2005'; 'Plan thématique proposé pour la rédaction de l'Histoire générale du Burundi des origines à l'an 2000'; 'Enquête et sondage sur l'enseignement de l'histoire au Burundi'; 'Ecriture de l'histoire du Burundi, une entreprise interdisciplinaire'; 'Synthèse de la réunion du Comité Scientifique,' Paris, 5-8 November 2003; 'Conférence des auteurs sur le projet «Ecriture de l'histoire générale du Burundi». Synthèse générale des travaux'; 'Atelier sur le projet «Ecriture de l'histoire du Burundi». Rapport général de la réunion des auteurs résidant au Burundi,' Bujumbura, 25-26 mars 2004'; UNESCO/JAPAN funds-in-trust co-operation (CBHR), 'Implementation status report' (April 2006); 'Rapport, atelier d'information et d'échange sur le projet «Ecriture de l'histoire du Burundi»' (Bujumbura 16/12/2008).

³²⁵ According to its workplan, the project would include the organisation of historical research and dialogue, of textbook development training, and of a school survey on the state of history teaching in Burundi.

³²⁶ The Committee was composed of six national and six foreign scholars. They included: E. Mworoha (President), A. Nsanze, J. Gahama, T. Nsabimana, A. Ntamobwa, P. Ngarambe, M. Wagner, E. M'bokolo, J.-P. Chrétien, A. Trouwborst, C. Thibon, C. Carbone, and since 2003, I. è Nziem Ndaywel. The coordination team was composed of Mworoha, M'bokolo and Wagner, together with UNESCO.

historiographical work.³²⁷ Once realised, this unprecedented project would have supplemented a similar historiographical initiative, of more limited scope, which had been brought to completion more than a decade earlier by Burundian and international experts in collaboration with UNESCO. As mentioned earlier, since its release in 1987, the publication *Histoire du Burundi des Origines au XIX^e Siècle* that had resulted from this project has been a key historical reference as well as one of the few history manuals used in Burundian schools.

Designed in the post-war context, this new initiative was understood as an important social project. Its stated objectives explicitly linked the promotion of the knowledge of Burundi's history and traditional culture to the goals of national identity-building, peacebuilding and reconciliation.³²⁸ The project was deemed to offer an important contribution to such processes in two main ways. First of all, this historiographical undertaking was expected to contribute to the rehabilitation of the national history by encouraging a collective and objective exploration of the country's entire past which could bring together and bridge a plurality of readings. Secondly, by producing much-needed pedagogic tools, the project was expected to educate the population on the complex and often controversial and sensitive national past.³²⁹ In the wake of the 2000 Arusha Accords, which stipulated the clarification of the national history as one of the missions of the TRC, the initiative was further presented as a complementary and supportive measure in the foreseen truth-seeking and reconciliation endeavours.³³⁰

Confronted with strong political and social demands, participants acknowledged the critical, while also extremely delicate and challenging, nature of the project. A number of recommendations and observations that were formulated by the Scientific Committee to guide the process are revealing of the approach that was favoured to conduct this delicate undertaking. Firstly, the guidelines highlighted a

³²⁷ After the 1999 adoption of a first workplan for the period 1999-2002, a new workplan was approved for the period 2003-2005 following the re-launching of the project in 2003. 'Plan d'action', and Ngarambe, 'Note', 14.

³²⁸ Ngarambe, 'Note', 17.

³²⁹ Ibid., 57.

³³⁰ See, for instance, CBHR, 'Implementation status report'. Unesco Office Chief and Representative in Burundi, Colin Nicholls, expressed the wish that 'the book History of Burundi ... transcends schools and ethnic groups, traces the path of a nation proud of its heroes and is a reference work that contributes to national reconciliation.' 'Rapport, atelier d'information', 2.

commitment to adopt a ‘pluralist, multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary perspective’ with a view to producing a ‘general’ and ‘total’ history. The aim being to ‘strive towards the common reading of the history of Burundi by a greater number’, the involvement of numerous authors, whose composition was to respect diversity, was understood as having added value.³³¹ Secondly, in recognition of the impossibility to reach consensus on every matter in the national history, the guidelines emphasised the importance of including an element of debate throughout the work as opposed to exposing single truths and offering simplistic explanations.³³² In line with this principle, authors were advised to allocate due space to the presentation and clarification of open and controversial historical questions by exploring a variety of existing approaches and interpretations. Also, they were urged to differentiate between facts and interpretations of facts. In so doing, the reader was to be given the opportunity to reflect and form a personal judgment on controversial issues. Thirdly, with specific reference to the more recent and sensitive past, the guidelines called for a need to both acknowledge and take distance from the so-called ‘*histoire mémoire* attached to the dramatic events’. Specifically, authors were warned about the challenges posed by the ‘weight of the memory of the past exacerbated by ideological manipulations that distort even the reading of history’.³³³ In dealing with this part of the national history, it was additionally opted for a positive approach to the concept of crisis, which would allow for a reflection on possible solutions and ways-out.³³⁴ Finally, the project documents underscored the importance of strictly applying the scientific requirements of the discipline, and, especially, of guaranteeing a respect of the principles of autonomy and objectivity. In this regard, a 2006 document recommended to ‘[e]nsure the project is more a scientific one rather than a political project’.³³⁵

³³¹ Ngarambe, 19.

³³² ‘Plan thématique’. The last proposed chapter addresses the ‘state of issues and debates’ on such topics as ‘the ethnic question; ideology, culture and information; the violence; power and authority; citizenship and State; development politics and models’.

³³³ Ngarambe, 76-77.

³³⁴ ‘Plan thématique’. See also, Ngarambe, 88.

³³⁵ ‘Implementation status report’; and Ngarambe. One of the recommendations made during the authors’ conference was to ‘resist to the solicitations of the politicians’. ‘Synthèse’.

While aspiring to be independent, this initiative was welcomed and embraced by the Burundian Government. In 2001, the project was officially recognised and housed in the Ministry of Peace Mobilisation and National Reconciliation. Since then, it became one of the ministry's sectoral activities. Embedded within this new framework, the project's main objective was to 'contribute to national reconciliation by helping Burundians in general, and the youth in particular, to better know their history'. Throughout the years, the government repeatedly expressed an acknowledgment of the relevance of the initiative, and affirmed its commitment to supporting its implementation as a measure of peace consolidation and reconciliation.³³⁶ Despite this apparent support, the project has suffered from a chronic lack of funding. As a result, its completion has been considerably delayed.³³⁷ At the time of writing, the situation does not seem to have significantly changed. The hope and expectation is that, with the TRC now underway, this initiative will newly receive due attention and consideration.

³³⁶ 'Rapport, atelier d'information,' 3.

³³⁷ Ibid. See also, Gahama, 'Les principaux défis'.

Timeline of the project <i>Écriture de l'Histoire du Burundi</i>	
*26-28 Sept 1997	Colloquium ' <i>Construire l'avenir du Burundi</i> ' organised by UNESCO (Paris): emergence of the idea to re-write the history of Burundi with a view to promoting peace
*16 Jan 1999	Preparatory workshop by UNESCO (Nairobi): elaboration of a list of possible topics and contributors
* 21-22 Jun 1999	Expert Conference on ' <i>Histoire du Burundi: Recherche, Pédagogie et Diffusion</i> ', organised under the aegis of UNESCO (Nairobi): adoption of an Action Plan 1999-2002 for the realisation of a handbook and didactic materials on the history of Burundi, and designation of a Scientific Committee
*28 Aug 2000	Arusha Accords: endorsement of the idea of re-writing the history of Burundi
*13-15 Dec 2000	First meeting of the Scientific Committee (Paris): adoption of a Thematic Plan, identification of possible authors, and designation of coordination team
*2-14 Nov 2002	Government lobbying/fundraising mission in Paris to re-launch the project
*5 Nov 2002	Meeting of Coordination Team in preparation of an Authors Conference (Paris) ³³⁸
*10-11, 13 Jan 2003	School survey in Bujumbura
*17-21 Febr 2003	Authors Conference (Bujumbura): adoption of a Thematic Plan, an Action Plan 2003-2005, and a final list of authors; discussions on issues of methodology and historical sources, and on issues related to history teaching in Burundi ('Day of discussions between the authors and secondary school history teachers')
*Aug 2003	Meeting of authors and editors (Bujumbura)
*5-8 Nov 2003	Second meeting of Scientific Committee (Paris)
*13-14 Jan 2004	Donors meeting (Brussels)
*25-26 Mar 2004	Meeting of authors residing in Burundi (Bujumbura): revision of Thematic Plan
*24-26 Jun 2005	Meeting of authors residing in Europe (Paris)
*16 Dec 2008	Informative workshop on the projet (Bujumbura)

Table 4. Timeline of the project
"Écriture de l'Histoire du Burundi"

3.4.1.2.4 Other prominent history-related initiatives

Although efforts in the field of collective historical reconstruction have so far failed to bear fruit, interest for the country's history appears to have gained momentum in the framework of renewed discussions on transitional justice. Evidence of this grown interest can be found in a number of initiatives that were

³³⁸ The Coordination Team included Mworoha, M'bokolo, and Chrétien, together with Rukingama and Y. Matuturu of the *Ministère chargé de la Mobilisation pour la Paix et la Réconciliation Nationale*.

recently launched by civil society organisations with the aim of promoting truth and reconciliation through history. At the forefront of these projects has been a wish to encourage dialogue, mutual understanding and empathy on Burundi's tragic events, as well as to preserve the country's memory by collecting historical sources and oral testimonies with a view to educating the new generation.

Among these initiatives are several radio programmes which have addressed Burundi's past. A notable example consists in a project that was recently launched by Radio La Benevolencija in the framework of its activities on the theme of 'coming to terms with the past'. As outlined on the website of the organisation, one of its main goals for 2011-2013 is '[t]o make people reflect upon the different versions of Burundian history by understanding the origins of the conflict, and to develop a shared history of what happened.' As part of its work, in August 2011, Radio La Benevolencija started the year-long programme series *Akahise kadasorongoye* (i.e. Unfinished past). This was aired weekly on the country's seven main radio stations.³³⁹ Composed of fifty episodes, each dealing with one year of Burundi's post-colonial history, the series culminated in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of independence in July 2012.³⁴⁰ Also noteworthy is the weekly radio programme *Inkingi y'ubuntu* (i.e. Pillars of humanity) run by Search for Common Ground's Studio Ijambo. Since 1999, this programme has broadcast stories of ordinary Hutu and Tutsi who risked their lives to save fellow Burundians during the conflict. In 2004, this series culminated in the organisation of a summit to honour and celebrate these 'heroes'.³⁴¹

Lately, important contributions have also been made to promote public knowledge of Burundi's less recent past. A prominent initiative in this regard consists in the 2010 production of a documentary movie on the country's pre-colonial and colonial history. Its realisation was explicitly linked to the national peacebuilding

³³⁹ I.e., Radio Nationale (RTNB), Radio Isanganiro, Radio Publique Africaine, Radio Bonesha, Radio Rema FM, Radio Umuco FM, and Radio Star.

³⁴⁰ 'La Benevolencija in Burundi. Coming to terms with the past' [twww.labenevolencija.org/category/burundi] (last accessed on 01/03/2012).

³⁴¹ 'SFCG Burundi. Heroes Summit, April 16-18, 2004' [www.sfcg.org/programmes/burundi/burundi_hero.html] (last accessed on 07/03/2012). Cenap's recent work on transitional justice is now also focusing on dealing with the past. Its new mandate includes collecting and protecting archives, recording testimonies of the conflict, locating mass graves, and identifying and institutionalising places and ceremonies in the memory of all the victims. Cenap, *Traiter du passé*.

and reconciliation process. In a fundraising document, this historical documentary was presented as ‘a significant contribution to this effort of appeasement and reconciliation of communities, already initiated’. More specifically, the project was expected to contribute to the national debate on truth and reconciliation as well as to mobilise Burundian historians to complete the UNESCO history-writing project.³⁴²

Against the backdrop of identified promises and challenges in the field of post-war historical reconstruction, this chapter will now turn its attention to reviewing the state of formal education in the post-1993 period. As Burundi appears to have emerged from the war without a clear ideology and official history, the post-war process of educational reconstruction and reform does not seem to have been strictly guided by a discourse which the government has intended to institutionalise. What does transpire from available documentation, however, is an official acknowledgment of the role played by education in the conflict, as well as a commitment to rebuild the system while taking into account the imperatives of peace and reconciliation.

3.4.2 Formal education in post-war Burundi: educational policies and history teaching

Burundi’s education sector was deeply affected by the 1993 crisis. Its condition in the post-war years has been described by analysts as ‘critical’ and ‘catastrophic’.³⁴³ In Jackson’s words, this ‘already failing’ system had been ‘virtually paralysed’ by the war.³⁴⁴ The Sectoral Policy issued by the MoE in 2002

³⁴² The documentary was realised by L. Ngabo, director of the Burundian company Productions Grand Lacs, in the framework of a project of digitalisation and repatriation of colonial archives by the Belgian ASBL CULTUREA. This production was validated by a Scientific Committee composed of Burundian and European historians. Productions Grand Lacs and CULTUREA ASBL, *Projet d’un film documentaire. Histoire du Burundi 1850-1965. L’histoire du Burundi en images (1850-1965): un documentaire historique à partir des archives audiovisuelles sur le Burundi* [www.culturea.org/Bienvenue_files/Documentaire%20Histoire%20du%20Burundi.pdf] (last accessed on 05/09/2011). In this same framework, ASBL CULTUREA also recently produced a documentary series of four episodes of Congo’s history from 1570 to 2005, *Congo coeur de cible*. On Burundi’s history, see also a workshop organised by the Institut Français du Burundi, ‘L’atelier de l’historien: “Burundi 1902-1962”’ (Bujumbura 31/05/2011) [www.latituedeFrance.org/L-atelier-de-l-historien-Burundi.html] (last accessed on 09/09/2011).

³⁴³ Jackson, *Equal access*, 5; and A. Ntabona, ‘Editorial: éduquer autrement aujourd’hui au Burundi,’ *Au cœur de l’Afrique* 2-3 (1997) 197, 199.

³⁴⁴ Jackson, 5.

outlined some of the main consequences of the war on the country's formal education. These included: the perturbation of educational activities due to the frequent standstill of courses;³⁴⁵ the physical destruction and looting of schools, including textbooks, supplies and equipment;³⁴⁶ a severe decline in human resources due to the killing and displacement of personnel;³⁴⁷ and a decline in school enrolments due to the killing and displacement of students, as well as to the economic impact of the crisis on the communities.³⁴⁸ In addition, as reported by UNICEF, post-war Burundi faced major challenges related to the considerable psychological trauma suffered by Burundian children.³⁴⁹ In the immediate aftermath of 1993, the Burundian government, in cooperation with international partners, committed itself to quickly rehabilitating educational provision in the country.³⁵⁰ In compliance with this pledge, schools were re-opened as early as February 1994, teachers and students were encouraged to return to school through a 'back-to-school campaign', new teachers were recruited and trained, and teaching and learning materials were produced and distributed.³⁵¹ Also, in the early emergency phase, the peace education programme *Bâtissons la Paix*, which

³⁴⁵ For security reasons, all schools in the country were closed from November 1993 to February 1994.

³⁴⁶ In early 1996, more than 25% of all primary schools had been destroyed. During the war, schools were also used as temporary shelters for IDPs. Great Lakes Advocacy Network (GLAN), *Analyse critique du système éducatif burundais* (July 1998), 85.

³⁴⁷ According to a 1998 report, 500 teachers had been killed in the violence. O. Bazikamwe, 'La planification de l'éducation, Table ronde sur le système éducatif burundais' (December 1998), 5. Jackson observed that the devastating effects of the war on teachers were compounded by the fact that the numerous Congolese and Rwandans who had been teaching in Burundi returned to their country after 1993. Also, many teachers requested transfers from more unsafe rural areas to Bujumbura and provincial capitals. GLAN, *Analyse*, 28, 88.

³⁴⁸ Enrolments declined from 69% in 1992 to 45% in 1997. They rose again to 70% in 1999. République du Burundi, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale (MEN), *Politique sectorielle* (Bujumbura 2002); République du Burundi, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Étude prospective: bilan de l'éducation en Afrique; cas du Burundi, Rapport provisoire* (Bujumbura April 1999), 5, 26-27, 46, 54. Also, according to Ntabona, in the early 1990s, one third of pupils in P6 had an age between 16 and 20 instead of 12. 'Une étude interpellante à garder à l'esprit,' *Au cœur de l'Afrique* 2-3 (1997) 438. In 2000, of the 800,000 IDPs, between 77,000 and 125,000 were school-children. P.C. Sinzinkayo, *Principaux résultats de l'inventaire des infrastructures physiques, hydrauliques et sanitaires des écoles publiques du Burundi* (July 1998), 22, and GLAN, 82.

³⁴⁹ In 1995, UNICEF reported that, in a survey conducted among 2,770 children, more than 2,500 said to have witnessed violence. UNICEF, *Le phénomène des traumatismes vécus par les enfants lors de la crise d'Octobre 1993* (Bujumbura January 1995), 8. For a general overview of child issues in Burundi, see M. Sommers, *A child's nightmare: Burundian children at risk: a field report assessing the protection and assistance needs of Burundian children and adolescents* (New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 1998).

³⁵⁰ Obura, 122. In a more critical tone, Rwantabagu stated that, 'all along the civil war period, the government has concentrated its resources on Defence rather on Education, devoting 43% of the State Budget on the former and 13% on the latter during the 2002-2003 period. At the same time, the international donors have focused their interventions on humanitarian assistance and conflict resolution activities, neglecting education altogether.' 5.

³⁵¹ Obura pointed out that 14-30% of teachers did not return to schools after 1993. 107.

was meant to be integrated into existing curricula, was introduced with the aim of supporting the national process of democratisation and pacification.³⁵²

In the post-emergency period, discussions on education and on its reconstruction and reform were visibly integrated into the country's post-war peacebuilding and reconciliation process. As revealed in the Arusha Peace Agreement, the parties at the negotiation table clearly acknowledged a relationship between education, conflict and reconciliation in Burundi. Issues related to educational access and content were explicitly included in the accords. At a policy level, the peace agreement called for the promotion of obligatory primary education as well as of regionally, socially and gender equitable access to quality education. The document further underscored the need to guarantee 'transparency and equity in examinations and competitions' as well as to provide special education to those who had missed out on schooling due to the conflict and to exclusion.³⁵³ At the level of teaching contents, the accords urged the launch of a vast educational programme aimed at promoting a culture of peace, unity and reconciliation.³⁵⁴ The need to encourage a culture of peace and human rights, especially among the youth, was later reiterated in the *Programme du Gouvernement 2005-2010* as a strategy to respond to the country's grave 'crisis of values'.³⁵⁵

In line with such principles, a peace-and-conflict-sensitive education reform was officially endorsed by the MoE in its 2002 Sectoral Policy.³⁵⁶ The extent to which the government has upheld its commitment to transform the education system into a tool for peace and reconciliation has however been largely called into question.

³⁵² GoB/UNICEF, *Projet «Bâtissons la paix»* (Bujumbura 1994), and *Bâtissons la paix / Gira amahoro. Manuel pour l'éducateur* (Bujumbura 1994).

³⁵³ République du Burundi, *Accord d'Arusha*, prot. I, ch. II, art. 7.11-14, under the heading 'Principes et mesures relatifs à l'éducation, relatifs à l'exclusion'. See also, 'Principes et mesures d'ordre social: une répartition équitable des infrastructures sociales, en particulier des écoles et des hôpitaux,' 21. Another relevant point that was expressed in the Government Programme was the recognition of the importance of an effective educational and professional reintegration of returnees, among whom were numerous trained teachers and education planners. République du Burundi, *Programme du gouvernement 2005-2010* (Bujumbura 2005), ch. II; reiterated in ch. VIII on education.

³⁵⁴ Rép. du Burundi, *Accord*, prot. I, ch. II, art. 6.3, under the heading 'Principes et mesures d'ordre politique, relatifs au génocide, aux crimes de guerre et autres crimes contre l'humanité.' In particular, the accords referred to the importance of promoting positive traditional values such as 'solidarity, social mutual aid, forgiveness and mutual tolerance, patriotism, *Ibanga* (secret and sense of responsibility), *Ubupfasoni* (dignity or respect for others and oneself) and *Ubuntu* (humanism and personality)'. Prot. I, ch. II, art. 7.26, under the heading 'Principes et mesures d'ordre culturel, relatifs à l'exclusion'.

³⁵⁵ Rép. du Burundi, *Programme*, ch. I-II. In ch. IX, the youth are depicted as a potential force for good.

³⁵⁶ MEN, 1-2, 6, in Obura, 119-120.

As Obura sombrely concluded in 2008, '[w]hile the education sector has fuelled hate between communities in the past, it could be incapable at this point in time of becoming a force for good and for peace'.³⁵⁷

3.4.2.1 Educational structures, policies and practices

Conflict-sensitive issues related to educational structures, policies and practices were addressed in the Sectoral Policy. In particular, the document expressed a commitment to reducing existing regional and social inequalities, to expanding general access to education, and to decentralising the system.

According to Obura, while enrolment rates had gradually increased after the war³⁵⁸ – especially following the introduction of free primary education in 2005-2006, – between 1993 and 2002-2003, regional and urban-rural disparities had exacerbated 'due to patchy security and to the chronic pattern of inequitable resource distribution'.³⁵⁹ Pointing the finger at an international community that had 'consciously or unconsciously been a partner in the unequal distribution of assistance', Obura argued that the rehabilitation phase 'did not change the pattern of disparity' in the provision of education.³⁶⁰ Instead, post-war reconstruction efforts continued to favour a 'two-track education system', thereby perpetuating rather than addressing the historical gap between better-served regions (the South, the centre, and Bujumbura) and more deprived areas (the North and the East).³⁶¹ From a social perspective, ethnic disparities were likewise reported to have

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 259.

³⁵⁸ UNDP, 'Le renforcement des secteurs de l'éducation et de la santé' (Bujumbura 2005) [www.bi.undp.org/rndh2005/RNDH_2005_CRISE_DU_DEVELOPPEMENT.htm] (last accessed on 13/09/2011).

³⁵⁹ Obura, 110.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 112.

³⁶¹ According to Obura, by 2002, the availability of schools, classrooms, textbooks, and teachers did not match population by province. Obura, 103-121. Reporting Jackson's findings, Obura stated that, '[t]he same five or six provinces, the same one third of the population, repeatedly receive two thirds of the nation's education resources, while the remaining dozen provinces are repeatedly allocated one third of the resources (Jackson 2000, 25)'. See also MoE, Département de l'enseignement primaire, *Statistiques scolaires, Année scolaire 1998-1999* (Bujumbura February 1999), 28; Sinzinkayo, 'Principaux résultats', 22; GoB, UNICEF/ UNESCO/ WB, *Analyse globale du système éducatif, Tome II* (December 1997), xi; MoE, 'Etude prospective', 26, 28.

endured both during and after the 1993 crisis.³⁶² Although discriminatory practices, such as the manipulation of exam results, had ended, in 1996 the UN Commission on Human Rights regretted ‘[t]he persistent presence of the Tutsi minority in key sectors’, including education.³⁶³ In 2000, the national university, in particular, was reported by Jackson to remain ‘a largely Tutsi institution’ with strong connections to Bururi province.³⁶⁴ As for the Twa, despite a heightened attention to their plight and needs, they continued to be ‘almost totally absent from schools today’.³⁶⁵ This predicament has been explained with a lack of structural efforts to promote Twa education,³⁶⁶ as well as with a general reluctance among the Twa to attend school out of fear of being subjected to abuse and humiliation.³⁶⁷ Against this backdrop, Jackson warned against the threat to durable peace posed by ongoing educational inequalities in the country.³⁶⁸ In his view, ‘[t]he historical and current inequalities in educational provision are a key factor in maintaining the divisions which underlie Burundi’s conflict’.³⁶⁹

In addition to exposing persisting ethnic disparities, observers have pointed to a condition of segregated schooling between Hutu and Tutsi students. Obura, for instance, spoke of a ‘balkanisation of secondary schools’ as a result of violence in the country.³⁷⁰ Attention has been further drawn to the separate education pursued by Hutu in refugee camps following their massive forced displacement abroad, notably to Tanzania.³⁷¹ Although, ‘for the first time, school was accessible to

³⁶² Obura 18-19. Next to ethnic disparities, gender inequalities were also reported to have subsisted. See, among others, T. Nisabwe, *La scolarisation de la fille au Burundi* (Bujumbura 1999); MoE, *Statistiques*, 2; and ‘Etude perspective’, 40.

³⁶³ UN Commission on Human Rights, *Initial report on the human rights situation in Burundi submitted by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, in accordance with Commission resolution 1995/90* (1996), par. 18 [www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/252e39f397a3d8ec802566a2005b6e12?Opendocument] (last accessed on 16/09/2011).

³⁶⁴ Jackson, 21. As a response, a new, private, university was founded in Ngozi in 1999.

³⁶⁵ Obura, 200-201. See also Nditije.

³⁶⁶ T. Golden, ‘One year later – Forgotten people: the Batwa ‘Pygmy’ of the Great Lakes Region of Africa’ (2004), 1. Obura, 194.

³⁶⁷ Nditije, 46, 54.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 39. According to Jackson, education in Burundi represented not only a ‘peace dividend’, but also ‘the key’ to long-term peace and ‘the primary conflict prevention measure for the future.’ 4.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁷⁰ Obura, 121. République du Burundi, Ministère de l’Education Nationale, *Politique sectorielle* (Bujumbura March 1999), 14.

³⁷¹ Several observers have pointed to the immediate initiatives promoted by Hutu refugees to provide education in the camps. Obura, 211, 218. According to Sommers, ‘the significance of education for refugee

everyone' in the camps,³⁷² a situation of injustice was felt to have continued at higher educational levels. Sommers reported that, due to the discouraging policies of the Tanzanian State, only few refugees had managed to attend post-primary education. As highlighted by Malkki, in the camps, the Tanzanian authorities were therefore perceived 'as carrying out a Tutsi-like policy of excluding Hutus from higher education'.³⁷³

3.4.2.2 School teachings

Issues related to teaching contents were also included in the Sectoral Policy. In particular, the document underscored the need to reform the national curriculum in order to address its largely irrelevant content and to 'integrat[e] civic, human and moral education'. Among other things, the Sectoral Policy affirmed the need to prioritise the teaching of peace education in the most unstable provinces, as well as to introduce citizenship education in all classes with the aim of promoting such values as 'peace, human rights, tolerance, and social and gender equity' among the young generation.³⁷⁴ Also, it called for a reform of existing curricula, such as history, geography, human sciences and French, with an eye to integrating peace-relevant issues.³⁷⁵ Since the formulation of these commitments, mixed results have been attained.

A peace education programme was introduced in schools, both in Burundi and in Tanzanian refugee camps.³⁷⁶ Here, the displaced had been taught the Burundian

survivors of Burundi's 1972 massacre is remarkable. This, again, arises in large part from Burundi's past.' Sommers, 'Representing refugees: the role of elites in Burundi refugee society,' *Disasters* 19(1) (1995) 20-21.

³⁷² Obura, 243, 214; and Sommers, *A child's nightmare*, 4.

³⁷³ Sommers, 'Representing,' 21; and, Malkki, *Purity and Exile*. As Sommers reported, the Tanzanian government had initially banned all formal schooling in the camps, especially at the secondary level. 4-5. According to Jackson, while educational provision was impressive in Tanzanian camps for 1993-refugees, in the camps hosting pre-1993 refugees only one secondary school was present. 30-31.

³⁷⁴ MEN, 38.

³⁷⁵ UNESCO/IBE, *World data on education*, 6th ed., 2006/07. *Burundi* (2006) [www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/Countries/WDE/2006/SUB-SAHARAN_AFRICA/Burundi/Burundi.pdf] (last accessed on 17/09/2011).

³⁷⁶ A number of peace education initiatives were also launched by several NGOs, especially in the non-formal sector. In 2005, the human rights organisation Iteka, for instance, organised a workshop for the approval of a textbook on human rights and peace education for unschooled youth. Iteka, 'La ligue Iteka organise un atelier de validation d'un manuel d'enseignement des droits de l'homme à l'endroit de la jeunesse non scolarisée' (Bujumbura June 2005) [www.ligue-iteka.africa-web.org/article.php3?id_article=360] (last accessed on 08/09/2011).

curriculum in order to facilitate their repatriation and reintegration.³⁷⁷ Pointing to a blatant ‘missed opportunity’ to promote peace through education, analysts reported a failure of refugee education, and of its peace education programme in particular, to effectively address feelings of distrust and fear among Hutu refugees towards Tutsis back home.³⁷⁸ These persisting fears were clearly expressed by one of Obura’s interviewees. As this young Burundian testified, ‘I have never been taught by Tutsi teachers. Perhaps, when I go to a school at home, these teachers might mistreat me, or even beat me’.³⁷⁹

In addition to a peace education programme, a new course in civics was developed in the country as part of an overall curriculum reform that was undertaken in 2004.³⁸⁰ Among other things, the reform introduced a more modern competence-based approach as well as a more active and participatory pedagogy.³⁸¹ The stated intention of the revision of the civics course was to respond to the blatant failure of schools to educate responsible citizens – as had been tragically demonstrated by the widespread participation of pupils and students in Burundi’s recurrent waves of violence. Today, this course is offered at the primary and junior secondary levels through the subject *Compétences Personnelles à la Vie Courante*, and at the senior level through *Education à la Citoyenneté*. Since 2006-2007, these subjects have been supplemented by a new course in *Education Civique et Humaine*, through which schools have promoted such values as human rights, peace and democracy.³⁸²

³⁷⁷ The use of the Burundian national curriculum in the camps was allowed although Tanzanian authorities had initially demanded the use of the Tanzanian curriculum. Obura, 216.

³⁷⁸ Developed by UNICEF and UNHCR in 1997, the peace education programme was published in 2001. In 2004, Obura described this programme as a ‘[I]ost opportunity’ based on the observation that it ‘was never solidly rooted in the camps or in the camp education system’. Obura, 215, 220, 231, 234, 251.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 249.

³⁸⁰ MEN, *Programme de l’Enseignement secondaire du Burundi. Cycle Collège* (Bujumbura February 2004). The 2004 curriculum replaced the 1990 programme which had been proposed at the *Colloque national sur les programmes de l’enseignement primaire* in August 1989. République du Burundi. Ministère de l’Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire. Bureau d’Education Rurale, *Programme des écoles primaires du Burundi* (Bujumbura, September 1990).

³⁸¹ Compared to the 1990 version, the new curriculum specifies objectives and basic competencies – subdivided into *savoir*, *savoir-faire*, and *savoir-être*; – it suggests pedagogical methods and evaluation approaches (largely relying on interrogative and participatory approaches, on observation and demonstration, and on the use of maps and oral sources); and includes bibliographic references.

³⁸² The civics curriculum encompasses the themes of ‘peace education, conflict prevention and resolution, human rights, democracy, tolerance, good governance, gender, sex education, delinquency, environmental protection, globalisation and sustainable human development.’ Mazunya, ‘Du civisme’. The themes addressed in the ECH programme largely overlap with the civics course. *Plan d’action de formation civique*

While the introduction of peace and citizenship education represents a promising development, to this day there continues to be a need to revise existing curricula and textbooks in accordance with the imperatives dictated by the new post-war context.³⁸³ History teaching, in particular, remains a largely unresolved issue.³⁸⁴ As will be briefly outlined in the next paragraph on the current state of history teaching in the country, whereas post-genocide Rwanda recently integrated the government's official history in new curricula and textbooks, Burundi is still struggling to revise its educational material, and, especially, to include the long omitted study of its recent history. In the face of a persisting lack of historical clarification and consensus, today, as in the past, the history course essentially ends with the country's achievement of independence.³⁸⁵

3.4.2.2.1 *The state of history teaching in post-war Burundi*

In Burundi today, history is a compulsory subject from the upper primary level onwards (from P4 to S7). At the primary level, its study is subsumed into the course *Etude du Milieu*, together with geography and science.³⁸⁶ Compared to the pre-war curriculum of 1990, the 2004 curriculum increased the teaching hours allocated to this course from 4-6 to 5-8 per week, depending on the grade. At the

et humaine et d'éducation à la paix et aux droits de l'homme, 2007-2008 [www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/education/training/docs/actions-plans/burundi.pdf (last accessed on 05/10/2011)]. At the primary level, the curriculum reform also introduced the study of English and Swahili in the framework of regional integration. Observatoire de l'Action Gouvernementale (OAG), 'Réforme du programme à l'enseignement primaire' (23/06/2006) [www.oag.bi/spip.php?article24] (last accessed on 06/10/2011). At the secondary level, a reform was launched in 2008/2009, with a focus on sciences and languages. 'Burundi: la réforme de l'enseignement secondaire en cours' (12/09/2008) [journalchretien.net/breve14235.html] (last accessed on 05/10/2011).

³⁸³ Mazunya, for instance, regretted a failure to introduce 'war literature' in schools. M. Mazunya, 'La place de la lecture dans la reconfiguration identitaire des élèves burundais'. International colloquium 'Textures, formes, figures', 22 October 2008, Université Toulouse II-Le Mirail.

³⁸⁴ Mworoha, 'Enquête-sondage'.

³⁸⁵ Several observers expressed their growing impatience in front of a lack of progress in updating and reforming the contents of the history course. In an article that was published on the commemoration day of Rwagasore's death, for instance, N. Gasarara called for 'the right of the Burundian youth to know' their country's troubled post-colonial past. N. Gasarara, '13 octobre 1961: Le prince Louis, ses proches et son pays' (13/10/2008) [www.arib.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=347] (last accessed on 04-09-2011).

³⁸⁶ This course addresses issues related to health and hygiene, the environment, geography, and history. On the national history, bibliographic references in the 2004 primary school curriculum include the BER *Fichiers d'Etude du Milieu*, extracts from Mworoha et al.'s *Histoire du Burundi*, and a 1981 issue of the *Revue de civilisation burundaise, Culture et société*. The bibliography also mentions peace education programmes from Burundi and the DRC: *Batissons la paix/ Yaga amahoro* (1996); UNESCO-PEER-UNICEF, *Programme d'éducation à la paix en République Démocratique du Congo, Manuel de l'enseignant et activités diverse* (2000); République Démocratique du Congo, *Programme d'éducation à la paix, Le rêve de DIDI, Histoires et chansons* (2000).

junior secondary level, history is taught as a separate subject for 2 hours per week. At the senior level, where classes are subdivided into specialisation streams, this course is taught for 1 or 2 hours depending on the stream – 2 hours in the *lettres*, 1 or 2 hours in the *sciences*, and 1 hour in the *lycées pédagogiques*.³⁸⁷

At the primary level, the study of history is centred on Burundi. Here, pupils learn about the country's traditional customs in P4, the pre-colonial period in P5, and the colonial period in P6. This exclusive focus on the national history represents a novelty compared to the pre-war curriculum. Until 2004, the study of Burundi's pre-colonial and colonial history was condensed in P5. In P6 pupils instead learned about African history, i.e. the pre-colonial time, the colonisation, anti-colonial resistance, and independence movements, with a focus on the historical evolution of the region. Despite such differences, the specific topics related to the national history have remained largely unchanged. With regard to the pre-colonial time, children are introduced to the kingdom's organisation and the 'great monarchs'. As for the colonial history, topics include the European penetration, the German and Belgian administration and economic realisations, and a general assessment of the colonisation. The new curriculum further added the issue of anti-colonial resistance, while it removed the topic of the independence struggle. A review of the aims and objectives of history teaching as they are stated in the primary school curriculum points to the privileging of social and civic competencies that fall under the category of *savoir-être*. In particular, required competencies related to historical topics include an adherence to patriotism, justice and peaceful conflict resolution, and openness towards the world.

At the secondary level, the history curriculum adopts a chronological and cross-regional approach.³⁸⁸ The school programme consecutively addresses the pre-history, the middle-ages, and the modern and contemporary times across the world. Here, a few references to the history of countries in the region are also included, namely with regard to pre-colonial kingdoms, the colonisation, and

³⁸⁷ In Burundi, the secondary school level is composed of a lower cycle of four years from 7ème to 10 ème (here referred to as S1-S4 in line with the other case-studies); and an upper cycle of three years from 3ème to 1ère (here referred to as S5-S7).

³⁸⁸ République du Burundi. Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire (MEPS), *Programmes d'histoire*, Section Histoire (Bujumbura, August 1992).

independence.³⁸⁹ As was the case in Rwanda before the last curriculum reform, in Burundi the study of the national history is taught throughout the first school year (S1), and is briefly reviewed in the last year (S7) (see table 5 below).

Level	Secondary School History Curriculum Contents (August 1992)
S1	<i>Burundian history</i> (from the origins until today)
S2	Pre-history and world ancient civilisations (incl. African civilisations and kingdoms); the Middle Ages (Europe, the Middle-East, African states)
S3	Modern times: Europe in XV-XVIII; Africa in XV-XIX (contacts with Europe, slave trade, African states/kingdoms); America
S4	Contemporary history: Europe in 1775-1914; Africa in 1880-1940 (European expansion, scramble/colonisation and resistance); crises of the first half of XX; international relations (1945-1962) (incl. decolonisation)
	For <i>Lettres Modernes</i> (reduced programme for other streams)
S5	European imperialist/colonial expansion in Africa and Asia (and resistance); rise of USA; the first half of XX (WWs, Asia); Western civilisations
S6	See above
S7	<i>Burundian history</i> (from the origins to today) (same as S1); decolonisation and post-independence problems; non-western civilisations (African, Muslim, Asian, Latin American)

Table 5. Burundi's current secondary school history curriculum contents

As revealed by a review of didactic materials (see table 6 below) as well as by conversations with teachers and school directors, the teaching of Burundian history in schools remains largely limited to the more distant past. Whereas the latest available version of the secondary school curriculum, dating 1992, covers Burundi's history up until the Third Republic, official teaching and learning materials have not been updated to include the period after 1962. Teachers today are supposed to rely on the old government-produced teacher guide *Histoire du Burundi*. Although re-issued in 1998, this version does not differ from the 1987 edition analysed in paragraph 3.3.2. With a focus on the pre-colonial and the

³⁸⁹ Topics include pre-colonial political formations in the DRC (Kongo), the Great Lakes region, and Zanzibar; European colonisation in the DRC (EIC and Congo Belge), and Ruanda-Urundi; and the independence struggle in DRC, Kenya, and Tanzania.

colonial time, its content continues to omit all references to the troubled recent past as well as to Hutu and Tutsi.

Burundi's history in the curriculum and in didactic materials: content overview (secondary education)	
<i>Teacher's guide Histoire du Burundi</i>	<i>History Curriculum</i>
<p><u>Pre-colonial Burundi</u></p> <p>TG: tot. 88pp: 'Pre-historic Burundi' (13pp); 'Pre-dynastic Burundi' (12pp); and 'Burundi under the sacred monarchy' (63pp) (preceded by a 25pp general introduction into the discipline)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Introduction (incl. sources) * Prehistoric (origins-1000BC) * Predynastic (700 BC-1700) * Monarchic (1700-1903): origins/foundation, consolidation, apex in 19th c., organisation – from Ntare Rushatsi to Mwezi Gisabo
<p><u>Colonial Burundi</u></p> <p>TG: tot. 60pp: 'Burundi under foreign domination': German colonisation (10pp); Belgian colonisation (45pp); and 'The conquest of independence (1958-1962)' (5pp).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Colonial domination (1903-1962) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - German colonisation (1903-1915): causes, resistance, consequences; military occupation and civilian administration, and socio-economic transformations; WWI and end of occupation; assessment of German colonisation - Belgian colonisation (1916-1962): military occupation, mandate and trusteeship; socio-economic transformations; assessment of Belgian colonisation - Decolonisation and achievement of independence (1958-1962): international developments; political parties, elections and Uprona's victory; achievement of independence
<p><u>Independent Burundi</u></p> <p>TG: Omitted in textbook, apart from introductory remarks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Independent Burundi (1962-today) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the constitutional monarchy and its inadaptation; - the establishment of the Republic; the political, social, economic and cultural evolution under the 1st and 2nd Republics; - the political, economic and social orientations of the 3rd Republic

Table 6. Burundi's history in the curriculum and in didactic materials: content overview

Overall, the aims of history teaching at the secondary school level are more varied than at the primary level. Next to promoting the acquisition of substantive knowledge and of general skills such as analytical and critical skills, the study of history seems to be mainly geared towards the acquisition of disciplinary dispositions (e.g. to situate themselves in time and space, and to appreciate and interpret sources), as well as towards the development of civic and social

attitudes, including solidarity, mutual understanding and respect of differences. The civic significance of history teaching is further highlighted in the curriculum by suggesting that, '[t]he teaching of history thus makes a considerable contribution to civic and human education in general.'³⁹⁰ In addition, in explaining the importance of studying history, the teacher's guide *Histoire du Burundi* refers to its potential to warn society against the mistakes of the past.³⁹¹ Arguably, by failing to include a discussion on the country's troubled recent past, history as has been taught in Burundian schools appears to have not been allowed to play such a preventive role. The failure of history teaching to live up to its promise of serving young people and the Burundian nation as a whole by educating the new generation about their country's past in particular has been compounded by a related pressing issue. A regrettable situation has been reported whereby the attainment of such objectives as the promotion of independent and critical thinking skills, which are fundamental for a democratic and peaceful society, have been hampered by a continued chronic lack of didactic materials which has obliged students to spend much of their history classes copying teachers' notes from the blackboard rather than critically reflecting on the past.³⁹²

Available evidence thus seems to point to a current situation in which young people in Burundi have been largely left to their own devices to make sense of a complex history about which multiple and often conflicting accounts have been circulating in the society. As a result of a failing history education, as argued by Mworoha in 2008, 'the youth terribly ignore the historical realities of this

³⁹⁰ RoB/MEPS, *Programme d'histoire*, 176.

³⁹¹ TG, 7-8.

³⁹² The state of history teaching in Burundi was assessed in the school survey that was conducted in 2003 in the framework of the UNESCO-sponsored History-writing project. Identified flaws included vast curricula, limited coverage of the national history, and a chronic lack of didactic material and of teacher training and support opportunities. With regard to didactic materials, BEPES produced history teacher guides only for the lower cycle. Books foreseen in the curriculum, especially for the upper cycle, were largely unavailable and outdated. Obura observed that 'many teachers in community schools have neither syllabus, nor teacher's guide, nor textbooks, as tools of work, let alone any reference material, maps or charts'. 133. In 2007-2008, the availability rate of primary school textbooks was found to be the lowest for the course *Etude du milieu* (0,2%). Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, *Le développement de l'éducation. Rapport national du Burundi* (Bujumbura 2008) [www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/burundi_NR08_fr.pdf] (last accessed on 04/09/2011). Notice that, in Burundi, textbooks can only be acquired at the Government Printing Press in the capital.

country'.³⁹³ More specifically, according to the conclusions reached in 2012 by A. Batungwanayo and B. Vanderlick, the lack of guidance provided by Burundian schools in relation to the nation's recent past has led many young people to accept a 'simplified and subjective reading of the conflict' transmitted to them by their entourage.³⁹⁴

The next section of this chapter will move to report some of the main findings of the student survey that was conducted in Burundi with the aim of exploring understandings and perceptions held by the young generation on the country's past and present times. In a separate section, the views expressed by Burundian respondents in relation to the national history will be juxtaposed to those presented across the border by young people in neighbouring Rwanda and DRC.

3.5 Representing Burundi's past and present: an analysis of young people's views and perceptions

In Burundi, 465 young people participated in the survey that was carried out in spring 2011 to collect their views on the country's and region's past and present. Participants included 231 boys and 231 girls (plus 3 respondents who did not specify their gender). They were drawn from seven secondary schools located across the country (see map 3). Most of them were born between 1986 and 1998, and had an age varying between 13 and 25 at the time of the survey. As was the case in Rwanda, the considerable age discrepancies that characterise Burundian

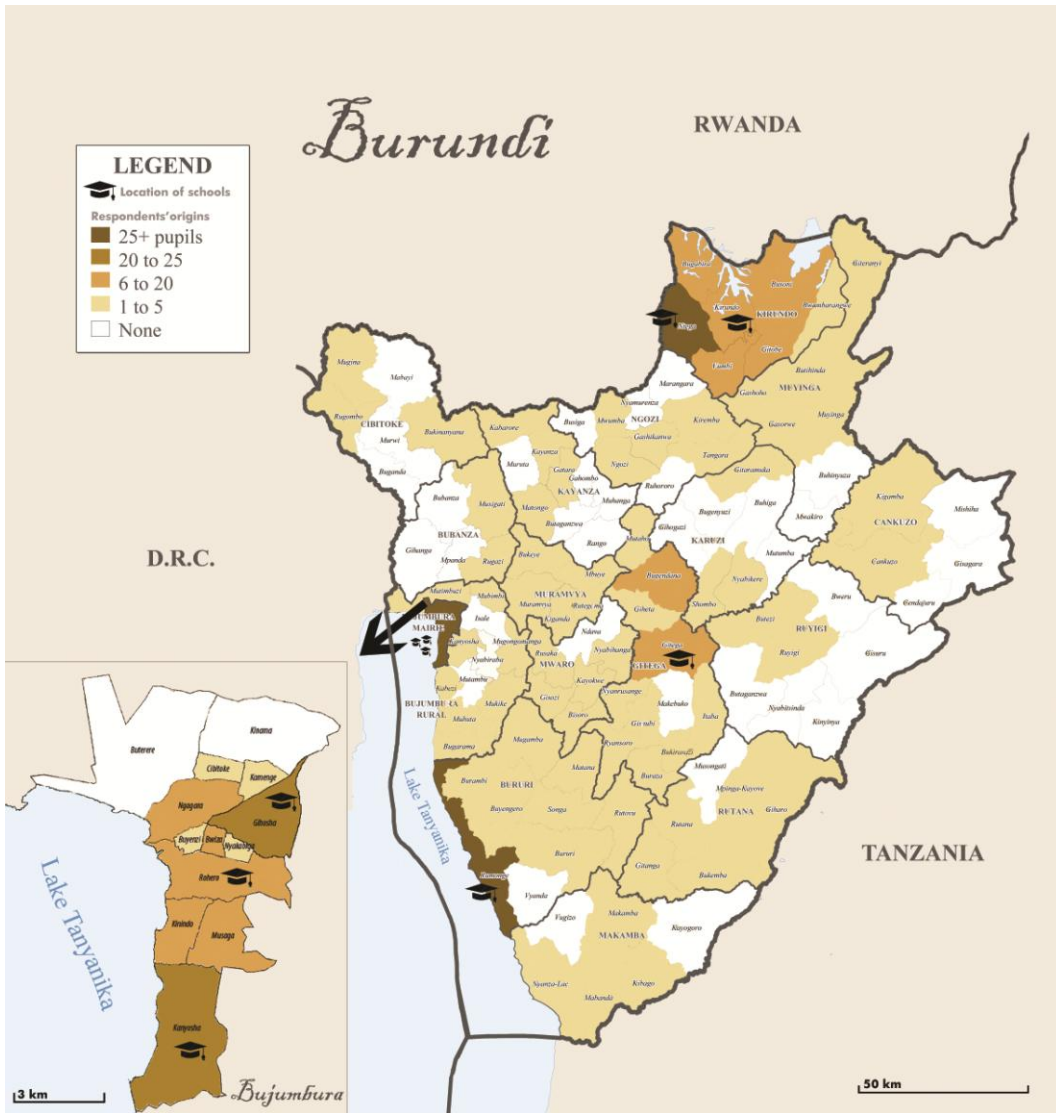
³⁹³ Mworoha, 'Communication n° 2: état des lieux et défis relatifs à la réalisation du projet «Ecriture de l'Histoire du Burundi», *Rapport, Atelier d'information*, 9.

³⁹⁴ Aloys Batungwanayo and Benjamin Vanderlick, *Perspectives Series: Research Report. Les Lieux de Mémoire, Initiatives Commémoratives et Mémorielles du Conflit Burundais: Souvenirs Invisibles et Permanents* [Lieux de Mémoire, Commemorative Initiatives and Memorials to Burundi's Conflicts: Invisible and Permanent Memories] (Utrecht: Impunity Watch, 2012), 14.

classrooms resulted in the participation of a few students as young as 12 and as old as 32.³⁹⁵ Among the surveyed population thus were pupils who were born before, during and after the recent 1993 civil war. As a result of the violence, as many as one fourth of all respondents reported that they or their family had been displaced either abroad or to the interior, especially in 1993-1994.³⁹⁶ As opposed to the situation found in Rwanda, where a large number of respondents had been born in exile due to forced displacement, almost all Burundian respondents were born in their country of origin. Of the 462 students who provided this information, 451 were born in Burundi, 126 of whom in the capital city Bujumbura. The remaining 11 were born in neighbouring countries, i.e. 6 in Tanzania, 4 in eastern Congo, and 1 in Rwanda. Among them, 8 had their family displaced in the 1993 war, 2 in 1972, and 1 in 1988. Most of them had only recently returned to Burundi, mainly between 2003 and 2010.

³⁹⁵ Respondents were born between 1979 and 1999.

³⁹⁶ A total of 112 said to have been displaced, especially the older students. Pupils studying in Rumonge, Kirundo and Ntega, and Gitega had been mainly displaced to, respectively, Tanzania, Rwanda, and the interior. The group of students who took refuge abroad, especially in Tanzania, was most probably comprised primarily of Hutu.



Map 3. Students' origins and school distribution

3.5.1 The history of Burundi according to Burundian students

3.5.1.1 General remarks on the structure and content of the narratives

3.5.1.1.1 Structure of the narratives

In line with the content of the school curriculum, students' accounts on the national history were often structured around several 'great periods': the pre-colonial time (pre-historic, pre-dynastic and monarchic), the time under German and Belgian colonial domination, and the period after independence. Narratives were also generally centred on a number of key dates and personalities that were considered to have marked the country's political history. These included:

- the foundation of the kingdom by Ntare Rushatsi in 1700 and the capitulation of Mwezi Gisabo against the Germans in 1903;
- Rwagasore's assassination in 1961 and the achievement of independence in 1962;
- the establishment of the republic in 1966;
- the country's first-ever democratic elections, the assassination of the newly elected President Ndadaye, and the subsequent start of the civil war in 1993; and,
- the end of the post-war transition and the election of current President Nkurunziza in 2005.

While usually accurate in situating key historical events and figures in time, the national narratives that were collected in Burundi occasionally showed chronological confusion and factual mistakes, especially in relation to the colonial period. Among such mistakes were: a belief in the pre-colonial existence of a united kingdom of Ruanda-Urundi; a confusion between the Berlin Conference and the Conference of Versailles as the occasion during which Burundi was assigned to Germany in the scramble for Africa; a confusion between WWI and

WWII as the beginning of Belgian colonisation; the mentioning of only Germany or Belgium as the country's former colonial power; and the temporal location of the recent civil war in 1994.³⁹⁷

3.5.1.1.2 Overview of the content and topics of the narratives

A number of topics appeared to regularly recur in students' essays. Although considerable attention was paid to describing people's socio-economic and cultural life during Burundi's various historical periods, the topics selected by the respondents revealed a predominant concern for the country's political history.³⁹⁸

With regard to the pre-colonial time, students' narratives often addressed Burundi's history prior to the foundation of the kingdom. In this respect, Burundian accounts greatly differed from Rwandan narratives, which instead were largely oblivious of the pre-monarchic period. In Burundi, students' essays mainly mentioned the ancient human settlement in the country and people's living conditions in the prehistoric time, as well as the political fragmentation that characterised the pre-dynastic era.³⁹⁹ That being said, in Burundi as well, accounts on the pre-colonial time focused mostly on the days of the 'sacred monarchs', which began with the unification of the kingdom. Particular attention was paid to describing the kingdom's political, economic, and socio-cultural organisation,⁴⁰⁰ and to presenting Burundi's monarchs. Accounts of this period sometimes merely consisted in reporting more or less comprehensive lists of the country's kings, or in simply mentioning their total number.⁴⁰¹ As a general rule, the emphasis was

³⁹⁷ Additionally, in one case, a student erroneously stated that the monarchy had come to an end following the assassination of King Ntare V, which in fact only happened in 1972.

³⁹⁸ Apart from historical topics, issues related to the subject of geography were also frequently included in students' essays. References were made to the country's location, landscape, demography, administrative organisation, and main economic activities. Also, while the focus of young people's narratives was on the national history, a few allusions were also made to the local history, in particular to the origins of the name of the province and town of Kirundo, in which two sampled schools were located.

³⁹⁹ These entities were variably described as tribes, clans, provinces, regions, or small autonomous chiefdoms or states, which were ruled by old wise men, chiefs, or *roitelets*. Two students, one of whom cited Prof. Mworoha, also mentioned the pre-dynastic existence of two *foyers*, one in the South and one in the North.

⁴⁰⁰ Students very frequently mentioned religious and cultural beliefs and practices (e.g. *umuganuro*, as well as legends and traditional practices related to the kings' succession and enthronisation), as well as traditional clothing, diet, housing, and education.

⁴⁰¹ The most comprehensive lists mentioned Ntare I (1680-1709), Mwezi I (1709-1738), Mutaga I (1738-1767), Mwambutsa I (1767-1796), Ntare II (1796-1850), Mwezi II (1850-1908), Mutaga II (1908-1915), and Mwambutsa II (1915-8/7/1966). While most students seemed to accept the theory according to which Burundi had known a total of eight kings, several accounts were found to reproduce the old colonial

placed on ‘the three great monarchs who have marked the history of Burundi’,⁴⁰² namely Ntare I Rushatsi, Ntare II Rugamba, and Mwezi II Gisabo.⁴⁰³ In the narratives, their lives and deeds were often extensively described and exalted.⁴⁰⁴

As for the colonial time, students’ accounts typically outlined the transformations that took place in this period, with a focus on the colonial misdeeds.⁴⁰⁵ A prominent place was also given to presenting the decolonisation process. In this respect, young Burundians seemed to be especially concerned with the independence struggle of the much-mentioned and eulogised Prince Rwagasore as well as with his assassination.

Regarding Burundi’s more recent post-colonial history, the content of students’ narratives appeared comparatively meagre. From this apparent gap, one could deduce a certain sense of discomfort among young people in talking about a past that Burundian society as a whole has been struggling to face. Several essays, for instance, simply stopped in 1962 or 1966, thereby altogether avoiding discussions on the country’s most controversial and sensitive past. In the majority of cases in which the post-colonial era was addressed, the most complex issues were generally overlooked or omitted. While the historical juncture between the achievement of independence and the end of the monarchy was nearly completely absent in students’ narratives,⁴⁰⁶ accounts of the subsequent republican period were often limited to listing Burundi’s successive presidents since 1966,

hypothesis according to which the country had been ruled by sixteen monarchs since its foundation. A couple of respondents showed their knowledge of the existence of controversies around the number of cycles of Burundian kings, i.e. two or four. In a few cases, students erroneously reported that there had been five or seven kings.

⁴⁰² B43.

⁴⁰³ Ntare Rushatsi was presented as the founder of the kingdom, of the monarchy, and of the Ganwa dynasty. Students’ essays made ample references to the various legends on this king’s origins and on the foundation of the kingdom. Accounts also included several references to Ntare’s forefather Ntweru and his sons Jabwe and Nsoro.

⁴⁰⁴ To a lesser extent, essays also mentioned King Mwambutsa and his son Ndizeye, the last of Burundian kings.

⁴⁰⁵ In relation to Burundi’s contact with the outside world, only a couple of students mentioned such topics as the country’s early penetration by Zanzibari/Arabs and by European explorers; the subdivision of the colonial period into German military and civilian administration, and Belgian occupation, mandate and UN trusteeship; and the role of missionaries in the colonisation. Merely one student for instance recounted that, ‘the missionaries facilitated the colonisation because they are the ones who were close to the population and who knew well the Burundians’. B56.

⁴⁰⁶ Only three essays referred to this historical juncture. Among these were two unclear statements on King Mwambutsa’s succession by his son Ntare V Ndizeye. Here, Ndizeye was said either to have dethroned his father or to have come to power while his father was abroad for medical reasons. In the third essay, the respondent spoke of this period as a time characterised by ‘a first multipartism’.

spearheaded by Micombero, Bagaza, Buyoya, Ndadaye and Nkurunziza.⁴⁰⁷ In referring to the country's presidents, essays tended, for example, to be remarkably silent as to the ethnic and political affiliation of those holding the reins of power. In so doing, they typically circumvented the sensitive theme of ethnicity and power. As for the country's various crises, a considerable number of respondents mentioned the events of 1972, and especially the 1993 civil war and its aftermath. Only few accounts, however, were outspoken in their analysis of these occurrences.

One student eloquently summarised the history of Burundi as was typically recounted by respondents who participated in the survey. In her words,

*'Burundi's settlement is of old date. Since the pre-historic time, a certain degree of organisation was gradually established in the form of small autonomous entities. Since ca. 1700, the legendary arrival of Rushatsi led to the unification of the kingdom under the secular Ganwa dynasty, headed by a powerful, sacred and divine king. The kingdom reached its apogee under King Rugamba, who conducted numerous expansionist wars, drawing most of the country's current borders. It was subsequently bravely defended from Arab slave traders by King Gisabo, who, however, was defeated by the German colonizers in 1903 (Kiganda Treaty). After WWI, the Germans were replaced by the Belgians. The colonisers were eventually driven out of the country in 1962 thanks to the independence struggle led by Prince Rwagasore, who was assassinated in 1961. In 1966 the monarchy was abolished through a coup that resulted in the establishment of the First Republic by Burundi's first president Micombero. Through another coup, the First Republic was replaced by Bagaza's Second Republic in 1976, which was itself replaced by Buyoya's Third Republic in 1987. In 1993, the first-ever democratic elections were organised. The newly elected President Ndadaye was however soon killed (on 21-10-1993), plunging the country into its worst crisis. After peace negotiations and a transition, new democratic elections were held in 2005, which were won by current president Nkurunziza.'*⁴⁰⁸

From the common narrative reported above clearly emerges that Burundian accounts consisted, for the most part, in a list of hard facts that were believed to have significantly marked Burundi's political history. The survey thus pointed to the existence of a certain degree of consensus among Burundian respondents with regard to the country's key historical events and figures. Unlike in Rwanda, students' essays in Burundi did not exhibit a broadly accepted interpretation and

⁴⁰⁷ Students only rarely mentioned the heads of state who came to power in the period between the presidency of Ndadaye and Nkurunziza, i.e. Ntaryamira, Ntibantunganya, Buyoya and Ndayizeye.

⁴⁰⁸ B55.

analysis of the national past. As will be demonstrated below, in accordance with the discourse presented in the history course, as well in the Arusha Accords, some of the more detailed essays seemed to point to a belief in a largely idyllic ancient time and in a negative experience with European colonisation. The survey, however, did not find a degree of common understanding of the particularly sensitive and controversial issues of identity and ethnicity, and of the violent post-colonial past. This finding thus seems to reflect a situation of disagreement that remains in Burundian society on these two topics, both of which have never been addressed in the school curriculum.

The next paragraphs will present a more in-depth analysis of the historical narratives that were collected among Burundian students. Echoing the structure adopted for the Rwanda case-study, the analysis will be particularly concerned with examining and comparing young people's views on the two most controversial issues of identity and conflict.

3.5.1.2 Identities in Burundi: definition, origins, meanings, and today's relevance of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa 'categories'

Following the Methodology section in Chapter 1.3, the essay-question that is the subject of the present analysis requested students to recount the history of their country and of its inhabitants from the origins until today. Through this particular phrasing, the survey intended to prompt discussions on identity and, at the same time, to limit influencing the answers of the respondents by excluding explicit references to specific groups.

In numerous cases, Burundi's inhabitants were simply referred to as 'the Burundians'.⁴⁰⁹ Whereas only one student mentioned the sub-division of Burundians into 220 clans, the country's population was further typically described as being composed of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. The frequent presence of these terms in students' accounts revealed a widespread recognition of the importance and relevance of these categories in Burundian society and history.

⁴⁰⁹ As we will see in more detail below, Burundians were often described as a traditionally united people who shared common language and customs.

This is especially true with regard to Hutu and Tutsi. Compared to these two categories, the Twa were in fact more often overlooked, thus suggesting a marginal role of this group in the Burundian context. In relation to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, a few exceptional essays specified the relative weight of each category in the society. A couple of students referred to Hutu and Tutsi as representing respectively Burundi's majority and minority groups. In one case, a respondent indicated their relative demographic weight in percentages. The figures that were provided by this student as if reflective of reality corresponded to the artificial ethnic quota that had been agreed during peace negotiations as a basis for power-sharing. He explained that, '[i]n Burundi, the population is essentially composed of Hutu (60%) and of Tutsi (40%), as well as of a small minority of Twa (pygmies, who still live in the forest up until today)'.⁴¹⁰

As demonstrated by the frequency of the use of these terms in the essays that were collected in Burundi, Burundian respondents seemed rather comfortable with discussing Hutu, Tutsi and Twa identities, especially if compared to their Rwandan counterparts. Also, the way in which the three categories were defined appeared to be relatively homogeneous. Usually, they were portrayed as 'ethnic groups'. In merely a handful of cases, these identities were instead described as 'races', or, more rarely, as 'tribes'. While such terms were often used in relation to Burundi's contemporary society, when describing the country's traditional society several narratives referred to these identities as 'social classes'. It was moreover only in this more ancient context that the largely overlooked Ganwa were mentioned, thus clearly suggesting the irrelevance of this type of identity in present-day Burundi.

If Burundian students demonstrated a certain level of consensus on the terminology used to define Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, similar to their Rwandan counterparts, they also revealed a certain lack of clarity and an apparent disagreement as to the origins and the evolving nature of these categories. In particular, while several respondents seemed to believe in their ancient existence –

⁴¹⁰ B423.

thereby often omitting or limiting the role of European colonisation in shaping these identities, – conversely, others presented them as a mere colonial invention.

3.5.1.2.1 Identities in the pre-colonial time

Within the category of narratives that conveyed a belief in the pre-colonial existence of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, interpretations were not homogenous. Perceptions differed especially on the nature of their differences. Whereas several essays presented these groups as ancestrally different ethnic groups or races, each with its own distinct origins and socio-economic occupations, others instead described the existing differences as being merely of social nature.

Among the first group of essays were accounts which reproduced old tales of origins and migration.⁴¹¹ These sometimes explicitly postulated the different ‘ethnic origins’ of the Burundian population. While such theories were found to be almost completely absent in Rwandan answers, as many as ten Burundian respondents told a history of successive migratory waves of Twa, Hutu and Tutsi. In these tales, each group was said to differ from the other two with respect to its geographical origins, its time of settlement in Burundi, and its lifestyle and main socio-economic occupation. Here, the Twa were generally depicted as the country’s first inhabitants, or, as a student wrote, as ‘*abasangwabutaka*’, i.e. ‘original inhabitants’. These nomad forest-dwelling hunter-gatherer and fisher pygmies from Lake Kivu were believed to have been repulsed by the Hutu, Burundi’s second ‘occupants’. The newcomers were occasionally portrayed as a Bantu agriculturist group from the regions around Lake Chad or Cameroon. According to two students, they had settled in Burundi towards the 14th century in search of fertile land as a result of the desertification of the Sahara. Finally, the Tutsi were presented as the last group of settlers to have arrived in the country – according to one student around the 16th century. They were described as a pastoralist group that had descended from Ethiopia, the Nile region, or simply from the North, in search of pasture. Despite their alleged origins, the Tutsi were

⁴¹¹ One student admitted ignoring the origins of the Burundian population. As he stated, ‘I don’t know where the population comes from’. B172.

never defined as ‘Nilotic’. Also, while clearly reproducing old colonial hypotheses, such accounts never cited the ‘Hamitic’ origins of this group. If the Hamitic myth was never explicitly mentioned, two essays indirectly hinted at this colonial construction. The first referred to the alleged non-African origins of the Tutsi. In his words, ‘the Tutsi claim an ancestry related to the evangelisation and not to the cultures of Africa.’⁴¹² The second, instead, mentioned the alleged introduction of civilisation by the Tutsi. As she explained, ‘the Hutu were supposedly civilised by the Tutsi’.⁴¹³ Further noteworthy about these narratives on origins and migration was the depiction of a relation of domination and subjugation among the three groups of settlers. Some students spoke of a domination of the Hutu by the Tutsi – ‘who seized power, subsequently constituting the kinglets’.⁴¹⁴ Others, instead, reported a situation of successive domination by each newcomer: first by the Hutu over the Twa, and later by the Tutsi over both the Twa and the Hutu.

Several respondents indeed seemed to embrace old theories on origins and migration. Two students however explicitly denounced them as being both false and dangerous. More specifically, they condemned these hypotheses for being at the root of an ethnism that had proven to be fatal. To support their argument, these two respondents referred to recent research findings which had scientifically demonstrated the ancestral presence of the Twa on the territory as well as the millenary co-existence of Hutu and Tutsi in the region. Another respondent highlighted the common Bantu origins of Hutu and Tutsi, who had come to join ‘Burundi’s original inhabitants: the Twa’. According to this student’s narrative, a social distinction between Hutu and Tutsi had only gradually developed after the foundation of the kingdom. As he explained, such divisions were based on people’s level of wealth, which was mainly determined by ownership of cattle.⁴¹⁵

Although to a lesser extent than in Rwanda, descriptions of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa as distinct social classes appeared to be relatively widespread in Burundian

⁴¹² B49.

⁴¹³ B264.

⁴¹⁴ B365.

⁴¹⁵ B372. According to another respondent, ‘before, they were united peoples subdivided according to their wealth’. B32.

essays. More so than in Rwanda, relations among these groups in the pre-colonial time were sometimes deemed to have been characterised by political and/or socio-economic inequality. Illustrative of this belief was the account of a student who described the Tutsi as ‘nobles’, and the Hutu and the Twa as second-class citizens who had been treated ‘with contempt and rejection’ by the former.⁴¹⁶ The few essays that included discussions on the political and social hierarchy in ancient Burundi were among the narratives that most clearly outlined the unequal relations between what were variously defined as social classes or ethnic groups. They often also mentioned the otherwise largely neglected Ganwa. In order of importance, these narratives presented the Ganwa as the ruling authorities – as ‘the royal class/ clan’ or as ‘princes of the blood’,⁴¹⁷ the Tutsi as wealthy cattle-owners close to the authorities; the Hutu as farmers or as employees of the Tutsi and of the Ganwa, and, according to one student, as a group which ‘didn’t like to govern’,⁴¹⁸ and, finally, the Twa as forest-dwelling hunters, craftsmen or blacksmiths, who, according to another respondent, were considered to be outcasts with whom ‘one could not drink or eat together’ as well as ‘the royal courts’ buffoons’.⁴¹⁹ Contrary to these rather unique accounts, descriptions of the political organisation of the kingdom during the time of the sacred monarchs did not generally refer to the place of Hutu and Tutsi in the hierarchy of power. A main exception in this respect was a narrative that spoke of both Tutsi and Hutu chiefs as members of the political elites that were there to assist the king.⁴²⁰

While acknowledging the existence of social or ethnic differences and of unequal relations in Burundi’s traditional society, at the same time several essays underscored that all groups had been living together in peace and unity for centuries. Highlighting the secular unity of the Burundian nation while also admitting its ethnic heterogeneity, a student recounted that,

⁴¹⁶ B412

⁴¹⁷ B193, B354.

⁴¹⁸ B243.

⁴¹⁹ B422, 387.

⁴²⁰ B48. In her words, ‘the secular dynasty ruled with the help of Hutu or Tutsi chiefs’. This view starkly contrasted with the account of another student, according to whom, ‘the Tutsi ruled before the colonisation’. B234.

'Burundi is an old nation of at least 400 years, united but not homogeneous, consisting of three ethnic groups (Hutu, Tutsi, Twa) who lived together in peace'.⁴²¹

3.5.1.2.2 Identities in the colonial time

As outlined above, several students expressed a belief in the ancestral existence of ethnicity and ethnic differences, thereby neglecting the role of colonisation in transforming identities. Others, instead, as will be further illustrated below, underscored the critical responsibility of colonial teachings and policies in introducing such divisions within the Burundian nation. Understandings of the nature and degree of the societal transformations introduced by colonial powers were however found to differ among this group of respondents. On the one hand, those students who reported the pre-colonial existence of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa as social classes generally maintained that the role of the colonial powers had consisted in transforming these existing identities into antagonistic ethnic groups – or races, casts or clans, according to three other respondents, respectively. One pupil, for instance, whose views have already been reported above (see note 1239), recounted that,

'The country was once occupied by the Twa (pygmies) before the arrival of the Bantu population. They used the same language, Kirundi. Under the reign of Rutshatsi, the society continued to structure itself into two classes: Hutu and Tutsi. This social division was reinforced by the Belgian colonisation and took an ethnic aspect as the Belgians imposed the domination of the Tutsi, declared as a superior race.'⁴²²

On the other hand, a view was collected according to which divisions had been utterly created by the 'whites' by separating a traditionally united 'Burundian *ethnie*' into three different groups.⁴²³ An essay clearly summarised this understanding. In the words of this young Burundian,

'Before the colonisation, Burundi was a very beautiful and peaceful country. The Burundians didn't know ethnic groups or social conflicts. They instead constituted a united people, with only one ethnic group, and no Hutu Tutsi and Twa. People lived together in peace, with one king whom they respected, and they

⁴²¹ B231

⁴²² B372.

⁴²³ B168.

*loved each other, regarding each other as brothers and sisters. This was before they were divided by the Belgian colonizers. Nowadays the Burundians fight and kill each other.*⁴²⁴

Despite students' essays often emphasising the colonial role in separating the Burundian people, the criteria used by the colonizers to divide the population were only very rarely outlined. In contrast to Rwandan narratives, where various factors were mentioned, in these sporadic Burundian accounts, the imposed divisions were solely said to have been based on people's physiognomy. As reported by a respondent, 'they separated us according to their measurements of noses, feet, height, and according to skin colour'.⁴²⁵

3.5.1.3 The evolution of Burundian history: explaining the origins and dynamics of the conflict

3.5.1.3.1 The pre-colonial time: an idyllic past of peace, unity, and solidarity

With the exception of a handful of narratives according to which Burundi's traditional society had been characterised by unequal relations between Ganwa, Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa, as in Rwanda accounts that were collected in Burundi presented copious references to an idyllic pre-colonial time of peace, unity, and solidarity. Set apart from the rest of Burundi's history as an exceptionally good era, this period was described by a student as 'the good history before the colonisation'.⁴²⁶

Ancient Burundi, occasionally dubbed 'a country of milk and honey', was generally depicted as a culturally and linguistically homogeneous nation, and as an old, strong, prosperous and well-organised kingdom, with stable political institutions and well-established borders. With pride, a respondent asserted that ancient Burundi 'constituted a great nation and a great kingdom amongst its

⁴²⁴ B122.

⁴²⁵ B92.

⁴²⁶ B2.

neighbours'.⁴²⁷ Its population was said to have lived 'comfortably' and 'without worries' before the advent of colonial rule. Social relations in the kingdom were described as having been excellent, and 'among the best in the world'.⁴²⁸ Peaceful coexistence, solidarity, and feelings of friendship, love, and fraternity were reported to have characterised life in this period in accordance with 'Burundi's good traditional culture'. As highlighted by several students, in case of local disputes, continuous internal peace was guaranteed by resorting to the kingdom's various judicial practices and institutions, such as the Bashingantahe.⁴²⁹ In the words of a respondent, 'previously the inhabitants of Burundi lived in solidarity; there were no ethnic, racial or religious wars. When there were conflicts among the people, there were the Bashingantahe to resolve them'.⁴³⁰ The only ancient wars and conflicts that were mentioned were internal factional disputes involving royal families and the Ganwa, and, more frequently, the kingdom's wars of expansion and of defence against external threats. The latter included the wars that had been fought by Ntare Rugamba against neighbouring kingdoms such as Rwanda, and the wars of resistance that had been led by Mwezi Gisabo against Arab slave traders and the German colonizers. The kingdom's astonishing track record of military success was typically explained with the exceptional feelings of unity and patriotism existing among Burundians at that time. Also, its strength was credited to the valour and excellent military and organisational qualities of Burundian monarchs, spearheaded by the much-exalted kings Rugamba and Gisabo. As was extensively described in an essay,

*'Previously, Burundians had a patriotic spirit and a valiant heart. Whenever a menace hung over the country, every citizen flew to the rescue of his fatherland under the guidance of their brave kings. It was thanks to this love of the Burundi for their country and thanks to their unity that they managed to get rid of the slave raiders and of the early colonisers, although they were less armed.'*⁴³¹

⁴²⁷ B51.

⁴²⁸ B201.

⁴²⁹ This term refers to a traditional mechanism of justice and conflict resolution which relied on 'men of integrity' to settle disputes in the society. See, e.g., A. Naniwe-Kaburahe, 'The institution of bashingantahe in Burundi,' L. Huyse & M. Salter, *Traditional justice and reconciliation after violent conflict: learning from African experiences* (Stockholm: International IDEA 2008), 149-179.

⁴³⁰ B77.

⁴³¹ B133.

While the ancient times were commonly portrayed in a positive light, in exceptional cases students referred to this period in terms of ‘a bad history’. In these essays, respondents mentioned the many internal wars of succession, the unrestrained and absolute power of the king, and the low level of civilisation.⁴³² More frequently, descriptions of the pre-colonial time as a ‘bad history’ related to the many challenges that had marked Gisabo’s reign. This historical juncture was generally depicted as a problematic and sombre era, during which the kingdom had faced a number of serious threats which had eventually resulted in its irrevocable decline. Among these menaces was the occurrence of natural calamities and of internal dissidence by rebellious chiefs,⁴³³ and, especially, foreign invasions. In this context, Gisabo was greatly praised for the intrepid and heroic military resistance that he had organised to defend the kingdom’s sovereignty against the Arabs and the Germans – victoriously against the former and in vain against the latter. His tenacious anti-colonial resistance in the face of superior Western weaponry was for instance underscored by a student who compared the Burundian king’s heroism to the consenting attitude of Rwanda’s king Rwabugiri (sic). In his words,

‘While the Rwandan King Rwabugiri agreed to sign, Gisabo refused foreign domination. After bloody vicissitudes whereby great numbers of Barundi were killed on the battlefield due to the military superiority of the Germans, he however could not but sign the famous Treaty of Kiganda. He had to pay 424 heads of cattle to the Germans due to his insubordination.’⁴³⁴

‘From that moment on’, as argued by a respondent, ‘everything had changed’.⁴³⁵

3.5.1.3.2 The colonial time: the role of colonisation in Burundi’s history, and in the creation of the conflict

Students’ accounts of the time of the colonisation abounded. Altogether, they presented a mixed assessment of colonial rule. Individually, they instead generally

⁴³² According to a student, ‘Burundians before lived like wild animals’. B11.

⁴³³ Students mentioned in particular the rebels Maconco and Kirima.

⁴³⁴ B45. The military superiority of the German invaders was underscored by a student in particular. He recounted how, ‘the Germans with their automatic weapons were facing the poor Burundians who carried nothing but spears’. B434.

⁴³⁵ B322.

expressed either a positive or a negative view of Burundi's contact with the European newcomers.

From a positive perspective, the colonisation was usually recognised as having brought development, progress, and civilisation. Among the positive contributions mentioned by Burundian students was the introduction of such novelties as schools, churches, hospitals, roads, industrial crops, a monetary economy, as well as written literature. Mixed views were however collected with regard to this last innovation. Colonial literary production was deemed by a student to have been crucial to the promotion of knowledge on the country's history. Conversely, a couple of essays questioned the veracity of its contents. According to a respondent, 'this literature contains a lot of prejudices, and hasty and erroneous conclusions'.⁴³⁶ Similarly, again drawing a parallel with Rwanda, another student affirmed that, 'the history of Burundi that was essentially made by the whites is a mythical history which poses the same problem as in Rwanda.'⁴³⁷

If several pupils acknowledged a number of contributions that had been brought by the colonisers, negative assessments of colonial rule clearly dominated students' accounts of this period. In the view of two respondents, the colonial time represented respectively 'a very dark page of our history' and 'a period of suffering and misery which should never be allowed to return.'⁴³⁸ The arrival of the Europeans was thus frequently portrayed as signalling a radical break with the idyllic ancient past. This understanding was clearly expressed by a student, according to whom, 'with the arrival of the colonizers everything changed and the problems arrived.'⁴³⁹

As a general rule, the narratives that were collected in Burundi tended to strongly emphasize 'the misdeeds of the colonisation' and of the Belgians in particular. A rather extensive list of colonial misdeeds emerged from students' accounts. Firstly, the colonial 'invaders' were accused of having subjected the Burundian

⁴³⁶ B62.

⁴³⁷ B188.

⁴³⁸ B427, B319.

⁴³⁹ B456.

population to subjugation, oppression, injustice, abuse, exploitation, and enforced hardship and misery. More specifically, essays mentioned the imposition of forced labour (or slavery) and of *corvées* as well as the enforcement of corporal punishment. Two students extensively covered the colonial abuses. In their words,

'The colonizers did everything they wanted in our country, seeking to satisfy their own interests and not those of Burundi. Burundians were mistreated, had no freedoms or rights, they were forced to endless work, and were whipped until blood in front of their families'.

*'During the colonisation, Burundians were treated like slaves and wild animals and had to pay heavy taxes. At that time, people lived in extreme poverty, and they did not eat and drink. Everything they produced had to be transported to the colonizers. They have to give them meat, milk, eggs, crops, and if they refused they were whipped. Many died and many decided to leave their homeland to go to neighbouring countries'.*⁴⁴⁰

Secondly, while exploiting the 'exceptional' political organisation of the kingdom by adopting a system of indirect rule, colonial powers were blamed for having severely weakened the monarchy by turning the king and the customary chiefs into their mere agents.⁴⁴¹ In addition, according to a couple of respondents, the Belgians had been responsible for the obscure death of a defiant King Gisabo. Thirdly, the kingdom was said by a student to have been unilaterally amputated from part of its territory (i.e. the Bugufi). This respondent argued that, in so doing, the colonisers had nullified the efforts and sacrifices that had been made by his ancestors to expand and defend Burundi's borders. Fourthly, the Europeans were denounced for having devalued and destroyed the country's good traditional culture, causing people's alienation and uprootedness.⁴⁴² Last but not least, as hinted at in the previous paragraph, colonial rule was frequently pointed the finger at for having radically transformed social relations for the worse.

Although to a lesser extent than in Rwanda, Burundian essays often portrayed the colonisers as having played a determinant role in dividing and antagonizing the population with the intention to favour their rule and to hinder the country's

⁴⁴⁰ B65, B169.

⁴⁴¹ In the words of a student, 'Burundians had such an exceptional organisation that the colonizers kept this organisation, establishing a system of indirect rule. The king and his chiefs continued to govern the country, but they were subjected to the colonial rule, becoming mere agents of transmission of orders given by the colonizing country. The king eventually lost all his sacred rights and absolute power'. B143.

⁴⁴² According to a student, 'the whites wanted to change our behaviour, our culture, our organisation'. B113.

independence. As in Rwanda, the main strategy that was said to have been employed for this purpose was the propagation of false divisive teachings on ethnicity. These teachings were alternatively referred to as ‘illusions’, ‘mentalities’ and ‘colonial heritage’. As explained by a student, ‘the colonisation created divisions among the Burundians, lying that there were ethnic groups in order to benefit from the crisis among us and to make our independence difficult’.⁴⁴³ Besides allegedly separating the population into different groups, the colonizers were believed by a couple of respondents to have fuelled tensions and hatred among the population by privileging the Tutsi to help rule the country on their behalf. In the words of two students, ‘the colonizers relied on the Mwami and especially on the Tutsi, while the Hutu were excluded from power’; ‘they told those whom they had called Tutsi to the rule based on their alleged racial superiority’.⁴⁴⁴ In more generic terms, another respondent referred to this situation of inequality by stating that, during the colonisation, ‘some were humiliated and others were exalted.’⁴⁴⁵ Usually, as in Rwanda, such accounts tended to directly link colonial divisive practices to the country’s post-colonial mass violence. It is especially through such practices that the colonisation was believed to have compromised Burundi’s future, bringing an ancient condition of peace and harmony to an end. Three extracts well illustrate this belief:

‘The colonisation marked the beginning of all the difficulties we have even today. At that point, another history began in Burundi; it’s from there that the genocide stems’.

‘By sowing division and hatred between the Burundians and by teaching the different ethnic groups, the colonizers destroyed the peace. The Burundians began to hate and kill each other because of the ethnicity whereas before they had lived harmoniously’.

*‘With the colonisation, the solidarity of the past was lost. People no longer helped each other and instead began to massacre each other because of ethnic issues, forgetting the good past of our ancestors’.*⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ B237.

⁴⁴⁴ B189, B44.

⁴⁴⁵ B175.

⁴⁴⁶ B35, B323, B312. Another respondent similarly stated that, ‘[t]he ethnic terms were brought by the whites to divide the Burundians, and to destroy their good organisation. The division sown by the Belgians developed until Burundi was trampled in blood by ethnic divisions. It was the beginning of massacres among brothers’. B74.

While these narratives typically blamed the colonisers for having caused or, at best, contributed to the country's post-colonial violence, only one student appeared to simultaneously acknowledge a degree of local responsibility. In this account, the population was reproached insofar as it had accepted and embraced colonial divisive teachings, both at that time and after independence.⁴⁴⁷

Not only were the 'whites' said to have sown division and tension among the population in order to hamper independence, another major adverse impact that the colonial actions were deemed to have had on Burundi's destiny related to Belgium's manoeuvring in the context of the country's decolonisation.

3.5.1.3.3 The decolonisation process and the achievement of independence

Students' essays revealed a widespread appreciation of the historical significance of Prince Rwagasore and of his heroic independence struggle among young Burundians.⁴⁴⁸ In several narratives, Burundi's Independence Hero and his nationalist party Uprona were set against those whom a respondent defined as 'the friends of the colonisers', notably Ntindereza and Biroli's PDC.⁴⁴⁹ The commonly accepted heroic image of Rwagasore appeared to be reinforced by an understanding that the prince had died while defending his country and his people from foreign oppression. In the words of a respondent, 'Prince Rwagasore had fought until his death for the freedom and independence of his country'.⁴⁵⁰

Although Rwagasore's assassination was mentioned very frequently in students' essays, little was stated about the circumstances surrounding this 'unfortunate event'. In most cases, respondents specified the date and, more sporadically, the

⁴⁴⁷ B60.

⁴⁴⁸ By presenting Rwagasore as heading a movement led by educated elites, several students underlined the crucial role that had been inadvertently played by colonial education in leading to the country's independence. As recounted by a respondent, 'at that time, the children of the royal class were sent to study in Belgium. This was the case of Prince Rwagasore, the hero of our independence. Upon his return, he fought against Belgian colonisation.' B73.

⁴⁴⁹ B117. Students only rarely mentioned other parties, such the UPD, the PP (described by a student as a 'pro-Hutu party') and Uprohutu (the precursor of Palipehutu). The only student who mentioned Uprohutu seems to have copied its account from Wikipedia. He underscored how this party, compared to Parmehutu in Rwanda, had failed to strongly position itself on the Burundian political scene. In his words, 'Uprohutu, which later became Palipehutu, did not obtain any role in Burundi's new political landscape, while Parmehutu in Rwanda took power by force two years earlier'. B9.

⁴⁵⁰ B113.

location of this incident. Conversely, they only rarely included discussions on the responsibility for this murder. Most commonly, students pointed the finger at the Belgians, or, more generically, at the colonizers or the whites. They were identified as the prime suspects in the affair. Their involvement, which was explained with their desire to impede the country's achievement of independence, was stated to have been either direct ('they killed him')⁴⁵¹, or indirect, through a plot that they had orchestrated, but not directly carried out. As recounted by a student, 'Rwagasore was murdered at the behest of the Belgians'.⁴⁵² In more infrequent cases, respondents accused other actors, who were mentioned either alone or along with the Belgians. These included Rwagasore's political opponents, and, more specifically, PDC leaders Ntidendereza and/or Birori. In one essay, they were described as 'the prince's enemies' in the context of Bezi-Batare rivalries.⁴⁵³ Generally, the names of these political figures appeared in conjunction with the Greek Kageorgis, Rwagasore's actual assassin. In few other accounts, blame for the prince's assassination was instead more generally apportioned to 'his enemies' or to 'some rebels whose identity is still unknown today'.⁴⁵⁴

Eventually, as a student recounted, Rwagasore's assassination, in defiance of the wishes of its sponsors, did not stand in the way of independence. Thanks to the perseverant struggle of the prince's compatriots, independence was finally gained on 01/07/1962, a date that seemed to be well-engrained in the minds of young Burundians. In the words of this respondent,

*'The murder of our hero, Rwagasore, did not prevent the proclamation of independence. While the Belgians believed to have eliminated all risks, the fighting was set forth by the prince's companions with the support of the people who finally managed to achieve independence on July 7, 1962. Now we are happy because we are independent.'*⁴⁵⁵

Although Rwagasore's murder had not precluded Burundi from gaining freedom from foreign domination, two students somberly believed that this event had forever compromised the nation's future. As the prince was deemed to have

⁴⁵¹ B126.

⁴⁵² B78.

⁴⁵³ B193.

⁴⁵⁴ B264, B217.

