Language Policy and the Formation of National Identity: Diverse Experiences

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Abstract—This article will examine some of the ways that political leaders attempt to create, control, and otherwise manage national identity through language policy. This appraisal will be assisted by some historical and contemporary case studies demonstrating the use of language policy in this process, drawn from the Third Reich and Nazi-occupied Poland, Sri Lanka, and pre- and post-majority rule South Africa. This article reaches the general conclusion that it is possible to influence the formation of national identity through language policy by using language to: (i) define the identity boundary, (ii) identify the nation through its prevailing ontology, and (iii) manage feelings—particularly fears, doubts, and uncertainties—for selected purposes. Whether a sense of national identity has been calmed or disturbed will have implications for order or conflict, peace or war, and accommodation or genocide.

Keywords—*Language, identity, language policy, Nazi Germany, Sri Lanka, South Africa*

I. LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

For individuals, a robust and well-integrated sense of identity is viewed by psychology as an important part of mental health. Identity can be defined as "a person's essential, continuous self, the internal subjective concept of oneself as an individual" (Reber, 1995: 355) [1]—and the same can be applied to a nation. Identity is formed by identification, which Freud (1955: 105)[2] viewed as the earliest expression of a tie with another person. This position was developed by Erikson (1968) [3], who considered a strong sense of identity a necessary condition for a successfully functioning individual and nation. Erikson viewed a strong sense of identity as a generator of energy, and a weak or confused sense of identity as a source of decline. As a crisis of identity develops, powerful negative factors are produced that "arouse in man a hatred of 'otherness'" (Erikson, 1968: 62) [3].

Identity at a collective level has been studied by many social scientists, especially in terms of national identity. Recently, there has been renewed interest in the concept of a collectivity as a group or community (Tollefsen, 2002 [4], Huebner, 2010) [5]. When considering the relationship between national identity and the individual, Smith (1991) [6] viewed national identity as having three functions: (i) providing a satisfying answer to the fear of oblivion through identification with a nation, (ii) offering personal renewal and dignity by becoming part of a political "super-family," and (iii) enabling the realization of feelings of fraternity—especially through the use of symbols and ceremonies (Smith, 1991: 160-161) [6]. According to this view, identification is a powerful two-way link between individual and nation. When a sense of national identity is weak or divided, this will affect the functioning of the state.

Thus, identity provides a link between the two concepts of state and nation. The state is an objective, politico-legal-coercive entity, while the nation is a subjective, psychological construct. The disjunction between state and nation can be the cause of great tension and conflict, while the linkage between the two is identity.

Identity (from the Latin "*idem*," meaning "the same") was first used in ancient times and later by medieval theologians and philosophers. More recently, it has been applied by psychologists. In addition, many poets, playwrights, novelists, composers, and other artists have given expression to statements of identity, and have subsequently had great influence on creating nations and states. Examples are the great nineteenth-century romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who gave a new form to Polish identity, and the writer and political activist, Jose Rizal, who powerfully shaped Philippine identity—particularly after his execution.

Marx showed himself to be an identity theorist when he wrote of class consciousness; however, the main impetus towards identity theory came from psychoanalysis, where it was seen as the basis of the socialization process by which societies are created. As Freud (1955: 105) [2] stated, "Identification is known to psychoanalysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person." To Freud, identification was a mechanism by which a child would recognize himself or herself through interaction with a parent. Later, this theme was expanded by Erikson (1968) [3], who considered a well-developed sense of identity as a necessary condition for both a successfully functioning individual and society. Erikson highlighted the dysfunctional states of confusion, crisis, and panic that can arise from a crisis of identity. Erikson saw a strong sense of identity as a generator of energy, and a weak or confused sense of identity as a source of decline. As a crisis of identity develops, powerful negative identity factors are produced that can create a hatred of "otherness" (Erikson, 1968: 62) [3].

Language is a fundamental component of identity— "Language expresses the collective experience of a group" (Herder in Smith, 1981: 45) [7]—and is a collective right (Kymlicka, 1995 [8], Breton, 1997: 47) [9]. Meanwhile, collective language grief has been shown to be a powerful motivation in communities that either have lost or fear losing their language (Bostock, 1997) [10].

