

LANGUAGE AND STATECRAFT

AN OLD TOOL FOR NEW GOALS?

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Abstract

This paper investigates how language as a tool of statecraft has changed over time and whether it remains relevant and legitimate in the current globalised context. Viewing the issue from an interdisciplinary perspective, it considers the role language policies have played at different stages in history, from enabling European nation-states to forcibly to carve out a new identity around a unified language, to fulfilling the imperialist mission of ‘educating’ colonised populations in an attempt to generate lasting economic and cultural benefits for colonial powers. Language policies survived the decolonization process and took new soft power forms in an attempt to address current day challenges. The authors argue, based on the analysis of expert interviews and data sources (both primary and secondary), that while the discourse and means of implementing language policies have changed under new conditions – particularly the rejection of force in language promotion, the domination of English, the protection of minority dialects, and the technological changes linked to globalization – the belief in the power of language to shape allegiances remains, on the political level, unchanged.

Keywords:

statecraft; language policies; minority dialects; soft power; globalization.

“Our hard power is dwarfed by a phenomenon that the pessimists never predicted when we unbundled the British Empire, and that is soft power – the vast and subtle and pervasive extension of British influence around the world that goes with having the language that was invented and perfected in this country, and now has more speakers than any other language on earth”¹.

This statement by Boris Johnson succinctly yet compellingly captures popular perceptions of the role of language in yielding and projecting a country’s power. Indeed, many countries have rolled out and maintain networks of cultural and language institutes aimed at improving their image abroad. Even the UK, with the dominant language of the international system, still feels the need to maintain its support for

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¹ Johnson B. Conservative Home. Britain the soft-power superpower of global liberalism. 2016. URL: <https://www.conservativehome.com/parliament/2016/10/britain-the-soft-power-superpower-of-global-liberalism-boris-johnsons-conservative-conference-speech-full-text.html> (accessed: 21.07.2021).

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the work of the British Council. Recommendations have also been made that the United States improve its perception abroad and its brand overseas by implementing a similar initiative [Brett & Schaefer 2019].

Statecraft has been defined in several ways. It refers to the ways a government attempts to exert influence over another state [Jordan, Stulberg and Troitskiy 2021a; 2021b], but also to amplify its own capacity to project power and implement foreign policies optimally. Although the term ‘statecraft’ is used more frequently in Realist International Relations theories than by Liberal or Constructivist scholars, it reflects a generic process of conducting any state’s foreign affairs; therefore it applies, to a varying degree, to all IR schools of thought. In the process of ‘doing statecraft’, the government can use not only hard power instruments (coercive, unidirectional vectors of power projection, leaving the other state no alternative or choice in submitting to the course dictated) but also soft power instruments (instilling the desire to follow the proposed policies). Language policies are typically perceived to be part of the latter.

Historically, language policies were at the heart of the creation of modern European nation-states, with a unified language being considered by many 18th and 19th century governments to be essential to building national communities capable of surviving and overcoming adversity from within and without. When these European states embarked on the colonial enterprise, some accorded language policies an important place in their relationship with conquered territories by diffusing their language, while others purposely chose not to share their language with their new subjects for fear it may unduly empower them. These divergent choices ultimately determined how widespread the colonial languages later came to be in independent nations; they continue to influence the language policies of European states to this day.

While coercion has been largely abandoned in language promotion and is frowned

upon in the international arena, states still funnel significant resources into teaching their language abroad through the creation of cultural and language institutes. In this paper, we explore how language as a tool of statecraft has changed over time and consider whether it remains relevant and legitimate in the current globalised context. Through a series of cases, the authors consider whether language can still be regarded as an effective instrument of statecraft, providing a historical, cultural, and political analytical overview of language policies. The historical cases of France, Spain, Britain, Cambodia, and the Philippines are explored through the study of primary sources, including laws, decrees, and official statements, as well as secondary documents, among which are specialised academic literature. Original expert interviews were used to collect data on the contemporary language policies of France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and China². The interview findings were verified and triangulated with primary and secondary sources of data emanating from official websites and press articles. The goal of this paper is not to present a comprehensive overview of language policies over time, but to draw upon specific examples, both historical and contemporary, to highlight the changes in how language is used in statecraft. While the existing academic literature puts a focus on exhaustive, usually historical, single case analysis, this study bridges the gap between past and present by offering highlights from a larger number of cases to analyse continuity and discontinuity in language policies.