⁴⁵⁵ B202.

played a crucial role in unifying the nation, his death was perceived to have allowed ethnic divisions to triumph, with tragic consequences. In their words,

'The kingdom never recovered from Rwagasore's death because only he had been able to unify Hutu, Tutsi, Ganwa, and Twa'.

*'After the death of Rwagasore, who had fought for a freedom without ethnic distinctions, ethnicity prevailed in our country.'*⁴⁵⁶

3.5.1.3.4 The post-colonial time: Burundi's Three Republics

As hinted at above, the picture of Burundi's post-colonial time, as was generally drawn by students, appeared rather sombre. Described by a couple of respondents as 'a bad past', this new phase in the country's history was largely associated with coups d'état and assassinations, and, especially, with recurrent violent crises and massacres. In a context in which this part of the national history has not been addressed in the school curriculum, students' accounts tended to be generally vague, with the exception of few particularly outspoken narratives.

Burundi's three republics, although much cited, were only rarely described or assessed. In such cases, the three successive governments were portrayed as military regimes that had seized power by force. Occasionally, a handful of features were presented which specifically characterised each republic. In particular, Micombero's First Republic was associated, on the one hand, with increased development, and, on the other, with authoritarianism, the assassination of King Ntare V, and the 1972 events. Bagaza's Second Republic was the least commented upon. The few essays that described this historical juncture presented it as having been characterised especially by exceptional development efforts, as well as by the occultation of the ethnic question and by restrictions on Christian practices. In contrast to students' mixed assessment of the first two republics, Buyoya's Third Republic was portrayed exclusively in a positive light. Specifically, Buyoya was credited for having introduced a re-balancing of power among Burundi's ethnic groups, a Charter of National Unity, as well as a new

⁴⁵⁶ B61, B99.

Constitution, which, in 1993, led to the organisation of the first-ever democratic and multiparty elections since the country's independence.

In addressing the political history of independent Burundi, only a handful of students discussed issues related to the controversial theme of ethnicity and power. As reported earlier in this section, several respondents had commented on the unequal nature of Hutu-Tutsi relations in the pre-colonial and the colonial eras. Conversely, with regard to the historical juncture between 1966 and 1993, while four students mentioned Uprona's monopartism, only three others referred to a Tutsi supremacy and monopoly on power. One among them, for instance, spoke of a 'government dominated by the Tutsi minority, which traditionally holds power in Burundi'.⁴⁵⁷ As mentioned above, this situation was said by a couple of students to have started to change at the end of the 1980s thanks to Buyoya's policies. According to an essay, Buyoya had favoured a 'rebalancing of power between Hutu and Tutsi' which eventually resulted in the establishment of 'the first government which was in equal parts Hutu and Tutsi'.⁴⁵⁸ If several narratives had underscored a condition of Tutsi supremacy in this period, none of the leaders of the three republics was explicitly identified as belonging to the Tutsi community, and, more specifically, to the Hima clan or the Bururi group. In contrast, some rare accounts stated the Hutu identity of several successors of President Buyoya, notably of Ndadaye and Nkurunziza. Generally, in such particularly outspoken essays, Ndadaye was identified not only as a Hutu of Frodebu, but also as Burundi's first-ever Hutu president. In this sense, the Tutsi identity of the country's previous heads of state was in so doing merely implied.

3.5.1.3.5 The 'crises': definitions and characterisations (nature, causes), circumstances, and actors and their roles (responsibility, victimhood, heroism)

In relation to the first five decades of Burundi's independence, students' references were the most abundant with regard to the country's post-colonial instances of conflict and mass violence.

⁴⁵⁷ B202.

⁴⁵⁸ B423.

In some cases, respondents generically spoke of Burundi's 'many' wars. In others, they mentioned in particular the events of 1972, and, especially, of 1993. In a number of essays, the primacy of these two events among all crises was explicitly stated. Whereas the former was depicted by some as the country's first great crisis, the latter was more sombrely portrayed as 'a fratricidal war without precedent, which was the longest, the hardest, and the most notable in Burundian history'.⁴⁵⁹ Given the prominence and the particularly contested nature of these two crises, their representations in students' accounts will be discussed more in depth further in this paragraph.

Compared to the 1972 and the 1993 events, Burundi's other instances of violence received relatively little attention. While not completely absent from students' narratives, the crises of 1965 and 1988, in particular, were often only cited *en passant*, without providing much detail. On the 1965 events, the three most elaborate essays mentioned respectively the assassination of Prime Minister Ngendandumwe, a coup d'état that was followed by a Hutu massacre, and the Busangana killings. Whereas the first two essays referred to Hutu victims, conversely the third one emphasised an instance of mass violence against members of the Tutsi community. As for the 1988 crisis, most respondents limited themselves to situate the events in space (in Ntega and Marangara), and, to a lesser extent, in time (16/08/1988). All other incidents were greatly overlooked or omitted. For instance, only three respondents mentioned the troubles of 1969, 1971, and 1991 respectively, without again providing any further detail.

3.5.1.3.5.1 Definitions and characterisations: nature, causes and actors

A large variety of terms and expressions were used to refer to the violent events experienced in Burundi in the post-colonial time. Often without further elaboration, students defined these occurrences mostly in terms of 'wars' or 'crises'. More sporadically, respondents spoke of 'conflict(s)' and 'tensions', of 'clashes' and 'fights', of 'killings' and 'massacres', or, more generically, of 'tragedies', 'troubles', 'difficulties', or 'events'. In some cases, as we will see in

⁴⁵⁹ B444.

more detail below, the term ‘genocide(s)’, or *Ihonyabwoko* in Kirundi, was likewise employed.

Next to these series of substantives, several adjectives were sometimes added to further describe the events. A first category of adjectives underscored the length and the gravity of the crises. These included such words as ‘long’, ‘endless’, ‘permanent’, and ‘regular’, as well as ‘difficult’, ‘profound’, ‘grave’, ‘dramatic’, and ‘bloody’. A second group of adjectives referred to the internecine nature of the conflict, thereby hinting at the main actors involved in the violence. Several essays spoke of a ‘civil’, ‘national’ or ‘fratricidal’ war, which had been ‘fought among us Burundians’ and ‘among Burundian brothers’. Others instead referred more specifically to an ‘ethnic’ or ‘inter-ethnic’ war, which had been ‘fought between ethnic groups’ or ‘races’, and, especially, ‘between (the) Hutu and (the) Tutsi’. In less frequent cases, the conflict was portrayed as a ‘socio-political’ confrontation, which had involved both ethnic groups and political parties. The more elaborate descriptions of the crises, and, in particular, of their actors, causes and motives, and of the criteria adopted in singling out victims, confirmed students’ understanding of the primarily ethnic, and to a lesser extent political, nature of the conflict and violence experienced in Burundi.

Identity – and ethnicity in particular – was widely perceived by students to have been at the core of the Burundian conflict.⁴⁶⁰ Firstly, as hinted at above, the identity-based nature of the conflict was underscored in numerous essays which identified Burundi’s ethnic groups, and especially Hutu and Tutsi, as the main actors in the violence. Often overlooked, the Twa were explicitly stated by two students to have not been involved in the confrontations. One of them explained that, ‘in Burundi, there have been conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi. Regarding the Twa, I’ve never heard that they had conflicts with the other races’. Similarly, his colleague affirmed that, ‘the Twa have never been the target of massacres.’⁴⁶¹ Secondly, ethnicity in general, and, more specifically, ethnic problems or divisions, were almost invariably seen as having been the cause of the violence.

⁴⁶⁰ Respondents spoke of wars ‘based’ or ‘caused’ by ethnicity.

⁴⁶¹ B300, and B234.

This belief emerged, for instance, from such statements according to which, ‘the Burundian people had killed each other because of problems related to ethnicity’.⁴⁶² As mentioned earlier in this section, respondents often traced the origins of these divisions back to the colonial time, in so doing mainly blaming the recent internecine violence on outside actors. Thirdly, ethnicity, or ethnic difference, was depicted as a criterion in the perpetration of the violence. In the words of a respondent, ‘the ones have killed the others because they are Tutsi or Hutu’.⁴⁶³ In relation to the ethnic violence experienced in her country, a student alluded to the use of stereotypical phenotypes to single out Hutu or Tutsi individuals. She explained that, ‘at that time, there was this practice of eliminating someone with a thin or big nose, who did not share the same size as their own’.⁴⁶⁴

More sporadically, politics was reported to have been another determining factor in the conflict and violence that ravaged the country. Firstly, while Hutu and Tutsi were generally depicted as the main actors in Burundi’s conflict, the involvement of political actors was also sometimes mentioned, especially in relation to the most recent war. These actors included, in particular, the government on the one side, and rebel groups on the other side. The latter most notably comprised the ‘Hutu’ FNL, ‘which fought against the Tutsi people’,⁴⁶⁵ and the CNDD-FDD. Secondly, by usually placing these actors’ confrontations in the context of a violent zero-sum competition for power, several respondents underscored the political causes and motives of the conflict and violence. In this sense, in stark contrast to accounts that primarily blamed outside actors for the country’s post-colonial violence, a couple of essays acknowledged the responsibility of power-thirsty local actors for the country’s misery. A student, for instance, affirmed that, ‘Burundi has been destroyed by his own children who wanted to govern’. Similarly, another student observed that, ‘many wars have been experienced in Burundi due to politics because each wanted to be the leader.’⁴⁶⁶ Thirdly, if interests related to power were perceived by some as a reason to fight, political

⁴⁶² B415.

⁴⁶³ B389.

⁴⁶⁴ B259.

⁴⁶⁵ B27.

⁴⁶⁶ B412, 310.

affiliation was also occasionally presented as having been a reason for being targeted in the violence. As explained by a student, ‘during the 1993 crisis, many people were killed because of their political party and their ethnicity’.⁴⁶⁷

3.5.1.3.5.2 Actors and their roles: the issue of victimhood and responsibility, and of ‘genocide’

With regard to controversial issues of victimhood and responsibility in Burundi’s post-colonial conflict and violence, a common tendency among students consisted in speaking in terms of *mutual* killings, notably between Hutu and Tutsi – who ‘have been killing each other for some time’.⁴⁶⁸ As a general rule, thus, roles of victims and perpetrators were not ascribed along specific ethnic or political lines. A few exceptions were however encountered which specified the ethnic identity of the victims. This clarification was most common in outspoken narratives that included discussions on the highly contentious and politically charged topic of genocide.

Overall, students’ accounts clearly reflected the contested and still unresolved nature of such discussions. Echoing existing disagreements in the broader society, young people’s answers revealed a lack of consensus, first of all, as to whether there ever was a case, or even multiple cases, of genocide in Burundi, and, secondly, with regard to the identity of the victims of such instances of mass violence.

Amongst the collected narratives, only few mentioned the loaded term ‘genocide’. Whether the general omission of this term was reflective of a belief in the non-occurrence of this ‘crime of crimes’ in Burundi, or whether it derived from a discomfort in addressing this issue, is difficult to argue. What can however be safely concluded from the analysis of students’ essays is the existence of divergent views among the surveyed population as to the number of genocides experienced in Burundi: one or several. When found, the word ‘genocide’ appeared in either plural or singular form. Among those essays which employed a plural form, two

⁴⁶⁷ B383.

⁴⁶⁸ B20.

main groups could be identified. The first consisted in generic and unspecified references to multiple and successive ‘ethnic genocides’ that had occurred *between* Tutsi and Hutu since independence. The second consisted in more specific references to the ‘two genocides’ of 1972 and 1993. Here as well, when the occurrence of two genocides was recognised, the violence was most commonly said to have taken place *between* Hutu and Tutsi. Only one exception was found, which described the 1972 crisis as a ‘*Hutu* genocide’, and the 1993 crisis as a ‘*Tutsi* genocide’.⁴⁶⁹ In the few cases in which the word ‘genocide’ was instead presented in the singular form, the term was generally used to selectively refer *either* to the events of 1972 *or* to the events of 1993. In most such cases, the recognition of a single genocide – in 1972 or in 1993 – was coupled with a portrayal of the other instance of violence as ‘simple’ killings or massacres which had targeted either both communities or a circumscribed group within one community. When the events in 1972 were described as a ‘Hutu genocide’, or, according to a student, as ‘a genocide against the Hutu intellectuals and semi intellectuals’,⁴⁷⁰ the 1993 events were usually overlooked or at most associated to the killing of ‘many Hutu *and* Tutsi’ indistinctly. Conversely, when the 1993 events were referred to as a ‘Tutsi genocide’ which had taken place in the context of a long and bloody civil war, the 1972 events were portrayed as ‘retaliations between Hutu and Tutsi’, as ‘massacres of Hutu in the south of the country’, or as ‘massacres of Hutu rebels’.⁴⁷¹ With regard to this controversial theme, a student set himself apart by avoiding to draw conclusions in a context in which, as he highlighted, the truth continued to remain obscure as to whether the violent events were to be characterised as either a ‘simple’ ethnic war or as genocide. In her words, ‘in Burundi, there were wars that some called ethnic war and others genocide, but until now we do not know what it really was’.⁴⁷² Less explicitly, two other respondents hinted at this open controversy and revealed their neutral stance on the matter by speaking of the occurrence of ‘genocide(s)’ and of ‘war or genocide’.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁹ B428.

⁴⁷⁰ B49.

⁴⁷¹ B36, B417.

⁴⁷² B229.

⁴⁷³ B3, B308.

Remarkably, whereas the ethnic identity of the victims of various forms of violence was sometimes cited, the ethnic or political identity of the perpetrators of such genocides, massacres, or persecutions was never explicitly specified.

3.5.1.3.5.3 Circumstances: origins and dynamics of the 1972 and 1993 events

Accounts on the circumstances of the waves of violence experienced in Burundi were particularly vague and meagre with regard to the occurrences in 1972. The most detailed narratives situated the events in time (under Micombero's presidency), and, more rarely, in space (in Southern Burundi). In relation to the location of the events, none of the respondents mentioned Rumonge (one of the towns that had been purposely sampled in the framework of the present study) as the starting point of this crisis. As for the origins and dynamics of the events, only one student identified 'a Hutu revolt against the authoritarian Tutsi-dominated regime' as the incident that sparked the violence.⁴⁷⁴ With regard to the assassination of King Ntare V, the few students who mentioned this occurrence failed to place it in the context of the 1972 crisis. Instead, the regicide tended to be erroneously associated with the end of the monarchy, which, in fact, had taken place a decade earlier. Blame for this crime was variously apportioned to unknown assailants, some Republicans, or, more specifically, to Micombero. According to a student, for instance, the former president was responsible for having orchestrated Ntare's return to Burundi from Uganda to assassinate him and to establish the Republic. As for the dynamics of the mass violence itself, as hinted at above, the most outspoken accounts of this period described the 1972 events as an instance of Hutu victimhood. Respondents variously referred to a Hutu genocide, a selective genocide against the educated Hutu, and to massacres or persecutions of the Hutu in general or of Hutu rebels. Due to the violence, a student explained, the Hutu had been forced to massively flee to Tanzania, where they had organised themselves into a rebellion with the aim of fighting and overthrowing the Tutsi-dominated government.⁴⁷⁵ Whereas these essays

⁴⁷⁴ B360.

⁴⁷⁵ B202.

recognised the Hutu as the victims of the 1972 events, they fell short of specifying the identity of those responsible for the violence.

Considering the circumstances of the much-cited 1993 crisis, accounts appeared to be more abundant and detailed. In particular, essays often identified the assassination of President Ndadaye as the cause and/or the triggering factor of the ensuing civil war. This frequent mention demonstrated the respondents' general understanding of the historical significance of this incident. Ndadaye himself was widely recognised as a prominent personality who had significantly marked Burundi's history and destiny. He was typically presented as a national hero. As such, his name was often mentioned alongside Rwagasore's. More specifically, Ndadaye was portrayed as Burundi's 'hero of democracy', whose merit consisted in having introduced and/or defended democracy until his death. If Ndadaye's victory in Burundi's first-ever democratic elections was associated with the advent of democratic governance in the country, his assassination in a deadly coup that took place only three months later was widely reported to have plunged the nation into its worst-ever crisis. As recounted by two students,

'This assassination set fire to the powder by triggering a grave civil war that lasted 10 years'.

'With this assassination the country fell into complete chaos: a war broke out between Burundians, who were divided among themselves and began to kill each other'.⁴⁷⁶

Despite the acknowledged historical saliency of this incident, the matter of responsibility for this much-mentioned murder was only rarely discussed by students. Touching upon this issue, a respondent underscored the continuing lack of clarity around this affair. As she pointed out, 'this tragic death has remained in the dark to this day'.⁴⁷⁷ In the few cases in which blame was apportioned, fingers were pointed at Ndadaye's political opponents and at military actors. The identity of these 'enemies of peace', as a student described them, remained however undisclosed.⁴⁷⁸ In rather vague terms, for instance, a respondent argued that, 'the

⁴⁷⁶ B98, B182.

⁴⁷⁷ B58.

⁴⁷⁸ B92.

murder of the president, which was caused by the hatred of the opposition parties, was followed by the decision by the others to take revenge'.⁴⁷⁹ In a context in which Ndadaye's ethnic and political affiliation (a Hutu of Frodebu) was rarely cited, such accounts thus only implicitly suggested the identity of the parties involved in the murder, or of those who sought revenge. The single exception in this respect was a narrative which spoke of 'Tutsi killers of the Hutu president'.⁴⁸⁰ This was also the sole case in which roles of both victimhood and responsibility in Burundi's violence were explicitly attributed along ethnic lines.

3.5.1.3.5.4 Consequences

Students' descriptions of the consequences of Burundi's crises were not particularly extensive. Generally, they mainly concerned the 1993 civil war, a crisis that numerous respondents had directly experienced at a more or less young age.

In most cases, students' essays emphasised the great human losses caused by this decade-long civil war. Although a handful of pupils had spoken of the occurrence of a 'Tutsi genocide' during the war, respondents showed a general tendency to indistinctly depict the Burundian people as a whole as the victims of the violence. The number of deaths resulting from war-related killings were said to have been 'many'. No mortality figures were instead cited, thereby pointing to a propensity to avoid discussions on another controversial issue. The only exception in this regard was a narrative that spoke of 'millions' of lives that had been lost in the violence.⁴⁸¹ Besides human losses, mass displacement was another frequently mentioned consequence of the war. Again, while no figures were provided, 'many' were reported to have been forced to flee their homes to find refuge elsewhere. In a couple of cases, students highlighted the hardship caused by the displacement, either in neighbouring countries, where 'life was very difficult', or internally, e.g. in another *commune* or in the forest, where people 'were forced to live like

⁴⁷⁹ B238.

⁴⁸⁰ B419.

⁴⁸¹ B222.

animals'.⁴⁸² In this context of death and displacement, a young respondent mentioned a resulting situation of broken and separated families. As he recounted, 'due to the war, children lost their parents, and parents lost their children.'⁴⁸³ Occasionally, the condition of Burundi's children and youth received special attention. Several students, for example, reported the existence of many war orphans in the country as well as a state of psychological trauma suffered by this group.

While most accounts emphasised the human costs of the war, a number of essays focused on the material consequences of this violent experience. In particular, respondents mentioned the destruction and devastation of the country's infrastructure, as well as a prevailing condition of severe socio-economic crisis and pervasive poverty. The latter was perceived by some to have hit the youth especially hard. Despite the emphasis on the specific plight of Burundi's youth – a group to which the respondents belonged, – the collected essays did not include students' recollections of their personal experience with the violence. Their narratives instead tended to be rather anonymous and to show a marked degree of distance between the story told and its teller.

3.5.1.3.5.5 The end of the conflict: the peace process and the transition

Whereas the starting point of the 1993 civil war was widely recognised to coincide with Ndadaye's assassination, accounts largely diverged as to its point of termination. A variety of years were mentioned, covering a period extending from the year 2000 to 2008. In most cases, students who referred to this issue situated the end of the war in 2003, the date of the signing of the peace accords with Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD. The year 2000, during which the Arusha Peace Agreement was signed, was cited more rarely, thereby possibly pointing to a belief in the limited significance of this event in the actual achievement of peace in the country.⁴⁸⁴ In two cases, the emphasis was instead placed on the

⁴⁸² B372, B351.

⁴⁸³ B173.

⁴⁸⁴ This accord was erroneously believed by a couple of respondents to have also been signed by the CNDD.

negotiations and the peace accords that had involved Burundi's last major rebel movement at war, i.e. the FNL (2006). Yet another respondent indicated the end date of the war with a question mark ('1993-?'). It is unclear whether the use of a question mark here meant to express uncertainty as to the date of the end of the conflict or, alternatively, to underscore the continuation of the war in the present time.

In comparison to the topic of war, Burundi's peace processes, and in particular the Arusha Accords, did not figure prominently in students' accounts. Only few narratives, for instance, mentioned the 'dialogue' that was held between Buyoya's government and the rebels. Clearly condemning the militant acts of 'these rebels who were hiding in the forest', two students referred to these groups as people 'who troubled the national security' and 'who terrorised the population'.⁴⁸⁵ Whereas the rebels' actions were disapproved of by these respondents, conversely Buyoya was occasionally extolled for his positive role in the crisis. A student, in particular, expressed his gratitude to the former president for having organised the peace negotiations. In her words, 'the roundtable in Arusha was organised by our Buyoya, whom we thank very much for not wanting things to continue the same way'.⁴⁸⁶ In addition to this tribute, Buyoya's role was lauded by two other respondents, who respectively mentioned his 'so-called' 1996 coup d'état, which aimed to re-establish order in the midst of war, and his previous attempts to form an ethnically mixed government.⁴⁸⁷ With regard to the accords themselves, students only rarely outlined its provisions. These included the promotion of mutual understanding, the cessation of hostilities and the return to peace, the repatriation of refugees and exiles, and the establishment of a transitional period.

As for the 2000-2005 transitional period that ensued from the accords, very little was recounted in students' essays. Apart from mentioning Buyoya and Ndayizeye as Burundi's successive heads of state, the few comments in relation to this time

⁴⁸⁵ B87, B385.

⁴⁸⁶ B266.

⁴⁸⁷ B414, B249.

were mainly limited to describing this period as having led to the adoption of a new constitution and to the organisation of new democratic elections in 2005.⁴⁸⁸

3.5.1.3.6 The aftermath of the war, and the present time

Burundi's current situation since 2005 was extensively covered in students' essays. As revealed by their answers, perceptions among young Burundians appeared to be rather mixed with regard to the country's level of improvement compared to the past. In particular, the survey collected divergent views on the country's present condition with respect to such issues as democracy and good governance, peace and security, and socio-economic development.

The more positive accounts tended to present Burundi as a democratic country. The year 2005, widely portrayed as a crucial turning point in the national history, was seen as signalling a much-aspired 'return to democracy' and a new beginning. Looking back in time, several students highlighted the poor democratic record of their country, where democratic elections had been held only three times since independence, i.e. in 1993, 2005 and 2010. In a more tragic tone, a couple of respondents observed that current President Nkurunziza had been not only the second democratically elected head of state in Burundi's history, but also the first-ever elected president to complete his mandate without being assassinated or forcibly removed from power. According to some of the students, a main proof of the present state of democracy consisted in the fact that free multi-party elections, rather than coups d'état, were now determining who had the right to govern the country. As they pointed out, through the elections, the Burundian people had finally been empowered to choose their leaders and representatives, and to dismiss them in case of dissatisfaction with their actions. In addition, Burundi was occasionally described as a country where freedom of expression and the rule of law were now found to prevail. As reported by a respondent, 'in Burundi today,

⁴⁸⁸ One student, the only to cite the exact date of the agreement (28/08/2000), mentioned the involvement of Mandela in the negotiations.

every person has the right to say whatever he wants, provided he does not break the law; and if you break the law, you will be judged according to it.’⁴⁸⁹

Besides references to issues of democracy and good governance, students abundantly spoke of the current state of peace and stability, or, rather, of the absence of war in Burundi. While war was usually said to have ended, opinions among students appeared to diverge as to the extent to which peace had been established in the country. For some, Burundi was already ‘in perfect peace’, a condition which, according to a respondent, had been achieved after a ‘painful and slow’ process.⁴⁹⁰ As a student declared, ‘[t]oday we are happy because we have freedom and the war is over’.⁴⁹¹ For others, instead, ‘peace is returning to Burundi little by little’.⁴⁹² The still ongoing nature of the process of post-war reconstruction, peacebuilding and reconciliation in the country was underscored by one student in particular. He recounted that, ‘Burundians are emerging from the war; now they are trying to rebuild the country, to reconcile, and to build a new Burundi’.⁴⁹³ This return to peace, according to two respondents, had led to generalised feelings of joy among the population. The prevailing condition of peace was often associated with a triumph of national unity over ethnic divisions. As observed by a student,

*‘Despite the difficulties that Burundi has known, today everything is back in order. Ethnic divisions seem to have disappeared and we now live in brotherhood without looking at the origins or the tribe of the other. Over time, we have realised that we all are the children of a same Burundi’.*⁴⁹⁴

Similarly, another respondent argued that, today, ‘Hutu, Tutsi and Twa tend to disappear’.⁴⁹⁵

From a socio-economic perspective, the country was presented by some as gradually evolving towards a more advanced stage of development. In particular, students reported the expansion of social services to the benefit of the population.

⁴⁸⁹ B243.

⁴⁹⁰ B274.

⁴⁹¹ B211.

⁴⁹² B71.

⁴⁹³ B52.

⁴⁹⁴ B322.

⁴⁹⁵ B114.

As they observed, this improvement was demonstrated by the multiplication of schools and health centres, as well as by the introduction of free primary education and health care for children.

Overall, the improvement of the country's political, social and economic situation was believed to be the result of both internal and external dynamics. For the most part, these promising changes were attributed to Nkurunziza's 'good government'. In this sense, the president's rise to power was generally portrayed as a positive development. Whereas Nkurunziza's re-election in 2010 appeared to inspire confidence in the future, a couple of essays highlighted the contested nature of the election results. They however avoided taking sides on the matter. This neutrality was most explicitly expressed by a student who declared that, 'there have been many rumours about this re-election. Let's allow time for us to guess who is telling the truth and who is lying'.⁴⁹⁶ While most narratives praised Nkurunziza for his positive government line, in one case, the encouraging changes were attributed to the actions of the population. Specifically, this respondent credited this improvement to a generalised understanding of the importance of self-agency and of working together for the future of the country – as opposed to working to, or to allowing anybody to destroy it, like in the past.⁴⁹⁷ Besides internal factors, Burundi's progress towards peace and development was, to a large extent, depicted as also deriving from its current participation in an ongoing process of regional integration. Students referred especially to the benefits of having joined the East African Community (EAC), next to such organisations as the Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries (CPGL), the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the African Union (AU). This participation, according to a respondent, 'is at the base of Burundi's peace, development, and good cooperation with other countries in the world'.⁴⁹⁸

In stark contrast to the positive image outlined above, several narratives presented a more sombre view of the country's current political, social, and economic situation. These more negative accounts highlighted, first of all, the existence of

⁴⁹⁶ B58.

⁴⁹⁷ B314.

⁴⁹⁸ B30.

ongoing problems of insecurity and instability. According to a few respondents, although the war had officially ended, killings and other crimes had continued to occur in the present time.⁴⁹⁹ According to others, war was instead still largely unfolding, especially in certain provinces, such as Bujumbura Rural. These continuous violent conflicts were mostly said to be linked to politics and to be fought among political parties, notably the ruling CNDD-FDD and Rwasa's FNL. To a lesser extent, the ongoing troubles were traced back to unresolved issues related to resources and land, as well as to ethnicity. Against a backdrop of perpetual tensions, several essays conveyed a deep concern for a present lack of unity, solidarity and love among Burundians. In particular, respondents lamented a prevailing existence of feelings of disunity, selfishness, greed and hypocrisy among a deeply divided population. A student presented a particularly negative assessment of her country's current state of polarisation and division. In her words,

'Nowadays Burundians are no longer as they were in the past. The ancient hospitality and love they used to have towards others have disappeared from their hearts. Burundians today are not united as before the colonisation and are divided by ethnicity and politics. Our brothers even went so far as to kill each other supposedly because they don't share the same ethnicity. Even today we continue to live the disorder sown by some enemies of the country and some Burundians who only want to satisfy their interests'.⁵⁰⁰

Another student underscored the fragility of the current peace by pointing to the threat posed by widespread feelings of animosity and vengeance among those who had lost their dear ones in Burundi's various instances of violence.⁵⁰¹ A strongly pessimistic view was presented by a respondent who emphasised the deep scars left by the wars, as well as the lack of substantive change despite the various attempts made by successive governments to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation throughout the years. As he observed,

'Burundi is still scarred by these wars. Attempts to reconcile the people were envisaged but without notable success. Various agreements were signed and several governments succeeded each other but without concrete change. In 2003,

⁴⁹⁹ In the words of a student, 'the war came to an end in 2008, but, to this day, people have not ceased being killed.' B367.

⁵⁰⁰ B286.

⁵⁰¹ B180.

some Hutu rebellions returned to the country and the CNDD-FDD won, but the expected change did not come.⁵⁰²

In relation to the failure of envisaged reconciliation efforts in Burundi, one essay further alluded to the barrier posed by a continuous situation of lack of clarity about the violent past. According to this account, ‘today Burundi still remains with some hidden histories’.⁵⁰³

In addition to a lack of peace, unity and reconciliation, students overwhelmingly mentioned a present state of extreme poverty, under-development, and socio-economic injustice and inequality. As poignantly stated by a respondent, ‘after all the wars that have devastated our country, it’s now the turn of poverty to make us suffer’.⁵⁰⁴ The condition of economic hardship that was believed to characterise the life of the general population, especially in the rural areas, was said to be particularly manifest in people’s chronic lack of means to pay for food, education, and health care. As a result, according to several essays, malnutrition, illiteracy and disease had been allowed to reach alarming proportions. This common predicament among the population was presented by some as starkly contrasting with the disproportionate wealth accumulated by the few, especially by politicians. In a context of widespread desperation, several students paid special attention to a number of specific social problems presently faced by the country’s children and youth. As mentioned earlier, a couple of essays cited the existence of many war orphans and street children. Also, a few accounts highlighted the difficulties encountered by young Burundians to access education and the job market. Left without a place in society due to a scarcity of opportunities, the highly frustrated youth were occasionally depicted as a current source of instability and an agent of violence in the country. As reported by a student, for instance, former young combatants, confronted with high unemployment rates, were now found to be regrouping in Burundi in order to make a living out of theft and robbery.

⁵⁰² B202

⁵⁰³ B179.

⁵⁰⁴ B388.

Several respondents advanced a number of suggestions for a better future. These included calls to promote peace and stability, good governance, social equality and justice, and the economic and moral well-being of the general population and of the youth in particular. This group, considered to be the key to the country's future, was portrayed by a student as a crucial force for change to be capitalised on. In his view, the cure for the nation's old wounds consisted in encouraging a change in the mindset of the Burundian youth based on a return to the largely lost traditional culture, and, in particular, on re-discovered feelings of love and obligation towards the fatherland.⁵⁰⁵ Urging a generalised patriotic awakening in the broader society, another respondent concluded his essay by declaring that, 'despite the efforts made by the authorities, we still have a long way to go. We must thus catch up by closely working together for the good future of our country. This is the only way to go'.⁵⁰⁶

3.5.2 The history of Burundi according to Rwandan and Congolese students

Having analysed Burundian narratives on the national history, this chapter will now turn to examining the history of Burundi as was recounted by young people from across the border. After providing a few general remarks on the content of Rwandan and Congolese accounts, the subsequent paragraphs will propose a more in-depth analysis of young people's views on Burundi's past, with a focus on issues related to identity and the conflict, as well as on Burundi's present time.

3.5.2.1 General remarks on the content of the narratives

Asked to narrate the history of neighbouring Burundi, several Rwandan and Congolese students admitted their limited knowledge on the matter. This

⁵⁰⁵ In her words, '[t]oday, we live with wounds that ethnic divisions have left in our hearts. Young Burundians seem to be forgetting more and more the value of their country and the good customs of our ancestors. They need to change certain mentalities because they are the Burundi of tomorrow'. B66.

⁵⁰⁶ B79.

ignorance was sometimes explained with the inaccessibility of information on this subject, and, more specifically, with the inadequate role of schools in providing such information. Once again, as in the case of Rwandan history, a couple of Congolese students justified their lack of knowledge on the history of the neighbouring country by stating that ‘I am simply not Burundian’.⁵⁰⁷

Essays on Burundian history which were collected in Rwanda and the DRC were generally limited to citing four main themes.⁵⁰⁸ These included the colonisation, the achievement of independence, the post-colonial violence, with a focus on the Hutu-Tutsi conflict, and, finally, the present time under incumbent President Nkurunziza. Conversely, accounts greatly overlooked Burundi’s pre-colonial history, its decolonisation, and post-colonial rule. References to Burundi’s key historical dates and personalities were also scarce. With regard to the former, essays mainly mentioned the achievement of independence in 1962, Ndadaye’s assassination and the start of the civil war in 1993, and, to a lesser extent, Nkurunziza’s elections in 2005. As for the latter, narratives usually included references to the country’s leaders, spearheaded by current President Nkurunziza and by Burundi’s Independence Hero Prince Rwagasore.⁵⁰⁹ More rarely, essays mentioned former presidents Ndadaye, Buyoya and Ntaryamira. Some of the most detailed accounts on Burundian history were provided by Rwandan students whose families had been displaced to Burundi since 1959-1961. These, for instance, were among the only essays which cited the foundation of the kingdom by Ntare Rushatsi and its defence by Mwezi Gisabo, as well as the successive coups by former Presidents Micombero, Bagaza, and Buyoya.⁵¹⁰

Overall, chronological confusion and factual mistakes abounded, especially among Congolese respondents. Among the most common inaccuracies was the temporal location of independence in 1960 or 1961, of the war in 1994, and of

⁵⁰⁷ C732.

⁵⁰⁸ Essays also included abundant references to non-historical issues, e.g. the country’s location, borders, surface, capital, demography, as well as economy, official languages and religion. References were also made to its current membership to various regional organisations.

⁵⁰⁹ A couple of Rwandan students confused Rwagasore with former Tanzanian President Nyerere and with Congo’s former Prime Minister Lumumba. Also, in one essay, his murder was erroneously reported to have taken place in 1962.

⁵¹⁰ This was for instance the case of a student who stated that, ‘as my family has spent 35 years in Burundi, I know all the details of its history’. B65.

Nkurunziza's elections in 2007. To a lesser extent, the survey also occasionally revealed a belief in the pre-colonial existence of a united kingdom of Ruanda-Urundi;⁵¹¹ the omission of Germany or Belgium as Burundi's colonial powers; the identification of France or England as the country's former colonisers, and of Rwigasore as Burundi's first President.

3.5.2.2 Identities in Burundi

In Rwandan and Congolese accounts, Burundi's inhabitants were typically referred to as 'Burundians' or 'Barundi'. In these narratives, the linguistic and cultural unity of this people was often underlined. Numerous respondents, however, also underscored the heterogeneous composition of Burundi's population by referring to the existence of Hutu, Tutsi, and, to a lesser extent, Twa. Rather frequently, this minority group was overlooked, especially in Congolese essays.

In Rwandan narratives, Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were typically defined as 'ethnic groups' or 'races'. More rarely, they were referred to as 'social classes', 'clans' or 'tribes'. Conversely, in the DRC, they were mainly described as 'ethnic groups' or 'tribes', and, more sporadically, as 'races' or 'peoples'.

In recounting the history of Burundi, several Rwandan essays traced the origins of divisions between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa back to the colonial time. In line with the official discourse on the history of their own country, these Rwandan respondents underscored the ancient existence of unity among Burundians before the arrival of the Europeans. This belief was expressed, for instance, by two students, according to whom,

'Like Rwanda, Burundi was for a long time a country that was characterised by union between the peoples, but after the arrival of the colonisers there were big changes: people put ethnicity first ...'

⁵¹¹ According to one student, 'Burundi had been conquered by a Rwandan king and annexed to Rwanda before the colonisation. But when the colonisers came to Africa, they separated Rwanda and Burundi and each became an independent country'. R462. Three other Rwandan students further traced the origins of the Burundian kingdom in Rwanda. As recounted by one of them, 'Burundi's founder Ntare Rushatsi came from Rwanda'. R754.

*'The Belgians divided Burundi into three races, like in Rwanda ...'*⁵¹²

A resemblance was thus often recognised between Burundian and Rwandan societies on account of their similar demographic make-up and history. As observed by a student, 'Burundi and Rwanda have almost the same people, culture and history, and even the same problems'.⁵¹³ Two Rwandan respondents, however, highlighted a crucial difference between these two countries' social organisation. In their words,

'In Burundi, there are three ethnic groups, Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. They are nothing but the three social classes that we had here in Rwanda'.

*'Burundi is a country of different clans, Hutu, the Tutsi and Twa, like Rwanda before the genocide'.*⁵¹⁴

In contrast to the current situation in Rwanda, 'ethnism' or 'racism', described as the separation and segregation of the population into ethnic groups or races, was reported to still characterise Burundian culture today. As a result of a continued adherence to this 'ideology', internal social relations in Burundi were often believed to be marked by a perpetual state of conflict and war between Hutu and Tutsi. This predicament, according to a couple of essays, found expression in the existence of segregation into 'Tutsi and Hutu boroughs in the country'.⁵¹⁵

While several Rwandan students expressed their disapproval of a long-lived abhorrent colonial heritage which had been finally eradicated in their own country, in stark contrast, several Congolese respondents largely reproduced the 'racist' themes that were dear both to the colonial discourse and to extremist Hutu rhetoric. These included references to the majority-minority issue, as well as to the themes of origins, and of autochthony and allochthony. In the DRC, the Hutu were sometimes described as 'the majority', and, in some few cases, as the 'real' Burundians. Revealing an ethno-centric understanding of the Burundian nation, two students affirmed that, 'Burundi is populated by the Hutu' and that, 'like the

⁵¹² R312, R645.

⁵¹³ R211.

⁵¹⁴ R438, R498.

⁵¹⁵ R91.

Rwandese, the Burundians are a people of Hutu.’⁵¹⁶ Such statements contrasted with another exceptional essay which, by describing both Hutu and Tutsi as ‘Burundi’s autochthonous peoples’, seemed instead to imply these groups’ common belonging to the Burundian nation.⁵¹⁷ Several Congolese respondents also emphasised the fundamental and ancestral difference between Hutu and Tutsi by portraying them as ‘two peoples’ of distinct origins. In such accounts, the Tutsi were rather often defined as ‘Nilotic’. More rarely, the Hutu were described as Bantu and the Twa as Pygmies. In some cases, the entire Burundian population was portrayed as ‘a Nilotic and pastoralist people’ of Northern or North-eastern origins, ‘like their Rwandan brothers’.⁵¹⁸ In one essay, Burundians were instead presented as a ‘Sudanic’ group from East Africa, which was composed of a Hutu and of a Tutsi ‘race’.⁵¹⁹ Yet another Congolese student ambiguously described the people of Burundi as being composed of Burundians as well as of ‘immigrants’. This term was not further clarified, leaving doubts as to whom it referred to, e.g. the Tutsi or the expatriate community.

3.5.2.3 The conflict in Burundi

Rwandan and Congolese students often presented neighbouring Burundi as a country with a turbulent history which had been marked by numerous instances of violence. Such occurrences were variously defined in terms of ‘conflicts’, ‘wars’, ‘massacres’, ‘political troubles’, ‘crises’, ‘disorders’, ‘insecurity’, ‘crimes’, and as ‘a difficult and bloody period’. As will be discussed in more detail below, the term ‘genocide(s)’ was also occasionally employed.

In their essays, several respondents underscored the prolonged nature of Burundi’s condition of insecurity. This predicament was believed by some to have been in place ‘since always’, ‘since a long time’, ‘for several years’, or, more specifically, ‘since independence’ or ‘since Rwagasore’s murder’. Highlighting Burundi’s

⁵¹⁶ C51, C744.

⁵¹⁷ C710.

⁵¹⁸ C333.

⁵¹⁹ C146.

longstanding experience with violence, a couple of students described its wars as ‘endless’ and ‘repetitive’.

Besides underscoring the protractedness of Burundi’s troubles, accounts often included a series of adjectives which further described the nature of these conflicts and wars by hinting at the identity of the main actors involved. A first group of essays emphasised the internecine nature of the confrontations by speaking in terms of ‘civil war(s)’, or of ‘intra-national’, ‘internal’ and ‘intestine’ war(s), which had been fought by Burundians among themselves. A second group of narratives, instead, referred more specifically to the identity-based nature of Burundi’s conflict and violence. Depending on how the identities involved were defined – as ‘ethnic groups’, ‘races’, or ‘tribes’ – references were alternatively made to ‘ethnic’ (or ‘inter-ethnic’), ‘racial’ or ‘tribal’ war(s). As will be shown further in the text, the actors in these wars were most commonly understood to be Hutu and Tutsi. While the nature of the conflict was generally perceived to be ethnic, a few essays underlined its political dimension. According to such accounts, the main actors involved in the conflict were political parties, and, more specifically, the government and its opponents, who had been engaged in a struggle for power. In the words of a respondent, ‘[a]fter its independence, Burundi has been characterised by conflicts between political parties who wanted to run the country and because of that, its people have remained in poverty’.⁵²⁰

The analysis of students’ representations of what was primarily portrayed as a Hutu-Tutsi conflict revealed a number of factors that were perceived to be at the root of this confrontation. As mentioned in the previous section, according to Rwandan respondents in particular, the Burundian conflict had been caused by what was variously defined as ‘ethnic ideology’, ‘racism’, or ‘racial segregation and discrimination’, that is, the acceptance of the existence of different ethnic groups or races in society. Several Rwandan students echoed the dominant discourse on the history of their own country by tracing the origins of the conflict in Burundi back to colonial divisive policies that had been introduced by the Belgians. As they explained,

⁵²⁰ C476.

'The Burundians, like people in all Belgian colonies, are characterised by social division. During the colonisation, they were divided into Hutu Tutsi and Twa, which caused clashes between these social groups. For this reason, the country has lagged behind'.

'The Belgians divided Burundi into three races as in Rwanda. This will cause insecurity in their country until the 1990s and even up to this day'.⁵²¹

As opposed to Rwandan and Burundian narratives, Congolese accounts never referred to a negative role played by colonialism in Burundi's conflicts. To the contrary, the only Congolese essay that mentioned the role of colonial rule in Burundian turbulent history underscored its positive contribution to the country's internal stability. In the view of this respondent, 'the colonisation in Burundi has left the country stable'.⁵²² If 'tribalism' was often mentioned in the DRC as a cause of Burundi's many wars and massacres, a couple of essays associated the Burundian conflict with a competition for power, and, more specifically, with a dispute between Hutu and Tutsi around the country's 'patrimony'.⁵²³

As pointed out earlier, Rwandan and Congolese students tended to overwhelmingly speak of Burundi's 'many' wars. References to specific crises were relatively rare and generally not detailed. Of all such occurrences, the 1993 war appeared to be the most well-known. The peculiarity of this war was underscored by a Congolese student who recounted how, 'Burundi experienced various waves of instability of which the most notable was in 1993'.⁵²⁴ The country's other instances of violence were instead largely overlooked. Amongst the hundreds of essays that were collected in the region, only two referred to the 'political troubles' of 1963 (sic), 1969 and 1972.⁵²⁵

A number of details of the 1993 crisis were provided in the most elaborated narratives. Here, the events were generally described as a decade-long civil war that had been marked by the outbreak of violent rebellions in the wake of the assassination of the newly elected President Ndadaye. A Congolese student

⁵²¹ R92, R198.

⁵²² C25.

⁵²³ C376.

⁵²⁴ C555.

⁵²⁵ In addition, two Congolese essays mentioned the Gatumba massacre which was perpetrated against 'Congolese Tutsi' refugees in Burundi in 2004.

referred to Ndadaye as the head of ‘the government of the majority’, a politically charged expression in a context in which the term ‘majority’ has been used to refer to both a political and an ethnic majority, i.e. the Hutu.⁵²⁶ Another Congolese respondent underscored the crucial significance of this murder. In his words, ‘after the death of President Ndadaye, Burundi entered a phase of complete shock’.⁵²⁷ Despite the recognised saliency and gravity of this event in Burundi’s history, discussions on the issue of responsibility for this murder were almost completely absent in students’ essays. The only exception in this regard consisted in a Congolese account that unambiguously blamed the assassination of the Hutu President on ‘the Tutsi’. Here, this indistinctly defined group was reported to have tortured Ndadaye and his advisors to death.⁵²⁸

With respect to the ensuing mass violence, Rwandan respondents seemed to be more reluctant than their counterparts to mention the word ‘genocide’ when recounting Burundian history. Compared to the DRC, where this laden term was employed by ten respondents, in Rwanda only four essays used this expression to describe the nature of the violence that had been experienced by the southern neighbour. Several Rwandan students were found in fact to downplay the gravity of Burundi’s violent occurrences, thereby sometimes underscoring that their neighbours had *not* experienced genocide like Rwanda. Three extracts are particularly illustrative of this stance:

‘Burundi has been characterised by the presence of ethnic groups like Rwanda, but, there, they didn’t have a genocide’.

‘In Burundi there was a case of insecurity whereby Hutus were against Tutsis, but this insecurity didn’t take a further step’.

*‘In Burundi, there were no serious wars, but only a massacre of a short time’.*⁵²⁹

Conversely, in Congolese accounts, parallels were often drawn between the events in Burundi and in Rwanda. As stated by a student, ‘in Burundi there was a

⁵²⁶ C749.

⁵²⁷ C687.

⁵²⁸ C632.

⁵²⁹ R19, R124, R228.

genocide like in Rwanda'.⁵³⁰ Clearly, the Rwanda genocide occupied a comparatively more prominent place in the minds of young Congolese. Several among them, in fact, mistakenly situated both events – the genocide in Rwanda and the genocide in Burundi – in 1994. In a couple of cases, Congolese respondents seemed to believe that the assassination of Burundian President Ntaryamira – sometimes confused with Ndadaye – in the same plane crash that killed Rwandan President Habyarimana had simultaneously sparked a genocide in both countries.⁵³¹ Again, revealing a belief in the centrality of the Rwanda genocide in the regional history, another student concluded that 'the genocide in Rwanda had influenced the genocide in Burundi'.⁵³²

In their accounts of Burundi's recent troubled history, Rwandan and Congolese students generally omitted to specify the identity of the victims and of the perpetrators of the country's various mass crimes. The violence was typically reported to have been committed 'against one another'. In the few cases in which roles of victimhood and responsibility were discussed, such roles were commonly associated to a particular ethnic group. A clear identification of perpetrator and victim roles along ethnic lines was found especially in Rwanda. Here, four students explicitly blamed (the) Hutu for having massacred (the) Tutsi. Among these few essays, two referred to the violence in terms of 'Tutsi genocide'. One of them underscored the less prominent public awareness of this occurrence compared to the Rwandan 'Tutsi genocide'. In her words,

'Even if it is not known everywhere like the Rwandan case, in Burundi there also was a Tutsi genocide. Hutu were killing Tutsi and in a real bad way. Also, Tutsi could not go to school'.⁵³³

Two more ambiguous, and apparently conflicting, statements in this regard were gathered in the DRC. One referred to a 'genocide of the Hutu people against the Tutsi people'; the other instead spoke of a 'genocide of the Tutsi people against

⁵³⁰ C296.

⁵³¹ This belief was also expressed by two Rwandan students. In the words of one of these respondents, 'the genocide in Burundi took place because the Burundian president also died with the Rwandan president'. R777.

⁵³² C288.

⁵³³ R51, R99.

the Hutu people'.⁵³⁴ As no further details were provided, it is unclear here whether, by presenting the mentioned 'genocide' as an act *of* one group *against* the other, these respondent respectively identified the two groups as the perpetrator and the victim of this crime, or whether they understood the violent events as a double or mutual genocide in which two 'peoples' had fought *against each other*.

Besides portraying Hutu and Tutsi as the main actors in the violence, respondents sometimes pointed the finger at Hutu political parties and rebellions for their responsibility in the massacres committed during the 1993 war. Without explicitly mentioning the Hutu identity of these actors, these accounts variously blamed Frodebu, the FNL or Palipehutu, and the CNDD-FDD. With the exception of one reference to the Tutsi militia group *Sans Echech*, which however was not openly denounced for having perpetrated abuses, essays never mentioned the role of the Tutsi-dominated State and of the army in Burundi's violence.⁵³⁵

With regard to the termination of the 1993 war, descriptions were found to be rather scarce. The few exceptions in this respect mentioned the year 2003 as its end date, the signing of a peace accord, and the advent of a period of transition that led to democratic elections in 2005. The most detailed account of the end of the war was written by a Congolese respondent. She reported that, 'the rebellions were resolved through dialogue so that a transition could start under the leadership of Ndayizeye who organised free elections in 2005, which were won by Nkurunziza'.⁵³⁶ Little was further said about the ethnic and political affiliation of the new president. Only one Congolese and two Rwandan students respectively described Nkurunziza as a Hutu and as the leader of the CNDD-FDD.

Moving into the present, Rwandan and Congolese accounts of Burundi's recent past only sporadically discussed the consequences of the war experienced by this country. While Congolese essays were surprisingly silent in this regard, references

⁵³⁴ C632, C543.

⁵³⁵ In fact, the dominant role of Tutsi individuals in the Burundian State was almost completely overlooked. Only one Rwandan essay alluded to this issue. R319.

⁵³⁶ C82.

to this topic were mainly found in Rwandan narratives. Here, the focus was placed primarily on the economic effects of such troubles. The instability to which Burundi had been subjected was generally believed to have hit hard the national economy, and to have thereby hindered the country's development and favoured poverty as well as famine. More rarely, students cited the massive displacement caused by the war, especially towards the country of the respondent. The human costs of the violence were instead utterly overlooked by students in the region. The only account that referred to this issue seemed in fact to downplay the scale of the casualties suffered in this country. As reported in this essay, 'in Burundi, there haven't been a lot of victims'.⁵³⁷

3.5.2.4 The aftermath of the war, and the present time in Burundi

Rwandan and Congolese accounts of Burundi's present time revealed mixed perceptions of the current state of affairs in the country.

The most positive analyses that were collected in Rwanda and the DRC depicted present-day Burundi as a country that was finally enjoying peace and security, as well as good governance and democracy. Students in the region expressed a belief that the war, and, more specifically, the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi, had been resolved, and that good internal relations had been restored. This view was clearly articulated by a Rwandan and a Congolese respondent, respectively. In their words,

'There was a time in which Burundi had serious conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi, but today these problems are over. Calm has finally returned'.

*'Today in Burundi there is no war like we have here. There, they live in unity and solidarity, and without tribalism or discrimination.'*⁵³⁸

Echoing the latter comment collected in eastern Congo, a Rwandan respondent drew an exceptional parallel with the current situation in his own country. In stark contrast to the dominant over-positive representation of post-genocide Rwanda sketched by his fellow students, this respondent affirmed that, 'the Burundians are

⁵³⁷ R309.

⁵³⁸ R22, C810.

united and show solidarity; they in fact love each other more than the Rwandese do'.⁵³⁹ In various essays, this state of peace and security in Burundi was said to have been accompanied by a triumph of good governance and democracy as demonstrated by its multiparty system and its recent elections. Additionally, Congolese students in particular sometimes mentioned their neighbours' good organisation. In their view, this condition was, for instance, manifest in the existence of admirable road infrastructure which greatly differed from the quality they were used to in their own country.

In contrast to such overly positive representations, most respondents conveyed more nuanced understandings of Burundi's current state of affairs. Here, efforts towards reconstruction, peacebuilding and democratisation were reported to be still ongoing. In these accounts, Burundi was depicted as a nation that was now finally moving away from war, and which was starting to unite to build peace and to reconstruct and develop the country. As recounted by a Rwandan and a Congolese respondent respectively,

'In Burundi, today they are trying to solve their problems and they are beginning to get organised. There as well, their politics encourages unity and the restoration of the country's order'.

'In Burundi, for the moment, it seems to be going well. The country and its peoples are developing little by little and peace is beginning to return'.⁵⁴⁰

Compared to Rwandan accounts, which appeared to be more reticent in this respect, Congolese narratives were found to overwhelmingly praise President Nkurunziza's governance. In particular, Burundi's head of state was commended for his remarkable efforts in the fields of reconstruction and development, peacebuilding and reconciliation, democratisation, and regional cooperation. In the words of a Congolese student,

'President Nkurunziza established democracy, and undertook the pacification and reconciliation of the country. It is thanks to him that Burundians live in peace and unity today, and that they are finally on their way to development'.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁹ R603.

⁵⁴⁰ R545, C498

⁵⁴¹ C428.

Similarly, one of the very few Rwandan respondents that lauded the Burundian president affirmed that,

'Burundi is now peaceful thanks to its President H.E Pierre NKURUNZIZA who brought back unity among Burundians and who is successfully developing the country in every domain. Because he decided to enter the EAC, Burundi will become smarter and richer, and will develop a lot by sharing many things with other countries such as Rwanda'.⁵⁴²

More critical accounts reported a range of problems and challenges that were believed to be currently faced by Burundi. First of all, respondents emphasised the country's continuing problems of instability and insecurity, including the regular occurrence of massacres and killings. In Rwanda especially, essays mentioned the perpetual nature of the Hutu-Tutsi conflict in Burundi. This was largely deemed to derive from the unabated presence of racial or ethnic 'segregation', 'discrimination' and 'divisionism' in the society – also referred to as 'genocide ideology' or 'the bad ideology of Hutu and Tutsi'. As pointed out by a Rwandan respondent,

'Burundi today is not well organised because there are some people who continue to divide the population, as in Rwanda in the past. In Burundi, Hutu and Tutsi are still there.'⁵⁴³

The current state of insecurity was also said to be caused by rebellions that had been launched by certain political parties. The primarily political nature of current conflicts in Burundi was highlighted by a Rwandan student according to whom, 'in Burundi, the refugees have returned; what remains are conflicts among politicians and various political parties who all want to govern the country'.⁵⁴⁴ Agathon Rwasa's FNL/Palipehutu, in particular, was reported to be the main actor to have carried forth its violent struggle, waging a war against the government and killing civilians. On account of its aggressive actions, the FNL was denounced by a Rwandan student as a 'terrorist' movement that had to this day continued to hinder internal peace and stability. Against a backdrop of lack of durable peace in present-day Burundi, a Congolese student urged the country's various political

⁵⁴² R42.

⁵⁴³ R355.

⁵⁴⁴ R313.

groups to enter negotiations in order to end their violent confrontations. According to this respondent, if successful, such undertakings had the potential to contribute to peace and security to the benefit not only of Burundians, but also of Congolese people living across the border.⁵⁴⁵ Besides issues of security, Rwandan students in particular mentioned problems related to bad governance and bad leadership. Burundi's situation in this respect was often presented by Rwandan respondents as contrasting with the current state of good governance in their own country. Specifically, their accounts referred to Burundi's lack of organisation – as demonstrated, for instance, by its 'dirty' towns, – as well as to its rampant levels of corruption and its insufficient efforts to promote gender equality. Such problems were instead never cited by Congolese students. As mentioned earlier, respondents from the DRC tended to depict the country's situation in a more positive light in this respect. From a socio-economic point of view, in both countries Burundi was predominantly described as facing considerable problems, including under-development, poverty, unemployment, and high illiteracy rates. Hope for the future in this regard was expressed especially by a Rwandan student. As she concluded, 'for now, Burundians have difficulties to develop, but little by little they too will succeed'.⁵⁴⁶

3.6 Summary and conclusion

Echoing the findings of the Rwandan case-study outlined in Chapter 2, the present chapter brought to light a clear interface between the politics of history, identity and education in colonial and post-colonial Burundi. Through an exploration of ideological and historical discourses from the colonial time until today, this chapter demonstrated how, throughout the decades, political entrepreneurs regularly invoked and manipulated history and identity in support of ideologies and claims to power. Also, it illustrated how dominant discourses have been

⁵⁴⁵ With regard to the state of security in the country, several essays additionally mentioned recent instances of attacks against Albinos.

⁵⁴⁶ R18.

consistently reflected and institutionalised in the education system through policies and teaching contents.

In the colonial period, 'Hamitism' became the ideological discourse and guiding dogma of the State. Although to a lesser extent than in Rwanda, this dogma was adopted as a lens to interpret Burundi's historical and social reality, and as a basis to determine positions of power within a system of indirect rule. Relying on manipulated oral traditions, colonial historiographical production played a critical role in authenticating the Hamitic myth and in justifying Belgian race policies that favoured an allegedly dominant Tutsi/Ganwa minority. Anchored in pseudo-historical interpretations of the country's past, the colonial racial ideology significantly shaped Burundi's newly established education system. Through its teachings and policies, the education sector in turn played a key role in reproducing both the system of indirect rule in which it was embedded and the racial ideology on which this system was founded. Specifically, School teachings about successive racial migrations and a Hamitic conquest and domination worked to inculcate racial myths, prejudice and stereotypes, to the effect of entrenching a racialised historical consciousness and superiority and inferiority complexes among Ganwa/Tutsi and Hutu pupils respectively. At the same time, inequitable educational policies and practices that favoured the former effectively re-produced and strengthened the local hierarchy.

In the wake of independence until the early 1990s, Tutsi-dominated regimes that came to power through military coups subsequently consolidated the hegemony of the ethnic minority by propagating a unitarist ideology which outlawed ethnic references as a form of dangerous divisionism. In order to prove the irrelevance and danger of ethnicity, the regimes' unitarist discourse relied on an interpretation of the past which depicted Burundi as an old nation whose secular unity had been undermined by the colonisers through their malicious invention of ethnic labels. Whereas the more distant past was invoked to demonstrate Burundians' ancestral unity, the representation of the more recent post-colonial past was revealing of an interest to conceal the existence of ethnic issues in Burundi's contemporary society. This obscuration was most blatantly manifested in the enforced amnesia

with regard to the country's various violent 'crises', particularly the 1972 events. In the framework of intense political efforts to promote national unity and to conceal existing division and tension, curricula and textbooks that were developed under military rule, notably the teacher guide *Histoire du Burundi*, reproduced and propagated the State rhetoric. The study of Burundian history focused on celebrating the country's glorious pre-colonial past of unity and solidarity, the achievements of great kings and heroes, as well as the rich and good ancient culture and tradition, which had been endangered by the colonisers. It instead omitted all reference to ethnicity and to the troubled recent history of conflict and violence. The credibility of such positive and unifying teachings was however undermined by the harsh reality of sustained ethnic discrimination and violence. This predicament also deeply affected an education system which covertly worked to perpetuate a system of 'Tutsi' apartheid and a systematic marginalisation of the Hutu.

Abroad, a rival ethno-nationalist narrative was propagated by the exiled Hutu radical opposition. Here, the past was mainly invoked to prove the congenital perfidy of the Tutsi and to justify a righteous fight for the 'liberation' of the Hutu and for the 'defense of democracy'. Reproducing Manichean theories from the colonial time, radical Hutu emphasised the primordialism of 'racial' differences and conflict in Burundi's society by reducing the country's history to a tale of conquest and exploitation of the autochthonous Bantu Hutu by the Hamitic Tutsi foreign invaders and oppressors. While the Hutu were encouraged to strengthen their identity, the concept of national unity was denounced as a shrewd strategy to conceal the injustice and persecution suffered by the Hutu, which culminated in the 1972 'Hutu genocide'. Through educational campaigns which aimed at transmitting the 'historical truth' among the refugee population, Hutu propagandists managed, apparently successfully, to keep alive a traumatic collective memory of longstanding Hutu victimhood, as well as the fear of a looming and long-planned Hutu extermination.

In the wake of the civil war, history has remained an issue of bitter contention between opposing camps claiming a monopoly on the truth. As a result of

vigorous politicised efforts at historical reconstruction, competing accounts of the country's past today openly co-exist in the public realm, often along ethnic lines. Conflicting post-war views have been antithetical on issues related to the two themes of identity and conflict. With respect to the former, rivalling interpretations have either affirmed or negated the traditional relevance of ethnicity in Burundian society. As for the latter, while views have diverged on the pre-colonial or colonial origins of ethnic conflict in Burundian society, the most acute controversies have concerned the more recent period, and especially the issue of genocide in relation to the two crises of 1972 and 1993. In this regard, Hutu and Tutsi appear to have held on to competing memories of victimhood which have found expression in one-sided memorialisation practices. In the aftermath of the war, selective and antagonistic memories have thus clearly remained a source of division and tension. Despite commitments to reconcile divergent views and to promote a common reading of the past, to this day controversies have remained largely unchallenged due to a continued lack of objective investigation and clarification of the past. Investigative initiatives that were launched in the framework of the country's peacebuilding process, most notably the TRC and the historiographical project *Ecriture de l'Histoire du Burundi*, have so far failed to deliver on their promises.

Against a background of unresolved history and memory wars, history teaching remains a particularly thorny issue on which consensus is yet to be reached. Whereas the post-war process of educational reconstruction and reform has encompassed efforts to address historical inequalities as well as to teach civic and peace education in schools, the process of revision of history curricula and textbooks has failed to take off. Due to a persisting lack of historical clarification on the controversial post-colonial past, the history course has not essentially changed since the 1980s and 1990s. Its contents continue to focus on the idyllic ancient past and to omit all discussion on the period following the departure of the colonisers in 1962. As a result, critics have argued, a situation has prevailed whereby the Burundian youth largely ignore their country's history or hold the biased views that have circulated in the private sphere. The analysis of narratives that were collected among 465 secondary school students in the field offered

relevant insights. In line with the teachings that have long been propagated in Burundian schools, young people's accounts tended to extensively exalt Burundi's pre-colonial period as an era of unity and glory, to demonize the colonisation as a time of profound national crisis and suffering, and to celebrate Rwagasore's heroic liberation struggle from foreign oppression. Pupils' narratives were instead comparatively meagre with regard to the more recent post-colonial history. They thereby showed an apparent ignorance or discomfort in relation to a difficult past which society as a whole has been struggling to confront. Issues related to the recent past as well as to identity and ethnicity likewise emerged as the subjects of most evident disagreements among young people.

Today, Burundi finds itself at an important crossroads. As the country recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary of independence, reflections on the past appear to have gained momentum. After decades of imposed amnesia and silence, the nation's sensitive and controversial history is now a recurrent topic of open and unrestricted discussions and debates. With the TRC currently expected to soon start its operations, the Burundian people might finally have the chance to collectively face the nation's difficult past and to reach mutual understanding and recognition of each other's experience of suffering. Hopefully, in conjunction with a resurrection of the presently dormant historiographical project *Écriture de l'Histoire du Burundi*, the TRC-process will also play an important role in promoting education reform, and, in particular, in facilitating the inclusion of an objective study of the country's recent history in Burundian schools. In the long-term, by allowing the new generations to better understand their country's past and present, education might be crucial to long-lasting peace.

4 DR Congo

4.1 Historical background: a brief chronology of DR Congo's political history

The Democratic Republic of Congo is the second largest country in Africa. Compared to its small eastern neighbours Rwanda and Burundi, its population of circa seventy million is greatly diverse.¹ Due to its more varied demographic composition, a separate section on the issue of identities in the DRC and in the Kivu will precede and complement the country's historical overview that is the object of the present sub-chapter. As we will see, like its neighbours, the DRC has experienced a largely complex and tragic history, much of which still remains obscure and controversial.²

¹ Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung, *Datenreport 2012*, 8-9.

² On the history of the DRC, see the collection of the section of *Temps Present* of the MRAC, directed by G. de Villers; the volumes of *Afrique des Grands Lacs* of the *Centre d'Etude de la Région des Grands Lacs*, directed by F. Reyntjens; and the Harmattan collections *Mémoires lieux de savoir* and *Histoire et Société*, directed respectively by B. Jewsiewicki and B. Verhaegen. As will emerge in this section, most of the extant literature on Congolese history was produced by foreign, mainly Belgian, French and American, scholars. Scholarly work by Congolese nationals mainly appeared since the 1970s. Among the most notable syntheses on Congolese history by national academics are: Tshimanga wa Tshibangu, *Histoire du Zaïre* (Bukavu 1976); I. Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire du Zaïre. De l'héritage ancien à l'âge contemporain* (Louvain-la-Neuve 1997), *Histoire générale du Congo. De l'héritage ancien à la République Démocratique* (Brussels/Paris 1998), and *Nouvelle histoire du Congo: des origines à la République Démocratique* (Brussels/Kinshasa 2009); G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: a people's history* (London 2002); and C.D. Gondola, *The history of Congo* (Westport 2002).

4.1.1 Identities in the DRC and in the Kivu

In the DRC, identity is a complex matter. Besides such identities as the family, the lineage, and the clan, the DRC counts a large number of what have been variously referred to as *ethnies*, tribes or communities.³ Their numbers range from 200 to 500, depending on the source. As a general rule, these groups own a specific language,⁴ culture, and territory.⁵ As ‘tribal’ identities have been linked to territorial rights, dangerous distinctions have emerged between so-called ‘*originaires*’ and ‘*non-originaires*’, causing tension and instability in various corners of the country.⁶ In the Kivu, an over-populated and resourceful border region in Eastern Congo, such distinctions have been particularly salient and problematic.⁷

The Kivu region is characterised by an especially varied ethno-cultural landscape. Among the various tribes living in the two provinces of North and South Kivu are the pygmies, the Nande, the Nyanga, the Hunde, the Havu, the Shi, the Fulero, the Vira, the Bembe and the Hundi, as well as a numerically significant Kinyarwanda-

³ On ethnicity in Congo, see for instance, J. Vansina, *Introduction à l’ethnographie congolaise* (Kinshasa 1965).

⁴ Congolese languages are mostly Bantu. From a linguistic point of view, another significant identity factor in the DRC relates to the four national languages, i.e. Lingala, Kikongo, Ciluba, and Swahili. This factor divides the country into four linguistic areas, often regrouped into two larger clusters: ‘*gens de l’Ouest*’ (speaking Lingala or Kikongo) and ‘*gens de l’Est*’ (speaking Swahili or Ciluba). Ndaywel, *Nouvelle histoire*, 103-104.

⁵ According to L. De Saint-Moulin, however, ‘[v]ery often, ethnicity, language and country do not coincide. Several tribes may speak the same language and one tribe can be spread over several linguistic domains. There are ethnic groups which do have land where they live and there are those who dominate in areas where they are not the majority.’ L. De Saint-Moulin, ‘Conscience nationale et identités ethniques: contribution à une culture de la paix,’ *Congo-Afrique* 43(372) (2003) 94.

⁶ Distinctions and antagonisms between so-called ‘autochthonous’ and ‘allochthonous’ groups have most notably existed between Bakongo and Bangala in western Congo; between ‘authentic Katangans’ and ‘*Katangais immigrés*’ in Katanga; and between Lulua and Luba in present-day Kananga in Western Kasai. Ndaywel, *Nouvelle histoire*, 100, 430-431, 686-8. G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, ‘The politics of citizenship in the DRC’, Paper presented at the Annual International Conference, May 19-20, 2004, on ‘State, borders and nations: negotiating citizenship in Africa’ at the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh. Vlassenroot and Huggins further reported that, while some anti-Hema elements portray the Hema as ‘visitors’ who ‘have no ancestral land’, a Hema intellectual interviewed in 2004 argued that ‘the Hema arrived in the region in the 11th century, before the Lendu’. K. Vlassenroot & C. Huggins, ‘Land, migration and conflict,’ C. Huggins & J. Clover (eds.), *From the ground up: land rights, conflict and peace in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Pretoria: ISS 2005), 191, note 151.

⁷ On issues related to identity and conflict in the Kivu in particular, see among others, L. Hovil, ‘Who belongs where? Conflict, displacement, land and identity in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo,’ Working Paper No. 3. International Refugee Rights Initiative & Social Science Research Council (March 2010); Mamdani, *Understanding the crisis in Kivu: Report of the CODESRIA mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo September, 1997* (2008) [ccs.ukzn.ac.za/files/mamdani.kivu.pdf] (last accessed on 06/11/2010); Vlassenroot, ‘Citizenship, identity formation and conflict in South Kivu: the case of the Banyamulenge,’ *Review of African political economy* 29 (2002) 499-516; J.-C. Willame, *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge. Violences ethniques et gestion de l’identitaire au Kivu* (Paris 1997); as well as, F. Reyntjens & S. Marysse, *Conflicts au Kivu: antécédents et enjeux* (Antwerp 1996).

speaking population. The ‘Banyarwanda’, literally ‘people from Rwanda’, consist of both Hutu and Tutsi. Various ethnonyms have been used to refer to this group. Based on their geographical area of residence, they have been referred to as ‘Banyarutshuru’, ‘Banyabwisha’, ‘Banyamasisi’ and ‘Banyajomba’ in North Kivu, and as ‘Banyamulenge’ in South Kivu.⁸ From a historical perspective, three main Banyarwanda groups have been generally identified based on their presumed time of arrival on Congolese soil.⁹ The first consists of descendants of people of Rwandan origins who settled on Congolese territory in the pre-colonial time (before 1885). This category encompasses the ‘Banyamulenge’, the ‘Banyajomba’, and the ‘Banyabwisha’. The second group are the so-called ‘immigrants’ or ‘transplanted’. This term refers to the tens of thousands of Hutu in particular, who relocated to eastern Congo during the colonial time in the framework of an immigration programme that was set up by the Belgians with the primary aim of providing cheap labour to white settlers, especially in Masisi and Rutshuru.¹⁰ The third and last group mainly consists of Rwandan ‘refugees’, both Tutsi and Hutu, who arrived in the DRC after the country’s independence (1960).¹¹ As will be outlined later in the text, the massive arrival of these ‘immigrants’ and ‘refugees’, which significantly upset the ethnic landscape of the region, was perceived by ‘autochthonous’ communities, such as the Hunde and the Nande, as a threat to their survival due to the alleged political, economic and socio-cultural domination of the ‘newcomers’.¹²

⁸ Mamdani, 239.

⁹ S. Jackson, ‘Sons of which soil? The language and politics of autochthony in Eastern D.R. Congo,’ *African studies review* 49(2) (2006) 95-123.

¹⁰ By 1954, the number of Banyarwanda living in the Kivu exceeded 170.000, causing significant land pressure. See B. Mararo, ‘Land, power, and ethnic conflict in Masisi (Congo-Kinshasa), 1940s–1994,’ *The international journal of African historical studies* 30(3) (1997) 503-538; G. Habimana, ‘L’économie des plantations et a main-d’œuvre importée en territoire de Masisi,’ *Regards croisés* 16 (2006) 28; J. Nzabandora, ‘Plantations européennes, Parc national et mouvements des populations dans le territoire de Rutshuru au Nord-Kivu (1920-1996),’ *Regards croisés* 16 (2006) 22 [www.pole-institute.org/documents/Regards16.pdf] (last accessed on 21/06/2012).

¹¹ Until 1994, this group of refugees was predominantly composed of Rwandan Tutsi, who had migrated in 1959-1961, 1963-1964, 1973 and 1990-1994. Since mid-1994, this group was instead mainly composed of Rwandan Hutu, who had left their country in the wake of the war and genocide. To these, one must add the thousands of Burundian refugees, mainly Hutu, who arrived in the DRC in 1969, 1972, and 1993.

¹² See, for instance, L. Batundi Ndasimwa, ‘Survie identitaire et pression démographique: point de vue d’un Muhunde de Masisi,’ *Regards croisés* 12 (2004) 68-73 [www.pole-institute.org/documents/regard_identites.pdf] (last accessed on 21/06/2012).

In this complex context characterised by growing perceptions of existential threat posed by overwhelming numbers of incomers, definitions of Congolese identity and nationality, and notions of ‘*congolité*’ (Congolese-ness) and ‘autochthony’, have been greatly contested.¹³ Much like in Rwanda and Burundi, in the DRC, historical discourses on origins and migration have been at the centre of post-colonial controversies and disputes around ‘who is a true Congolese and who is a foreigner on the basis of first arrival on the territory’.¹⁴ Gauthier de Villers explained that, in the Congo, ‘[n]ationals must be autochthonous, “*originaires*”, that is to say being able to link themselves to ancestors settled in the country since the “origins”’.¹⁵ Until recently, in fact, in the framework of what Mamdani defined as a ‘politics of indigeneity’,¹⁶ legislation required proof of ancestral connection to Congolese territory as a base to determine national belonging and citizenship, and hence civil and political rights. Not without contestation, throughout the decades, the cut-off date for nationality claims was variously situated in the pre-colonial (1885) or in the colonial time (1908 and 1950).¹⁷ As a result, a distinction was institutionalised between, on the one hand, ‘autochthonous’ groups, namely the authentic natives and incontestable citizens of the DRC, such as the Twa, the Nyanga, the Hunde and the Nande, and, on the other hand, ‘foreign’ peoples of questionable and doubtful nationality, with particular reference to Kinyarwanda-speakers. Accused of concealing their ‘real’ identity in order to usurp ‘indigenous’ land and resources,¹⁸ this group was recurrently demonised and singled out for discrimination as well as for

¹³ During the 2006 electoral campaigns, the theme of origins and ‘*congolité*’ was invoked in a ‘media war’ that opposed the two main presidential candidates Kabila and Bemba. Reyntjens reported that Kabila was falsely accused of being Rwandan. As the scholar pointed out, this was ‘a particular virulent claim in light of the profound disgust of most Congolese for Rwanda.’ *The Great African war*, 271-273.

¹⁴ Hovil, ‘Who belongs where’, 13. See also, M. Bøås, “‘New’ nationalism and autochthony: tales of origin as political cleavage,” *Africa spectrum* 1 (2009) 19-38.

¹⁵ G. De Villers, ‘Identifications et mobilisations politiques au Congo-Kinshasa’, *Politiques africaines* 72 (1998) 87 [www.politique-africaine.com/numeros/pdf/072081.pdf] (last accessed on 22/06/2012).

¹⁶ Mamdani, 246-247.

¹⁷ The cut-off date for such claims was moved from 1908 (1964 Constitution), to 1950 (1972 Decree), and to 1885 (1981 Law). The more inclusive 1972 Decree granted Zairian citizenship to ‘all persons of whom one of the ascendants is or was a member of one of the tribes established on the territory of the Republic of Zaire in its limits of 15 November 1908’ (i.e. including Banyamulenge) and to people from Ruanda-Urundi residing in Zaire since 1 January 1960 (i.e. including Banyarwanda immigrants and early refugees). Jackson, ‘Sons of which soil?’, Marysse & Reyntjens; Vlassenroot & Huggins.

¹⁸ L. Kambere Muhindo, *Après les Banyamulenge, voici les Banyabwisha aux Kivu: la carte ethnique du Congo Belge en 1959* (Kinshasa 1999). The author underscored the ‘*allochtonie*’ of the various *Rwandophones* and their political construction of ‘*pseudo-ethnomymes*’ in order to prove their autochthony. 13. See also E. Kahindo’s online article, ‘Quel autre nom les Tutsi se donneront-ils demain?’. Kahindo stated

xenophobic attacks throughout the post-colonial time, leading to repeated instances of violent confrontation.¹⁹ Controversies and tensions around the issue of identity and citizenship became particularly acute since the 1990s. These rose in the context of democratisation and of a competition for power between what Mamdani defined as a ‘self-consciously “indigenous” majority’ and an allegedly “nonindigenous” minority’.²⁰ As argued by Reyntjens, in this period ‘the denial of citizenship became a means for the political and economic exclusion of the Banyarwanda, and the Tutsi in particular.’²¹

Several prominent scholars, including Mamdani, Lemarchand and Reyntjens, observed that, since the 1990s, in line with a notorious regional extremist discourse, the ‘dualisation’ of Kivutian society between indigenous and nonindigenous groups was compounded by a new dominant polarisation within the Banyarwanda community: the Hutu, considered to be indigenous ‘Bantu’, on the one hand, and the Tutsi, labelled as alien ‘Hamites’, ‘Hima’ or ‘Nilotics’, on the other hand.²² Similar to the situation in Rwanda and Burundi, in the DRC the opposition between the Bantu and Hamitic ‘races’, which has been regularly invoked in the many conflicts that have plagued the region, was the fruit of colonial ethnology. Here as well, the Tutsi had been depicted by the colonisers as belonging to a foreign superior race of pastoralist Hamites (or Nilotics) from Abyssinia and the Galla regions, who had subjugated and dominated the autochthonous Twa and Bantu.²³ Debunking such colonial constructions, the

that, ‘[i]n their current phase of conquest of the DRC, the Tutsi carve tailored Congolese ethnic identities ... the goal is to rule over the entire territory, crushing anyone who seeks to resist their desire to dominate.’ (23/11/2010) [www.benilubero.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2238:quel-autre-nom-les-tutsi-se-donneront-ils-demain&catid=19:culture-grale&Itemid=88] (last accessed on 22/03/2011).

¹⁹ The first confrontation between ‘autochthonous’ Hunde and Nande, and the Banyarwanda was the so-called ‘Kanyarwanda war’ in North Kivu. In the same period, during the Simba uprising in South Kivu, ethnic antagonisms also rose between Fulero, Bembe and Vira rebels, and the Banyamulenge. Between 1963 and 1965, large numbers of Bembe fought in the ranks of the Mulelist rebellion against the state army. The Banyamulenge, on the other hand, had sided with the Kinshasa government and had participated in the organised crackdown on the Bembe after the defeat of the Simba. For their contribution to the anti-insurgency, certain Banyarwanda were rewarded by the national government with lucrative positions. Willame, 83.

²⁰ Mamdani, 246.

²¹ Reyntjens, 14-15. In 1989, a census was conducted to determine who was Zairian. In 1994, a Commission was subsequently created to examine the situation of ‘foreigners’.

²² *Ibid.*, 147 and 141. See also, Mamdani, 235; and Lemarchand, 34.

²³ Reyntjens pointed out that the colonial representation of the Tutsi-Hutu relationship resembled that between the Hema and the Bairu. During the colonial time, the ‘pastoralist’ Hema ‘minority’ was favoured

prominent Congolese History Professor Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem pointed out that, while the concept of ‘Hamite’ is ‘a simple product of the imagination’, the term ‘Nilotic’ does not apply to the Tutsi since this group speaks a Bantu language, Kinyarwanda.²⁴

Recently, in 2004, the ‘nationality question’ was re-addressed through a Nationality Act. Among other things, the Act declared ‘Congolese by origin every person belonging to the ethnic groups and nationalities whose ascendants and territories were part of what became Congo (...) at independence’ (1960).²⁵ According to a recent report, this law, however, ‘is not being applied and has not helped to re-define local understandings of inclusion and exclusion: on the ground, notions of belonging continue to be profoundly contested.’²⁶

4.1.2 The pre-colonial period

The ancient history of the DRC has been the object of great speculation and contestation. As in Rwanda and Burundi, this is especially true with regard to the issue of migrations and settlement. By most accounts, the earliest settlers in the region were forest-dwelling hunter-gatherer pygmies. They were reportedly followed by Bantu and Nilotic groups migrating from the north, probably between 500 and 1000 A.D.²⁷ Over time, several complex and vast states were founded,

over the ‘agriculturalist’ Bairu ‘majority’ in all domains, including education, administration, politics and economy. 216.

²⁴ Ndaywel, 104-105.

²⁵ République Démocratique du Congo. Assemblée Nationale. *Constitution de la République Démocratique du Congo* (Kinshasa, Février 2005), Ch.2 ‘De la nationalité’, art.10, p.8 [democratie.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/Constitution_de_la_RDC.pdf] (last accessed on 28/03/2011).

²⁶ Hovil, 5. For an overview and analysis of this law, see B. Manby, *Struggles for citizenship in Africa* (London/New York 2009), 66-80; S. Jackson, ‘Of “doubtful nationality”: political manipulation of citizenship in the D.R. Congo,’ *Citizenship studies* 11(5) (2007) 481-500, and ‘Sons of which soil?’. Notice that while the 2005 official *Monographie du Sud-Kivu* spoke of ‘foreigners’, without further elaborating on their identity and origins, the *Monographie du Nord-Kivu* distinguished between ‘autochtonous’ (or ‘nationals’), who resided on Congolese territory in the pre-colonial time (including the ‘Pymoides’, the ‘Bantous’, and the ‘Nilotiques’, essentially composed of pastoralist Tutsi), and colonial ‘immigrants’ from Rwanda and Burundi. République Démocratique du Congo, Ministère du Plan, *Monographie de la province du Sud-Kivu* (Kinshasa 2005), 25 [www.document.minisanterdc.cd/document/doc_124.pdf] (last accessed on 30/03/2011); and *Monographie de la province du Nord-Kivu* (Kinshasa 2005), 32-35 [www.provincenordkivu.org/docs/Monographie%20Nord%20Kivu.pdf] (last accessed on 30/03/2011). Demographic data from 1984 reproduced in the latter monograph further reported that in Masisi and Rutshutu Territories, respectively, 43,29% and 24,52% were *étrangers* (i.e. mostly Rwandan immigrants).

²⁷ Ndaywel, 72.

such as the Kongo and the Lunda Kingdoms, and the Luba Empire.²⁸ By the end of the 19th century, most kingdoms had disintegrated due to conflict, slavery and colonialism.

The first European contact was established by the Portuguese navigator Diogo Cão with the Kongo Kingdom in 1482. The newcomers soon embarked on a ‘civilising’ project of evangelisation and Christianisation. At the same time, they also engaged in the notorious Atlantic Slave Trade. While this trade had plagued Congo’s western regions, the east was simultaneously subjected to the Arab slave trade conducted by Zanzibari merchants. Millions are believed to have been raided or to have succumbed as a result of such practices.

4.1.3 The colonial period²⁹

Since the second half of the 19th century, exploratory missions were conducted into the territory’s interior. As knowledge was gathered on this distant land, the Congo soon became the object of the expansionist ambitions of Belgium’s King Leopold II. His ambitions were however restrained by a reluctance of the Belgian government to embark on a costly colonial project. Lacking enthusiastic support at home, the monarch took unilateral steps to set up a private venture in the region under humanitarian pretexts. In 1876, Leopold sponsored an International Geographic Conference in Brussels. This event resulted in the creation of the *Association Internationale Africaine* (AIA), the stated objective of which was to

²⁸ Other significant political entities were the Kuba Kingdom, and the centralised structures in the northern savannahs (Bazande, Banbetu, Bangbandi and Bangbaka), as well as in Maniema and in the Kivu in the East (Nande, Hunde, Shi, Havu).

²⁹ For a bibliography on Congo’s colonial past, see, J.-L. Vellut, F. Loriaux & F. Morimont, *Bibliographie historique du Zaïre à l’époque coloniale (1880-1960). Travaux publiés en 1960-1996* (Louvain-la-Neuve/Tervuren 1996). On Belgian colonialism, see in particular the pioneering syntheses by R. Slade, *King Leopold’s Congo. Aspects of the development of race relations in the Congo Independent State* (London 1962), and by R. Anstey, *King Leopold’s legacy. The Congo under Belgian rule 1908-1960* (London 1966); the rather conservative synthesis by R. Cornevin, *Histoire du Congo/Léopoldville-Kinshasa. Des origines préhistoriques à la République Démocratique du Congo* (Paris 1966); as well as the more recent critical publications by N. Ascherson, *The king incorporated: Leopold the Second and the Congo* (London 1999); J. Stengers, *Congo, mythes et réalités* (Brussels 2005); D. Vangroenweghe, *Rood rubber. Leopold II en zijn Kongo* (Brussels/Amsterdam 1985); and A. Hochschild, *King Leopold’s ghost: a story of greed, terror and heroism in colonial Africa* (Boston 1998). Notice that the French version of the book used the controversial term ‘holocaust’ in the title: *Les fantômes du roi Léopold II: un holocauste oublié* (Paris 1998). On controversies surrounding King Leopold, see M. Dumoulin, *Léopold II, un roi génocidaire?* (Brussels 2005), and P. Marechal, ‘La controverse sur Léopold II et le Congo dans la littérature et les médias. Réflexions critiques,’ J.-L. Vellut (ed.), *La mémoire du Congo. Le temps colonial* (Tervuren/Gent 2005), 43-49. See also P. Bates’ film *Congo: white king, red rubber, black death* (2004).

spread civilisation in Africa and to abolish the slave trade. In 1878, another entity, the *Comité d'études du Haut-Congo* (CEHC), was founded with the aim of developing the territory of the Congo basin. In 1882, the CEHC was replaced by the *Association Internationale du Congo* (AIC) by Leopold, its only shareholder. During this period, the monarch commissioned the explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish posts in the Congo basin by signing treaties with local chiefs on his behalf. A few years later, at the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885, Leopold's AIC was recognised the right of sovereignty over the acquired territories. Declared a neutral and a free navigation and trade area, in 1885 the territory officially became the king's personal fiefdom under the name of *État Indépendant du Congo* (EIC, or Congo Free State). Leopold's rule in the Congo is notorious for the plunder of natural resources and for the ruthless exploitation of the local population. Millions are believed to have died as a result of the imposition of forced labour in the rubber and ivory industry, and in infrastructural work.³⁰ This tragedy, defined by some as 'the first genocide of the modern era',³¹ gave rise to a major international scandal. In its wake, the EIC was annexed by Belgium and re-baptised Belgian Congo.

In the aftermath of the two World Wars, which saw a significant Congolese participation on the African warfront,³² voices were raised by the emergent middle-class intelligentsia against racial discrimination and segregation, and in favour of political emancipation.³³ In 1959, violent riots broke out in Léopoldville (today Kinshasa). The violence resulted in the death of numerous supporters of the *Association des Bakongo* (ABAKO), a nationalist movement that was calling for immediate independence. Following a round-table conference, general elections were held in 1960. These were predominantly marked by an opposition between unitarist and federalist parties. The former included Patrice Lumumba's *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC) and the *Parti National du Progrès* (PNP).

