# Introduction

## Empire and Metropole

In the sixteenth century, Western Europe became a presence in the global arena; a presence that would become increasingly dominant throughout the nineteenth century. From then on, no non-European society would be able to escape the profound and long-lasting changes imposed by a number of European powers, which were themselves undergoing great changes, and by young nations such as the United States. Many complex factors contributed to this process of change: the emigration of men and women; the export of capital; the expansion of enterprises; the spread of beliefs, languages, techniques and ways of life; and the introduction of military forces, political structures and repressive, educational and medical systems.

Belgium, a new nation founded in 1830, participated in this great upheaval. Throughout the nineteenth century, Belgian entrepreneurs founded businesses, traded goods and exported capital all over the world, while missionaries spread the Catholic faith. Belgium's global activities also assumed a political dimension when this country colonised vast regions in the heart of Africa, disrupted the indigenous societies and created a new political entity called the Congo. Against all odds, this entity still exists today. Thus a small, newly founded European nation had a profound influence on the enormous continent that – often for the wrong reasons – has been called 'dark'.

But the opposite is also true: The Congo has, albeit unintentionally, left its mark on Belgium. Belgian colonial activity transformed Belgium. It is this transformation that constitutes the subject of this book. An overview of recent international developments in the study of imperialism will help to understand our aim.

Since its beginnings in the second half of the nineteenth century, the historiography of colonialism has been characterised by profound changes.[1] The

[1] F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, 2005). See also H. Wesseling, "Overseas History", in P. Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 67–92.

days when the chronicle of the white man's global expansion was spoken of in laudatory prose are, of course, long gone. Many preconceptions and divisions have been, over time, addressed and dismissed.

First of all, there is the division between eras. Until recently, the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras were neatly separated, thus neglecting the many complex threads linking societies, people, habits and ideas over these so-called divisions. Currently, analysts are striking a more complex balance between continuity and discontinuity. Next, there were divisions between scientific disciplines. Colonial historiography, originally limited to the domain of high politics, gradually began to integrate theoretical perspectives, specific methodologies and new dimensions, in particular economic history. Over time, colonial historians began to integrate theories and concepts from the fields of sociology, anthropology, literature and cultural studies. Finally, there was the division between the colony and the colonial power. Traditional imperial historical works concentrated almost exclusively on the influence the metropolis or 'mother country' had on its colonies. From the 1960s onwards, this bias was rightly criticised as being Euro-centric. A new generation of works appeared, focused not only on the changes wrought by the European presence, but also on those caused by 'local' structures and the adaptive mechanisms adopted by the colonized. Gradually, the mother country faded out of sight, as if developments in the colony(ies) were of no importance to the metropolis itself. Moreover, the traditional historiography of European nation-states largely ignored the existence of colonial empires, as if those empires had no influence on Europe.[2] Fortunately, over the last twenty years or so, this neglect has been remedied.

Historians have increasingly realised that the imperial situation cannot be understood if the different locations involved in the process are studied in isolation. In the introduction to their well-known volume, Stoler and Cooper posited that "metropole and colony, coloniser and colonized need to be brought into one analytic field".[3] Beginning in the second half of the 1990s, global connexions became the leitmotiv of colonial historiography. Developments and experiences both at home and in-colony were inter-woven, constantly reflecting, shaping and re-shaping themselves in often subtle and complex ways. As a result, historians are now returning to the metropole. They are contributing significantly to the study of imperial processes without falling into the trap of Euro-centrism by asking – and answering – some fundamental questions: What impact did colonialism have on the economic development of Western Europe?[4] How did colonialism mould the experience of European identity?

[2] A. G. Hopkins, "Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History", *Past & Present*, 164 (1999), p. 207.

[3] A. L. Stoler & F. Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda", in F. Cooper & A. L. Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 15.

[4] B. Etemad, *De l'utilité des empires. Colonisation et prospérité de l'Europe (XVIe – XXe siècles)* (Paris, 2005).