1

Language has been widely recognized as a core aspect of nation building [Wright 2000; Connor 1994]. Most language policies rest upon the nation-state ideology, according to which a nation must be as homogeneous as possible, politically, culturally, and linguistically [Durand 1996]. A textbook example of a country with a centralized language policy is

² Information on the interviewees is summarized in Appendix 1. The numbers of expert interviews in the following references correspond to the numbers in the appendix.

France. Throughout history it was acceptable for a state policy to ban and uproot local dialects [Citron 1992] and France has a long history (since Louis XIV) of forbidding dialects (Picard, Occitan and Franco-Provençal, among others). The French Academy has been regulating the use of French since 1634, acting on the belief that languages should be uniform and not vary [Durand 1996]. The codification and desire of the intellectual elite to consolidate the exclusive use of French in the entire country does not imply that linguistic unification had been successfully accomplished, however. The monarchy tolerated the use of local languages and, according to a survey by the politician l'Abbé Grégoire in 1790, out of a total population of 26 million, 46% either could not speak or could not understand French whilst an overwhelming majority could not speak it correctly [Walter 1994]. After 1789, the new French Republic began to assert the need for greater linguistic and social unity more aggressively; local languages were associated with being a traitor to the new regime [Durand 1996].

Jules Ferry consolidated the French language as the sole language of the nation when he made school free and compulsory for all in 1882, but he did so at the cost of the dialects, which were labelled *patois* (literally meaning 'rough, clumsy, or uncultivated speech') [Gardy 1990]. Other factors which rooted the use of French in daily life were military conscription and the creation of a large professional civil service, or centralized state bureaucracy. The use of *patois* was severely sanctioned in schools where, starting from 1860, children speaking regional languages instead of French would have to carry a 'token of shame', an object they would pass on to the next person heard speaking *patois*, and the child carrying it at the end of the day would be subjected to public punishment and humiliation [Walter 1994; Durand 1996]. To this day, France persists in its attempts to unify the language, as illustrated by the Toubon Law of 1993, which reaffirms that French is the language of the republic and requires its use in a myriad of situations ranging from advertising to job contracts and publishing [Sauliere 2014].

The idea that languages differ *per se* from idioms results from an ideology which spread during the 19th century and itself contributed to the emergence of nation-states [Heller 2002]. In 1808 Friedrich made a distinction between "organic" and "mechanical" languages: the first type (among which are Sanskrit, Persian, and European languages) are considered superior to the second (Chinese, Basque, Arabic) because it has words with roots and additional flexions making them highly adaptable to describe new concepts and nuances in changing semantics [Errington 2007]. This academic "analysis" of language evolution, though arbitrary, shows that language became associated with new cultural and historical meaning during the 19th century [Errington 2007] and that some languages were considered better instruments to serve a nation in the long term than others. State power has, over time, become less a question of the state coercing the population into adopting a united ideology and more about the state's ability to gain its citizen's loyalty [Gramsci 1971]. In spite of changes in perceptions, having a common language is still regarded as key factor in ensuring a state's unity and survival.

Language became an important political consideration during the process of colonization as European nations were confronted with different cultures and dialects they had to make sense of. The debate concerning the humanity of the people discovered in the New World centered, *inter alia*, on cultural and linguistic practices. Christopher Columbus's notes on his voyages betray a hesitation in actually conferring on the communications he witnessed the status of a language [Todorov 1984]. In 1492, Anton de Nebrija confided to Queen Isabel that "language was always the companion of empire. . . . language and empire began, increased, and flourished together" [Errington 2007]. Language played an important, albeit dual, role from the very onset of the process of colonization, which by and large amounted to not recognizing the local dialects and imposing the colonial language. The Requerimiento of 1513, a declaration by the Spanish monarchy that it was entitled to conquer the New World and enslave or slay its in-

habitants, offers an interesting illustration of the role of language. Indeed, before any conquest, the victims were read this request in Spanish, suggesting that the Native Americans' inability to understand the request to submit was justification for all the actions that ensued. As noted by Errington [2007: 26] the Requerimiento was a "kind of early prototype for linguistic asymmetries of colonial power: the nonintelligibility of speech provided sufficient grounds for subjugating them because it was evidence not of their difference, but of their deficiency." While some early friars attempted to bring Catholicism to the New World without changing the language practices of the Native Americans, considering them as unsullied by the Spanish and their vices, most missionaries abided by recommendations of the Church that translating prayers into dialects could distort the word of God and lead to the infiltration of paganism in Christian religious practices [Burkhart 1989].