³⁰ According to Ndaywel, estimates of the deaths caused by colonial exploitation in 1880-1930 vary between 5 and 10 million. These accounted for 15%-50% of the then entire population. 305-319.

³¹ G. Mthembu-Salter, 'The Democratic Republic of the Congo: recent history,' K. Murison (ed.), *Regional surveys of the world: Africa South of the Sahara 2003*. 32nd ed. (London 2003), 246. In 2006, a motion was unsuccessfully presented to the British Parliament to recognise the colonial crimes as genocide.

³² Académie royale des sciences d'outre-mer, *Le Congo belge durant la seconde guerre mondiale – Bijdragen over Belgisch-Congo tijdens de tweede wereldoorlog* (Brussels: ARSOM 1983).

³³ These claims were first expressed in the Manifesto *Conscience africaine* published in 1956.

The latter encompassed Joseph Kasa-vubu's ABAKO, the Kasai-based *Mouvement National Congolais-Kalonji* (MNC-K) of Albert Kalonji, the *Confédération des Associations Tribales de Katanga* (CONAKAT) of Moïse Tshombé, and the *Association Générale des Baluba de Katanga* (BALUBAKAT) of Jason Sendwe.³⁴ MNC leader Lumumba eventually emerged as the winner of the elections. He became the country's first-ever prime minister. His rival Kasa-Vubu was subsequently appointed president of Congo's First Republic.

4.1.4 The post-colonial period

4.1.4.1 The First Republic and the 'Congolese Crisis' (1960-1965)

35

On June 30, 1960, the Belgian Congo became independent under the name of *République du Congo*. Hopes for a peaceful and prosperous future were soon shattered by the ushering in of a period of deep crisis, marked by political division, tension and violence. The first five years of independence saw a bitter opposition between pro-Soviet radicals (e.g. Lumumba) and pro-western moderates (e.g. Kasa-vubu), as well as between nationalists and federalists. Disputes among politicians were accompanied by a violent army mutiny, secessions in Katanga and in Kasai,³⁶ and insurgencies, such as the Simba rebellion in the east.³⁷ In September 1960, in the context of a constitutional crisis, army Chief of Staff Joseph Désiré Mobutu neutralised Lumumba's government, allegedly supported by the CIA. Following the coup, several short-lived civilian governments succeeded each other. Actual power, however, came to be concentrated in the hands of a group of Mobutu loyalists, the so-called 'Binza Group'. On January 17, 1961, after having been removed from office and placed under house arrest, Lumumba was murdered under obscure circumstances.

³⁴ Other parties included the *Parti Solidaire Africain* (PSA) and the *Parti National du Peuple* (PNP).

³⁵ On this period, see for instance the yearly CRISP volumes *Congo* by J. van Lierde, J. Gerard-Mibois and B. Verhaegen (published between 1959 and 1967).

³⁶ A military operation conducted in Kasai by the army caused the death and massive displacement of unarmed civilians – a disaster later qualified as 'luba genocide'. Ndaywel, 477.

³⁷ See for instance, C. Young, 'Rebellion and the Congo,' R. Rotberg (ed.), *Rebellion in Black Africa* (London 1971).

According to a widely accepted theory, Congo's former PM was summarily executed by Katangan officers and his body made to disappear, reportedly with US and Belgian complicity.³⁸ In 2001, a Belgian parliamentary inquiry admitted the 'moral responsibility' of the Belgian authorities. It instead failed to establish their direct involvement in the assassination.³⁹

4.1.4.2 Mobutu's Second Republic (1965-1990) and the democratic transition (1990-1996)⁴⁰

Faced with continuous political unrest and a new constitutional crisis, Mobutu, backed by Western countries, seized power once again on November 25, 1965. Having proclaimed himself president of the Second Republic, Mobutu quickly proceeded to concentrate all powers into his hands, eventually establishing one of Africa's longest-lasting regimes. While all political activities were banned, in 1974 a party-state was consolidated around Mobutu's *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR). Among the distinct features of the Second Republic were, on the one hand, a 'cultural revolution' based on the principle of 'authenticity', which led to the renaming of the country as Zaire, and, on the other hand, the 'Zairianisation', or nationalisation, of the economy.

³⁸ In the words of Ndaywel, '[f]rom the next day, they strove to hide from the Congolese people the history of the death of their great leader.' 484. On Lumumba, see Willame, *Patrice Lumumba. La crise congolaise revisitée* (Paris 1990); J. Tshonda Omasombo & B. Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba acteur politique. De la prison aux portes du pouvoir juillet 1956-février 1960* (Tervuren/Paris 2005); L. de Witte, *The assassination of Lumumba*, trans. by A. Wright & R. Fenby (London/New York 2001) (which concluded that Lumumba's murder had been commissioned by Belgian authorities), and *Crisis in Kongo. De rol van de Verenigde Naties, de regering-Eyskens en het koningshuis in de omverwerping van Lumumba en de opkomst van Mobutu* (Leuven 1996). See also the film by R. Peck, *Lumumba* (New York 2000).

³⁹ D. Bacquelaine, F. Willems & M.-T. Coenen, *Parlementair Onderzoek met het oog op het vaststellen van de precieze omstandigheden waarin Patrice Lumumba werd vermoord en van de eventuele betrokkenheid daarbij van Belgische politici - Verslag namens de onderzoeksc commissie* (Brussels 2001); L. De Vos et al., *Lumumba: de complotten? De moord* (Leuven 2004). See the critique by G. de Villers, 'Histoire, justice et politique. À propos de la commission d'enquête sur l'assassinat de Patrice Lumumba, instituée par la Chambre belge des représentants,' *Cahiers d'études africaines* 173-174 (2004) 193-220 [etudesafricaines.revues.org/4596] (last accessed on 04/08/2011); and J. Omasombo Tshonda, 'Lumumba, drame sans fin et deuil inachevé de la colonisation,' *Cahiers d'études africaines* 173-174 (2004) 221-261 [etudesafricaines.revues.org/4605] (last accessed on 04/08-/011).

⁴⁰ On the Second Republic, see, e.g., C. Braeckman, *Le dinosaure: Le Zaïre de Mobutu* (Paris 1992); T. Callaghy, *The state-society struggle: Zaire in comparative perspective* (New York 1984); C. Young & T. Turner, *The rise and decline of the Zairian state* (Madison 1985); M.G. Schatzberg, *The dialectics of oppression in Zaire* (Bloomington/ Indianapolis 1988), and *Mobutu or chaos? The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990* (Lanham 1991). On the history of the transition, see G. de Villers & J. Omasombo Tshonda, *Zaïre. La transition manquée 1990-1997* (Paris 1997).

Despite initial instances of open resistance to the regime, most notably by former Katangan gendarmes, the churches, and students, the first decade of Mobutu's rule was characterised by a degree of stability. To a great extent, the relative calm that marked the early phase of Mobutu's presidency was based on co-option and repression of the opposition. Major challenges to the regime re-emerged in the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s. In this period, Mobutu's government was confronted with various incursions and rebellions. These included the wars of Shaba launched by the 'Katangan Tigers', and the wars of Moba led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila. The regime was faced likewise with growing internal opposition and criticism against a prevailing situation of authoritarianism, political repression and human rights violations, as well as mismanagement, corruption and kleptocracy.

In 1990, under increased domestic and international pressure, Mobutu was forced to announce the end of the Second Republic and the advent of a democratic transition.⁴¹ Determined to hold on to power and to hinder the transitional process, the president resorted to divide-and-rule strategies with the aim of weakening the opposition. In particular, he exploited and fuelled tribal and regional antagonisms and xenophobia, giving rise to a wave of discrimination and persecution against those considered to be *non-originaires* and foreigners (e.g. Kasaians in Katanga, and Banyarwanda in the Kivu).⁴² Also, he ordered the violent repression of public protests that had been organised by university students in 1990, and by a group of Christians in 1992 – the so-called 'martyrs of democracy'.⁴³ In the midst of rising tensions, the leader of the opposition party *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS), Étienne Tshisekedi, was elected prime minister. In a bold move, Mobutu refused to endorse his rival's government and instead created a parallel government. In 1994, the political crisis was resolved by merging the two

⁴¹ According to Lemarchand, '[j]ust as Mobutu owed his rise to power to the penetration of East- West rivalries in the continent, in the last analysis the collapse of the Zairean state must be seen as a casualty of the cold war's end'. Lemarchand, 'The Democratic Republic of the Congo: from collapse to potential reconstruction,' Occasional paper (Copenhagen 2001), 19.

⁴² Vlassenroot, 'The promise of ethnic conflict: militarisation and enclave-formation in South Kivu,' D. Goyvaerts (ed.), *Conflict and ethnicity in Central Africa* (Tokyo 2000), 73.

⁴³ V. Digeekisa Piluka, *Le massacre de Lubumbashi, Zaïre 11-12 mai 1990* (Paris 1993).

existing parliaments into the High Council of the Republic -Transitional Parliament. The long-promised elections, however, failed to take place.

In this unstable domestic context, Zaire became a safe-haven for some 200,000 Burundian refugees who were fleeing the 1993 civil war in their country.⁴⁴ In mid-1994, this humanitarian crisis was severely compounded by the arrival of another 1.5 million Rwandan Hutu refugees, including numerous ex-FAR and Interahamwe. This massive displacement, according to Filip Reyntjens, signalled ‘the beginning of the dramatic extension of the neighbouring conflicts, most prominently of the Rwandan civil war.’⁴⁵ The scholar’s observation echoed the conclusions of an OAU International Panel of Eminent Personalities. In 1994, the panel declared that,

*‘[t]he end of the genocide was not the end of a terrible chapter in the history of one country. On the contrary, it was the opening of an entirely new chapter, almost as appalling as the first, but enveloping the entire Great Lakes Region in brutal conflict...For Africa, the genocide was only the beginning.’*⁴⁶

4.1.4.3 The two Congo Wars: Laurent Kabila’s ‘war of liberation’ (1996-1997) and ‘Africa’s World War’ (1998-2003)⁴⁷

As mentioned in paragraph 4.1.1, since the 1990s, the Kivu has been a major scene of violence. In particular, tension rose both between ‘autochthonous’ Congolese and Banyarwanda of ‘questionable nationality’, and between Hutu and Tutsi. Between 1993 and 1996, a wave of inter-ethnic violence engulfed North

⁴⁴ Since then, both the CNDD-FDD and the FNL used South Kivu as a base from where to launch cross-border attacks.

⁴⁵ Reyntjens, 2.

⁴⁶ African Union, *Rwanda: the preventable genocide* (July 2000), par. 20.1 [www.africaunion.org/Official_documents/reports/Report_rowanda_genocide.pdf] (last accessed on 24/03/2011).

⁴⁷ On Congo’s troubled recent history, see T. Turner, *The Congo wars: conflict, myth and reality* (London/New York 2007) (a publication greatly relevant to the present study on account of its focus on the cultural and ideological aspects of the conflict); Reyntjens, *The great African War*; Lemarchand, *The dynamics of violence*; Prunier, *Africa’s World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the making of a continental catastrophe* (New York 2008), and *From genocide to continental war: the ‘Congolese’ conflict and the crisis of contemporary Africa* (London 2009); J.K. Stearns, *Dancing in the glory of monsters: the collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York 2012); J.F. Clark (ed.), *The African stakes of the Congo war* (New York/Houndmills 2002); and C.P. Sherrer, *Genocide and crisis in Central Africa: conflict roots, mass violence, and regional war* (Westport/London 2001).

Kivu, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths and massive displacement.⁴⁸ In South Kivu, a province with a relatively small Kinyarwanda-speaking community of Banyamulenge, instability instead erupted at a later stage, mainly in 1995-1996.⁴⁹ Such confrontations resulted from a situation of increasing discrimination and violence against the Banyarwanda following a rejection of their claims to Congolese citizenship.⁵⁰

In 1996, a Banyamulenge rebellion broke out in South Kivu with the support of neighbouring countries, spearheaded by Rwanda.⁵¹ Its ranks were composed of numerous Banyamulenge/Tutsi who had fought in the Rwandan civil war on the side of Paul Kagame's RPA. One month later, the rebellion transitioned into a new insurgency, the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo* (AFDL). Its stated aim was to 'liberate' the country from Mobutu's dictatorship. According to several observers, the AFDL, led by the long-time anti-Mobutist rebel L.D. Kabila,⁵² was a Rwandan creation that intended to give a Congolese face to what was perceived as an external aggression.⁵³ With the support of regional armies, the AFDL advanced swiftly into Zaire's territory, almost

⁴⁸ Between 70,000 and 100,000 are estimated to have died in the violence. According to Reyntjens, '[by] March-April 1996, the zone of Masisi had been "ethnically cleansed": most local Tutsi fled to Rwanda, where about 18,000 refugees had arrived by the end of April.' 17. In March and May 1996, respectively, the government finally launched two military operations – 'Kimia' ('peace' in Lingala) and 'Mbata' ('slap') – to put an end to inter-ethnic violence.

⁴⁹ Mamdani argued that, '[t]he minority question in South Kivu is less complex than that in the north. Whereas the situation in North Kivu has a longer history and is intimately affected by what happened in Rwanda, the situation in South Kivu is of more recent origin but is influenced by the developments in both Rwanda and Burundi.' 247. According to the monograph of South Kivu, '[t]he Province of South Kivu has known an unstable political environment since the arrival of Rwandan refugees in 1994 and the seizure of power in Rwanda by the RPF.' 21.

⁵⁰ This decision was taken on the basis of a declaration issued by a parliamentary commission (the so-called Vangu Commission), which had been mandated to investigate the identity of Banyarwanda living in the Congo. For the full text of the resolution, see M. Ruhimbika, *Les Banyamulenge (Congo-Zaire) entre deux guerres* (Paris 2001), 203-211. In this publication, the Banyamulenge are depicted as innocent victims, as defending their legitimate rights as autochthonous Congolese, and as not being associated with Rwanda.

⁵¹ Rwanda intended to eliminate the threat posed by the ex-FAR/Interahamwe units who were using the refugee camps set up on Congolese territory as a rear base to launch incursions into Rwanda, with the support of the Zairean regime (as well as of France).

⁵² For a biography of Kabila, see, E. Kennes, *Essai biographique sur Laurent-Désiré Kabila* (Tervuren/Paris 2003); G. Mukendi, *Kabila. Le retour du Congo* (Ottignies 1997); Wilungula B. Cosma, *Fizi 1967-1986. Le maquis Kabila* (Tervuren/Paris 1997); and J.-C. Willame, *L'odyssée Kabila. Trajectoire pour un Congo nouveau ?* (Paris 1999).

⁵³ Reyntjens, 105, 107; Turner, 76; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 225. A rumour has been circulating in the region, according to which the protocol establishing the creation of the AFDL was accompanied by a secret agreement which promised Congolese nationality rights as well as land concessions to the Tutsi residing in the Kivu. Ndaywel, 603.

unopposed by a national army in dire state.⁵⁴ As the war unfolded, widespread human rights abuses were committed, including killings, torture, rape, kidnapping, child recruitment, and looting and destruction.⁵⁵ Numerous reports have denounced a situation whereby Rwandan Hutu refugees in particular became the target of a relentless hunt and of systematic attacks and large-scale massacres. Across much of the extant literature on the First Congo War, Rwanda's military campaign against Hutu refugees has been controversially defined as 'genocide'.⁵⁶ Following failed negotiations, the advancing AFDL troops marched into Kinshasa on May 17, 1997. On the same day, Kabila proclaimed himself President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. As the new rulers rose to power, Mobutu went in exile, where he died a few months later.

According to critics, although the new regime registered a number of achievements, especially in the domains of security and reconstruction, it failed to distance itself from old practices. Kabila's government soon revealed authoritarian and undemocratic traits. Much like his predecessor, the incumbent president quickly moved to concentrate power into his own hands and into those of a few dignitaries from his entourage, i.e. from his province of Katanga and his ethno-political group, the Balubakat. At the same time, determined to rule unopposed, he suspended political activities and silenced critical voices. Such practices crushed the hopes of those who had supported the 'liberation war'

⁵⁴The AFDL rebellion, largely composed of child soldiers (also known as *Kadogo*, i.e. 'little ones' in Swahili), was actively supported by Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian armies, as well as by Angola and Katangan ex-Tigers. The Zairian army was instead supported by a group of Katangan gendarmes, the Angolan rebellion UNITA, and the Rwandan ex-FAR. According to Reyntjens, while the former coalition was backed by the USA, the latter was supported by France. As he pointed out, however, the involvement of these Western powers 'is shrouded in mystery'. Reyntjens, 117.

⁵⁵Innocent civilians of all ethnic groups were the victims of abuses perpetrated by the various armed groups involved in this war, notably the AFDL/APR, the ex-FAR/Interahamwe, the FAC, the Mayi-Mayi and self-defence groups.

⁵⁶Refugees were based at the various camps located around Bukavu/Uvira and around Goma. During Rwanda's military campaigns, these were all systematically destroyed. For a first-hand account of the violence, see B. Umutesi, *Surviving the slaughter: the ordeal of a Rwandan refugee in Zaire* (Madison 2004); as well as R. Lemarchand, 'Bearing witness to mass murder,' *African studies review* 48(3) (2005) 93-101. See also two different interpretations of the refugee problem proposed respectively by H. Adelman, 'The use and abuse of refugees in Zaire,' S. Steadman & F. Tanner (eds.), *Refugee manipulation: war, politics and the abuse of human suffering* (Washington 2003); and Reyntjens, *La guerre des grands lacs: alliances mouvantes et conflits extraterritoriaux en Afrique centrale* (Paris 1999), 100-142, and J.-P. Godding, *Réfugiés rwandais au Zaïre: sommes-nous encore des hommes?* (Paris 1997). In Reyntjens' *The Great African war*, a whole chapter is dedicated to the 'Massacre of the Rwandan refugees' by the RPF, in which the author argues that the refugees 'became the object of a real extermination project.' 98. The chapter is further accompanied by an extensive bibliographic appendix (287-290) aimed at 'show[ing] how abundant the documentation is on this grave matter and how soon it was available'. 93.

against Mobutu's dictatorship. Kabila's popularity further declined due to perceptions of him being at the head of a puppet government directed by Rwanda. This country's military and political role in post-Mobutu DRC was conspicuous. Rwandans occupied key positions within the AFDL (including those of Army Chief and Secretary General), and continued to operate on Congolese soil alongside the *Forces Armées Congolaises* (FAC). Faced with mounting criticism, Kabila was compelled to take distance from his allies. In a bold move, he dismissed his Rwandan Chief of Staff and urged the RPA's immediate departure.

Against the backdrop of escalating tensions, a new war broke out in August 1998 as the RPA invaded the DRC with the aim of overthrowing President Kabila.⁵⁷ According to several observers, the foreign 'aggression' was again dissimulated into a local rebellion, launched by the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD). Reyntjens, Lemarchand and Ndaywel, among others, argued that the creation of the Banyamulenge-dominated RCD had been 'masterminded by Kigali', with the support of its American allies.⁵⁸ Rwanda, on its part, justified its intervention on security and humanitarian grounds. Rwandan officials accused the Congolese government of allowing militant Hutu refugees to operate on its territory undisturbed. Also, they denounced instances of massacres, and even genocide, that had been perpetrated against Congolese Tutsi.⁵⁹ As a result of the war, both anti-Rwanda and anti-Tutsi sentiments intensified. As reported by Reyntjens, documents that circulated at that time in the DRC denounced the 'Tutsi invasion' and 'hegemony', the 'ferocious dictatorship' and 'domination imposed by Rwanda', and 'the annexation pure and simple of eastern Zaire by Rwanda'.⁶⁰ While the Rwandan intervention claimed to aim at protecting the Tutsi, this group

⁵⁷ A successful resistance was put up by Kinshasa's residents. This was described by Ndaywel as 'a massive and heroic effort to track down the invaders'. 612.

⁵⁸ Reyntjens, 195; Lemarchand, 'The geopolitics of the Great Lakes crisis,' Reyntjens & Marysse, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs: annuaire 2005/2006* (Paris 2006), 47; Ndaywel, 612. According to Reyntjens, the USA acted as a 'patron for Rwanda and the AFDL, and later the RCD'. 230, and 66-79.

⁵⁹ Reyntjens summarised Rwanda's complex motives for its intervention in the Congo in these words: '[t]hey were a combination, changing over time, of genuine security concerns, economic interests, ethnic solidarity and even (selective) humanitarian concerns, the need to "buy" internal elite solidarity, (military) institution building and a feeling of entitlement coupled with a sense of invincibility against the background of the comfort offered by the collapse of its rich neighbour.' 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 148-150. According to Reyntjens, these sentiments had become more widespread as a result of the arrogant and triumphalist attitudes of certain Congolese and Rwandan Tutsi, 'who behaved as if they were an occupying force' and as 'liberators'. 147. See also Turner, 93.

came to be associated with the ‘enemy’. Accused of being collaborators and foreign agents in disguise, Congolese Tutsi increasingly became the target of pogroms at the hands of ‘the autochthonous’, ‘with the approval, if not upon incitement of, local authorities’.⁶¹ Soon, the war escalated to unprecedented levels. What initially started as a ‘rebellion’ turned into ‘Africa’s World War’, a violent conflict that came to directly involve eight African countries and about twenty-five local and foreign armed groups.⁶²

The year 1999 marked the beginning of what Reyntjens called ‘a long diplomatic saga’.⁶³ By then, the DRC had lost its territorial unity as it was fragmented into three separate regions: the west was controlled by Kabila, the south-east by the RCD,⁶⁴ and the north-east by the Uganda-backed *Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo* (MLC), led by Jean-Pierre Bemba. After numerous attempts aimed at reconciling the parties to the conflict, a ceasefire was signed in Lusaka under the aegis of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). The agreement called for the end of confrontations, the disarmament and demobilisation of armed factions, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC). Also, it provided for the launching of an Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) that would lead to a transitional period and to the organisation of the country’s first-ever democratic elections since 1960. The Lusaka Accord, however, failed to be fully implemented. Despite the ceasefire,

⁶¹ Ibid., 131-132. The new wave of persecution against Tutsi/Banyamulenge led Lemarchand to argue that, ‘[f]ew people have been dealt a harsher blow by history’. Lemarchand, *The dynamics*, 11. This view is shared by T. Longman (‘The complex reasons for Rwanda’s engagement in Congo,’ Clark (ed.), *The African stakes*, 133), as well as by Nzongola-Ntalaja. The latter described this group as ‘victims of officially inspired hatred and violence, and some of the biggest losers of the second Congo war’ due to their association with the RPF regime. 229-230. See also, ICG, *The Kivus: the forgotten crucible of the Congo conflict* (Nairobi/Brussels 2003), 13.

⁶² Kabila was backed by Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Chad, Libya and Sudan. Among Kabila’s allies were also local Mayi-Mayi militias and civil defence forces, as well as the Burundian FDD and the Rwandan ex-FAR/*Interahamwe*. This last group was organised first under the name of *Armée de Libération du Rwanda* (ALiR) and later under the *Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR).

⁶³ Numerous outside facilitators attempted to put an end to the war. Among these were ‘SADC, the UN, the OAU, South Africa, Libya, Belgium, the United States, the *Francophonie* and NGOs’. Reyntjens, 244.

⁶⁴ In March 1999, in a context of growing tensions between Rwanda and Uganda, the RCD split into two factions: the pro-Rwanda RCD-Goma and the pro-Uganda *RCD-Mouvement de Libération* (ML). In 1999-2000, violent confrontations broke out between Rwanda and Uganda, notably in the strategic town of Kisangani. Various reasons, from (geo-)political to economic nature, have been put forward to explain the tensions between the two former allies.

military activities continued, coupled with systematic pillaging of natural resources and widespread violence.⁶⁵

On January 16, 2001, President Kabila was shot dead by one of his bodyguards.⁶⁶ The truth behind the assassination was never fully uncovered. As a result, various conspiracy theories have circulated to this day.⁶⁷ Upon his death, the president was succeeded by his son, Joseph Kabila. This regime change signalled an important turning point in the peace process. Breaking with his father's attempts at sabotage, J. Kabila breathed new life into the ongoing peacemaking and democratisation efforts. During his presidency, MONUC, the then largest and most costly UN peacekeeping mission in the world, was allowed to fully deploy.⁶⁸ At the same time, in a context of political opening, the ICD finally took off. Also, as a result of bilateral agreements, all foreign troops had withdrawn by 2003, reportedly with the notable exception of Rwanda. According to Reyntjens, despite a pledge to withdraw its forces, Rwanda had in fact maintained 'a clandestine residual presence, particularly in North Kivu'.⁶⁹ The 1998 war officially ended with the signing of the 2002 *Accord Global et Inclusif* (AGI), endorsed in Sun City, South Africa, in 2003. The AGI stipulated the establishment of a two-year transitional government, led by President Kabila with the assistance of four vice-presidents ('1+4' formula). These political figures were each to represent the government, the political opposition, and the two rebel groups RCD and MLC.⁷⁰ The effects of the long and brutal armed conflict that was coming to an end were catastrophic. According to a much cited report issued by the International Rescue

⁶⁵ The most unstable regions were the Kivus, the Oriental Province (especially Kibali-Ituri), and North Katanga. On the role of resources in the war, see, among others, M. Nest, F. Grigon & E. Kisangani (eds.), *The Democratic Republic of Congo: economic dimensions of war and peace* (Boulder 2006).

⁶⁶ Kabila's assassin was apparently a *kidogo* from Kivu by the name of Rachidi Kasereka.

⁶⁷ Braeckman identified five concurrent conspiracies. Suspects included 'former Mobutists settled in Brazzaville; military from Kivu...; a Katangan Lunda network around Kabila's *aide de camp* Colonel Eddy Kapend, linked to Angola; Lebanese diamond traders...; and...the U.S. Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA).' C. Braeckman, *Les nouveaux prédateurs. Politique des puissances en Afrique centrale* (Paris 2003), 105, cited in Reyntjens, 252-253. See also, O. Lanotte, *République Démocratique du Congo. Guerres sans frontières* (Brussels 2003), 137-151. A few months after the assassination, a flawed investigation was conducted, which incriminated close to a hundred individuals.

⁶⁸ *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo*.

⁶⁹ Reyntjens, 208. As stipulated in the Pretoria Accord, Rwandan troops officially withdrew in 2002 in exchange for DRC's commitment to disarm Rwandan Hutu rebels active on its territory. In 2003, Ugandan troops followed, as agreed in the Luanda Accord.

⁷⁰ These four positions were respectively filled by A. Yerodia Nombasi, A. Z'Ahidi, A. Ruberwa Manywa, and J.-P. Bemba.

Committee (IRC), the war had caused, directly or indirectly, approximately 3.8 million deaths between August 1998 and April 2004. Owing to its exorbitant human costs, this violent occurrence has been recognised as ‘by far the deadliest war in the world since World War II and the deadliest in Africa ever recorded.’⁷¹

4.1.4.4 The transition (2003-2006) and Joseph Kabila’s era (2006-2010)

The transitional government was officially established on June 30, 2003. The period of transition came to an end with the organisation of general elections in 2006. Kabila, who emerged as the winner, was sworn into power in December 2006. His main rival, Bemba, instead, was arrested in 2008 following a warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on account of allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity he had reportedly committed in the Central African Republic in 2002-2003.

Despite the official end of the war in 2003, insecurity continued unabated, especially in the Kivu region.⁷² While South Kivu has since then been mainly experiencing low-level warfare, North Kivu has been stricken by more intense armed combats, particularly since 2006. Various actors have contributed to this state of instability in the region. Among them are undisciplined army soldiers, Mayi-Mayi militias,⁷³ the Interahamwe/FDLR,⁷⁴ as well as renegade army officers, most notably General Laurent Nkunda.⁷⁵ This former RCD-Goma Tutsi

⁷¹ B. Coghlan et al., *Mortality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: results from a nationwide survey* (Melbourne/New York: Burnet Institute & IRC 2004), iii [www.kongo-kinshasa.de/dokumente/ngo/IRC_DRC_Mortalit_Dec04.pdf] (last accessed on 29/03/2011).

⁷² ICG, *The Kivus*.

⁷³ The Mayi-Mayi are a local phenomenon, characterised by an ethno-regional dimension, and largely attracting marginalised youth. Originally born to protect their community from the perceived threat posed by Rwandans, they soon became motivated by greed. See, A. Mwaka Bwenge, ‘Les milices Mai-Mai à l’est de la République du Congo: dynamique d’une gouvernamentalité en situation de crise,’ *Revue africaine de sociologie* 7(2) (2003) 73-94; K. Vlassenroot & F. Van Acker, ‘Les «Mai-Mai» et les fonctions de la violence milicienne dans l’est du Congo,’ *Politique africaine* 84 (2001) 103-116.

⁷⁴ See M. Rafti, ‘Crumbling in exile: the changing nature of the Rwandan opposition,’ S. Marysse & F. Reyntjens (eds.), *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs, Annuaire 2004-2005* (Paris 2005), 95-118. In 2009 and 2010, military operations were launched with the aim of neutralising the FDLR: *Kimia I* in North Kivu, and *Kimia II* and *Amani Leo* in South Kivu.

⁷⁵ General Nkunda had previously been a primary school teacher. After fighting in Rwanda in the early 1990s on the side of the RPF, he moved back to the DRC in 1996 to fight with the AFDL and later the RCD. ICG, *Congo’s elections: making or breaking the peace* (Brussels 2006), 14, note 97. See also, J.K. Stearns, ‘Laurent Nkunda and the national Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP),’ S. Marysse, F. Reyntjens & S. Vandeginste (eds.), *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs: Annuaire 2007-2008* (Paris 2008), 245-267.

officer from North Kivu, according to Lemarchand, was ‘among the most persistent “spoilers’ of the precarious peace’.⁷⁶ In May-June 2004, he managed to briefly capture Bukavu with the alleged support of Rwanda.⁷⁷ Fearing reprisals after Nkunda’s withdrawal to North Kivu, tens of thousands of Kinyarwanda-speakers left South Kivu. Some fled to Burundi, where many were killed at Gatumba transit camp. In 2006, the General founded the *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple* (CNDP), a new rebel movement, which claimed to want to protect the Tutsi from the looming prospect of genocide. According to Reyntjens, the CNDP, in fact, aggravated the predicament of this group by ‘enhanc[ing] the perception among other communities that they were “different”, dangerous, disloyal and even alien’.⁷⁸ Following a rupture with his Chief of Staff Bosco Ntaganda, Nkunda was arrested in Rwanda in 2009, in a climate of growing international pressure and of bilateral rapprochement between Rwanda and the DRC. Two months later, on March 23, the CNDP signed a peace agreement with the Congolese government, which, among other things, provided for the integration of the former rebels into the national army. In 2012, peace in North Kivu was once again seriously threatened by a new rebel group, the so-called ‘M23’ – named after the 2009 accords they now reject. Led by renegade and ICC-wanted General Ntaganda, the movement is mainly composed of former CNDP rebels who defected from the national army after their military integration.

As emerged in this section, regional powers, spearheaded by Rwanda, have been largely blamed for the protracted violence that has plagued the DRC since the mid-1990s. Recently, such allegations were reinforced by a new UN report that was released in June 2012, which accused Rwanda of actively supporting the newly founded M23. The determinant role of Rwanda in Congo’s recent troubled history has been underscored by numerous renowned scholars, both national, such

⁷⁶ Lemarchand, ‘The geopolitics,’ 41.

⁷⁷ As summarised in a 2008 report, ‘Rwanda is known to have provided, at minimum, rhetorical support for Nkunda. Some suspect the Rwandan government provided Nkunda with arms, and others have documented occasions when Rwanda allowed Nkunda to recruit soldiers, sometimes children, within its borders.’ P. Vinck et al., *Living with fear: a population-based survey on attitudes about peace, justice, and social reconstruction in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo*. Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley; Payson Center for International Development, Tulane University; International Center for Transitional Justice (New York 2008) [www.law.berkeley.edu/HRCweb/pdfs/LivingWithFear-DRC.pdf] (last accessed on 03/04/2011), citing HRW, *Renewed crisis in North Kivu* (New York, October 2007), 49.

⁷⁸ Reyntjens, 227.

as Nzongola and Ndaywel, and foreign, such as Reyntjens and Lemarchand. Nzongola, for instance, highlighted how, due to a collapse of the Zairian/Congolese State, ‘Lilliputian states’, such Rwanda and Uganda, were allowed ‘to take it upon themselves to impose rulers in Kinshasa, and to invade, occupy and loot the territory of their giant neighbour.’⁷⁹ Reyntjens’ view in this respect appears to be particularly pungent. Referring to Rwanda as ‘a major factor of regional instability’, in 2009 the scholar argued that, ‘[a]lthough it is the smallest country in the region, it is there that the epicentre of all crises lay. Without it, the conflicts would not have developed to such an extent.’⁸⁰ Pointing to the crucial role of Rwanda both in the conflict and its resolution, Reyntjens’ conclusion was that, ‘by turning a blind eye to Rwanda’s hegemonic claims in eastern Congo, the future stability of the region remains in doubt.’⁸¹

Having sketched Congo’s complex social and political landscape and turbulent history, this chapter will move to exploring the politics of history, identity, and education as it played in this country. Partly building on the available literature, the next three sections will seek to demonstrate the interface between ideology, historiography, and education throughout Congo’s recent history. For this case-study as well, upon examining the evolution of ideological and historical discourses from the colonisation until today, for each of the three historical periods under review, namely the colonial era, the time of the two Republics, and the war and post-war years, the thesis will examine the extent to which official discourses have shaped Congo’s education system in the course of the decades. With a view to answering the questions that have guided this research, findings drawn from the extant literature will be complemented in particular by a critical review of old and new history curricula and textbooks as well as by an analysis of narratives that were collected among young Congolese about their country’s past and present times.

⁷⁹ Nzongola-Ntalaja, 214.

⁸⁰ Reyntjens, 4, 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 286.

4.2 Ideology, historiography and formal education in colonial Congo

4.2.1 Ideology and historiography in colonial Congo

As in Rwanda and Burundi, the first historiographers of the Congo were European missionaries and colonial administrators. Here as well, colonial literature and scholarship, including historiography, largely served the purpose of justifying Belgian rule.⁸² This connivance was clearly illustrated by G. Vanthemsche in a 2006 article on ‘The historiography of Belgian colonialism in the Congo’. The scholar pointed to the obstinate reluctance demonstrated by Belgian authors to earnestly appraise the colonial period. Until rather recently, their work was characterised by an apologetic and negationist discourse which typically portrayed Belgian colonialism in terms of ‘[h]eroism, unselfishness, and unbridled thirst for action’.⁸³ The dominant narrative presented King Leopold II, in particular, ‘as a visionary, an extraordinary genius’, whose only goal was ‘the gift of a prosperous

⁸² Written history on the Congo was mainly produced under the aegis of Belgian institutions. These were spearheaded by the *Musée du Congo Belge* in Tervuren, by the *Ecole Coloniale d’Anvers*, and by the *Institut Royal Colonial Belge* (IRCB). This was later renamed *Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales* (ARSC), and, since 1959, *Académie Royale des Sciences d’Outre-Mer* (ARSOM). In Congo itself, research was conducted since 1948 under the aegis of the *Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale* (IRSAC).

⁸³ G. Vanthemsche, ‘The historiography of Belgian colonialism in the Congo,’ C. Lévai (ed.), *Europe and the world in European historiography* (Pisa 2006), 92. This was (and has been) disseminated among the Belgian (and Congolese) public, for instance through schools. According to Vanthemsche, for a long time, ‘the Belgian public’s view on the Congo remained largely unchanged, shaped by school reminiscences, clichés and popular “history” books.’ 100. The scholar reported the example of a Belgian primary schoolbook used in 2006, which selectively presented this history as follows: ‘When the Belgians arrived in the Congo, they found a population that was victim of bloody rivalries and slave trade. Belgian civil servants, missionaries, doctors, colonists and engineers civilised the black population step by step. They created modern cities, roads and railroads, harbours and airports, factories and mines, schools and hospitals. This work greatly improved the living conditions of the indigenous people.’ J.-P. Lefevre, *Une ancienne colonie, le Congo*, in *A la conquête du temps. Cycle 10/12*, qtd. by Vanthemsche, 89. A move away from this apologetic view was made by Jean Stengers in the 1950s-1960s. A more radical change in this regard, however, occurred only in the 1990s. Controversies around the colonial past emerged among a divided Belgian public opinion in particular following the publication of Hochschild’s world-wide best-seller *King Leopold’s ghosts*. Besides Leopold’s ‘red rubber’, the assassination of Lumumba became another issue of controversy which led to heated debate. This was sparked by the publication of de Witte’s *De moord op Lumumba*, as well as by Peck’s film *Lumumba*. In 2000, an investigation was eventually conducted by a Parliamentary Enquiry Commission, which admitted the ‘moral responsibility’ of the Belgian authorities. This acknowledgment was followed by a parliamentary apology. See also, H. Vanhee & G. Castryck, ‘Belgische historiografie en verbeelding over het koloniale verleden,’ *Revue belge d’histoire contemporaine* 32 (3-4) (2002) 305-320.

colony to his beloved Belgium.’⁸⁴ Celebrating the Belgian monarch, the atrocities that were committed during his reign were utterly denied or minimised. Accusations levelled against Leopold’s rule were depicted as a smear campaign that had been orchestrated by foreign countries coveting the rich territory. An illustrative example of the eulogistic colonial discourse can be found in the *Biographie Coloniale Belge*, an important reference work that was published in 1948 by the *Institut Royal Colonial Belge* (IRCB). In its words,

‘Three aspects dominate the glorious life of Leopold II in its colonial aspect: political and diplomatic genius, nobility of sentiments, disinterestedness. (...) He had achieved the work of a Titan; He took rank amongst the greatest Statesmen of History. (...) This builder of Empire, this Gatherer of Lands (“Rassembleur de Terres”) for the benefit of Fatherland and Civilisation (...) [always] said that He wanted to give a colony to his country, to open up central Africa to civilisation.’⁸⁵

This glorious image of King Leopold II and of Belgian colonialism was reiterated in the historic speech that was pronounced in 1960 by Leopold’s successor, King Baldwin. During the official ceremony that marked Congo’s independence, he declared,

‘The independence of the Congo is the crowning of the work conceived by the genius of King Leopold II undertaken by him with firm courage, and continued by Belgium with perseverance.’⁸⁶

While the emphasis of the official historical discourse was placed on the ‘praiseworthy’ European enterprise, in this narrative, local societies functioned as a mere décor. Largely neglected by the colonial historiographical literature, the study of local societies was rather the work of ethnologists and ethnographers.⁸⁷

If historiography was largely used to legitimise Belgian rule in the Congo, according to Thomas Turner, ethnography and linguistics played a particularly important role in supporting the colonisation in a different way. As he pointed out in his outstanding 2007 publication *The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth and Reality*,

⁸⁴ Vanthemsche, 92.

⁸⁵ O. Louwers, *Biographie coloniale belge*, tome 1 [Hommage au Roi Léopold II, fondateur de l’empire colonial belge] (Brussels 1948), 5, 13, 16-17, qtd. by Vanthemsche, 93.

⁸⁶ Qtd in D. Renton, D. Seddon, & L. Zeilig, *The Congo: plunder and resistance* (London/New York 2007), 81.

⁸⁷ Among these were C. Van Overber, E. Tordey & T. Joyce, A. Hutereau, R. Beaucort, J. Maes & O. Boone, C. van der Kerken, and E. Verhulpen.

such scholarship, which was greatly impregnated with a racist ideology that essentialised and naturalised difference, was exploited to organize the colony and to justify roles and hierarchies of power within the colonial apparatus.⁸⁸ In particular, ethnographic studies served the purpose of guiding Belgium's 'indigenous policy' and administrative reforms in the Congo by categorising the local population into 'tribes', each with its own supposed territory, 'Native Authority', and customary laws. The aim was to homogenize and simplify the complex local environment by proceeding to what Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers called a 'territorialisation of ethnicity'.⁸⁹ This consisted in organising the territory in separate ethnic-based administrative entities, the movement in and out of which was strictly regulated.⁹⁰ According to Vlassenroot and Huggins, '[t]he pre-colonial system of communal territorial ownership practices formed the basis for the Belgian colonial administration's version of indirect rule.' In so doing, authorities 'institutionalised ethnic identity as an organising principle of the colonial state.' They further explained that, '[a]lthough the population living in the newly created collectivities was multi-ethnic, customary power, which now represented state authority, was defined mono-ethnically and awarded to the ethnic community considered as indigenous.'⁹¹ In this sense, the two scholars spoke of a 'process of "containerisation" [which] involved a "rigidification" and in some cases a re-definition of ethnic identities and a codification of customs.'⁹² Highlighting the role of scholarship in this process, Turner reported that the official recognition of new chiefdoms in the framework of this reform had to be

⁸⁸ In the framework of efforts aimed at justifying the colonisation, the Belgian ideological and historical discourse, which was reflected in pseudo-scientific works by European authors of that time, showed its adherence to racial theories. In line with a general tendency and concern among colonial historians to demonstrate the superiority of the white race vis-à-vis the primitive 'Negroes', as stated by the Prince Dika in 1983, attempts were made to 'whiten all civilised or civilizing elements encountered on the black continent', thereby leading to a distinction between a 'Black' and a 'White' Africa (the latter including Egypt). In the words of the Cameroonian academic: 'The history of the African continent has been seen in terms of a power struggle [*rapport de forces*] between the breeder, warrior, and civilizing White, and the farmer, amorphous and wild Black. Consequently, the builders of nearly all African empires have been whitened.' P. Dika-Akwa Nya Bonambela, *Les problèmes de l'anthropologie et de l'histoire africaines* (Yaoundé 1983), 9, 16.

⁸⁹ K. Vlassenroot & T. Raeymaekers, 'The formation of centres of profit, power and protection: conflict and social transformation in eastern DR Congo,' Occasional paper, Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen (Copenhagen 2005), 10
[www.teol.ku.dk/cas/research/publications/occ_papers/vlassenroot_samletpaper.pdf] (last accessed on 02/04/2011).

⁹⁰ De Saint Moulin, 4.

⁹¹ Vlassenroot & Huggins, 125, 175, 131.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 122.

preceded by the production of enquiry reports and maps, ‘which indicate[d] the supposed homelands of indigenous peoples and languages, in the ethnographic present’.⁹³ The scholar mentioned three particularly influential syntheses: A. Moeller’s *Les Grandes Lignes des Migrations des Bantous de la Province Orientale du Congo Belge* (1936), whose map was described by Turner as a ‘colonial mishmash’; G. van der Kerken’s *L’Ethnie Mongo* (1944); and E. Verhulpen’s *Baluba et Balubaisés du Katanga* (1936). The academic poignantly observed that,

‘The three vast syntheses are based on two dominant tropes, namely migration and cultural change (being “ized”). The assumptions are that (i) many people came from far away (like the Tutsi who supposedly came from Ethiopia), and (ii) that many people have lost their “real” culture (again like the Tutsi, who supposedly lost their Cushitic language and adopted the Bantu tongue of the Hutu).’⁹⁴

As in Rwanda and Burundi, colonial scholarship in Congo, such as Moeller’s work on Bantu migrations in eastern Congo, proceeded to a ‘racialisation of history’ which essentially reduced the country’s ancient history to a succession of migratory waves of Pygmy, Bantu, and ‘Hamitics’ or ‘Nilotics’. Here as well, the Hamitics were depicted as a superior, civilizing and dominant foreign race of pastoralist warriors, and as the founders and rulers of complex centralised kingdoms in the region. With regard to eastern Congo, and more specifically to the Rwandophones living in the Kivu region, a 1935 synthesis by Maes and Boone, for instance, echoed the colonial thinking on Rwandan society. This study referred to the ‘Baniaruanda’ in North Kivu as being composed of ‘three races’: the Batwa or Pygmies, the Bahutu ‘people’, and the Watutsi ‘noble class’. Whereas the study had acknowledged the existence of these three groups among the Banyarwanda of North Kivu, two decades later, in 1954, a map by Boone only mentioned the Hutu as the indigenous residents of the area.⁹⁵ A more recent article by Father L. de Saint Moulin, author of numerous studies on Congo’s demography, reported a map that included the ‘Banyabwisha’ of North Kivu. Conversely, it omitted the Banyamulenge in South Kivu and the Rwandophones in

⁹³ Turner, 66.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109, note 12.

Masisi.⁹⁶ Highlighting the pseudo-scientific and political nature of such scholarship, Turner drew a parallel with the situation in Rwanda. His argument was that,

‘These maps and syntheses – by Moeller, Verhulpen, Boone, de Saint Moulin and others – are the equivalents for the Congo of the Rwandan histories produced by de Lacger, Kagame and Maquet. Like those histories, they are not “science”, standing outside politics; instead, they are fatally flawed by their colonial, political origins.’⁹⁷

Based on this pseudo-science, policies were designed in the Kivu, as well, in order to organize the administration of this region. Compared to colonial policies in Ruanda-Urundi, however, a different approach was adopted towards the Banyarwanda in Belgian Congo.⁹⁸ Whereas, in Ruanda-Urundi, Belgium had relied on a strengthened Tutsi oligarchy on account of the supposed racial superiority of this group, conversely, in Congo, the Hutu were acknowledged as an indigenous tribe, which, on that ground, was officially entitled to rule over its own territory through chiefs from within its ranks. In particular, when the Rwandan Bwisha region was annexed to the Belgian Congo in 1918, the colonial administration recognised this chiefdom within Rutshuru Territory – considered as ‘*Territoire des Bahutu*’,⁹⁹ – and replaced the existent Tutsi chief with a Hutu *mwami*. While colonial administrative reforms were generally guided by a principle of reliance on traditional structures, incoherent policies were introduced towards the Banyarwanda in Masisi and the Banyamulenge in South Kivu. With regard to the former, a separate *collectivité* (Gishari) with its own Native Authority was established in the ‘Hunde’ Masisi Territory in order to cater for the needs of the non-indigenous Hutu immigrant community living there.¹⁰⁰ This

⁹⁶ De Saint Moulin, ‘Conscience’.

⁹⁷ Turner, 66.

⁹⁸ See, e.g. S. Bucyalimwe Mararo, *Masisi et Rutshuru [Nord-Kivu, RD Congo], 1993-2009. Géopolitique nationale et régionale* (Saarbrücken 2010); Mamdani, *Understanding the crisis*; Kambere Muhindo; and Habimana.

⁹⁹ Similarly, Beni and Lubero territories, for instance, were labelled as ‘*Territoire des Nande*’.

¹⁰⁰ Turner added a note on the role that Rwandan historiographer Alexis Kagame played in justifying the colonial Banyarwanda immigration programme by manipulating Rwandan history and chronology. The scholar accused Kagame of pushing back not only the time of the foundation of the kingdom in order to claim its antiquity, but also of Rwandan incursions into Congolese territory (from the 19th to the 16th century) in order to claim its ancient possession by Rwanda. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, in 1998, former Rwandan President Bizimungu relied on a map presented in A. Kagame’s *Abrégé* (1972), showing parts of North Kivu as belonging to ancient Rwanda. As observed by Turner, this same map is reproduced on the cover of Banyafashe (ed.) *Les défis de l’historiographie rwandaise*. Turner 60-62, and note 46, p218.

‘anomalous’ entity was eventually suppressed and integrated into the existent Buhunde chiefdom following protests against what was perceived as an usurpation of Hunde ancestral land. As for the (Tutsi) Banyamulenge, despite the current widespread belief in their pre-colonial existence in the highlands of South Kivu, they were never conferred an own autonomous collectivity. They were instead obliged to live under the rule of various larger neighbouring communities: the Bembe in Fizi, the Vira and the Fulero in Uvira, and the Lega in Mwenga. In relation to the approach of the Belgians towards these Tutsi pastoralists, Turner explained that, ‘[f]or decades, they ignored their presence, or considered them to be foreigners’ (i.e. Rwandan).¹⁰¹ In addition, the academic argued that the decision not to unite them into a single administrative entity might have been determined by the deep mistrust of the colonial authorities towards this group. Reportedly, Tutsi pastoralists in the Congo were perceived as holding an ‘uncooperative’ stance and as threatening ‘to “dominate the Congolese people” and to reduce European influence over the Congolese’.¹⁰²

Much like in Ruanda-Urundi, colonial bias and stereotypes apparently also guided recruitment policies for the state apparatus of the Belgian Congo. In this respect, Turner’s observations are again insightful. He reported that, in their administration of the colony, the Belgians looked for ‘suitable subordinates among the “natives”.’ For instance, while the ‘fierce and courageous’ Bangala and Batetela had been initially favoured in the western regions, especially for military recruitment, the Baluba were privileged for the more skilled professions. As the Tutsi in Rwanda, the Baluba were considered to be particularly ‘intelligent’ and ‘open to European ideas’. According to Turner, they were characterised as ‘white’, ‘black Europeans’ or ‘African Jews’.¹⁰³ Similarly, with regard to the Ituri region in north-eastern Congo, Vlassenroot and Huggins reported anecdotal evidence according to which

¹⁰¹ Turner, 80.

¹⁰² Ibid., 81-82, quoting geographer G. Weiss, *Le pays d’Uvira. Etude de géographie régionale sur la bordure occidentale du lac Tanganika* (Brussels: ARSC 1959), 146.

¹⁰³ Turner, 56-57.

the Belgians had favoured the ‘superior’ and ‘more receptive’ pastoralist Hema over the ‘more resistant’ agriculturalist Lendu.¹⁰⁴

As will be demonstrated in the next section, as the Belgians imposed their rule and organisation by deforming history and by re-imagining the local society, the newly established formal education system came to be shaped in such a way as to support the ideological justification and the effective consolidation of the colonial enterprise in the Congo.

4.2.2 The institutionalisation of the official discourse through the education system: history teaching and education policy in colonial Congo¹⁰⁵

Similar to Rwanda and Burundi, formal schooling in the Congo was introduced by the European newcomers.¹⁰⁶ Since the establishment of the first schools in 1880s up until 1954, formal education was a monopoly of the Church, a powerful institution which, according to Turner, had functioned as ‘the ideological and social service arm’ of the colonial system.¹⁰⁷ A privileged position in this field was

¹⁰⁴ Vlassenroot & Huggins, 164-165, citing Asadho, *Rapport de l'Asadho sur le conflit inter-ethnique Hema-Lendu en territoire de Djugu dans la Province Orientale* (Kinshasa 1999) [cprgla.chez.com/droits_de_la_personne/CPRGLA_ASADHOhema.htm] (last accessed on 05/10/2010); O. Sematumba, *Ituri: the war within the war* (Goma: Pole Institute 2003); FEWER/AIP/APFO/CSVR, *Ituri: actors, stakes, dynamics* (Nairobi/Bunia 2003) [www.fewer-international.org/images/lib/260_5.pdf] (last accessed on 05/10/2010).

¹⁰⁵ On colonial education see in particular, M. Depaepé & L. Van Rompaey, *In het teken van de bevoogding: De educatieve actie in Belgisch-Kongo (1908-1960)* (Leuven/Apeldoorn 1995); G.E. Jambers, *L'enseignement au Congo belge (Léopoldville 1947)*; K.M. Kita, *Colonisation et enseignement. Cas du Zaïre avant 1960* (Bukavu 1982); as well as the numerous publications by Father H. Vinck, including ‘Le manuel scolaire au Congo Belge. L'état de la recherche,’ R. Sani (ed.), *History of education & children's literature*, vol. 2(1) (Macerata 2007), 117-141; ‘Manuels scolaires coloniaux. Un florilège,’ *Annales aequatoria* 19 (1998) 3-166 (also published in English as ‘African colonial schoolbooks (Belgian Congo): anthology’ [www.aequatoria.be/04engels/0538manuels_en/0381florilege_en.htm] (last accessed on 02/02/2011)); and ‘The influence of colonial ideology on school books in the Belgian Congo,’ *Paedagogica historica* 31(2) (1995) 355-405.

¹⁰⁶ In the Western regions, the first school was founded by the French *Pères du Saint-Esprit* in Boma. In the East, education was instead inaugurated by the White Fathers of Cardinal Lavigerie. Jambers, *L'enseignement*, 1-10; Kimena Kekwakwa, ‘Politique,’ 161; and Kambere Muhindo, 14. In the Kivu, much of the local elites was educated at the renowned *Petit séminaire de Mugeru* and at the *école normale de Nyangezi* in South Kivu. Before the arrival of the ‘white man’, education had been a family and a community matter. Oral traditions, encompassing tales of mythical and legendary ancestors and founding heroes, were transmitted from generation to generation during ‘nocturnal conversations’, ‘around the fire.’ Erny, *De l'éducation traditionnelle*, 39-40.

¹⁰⁷ Turner, 43. Following international protests against the EIC's neglect of indigenous education, in 1906 the Catholic Church was offered a privileged position by the colonial administration to educate the Congolese masses. Ndaywel, 319-326. The majority of schools were either missionary schools or state schools managed by missionaries. Only few schools, such as those run by Protestants, were private. See also, K. Kimena

conferred in particular to Belgian Catholic missions. As explained by the Director of the Ministry of Colonies De Jonghe, the aim of this alliance was to ensure Belgium's hegemony and to propagate its influence and respect among the local population.¹⁰⁸ In the following paragraphs, this chapter will examine the extent of the co-option of education by the colonial State in the Congo. Through an analysis of educational policies and teaching contents, formal education will be demonstrated to have been perfectly inscribed in the colonial project in support of Belgium's political and socio-economic interests.

4.2.2.1 Educational structures, policies and practices

In the extant literature, colonial education in the Congo has often been described as highly 'segregated' as well as 'selective' and 'elitist'. On the one hand, in line with a racial ideology that purported the superiority of the 'whites' vis-à-vis 'the negroes', the colonial administration promoted racial segregation between 'white' and 'black' pupils. On the other hand, it encouraged the development of a growing gap among the native population by reserving the belated and highly selective post-primary education to only a tiny privileged minority of so-called *évolués*.¹⁰⁹ According to critics, the aim of this approach was to limit the chances of the indigenous population to participate in their country's affairs.

Few studies have elaborated on the existence of educational inequality among the natives. Turner, in particular, reported that privileged access to schooling was conferred to ethnic communities 'that were considered intelligent and

Kekwakwa, 'Politique coloniale de l'Etat vis-à-vis des missions religieuses au Congo,' *Culture au Zaïre et en Afrique* 5 (1974) 163-196.

¹⁰⁸ E. De Jonghe, *L'enseignement des indigènes au Congo belge* (Brussels 1931), 8. The importance of favouring national missions was highlighted by Hulstaert, a author of numerous schoolbooks, in a letter addressed to De Jonghe. As he argued, '[f]oreigners cannot give an education in a national spirit ... particularly the Anglo-Saxons ... they don't feel "Belgian" and they conserve a certain contempt for us...' Qtd in Vinck, 'The influence'.

¹⁰⁹ Initially, the Congolese elites were mainly formed in Catholic seminaries. Since the late 1940s, they were also formed in laic secondary schools, the curricula of which were nearly identical to those of the *métropole*. Tertiary education started as late as the mid-1950s in the wake of the establishment of the *Université Lovanium* in Léopoldville in 1954 and of the *Université officielle du Congo Belge et Ruanda-Urundi* in Elizabethville in 1956. Ndaywel, 415-416. At independence, only a handful of Congolese held a university degree. Ndaywel, 378. In 1960, of all enrolled individuals, 96,60% attended the primary level, 3,36% the secondary level, and 0,04% the tertiary level. M.K. Katako, *Les disparités régionales du système d'enseignement zaïrois: étude diagnostique et politique de la planification*, Ph.D. diss., Université Libre de Bruxelles (Bruxelles 1987), 106.

adaptable'.¹¹⁰ Speaking of a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', the scholar argued that, 'not only state posts but also mission schools were built in places where the people were considered most suitable.'¹¹¹ Reportedly, in the *Petit Nord* in the Kivu region (present-day Goma, Rutshuru, Masisi and Walikale), which fell under the responsibility of the White Fathers of the Apostolic Vicariat of Bukavu, educational opportunities were mainly reserved to the Banyarwanda.¹¹² Other communities living in the region, such as the Hunde and the Nyanga, were instead largely disadvantaged. Similarly, with regard to the Ituri region, Vlassenroot and Huggins suggested that, under colonial rule, the Hema had disproportionately benefited from educational access compared to their Lendu neighbours.¹¹³ Partly as a result of such practices, on the eve of independence, the better-educated Hema, like the Banyarwanda, had managed to consolidate a position of political and economic supremacy in their respective areas of residence.¹¹⁴

4.2.2.2 School teachings

Access to colonial education being largely characterised by segregation, selectiveness and inequality, the teaching contents that were imparted to the natives were primarily determined by 'utilitarian' and 'paternalistic' orientations and goals.¹¹⁵ Up until WWI, its main aim had been to provide basic literacy to the masses in an effort to transmit religious teachings and to promote the evangelisation and civilisation of 'the primitive black man'. The primacy of these goals is demonstrated by the fact that, '[t]he very first readers', as pointed out by H. Vinck, 'were the Bible for Protestants and biblical stories and catechisms for Catholics.'¹¹⁶ Since the inter-bellum, new necessities led native schooling to become also concerned with providing vocational education with the aim of

¹¹⁰ According to Turner, '[g]roups that were considered intelligent and adaptable benefited from having state posts, missions and schools on their territory. Groups that resisted longer often found themselves a generation or more behind in terms of access to markets and to schooling, with lasting consequences.' 79.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 115.

¹¹³ Vlassenroot & Huggins, 164-165, citing J.-P. Lobho, 'Impact de la colonisation belge sur les structures sociopolitiques au Congo: le cas de la société hema en Ituri,' *Revue congolaise des sciences humaines* 2 (1971) 85-102. The authors also reported the 2004 testimony of a former headmaster of a school in Bunia, according to whom 'as late as the 1980s there was low school attendance by Lendu children.'

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 164-166.

¹¹⁵ L. Than Khôï, *L'enseignement en Afrique tropicale* (Paris 1971).

¹¹⁶ Vinck, 'The influence.'

training local auxiliaries to serve as clerks, craftsmen, and teachers.¹¹⁷ After WWII, the colonial school system turned into a copy of the system of the *métropole*. In this sense, A. Odimba Omakoko spoke in terms of ‘a foreign school implanted in the Congo’, which had functioned as a major instrument of cultural alienation and assimilation.¹¹⁸

The utilitarianism and paternalism that characterised colonial schooling in Belgian Congo is clearly revealed by the contents of history teaching. Initially limited to biblical history, the primary aim of which was to promote pupils’ moral and spiritual education, historical notions were integrated into the school curriculum in the mid-1920s.¹¹⁹ In this period, the study of history was mainly concerned with Europe and Belgium.¹²⁰ Insofar as Congolese history was taught, its content appeared to be consistent with a wish to encourage the local acceptance and appreciation of Belgian colonisation.¹²¹ For this purpose, historical teachings were carefully selected. In an official document detailing a curriculum of the late 1920s, its authors explicitly declared that, ‘[i]n the course of the lessons on the history of the Congo, attention should be paid to emphasize the advantages the indigenous people got out of the European occupation: suppression of the slave

¹¹⁷ In the 1920s, colonial school policy stipulated the creation of three types of schools: *primaires du 1^e degré*, with a main focus on manual work; *primaires du 2^e degré*, for gifted children; and *écoles spéciales*, including *écoles pour candidats commis*, *écoles normales*, *écoles professionnelles et agricoles*. Others were instead educated at the privileged *petit séminaire* and the *Postulat des frères indigènes*. A. Mopondi Bendeko Mbumbu, ‘Des objectifs de l’enseignement à la formation des enseignants en République Démocratique du Congo,’ 2-3

[www.congoforum.be/upldocs/L%20ENSEIGNEMENT%20EN%20RDC%20SELON%20LE%20PROF%20MOPONDI.pdf] (last accessed on 06/02/2011); and Jambers, 9.

¹¹⁸ A. Odimba Omakoko, *L’enseignement de l’histoire en République Démocratique du Congo (ex-Zaïre). Diagnostic (1960-1980)* (Bern 1999), 3.

¹¹⁹ Historical notions were present in the 1925 and 1929 curricula. See, Congo belge, *Service de l’enseignement, organisation de l’enseignement libre au Congo belge et Rwanda-Urundi, avec le concours des sociétés des missions nationales* (Brussels 1929), 8-34 [www.aequatoria.be/04frans/0538manuels/0382_1929.htm] (last accessed on 05/02/2011). They were subsequently expanded in 1948 and 1953. Notice that the 1953 curriculum was aligned to that of the *métropole*. As for the primary school curriculum, until 1963 the study of history was mainly imparted through sporadic *Leçons de géographie* and through the booklet *Les contes de chez nous*.

¹²⁰ As pointed out by Odimba, young Congolese were taught that ‘our ancestors were the Gauls’ and that ‘our independence took place in 1830’. 54.

¹²¹ The curriculum of the 1920s included such topics as the history of Belgium; the history of the Church; the arrival of the Belgians in the Congo and their civilizing œuvre; the history of the Belgian Congo since Stanley’s explorations, the history of the missions and of the territory, and the benefits of European occupation. Two decades later, the curriculum prescribed the teaching of the ‘history of the Belgian Congo since Stanley: indigenous civilisation and its evolution under the influence of European civilisation’. Odimba, 49. Notice also the omission of African societies in the newly introduced study of world ancient civilisations in the 1953 curriculum, with the exception of Egypt. Cardinal Van Roey, *Programme, Fédération de l’enseignement moyen catholique* (Kisantu 1953). Qtd in Odimba, 52.

trade, the ending of the domestic wars, the suppression of barbarous customs, the evangelisation, the medical assistance.’¹²²

Telling of a wish to advance colonial interests through education, curricula and related documents provided only rough guidelines on the content of colonial school teachings. On account of the more detailed narratives they provide, textbooks represent a crucial source that allows to better grasp the nature of the colonial discourse as conveyed through Congolese schools. An important contribution to our understanding of colonial school teachings in the Congo has been made by Father Honoré Vinck. Vinck’s greatest merit in this regard consists in having collected, translated and analysed a large number of colonial schoolbooks, extracts of which were gathered in an anthology that was published in 1998.¹²³ In an earlier article on the ‘The influence of colonial ideology on schoolbooks in the Belgian Congo’ (1995), the author proposed an analysis of fifty textbooks. These included readers and history and geography books, which had been produced between 1908 and 1959 for use in Congolese elementary schools.¹²⁴ Vinck succinctly summarised the main topics covered by the textbooks with these words:

‘Representation schemes of the history of the Belgian Congo in the schoolbooks are very simple. They are going from Stanley to Leopold, the Arabs, the origins of the Christian Missions, the transfer from the Free State to a Belgian Colony, up to the current King at the moment of publication of the reader. Secondary events

¹²² Inspection Générale de l’Enseignement, *Instructions relatives aux programmes à suivre et aux méthodes à employer dans les écoles de la Colonie* (Léopoldville 1931), 24 [archive.org/stream/InstructionsRelativesAuxProgrammesASuivreEtAuxMethodesAEmployerDans/Inspec.ge.n.1931_djvu.txt] (last accessed on 06/02/2011). Twenty years later, the aims had remained largely unchanged: ‘This history must be strictly objective and tend to strengthen the loyalism of the indigenous (...) It is without question that the teaching of history to the indigenous must take into account the progress of the civilisation and the direct merits of the civic authorities and the religious missions.’ Congo belge, *Service de l’enseignement, organisation de l’enseignement libre subsidié pour indigènes avec le concours des sociétés de missions chrétiennes: dispositions générales* (Brussels 1948) [www.aequatoria.be/04frans/0538manuels/0382_1948.htm] (last accessed on 05/02/2011).

¹²³ Vinck, ‘Colonial schoolbooks’. During the colonial period, textbooks were mainly written for internal use by missionaries in vernacular or trade languages (i.e. Lingala, Kikongo, Tshiluba or Swahili, according to the province). Since the 1950s, locally produced textbooks started to be replaced by books written in French and imported from Belgium. Notice that, while, in primary school, indigenous pupils were initially taught in their native language, in 1956, French became the language of instruction from P3.

¹²⁴ Schoolbooks analysed by Vinck were used in particular in the northern half of the country (Equateur and Oriental Province) and in Kinshasa. According to the author, these manuals were likely to have been used by ca one fourth of the total school population in the colony and to have not greatly differed from textbooks used in the rest of the country. The majority of booklets were written in Lingala, Lomongo, Ngbandi, and French, and were translated with the patronisation of Prof. Jewsiewicki. In Europe, original or copied texts can be found in the MSC Archives in Borgerhout, Belgium.

*and figures are: Livingston, Cameron, the Portuguese in the 15th century, the anti-slavery trade campaign, the Berlin conference, World War I, the tribal wars. The Congo visits of Belgian Princes or Kings were highly important events for the booklets.*¹²⁵

In line with the curriculum, the focus of colonial textbooks was clearly placed on Congo's history since the arrival of the 'white man'. Conversely, local pre-colonial history, as well as instances of anti-colonial resistance, were largely neglected in mainstream schoolbooks. A deeper content analysis of colonial manuals led Vinck to conclude that the schoolbook represented the most powerful propaganda tool of the colonial regime. As he reported, with the exception of only three books, which did not adhere to the dominant doctrine and instead resisted and even criticised the system in place, most booklets overtly propagated the colonial ideology through a specific and largely constant interpretation of the country's colonial past.

Based on Vinck's work, the following paragraphs will present an analysis of selected issues that are most relevant to this study. In particular, they will show how colonial schoolbooks, clearly permeated by a racial ideology and oriented towards the legitimisation of the colonisation, worked to shape identities ('racial', 'ethnic' and 'national'), historical views (including perceptions of responsibility, victimhood and heroism), as well as attitudes towards power and authority.

4.2.2.2.1 Identity, and origins, migrations and settlement

A large number of textbooks that were collected in Vinck's anthology presented an overview of 'the peoples of the Congo'. Here, descriptions appeared to be strongly influenced by racial ideology and to be dominated by bias, prejudice, stereotypes, and generalisations.

In their depiction of Congo's inhabitants, several schoolbooks spoke of the presence of both 'Blacks and Whites'. Through the texts, a sense of congenital inferiority appears to have been inculcated among the colonised subjects through the recurrent use of what Vinck defined as a 'black-is-bad and white-is-good

¹²⁵ Ibid.

terminology'.¹²⁶ Congolese pupils were encouraged to reject their traditional 'barbaric' and 'satanic' beliefs and practices, and instead to embrace 'superior' western values, beliefs, lifestyle, and work ethos. They were persuaded 'to be like the Whites' as opposed to living 'like animals' as their ancestors were supposed to have done. The only exception that was found by Vinck in this respect was a 1957 textbook. Contrary to mainstream colonial schoolbooks, this manual seemed to prompt Congolese children to honour their forefathers and their traditional customs and culture.¹²⁷

If most bias was expressed with regard to a 'white-black' opposition, a number of booklets stood out for their generalisations and stereotypes in their presentation of certain local tribes. After stating that '[t]he Congolese are black', a 1927 book, for instance, depicted the Bateke as 'keen tradesmen', the Bakongo as 'the carriers and the courageous workers', and the Bangala as 'not afraid to go to war' and as 'an intelligent people'.¹²⁸ A particularly biased view was found in a 1928 schoolbook which maintained that, '[t]he Bangala are more intelligent than the Bakongo'.¹²⁹ A 1935 schoolbook instead compared the character of the Mongo and of the Ngombe. According to its author, '[t]he Ngombe...are different from the Mongo. They are mean and bellicose. The evil in which they excel is sorcery.'¹³⁰ Among all groups, the Pygmies, generally described as forest-dwelling nomad hunters and 'very clever to kill game',¹³¹ were invariably portrayed in especially derogatory terms. In some cases, schoolbooks limited themselves to illustrating their physiognomy. Described by a 1925 manual as

¹²⁶ In one textbook analysed by Vinck, its author wrote: 'The children often ask me: "Why are we not as intelligent as you Whites?"'. 'The Congolese'. Lesson 5, *Bonkanda wa baoci b'anto* (Bongandanga 1925), 23-30, qtd. in Vinck, 'Colonial schoolbooks', 4. Similarly, E.J. Rubben's *Leçons pratiques de lingala* (1928) affirmed that, '[a]ll people on earth descend from Adam and Eve, our first ancestors; but they are not all alike: their skin and the shape of their face and their head much differ. The people of this world are divided into four types, notably: the Black, the Yellow and the Red. The White ... surpass all the others in intelligence.' See also, Vinck, 'Théories racistes dans les livrets scolaires du Congo Belge,' *Revue africaine de théologie* 43 (1998) 104-115; 'The whiter the better. African colonial schoolbooks: a path to a new identity,' E. Matthes & C. Heinze (eds.), *Interkulturelles Verstehen und kulturelle Integration durch das Schulbuch? Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Fremden* (Bad Heilbrunn 2004), 271-297; and "'Flat nose versus point nose": Black and White in Congolese colonial schoolbooks,' R. Sani (ed.), *History of education & children's literature*, vol. 2(2) (Macerata 2007), 69-78.

¹²⁷ P. Ngoy, *Bosako wa Mongo*. Mbula ey' 5 l'ey'6 (1957), qtd. in Vinck, 19-20.

¹²⁸ 'The inhabitants of the Congo,' Lesson 37, *Buku na kutanga o lingala, III* (Liège 1927), 30-31, qtd. in Vinck, 51.

¹²⁹ Rubben, *Leçons*, 135.

¹³⁰ G. Hulstaert, *Buku ea mbaanda* (Coquilhatville 1935).

¹³¹ 'The peoples of the Congo,' Lesson 20, *Buku na botangi, I, 2* (Niagara 1953), 51-53, qtd. in Vinck, 55.

‘dwarfs’ and as ‘a race of very small people’,¹³² the Pygmies continued to be seen in 1953 in the following terms: ‘They are short, the colour of their body is clear, they have a big head, a short neck, a flat nose, a lot of hairs to the body, short legs and long arms.’¹³³ In other cases, these demeaning physical descriptions were accompanied by offensive portrayals of their character. A book published in 1929 suggested that ‘they are dirty’ and ‘surpass all other peoples of Africa in ignorance’ and ‘in the art of theft’.¹³⁴ Another manual, published in 1935, added that, ‘[t]hey don’t look for greater intelligence nor for more well-being’ and that ‘they are very disregarding to God’s business and to the business of the world.’¹³⁵

Introducing the theme of migration and settlement, various books mentioned the fact that the Pygmies were Congo’s first settlers. They were said to have been (forcibly) displaced by the ‘superior’ and ‘more intelligent’ Bantu, ‘our forebears’,¹³⁶ who ‘came from other countries’.¹³⁷ By referring to the Bantu as ‘our forebears’, the textbook seemed to complement the typical belittling image of the pygmies with an apparent exclusion of this group from the public for which the manual was intended. A 1940 manual recounted the arrival of the Bantu in these terms:

‘in remote times some tribes of Africa, called Bantu, fought the Pygmies, and dislodged them of some places of the Congo, so that they took their place. The Bantu were more intelligent than the Pygmies, and because of that reason they settled definitely in the Congo, of which they are the natives. In the 14th century, some of them regrouped in the kingdom of the Lower Congo (...) and, being superior, they became the chiefs of the tribes living near of them.’¹³⁸

¹³² ‘The dwarfs,’ Lesson 14, *Exercices de langage: lingala-français et français-lingala* (Liege 1925), 107-108, qtd. in Vinck, 59.

¹³³ ‘The peoples of the Congo,’ *Buku na botangi*, 51-53, qtd. in Vinck, 55.

¹³⁴ ‘The pygmies,’ Lesson 4, J.E.E. Carpentier, *Banto ba monde* (Bongandanga 1929), 38-39, qtd. in Vinck, 58. Probably destined for several African colonies, this manual also portrayed Ugandans, and more specifically the Baganda, as ‘stronger and more intelligent than other peoples of Africa’. ‘The Ugandans,’ Lesson 2, 26-28, qtd. in Vinck, 56. Again, ‘[a]ll Africans do not look alike as far as their level of knowledge is concerned ; some surpass the others (...) The Baganda are a people who surpasses the other peoples of Central Africa in intelligence.’ 31, 39.

¹³⁵ ‘The pygmies,’ Lesson 125, *Buku ea mbaanda*, 79-80, qtd. in Vinck, 59.

¹³⁶ See, for instance, ‘The peoples of the Congo,’ Lesson 96, *Buku ea mbaanda*, 60-61, qtd. in Vinck, 52-53.

¹³⁷ ‘The peoples of the Congo,’ *Buku na botangi*, qtd. in Vinck, 55. See also, A. Michiels & N. Laude *Notre Colonie. Géographie et notice historique* (Brussels 1932). Among other things, this manual recounted a history of migrations of different ‘peuplades’, and taught Congolese children that they were Bantu.

¹³⁸ ‘Africa,’ Lesson 32-33, Livingstone and Stanley, *Histoire du Monde II* (Bolenge 1940), 98-103, qtd. in Vinck, 13.

In the schoolbooks analysed by Vinck, which were all produced in northern and western Congo, references to groups other than the Pygmy and the Bantu were almost completely absent. The only exception that was reported by the author was a 1944 manual. In its presentation of ‘The tribes of the Congo’, besides the Batwa and the Bantu, the booklet additionally mentioned the Sudanics living in the North (e.g. Azande, Ngbaka, Bganza, and Ngbandi) as well as the ‘Hamites: Watutsi and Warundi’, ‘the tall men to the East’.¹³⁹ Since colonial schoolbooks written in eastern Congo were not included in Vinck’s anthology, a comparison remains to be made with the way in which the ethnic landscape was portrayed in colonial schools in Ruanda-Urundi.

While several textbooks recognised and underscored the diversity of the peoples of the Congo, some seemed also to promote a collective national identity among the various existing tribes. In a rather confusing manner, feelings of attachment to the fatherland were developed towards the *métropole* and/or towards the Congo. On the one hand, children were taught, in an assimilationist vein, that, ‘you are Belgians’ and that ‘[y]our King is the King of Belgium’.¹⁴⁰ They were expected to recognise the Belgian flag as their own, and to sing the Belgian national anthem (*La Brabançonne*) as well as the colonial hymn (*Vers l’Avenir*).¹⁴¹ On the other hand, pupils were taught to love the Congo. One song, with the title ‘The Congo, my country’, for example, exalted the children’s homeland in these words: ‘Congo, my country, you surpass all others countries. Homeland of my father and my mother. Homeland where I was born’.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ ‘The tribes of the Congo,’ Lesson 18, O. Van Hullebusch, *Botondoli mambi ma nse, Mobu bwa mitano* (Lisala 1944), 14, qtd. in Vinck, 54.

¹⁴⁰ ‘The arrival of the whites,’ Lesson 3, *Banto ba monde*, 36-38, qtd. in Vinck, 5.

¹⁴¹ ‘Fidelity to the State,’ *Oa nsonsolo* (Bolenge 1950), qtd. in Vinck, 39.

¹⁴² ‘The Congo, my country,’ Song 33, *Njembo nda nkundo* (Bamanya, Westmalle, 1911), 18-19, qtd. in Vinck, 60.

4.2.2.2.2 History: Pre-colonial misery and the coming of Western civilisation: Belgian heroic struggle for the Congo's liberation from the devil's and the Arabs' slavery

4.2.2.2.2.1 The pre-colonial time

Colonial schoolbooks were particularly articulate in their comparisons of Congolese life before and after the arrival of the white man.

The pre-colonial time was almost invariably portrayed as a dark era marked by '[t]otal obscurity' and by 'fear, misery and death'.¹⁴³ On the one hand, misery at that time was said to have been caused by the presence of 'savage people, excelling in all kind of evil'.¹⁴⁴ Pupils' forefathers were described as lazy, pagans, immoral, barbaric, ferocious, and divided among themselves. They were presented as being constantly at war, killing and eating each other.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, the ancestors were depicted as having greatly suffered due to the 'horrible' Arab slave trade. Across the colonial schoolbooks, the Arabs were portrayed as 'bad people', who had enslaved and slaughtered the Congo's indigenous population.¹⁴⁶ This regrettable situation was explained and justified with the racist myth of the curse of Ham, the precursor of the notorious Hamitic theory. One song was especially explicit in this regard. The text referred to 'us all Blacks of this country' as the descendants of Ham, who, '[c]ursed by our father Noah', had been 'oppressed' through 'the terrifying slavery of the devil and of the bad people [the Arabs]'.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Quotes from 'The holiday of the kings of Belgium,' Lesson 12, *Mambi ma botangi, II* (Lisala 1950), 31-34, qtd. in Vinck, 17; and, 'Why the former commander came back to the village of chief Kamulete,' Lesson 30, *Livre de lecture français-lingala* (n.d. / n.p.), 146-154, qtd. in Vinck, 63.

¹⁴⁴ 'The whites in the Congo,' Lesson 21, *Bosako w'oyengwa, III* (Coquilhatville 1955), 243-244, qtd. in Vinck, 18.

¹⁴⁵ 'Previously – Currently,' Lesson 3, *Buku na botangi mpe boyebi, II-1* (Niagara 1951), 11, qtd. in Vinck, 18.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. See also, 'The slavery in the Congo,' Lesson 15, *Exercices de language*, 108-110, qtd. in Vinck, 21; and, 'About the Congo,' Lesson 73, *Mambi ma botangi ndenge na ndenge* (Makanza/Nouvel Anvers 1932), qtd. in Vinck, 'Colonial', 11. On this booklet, see also, Vinck, 'Un livre scolaire au Congo belge, 1932: Mambi ma botangi ndenge na ndenge. Buku ya babale. Introduction, commentaire et traduction,' *Annales aequatoria* 27 (2006) 173-217.

¹⁴⁷ 'The punishment of Ham,' Song 35, *Njembo nda nkundo*, 20, qtd. in Vinck, 68. See also, H. Vinck, 'Le mythe de Cham dans les livrets scolaires du Congo Belge,' *Canadian journal of African studies* 33(2/3) (1999) 642-674.

4.2.2.2.2 The colonial time

In line with a wish to legitimise the colonisation, schoolbooks greatly emphasised the merits and achievements of ‘the Whites’ in the Congo. In a context in which ‘the Blacks’ were depicted as being ‘[i]n the hands of the Devil’, ‘the Whites’, and in particular the Belgians, were portrayed as heroes in the fight against evil, and as the saviours and liberators of the Congo.¹⁴⁸ As summarised by Vinck, the Europeans’ arrival in the Congo was presented ‘as an expedition of extremely courageous white men, marching into Africa for the liberation of the poor Black peoples, shrivelled and terrified by the Arabic slave trade, tribal wars, ignorance and satanic habits.’¹⁴⁹ In unambiguous terms, colonial textbooks underscored how, thanks to their mercy, courage and perseverance, ‘the Whites’ had brought freedom, unity and brotherhood, peace and stability, civilisation and progress, and development and prosperity.¹⁵⁰ In describing these accomplishments, historical lessons emphasised the great sacrifices made by the Europeans for the benefit of the local population. With regard to the anti-slavery campaigns, for instance, a topic that was expected to teach pupils that ‘the Europeans saved us from the Arabs,’¹⁵¹ a 1932 textbook affirmed that, ‘European soldiers fought many battles, which resulted in the loss of many lives... The victory of the European soldiers marked the end of the horrible Arab slave trade.’¹⁵² Similarly, in reference to the developmental work in which the Belgians were said to have invested heavily, a

¹⁴⁸ The whites were in fact presented as the saviours of Africa as a whole. ‘The people of Africa,’ Exploratory notions, *Banto Ba Monde*, 3-6, qtd. in Vinck, 53-54. While the arrival of the Whites was exalted, the topic of local anti-colonial resistance was typically omitted in colonial textbooks. The only exception found by Vinck consisted in a lesson according to which ‘Leopold sent its agents to the Congo. But the natives didn’t agree with the arrival of the Whites or with their teachings; they fought them and robbed them. Therefore, the Whites made war with the natives, and defeated them.’ ‘The whites in the Congo,’ *Bosako w’oyengwa*, qtd. in Vinck, 18-19.

¹⁴⁹ Vinck, ‘The influence’. See ‘Some stories on the Belgian Congo,’ *Bonkanda wa nsango la nyama la belemo la balako ba français* (Bongandanga 1930), 141-149, qtd in Vinck, ‘Colonial schoolbooks’, 7.

¹⁵⁰ According to a manual, ‘[b]efore, our ancestors were divided in several groups ... We were enemies ... Yet we have the state ... and we are only one territory, one large fraternity in one fatherland... We live in peace, without war, and honestly, we are happy to be citizens of the Belgian Congo.’ Nyang’ea Lonkange (Leslie Hedges), *Bonkanda wa mbaanda w’ école. Etate ea bafe* (Coquilhatville 1924). See also, ‘Some stories,’ qtd. in Vinck, 9.

¹⁵¹ ‘Liberation of the Blacks,’ Lesson 34, *Mateya ma bomonisi, Manual du maître* (Lisala 1955), 88-90, qtd. in Vinck, 26.

¹⁵² The same textbook stated that, ‘[i]f it had not been for European intervention, people would have remained in Arab slavery even today (...)’. ‘About the Congo,’ *Mambi ma botangi ndenge na ndenge*, qtd. in Vinck, ‘Colonial schoolbooks’, 11. Booklets and songs also honoured and praised the courageous military in relation to its participation in WWI against the Germans. See, ‘Three songs of schoolchildren,’ *Nzembo ya bayekoli*, 3rd ed. (Stanleyville 1927), 6-8, qtd. in Vinck, 47-49. The texts of these songs have been published with commentary in ‘Gezangen ter ere van de Kongolese Openbare Weermacht in schoolboekjes van Belgisch Kongo,’ *Bulletin du Craoca* 3 (1998) 23-27.

1930 manual described the construction of the railroad Matadi-Stanley Pool as a ‘very dangerous and deadly work’ whereby ‘[s]everal Whites and their workers died’. Highlighting the altruistic aims of this ‘impressive’ project, the textbook also stated that, ‘[t]he money of the Whites was invested in this railroad, because without [the existence of the] railroad the Whites could not have brought their intelligence and their culture to the Congo.’¹⁵³

In these accounts, King Leopold II assumed a central role.¹⁵⁴ The Belgian king, who was said by a textbook to have been ‘chosen’ by European powers to become the King of the Congo,¹⁵⁵ was heroically portrayed as ‘the great civilizer, the big chief, the benefactor of the Blacks’, and as a magnanimous, loving and wise father. A schoolbook, for instance, taught that, moved by Stanley’s reports of Congo’s misery, Leopold had invoked ‘the good-minded Belgians to save the Blacks of the Congo’. The author further recounted how the king had ‘put his heart, his intelligence, and his money in the maintenance of the Congo’.¹⁵⁶ His devotion, according to another manual, ‘testifies of a sincere love for his subjects.’¹⁵⁷ With regard to the end of his reign in the Congo, a booklet stated that, after twenty-four years of wise governance, for which he had been widely congratulated, Leopold II ‘offered’ the Congo ‘to his Belgian compatriots’.¹⁵⁸ References to the abuses that notoriously marked this period were instead typically absent from colonial textbooks. As reported by Vinck, the only book that mentioned the ‘red rubber’ scandal downplayed its gravity and significance. According to the manual, this had been the act of few ‘evil people’ which should not overshadow the many merits of ‘the Whites’.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ ‘Some stories,’ *Bonkanda wa nsango*, 141-149, qtd. in Vinck, 8. In a very similar textbook, it was also stated that, ‘[h]ad there not been the money of the Whites, [the Blacks would have had neither many good things nor the access to the knowledge.’ ‘Africa,’ *Histoire du monde II*, 98-103, qtd. in Vinck, 15. See also, ‘Some facts that took place in the Congo,’ Lesson 31, *Botondoli*, qtd. in Vinck, 16.

¹⁵⁴ Leopold’s successors were also exalted. Speaking of King Albert, a textbook read, ‘he tries to make the best of the Congolese.’ Another lesson depicted Albert as a ‘strong, polite and sympathetic’ king. ‘The history of famous people,’ *Bonkanda wa nsango*, 1-4, qtd. in Vinck, 40.

¹⁵⁵ ‘The whites in the Congo,’ *Bosako*, qtd. in Vinck, 18.

¹⁵⁶ ‘The holiday,’ *Mambi ma botangi, II*, 31-34, qtd. in Vinck, 17. See also, ‘Youngsters of the Congo, don’t forget!’, Lesson 44, *Mambi ma botangi, II* (Lisala 1955), 90-93, qtd. in Vinck, 26.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Our supreme chief,’ Lesson 100, *Buku ea mbaanda*, 63, qtd. in Vinck, 39-40. See also, ‘The government of Leopold II,’ *The origins* (Bondo 1936), 31-34, qtd. in Vinck, 12-13.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Some facts,’ *Botondoli*, 27-29, qtd. in Vinck, 16.