Did the colonial system breed totalitarianism and genocide in Europe? (This was the position put forward by Hannah Arendt as early as the 1950s,[5] which has gained new momentum in the last few years.)[6]

Paradoxically, the study of global imperial connexions often remains within a national model, notably the British case. The colonial impact on the metropolis is rarely studied from a truly transnational, comparative perspective.[7] Most historians still take a specific national example as the focal point. Consequently, a survey of the thriving 'empire strikes back' theme cannot escape the juxtaposition of *national* historiographical studies. We shall look at the British and French examples, touching only briefly on the Dutch, German and Italian cases.[8]

The historiography of the British Empire stands out as an impressive intellectual monument, the rich trajectory of which has been mapped out more than once.[9] We will focus on how the metropolitan scene appears in these studies of the imperial process. The oldest studies focused on the domestic political bases of imperial activity. They repeatedly emphasised high politics and diplomatic activity and were rightly criticised for being one-sided. Yet this research laid the solid foundations on which further work, inspired by different perspectives, was built.

Studies concerning the economic dimensions of imperialism came later. Since the 1970s, much groundbreaking research has been devoted to the relationship between the British Empire and the British domestic economy, including the impact of the former on the latter. Trade and the flow of capital have been mapped within and outside the British colonial world and their impact on Britain's position in the world economy dissected. Historians have examined the profitability of colonial investments and evaluated the role of domestic economic interests on starting, maintaining and/or ending colonial dominance. Many authors have tried to answer an apparently simple question: Was the empire profitable, or not, to the British economy? The answers have always been far more complex than the question itself.[10]

More recently still, attention has shifted to the socio-cultural field. In 1984, John MacKenzie broke fresh ground with his classic book on British imperial

[5] H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951), p. 221.

[6] *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah*, 189 (July-December 2008): "Violences de guerre, violences coloniales, violences extrêmes avant la Shoah", pp. 101–246.

[7] Some notable exceptions: M. Kahler, *Decolonization in France and Britain: The Domestic Consequences of International Relations* (Princeton, 1984); M. G. Stanard, "Interwar pro-Empire Propaganda and European Colonial Culture: Toward a Comparative Research Agenda", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 44, 1 (January 2009), pp. 27–48.

[8] The Portuguese and Spanish cases will not be mentioned, being of a very different nature.

[9] Wm. R. Louis, "Introduction", in R. W. Winks, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Vol. V. Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 1–43; R. W. Winks, "The Future of Imperial History", in ibid., pp. 653–68; J. Gascoigne, "The Expanding Historiography of British Imperialism", *The Historical Journal*, 49, 2 (2006), pp. 577–92.

[10] For example L. E. Davis & R. A. Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Political Economy of British Imperialism, 1860–1912* (Cambridge, 1986); M. Edelstein,

propaganda.[11] Since then, he and many other historians have studied the impact of empire on popular culture, lifestyle, art, consumption patterns, attitudes and perceptions of the empire 'at home'.[12] These historians assert that the mind of the British population was profoundly saturated with imperial ideology. Within the innovative and multifarious currents of the 'new imperial history (or histories)' and post-colonial studies, historians have shown that, in Britain, the empire moulded worldviews, conceptions of race, religious structures, gender roles and stereotypes.[13] Furthermore, historians have identified the colonial phenomenon as a crucial element in the definition and construction of British national identity and the identity of its constituent parts. In other words: We cannot understand the cultural and ideological foundations of Britain without taking into account Britain's imperial structure. The past few years have witnessed impressive academic advances, particularly that it is now impossible to study British history while leaving empire somewhere on the periphery. "Britain was very much a part of the empire, just as the rest of the empire was very much part of Britain".[14] Does this mean that any further research in the field is unnecessary? Certainly not. A number of new insights – or hypotheses – are still debatable. For example, Bernard Porter, one of Britain's leading imperial historians, has recently argued that the colonial impact on large parts of the British population was much more superficial than previously suggested.[15] Porter – the 'king of the sceptics' (as Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose have called him)[16] – has attracted harsh criticism.[17] Simon Potter aptly summarises the debate: "It is relatively clear that imperial influences reached Britain through a number of channels; what historians most frequently debate is whether those influences had a significant impact or not, a question that raises the difficult issue of audience reception".[18] Clearly, the debate on the impact of colonial activity rages on.