On the other hand, language was also viewed as one of the main tools for gaining control over Native Americans and shifting their political loyalties. As colonialism morphed into imperialism, diverging language strategies were adopted by different metropolises. Whereas in the British and French empires, education was widely organized in the colonizer's language, the Germans were reluctant to share their language with their colonial territories [Mazrui 1975]. Teaching the language of the empire to colonies, they reckoned, could in the long run contribute not only to closing the gap between the two but also act as an enabler for the elite of the colonies, who, after receiving a French or British education, began to aspire to equal opportunities. As noted by Errington: "*The effects of work by colonial linguists [...] outran their intent, which neither they nor other imperial officials could fully control or recognize. Colonial subjects pirated "their" languages for purposes of their own, showing how teaching a language is a bit like providing information or money: once given, the giver loses control of the ways they are used*". [2007: 25]

The language policies of the French and British empires were aimed at consolidating

their influence over the colonies by 'shaping the minds' of native populations via education, as well as creating an administrative elite fluent in the metropole's language and capable of administering the territories on its behalf. Language diffusion was also seen as a factor of power and a facilitator of trade. This strategy of integrating the colonies into a tight-knit empire did not, however, prevent all the colonized territories from achieving independence; it may even have led to more traumatic post-colonial outcomes than other colonial approaches.

Globalization is commonly defined as a qualitative increase in transactions and economic interdependency around the world, followed, accompanied, or sometimes preceded by a global consciousness of the emergence of a world society of humankind [Meyer 2007]. While the globalization discourse initially focused on the role of transnational actors and the erosion of differences around the world in linguistic as well as cultural terms [Rosenau 1984], it later concentrated on the backlash from states and communities which seek to preserve their identities. Globalization is frequently viewed as the vector of hegemonic normative influence exercised by powerful countries [Bourdieu 2001], and has led to cultural resistance that has taken different forms. In a context where national cultural and language specificities are perceived as threatened, countertrends to globalization have rapidly developed.

States concerned about foreign cultural and linguistic influence linked to globalization may adopt "localization" strategies, which mainly rely on schooling and television broadcasting to protect their culture and language [Chiang & Zhou 2018; Schriewer 2003; Lingard 2000]. The idea that globalization carries within itself different counteracting waves of cultural and linguistic conquest and, as a result, fosters diversity rather than unity is also common in the literature. Russian political scientist Bogaturov described the co-existence of two normative substructures, or enclaves: modernity promotes rational forms of social organization, based on written prescriptions as well as the observance of formal rules and legally implemented norms;

the second enclave – *traditionalism* – is concerned with reproducing traditions and time-honored practices [Bogaturov 2010]. Most countries are systemic in the sense that one of the two described substructures dominates; however, in a number of countries, which due to the specificities in their social institutional development have become conglomerates, the two enclaves cohabitate in the mindset of their populace, on a roughly equal footing, and even the traditional enclave can be modernized to emulate contemporary social practices in form, but not in substance. The social dynamic in conglomerates such as Russia, China, or Italy is problematic as the state has to manage (and pay heed to) two or more value systems simultaneously. Globalization is increasing heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, as countries with a modern substructure (because of incoming migration) can face the challenge of managing this growing traditional value system, which is embodied in ever-larger diasporas and migrant communities. While migration governance is a powerful short-term instrument of statecraft [Pagani 2021], highly restrictive policies are not viable in the long term, as migrant communities grow to have two value systems and may end up culturally changing their host countries.

While globalization has been associated with the increasing dominance of global (super) languages over local ones, some scholars have taken note of the opportunities that have opened up for the local in a globalized world. “Glocalisation” [Robertson 1994] may offer local languages and cultures more development opportunities than the national context ever did. While local languages were openly repressed and forbidden in many nation-states, multiculturalism as a mature global norm now ensures that dialects are increasingly protected by international rules and states that infringe upon them face criticism. Indeed, at the United Nations, the protection of minority languages is considered a human rights obligation according to the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic,

Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 1992. Minority languages are no longer restricted by a national geographical context and at the mercy of national state bureaucracies promoting national unity agendas [Craith 2007]. Multiculturalism is interpreted not only as a guarantee of the survival of individual ethnic groups, but also as the need for official recognition of their rights, up to the possibility of self-determination. Meanwhile, the resurgence of local languages that has accompanied globalization has changed the political landscape over the world, creating more territorial contestation.