II.   MECHANISMS OF CHANGE

Durkheim (1970: 124) [11] described the mechanism by which collective consciousness—including a sense of identity—arises as *reciprocity*: "men in union can mutually transform one another by their reciprocal influence." Durkheim viewed the process as one of representations being passed by *contagion*.

Another mechanism of change in national identity is collective trauma, which operates by changing the existing ties between survivors (Myers, 1999: 2) [12]. Among individuals, it has been recognized that stress can be a cause or trigger of mental disorder; thus, when stress is widespread throughout a community, a significant change in the national identity can be predicted (Cawte, 1973) [13]. At the collective level, it is well recognized that major traumatic events or continuing conditions of extreme stress—such as in the Polish ghettos under Nazi control—can produce heightened incidence of suicide and other indicators of mental illness (Bostock, 1995) [14].

Another mechanism of change is the feedback loop. In their study of an industrial plant, Voyer, Gould, and Ford (1999) [15] found that many efforts to reduce organizational anxiety were counterproductive because of the action of reinforcing feedback loops between the various elements of collectively-held attitudes and perceptions. Some of these loops were balancing feedback loops, which had the effect of reducing anxiety and moving the organization towards achieving equilibrium (its position before a stressful event). Thus, anxiety over national identity can be increased or decreased through the mechanism of feedback. Voyer, Gould, and Ford (1999: 3) [15] demonstrated that, in one organization, the leader's role was the only balancing feedback loop—an indication of the importance of leaders in managing the level of anxiety in a society.

The common element in the various mechanisms of change in national identity—reciprocity, contagion, or feedback loop—is communication. For this reason, it is clear that language plays an indispensable role in causing changes in the state of a national identity.

It is possible to develop some descriptions of the emotions underlying a community's sense of identity. In addition to fear, anxiety, memory, consciousness, habituation to genocide, trauma, grief, guilt, retribution, and paranoia, one could propose security/insecurity, fear of others, and habituation/non-habituation to violence.

Thus, it is possible to describe the state of national identity both relative to other communities and in terms of changes to itself at an earlier time, as a condition of being either adjusted to its circumstances or disturbed.

III.   POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF A DISTURBED NATIONAL IDENTITY

The presence of a disturbed sense of national identity state has an essential role in the great questions of the existence and survival of human society: order or conflict, peace or war, accommodation or genocide. The precise nature of the link between identity and behavior is an age-old question of responsibility, which will always remain unresolved. Another way of looking at the same problem is to say that antisocial behavior may not be a result of illness:

harm to society ... should not be part of the definition of mental illness,   because to include it would open the door to saying that, for example, all rapists and all those who oppose society's aims are mentally ill. (Collier, Longmore, and Harvey, 1991: 314) [16]

However, it is obvious that large-scale violence does require large numbers of willing participants; therefore, similarity of motivation, ontology, information supply, and interpretation must be assumed.

When a large number of people collectively show aggression, it can be a product of a manipulated sense of national identity. Such aggression can be engineered by the controlled supply of information and interpretation that is used to generate collective anxiety. Lake and Rothchild (1996: 1) {17} expanded on this theme:

As groups begin to fear for their safety, dangerous and difficult-to-resolve strategic dilemmas arise that contain within them the potential for tremendous violence ... Ethnic activists and political entrepreneurs, operating within groups, build upon these fears of insecurity and polarise society.

Many studies of organized violence do not attribute all causality to leadership, as there must be facilitating followers or at least acquiescence from bystanders (Staub, 1989: 23) [10]. Further, there is very likely a situation where the "raw material" of collective grievances are present (Bostock, 1997) [11]. Thus, it is possible to believe that the impulse to aggressive behaviors, culminating in homicidal and suicidal acts (the two often being related), can be a product of a disturbed sense of identity.