¹⁵⁹ According to this manual, Leopold ‘accepted to send some of his agents to teach you to work and to acquire good manners. Some people that he sent were evil people, and behaved badly during the rubber

4.2.2.2.3 Power: Shaping local attitudes towards power and authority: loyalty, obedience and respect towards the sacred authorities

Next to seeking to legitimise colonial rule in the eyes of the indigenous subjects, schoolbooks sought to promote feelings of loyalty, obedience and respect towards the colonial authorities. Through various texts and songs, Congolese children were encouraged to honour and offer praise and gratitude to the State, and to ‘the Whites’ in general, for their great and kind deeds in ‘saving’ the Congo from evil.¹⁶⁰ In order to urge Congolese children to respect the State, religious arguments were regularly sought. Vinck observed that a recurrent theme in colonial schoolbooks was the medieval view of the ‘delegation of divine power to civil authorities’.¹⁶¹ In line with this view, Belgium and its king were often portrayed as being sent by God himself.¹⁶² As expressed by a manual, ‘[w]e thank God, because he gave us our good chief...Pray God for him constantly.’¹⁶³ While authoritative figures were commonly depicted as ‘God’s substitutes’,¹⁶⁴ their orders, including the observance of the ‘chores of the State’ such as the corvées, were legitimised by presenting them as ‘the command of God’.¹⁶⁵ Besides representing the expression of divine will, the chores imposed by the colonial administration were described as being ‘in our own interest’. This teacher guide taught that, ‘the suffering that work generates...yields money, hardens the body, and expiates sins.’¹⁶⁶ Another booklet further underscored the necessity of the

campaign. You do not ignore, yourselves, how the first Whites acted’. ‘The Congolese,’ *Bonkanda wa baoci b’anto*, 23-30, qtd. in Vinck, ‘Colonial schoolbooks’, 4. Another exception was *Bosako wa Mongo*, cited in Vinck, 5.

¹⁶⁰ ‘The gratitude we must return to the State, that is: the colony of the Belgian Congo,’ Lesson 31, *Bonkanda wa mbaanda*, 97-215; ‘The authorities of the State,’ Lesson 12, *Mateya ma lisolo. Manuel du maître II* (Lisala 1954); and ‘Some facts,’ respectively qtd. in Vinck, 33, 31, and 17.

¹⁶¹ See also, Vinck, ‘Le concept et la pratique de l’autorité tels qu’enseignés dans les livrets scolaires du Congo Belge,’ *Revue africaine des sciences de la mission* 6 (1997) 115-128.

¹⁶² According to a school song, ‘[a] strong King is sent by God in this country; And his relatives [Belgians]... Thank them, you, son of this country... Oh country elected by God, To free your brothers and sisters, Oh Belgium, the Heavens bless you’. ‘Congo, rejoice,’ Song 36, *Njembo nda nkundo*, 21, qtd. in Vinck, 20-21.

¹⁶³ ‘Our supreme chief,’ *Buku ea mbaanda*, 63, qtd. in Vinck, 39-40. Another booklet declared, ‘let’s honour God because he has given us good chiefs. We want that he keeps them, and bless them in their works’. ‘The holiday,’ *Mambi ma botangi II*, qtd. in Vinck, 18.

¹⁶⁴ ‘The authorities,’ Lesson 1, *Mambi ma botangi ndenge na ndenge*, 9-10, qtd. in Vinck, 30.

¹⁶⁵ ‘The authorities of the State,’ *Mateya ma lisolo II*, 28-30, qtd. in Vinck, 32.

¹⁶⁶ ‘The reasons of the chores of the State,’ Lesson 33, *Mateya ma lisolo, III. Livre du maître* (Lisala 1948), 28, qtd. in Vinck, 45. The booklet further stated that, ‘[t]he works ordered by the chiefs are not a chore, but it is the fulfilment of God’s command’.

indigenous to work for ‘the Whites’ by stating that, ‘we won’t benefit big incomes unless by the work of the Whites’.¹⁶⁷

Evidence seems to show that the official knowledge that was transmitted through colonial schoolbooks eventually shaped the historical consciousness of the country’s first educated elites. As demonstrated by their various speeches, Congolese future political leaders, who had attended mission schools prior to the country’s independence, were well aware of the historical notions outlined above. Following in the footsteps of their former masters, Congo’s most prominent personalities had used these teachings on several occasions in support of their respective political agendas, espousing or rejecting them according to the circumstances. In 1954, in a lecture commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Stanley’s death in front of the colonial authorities, Lumumba summed up the historical teachings from his school time. During the event, Congo’s future prime minister spoke of the tyranny of tribal chiefs and sorcerers, and of the ‘devastating’ famine, epidemics, and Arab slave trade. He further exalted King Leopold’s ‘disinterestedness and philanthropy’ and ‘the noble intentions of the King Founder and of Stanley’ to bring ‘freedom’ and ‘dignity’ to the Congolese people. In his speech, he declared, ‘[w]ho delivered us...? Was it not Stanley and Leopold II?’¹⁶⁸ Few years later, Lumumba’s tone had drastically changed.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Agriculture and trade,’ Lesson 37, *Mateya my bomonisi, II*, 96-97, qtd. in Vinck, 46-47. Two other manuals stated that, ‘[t]he Whites of the schools and others, taught us hard works and wisdom and now some Blacks are employed to other works’; and ‘we the natives, get the money of them for this work’. ‘The arrival,’ *Banto ba monde*, and ‘Some stories,’ *Bonkanda wa nsango*, respectively qtd. in Vinck, ‘Colonial schoolbooks’, 6, 9.

¹⁶⁸ P. Lumumba, qtd. in Keith Kyle, ‘Film review article. Lumumba,’ *International affairs* 78(3) (2002) 596.

4.3 Ideology, historiography and formal education in post-colonial Congo (1960 -1990)

4.3.1 Ideology and historiography in post-colonial Congo

The achievement of independence and the establishment of the First Republic in 1960 signalled a radical break with the colonial dominant ideological and historical discourse. This rupture found expression in the famous unannounced speech that was held by Congo's first Prime Minister Lumumba on the day of the official transferral of power on June 30. In stark contrast to the colonial rhetoric, Lumumba underscored the Congolese 'heroic' and 'indispensable' 'struggle, of tears, fire and blood' which had 'liberated' the people from a 'humiliating slavery' and from a 'regime of injustice, oppression and exploitation'. Emphasising the historical significance of this memorable day, Lumumba urged his compatriots 'to make this June 30, 1960, an illustrious date that you will keep indelibly engraved in your hearts, a date of significance that you will teach to your children, so that they will make known to their sons and to their grandchildren the glorious history of our fight for liberty.'¹⁶⁹

Following his coup in 1965, Mobutu recovered much of Lumumba's nationalist discourse.¹⁷⁰ In an attempt to prove its originality vis-à-vis what came to be

¹⁶⁹ Lumumba's Independence Day address, qtd. in S. McIntire, *Speeches in world history* (New York 2009), 438-440. On Lumumba's political thinking, see, J. Van Lierde, *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba* (Paris 1963). Shortly after the attainment of the country's independence, Lumumba articulated the need to 'proceed to a mental decolonisation because the people have been falsely indoctrinated for 80 years.' Lumumba, Press conference, 09/08/1960, J. Gerard-Libois & B. Verhaegen, *Congo 1960*, tome 2 (Bruxelles: CRISP 1961), 593-595. As reported by Frédéric Kabasele, Lumumba once stated, '[t]he day will come when our children will re-write our true history'. M. Frédéric Kabasele, 'Mon rêve sur le Congo et sur l'Afrique,' *Agence de presse D.I.A* [www.dia-afrique.org] (last accessed on (02/05/2012).

¹⁷⁰ C. Braeckman & P. Martin, 'Le Congo devient Zaïre, le peuple chante et danse pour le léopard. Pierre disait de ce grand African : Joseph Désiré est mon ami', *Le soir* (20/05/1997), 6-7 [archives.lesoir.be/le-congo-devient-zaire-le-peuple-chante-et-danse-pour-l_t-19970520-Z0DQMP.html] (last accessed on

known as ‘Lumumbism’, the new regime developed a distinct state ideology. This has been variously referred to as ‘authentic Congolese/Zairian nationalism’, ‘authenticity’, or, more generally, as ‘Mobutism’, that is, Mobutu’s philosophy and teachings.¹⁷¹ According to Callaghy, this doctrine represented an incoherent ideological blend of a regime that was characterised by ‘a vague and eclectic legitimating “mentality”’. As the scholar explained, this ‘includes notions from liberal democracy, revolutionary populism, even socialism. Above all, however, it is organic-statist in orientation, drawing on traditional African notions of community, equity, authority, and power, particularly pre-colonial concepts of kingship, chiefship, and the “big man”’.¹⁷²

Under the Second Republic, the formulation of the new state ideology was accompanied by efforts aimed at re-writing the country’s history. In a 1976 speech, Mobutu made this intention clear. He declared that, ‘[t]hanks to the Authenticity, in Zaire, we are re-writing the history of our country, namely the true history, the authentic history.’¹⁷³ Following in the footsteps of Lumumba, Mobutu’s regime developed and propagated a historical narrative that took considerable distance from the colonial discourse.

In contrast to the derogatory colonial teachings, which were now denounced for having imposed a local inferiority complex vis-à-vis the ‘Whites’, much of the new ideology was centred on a cult of the ancient pre-colonial past. Rather than rejecting this heritage as barbaric, the underpinning nationalist philosophy and policy of ‘*Recours à l’authenticité*’ called for a return to the ancestral roots and for a re-valorisation of tradition as a foundation for the development and

22/06/2012). Mobutu’s various communications are collected in Mobutu Sese Seko, *Discours, allocutions et messages 1965-1975. Tome 1/2* (Paris 1975); *1976-1981. Tome 1 (1976-1978)* (Kinshasa 1978) and *Tome 2 (1979-1981)* (Kinshasa 1981); *1983-1988. Tome 4* (Paris 1988).

¹⁷¹ In his analysis of the evolution of the regime’s political discourse, Bob W. White underscored a shift of emphasis from economic nationalism (*‘indépendance économique’* or *‘nationalisme authentique’*), to traditional culture and values (*‘recours à l’authenticité’*), and finally to *‘mobutisme’*. B.W. White, ‘L’incroyable machine d’authenticité. L’animation politique et l’usage de la culture dans le Zaïre Mobutu,’ *Anthropologie et sociétés* 30(2) (2006) 43-63. The relationship between these notions was explained by Mobutu in these terms: ‘the authentic Zairian nationalism, the doctrine of the Popular Movement of the Revolution, authenticity, its ideology, the recourse to authenticity, its approach, can be considered as the teachings and the thinking of the Founding President’. Speech pronounced on 16/08/1974. Mobutu, *Discours. T.2*, 526.

¹⁷² T.M. Callaghy, *The state-society struggle: Zaire in comparative perspective* (New York 1984), 6.

¹⁷³ Mobutu, ‘Voeux et hommages, Senghor est entré vivant dans l’histoire,’ *Ethiopiennes numéro spécial* (1976) [ethiopiennes.refer.sn/spip.php?article612] (last accessed on 22/06/2012).

modernisation of ‘our great African fatherland’.¹⁷⁴ While such attempts at promoting the ancient past as a source of pride and inspiration and as a model for the present day have been commended, critics have pointed to the underlying political motivations of this recourse to the past. To a great extent, this philosophy, which largely relied on an ‘invention of tradition’, appears to have served the purpose of legitimising Mobutu’s absolute and autocratic rule. This was accomplished by insisting on allegedly traditional institutions and values, which were centred on the all-powerful, sacred and unifying figure of the chief.¹⁷⁵ Conversely, Western-style multi-party politics was depicted as not conforming to the ancestral culture and, therefore, as being unsuited for the African context. Congolese history was used to prove that the system of multipartism introduced by the colonizers had been a recipe for chaos. According to Mobutu, this colonial heritage had resulted in ‘tribalism, rebellions, fratricidal wars, failure of the state, territorial balkanisation: five hundred thousand deaths! A river of blood.’¹⁷⁶

While the ancient era was extolled as a golden age, the subsequent period from the colonisation until the 1965 coup was described as a time of great suffering. The official discourse on this more recent period is clearly summarised in the MPR *Manifeste de la N’Sele*, the ‘fundamental charter of our Revolution’.¹⁷⁷ As emerges from the manifesto’s *Historical preamble*, at the core of the new state narrative were a condemnation of colonisation, a celebration of the independence struggle, a criticism and denigration of the First Republic, and an exaltation of the Second Republic. With regard to the colonial time, this ceased being depicted as an era that had brought salvation and civilisation to the Congo. The emphasis was

¹⁷⁴ Speech pronounced on 20/03/1973. Mobutu, *Discours*, 314. See also the two speeches of 15/08/1974 and 20/05/1975, 526 and 596. On the concept and philosophy of *authenticité*, see A. Kalanda Mabika, *La remise en question: base de la décolonisation mentale* (Brussels 1967); and K. Kangafu, *Discours sur l’authenticité: essai sur la problématique idéologique du Recours à l’authenticité* (Kinshasa 1973). On the history and evolution of this concept and of its meanings, see also Ndaywel (1998), 675-681. Several authors, such as M. Mikanza and B.W. White, highlighted the political intentions behind Mobutu’s ideology and rhetoric of nationalism and authenticity, namely the legitimisation of the regime and of its policies. M. Mikanza, ‘Pour une politique culturelle nationale?’, I. Ndaywel è Nziem (ed.), *Quelle politique culturelle pour la Troisième République du Zaïre* (Kinshasa 1992), 204.

¹⁷⁵ See, for instance, Schatzberg, *The dialectics of oppression*; and Young & Turner, *The rise and decline*.

¹⁷⁶ Mobutu, *Dignité pour l’Afrique. Entretiens avec Jean-Louis Remilleux* (Paris 1989), 88. Also, according to Mobutu, ‘two or three heads on one body make a monster’. Mobutu, *Discours*. T.2, 201. Qtd. in B.W. White, *Rumba rules: the politics of dance music in Mobutu’s Zaire* (Durham 2008), 77.

¹⁷⁷ Speech of 31/12/1969. Mobutu, *Discours*, T.1, 484. According to Braeckman & Martin, the slogan ‘Mouvement populaire de la révolution’ (MPR) had been taken over from the neutralised rebel Pierre Mulele. ‘Le Congo’.

now placed on the selfish exploitation of the local population by ‘the Whites’. In this context, the achievement of independence was acclaimed as a triumph of nationalist claims. This heroic victory was said to have taken place following the bloody and merciless repression of patriotic uprisings, and despite the many difficulties and diversions caused by foreign actors. The subsequent time of the First Republic was depicted as a period marked by unfortunate events that had crushed the hopes of the nation. This era was associated with the outbreak of mutinies, secessions and rebellions assisted by foreigners,¹⁷⁸ as well as with the rise of a weak and divided government, and of tribal, selfish and incompetent political parties. Parties and their leaders were accused of having been moved by personal ambitions and greed rather than by a concern for the common good. Against this backdrop, the narrative praised the army interventions which, led by several patriots headed by Mobutu, first ‘neutralised’ the government in 1961, and later established the Second Republic in 1965. Mobutu’s coup, in particular, was justified by claiming the need to prevent the occurrence of further internal infighting. His subsequent rule was presented in an overly positive light. The president was commended for his efforts at re-establishing order, the central state authority, the national prestige and self-determination, as well as at bringing an end to a condition of foreign subjection and economic dependence. In a 1972 speech, Mobutu proclaimed that, ‘[i]t was not until the Revolution of November 24, 1965 that an end was put to the misery, the uncertainty, the disarray and the despair experienced by the Zairian people’,¹⁷⁹ including ‘fratricidal wars’ and ‘external interferences’.¹⁸⁰ As revealed in his various communications, Mobutu’s rise to power was legitimised in terms of ‘liberation’, a theme that had likewise been used by Congo’s former colonial rulers. The colonial powers, as shown earlier, had portrayed their history in the Congo as a heroic tale of liberation against both the indigenous savages and the brutal Arabs. By turning heroes into villains, the new regime presented the national history as a struggle for the country’s liberation from colonial and neo-colonialist and imperialist forces, whose only interest was to ‘keep Africa in a state of misery and unproductivity in

¹⁷⁸ Speech of 30/06/1969. Mobutu, *Discours*, T.1, 334.

¹⁷⁹ Speech of 30/06/1972, *Ibid.*, T.2, 223.

¹⁸⁰ Speech of 24/11/1969. *Ibid.*, T.1, 476.

order to exploit it continuously'.¹⁸¹ In the context of a long epos of the country's liberation struggle, Mobutu exalted his coup as a 'Revolution' that had signalled both a radical break with the 'humiliating' past and the 'beginning of our total independence' and 'of our mental desalienation'.¹⁸²

In the framework of an attempted 'cultural revolution' that was aimed at desalienating Congolese minds, the elaboration of this new version of the national history was accompanied by the introduction of several sweeping measures and symbolic gestures which fostered partly re-invented traditions at the expense of colonial and Western influences. Most notably, what De Villers referred to as 'a form of cultural atavism'¹⁸³ found expression in the replacement of all western and Christian names with traditional ones.¹⁸⁴ As part of this policy, the Congo (i.e. the country, the river, and the currency) became known as Zaire.¹⁸⁵ New names were also given to towns, streets and public places.¹⁸⁶ Likewise, colonial *lieux de mémoire* glorifying 'our hangmen', including statues of King Leopold II, Albert I, and Stanley, were removed and replaced with *lieux de mémoire* honouring 'our heroes', such as Lumumba.¹⁸⁷ The president himself, renamed Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa za Banga, became Zaire's omnipresent public figure and the object of a cult of personality.¹⁸⁸ His image, memorable for his trademark leopard-skin cap and his elaborately carved wooden walking stick – emblems of African chieftaincy, – was immortalised on TV, posters, stamps, and on the country's

¹⁸¹ Speech of 24/06/1967, *Ibid.*, T.1, 209.

¹⁸² Speeches of 20/05/1975, T.2, 587; of 07/08/1975, T.2, 606-607; and of 26/10/1972, T.2, 238-239.

¹⁸³ De Villers, 'Identifications,' 87.

¹⁸⁴ New dressing codes for men and women (now addressed as 'Citizens' instead of Mr and Mrs) were also imposed. These included a localised version of the Mao suit (so-called 'abacost') for the former, and authentic loincloths for the latter.

¹⁸⁵ The date that inaugurated this change was yearly commemorated as the '*Journée des trois Z*'.

¹⁸⁶ Léopoldville became Kinshasa, Stanleyville Kisangani, Elisabethville Lubumbashi, Jadotville Likasi, Albertville Kalemie, and Katanga became Shaba.

¹⁸⁷ Speech of 24/11/1967. Mobutu, T.1, 266. The image of Lumumba has largely been a heroic one. As pointed out by Ndaywel (471), however, in the 1960s, while Lumumba was widely seen by the Congolese people as a liberator, he was simultaneously diabolised by Katangans as a dictator and a communist, and by Kasaians as an assassin. His heroic image of liberator was officially recognised under Mobutu. Since then, banknotes and boulevards were dedicated to his memory. Numerous paintings portraying his political struggle and martyrdom have likewise been produced. B. Jewsiewick, *A Congo chronicle: Patrice Lumumba in urban art* (New York 1999).

¹⁸⁸ Mobutu's new name is generally translated as 'the all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest leaving fire in his wake'.

currency.¹⁸⁹ Overall, traditional culture, and in particular traditional music and dance, was co-opted by the regime within the framework of the so-called ‘*animation politique*’. Culture was thus turned into an important instrument of political mobilisation in support of the party and the president – ‘Founding President’, ‘Father of the Revolution’, ‘the Saviour’.¹⁹⁰

The politics of history, memory, and culture in the newly founded Zaire was accompanied by a politics of identity which was aimed at forging a re-born nation. Mobutu’s ‘authentic Zairian nationalism’ insisted on the promotion of national unity and the condemnation of regionalism and tribalism. Whilst it recognised and valued the great diversity that characterised the country, the regime committed itself to strengthening a single Zairian identity and national consciousness, as well as a patriotic and nationalistic spirit among the country’s citizens. Like the official historical narrative, the discourse on national unity, while apparently commendable, was exploited to serve the interests of the regime. In particular, claiming to want to promote unity and to counter internal divisions, the government imposed a single national party which co-opted all Zairians. Furthermore, it centralised the administration and promoted ethnic diversity and balance in key governmental posts in order to weaken centrifugal forces that might have destabilised the State. Despite this rhetoric on unity, Mobutu greatly favoured his homebase, the Equateur Province. At times, he also purposely fuelled tribal and regional division and tension in order to undermine opposition forces. This divide-and-rule strategy was applied especially during the democratisation period of the early 1990s, which had signalled the end of Mobutu’s Second Republic. At this juncture, Mobutu, fearing a loss of power, replaced his longstanding politics of unity with a ‘politics of origins’, the so-called ‘*géopolitique*’. According to this politics, ‘all positions of authority could only be

¹⁸⁹ Before being named Mobutu Sese Seko, at a time when he was known as General he generally appeared in public in army uniform.

¹⁹⁰ White, ‘L’incroyable machine d’authenticité,’ and *The politics of popular dance music*. On the politics of culture under Mobutu, see also B.E. Botombele, *La politique culturelle en République du Zaïre* (Paris: UNESCO 1975); Callaghy, *Politics and culture in Zaire* (Ann Arbor 1987); G.S.A. Kapalanga, *Les spectacles d’animation politique en République du Zaïre* (Louvain-la-Neuve 1989); Schatzberg, *The dialectics*; I. Ndaywel è Nziem (ed.), *Quelle politique culturelle*.

awarded to those indigenous to the region concerned'.¹⁹¹ As a result, a dangerous opposition openly re-emerged between *originaires* and *non-originaires*. This led to a wave of discrimination and persecution against those considered to be foreigners (e.g. Kasaians in Katanga, and Banyarwanda in the Kivu). Drawing attention to a persistent politics of history and identity in his country, Congolese historian Elikia M'Bokolo once poignantly observed that, as notions of nationality and citizenship were overtly and violently challenged in times of crisis, flawed colonial classifications were recycled and widely exploited as 'scientific' proof by 'local intellectuals, whether they be simple ideologues, amateur historians, or part-time ethnologists.'¹⁹²

As will be demonstrated in the next section, the official ideology and discourse of the Second Republic was clearly reflected in the country's education system. Once again, the politicisation of education was evident both at the level of policies and practices, and of teaching contents.

4.3.2 The institutionalisation of the official discourse through the education system: history teaching and education policy in post-colonial Congo

Under Mobutu, the politicisation of the education system was all-encompassing. As the entire public sphere, this sector was controlled and restricted by a regime anxious to castigate any divergence from the official doctrine.

In the wake of the 1965 coup, the regime established tight control over the education sector. Conscious of the power of education to shape people's minds as well as of its considerable share in public employment, the government soon proceeded to nationalise, centralise and politicise the system. One of the first main steps in this direction consisted in the nationalisation of the country's universities

¹⁹¹ Vlassenroot, 'The promise of ethnic conflict,' 73.

¹⁹² E. M'Bokolo, 'Le séparatisme katangais,' J. Amselle & M'Bokolo (eds.), *Au cœur de l'ethnie*, 188. See for instance K. Kinyalolo, who rejected the widely accepted theory on the pre-colonial settlement of the Banyamulenge in the country, instead asserting their more recent arrival in the colonial time. K. Kinyalolo, 'Désinformation, historiographie et paix dans la région des Grands Lacs de l'Afrique centrale,' S. Djungu & L. Kalimbirio (eds.), *Grands Lacs d'Afrique: culture de paix vs. culture de violences* (Huy 2003).

following student anti-government protests.¹⁹³ As part of this reform, in 1971, the three existing tertiary institutions were brought under a single management structure through the creation of a unique university, the *Université Nationale du Zaïre* (UNAZA). While its top academic officials were nominated by presidential ordinances, both its staff and students (as all Zairian citizens) were automatically enlisted in the all-powerful party-state, by which they were systematically indoctrinated and monitored. Students in particular, and the youth more in general, were co-opted through the *Jeunesse du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (JMPR).¹⁹⁴ Following the tertiary education reform, in 1974, the regime proceeded to nationalizing primary and secondary education.¹⁹⁵ Among other things, the politicisation of the system is reported to have found expression in the nomination of school authorities based on their militancy.¹⁹⁶

At the level of teaching contents, state control was exercised through the *Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériels Didactiques*. This body was tasked with designing and revising school curricula, as well as with developing didactic material and guidelines for editors. Under Mobutu, all manuals had to be vetted and approved according to these guidelines before being used in schools. Determined to also centralize the production of schoolbooks and to affirm its autonomy vis-à-vis private editors, since 1984-1985, this organism started conducting its own editing activities.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Ndaywel, 552-553.

¹⁹⁴ G. Ngoie Tshibambe, 'The international partnerships in higher education: breaking the gravity of the extraversion culture, sowing the grains of change in Africa's higher education institutions'. Paper presented at the Conference 'Rethinking development in an age of scarcity and uncertainty: new values, voices and alliances for increased resilience, 19-22 September 2011, York [eadi.org/gc2011/tshibambe-790.pdf] (last accessed on 05/02/2011); A. Mbata Betukumesu Mangu & E. Tshishimbi Katumumoyi, *Universités et libertés académiques en République Démocratique du Congo* (Dakar: Codesria 2005); and M.G. Schatzberg, 'Fidélité au Guide: the J.M.P.R. in Zairian Schools,' *Journal of modern African studies* 16 (1978) 417-431.

¹⁹⁵ In 1977, education was once again conferred to the Churches through an agreement that stipulated their management role of state-subsidised and state-controlled schools.

¹⁹⁶ G. Mokonzi Bambanota, 'Les exclus de l'école congolaise, Ecole pour tous: discours ou réalité?' (08/02/2005), *Ecole démocratique*, 5 [skolo.org/spip.php?article242&lang=fr] (last accessed on 03/02/2011).

¹⁹⁷ Private editors were both local (mostly faith-based) and foreign. The former included: Editions Saint-Paul Afrique, Editions du Centre de recherches pédagogiques (CRP), Centre d'études pastorales (CEP), Afrique Editions, Centre Protestant d'Édition et de Diffusion (CEDI), Editions de la Commission Episcopale de l'Éducation Chrétienne du Zaïre, Édition et Culture Africaines (ECA, Hatier), and Editions Lokold. The latter included the two Belgian educational publishers Duculot and De Boek. The State conducted its editing activities through the Centre de Recherches et de Diffusion Pédagogiques (CEREDIP) and the Editions de la Direction des Programmes Scolaires (EDIPEPS). See, J.-M. Sivry, *Examen des besoins et analyse des possibilités de formation et de développement des ressources humaines de l'industrie du livre au Zaïre*

With an eye to illustrating Mobutu's politics of education and its relation to the state ideology, the following paragraphs will explore more in depth the nature of reforms undertaken by the regime at the level both of policies related to educational access and of contents of curricula and textbooks.

4.3.2.1 Educational structures, policies and practices

In the wake of independence, rather successful efforts were made to democratize the national education system by considerably expanding its access.¹⁹⁸ Several legal texts were produced which stipulated equal and non-discriminatory access to education, as well as the compulsoriness of primary education.¹⁹⁹ In accordance with these principles, a number of measures were taken in the 1970s with the stated aim of redressing educational disparities deriving from the colonial time. With this purpose, Mobutu's regime proceeded to a geographical redistribution of schools. Also, it introduced a policy of regional quota regulating access to tertiary education. Such policies were intended to favour Congo's historically disadvantaged provinces (Equateur, Oriental Province, Kivu, and Kasai-occidental) vis-à-vis better-served and better-schooled regions (Bas-Congo, Bandundu, Katanga, Kasai-oriental, and Kinshasa).²⁰⁰ Reportedly, these apparently commendable measures had the effect of disproportionately privileging Mobutu's homebase Equateur, as well as Kasai occidental, to the detriment of Kinshasa, Bas-Congo, and Katanga.²⁰¹ The quota system, in particular, has been

(UNESCO: Paris 1986) [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0007/000722/072283fo.pdf] (last accessed on 07/02/2011).

¹⁹⁸ In 1960, primary school enrolments in the Congo were among the highest in Africa. As a result of post-colonial reforms, enrolments exceeded 90% in the second half of the 1960s. N. Hirtt, 'Preface,' G. Mokonzi Bambanota, *De l'école de la médiocrité à l'école de l'excellence au Congo-Kinshasa* (Paris 2009), 12; and Mokonzi Bambanota, 'Les exclus', 4.

¹⁹⁹ See art. 33 and 36 of the 1964 Luluabourg Constitution, and Art. 13 of the 1967 Constitution; Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution, *Manifeste de la N'Sele* (Kinshasa: FORCAD-IMK 1984); EDIDEPS, *Loi-cadre. Revue pédagogique*, 11; and loi n° 80-012 (15 November 1980). Compared to the 1964 Constitution, during the Second Republic, education was not declared free, to the detriment of poorer households as well as of girls (reportedly, in case of limited resources, families tended to favour boys' education). Mokonzi, *Democratic Republic of the Congo: effective delivery of public services in the education sector* (Rosebank: AfriMAP / Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa 2010), 41 [www.afriMAP.org/english/images/report/AfriMAP_DRC_Edn_full_EN.pdf] (last accessed on 07/02/2011).

²⁰⁰ In 1969-1970, the provinces of Kinshasa, Bas-Congo, and Kasai oriental showed the highest gross secondary enrolments rates (18.97%, 15.76%, and 17.42%, respectively). The lowest rates were instead registered in the provinces of Kivu (3.89%), Oriental (4.18%) and Equateur (4.46%). Nkoy'a Nzola, *Disparités régionales et développement de l'enseignement secondaire au Zaïre* (1969/70-1986/87), Mémoire de Licence en Démographie, Université de Kinshasa, 1990.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

criticised by observers, such as Joseph Senda Lusamba, on several grounds. Besides causing a deterioration of educational quality by favouring mediocrity over excellence, this policy has been denounced for promoting further inequalities and consequent frustrations and conflict, and for leading to a tribalisation of the sector. Although the regime had purported a view on unity and equality, according to the scholar, this system had the opposite effect of strengthening regional and ethno-tribal identification and solidarity among students and staff, eventually creating a greatly politicised and segregated educational environment.²⁰² Senda's description of higher institutions as a theatre of tribalisation and ethnic antagonism was reiterated by the historian Léonard N' Sanda Buleli. Speaking of the case of Kivu-Maniema, the Congolese scholar reported that, although a '*politique de brassage*' (policy of balancing) was promoted by the MPR within the state university, a 'sort of "*géopolitique*"' took shape in this sector, especially in the early 1990s. The academic brought the example of Bukavu, the region's most important university centre. Here, he observed, universities had been largely characterised by the dominance of some groups and the marginalisation and discrimination of others.²⁰³ According to N' Sanda, several tertiary institutions, such as the *Institut Supérieur Pédagogique* (ISP), had also been the scene of major incidents between so-called '*originaires*' (e.g. the Bashi) and those who were labelled as '*non originaires*', foreigners, and invaders (e.g. the Rwandophones).²⁰⁴ In this context of competition and conflict within the education sector, in 1996, Human Rights Watch confirmed the existence of contentions between 'autochthonous' communities and the 'Rwandophones' over the issue of educational access. As reported by the organisation, the latter were

²⁰² J. Senda Lusamba, 'La politisation de la gestion des ressources humaines dans l'enseignement supérieur et universitaire: cas du système de quota régional en République Démocratique du Congo,' A. Mbata Betukumesu Mangu et al., *Universités et libertés académiques en République Démocratique du Congo* (Dakar: Codesria 2005), 130-148 [www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/congo-chap4-der.pdf] (last accessed on 09/02/2011). See also, M.G. Shatzberg, 'Ethnicity and class at the local level: bars and bureaucrats in Lisala, Zaire,' *Comparative politics* 13 (1981) 470.

²⁰³ According to N'Sanda, while state institutions had promoted ethnic balance among the academic authorities, private institutions had often been dominated by specific tribes. Reportedly, the Université catholique de Bukavu (UCB), the Université officielle de Bukavu, and the Institut supérieur de développement rural (ISDR) were dominated by the Bashi; the Université évangélique de l'Afrique centrale (UEA) by the Fuleru; and the Université Simon Kimbangu (USK) by the Bembe. The scholar further reported that, in 2003, the Université officielle de Bukavu had seen the massive departure of Lega lecturers following ethnic discrimination. L. N'Sanda Buleli, 'Les universitaires du Kivu et la question identitaire,' N. Bugwabari et al. (eds.), *Universités, universitaires en Afrique de l'Est* (Paris 2012).

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

accused of having disproportionately benefited during Mobutu's reign, an allegation that this group fiercely refuted.²⁰⁵

4.3.2.2 School teachings

Since Congo's independence, teaching contents underwent several reforms.²⁰⁶ In line with the new leaders' nationalist ideology, the primary aim of the post-colonial revision efforts was to decolonise the school curriculum and to make it more relevant to the local setting. More specifically, the intention underlying the various reforms was to provide a more Congolese and African orientation to the teaching of history, geography, and civic and moral education. Despite these premises, the proposed history curricula and textbooks, in particular, retained a primarily euro-centric content.²⁰⁷ The failure to Africanise history education in the Congo can be partly explained with the belated establishment of tertiary education and training of professional historians in the country. As a result, an obsolete and predominantly biased and euro-centric colonial historiography was allowed to dominate for a long time.²⁰⁸ It was in fact only in the early 1970s that Lubumbashi

²⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch/Africa Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme, *Zaire. Forced to flee. Violence against the Tutsis in Zaire* (New York 1996), 6. Vlassenroot reported that, in the wake of their collaboration on Mobutu's side during the Simba rebellion, Banyamulenge youth had been rewarded with, among other things, access to education. K. Vlassenroot, 'Citizenship,' 504. During a conference in 2004, Batundi Ndasimwa, a Hunde school inspector and a member of the Goma-based NGO Pole Institute, reported that, on 'Hunde territory', education, like other social services and the administration, had soon come under the control of this group of new-comers, who were generally better educated as a result of the colonial legacy. The author further added that this situation of inequality had been compounded by the fact that, since the open armed conflict in the 1990s, schools built by the Hunde had been the first to be burnt down. 'Survie,' 70-71.

²⁰⁶ In the 1960s and 1980s, the country relied on the substantial support of UNESCO in the field of education. See, G. Fullerton, *UNESCO in the Congo* (Paris: UNESCO 1964) [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001282/128246eo.pdf]; UNESCO, *Appui à la réforme de l'éducation. Résultats et recommandations du projet* (Paris 1983) [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0005/000559/055956fo.pdf]; *Appui à la réforme et à la planification de l'éducation* (Paris 1984) [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0006/000629/062961fo.pdf] (last accessed on 05/02/2011).

²⁰⁷ See, old curricula of the 1960s and 1980s, RDC, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *Programme et instruction* (Léopoldville 1963) [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001595/159554fb.pdf] (last accessed on 06/02/2011); *Programme nationale Histoire, cycle long/sections toutes/options toutes: années: 3-4-5-6* (Kinshasa: Samafos 1982), and *Programme nationale enseignement primaire, vade-mecum des maîtres* (Kinshasa: Ceredip/Edideps 1988). For commentaries on post-colonial teaching contents, see S. Gasibirege Rugema, *A la recherche d'une réforme scolaire adaptée* (Kinshasa 1979); and Odimba, *L'enseignement*. In his analysis of seven history textbooks for S1 and S2, the latter author reported that only two manuals covered African history rather extensively. Insofar as the regional and national history was addressed, textbooks mainly covered the period since Africa's contact with the Western world, i.e. the explorations, the slave trade, and the colonisation. Here, the colonisation was largely depicted as a noble and humanitarian enterprise. 64-6.

²⁰⁸ The first full-fledged History department was founded in 1966. First based at Lovanium University in Kinshasa, this was moved to Lubumbashi campus as part of the 1971 university reform. For years, the department was predominantly staffed by foreign (mainly Belgian) academics. I. Ndaywel è Nziem,

university campus developed into one of the few main centres specialised in Congolese history. In this period, however, historiographical production came to be strictly monitored, and censored when necessary, by a regime determined to manipulate history for its own benefit. As reported by Anton de Baets, '[a]fter 1970, it was apparently very difficult for Zairese (Congolese) historians to write on postcolonial history, especially political contemporary history.'²⁰⁹ If the academia was restricted in its liberty and was co-opted by an autocratic and all-powerful State, the same principle was applied to an education system which was turned into an instrument of propaganda and indoctrination in support of the regime in place.

In order to substantiate the argument according to which Mobutu's ideological and historical discourse found its way into Zairian schools, this section will propose an analysis of six Congolese and Zairian history schoolbooks that were published in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (see tables 7-9 below). Of the six history textbooks, four were destined for use in primary schools (P5 and P6) and two in secondary schools (S2 and S6). Five were written by Zairian authors during Mobutu's Second Republic. They were published either by the State through the *Éditions Samafos* or by private publishing houses. The remaining textbook was instead produced during the First Republic. This was written by a Belgian author and published in Belgium by Scheut missionaries. Two additional schoolbooks that were issued in the first half of the 1960s, one in Congo and the other in Belgium, were likewise taken into account. They were solely analysed based on their tables of contents. Due to the impossibility to locate these publications in the timespan of the present research, they could not be more thoroughly reviewed. Since notions on Zaire's political history and society were also transmitted through the course of Civism and of Civic and Political Education, the analysis of history

'L'historiographie congolaise. Un essai de bilan,' *Civilisations* 54 (2006) 241 [civilisations.revues.org/index489.html] (last accessed on 08/02/2011). On the history of historical studies in Congo, see M. Mwa Bawele & S. Kivilu, 'Historical research in Zaire. Present status and future perspectives,' B. Jewsiewicki and D. Newbury (eds.), *African historiographies. What history for which Africa?* (London 1986), 224-234. On the historical development of tertiary education in Congo, see A. Mpevo Mpolo, *Les quatre tournants manqués de l'université congolaise. Analyse des réformes académiques du Congo-Zaïre (1971-2011)* (Paris 2012).

²⁰⁹ A. de Baets, *Censorship of historical thought: a world guide 1945-2000* (London 2002), 136-139 [arts.eldoc.ub.rug.nl/FILES/publications/general/Historical/2002/debaets_censor/congo.pdf] (last accessed on 08/02/2011).

textbooks has been complemented by a review of four civics schoolbooks published in the 1970s and 1980s.

N.	History textbooks (1960s, 1970s, 1980s) ²¹⁰	Contents
1.	G. Beel, <i>Histoire du Congo. Formation de la Nation congolaise. Destiné aux élèves des écoles du Congo (Congrégation du Coeur Immaculé de Marie, CICM) (Namur: Maison d'édition Wesmael-Charlier 1963) (90pp)</i> ²¹¹	National history, with a focus on the period since the first contact with the outside world, and especially on the EIC
2.	Kasongo wa Kapinga, <i>Histoire du Zaïre, 5^{ème} primaire (Kinshasa: Editions Samafos 1975) (93pp)</i> This volume was written with the cooperation of members of the reform commission	National history from the pre-colonial time until the EIC period
3.	Kasongo wa Kapinga & Kombe, <i>Histoire du Zaïre, 6^{ème} primaire (Lodi: Laus 1982) (134pp)</i>	National history: the Belgian Congo, and the Two Republics ²¹²
4.	<i>Histoire 6^{ème}: Le Zaïre en Afrique et dans le monde. Des origines à nos jours (ed. Samafos) 1981, written by a group of professors) (154pp)</i> This volume was first published in 1971 as <i>Histoire 6^{ème} : Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde (Okapi)</i> . Compared to this previous edition, the revised edition of 1981 presented an identical content, with only few exceptions. Changes included the replacement of new geographical names according to the <i>Recours à l'authenticité</i> , as well as of Mobutu's picture and appellation: the younger and serious image of Mobutu, defined as 'Le Président de la République, le Lieutenant Général, Joseph-Desiré Mobutu' in 1971, was replaced with an older and smiling president, defined as 'Citoyen MOBUTU SESE SEKO, Président-Fondateur Du M.P.R et Président de la République du Zaïre'.	Focus on Zairian history from the origins until today (especially pre-colonial and colonial). ²¹³ It also includes chapters on African and world history
5.	<i>Regards sur l'histoire. Panorama des civilisations du 5^{ème} siècle à nos jours. Cours à l'usage des élèves de 2^{ème} année du Cycle d'Orientation (Kinshasa: Centre de Recherches Pédagogiques 1967) (123 pp)</i>	Focus on European history. Only 1 of the 14 chapters (i.e. last 30 pages) is dedicated to pre-colonial, colonial and independent Africa/Congo ²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Textbooks were generally composed of a number of lessons, documentary texts (also referred to as complementary readings or additional information), open-ended questions and exercises, new lexicon, brief summaries reporting the most important facts to remember, and pictures and maps..

²¹¹ Earlier publications by G. Beel include: *Histoire du Congo belge depuis 1830/ Histoire du Congo belge depuis Stanley* (Léopoldville: Institut Saint-Joseph 1951) (37pp) - Première année secondaire, Première année moyenne ; and *Histoire de Belgique et du Congo: la Belgique depuis 1830, le Congo depuis Stanley*. Destiné aux élèves des écoles du Congo Belge (Wesmael-Charlier 1955-1957).

²¹² 17 of the 42 lessons are dedicated to the two Republics. A reviewed and corrected edition of this publication appeared in 1990. Unfortunately, this could not be located in time to be included in the present research. Kasongo wa Kapinga & Kombe, *Histoire du Zaïre. 6^{ème} primaire*, Ed. revue et corrigée (1990).

²¹³ Only 1 of the 32 chapters are dedicated to Independent Congo.

²¹⁴ Topics on the national history include the Kongo kingdom (105-109) and Independent Congo (120-123). 10 of the 15 chapters deal with European history. The remaining three are dedicated to the Islamic civilisation, pre-colombian civilisations, and the USA (revolution and war of secession).

6.	S. Longo Kazumba, <i>Histoire. Classes terminales</i> (first published in the 1980s, republished in 2006 by New Scolot Editions) (269pp) ²¹⁵ In the preface, Kazadi Longesha, the head of the history unit of the national reform commission that had been established under President Mobutu, strongly recommended this publication to both pupils and teachers. Placed in a context of necessary decolonisation of education, which for a long time had favoured ‘alienation and neocolonialism’, the textbook was described as being ‘very useful, pioneer, and up until today irreplaceable’. ²¹⁶	This textbook, much resembling the content of Albert Leysbeth’s <i>Histoire de l’Afrique</i> (1963), ²¹⁷ presents an overview of African history from the origins until 1985, with a rather prominent focus on Congolese history (mainly pre-colonial (84pp) and colonial (57pp), and only to a lesser extent post-colonial (28pp))
Additional textbooks		
	G. Deward, <i>L’histoire du Congo: évolution du pays et de ses habitants : à l’usage du degré supérieur des écoles primaires et des classes inférieures de l’enseignement secondaire du Congo et du Ruanda-Urundi</i> (Liège/ Paris: Editions H. Dessain 1960) (170pp)	Focus on Congo’s history since its contact with the outside world.
	Noëlla De Roover, <i>Histoire de notre pays. Manuel d’histoire pour la 5ème primaire</i> (Kinshasa: B.E.C. 1963) (96pp)	Large focus on history of France

N.	Civics textbooks (1970s, 1980s)
1.	Babudaa Malibato, <i>Education civique et politique. 3e secondaire. 1. Le citoyen dans la communauté nationale. 2nd ed.</i> (Kinshasa: Samafos 1981) for S3; First ed.: <i>Education et instructions civiques, 3e secondaire, Le citoyen dans la communauté nationale</i> (1975) ²¹⁸
2.	Babudaa Malibato, <i>Education civique et politique 2. Le citoyen dans le developpement national</i> (ed. Mayaka Esongama Nsa) (pp), for S4
3.	Babudaa Malibato, <i>Education civique et politique 3. Le citoyen et la conscience nationale, africaine, internationale</i> (ed. Bobiso 1981), for S5 ²¹⁹
4.	Wua-K. Malaba Tshiwula, <i>Civisme 2</i> (ed. Sciedi 1974) ²²⁰

Tables 7-9. Sampled Congolese and Zairian history and civics textbooks (1960s-1980s)

²¹⁵ Editions of this manual were published in 1984 and 1987.

²¹⁶ Kazadi Longesha, ‘Preface’, S. Longo Kazumba, *Histoire. Classes terminales* (Kinshasa : New Scolot ed. 2006), 3-4.

²¹⁷ A. Leysbeth, *Histoire de l’Afrique* (Léopoldville: Bibliothèque de l’Etoile 1963) (123pp).

²¹⁸ The two editions presented an almost identical content. In comparison with the first edition, the second added a chapter on ‘Education civique et politique, Patrie, Nation Etat’, annexes on the JMPR and on the MPR Charter, as well as a more extensive bibliography. The 1st ed. included a letter of authorisation by the party’s *Direction du Bureau Politique*.

²¹⁹ Largely differing from other texts, the content of this manual was based on original documents and required students’ analysis. It encompassed questions, and exercises, and encouraged research, debates, and reflections.

²²⁰ Topics included: Zaire’s population and organisation, emblems, culture, the army, and the national history and current politics (e.g. life of Mobutu and the MPR).

The textbook analysis proposed in the next paragraphs will be organised into three main sections. The first will explore the representation of the theme of identity, and of origins and migrations. The second will examine the manuals' portrayal of Congo's history, including the pre-colonial era, the early contacts with the outside world and the colonisation, the decolonisation and the achievement of independence, and the time of the two Republics. The third and last section will explore views and attitudes towards power and authority as promoted through Zairian textbooks. While the sample of textbooks selected for this study cannot claim to be exhaustive, the review of their content undoubtedly brought to light an intense politics of history education in post-colonial Congo. As will be extensively illustrated below, the analysis confirmed the hypothesis according to which educational institutions in Zaire had functioned as important places of indoctrination where the party ideology and the regime's selective and politicised interpretation of the past (and of the present) were vigorously taught. A preliminary review allowed to identify the general topics in the national history which appeared to be considered the most significant in the wake of the country's independence (see table 10). A deeper analysis further discerned a number of central themes which show the extent to which the new didactic materials effectively took distance from the colonial discourse that had been disseminated through old textbooks. With regard to the theme of identity, the content of the new manuals largely reproduced the colonial ethnographic discourse. In particular, they revealed an acknowledgment of the existence of 'ethnic' (or 'racial') differences, an identification of the Bantu as 'our ancestors,' as well as an emphasis on national unity. Concerning the country's history, the historical narrative that was presented in the analysed Zairian textbooks was found to echo the official discourse and ideology of Mobutu and of his party. In line with Mobutu's propaganda, the underlying intentions of history teaching during this period appear to have been to instil pride in pre-colonial traditions; to condemn colonialism; to applaud the patriotic independence struggle; to denounce the problems and failures of the First Republic; and, finally, to exalt Mobutu, the army and the Second Republic, and their achievements. In brief, the emphasis was placed on those elements that legitimised and praised the regime's existence and

actions, and which denigrated and justified the dismissal of both the colonial regime and the First Republic. In contrast to the dominant narrative that was propagated in schools in the wake of independence, quite divergent views were found in schoolbooks of the 1960s, especially with regard to the representation of the colonial period. Unlike Zairian textbooks of the 1970s and 1980s, these older booklets continued to present a largely apologetic interpretation of Belgian colonisation, as well as to show little concern for, and an obsolete view of, Congo’s pre-colonial past.²²¹

Overview of general topics on the national history as presented in the Congolese and Zairian schoolbooks of the 1960s-1980s	
Pre-colonial history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Pre-history * Migrations and settlement; peoples and their lifestyle/civilisation and organisation * Ancient kingdoms and empires (e.g. Kongo, Kuba, Luba, Lunda, Mongo, Uele, Bayeke, Mangbetu, Zande): their location, sources, origins, organisation, apogee, and decline
Contacts with the outside world in the 15th and 19th centuries, and colonial history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Islamic and European penetration, explorations, slave trade * Creation of the EIC (1876-1885): geographical conference, AIA, Berlin Conference * Establishment, organisation, and challenges and realisations of the EIC (1885-1908): exploration and occupation, delimitation of borders, administrative organisation, economy and finance, military campaigns (anti-Arab/slavery, shabamsiri, and mahdist campaigns, Batetela/FP revolts), the ‘bataille du rail’, evangelisation, Belgian annexation * Establishment, organisation and realisations of Belgian Congo; the two WWs and their aftermath, including the country’s participation in the wars and anti-colonial resistances * Decolonisation and achievement of independence
Independent Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The First and Second Republic

Table 10. Overview of general topics on the national history as presented in the Congolese and Zairian schoolbooks of the 1960s-1980s

²²¹ Beel’s schoolbook, in particular, greatly focuses on the period since the first contact with the outside world, and especially on the EIC. Only 3 of 25 sub-chapters (for a total of 8 out of 90 pages) are dedicated to the period before this contact. Another prime example in this regard is the S2 schoolbook *Regards sur l’histoire*. This manual, for instance, portrayed the Egyptian civilisation as being ‘foreign to Africa’.

4.3.2.2.1 Identity, and origins, migrations and settlement

In post-colonial schoolbooks, descriptions of the pre-colonial time typically started with outlining the history of the ancient migrations and settlement of the country's different 'ethnic' groups (or 'races')²²². Showing an acknowledgment of the country's diversity, textbooks that were designed under Mobutu's Second Republic described Zaire as a multi-ethnic nation, which was composed of Pygmy, Bantu, Sudanic and Nilotic peoples.²²³ This demographic composition was explained as being the result of successive migratory waves which had led to both confrontation and interbreeding among peoples of different origins and with distinct socio-economic activities and physiognomy.

In the schoolbooks,²²⁴ the pygmies, also called '*Negrilles*', were portrayed as the country's first and most ancient inhabitants. They were described as living primitively as nomad and forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers. According to Beel's *Histoire du Congo* (1963), the pygmies had maintained a 'very simple' way of life. In his words, they lived in 'the least advanced stage,' 'without worrying about tomorrow'.²²⁵ As a general rule, textbooks presented detailed descriptions of their physical appearance. Largely echoing colonial ethnographic literature, characterisations of this group included references to their big head, short legs, long arms, hairy chest, and small size.²²⁶ While several textbooks mentioned the arrival of so-called Proto-Bantu or semi-Bantu, who were depicted as a 'more advanced', 'more civilised' and 'less ferocious' nomad group of savannah-dwellers,²²⁷ most attention was paid to the Bantu migrations from the North (i.e. around Lake Chad).²²⁸ More advanced and better organised, the sedentary

²²² The term 'race' was used in the manuals of the 1960s, i.e. *Regards sur l'histoire* and Bell's *Histoire du Congo*.

²²³ Kasongo P5, 18; and *Civisme* 2, 7.

²²⁴ Kasongo P5, 15-22; *Regards*, 96.

²²⁵ Beel, 9.

²²⁶ Kasongo P5, 15; *Histoire 6ème*, 58-59.

²²⁷ Kasongo P6, 10. The term 'semi-Bantu' was mentioned in textbooks produced during the First Republic, i.e. Deward's *Histoire du Congo* and De Roover's *Histoire de notre pays*.

²²⁸ They were said to have migrated around the 1st century AD and to have reached Central Africa between the 12th and 13th centuries. Kasongo P6, 9. Longo's *Histoire. Classes terminales* placed the beginning of the Bantu migrations towards Northern Nigeria in 2500-500BC. 49. Beel instead traced their origins in the East (Upper Nile, Ethiopia and the Great Lakes), and the time of their first arrival in Central Africa in the 9th century. Beel, 9-10.

agriculturalist and cattle-breeder Bantu were reported to have displaced, or dominated and assimilated the pre-existing peoples. First organised in families, clans and tribes, as well as in classes, the Bantu were presented as the founders of several great kingdoms (see further in the text).²²⁹ In *Histoire du Zaïre 6ème* and *Histoire 6ème*, they were described as ‘our ancestors’.²³⁰

Descriptions of Congo’s ancient history of migrations and settlement were dominated by references to the Pygmies and the Bantu. At the same time, the arrival of the Sudanics and the Nilotics on Congolese soil was omitted in certain schoolbooks, notably in *Histoire du Zaïre*.²³¹ With regard to the Sudanics, they were mentioned in two of the analysed textbooks: Beel spoke of ‘other peoples, of Sudanese origins’; Longo referred to ‘*Les Bantu-Soudanais*’. Members of this group, which include the Azande, Ngbandi, Ngwaka, Mangbetu and Ngombe, were said to distinguish themselves for their tall and slender figure, their large forehead, and their very dark skin.²³² As for the Nilotics, also called *Chamites*, references were comparatively more frequent.²³³ What is remarkable about the representation of this group is the apparent promotion of a chasm and antagonistic image between the agriculturalist Bantu – *nota bene*, ‘our ancestors’, – and the pastoralist Nilotics/*Chamites*. That being said, in *Histoire 6ème* and *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, the Bantu and the Nilotics were both considered to belong to the same group of ‘blacks’ or ‘negroes’, as opposed to the Pygmies.²³⁴ Echoing old colonial literature, the Nilotics’ more recent arrival in the Great Lakes region,

²²⁹ Kasongo P5, 18. See also, Deward.

²³⁰ Kasongo P6, 8; and *Histoire 6ème*, 32.

²³¹ In its chapter on African civilisations, Kasongo P6 only included two paragraphs, respectively on the Pygmies and the Bantu.

²³² Beel, 11; and Longo, 47-48.

²³³ They were found, in particular, in *Histoire 6ème, Regards sur l’histoire*, Bell’s *Histoire du Congo*, and Longo’s *Histoire. Classes terminales*.

²³⁴ *Histoire 6ème*, 96. The term ‘negro’ was used by Longo, 47. A neat separation was also made between ‘Black’ and ‘White’ Africa. *Histoire 6ème*, 97. According to Longo, other African ethnic groups, which did not pertain to the Congolese context, included the Bushmen, the Hottentots and the ‘Whites’ of North Africa (e.g. Berbers, ancient Egyptians, Lybians). 46-47.

from southern Egypt, the North-East or the Upper Nile Valley,²³⁵ was typically portrayed in terms of invasion of the agriculturalists' land and of domination.²³⁶

Examples of 'tribes' belonging to these groups were generally omitted. Longo's *Histoire. Classes Terminales* represents an exception in this respect. The manual mentioned the pygmy Bambuti and Batswa, and such Bantu groups as the Bakongo, the Baluba, the Mongo and the Balunda. References to Hutu and Tutsi in particular were nearly completely absent in schoolbooks' descriptions of Congolese/Zairian society. These were solely found in a map reported in *Histoire 6ème* which included the Hutu in eastern Zaire, together with other Bantu peoples, such as the Bushi and the Bemba.²³⁷ No mention was instead made of the Tutsi. References to this identity group were only explicitly made in relation to neighbouring countries. Bell's schoolbook, for instance, referred to the Tutsi as a group belonging to the tall and pastoralist Nilotic 'race', which had notably settled in Rwanda.²³⁸ The Tutsi were also cited in the two secondary school textbooks *Regards sur l'Histoire* and Longo's *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, in their chapters on Africa's ancient kingdoms. Here, the Tutsi were described as '*pasteurs Chamites orientaux*' and '*seigneurs-pâtres Chamites*' ('chamitic lord-shepherds').²³⁹ They were said to have dominated and subjugated agriculturalist groups such as the Hutu, and to have founded the powerful kingdoms of Bunyoro, Buganda, and Nkole in today-Uganda, and of Rwanda and Burundi.²⁴⁰ Longo's manual, in particular, reproduced the colonial theory on migration. He spoke of successive migratory waves of the hunter pygmies, of the majority agriculturalist Bantu Bahuru or Bahutu from the South-East, and finally of the tall pastoralist *Chamites* Bahima or Batutsi from the North-East. In the manual, the

²³⁵ These three locations of the origins of Nilotic groups were mentioned respectively in *Histoire 6ème*, 32; *Regards*, 103-104, and Longo, 49; and Bell, 11. These groups were said to have arrived at the beginning of the first millennium (or since the Christian era). According to *Regards*, they had probably settled in the Great Lakes in the 15th century.

²³⁶ *Histoire 6ème*, 32; *Regards*, 103-104.

²³⁷ *Histoire 6ème*, 61.

²³⁸ Beel, 11.

²³⁹ *Regards*, 103; Longo, 85

²⁴⁰ According to Longo, these kingdoms had been founded since before the 17th century. 85-88. See also, J. Bouchaud, *Les civilisations de l'Afrique noire*, C.S.Sp, 2nd ed. (Léopoldville: *Bibliothèque de l'étoile* 1963). Here, the pastoralist Hamitics or Chamitics, including the Nilotics, were said to have originated from 'a blend of the black race and of the white race'. Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi were further presented as neo-sudanese and rhodesian empires that had been founded by noble castes.

Bahima/Batutsi were associated to the Galla, alongside the Ethiopians, the Peul, the Nouer, the Dinka and the Alur.²⁴¹ This association was more implicitly made in *Regards sur l'Histoire*, where the Tutsi was mentioned in a paragraph with the title 'Les états Peuls – Les Batutsi'.²⁴² With regard to Uganda, Longo portrayed Bunyoro and Nkole as having been dominated respectively by the Nilotic Alur, Luo, and Acholi, and by the 'dominant caste' of the Hima. The author's characterisation of Rwanda's pre-colonial history and society is especially noteworthy as it further outlined ancient Hutu-Tutsi relations in this country. A central theme here was the domination of the pastoralist Tutsi over the Twa and the Hutu 'classes', which had worked at the service of this 'aristocracy' and 'noble caste' of '*seigneurs*'. The Hutu, in particular, were said to have been tied to the Tutsi lords through so-called 'serfdom contracts'. In the words of the author,

*'The Bahima, called Batutsi in this country, submitted the Batwa and the Bahutu to their authority ... The society was divided into three classes: the noble caste of Tutsi pastoralists, the Bahutu farmers and the Batwa. Only the Batutsi had the right to own land, to serve in the army and in the administration, to own herds. The Bahutu farmers were linked to these lords through serfdom contracts. The Batwa were at the service of the king and of the Tutsi aristocracy. They were employed as hunters, watchmen or domestics.'*²⁴³

Longo's brief description of the history of ancient Burundi is also interesting. According to the author, the foundation of the Burundian kingdom could be traced back to 'the slow infiltration of pastoralist Tutsi from Rwanda among agriculturalist Hutu and Twa', in the 18th century.²⁴⁴ For the rest, Burundi's ancient history was presented as being marked by repetitive skirmishes with Rwanda.

If a rift between Bantu and Nilotics/*Chamites* seemed to be created, both *Regards sur l'Histoire* and *Histoire. Classes Terminales* concluded their presentations by underscoring the gradual interbreeding of these reportedly ancestrally different groups.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Longo, 47.

²⁴² *Regards*, 103.

²⁴³ Longo, 87.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁴⁵ *Regards*, 103-104.

A final note in relation to the theme of migrations is warranted with regard to an evaluation question that was formulated in *Histoire du Zaïre 5ème*. Showing a remarkable degree of comfort in addressing the commonly sensitive issue of origins, the schoolbook required pupils to pinpoint whether their family was still living on its ancestral land. In the manual, children were asked: ‘Does your family find itself on its homeland (*terres d’origine*)? If not, why?’²⁴⁶

As illustrated above, post-colonial textbooks recognised the diversity of the country’s peoples. Zairian schools, however, were at the same time also clearly assigned a mission to forge a united and patriotic citizenry around Mobutu and his party. Such task was attributed in particular to the course of Civic and Political Education, a subject which essentially taught the doctrine of Mobutism.²⁴⁷ The civics schoolbooks that were analysed for the purpose of this study demonstrated to be in line with the aim of education as stipulated in the 1986 Framework Law. This consisted in forming ‘the Zairian man who is a militant in the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution*, a responsible citizen, useful to himself and to society, capable of promoting the development of the country and the national culture’.²⁴⁸ In accordance with this law, the emphasis in the civics textbooks was placed on the development of pupils’ patriotism, and, more specifically, of their knowledge and respect of social and civic virtues, duties and responsibilities, as well as of the MPR and its leader. Several values appeared prominently in the textbooks. They included: solidarity and communitarianism, with a focus on the family and the nation; respect of the authority, as well as of the elderly, maternity, and the common good; selflessness, a spirit of service, and patriotic courage; a dedication to work, as well as competence, discipline, and cooperation; and a sense of pride in the country and its ancestral heritage.²⁴⁹ In various official speeches and documents, history education was likewise explicitly mentioned as having an important role to play in this respect. On the one hand, by teaching about the

²⁴⁶ Kasongo P5, 17.

²⁴⁷ This subject had come to replace the course of Religion, which had been suppressed in 1974.

²⁴⁸ *Loi-cadre de l’enseignement national*, art.3, qtd. in Mokonzi Bambanota, *Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 43.

²⁴⁹ See especially Babudaa Malibato’s manuals.

country's 'prestigious' and 'glorious' past and about its heroes, school history was deemed crucial to stimulating and nurturing national pride and a sense of attachment, love, devotion, and even sacrifice towards the State and the nation (see paragraphs below). As expressed by Mobutu in one of his speeches, history education was to be an important instrument in the development of a nation that is 'more united, prosperous, glorious, powerful, and feared by strangers who can inspire us negatively'.²⁵⁰ On the other hand, besides arousing patriotic sentiments, history teaching was considered a useful tool in uniting the nation by forging and strengthening a national identity, while weakening ethnocentric and regional particularities, as well as foreign influences. Teaching history in Zaire was thus clearly designed with strong political and civic aims. This appears evident in the opening of *Histoire du Zaïre 5ème* and *6ème*. The former opened with the national anthem *La Zaïroise*, preceded by a picture of a smiling Mobutu among the enthusiastic masses and with a caption of the president's speech on the occasion of the MPR's first anniversary. The latter, instead, was introduced by an extract on 'Patriotism' from R. Gripekoven's *Aimer Son Pays*, which exalted the love and self-sacrifice for the fatherland. Furthermore, in the introduction of *Histoire 6ème*, its authors claimed to adhere to objectivity and impartiality, leaving it to the teachers to draw conclusions dictated by their patriotism.

4.3.2.2.2 History: The pre-colonial golden-age, Belgian colonial occupation and oppression, and the country's heroic liberation from the influence and domination of the Whites

4.3.2.2.2.1 Pre-colonial time: ancient civilisations, kingdoms and empires

In accordance with the civic aims of history teaching outlined above, schoolbooks' depictions of the national pre-colonial past pointed to a desire among their developers to imbue young people with a sense of pride in their country's ancient traditions and civilisations. In line with Mobutu's nationalist

²⁵⁰ Mobutu further declared that, 'History will teach the traditions of the fatherland, the past of Zaire, the glories of the fatherland, the secular institutions, the cultural, moral and spiritual richness of Zaire'; 'History will develop children's love of the fatherland and of the common good, and all the qualities of a patriot: generosity, fidelity, etc..' Mobutu, *Discours*, T.2, 60. In accordance with Mobutu's words, the 1988 curriculum expected pupils at the P3-P4 level to 'learn the cult of our great men, of our heroes, of all those who have contributed to the greatness of the fatherland.'

doctrine and its recourse to ‘authenticity’, *Education Civique et Politique 3* declared that, ‘[o]f this traditional and pre-colonial past Zaire has legitimate reasons to be proud’.²⁵¹ More in general, Africa as a whole was exalted as ‘the beacon of humanity’ and ‘the home of great civilisations’.²⁵²

In describing Congo’s pre-colonial kingdoms and empires, Zairian textbooks, while also recognizing the existence of structural weaknesses and internal troubles, largely praised their ancient organisation, their ‘very beautiful’ and ‘marvellous’ civilisation, and their ‘splendour’ and ‘richness’.²⁵³ In a lesson on the Kingdom of Kongo, for instance, *Histoire du Zaïre 5ème* underscored the astonishing achievements of the ancestors prior to arrival of the Europeans. This view most vividly came to the fore in the introduction to this lesson, which consisted in a child-father conversation on the topic at hand. Here, the child affirmed,

*‘And I thought that it was the foreigners who had taught us how to build cities and to organize a country ... - This is false. The first Europeans to set foot in Zaire were very surprised to see everything that our grandparents had achieved.’*²⁵⁴

Next to encouraging pupils’ national pride, descriptions of the country’s pre-colonial time as presented in *Histoire du Zaïre 5ème* further supported the official discourse by highlighting the desirability of unity and solidarity in a multi-ethnic country, as well as the importance of having a chief at its head. In particular, in the conversation that introduced the lesson on the Luba Empire, the child protagonist (Mokuse) declared:

*‘Ah! This is beautiful, says MOKUSE, a large country made up of various ethnic groups united to work for the common good. It is also necessary that this country has a chief, because a country without a chief is a body without a soul.’*²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ *Education civique et politique 3*, 16.

²⁵² *Regards*, 93.

²⁵³ *Histoire 6ème*, 77.

²⁵⁴ Kasongo P5, 26.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

4.3.2.2.2 Early contacts with the outside world and the colonial time

Although exalting the ancient time, Zaire's textbooks greatly condemned the 'scourge' of the slave trade and the colonisation. Their occurrence was denounced for having curbed the 'marvellous' evolution of African and Zairian pre-colonial states by sowing 'ruin, divisions, fear, war'.²⁵⁶

In relation to the Kingdom of Kongo, initially positive contacts with the Portuguese were said to have turned 'disastrous'. The decline of this great kingdom was mainly blamed on the foreigners. Fingers were pointed first of all at their 'shameful' slave trade. According to *Histoire 6ème*, as a result of the slave trade, the Kongo, as also other African kingdoms and empires, had been severely weakened by foreigners through exhaustion, de-peopling and antagonisation, as well as through the introduction of alcohol, fire weapons, and disease.²⁵⁷ In the context of the slave trade, only Longo, in particular, acknowledged the collaborating role of certain local actors, such as the Azande and tribal chiefs.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, textbooks blamed the foreigners for the outbreak of internal conflict and anarchy which were deemed to have been provoked through a policy of divide and rule.²⁵⁹

With regard to the Belgian colonisation, Zairian textbooks took clear distance from the colonial discourse. In stark contrast to old schoolbooks, they sketched a predominantly negative image of this period.

In presenting the creation of the EIC, *Histoire du Zaire 5ème*, in particular, underscored the selfish interests of King Leopold II. The manual explained how the stated humanitarian objectives of his enterprise in Central Africa – the promotion of explorations and commerce, and the fight against slavery, tribal wars and disease – were in reality meant to 'cover the intentions of the king of the Belgians, which were to create a colony in Africa'.²⁶⁰ Similarly, *Histoire. Classes*

²⁵⁶ *Histoire 6ème*, 103-104.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Longo, 91. The author also mentioned succession struggles and external invasions (by the Yaka) as causes of the kingdom's decline. It furthermore referred to the killing of King Antonio by the Portuguese. 91-92.

²⁵⁹ Kasongo P5, 35; Kasongo P6, 18; *Histoire 6ème*, 98-100.

²⁶⁰ Kasongo P5, 62.

terminales highlighted that, with the aim of providing his country with raw materials and markets, Leopold proceeded to setting in motion what the textbook described as ‘a masterpiece of political strategy’.²⁶¹ According to the civics manual *Civisme 2*, the outcome of his undertakings in the region was the creation of a ‘private property of an absolute monarch’.²⁶²

Concerning the subsequent period of foreign occupation and colonisation, a strong emphasis was placed on outlining the ‘disadvantages’ of Belgium’s colonial rule. Here, extensive mention was made of the ‘abuses’, ‘scandals’, ‘inhuman’ practices and ‘grave excesses’, and of the injustices and suffering that marked this era.

Among the colonial abuses mentioned in the textbooks were the confiscation and exploitation of the country’s ‘fabulous’ and much-coveted rich natural resources to the benefit of the colonisers.²⁶³ As reported by the manuals, this pillage was coupled with the exploitation of human resources by state agents through the imposition of forced labour and hard chores. Textbooks recounted how, under foreign rule, people had been treated like animals or machines that were expected to ‘produce, serve and obey’ the European masters.²⁶⁴ In its lexicon section, *Histoire. Classes Terminales* further mentioned the term ‘Red Rubber’ to refer to ‘the horrors, the cruelty, briefly the bloody methods of the Leopoldian system’ which had been employed by EIC agents and concessionary societies. More specifically, Longo associated this term with such abuses as ‘forced labour, corporal mutilations, camps of hostages, [and the] whip’.²⁶⁵ In the context of the territorial occupation and conquest by EIC agents, textbooks further underscored the injustice and abuse to which the soldiers of the *Force Publique* had been subjected. They recounted how Congolese soldiers had suffered under-nourishment, under-payment and severe punishment despite the great service they had rendered to the EIC.²⁶⁶ Their involvement had been indispensable in the fight

²⁶¹ Longo, 136.

²⁶² *Civisme 2*, 40; and Kasongo P6, 27.

²⁶³ Longo, 154.

²⁶⁴ *Histoire 6ème*, 31. See also *Civisme 2*, 41.

²⁶⁵ Longo, 222.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 157; Kasongo P5, 88. The latter textbook seemed to justify the rebellion of FP soldiers by affirming that, as a result of the European disregard for their rights, they ‘were certainly disgruntled and ready to revolt.’

against the ‘terrible’ and ‘merciless’ Arab slave traders,²⁶⁷ and against local resistance (by Bangala and M’siri)²⁶⁸ and foreign invasions (by the Mahdists).²⁶⁹ A great but unrewarded sacrifice was said to have also been made during the two World Wars. In the schoolbooks, the Congolese were praised for their honourable, heroic and crucial participation in the defence of the interests and sovereignty of the colonisers²⁷⁰ – who, ‘however, refused them the same freedom’.²⁷¹ On account of its longstanding military and civilian mobilisation, and of the extensive pillage of its resources, Zaire was believed to have greatly paid the costs of this foreign war which further contributed to the country’s externally imposed ruin.²⁷²

Besides being exploited and mistreated, the Zairian people were reported to have been subjected to systematic discrimination, segregation, inequality, and restriction of liberties.²⁷³ Colonial discriminatory and unequal practices included poor and belated efforts in the fields of healthcare and education. School teachings underscored, for instance, how indigenous education had been allowed only insofar as it served and did not threaten the ‘paternalist regime’.²⁷⁴ According to Zairian textbooks, next to limiting the formation of a local elite that could challenge the status quo, colonial authorities had sought to maintain the country under their yoke through shrewd strategies which had provoked a radical transformation of society. The foreign newcomers were accused of having done so by weakening local authority, by fuelling tribal division and tension (e.g. between

²⁶⁷ The Arab slave traders were said to have conducted indiscriminate and merciless massacres and extensive raids. According to Kasongo P5, ‘[t]he tactic used by the hieves is simple. The Arabs silently surround a village at night; when they are all in place, they start killing everything that moves. Only the finest specimens of men and women are spared; the elderly and small children are ruthlessly eliminated. After a few years, entire regions of Zaire are completely depopulated (Maniema, Lomami, Shaba).’ Kasongo P5, 80-83. That being said, the manual also appreciated the economic, socio-cultural, and political advantages of the Arabs’ presence in the country. 55. Notice that in the textbook, the European anti-slavery campaign was explained with selfish rather than altruistic motives, notably a desire to monopolize the ivory commerce and to legitimize the existence of the EIC. 83.

²⁶⁸ With regard to M’siri, Longo highlighted that his assassination was due to a desire to eliminate all resistance to the occupation and conquest of Katanga. 145.

²⁶⁹ *Histoire 6ème*, 125-126.

²⁷⁰ According to Kasongo P6, the Europeans ‘oblige the African troops to fight on their side. Thus, to defend European interests, this world war cost the life of thousands of Africans.’ And it continued, ‘[t]hanks to the Zairians, the Belgians were able to keep their colony’. 29-30. See also, Longo, 165-166, 169-170.

²⁷¹ *Education civique et politique 3*, 47.

²⁷² The textbook reported a speech pronounced by Mobutu in 1973, in which he declared: ‘Zaire has supported a war that did not concern it, but which totally ruined it’ ... ‘from 1940 to 1945, Zaire fought for a cause that was not its own, ... despite this it was literally plundered to bear the costs of the war on behalf of its former *métropole*.’ *Ibid.*, 34, 38

²⁷³ See also, Kasongo P5, 27.

²⁷⁴ Longo, 169, 172. *Education civique et politique 3*, 31-39.

Baluba and Lulua, and Conakat and Balubakat), by destroying local traditions and culture, and by introducing bad habits such as alcoholism.²⁷⁵ *Education Civique et Politique 3* presented a particularly comprehensive list of the ‘grave’ abuses and misdeeds of the colonisation. Altogether, they were deemed to have led to a condition of ‘economic enslavement’, ‘social subjection’, and ‘political domination’. Such abuses included:

*‘domination, oppression, use of force, segregation and mistreatment, disdain of the Zairian person and cultural values, land expropriation and forced cultivation, deportations, impoverishment of villages in human resources through intensive and arbitrary requisitions of labour for the mines, acculturation and cultural and spiritual uprooting through the imposition of a foreign civilisation not well-assimilated and incapable of replacing the forgotten ancestral values, the decline of traditional authority, the transfer of entire Zairian art collections to Europe, the separation of ethnic cultural entities through an arbitrary territorial division’.*²⁷⁶

Although the ‘misdeeds’ of the colonisation dominated post-colonial school teachings concerning this period, textbooks generally recognised its ‘advantages’ and positive contributions – or, in the words of *Regards sur l’histoire*, its ‘undeniable benefits’.²⁷⁷ *Histoire du Zaïre 6ème*, for instance, explained that, ‘[i]n itself the system is bad, but one can discover aspects favourable to the colonised country and to its inhabitants’.²⁷⁸ Among these positive aspects figured the unification and the organisation of the country and of its people, the ‘immense’ infrastructural and economic development in the domains of agriculture, industry, transport and communication – *nota bene*, ‘to better exploit’ the country and thanks to the Zairian labour force – as well as the promotion of social progress in the fields of health and education.²⁷⁹ With regard to the EIC period, while *Histoire 6ème* acknowledged the abuses committed by the agents of exploitative companies, it also commended King Leopold for his great achievements. The manual concluded that,

²⁷⁵ Kasongo P6, 123.

²⁷⁶ *Education civique et politique 3*, 39.

²⁷⁷ *Regards*, 117.

²⁷⁸ Kasongo P6, 45.

²⁷⁹ Kasongo P6, 41-46. With regard to the ‘battle of the rails’, Longo seemed to justify it by describing it as a costly enterprise (in which 1,800 Africans and 132 Europeans had lost their lives) but ‘really necessary to open the country to the sea’. 157.

*'Despite the abuses, the oeuvre of King Leopold II is great. Zaire today owes him its vastness. For 23 years, he was able, without ever setting foot in Zaire, to rule over his State, establishing order, peace and prosperity ... He opened the Zaire Basin to progress.'*²⁸⁰

Concerning the depiction of the colonial period, a separate note is warranted with regard to schoolbooks that were produced in the 1960s, most notably Beel's *Histoire du Congo*. Compared to the predominantly critical descriptions found in Zairian schoolbooks of the 1970s and 1980s, this earlier manual revealed a generally more positive view of the colonial era, coupled with a more negative image of the pre-colonial time.²⁸¹ In many ways, Beel's historical narrative appeared to largely coincide with the colonial discourse. A few examples can be cited as standing out in this respect.

First of all, while it only briefly acknowledged the ravage caused by the European slave trade in Western Congo – which was said to have been occupied by 'initially well-intentioned foreigners', – a disproportionate emphasis was placed on the Arab slave trade in the East. The schoolbook highlighted the fear, tyranny, massacres and destruction imposed by these 'oppressors'. They were said to have raided over fifteen million Congolese in only four decades. According to the manual, the explorers' 'alarming news' on the slave trade as well as on local 'cruel habits',²⁸² together with Leopold's 'strong taste for geography', had been the main reasons for the Belgian king's interest for this region.²⁸³

Secondly, the manual paid tribute to the 'heroic efforts' of 'brave' explorers such as Stanley, who had been confronted with many perils during their travels. In a bid not to tarnish the righteous image of the explorers, the textbook recounted how,

²⁸⁰ *Histoire 6ème*, 127. To some extent, Longo, as well, also praised Leopold. According to him, the end of the slave trade had come thanks to Leopold and the *Force Publique*. 128.

²⁸¹ With regard to Congo's pre-colonial societies, Beel placed a greater emphasis for instance on Bantu cannibalist practices as well as on the regular tribal wars that had haunted this region. Beel, 11.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 19-21. In the context of the humanistic geographical conference convened by Leopold, the king was said to have been 'offered' the presidency of the subsequently founded African International Association (AIA). *Ibid.*, 26-27.

faced with numerous instances of local resistance (e.g. by the Basoko and the Bangala), '[r]eluctantly, Stanley had to fire to defend himself'.²⁸⁴

Thirdly, with regard to the subsequent occupation of Congolese territory by the EIC, Beel portrayed such endeavour in terms of pacification. The description of the resistance that had been put up in particular by chief M'Siri in Katanga was presented by stressing the 'terrible', 'merciless' and 'cruel' nature of his rule over 'oppressed tribes'. Against this backdrop, the EIC's intervention against M'siri was justified with a desire to 're-establish peace and prosperity'. Also, the eventual killing of the chief by a Belgian officer was once again depicted as an act of legitimate self-defence. In the words of the manual, 'the young captain [Stairs] had to defend himself and killed Msiri'. As a result of the intervention, '[t]he calm returned' and 'the people breathed.' This positive image was reiterated in the questionnaire that concluded this section. Here, pupils were asked to '[s]how that the annexation of Katanga to the EIC was a benefit for the region.'²⁸⁵ In a similar vein, in describing the EIC's campaign against 'the Arab peril' hinted at above, the schoolbook emphasised the cruelty of the Arab slave raiders, and spoke of the 'thousands of ill-fated' who had been enslaved or had died, to the 'rage and indignation' of the Europeans. The manual's representation of the Belgian response to the Arab slave trade underscored the initial incapacity of the EIC to effectively prevent 'these crimes' due to the insufficient number of troops at its disposal. Early measures meant to impede the 'odious' business, such as the appointment of the famous slave trader Tippu-Tip as a governor, were said to have been finally followed by a 'gigantic struggle', which resulted in a 'resounding success'. As the textbook concluded, '[t]he Arab campaign has ended and the trade definitively eradicated by the sole action of the troops of the Independent State.'²⁸⁶ As for the revolts of the Batetela (soldiers of the *Force Publique*), the booklet seemed to exculpate the European officers who were in charge of military operations. Contrary to Zairian textbooks, Beel did not focus on the abuses that the local soldiers had suffered. Instead, he explained the mutinies

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 24-25.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 41-43.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 45-50.

by stressing the unavoidable difficult circumstances of the Congolese setting, and particularly the challenges deriving from the character of the indigenous people and from the country's geography. The author underlined the 'excessive severity' of the Belgian captain towards men who were used to an 'undisciplined life', as well as 'the extraordinary suffering' endured during a long and hard journey on the way to the anti-mahdist struggle. While blame was not explicitly assigned, praise for the military victory in the fighting appeared to be primarily apportioned to the Belgians. In the end, the textbook reported, '[i]t took the audacity and the courage of Dhanis [Belgian officer] and of his men – white and black – to defeat them and drive them away'.²⁸⁷

Fourthly, *Histoire du Congo* greatly emphasised a series of positive socio-economic achievements that reportedly marked the colonial period.²⁸⁸ Among other things, the manual extolled the educational and medical work of the dedicated missionaries, who were 'animated by the ardent desire to help their neighbour'.²⁸⁹ Also, it underscored the promotion of infrastructural progress, with particular reference to the construction of the Matadi-Stanley Pool railway. This was portrayed as a 'grandiose project' which had been of 'capital importance' to opening the country to civilisation and commerce. The project was further exalted for having finally allowed the suppression of the '*penible*', but 'absolutely essential', 'porterage service'. In a context in which Congolese workers were euphemistically said to have been 'offering their services' for the realisation of this important project, its human cost was recognised as having been 'startling' due to difficult work conditions, 'among both the Europeans and the Africans'.²⁹⁰ Once again, while the circumstances were blamed for the adversity, the Europeans preceded the Africans in the list of those who were commemorated for their service to the country.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 53-55. With regard to the *Force Publique*, the schoolbook also acknowledged the important Congolese contribution to the war efforts and to the victory of the Allies. 74-76.

²⁸⁸ The manual included several complementary readings, especially extracts from G. Liétaert's *La croix du Congo*, which were greatly apologetic of the European and Leopoldian *œuvre*. In one of these extracts, the author, for instance, underscored the great European efforts made to 'save' the Congo from disease. In his words, '[a]ll the Europeans who could ... became nurses in order to save the population.' 66.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 57, 73.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 58-60.

Fifthly, in line with its overall apologetic view of the colonisation, Beel's schoolbook paid particular tribute to King Leopold II, 'benefactor of the Congo' and 'illustrious founder of the Congo'.²⁹¹ His 'civilising role' was summarised as follows:

*'Leopold II had put his personal fortune at the disposal of his African œuvre...he made explore and occupy every corner of the territory and he had the honour of delivering the country from the horrible scourge of the slave trade. It would be difficult to exaggerate the dedication and the energy that he displayed in the development of his Congolese œuvre...Leopold II organised and civilised his State. He sent officials with the mission to protect the inhabitants, to bring peace, to make disappear the barbaric customs of ritual killings and of cannibalism. He sent missionaries, knowing that true civilisation does not go without Christianity; doctors, to fight against tropical diseases, especially against sleeping sickness...; engineers, to enrich the Congo with technical progress; magistrates, to stop the injustices of fetishists and small chiefs who abused their authority.'*²⁹²

With regard to the abuses and 'atrocities' that notoriously marked this period, the textbook exculpated the Belgian king. It instead placed the sole blame on certain unscrupulous 'agents'. In its words,

*'his high quality [of Leopold] could not prevent deplorable practices, notably in the two "domaines de la couronne" whose resources were exclusively intended to cover the king's expenses in favour of the Congo. Some of the agents responsible for the exploitation of these regions were adventurers without scruples who did not recoil from atrocity.'*²⁹³

Failing to elaborate on the causes that led to the annexation of the EIC by Belgium (notably, the 'red rubber' scandal and the king's incapacity to repay his loan²⁹⁴), the manual merely stated that Leopold 'ardently longed to give it to his country'.²⁹⁵

Beel's description of the subsequent period included, among other things, a eulogy of the admirable humanitarian efforts made by Leopold II's successors

²⁹¹ Ibid., 67, 71.

²⁹² Ibid., 67.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Longo, 159.

²⁹⁵ Beel, 60.

Albert I and Leopold III. As their predecessor, the two Belgian kings were depicted as promoters of the happiness and human dignity of the local population.²⁹⁶ In addition, the schoolbook outlined the benefits of the 1949 Belgian ten-year plan for the Congo and the considerable socio-economic progress that accompanied it.²⁹⁷ Overall, only one particularly critical remark was found about Belgian colonial policies, that is, the belated establishment of indigenous post-primary education.²⁹⁸

4.3.2.2.3 The decolonisation

Zairian textbooks presented a mixed view of the country's decolonisation process and of the achievement of independence.

On the one hand, the manuals celebrated the patriotic resistance against foreign occupation and the rise of national emancipation.²⁹⁹ They referred in particular to the 'martyrs' of the independence struggle. Textbooks mentioned, first of all, the 'insurrection', 'riots' or 'violent troubles' that took place in Kinshasa and Kisangani in 1959. The riots were justified by arguing that they had been sparked by popular anger following the 'unfounded' decision of the colonial administration to prohibit a political meeting by the nationalist party ABAKO. According to Zairian textbooks, the riots, which were occasionally reported to have been accompanied by acts of arson and looting, had ended with a 'merciless' and 'brutal' repression and 'massacre' of 'nationalist' Zairians by the Belgians, the colonial authority, or the police.³⁰⁰ In the framework of the independence struggle, references were also made to Prime Minister Lumumba. In *Histoire du Zaïre 6ème*, Lumumba was portrayed as 'one of the great African nationalist leaders', as a 'great Zairian patriot', a 'martyr of colonisation', and a 'national

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 71-72.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 79.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 77.

²⁹⁹ The manuals also mentioned the circumstances of this rise of national emancipation, namely the Bandoeng Conference, the Manifest *Conscience Africaine*, the Universal Exposition of Brussels, and the Accra Conference.

³⁰⁰ *Education civique et politique* 3, 45; Longo, 262, 182.

independence hero'.³⁰¹ Overall, little attention was however paid to the circumstances of the murder, or 'disappearance', of this prominent political figure. According to *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, these were 'still not clarified'.³⁰² At most, Lumumba was said to have been imprisoned and 'massacred' (or 'executed') in Shaba/Katanga with his two associates Okito and M'Polo on January 1, 1961. In *Histoire du Zaïre 6ème*, an allusion to a possible colonial involvement in the Prime Minister's assassination seemed to be implicitly made by affirming that Lumumba had been perceived as an 'agitator' by the colonial authorities.³⁰³

On the other hand, while Zairian schoolbooks exalted the country's independence struggle, they at the same time tempered their celebratory tone by speaking in terms of a precipitation of events following timid and belated reforms. They pointed in particular to the unpreparedness of the national elites to rule over their country as it 'regained the freedom that had been lost since 1885'. As explained by Longo, 'the Belgian administration hardly worried about preparing the Congolese elites to take power in their hands'.³⁰⁴ In addition, the civics manual *Civisme 2* maintained that numerous political parties, '*mal dirigés*', had been created by certain incapable and power-thirsty Zairians, provoking the ushering in of a troubled post-independence period.³⁰⁵

A somewhat different image was sketched in the schoolbook of the 1960s *Regards sur l'histoire*. In its chapter on independent Congo, the textbook seemed to embrace a paternalistic and apologetic stance that was typical of the colonial discourse. In contrast to the more critical Zairian textbooks, the author of this earlier manual presented Belgium's belated political reforms in terms of 'prudence' in the interest of internal stability. In his words,

'Aware of the huge problems facing the establishment of a uniquely Congolese government, it [the colonial administration] did not want to rush things. It

³⁰¹ Kasongo P6, 81. See also Longo, 262.