Another striking feature of contemporary imperial studies is their socio-cultural focus. On the one hand, when studying the colonial impact on the

"Imperialism: Cost and Benefit", in R. Floud & D. McCloskey, eds., *The Economic History of Britain Since 1700. Vol. 2. 1860–1939* (Cambridge, 1994²), pp. 197–216.

[11] J. M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880–1960* (Manchester, 1984).

[12] See for example the numerous books published in the 'Studies in Imperialism' series published by Manchester University Press.

[13] S. Howe, ed., *The New Imperial Histories Reader* (London-New York, 2010), pp. 1–20.

[14] D. Cannadine, *Ornementalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London, 2001), p. XVII.

[15] B. Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004).

[16] C. Hall & S. Rose, "Introduction: Being At Home With the Empire", in C. Hall & S. Rose, eds., *At Home With the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 16.

[17] J. M. MacKenzie, "'Comfort' and Conviction: A Response to Bernard Porter", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 36, 4 (December 2008), pp. 659–68.

[18] S. J. Potter, "Empire, Cultures and Identities in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain", *History Compass*, 5, 1 (2007), pp. 51–71 (citation on p. 54); J. Thompson, "Modern Britain and the New Imperial History", *History Compass*, 5, 2 (2007), pp. 455–62.

coloniser, proponents of new imperial history and post-colonial studies offer insights into such fields as the representation of the Other and the Self, the (re)creation of racial and sexual stereotypes, gender relations, religious attitudes, migrations, consumption patterns, class relations and daily life. On the other hand, the new imperial historians sometimes neglect aspects they (unjustly) consider old-fashioned, such as political institutions and processes, economic structures and international relations. Naturally, the quasi-monopoly that these 'old-fashioned' subjects previously exerted on historical research has produced a vast amount of knowledge. Moreover, many British historians continue to study the impact of the colonial system on British economic structure and performance.[19] Several interesting monographs have also analysed the colonial dimension of Britain's domestic political scene, but it remains necessary to integrate all these different aspects into a global picture of the empire's impact on Britain's history, cultural and social aspects, politics, foreign relations and economics.[20] P. J. Marshall has published some balanced evaluations of how the empire influenced contemporary British history.[21] But Andrew S. Thompson's recent book *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* offers the most balanced overview to date, covering a long time span and encompassing the entire range of thematic issues.[22] As we move more deeply into the Belgian case, we shall return to a number of essential points made by these British historians.

In size and diversity, the British Empire exceeded all the other colonial empires of its time and the same can be said of academic research pertaining to these respective empires. The historiography of other modern colonial systems pales before the vast knowledge that has been accumulated concerning Britain.

[19] See for example B. R. Tomlinson, "The British Economy and the Empire, 1900–1939", in C. Wrigley, ed., *A Companion to Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 198–211; A. R. Dilley, "The Economics of Empire", in S. Stockwell, ed., *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 101–29; P. J. Cain, "Economics and Empire: the Metropolitan Context", in A. Porter, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Vol. III. The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 31–52; A. Offer, "Costs and Benefits, Prosperity, and Security, 1870–1914", *Idem*, pp. 690–711; D. K. Fieldhouse, "The Metropolitan Economics of Empire", in J. M. Brown & Wm. R. Louis, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Vol. IV. The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 88–113.

[20] For example D. Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics 1945–1961: From 'Colonial Development' to 'Winds of Change'* (Oxford, 1971); S. Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918–1964* (Oxford, 1993); S. Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2001). On the imperial impact on Ireland, see also K. Jeffery, ed., *'An Irish Empire'? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996).

[21] For example P. J. Marshall, "Imperial Britain", in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 318–37.

[22] A. S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow-London, 2005); A. S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics c. 1880–1932* (Harlow-London, 2000); A. S. Thompson, "Empire and the British State", in S. Stockwell, ed., *The British Empire. Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 39–61.