In light of this discussion, it is clear that individuals and groups may try to manage national identity through various techniques—especially language policy—by using language to: (i) define the boundaries of a collectivity, (ii) identify the collectivity through its prevailing ontology, and (iii) adjust feelings—particularly fears, doubts, and uncertainties—for their own purposes. As Shohamy (2006: 77) [19] stated:

authorities will often use propaganda and ideologies about language loyalty, patriotism, collective identity and the need for "correct and pure language" or "native language variety" as strategies for continuing their control and holding back the demands of these "others."

IV. LANGUAGE POLICY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

As aforementioned, language policy is one area in which rulers attempt to create and manage the national identity of a community, nation, or international body. Thus, it is appropriate here to consider a small number of case studies and then draw some general conclusions.

A. *Nazi Germany's Language Policy*

Under a regime committed to creating a heightened sense of national identity through the use of violence in every aspect of life, it is unsurprising that language policy was included in Nazi Germany, both by intention and effect (Klemperer, 1996) [20].

The aims of Nazi language policy were the politicization of the German language, language purism, and Germanization in the occupied territories. Politicization meant that language was seen as just another instrument of often-crude policy manipulation of semantics and syntax (Klemperer, 1996 [20]; Grunberger, 1971: Ch. 21) [21]. The whole ensemble of politicized Germany has been called "Nazi Deutsch" (Lane and Rupp, 1978: xxvii) [22]. Purism saw the removal of words, phrases, and concepts from the language if considered un-German or un-Aryan. This included many famous French dishes and the Hertz—a unit of physical measurement (Grunberger, 1971: 328) [21]. There was also control of language through control of the media, such as the directive of the German Government of October 1941 that required that Soviet troops only be referred to by journalists as "Bolshevics, beasts and animals" (Young, 1991: 108) [23].

Within countries occupied by the Third Reich, German was the official language, yet proclamations announcing curfews, lists of deportees scheduled for transport, and lists of hostages for execution were published in bilingual versions. In Poland, the country was divided into a *Généralgouvernement*, which had a measure of self-government, and that part included into the greater Third Reich. The latter part of the country was to be Germanized, requiring that the Polish language be barred from administration, education, and even entertainment, with a view to making German the sole language of the city (Dobroszycki, 1984: xxiii-xxiv) [24]. For example, the name of the city of Lodz was changed to Litzmannstadt (Dobroszycki, 1984: xxiii) [24]—an example of an attempt to achieve identity change through language policy.

The Jewish languages of Yiddish and Hebrew and the Roma language of Romany do not appear to have been targeted for removal in any way separate from the disappearance of the speakers themselves, in that there was never any idea that the people might be permitted to live but without their languages. These languages were tolerated in the ghettos; however, no letter of the Hebrew alphabet could ever be seen to frank a German postage stamp while being handled by ghetto post offices (Hilberg, 1961: 156) [25]. Further, schools were not permitted to teach German to the so-called "inferior race" [25].

Nazi language policy demonstrates an attempt to inflate the purified German national identity through the delusion of a hypothetical language purity—or "*Volks* language"—reinforced with an enhanced and deluded sense of language exclusivity. Downgrading the languages of captured people indicates an intention to induce among them a modified national identity state of insecurity, depression, exclusion, and habituation to violence. Further evidence of intention can be seen in banning Jewish children from the right to receive education in the German language. Further, the forcible removal of words and names deemed to be "non-Aryan" from the official version of the German language suggests a desire to habituate the German people to a state of acceptance of violence—initially at the verbal level, in preparation for later at the physical level.

B. *Language Policy in Sri Lanka*

The civil war in Sri Lanka began in 1983 and ended in 2009, after claiming a probable total of 110,000 lives (BBC, 2016) [26]. It also created large population displacement, led to systematic sexual violence against women, and caused severe and widespread post-traumatic stress (Somasundaram, 2010) [27].