³⁰² Longo, 192.

³⁰³ Kasongo P6, 81.

³⁰⁴ Longo, 181-183.

³⁰⁵ *Civisme 2*, 44. See also, *Education civique et politique*, 3, 50-53.

*carefully elaborated the project of establishing a democracy in the Congo that would decide for itself about its independence.*³⁰⁶

Additionally, much unlike Zairian textbooks, *Regards sur l'Histoire* addressed the topic of the 'great riots' of 1959 by focusing on the acts of violence, including destruction, arson and pillaging, which had been committed against the 'Whites' by thousands of dissatisfied young protesters. Conversely, the manual omitted any mention of the words 'martyrs' or 'massacres' that figured in later texts. While it overlooked the violent nature of the repression of the riots, the chapter emphasised the Belgian king's subsequent expression of concern and of a wish for a careful transition to independence that would guarantee peace and prosperity in the country. As the author recounted,

*'When calm is restored (emphasis added), King Baldwin declared on January 13, 1959, that he is firmly determined to lead the Congolese people to independence in prosperity and peace ... He would have wanted to do so without inconsiderate haste, but political parties rush and dash.'*³⁰⁷

In this sense, *Regards sur l'Histoire* seemed to attribute the blame for Congo's instability to the impatience of reckless politicians, whose stance clearly contrasted with the more responsibly cautious attitude of the Belgian king. A similar approach to the 'bloody troubles' of 1959, including the mention of the restoration of calm and of the King's speech, was found in the other textbook of the 1960s, namely Beel's *Histoire du Congo*. That being said, this manual also took some distance from the colonial discourse. It in fact reported Congolese feelings of impatience and resentments towards the predominance of foreign powers and interests, and towards the racist and humiliating practices of 'a certain category of Whites'.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ *Regards*, 120.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

³⁰⁸ Beel, 80-83.

4.3.2.2.4 The First Republic

Zairian textbooks presented an overwhelmingly negative assessment of the First Republic and of its ‘vicissitudes’.³⁰⁹ This period, typically depicted as a ‘difficult’ and ‘unfortunate’ start, was largely associated with a time of prevailing ‘anarchy, chaos, disorder, recklessness and incapacity’.³¹⁰ The emphasis was placed on a series of ‘grave problems’ that the Republic had experienced since the very immediate aftermath of independence.³¹¹ First of all, the manuals mentioned the outbreak of army mutinies. This was explained and justified by referring to the ‘very legitimate’ demands of africanisation of the army, which had been unmet by Belgian officers. According to Longo, the mutiny had been provoked by General Janssens and could have been avoided, had he not ‘incited’ the soldiers to rebel.³¹² The textbooks further cited the concomitant instances of anti-European reprisals which had resulted in the massive departure of Belgian cadres and in a consequent administrative vacuum that crippled the country. In this context, Zairian schoolbooks additionally denounced the unlawful nature of the military intervention by Belgium, which was ‘terrorising’ the Republic. Secondly, the textbooks highlighted a situation of political impasse and instability which was said to have derived from quarrels among selfish politicians moved by personal ambitions. According to the narrative propagated in schools, the new State, which had been ruled by a number of short-lived and largely inefficient governments, was faced with a loss of central authority, and with a prevailing condition of national disunity, tribalism, and balkanisation. This predicament manifested itself both in secessions of provinces ‘excited by their former colonizers’, and in rebellions, such as the Mulelist insurgency, conducted by ‘bloodthirsty’ ‘agitators’. As a result, a textbook reported, ‘thousands of victims – Zairian and foreigner – paid with their life their attachment to this piece of Zairian land’.³¹³ In addition to violence and instability, such problems as chronic corruption,

³⁰⁹ Kasongo P6, 86.

³¹⁰ *Education civique et politique* 3, 52, quoting Mobutu’s 1973 speech at the UN Assembly. Similarly, Longo presented the immediate aftermath of independence as being characterised by ‘a very agitated political life’. 187.

³¹¹ According to Kasongo P6, a misunderstanding of Lumumba’s nationalistic declaration at independence had ‘provoked’ a succession of ‘unfortunate events’. 75.

³¹² Longo, 187.

³¹³ Kasongo P6, 92-94. Longo referred to the rebellions in negative terms. He spoke of a rebellion ‘raging’ in the country and of its ‘alarming proportions’, with much of the country ‘afame’. 194.

economic crisis, and famine and epidemics were cited as ulterior factors that had further ravaged the country during the First Republic.³¹⁴

Overall, in their description of this period, Zairian textbooks were generally clear in apportioning blame for the country's troubles and fratricidal struggles. On the one hand, they pointed the finger at inexperienced, ill-prepared, irresponsible and power-thirsty politicians and their parties.³¹⁵ According to *Civisme 2*, '[m]is-directed, these political parties were real causes of divisions, troubles and misfortunes of all kinds which put the country to fire and the sword'.³¹⁶ On the other hand, they denounced interfering foreign actors coveting the country's rich natural resources. In the words of *Histoire du Zaïre 5ème*, '[t]his exceptional wealth of the subsoil arouses the envy of neighboring states and of certain industrial powers, causing very painful crises throughout the country's history'.³¹⁷

4.3.2.2.5 Mobutu's coup and the Second Republic

At the core of the textbooks' presentation of the Second Republic were a legitimisation and exaltation of Mobutu, the army and the MPR, and a tribute to their loyal service to the fatherland. The teachings that were conveyed through Zairian history and civics classes appear to have in so doing complemented and enriched the daily sessions of '*animation politique*', during which, under the leadership of teachers, pupils were required to memorise and perform political songs and slogans honouring the chief and the party.³¹⁸

To start with, in the analysed schoolbooks, Mobutu's military coup in 1965 appeared to be justified by situating it in a context of popular suffering and exasperation and of a widespread desire for a return to peace and order. *Histoire 6ème*, for instance, declared:

³¹⁴ *Education civique et politique 3*, 50; Kasongo P6, 86-91.

³¹⁵ As stated in *Histoire 6ème*, '[th]e lack of experience among the politicians of the First Republic led the country into chaos.' 145.

³¹⁶ *Civisme 2*, 44.

³¹⁷ Kasongo P5, 85.

³¹⁸ Young & Turner reported that, in 1973 and 1974, ca. 10 % of schooldays were cancelled to partake in party-related events. 219. See also, Schatzberg, 'Fidélité au Guide'; Y.D. Covington, *Embodied histories, danced religions, performed politics: Kongo cultural performance and the production of history and authority*. Doctoral thesis (University of Michigan 2008), 269.

*'Only one agency can restore order and peace: the army. On November 24, 1965, its Head, then Lieutenant-General, MOBUTU took power. The country breathes.'*³¹⁹

Similarly, in an attempt to justify Mobutu's coup, *Histoire. Classes Terminales* stated that,

*'the situation becoming extremely confused, General Mobutu decided to seize power on November 24, with the assistance of the army.'*³²⁰

The newly established regime was celebrated for having averted the looming prospect of renewed chaos and political struggle in a country that was 'on the brink' of total anarchy. Also, the regime was extolled for having broken with the troubled past by conducting a successful fight against all 'evils' tormenting the country. In the words of *Histoire du Zaïre 6ème*, '[u]pon the coming to power of General MOBUTU (1965) everything changes'.³²¹ Mobutu was thus portrayed as a saviour and a 'Guide' of Zaire and of Zairians – first in 1960 at the head of the *Collège des Commissaires Généraux*, and since 1965 at the head of the Second Republic. As declared by the textbooks, the new head of state had committed himself to 'save the country from this disaster', to 'raise the country from its ruins', and to 'restore order where chaos reigned'.³²²

In stark contrast to the politicians of the First Republic, Mobutu was depicted as a competent leader and as a patriot who, since the national liberation struggle, had been acting in the interest of the nation through 'a thousand sacrifices'.³²³ In an extensive chapter on the president's life, *Histoire du Zaïre 6ème*, in particular, included an evaluation question asking students to '[s]how that on account of his origins and the functions that he exercised before and after 1960, MOBUTU was very well-prepared to assume the presidency of the Republic of Zaire.'³²⁴ Not only Mobutu's background, but also his character and personality were described

³¹⁹ *Histoire 6ème*, 145.

³²⁰ Longo, 196.

³²¹ Kasongo P6, 123-124.

³²² *Civisme 2*, 58 ; and Kasongo P6, 96.

³²³ Kasongo P6, 101.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

at length to prove his legitimacy as the country's supreme leader. The analysed schoolbooks exalted the 'outstanding revolutionary spirit', the dedication, the 'courage and high determination', and the 'decisiveness, composure, [and] intelligence' of this 'great statesman' and 'great militant of Zaire'.³²⁵ Highlighting the exceptionality and irreplaceability of President Mobutu, *Histoire du Zaïre 6ème* rhetorically asked,

*'In whom would Zairians find the force, the consciousness, [and] the wisdom that characterise a head of state if not in its Head, President MOBUTU'.*³²⁶

Adding to this image of legitimacy, textbooks also underscored Mobutu's overwhelming popular support,³²⁷ as well as his great esteem at the international level.³²⁸

With regard to the marking features of Mobutu's Second Republic, Zairian manuals, besides outlining the key dates and ideological pillars of the new regime, emphasised and praised its numerous merits and achievements.³²⁹ Abundant references were made to its 'energetic', 'intelligent' and 'spectacular' measures, and to its 'great' and 'gigantic' realisations.

The first of the achievements of the Second Republic consisted in the 'pacification' of the country. Head of the 'valiant' National Army, Mobutu, described as an 'apostle of peace' and a 'peacemaker', was said to have embarked on a 'peace crusade' and on a 'merciless' and victorious fight against 'evil forces' which were responsible for the various secessions and rebellions that had ravaged Zaire.³³⁰ Besides restoring order and peace in his country, Mobutu was further commended for supporting liberation and peace efforts elsewhere in Africa, as

³²⁵ *Civisme 2*, 56-57, 61; Kasongo P6, 103.

³²⁶ Kasongo P6, 99.

³²⁷ According to Kasongo P6, Mobutu was chosen 'by an overwhelming majority'. 101.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

³²⁹ The titles of the paragraphs that were dedicated to Mobutu's Second Republic in Kasongo P6 are illustrative of the celebrated image of Mobutu. These included: 'When order seems to be restored' (83), 'Restoring peace' (103), 'Bringing order, reunifying the country' (107), 'Economic independence (109), 'The politics of prestige' (112), 'Re-establish the dignity of the country' (115), 'Some highlights (*grands moments*) of the 2nd Republic' (117), 'Some key ideas of the new regime' (121), and 'Towards the conquest and maintenance of political and economic independence' (123).

³³⁰ Kasongo P6, 103-106.

well as for having established excellent regional and international relations in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity.

A second achievement was the restoration of the country's national unity and central authority which had been lost after five years of division, tribalism, and anarchy. It is in this context that textbooks seemed to legitimise the creation of a single party, as well as of a single trade union and a single university. The foundation of the party-state was presented as uniting all Zairian citizens and as putting an end to a counter-productive 'time of politicking'.³³¹ In *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, Mobutu's monopolisation of power was justified with the president's alleged willingness to avoid disunity and internal conflict. The author stated that,

*'he [Mobutu] banned political party activity, source of dissent within the young nation (...) To react against the political and administrative anarchy, General Mobutu increasingly strengthened his authority. As from March 22 [1966], he exercised legislative power (through ordinance laws) and the functions of Prime Minister. This system has the advantage of avoiding the danger of a conflict between the Head of State and his Prime Minister as it happened in 1960 between Kasa-vubu and Lumumba, and in 1965 between Kasa-vubu and Tshombe.'*³³²

Depicted as 'a man who loved freedom and justice',³³³ Mobutu was furthermore said to have worked hard to achieve Zaire's liberation from all forms of colonialist and neo-colonialist servitude, including 'under-development, alienation and degradation'.³³⁴ With a particular focus on its fight to end a longstanding condition of economic dependence benefiting foreign actors, the regime was extolled for its efforts at africanising the country's cadres, at suppressing foreign monopolies through the nationalisation of enterprises and the reclaiming of national rights on its soil and sub-soil, and at creating and strengthening the

³³¹ Ibid., 109. According to Longo, the party had become the 'only source of power and legitimacy in Zaire. The MPR oriented and ordered. The State becomes an instrument for the achievement of its objectives'.

³³² Longo, 196.

³³³ Referring to a group of officers headed by Colonel Mobutu, Kasongo P6 stated that, '[s]ome, having at their head a man who loved freedom and justice, temporarily restored order where chaos previously reigned'. Kasongo P6, 83. The College des Commissaires Generaux headed by Mobutu was presented as having managed to temporarily restore order and to have ended the secessions, 'thanks to the perseverance and the courage of the ANC, support by the UN'. 90.

³³⁴ *Civisme* 2, 61.

national industry and currency.³³⁵ According to *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, in a ‘spirit of economic independence’,

*‘[t]he Congo experienced a real economic boom with the advent of President Mobutu in 1965. As soon as [he came to] power, the President of the Republic decided to rehabilitate the Congolese power, to industrialize the Congo’.*³³⁶

As part of his fight for justice, Mobutu was reported to have also committed himself to the promotion of human rights, including women emancipation,³³⁷ and the expansion of social services such as healthcare and education.

Another important accomplishment of the Second Republic that was cited in the textbooks was a reaffirmation of the country’s national dignity and international prestige. This national revalorisation was reportedly achieved through a series of development and modernisation measures that had allowed Zaire to take a great leap forward, as well as through diplomatic efforts. Underscoring the great changes that had been introduced by Mobutu, *Histoire du Zaïre 6ème* declared that,

*‘Yesterday Congolese, we were the laughingstock of Africa and of the world. Today that we have erased our mistakes thanks to the dynamism of our leader MOBUTU SESE SEKO, we present ourselves with pride as Zairians.’*³³⁸

Similarly, in its conclusion on the Second Republic, *Histoire 6ème* stated that,

*‘The pace with which our country is transforming is very fast. Look around you all the changes that make Zaire a powerful and prosperous State. We are now a United Nation, conscious of its greatness. We exceed our old divisions and we look to a brighter future.’*³³⁹

As for the various instances of opposition to Mobutu’s rule which emerged during the Second Republic, Zairian textbooks tended to largely omit them from their overly positive narrative of this period. Only few exceptions were found in this respect. The tale outlined in *Histoire. Classes Terminales* is a case in point. Its

³³⁵ Kasongo P6, 112-113.

³³⁶ Longo, 206.

³³⁷ Ibid., 199.

³³⁸ Kasongo P6, 115.

³³⁹ *Histoire 6ème*, 146.

analysis revealed, first of all, that, insofar as references to such occurrences were made, they were placed in a context in which the Mobutu era was unambiguously celebrated. This particular contextualisation seemed to therefore implicitly point to the illegitimacy of voices critical of the regime. The textbook's description of the Second Republic was in fact characterised by the association of each year of Mobutu's presidency with an expression, rather positive and legitimizing, that summarised the regime's political, administrative, economic and socio-cultural reforms and realisations – none of which was even slightly criticised by the textbook author. The manual referred respectively to the year of the 'resurrection' (1965), 'conception' (1966), 'restructuration' (1967), 'sports rehabilitation' (1968), 'work' (1969), 'democracy' (1970), 'change of the country's name' (1971), 'authenticity' (1972), 'Zairianisation' (1973), 'constitutional revolution' (1974), 'radicalisation' (1975), 'retrocession' (1976), 'special development effort' (1977), 'rehabilitation' (1978), 'stabilisation' (1979), 'economic take-off' (1980), 'the social' (1981), 'the great political year' (1982), 'the year of the rigorous management' (1983), and 'the international year of the woman' (1984), and 'of the youth' (1985). Secondly, within an overall positive narrative which failed to situate the events in a context of legitimate grievances, instances of opposition to Mobutu's rule were reported in ways that seemed to justify and condone their violent repression by the regime. In *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, the response of the State and of the army was portrayed as having been energetic and triumphant against dangerous and violent forces that threatened to destabilise the country. The author mentioned in particular:

- i) the hanging of political personalities following the 'discovery' of a "complot de la Pentecôte", which was aimed at overthrowing the government;³⁴⁰
- ii) 'violent troubles' and the 'insurrection' of former Katangan gendarmes, which was energetically suppressed by the army;
- iii) the execution of the rebel Mulele, 'sentenced to death as a war criminal';

³⁴⁰ Longo, 199.

- iv) the 1969 student demonstrations, which degenerated into ‘fights’, leading to the arrest of protestors, who, however, were all ‘pardoned’ by Mobutu;³⁴¹
- v) the wars of Shaba by ‘gangs of mercenaries’ and ‘aggressors’ from Angola, as well as attacks in Moba by ‘gangs’ from Tanzania, who were eventually defeated; and,
- vi) the arrest of politicians, such as Tshisekedi, due to their participation in the “*conspiration de la Saint-Sylvestre*”.³⁴²

4.3.2.2.3 Power: Shaping local attitudes towards power and authority: loyalty, obedience and respect towards the sacred authorities

The contents of school teachings propagated during Mobutu’s Second Republic pointed to their clear role in shaping local attitudes towards power and authority. In a context in which opposition to the regime was discouraged and condemned, the education system, recognised as a potential ‘hotbed of contestation or questioning’,³⁴³ appeared to be largely geared towards moulding citizens who were complacent, obedient, respectful and uncritical towards the authorities and the institutions of power. The school teachings illustrated above were found to be in accordance with the official line as presented in various state documents and speeches. Here, the State required schooling to nurture feelings of love, admiration, respect, indulgence, obedience, loyalty, obligation and gratitude towards President Mobutu in particular.³⁴⁴ This objective was made especially clear in the 1976 *Student Guide* of the *Institut Makanda Kabobi* (IMK), the party’s ideological training centre. Run by the unit *Mobilisation, Propaganda et Animation Politique* of the *Bureau Politique*, this institute represented an

³⁴¹ Ibid., 200.

³⁴² Ibid., 194-205.

³⁴³ IMK, *Guide de l’étudiant* (Okapi: Kinshasa 1976), 12.

³⁴⁴ According to the guide, ‘[s]chool history thus will instill a spirit or reflex of obedience ... It will seek to unite the spirits by attaching them not to one party but to the whole, to the State ... the teaching of history thus will prepare the child to accept the dominant power and its various representatives.’ Ibid., 17.

important instrument for the propagation of the teachings of the ‘Founder-President’ and ‘Father of the Nation’.³⁴⁵ In the words of the Guide,

‘School history will laud the Head of State. He is paternal, protective, peacemaking, charitable ... School history will worship the Head of State and the country’s political regime. The teaching of history will attach children to the President of the Republic. It will venerate the person, the function, the line, the entourage and the works of the Head of State. It will show the positive side. It will make love the hero and saviour of Zaire. The Head of State represents essentially the will of the people or the will of God. He is thus sacred.’³⁴⁶

The citation above, as well as the analysis of history and civics textbooks proposed in the previous paragraphs, revealed a large degree of continuity between the colonial and the post-colonial discourse in their approach to history and power. While roles of heroes and villains were inverted, the new regime’s absolutist, hagiographical and apologetic approach to history as well as its autocratic understanding of authority and power much resembled colonial practices. The image of Mobutu that was propagated during his rule was in many ways reminiscent of the colonial depiction of King Leopold II: whereas his faults and failures were disregarded, he was exalted as a hero, a saviour, as well as a father, who was protective and benevolent towards his children, and whose authority was sacred and divine.

Despite the vigorous efforts made by the regime to indoctrinate and to silence its subjects, in 1997, opposition forces prevailed, leading to the demise of Mobutu. As Mobutu’s era came to an end, so did the ideology and the official discourse of those who had been defeated.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 3. See also, F. De Boeck, ‘Postcolonialism, power and identity: local and global perspectives from Zaire,’ R. Werbner & T. Ranger (eds.), *Postcolonial identities in Africa* (London/New Jersey 1996), 81.

³⁴⁶ IMK, 19.

4.4 Ideology, historiography and formal education in war-torn and post-war Congo (1997-today)

4.4.1 Ideology and historiography in war-torn and post-war Congo

In 1997, Mobutu was ousted by the Lumumbist rebel L.D. Kabila and his Public Salvation Government. This latest instance of political change was again accompanied by a rejection of the previous ‘regime of truth’ and by the propagation of an ideological and historical discourse that legitimised the incumbent power-holders and their policies vis-à-vis both the overthrown order and any potential opposition to the new status quo.

While the new official discourse took distance from the past, it also showed a degree of continuity with the preceding era.³⁴⁷ Like Mobutu, Kabila largely recovered Lumumba’s socialist and nationalist rhetoric. He, too, traced the origins of Congo’s recent troubled history to an imperialist wish to hinder the country’s development by imposing a condition of economic dependence and mental alienation. Influenced by the Marxist-Leninist ideology, Kabila’s government portrayed the national history between 1885 and 1997 as a time that had been dominated by an anti-popular, oppressive, sanguinary and exploitative colonial and neo-colonial State which had served foreign interests at the expense of ‘our populations’, ‘long betrayed and forced to dispossession and deprivation’.³⁴⁸ Against the backdrop of state oppression and exploitation, the post-colonial period

³⁴⁷ See, L.D. Kabila, *De l’édification du pouvoir populaire en République Démocratique du Congo* (Kinshasa: Secrétariat des CPP 2000). Quotes from L.D. Kabila’s speeches that were reproduced in newspapers such as *Le phare* and *Le palmarès* have been drawn and translated from A. Musuasua Mususua, *Le vocabulaire politique des leaders nationalistes congolais: De P.E. Lumumba à L.D. Kabila*. Ph.D. Diss. University of Metz, 2005-2006.

³⁴⁸ Speech of 30/06/1997, reproduced in *Le phare* 667 (01/07/1997) 7; and of 17/05/1999, *Le palmarès* 1535 (17/05/1999), 5.

was associated with ‘a long and painful struggle for true national liberation’. Its first champions were Simon Kimbangu and ‘the great and unforgettable figure of our national hero, Patrice Emery Lumumba and his companions’.³⁴⁹ In a bid to legitimize his own leadership, Kabila positioned himself historically as the heir of the struggle against imperialist powers and their neo-colonial agents. The latter were deemed to have headed the country’s various governments, from J. Bomboko to Mobutu. Rather than a time of peace and prosperity, the presidency of Mobutu in particular, Kabila’s long-time enemy, was depicted by the new ruler as a ‘painful’ period of dictatorship,³⁵⁰ misery, and infrastructural and economic devastation.³⁵¹ As this era was condemned as a time of decadence, its coming to an end was acclaimed as the achievement of a much-aspired ‘liberation’ and as the ‘victory of the popular democratic revolution’. In Kabila’s words, ‘[t]he political liquidation of the Mobutist neocolonialism was an obligatory step’ to ensure the establishment of ‘people’s power’.³⁵² While claiming a commitment to democracy, the new regime seemed however to perpetuate Mobutist practices. Much like its predecessor, the incumbent leadership eschewed political liberalisation based on the argument that this would be a recipe for chaos in a context that was dominated by neocolonialist parties which had long divided the people.³⁵³ With a wish to seek legitimisation for their absolute power, the new rulers, as reported by De Villers, presented themselves as the country’s ‘liberators’, as opposed to all other local actors, who had instead followed and supported the dictator. In 1997, Kabila declared, ‘[o]nly we have resisted against this evil. The three quarters of the country went along with it. We saw you dancing to the glory of the monster.’³⁵⁴

³⁴⁹ Kabila, speech of 30/06/1997, *Le phare* 667, 2. See also, L.D. Kabila, ‘Hommage à Patrice Emery Lumumba,’ speech of the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo reproduced in *Agence congolaise de presse* (19/01/1998) [web.archive.org/web/19980509054129/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/archives/Official4.html] (last accessed on 03/03/2011).

³⁵⁰ Kabila, speech of 30/06/1997, *Le phare* 667, 7.

³⁵¹ Kabila, speech of 29/05/1997.

³⁵² Kabila, speech of 21/04/1999, Kabila, *De l’édification*, 115-116; and L.D. Kabila, ‘Démocratiser la société congolaise à partir de la base Discours du Président Kabila au Congrès des Comités du Pouvoir Populaire, le 21 avril 1999’ [www.deboutcongolais.info/discours2-CPP.htm] (last accessed on 04/03/2011).

³⁵³ In the framework of his ‘democratic revolution’, Kabila established a multitude of Committees of Popular Power (CPP), Described as ‘governments of the street,’ the CPPs were, among other things, tasked with monitoring the society, including schools.

³⁵⁴ Qtd. in De Villers, 91.

Like Mobutu before him, the new president envisioned and promoted a radical break with the past which went beyond efforts at re-writing the national history. Such efforts were once again accompanied by a symbolic and cultural war, this time against the Mobutist heritage. In the framework of a social project aimed at re-defining the nation in opposition to the old regime, Kabila quickly moved to re-establish the name 'Congo' as well as the national anthem and flag of the First Republic. While Mobutu had inaugurated the 'Zairian' identity as a symbol of the re-appropriation of a long-lost national dignity and pride, Kabila, 'Builder and Father of the Nation', showed his intention to make a clean sweep of the recent history and to truly restore the 'Congolese' dignity. The re-instatement of the 'Congolese' identity was based on the argument that, '[o]ur human dignity of citizens was fictitious as the word "Zairian" represented the opprobrium, the beggary and the shame of the African'.³⁵⁵ As part of its social project to forge a new national identity, Kabila's regime, like its predecessor, also launched a widespread campaign of indoctrination with the aim of imbuing the population with socialist and nationalist values and ideals that underpinned the official ideology. This objective was pursued in particular through the so-called 'National Service', described by Reyntjens as a 'paramilitary organ of education, management and mobilisation of civic and patriotic actions'.³⁵⁶ Its primary target were the youth, a group considered to be 'more dynamic, stronger, more resistant and also more malleable, prompt to change, and therefore more educable'.³⁵⁷ Thousands of jobless secondary school and university graduates were enlisted and mobilised through this political, military, and economic education programme with the purpose of developing 'the spirit of the patriot, nationalist [citizen], resolutely decided to engage in and gain the battle of development'.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Reyntjens, 157. See also, Derome Marie, 'Kabila veut mettre la jeunesse désœuvrée au vert. 100000 jeunes recevront une formation militaire et d'autodéfense d'un an dans des centres à la campagne' (23/10/1997) [www.liberation.fr/monde/0101225980-kabila-veut-mettre-la-jeunesse-desoeuvree-au-vert-100000-jeunes-recevront-une-formation-militaire-et-d-autodefense-d-un-an-dans-des-centres-a-la-campagne] (last accessed on 20/03/2011). Reyntjens added that, '[t]he new authorities proposed only three alternatives to the students of the university and other institutions of higher education in Bukavu: enrolment in the municipal police, in the AFDL army or in the intelligence services.' 154-155, citing Willame, 'Laurent-Desire Kabila: les origines d'une anabase', *Politique africaine* 72 (1998) 77.

³⁵⁷ Kabila, cited in 'Le Service National et la bataille du développement,' *Monthly magazine of connection and information of the National Service* 1(2) (1998) 18 [web.archive.org/web/19980509050213/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02_18.html] (last accessed on 19/03/2011).

As the Second Congo War broke out in 1998, Kabila succeeded in reinvigorating his wavering popularity by presenting himself once again as the leader of an ongoing national ‘liberation’ and ‘resistance’ struggle against foreign occupation and domination. This time, the enemies were regional powers, namely ‘the Rwandan-Ugandan-Burundian coalition’. They were accused of wanting to re-colonise the Congo, with the support of power-thirsty and unpatriotic Congolese collaborators.³⁵⁹ In his last speech before being murdered in 2001, Kabila praised the nation for its ‘immense sacrifices’ and its ‘glorious and relentless’ resistance against occupation and ‘humiliation, subjugation and exploitation’. In unequivocal terms, the neighbouring countries were depicted as ‘aggressors’, ‘invaders’, ‘raptors’, ‘*esclavagistes*’, and ‘gravediggers of our country’. They were deemed responsible for having murdered more than two million Congolese and of having extensively exploited the country’s natural resources. The President concluded his speech by calling on the ‘daughters and sons of the great democratic Congo’ to unite and wage a ‘merciless struggle, against our enemies’ in order to achieve the country’s ‘total liberation’ and to restore its territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty.³⁶⁰

During the war, the regime’s nationalist, and especially anti-Rwandan, discourse was accompanied by a growing anti-Tutsi and anti-Hamitic rhetoric which demonised what was portrayed as an alien, threatening and domineering ‘race’.³⁶¹ De Villers argued that, being perceived as a foreign Tutsi aggression, the 1998 rebellion that sparked the war had led to ‘the exacerbation of a nationalism

³⁵⁸ D. Kalume Numbi, ‘In extenso, le discours du commandant SN, le rapport synthèse et le discours du chef de l’état,’ *Monthly magazine of connection and information of the National Service* 1(2) (1998) [web.archive.org/web/19980509045845/rdcongo.org/frames/acp/sn02_05.html] (last accessed on 20/03/2011).

³⁵⁹ Kabila, speech of 17/05/1999, *Le palmarès* 1535, 4. According to Turner, Rwandans were nicknamed ‘*néo-belges*’ in the Kivu. 22.

³⁶⁰ Kabila, speech of 01/01/2001, ‘Dernier discours du Feu Mzee Laurent Désiré Kabila, Président de la RD, héros national’ [www.congoforum.be/fr/congoforumdetail.asp?subitem=21&id=154075&Congofiche=selected] (last accessed on 03/03/2011).

³⁶¹ De Villers, 89. De Villers further reported that Mobutu’s spokesperson and academic K.-L. Sando explained the 1996 AFDL war, which he labelled ‘*guerre des Tutsi*’, as deriving from ‘the difficult co-existence between two races’ (Hutu and Tutsi), who had interiorised a Bantu-Hamitic distinction based on the idea predating colonisation according to which the Tutsi ‘is born to dominate the Hutu’. K.-L. Sando, *Conflits de l’Est du Zaïre. Repères et enjeux* (Kinshasa: Ministère de l’Information et de la Presse 1997), 17, qtd. in De Villers, 90.

crystallised on the anti-Tutsi sentiment' among the 'indigenous' majority.³⁶² Fears of a prospect of Rwandan colonisation and Hamitic domination were fuelled by local actors inciting xenophobic feelings among the 'rightful' owners of Congolese land. As reported by several observers, Rwandan officials themselves had also at times given reason to believe in such allegations by raising the idea of a pre-colonial 'Greater Rwanda' encompassing Congolese territory.³⁶³ If anti-Tutsi sentiments in Congo had intensified since 1998, they had built on a longstanding history of ethnic conflict and antagonism. In 1963, for instance, prior to the outbreak of the Kanyarwanda war, a special commission that was created in North Kivu with the aim of studying the 'Rwandan problem' collectively accused the Rwandophones, and especially the Tutsi, of a long list of wrongdoings. These included:

*'having revolted against the established authorities; of wishing to exterminate them; of having taken control of power and of all key positions since June 1960...whereas they were foreigners; of having expropriated the autochthones' lands without any compensation...; of supplying themselves with heavy and improved weapons of unknown provenance; of establishing shooting grounds on all strategic places of Northern Kivu; of behaving as conquerors; of provoking food shortage and rising prices in the province through their numbers; and of taking over all places in schools after a massive evacuation of the Congolese children.'*³⁶⁴

Three decades later, prior to the outbreak of anti-Banyarwanda violence in 1993 and of the subsequent war in North Kivu, a deputy governor pronounced a similar inflammatory speech. As he declared,

'History has shown that the Tutsi, ever-eager for power, have long been destabilisers. By all possible means they try to subvert established authority...The

³⁶² Similarly, Reyntjens argued that, during the 1998 war, 'anti-Tutsism' became 'a strong rallying factor among Congolese whose national(ist) feelings were hurt by Rwandan aggression and domination.' 244. See also, Nzongola-Ntalaja, 'The politics of citizenship in the DRC', 7.

³⁶³ Most notably, in a press conference that was held in the midst of the 1996 war, former Rwandan President Bizimungu, 'attempted to show, with the help of maps, that the region inhabited by the Banyamulenge historically belonged to Rwanda'. Reyntjens, 53. According to Ndaywel, this represented a case of historical revisionism by a power 'determined to conquer part of Congolese territory'. 353. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the nature and extent of Rwanda's pre-colonial dominance and occupation in this region have been disputed. Some authors have argued the complete annexation of parts of the Kivu by the Rwandan Kingdom in the pre-colonial time, arguing the existence of a 'precolonial mega-Rwanda'. Conversely, others have highlighted Rwanda's limited authority in the region, rejecting the argument that large parts of today's Kivu belonged to ancient Rwanda.

³⁶⁴ Bucyalimwe Mararo, 'Land, power,' 523, quoting the Assemblée Provinciale du Nord-Kivu, *Compte-rendu de la session du 15 octobre 1963* (Goma, 15 October 1963), 6.

*population of the zone of Walikale has elected me to prevent that the zone be invaded by Tutsi.*³⁶⁵

Today, as Lemarchand pointed out in 2009, little seems to have changed. This group, whose identity and allegiance have long been contested, continues to be considered collectively responsible for much of the trouble that has plagued this region on account of its alleged association to Rwanda's invasion and imperialism.³⁶⁶ This perception is confirmed in statements presented in the *Monographie de la Province du Sud-Kivu* produced by the Ministry of Planning in 2005. According to this official document, 'the use of the Banyamulenge by the enemies of peace' had been one of the problems affecting the province. The authors explained that,

*'This ethnic group of Rwandan origin has always been at the root of the political instability in our province, and even in the whole country. This ethnic group has always served as a pretext to explain the intervention of the army of Rwanda, Burundi and even Uganda.'*³⁶⁷

If the war against foreign domination had galvanised widespread support around Kabila's new 'liberation' struggle, the assassination of the president in the midst of the armed conflict resulted in his official enshrinement as a national hero and as a symbol of Congo's nationalist resistance.³⁶⁸ In the wake of the murder, the new head of state, Joseph Kabila, presented himself as continuing his father's legacy. Echoing the rhetoric of the late president, J. Kabila's discourse showed reverence

³⁶⁵ Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 28, citing K. Vlassenroot, "'Des serpents déloyaux". De positie van de Banyarwanda in Oost-Zaire/DRC,' *Noord-Zuid cahier* 22(4) (1997) 53.

³⁶⁶ Lemarchand, *The dynamics*.

³⁶⁷ Ministry of Planning, *Monographie de la Province du Sud-Kivu*, 21-23. According to the *Monographie du Nord-Kivu*, the role of neighbouring countries, spearheaded by Rwanda and Uganda, has consisted in 'exploiting the Congolese politicians, pitting them against each other while they take the opportunity to exploit and enjoy the resources of the country, of the Province such as mineral materials, wood, ...' 25-26.

³⁶⁸ Today, the memory of L.D. Kabila is preserved through a yearly commemoration day and memorial sites, including a mausoleum and the *memorial du Palais de marbre* at Mont Ngaliema in Kinshasa. Heroes' Day (16 and 17/01), commemorating the assassination of L.D. Kabila and Lumumba, as well as Liberation Day/AFDL anniversary (17/05) are among the current public holidays, together with the Day of the Martyrs (04/01) and Independence Day (30/06). It is relevant to note that, at every transition, changes were introduced in the list of public holidays. During the First Republic (1960-1965), Belgium's National Day (21/07) was eliminated as a public holiday, and replaced by the Day of the Martyrs and Independence Day. During Mobutu's Second Republic, among the new national holidays added by the regime were the Army Day (17/11), the inauguration of the Second Republic (24/11), the MPR's foundation (20/05) and Mobutu's birthday. In the context of a war against the Church, Mobutu had further eliminated all religious holidays, including Christmas. In the wake of the Second Republic, the MPR-related holidays were dropped from the list. 'Congo (DRC) 2012 public holidays' [www.qppstudio.net/publicolidays2012/congo__dem__rep__zaire_.htm] (last accessed on 03/04/2012).

for the ‘long struggle’ for independence and ‘liberation’ that had been fought by the country’s ‘combatants’, ‘martyrs’ and ‘heroes’.³⁶⁹ These patriots, spearheaded by Kimbangu, Lumumba, Mulele and Mzee Kabila, were depicted as ‘role models’ for the Congolese youth. In 2007, on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of his father’s murder, the new president declared, ‘[t]oday, we all carry the legacy of our national heroes who understood that the unity of the nation and the happiness of the people were ideals worthy of supreme sacrifice’.³⁷⁰ In Kabila’s speech, his father, especially, was portrayed as a great man, who had dedicated and sacrificed his life to a relentless struggle for freedom, justice, democracy and dignity, and for national reconstruction and consolidation.³⁷¹ This struggle was situated in a context in which, as Kabila sombrely declared on June 30, 2005, the ‘glorious’, ‘sacred’ and ‘memorable’ independence day had been followed by a long sequence of regrettable events. These included: mutinies, secessions, and general disorder; the revocation of the legitimate government and political assassinations; a military coup, and subsequent mismanagement, nepotism, and economic devastation; a prolonged transition to democracy; as well as protracted war and systematic pillage.³⁷² Kabila’s view of the recent war, in particular, is revealed in a speech he held soon after being appointed president in 2001. According to the new head of state, the country was at that time experiencing ‘one of the most painful crises of its history’. In his words, the nation, ‘this great Congo that Lumumba led to independence and for which the President of the Republic, M’zee Laurent-Désiré Kabila, fought until his tragic death’, was ‘in peril’, ‘torn and bruised’, and victim of an ‘unacceptable war of aggression’. Like

³⁶⁹ J. Kabila, speech of 30/06/2005, ‘Discours du Président Joseph Kabila à l’occasion du 45^e anniversaire de l’indépendance’ [www.deboutcongolais.info/actualite5/art_293.html] (last accessed on 05/03/2011). Five years later (30/06/2010), Kabila reiterated that, ‘For generations, our people has fought to maintain the country’s unity and integrity, triumphing over centrifugal forces and thwarting all covetousnesses.’ ‘Message du Chef de l’Etat à la Nation à l’occasion du Cinquantenaire de l’indépendance’ [www.digitalcongo.net/article/68146] (last accessed on 05/03/2011).

³⁷⁰ J. Kabila, speech of 17/05/2007, ‘Discours du 17 mai 2007 par le Président Joseph Kabila’ [www.deboutcongolais.info/actualite5/art_352.html] (last accessed on 05/03/2011). During the 2012 commemoration of Mzee Kabila’s assassination, various high state officials reiterated this view. They referred to the late president as a role-model, a great patriotic man who symbolizes a national struggle and the sense of patriotic sacrifice. ‘Onze ans après sa mort tragique: Laurent-Désiré Kabila dans la mémoire des Congolais,’ *L’avenir quotidien* (19/01/2012) [www.africainet.com/rdc/nouvelle.asp?no_nouvelle=647095&no_categorie=] (last accessed on 20/01/2012).

³⁷¹ Echoing the words of his predecessor, J. Kabila maintained that, ‘[t]he *raison d’être* of the liberation of May 17, 1997, was to relinquish power to the people...the liberation has made democracy possible.’ ‘Discours du 17 mai’.

³⁷² J. Kabila, speech of 30/06/2005, ‘Discours du Président’.

his father before him, Kabila affirmed his commitment to achieve a ‘total liberation from the occupation by the forces of aggression’.³⁷³

More recently, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of independence in 2010, Kabila’s tone appeared to be rather positive and conciliatory in comparison with five years earlier. This time, the country’s deplorable historical events were largely omitted from the president’s speech. Instead, his words were greatly marked by a tribute to the nationalism of historical figures who had contributed to the attainment of independence and to the subsequent preservation of the sovereignty and unity of the country, which had been founded ‘on the ashes of several decades of colonisation’. Amongst the personalities honoured by the president were Kimbangu, the authors of the 1956 Manifesto (Malula, Ngalula and Iléo), the Independence Fathers and first leaders (Lumumba, Kasa-Vubu, Kalonji, Bolikango, Kamitatu, Bolia), and Mzee Kabila. The president did not forget Mobutu. He was described as a ‘passionate militant of our authenticity and of our unity’.³⁷⁴

Against the backdrop of ‘remarkable victories’ as well as of ‘regrettable failures’ (notably in the economic and social domains), the jubilee was depicted by Kabila as a ‘particular moment of evaluation, with a view to a new beginning’.³⁷⁵ It is this context that, as the country prepared to enter a new historical phase, voices have been increasingly raised in favour of a ‘duty to remember’ and historical reconstruction.

4.4.1.1 ‘Devoir de memoire, devoir d’histoire’: historical reconstruction in the wake of colonisation, dictatorship and war

In the DRC, the fiftieth anniversary of independence has been seen as an important *rendez-vous avec l’histoire*. In particular, this event has been viewed as offering an opportunity to respond to a continuing need to re-appropriate and

³⁷³ J. Kabila, speech 26/01/2001, ‘Discours programme du Président Joseph KABILA’ [www.deboutcongolais.info/discours-joseph-kabila/1_programme.html] (last accessed on 05/03/2011).

³⁷⁴ J. Kabila, speech of 30/06/2010, ‘Message’.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

demystify the national history, as well as to construct a stronger historical and national consciousness among the new generation. In 2009, an article that was published on the official website of the President referred to this upcoming historical juncture as a chance to ‘re-write’ a history that had long been falsified, with an eye to reconstituting the collective memory of the nation. This historic moment was presented as offering an opportunity to proceed to a critical review and assessment of the past, based on which the foundations for the country’s future development were to be laid. In the article, historians, and intellectuals more in general, some of whom were said to have supported the falsification and politicisation of history during the ‘dictatorship’, were urged to comply with their duty to set the record straight and to teach ‘our children the true history of our country.’³⁷⁶ This official message echoed the numerous calls that have been made in recent years by both political and civilian actors to re-write and teach a ‘new’, ‘total’, and ‘more truthful’ account of the past in the framework of a process of nation-building and reconciliation.³⁷⁷ The challenges in this respect have not been underestimated.

On the eve of the anniversary, the need to re-examine the country’s past in order to unveil and debunk historical lies and distortions was expressed with a sense of urgency, among others, by the prominent Congolese History Professor Elikia M’bokolo. In his Preface of Ndaywel’s 2009 publication *Nouvelle Histoire du Congo*, which set the tone for the jubilee,³⁷⁸ M’bokolo underscored the country’s

³⁷⁶ Nzazi Mabidi (Bureau du Porte-parole du Chef de l’Etat), ‘EDITORIAL, Cinquantenaire de l’indépendance de la Rdc. Joseph Kabila ne perd pas de temps’ (Kinshasa 28/07/2009) [www.presidentrdc.cd/edito_50naire.html] (last accessed on 28/04/2011). This article was published on the occasion of J. Kabila’s creation of a *Commissariat Général du Cinquantenaire* (CGC), which was tasked with organising the jubilee.

³⁷⁷ See for instance, Reverend A. Mavinga Tsafunenga, ‘Bâtir une nouvelle et vraie République Démocratique du Congo. Enjeux de l’approche culturelle du développement, eu égard aux cinq chantiers définis par le Président de la République Démocratique du Congo’ (20/08/2007), 26-27 [www.f-ce.com/cgi-bin/news/pg-newspro.cgi?id_news=8341] (last accessed on 22/03/2011). In referring to the urgency of writing a new ‘total’ history of the DRC, Ndaywel underscored the need to complement the typically dominant study of the history ‘from above’ (of great leaders), with the largely neglected history ‘from below’ (of ordinary people), of the periphery, and of the pre-colonial time. Ndaywel, ‘L’historiographie’.

³⁷⁸ Ndaywel was also the coordinator of the CGC scientific committee, and President of the *Société des Historiens Congolais*. For a critique of Ndaywel’s earlier work (published in 1996 and 1997), see J.-L. Vellut, ‘Prestige et pauvreté de l’histoire nationale. A propos d’une histoire nationale du Congo,’ *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 77(2) (1999) 480-517. In the view of Prof. Kambayi Bwatshia, the seminal work of Ndaywel, while marking an important milestone in Congolese historiography, also very much resembled the work by the former administrator of French overseas territories, R. Cornevin, *Histoire du Zaïre, des origines*

contemporary challenge of having to deal with the legacy of ‘two terrible brainwashings’. On the one hand, the scholar referred to the need for a ‘decolonisation of history’. This consisted in addressing the legacy of vicious colonial practices of cultural ‘devalorisation and destruction’, which had led to the uprooting and alienation of Congolese society. On the other hand, he mentioned the need to rectify a history that had been manipulated during the Second Republic, and which had imposed a mere caricature of the country’s ancient traditions under the banner of ‘authenticity’.³⁷⁹

Highlighting the challenges posed by the legacy of a longstanding politicisation of history-writing in Congo, M’bokolo’s colleague Ndaywel underscored how, following the example of the former colonial masters, each regime had attempted to discredit and to erase the memory of its precursor. As a result, according to the academic, the lesson learned from the country’s history appeared to be that, ‘in fifty years of evolution, nothing had been produced that is edifying and worthy of being celebrated together’.³⁸⁰ This view was expressed, for instance, by Dominic Johnson. He described the Congolese national identity as being largely founded on a collective traumatic memory. In his words,

*‘The common experience of the Congolese, who have suffered a particularly aggressive form of colonisation, of decolonisation and of Mobutist dictatorship, has forged some sort of common national identity that mainly contains experiences of shared suffering and that has not yet been filled with positive realisations’.*³⁸¹

In light of this state of affairs, M’bokolo regretted, in particular, a situation whereby many Congolese today, showing a sort of inconceivable nostalgia towards the colonial time, seemed to regard the memorable achievement of independence as ‘the beginning of Congo’s misfortunes’ and as an event to be

à nous jours. K. Bwatshia, ‘Conscience historique et les citoyens congolais,’ *La conscience* (Kinshasa 31/03/2006).

³⁷⁹ E. M’bokolo, ‘Préface. Pour que vive l’Histoire,’ I. Ndaywel è Nziem, *Nouvelle histoire*, 9-19.

³⁸⁰ Ndaywel, *Nouvelle histoire*, 673.

³⁸¹ D. Johnson, ‘Le conflits de nationalité en Afrique,’ *Regards croisés 12. Les identités meurtrières: faire face aux défis posés par nos murs psychologiques et idéologiques* (Goma: Pole Institute September 2004), 26 [www.pole-institute.org/documents/regard_identites.pdf] (last accessed on 03/03/2011).

forgotten rather than commemorated.³⁸² Having observed widespread negative views of Congo's past as well as a generally poor, fragmentary, and inaccurate historical knowledge among the population, M'bokolo questioned the possibility of successfully re-building the country.³⁸³ In this sense, History, both as an academic discipline and as a school subject, was believed to have failed the nation. This field was therefore deemed to urgently require thorough review. It is against this backdrop that M'bokolo saluted Ndaywel's *Nouvelle Histoire du Congo* as a new milestone both for Congolese historiography and for history teaching. According to the scholar, this publication, which was intended as a reference tool for university students, for secondary school teachers, and for textbook developers, encompassed 'the knowledge of our past, the concern for pedagogy and the sharing of *civisme*: three things the Congolese people are in dire need of'.³⁸⁴

In an earlier article on Congolese historiography, Ndaywel further elaborated on the necessity to re-examine the national past. He highlighted the need for a '*lecture croisée*' of the past and for a 'democratisation of history'. According to the academic, by taking into account different, and even conflicting and antagonistic versions of the common past, the discipline of history had the potential to offer a crucial contribution to the national peacebuilding and democratisation processes.³⁸⁵ This observation brings us to the third great challenge in relation to historical reconstruction in the DRC: besides a de-colonisation and a de-Mobutisation of historiography (and of history teaching), today's Congo remains confronted with the imperative need to face its particularly

³⁸² According to the historian, the fathers of the nation and of independence were the object of obloquy by the older generation and of oblivion by the younger generation. M'bokolo, 'Préface,' 11-12.

³⁸³ M'bokolo wondered '[h]ow to (re)build a country when its own children conceive, cultivate and maintain a knowledge that is so inaccurate, so bad and so negative of themselves and of the countless generations of men and women who have preceded them ...?' Ibid., 13.

³⁸⁴ M'bokolo, 9; and 16, 29-30. The manual, which includes bibliographies, maps, primary sources and pictures, summarises Congo's history from 1400s until today as a history of violence, exploitation and predation mainly by outside forces, and of resistance and heroism by local actors. This condensed and updated version of Ndaywel's monumental *Histoire générale du Congo* (1998) was 'baptised' by the Director of the Office of the Head of State in Septembre 2009. 'Livres: baptême de «Nouvelle Histoire du Congo, Des origines à la République démocratique du Congo»' (29/09/2009) [www.digitalcongo.net/article/61419] (last accessed on 28/05/2011); Raymonde Senga Kosi, '«Nouvelle Histoire du Congo, des origines à la République démocratique» porté sur les fonts baptismaux' (28/09/2009) [www.lepotentiel.com/afficher_article.php?id_edition=&id_article=86751] (last accessed on 28/05/2011).

³⁸⁵ 'L'historiographie', 248.

sensitive and highly controversial history of recent war and mass violence. As Turner poignantly suggested, '[t]he wars on the ground have been accompanied by wars of words, fought to define what is or is not happening.'³⁸⁶ As a result, as will be illustrated below, disagreements have persisted on the nature, causes, and stakes of the wars, and on questions related to roles of victimhood and responsibility in the violent events.³⁸⁷

4.4.1.1.1 Historical reconstruction through transitional justice mechanisms

As was outlined in the historical section that introduced this chapter, the DRC has experienced several tragic events throughout its history. Most notably, the country is known for having been the scene of the deadliest armed conflict since WWII. As many as 5.4 million excess deaths are estimated to have been caused by the protracted violence between August 1998 and April 2007.³⁸⁸ In recent years, various observers have insisted on Congo's urgent need to confront its difficult and violent past. In 2009, an ICTJ report described the Congo as a country with 'a long history of unaddressed legacies of mass atrocities since the colonial era.'³⁸⁹ A similar view was expressed by researchers at the Goma-based Pole Institute, a well-respected local organisation which, in collaboration with various Congolese communities, has sought to promote 'a work of appropriation of the common history'.³⁹⁰ In a 2004 issue of its review *Regards Croisés* on the theme *Devoir de mémoire au Nord Kivu*, the institute brought attention to the fact that the country's history had been marked by 'a long line of denied and forgotten massacres, whose perpetrators had never been brought to justice'. It further pointed to a common practice consisting in destroying incriminating evidence and in falsifying history.

³⁸⁶ Turner, 2.

³⁸⁷ The wars have been variously depicted as civil wars, as international wars aimed at toppling a dictatorship, as a continuation of the Rwandan conflict on Congolese soil, and as resource wars. Also, Rwanda's and Uganda's involvement, for instance, has been variously portrayed as an act of self-defence and humanitarianism, or as an act moved by expansionist and economic interests.

³⁸⁸ Coghlan et al., *Mortality*.

³⁸⁹ L. Davis & P. Hayner, 'Difficult peace, limited justice: ten years of peacemaking in the DRC' (New York: International Center for Transitional Justice, March 2009), 7.

³⁹⁰ Another relevant organisation in the field of memory work in the DRC is the Institut pour la Mémoire au Congo (IMC). The organisation was created with the aim of collecting, preserving and vulgarising memories of atrocities, and of promoting dialogue on the past in order to establish a collective memory. Based on the observation of a failure of successive governments to face the past and to document and redress past abuses that took place since the colonial time, one of its co-founders argued that, 'Congo's history is characterised by a glaring absence of memory'. O. Kambala wa Kambala, 'Mémoire' [www.memcongo.org/french/memory.html] (last accessed on 29/06/2012).

Conscious of the dangers of failing to face history, the authors affirmed the nation's duty to deal with the violent past in order to prevent its recurrence.³⁹¹ In the Preface of a 2008 publication dedicated to the same topic, the organisation rejected amnesia as a viable option while also acknowledging the peril of upsetting fragile balances between peace, and truth and justice.³⁹² According to the report, longstanding peace and reconciliation ought to be based on a sincere reflection on the past from which lessons could be learned. Echoing Ndaywel's view on the need for a '*lecture croisée*' of the past, the authors argued that, in the face of parallel and largely antagonistic memories and histories which hindered a recognition of the suffering of the 'Other', the way forward consisted in the promotion of an inclusive and respectful '*croisement des mémoires*'.³⁹³ This argument was clearly articulated in 2003 by the institute's research director and historian Aloys Tegera. With reference to the case of North Kivu, the scholar explained that,

*'The collective memory of the Nande is haunted by the massacre of hundreds of people fleeing the AFDL forces in autumn 1996, attributed to the Hutu militia. The Hutu mourn their people at Mugogo, the Tutsi are far from forgetting the massacres of Mokoto, the Hunde count in their thousands the people killed since March 1993, and the list is long for each of the ethnic communities. Trying to rebuild the North Kivu without touching this painful past would be a trap. It is a duty to remember, and as soon as possible, not in order to avenge our dead, but so that the whole community can take possession of their common memory.'*³⁹⁴

Left unaddressed, politicised memories of collective traumas inevitably contributed to reinforcing sectarian identities and negative prejudices and stereotypes to the detriment of feelings of national consciousness and solidarity, and, ultimately, of peace and reconciliation.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ C. Kayser, 'Devoir de mémoire et responsabilité partagée pour l'avenir,' *Regards croisés* 13. *Devoir de mémoire et responsabilité collective pour l'avenir* (Goma: Pole Institute December 2004), 2 [www.pole-institute.org/documents/regard13.pdf] (last accessed on 04/03/2011).

³⁹² O. Sematumba, 'Préface,' *Fissures* 8. *Le devoir de mémoire au Nord Kivu: enjeux et défis* (Goma: Pole Institute June 2008), 4 [www.pole-institute.org/documents/fissure8.pdf] (last accessed on 05/03/2011).

³⁹³ *Ibid.* 11-12.

³⁹⁴ A. Tegera, 'North Kivu: a rebellion within a rebellion?,' *Democratic Republic of Congo: peace tomorrow?* (Goma: Pole Institute, March 2003), 9-10 [www.pole-institute.org/documents/regards08bis.pdf] (last accessed on 05/03/2011).

³⁹⁵ Among the most widespread stereotypes, which cut across state boundaries, are those affirming 'Tutsi's ingrained deceitfulness and dissimulation'. Lemarchand, *The dynamics*, 34. B. Wilingula Cosma additionally referred to prejudices existing between Bembe and Tutsi. According to the author, 'Babembe consider Tutsi to be good-for-nothings, incapables, lacking in physical strength, uncircumcised, an inferior people who drink all day and bemoan not their dead but their cattle. For their part, Tutsi regard Babembe as trouble makers,

Widely recognised as being of paramount importance, the recourse to investigative processes and mechanisms reportedly failed to respond to the country's needs for truth, justice and reconciliation. In a context in which, '[e]very community has its own version of the facts and its own estimate of the number of victims',³⁹⁶ only inadequate attempts have so far been made to face the difficult recent past and to shed light on controversial issues of responsibility and victimhood.³⁹⁷

On the one hand, national criminal prosecution has been limited to a handful of cases and has largely spared high-level perpetrators. Unable to deliver justice, the abysmal Congolese judicial system has been supplemented by international efforts. While a government request to set up an ad-hoc UN tribunal never came to fruition, the DRC became one of the few countries worldwide on which the International Criminal Court (ICC) has focused its investigative activities for cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Since the ICC first-ever investigation in 2004, five arrest warrants had been issued as of June 2012. These resulted in four arrests, which led to one conviction and one release.³⁹⁸ The International Court of Justice (ICJ), which has the mandate to settle inter-state disputes, is another mechanism that has been requested by the DRC to address crimes committed on its territory by neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda. This request has had limited success. In 2005, the DRC won its case against Uganda over the pillage of Congolese natural resources, for which, however, it is still

barbaric, haughty, goof only for heavy [agricultural] labour in exchange for a calf close to death.' B. Wilingula Cosma, *Fizi 1967-1986: Le maquis Kabila* (Paris 1997), 24, qtd. in Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 18.

³⁹⁶ UNOHCHR, *Mapping exercise*, 59 (par. 155). For an overview of various interpretations of the 1993 war in North Kivu to which this statement refers, see Bucyalimwe Mararo. According to the author, the war has been variously interpreted as: 'an anti-Tutsi creation to incriminate Hutu and, through them, to implicate Habyarimana;... a Tutsi plot to justify a possible plan to divide Hunde and Hutu... an anti-Rwandan war organised by a coalition of the autochthonous Hunde, Nyanga, Tembo, and Nande; an anti-autochthone war organised by a coalition of Hutu and Tutsi Rwandans...' 'Land, power,' 534.

³⁹⁷ The ICTJ report highlighted that the various peace and ceasefire agreements – notably, the accords of Lusaka (1999), Sun City (2002), Ituri (2006), and Goma (2008) – all promised amnesty to the warring parties. They largely neglected broader transitional justice measures as a way to address mass violence in the DRC. Davis & Hayner, 'Difficult peace,' 3-4. See also, 'Analysis: Justice still remote for victims of atrocities in DRC' (11/10/2010) [www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2010/10/mil-101011-irin01.htm] (last accessed on 13/10/2010).

³⁹⁸ Arrest warrants were issued against Callixte Mbarushimana, alleged Executive Secretary of the FDLR (released in December 2011); Thomas Lubanga Dyilo (convicted in March 2012), Germain Katanga, and Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui (whose trials opened in 2009); and Bosco Ntaganda (still at large as of end-2012). Notice that crimes perpetrated before the ICC establishment in 2002, i.e. including those committed during the two Congo Wars, do not fall under the court's jurisdiction. See, www.icc-cpi.int, and www.coalitionfortheicc.org.

awaiting reparations. Conversely, similar allegations against Rwanda were never addressed by the ICJ.³⁹⁹

On the other hand, in accordance with the Sun City Accord, the 2003 Transitional Constitution established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).⁴⁰⁰ The TRC Law that was subsequently drafted in 2004 recognised that, since independence, the country had experienced wars and massive human rights violations as well as a systematic pillage of its natural resources. Based on the premise that the causes of the many abuses had never been clarified, the TRC was conferred the mandate to ‘re-establish the truth about the Congolese conflicts and to promote peace, justice, reparation, forgiveness and reconciliation in view of reconstituting the national unity.’⁴⁰¹ The ambitious truth-seeking efforts were expected to cover the political and socio-economic circumstances surrounding the various crimes that had been committed between 1960 and 2003. Eventually, the TRC, which effectively operated between 2005 and 2007, miserably failed to accomplish its mission due to its severely flawed nature. To a large extent, this failure stemmed from the fact that several of its commissioners, who had been directly appointed by the warring parties, included individuals who had been involved in the abuses they were supposed to investigate.⁴⁰² As a result, the process ended without collecting a single witness statement and without opening any enquiries. Following this abortive project, voices were raised in favour of re-launching truth-seeking initiatives. In 2008, for instance, a proposal was presented to the Senate to set up a new commission. As of today, however, no significant progress has been made towards the realisation of this proposition.⁴⁰³ In the same

³⁹⁹ A missed opportunity in relation to the pursuit of justice in the DRC also concerns the ICTR. Although mandated to investigate crimes that were committed in Rwanda and by Rwandans in neighbouring countries in 1994, this tribunal has so far only tried crimes perpetrated in Rwanda.

⁴⁰⁰ République Démocratique du Congo, RDC, Cabinet du Président de la République, *Constitution de la transition. Journal officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo* (Kinsahsa 05/04/2003), art. 154 [repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/4122/3239.pdf?sequence=1] (last accessed on 04/05/2011).

⁴⁰¹ RDC, *Loi No. /04/018 du Juillet 30 2004 portant sur l'organisation, attributions et fonctionnement de la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation*, art. 4, 8 [www.leganet.cd/Legislation/DroitPenal/Loi01.18.30.07.2004.CVR.htm] (last accessed on 03/03/2011).

⁴⁰² Davis & Hayner, 21.

⁴⁰³ The wish to re-launch truth-seeking initiatives was also expressed at the Goma Peace Conference in January 2008. *Report from the North Kivu working group*, Goma conference on peace, security, and development in the Kivus, Section 3, Conflict Management and Resolution, recommendation 1.5.7.; *Report from the South Kivu working group*, Goma conference, recommendation e) 2. Recommendations also included reparations, such as compensations, funerals, and symbolic memorials for the victims. Ibid. e) 5, 6.

year, in a context of continued unwillingness and/or incapacity to address impunity, the publication of a large-scale survey revealed that, while peace and security, as well as leading a ‘normal’ and decent life, were perceived as a priority among the population of war-stricken Kivu, wishes for justice and truth were not lacking.⁴⁰⁴ That being said, although the large majority of respondents considered it important to know the truth about what happened during the conflict, many affirmed their reticence to openly speak out about it, primarily out of fear of revenge and retaliation.⁴⁰⁵

Recently, an important step towards the recovery of the truth and the production of a historical record of the conflict was made by the international community. In October 2010, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a controversial 550-page report. This listed 617 of the most serious abuses that had been committed in the DRC from 1993 to 2003. In her foreword, Navi Pillay explained that, in a context ‘where almost every single individual has an experience to narrate of suffering and loss,’ ‘[t]he report is intended as a first step towards the sometimes painful but nonetheless essential process of truth-telling after violent conflict.’⁴⁰⁶ Not surprisingly, its publication received mixed reactions. On the one hand, human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International (AI), hailed the report as ‘a very thorough investigation’ based on which judicial action should immediately be undertaken.⁴⁰⁷ Congo’s official response was also positive. Here, the ‘heart-breaking’ document was welcomed as a ‘detailed’ and ‘credible’ study, which deserved follow-up measures. On the other hand, several regional actors, who were implicated in the report, rejected its

⁴⁰⁴ Vinck et al., *Living with fear*. According to the respondents, justice, understood as ‘arresting those responsible for crimes’, was the primary strategy to enable the attainment of peace. This was followed by dialogue, truth-seeking, and military victory. 2. Among the means mentioned to achieve justice were courts and tribunals, followed by truth mechanisms, customary justice, and non-governmental conflict-resolution projects. The survey thus pointed to a predominantly retributive perception of justice. 43. The list of actors deemed to have to be held accountable included (in order of importance): militias (and especially their leaders), Rwanda, Uganda, and the Congolese government and its army. Although less prominently, interest was also expressed for the establishment of memorials, i.e. a day of remembrance or a monument, as well as for the production of written and audio-visual documentation to remember what happened. 52.

⁴⁰⁵ Other reasons mentioned for not being willing to talk about the conflict were a belief in its uselessness and the lack of things to say. Notice that, as opposed to a judicial inquiry, the establishment of a truth commission as a way to seek the truth counted on relatively little support among the surveyed population. *Ibid.*, 48-50.

⁴⁰⁶ N. Pillay, ‘Forward,’ *Report of the Mapping Exercise*, 1.

⁴⁰⁷ ‘UN tones down DRC report’ (01/10/2010) [www.news24.com/Africa/News/UN-tones-down-DRC-report-20101001] (last accessed on 03/03/2011).

veracity after having attempted to impede its release.⁴⁰⁸ The main controversy concerned allegations made against Rwanda. In particular, the country was denounced for having committed ‘acts which could constitute crimes of genocide’ against Hutu refugees.⁴⁰⁹ These grave charges thus cast doubt on Rwanda’s claim that the purpose of its military intervention in the DRC was to pursue those responsible for the 1994 genocide. The Rwandan government dismissed the report, arguing that it was ‘flawed and dangerous’ and that it represented ‘an insult to history’. The UN was accused of ‘rewriting history, improperly apportioning blame for the genocide that occurred in Rwanda and reigniting conflict in Rwanda and the region.’ The document was denounced as being unfounded, as relying overly on questionable sources, and as failing to take the historical context into account. According to officials, the study overlooked ‘especially the immediate and serious threat posed by armed and ideologically charged refugees positioned right at the border of Rwanda and Zaire.’⁴¹⁰ In Uganda, government officials echoed the negative reactions of their Rwandan counterparts. They described the report as a ‘compendium of rumours’, and as being ‘biased’, ‘inaccurate and in bad taste,’ and ‘one-sided’. According to Uganda’s military spokesperson, ‘[t]hey did not get our side of the story.’⁴¹¹

If the reactions to the UN Mapping report demonstrated the existence of divergent views on Congo’s recent past among actors in the region, another initiative, namely the 2008 Goma Peace Conference, was particularly revealing of the

⁴⁰⁸ ‘Rapport sur la RDC: les pays de la région des Grands Lacs rejettent en bloc les conclusions de l’ONU,’ *RFI* (02/10/2010) [www.rfi.fr/afrique/20101002-rapport-rdc-pays-region-grands-lacs-rejettent-bloc-conclusions-onu] (last accessed on 03/03/2011); ‘Rwandan, Ugandan, Burundi forces furious over UN-DR Congo Report,’ *RFI* (01/10/2010) [www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20101001-rwanda-uganda-burundi-furious-un-drc-report] (last accessed on 03/03/2011).

⁴⁰⁹ According to the report, during the First Congo War, public meetings were organised by the AFDL/APR soldiers to ‘raise awareness’ among the local population on the Hutu refugees’ collective responsibility for the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda and on their genocidal plans in Congo as well. *Report*, 281.

⁴¹⁰ Government Spokesperson and Minister of Foreign Affairs, L. Mushikiwabo, qtd. in ‘UN DRC report threatens regional security – govt’ (01/10/2010) and ‘Rwandan premier says UN report “flawed”’, *The new times* (02/10/2010) [www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14400&article=34153] (last accessed on 03/03/2011). Rwandan officials further reiterated their country’s determination to defend itself ‘against all attempts to rewrite our history’.

⁴¹¹ Like his Rwandan counterpart, Ugandan Foreign Affairs Minister warned that the report undermined efforts made towards regional peace and security. ‘Uganda says UN report on DR Congo war crimes “biased”’ and ‘Uganda condemns UN report on DR Congo “war crimes”’, *Daily monitor* (01/10/2010); ‘UN releases controversial report on conflict in DR Congo (2nd Roundup)’ (02/10/2010) [www.monstersandcritics.com/news/africa/news/article_1588527.php/UN-releases-controversial-report-on-conflict-in-DR-Congo-2nd-Roundup] (last accessed on 03/03/2011).

multitude of perceptions held by national actors. This ‘platform for catharsis’, as Davis and Hayner once described it,⁴¹² clearly brought to light the existence of parallel memories of the conflict among Congolese communities living in North and South Kivu. In so doing, the conference vividly confirmed the need and the challenges of historical reconstruction and reconciliation in the aftermath of mass violence in the country.

4.4.1.1.2 ‘Devoir de mémoire’, historical dialogue and reconciliation in the Kivu: the Goma Peace Conference: parallel and conflicting memories of victimhood, resistance and heroism

The Goma Peace Conference was held in January 2008. The initiative was born out of a strong desire to put an end to the armed conflict and violence that had been ravaging the Kivus for years. Attended by over 1,500 people, the meeting represented a historic event that allowed for multiple voices to be heard. Various delegations were invited to share their views on issues related to peace, security and development in North and South Kivu. Participants included delegates of the Congolese state, of armed groups, of the international community, of the local civil society, customary chiefs, as well as representatives of the various (ethnic) communities living in the region. The declarations and exposés that were presented by this last category were particularly telling as they brought to light the various groups’ understandings and beliefs on the past and the present, as well as their current preoccupations. On this occasion, each community was given the opportunity to outline its view on the history of its province – including its relations with other communities – as well as to provide its analysis of the main causes of the province’s state of insecurity and under-development, and to suggest possible solutions. The ultimate aim of the conference was to discuss the prevailing situation in the Kivus in order to reach ‘a common understanding of the causes and consequences of insecurity; [and to] defuse fear, mutual distrust, suspicion, frustration and anger that make coexistence difficult’.⁴¹³

⁴¹² Davis & Hayner, 22.

⁴¹³ République Démocratique du Congo, *Conférence sur la Paix, la Sécurité et le Développement dans les Provinces du Nord-Kivu et du Sud-Kivu. Rapport final des travaux*, 3 [www.pole-

As we will see, the historical narratives presented at the conference largely varied. The different communities on the other hand showed a general consensus with regard to the pivotal role of Rwanda in the Congolese crisis. Overall, much of the historical overview and analysis of the conflict in Eastern Congo appeared to be centred on Rwanda's troubled history since 1959 and on its ramifications in the DRC. Specifically, local actors seemed to agree that a major, if not *the* major, cause of insecurity consisted in the '[t]ransposition of Rwanda's ethno-political conflicts to the DR Congo,' and in particular in the mismanagement of the Rwandan refugee crises. A resolution of the refugee problem, and especially the repatriation of the FDLR, was therefore considered as the main priority in the promotion of Congo's national security. Measures that were believed to favour the implementation of this solution included the organisation of an honest inter-Rwandan dialogue and the promotion of a politics of national reconciliation in the neighbouring country.⁴¹⁴ If Rwanda and Rwandans (and the spill-over of their conflict) were largely blamed for the recent insecurity in the Kivu, responsibility for this state of affairs was also attributed to national actors, including militias, spearheaded by the CNDP, and the army.

Despite this degree of consensus on the primarily external origins of the conflict, communities tended to hold different interpretations of the country's historical events. Each community typically depicted itself as an innocent victim of injustice, discrimination, marginalisation, exclusion, intolerance and tribal hatred, as well as of gross human rights abuses, including massacres and even genocide. Each group also usually portrayed itself as a peace-loving and traditionally pacific and welcoming community, upon which war had been forcibly imposed by others. As blame was apportioned to the aggressive 'other', own militant operations were

institute.org/brouillons/Conf%E9rence%20de%20paix/Rapport_final_travaux%5B1%5D.pdf] (last accessed on 05/05/2011).

⁴¹⁴ Participants thus seemed to concur with the argument raised by various scholars, who have maintained the necessity to take a regional approach to the conflict. According to Jackson, for instance, '[o]ne key issue in this regard is the lack of honest appraisal of what took place during and after the Rwandan genocide, which continues to haunt the region: for as long as the government of Rwanda continues to compound the myth that all Hutus are genocidaires without taking any responsibility for atrocities committed by its own forces, the potential for renewed ethnically-based violence throughout the region will be an ongoing threat to stability. Therefore there is need for a more honest appraisal of ethnic relations in Rwanda that would, in turn, be used to address ongoing threats to regional stability, particularly in relation to eastern Congo'. 'Who belongs where,' 5-6.

generally presented as legitimate acts of self-defence. Overall, the declarations of the Hutu and Tutsi Kinyarwanda-speakers on the one hand, and of the so-called ‘autochthonous’ communities on the other hand, appeared to be markedly contradicting, especially with regard to roles of perpetrators, victims, and heroes. Here, cases of mutual accusations and of inversion of such roles abounded.

In their *Cahier de charge*, for instance, the Congolese Hutu urged special attention on account of their ‘particular’ state of victimhood. This community claimed to have been subjected to marginalisation, especially in favour of the Nande; to demonisation, by association with both the ‘*génocidaires*’ Interahamwe and the ‘foreign’ Banyarwanda; to massacres and ethnic cleansing, perpetrated especially by Nande militias in 1993; as well as to genocide in 1996, at the hands of the AFDL and their regional allies. Highlighting their innocence, as well as their autochthony, Congolese Hutu presented themselves as ‘victims of their hospitality’ on their own land. In their view, they had been betrayed by other communities after having hosted them, ‘without xenophobia’, in Rutshuru Territory, ‘*terroir des Hutu*’.⁴¹⁵

Accused by the Hutu of various crimes, the Nande depicted themselves as a traditionally pacific community that had never provoked any confrontation or resorted to violence to prevail over other groups.⁴¹⁶ They maintained to have accepted non-Nande officials in the province without any resistance, and to have opted for reconciliation and forgiveness despite having themselves been victims

⁴¹⁵ *Cahier de charge de la Communauté Hutu Congolaise* (Goma 09/01/2008), 12 [www.pole-institute.org/brouillons/Conf%E9rence%20de%20paix/cahier_charge_hutu%5B1%5D.pdf] (last accessed on 05/05/2011). The issue of origins and belonging had also been underlined in a previous declaration by representatives of the Hutu and Tutsi communities from North Kivu. Here, it was affirmed that, ‘[h]istorically, the Hutu and Tutsi settled in North Kivu (Masisi, Goma, Rutshuru) since the 16th century. The Hunde and Nande entered the province in the 17th and 18th centuries coming from Uganda.’ The declaration further raised accusations of discrimination and marginalisation, as well as of a long-planned genocide by Hunde and Nyanga against the Hutu and Tutsi living in North Kivu. *Memorandum des communautés Hutu et Tutsi du Nord Kivu à la Commission d’enquête sur les massacres de Walikale, Masisi et Bwito (Rutshuru) en Mars et Avril 1993* [africadaily.blogspot.com/2007/11/memorandum-des-communautes-hutu-et.html] (last accessed on 06/05/2011).

⁴¹⁶ In South Kivu, the Lega community echoed the Nande’s arguments. Their declaration stated that, ‘the Lega people never took up arms to uphold its social and political demands, however legitimate’. *Communication du peuple Lega de Mwenga et Shabunda*, 3 [www.pole-institute.org/brouillons/Conf%E9rence%20de%20paix/COMMUNICATION%20PEUPLE%20LEGA%5B1%5D.pdf] (last accessed on 05/05/2011).

of discrimination.⁴¹⁷ Such mutual allegations between Nande and Hutu reflected earlier statements which had been made in 2003 in the framework of the North Kivu Pacification and Concord Commission. On this occasion, while the President of the Nande community in Goma accused the Hutu and the Tutsi of planning to exterminate the Nande, the two communities responded by reminding the audience of the massacres they had themselves been subjected to since the early 1960s.⁴¹⁸

As for the Banyamulenge and the Tutsi communities, their declarations exhibited a litany of abuses, including attempted extermination, which they said had marked their lives since independence.⁴¹⁹ According to the two groups, their predicament had worsened especially after the 1998 rebellion, for which they had been collectively blamed, and again since 2006, due to suspicions of their involvement in CNDP activities. Reported abuses included demonisation, humiliation, harassment, discrimination and marginalisation, as well as ethnic cleansing and massacres at the hands of anti-Tutsi militias and of the army. Forcibly displaced abroad, they had also been killed in refugee camps, most notably in the Gatumba ‘genocide’ in Burundi.⁴²⁰ According to the narrative, it were the persistent threats and the government’s disinterest for their fate that had provoked the mobilisation of its youths to fight in a ‘war imposed on the Banyamulenge community’.

⁴¹⁷ *Message de la communauté Nande à la conférence sur la sécurité* [www.pole-institute.org/brouillons/Conf%E9rence%20de%20paix/MESSAGE_DE_LA_COMMUNAUTE_NANDE_A_LA_CONFERENCE_SUR_LA_SECURITE%5B1%5D.pdf] (last accessed on 05/05/2011).

⁴¹⁸ Pole Institute, *Democratic Republic of Congo*, 6-7.

⁴¹⁹ The beginning of their predicament of insecurity was respectively traced back to the 1964 Mulelist rebellion and to the first Congo War in 1996. *Déclaration de communauté Banyamulenge* [www.pole-institute.org/brouillons/Conf%E9rence%20de%20paix/Memo_communaute_Banyamulenge%5B1%5D.pdf], and *Mémoire de la communauté Tutsi* [www.pole-institute.org/brouillons/Conf%E9rence%20de%20paix/communaut%E9_tutsi%5B1%5D.pdf] (last accessed on 06/05/2011). The declaration of the Tutsi community, for instance, spoke of ‘[s]erious and tragic historical antecedents that have systematically marked the history of the Tutsi under all successive regimes in Kinshasa since independence in 1960’ and of the perennality of the will of the central power to eradicate the Congolese Tutsi from the country.’ 5, 6.

⁴²⁰ Notice that, as most cases of violence, the 2004 Gatumba massacre has been the object of different interpretations. The existence of parallel histories of this event among Congolese came to light in interviews which were conducted by researchers of the Goma-based Pole Institute about one month after the massacre, both in Gatumba among the survivors, and in Bukavu and Uvira among the rest of the population. According to survivors, the attack had originated from the DRC and had been mainly perpetrated by Congolese Mayi-Mayi with support of the government. Interviewees in the DRC instead tended to embrace the government’s position which rejected any Congolese involvement in the attack and which stated the then imminent threat formed by the refugees at Gatumba. Kayser, ‘Devoir,’ 2-3. See also, A. Tegera & C. Kayser, *Débats et manoeuvres autour du massacre du camp de Gatumba: informations ou interprétations? Les agendas politiques assassinent une deuxième fois les morts de Gatumba* (Goma, September 2004) [nuit.rwandaise.free.fr/presse/Gatumba-PoleInstitute.htm] (last accessed on 06/05/2011).

Victims of this ‘imposed war,’ the Banyamulenge affirmed their commitment to peace. At the same time, they urged others to respect their right to exist on ‘the land of their ancestors’, where they had resided ‘for more than two centuries’, as well as their right to equality. With a view to a safer and fairer existence, the community recommended the promotion of a ‘politics of securisation of the Tutsi’ and the establishment of ‘mechanisms of protection and representation of the minorities.’ Specifically, their declaration called for the reinstatement of Tutsi customary entities in North and South Kivu, the indisputable historical existence of which was said to be falsely denied by other communities, such as the Bembe and the Fulero, who claimed that the Banyamulenge had only recently arrived on Congolese soil.⁴²¹

If the Banyamulenge rejected the ‘lies’ propagated by their neighbours, similarly, the Fulero declared their wish to ‘tell the truth’ and to counter ‘the falsification of history’.⁴²² Contrary to the version of history outlined by the Banyamulenge community, in their exposé, the Fulero stated that it was (only) since the 1920s that they had been hosting Banyarwanda (and Barundi) who were fleeing famines and ‘secular wars’ in their own country. The Fulero maintained that the term Banyamulenge was a name currently used by the Rwandan community residing in Mulenge, a territory that was described as the ‘unquestionably ancestral heritage of the king of the Bafuliro’. According to this community, the Tutsi, who during the RPF war in 1990-1994 had shown their attachment to ‘*leur patrie mère*’, namely Rwanda, had been the perpetrators of horrible crimes in the DRC. Portrayed as a group with an ‘expansionist and hegemonic spirit’, and who ‘always tries to crush us’, the Tutsi were accused of having committed atrocities against ‘those who had hosted them’. Such regrettable behaviour was viewed as a sign of ‘a manifest ingratitude’ towards ‘our legendary hospitality’. Also, they

⁴²¹ The declaration referred in particular to the autonomous *groupements* of Busanza, Jomba, and Katoyi, and the chiefdom of Gishari, in North Kivu, as well as the territory of Minembwe in South Kivu. According to the community, these entities had been unfairly suppressed by the colonial power in 1933 after having been granted as early as 1891. To support the thesis on the ancient existence of these entities, the Banyamulenge declaration cited a number of scholarly publications. They referred to Weiss, *Le pays d’Uvira* (1951), which dated the arrival of this group in 1881, and to A. Kagame and J. Macquet, who traced the time of their arrival back to the 16th century.

⁴²² *Déclaration des Bafuliiru*, 2 [www.pole-institute.org/brouillons/Conf%E9rence%20de%20paix/D%E9claration%20des%20Bafuliiru.pdf] (last accessed on 06/05/2011).

were said to have manoeuvred themselves into strategic positions of power, leading to a situation of marginalisation and to an imminent prospect of enslavement of the Fulero ‘on their own land’. In an attempt to justify their militancy as an act of self-defence, the Fulero declaration affirmed that, faced with ‘this real threat of extinction and extermination’, they ‘had no choice but to rally with their resisters’. The exposé of the Nyanga community of North Kivu showed great resemblance with the position of the Fulero of South Kivu. Speaking of the past in terms of a ‘nightmare’, the Nyanga accused the Rwandan ‘immigrants’ and ‘refugees’, whom they had kindly hosted in their Territory of Walikale and who did not ancestrally belong there, of having ungratefully caused recurrent insecurity and displacement by revolting against the established authorities with the aim of forcibly occupying indigenous land and to create ‘a state within a state’. It was once again such bellicose intentions that were considered to be the cause of the tensions that broke out in 1993. The Nyanga community also depicted itself as having been the victim of abuses during the two Congo wars, including attempted extermination, and as having been recently imposed a new war by Nkunda. In this context, while it proclaimed its desire for peace, the Nyanga community justified the operations of its Mayi-Mayi militias by affirming a need for self-defence and survival in the face both of patent signs of indifference on the part of the government towards the abuses committed against civilians and of a serious threat to the country’s territorial integrity that had to be countered.⁴²³

The Goma Peace Conference clearly brought to light the existence of conflicting views on the country’s past and present. The event additionally demonstrated a common understanding of the importance of education for the resolution of the conflict. In the final reports, education was mentioned not only as a means to promote development through expanded provision and access, but also as a potential peacebuilding and reconciliation tool that could be exploited by

⁴²³ Among other things, the declaration stated that, ‘these refugees have no right linked to the land, the belonging to which is based on clan, the value of which is highly sacred and its origin ancestral... They are Rwandan populations’. The declaration concluded that ‘these categories of populations,’ described as people ‘without land or fatherland’, ‘are at the base of all the evil known by the populations. *Déclaration de la communauté locale de Walikale Nyanga*, 9-15 [www.pole-institute.org/brouillons/Conf%20de%20paix/nyanga%5B1%5D.pdf] (last accessed on 06/06/2011).

promoting peace and citizenship education, as well as history teaching.⁴²⁴ With regard to the latter, in particular, the final report for South Kivu vaguely highlighted the need to ‘[s]trengthen the teaching of a history of the DR Congo [that is] adapted to current developments in relation to [the issue of] nationality’.⁴²⁵ What this envisioned reform practically entailed, unfortunately, was not specified.

The next section will turn its attention to outlining recent developments that have taken place in the field of education against this backdrop of conflict and of peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

4.4.2 Formal education in war-torn and post-war Congo: educational policies and history teaching

The various wars and rebellions that have ravaged the Congo since the mid-1990s severely affected the education sector.⁴²⁶ The impact of protracted instability has been devastating, especially in the Kivu. Educational provision has been regularly disrupted; school buildings have been destroyed, damaged, and pillaged, and used as temporary shelters for the displaced; and teachers and pupils have been killed, displaced, and forcibly recruited. Young people in general, including unemployed graduates and students, as well as marginalised youth and school drop-outs, have been among the main recruits of militias.⁴²⁷ Mobilisation efforts by Nkunda’s CNDP, for instance, appear to have systematically targeted youngsters, both in the

⁴²⁴ *Rapport de l’atelier/ Nord-Kivu sur la paix, la sécurité et le développement dans la province du Nord-Kivu* (Goma 22/01/2008) [www.pole-institute.org/brouillons/Conf%E9rence%20de%20paix/Rapport_Final_Nord-Kivu%5b1%5d.pdf], and *Rapport de l’atelier du Sud Kivu* (Goma 21/01/2008) [www.pole-institute.org/brouillons/Conf%E9rence%20de%20paix/Rapport_Final_sud-Kivu%5B1%5D.pdf] (last accessed on 05/05/2011).

⁴²⁵ *Rapport de l’atelier du Sud Kivu*, 6.

⁴²⁶ World Bank, *Le système éducatif de la République Démocratique du Congo: priorités et alternatives* (Washington 2005); Education Policy and Data Centre, ‘DRC education national profile’ (03/04/2012) [www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Congodemrep_NEP.pdf]; E. Boak & H. Smith, *Study on governance challenges for education in fragile situations: Democratic Republic of Congo country report* (Brussels: European Commission 2009) [capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu] (last accessed on 06/05/2012); RDC, MEPS, *Le développement de l’éducation. Rapport national de la République Démocratique du Congo* (Kinshasa: MEPS 2004); Mokonzi Bambanota, *The DRC: effective delivery*, and *De l’école*.

⁴²⁷ As mentioned earlier in the text, under L.D. Kabila, the State, as well, had promoted the systematic mobilisation and recruitment of thousands of jobless secondary school and university graduates through the ‘National Service’.

Kivu and in refugee camps in Rwanda.⁴²⁸ According to J. Stearns, Nkunda, who was himself a former school teacher, formed his recruits through seminars, which, next to military training, also included lessons in history. These activities took place in the framework of an extensive campaign of propaganda which was aimed at spreading an ideology of Tutsi victimhood by educating the public about Congo's long history of Tutsi violence and raising fears of a looming prospect of Tutsi genocide. Further demonstrating an acknowledgment of the political significance of education, the CNDP reportedly also built schools and paid teacher salaries in areas under its control. This was the case in Masisi, a region where school children were once recorded singing songs which praised Nkunda and his movement.⁴²⁹

If rebel groups such as the CNDP apparently resorted to education to win the hearts and minds of the population, the Congolese State recognised investment in this domain as a priority in order to restore people's trust and to rebuild the country and the nation. Since the end of the First Congo War, systematic efforts have been made to reconstruct, rehabilitate and reform the gravely deteriorated education sector.⁴³⁰ Among the many challenges faced by the system was a need to address its longstanding inequalities as well as its largely irrelevant and politicised contents.