This has consequences for our central theme of the colonial impact on the metropolis, a subject that, for many years, has been largely ignored by scholars working on the non-British colonial powers in Europe. Nevertheless, things have changed rapidly in the last decade or so, spurred on by post-colonial studies and new imperial histories published in the United Kingdom.

France is a first case in point. Here, only a small number of studies concerning the imperial impact on the metropolis had been published before the rise of the new British approaches. Forty years ago, Raoul Girardet explored the domestic (political and ideological) sources of French imperial activity.[23] In the 1970s, Charles-Robert Ageron analysed the impact of colonial activity on French politics and – rather ahead of his time – on public opinion and popular perceptions.[24] According to Ageron, the imperial impact on French minds and attitudes was both limited and late. Others – not only renowned French historians such as Claude Liauzu, but also foreign scholars – followed in the footsteps of these two pioneers and continued to study the domestic political dimension of colonialism.[25] At the same time, the specificity of French imperialism engaged many historians. Jean Bouvier, Jacques Thobie and René Girault highlighted some of the domestic economic sources of imperial activity, but mainly focused on French investments and trade in the periphery, of which the colonial empire was just one facet.[26] This growing interest in the economic dimension of imperialism culminated with the publication in 1984 of Jacques Marseille's *Empire colonial et capitalisme français: Histoire d'un divorce*, which revealed how the French economy reacted to imperial activity and was influenced by it.[27]

In the second half of the 1990s, French colonial history underwent revival and re-orientation. This revival was not limited to the purely academic sphere. It originated in and was largely influenced by discussions of the delicate and problematic relationship of French society with its colonial past – a problem existing in other European countries as well.[28] Many aspects of France's colonial

[23] R. Girardet, *L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris, 1972).

[24] Ch.-R. Ageron, *France coloniale ou parti colonial?* (Paris, 1978); Ch.-R. Ageron, "Les colonies devant l'opinion publique française (1919–1939)", *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, 37, 286 (1990), pp. 31–73.

[25] C. Liauzu, *Aux origines des tiers-mondismes. Colonisés et anticolonialistes en France (1919–1939)* (Paris, 1982); C. Liauzu, *Histoire de l'anticolonialisme en France. Du XVIe siècle à nos jours* (Paris, 2007); A. Biondi, *Les anticolonialistes (1881–1962)* (Paris, 1992). Among the foreign scholars, Raymond F. Betts, A. S. Kanya Forstner and William B. Cohen were of course outstanding specialists in French colonialism. See also S. M. Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby 1889–1938* (Stanford, 1983).

[26] J. Bouvier & R. Girault, eds., *L'impérialisme français d'avant 1914* (Paris-The Hague, 1976); J. Bouvier, R. Girault & J. Thobie, *L'impéralisme à la française. La France impériale 1880–1914* (Paris, 1982).

[27] J. Marseille, *Empire colonial et capitalisme français* (Paris, 1984).

[28] D. Rothermund, "The Self-consciousness of Post-Imperial Nations: A Cross-national Comparison", *India Quarterly. A Journal of International Affairs*, 67 (March 2011), pp. 1–18 (pdf available on http://iqq.sagepub.com/content/67/1/1.abstract). See also S. Jahan & A. Ruscio, eds., *Histoire de la colonisation. Réhabilitations, falsifications et instrumentalisations* (Paris, 2007); O. Dard & D. Lefeuvre, eds., *L'Europe face à son passé colonial* (Paris, 2008).

past remain controversial: slavery, the use of violence, torture and even mass murder in the colonies. A French law, passed in April 2005, required schools to teach the 'positive effects' of colonialism. This led to many protests and the law was soon abolished. The role of the imperial past in French history and its lasting influence on contemporary French society remains a highly politicised topic. In 2009 and 2010, French authorities launched a public debate on the meaning of French national identity. Colonial heritage was, inevitably, part of that debate in which a number of crucial questions that had been discussed in the public forum for many years were uncomfortably linked to French colonial history. How could France's central values of *liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité* be reconciled with the crimes and oppression in the colonies?[29] What was and is the place of colonial and post-colonial migrants in French contemporary society? Does today's racism relate to the colonial past? What is the meaning of being 'French' in a country where many influences, including some from the former colonies, are at play? Why were imperial matters – at least some of their more disturbing aspects – erased from public memory? What could (and had to) be done to (re)activate these forgotten aspects?[30]