There is clearly evidence of a disturbed national identity, but it is important to consider the extent to which language is implicated. Sri Lanka is a plural society where the majority group is the Sinhalese, who came from Northern India in the sixth century BCE and conquered the Veddas—the original inhabitants. The Sinhalese speak Sinhala, are mostly Buddhist, and today number 15 million (75 per cent of the population). The largest minority is the Tamils, who today number 3 million and speak Tamil. They are mainly Hindu in religion and form two groups: the Sri Lankan Tamils, who are descendants of the Tamil-speaking groups who migrated from South India as many as 1,000 years ago, and the Indian Tamils, who are descendants of the comparatively recent immigrants who came from India in the time of the British to work in tea and other plantations. There are also Muslims (known as "Moors") and Christians of Sinhalese, Tamil, and other origins. The Sinhalese introduced Buddhism from India in the third century BCE, and the island became a major center of Buddhist activity. However, more recent settlers were Arabic peoples, followed by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British.

The transfer of power from the British to self-government was "smooth and peaceful" (de Silva, 1981: 461) [28]; however, later events were to prove less serene. From 1948 to 1956, for a brief period in 1960, and from 1965 to 1970, the country was ruled (in its own right or in coalition) by the United National Party, which was concerned with protecting the rights of the Tamils. The socialist Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), created in 1951 by Solomon Bandaranaike, advocated national heritage, yet gained the support of groups advocating the recognition of Sinhala as the sole official language and Buddhism as the official religion. The SLFP won office in 1956 and remained in power until 1965, except for a brief period in 1960, and in coalition with a minor party (the Lanka Sama Samaj Party) in 1964.

In 1978, some limited recognition was given to the Tamil language, yet violence continued. In 1981, after a period of strikes and unrest, an emergency was declared and the unrest of this period marked the beginning of the civil war. The government attempted to seal northern areas from contact with Tamil Nadu—the southern State of India, from where the Tamil secessionists were being supplied—and, in 1986,

internecine fighting broke out between the two main Tamil groups: the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (also known as the "Tamil Tigers"). The latter group subsequently became dominant.

After a campaign based on a promise to end the civil war, the election to office of President Kumaratunga in 1994 was followed by a truce that broke down in 1995. It was a civil war of attempted resolution through power that was characterized by a very high level of violence against civilians. Both politicians and members of the public were often indiscriminately caught in bomb blasts, thereby generating widespread collective fear.

Frequent political assassination is a major manifestation of a condition that can be interpreted as a severely disturbed national identity. In Sri Lanka, political assassination has been a persistent mode of the system's operation, and many leaders have been killed. This reflects the intensity of the political process in this deadly theatre of politics. Political violence through rioting and mass killings indicative of a collective habituation to violence were a feature of Sri Lankan politics that spread throughout all levels of society. The 1983 ethnic violence against the Tamils of Colombo, in which hundreds were killed, was a particularly clear manifestation of the breakdown of the state. Government response was the frequent use of a State of Emergency—a situation in which normal democratic processes are suspended.

The movement of large numbers of people within a state and from a state can also be interpreted as a symptom of a disturbed national identity. Highly contagious and realistically-based fear of endemic violence is the major causal factor, and the displaced people are those individuals whose psychic needs of security, dignity, and fraternity—the normal functions of identification—are not being supplied by the national identity. Since 1983, between 500,000 and 1 million people have left Sri Lanka (CIA World Factbook, 2016) [29].

1) The Language Factor: During the period of British rule, the Sri Lankan population was generally unified under an independence movement, and there was a Swabhasha movement for Sri Lanka's "own language," which embraced both Sinhala and Tamil (Edwards, 1985: 179) [30]. However, after independence, the communities drew further apart and became divided on the lines of language, religion, culture, and economic position, in which the Tamils had formerly received favored treatment under the British. Following independence, it appears that a single Sri Lankan national identity was difficult to create, and the situation resulted in separate Sinhalese and Tamil national identities, founded on their respective languages.

It has been argued that:

(t)hough other factors also propelled Sri Lanka's descent into the maelstrom, language policy, and the effort to assert ethnic dominance that it epitomised, did the greatest harm of all.
(Neier, 1996: 140) [31]

There is a difference of family with regard to Sri Lanka's two major languages. Sinhala is an Indo-Aryan language descended from Sanskrit. Its script is one of the many variants of the Indic system that is used throughout India (Devanagari, Malayalam, Tamil, and so forth) and very widely in Southeast Asia. Its similarities in script to other languages notwithstanding, Sinhala is now geographically isolated. Long separated from its distant relatives in Northern India, Sinhala is spoken by 14 million Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, but is not widely used outside the country.