⁴²⁸ ICG, *Congo: bringing peace to North Kivu* (Nairobi/Brussels October 2007), 7 [www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/central-africa/dr-congo/Congo%20Bringing%20Peace%20to%20North%20Kivu.pdf] (last accessed on 23/03/2011); UNSC, *Report of the group of experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, S/2005/30 (25/01/2005), par. 185-192. According to various testimonies, in autumn 2007, Nkunda's forces, supported by armed Tutsi students, forcibly recruited students from several primary and secondary schools in CNDP-controlled areas in North Kivu, forcing many to flee. 'Congo warlord continues to recruit kids,' *Sydney morning herald* (20/09/2007) [www.smh.com.au/news/World/Congo-warlord-continues-to-recruit-kids/2007/09/20/1189881644788.html] (last accessed on 22/03/2011); 'Nord-Kivu: les élèves tutsis voulaient nous emmener au service militaire,' *AFP* (19/10/2007) [afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jeLtYmTmPt8ZS1PQG7-aflvE2zjA] (last accessed on 22/03/2011).

⁴²⁹ J.K. Stearns, 'Laurent Nkunda and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP),' *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs, Annuaire 2007-2008* (Nairobi, April 2008), 264; also reported in ICG, *Congo*, note 44, p.7, and note 63, p. 10.

⁴³⁰ Education was made a priority in L.D. Kabila's 1997-1999 triennial plan for the country's reconstruction. See also RDC, Ministère de l'éducation nationale, *Plan-Cadre national pour la reconstruction du système éducatif de la République démocratique du Congo. Déclaration de politique éducative (Avant-projet)* (Kinshasa: Cabinet du Ministre August 1999). In 2007, Kabila's priorities were borrowed and reformulated by his son J. Kabila under the name of 'Cinq Chantiers'.

4.4.2.1 Educational structures, policies and practices

In the turbulent post-Mobutu era, the Congolese education system has struggled to overcome the enduring disparities that historically characterised it. As the Second Congo War was coming to an end, in 2002 a UNICEF report brought to light the existence of considerable gender, social, urban-rural and regional inequalities in educational access. Among the most disadvantaged groups were girls, the poor, the disabled, rural populations, and people living in war-torn Kivu as well as in the northern province of Equateur.⁴³¹ Additionally, several studies have drawn attention to the educational marginalisation of certain ethnic groups, such as the pygmies in Mambasa and the Enya in Kisangani.⁴³² In the context of ethnic-based conflict that wreaked havoc in the east in particular, various communities also denounced their situation of educational marginalisation and exclusion as they were forced to flee targeted violence.⁴³³

In the aftermath of the war, the government expressed a commitment to promoting basic education for all. In compliance with this pledge, both the 2003 and the 2006 constitutions stipulated the right to equal and non-discriminatory education, as well as to free and compulsory primary education.⁴³⁴ As lamented by various observers, despite the government's promising intentions to expand and democratise access to education, the situation today has not significantly changed: for many, education, especially at the post-primary level, appears to remain a privilege rather than a fundamental right.

⁴³¹ The lowest net enrolment rates were found in North Kivu (34%) and Equateur (37%). The highest in Kinshasa (76,3%) and Kasai Oriental (64,0%), as well as in Bas-Congo and Bandundu. Unicef, *Enquête nationale sur la situation des enfants et des femmes (MICS2/2001). Rapport d'analyse* (Kinshasa: UNICEF 2002), 73.

⁴³² G. Mokonzi Bombanota, P.M. Vitamara, & A.A. Isoy, 'Problématique de la scolarisation des pygmées dans le territoire de Mambasa en République démocratique du Congo,' *Bulletin of the International Committee on urgent anthropological and ethnological research* 40 (1999-2000) 113-119; and 'Les Enya face à la scolarisation: cas des Enya de Kisangani en République Démocratique du Congo,' *Bulletin of the International Committee on urgent anthropological and ethnological research* 41 (2003) 137-146.

⁴³³ In a petition letter written in November 2007 by the Congolese Tutsi community residing in Brussels, it was stated that, as a result of ethnic cleansing throughout the Kivu, '[w]ith the notable exception of Goma and Kitchanga, Congolese schools no longer form Tutsi children for lack of applicants.' 'Pétition de la communauté congolaise Tutsi pour dénoncer la persistance de la menace de génocide', *La voix du Congo* (04/12/2007) [lavoixducongo.afrikblog.com/archives/2007/12/04/7115242.html] (last accessed on 03/05/2011).

⁴³⁴ RDC, *Constitution de la transition*, art. 48, and 2006 Constitution, art. 43. Art. 17 of the 2003 constitution outlaws educational discrimination based on 'religion, gender, family origins, social condition, residence, opinions and political convictions, belonging to a race, ethnic group, tribe, cultural or linguistic minority.'

4.4.2.2 School teachings

With regard to school teachings, the necessity to review their contents was promptly recognised by the government. As soon as Mobutu was overthrown in 1997, the new power-holders proceeded to reform the primary school curriculum. After an initial pilot phase, the revised programme was published in 2000, vulgarised in 2003, and reproduced in electronic form in 2009.⁴³⁵ At the secondary level, various subjects were also recently reformed. According to official documents, besides embracing a pedagogic approach centred on objectives, the curriculum revision undertaken by the government intended to update the teaching contents in light of recent political changes and of a need to promote the new generation's 'patriotic awakening'. As a long chapter in the country's history had ended, education was entrusted with a new mission. Its envisioned aim was to 'train competent men and women, [who are] imbued with human, moral, spiritual, cultural, [and] civic values, and [who are] creative artisans of a new Congolese society, [which is] democratic, solidary, prosperous and peaceful'.⁴³⁶

In recognition of a need to address what was perceived as a deep and longstanding moral crisis that had affected the nation, the reform sought to break with the past by introducing the new course of Civic and Moral Education (*Education Civique et Morale*, ECM). This 'neutral' subject, the content of which was last revised in 2007,⁴³⁷ was meant to replace Mobutu's Civic and Political Education, a course which, since the 1970s, had largely functioned as a tool of ideological propaganda

⁴³⁵ Edipeps, *Programme nationale de l'enseignement primaire* (Kinshasa 1997) ; République Démocratique du Congo. Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériel Didactique, *Programme nationale de l'enseignement primaire, ed. électronique* (2009) (conforme au programme scolaire de l'année 2000 actuellement en vigueur).

⁴³⁶ UNESCO/IBE, *World data on education, 7th ed. 2010/11. République Démocratique du Congo* (November 2010) [www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo.pdf]

⁴³⁷ République Démocratique du Congo, Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériel Didactique, *Programme national d'éducation civique et morale (avec l'intégration des droits de l'homme, culture de la paix et code de la route), enseignement primaire* (Kinshasa, April 2007) (38pp), and *enseignement secondaire, toutes sections* (Kinshasa, April 2007) (31pp). Among the primary schoolbooks for this course are *L'Ecolier, la Voie publique et le code de la route P1^e-6^e* (110p); P. Dezutter, *Éducation morale et civique 5^e* (CRP); and *Éducation à la culture de la paix* (Médiaspaul) (144p).

of the former regime.⁴³⁸ Centred on notions of human rights and a culture of peace, this new school subject is today expected to develop pupils' *savoir-être* with a view to promoting a radical change in the society. On the one hand, ECM is geared towards encouraging a civism, nationalism and patriotism which should be translated into concrete actions at the service and in the defence of the fatherland. On the other, it aims to transmit positive social, moral, and civic values and virtues, as opposed to *anti-valeurs* such as tribalism, regionalism, exclusion and discrimination. The values sponsored through this subject include peace and unity, cohesion and cooperation, justice and democracy, respect of rules and duties and of human rights, protection of the environment and of the common good, as well as a spirit of initiative, creativity, problem-solving, and a critical and analytical mind.⁴³⁹

Although primarily conveyed through ECM, values such as patriotism, harmony, solidarity, and respect of others have also been integrated and mainstreamed, at least theoretically, into a few other subjects such as Music and Physical Education. With regard to the former, the primary school curriculum provides for the study of patriotic as well as positive songs. According to the programme, '[a]ll songs will express a favourable or pleasant feeling: joy, friendship, brotherhood, solidarity, sympathy, etc. None will elicit aggressive feelings: hatred, violence, exclusion, tribalism, etc.'⁴⁴⁰ As for Physical Education, games are expected to be occasions for practising social and moral virtues, including 'courage, coolness, a taste for effort, respect of regulations and of the opponent, [and] a taste for order'.⁴⁴¹

Currently, while a culture of peace has been promoted through various carrier subjects such as those mentioned above, peace education does not constitute a school subject in its own right. That being said, in 2000, a peace education

⁴³⁸ Signalling a break with the past, in the 1990s, the government reintroduced the subject of Religion, which Mobutu had eliminated from the curriculum. As appears from official directives, the government showed a commitment to respect and tolerance towards religious diversity through its decision to allow each religious confession to elaborate its own specific curriculum for this course in a way that is 'adapted to the doctrine of other beliefs'.

⁴³⁹ 2000 curriculum, 74-76, 127; ECM curriculum (primary), 26, and (secondary), 7.

⁴⁴⁰ 2000 curriculum, 48.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

programme, which included a teacher guide and a collection of tales and songs, was developed under the aegis of UNESCO-PEER, in partnership with UNICEF.⁴⁴² Additionally, in the same year, a ‘UNESCO Chair in Culture of Peace, Conflict Resolution, Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance’ was established at the University of Kinshasa with the aim of promoting research and training in these fields.⁴⁴³

In a context of overall commitment to positive change, the particularly sensitive subject of history was also revised: at the primary level in 2000 and at the secondary level in 2005.⁴⁴⁴ On account of its typically strong political, social and civic value, this area of study and the way it evolved deserves special attention in the framework of this research.

With the aim of assessing the present state of history education in the DRC, the paragraphs below will propose an analysis of the curricula that are currently followed in Congolese schools. Particular attention will be paid to exploring issues related to the authorship, structure and organisation of the material, as well as to the pedagogic approach, aims and content of the history course. In order to further examine the specific content of current school teachings on the country’s

⁴⁴² Its content was centred on such values as respect and appreciation of others and of the environment, friendship and solidarity, peace, compassion and forgiveness, honesty, democracy and justice, and communication and non-violent conflict resolution. UNESCO-PEER-UNICEF, *Programme d’éducation à la paix en République Démocratique du Congo, Manuel de l’enseignant et activités diverse* (Nairobi 2000); République Démocratique du Congo, *Programme d’éducation à la paix. Le rêve de DIDI, Histoires et chansons* (Nairobi 2000) [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001562/156236fo.pdf] (last accessed on 04/05/2011). Similar peace education programmes were developed as part of the PEER project in conflict zones such as Somalia, Djibuti and Yemen.

⁴⁴³ UNESCO, UNITWIN. Democratic Republic of Congo [www.unesco.org/en/university-twinning-and-networking/access-by-region/africa/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/unesco-chair-in-culture-of-peace-541] (last accessed on 30/07/2012).

⁴⁴⁴ République Démocratique du Congo, Ministère de l’Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériel Didactique, *Programme national d’Histoire. Enseignement secondaire* (Kinshasa 2005). (28pp). According to a list of essential textbooks that was drafted by the government in 2009, several history schoolbooks were also recently published. These include: *Histoire 5ème primaire* (Commission Episcopale des Editions Chrétiennes/ CEEC, n.d.) ; *Histoire 6ème primaire: la R.D. Congo en Afrique et dans le monde des origines à nos jours* (New Scolot Edition n.d.) (158pp); *Regard sur l’histoire 1^{ère}, 2ème* (Kinshasa: Centre de Recherche Pédagogique-Pères de Scheut/ CRP n.d.) ; Lupamanyi Lisongo & Langwa Langwa, *Histoire en 1ère année secondaire* (Kinshasa: Missionnaires de Saint Paul/ Médiaspaul 2009) (161pp); Longo Kazumba & cie, *Histoire: classe terminales* (New Scolot Editions n.d.) (272pp). Comité de Pilotage Projet ‘Paquet minimum des manuels scolaires essentiels’, *Liste de manuels scolaires en charge de ‘Ediscolaires’* (a newly established association of local editors, printing houses and booksellers that have partnered with the government). République Démocratique du Congo, Ministère de l’Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Comité de Pilotage Projet ‘Paquet minimum des manuels scolaires essentiels’, *Etude de faisabilité du paquet minimum des manuels scolaires essentiels pour l’élève du primaire et l’élève du secondaire* (Kinshasa, December 2009).

history, the analysis of the national curriculum will be complemented and enriched by an in-depth review of a syllabus that was recently developed for local use in the especially troubled province of North Kivu.

4.4.2.2.1 General remarks on current curricula and textbooks

i. Authorship

In the DRC, school curricula are developed by the *Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériel Didactique* of the Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Professional Education. Further specification of their individual authors and contributors are absent from these official documents. As far as the schoolbooks are concerned, these are written by educational specialists conform the national curriculum and are mainly published by faith-based or private editors.

ii. Structure and organisation

The 2000 primary school curriculum encompasses official directives for the teaching of all subjects at the primary level.⁴⁴⁵ For each subject, the document outlines general and specific objectives, topics, and methodological directives, including teaching and learning activities (TLAs), evaluation methods, and desirable didactic material (e.g. drawings, pictures, illustrations, maps, syntheses, and sketches). The curriculum further lacks an indication of suggested time allocation for each topic, as well as a bibliographic list. In comparison with the primary school curriculum, the 2005 secondary school history curriculum appears to be more comprehensive. Following an introductory note and the description of the general objectives of the subject, for each grade, the document includes a final objective, a four-column table outlining basic competencies, specific objectives, topics and suggested time allocation, as well as more elaborated methodological

⁴⁴⁵ At the primary level, languages (Congolese and French) and math are allocated the bulk of teaching hours. These are followed by subjects of 'scientific awakening', namely Civic and Moral Education (ECM), Health and environmental education, and *Etude du milieu*. Taught as such at the *degré élémentaire* (P1-P2), *Etude du milieu* is split into history, geography and natural sciences at the *degré moyen* and *terminal* (P3-P6). A third degree of importance is given to subjects meant to promote pupils' aesthetic awakening. These include drawing, calligraphy, singing and music, physic education, and manual work.

indications. It instead fails to include a list of didactic and bibliographic references.

iii. Pedagogic approach

From a pedagogical perspective, the new curricula adopt a competence-based approach centred on both general and specific objectives. Framed around the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes (*savoirs*, *savoir-faire* and *savoir-être*), the material claims to embrace an active and participatory learner-centred pedagogy that promotes critical thinking rather than rote memorisation. In this respect, the 2005 history curriculum appears to only partially live up to its promises. The basic competencies and specific objectives proposed for this subject reveal a certain concern for the development of students' analytical skills. Learners are required not only to merely mention, define and describe 'facts', but also to explain, analyse, assess, and relate and compare them. In particular, pupils are expected to be able to identify origins, causes, processes and change, and positive and negative consequences related to history. The methodological indications reported in the curriculum, however, only occasionally require teachers to prompt students' active participation. While they are here and there invited to start their lessons with probing questions and by eliciting observations, teachers are explicitly advised to assign individual or group research and presentations, and to encourage debate in the classroom only one time throughout the entire programme.⁴⁴⁶ For the most part, the document mainly recommends the instructors to describe, explain and illustrate the suggested topics. In this regard, the primary school curriculum adopts a better practice insofar as it requires teachers to address historical issues by relating them to the present time as well as to the pupils' local environment.⁴⁴⁷ From a pedagogical point of view, the ECM course appears to point to a promising development. Having been reformed more recently, this course was found to embrace a more participative approach compared to the history curriculum. Throughout the methodological notes reported in the ECM curriculum, teachers are encouraged to enrich the content of

⁴⁴⁶ 2005 curriculum, 27.

⁴⁴⁷ 2000 curriculum, 143.

their lessons with such engaging activities as brainstorming, quiz, role-plays and simulations, case-studies, group work, discussions, conferences, debates, and guided visits.

iv. Aims of history teaching

At the primary level, the general objectives specified in the curriculum reveal a variety of aims attributed to the study of history. Some of these objectives relate to the acquisition of substantive knowledge (e.g. key events, dates and personalities), of disciplinary understandings (e.g. notions of evolution and civilisation) and of historical dispositions (an interest to discover the past and an adherence to objectivity). Others, instead, relate to the development of civic and social attitudes and values. On the one hand, the teaching of history is expected to promote international understanding by encouraging a discovery of interdependent relations among different peoples.⁴⁴⁸ On the other, its study is aimed at ‘awaken[ing] children’s patriotic and nationalist sentiments’.⁴⁴⁹ At the secondary level, the curriculum describes history as a ‘fundamental and strategic’ subject ‘of openness, awakening, mobilisation, *engagement*, socialisation, rooting and development’.⁴⁵⁰ More specifically, official directives highlight an intention to promote ‘republican values of freedom, democracy, brotherhood, justice, [and] solidarity’ with a view to shaping ‘complete, patriotic and hard-working’ citizens. The general objectives of the history course at this level further include the development: i) of a scientific, historical and critical spirit; ii) of a knowledge and understanding of past, present and future, as well as general creativity and maturity; and iii) of technical and basic notions.⁴⁵¹

v. Content and its organisation

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 7-8

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁵⁰ 2005 curriculum, 2.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 3-4. According to the syllabus analysed below, the importance of history relates to the ability to better understand and live the present, and to prepare for the future. In the syllabus’ words, ‘[t]he analysis of the past does not mean one should learn by heart dates and historical facts, but understand their importance in social life in order to live well the present and prepare the future. History syllabus, 4. See also, Longo, 7.

Content-wise, curricula have been updated and ‘decolonised’ in order to enhance their relevance. They have been made more relevant to the national and regional context, while also taking into account the history of the broader world. In the words of the 2005 curriculum, its developers adopted a ‘clearly globalist, African and Congolese perspective of history’.⁴⁵²

At the primary level, history, with an emphasis on the DRC, is taught as a separate subject for one hour per week from P3 onwards. As outlined in Table 11 below, after being provided with a general overview of Congolese history in P3 and P4, pupils learn about the national pre-colonial and colonial past more in depth in P5. In P6, the curriculum embraces a broader temporal and geographical perspective, covering a selection of topics in world history, the primary aim of which is to illustrate peoples’ interdependence.⁴⁵³ At the secondary level, a common history programme is taught in all classes for two hours per week. Starting each year with a general introduction to the discipline, the curriculum adopts a chronological and cross-regional approach which gives precedence to the study of African and Congolese history. In the first two years (*Cycle d’Orientation*), attention is given to African and Congolese ancient (S1) and colonial history (S2). In the S3-S6 upper cycle, the study of History starts anew. At this level, the subject deals successively with the ancient and prehistoric time (S3), the Middle-Ages and the Modern times (S4), the Contemporary time (S5), and the more recent period from 1945 until today (S6). The study of each era covers all continents, starting with Africa and ending by highlighting the historical relations between the different parts of the world. Notions on the national history, and in particular on the pre-colonial and colonial time, are presented in all classes, especially in S1, S2, and S6. In this last grade, pupils are provided with a ten-hour general synthesis of Congolese history ‘from the origins until today’. Concerning the regional history, the curriculum encompasses especially the study of pre-colonial Central Africa. With the exception of references to the Buganda kingdom, no explicit mention of neighbouring countries is however made.

⁴⁵² 2005 curriculum, 3.

⁴⁵³ Such topics include migrations, civilisations, Christianity and Islam, discoveries and explorations, and slavery and the slave trade.

Overview of general history-related topics presented in current Congolese curricula	
Level	2000 curriculum (P3-P6, 1h/w)
P3- P4	* Congolese history (key figures, events and dates); traditional and modern life
P5	* Pre-colonial history of Central Africa and DRC: peuplades: origins, lifestyle, and organisation, incl. kingdoms and empires * Congolese colonial history
P6	* World history: prehistory, settlement/migrations and civilisations; Christianity and Islam; great discoveries and explorations, slave trade
Level	2005 curriculum (2h/w for the all sections)
S1	* Prehistory, and world ancient civilisations * African and Congolese pre-colonial history: migrations and settlement, kingdoms and contact with the outside world
S2	* African and Congolese colonial history: explorations, missionaries, slave trade, colonisation
S3	* Prehistory and world ancient civilisations: in Africa, Europe and Asia * Migrations in Africa/ DRC
S4	* Middle Ages and Modern Times: in Africa/DRC (e.g. kingdoms and empires), and in Europe, America, and Asia * International relations: scientific progress and explorations
S5	* Contemporary history (1789-1945): in Africa/DRC: decline of ancient kingdoms, colonisation and resistances; and in Europe, Asia, and America (focus on revolutions, imperialism, nationalism and independence struggles) * International relations: WWs and inter-war period, incl. role and consequences for Africa and DRC
S6	* Contemporary history (from 1945 until today): in Africa/DRC: decolonisation, and problems of independent Africa, including civil wars and coups; in Europe, and Asia * World civilisations, and international relations: Cold War (neocolonialism and Third World) * Synthesis of Congolese history (from the origins until today) * Great contemporary problems in Africa, Europe, Asia and America

Table 11. Overview of general history-related topics presented in current Congolese curricula

With regard to the study of the national history, the preliminary analysis of the curriculum content that was conducted as part of this research pointed to a number of core topics which largely recur throughout the various grades (see table 12 below). Concerning the pre-colonial period, topics include the origins, migrations and settlement of various peoples, their ancient social and political organisation (i.e. kingdoms and empires), and their early contact with the outside world (i.e.

the explorations and the slave trade).⁴⁵⁴ As for the colonial time, the curriculum addresses the creation and organisation of the EIC and the Belgian Congo, instances of local resistance and the process of decolonisation, and ends with a general assessment of this period.⁴⁵⁵ Compared to the less recent past, the country's post-colonial history appears to be greatly neglected. At the secondary level, this more contemporary period is merely dealt with in S6. Here, the curriculum mentions the two Republics and the transition, without however further elaborating on the specific content of these topics. A more precise outline of this period is presented in the primary school curriculum, and in particular in the overview of key historical dates and events that is provided in P4 and P5. The proposed list includes references to the martyrs of independence, the beginning of the First Republic, and Lumumba's death; to the rebellions and secessions of the 1960s; to the advent and the end of the Second Republic; as well as to the creation of Mobutu's MPR, the Christians' march, and the establishment of the Sovereign National Conference (CNS).

	Congo's national history in the curriculum (secondary education)
Pre-colonial Congo 27h in S1 (+ 21h embedded in African history in S1, S3 and S4 + synthesis in S6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Migrations and settlement: pygmies, bantu, sudanics and nilotics; their origins, lifestyle, and political, economic, and socio-cultural organisation) * Kingdoms and empires: e.g. Kongo, Kuba, Pende, Luba, Lunda; and stateless societies * First contacts with the outside world: Arab and European slave trade, foreign explorations and penetration of the Congo Basin, and the Berlin Conference
Colonial Congo 3h on EIC in S1, 22h in S2 (+ 10 embedded in history of African colonisation and resistances in S5 + synthesis national history in S6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Creation of the EIC: administrative organisation, and social, cultural and economic realisations * Congo under Belgian domination: organisation and political evolution of the Belgian Congo; assessment of policies: positive and negative aspects * Anti-colonial resistances, and decolonisation: e.g. causes, actors
Independent Congo (6h embedded in history of African decolonisation and post-independence problems, including dictatorship, wars and coups in S6 + synthesis national history in S6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 1st and 2nd Republics, and transition (until 2006) * At the primary level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key historical figures: Lumumba, Kasa-Vubu, Mobutu; as well as Cao, King Alphonse, Livingstone and Stanley; - Key historical events and dates: creation of the EIC, martyrs of independence, independence, and Lumumba's death;

⁴⁵⁴ These topics are addressed in P5 and S1, and to a lesser extent in S3 and S4.

⁴⁵⁵ These topics are addressed in P5 and S2, and to a lesser extent in S1 and S5.

	rebellions and secessions; the advent and the end of the Second Republic; the creation of Mobutu's MPR, the march of Christians, and the CNS
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Table 12. Congo's national history in the curriculum

Besides the subject of history, ECM is another important carrier of historical notions. Its curriculum shows that, in P4 and especially P5, pupils are expected to learn about key events, dates and personalities in Congolese history. Here, the focus is placed on national heroes and role models, as well as on cases and examples of nationalism. Also, the course requires children to be able to compare the country's various constitutions as well as citizens' rights and freedoms throughout history, 'while avoiding to incite hatred and violence in pupils'. In referring to the importance of linking ECM to other subjects, its methodological directives reported in the 2000 curriculum underscore the civic value of history. Specifically, the document declares that,

'Through the many opportunities of civic instruction that it offers, the national history course will be a valuable contribution to the formation of the good citizen.'

*The teacher will use every opportunity to nurture the cult of our great men, of our heroes, of all those who have contributed and contribute to the greatness of the fatherland. The patriotic ceremonies will be obligatorily explained and followed by an active participation in the organised festivities.*⁴⁵⁶

To a lesser extent, historical notions are also transmitted through other subjects, including geography, music, the national languages, and physical education. Historical notions are conveyed through these four courses respectively by teaching such topics as the evolution of the country's administrative and political organisation, historical and traditional songs, historical accounts, and traditional games and dances.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ 2000 curriculum, 76.

⁴⁵⁷ In S2, in particular, the geography curriculum deals, among other things, with the historical evolution of the country's administrative and political organisation from 1885 to 2003, traditional societies and their organisation, and the colonial political and economic legacy.

4.4.2.2.2 Content analysis: Congolese history according to current history curricula and textbooks

The overview of curriculum contents outlined above illustrates the general historical themes that are considered to be the most significant by the government. In this respect, apart from a few additions in relation to the recent past, the topics that are currently taught with regard to the national history do not significantly differ from those mentioned in didactic guidelines developed in previous decades. While the list of topics presented in the curriculum is not detailed enough to reveal a clear official interpretation of the national past, a complementary analysis of current textbooks allows us to discern the specific understanding of the country's history as is narrated by their respective authors, and the extent to which this has changed compared to the past. The relevance of textbook analysis is enhanced by the reality that, in contexts such as the DRC, what is recounted in textbooks tends to coincide with what is taught and learned in the classroom. As widespread recourse to a traditional text-based pedagogy is reportedly the norm in the country, the narrative conveyed through schoolbooks and other didactic materials is likely to be largely transmitted as it is by (poorly qualified, poorly motivated and poorly equipped) teachers, and to be subsequently reproduced by pupils through rote memorisation.

With the aim of complementing and enriching the curriculum analysis presented in the previous paragraphs, during the school visits that were conducted in the Kivu in autumn 2009 as part of this research, two secondary school manuals were collected from history teachers. The first is *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, which was published in 2006 for S5 and S6 levels. Written by the then history teacher Longo Kazumba, this schoolbook, the content of which has been analysed in Chapter 4.3.2.2, is a reproduction of an edition that was published in the 1980s. Conforming to the old curriculum, and covering Congolese history from the origins until 1985, this manual was apparently still in use at the time of the field research, despite its largely outdated content. The second didactic material that was collected is a syllabus for S6-classes. This was produced for the school year 2008-2009 by a history teacher who was employed at the Institute Maendeleo in

Goma.⁴⁵⁸ As opposed to Longo's textbook, this recent syllabus follows the new curriculum. Accordingly, it also presents a general synthesis on the national history from the origins until 2009. Topics include the country's ancient migrations and kingdoms, its evolution under colonial rule, the two Republics, the 1990-2006 transition, and the recent wars (see table 13).

Contents of the 2008/2009 history syllabus (Goma)	
<i>Introduction</i>	* A general introduction to the discipline (19pp)
<i>Pre-colonial Africa/Congo</i>	* Peopling and migration (3pp) * Empires and kingdoms (30pp, of which 10pp on the DRC, and 3pp on the Great Lakes)
<i>Early contacts with the outside world and colonial Africa/Congo</i>	* Discoveries, slave trade/resistance, explorations, and colonisation (12pp)
<i>Contemporary time</i>	* Post-WWII period: in Africa (in particular its decolonisation) (9pp), in Europe (10pp) and in Asia (2pp) * Contemporary civilisations (6pp) * Contemporary international relations and problems (including neocolonialism) (3pp)
<i>Synthesis on Congo's political history until 2009</i>	* Introduction: chronological overview of regimes and country's names, and geographical context * Congo before the colonisation * Leopold's enterprise in Central Africa, the EIC, the Belgian Congo, African reactions, WWII and its aftermath, and the march towards independence * Independent Congo, the Second Republic, the long transition towards democratisation, and the wars (17pp)

Table 13. Contents of the 2008/2009 history syllabus (Goma)

In the paragraphs below, this study proposes an in-depth examination of the contents of the current curricula and of the recent syllabus. In the analysis, frequent parallels will be drawn with *Histoire. Classes Terminales* based on the observation that, while the syllabus appeared to be strongly influenced by this earlier publication, it sometimes also clearly took distance from this book, thereby demonstrating a conscious choice to review and update some of its author's arguments.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ J.M. Muzungu Baderha B., *Syllabus du cours d'histoire dans les classes de sixièmes années des humanités secondaires*. Version I. Année scolaire 2008-2009.

⁴⁵⁹ *Histoire. Classes Terminales* was included in the syllabus' bibliographic list (1983 edition). The list of 35 titles encompasses a total of nine publications on African colonial history (UNESCO 1989), on regional conflicts (Andre 1996, Braekman 1995, Ngbanda 2004 and Péan 2005 on Rwanda), as well as schoolbooks (Longo 1983, Lambin *Histoire terminales*, De Saint Moulin 1983); one BA thesis on the Banyamulenge insurrection; four reports (by HRW and OCHA) and 2 journals (by AMANI and CERDAC) on the wars in the DRC; 1 conference paper on the transition, and 17 lecture notes. Throughout the text, the syllabus also cites a few more authors, such as L. Greindl, J. Ki-zerbo, Tshimanga wa Thsubangu, and Salmon.

4.4.2.2.1 Identity, origins and migrations, and pre-colonial societies and states

Today, in the DRC, the theme of identity is addressed in the primary and secondary school curriculum through various subjects.

Through the courses of ECM and geography, in particular, pupils learn about the composition of the population of their country and of their province. Here, references are made to the notions of clan, tribe (and its location), *ethnie*,⁴⁶⁰ and nationality,⁴⁶¹ as well as to the variety of languages and religions that characterize the nation. While it does not appear in relation to the Congolese context, the concept of ‘race’ is also mentioned as a topic in the study of Africa’s geography.⁴⁶² If, on the one hand, the ECM curriculum recognises the existence of essential differences, on the other, it underscores the theme of national unity and national consciousness, as well of African and international solidarity.⁴⁶³

In the history curriculum, the topic of identity is addressed through the study of the ancient migrations and settlement of the various peoples inhabiting (Central) Africa and the Congo. The most detailed presentation of this topic is provided in the P5 curriculum. Specifically, the document refers to the origins, lifestyle and activities of the groups out of which the country’s population was composed. These include the pygmies – the ‘[f]irst inhabitants of the Congo, driven back by the Bantu’ – together with the Bantu, the Sudanics, and the Nilotics. In outlining the ancient social organisation of these groups, the document mentions the notions of family, lineage, clan and tribe, as well as of nobles and slaves.

On the issue of Africa’s and Congo’s ancient migrations and settlement, the content of the syllabus greatly resembles, and sometimes entirely reproduces and plagiarises descriptions presented in *Histoire. Classes terminales*. Echoing Longo’s schoolbook, the syllabus speaks of the existence of a number of ‘ethnic groups’ (*and* ‘races’). Each is associated with a distinct area of residence, socio-

⁴⁶⁰ ECM, 144. .

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, 124, 127.

⁴⁶² Here, a distinction is for instance made between ‘white’ and ‘black’ Africa. 2000 curriculum (P6), 146; and 2005 curriculum (S1), 17-18.

⁴⁶³ ECM, 32.

economic activity, and physiognomy (e.g. size and height, skin colour, and shape of nose, lips and crane), as well as with specific origins.⁴⁶⁴ Besides groups which do not pertain to the Congolese context, namely the Bushmen, the Hottentots and the ‘Whites’ of North Africa (e.g. the Berbers, ancient Egyptians, and Lybians), African, and Congolese people in particular, are categorised into two main clusters: the old pygmies or *negrilles*, such as the Bambuti and the Batswa, and the ‘negroes’, including the Bantu, the Sudanics, and the Nilotics/*Chamites*. Here, while the Hutu are mentioned as belonging to the agriculturalist Bantu majority, the Tutsi are associated to the tall pastoralist Nilotics/ *Chamites*.⁴⁶⁵

An additional note is warranted with regard to the ancient interlacustrine states.⁴⁶⁶ As opposed to Longo’s schoolbook, which referred to the domination of the Chamites and the subsequent foundation of the region’s kingdoms, the syllabus seems to trace the origins of such political entities back to the Bantu migrations.⁴⁶⁷ Also, while it largely reproduces Longo’s argument on the domination of pastoralist groups in Bunyoro and Nkole,⁴⁶⁸ with regard to ancient Rwanda, the syllabus omits Longo’s reference to the domination of the Tutsi pastoralist aristocracy. Instead, the manual limits itself to citing Rwanda’s three ‘peoples’: the hunter pygmy Twa (the first inhabitants), the agriculturalist and land owners Hutu and the pastoralist Bahima/Batutsi.⁴⁶⁹ By referring to the Hutu as ‘*agriculteurs propriétaires des terres*’, the syllabus seems to convey an understanding of this group’s right to land ownership, and by extension to the country’s territory, as the rightful owners of Rwanda. Rather than further elaborating on the nature of the relations between these groups, the emphasis is mainly placed on presenting Rwanda’s most important kings, especially in the

⁴⁶⁴ In this last respect, the syllabus underscores a difficulty deriving from old flawed theories, including theories about the non-African origins of certain groups.

⁴⁶⁵ Syllabus, 47-48.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 64-66. Longo, 85-88. With regard to the situation on the Congolese side of the border, the syllabus also mentions the ancient existence of numerous centralised agro-pastoral kingdoms with a medieval-like socio-economic organisation, such as the Bushi, the Buhunde, and the Buhavu. 66.

⁴⁶⁷ The syllabus mentions Bunyoro, Kitara, Nkore, Buganda, Bugesera, etc. 48 ; Longo, 85.

⁴⁶⁸ According to the syllabus, ‘the herders exerted their dominance over the Bantu who were farmers and create the Bito dynasty’. 66. Longo’s schoolbook and the syllabus situated its foundation by the Bachwezi in the 15th and in the 16th century respectively.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

context of the kingdom's expansionist wars.⁴⁷⁰ Rwabugiri, in particular, is portrayed as a 'heroic character', 'thirsty for glory' and 'concerned with perpetrating (sic) the image of a conquering Rwanda'. In the syllabus, he is said to have dominated the Ruzizi-Kivu region through various military campaigns, namely against the Hunde, the Havu and the Shi. Of Rwabugiri's attacks against the Bushi, the author retains, with a nationalistic undertone, that the Rwandan king was confronted with Shi troops that were 'fresh and ready to defend their land against the aggressing enemies'.⁴⁷¹ As for ancient Burundi, while Longo had traced the foundation of the kingdom back to 'the slow infiltration of pastoralist Tutsi from Rwanda' in the 18th century, the syllabus limits itself to situating its foundation by King Ntare Rushatsi in the 16th century. For the rest, echoing Longo, the manual reduces the ancient history of the Burundian kingdom to a succession of skirmishes with neighbouring Rwanda.⁴⁷²

4.4.2.2.2 History: Belgian colonial occupation and oppression, and the heroic liberation struggle against colonisation, dictatorship, and regional re-colonisation

4.4.2.2.2.1 The colonial time

The current curriculum dedicates considerable attention to Congo's colonial history. In relation to the country's experience under foreign domination, the P5 history curriculum, in particular, seems to sketch a rather positive image of the EIC period compared to the more mixed assessment of the official Belgian colonisation. With regard to the EIC, the document refers to its '*grandes réalisations*', namely the promotion of geographical explorations, anti-slavery campaigns, and infrastructural, institutional and social development. In its presentation of Belgium's colonial regime, instead, the curriculum underlines both its advantages and disadvantages: political, economic, and social development and progress, on the one hand, and racial discrimination, forced labour, and pillage of natural resources, on the other hand.

⁴⁷⁰ Longo's schoolbook mentioned King Mutara I, Cyrima II and Kigeri IV. The syllabus instead refers to Rwanda's founder Gihanga, and in particular to Rwabugiri and its military campaigns. In the syllabus, space is also given to briefly present the kingdom's political organisation.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 65; Longo, 88.

In the syllabus, both the positive and negative consequences of colonisation are outlined, although a stronger focus seems to be placed on the latter. From a positive perspective, the manual presents this period as having been marked by social, economic and infrastructural progress and development. In describing the process that led to the creation of the EIC, the didactic material portrayed the objectives of King Leopold's conferences and associations as being of scientific, humanitarian, and commercial nature. Specifically, the author mentioned the sponsoring of geographical explorations; the promotion of civilisation, and of a fight against slavery, tribal wars and disease; the opening of Africa to world commerce, and, in particular, the provision of raw material and markets to the benefit of Belgium.⁴⁷³ As for its more negative effects, the syllabus reports the destruction of ancient kingdoms, the violent suppression of local resistance, the introduction of racial segregation, the exploitation of natural resources,⁴⁷⁴ the imposition of 'forced labour' and excessive *corvées* (e.g. the 'heavy' and 'unbearable' railway construction work),⁴⁷⁵ and the perpetration of 'abuses and atrocities' in the framework of the 'Red Rubber' enterprise.⁴⁷⁶ In this overall context of imposed suffering, the manual also underscores the enormous Congolese sacrifices made during the two World Wars, by providing raw and natural material as well as forced labour. According to the syllabus, during WWII, 'all villages contributed to the war effort'; '[t]he Congo equipped its army and that of Belgium'. As recounted in the text, such efforts had resulted in proud achievements. In its words, 'the Congolese scored resounding victories'.⁴⁷⁷ The author further highlights how the Congolese people, exploited and abused, had been kept under the colonial yoke by limiting educational opportunities as well as by opening breweries 'to drug the Black so that they remain in a millenary sleep.'⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷³ According to Longo, the early European slave trade had been conducted after the initial protest of Kongo's king, and later with the involvement of local chiefs due to their greed. 91. With regard to Stanley, the syllabus recounts how, 'his accounts roused European opinion on the horrors of the treaty.' 86.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

With regard to the decolonisation period, the syllabus refers to the 1959 ‘explosion’ which had followed the refusal by the colonial authorities to allow a meeting of the nationalist ABAKO party. In the text, this party is described as ‘the most dynamic of tribal associations in the Belgian Congo, which until 1960 was the spearhead of Congo’s independence movement’.⁴⁷⁹ The image portrayed by the author seemed to be one of asymmetric confrontation between the police, who were shooting on the masses, and the masses, who were responding by throwing stones. According to the manual, as a result of the violence, hundreds of wounded and dozens of dead could be counted among the Congolese ‘martyrs of independence’.⁴⁸⁰ As opposed to the numerous Congolese victims, ‘only’ 49 wounded were reported among the Europeans.⁴⁸¹

Although the syllabus rejoices Congo’s eventual achievement of independence in 1960, its author underscores the advent of a condition of neo-colonialism in its wake. This is described as a continued ‘state of economic and cultural domination’ which had been imposed by foreign powers with the aim of ‘neutralising, recolonising and dividing’ the Third World. According to the author, as a result of neocolonial practices, Third-World countries, such as the DRC, had been victims of ‘repetitive wars, tribalism, nepotism, pillage, rape, balkanisation, etc.’⁴⁸²

4.4.2.2.2.2 The First and the Second Republic

As mentioned earlier, in comparison with the pre-colonial and the colonial times, Congo’s post-colonial history has not received much consideration in the current curriculum. Events related to this more recent period are addressed especially in S6, the grade for which the collected didactic material was developed.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 98-99.

⁴⁸⁰ Between 241 and 510 wounded, and between 48 and 60 deaths.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, 100.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 89.

Similar to Zairian schoolbooks, the recent syllabus sketches a predominantly negative image of the First Republic, one marked by a political life that was ‘very agitated and plunged into chaos’. Of this period the author retains especially the various mutinies, rebellions and secessions; the tensions between Lumumba and Kasa-vubu; the ‘neutralisation’ of the government by Mobutu, and the arrest and death of Lumumba; as well as the subsequent succession of several governments, which ended with Mobutu’s coup in 1965.⁴⁸³ According to the text, the coup had showed ‘the incompetence of the Republic’ and its incapacity to govern itself.⁴⁸⁴

The description of the Second Republic as presented in this recent guide greatly diverges from the view that had been disseminated by textbooks developed under Mobutu’s rule. In a denunciatory tone, the author recounted how the Second Republic was headed by ‘a strong regime’, which had long subjugated the Congolese people by depriving them of their basic rights to well-being and security. In stark contrast to the celebratory vein characterising old schoolbooks, the manuals underscores that,

*‘It is important to remember that to better subdue the people, the tactics of the Mobutu regime had consisted in starving them by undermining the economy, in depriving them of education, training and health care through the destruction of all educational and health facilities. He offered ... insecurity by pitting them against the army and by destroying the national army while encouraging private militias. In so doing, he ruled without fear for a long time without being challenged’.*⁴⁸⁵

Having represented Mobutu’s presidency as a period of oppression and misery, the syllabus further portrays the ‘long’ democratisation process that started in the 1990s as ‘a true liberation of the Congolese’.⁴⁸⁶ The author reports that, hindered by the regime, this promising transitional process had unfortunately been accompanied by a number of violent incidents. These included atrocities and

⁴⁸³ The syllabus underscores the Americans’ involvement in the coup that brought Mobutu to power. It suggests that US president J. Kennedy ‘reorganised the central government also bringing together the secessionists into one army led by Colonel Mobutu.’ 100-101.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 102.

massacres perpetrated against students and the Luba community, as well as the violent repression of Christians' protests.

4.4.2.2.2.3 The wars of 1996 and of 1998

Produced in Goma in 2008-2009, the syllabus includes the topic of the two recent wars that ravaged the Kivu region in particular.

With respect to the First Congo War, attention is paid to presenting the creation of the AFDL, which took place shortly after what the text describes as a 'so-called "Banyamulenge rebellion"'. Here, the author underscores the external origins of the movement, describing it as a cunning foreign construction with a hidden agenda. According to the syllabus, the aims of the rebellion, which had been founded in Rwanda, included overthrowing 'the dictator', as well as dismantling Hutu refugee camps, pillaging Congolese resources, and dominating the Congo. In a critical tone, the author declares that, '[t]his false rebellion and true aggression was led by Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, etc., with the motive to "free the country".' Concerning the Second Congo War, the syllabus once again underlines the responsibility of neighbouring countries, spearheaded by Rwanda, in this 'great crisis that continues to this day'. According to the manual, acting under the pretext of securing their borders, regional actors, in reality, aimed at gaining access to Congo's rich resources. Rwanda especially is accused by the author of having been behind the creation of the new RDC-Goma rebellion, with the support of certain Western powers.⁴⁸⁷ Whereas the causes of Congo's recent wars and misery are primarily traced to a shrewd manoeuvring by aggressive and predatory foreign actors, in the syllabus no mention is made of local stakes and interests.

In the context of 'the Congolese crisis', the manual further outlines the various peacemaking efforts that had been made to end the war. In relation to the Global and Inclusive Accord in particular, the author mentions for instance the 'difficult'

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 102-104.

power-sharing formula that was endorsed on this occasion.⁴⁸⁸ Once again with a negative undertone, the ensuing period of transition, which ended in 2006 with the organisation of ‘free, democratic and transparent’ elections, is described in the syllabus as a long process that was hindered by many ‘weaknesses’. Specifically, the author points the finger at those ‘Congolese by name who did not want the end of the war’ and who were simple ‘puppets’ (of foreign powers). Among those who are depicted as the main spoilers of peace in the Kivu were armed militias, notably Nkunda’s CDNP. In the syllabus, their militant activities are reported to have ravaged especially in North Kivu. As a result, according to the author, North Kivu was a province ‘where [the war] continues until today, very violently’, and where ‘it chose its domicile’,⁴⁸⁹ causing death and mass displacement. The manual finally concludes by mentioning the 2008 Goma Peace Conference. The text outlines the participants, objectives and results of the conference, such as the establishment of the ‘very appreciated’ Amani Programme. Aimed at stabilizing the region, this programme is described as having been unfortunately unable to prevent the resumption of violent confrontations. As the author reports, in October 2008, the CNDP had restarted the war, while a new aggression was being conducted by ‘unknown brigades’. Once again, the primary blame is apportioned to neighbouring countries: according to the author, trustworthy sources had revealed that ‘these attacks are directed by Rwanda’.⁴⁹⁰

Against the backdrop of a difficult and highly contested national past, the next section of this chapter will move to examining views and perceptions that were collected among Congolese students on their country’s history and destiny. Their views will subsequently be juxtaposed to those expressed across the border by young people in neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi.

⁴⁸⁸ The syllabus mentions the meetings in Lusaka, Gaborone, Addis-Ababa, Pretoria, and Sun City. 103.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 104-105.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 106.

4.5 Representing Congo's past and present: an analysis of young people's views and perceptions

In the DRC, a total of 999 young people took part in the survey that was conducted in the field in autumn/winter 2009. Participants included 555 boys and 402 girls (plus 42 respondents who did not specify their gender). They were drawn from sixteen secondary schools located in North and South Kivu (see map 4). Born between 1989 and 1996, most respondents had an age varying between 13 and 20 at the time of the survey. Students as young as 11 and as old as 34 were however also among the participants as a consequence of the considerable age discrepancies that characterise Congolese classrooms today.⁴⁹¹ Up to 95% of the surveyed youth were born and raised in the two highly volatile Kivu provinces – 65% in North Kivu and 30% in South Kivu. The remaining 5% were instead born and raised either elsewhere in the Congo (3,5%)⁴⁹² or, to a lesser extent, abroad, especially in neighbouring Rwanda (1,5%).⁴⁹³ Consequently, most respondents were found to belong to some of Kivu's main 'tribes', including Hunde, Nande and Hutu in North Kivu, and Shi and Rega in South Kivu. Conversely, participants from other communities, such as the Tutsi, were only very few in number.⁴⁹⁴ While largely diverse, the surveyed population appeared to share a common experience of violence and displacement which had deeply affected their lives. Having lived in the midst of persistent insecurity, the majority reported having been displaced at least once in their life time due to wars, rebellions,

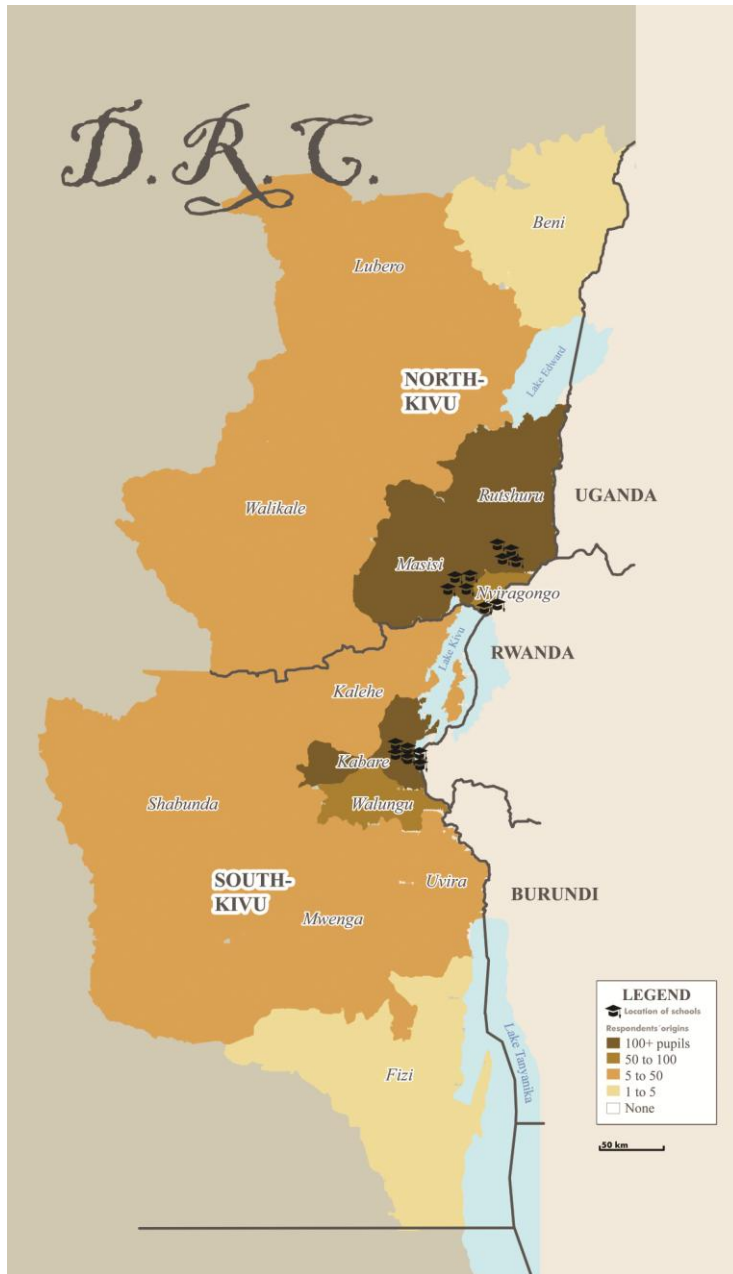
⁴⁹¹ The oldest participant was born in 1975, the youngest in 1998.

⁴⁹² These respondents were born and raised either in the east (Maniema, Oriental Province and Katanga) (1-3%) or in the west (Kinshasa, Bas-Congo, Bandundu, Equateur, and Western Kasai) (0,5%).

⁴⁹³ Other countries that were mentioned were South Africa, Uganda, Burundi and Kenya.

⁴⁹⁴ As opposed to the survey in Rwanda and Burundi, in the DRC respondents were asked to specify their *ethnie*, tribe and clan. As emerged from students' answers, participants showed great confusion as to the difference between the three categories. These concepts were in fact often used interchangeably. According to the lead research assistant, 'the question on the clan, tribe and *ethnie* has seemed to be the most difficult in the eyes of the pupils, who say to have never learned about it.'

banditry as well as natural disasters.⁴⁹⁵ As will clearly come to the fore in the analysis presented in this section, such traumatic experiences strongly influenced and shaped young people’s views on the history and destiny of their country.



Map 4. Students' origins and school distribution

⁴⁹⁵ Ca. 55%, i.e. 568 respondents, stated that they or their family had been displaced at least once for security reasons. In particular, students mentioned the two Congo Wars, Nkunda's wars in Sake, Kiwanja and Rutshuru (especially in 2008), and in Bukavu (2004); attacks by the FDLR; banditry; as well as the Nyiragongo volcanic eruption (2002) and the famine.

4.5.1 The history of the DRC according to Congolese students

4.5.1.1 General remarks on the structure and content of the narratives

4.5.1.1.1 *Structure of the narratives*

As in Rwanda and Burundi, Congolese historical narratives were generally structured according to a temporal division into pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. Despite this commonly accepted temporal framework, in narrating the history of their country ‘*from its origins until today*’, students variously placed the point of departure of the recounted tale in either the pre-colonial or the colonial period. In the former case, respondents recounted their country’s history starting from the time of the Bantu migrations or of the ancient kingdoms and empires. As underscored in a couple of accounts, the Congo was already inhabited, and therefore already had a history, prior to the arrival of the ‘whites’. In the latter case, instead, the beginning of this history was seen as coinciding either with the arrival of European explorers in the 15th century or with the Berlin Conference and the colonisation – that is, when the Congo was formally recognised as a country. Also, while this tripartite chronological repartition was commonly accepted, respondents were found to disagree on the date that marked the beginning of the colonial period. Depending on whether or not the Leopoldian era was considered as ‘colonisation’, the advent of this chapter in the country’s history was variously situated either in 1885 (date of the creation of the EIC) or in 1908 (date of the establishment of the Belgian Congo and of the formal commencement of colonial rule).

More so than across the border, accounts tended to be organised around a large number of key dates and personalities that were seen as marking the country's political history. In particular, among the most cited events were:

- Cão's discovery of the mouth of the river Congo (1482);
- the establishment of Leopold's EIC (1885) and of the Belgian Congo (1908);
- the achievement of independence (30-06-1960) and Lumumba's assassination (17-01-1961);
- Mobutu's coup (24-11-1965);
- L.D. Kabila's coup (17-05-1997) and his murder (16-01-2001);
- the inauguration of J. Kabila's presidency following his democratic election (06-12-2006); and, finally,
- Nkunda's war (e.g. 2008).

Despite their overall exceptional chronological precision – to the point of occasionally mentioning the exact day and time of certain events, – Congolese essays were not void of factual confusions, inconsistencies, and mistakes. Some few accounts, for instance, erroneously identified the Portuguese, the British or the Germans as Congo's colonisers.

4.5.1.1.2 Overview of the content and topics of the narratives

The analysis conducted for the purpose of this study revealed the recurrence of a number of prominent topics in Congolese narratives. As emerged above, these appeared to be primarily concerned with the country's political history, and especially with the more recent post-colonial era.⁴⁹⁶

With regard to the greatly neglected pre-colonial time, two themes were generally addressed by Congolese students, namely the history of migrations and Congo's various kingdoms and empires. Compared to the more extensive descriptions found in Rwanda and Burundi on their respective kingdoms, in Congo such

⁴⁹⁶ In the DRC as well, narratives also tended to include numerous references to the country's geography.

entities were merely mentioned in passing.⁴⁹⁷ The most detailed accounts on this topic were generally limited to citing the name of a handful of monarchs. Concerning the time of the colonisation, while accounts often included brief references to the early contacts with European explorers as well as to the foundation of the EIC,⁴⁹⁸ most attention was paid to denouncing the colonial misdeeds committed under Belgian rule, as well as to exalting Lumumba's independence struggle. As for the post-colonial era, narratives largely reduced the history of this period to a succession of heads of state, i.e. Kasa-vubu and Lumumba, Mobutu, L.D. Kabila, and J. Kabila. Some of the most outspoken essays offered an assessment of these politicians' leadership. Also, they suggested hypotheses regarding the murders of the two national heroes Lumumba and Mzee Kabila. Moving into the present time, the narration of the national history tended to focus on the particularly troubled provinces of North and South Kivu.⁴⁹⁹ Accounts of this period provided lengthy descriptions of the provinces' various wars and general insecurity, and elaborated views on the way forward.

The history of the DRC as recounted by Congolese students can be summarised with the words of a respondent who well captured the common representation of the national past provided by her fellows. As she recounted,

'A long time ago, Congo's territory was inhabited by the pygmies, who were eventually dislodged by the great Bantu migrations. Numerous kingdoms and empires were later founded, such as the Kingdom of Kongo. The first contact with the outside world was established in 1482, when the Portuguese explorer Cão discovered the mouth of the river Congo. In 1885, following the Berlin Conference and various explorations, the Belgian King Leopold II created the EIC, which in 1908 was ceded to Belgium, becoming the Belgian Congo. After many decades of abuse and humiliation, including slavery, the colonisation by the whites came to an end in 1960 thanks to the independence struggle of our national hero Lumumba, who was assassinated in 1961. In 1965, Mobutu took over power, establishing a long dictatorship at the head of the newly founded Zaire. He was toppled by L.D. Kabila's liberation war in 1997. In 2001, Kabila was killed and was subsequently replaced by his son J. Kabila, who was democratically elected in 2006. Today, he remains our president, at a time when the country and its population are deeply suffering due to a multitude of political

⁴⁹⁷ These included the Kongo, Luba, Lunda, Kuba, Pende, and Yeke kingdoms/empires. In a couple of cases, essays also mentioned Kivu's local kingdoms, most notably the Rega and the Shi empires.

⁴⁹⁸ Students cited Cão, Stanley, and Livingston. Only very few students instead mentioned Congo's contacts with the Arab world.

⁴⁹⁹ Typically, references to the local history mainly concerned events of the last decade, and more particularly the war.

*and socio-economic problems. This is especially true in the two provinces of North and South Kivu, which have been victims of perpetual war and widespread abuse to this day.*⁵⁰⁰

As revealed by the citation above, Congolese essays tended to be primarily factual, thereby showing limited evidence of analytical skills. Although the How and Why of History were often omitted, students at times offered interesting insights, analyses, and opinions, which allowed for a deeper examination of their thinking on their country's past, present and future. As in Rwanda and Burundi, if a degree of consensus was found on both the structure and the main topics of the narratives, the survey also brought to light the existence of a main guiding thread in the general narration of Congo's historical trajectory. Specifically, a propensity was detected in Congolese accounts to present the national history as a long tale of woe and victimhood – a perception that resulted in an apparently overwhelming sense of pessimism, frustration and even resignation towards both the present and the future.

In line with the previous case-studies, the following paragraphs will provide an in-depth analysis of Congolese historical narratives. Once again, the emphasis will be placed on examining students' views on some of the most sensitive and controversial issues related to the themes of identity and origins, and of the country's troubled history. This section will be followed by a complementary analysis of young people's representations of these same themes in neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi.

4.5.1.2 Identities in the DRC and in the Kivu: categorisations and origins

Asked to narrate the history of the Congo and of its inhabitants from the origins until today, Congolese students often included discussions on issues of identity, origins, and migration in their essays. To a great extent, these revealed their understanding of the Congolese nation.

⁵⁰⁰ C71.

As a general rule, Congo's inhabitants were referred to as '*les congolais*'. At times, the Congolese were further described as a people of 'blacks' as opposed to 'the whites'. If accounts typically highlighted the common national and sometimes racial identity of Congo's peoples, students also regularly underscored the great heterogeneity as well as the ancient existence of differences within the population. Specifically, the DRC was recurrently portrayed as a complex mosaic composed of hundreds of what were generally referred to as 'tribes', or, more rarely, as '*ethnies*'. They were categorised by several respondents into a number of larger groups – sometimes *also* called '*ethnies*', – each with its distinct geographical origins, time of settlement on Congolese soil, and main socio-economic occupation.

Among these categories, the Pygmies and the Bantu were the most frequently cited. The former, also called '*négrilles*', were commonly described as a minority of nomad, forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers, fishers, and crafters. Occasionally portrayed as 'small' and 'primitive' people, the pygmies were reported to be the descendants of the country's first inhabitants. The Bantu, instead, whom one student represented as being essentially agriculturalists, were depicted as a group originating from Northern Africa (i.e. the Sahara, Chad). They were usually said to have 'followed' or, more antagonistically, to have 'driven back' or 'chased away' the pre-existing pygmies, subsequently founding Congo's many kingdoms and empires. Compared to the Pygmies and the Bantu, other clusters, namely the '*semi-bantu*', the '*soudanais*', and the '*nilotiques*', were only sporadically mentioned. In these few cases, accounts generally labelled the Nilotics in the east and the Sudanics in the north-east (e.g. the Azande, the Mangbetu, and the Ngwandi) as a minority of pastoralists. In accordance to old beliefs, the Nilotics – twice also referred to as '*nilohamites*' and '*hamites*' – were said to comprise the 'dominant' and late-comers Tutsi and Hima. Their geographical origins, according to a respondent, were to be found in 'Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, etc'. While such groups were often omitted in students' representations of the nation, in several essays, respondents excluded them from the national narrative by associating not only themselves, but also the entire Congolese population, with the Bantu specifically. As two students observed:

'We the Bantu met the pygmies here on Congolese territory and we drove them back; today, we surpass them in number'.

'The inhabitants of the DRC are the Congolese, who are Bantu people'.⁵⁰¹

In North Kivu especially, where accounts on origins, migrations, and settlement were also specifically found in relation to the province's history, a number of students drew a neat line between 'us, the Bantu' and 'them, the Nilotics'. As will be illustrated later in this section, in the local setting of the Kivu, the term 'Nilotic' was used to refer not only to the Tutsi, but also to Rwandans or Banyarwanda in general – *both* Tutsi and Hutu. The distinction between 'Bantu Congolese' on the one hand, and 'Nilotic Rwandans' currently living in the province on the other hand, was highlighted by a couple of Nande and Hunde students in particular, who referred to these communities' different origins and time of arrival in the area. The groups to which they belonged were described as tribes from South-western Uganda that had settled in the province during the pre-colonial era. The Banyarwanda, instead, were believed to have arrived from Rwanda at a later stage, notably during the colonial and post-colonial periods. In a handful of narratives, the theme of autochthony, which primarily distinguished between Congolese '*originaires*' and Rwandan '*étrangers*', clearly came to the fore. Without explicitly situating the reported events in time, a Hunde and a Nande respondent, especially, recounted that,

'When the pastoralist Nilotic Hutu from Rwanda arrived in Rutshuru, they managed to acquire the land of the Hunde, who were already there, in exchange for their beautiful women.'

'At some point in history, people from Rwanda arrived in Rutshuru and Masisi in great numbers, massively occupying the land of those originaires to the province, such as the Nande, the Hunde, the Nyanga, and the Pygmies.'⁵⁰²

As will emerge in the next paragraphs, these alien and threatening 'others' were among the main actors in students' accounts of Congo's 'bad' and 'sad' history.

⁵⁰¹ C174, C288.

⁵⁰² C223, C305.

4.5.1.3 The evolution of Congolese history: tracing the origins and sources of Congo's historical misery

Essays that were collected in the DRC revealed young people's overwhelming adherence to a predominantly negative view of their country's history. In the framework of a widely accepted narrative of national victimisation, the Congo was commonly represented as a tragic victim of what was described as a chronically 'bad', 'sad', 'sombre', 'deplorable', 'difficult' and 'perplexing' history of endless suffering.

As will be illustrated in this section, while a negative outlook on the country's history appeared to be broadly shared among Congolese respondents, perceptions seemed to vary as to the exact origins of Congo's historical misery. Several accounts generically reported that the country had 'plunged into the abyss' 'a long time ago'. Others, instead, traced the commencement of the 'bad history' back to specific points in time. They were variously situated in the pre-colonial, colonial, or post-colonial times (especially in the 1990s). If views differed on the starting point of Congo's incessant suffering, its main cause was consistently found in the fact that the DRC had been a country 'envied' and 'coveted' by foreign powers due to its natural wealth. External actors, and in particular Western and neighbouring countries, were widely accused of having been responsible for recurrently imposing a condition of insecurity on the Congolese population with the aim of taking possession of the country's resources. In this sense, rather than a blessing, the exceptional wealth with which the Congo had been endowed was generally viewed as a curse that had brought only misery and poverty instead of progress and development. In this context of national victimisation at the hands of greedy outside forces, those who were seen as having collaborated with malicious foreign powers were depicted as selfish and corrupt traitors. Conversely, those who rose up and perished while fighting against the intruders and their accomplices were celebrated as national heroes and as role models for the young generation. In this sense, young Congolese showed a dominant understanding of heroism as being mainly determined by martyrdom in defending the nation against foreign menaces.

4.5.1.3.1 The pre-colonial time: backwardness and savagery, or civilisation and peace

Compared to Rwandan and Burundian essays, the content of Congolese accounts on the country's pre-colonial time was remarkably poor. Also, young people's narratives in the DRC were largely negative in their characterisation of this era. As opposed to their counterparts, who had overwhelmingly exalted the ancient history of their respective country as a golden age of peace, unity, and solidarity, the few Congolese students who went beyond listing the names of old kingdoms and empires often underscored the backwardness and violence that had characterised this epoch. Specifically, the period that preceded the colonisation was portrayed as an era that had been marked by misery, savagery, ignorance, the adoration of false gods, as well as by perpetual ethnic conflicts and continuous wars of expansion between kingdoms. These disparaging views of the ancient times were typically accompanied by a rather positive depiction of the colonisation. In such cases, the arrival of the 'whites', or 'civilised men', was primarily associated with the introduction of civilisation and progress, as manifested in the construction of schools, hospitals, churches, roads, and towns.⁵⁰³ In a small minority of essays, King Leopold II in particular was praised for his role in Congo's history. Here, the former Belgian monarch was described as a good ruler, who had been committed to ending slavery as well as to developing the country by using his personal funds and by capitalising upon Congo's natural resources (e.g. ivory and rubber). In this sense, the old colonial discourse appeared to be still circulating among the Congolese youth despite the considerable efforts that have been made since the 1960s to instil pride in the country's ancient heritage. In the Congo, unlike in Rwanda and Burundi, the distant era was almost never found to be unequivocally described as an idyllic time of peace and prosperity. As will be illustrated below, positive perceptions of this period were implicitly conveyed in representations of the colonial time as the beginning of the country's troubles.

⁵⁰³ A few students also underlined the fact that it was in this period, and thanks to the European newcomers, that their country's history had become known.

4.5.1.3.2 *The colonial time: the role of the colonisation in Congo's troubled history*

Whereas a minority of respondents underscored their ancestors' backwardness and savagery as well as the progress that had stemmed from the contact with the Western world, a more widespread view highlighted how the arrival of the 'whites' had coincided with the commencement of Congo's misery. As pointed out by a student,

*'before the colonisation the Congolese lived well, but when the whites came everything changed and the misery commenced: the whites wanted to enrich themselves and to exploit and impoverish the blacks.'*⁵⁰⁴

As in Rwanda and Burundi, if the colonisation was sometimes recognised to have made a number of positive contributions to the country's socio-economic development, an overall negative assessment of colonial rule strongly prevailed in the DRC. Here as well, while positive or balanced representations of this time were fairly unusual, the emphasis was mostly placed on illustrating the long list of misdeeds ascribed to the 'bad rule' of 'barbaric' white men. On account of the exceptional gravity of European wrongdoing in the Congo, this era was presented by a student as 'the most difficult moment in our history, still difficult for us to overcome!'⁵⁰⁵ Specifically, the local population was portrayed as having been a victim of slavery and exploitation in a context in which the arrival of 'the whites' was explained with a wish to plunder the country's natural resources. Congolese respondents extensively recounted how, in this 'period of suffering', their ancestors had been treated 'like animals' and 'sold like merchandise' by people who exploited, abused, and killed them 'without mercy', subjecting them to 'heavy work' and 'many exactions'. Echoing students' general tendency to identify with the victims – by referring to 'us, Black/Congolese', – an essay sombrely summarised the arrival of the 'White hangmen' in these words:

'Having found that our country was rich, the whites colonised us to extract our wealth and started bartering mirrors, cloths, and weapons in exchange for land. They started treating us like animals as they created the slave trade of the blacks.'

⁵⁰⁴ C16.

⁵⁰⁵ C712.

Men, women, and children were taken by force and were sold as slaves to the Europeans to cultivate their fields in America and to carry them on their backs. We did not eat and did not sleep well. We worked without reward, without pay; instead of paying them they were given chicottes. Those who were not useful to them were simply killed'.⁵⁰⁶

In stark contrast to the old apologetic view that was reproduced by a minority of respondents, Leopold II was more commonly portrayed as a shrewd figure who had cunningly created the EIC as his 'private property' with the aim of enriching both himself and his 'poor' country. Leopold's rule was often depicted as dictatorial, selfish, and exploitative. Only few accounts, however, mentioned '*les abus léopoldiens*', including forced labour and slavery, and, more specifically, the infamous 'Red Rubber' scandal. Accordingly, merely a couple of students explained Belgium's annexation of the EIC with the international indignation at the 'injustice' and 'atrocities' committed under Leopold. In most cases, instead, the reason for this take-over was identified with the king's incapacity to repay his debt to Belgium following the loan he had taken from his country to sponsor his private venture in Central Africa. In this context, various terms, with different nuances, were used by respondents to describe this transfer of authority. In rather neutral terms, Leopold was sometimes simply said to have 'sold', 'given', or 'ceased' the EIC to his country. In more sporadic cases, essays highlighted Leopold's forced release of his personal fief by reporting that the king had been 'obliged to relinquish' his territorial possession, which was 'confiscated' by Belgium.

While Congolese narratives on the colonial time primarily emphasised the abuses and exploitation that had marked this period, less frequently respondents mentioned a number of other negative effects that were believed to have further resulted from Congo's contact with the Western world. Several essays, for instance, denounced the whites for having unilaterally and adversely altered the country's ancient political and ethnic landscape. Specifically, the Europeans were reported to have largely caused the decline and disappearance of pre-colonial kingdoms and to have instead created a new entity, the borders of which had been

⁵⁰⁶ C221.

randomly drawn ‘without consulting us’ and ‘without taking into account the existing ethnic groups, tribes, and clans’.⁵⁰⁷ As a result, as explained by a student, ‘today, one can find Rwandan people in the DRC (Rutshuru), groups of Nande in Uganda, as well as other Congolese in Angola and in the Central African Republic’.⁵⁰⁸ Like in Rwanda and Burundi, the policies that were subsequently introduced by the Belgians to rule over the newly founded entity were deemed by some to have caused not only immediate hardship, but also long-term adversity. In the DRC as well, these policies were believed to have sown the seeds of the country’s post-colonial failure and misery. As illustrated in Chapters 2 and 3, Rwandan and Burundian students had overwhelmingly blamed the colonisers for having caused internal conflict in their country by spreading divisionism. In the Congo, instead, insofar as the colonisers were considered responsible for the country’s post-colonial troubles, such accusations were primarily related to Belgium’s exploitative practices as well as to its dis-concern for the need to prepare and support local cadres with a view to Congo’s independence. On the one hand, colonial exploitation was believed to have compromised the country’s future socio-economic development by robbing it of its precious resources. On the other, Belgium’s paternalism and tight grip on power was frequently recognised as a main cause of later political instability.

In students’ accounts of the colonisation, while the focus was strongly placed on elucidating and denouncing the victimisation of the Congolese population by ‘the whites’, instances of both local collaboration and early resistance were only rarely mentioned. With regard to the issue of collaboration, several respondents expressed their bewilderment at a situation whereby their ancestors had been ‘so easily’ exploited and dominated. Few students explained this regrettable situation with the ignorance and myopia of their forefathers. Local chiefs, in particular, were denounced for having foolishly accepted to sign ‘friendship pacts’ with the whites, offering them land and slaves in exchange for goods of little value (*pacotilles*). A couple of essays thus highlighted either the passive acceptance or the active favouring of white domination in the Congo. References to instances of

⁵⁰⁷ C501, C398.

⁵⁰⁸ C229.

local resistance were limited to rare mentions of what were described as ‘wars between the autochthonous and the colonisers’. The only specific example of resistance that was cited in one essay related to the uncooperative stance of Chief M’siri, for which he was brutally killed. As will be shown in the paragraph below, if the theme of early anti-colonial resistance was generally omitted from students’ accounts, the later independence struggle appeared to be overwhelmingly present in young people’s representations of the national past.

4.5.1.3.3 The decolonisation process and the achievement of independence

Like in Burundi in particular, in the DRC, the strong emphasis on the colonial misdeeds was often accompanied by the celebration of the independence struggle that marked the 1950s. A variety of actors were praised for their role in this context. In some cases, the protagonists of this struggle were ‘the Congolese’ or ‘the Congolese citizens’ without distinction. Such accounts thus seemed to underscore a general mobilisation of the nation for the country’s freedom. In other cases, a key role was attributed more narrowly to ‘several patriots’, and, in particular, to ‘Congolese politicians’, ‘leaders’ and ‘the elite’. A third group of essays paid tribute to specific personalities. These included the ‘martyrs of independence’ – who had been ‘massacred’ in 1959, – members of the messianic movements Kimbanguism and Kitawala, as well as ‘certain educated Congolese, such as Kasa-vubu, Lumumba, Bolikango, Adoula, Gisenga, etc’. Besides local actors, the Belgian King Baldwin was also occasionally credited for Congo’s independence. As a student recounted, ‘[t]hanks to King Baldwin, our country was decolonised’.⁵⁰⁹

Of all the ‘great men’ who fought for independence, Lumumba received a special tribute as the leader of the struggle for ‘freedom from colonisation and slavery’. It was thanks to him in particular that Congo’s ‘dream’ of freedom was believed to have been finally achieved. As in the case of Rwagasore in Burundi, Lumumba was overwhelmingly presented as inspiring respect, veneration, and emulation on

⁵⁰⁹ C434. In this context, the Belgian king was mentioned either alone or together with Lumumba, and occasionally with Kasa-vubu.

account of his pivotal role in Congo's liberation. This political figure, whose historical significance was broadly recognised, was almost invariably portrayed as a national hero and a patriot, as the father and a martyr of independence, and as a role-model for all Congolese. His love and sacrifice for the country, and his patriotism and heroism in its defence, were described as 'memorable' and 'exemplary'. In addition to praising Lumumba's extraordinary patriotic love, several essays exalted his 'intellectual force', which enabled him to achieve what nobody before him had managed to accomplish. Again similarly to Burundi's national hero Rwagasore, the image of Lumumba's heroism was bolstered by his martyrdom as he rose up against foreign domination and oppression. As a student declared,

*'Lumumba really loved us. He defended his fatherland with his life and he accepted to die for it. Lumumba is a man that I will never forget or ignore, and we all must imitate him.'*⁵¹⁰

Lumumba's death on January 17, 1961 – a date well-ingrained in the memory of the surveyed youth – was widely depicted as a 'sad' and 'regrettable' moment. The crucial significance of this event was especially underscored by a couple of respondents who argued that the course of the national history might have been different if Lumumba had not disappeared so prematurely from the Congolese scene.⁵¹¹ Apart from the frequent mention of the date of Lumumba's assassination, a number of details were sometimes provided by students as to the circumstances of this occurrence. Several essays, in particular, recounted how he had been insulted, imprisoned, mistreated, and killed – or assassinated, executed, or burned alive – in Katanga, together with his two companions Okito and Mpolo. With regard to the controversial issue of responsibility for this murder, blame was mostly assigned to 'the whites'. More specifically, respondents pointed the finger at the Belgians and, to a lesser extent, at the Americans. Besides Western powers, local figures were also occasionally mentioned as carrying responsibility for the tragic disappearance of Congo's illustrious prime minister. In apportioning blame, a couple of respondents vaguely denounced Lumumba's own friends and

⁵¹⁰ C718.

⁵¹¹ Several students associated Kasavubu to Lumumba's struggle, erroneously maintaining that he too had been assassinated for his patriotism.

collaborators. In more outspoken accounts, fingers were pointed especially at Mobutu, and, more sporadically, at Tshombe and the Katangans. In a couple of cases, essays instead blamed ‘unknown people’. A student in particular explained the still obscure identity of Lumumba’s assassins by highlighting the lack of enquiry into this murder, the truth around which, he argued, had been purposely concealed. In his words,

*‘The history of my country is well hidden as demonstrated by the fact that even the heroes Lumumba and Kasa-vubu [sic] have disappeared (killed) without any trace or enquiry. I strongly doubt that everything that is told us now is true (...).’*⁵¹²

4.5.1.3.4 The post-colonial time: the First and the Second Republic

The end of the colonisation was overwhelmingly welcomed by the surveyed students. Underscoring the joy of the Congolese population at the proclamation of the country’s independence in 1960, a respondent exclaimed,

*‘Here, everywhere in the Congo, everyone was shouting “long live freedom, long live independence, long live our country the Congo!”’*⁵¹³

Despite such expressions of elation, as in Rwanda and Burundi, the image that was sketched of the period following independence was predominantly sombre. The ushering in of the post-colonial era was often depicted as marking the starting point of a worsening political, social, and economic situation. Disorder, instability, dictatorship, as well as great suffering due to unremitting war and accompanying mass violence and abuse were perceived to have since then largely characterised life in the DRC. This view was solemnly summarised by a student as follows:

*‘Before independence we lived better. Since 1960 up until today, we have suffered too much with all the violence, the pillage and the war. The country has been in total shambles and the situation has been getting worse and worse, moving from dictatorship to war.’*⁵¹⁴

As opposed to the numerous respondents who had traced the beginning of the country’s misery to independence, one essay portrayed the deplorable predicament

⁵¹² C901.

⁵¹³ C517.

⁵¹⁴ C877.

of the post-colonial period as a mere continuation of the suffering that had been inaugurated in the colonial time. In this sense, the achievement of independence was thus presented as having failed to bring about positive change. As reported in this account,

*'Up until now, this independence has brought us nothing, because the Congolese population continues to suffer as in the colonial time.'*⁵¹⁵

Showing great disenchantment towards a condition of perpetual and even increased suffering, several students seemed to call into question the 'heroic' national struggle that had led to the country's independence. They spoke in terms of a 'premature' and 'precipitated' declaration of independence by Congolese leaders. According to a few essays, in the 1960s the time was simply not ripe for local self-governance as a result of a lack of qualified cadres deriving from Belgium's paternalist policies. Positing a clear causal relationship between today's suffering and an injudiciously hasty decolonisation, a respondent suggested that prolonging colonial rule would have been desirable at that time as it might have averted the distress that the country had been experiencing since independence. In his words,

*'If we had accepted what the Belgian General Janssens had said ("Before Independence = After Independence"), no one was going to suffer until now; if we suffer today it is because of Lumumba, who rushed to demand independence.'*⁵¹⁶

If the former *métropole* was blamed for having inadequately prepared the local population to govern itself, responsibility for the country's post-colonial crisis and failure was believed by some to be shared by not only 'incapable' but also 'unpatriotic' Congolese politicians. In such cases, essays often criticised local leaders without naming names. In the most explicit accounts, accusations were levelled especially against Congo's former President Mobutu.

Generally, the 'period of troubles' and 'crisis' of the First Republic, of which only few students retained the mutinies, secessions, rebellions, and political rivalries,

⁵¹⁵ C458.

⁵¹⁶ C317.

was overshadowed by narratives on Mobutu's Second Republic. Whereas several respondents had situated the start of the country's misery in the immediate aftermath of independence, others, instead, made it coincide with Mobutu's coup in 1965. Sometimes referred to as '*le Marechal*' and '*le Roi du Zaire*', Mobutu was commonly depicted as 'a great dictator' and 'a bad president', who, according to some students, had risen to power with the support of Western powers, notably the Americans and the Belgians. Apart from few references to the radical changes that had been promoted as part of his 'Recourse to Authenticity', Mobutu's 32-year-long rule was generally associated with what a student described as 'a triumph of all *antivaleurs*'.⁵¹⁷ Echoing the political discourse of the post-1990s, his reign was said to have been marked by dictatorship and lack of democracy, repression and widespread abuses, corruption and kleptocracy, as well as economic decline, poverty and under-development. Tracing the origins of today's misery to Mobutu's disastrous rule, a respondent stated that,

*'The wicked Mobutu seized power in 1965 and ruled Zaire at its own discretion. His whole reign was characterised by disorder and injustice. This is the origin of the calamity we face today.'*⁵¹⁸

Although negative portrayals of Mobutu dominated students' narratives on the Second Republic, a small minority of accounts were found to present Congo's former ruler in a more positive light. One student, in particular, described the presidency of '*Papa Mobutu*' as 'one of the best events my country has ever experienced'. Another essay added that, 'Mobutu was very loved by the Congolese population because he ruled his country very well'.⁵¹⁹ In stark contrast to the more widespread negative view of Mobutu's rule, several accounts underscored this figure's good leadership by reproducing some of the arguments that had been propagated by the regime at the time of the Second Republic. In these narratives, the former president was praised for having promoted economic development and progress, national prestige and self-reliance, as well as order and stability following an unremitting period of anarchy and war. In few cases, rather than presenting either a solely negative or positive depiction of this period,

⁵¹⁷ C221.

⁵¹⁸ C856.

⁵¹⁹ C804, C687.

respondents provided a more balanced and mixed assessment of Mobutu's presidency. On the one hand, Mobutu was reported to have established a dictatorial regime, on the other, he was deemed to have at the same time guaranteed peace and stability, as well as economic and social development.⁵²⁰

4.5.1.3.5 The recent wars and mass violence (1990s-today)

If all periods in Congolese history – pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial – were variously identified by students as marking the commencement of the country's misery, the more recent period since the 1990s received a prominent place in the victimisation tale told by young Congolese. This was most vividly presented as a time of greatest suffering by those who were also first-hand witnesses (and victims) of this history in the making. For some, the 1990s signalled the beginning of a new era of disorder, chaos, and war following years of relative peace experienced under Mobutu. As two students tragically testified, what started was 'a time of tears and blood' and 'our worst nightmare'.⁵²¹

The recent instances of conflict and mass violence that ravaged the Congo, and the Kivu in particular, received overwhelming attention in students' essays. Abundant references were made especially to the First and Second Congo Wars, as well as to the 'many' wars that had plagued both North and South Kivu up until the time of the survey in autumn 2009.

4.5.1.3.5.1 The First and Second Congo Wars, the peace process, and the transition

In their narratives on Congo's recent history, students often mentioned the AFDL rebellion, although briefly. Usually, in line with the current political discourse, this occurrence was exalted as a 'liberation war' that had been fought to put an end to Mobutu's 'dictatorship'. The righteousness and legitimacy of the rebellion was highlighted in a couple of essays by underscoring the popularity of the 'liberation' movement. These accounts pointed at its endorsement by the Congolese

⁵²⁰ Others instead distinguished between an early phase of good governance and a later period of decay.

⁵²¹ C85, C294.

population amid widespread feelings of exasperation with Mobutu's rule and of hope for democratic change. If the AFDL was said to have counted on broad popular support, several respondents also underlined the military assistance provided by neighbouring countries – a support that, as we will see further in the text, was widely believed to have been far from a disinterested charitable act. The extent of the connivance of regional powers with the AFDL was clearly highlighted by one student in particular. According to him, its leader, L.D. Kabila, was 'a rebel formed by the Rwandans and the Ugandans.'⁵²²

Despite this unflattering comment in the context of regional resentments that grew in the wake of the First Congo War, Kabila was generally depicted in a positive light. Much like Congo's Independence Hero Lumumba, who was widely seen as the father of the 'first liberation' (from colonial domination and oppression), Kabila was portrayed as an 'unforgettable' national hero, who had led the country to its 'second liberation' (from Mobutu's dictatorship). On account of this shared heroism, Kabila was occasionally mentioned in the same breath as his much-celebrated forerunner. As a student explained,

*'In our country we have two national heroes: Lumumba and Mzee Kabila. They are our heroes because they died for our country.'*⁵²³

Like Lumumba's murder forty years earlier, Kabila's assassination in 2001 was a much-cited and deplored event. The reprobation of this criminal act was at times reinforced by a belief that those responsible for killing Kabila had deprived the Congo not only of a hero, but also of 'a good president'. According to the general view conveyed in students' essays, Kabila had had the merit of bringing good governance and democracy, peace and security, and economic development to a country that had been left in shambles by his predecessor Mobutu. With regard to the identity of Kabila's hangmen, opinions diverged. Among the reported culprits were a variety of different actors. These included one of Kabila's guards, Congolese politicians and government officials, neighbouring countries (spearheaded by Rwanda), as well as the Americans. As in the case of Lumumba,

⁵²² C412.

⁵²³ C845.

a respondent emphasised the unresolved mystery surrounding the identity of Kabila's assassins as a result of a lack of investigation into this crime. The failure to shed light on the murder of the former president led this young Congolese to sombrely conclude that, if nothing had been done to deliver justice to such important personalities as the country's national heroes, the chances of achieving accountability and redress for the violent death of ordinary Congolese were likely to be nil. Denouncing Congo's rampant impunity, he wondered, 'if one cannot prosecute those who were at the origins of the death of the Head of State, when do we really think one will be able to prosecute those who kill a simple individual?'⁵²⁴

Similar to the accounts of the First Congo War, students' references to the Second Congo War were only brief and not particularly detailed. In most cases, such references were limited to mentioning its primary actor, namely the RCD, a rebel movement that was again believed by some to have been founded and supported by Rwanda. Occasionally, the ensuing war was defined as a 'rectification war'. No further explanation was however provided as to the meaning of this expression. More sporadically, armed groups other than the RCD/Goma were also cited, including the RCD/KML, the MLC, and the Mayi-Mayi.

In the context of the two Congo Wars, little attention was paid to the peacemaking efforts that had been promoted by various actors to resolve these crises. Only few respondents, for instance, cited the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and the resulting Sun City Accord that officially ended the Second Congo War. Whereas references to the peace process were rarely included in students' accounts of the war, the ensuing transition was addressed more often. In particular, respondents mentioned the '1+4' system, the referendum that led to the promulgation of the constitution, and especially the historic 2006 elections. Won by J. Kabila in a race against MLC leader Bemba, these were commonly described as Congo's first 'free, democratic, and transparent' elections. On this account, the year 2006 was sometimes depicted as having marked an important turning point in the country's political history. In contrast to past rulers, who had seized power through the use of force, J. Kabila

⁵²⁴ C193.

was portrayed as a legitimate president, ‘the first to have been democratically elected by the Congolese population’.⁵²⁵ With regard to Kabila’s political rival Bemba, merely one student indicated that he had been arrested and that he faced trial in Europe for war crimes.

4.5.1.3.5.2 Wars and instability in the Kivu: sources, causes, actors and their roles (responsibility, victimhood, and heroism), dynamics, and consequences

Typically, the collected narratives ended with abundant references to the troubled recent history of the students’ home-provinces of North and South Kivu. In presenting their provinces’ local history, respondents widely suggested that war had been its dominant feature as well as a constant variable throughout time – at least since the day they were born. Peace, on the other hand, was believed by some to have never existed in the region. On account of its exceptional volatility, the Kivu was occasionally recognised as occupying a unique place in the country’s history. As a student explained,

‘It is in this part of the Congo that all wars and rebellions originated. It is here that wars and troubles have historically reigned up until today.’⁵²⁶

Students’ essays reported a long list of ‘troubles’ that had tormented the Kivu and its population. Besides the two Congo Wars that had been launched by the AFDL and the RCD respectively,⁵²⁷ the region’s recent sources and actors of insecurity included:

- i) ‘tribal’ conflicts, e.g. between Hunde and Hutu Banyarwanda, between Shi and Rega, as well as incidents involving the Banyamulenge;
- ii) inter-state confrontations between Congolese and foreigners, especially Rwandans;
- iii) wars by Nkunda and his CNDP rebellion, e.g. in Bukavu in 2004 and in North Kivu in 2006-2009;

⁵²⁵ C968. Two students questioned Joseph Kabila’s ascendancy. One of them wondered, ‘who is Mzee Kabila’s real son?’ C812.