Originally, foreign scholars inspired by post-colonial studies were responsible for the new approach to France's colonial past, but their research did not really enter French consciousness. In the early 1990s, Herman Lebovics started to explore the colonial roots of French cultural traits and the French mentality.[31] Many other (mainly British) authors examined similar themes, highlighting the ways in which empire shaped French arts, worldviews, gender roles, daily life and social attitudes.[32] This revived foreign interest in French colonial history was not limited to the field of post-colonial studies. Other historians, such as Martin Thomas, Martin Evans and Robert Aldrich, also analysed various aspects of the repercussions of empire on the metropolis.[33] Alice Conklin, in her book on the French 'civilising mission' in West Africa, draws attention to

[29] G. Manceron, *Marianne et les colonies. Une introduction à l'histoire coloniale de la France* (Paris, 2003).

[30] For example R. Bertrand, *La controverse autour du 'fait colonial'* (Paris, 2006); C. Coquio, ed., *Retours du colonial? Disculpation et réhabilitation de l'histoire coloniale* (Nantes, 2008).

[31] H. Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity* (Ithaca, 1992); H. Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Age of Globalization* (Durham, 2004) and so forth.

[32] For example A. G. Hargreaves & M. McKinney, eds., *Post-colonial Cultures in France* (London-New York, 1997); A. G. Hargreaves, ed., *Memory, Empire, and Postcolonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism* (Lanham, 2005); T. Chafer & A. Sackur, eds., *Promoting the Colonial Idea in France: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France* (Houndmills, 2002); E. Ezra, *The Colonial Unconscious. Race and Culture in Interwar France* (Ithaca-London, 2000); D. J. Sherman, "The Arts and Sciences of Colonialism", *French Historical Studies*, 23, 4 (Fall 2000), pp. 707–29; T. Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, 2006).

[33] M. Thomas, *The French Empire Between the Wars* (Manchester, 2005); M. Evans, ed., *Empire and Culture: The French Experience 1830–1940* (Houndmills, 2004); R. Aldrich, ed., *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums, and Colonial Memories* (Houndmills, 2005); R. Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (New York, 1996), etc.

the effects of colonial ideology in France itself: "[T]he practice of colonialism may well have reinforced and enabled these other forms of discrimination in the metropole in ways that have not yet been recognized".[34]

Finally, after some delay, a new generation of French historians began to (re)explore France's colonial past. By 1995, Alain Ruscio had already analysed the French view of the colonised world and its populations.[35] At the very end of the 1990s, a group of historians (Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, Sandrine Lemaire, Françoise Vergès, etc.) began to explore various aspects of colonial influence on French society, originally focusing on the analysis of representation and propaganda, but gradually extending the scope of their research to include political and economic issues as well.[36] Like many of their British colleagues, these authors stress the importance of colonialism in shaping French social habits and mentality. A few recent studies directly tackle the political dimension. Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison analyses the way imperialism has influenced the French state, in particular by creating what he calls 'state racism'.[37] The creation of a French political identity is at the centre of Dino Costantini's work.[38] He analyses the paradoxical relationship between the human rights proclaimed by the French Republic and the colonial 'exception' where these rights were not upheld. These recent publications essentially dwell upon political discourse, representation and ideology, and not so much on political practices and movements, or on the institutional aspects of imperialism. A few exceptions stand out, particularly Marc Michel's studies analysing the influence of the colonial experience on the military and on the rise of right-wing sentiments in French politics.[39] Nevertheless, a global and thematically well-balanced analysis of the colonial impact on French history – the equivalent of Andrew Thompson's work on Britain – still remains to be written.