2

We have seen that languages are considered a key aspect of nation-building, and language policies can help redefine political communities. We will further explore to what extent language can be perceived as an effective means of *statecraft*, i.e. *the purposeful application of a variety of national resources to attain the state objectives*. More specifically, this part deals with the advantages provided to a country by having the dominant language internationally.

At the start of the 21st century, English admittedly enjoys the foremost position in the world [Crystal 2003]. While it has been overtaken by Chinese in terms of the number of primary speakers, English still holds the first position globally when counting primary and secondary speakers together (1,268 million for English vs. 1,120 for Mandarin)³. The status of English is linked to it being by far the preferred language of international communication in the vast majority of contexts, from the internet to international business, research, and diplomacy. Linguistic inequality in academia, for instance, has been the object of numerous studies, including the “free ride” native speakers of English have when seeking to have their work published [van Parijs 2007]. Most top scholarly journals require research articles be submitted in English, creating an in-built discrimination against non-natives. However, mastering English as a foreign lan-

³ Infoplease. Most Widely Spoken Languages in the World. URL: <https://www.infoplease.com/world/social-statistics/most-widely-spoken-languages-world> (accessed: 21.07.2021).

guage, even to a high level of proficiency, may not reset the balance⁴. Indeed, language is not an objective vector for communication in which all are equal. Second language learning rarely allows non-native speakers to attain the level of fluency of native speakers, putting them at a natural disadvantage compared to native speakers, especially when it comes to being convincing in public debate or when teaching [Ramirez & Kulh 2017]. A limited vocabulary range or being oblivious of subtle usage nuances or unregistered connotations may lead to a reductive representation of a person's ideas, as well as to articles (or arguments) being rejected by research journals [Flowerdew 2019].

Quite obviously, having the dominant language provides a number of advantages not only to its speakers but also to the state. Language is the basic currency of international communication, so if other countries use your language, to continue the metaphor, then it boosts your trade and others will need to borrow from you to be able to interact. If societies abroad can speak the language of a country then it offers a ready vector to promote the country's worldview, culture, and to get foreign populations to be somewhat more accepting of its foreign policy. Popular support abroad facilitates the diffusion of a state's norms, thus paving the way for effective statecraft.

English has a special status or is the official language in 75 countries across the globe [Majhanovich 2013]. English is the dominant language for international treaties. While the UN charter exists in several languages, time has shown that the English version is informally considered to be the most accurate. Treaties are most often first drafted in English, after which, in the UN, Secretariats' translators are in fact not permitted to consult with embassies in the process of translation, meaning that the translators may need to invent new

terms or make approximations to convey new concepts⁵.

English is the lingua franca used within regional organizations. The EU, for example, while recognizing the official languages of its members, still has two thirds of its official documents drafted only in English [Majhanovich 2013]. In spite of a campaign for "European linguistic diversity" led by the French Minister for European Affairs after Brexit⁶, English is most likely to remain the preeminent language for interaction within the organization.

Likewise, when a regional organization chooses English as their official language, it gives Anglo-Saxon countries more power of conceptual and normative influence over a given organization. Thus, English is the principal language of the African Union, made up of 55 states, or of ASEAN, representing 10 states. In their agreements, these organizations use the linguistic array available in the English language, along with the meanings originally attached to these words and concepts. The term "democracy" may have different meanings in different languages, but the western understanding takes precedence as that is where it took shape. The Russian language still has no terms for "empowerment", "privacy", or "statecraft", reflecting how language choice shapes conceptual understandings⁷.

English is used not only as an official communication medium in a majority of international and regional organizations, but also during informal international negotiations. Indeed, discussions on the sidelines between politicians and policymakers normally take place in English, and politicians stand to lose informal credibility in the group of equals if they are unable to speak the common (read: dominant) language⁸.

American sociolinguist Fishman systematically demonstrates how the obligation to study

⁴ Expert interview 3.

⁵ Expert interview 4.

⁶ Bensaid A. French call to replace English with Latin as Europe's official language. TRT Wprld. 2021. 15 March. URL: <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/french-call-to-replace-english-with-latin-as-europe-s-official-language-44961> (accessed: 21.07.2021).