⁵²⁶ C278.

⁵²⁷ In South Kivu, students also sporadically mentioned the Mulelist rebellion and the intervention of the mercenary Jean Schramme in the 1960s.

- iv) continuous attacks by the Interahamwe/FDLR, as well as by various Mai-Mai groups, such as Mudundu 40, Mai-Mai Kapopo, and Raia Mutomboki in South Kivu;
- v) assaults by bandits and criminals, such as the so-called '*fin d'heure*' in South Kivu; as well as,
- vi) cases of harassment by soldiers of the national army and by other state agents, e.g. attacks and kidnappings of journalists and students in Bukavu.

Numerous accounts further underlined that the insecurity caused by wars, rebellions, and banditry had been compounded by the occurrence of natural calamities. Such disasters included the deadly volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in North Kivu in 2002, and the earthquake that hit South Kivu in 2007.⁵²⁸

Against the backdrop of multiple security threats, students illustrated at length the misery to which Kivu's inhabitants had been subjected. Compared to their Rwandan and Burundian counterparts, Congolese respondents tended to describe more extensively and more vividly the violence they had personally lived through, often sharing their testimonies of the events and of their impact.

In their essays, students recurrently referred to the 'horrible' and 'grave' human rights abuses and the 'unjustifiable crimes' that had taken place in a climate of unremitting insecurity and rampant impunity. Respondents cited the frequent occurrence of killings, sexual violence, abduction and forced conscription, forced labour and enslavement, as well as pillage and destruction of property, notably crops. As testified by a young Congolese, 'parents suffer because we cannot longer harvest due to the FDLR who roam from field to field and even our military who steal our crops secretly.'⁵²⁹ In describing the violence, students often highlighted the low value attributed to human life in the Kivu. They did so by

⁵²⁸ The memory of the 2002 eruption appeared to be very fresh among students in Goma, a town that had been partially destroyed by the flowing lava. As recounted by a respondent, 'I cannot forget the date of 17/01/2002, which marks the day of the volcanic eruption in Goma. The people of North Kivu were massively displaced to Rwanda and to the interior'. C102.

⁵²⁹ C512.

making recourse to animalesque analogies that conveyed the easiness with which innocent people, including their dear ones, had been slaughtered. In their words, people had been killed ‘like animals’, ‘cows’, ‘goats’, ‘flies’, and ‘flees’. A vivid imagery associated with the element of blood was sometimes also used to depict the extreme violence that had plagued the Kivu. A student, for example, portrayed his province as a ‘red’ region, where ‘blood is flooding in the streets’.⁵³⁰

In addition to drawing attention to the brutal nature of the abuses, several Congolese essays enumerated the consequences that such pervasive crimes had had on the population. The most direct effects of the violence mentioned in students’ accounts included massive death and displacement, and the spread of diseases. The insecurity deriving from extensive militant activities was likewise reported to have caused a general disruption of every-day life activities and a consequent aggravation of socio-economic hardship. The lack of security was seen as a primary cause of the region’s chronic condition of poverty, unemployment, famine and malnutrition. A number of students in North Kivu recounted their personal experience of war and the direct impact it had on their life. They for instance highlighted how their education had been regularly disrupted due to forced flight and displacement as well as due to the impossibility of paying school fees as a result of belligerents pillaging and destroying their parents’ assets. As three respondents testified,

‘In North Kivu, we always have war, and our studies therefore cannot evolve. The costs of the school continue to increase, but now, during the war, where will we find the money to pay for it? All our goods have been taken away.’

‘We, the students of Rutshuru, never complete the school year without fleeing’.

‘The Masisi Territory has been dominated by insurgents and studying was difficult: we were in the classroom but in vain. Today we study with a little bit of peace in our heart.’⁵³¹

Against the backdrop of what was depicted as an imposition of indiscriminate hardship, students’ accounts revealed a widespread recognition of the shared

⁵³⁰ C294.

⁵³¹ C318, C376, C521.

victimhood of all civilians living in the war-affected areas of eastern Congo, irrespective of their identity. As a respondent pointed out, ‘everybody has been affected by the war, including women, children, and the elderly’.⁵³²

Confronted with extreme suffering, students often raised fundamental questions on the Who and Why of the recent imposition of misery in the Kivu. As will be shown below, the collected accounts demonstrated a certain consensus on the main actors and causes that were considered to be responsible for Congo’s misfortune. With regard to the former, as mentioned earlier, a rather broad inventory of past and present sources of insecurity was provided. That being said, the primary focus in students’ narratives was clearly placed on outlining and denouncing a ‘foreign’, and, especially, ‘Rwandan threat’. Concerning the latter, compared to the analyses offered by Rwandan and Burundian respondents on the conflicts experienced in their own country, issues of identity and politics in Congolese narratives were found to be largely overshadowed by a more prominent emphasis on the factor of greed. Although several essays mentioned the problem of ‘tribalism’,⁵³³ Congolese respondents seemed to widely believe that at the core of the recurrent violence in the Kivu were its enviable natural resources, which had turned the region into a much-coveted booty for greedy actors.

4.5.1.3.5.2.1 Actors of insecurity: ‘the Rwandan threat’ and the externally imposed misery

The question of responsibility for the generalised state of despair in the Kivu was frequently brought up by Congolese students. While a respondent in Bukavu hinted at this issue by wondering ‘[w]ho is behind all this suffering?’,⁵³⁴ others appeared to have little doubt about the identity of those who were to blame.

⁵³² C402.

⁵³³ In North Kivu, respondents alluded to tribal problems which mainly related to Congolese *originaires* and people of Rwandan origins. In South Kivu, instead, students’ essays referred to problematic relations between the province’s main groups, namely the Shi and the Rega. According to several respondents, the coexistence between these two tribes had been characterised by violent and even deadly confrontations, specifically during football matches between the two teams associated to these two tribes: Muungano for the Rega and Bukavu Dawa for the Shi. A couple of accounts additionally pointed to a situation of discrimination in employment in favour of the Shi. A number of stereotypes were also mentioned in relation to the Rega and the Shi. The former were portrayed as show-offs, the latter as hard-working and more reserved people.

⁵³⁴ C810.

In few cases, fingers were pointed at local actors. Accusations were levelled in particular against Congo's selfish, corrupt, and incompetent leaders. One student, for instance, blamed the insecurity caused by soldiers of the national army on a government that had failed to take charge of the needs of the 'courageous' military. The unlawful activities of the military were justified by this respondent by suggesting that soldiers had consequently been obliged to steal from the population in order to cater for their welfare.⁵³⁵ More rarely, accounts denounced an unpatriotic population that had been insufficiently supportive of government's efforts to counter the country's various security threats.

Usually, these threats were believed to have primarily come from abroad. The recent and current suffering experienced in the Kivu was indeed most often portrayed as an imposition by outside forces. Among these forces were, first of all, 'the whites' or the 'Westerners', especially the Americans. They were at times unequivocally accused of being 'the main cause of our misery' and the 'real winners' of 'our' wars. For the most part, their guilt, according to students' essays, consisted in having repeatedly hidden behind the various armed groups that had ravaged the country, financing and arming them with the aim of gaining access to Congo's wealth. In particular, Western countries were criticised for backing the criminal activities of the main spoilers of the peace in the Kivu, namely the Rwandese. Occasionally depicted as mere puppets of neo-colonial powers, regional actors, spearheaded by Rwanda and its people, were usually situated at the top of the list of wrong-doers in the Congo. These actors were found to be at the centre of numerous prejudices and accusations that were reported in students' accounts of the recent history of the Kivu. According to the majority of Congolese respondents, 'it was them' who were responsible for bringing war and extreme violence to the DRC. At the time of the survey, Congo's neighbours were deemed to continue posing a serious threat to stability in the Kivu.

The centrality of Rwanda and its people in students' understandings of the recent violence clearly emerged in analyses which traced the origins of Congo's 'worst-ever nightmare' back to the arrival of various groups of Rwandans since the mid-

⁵³⁵ C414.

1990s. Two events in particular were identified as marking the region's dramatic rise in insecurity. The first of such events was the 1994 genocide. Students pointed especially to the devastating effects of the resulting massive influx of militant Rwandan Hutu refugees to their country. This, according to a Hunde student, had been 'provoked by the Tutsi'.⁵³⁶ The second crucial event was the First Congo War in 1996-1997. Here, respondents referred to Kabila's initial alliance with the Rwandese or the 'Tutsi' during his 'liberation war', and to the subsequent 'invasion' by Rwanda following Kabila's unfulfilled promise to relinquish parts of eastern Congo to his former allies.⁵³⁷ While Congo's former president had been widely portrayed as a national hero, on account of his initial connivance with the Rwandans, one student blamed him for having allowed Rwandans to enter the country in the first place. In his words,

*'The Rwandans were not yet there during Mobutu's era. When Mzee Kabila took over power, the Rwandans started to enter our country. It's because of him that the Rwandans have been here in our province.'*⁵³⁸

According to students' accounts, since then, Rwanda and its Ugandan and Burundian collaborators had demonstrated to be 'our great enemies' as they turned the Congo into a battlefield and into 'a cake to be shared'.⁵³⁹ The result of this external involvement in Congo's affairs, as conveyed by several respondents, had been the disruption of a situation of relative internal peace by actors who were often referred to as 'foreigners', 'infiltrators', 'invaders', and as 'the enemies of our happiness and of peace'. This externally enforced rupture with a previous serene condition of peaceful coexistence was made clear by a Havu student from Bukavu. She pointed out that,

⁵³⁶ C585.

⁵³⁷ A Banyarwanda Hutu student in Sake added that Rwanda's territorial claims over North Kivu were based on their argument that, in the pre-colonial time, the Rwandan King Rwabugiri had ruled over this region. C513.

⁵³⁸ C358.

⁵³⁹ While Rwanda appeared at the top of the list of Congo's wrongdoers, Uganda and Burundi were generally depicted as secondary actors, who had coalesced and collaborated with Rwanda in its fight against the Congo. As explained by a student, '[c]ountries such as Burundi and Uganda have helped Rwanda to create wars here in the Congo by lending them their own weapons and soldiers to fight against us to destabilise us and to steal our province.' C176. Several Congolese respondents instead emphasised the peaceful and unproblematic relations with Burundi and with its people, describing them as nice and welcoming. According to a student, this was despite their being Nilotic people like Rwandans. C932. Of all eastern neighbours, Tanzania was often depicted as the only country that had not been at war with the DRC.

'In South Kivu, people used to live together peacefully in the past. The situation however changed with the war that was brought by our neighbour Rwanda'.⁵⁴⁰

Highlighting the primarily external causes of Congo's historical victimhood, Congolese respondents frequently explained their country's misery with its misfortune of bordering envious, greedy, and aggressive countries. They were accused of having persistently destabilised their once powerful neighbour with the aim of 'colonising', occupying and annexing its rich eastern regions. A Banyabwisha respondent in Rutshuru town traced his province's instability to a foreign invasion and occupation motivated by illegitimate expansionist aims by reporting that,

'Our province of North Kivu has known several wars because we live next to countries that want to expand, especially Rwanda. These foreigners tirelessly try to occupy us and to drive us away, we the owners'.⁵⁴¹

Echoing a dominant Manichean representation of Congo's recent wars, another student lucidly conveyed a clear-cut opposition between 'us victims' and 'the Rwandese, our hangmen'. She concluded that,

'History teaches us that the Rwandese have been the enemies and hangmen of us the Congolese for a long time...Rwandans don't like us; they hate us and abuse us'.⁵⁴²

Like in the excerpt above, 'the Rwandese' were often indistinctly and collectively blamed for the misery that the Kivu had experienced since 'their' arrival. Overall, only few young Congolese were found to sketch a nuanced picture of their neighbours. The most explicit of students' statements in this regard underscored that 'some are good and some are bad, as anywhere else in the world'.⁵⁴³ A more common approach among students in the DRC consisted in demonising this people as a whole by reproducing negative stereotypes that have long circulated in the region. By drawing specific lessons from history, young Congolese often

⁵⁴⁰ C805.

⁵⁴¹ C319. Only one student explained this conflict by stating the points of view of both countries. In her words, 'the DRC and Rwanda were in conflict since 1994. Rwanda says that the DRC protects the Rwandan Interahamwe rebels and the DRC says that the war in Kivu with Nkunda is supported by the Rwandese.' C74. As mentioned earlier in the text, Rwanda's alleged security reasons for entering Congo's territory were discarded as a lie by most Congolese students. According to one respondent, 'Rwanda threatens the DRC saying that it seeks the FDLR, however that is not true. C418.

⁵⁴² C450.

⁵⁴³ C717.

interpreted certain attitudes and behaviours as a distinct nature of an entire national identity-group. Largely echoing old clichés associated to the Tutsi in particular, Congolese respondents widely depicted Rwandans as bellicose, ruthless, domineering, parasitic, deceitful, and cunning people. As emerged from numerous Congolese narratives, history was believed to have taught that Rwandans were a people of criminals, killers, rapists, and *génocidaires*. According to a student, they were in fact ‘the biggest murderers of the whole region’.⁵⁴⁴ Accounts frequently reported how Rwandans had first exposed their ‘bad heart’ and ‘satanic *esprit*’ in 1994, when ‘they massacred their own parents and siblings’.⁵⁴⁵ These ‘evil’ people were said to have subsequently turned their malevolence towards their rich and once powerful western neighbour, causing war and despair. In particular, the Rwandese were deemed to have demonstrated their unrestrained thirst for power and their strong ‘spirit of conquest, expansion and domination’. They were accused of behaving as ‘aggressors’, ‘invaders’, and ‘tyrants’ in the Congo, as well as thieves and parasites. As lamented by a respondent, ‘these impostors breathe with our oxygen, evolving and enriching themselves thanks to Congo’s wealth at our expense’.⁵⁴⁶ The adverse role played by Rwandans in the Congo, and the ‘horrible’ crimes and abuses they had committed there, were abundantly reported. A Hunde student in Sake (Masisi), for instance, vividly recounted that,

*‘In the province of North Kivu, for example in Walikale, people suffer a lot because of Rwanda, which is hidden there. I know and have seen with my own eyes the war of the Rwandan rebels: they have killed us, and raped our mothers and our sisters; they have stolen our minerals, and taken our fields and our animals by force; they have burned our houses and built houses for themselves. The Rwandan invaders treat the Congolese like their dogs and behave as if this was their territory’.*⁵⁴⁷

In line with the extract above, brute force was believed by some to have been commonly used by the ‘barbaric’ Rwandese to achieve their malicious aims. Revealing a deep mistrust and paranoia towards their Rwandan neighbours, several students also warned against their innate hypocrisy and dishonesty, and for

⁵⁴⁴ C531.

⁵⁴⁵ C473.

⁵⁴⁶ C306.

⁵⁴⁷ C580.

their tendency to conceal their true colours with the purpose of advancing their vested interests. In this respect, two respondents observed that,

‘The Rwandese are complicated people; you never know what their position is. That is why I am afraid of them.’

‘The Rwandese are cunning people and their aims are well-hidden. But I can see that the Rwandese have been engaging in a hidden conflict with the Congo. Like in the story of “the Crow and the Fox”, the Rwandese pretend to love us, but in reality they have other ideas in their mind: they only think about the wealth of our country.’⁵⁴⁸

In relation to the supposed untrustworthy nature of Rwandans (and Burundians), a couple of essays reproduced the stereotype of the beautiful but mischievous Rwandan girls, who had the ‘habit’ of having secretive relationships with their ‘brothers’ while pretending to love their Congolese partners.⁵⁴⁹ Besides references to camouflaged emotions and hidden objectives, another recurrent theme which was related to the accusation of Rwandans’ duplicity consisted in an almost paranoid denunciation of a Rwandan ‘habit’ of lying about their real identity and of ‘infiltrating’ in the DRC pretending to be Congolese. Exposing such fraudulent practices, a Nande student in Goma stated that,

‘The DRC had welcomed the refugees from Rwanda and up until today they continue to infiltrate our province saying they are Congolese. They like to aggress our country under false name. But I know that it’s Rwanda that is the main actor of everything that has been taking place here in the Congo’.⁵⁵⁰

4.5.1.3.5.2.1.2 ‘The Hutu FDLR’ and ‘the Tutsi CNDP’: living at the mercy of two ‘Rwandan’ evils

As shown above, in a large number of narratives, Rwandans were indistinctly blamed for Congo’s current state of misery. In several essays, students had instead been more precise in pinpointing the ethnic and political affiliation of their hangmen.

⁵⁴⁸ C495, C624.

⁵⁴⁹ C323.

⁵⁵⁰ C125.

On the one hand, fingers were pointed at the Rwandan Hutu rebels FDLR or Interahamwe – also referred to as Hutu refugees. As recounted by a respondent,

'Here in North Kivu we suffer a lot: the Rwandan Hutu FDLR rebels threaten us, killing and raping people, and stealing their goods'.⁵⁵¹

If Rwandan rebels were widely reported to have been wreaking havoc in the region, their cross-border military pursuit by the Rwandan army was mentioned as an additional major cause of suffering. According to a Hunde respondent in Kiwanja,

'Today, we are bothered by Rwanda, which says it is looking for the FDLR while they are in fact mistreating the Congolese'.⁵⁵²

On the other hand, countless accusations were levelled against the 'Nilotic' Tutsi. In the words of a Hutu respondent in Sake,

'The Tutsi always trouble us here... there are some Nilotics who bring wars in North Kivu. They are the ones who planted hatred between Hunde and Hutu. Thank God today we are united'.⁵⁵³

In a context in which no clear distinction was generally made between Rwandan and Congolese Tutsi (or 'Banyamulenge'), 'the Tutsi enemy' was typically associated both with the Rwandan government and its army, and with 'their' RDC and CNDP rebellions. Nkunda's CNDP, in particular, references to which were nearly omnipresent in students' accounts of Kivu's recent history, was strongly associated with what was broadly perceived as a Rwandan threat. Reported to have 'come from Rwanda' and to have been led by 'a Tutsi of Rwandan origins', this rebel movement was commonly denounced for collaborating with the Rwandan government with the aim of dominating and annexing the Kivu, and even the entire country. As declared by a Nande respondent studying in Kiwanja,

'It's the Rwandans who threaten us through their CNDP rebels, killing the population, stealing and smuggling the rich resources of the Congo into Rwanda, looking for fertile lands for their cows, wanting to dominate us and to annex the Congo to Rwanda and wanting to be Congolese by force, but without results'.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ C577.

⁵⁵² C438.

⁵⁵³ C524.

⁵⁵⁴ C421.

Echoing the above allusion to a wish of the ‘Rwandan’ CNDP rebels ‘to be Congolese by force’, another student further challenged the ‘so-called’ ‘Congolese’ identity of these ‘Tutsi from Rwanda’. Reiterating a belief in the connivance between Rwanda and the CNDP as well as in a practice of Rwandan ‘infiltration under false name’, this respondent declared,

‘I lived with so-called Congolese Tutsi who came from Rwanda in 1994. They are the ones who form militias such as Nkunda’s CNDP, who forced us to work for them.’⁵⁵⁵

Students’ essays included countless first-hand testimonies of ‘Nkunda’s War’ – a war that was seen as having opposed the CNDP rebels not only to the Congolese government and its army, but also to the Congolese people as a whole. In South Kivu, frequent references were made to ‘*la guerre de Mutembusi et de Nkunda*’ of 2004, and to the brief capture of Bukavu by these two ‘Rwandan rebels’.⁵⁵⁶ In North Kivu, the threat posed by the CNDP rebels referred especially to the wars that had been fought between 2006 and 2009 in the respondents’ home-towns of Kiwanja, Sake, and Rutshuru. Overall, compared to other instances of violence, students’ stories in relation to the abuses committed by this movement appeared to be remarkably detailed. The CNDP was extensively accused of brutally and indiscriminately killing and wounding innocent civilians, including babies and the elderly; of raping women and girls of all ages; of kidnapping and enslaving civilians, including young boys, forcing them to support the rebels’ military efforts by transporting weapons and ammunition; of displacing many, both internally and externally; of pillaging and destroying goods and properties; as well as of causing hunger and disease. A few students in Kiwanja, in particular, offered their personal testimony of how, in early November 2008, only a year prior to the survey, their town had been the victim of a ‘terrible’ massacre, during which, as recounted by a respondent, ‘the FARDC soldiers were fleeing faster than the

⁵⁵⁵ C603.

⁵⁵⁶ The experience of this war was vividly recalled by a Shi respondent from Walungu studying in Bukavu: ‘I remember the war of Mutembusi and Nkunda in 2004. Many of my friends were lost because of this war; we lost many goods because of pillage, shops were destroyed, even the big market of Kadutu was burned down by the enemies of our happiness (the Rwandans) who didn’t want the Congo to evolve. After his defeat in Bukavu, Nkunda retreated to North Kivu, where he provoked a new war.’ C891.

population'.⁵⁵⁷ According to a student who had witnessed the violence, this incident, which had claimed as many as five hundred lives, constituted 'genocide'.⁵⁵⁸ In stark contrast to Rwandan and Burundian national narratives, this was the only time that this loaded term was found in Congolese essays on the country's history.

As Nkunda was considered to be responsible for most of the suffering that had been imposed on eastern Congo in the past years, several respondents referred to the recent capture and imprisonment of 'this criminal' with joy and relief. Feelings of satisfaction were however mitigated by suspicions surrounding the circumstances of Nkunda's arrest and subsequent custody in Rwanda. Echoing earlier expressions of frustration with a lack of clarity and accountability in relation to heinous crimes committed in the country, questions were raised about the veracity of reports on Nkunda's imprisonment as well as about the reasons why this villain had continued to 'hide' in Rwanda instead of being handed over to the Congo to finally face justice.

While the experience with Nkunda's wars had generated numerous tales of suffering and had prompted countless expressions of resentment towards the CNDP, a singular and starkly contrasting view was collected from one of the very few Tutsi respondents who had participated in the survey. This student, who had been partly raised in Rwanda by parents who came from the same geographical area as Nkunda,⁵⁵⁹ did not depict the CNDP as a tormentor of the Congo. In this account, the movement was instead exalted as a defender of the Congolese population from the threat posed by the Rwandan FDLR and as a guarantor of peace and security in the Kivu. As the founder and leader of a heroic and righteous movement, Nkunda was here portrayed as a man who had been committed to peace, and whose legacy needed to be preserved in the wake of his disappearance from the Congolese scene. In the words of this respondent,

⁵⁵⁷ C438.

⁵⁵⁸ C489. According to reports, the victims of this massacre amounted to 150. See, HRW, *Killings in Kiwanja. The UN's ability to protect civilians* (New York, December 2008).

⁵⁵⁹ I.e. Bwito.

*'Since the day I was born, I have heard of the FDLR, who came from Rwanda after having exterminated the Tutsi people of Rwanda and who fled to Congo, causing insecurity in North Kivu. As the FDLR was killing and displacing many, the CNDP came to defend the Congolese people from the Rwandan peoples (FDLR). During the time that the CNDP was here, we have had a period of agricultural activities. Now that its founder Nkunda is no longer there, each of us is responsible for promoting the ideas that he left us in order to live well with our neighbours and with foreigners.'*⁵⁶⁰

4.5.1.3.5.2.2 The Congolese population: between victimhood and resistance

Rwandans emerged as the principal actors in students' accounts of the recent violence in the Kivu. In what appeared to be mainly told as a story of Rwandan wickedness in the Congo, whereas Rwandans were attributed the lead role as antagonists, the Congolese were most frequently depicted as passive and defenceless victims. In the framework of an overall story of victimisation, the emphasis was mainly placed on the suffering endured by the Congolese population at the hands of their 'evil tormentors'. Conversely, narratives of Congolese resistance and heroism were only rarely included in students' representations of the recent troubled time. In such few cases, rather than merely underscoring people's suffering and defencelessness, narratives stressed the courage and bravery of Congolese patriots who had stayed behind to help the national army to defend the country against the aggressing enemy. Among these accounts was the testimony of a Hunde student from Masisi Territory. Highlighting the support given to the army's resistance by his entourage, he proudly stated, 'as for us, we have fought side by side with the government's soldiers.'⁵⁶¹

Although little mention was made of instances of Congolese opposition and resistance against the perceived Rwandan threat, the surveyed youth frequently acknowledged their historical responsibility and patriotic duty to defend the nation if necessary. Recurrently referring to 'my beloved and beautiful country' and 'my dear homeland/fatherland', Congolese respondents oftentimes conveyed feelings of patriotic love and pride, of ancestral attachment to their country and their

⁵⁶⁰ C140.

⁵⁶¹ C508.

province, as well as a readiness to stand up and defend their land and their rights from those who intended to dominate and colonise them. Such nationalistic sentiments were voiced most vividly by two students from North Kivu and South Kivu respectively. As they declared,

'The Rwandese are my enemies because they want to take my Congo, and I will fight them if I need to. Rwanda has no reason to try and take North Kivu because this is a province of the DRC, our country; this is the land that our ancestors left us'.

'I love my dear and beautiful country, the DRC; it's here that both me and my parents were born and raised...I am Congolese and I am proud of it. I will remain Congolese and I will defend my beloved homeland from its enemies until I die'.⁵⁶²

4.5.1.3.5.2.3 Actors of peace: the President, God, and the UN

Whereas the collected essays extensively elaborated on those who were considered to be responsible for starting the war and for committing heinous crimes against civilians, in an overall context in which peacemaking efforts were largely overlooked,⁵⁶³ those who were seen as having worked towards bringing peace to the Kivu were only rarely mentioned. Among the actors that were most praised for their positive role in the resolution of the conflict was incumbent President Joseph Kabila. In various accounts, he was presented as a peacemaker who had promoted both internal dialogue within the country and bilateral rapprochement with Rwanda. Besides the President, the figure of God was also recurrent. Religious arguments were rather frequently used to explain both the experienced hardship and the relief brought by peace efforts. While the war was depicted by a student as 'a test of God' for the Congolese population, its end was often presented as the result of 'divine grace' and of 'the almighty God' acting through the hand of the president. In addition to the Congolese president and God, a couple of essays that were collected in North Kivu commended and thanked the UN, and more specifically MONUC and the Amani operation for their important role in establishing peace in the region through their demobilisation activities.

⁵⁶² C628, C914.

⁵⁶³ The 2008 Goma Peace Conference, in particular, was explicitly cited by only one student. C112.

Positive views on these actors of peace were not universally shared. Extolled by some for their positive involvement in the Kivu, both the Congolese government and MONUC were also occasionally criticised for ‘doing nothing’ and for ‘having turned a blind eye to the violence we are experiencing’.⁵⁶⁴ As for God, instead, his actions were never questioned or challenged. In the face of continuing misery, whereas several respondents showed their disappointment with their leaders (as we will see in the next paragraph), in not a single case did students express a loss of faith in God and a belief of having been abandoned by their ‘Father’ and ‘Saviour’.

4.5.1.3.6 *The present time and the way forward*

In the DRC, the present time received considerable attention in students’ essays. More so than in Rwanda and Burundi, views that were collected in Congo appeared to be remarkably homogenous in their predominantly negative depictions of the country’s current state of affairs.

Compared to their counterparts, only few Congolese students expressed a sense of hope and optimism towards the present and the future. Positive comments were mainly voiced in the framework of statements commending incumbent President J. Kabila. Except for a couple of respondents who maintained that ‘he had not ruled very well’, Kabila was generally praised for having promoted democracy through the organisation of elections, the country’s reconstruction through his ‘*Cinq Chantiers*’, as well as law and order, peace and security, and unity. As recounted by a young Congolese, ‘after the death of his father, President Joseph Kabila committed himself to addressing the country’s problems, which have however been difficult to resolve.’⁵⁶⁵

If a belief in Congo’s ongoing positive evolution was sometimes cautiously articulated by depicting the DRC as ‘a country on the move’ (*‘un pays en marche’*), a strong sense of pessimism and disillusion with what was perceived as a ‘hopeless’ situation emerged as being pervasive among the surveyed youth.

⁵⁶⁴ C119, C275.

⁵⁶⁵ C739.

Highlighting a generalised and almost existential condition of misery characterizing life in the DRC, a student sombrely stated that ‘the Congolese man suffers’.⁵⁶⁶ In a critical vein, another respondent presented the country’s motto as a mockery. Comparing the national motto with the actual current situation, he bitterly observed, “‘Justice-Peace-Work’? There is no justice, there is no peace, let alone work!”⁵⁶⁷ In several cases, the observation of a continued lack of progress resulted in the expression of feelings of resignation towards the country’s doomed fate. A student, for example, solemnly declared that, ‘the country’s decline is near as no remedy is in sight despite the many cries of alarm’. Similarly, another young Congolese affirmed her unwavering certainty that ‘the Congo will not get far’.⁵⁶⁸

4.5.1.3.6.1 Assessing current problems and challenges

As in Rwanda and Burundi, students’ descriptions and assessments of the present time in the Congo included frequent references to issues of governance, socio-economic development, and security.

Among the most serious problems with which the country was believed to be currently confronted were bad governance and endemic corruption – defined by a respondent as ‘a real disease’.⁵⁶⁹ Referring to a so-called ‘politics of the belly’ (*politique du ventre*), students lamented the selfishness of Congolese leaders and politicians, who, once in power, tended to forget about those whom they represented. Rather than fulfilling electoral promises of positive change and progress in the interest of the country and its people, politicians were said to prefer to exploit their position of authority in order to enrich themselves at the expense of the general well-being of the population. According to numerous respondents, the primary manifestation of their leaders’ bad governance consisted in their mismanagement of the country’s natural resources. Accounts often highlighted how the government’s inability to efficiently control and exploit these resources had caused a country as potentially rich as the Congo, ‘which does not

⁵⁶⁶ C487.

⁵⁶⁷ C65.

⁵⁶⁸ C653, C745.

⁵⁶⁹ C877.

lack anything’, to end up becoming one of the poorest and most under-developed countries in the world. Speaking of the Congo as ‘a rich country with a poor population’, a student frustratingly pointed out that, ‘this is what I call living in the water and dying of thirst’.⁵⁷⁰ Similarly, another respondent underscored the sad irony of ‘being rich on paper while being poor in reality’. In a critical tone, he explained that,

‘Today, our economy is the weakest in Africa after that of Somalia. Our leaders do nothing to save the image of our dear country. Instead, they make the stupid mistake of taking loans here and there, imposing a heavy burden on us youth to repay all these debts.’⁵⁷¹

Frustrations in this respect were further aggravated by the observation that, while the Congolese were ‘starving’ due to a failure to make appropriate use of their country’s resources, foreigners, including the ‘whites’ and neighbouring countries, had been allowed by the government to have free rein in the Congo and to exploit its wealth to their own advantage. Against the backdrop of a prevailing condition of ‘neo-colonialism’ (or ‘indirect’ and ‘clandestine colonialism’), concerns were expressed about a possible risk that the Kivu might eventually be sold by corrupt politicians. In the view of several young Congolese, their leaders had proved to be not only unable to seriously confront and counter negative foreign forces, but also willing to give in to their provocations. In the words of a student,

‘Here in the Congo I can see that soon our province could be sold if we don’t pay attention, because our authorities are very corruptible and our neighbours are ready to buy our country’.⁵⁷²

According to numerous accounts, due to their rulers’ bad governance and resource mismanagement, Congolese people continued to be severely affected by major socio-economic problems. These included widespread poverty and unemployment, overpopulation and rural exodus, environmental pressure and damage, a paucity of public services and infrastructure (e.g. adequate water and electricity supply, roads, houses, and school buildings), hunger and disease, and illiteracy. Various respondents highlighted some of the specific problems affecting

⁵⁷⁰ C628.

⁵⁷¹ C849.

⁵⁷² C418. The theme of the need of ‘vigilance’ towards Rwanda and/or Rwandans was rather recurrent.

the life of young people as themselves. Students lamented especially the persistent lack of free education, as well as the inability of schooling to guarantee employment in the poor and corrupt Congolese setting. As a result, according to respondents in South Kivu, many desperate and frustrated youngsters had been forced to abandon their homes and to live as street children and child-soldiers. This deplorable neglect of the needs of young people in the Congo was thus recognised as a cause of further criminalisation and militarisation of an already chronically unsafe province.

Security was overwhelmingly reported to be another prominent challenge that had continued to gravely impact people's life in the Kivu in particular. Pointing to the protracted nature of armed conflict and violence, as well as to a generalised wish for a yet-to-materialise peace, a respondent declared that,

*'The day we will have peace in this country, there will be a big celebration. For now, our suffering goes on.'*⁵⁷³

4.5.1.3.6.2 Charting the way forward: wishes, expectations, and recommendations for the future

Faced with both a troubled past and a disturbing present, several young Congolese voiced their wish for a better future. Among their primary aspirations was the achievement of peace and economic development and prosperity. To a lesser extent, a desire was likewise expressed for the attainment of social justice and equality, and for a triumph of the rule of law. Responsibility for enabling such positive change was mainly laid upon the national authorities, spearheaded by the President, as well as upon the Congolese population as a whole. In students' solicitations to increase good governance and to strengthen national unity and solidarity, while the authorities were urged to enhance their commitments and efforts to reconstruct and reorganise the country, the general population was encouraged to 'get back to work' and to join forces in support of the government'. As compellingly declared by a student:

⁵⁷³ C85.

'I ask everybody to get together and to use all the forces of the nation to build this country and to build a better future'.⁵⁷⁴

Again, a number of accounts highlighted a critical role of the divine in Congo's destiny. Demonstrating a strong reliance on God, respondents occasionally summoned his help to allow and to guide the country's recovery from anguish and despair. Placing the country in the hands of God, a student invoked his protection by stating,

'God help us against the Rwandans, who want to take our land; God help us to survive and to live in peace again'.⁵⁷⁵

If several students primarily trusted in God for the advancement of peace in particular, practical suggestions and recommendations on how to prevent and counter further conflict and destabilisation were also frequently formulated by Congolese respondents. As will be widely illustrated in the next paragraph, in a context in which Rwanda and its people were widely perceived as being at the core of Congo's recent misery and insecurity, addressing the country's relations with its neighbours appeared to be a major concern as well as a topic of considerable dissension among young Congolese.

4.5.1.3.6.3 Addressing 'the Rwandan threat': revisiting relations with the (former) enemies

Broadly recognised as being critical to internal stability, the issue of Congo's relations with Rwanda and its people revealed the existence of a striking divergence of opinions among Congolese respondents. Whereas bilateral relations were generally seen as having been conflictual in the past, views were found to substantially vary in their assessment of the current situation and in their expectations and recommendations for the future. Overall, their main difference consisted in conveying either more positive or more negative impressions and attitudes.

Among the most positive narratives were accounts that underscored Congo's improved relations with its 'neighbours', also defined as 'friends' and 'brothers'.

⁵⁷⁴ C287.

⁵⁷⁵ C577.

In these essays, a strong emphasis was placed on reporting the two countries' extensive cooperation in such varied fields as diplomacy, security, humanitarian assistance, economy and commerce, and energy. More specifically, students mentioned the re-opening of each other's embassies; the military alliance against the FDLR in the framework of the joint operations *Umoja Wetu* and *Kimya II*; the assistance provided to each others' refugees, for instance during the 2002 volcanic eruption in Goma; the promotion of commercial exchanges in the framework of the CEPGL, as well as a deal on joint power generation. On various occasions, this promising evolution was said to have been confirmed at a 2009 meeting in Goma, during which the countries' presidents had expressed their shared commitment to strengthen bilateral ties. While overall positive, these accounts revealed a varying level of confidence in the reported process of rapprochement. Whereas several students showed their trust in the successful resolution of past conflicts, others, although welcoming the recent attempts at improving relations, disclosed a degree of uncertainty about the chances of actually seeing such process succeed. The two statements below are illustrative of these contrasting stances:

'Our neighbours have always been our friends, despite a few occasions of conflict, which have now been resolved.'

*'Today we are in a phase of resolution of the profound regional conflicts and wars of aggressions that had developed with our neighbours since 1996. Lately we have started to improve our relations with them, hoping that this time they have put their hands on their hearts and will respect the commitments to cease their bad habits of invading us.'*⁵⁷⁶

In stark opposition to narratives that emphasised the recent reconciliation between the Congo and Rwanda, a conflicting view described bilateral relations as continuing to be dire. In the words of a student, 'Rwandans and Congolese don't like each other; they fight like cats and dogs'.⁵⁷⁷ As a general rule, in these more negative accounts, the occurrence of official acts of cooperation and solidarity was either utterly overlooked or strongly played down. In the latter cases, students typically underscored the mere political nature of such rapprochement and the

⁵⁷⁶ C731, C626.

⁵⁷⁷ C301.

failure of this process to take root among the people on the ground, whose lives had been severely affected by the imposed war. Among the respondents who considered bilateral relations to be still characterised by conflict and hatred, opinions seemed however to diverge on the prospects and expectations with regard to a possible resolution of the hostilities. Predictions included either a termination of the ongoing conflict, or, alternatively, its endurance and even a looming scenario of apocalyptic inter-state war. As variously declared by two students,

'According to history and from what I see today, relations between us and especially Rwanda are not good. Disagreements exist between us, but I know that they will end one day'.

'I think we will always have problems between us. In fact, according to me, one day a terrible fight will break out between the DRC and Rwanda. In the Kivu especially, everyone who is Congolese will eventually end up being either a soldier or a Mayi-Mayi to fight against Rwanda'.⁵⁷⁸

Besides the existence of divergent views on the nature of present and prospective relations, the collected accounts revealed a variety of more or less reconciliatory visions and recommendations with regard to the way forward.

The majority of respondents seemed to wish and hope for strengthened regional dialogue, unity, and cooperation for the sake of long-term peace and prosperity.⁵⁷⁹

Demonstrating a reconciliatory and forward-looking vision, as well as a recognition of the importance of future peaceful relations, two students concluded that,

'We must reconcile with each other, because eternal conflicts will not build anything. The past is the past. Let's now prepare for the future'.

'We must unite because unity is strength, and we must love each other because in this world neighbours must be best friends'.⁵⁸⁰

In the statements above, responsibility for an improvement of relations appeared to be seen as being equally shared between Rwandans and Congolese. In

⁵⁷⁸ C66, C528.

⁵⁷⁹ Cooperation was said to need to be strengthened for instance regarding the movement of people and goods, as well as the recognition of educational degrees.

⁵⁸⁰ C424, C29.

numerous other narratives, the obligation to amend the relationship between the two countries and peoples was instead primarily placed either on the former, or, to a lesser extent, on the latter.

In most cases, based on the understanding that Rwandans had been the principal source of Congolese suffering in recent years, their behavioural and attitudinal change towards their neighbours was often presented as holding the key both to Congo's peace and to improved bilateral relations. As a respondent explained,

'Rwandans have to understand that it's time for them to make peace and to be polite towards their neighbours. In fact, if the Rwandese were to cease their provocations and aggressions, we could finally unite in a common fight against poverty and under-development'.⁵⁸¹

Against the backdrop of 'provocations' that were believed to be hindering peace and reconciliation, several specific suggestions were advanced on ways in which Rwandans could promote better relations. In particular, Rwandans were urged:

- to cease their militant activities in the DRC and, especially, to stop supporting rebels such as the CNDP;
- to extradite Nkunda, 'the aggressor of the Congo', so that he could face justice at the ICC;
- to renounce their expansionist aims and to acknowledge that 'our country belongs to us';
- to accept and be frank about their Rwandan identity, and to stop calling themselves Congolese; and, finally,
- to favour the repatriation of the FDLR.

Whereas the abandonment of 'bad' practices by Rwanda was generally placed at the centre of a possible resolution of hostilities, the main responsibility conferred to the Congolese themselves appeared to merely consist in accepting to forgive their neighbours for their wrongdoing. As declared by a student,

⁵⁸¹ C337.

'We are obliged to live in peace with our neighbours, and we have to forgive them for all the pain they have caused us'.⁵⁸²

Occasionally, the Congolese were encouraged to leave the past behind and to reconcile with their 'hangmen' based on religious arguments. A respondent, for instance, maintained that Congo's neighbours, regardless of their misdeeds, 'deserve to be loved because they are also God's children'.⁵⁸³ A different argument in favour of forgiveness towards the Rwandese was raised by another student. Showing his faith in humanity, this young Congolese pleaded for giving the former enemies a second chance to prove themselves to be good neighbours. In his words, 'human beings can change: the enemies of yesterday can become the friends of tomorrow'.⁵⁸⁴ In a number of cases, respondents demonstrated their personal willingness to reconcile with their neighbours. Among them was a young Congolese respondent who asserted her intention to follow the example set by her president, by declaring,

'I think I will visit Rwanda one day. As our president met and signed an agreement with Rwanda's president, me too I am going to have a relationship with the people of Rwanda'.⁵⁸⁵

A certain readiness to surmount past hostilities was likewise expressed by a student who, while still evidently resentful towards Rwandans, appeared to be willing to open up to a dialogue that could repair torn relations. In his words,

'I find it difficult with those people, but if debates were organised, perhaps the situation could be remedied and I could change my mind towards them'.⁵⁸⁶

Such reconciliatory views and attitudes were not shared by all respondents. Holding on to a memory of the 'criminal' involvement of Rwandans in Congo's affairs, young Congolese often revealed deep feelings of mistrust, fear, resentment, and revenge, as well as hostile dispositions towards their eastern neighbours. In a rather confrontational tone, a student, for instance, seemed to

⁵⁸² C398.

⁵⁸³ C856.

⁵⁸⁴ C156.

⁵⁸⁵ C329.

⁵⁸⁶ C307.

solicit a robust collective reaction to the imposed suffering. He provocatively stated that,

*'This war is caused by some Rwandans who invade us all the time to take over eastern Congo, making us suffer a lot. If one day they were to succeed, we will be killed by the Rwandans. So, the question is: what are we going to do about it?'*⁵⁸⁷

While an explicit answer to this question was left out in the statement above, a number of essays included comments that conveyed a overtly antagonistic vision of the best way forward. Rather than encouraging and welcoming increased and improved relations with Rwandans, several respondents abhorred and warned against any rapprochement with 'those people'. This position was founded on the belief that a 'soft' approach would only grant Rwandans the opportunity to cunningly advance their vested predatory aims hidden behind a smokescreen of reconciliation. Their recommendation to the Congolese President was instead to definitively break all relations with Rwandans on account of their being both unnecessary and counterproductive. More specifically, students suggested to once and for all establish who is and who is not Congolese, to expel all Rwandans, as well as to close all borders in order to protect the country from foreign intruders and insurgents and from further exploitation. Three statements are particularly noteworthy for their unequivocal expression of xenophobic fears as well as of ideals of (ethno-)national purity:

'At the moment we do not know who is Rwandan and who is not. There is a total confusion with the wars they impose on us. Let the Rwandese stay Rwandese and the Congolese be Congolese.'

'Everybody has to return to his own country; we don't want this agreement that opens the borders because they will then come to our country to exploit and to steal our land for their cows. I say No!'

*'I think that if we could have the Tutsi return to Egypt, and the Hutu FDLR to Rwanda, we would finally have peace. In the end, the Tutsi in Rwanda should recognize that the Hutu are originaires and that the country belongs to them.'*⁵⁸⁸

Feelings of concern in this regard were sometimes specifically expressed in relation to Congolese Tutsi refugees living in Rwanda. Several accounts revealed

⁵⁸⁷ C585.

⁵⁸⁸ C585, C418, C323.

how their prospective return to the DRC was seen both as a potential source of renewed conflict and as a new opportunity for Rwandans to shrewdly infiltrate the Kivu to pursue their malicious goals. As stated by a student,

'I think that we could still have conflicts, because they say that they are Congolese while everywhere we can have infiltrators coming from Rwanda. We should put an end to this'.⁵⁸⁹

While the Congolese authorities were advised to break relations with Rwanda and to repatriate its population as a prevention strategy against the perceived Rwandan threat, a number of respondents showed their own personal refusal to reconcile with those against whom they appeared to still hold deep rancour. Such sentiments were strongly conveyed by three students in particular. One expressed her intention to abstain from having any contact with her neighbours. The other two communicated their willingness and readiness to avenge the suffering caused by the enemies and to take up arms to fight against them:

'Personally, I don't want to have anything to do with the Rwandese. I have a bad memory of them and I really don't like them. In fact, nobody in my family likes them, and every time we see these foreigners we feel bad because of the war they bring us'.

'I wish the Rwandese our same suffering. Once there will be war in their country, we will not help them and we will support their enemies. I want them killed'.

'Nkunda's war in North Kivu has killed many people. That is why, if there is a way to revolt against the Rwandans, and if they tell people to go there, I think I will also go'.⁵⁹⁰

Once again, religious arguments were not lacking. Rather than encouraging forgiveness, religion was this time summoned in a context of retribution. A couple of essays, for instance, raised a scenario of divine ordeal, whereby Rwanda, described by a student as 'a damned nation',⁵⁹¹ would eventually have to account for its wrongdoing before God. In the words of a respondent,

'As a child, I don't have a bad heart towards this country. I know that God will make Rwanda pay for what it did to us'.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ C877.

⁵⁹⁰ C358, C376, C589.

⁵⁹¹ C679.

⁵⁹² C621.

The resolute expressions of hostility and vengefulness conveyed by young Congolese confirmed the considerable challenges of changing perceptions and of repairing relations in the DRC. If the reality that came to the fore in this study raises some concern for the future, a comparison of different views also indicated a possible way out of a cycle of revenge and escalation. A review of students’ testimonies demonstrated how the painful war experience had almost invariably led to the conclusion that Rwandans are ‘bad neighbours’. Conversely, direct experiences in settings that transcended this clearly traumatic event, – most notably in the everyday life in the Kivu (with Rwandan schoolmates, neighbours and visitors) as well as in Rwanda itself (as visitors and as refugees), – proved to be more diverse and to elicit different sentiments. Often, the more reconciliatory opinions and attitudes appeared to have been shaped by a direct positive experience with ‘the other’ in such settings, which had prompted a reconsideration of common negative stances nurtured by a haunting memory of war as well as by hear-say. The table below reports *in extenso* a number of illustrative examples of such different experiences and resulting perceptions and attitudes. Some students recounted stories of abuse and inhospitality that confirmed and reinforced negative perceptions of Rwandans. Others instead told stories of friendship and kindness, which explicitly challenged and debunked ‘common knowledge’ on the wickedness of the Rwandese.

Negative experiences and confirmation of prejudices	Positive experiences and debunking of prejudices
<i>During the war in the DRC</i>	
‘The only experience that I have with the Rwandese is their war against us. My personal experience with Rwanda is that when the Rwandese come to the DRC we experience theft, violence and killings. Personally, I had a childhood friend, and the Rwandese cut his head and raped his sister to death. Since then, and to this day, I hate Rwanda.’ ⁵⁹³	N/A
<i>In everyday life in the DRC</i>	

⁵⁹³ C422.

<p>‘I have never been to Rwanda, but I see these foreigners in our country, and seeing what they did and do here, I don’t like them.’⁵⁹⁴</p>	<p>‘I have never been to Rwanda, but I have studied with some Rwandans in my school here, and we are good friends. By spending time with them I discovered their good heart in comparison with what people here think of them.’⁵⁹⁵</p>
<p><i>During a displacement to Rwanda in the wake of the 2002 volcanic eruption</i></p>	
<p>‘At the time of the volcanic eruption that displaced us, they didn’t take good care of us. They must have forgotten how we welcomed them during their genocides.’⁵⁹⁶</p>	<p>‘I have good memories of the Rwandese, whom are believed to be mean people and brutal killers. At the time of the volcanic eruption, they proved to have a good heart in welcoming and taking good care of us. My family and I, for instance, were displaced to Gisenyi, where we were received by people whom we didn’t even know. They welcomed us in their homes for a few days, giving us a place to stay and food. Hereby I want to thank them again.’⁵⁹⁷</p>
<p><i>During visits to Rwanda</i></p>	
<p>‘If a Congolese goes to Rwanda today, he will be mistreated and will risk his life. For example, one day I was in Gisenyi, and I was robbed of everything I had because I am Congolese. Instead they come here, walking with their revolvers on the street, and doing what they want in our country.’⁵⁹⁸</p>	<p>‘Rwanda is a country which the Congolese suspect of being inhabited by very mean people, whereas when I arrived there I was very well received by our friends the Rwandese.’⁵⁹⁹</p>

Table 14. Experiences by young Congolese with the Rwandan neighbours

Experiences clearly were not all rosy. Significantly, the contrast that emerged from the statements above seems to validate the importance of investing in the promotion of opportunities that could favour positive cross-border contact with a view to surmounting existing bias and prejudice. The positive impact of such initiatives was testified by two students. As they recounted,

‘Despite our past misunderstandings, my relations with our Rwandan neighbours are perfect today because we have the chance to organize sports events, which have brought us together, reinforcing our relations.’

‘Today I love our neighbours and I don’t keep grudges against them. By meeting them, I’ve realised that what happened was caused by a few crooked individuals

⁵⁹⁴ C333.
⁵⁹⁵ C876.
⁵⁹⁶ C132.
⁵⁹⁷ C178.
⁵⁹⁸ C34.
⁵⁹⁹ C98.

*and that their actions don't have to result in cutting relations that were acquired long time ago.*⁶⁰⁰

4.5.1.3.6.4 Revisiting relations with the West

Most recommendations in relation to future peace primarily concerned Congolese and Rwandan people. In a handful of essays, students instead formulated solutions that involved Western actors. With no exception, rather than soliciting their assistance, respondents who advanced suggestions regarding ‘the West’ showed a desire to take distance from a world that was mainly seen as exerting negative influences. A student in Goma, in particular, argued that a solution to internecine conflict in the Kivu would require banning the NGOs of ‘the whites’. In his view, these international players, who had been working under false pretexts while advancing their hidden ‘neo-colonial’ agenda, were in fact responsible for bringing war and suffering to the region.⁶⁰¹ Another respondent outlined his vision for Congo’s and Africa’s future relations with ‘the whites’ in a more antagonistic and vengeful tone. He encouraged the young generations ‘of black skin’ not only to unite to fight against white domination, but also to explore ways in which ‘the peoples belonging to the white race themselves could be colonised by us’. Further evoking nationalist and pan-African feelings, this young Congolese affirmed that, ‘we have to be proud of our skin, we have to be proud of being African and Congolese, and we must work together to see how we can build and civilize our dear continent without the whites.’⁶⁰² In stark contrast to views that strongly condemned a condition of neo-colonialism in the Congo, a couple of students expressed their remarkable preference for a renewed period of direct colonisation under ‘the whites’, or even under Rwanda. This stance was based on an expressed belief according to which these outside actors would be able to better rule over the DRC than their own leaders. This peculiar thought was most clearly voiced by two respondents. In their words,

⁶⁰⁰ C956, C106.

⁶⁰¹ C111.

⁶⁰² C898.

'Today, people are asking a return to their country's direct colonisation instead of living in this miserable independence. At least, during the colonial time, the whites built the country, the inhabitants lived in peace and without hunger, and children went to school'.

'Today, nothing is done and we live in misery. Personally, I would prefer our country to be given to the whites because the Congolese don't know how to run their country. Even, it could be better to give it to Rwanda, as it could help us to become civilised and organised'.⁶⁰³

The excerpts reported in the paragraphs above clearly revealed a tendency among young Congolese to convey predominantly negative and pessimistic outlooks on their country's history and destiny. Such views, as will be illustrated in the next section, appeared to be largely shared across the border.

4.5.2 The history of the DRC according to Rwandan and Burundian students

4.5.2.1 General remarks on the content of the narratives

Asked to narrate the history of neighbouring Congo, students in Rwanda and Burundi showed, and sometimes explicitly recognised, their limited knowledge on the matter. Here as well, students' poor acquaintance with the regional history was generally explained with a failure of schools to adequately inform them on this subject.

In Rwandan and Burundian accounts of Congo's history, several topics tended to regularly recur. Essays usually included brief references to the Belgian colonisation, the achievement of independence, the succession of post-colonial regimes, and, most frequently, to the troubled recent and present times.⁶⁰⁴ Compared to the less distant past, Congo's pre-colonial history was instead largely

⁶⁰³ C934, C855. As pointed out by another Congolese student, 'in neighbouring countries such as Rwanda, there is the spirit of working (*esprit de travail*), respect of laws and punishment for everybody who infringes on them, less corruption. They are small countries, but they are well-organised, and they respect and value their richness.' C42.

⁶⁰⁴ With regard to the colonisation, as a general rule no distinction was made between the two periods of Leopold's EIC and of the Belgian Congo. In relation to Congo's decolonisation, students mentioned especially the date of independence and the figure of Lumumba. A couple of essays additionally included references to the creation of political parties, spearheaded by Lumumba's MNC, Kasa-vubu's ABAKO, and Tshombe's CONAKAT. Often, Congo's history was also summarised by simply listing the evolution of the names that the country assumed throughout the decades (EIC, Belgian Congo, Congo-Leopoldville, Congo-Kinshasa, Zaire, and DRC).

neglected. The rare exceptions in this respect mainly referred to the Kingdom of the Kongo, and, in the case of Rwanda, to the attachment of parts of eastern Congo to the ancient Rwandan kingdom.⁶⁰⁵ Overall, only few historical dates were cited. By far, the most commonly cited was the achievement of independence in 1960. As for the country's historical personalities, the most commonly mentioned were, in order of importance, the post-colonial leaders Lumumba and Mobutu, and to a lesser extent, J. Kabila, L.D. Kabila, and Kasavubu.

Demonstrating students' poor knowledge of their neighbours' history, Rwandan and Burundian essays included numerous factual mistakes. Among these was the identification of Portugal, Germany, France and/or the UK as the country's former colonisers, of 1961 or 1962 as the date of independence, and of Lumumba or Mobutu as Congo's first president.⁶⁰⁶

4.5.2.2 Identities in the DRC and in the Kivu

The theme of identity in relation to the DRC was rarely brought up by Rwandan and Burundian students. In most cases, respondents underscored the highly heterogeneous nature of their country's population. Usually referred to as 'the Congolese', Congo's inhabitants were said to be composed of a multitude of what were variously defined as '*ethnies*', 'tribes', 'clans', 'races', or, more generically, as 'peoples' or 'groups'. Their differences were sometimes highlighted by describing them as each having their own distinct language and culture. Typically said to be 'many', their estimated number varied from 200 to over 400.

Specific examples of such groups were only seldom included in students' essays. In Burundi, a handful of narratives mentioned the Bashi, the Baluba, the Babembe, and the forest-dwelling pygmies. In Rwanda, accounts mainly indicated

⁶⁰⁵ On the Kingdom of the Kongo, a handful of students mentioned the name of some of its kings, its early contact with the Portuguese and its subsequent Christianisation and modernisation, and its decline as a result of internal conflict. The country's early contact with the Arabs was instead mentioned by only one Burundian student.

⁶⁰⁶ Also, in few cases, Leopold, Mobutu and Nyerere (Tanzania) were mistakenly mentioned instead of Lumumba as Congo's independence hero. Additionally, in two cases, Rwandan Kagame and Zimbabwean Mugabe were confused as Congo's current head of State.

the presence of a community of Kinyarwanda speakers of Rwandan origins. This group's settlement in the Kivu was explained by a couple of respondents by referring to the time of colonial partition, when a section of the ancient Rwandan Kingdom, together with its population, had been annexed to eastern Congo. In Rwanda, these were the only references that were found in relation to the theme of origins, migrations and settlement. In Burundi this topic was addressed by highlighting either the diverse origins of the various peoples living in the DRC (without however specifying their exact provenance), or, alternatively, by underscoring their common Bantu origins – with the exception, according to some, of the pygmies, Congo's first inhabitants.⁶⁰⁷

Opinions on the nature of inter-ethnic relations in the DRC diverged among students. According to several respondents, relations among Congolese people had been friendly and even brotherly *despite* the existing differences. Conversely, others portrayed internal relations in the DRC as being characterised by a lack of unity, by tensions and conflicts, as well as by discrimination and segregation, *due* primarily to the existence of differences. In the view of these students, the Congo's frequent tribal wars were to be explained with the country's great ethnic and linguistic diversity and with the obstacle this diversity posed to inter-group communication and understanding. Whilst heterogeneity was seen by some as a problematic factor, a Burundian respondent instead considered this variety as a source of cultural and historical richness. In her words, 'the history of the Congo is very rich thanks to its numerous customs and cultures.'⁶⁰⁸

4.5.2.3 The troubled history of the DRC and of the Kivu

Echoing Congolese narratives, Rwandan and Burundian accounts of Congo's past conveyed predominantly disconsolate views. They often spoke of a 'bad' history, which had been marked by political instability, wars, coups, dictatorship, bad governance, economic mismanagement, and general misery. As a Burundian

⁶⁰⁷ The geographical origins of the Bantu were variously located in Chad, Cameroon, Niger, or Nigeria. In one case, a respondent further described the Bantu peoples as agriculturalists.

⁶⁰⁸ B49.

student poignantly observed, ‘the DRC is a beautiful and naturally rich country, but is struck by great misfortune’.⁶⁰⁹

Like in Congo itself, respondents in Rwanda and Burundi traced the beginnings of Congo’s troubled history to a variety of junctures in the country’s historical trajectory. In several cases, essays underscored the chronic nature of Congo’s misery and insecurity by maintaining that this had been a reality ‘since always’ or ‘for a long time’. In others, the origins of Congo’s difficulties were situated either in the colonial time or, more frequently, in the post-colonial era. Specifically, the commencement of the country’s perpetual instability was variously identified with such turning points as the arrival of the ‘whites’, Lumumba’s assassination and Mobutu’s coup, and events in the 1990s, notably the arrival of the Interahamwe/ex-FAR and Mobutu’s overthrow.

Concerning Congo’s colonial time, the tone of Rwandan and Burundian narratives was largely accusatory. Although a number of positive contributions deriving from the colonisation were underscored in Burundi in particular – namely the foundation, unification, and infrastructural development of the country,⁶¹⁰ – references to the hardship caused by the former colonial power dominated accounts of this period. Respondents mentioned such colonial misdeeds as the introduction of the slave trade, the imposition of forced labour and corporal punishment, the exploitation of the country’s resources, as well as the deliberate fuelling of internal tensions. In Rwanda especially, where accounts tended to be particularly critical and reproaching, several essays denounced the primacy of colonial responsibility for their neighbours’ troubles by exposing explicit causal relations between colonial practices and Congo’s present condition of economic and political instability. In particular, while the colonial exploitation of Congolese resources was believed to have adversely contributed to the current state of poverty and under-development, Belgian paternalist and divisionist practices were blamed for the country’s disorganisation and consequent insecurity. In the words of two outspoken Rwandan students,

⁶⁰⁹ B71.

⁶¹⁰ According to a Burundian student, ‘it was thanks to Leopold that the Congo existed’. B275.

'During the colonial period, the Belgians over-exploited the natural wealth of the Congolese, from which their poverty derives. They also developed a theory of non-self-governance in the Congo, which led to the great disorganisation that characterizes this country. It is due to this disorganisation that many terrorists live there today.'

*'Currently the Congolese don't live in total peace due to the colonisation by the whites, which left disagreements and caused wars. Just after the colonisation, for instance, the Katanga province wanted to become independent by reason of its immense richness, but they were stimulated by the whites who were interested in amassing wealth.'*⁶¹¹

In addition, in the relatively few essays that mentioned this issue, the Belgians (or 'the whites') were accused of having played a pivotal role in Congo's descent into darkness on account of their involvement in the assassination of the country's Independence Hero Lumumba. Their connection to this dramatic event was reported to have been either direct ('he was killed by the Belgians'), or indirect, as part of a conspiracy spanned together with local actors ('he was killed by Kasavubu and Mobutu in a Belgian plot'). Only a couple of respondents omitted all allusion to the role played by the Belgians, instead blaming this murder exclusively on local actors such as Mobutu, Kasavubu, or, more vaguely, Lumumba's compatriots.

Whereas several accounts emphasised the negative role of the colonisers in Congo's 'sad' history, others highlighted the bad governance of post-colonial leaders and its impact on the country's misery. As observed in a Rwandan essay, 'throughout the decades, Congo's presidents have done nothing for the country; instead, they destroyed it.' Such allegations were made especially against Mobutu. When a value judgment was articulated, this key historical figure was generally depicted as a 'great dictator', an 'autocrat', and a 'bad' and 'wicked' president. He was accused of having ruled 'as an absolute monarch' and 'as a god', 'subjugating', 'terrorising', 'persecuting' and 'killing' the population. Underscoring Mobutu's crucial role in the country's decline, a Rwandan student stated that,

⁶¹¹ R492, R802.

'The country was severely damaged by Mobutu. Since then, it has continued to experience insecurity and total disorder'.⁶¹²

Although a critical tone dominated accounts of Mobutu's rule, several positive remarks were also collected, especially in Burundi. In such rare cases, Congo's former leader was portrayed as 'a strong man at the African level', who had managed to unite and develop his country, turning it into a major economic power. Pointing to the controversial nature of Mobutu's presidency, a Burundian essay instead reported the existence of mixed feelings towards this historical figure. He argued that, 'while some like him, others don't'.⁶¹³

Some consideration was thus given to exposing the nature of colonial and post-colonial rule and their largely devastating effect on Congo's destiny. Overall, however, Rwandan and Burundian accounts appeared to be most strongly concerned with the country's recent time of violent conflict. Students variously defined such occurrence in terms of 'wars', 'conflicts', 'rebellions', 'fighting', 'disagreements', 'political instability', 'crises', 'troubles', and 'disorder'. Wars, in particular, were said to have been 'many', 'frequent', and 'endless'. As sombrely suggested by a Burundian student, 'the Congo is a place where war never ends'.⁶¹⁴

In their essays, several respondents pointed out that the Congolese State had been struggling with numerous sources of insecurity, especially in the east. On the one hand, a couple of essays cited the inter-state wars that had been fought in the past between the DRC and neighbouring countries, especially Rwanda. As recounted by a Rwandan student, 'we used to fight some time ago'.⁶¹⁵ On the other hand, respondents more often mentioned the recurrent incidence of intra-state conflict among Congolese themselves. Their accounts variously referred to the outbreak of 'civil wars', 'ethnic' or 'tribal' conflicts, and 'fratricidal quarrels'. Highlighting the lack of peace and social cohesion in the neighbouring country, a student argued that, 'the Congolese are not united, and they have hated and killed each

⁶¹² R38.

⁶¹³ B298.

⁶¹⁴ B111.

⁶¹⁵ R487.

other for a long time'.⁶¹⁶ In addition, the DRC was described as the scene of militant activities that had been conducted by domestic and foreign 'rebels', 'terrorists', and 'paramilitary groups', as well as by an 'undisciplined' national army.

The identity of the actors that had been involved in the most recent wars and violence was only sporadically specified. At the top of the list of those who were believed to have been tormenting the country and its population in recent years were the Rwandan Interahamwe/FDLR/ex-FAR – also referred to as *inyeshyamba* (rebels), or *impunzi* (refugees).⁶¹⁷ To a lesser extent, essays mentioned other armed groups, notably Nkunda's CNDP and the Mayi-Mayi (e.g. PARECO). As for Congo's 'tribes', only the Banyamulenge were occasionally cited in the context of the country's internal conflicts. In such infrequent cases, this group was depicted as a victimised tribe. According to a couple of Rwandan essays, the Banyamulenge had been discriminated against and threatened with extermination. Similarly, several Burundian respondents brought evidence to the victimisation of this group by touching on the Gatumba massacre that had been committed against Banyamulenge refugees not far from Bujumbura.

Next to references to the origins, nature, and actors of Congo's ongoing instability, a number of causes were also identified. In particular, three main factors – of social, political, and economic nature, respectively – were alternatively deemed to be at the root of the country's conflict and violence. The first, as mentioned earlier, consisted in the highly diverse and divided nature of its society. The second cause was related to the leaders' bad or weak governance. The weakness of the Congolese State was sometimes declared to have partly derived from the vastness of the country, which had compounded the task of exerting full control over the territory. The third factor consisted in people's greed and competition to exploit the country's rich natural resources. As a Rwandan respondent explained, 'in the Congo there are many wars linked to possession of raw materials because

⁶¹⁶ B380.

⁶¹⁷ One Rwandan student also mentioned the rebels' splinter group URUNANA.

the Congolese are greedy.’⁶¹⁸ In some cases, local dynamics of conflict were recognised as being aggravated by ‘foreigners’ who wished to get their share of the country’s natural wealth. A Burundian student, for instance, drew attention not only to the passive attitude of foreign countries towards Congo’s misery, but also their complicit role in the pillage of its resources and in the perpetuation of internal instability. In her words, ‘foreign forces do nothing to help the country; instead they exploit its mineral-rich sub-soil and fuel wars.’⁶¹⁹ Contrary to Congolese accounts, in Rwandan and Burundian narratives the term ‘foreigners’ was generally applied to refer to the West. As a Burundian respondent explained, ‘[t]he Congo cannot have peace because it cannot get rid of world powers, which plunder the Congolese minerals they need for their factories’.⁶²⁰

The negative role of neighbouring countries, which had been much cited by Congolese respondents, was instead utterly omitted in Rwandan and Burundian accounts. In Rwanda narratives in particular, the portrayal of Rwanda’s role in the Congo was in fact diametrically opposed to the image that was widely sketched in Congolese essays. While Congolese students had depicted Rwanda and its people as the biggest threat to Congo’s internal peace and stability, conversely, Rwandan students, while recognising the menace posed by the Rwandan FDLR, portrayed Rwanda’s involvement in the Congo in uncritical and even positive terms. On the one hand, in stark contrast to the dominant Congolese narrative, in Rwanda, the blame for the recent history of hostilities between the two countries was invariably placed on the Congolese. Specifically, in an apparent attempt to justify the (re)actions of the Rwandan government, the Congo was accused of having behaved as an inimical country that had threatened Rwanda’s stability after the genocide. The Congolese were deemed to have done so by accepting to host, hide, and support the belligerent *génocidaires* Interahamwe and ex-FAR, and later the FDLR insurgents (or *abacengezi*). On the other hand, in a context in which bilateral relations were generally believed to have been restored, Rwanda was occasionally exalted for the stabilising role it had played in the Congo. A student,

⁶¹⁸ R771.

⁶¹⁹ B239.

⁶²⁰ B198

for instance, recounted how his country had helped the DRC in times of war by sending its soldiers ‘to bring peace’.⁶²¹ Two occasions in particular were mentioned during which Rwanda was said to have offered its vital assistance to the Congolese. The first was the 2009 joint military operation *Umoja-Wetu*. Thanks to Rwanda’s cooperation, this operation was reported to have been successful in countering the rebels operating on Congolese soil. The second was L.D. Kabila’s ‘war of liberation’. Once again, according to a couple of students, this rebellion could only succeed thanks to its reliance on Rwandan support. While Rwandan respondents emphasised their country’s magnanimous acts aimed at helping a neighbour ‘in need’, their narratives excluded all allusion to what Congolese respondents massively believed to be Rwanda’s real, predatory, motives. Also, they omitted all reference to the abuses and crimes that had been reportedly committed both by Rwandan forces and by its allies, especially Nkunda’s CNDP. A single exception to the overall positive image of Rwanda was found in Rwandan essays. This account openly admitted that, ‘many foreign countries steal Congolese resources, including Rwanda.’⁶²²

Having acknowledged the continuous insecurity plaguing the Congo, Rwandan and Burundian students usually recognised their neighbours as victims of great suffering. The gravity of their predicament was sometimes expressed by portraying Congo’s inhabitants as ‘unhappy people’, ‘tired of the endless and persisting wars and violence’.⁶²³ Although descriptions of people’s ordeal were not as extensive and vivid as those offered by Congolese respondents themselves, who had personally witnessed the havoc, Rwandan and Burundian students appeared to be generally aware of the hardship endured on the other side of the border. In numerous essays, the Congolese were reported to have been subjected to ‘atrocious’ killings, massacres and sexual violence, as well as to unrestrained plunder and devastation. As pointed out in several narratives, the impact of war and instability in the Congo had been enormous. On the one hand, rampant insecurity was said to have caused extensive trauma, death and displacement. On

⁶²¹ R940.

⁶²² R726.

⁶²³ B189.

the other, it was deemed to have severely affected the country's chances of recovery by weakening the State and by hindering economic development.

4.5.2.4 The aftermath of the war, and the present time in the DRC and in the Kivu

Rwandan and Burundian essays showed little enthusiasm for Congo's current developments and foreseen prospects. Although a few narratives highlighted the country's ongoing progress towards peace consolidation, reconstruction and development, and democratisation, views appeared to be predominantly negative and pessimistic. Accounts of Congo's recent history and present time (as well as of Congolese history in its entirety) were dominated by an emphasis on the country's many political and socio-economic problems and challenges. Reflecting the image presented by Congolese students themselves, Rwandan and Burundian respondents provided a largely negative assessment of such issues as peace and security, governance, and development. The commonly accepted view across borders portrayed the Congolese population as living in extreme hardship, great misery, and in continuous danger due to a condition of enduring insecurity, bad governance, and poverty.

Concerning the issue of security, very few respondents affirmed that the war in the DRC had ended or subsided. Most essays instead underscored the unabated nature of instability and of accompanying human rights abuses. In one case, a student warned that, although calm had recently started to return, 'hidden unrest' was simmering under the surface. If insecurity was considered as Congo's major challenge, the DRC was also believed to have been severely affected by poor governance, as well as by generalised indolence, selfishness, corruption, and lack of patriotism. According especially to Rwandan narratives, which tended to be largely derogatory in their portrayals of the western neighbours, the deplorable conduct of Congolese politicians, and of the population as a whole, had led to great disorganisation and disorder, and to Congo's status as one of the poorest, least developed, and most economically dependent countries in the world. In Rwanda, Congo's incompetent, irresponsible, and selfish leaders were harshly

criticised for having been unable or unwilling to take resolute measures to effectively address such problems as widespread poverty, malnutrition, unemployment and illiteracy, and infrastructural decay. In particular, as in the DRC itself, respondents in both Rwanda and Burundi showed their astonishment in front of the country's inability to use its rich natural resources to step out of its current state of extreme poverty and under-development. Highlighting an axiomatic situation whereby 'the country is rich but the people are poor',⁶²⁴ students pointed the finger primarily at the local authorities. According to a Rwandan respondent, these had demonstrated to shamefully 'behave as if the country's wealth was theirs instead of governing in the interest of the population'.⁶²⁵ More generally, the Congolese as a whole were widely believed 'not to know' how to adequately control, exploit, and manage their country's resources for their own profit. Against this backdrop, foreign countries were said to have taken advantage of the weakness and corruption of the State in order to enrich themselves. While the country's inability to use its natural wealth was seen as a scandalous missed opportunity, on account of this unexploited potential, students' views on Congo's future prospects were not entirely pessimistic. Whereas, according to a few respondents, their big neighbour was doomed to remain in a perpetual state of political and economic insecurity, according to others, it instead had a chance to redeem itself and to finally achieve peace and prosperity. As optimistically argued by a Burundian and a Rwandan student respectively,

'Thanks to its abundant raw materials and energetic sources, Congo has the potential to become one of the most powerful countries in the world, and to thereby contribute to the development of other countries in Africa'.

*'Today, if the Congolese were to work together and to responsibly use their resources for the common interest, their country could become the best in Africa and could even help other countries like Rwanda'.*⁶²⁶

Irrespective of their either positive or negative views and beliefs, a number of respondents showed their sympathy and solidarity with the neighbours by

⁶²⁴ B412.

⁶²⁵ R588.

⁶²⁶ B16, R754.

expressing good wishes and hopes for a future of peace, development, and progress. With these objectives in mind, Rwandan and Burundian students strongly encouraged the Congolese to mobilise the forces of the nation for the sake of a better future. In particular, they recommended their neighbours to commit themselves to promoting such goals as national unity and patriotism, good governance and anti-corruption, efficient management of the country and of its resources, as well as integration into the EAC. As asserted by a young Rwandan in her concluding remarks,

*'If the DRC was to better do its best and to join our regional community of nations, its miserable days would be over and a new chapter of its history could finally begin.'*⁶²⁷

4.6 Summary and conclusion

Echoing the findings and conclusions on the Rwandan and Burundian case-studies outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, the Congolese case-study presented in Chapter 4 exposed the politics of history, identity and education as it played out in this country in the course of the decades. By exploring the evolution of ideological and historical discourses and of educational policies and teaching contents from the colonial time until today, the present chapter confirmed a constant political appeal to history and identity as well as a consistent institutionalisation of dominant discourses in the education system. Schoolbooks, in particular, proved to have functioned as powerful propaganda tools of successive regimes. Typically permeated by the official ideology and oriented towards the legitimisation of the regimes in power, they worked to shape identities, historical views, as well as attitudes towards power and authority.

⁶²⁷ R821.

Much like in Rwanda and Burundi, colonial discourses on history and identity in Congo served the purpose of legitimising and supporting Belgian rule. Heavily relying on pseudo-scholarship impregnated with a racist ideology, the colonial discourse propagated apologetic and eulogistic views which glorified the image of Belgian colonialism and especially of King Leopold II by presenting them as saviours and benefactors of the Congo. Also, Belgians' rule was supported by a discourse which re-imagined the local society and its history. In their administration of the colony, colonial officials resorted to ethnographic knowledge to guide the design of 'indigenous policies' and to justify roles and hierarchy of power within the state apparatus. In this context, schools functioned as important elements of the colonial machinery through which Belgium's hegemony and colonial interests were advanced. As such, they were significantly shaped by the colonial ideology and discourse. The racial ideology embraced by the colonial power found expression in inequitable educational policies and practices which favoured 'the whites' and allegedly superior tribes. Furthermore, the official ideology found expression in biased school teachings which legitimised Belgian colonisation while inculcating a sense of congenital inferiority among the colonised subjects. Clearly oriented towards the legitimisation of the colonisation, schoolbooks exalted the merits and achievements of the whites and of the colonial authorities in saving the Congo from the darkness and misery that had characterised life before their arrival.

The achievement of independence from Belgian rule signalled a radical break with the colonial discourse. Following the departure of the colonisers, Congo's successive governments propagated a strong nationalist ideology which made large appeal to history. In the framework of a project of 'mental decolonisation' first announced by Lumumba, Mobutu's regime made a concerted effort to re-write the country's 'authentic' history. This history exalted the glorious ancient past, condemned the slave trade and Belgian colonisation, and celebrated the heroic independence struggle from foreign occupation and oppression. It further denigrated the First Republic and its corrupt and incompetent leaders, and legitimised and glorified Mobutu's Second Republic. The advent of Mobutu's rule was portrayed as having brought salvation from anarchy and as having marked the

beginning of true independence as well as of a re-birth of Zairians as a proud and strong nation. Functioning as powerful instruments of propaganda and indoctrination, schools were reformed to reflect the official ideology and discourse. Curricula and textbooks that were developed under Mobutu propagated a politicised view of the country's past and present which legitimised the regime in place and which justified the dismissal of its predecessors. Also, while recognising the rich diversity of the nation, schools worked to build national unity and patriotism around Mobutu and his party.

Mobutu's demise in the wake of the First Congo War was accompanied by a rejection of the previous regime of truth and by the propagation of a discourse that legitimised the incumbent power-holders and their policies vis-à-vis the overthrown order. Influenced by a socialist and nationalist ideology, the new president L.D. Kabila portrayed Congo's colonial and post-colonial history as a time of popular oppression by a sanguinary and exploitative State. The military coup that deposed Mobutu was depicted as the final victory in a long struggle for true liberation and independence. During the Second Congo War, Kabila bolstered his legitimacy by presenting himself as the leader of an ongoing national liberation struggle against foreign occupation and domination by aggressive regional powers. The regime's nationalist and especially anti-Rwandan discourse was accompanied by a growing anti-Tutsi and anti-Hamitic rhetoric which demonised what was portrayed as an alien, threatening and domineering race. Following his father's assassination, J. Kabila largely reproduced the nationalist rhetoric of the late president-turned-hero, who had perished while defending the besieged nation against foreign invaders.

In the wake of Congo's various regime changes and wars, history remains a matter of bitter contention. In a context in which investigative processes have failed to deliver truth and justice to the many victims of the still ongoing violence, disagreements have persisted on the nature, causes and stakes of the ravaging wars, and on questions related to roles of victimhood and responsibility in the violent events. As clearly emerged at the 2008 Goma Peace Conference, communities in North and South Kivu have held on to competing memories of the

conflict, claiming their state of victimhood and innocence and their legitimate defence against aggressive ‘others’. To this day, the existence of partisan recollections and representations of the past thus remains a source of division and tension and a major obstacle to the achievement of national unity and reconciliation in the country.

From the eve of Congo’s fiftieth anniversary of independence, voices have increasingly been raised in favour of a ‘duty to remember’ and of historical reconstruction in the face of a longstanding falsification and politicisation of history. Calls have been made to teach Congolese children ‘the true’ history of their country, and to promote a stronger historical and national consciousness among the new generation.

Since the late 1990s, a process of educational reform has taken off. Besides attempting to address historical inequalities and to nurture positive values, the government has proceeded to revising history curricula and textbooks. The didactic materials that were analysed in the present study revealed, among other things, a large neglect as well as a negative image of the recent post-colonial era. The two Republics that were established in the wake of Lumumba’s heroic independence struggle were respectively associated with chaos and political incapacity, and with dictatorship, oppression and deprivation. In relation to the last decade of war and instability, the analysed syllabus largely portrayed the Kivu as a victim of aggression by predatory regional powers, spearheaded by Rwanda.

Against the backdrop of a turbulent and contended national history, narratives that were collected among 999 secondary school students in North and South Kivu provided interesting insights into young people’s understandings of Congo’s historical trajectory. Overall, the survey exposed a predominantly negative understanding of the country’s past and a resulting sense of pessimism, frustration and resignation towards the present and the future. The study found a propensity among Congolese youth to present their country’s history as a long tale of national victimisation at the hands of rapacious alien forces and corrupt local collaborators. This common tale of woe and victimhood was punctuated by references to acts of

heroism by actors such as Lumumba and Mzee Kabila who sacrificed their life for Congo's freedom from foreign oppression. Pupils' accounts were particularly lengthy, detailed and vivid with regard to the abuses experienced during the colonial time and, especially, to the suffering imposed by the wars and violence which have plagued the Kivu region in recent years. In describing the war-related hardship of which many respondents had a direct experience, fingers were overwhelmingly pointed at western and regional actors, spearheaded by the 'Nilotic' Rwandans and/or Tutsi. Influenced by their fresh memories of the war, numerous students exhibited deep-seated feelings of resentment and a desire for revenge towards those who were deemed responsible for Congo's suffering. Unless such understandings and sentiments are addressed, for instance in schools, the risk of further escalation of conflict might be unavoidable.

5

History teaching according to students in the Great Lakes Region: Young people's views and suggestions

As part of their exploration of the politics of history, identity and education in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, the preceding three chapters analysed historical narratives that have circulated in schools and in the broader society in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC.

The present chapter intends to complement the three case-studies by once again giving a voice to young people in the region. Based on the survey that was carried out in the field, this section reports some of the ideas and opinions that were collected among secondary school students on the state of history teaching and learning in their country. More specifically, this part of the survey was conducted with the aim of assessing young people's perceptions of the role of schools in the development of their historical knowledge, their appreciation of the importance of learning about the past and their historical interests, and, finally, their recommendations on how to improve the current state of this school subject based on their appraisal of identified merits and flaws.

The survey first of all confirmed the power of formal education in informing and shaping a nation's knowledge and consciousness. Across the region, students widely recognised the school as being among the most important – if not *the* most

important – source of their historical knowledge.¹ Numerous respondents underscored that the school had taught them all or most of what they knew. The common appreciation of the central role of schooling in educating the new generation on the past was often coupled with an expression of trust in an institution that was presented as a reliable source of information. Occasionally, the ‘true’ information provided by the school was set against the ‘false’ information that could be gathered in the broader society. This belief was most clearly voiced by a Rwandan pupil. She explained that the school had told her ‘all the truth and all the details about our country’s history, while, outside the school, people tend not to be willing to talk about it in-depth and often tell lies’.²

Despite a frequent recognition of the important role of schools in informing young people about past times, only few students affirmed their satisfaction with the current state of history teaching and learning in their country (‘I find it ok like it is’³). The analysis of the students’ answers on the matter resulted in a long list of wide-ranging criticism and suggestions. In their comments, respondents highlighted the need to address four main issues. These related to the current inadequacy of the content of the curriculum, of the quantity and quality of human and material resources, and of the nature of didactic methods.

With regard to teaching contents, students across the region commonly underscored a need to revise the curriculum with an eye to promoting the study of the national history.⁴ Although considerable appreciation was shown for ‘foreign history’,⁵ pupils expressed a predominant interest to learn ‘*l’histoire de chez*

¹ In the list of main sources of students’ historical knowledge, the schools was generally followed by the media, books, and the family. More sporadically, respondents mentioned historical sites, such as museums, monuments, and memorial sites.

² R835.

³ C398.

⁴ Numerous students advised the government to increase the number of hours allocated to the study of the national history. They also suggested to introduce optional extra-curricular activities, e.g. through the organisation of youth history clubs, and special afternoon or holiday sessions. In Rwanda and Burundi, a couple of students regretted having studied the national history only in the first grade. They argued that at that time they were too young to understand what was taught. In the words of a Rwandan pupil, ‘I did not understand well because when I learned Rwandan history I was in S1, I was very young and was poor in French’. R367.

⁵ Among the most popular historical topics in world history were the revolutions and the two WWs in Europe, as well as African pre-colonial civilisations and empires, and the colonisation and decolonisation. The interest for the history of the western world was mainly explained with a wish to draw historical lessons from the more advanced and developed countries. Along similar lines, knowledge of African history was believed by

moi/nous' – a history many said to unfortunately have a limited knowledge of.⁶ Voices were strongly raised in favour of making the overloaded history course more relevant to the context in which it was taught by prioritising and emphasising the study of the national and local history, 'which concerns us directly and which will help us later', vis-à-vis the history of other countries, 'which doesn't concern us as we might never set foot there'.⁷ Numerous respondents justified their primary interest for the national history with such nationalistic and patriotic statements as 'because it's my country' and 'because I love my country'. A Congolese student more eloquently argued that, 'the national history should be a priority in order for young people to become aware of their country and of its challenges so that they can one day improve the situation when they will be at the head of the country.'⁸ Echoing the view of this respondent, most students expressed their appreciation of the subject, indicating its great social and civic value for both the present and the future.⁹ Only a tiny minority of respondents instead considered studying history to be 'useless'. A Burundian pupil conveyed the widely shared belief in the significance of learning history by observing that,

*'History allows us to know the past in order to understand the present and to envision and prepare the future by correcting certain mistakes of the past. Without knowing history the next generation will be in jeopardy. Without knowing the past we cannot advance in the future.'*¹⁰

As pointed out in the comment above, the value of history was broadly believed by students to mainly consist in its capacity to offer (moral) lessons as well as

many to be important in order to both understand the reasons for the continent's marginal place on the international scene and to act to abandon this condition.

⁶ 95%, 89%, 82% of Burundian, Rwandan, and Congolese respondents respectively affirmed their wish to learn more about their country's history. Overall, most interest was shown for stories of conquests and wars, as well as for the adventures of courageous leaders and heroes – including kings, emperors, independence leaders, and leaders of the 'liberation war'. To a lesser degree, considerable interest was shown for topics related to civilisation and culture.

⁷ R176, C426. A couple of Rwandan students further suggested that this course should be taught in Kinyarwanda in order to better embed it in the country's specific context.

⁸ C91.

⁹ Overall, history appeared to be a rather popular subject among respondents. 92% among them expressed a high or intermediate interest in this subject. Also, over 90% of respondents stated the importance of history education. While most students argued that history should be taught as a compulsory subject in schools, a small minority of students, in particular from Rwanda, expressed a preference to diminish the status of this subject area by making it an optional course or a course to be taught *'pour plaisir'* (for fun), without examinations and marks.

¹⁰ B55. A student from the DRC also eloquently highlighted the importance of 'knowing who we are and where we can from, and how we arrived where we are.' C138.

useful guidance by showing, on the one hand, past mistakes to be avoided as well as sources of problems to be eradicated, and, on the other hand, past good practices to be revived and strengthened. By transmitting such lessons, this school subject was deemed to have the power to inspire young people to work towards the construction of a ‘good future history’ of peace, democracy, and prosperity.

In order for young people to be able to extrapolate such vital lessons from the past, teachers were widely urged by respondents to teach the entire national history (‘point by point’), including both its positive and negative sides. Although much interest was expressed for the more distant pre-colonial and colonial eras, numerous pupils highlighted the need to emphasise the greatly neglected, but highly relevant, study of the recent past – ‘the era we are living in’.¹¹ Specifically, students revealed a strong wish to better understand the post-colonial period of war and violence, notably the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the 1972 and 1993 crises in Burundi, and the wars since the 1990s in the Kivu. Their comments brought to light a need to make sense of an ‘incomprehensible’, but greatly significant, experience of violence, which, according to some, had been concealed by adults.¹² In Burundi, especially, several respondents lamented a situation whereby the post-colonial history had been omitted from the curriculum. They spoke of a history ‘hidden’ by curriculum planners and avoided by teachers when confronted with sensitive questions in the classroom. Similarly, a Congolese pupil regretted that, ‘when we ask questions about the war, especially here in eastern Congo, we don’t get any answer’.¹³

Students presented various reasons to justify their specific interest in the troubled recent past. Echoing the views expressed by some of his peers both within and across the border, a Burundian student underscored the importance of studying the ‘sad’ history of war on account of its great impact on the nation. He remarked that the war ‘should not be ignored because it deeply and durably marked the history

¹¹ B254.