In contrast, Tamil is one of the major languages of southern India and one of India's 15 Schedule Languages or official languages. It is one of the oldest of the Dravidian languages and is spoken by over 60 million people in India—mainly in Tamil Nadu—and has a sizeable number of speakers in Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana, and East Africa (Katzner, 1977: 199) [32], as well as its 3 million speakers in Sri Lanka.

Unlike the Sinhalese, for whom language and religion are inextricably bound, for the Tamils, language is paramount, while religion is not as central to ethnic identity (de Silva, 1986: 216) [28]. The fact that Tamil nationalists in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu actively resisted the efforts of the national government to introduce Hindi as India's national language (de Silva, 1986: 4) [28] was not unnoticed by Sri Lanka's communities of Tamils. Many of these people saw themselves as being engaged in a similar struggle; thus, it is possible to see collective Sinhalese language insecurity reacting to collective Tamil language insecurity, and then escalating in a chain reaction of collective paranoia.

The feeling of isolation of their language is relevant to understanding the political imperative of the Sinhalese to safeguard and strengthen its position. As a writer of Sri Lanka Tamil origin stated, "The Sinhala language … was in danger of extinction—and with it the Sinhala people. Where else in the world was Sinhala spoken but in Ceylon?" (Sivanandan, 1990: 217) [33]. It has also been reported that there was insecurity related to religion among Sinhalese activists, one of whom stated, "if they didn't do something there would be no more Buddhism and no more Sinhalese—they'd all be Hindu priests, speaking in Tamil" (Horowitz, 1985: 176) [34]. In the case of Sri Lanka, language both reinforced religion and was reinforced by religion, as de Silva (1993: 7) [28] observed: "Buddhism and the destiny of the Sinhala language were so closely intertwined that it was virtually impossible to treat either in isolation from the other." Thus, the language issue came to dominate the process of politics following independence.

It is significant that an attempt to address the language issue was a feature of the Indo-Lankan Peace Accord signed between the governments of India and Sri Lanka in 1987, in that Tamil was at last given equal official status to Sinhala. However, this belated step was not sufficient to remove the underlying causes of the civil war (Mathew and Barbu, 2010) [35]. The issue of language conflict also involves a conflict of cultural values. Kapferer (2012) [36] argued that there are myths of Buddhist triumphalism propagated through the Sinhalese education system. Government attempts to create ethnic quotas have further exacerbated the ethnolinguistic conflict. Horowitz (1985: 180) [34] reported a study of cultural stereotypes—admittedly from several generations ago, but possibly still

relevant today—in which Sinhalese viewed themselves as "kind, good and religious," but twice as lazy as the Tamils, who they saw as "cruel and arrogant," as well as "diligent and thrifty." Even the historical existence of collective stereotypes is a factor undermining the chance to successfully construct a single inclusive national identity.

Thus, the proposition that Sri Lanka's "descent into the maelstrom" was a product of a certain type of language policy and a desire for ethnic dominance appears to be validated, with the result of Sri Lanka still retaining a deeply disturbed and divided national identity.

C. Language Policy in South Africa

The African continent has a high level of sociolinguistic complexity, with more than half the world's surviving languages found there, and over 5,000 language names identified in Sub-Saharan Africa (Spencer, 1985: 387) [37]. South Africa has nine major African languages that are spoken by 67 per cent of the country's population of 50 million. However, not until the achievement of majority role in 1994 did these languages have official status, which had been reserved for Afrikaans and English—even though these languages were themselves very much the subject of policy.