The other ex-colonial powers on the European continent are also taking a new interest in their imperial pasts. And as in France, the memory of colonialism is a sensitive subject in some countries. Specific dramatic aspects of their

[34] A. L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford, 1997), p. 253.

[35] A. Ruscio, *Le crédo de l'homme blanc. Regards coloniaux français XIXe – XXe siècles* (Brussels, 1995).

[36] P. Blanchard, S. Lemaire & N. Bancel, eds., *Culture coloniale en France. De la Révolution Française à nos jours* (Paris, 2008); P. Blanchard, N. Bancel & S. Lemaire, eds., *La fracture coloniale. La société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial* (Paris, 2005); N. Bancel, P. Blanchard & F. Vergès, *La République coloniale. Essai sur une utopie* (Paris, 2003), etc. A recent study analyses the imperial impact on a particular French region: R.-C. Grondin, *L'empire en province. Culture et expérience coloniales en Limousin (1830–1939)* (Toulouse, 2010).

[37] O. Le Cour Grandmaison, *La République impériale. Politique et racisme d'État* (Paris, 2009) and Id., *Coloniser, exterminer. Sur la guerre et l'État colonial* (Paris, 2005).

[38] D. Costantini, *Mission civilisatrice. Le rôle de l'histoire coloniale dans la construction de l'identité politique française* (Paris, 2008).

[39] M. Michel, "La colonisation", in J.-F. Sirinelli, ed., *Histoire des droites en France. Volume 3. Sensibilités* (Paris, 1992), pp. 125–63. See also J. Marseille, "La gauche, la droite et le fait colonial des années 1880 aux années 1960", *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 24 (October-December 1989), pp. 17–28.

respective imperial past – for example the use of poison gas by the Italians in Ethiopia, the German *Vernichtungsbefehl* against the Hereros and of course 'red rubber' in the Congo Free State – have caught the attention of a broader public and even of official authorities. This has stimulated interest in the colonisers' role in the colonies *and vice versa*. In Italy and Germany, a new wave of studies explores the impact of colonies on the nation. As is the case in Great Britain and France, most of these publications explore socio-cultural issues such as gender constructions, racial attitudes and stereotypes, literature and the arts, daily life and colonial memory.[40] In the German case, historians raise challenging and crucial political questions, namely the relationship of colonial racism and violence to National Socialism. This is a specific national variant of the larger debate, mentioned earlier, concerning the relationship between colonialism and the rise of totalitarianism, racism and genocide in Europe.[41] In the Netherlands, historians have always been very attentive to the role of the colonial empire in economic development at home – a crucial factor in their national history.[42] According to historian Edwin Horlings, for example, "the financial benefits [from the empire] were used to lay the foundations for a process of modern economic growth in the 19th century".[43] Most recently, Dutch historians have increasingly turned to the study of the post-colonial effects of empire.[44]

[40] J. Andall & D. Duncan, eds., *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory* (Oxford, 2005); P. Palumbo, ed., *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonialism from Post-Unification to the Present* (Berkeley, 2003). M. Colin & E. R. Laforgia, eds., *L'Afrique coloniale et postcoloniale dans la culture, la littérature et la société italiennes. Représentations et témoignages* (Caen, 2003). N. Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna, 2002) is a general history of Italian colonialism, but also deals with its domestic aspects and repercussions. E. Ames, M. Klotz & L. Wildenthal, eds., *Germany's Colonial Pasts* (Lincoln-London, 2005); B. Kundrus, *Moderne Imperialisten. Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien* (Cologne, 2003); R. Kössler, "Awakened from Colonial Amnesia? Germany After 2004", available online at www.freiburg-postkolonial.de/Seiten/koessler-colonial-amnesia.htm (2006, accessed 4 February, 2010); M. Perraudin & J. Zimmerer, eds., *German Colonialism and National Identity* (New York, 2011).

[41] P. Grosse, "What Does German Colonialism Have to Do with National Socialism", in E. Ames, e.a., eds., *Germany's Colonial Past, op. cit.*, pp. 115–34. See also J. Zimmerer, "Holocauste et colonialisme. Contribution à une archéologie de la pensée génocidaire", *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah*, 189 (July-December 2008), pp. 213–46.