¹² Two Rwandan students stated: ‘I can’t understand why it happened and how people can kill each other like animals’; ‘[e]ven if I experienced it, it still seems unreal and unbelievable’. R78, R209.

¹³ C409.

and future of our country'.¹⁴ Students' interest in the recent troubled past also frequently derived from a desire to understand tragic events which had personally affected them. Three pupils from Burundi, Rwanda and Congo respectively explained that the war should be taught 'because I have lived in this period of war that deeply marked my existence and affected me', 'because I lost a big part of my family and I am suffering its consequences', and 'because we die without even knowing why'.¹⁵ In other cases, this wish was dictated by a felt need to be informed about a significant event of which some pupils had instead no direct experience. Two respondents from Burundi and Rwanda respectively affirmed to want to learn this history 'because I wasn't yet born' and 'because I was born abroad and I only heard some few stories about it'.¹⁶ Besides being linked to a personal urge for knowledge and comprehension, the importance of being aware of this part of the recent past was often explicitly related to a desire to learn how to prevent and resolve conflicts, and how to advance sustainable peace and reconciliation. Across the region, pupils argued that historical awareness had the potential to allow the new generation to prevent the 'return of this bad side of history' by enabling it to understand and address its causes. Schools in particular were deemed to have the moral duty to transmit this knowledge to the nation's children in order to sensitise them to the motto of 'Never Again'. According to several students, this sensitisation campaign ought to have the broadest possible scope with a view to also reaching those to whom this history might seem irrelevant. A Congolese respondent, for instance, pleaded for pupils in the western parts of the country to be taught about the dreadful war in the east 'from which they are so distant'.¹⁷

In Rwanda especially, pupils' acknowledgment of the importance of educating the youth about the troubled past was sometimes accompanied with a wariness in relation to the difficulties involved in teaching potentially upsetting and traumatising topics such as the genocide. The genocide was considered as a topic which warranted special caution in order to avoid pupils' distress. Although not a

¹⁴ B66.

¹⁵ B209, R168, C360.

¹⁶ B301, R89.

¹⁷ C508.

single respondent argued that this topic should be omitted from the curriculum, covering sensitive issues was judged by some to be inappropriate at the primary school level. In the words of a student, ‘one cannot teach Rwandan history in primary schools because one cannot tell young children that people took their machetes and cut their neighbours’.¹⁸ In a handful of cases, respondents communicated their own profound discomfort in hearing and learning stories of suffering related to the post-colonial wars and violence, as well as, for example, to the ‘horrible’ slave trade and the colonisation. Stories about anguish, violence, and death, according to these pupils, aroused in them not only sadness, but also an uncomfortable sense of rage and hatred towards those considered to be responsible for the endured suffering.

A more generalised discomfort, especially with regard to the troubled past, emerged in relation to the confusing existence of multiple versions of history. In their efforts to understand ‘what really happened’, students seemed to be struggling with an incongruence of encountered narratives, which they commonly understood and explained as an opposition between ‘true’ and ‘false’ stories. Revealing their impatience with ambiguity, respondents widely expressed a wish to know ‘the truth’. ‘The reality’ of the events was believed, in Burundi especially, to have been largely concealed and greatly distorted. As remarked by a Burundian pupil, ‘everyone in this country has his own version which defends his side; but which is the true one?’¹⁹ A very widespread concern that was articulated by students across the region was for schools to teach the ‘authentic’, ‘true’, ‘real’, and ‘correct’ history – ‘to tell the history as it is’. Teachers were urged to provide reliable, objective, and ‘non-contradictory’ information in order to avoid ‘confusing students about the truth’.²⁰ Contrary to earlier reported comments which valued the role of schools in this regard, a Rwandan respondent, among others, maintained that, ‘often the teachers, and even the books, don’t tell the same history, and tell stories that differ from the reality.’²¹ Whereas a Burundian

¹⁸ R629

¹⁹ B128.

²⁰ B19. In the DRC, discomfort was expressed by a number of students with regard to the topic of ‘the origin and evolution of mankind which is in contradiction with the history of creation told by the Bible’. C892.

²¹ R421.

student singularly acknowledged that ‘each regime tends to teach history for its own benefit’,²² in all three countries, numerous students insisted on the need to teach a ‘same history’, which should be strictly determined by the State. In the view of a Rwandan respondent, ‘one should not use any book since there are books that contain mistakes and lies’. As one of his peers further suggested, ‘in order to avoid lies, books used by teachers and pupils must be accepted by the State’.²³

Widely seen as primary sources and transmitters of knowledge, teachers were generally considered to be pivotal to ensuring good-quality history education. Time and again, respondents underscored the need to guarantee that the course was taught by qualified, experienced, well-informed, as well as diligent, motivated, and passionate individuals. In recognition of the importance of the role of teachers in educational processes, students often recommended their respective government to invest more heavily in teacher training as well as to raise teacher salaries in order to enhance their motivation.²⁴ In Rwanda, additional criteria such as nationality and personal experience were also provided. Several respondents, for instance, suggested that the national history be taught only by native and elderly Rwandans (‘who had witnessed history’),²⁵ or by Rwandans who had always lived in the country, as opposed to former members of the Diaspora. A number of students lamented in particular having been taught by Congolese teachers – wondering, ‘how can strangers teach the history of Rwanda?’.²⁶ Conversely, few others considered it to be more appropriate to hire foreign teachers for this sensitive task. Two pupils recommended this solution ‘because foreigners are less emotionally involved’ and because ‘Rwandan teachers tend to skip some topics that embarrass them (*qui les gênent*) because they feel responsible for some mistakes or because they don’t feel at ease when talking about things that hurt them or which they personally experienced’.²⁷ Again in

²² B140.

²³ R241, R682.

²⁴ In the DRC, raising teacher salaries was additionally presented as a measure to prevent corruption in schools.

²⁵ R190.

²⁶ R725.

²⁷ R85, R215.

Rwanda, a couple of respondents advised the government to ‘train teachers because they might have false information from their grandparents’ and to monitor that they taught the same curriculum and did not transmit the genocide ideology.²⁸

Students’ insistence for a single truthful story to be passed on by the teacher to the pupils pointed to a wide acceptance of a traditional view of history didactics. Much in contradiction to this understanding, numerous respondents (simultaneously) underscored the imperative need and the benefits of introducing more democratic, engaging, and active teaching approaches. The history course, according to the collected opinions, had to be reformed in such a way as to stimulate students’ understanding by increasing space for explanations, questions, and discussions in the classroom. Such pedagogical methods had to replace a generalised classroom practice which required the mere memorization and assimilation of facts and dates, and which involved ‘wasting time’ copying teachers’ notes from the blackboard. In advocating for change in this respect, students overwhelmingly highlighted the urgency to resolve the chronic lack of didactic material, and especially of students’ textbooks. The lamentable situation was brought to light among others by a Burundian student, who declared, ‘in my entire life, I have never had a student textbook’.²⁹ In Congo, a pupil recounted his experience, explaining that, ‘in school we only have one book which is *Ma Patrie*, which we use since primary school.’³⁰ Against this backdrop, pupils advised to produce and employ different sources and varied teaching materials. Access to multiple sources of information, which had to be made available through better-equipped school libraries, was deemed necessary to allow young people to deepen notions learned in the classroom as well as to verify their veracity. Besides relying on written materials, teachers were requested to make more extensive use of documentary movies, pictures, and maps, as well as to organise field trips to historical sites and museums in order to make their course more interesting and

²⁸ R437, R322.

²⁹ B327.

³⁰ C624.

appealing.³¹ In pupils' views, such practices would enrich the typically 'abstract telling' of history with a more 'concrete showing' of history through which students could effectively 're-live' the past. In addition, respondents argued in favour of adopting a practical approach of 'learning by doing'. In particular, they called for increased opportunities for young people to conduct individual and group research projects, including field work, in order to discover the past for themselves.

Finally, demonstrating their resourcefulness, respondents called upon a variety of actors and factors outside the school which had the potential to further contribute to their historical understanding. Among other things, students in the region recommended concerned actors to invest in specialised research institutes and to sponsor scientific research with a view to producing additional knowledge and new documentation on the national history, especially in the local language. In Burundi in particular, two students stressed the need to revive efforts to investigate the truth and to re-write history as a precondition to finally revise the currently outdated curricula and textbooks. Respondents further demanded to invest in the construction, restoration, and protection of historical sites, museums, and archives, as well as in the establishment of cultural and information centres. The media were another institution which was called upon to play a more significant role in history education. Pupils for instance suggested creating TV and radio programmes as well as journals and magazines specialised in the national and local history. Society as whole, spearheaded by parents and grandparents, was also asked to respond to a duty to teach young people about their country's history. Once again, in Rwanda, adults were believed to have a positive role to play in this regard only as long as they had abandoned 'their false ideologies'. Finally, while stressing the importance of stimulating historical knowledge among the nation's youth, students in the region advocated for the need to find ways to extend teachings on their country's history beyond the national borders, and especially to neighbouring countries.

³¹ Students also recommended the use of comics, testimonies, novels, drama, music, and new media, including interactive multimedia websites and online resource centres. In addition, they proposed the organisation of conferences, workshops, seminars, debates, and competitions (*'concours de Genie en herbe'*).

Overall, students' reported experience and extensive recommendations in the field of history education pointed to the existence of considerable room for improvement towards better responding to the needs of the new generation in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. Following a summary of the main findings of this thesis, the concluding chapter below will reflect on the current state of affairs in the region with a view to formulating tentative conclusions and recommendations on the way forward.

6

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present research was conducted to draw attention to the largely understudied theme of the politics of history, identity, and education in the turbulent Great Lakes Region of Africa. The study approached the subject by examining the historical evolution of political discourse in Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC from the colonial era until today, and by analysing the extent to which this discourse has been institutionalised through teaching contents and educational policies and practices throughout the decades. The analysis was further complemented and enriched by a comparative exploration of narratives on the national and regional history which were collected among 2,500 secondary school students in the field. Through this multifaceted approach, the thesis ultimately aimed to better understand and assess the challenges and opportunities involved in post-war processes of social, historical, and educational reconstruction that are now taking place in the three societies under review. As these countries have embarked upon a crucial and delicate transition from war, dictatorship, and large-scale violence to sustainable peace and democracy, the significance and current relevance of the questions underlying this study and of its tentative answers are here deemed to be considerable.

Having reached the conclusion of this thesis, this final chapter will summarise the main research findings. It will subsequently present a number of extrapolated lessons, conclusions, and recommendations that are considered to be relevant both to the region that is the object of this study and to societies facing similar challenges on their path to sustainable peace.

6.1 Summary of the main findings

In the hundreds of pages of description and analysis that precede the present chapter, this study brought to light the strong political grip on narrative construction and circulation, and, in particular, the longstanding and intense nature of the related politics of history, identity, and education to which the Great Lakes Region has been historically subjected. The main findings and conclusions in this regard can be broken down and summarised as follows.

First of all, through the examination of colonial and post-colonial political discourse, the thesis exposed the relentless ideological preoccupation with history and identity throughout time. The study illustrated how, since the colonial introduction of the idea of the nation-state and of its systems of representation including written national history, the nation and its past have been repeatedly re-imagined and re-narrated by political entrepreneurs. In each of the three cases here investigated, successive regimes and their opponents wrote and re-wrote, and taught and re-taught the history of the nation according to their political agendas, creating competing plots that largely differed in the emphases and omissions they presented, and in the conclusions and lessons they drew. Demonstrating the use and abuse of the past in the service of present interests, politicised narratives, often relying on pseudo-historiography, proved to be central to efforts aimed at legitimising the status quo or its demise, and at forging and consolidating an imagined community that reflected the views and values of its ideologues. Largely conveying myths, rumours, and stereotypes, these narratives have been regularly mobilised by political actors to rally followers around their cause, often to the effect of stirring feelings of resentment, mistrust, and fear, and of conditioning the population into committing or condoning violence. In the Great Lakes Region, the role of manipulated collective identities and memories in engendering societal division, tension, and violence appears to have played out in two main ways. On the one hand, narratives on identity, origins, and migration have been invoked to support claims on legitimate power based on proof of autochthony of the sons of the soil versus those perceived to be strangers, newcomers, and immigrants. On the other hand, painful collective memories of historical traumas related to both

the distant and the recent past have been summoned as part of a typical ideology of victimisation to prove one's own innocence and victimhood, and the danger posed by the threatening 'other' to the survival of the community. Victimisation-based narratives emerged as a constant and central feature in political and ideological discourse. Drawing on Wertsch's seminal study on collective memory, a second-order narrative analysis of official and dissident accounts in the region seemed to reveal how, despite noticeable differences in emphasis, interpretation, and categorisation of same 'mid-level events' among various 'specific narratives', competing accounts have had at least one general plot running through them – what Wertsch called 'schematic narrative template'.¹ This plot has generally entailed three core elements, namely:

- an initial peaceful and harmonic condition, commonly situated in the ancient times;
- the commencement of troubles and of a period of great suffering due to the oppression, subjugation, and humiliation imposed by evil and usually alien forces (e.g. the European colonisers, the 'Hamitic' Tutsi race, Rwandans); and, finally,
- the overcoming of the crisis as the result of a triumph over the evil forces, – typically coinciding with the instauration of a new regime, – the gains of which had to be zealously preserved in order to prevent the return of past misery.

Secondly, having laid bare the common political manipulation of history and identity, the thesis revealed a situation whereby national education systems in Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC recurrently functioned as key political and ideological tools that were strategically employed by the State to anchor its discourse and practices in the society. The research showed how, in a general context of institutionalisation of dominant ideologies and of enforcement of

¹ Wertsch, *Voices of collective remembering* (New York 2002); and 'Specific narratives and schematic narrative templates,' Seixas (ed.), 49-62. In Wertsch's words, 'specific narratives are the focus of history instruction in schools and deal with "mid-level" events that populate textbooks, examinations, and other textual forms found in that context. In contrast, schematic narrative templates involve a much more abstract level of representation and provide a narrative framework that is compatible with many instantiations in specific narratives'. 51.

specific regimes of order and knowledge, official ideological tenets and beliefs have each time permeated and shaped an education system which in turn played an important role in maintaining the desired status quo. More specifically, through an analysis of educational contents, policies and practices, and of the nature of their reform which was found to usually accompany major instances of political change, the study demonstrated the connivance of this sector in legitimising, reproducing, and reinforcing the socio-political order in which it was embedded, and in shaping collective identities and collective memories according to the understandings of the elites in power. The study also confirmed certain trends and patterns that have been increasingly identified by the extant literature on ‘the two faces of education’. Functioning as mirrors of society, national education systems in the region appear to have reflected, as well as played into, reproduced, and perpetuated societal dynamics of violence, conflict, and injustice. Borrowing from the discourse on violence formulated by the founder of Peace and Conflict Research Johan Galtung, it can be suggested that formal education in the countries under review has largely been a violent institution, where ‘direct, structural and cultural violence’ has been historically perpetrated.² Theories on human needs and relative deprivation that were conceptualised by J.W. Burton and E.E. Azar in their analysis of protracted or intractable conflicts can also be relied upon to corroborate the conflict-exacerbating role of formal education.³ Reported evidence has seemed to prove that this social domain long favoured a denial of basic human needs, including such needs as safety and physical security, political and socio-economic access and participation, and identity/recognition and cultural expression. As the case-studies showed, schools in the region have been places where targeted, systematic and widespread physical, verbal, and psychological violence has been encouraged and perpetrated against certain groups. Also, educational institutions have been sites and agents of discrimination, division, segregation, assimilation, alienation, and indoctrination. On the one hand, through

² J. Galtung, *Peace by peaceful means: peace and conflict, development and civilization* (Oslo 1996). See also Galtung, *Violence and its causes* (Paris: UNESCO 1981); and ‘Cultural violence,’ *Journal of peace research* 27(3) (1990) 291-305.

³ E.E. Azar & J.W. Burton, *International conflict resolution: theory and practice* (Boulder 1986); Azar, *The management of protracted social conflict: theory and cases* (Aldershot 1990); and Burton, *Conflict: human needs theory* (New York 1990).

discriminatory and exclusionary policies and practices that deliberately promoted unequal access to quality education, this sector reportedly generated and perpetuated unequal power structures in the society. On the other hand, throughout the decades, highly politicised curricula and textbooks have transmitted beliefs and values carefully chosen by the elites in power with the aim of expediently turning the new generation into conforming and obedient citizens. Echoing findings from across the globe, such an ideological and propagandistic role of school teachings has been particularly evident in the subject of history. As a primary locus of the politics of history and identity, this course has typically functioned as a major vehicle of an uncontested state-approved truth about the nation, and about its past and destiny. While generally promoting a sense of unity and of loyalty to the nation and the State, teaching contents have, either implicitly or explicitly, often also conveyed bias, prejudice, and stereotypes that have nurtured inferiority or superiority complexes, as well as feelings of contempt, distrust, fear, and resentment towards designated ‘others’. To ensure children’s uncritical acceptance and assimilation of desired beliefs and values, including a sense of reverence and unquestioned obedience towards the authorities, the latter have heavily relied on a teacher-centred and knowledge-based approach to teaching and learning. As denounced by the father of critical pedagogy Paulo Freire, this ‘banking education’, favouring an top-down transmission of dogmatic knowledge, has, in this region as well, constituted an oppressive instrument of manipulation and domination that has been amply used to reinforce hierarchical and hegemonic structures, as well as people’s feelings of dependence and passivity.⁴

Reaching into the present, the analysis pointed to the enormity of the current challenges and necessities in the fields of post-war social, historical, and educational reconstruction in this part of the world. As wars have officially come to an end in the countries under review, contentions over issues related to history and identity emerged as prominent obstacles to sustainable peace and reconciliation. The study demonstrated how this watershed historical juncture has

⁴ P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (New York 1970); and Freire, *The politics of education: culture, power and liberation* (South Hadley 1985).

been profoundly marked by bitter political struggles for control over the representation of the nation and of its past – and especially of the recent violent conflict. Mostly fought along identity lines, these struggles have opposed factions holding strikingly conflicting views, and each actively seeking scholarly validation on the one hand and refutation of rival truths on the other hand. In this contested setting, the present research further exposed the large failure of recent transitional justice and reconciliation processes and mechanisms to adequately address these societies' need to deal with a sensitive and controversial past and to mediate in today's history and memory wars. Inevitably, as in the past, the education system in countries in the Great Lakes Region appears to have been deeply affected by the political environment. In particular, while acknowledging the achievements made in post-war educational reconstruction and reform, the thesis confirmed the daunting and largely unresolved challenges of teaching and learning history in a context marked by a legacy of sustained antagonistic memories and identities, and of highly politicised and parochial interpretations of the nation's past.

Against this backdrop, the present research investigated young people's representations of the nation and of its historical trajectory. The examination of students' narratives generated a wealth of findings on students' views and interpretations on various key events and actors. Out of the mass of specific data, a few general findings could be extrapolated. Among other things, while displaying varying degrees of interpretive difference both within and across state borders, national histories were found to be widely recounted as a tale of victimhood and heroism in which responsibility was largely laid upon outside actors, and heroism determined by exceptional patriotic deeds in the service of the besieged nation. In this tale, images conveying a stark opposition between 'us the victimised' and 'them the victimisers' were not uncommon. To a great extent, simplistic, archetypal, and black-and-white perspectives appeared to dominate over more nuanced and balanced views, thereby sometimes clearly informing feelings of animosity and resentment towards culpable 'others'.

Having examined the content and nature of young people's historical understandings, this study further captured students' ideas and opinions on the state of history teaching and learning in their country, as well as their suggestions for reform. More specifically, the survey allowed an assessment of young people's perceptions of the role of schools in the development of their historical knowledge, their appreciation of the importance of learning about the past and their historical interests, and, finally, their recommendations on how to improve the current state of this school subject based on their appraisal of identified merits and flaws. Overall, across the region, young people widely recognised the school as being among the most important sources of their historical knowledge. Despite this frequent recognition, students pointed to a large failure of schools to fulfil their moral, social and civic duty to adequately educate young people about the past and to prepare them for the present and the future. Their answers resulted in a long list of wide-ranging criticism and suggestions in relation to the content of the curriculum, the quantity and quality of human and material resources, and the nature of didactic methods generally adopted by the teacher. Among other things, pupils recommended to enhance the relevance of the history course by prioritising the study of the national history – including the largely 'hidden' recent past, – to train teachers and make materials available, and to introduce a more active pedagogy. The survey additionally revealed a contradiction expressed by students between, on the one hand, a wish to actively discover the past for themselves by relying on different sources, and, on the other hand, a discomfort with multiple truths and a wide concern to be taught one single and 'true' history, possibly emanating from the State.

6.2 Tentative conclusions and recommendations

The comparative examination of the past and present state of affairs in Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC prompted the formulation of several tentative conclusions and recommendations in relation to ongoing processes of social, historical and educational reconstruction in the region. The reflection pointed to a number of missed opportunities as well as of possible areas of action which could help the

concerned societies towards effectively addressing the challenges they currently face.

With regard to the field of post-war social and historical reconstruction, the study revealed a persistent dominance of ‘grand narratives’ about the nation and its past. The research exposed a still prevalent adherence to an absolutist approach to history which fails to acknowledge the epistemological limits of historiography to unveil ‘the true history’. Whether unilaterally or through dialogue, political entrepreneurs in the aftermath of war and mass violence appear to have primarily favoured official efforts to write a ‘new history’ of the nation with the aim of redirecting people’s collective historical consciousness towards national unity and reconciliation. Most notably in Rwanda, this absolutist approach has reportedly resulted in the suppression of open debate and in a consequent perilous subterranean existence of competing narratives striving for acknowledgment. In recognition of the dangers of failing to critically and honestly confront the past, this study strongly recommends political actors as well as the broader society to engage in an open and democratic historical dialogue based on the understanding that there is no single correct narrative, but rather a multiplicity of interpretations which deserve to be taken into account. In support of a societal reflection on the past, collaborative historiographical endeavours should be encouraged, in so doing breaking with a practice whereby these all-important undertakings have either been hijacked by politics or neglected in the face of more pressing issues. This type of initiatives should be re-valued in the region as important avenues that could help contested societies to meaningfully deal with their sensitive and controversial past by bringing to light and critically evaluating existing views. To echo Chris Lorenz’s eloquent words, these projects should be guided by a principle according to which, while ‘it is neither realistic nor reasonable to expect consensus in historiography... the most we can strive for is a sound knowledge of the different points of view, leading to a maximum of empathy and to mutual understanding of past and present positions.’⁵ While such endeavours are highly

⁵ C. Lorenz, ‘Towards a theoretical framework for comparing historiographies: some preliminary considerations,’ Seixas (ed.), 39.

desirable for the consolidation of peace and reconciliation at the national level, the incorporation of a regional dimension is likewise recommendable for the sake of reconciling nations among which misunderstandings, disagreements and conflicts have been rife. The integration of a regional dimension is all the more relevant in light of the fact that, although separate and unique, the history and destiny of the three neighbouring countries under review have been deeply interconnected. As the effects of local events have punctually reverberated across porous national borders often with catastrophic consequences, there is little doubt that an analysis as well as the search for ways out of cycles of conflict and violence should best transcend artificial state boundaries.

As for the domain of educational reconstruction, this thesis acknowledges that, in the aftermath of war in the region, several promising steps, at least on paper, have been taken to reconstruct and reform the education sector in a conflict-sensitive manner. Among other things, official policies have been introduced with the aim of outlawing discrimination and of promoting equal and merit-based opportunities. These have been combined with efforts to establish participatory and decentralized management structures that guarantee greater transparency and accountability in the sector. Also, governments have embarked upon a process of curriculum and textbook revision with an eye to ‘correcting’ and updating their content, to including peace education notions, as well as to introducing a more learner-centred pedagogy which encourages pupils’ critical thinking. Despite the commitments expressed to turn schools into instruments for positive change, the opportunities offered by post-war transitions to transform the education system into a peacebuilding tool appear to have only been partially exploited in this region. History education, in particular, emerged as a field in which a critical opportunity to help society deal with the past has regrettably been missed. This study argues that history education reform, while being a most challenging area of action, has a largely untapped potential for distinctly contributing to peacebuilding, reconciliation and democratisation processes in the three examined cases. Greatly neglected in mainstream peacebuilding and transitional justice

practice, history education deserves to be re-considered and re-valued as a critical avenue to respond to the needs of such divided post-war societies.

To this day, history teaching in the countries under review appears to have greatly failed the nation, and its youth in particular. This failure was brought to light by the analysis of current curricula and textbooks, and, especially, by the testimonies offered by the hundreds of young people who were surveyed in the framework of the present research. Despite the students' widespread recognition of the important role of schools in informing and shaping their historical knowledge, their diagnoses of the current state of history teaching and learning in their country demonstrated a general sense of dissatisfaction. Students' extensive recommendations pointed to the existence of considerable room for improvement towards better responding to the personal and social needs of the new generation as well as of society as a whole. Based on the analysis of both curricula and textbooks and students' views, a number of general conclusions and recommendations can be advanced in the field of history education.

The three case-studies first of all revealed the limited relevance of the substantive content of the history course across the region. To a great extent, the large failure of schools to adequately educate the new generation about their country's history has stemmed from a general wish to supply society with a new definitive history around which consensus has however been difficult to find. In such deeply divided and contested societies, where starkly divergent narratives have been hard to reconcile, the task of reaching an agreement on 'what to teach', especially in relation to political troubles children may have closely experienced, has proven notoriously daunting and conflict-ridden. As a result, young people have been left to struggle through the competing truths that have overtly or covertly circulated in the public and private spheres. Against this backdrop, this thesis recognises the expediency of bolstering initiatives to support the development of history curricula and textbooks that are both factually accurate and inclusive of existing views. In light of the particular challenges involved in teaching the violent recent past, concerted efforts should be made to ensure that school history acknowledges past abuses and atrocities while also presenting a 'usable' past that encourages

former enemies to work towards a shared future. In order to guarantee accuracy and inclusiveness, a valuable option would be to organise broad-based consultations and to form joint commissions with a mandate to explore common historical questions in the framework of open scholarly discussions which could be then translated to the pedagogic domain. In order to ensure that history education plays a meaningful role in society, such varied actors as scholars, curriculum planners, textbook authors, teachers, as well as pupils should be engaged in these activities, if necessary with the support of international experts. In the process, due consideration should be given to young people's insights in particular. Often 'driven to become a destabilising and destructive force',⁶ young people should instead be positively engaged in empowering decision-making processes that are sensitive to and inclusive of their views, perceptions, and understandings. Rather than dismissing young people's opinions as being of little significance, this study strongly argues that grasping the views, experiences and aspirations of those most directly concerned and affected by the school system is of crucial importance if teaching is to avoid the risk of being irrelevant or, worse, of reinforcing misconceptions. Once again, if schools could in so doing play a greater role in responding to young people's need to gain a deeper understanding of their country's history, concerted efforts should likewise be made to better promote their knowledge and understanding of the history and society of neighbouring countries. In the face of students' limited appreciation and at times considerably negative views towards their neighbours, it would be desirable for reform processes to ensure that regional topics receive increased attention in national curricula and that pupils are sensitised to the relevance of this knowledge. For this purpose, regional organisations such as the EAC would be best positioned to play a decisive role in this field as part of efforts at promoting cultural integration and cooperation for the sake of regional understanding and cohesion. As demonstrated by available evidence, the success of this type of both national and regional initiatives greatly relies on a genuine willingness on the part of national governments to loosen their typical grip on narratives about the nation's

⁶ J. Lowicky, 'Missing out: adolescents affected by armed conflict face few educational opportunities and increased protection risks,' *Current issues in comparative education* 2(1) (1999) 4.

past, present, and future. Democratisation of the political context in which processes of educational reform are inevitably embedded is evidently a necessary condition for the here advocated democratisation of history education.

While acknowledging the significance of revising the substantive content of history curricula and textbooks, in its reflection on the historical lessons that should be taught to the new generation in order to build a peaceful future, the present thesis contends that a meaningful approach to post-war history education reform in this region should primarily entail a re-conceptualisation of the aims and objectives of this course as well as a re-definition of its methodology. This study thus pleads for a re-orientation of discussions and of mainstream practice from an emphasis on content (what to teach) to an emphasis on pedagogy and aims (how to teach and for what purpose). In analysing the state of history teaching and learning in the Great Lakes Region, the three case-studies exposed an insufficient attention to the development of young people's cognitive skills and understanding of the discipline of history. It is especially through the promotion of such skills and understandings that history education has a distinct role to play in the reconstruction of society.

Borrowing from Laville's conceptualisation of history education, this thesis argues that the primary focus in this school subject should be shifted from a common practice in 'history teaching' to a practice in 'historical education'. Whereas the former 'furthers the creation of a common historical consciousness' by providing young people with a simplistic short-term and 'presentist' 'practical' past,⁷ the latter is 'aimed at the acquisition or development of historical "thinking"' and 'historical' understanding.⁸ The aim of 'historical education' as understood by this study entails the promotion of a willingness and capacity to 'deal "historically" with the past', that is, to accept its complexity and ambiguity. From a methodological point of view, a re-orientation of efforts at reforming the history curriculum could find inspiration in the so-called 'New History', a philosophy and approach to history education which was developed in Britain

⁷ M. Oakeshott, *On History and other essays* (Indianapolis 1999), 1-48.

⁸ Laville, 'Historical consciousness,' 177.

during the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁹ Based on critical historiography, which re-conceptualises history as ‘interpretation of evidence’ rather than factual truth, this philosophy overtly challenges the notions of a fixed past and of history as a ‘received’ subject. Instead of aiming at the uncritical acquisition of a predefined content through a traditional text-based and knowledge-based curricular approach, the ‘New History’ focuses on promoting an active process of historical learning which requires students to ‘be concerned not only with knowing *that* but also with knowing *how*’. Schools are uniquely positioned in this respect. As Lee pointed out, ‘[w]hatever else it does by way of acquainting them with different kinds of past, history education in schools should give students an intellectual apparatus for handling history. No one else will.’¹⁰

Informed by specialised scholarship on the practice of history education, this concluding chapter proposes two main sets of aims and objectives which curriculum reform should favour in the Great Lakes Region in order for history education to develop students’ historical thinking. First of all, processes of curriculum revision in the three countries under review should better ensure that pupils are familiarised with the discipline of history and encouraged to embrace the professional historian’s understandings, dispositions and propensities. In particular, history education should promote a clearer understanding of the relationship between the nature of history as a discipline and the construction of historical content knowledge – that is, how we know, explain, and give accounts of the past. To echo the words of D. Shemilt, students in this region should be more systematically introduced ‘to the idea of reconstructing from evidence, (...) and to the problems of reconstruction in the face of biased, incomplete and contradictory evidence’.¹¹ School history should nurture an appreciation of the inevitability of multiple stories stemming from different questions and different

⁹The 1970’s British Schools History Project (SHP) is a primary example of the embracement of critical historiography as an approach to history teaching. See, *inter alia*, J. Slater, *Teaching history in the new Europe* (London/New York 1995); J. Arthur & R. Phillips, *Issues in history teaching* (London 2000); A.K. Dickinson & P.J. Lee (eds.), *History teaching and historical understanding* (London 1978); T. Haydn, ‘History,’ J. White (ed.), *Rethinking the school curriculum values, aims and purposes* (London 2004), 87-103; R. Phillips, *History teaching, nationhood and the State* (London 1998); D. Shemilt, *History 13-16. Evaluation study* (Edinburgh 1980); D. Sylvester, ‘A historical overview,’ H. Bourdillon (ed.), *Teaching History* (London 1994); S. Wineburg, *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts* (Philadelphia 2001).

¹⁰ Lee, ‘Understanding History,’ 155.

¹¹ Shemilt, *History*, 5.

points of departure. This appreciation should go hand in hand with a rejection of an attitude of passive and uncritical acceptance of given stories as well as with an awareness of the undesirability of giving in to a ‘natural’ propensity to analyse and interpret the past through the lenses of the present.¹² Secondly, curriculum reform should ensure that the acquisition of disciplinary concepts and dispositions is matched with the development of students’ ability to apply the historian’s methods, tools, and approaches to discover the past for themselves by actively engaging in a sophisticated process of independent historical enquiry and narrative construction. Contrary to a currently common practice in the region, in history classes students should be stimulated to formulate and answer relevant historical questions, and to reconstruct the past through the articulation of reasoned, coherent, and well-founded arguments based on an accurate and critical handling of a range of relevant sources. In a teaching and learning process whereby history is presented ‘in the form of a debate among different and often conflicting representations’,¹³ pupils should learn to arbitrate amongst alternative interpretations of the past and to ‘construct complex narratives that take “ambivalences and paradoxes, ambiguities and dissonances into account”.’¹⁴ Evidently, for this approach to be effectively implemented, curriculum revision should be accompanied with adequate investment in training educators in critical, democratic, and active pedagogy. To support their work, resources should additionally be made available to provide access to varied sources of information.

Ultimately, it is the contention of this study that, through a pedagogy of apprenticeship in historical thinking, history education has a distinct potential to contribute to the advancement and consolidation of post-war peacebuilding and democratisation processes in the Great Lakes Region and beyond. Through its disciplinary teachings, history can promote such skills and abilities as critical thinking, problem solving, analysis, synthesis, and judgement. These are fundamental to the formation of informed and independent-minded citizens who are duly equipped to effectively deal with ‘abusive, ideologically slanted efforts to

¹² Wineburg, *Historical thinking*, 3-27.

¹³ C. Lorenz, ‘Towards a theoretical framework,’ 39.

¹⁴ M. Salber Phillips, ‘History, memory and historical distance,’ Seixas (ed.), 104.

reconstruct the past'.¹⁵ Such skills are particularly needed in an environment as contested as the Great Lakes Region, where the past has been amply manipulated and mobilised for present political gain, including for aggressive purposes. Besides reducing young people's vulnerability to dangerous manipulation and indoctrination, a critical approach to history education has a unique power to widen perspectives and to defy narrow-mindedness and parochialism. Through its teachings, history can nurture democratic dispositions, and attitudes of respect, understanding, and acceptance towards what is or seems to be different. In particular, an apprenticeship in historical thinking can provide dispositions and tools necessary to help the new generation handle multiple sources of information that reflect different views and 'to develop empathy for or take the perspective of those perceived as "other"'.¹⁶ More specifically, history education has a crucial role to play in helping young people navigate through competing accounts of the recent violent past, with which they seem to be struggling in their efforts to understand 'the truth' about 'what really happened'. In so doing, history can likewise respond to the need to encourage students in the region to embrace more nuanced and balanced views as opposed to the often simplistic, archetypal, and black-and-white perspectives which tended to inform feelings of animosity and resentment towards culpable 'others'.

While the challenges of writing and teaching history have proven extremely daunting in the Great Lakes Region, the promises and opportunities that this field presents are considerable. If capitalised upon, such opportunities might prove to be key in allowing the new generation to move forward towards a more peaceful and prosperous future. Equipped with the tools of professional history, young people could today become better prepared to face the hurdles and challenges that have often tragically affected this turbulent region of Africa.

¹⁵ J. Létourneau & S. Moisan, 'Young people's assimilation of a collective historical memory: a case study of Quebecers of French-Canadian heritage,' Seixas (ed.), 123.

¹⁶ L.S. Levstik, 'Crossing the empty spaces: New Zealand adolescents' conceptions of perspective-taking and historical significance', O.L. Davis Jr., E.A. Yeager & S.J. Foster (eds.), *Historical empathy and perspective taking in the social studies* (Lanham 2001), 71-72. See also, K.C. Barton & L.S. Levstik, *Teaching history for the common good* (Mahwah, N.J. 2004).

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République du Burundi. Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire, *Programmes d'Histoire, Section Histoire* (Bujumbura, August 1992).

République du Burundi, Ministère de l'Education Nationale. Direction générale des bureaux pédagogiques. *Programme de l'Enseignement secondaire du Burundi. Cycle Collège* (Bujumbura February 2004).

Textbooks

Ministère de l'Education Nationale/Bujumbura, *Histoire du Burundi* (Bujumbura 1978).

Bureau d'Etudes des Programmes d'Enseignement Secondaire (BEPES), *Histoire du Burundi. Livre du Maître, Classe de 7e. 2e édition* (Bujumbura, Septembre 1987).

GoB/UNICEF, *Bâtissons la paix / Gira amahoro. Manuel pour l'éducateur* (Bujumbura 1994).

3) DRC**Curricula**

Congo belge, *Service de l'enseignement, organisation de l'enseignement libre au Congo belge et Rwanda-Urundi, avec le concours des sociétés des missions nationales* (Brussels 1929) [www.aequatoria.be/04frans/0538manuels/0382_1929.htm] (last accessed on 05/02/2011).

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Congo belge, *Service de l'enseignement, organisation de l'enseignement libre subsidié pour indigènes avec le concours des sociétés de missions chrétiennes: dispositions générales* (Brussels 1948) [www.aequatoria.be/04frans/0538manuels/0382_1948.htm] (last accessed on 05/02/2011).

Cardinal Van Roey, *Programme, Federation de l'enseignement moyen catholique* (Kisantu 1953).

RDC, Ministère de l'Education Nationale, *Programme et instruction* (Léopoldville 1963) [<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001595/159554fb.pdf>] (last accessed on 06/02/2011).

RDC, Ministère de l'Education Nationale-, *Programme nationale Histoire, cycle long/sections toutes/options toutes: années: 3-4-5-6* (Kinshasa: Samafos 1982).

RDC, Ministère de l'Education Nationale, *Programme nationale enseignement primaire, vade-mecum des maîtres* (Kinshasa: Ceredip/Edideps 1988).

RDC, Edipeps, *Programme nationale de l'enseignement primaire* (Kinshasa 1997).

UNESCO-PEER-UNICEF, *Programme d'éducation à la paix en République Démocratique du Congo, Manuel de l'enseignant et activités diverse* (Nairobi 2000).

RDC, *Programme d'éducation à la paix. Le rêve de DIDI, Histoires et chansons* (Nairobi 2000) [<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001562/156236fo.pdf>] (last accessed on 04/05/2011).

RDC, Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériel Didactique, *Programme national d'Histoire. Enseignement secondaire* (Kinshasa 2005).

RDC, Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériel Didactique, *Programme national d'éducation civique et morale (avec l'intégration des droits de l'homme, culture de la paix et code de la route), enseignement primaire* (Kinshasa 2007).

RDC, Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériel Didactique, *Programme national d'éducation civique et morale (avec l'intégration des droits de l'homme, culture de la paix et code de la route), enseignement secondaire, toutes sections* (Kinshasa 2007).

Plan d'action de formation civique et humaine et d'éducation à la paix et aux droits de l'homme, 2007-2008 [www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/education/training/docs/actions-plans/burundi.pdf] (last accessed on 05/10/2011).

RDC Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériel Didactique, *Programme nationale de l'enseignement primaire, ed. électronique* (2009) (conforme au programme scolaire de l'année 2000 actuellement en vigueur).

Comité de Pilotage Projet 'Paquet minimum des manuels scolaires essentiels', *Liste de manuels scolaires en charge de 'Ediscolaires'* (Kinshasa 2009).

République Démocratique du Congo, Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Comité de Pilotage Projet 'Paquet minimum des manuels scolaires essentiels', *Etude de faisabilité du paquet minimum des manuels scolaires essentiels pour l'élève du primaire et l'élève du secondaire* (Kinshasa 2009).

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Livre de lecture français-lingala (n.d. / n.p.).

Njembo nda nkundo (Bamanya, Westmalle, 1911).

Nyang'ea Lonkange (Leslie Hedges), *Bonkanda wa mbaanda w'écôle. Etate ea bafe* (Coquilhatville 1924).

Bonkanda wa baoci b'anto (Bongandanga 1925).

Exercices de langage: lingala-français et français-lingala (Liege 1925).

Buku na kutanga o lingala, III (Liège 1927).

Nzembo ya bayekoli, 3rd ed. (Stanleyville 1927).

Rubben, E.J., *Leçons pratiques de lingala* (1928).

Carpentier, J.E.E., *Banto ba monde* (Bongandanga 1929).

Bonkanda wa nsango la nyama la belemo la balako ba français (Bongandanga 1930).

Mambi ma Botangi ndenge na ndenge (Makanza/Nouvel Anvers 1932).

Michiels, A., & N. Laude *Notre Colonie. Géographie et notice historique* (Brussels 1932).

Hulstaert, G., *Buku ea mbaanda* (Coquilhatville 1935).

Histoire du monde II (Bolenge 1940).

Van Hullebusch, O., *Botondoli mambi ma nse, Mobu bwa mitano* (Lisala 1944).

Mateya ma lisolo, III. Livre du maître (Lisala 1948).

Oa nsonsolo (Bolenge 1950).

Mambi ma botangi, II (Lisala 1950).

Buku na botangi mpe boyebi, II-1 (Niagara 1951).

Buku na botangi, I, 2 (Niagara 1953).

Mateya ma lisolo. Manuel du Maître II (Lisala 1954).

Bosako w'oyengwa, III (Coquilhatville 1955).

Mambi ma botangi, II (Lisala 1955).

Mateya ma bomonisi, Manual du maître (Lisala 1955).

Ngoy, P., *Bosako wa Mongo. Mbula ey' 5 l'ey'6* (1957).

Post-colonial manuals

Beel, G., *Histoire du Congo. Formation de la Nation congolaise. Destiné aux élèves des écoles du Congo* (Namur: Maison d'édition Wesmael-Charlier 1963).

Kasongo wa Kapinga, *Histoire du Zaïre, 5ème primaire* (Kinshasa: Editions Samafos 1975).

Kasongo wa Kapinga & Kombe, *Histoire du Zaïre, 6ème primaire* (Lodi: Laus 1982).

Histoire 6ème: Le Zaïre en Afrique et dans le monde. Des origines à nos jours (Kinshasa: ed. Samafos 1981).

Histoire 6ème : Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde (Okapi 1971).

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Deward, G., *L'histoire du Congo: évolution du pays et de ses habitants : à l'usage du degré supérieur des écoles primaires et des classes inférieures de l'enseignement secondaire du Congo et du Ruanda-Urundi* (Liège/ Paris : Editions H. Dessain 1960).

De Roover, N., *Histoire de notre pays. Manuel d'histoire pour la 5ème primaire* (Kinshasa: B.E.C. 1963).

Babudaa Malibato, *Education civique et politique. 3e secondaire. 1. Le citoyen dans la communauté nationale*. 2nd ed (Kinshasa: Samafos 1981).

Babudaa Malibato, *Education et instructions civiques, 3e secondaire, Le citoyen dans la communauté nationale* (1975)

Babudaa Malibato, *Education civique et politique 2. Le citoyen dans le développement national* (ed. Mayaka Esongama Nsa n.d.)

Babudaa Malibato, *Education civique et politique 3. Le citoyen et la conscience nationale, africaine, internationale* (ed. Bobiso 1981)

Wua-K. Malaba Tshiwula, *Civisme 2* (ed. Sciedi 1974).

Muzungu Baderha, J.M., *Syllabus du cours d'histoire dans les classes de sixièmes années des humanités secondaires*. Version I. Année scolaire 2008-2009.



Annex 1 – Sample of students’ questionnaire

Enquête pour les élèves

INSTRUCTIONS: VEUILLEZ REMPLIR LE FORMULAIRE CI-DESSOUS DE LA MANIÈRE LA PLUS EXHAUSTIVE POSSIBLE. L'ESPACE PRÉVU POUR RÉPONDRE AUX QUESTIONS EST SEULEMENT INDICATIF. VOUS POUVEZ L'ESPACE SELON VOTRE BESOIN. EN CAS DE NÉCESSITÉ, VOUS POURRIEZ UTILISER LA DERNIÈRE ARRIÈRE-PAGE SANS OUBLIER DE MENTIONNER LE NUMÉRO DE LA QUESTION NÉCESSITANT PLUS D'ESPACE. VEUILLEZ REMARQUER QUE VOS RÉPONSES SERONT ANALYSÉES SEULEMENT POUR BUTS SCIENTIFIQUES.

PARTIE I: Informations personnelles

1. Sexe: F. / M.

2. Année de naissance: 1992

3a. Lieu de naissance:

Pays BURUNDI
Province GITUMBORA MAIRE
Commune BWIZA

3b. Si tu es né(e) à l'étranger, dans quelle année tu es rentré(e) au Burundi?

4. Où est-ce que tu as passé la plupart de ta vie?

Pays BURUNDI
Province GITUMBORA MAIRE
Commune BWIZA

5. Mes parents sont originaires de:

Pays BURUNDI
Province MURAMBYA
Commune BUKETE et KIGANDA

6. Toi ou ta famille, vous avez été déplacés vers l'étranger ou bien à l'intérieur du Burundi pendant une période de votre vie pour raisons de sécurité?

Non

Oui - Où ?

- Quand ?

- Pour quelle raison ?

RDC
De 1996 jusqu'à 1997

pour des raisons de sécurité se trouvant dans le pays à l'époque

7. Formation actuelle:

École Lycée du Saint Esprit
Classe 1^{ère}
Section Lettré Moderne

PARTIE II: L'histoire comme matière d'étude (général)

1. Aimes-tu l'histoire' comme matière d'étude?

Beaucoup Moyennement Non

2. Quel est le thème, sujet ou événement historique qui t'intéresse le plus et que tu voudrais approfondir? Pourquoi?

La II^{de} GM car j'aimerais comprendre comment une personne peut saisir des millions de personnes sans le savoir de rien.

3. A ton avis, l'histoire qu'on enseigne à l'école est-elle suffisante?

Oui Non 4. A ton avis, étudier l'histoire à l'école est important? Oui Non 5b) Pourquoi?

Etudier l'histoire à l'école est important car cela nous aide à comprendre le passé du pays et pouvoir mieux comprendre leurs situations actuelles. Cela nous aide à connaître les faits commises dans le pouvoir pour ne pas les commettre à notre tour.

5. Est-ce que tu as étudié l'histoire du Burundi à l'école?

Oui - Dans quelle(s) classe(s)?Non - en 7^e et en 1^{re} LM

PARTIE III: Histoire du Burundi: composition (a)

6. Résume ce que tu sais de l'histoire du Burundi et de ses habitants, dès l'origine à nos jours.

Le Burundi fut un des nations royales d'Afrique car on a trouvé des éléments vieux
 au Burundi. Les Burundais étaient sédentaires depuis longtemps. Il pratiquait la
 métallurgie depuis le 7^e siècle. La préhistoire du Burundi est mal connue à cause du
 manque des sources écrites. Le Burundi fut d'abord une monarchie de droit
 divin depuis le 16^e s. Le 1^{er} roi, Ntare Ruzhatzi, dont l'origine est
 mystérieuse, a unifié le pays de pays connus son épouse sous le
 règne de Ntare Ruzhatzi. Il agrandit le territoire grâce à ses
 conquêtes. Ntare Gisabo, fils de Ntare Ruzhatzi, défendit les frontières
 établies par son père. Il fut le plus grand monarque du Burundi
 car il s'est même opposé à l'occupation du territoire burundais
 par les colonisateurs. Il a résisté avec acharnement mais il a
 contraint de signer le Traité de Nyungu le 06 06 1903
 qui officialisait le fait de Ntare Gisabo et le début de
 l'occupation allemande sur le Burundi. Le Burundi a reçu son
 indépendance le 01 juillet 1962 grâce à l'action du Prince Louis Rwagasore
 au sein du parti UPRONA. C'est le coup d'état de 1966 de Capitaine
 Michel MICOMBERO qui marqua la fin de la monarchie et l'établissement
 de la 1^{re} république. De 1966 à 1993, le Burundi fut marqué par
 une instabilité politique (coups d'état). En 1993, Melchior Ndadaye
 fut le premier président burundais démocratiquement élu. Il fut assassiné
 le 21 oct 1993 après un règne éphémère de trois mois. Cet assassinat
 mit le feu au powder en déclenchant une guerre civile qui a duré
 plus de dix ans. Ce sont les accords d'Arusha signés en 2000 qui
 ont marqué la fin de la guerre. Un gouvernement de transition fut
 établi pour une période de 18 mois. En 2005, Pierre NKURUNZIZA fut élu
 par suffrage universelle indirect. En 2010, Pierre NKURUNZIZA a été réélu
 pour un second mandat de cinq ans.
 L'histoire du Burundi fut marquée par des bouleversements politiques,
 économiques et sociaux. Malgré les efforts fournis par les autorités,
 il reste un long chemin à parcourir.

PARTIE IV: Histoire du Burundi (b)

7. Je connais l'histoire de mon pays...

Très bien Assez bien Pas bien

8. La période de l'histoire du Burundi que je connais moins bien est celle....

D'avant la colonisation De pendant la colonisation D'après la colonisation

9. Comment est-ce que tu as appris l'histoire du Burundi? Quelles ont été les sources principales de ta connaissance de l'histoire du pays?

J'ai appris l'histoire du Burundi à l'école en 7^e année, mais on l'a bien détaillé en TCE, en commençant de la préhistoire jusqu'à la colonisation. Les sources sont des vidéos montrées en classe, internet, radio, télévision, etc. Les notes données par le prof d'Hist de l'école.

10. Est-ce que tu voudrais en savoir plus à propos de l'histoire du Burundi?

Non Oui

11. Quel est le sujet ou l'événement dans l'histoire du Burundi que tu voudrais connaître mieux? Pourquoi ?

L'Assassinat de SF Melchior NDAHASE parce que ça a mis le feu dans le pays en faisant éclater une guerre civile qui a marqué la majeure partie de mon existence. J'aimerais mieux connaître les origines de cet événement pour que les générations futures puissent prévenir un tel acte dans le futur.

PARTIE V: Histoire du Burundi (c)

12. L'histoire du Burundi devrait-elle être enseignée dans les écoles?

Non Oui

13. Donne des suggestions sur comment on pourrait améliorer l'enseignement de l'histoire du Burundi à l'école.

On pourrait donner des livres d'histoire aux élèves pour qu'ils puissent avoir une connaissance approfondie sur des sujets d'histoire. On pourrait aussi montrer des films.

PARTIE VI: Histoire et actualité régionales

14. Résume ce que tu sais de l'histoire et du présent des pays et des peuples voisins du Burundi mentionnés ci-dessous.

<p>a) RD Congo/ Les Congolais</p>	<p>Le Congo a été une colonie belge ^{à partir de} 1908 après avoir été une propriété privée du roi belge Léopold II. Ce fut une colonie très convoitée par les Européens à cause de la richesse de son sous-sol. Il reçut son indépendance le 30 juin 1960 grâce à l'action de Patrice Lumumba au sein du parti MLC. Il y a eu une guerre civile qui n'est toujours pas terminée complètement. Le RDC est dirigé par SF Joseph KABILA.</p>
<p>b) Rwanda/ Les Rwandais</p>	<p>Le Rwanda fut une colonie allemande d'abord puis belge. Il était attaché au Burundi et formait le Rwanda-Urundi. Il a eu son indépendance le 01 juillet 1962 tout comme le Burundi. Il y a eu un génocide en 1994 qui a pris la vie de des millions de gens. Le Rwanda est dirigé par Paul KAGAME qui vient d'entamer son second mandat. Les Rwandais parlent le Kinyarwanda, langue similaire au Kivundi.</p>
<p>c) Ouganda/ Les Ougandais</p>	<p>L'Ouganda fut une colonie britannique. Ce pays est dirigé par Yoweri MUSEVENI depuis un bon bout de temps.</p>
<p>d) Tanzanie/ Les Tanzaniens</p>	<p>La Tanzanie était appelée le Tanganyika. Elle fut une colonie allemande d'abord puis britannique. Elle reçut son indépendance le 09 Dec 1962 grâce à l'action de Julius Nyerere au sein du parti TANU. La Tanzanie est dirigée par le Président KIKWETE.</p>

15. Quelle a été la relation historique et actuelle entre ces pays et le Burundi?

Le Burundi était une colonie attachée au Rwanda durant la colonisation. Les deux pays formaient le Rwanda-Urundi. Les cinq pays forment la Communauté Est Africaine ou East African Community.

16. Comment est-ce que tu as appris l'histoire et l'actualité de ces pays? Quelles ont été les sources principales de ta connaissance de l'histoire de ces pays?

J'ai appris l'histoire de ces pays dans le cours d'histoire. Les sources utilisées sont le ^{noté}noté du professeur d'histoire de Terc 11, les médias, ...

17. Qu'est-ce que tu penses des pays et des peuples voisins du Burundi mentionnés ci-dessous?

a) RD Congo/ Les Congolais	Les Congolais sont des gens qui aiment l'ambiance et qui aiment aussi jouer. Ce sont des gens qui rient beaucoup.
b) Rwanda/ Les Rwandais	Je n'ai jamais été au Rwanda mais je rencontre parfois des Rwandais ici au Burundi. Ce sont des gens discrets et qui aiment parler leur langue maternelle.
c) Ouganda/ Les Ougandais	Je ne sais rien à propos de ce peuple.
d) Tanzanie/ Les Tanzaniens	Les Tanzaniens qu'on voit souvent au Burundi sont des commerçants avisés, ils donnent donc la priorité à leur commerce.

18. Décris ton expérience personnelle avec ces pays et ces peuples voisins.

Je n'ai aucune expérience car je ne les fréquente pas

Annex 2 – History curricula compared

	RWANDA	BURUNDI	DRC
	Social Studies ¹⁷ (2 periods/w) (no date, perhaps 2008?, 88p), Compulsory and examinable	Etude du milieu (2004) (7-8h/w) ¹⁸	Etude du milieu P1/P2 (5h/w), History P3-P6 (1h/w) (2000, electronic version 2009)
P3-P6	<p>P4-P5: Traditional society in Rwanda</p> <p>P6: Rwandan history - Pre-colonial people and their organisation - Arrival and influence of foreigners, colonisation and resistance - Independent Rwanda, genocide (compare with other genocides), and post-genocide</p>	<p>P4 : Periodisation, traditional life and values in Burundi</p> <p>P5: Pre-colonial Burundi - organisation, main kings</p> <p>P6: Colonial Burundi - European penetration, and Burundian resistance - German and Belgian colonisation</p> <p>(1990) (6h/w P4-6)¹⁹ : P4 : Traditional life in Burundi P5 : Burundian history: Pre-colonial organisation, main kings; European penetration, and German and Belgian colonisation; Independence struggle and decolonisation P6: African history: Africa before colonisation; African resistance; Colonisation and independence struggles; Regional history: Rwanda, Zaire, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya</p>	<p>P3: Introduction to history, periodisation Congolese history, traditional and modern life</p> <p>P4: Introduction to history, traditional and modern life, Congolese history - key figures, events and dates</p> <p>P5: Introduction to history, History of Central Africa and DRC (pre-colonial) - peuplades (origins, lifestyle, social and political organisation: incl. Congo's kingdoms and empires) - Congolese history (colonial): periodisation, key dates - contact with outside world: slave trade, explorations, establishment EIC and Belgian Congo</p> <p>P6: World history - Prehistory, first human settlements (incl. Bantu migrations) and civilisations - Christianity and Islam - Great discoveries and explorations XV-XIX s. (incl. Africa), slave trade, and scientific discoveries</p>
First cycle			

¹⁷ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education/NCDC, *Social Studies Curriculum, grade 1-6* (Kigali, no date).

¹⁸ République du Burundi. Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale. Direction Générale des Bureaux Pédagogiques. Bureau d'Éducation Rurale, *Programme de l'enseignement primaire du Burundi* (Bujumbura, April 2004).

¹⁹ République du Burundi. Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire. Bureau d'Éducation Rurale, *Programme des écoles primaires du Burundi* (Bujumbura, September 1990).

	History, S1-S3: (August 2008, 81p), Compulsory and examinable	History,20 (August 1992)	History21 (2005, 28p) Secondaire General (2h/w)
O1	<p>0. General introduction to History</p> <p>1. Rwandan history (ancient)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sources of history - Pre-history and the population/ancient settlement -Origin, formation and expansion of the Kingdom of Rwanda until 19th century - Civilisation of ancient Rwanda (organisation) <p>2. African history (until 18th c)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-history/ cradle of humanity - African ancient civilisations (e.g. Egypt) - African States and Empires from the Middle Ages until 18th c; slave trade <p>(August 1998, 31p): only Rwandan history (pre/-colonial, colonial, independent)</p> <p>Political education²² (December 2008, 35p): Traditional society (founders, organisation, values)</p>	<p>0. Introduction to History</p> <p>1. Burundian history (from the origins until today)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prehistorical (origins-1000BC) - Predynastic (700 BC-1700) - Monarchic (1700-1903: origins/foundation, consolidation, apex in 19th c, organisation) - Colonial domination (1903-1962: German and Belgian colonisation, and decolonisation) - Independent Burundi (1962-today: constitutional monarchy; 1st, 2nd and 3rd Republics) 	<p>0. General introduction to History</p> <p>1. African ancient history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-history / Africa cradle of humanity - Civilisations in Africa (e.g. Egypt) - African migrations/settlement (incl. DRC) <p>2. Congolese pre-colonial history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formation of population groups/societies in the Congo Bassin (e.g. identify current tribes, their origins and organisation) - Congo's and Africa's contact with the outside world (with Europeans and Arabs) - Creation of EIC
O2	<p>1. African history (19th-20th century)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explorations 15th c. - Africa in the 19th and the 20th century (Renaissance of African states; colonisation and African reactions: collaboration and resistance) <p>2. History of Colonial Rwanda (1897-1962)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - German colonisation 1897-1916 - Belgian colonisation 1916-1962 - Decolonisation <p>3. History of North America and Europe in 19th century</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enlightenment (incl. revolutions) - North America in the 2nd half of the 19th c. <p>(1998: only African history until 1950: pre-history; ancient civilisations; states and empires; slave trade; Africa in the 19th and 20th c.)</p> <p>PE: Political history of Rwanda (pre-colonial, colonial, independent, incl. post-genocide: focus on issues of governance and human rights)</p>	<p>1. Pre-history and world ancient civilisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - incl. African civilisations and kingdoms <p>2. Middle Ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Europe (e.g. Christianity) - Islam - African states 	<p>0. General introduction to History</p> <p>1. African colonial history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact with the outside world (incl. slave trade) - Colonial occupation of Africa (e.g. explorations, scramble, colonisation) <p>2. Congolese colonial history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colonial occupation of Congo: creation EIC; Congo under Belgian domination - Congolese resistances - Decolonisation

²⁰ République du Burundi. Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire. Bureau d'Education Rurale, *Programmes d'Histoire*, Section Histoire (Bujumbura, August 1992).

²¹ REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO, MINISTERE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT PRIMAIRE, SECONDAIRE ET PROFESSIONNEL, DIRECTION DES PROGRAMMES SCOLAIRES ET MATERIEL DIDACTIQUE, PROGRAMME NATIONAL D'HISTOIRE, ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE (Kinshasa 2005).

²² Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education/NCDC, *Political Education curriculum for secondary schools* (Kigali, December 2008).

<p>O3</p>	<p>1. Asia in 1850s (Japan, China) 2. WWs, and decolonisation 3. Independent Rwanda - The 1st Republic (1962-1973) - The 2nd Republic (1973-1994) - The war of 1990-1994 and the genocide of Tutsi, and Efforts of the Government of National Unity</p> <p>(1998: only Contemporary history (19th-20th c): Europe, America and Asia in the 19th c; The 20th c: WWs, and decolonisation, especially in Africa)</p>	<p>1. Modern time in Europe (XV-XVIII) - Explorations/discoveries, humanism/renaissance, reformation, modern state, European hegemony 2. Africa XV-XIX - Contacts with Europe, slave trade - African states/kingdoms 3. America - Pre-colombian civilisations, Spanish and Portuguese colonisation</p>	
<p>O4</p>		<p>Contemporary history (1775-today) 1. Europe 1775-1914 - Revolutions, Italian and German unification, Victorian England, France under III Rep. 2. Africa 1880-1940 - European expansion, scramble/colonisation and resistance, 3. Crises of first half of XX - WWs (incl. Russian revolution) 4. International relations (1945-1962) - Cold War, decolonisation</p>	
<p>Second cycle</p>			
	<p>History, S4-S6: (June 2010, 65p)²³, compulsory and examinable only for all combinations which include History (e.g History-Economic-Geography, History-Economics-Literature and History-Geography-Literature combinations)</p> <p>(April 1996, 63p. for Humanities and Languages sections; for TTC (38pp), reduced scope and content in different order: priority to the history of Rwanda in the first year, decolonisation of Africa and the contemporary world, rather than the history of the world and of Africa, and Rwanda in the final year.)²⁴</p>	<p>For Lettres Modernes, reduced for Sciences (SC.A/B); programme A3 reduced for 4 L.P.</p>	<p>Same programme, 2h/w for all sections (littéraire, pédagogique, commerciale et administrative, agricole, scientifique – math-physique, chimie-biologie, coupe et couture, technique, et autres)</p>
			<p>0. General introduction to</p>

²³ Ministry of Education/NCDC, *History program for Advanced Level. Secondary school* (Kigali, June 2010).

²⁴ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education/Direction of Studies and Pedagogical research, *History teaching programme: humanities section (also Languages section)* (Kigali: Division of Programmes for Studies of Secondary Education, April 1996).

			<p>History</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antiquity/ pre-history, and ancient African and world civilisations 2. African ancient history <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - African and Congolese migrations
A1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. World ancient civilisations (excl. Africa) 2. European Middle Ages and Modern Times, and Great revolutions (until 18th c) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feudalism, Christianity and Islam - Major discoveries, Humanism, reformation, modern state, Enlightenment - Revolutions 18th c 3. Ancient African history (until 1870) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - African states and empires, and contacts with the outside world (incl. slave trade) 4. Rwandan pre-colonial history (focus on 1800s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formation, expansion and organisation of the Kingdom - Political and social relations - First contact with Europeans - Rucunshu events <p>(1998: World history before 18th c.: antiquity/ world civilisations, middle ages, modern times; African history (5thBC) until 19th c.: ancient African civilisations, Kingdoms and Empires of the Middle Ages, and contact with outside world. For TTC: History of Rwanda 1800-1994)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European imperialist/colonial expansion in Africa and Asia (and resistance), and rise of USA 2. First half XX <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WWs (incl. Russian revolution), Asia (China, Japan) 3. Western civilisations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 0. General introduction to History <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Middle Ages and Modern Times in Africa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - African kingdoms/empires - Contact with Islam; expansion Christianity and Islam 2. Middle Ages and Modern Times in Europe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feudalism, crusades, reformism, Turkish invasion 3. Middle Ages and Modern Times in America <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-colombian civilisations, contact with Europe, settlement of Blacks in America 4. Middle Ages and Modern Times in Asia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Muslim world, the Far East, religions 5. Relations between different parts of the world <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical/scientific progress, European explorations
A2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contemporary European/World history (19th-20th century) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Europe in the 19th c.: Vienna Congress and re-arrangement of Europe (France, Austrian empire, Belgium, revolutions); Italy and Germany unifications; the Eastern question - Europe/World in the 20th c.: WWs and post-WWII (incl. Cold War, and emergence of superpowers) 2. African history (19th-20th century) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-colonial African societies/states - Coming of Europeans 3. Rwanda under German colonial rule (1897-1916) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - German colonisation <p>(1998: World history (1789-1945): the above, preceded by great revolution - for TTC: World history/antiquity to 1945: greek and roman civilisations; American and</p>	See above	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 0. General introduction to History <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. African contemporary time (1789-1945) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decline of ancient kingdoms; rise of some empires - Scramble/ colonial occupation and African resistances 2. European contemporary history <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - French revolution; Vienna congress; independence and nationalist movements; Russian revolution; rise of totalitarianism; scientific and technical progress 3. Asian contemporary history <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European imperialism in Asia; Japan; China 4. American contemporary

	<p>French revolutions; WWI and WWII; for both, African history (1884-1960): explorations, colonisation, resistances)</p> <p>PE: African history (pre-colonial, colonial, independent)</p>		<p>history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European imperialism and independence struggles 5. Relations between different parts of the world - WWs (incl. inter-war period)
<p>A3</p>	<p>1. Africa's colonisation and decolonisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scramble, colonisation - Reactions (collaboration and resistance) - African nationalism, independence struggles, decolonisation - Post-independence problems <p>2. Rwanda under Belgian colonial rule and after independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belgian colonisation and decolonisation - First and Second Republics - The Liberation War of 1990 and the Tutsi Genocide of 1994, and The Government of National Unity <p>(1998: Contemporary world (1945 to the present day): Cold War, decolonisation; The History of Rwanda (1800-1994): Rwanda in the 19th c; colonial Rwanda, and decolonisation; Independent Rwanda: political and socio-economic situation under the two republics, The liberation war (1990-1994), Genocide and Massacres, and the Government of National Unity. For TTC, only Decolonisation of Africa)</p>	<p>1. Burundian history (from the origins to today) (same as O1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sources - Prehistorical, Pre-dynastic, Monarchic - Colonisation and decolonisation - Independent Burundi <p>2. Decolonisation and post-independence problems</p> <p>3. Contemporary non-western civilisations (origins, characteristics, current problems)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - African (incl. ancient civilisations and pre-colonial kingdoms), Muslim, Asian, Latin-American 	<p>0. General introduction to History (incl. historical critique)</p> <p>1. African history from 1945 until today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decolonisation and problems of independent Africa (incl. civil wars and coups) <p>2. African history from 1945 until today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cold War; EU <p>3. Asian history from 1945 until today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decolonisation, independence <p>4. The great world civilisations</p> <p>5. Relations between different parts of the world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capitalism and socialism; Cold War: neocolonialism and Third World <p>6. Synthesis of Congolese history (from the origins until today)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Settlement: kingdoms/empires - Slave trade - Creation EIC - Anti-colonial resistances - Colonisation and political evolution of Belgian Congo - Independent Congo: 1st and 2nd Republics, and transition (until 2006) <p>7. The great problems of the contemporary world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Africa, Europe, Asia and America

Samenvatting in het Nederlands

HOE VERTELLEN WE HET DE LEERLING?

Geschiedenis, identiteit en de politisering van onderwijs in het Afrikaanse Grote Merengebied.

Wereldwijd is de kracht van narratieven in het vormen van collectieve identiteiten en herinneringen aangetoond. Daarnaast blijken zij een belangrijke rol te spelen in het legitimeren van zowel de status-quo als op de toekomst gerichte handelingen, met inbegrip van het voeren van oorlog en het bevorderen van de vrede. Als effectieve pijlers voor het verankeren van dominante verhaallijnen in de samenleving hebben onderwijssystemen doorgaans gefungeerd als belangrijke ideologische instrumenten die telkens weer door machthebbers zijn gebruikt om de denkbeelden en waarden van jonge generaties te vormen.

Gebaseerd op drie cases uit Centraal Afrika, namelijk die van Rwanda, Burundi en de Democratische Republiek Congo, poogt dit proefschrift bestaande studies over de politisering van geschiedenis, identiteit en onderwijs aan te vullen. Door de nadruk te leggen op de naoorlogse context, waarin sprake is van verdeeldheid, probeert de auteur de uitdagingen gesteld door een beladen nationaal verleden, alsmede de benaderingen die zijn gekozen om hiermee om te gaan, beter te beoordelen.

Voor elke casus bekijkt zij de historische evolutie van officiële vertogen van de koloniale tijd tot op heden, en de mate waarin deze in de loop der tijd zijn geïnstitutionaliseerd in curricula, schoolboeken en onderwijsbeleid. De analyse is aangevuld met een vergelijkend onderzoek naar geschiedopvattingen die tussen 2008 en 2011 door veldwerk werden verzameld onder 2500 middelbare scholieren. Gebaseerd op een uitgebreid kwalitatief onderzoek brengt deze studie de denkbeelden van jongeren over de natie, haar geschiedenis en haar lotsbestemming in kaart. De auteur beoordeelt tevens hun ideeën over de stand

van het geschiedenisonderwijs in hun land en hun aanbevelingen voor hervorming. Door deze veelzijdige aanpak mikt de thesis er uiteindelijk op om de uitdagingen en kansen behorend bij naoorlogse processen van sociale en historische reconstructie, alsmede de wederopbouw van het onderwijs, in deze regio beter te begrijpen. In een tijd waarin de drie buurlanden zich in een delicate overgangssituatie bevinden naar duurzame vrede en democratie is deze studie naar de bestaande problematiek en onderliggende vragen, evenals dienaar de voorlopige antwoorden van groot belang.

Door middel van een analyse van vertogen die in Rwanda, Burundi en DR Congo door de decennia heen overheersend zijn geweest legt de studie het bijna onuitroeibare gebruik en misbruik van het verleden ten dienste van hedendaagse belangen bloot. De thesis toont aan hoe, sinds de koloniale introductie van het idee van de natiestaat en van zijn representatievormen, met inbegrip van de geschreven nationale geschiedenis, de natie en haar verleden herhaaldelijk opnieuw zijn verbeeld en uitgedragen door politieke entrepreneurs. In het Grote Merengebied schreven opeenvolgende regimes en hun opposenten de geschiedenis van hun land, waarbij zij met elkaar wedijverende verhaallijnen creëerden, die elk aanzienlijk verschilden in wat zij beklemtoonden en wat zij weglieten. Hetzelfde geldt voor de conclusies en lessen die zij uit deze verhalen over het verleden trokken. Gepolitiseerde verhaallijnen, vaak gefundeerd op pseudo-historiografie, bleken centraal te staan in pogingen die gericht waren op het legitimeren van de status quo of juist op de beëindiging daarvan, en op het smeden en het consolideren van een geconstrueerde samenleving die de inzichten en waarden van haar ideologen reflecteerde. Deze narratieven, die grotendeels mythes, geruchten en stereotypen overdroegen, zijn geregeld door politieke actoren ingezet om volgelingen op te stoken, vaak met het resultaat dat gevoelens van wantrouwen, angst en wrok jegens ‘de ander’ werden oproepen. In het Grote Merengebied lijkt deze dynamiek twee belangrijke effecten te hebben gehad. Enerzijds werden verhalen over identiteit, afkomst en migratie aangeroepen om aanspraak op de macht te ondersteunen op basis van een discours over de ‘zonen van eigen bodem’ ten opzichte van degenen die gezien werden als vreemdelingen, nieuwkomers en allochtonen. Anderzijds werden pijnlijke collectieve

herinneringen aan historische trauma's die verband houden met zowel het verre als het recente verleden opgeroepen als onderdeel van een ideologie van slachtofferschap om zodoende de eigen onschuld en het gevaar van de bedreigende 'ander' voor het voortbestaan van de gemeenschap te bewijzen. Deze dissertatie toont aan hoe, ondanks opvallende verschillen in nadruk, interpretatie en categorisering van dezelfde gebeurtenissen door diverse actoren, verhaallijnen die slachtofferschap centraal stellen een constante eigenschap van politieke en ideologische discoursen in de regio zijn geweest.

Het proefschrift legt tevens de voortdurende rol van nationale onderwijssystemen in Rwanda, Burundi en Congo bloot om als centrale ideologische instrumenten dominante discoursen en praktijken in de maatschappij te verankeren. Door een analyse van de hervormingen die samengingen met belangrijke politieke veranderingen bewijst de studie de medeverantwoordelijkheid van de onderwijssector in het legitimeren en consolideren van de sociaal-politieke orde waarin deze ingebed is geweest, en in het vormgeven van collectieve identiteiten en herinneringen overeenkomstig de inzichten van de machthebbende elites. De studie bevestigt eveneens bepaalde trends die in toenemende mate door de bestaande literatuur worden herkend als 'de twee gezichten van het onderwijs'. In de regio lijken nationale onderwijssystemen reeds bestaande maatschappelijke processen van geweld, conflict en onrecht te hebben gereproduceerd en voortgezet. Zoals de case-studies aantonen zijn scholen vaak oorden geweest van systematisch geweld en stelselmatige discriminatie, verdeling en segregatie, assimilatie en vervreemding, en manipulatie en indoctrinatie. Aldus hebben zij bijgedragen aan het genereren en voortzetten van ongelijke machtsstructuren in de maatschappij en aan het omvormen van de nieuwe generatie tot eensgezinde en gehoorzame burgers. De ideologische en propagandistische rol van scholen is in deze bijzonder evident geweest in het vak Geschiedenis. Dit vak fungeerde, en fungeert nog altijd, dikwijls als een belangrijk overdrachtsmiddel van een door de overheid gesanctioneerde waarheid over de natie, haar verleden en haar lotsbestemming, die niet voor discussie vatbaar wordt geacht. Bovendien heeft het geschiedenisonderwijs vaak vooringenomenheid, vooroordelen en stereotypen jegens apart gezette groepen overgedragen.

Met betrekking tot de hedendaagse situatie in Rwanda, Burundi en Congo toont de analyse de enorme omvang van de huidige uitdagingen en behoeften op het gebied van naoorlogse sociale, historische en educatieve wederopbouw in dit deel van de wereld. Het onderzoek wijst eveneens op een aantal gemiste kansen, alsook op mogelijkheden voor een effectievere aanpak van de uitdagingen waarmee de betrokken samenlevingen momenteel worstelen.

In elk van de drie onderzochte landen bestaat vandaag de dag onenigheid over geschiedenis en identiteitskwesies, hetgeen een belangrijk obstakel vormt voor duurzame vrede en verzoening. De studie toont aan hoe de voortgaande transitie diep is getekend door een bittere politieke strijd om de controle over de verbeelding van de natie en haar verleden – en met name die van de recente gewelddadige conflicten. Meestal uitgevochten langs identiteitslijnen, heeft deze strijd groeperingen die sterk tegenstrijdige opvattingen bezigen tegen elkaar opgezet, waarbij elk van de partijen actief op zoek is geweest naar wetenschappelijke goedkeuring van het eigen verhaal aan de ene kant en de weerlegging van rivaliserende waarheden aan de andere kant. Tegen de achtergrond van deze conflictueuze situatie legt het onderzoek de mislukking van recente processen en mechanismen van *transitional justice* en verzoening bloot. Inspanningen op dit gebied blijken de behoefte van deze samenlevingen om om te gaan met hun verleden niet adequaat aan te pakken. In het kader van de inspanningen op dit gebied tot dusver bespeurt deze studie een aanhoudende overheersing van ‘*grand narratives*’ over de natie en een nog steeds voorkomend vasthouden aan een absolutistische benadering van geschiedenis. Politieke entrepreneurs lijken in de nasleep van oorlog en massaal geweld, hetzij unilateraal hetzij middels dialoog, vooral officiële pogingen te hebben ondersteund om een ‘nieuwe geschiedenis’ van de natie te schrijven met als doel het ombuigen van het gezamenlijk historische bewustzijn naar steun van processen ter bevordering van nationale eenheid en verzoening. Met name in Rwanda heeft deze absolutistische benadering naar verluidt geleid tot de onderdrukking van het open debat en een daaruit voortvloeiend gevaarlijk sluimerend bestaan van wedijverende en naar erkenning strevende verhalen.

Op het gebied van de wederopbouw van het onderwijs erkent dit proefschrift dat in de nasleep van de oorlogen in de regio een aantal veelbelovende stappen is genomen, in elk geval op papier, om de onderwijssector op een conflict-gevoelige manier te reconstrueren en te hervormen. Onder andere is officieel beleid geïntroduceerd met een verbod op discriminatie en bevordering van gelijke kansen als oogmerk. Dit beleid wordt gecombineerd met inspanningen om structuren op te zetten die meer transparantie en verantwoording in de sector trachten te garanderen. Ook zijn regeringen begonnen met een proces van herziening van curricula en schoolboeken met het oog op het ‘corrigeren’ en actualiseren van hun inhoud, het opnemen van noties van vredeseducatie en de invoering van een kritische en meer op de leerling gerichte pedagogiek. Onder erkenning van de positieve resultaten stelt de analyse dat, ondanks de gedane toezeggingen, de mogelijkheden die door naoorlogse overgangperiodes worden geboden het onderwijs om te buigen tot een hulpmiddel voor het bevorderen van positieve verandering in deze regio slechts gedeeltelijk zijn benut.

Het geschiedenisonderwijs is in het bijzonder naar voren gekomen als een vakgebied waarin een belangrijke kans is gemist om samenlevingen te helpen omgaan met hun verleden en daarbij aanzienlijk bij te dragen aan vredesopbouw, verzoening en democratiseringsprocessen in de drie onderzochte casus. Tot op de dag van vandaag lijken scholen in de onderzochte landen in grote mate te hebben gefaald in hun missie om de nieuwe generatie adequaat te onderwijzen over de geschiedenis van hun land en van hun omgeving. Deze mislukking wordt aan het licht gebracht door de analyse van de huidige leerplannen en leerboeken, en vooral door de getuigenissen van de honderden jongeren die werden ondervraagd in het kader van dit onderzoek. Met betrekking tot onderwijshervorming benadrukt deze studie het cruciaal belang de standpunten, ervaringen en wensen van jonge mensen aan te grijpen om het risico van irrelevantie of, erger nog, van misvattingen te vermijden.

Het eerste gedeelte van de analyse van de beantwoording van de questionnaires richt zich op het verkennen van de representaties van de natie en van haar geschiedenis, zoals deze door jongeren in de regio wordt verteld. Tegen een

achtergrond van aanhoudend tegengestelde herinneringen en identiteiten en van sterk gepolitiseerde en particularistische interpretaties van het nationale verleden werd middelbare scholieren gevraagd om de geschiedenis van hun land alsmede van de regio samen te vatten. In de analyse van de verhalen werd bijzondere aandacht geschonken aan de door hen naar voren gebrachte narratieve structuren en dominante thema's, evenals aan hun beschrijvingen van en verklaringen over de meest controversiële kwesties als identiteit en migratie, en oorlog en genocide. De verhalen van de leerlingen leverden een schat aan bevindingen op over hun opvattingen ten aanzien van diverse belangrijke gebeurtenissen en actoren. In hun antwoorden werd een verschillende mate van afwijking in interpretatie aangetroffen. Ondanks de verschillen bleek over het algemeen een simplistische en archetypische invalshoek te overheersen over meer genuanceerde en afgewogen standpunten, waardoor soms duidelijke gevoelens van vijandigheid jegens verwijtbare 'anderen' naar voren werden gebracht. Deze tendens lijkt gekoppeld aan een bepaald ongeduld en ongemak om te gaan met historische ambiguïteit en meervoudige waarheden. De meest dominante verhaallijn die op grote schaal werd gereproduceerd vertelde het nationale verleden als een verhaal van slachtofferschap en heldenmoed. Hier werd de verantwoordelijkheid voor vroegere en huidige misstanden overwegend neergelegd bij externe actoren, en heldenmoed was bepaald door uitzonderlijk vaderlandslievende daden in dienst van de geteisterde natie.

Behalve een optekening van de ideeën en meningen van de leerlingen over het geschiedenisonderwijs maakte de enquête ook een evaluatie mogelijk van de beeldvorming van leerlingen over de rol van scholen in de ontwikkeling van hun historische kennis, van hun waardering van het leren over het verleden en hun historische interesse, en, ten slotte, van hun aanbevelingen voor verbetering van de huidige stand van dit schoolvak. In de hele regio erkennen de jongeren over het algemeen de school als één van de belangrijkste bronnen van hun historische kennis. Ondanks deze alom aanwezige erkenning wezen studenten op het grote falen van scholen bij de vervulling van hun maatschappelijke en morele plicht om jongeren adequaat te informeren over het verleden en hen voor te bereiden op de toekomst. Hun antwoorden resulteerden in een lange lijst van brede kritiek en

suggesties met betrekking tot de inhoud van het curriculum, de kwantiteit en de kwaliteit van de menselijke en materiële middelen, en de aard van de didactische methoden die doorgaans door de leerkracht worden gebruikt. Onder andere raadden leerlingen aan de relevantie van het vak Geschiedenis te verbeteren door voorrang te geven aan de studie van de nationale geschiedenis, met inbegrip van het grotendeels ‘verborgen’ recente verleden, leerkrachten bij te scholen en hulpmiddelen beschikbaar te stellen, en een meer actieve pedagogie te introduceren.

Op basis van de analyse van vertogen, van het schoolmateriaal en van de inzichten van scholieren formuleert de studie een aantal conclusies en aanbevelingen om de lopende naoorlogse processen van vredesopbouw, verzoening en democratisering in de onderzochte samenlevingen te ondersteunen.

De auteur concludeert dat, hoewel sterk verwaarloosd in processen van vredesopbouw en *transitional justice*, Geschiedenis als discipline en als schoolvak het verdient te worden heroverwogen als een cruciaal middel om te voorzien in de behoeften van de nog altijd verdeelde samenlevingen in Rwanda, Burundi en DR Congo.

De gevaren van een onkritische benadering van het verleden onderkend, raadt deze studie ten eerste aan een open en democratische historische dialoog aan te gaan op basis van het inzicht dat er een veelvoud aan interpretaties bestaat die in aanmerking zullen moeten worden genomen. Ter ondersteuning van een maatschappelijke overdenking van het verleden pleit de auteur voor het aanmoedigen van gezamenlijke historiografische inspanningen. Op inclusie gerichte technische commissies zouden kunnen worden gevormd om gemeenschappelijke historische vraagstukken en bestaande standpunten te verkennen in het kader van een open wetenschappelijke discussie die een begrip voor tegenstrijdige meningen zou kunnen bevorderen. Tot op heden zijn deze uiterst belangrijke inspanningen ofwel gekaapt door de politiek ofwel verwaarloosd. Deze studie stelt dat zulke initiatieven niet alleen op nationaal

niveau, maar ook op regionaal niveau zeer gewenst zijn voor de versterking van de vrede en onderlinge verzoening.

Ten tweede stelt deze studie de urgentie van de hervorming van het geschiedenisonderwijs in de drie landen aan de kaak. Gezien het beperkte vermogen van het vak Geschiedenis in de regio om de hedendaagse jeugd over zijn erfgoed te onderrichten herkent dit proefschrift de dringende noodzakelijkheid curricula en leerboeken te ontwikkelen die relevant, feitelijk, accuraat en inclusief zijn. Om dit te bewerkstelligen zou het werk van de bovengenoemde historische commissies naar het pedagogische domein moeten worden vertaald. Naast het onderkennen van de behoefte van jongeren een dieper begrip van de geschiedenis van hun land te krijgen brengt het onderzoek de noodzaak naar voren de kennis van de geschiedenis en maatschappij van de buurlanden te bevorderen. In het licht van de beperkte waardering en soms aanzienlijk negatieve opvattingen van scholieren ten opzichte van hun burens raadt deze studie aan regionale thema's meer aandacht te geven in de nationale leerplannen en leerlingen meer begrip bij te brengen over de relevantie van deze kennis.

De importantie van de herziening van de inhoud van leerplannen en leerboeken op basis van wetenschappelijk onderzoek erkennende, betoogt dit proefschrift dat de hervorming van het geschiedenisonderwijs in de regio ook en vooral een reconceptualisering van leerdoelen en pedagogische methoden zou moeten inhouden. Bij de analyse naar de stand van het geschiedenisonderwijs in het Grote Merengebied bleek dat onvoldoende aandacht wordt besteed aan de ontwikkeling van cognitieve vaardigheden en van een begrip van de discipline in het algemeen. Deze studie bepleit dan ook dat juist bij het bevorderen van dergelijke vaardigheden en inzichten het geschiedenisonderwijs een onderscheidende rol heeft te spelen bij de maatschappelijke reconstructie van de samenleving.

In haar reflectie op de historische lessen die de nieuwe generatie in de regio zou moeten worden aangeleerd om een vreedzame toekomst op te bouwen stelt deze studie dat de primaire focus in het schoolvak zou moet worden verschoven van

een praktijk gericht op het stimuleren van een gemeenschappelijk historisch bewustzijn gebaseerd op de overdracht van gegeven verhalen naar een meer kritische en actieve aanpak gericht op de ontwikkeling van het historisch besef en het stimuleren van historisch denken. Curriculumhervorming in de drie onderzochte landen zou in de eerste plaats de verwerving van disciplinaire concepten, disposities en methoden moeten bevorderen om zodoende processen van onafhankelijk historisch onderzoek te ondersteunen. Met behulp van verschillende informatiebronnen zouden leerlingen aldus moeten leren bemiddelen tussen alternatieve interpretaties van het verleden en narratieven moeten construeren die complexiteit en dubbelzinnigheden waarderen. Naast het reduceren van de kwetsbaarheid van jongeren voor gevaarlijke manipulatie en indoctrinatie heeft een kritische benadering tot het geschiedenisonderwijs een uniek potentieel om particularisme te trotseren en een democratische houding te bevorderen door de nieuwe generatie te helpen verschillende perspectieven te verkennen. Op deze manier kan het vak Geschiedenis inspelen op de behoefte jonge mensen in de regio te stimuleren meer genuanceerde en evenwichtige standpunten te omarmen. Dit in tegenstelling tot het simplistische zwart-wit denken dat soms tot negatieve gevoelens heeft geleid jegens verwijtbare ‘anderen’. De conclusie van dit proefschrift luidt dan ook dat de hedendaagse jongeren, uitgerust met de instrumenten van het professionele Geschiedenis, beter voorbereid zullen zijn op de hindernissen en uitdagingen die deze turbulente regio in Afrika hen zal voorleggen.