Following colonization by Europeans, the Dutch language was brought to southern Africa in 1652, and continued to have some official recognition after the takeover of the Cape Colony by the British in 1814, when the English language became official. When the Union of South Africa was created in 1910 as an independent dominion within the British Empire, Dutch was given equal status with English. As a result of its isolation from The Netherlands and its contact with African languages, Malay, English, French, and Portuguese, the seventeenth-century form of Dutch became transformed into a new language called Afrikaans sometime between 1800 and 1850. Afrikaans was initially viewed disparagingly by both English and Dutch speakers, yet it gradually gained respectability. In 1875, a group of teachers and clerics in the Cape founded a Society of True Afrikaners to stand for "our language, our nation, our land" (Worden, 1995: 88) [38]. They produced a newspaper written in Afrikaans and stressed the uniqueness of their God-given destiny (Worden, 1995: 88) [37]. In 1918, a secret society was established—the Afrikaner *Broederbond*. By 1929, this society was instrumental in creating the Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Associations, with the purpose of unifying Afrikaners and propagating a strong sense of language, culture, religion, and race-based identity among them. In the meantime, in 1925, Afrikaans replaced Dutch as the equal and sole official language of South Africa alongside English—a situation that continued until majority rule.

1) Language Policy under Minority Rule: South Africa's period of minority rule can be viewed as comprising tension between races, but also between Afrikaners and white South Africans of British background, with the languages of Dutch and then Afrikaans and English the subject of conflict as the vehicles of identity within their respective identities. This was particularly meaningful for Afrikaners because: "(I)n nationalist thinking, the people's very existence was manifested in the 'living language' of Afrikaans" (Giliomee, 1997: 122) [39]. The period was also an interface between the colonial languages and the vernaculars. While tolerating African languages, the British were reluctant to spread English because of the political implications of possible mobilization through the common medium of communication, and a desire to "maintain the linguistic distance between the Englishman and his coloured subject, as a way of maintaining the social distance between them" (Mazrui, 1988: 98) [40].

After the Afrikaners became dominant through minority rule in South Africa in 1948, they used language policy as an important component in the total range of policies designed to halt the "Westernization" of the African population. As Mazrui (1988: 90) [40] noted: "Language policy was part of this deceleration of the westernizing process. Afrikaners preferred 'Bantu Education' as a device of keeping Africa 'African' and while power supreme!" (Mazrui, 1988: 90). A central feature of Bantu Education—the education policy of the Afrikaner-dominated Nationalist Government—was a policy called "mother-tongue education," which required that education for Africans be presented in Afrikaans up to and including tertiary level (Bunting, 1969: 273) [41]. This policy caused much distress, and an official commission in 1963 received reports from an overwhelming majority of witnesses that "the standard of English had declined considerably and was still deteriorating" (Bunting, 1969: 273) [40]. Education policy attempted to steer Africans towards Afrikaans, in what appeared to increasingly be a choice between Afrikaans and English, where Afrikaans was seen as a symbol of white oppression and a language of racial claustrophobia, whereas English was seen as a language of Pan-African communication (Mazrui, 1988: 90) [40].

The issuing of an order for black school pupils to be taught in Afrikaans, rather than English, triggered the explosive 1976 Soweto riots, in which 600 people died. In addition, as the "homelands" created under the apartheid policy accepted "self-government," they gradually selected English and an indigenous language as their official languages (Giliomee, 1997: 123) [39]. As the future for Afrikaans began to appear insecure, a new ally was found among the mixed-race people—a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking group almost as numerous as the Afrikaners themselves. In this manner, after 36 years of excluding mixed-race people from the Afrikaner collectivity, the ruling National Party changed its definitional criteria of an Afrikaner to include anyone who spoke Afrikaans (Schiff, 1996: 219) [42].

Thus, it is possible to interpret South African language policy under minority rule as an attempt to control national identity by division into a multiplicity of separate national identities, with the overall aim of securing and enhancing the future of one group at the expense of the others. For black people, through mother-tongue education and not offering education in English, this policy sought to create a national identity of insecurity, depression, dampened sense of realism, exclusion, and habituation to violence. For South Africans of British background, this policy aimed to create feelings of insecurity, depression, and a hint of the likelihood of violence, yet offered the possibility of inclusion in the Afrikaner identity as a viable strategy. Among Afrikaners, the policy sought to create a mental state of a secure future and mood of elation through the delusion of a God-given destiny, based on an

unrealistic belief in the sustainable viability of a policy of excluding Africans, underlain with a habituation to a political subtext of the ever-present threat of violence.