[42] P. C. Emmer, "The Economic Impact of the Dutch Expansion Overseas, 1570–1870", *Revista de Historia Economica*, 15, 1 (1998), pp. 157–76; E. Horlings, "Miracle Cure for an Economy in Crisis? Colonial Exploitation as a Source of Growth in the Netherlands, 1815–1870", in B. Moore & H. Van Nierop, eds., *Colonial Empires Compared: Britain and the Netherlands, 1750–1850* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 145–67; H. Baudet & M. Fennema, e.a., *Het Nederlands belang bij Indië* (Utrecht, 1983); P. van der Eng, "Economic Benefits from Colonial Assets: the Case of the Netherlands and Indonesia 1870–1958", research memorandum of the Growth and Development Centre of the University of Groningen, June 1998 (downloadable from http://ideas.repec.org/p/dgr/rugggd/199839.html); M. Wintle, *An Economic and Social History of the Netherlands, 1800–1920* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 214–25.

[43] E. Horlings, "Miracle Cure (…)", art. cit., p. 167.

[44] G. Oostindie, *Postkoloniaal Nederland. Vijfenzestig jaar vergeten, herdenken, verdringen* (Amsterdam, 2009); U. Bosma, *Terug uit de koloniën. Zestig jaar postkoloniale migranten en*

So how does Belgium fit into this picture? Colonial historiography was a latecomer in Belgium.[45] Belgian universities introduced the first courses on overseas and colonial history at the end of the nineteenth century, but very few academic historians actually specialised in this domain. Most writings on the Congo were blatant eulogies for Leopold II and the pioneers of the Congo Free State. Real historical research into the Belgian colony, especially its origins, only began appearing in the 1950s. One scholar, Jean Stengers, meticulously analysed Leopoldian politics and the birth of the Free State. From the 1960s onwards, he also published many studies on the decolonisation of the Congo. Some other historians did, of course, publish on early Belgian colonial history, but they were rather isolated figures on the periphery of academia. They certainly did not have Stengers's scholarly stature. Moreover, they had not yet freed themselves from the then widespread admiration for Leopold II. In the 1970s, Jean-Luc Vellut started his impressive scholarly activities, which led to real advances in the understanding of Belgian colonial history. For many years, Vellut and Stengers were practically the only Belgian historians specialising in Congolese colonial history. The Congo was studied much more actively abroad, notably by British and U.S. historians; a trend that started in the 1950s and continues until today. Congolese historians, meanwhile, only joined the international research community in the 1970s and 1980s, due to the late development of higher education in the Congo. In Belgium itself two authors, anthropologist Daniël Vangroenweghe and former diplomat Jules Marchal, published several books in the mid-1980s revealing the horrors of the Leopoldian regime in the Congo. These publications revived general interest in the colonial past and may have contributed to a revival of Belgian academic interest in colonial history. From the 1990s on, a new generation of researchers increasingly focused on the Congo. Yet, most of these works, like the numerous publications of foreign historians, deal with the situation in the colony itself. Only very recently have Belgian and foreign historians analysed the colony's impact on the Belgian metropolis, especially in the socio-cultural field. This is entirely in line with the international research trends in (post-) colonial studies.

## The Focus of the Present Book

This brings us to the purpose of the present book. The most important gaps in our knowledge of the colonial nexus relate to the political and economic impact of the Congo on the metropolis. Stengers (1960s) focused on the Leopoldian period and decolonisation. The role of colonial activities in Belgian politics from 1908 to the end of the 1950s remains completely unexplored. The

*hun organisaties* (Amsterdam, 2009); L. Van Leeuwen, *Ons Indisch erfgoed. Zestig jaar strijd om cultuur en identiteit* (Amsterdam, 2008).

[45] G. Vanthemsche, "The historiography of Belgian colonialism in the Congo", in C. Levai, ed., *Europe and the World in European Historiography* (Pisa, 2006), pp. 89–119 (online: www.cliohres.net/books/6/Vanthemsche.pdf).