The explanation of how South Africa changed from minority to majority rule has been the subject of much analysis (Giliomee, 1997) [39], yet it can be argued that language policy has played a substantial role by offering Afrikaners and their language of Afrikaans a secure place in the "rainbow nation."

2) South African Language Policy after Majority Rule: The Constitution of the new South Africa was adopted in 1996, and Section 6 of Chapter 1 ("Founding Provisions") established the principles of policy regarding language. It recognized 11 official languages and stated that practical and positive measures must be taken to elevate the status and advance the use of the indigenous languages, while "all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and be treated equitably" (South Africa, 1997: 1) [43]. The estimated numbers of speakers of each language as a home language are as follows: Afrikaans: 6.8 million; English: 4.8 million; IsiNdebele: 1 million; IsiXhosa: 8.1 million; IsiZulu: 11.5 million; Sepedi: 4.6 million; Sesotho: 3.8 million; Setswana: 4 million; SiSwati: 1.2 million; Tshivenda: 1.2 million; and Xitsonga: 2.2 million (Statistics South Africa, Census, 2011) [44].

Although all official languages are constitutionally equal, there are great differences in demography, written literature, and international use, which make it difficult to assess the effect of this new language policy. However, two interesting questions arise: (i) Why did the Afrikaner-dominated minority government yield without a struggle to majority rule—or "surrender without defeat," as stated by Giliomee (1997) [39]—bearing in mind the likely effect on their language? (ii) Why did the African National Congress (ANC)–led majority government adopt such a generous policy towards Afrikaans under the circumstances? The answers to these questions are related and concern the management of national identities. Much has been written describing the national identity of Afrikaners as comprising a collective fear of loss of identity through loss of language. As Giliomee (1997: 123) [39] described:

> *there was every prospect that a black government would elevate English to the status of being the sole official language, spelling the end of Afrikaans and the Afrikaner culture—and with it the demise of the Afrikaner people.*

The choice of newly-independent Namibia to make English its sole official language—though with recognition of educational rights in other languages was not unnoticed by Afrikaners. In fact, the South West Africa People's Organization had long made it clear that Afrikaans—the lingua franca of Namibia—would be replaced by English (Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Africa, 1986: 78) [45].

The ANC-led government could well have followed a policy of language retribution towards Afrikaans, destroying the language through abolishing its status. However, it instead chose to follow a path of status enhancement for the nine indigenous languages, while offering Afrikaans a continued place as an official language in the new South Africa. In other words, the choice for Afrikaners was between a policy of limited status reduction or a freefall into ultimate oblivion.

Thus, the post-apartheid position offered to Afrikaners was one of some security, limited depression, an end to delusion, some inclusion, and a reduced prospect of violence—with language policy making a significant contribution to this. In other words, this was an offer far better than might have been expected. The promotion of *Ubuntu*—a traditional African communal practice of common humanity (Kamwangamalu, 1999) [46], as embodied in the proposed and later realized Truth and Reconciliation Commission—provided an additional mechanism for inclusion in the new national identity.

The future role of language policy in the development of South African national identity will be critical. The fears aroused by the ANC-led government's refusal to grant approval to either exclusive mother-tongue education or single-language schools and universities (Giliomee, 1997: 137) [39] have created one area of tension. Another cause of major concern is the effect of the "all-mighty English language" on the survival of all other languages, which might result in skepticism about the "rainbow nation" (Beukes, 2004) [47]. In light of the above discussion, it appears that the maintenance and development of the South African state depends on the emergence of a new sense of national identity, to which language policy can continue making a large contribution by avoiding linguistic exclusion.

V.   CONCLUSION: LANGUAGE POLICY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

This article has sought to establish that the many attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and practices that together comprise national identity are strongly influenced by language policy. Individuals and groups—particularly those in positions of power—seek to create and manage national identity through language policy by using language to: (i) define the nation, (ii) identify the nation, and (iii) manage feelings—particularly fears, doubts, and uncertainties, but also security about the future.

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