⁷ Expert interview 8.

⁸ Expert interview 6.

English at almost all levels of education in most countries provides strategic advantages to Anglo-Saxon countries [Fishman 2006]. English fluency is required in most universities around the world, regardless of the subjects a student majors in. The new model of World Class universities (promoted by the West and requiring universities to compete with each other for students and faculty, to excel in research, to focus on stakeholders, and to implement a commercial business model) makes universities around the world compete with English-speaking US and UK universities in line with their rules, acknowledging their headstart from the get-go [Crowley-Vigneau et al. 2020]. Anglo-Saxon universities top international quality rankings in all categories, reflecting the advantages they reap from having designed the model and diffusing English as the dominant language. Indeed, dominating the world education system itself enables Anglo-Saxon countries to attract talented people and lead technologically. Having the dominant language also yields economic advantages related to providing an attractive business environment and to linguistic tourism.

The widespread practice among states of opening and financing language institutes abroad is just one small illustration of the fact that states recognize the power of language in “befriending” civil societies abroad.

3

One telling example of *effective language statecraft* is the case of the USA and the use of English in the Philippines. The country was colonized successively by Spain (1565–1898) and the United States (1898–1946), with these two countries having been the most significant foreign influences in the Philippines. Spanish became the dominant language for many centuries, overcoming local dialects. From the 17th to the beginning of the 20th century, Spanish was the language of state administration, the army, literature, and recorded acts of civil status, as well as the language of schooling [Sibayan 2000]. Even the instigators of the failed liberation revolution of 1896–1898, Filipinos like Jose Rizal, Marcelo del Pilar, penned their pamphlets, articles, nov-

els, and plays in Spanish, revealing to what extent the language was anchored in the country [Anderson 1983]. Spanish was the only language of communication that bound together all the different islands comprising the country’s dispersed territory. In 1900, 60% of the population of the Philippines spoke fluent Spanish as a first or second language and some of the local dialects had up to 40% of words borrowed from Spanish [Grinina & Romanova 2019].

The Spanish-American war of 1898 led to the defeat of Spain that year and their departure from the Philippines. American influence started to expand from that point onwards. The USA had come up with a meticulous and, to an extent, remarkably smart language policy in the Philippines: they encouraged the national leaders to create their own national language based on a number of traditional dialects, particularly the Tagas Usus dialect of the inhabitants of Manila, with this new language being designed to replace Spanish as an official language [Grinina & Romanova 2019]. In parallel, English came to be introduced as a de-facto medium of communication into different aspects of social life. Firstly, this was done in secondary school classrooms by American soldiers who started to teach in Corregidor in 1898 [Martin 2014]. In the early 1990s, the US started sending groups of teachers, the Thomasites, to the Philippines, to help establish a school system in English [Tarr 2005]. The influence of English grew progressively with radio and television broadcasts in English. In 1935, English became the official language together with Spanish, and in 1973, Spanish lost its official status and stopped being mandatory in schools [Grinina & Romanova 2019].

But how was the dominance of the Spanish language overthrown? Some may associate it with the defeat of Spain in the war of 1898. However, Spain lost control of other territories to the USA, such as Cuba, which did not give up on the Spanish language [Grinina & Romanova 2019]. In the 20th century, Spanish was linked with the colonial regime and the political past, while English was associated with democratic politics, modern economies,

and advanced cultural trends [Craith 2007]⁹. English also offered women their first chance at education with the creation of mixed schools taught in English as opposed to more discriminatory Spanish schools, opening the path for equal opportunities.

Effective statecraft in this case rested upon a sound strategy consisting of firstly undermining the existing language, then replacing it initially with a dialect which was highly likely to be widely approved of, and in parallel pushing for the development of the new state's language by sending teachers and promoting popular globalized values. English became a superstructure that enhanced the sense of local identity in the Philippines by encouraging the use of the local languages. At the same time, English was considered necessary, as the local languages did not provide access to the global knowledge infrastructure [Smolicz & Nical, 1997]. This policy was supported by the USA's positive image as a liberator during the two world wars.

The American influence in the Philippines served the USA well during the Cold War and still provides it with a strategic advantage for its military containment of China. While the US withdrew from the Clark Air base in 1991 and the naval station Subic Bay in 1992 after volcanic eruptions and disagreements, starting from 2012 the US military restarted building up their presence there, with a Visiting Forces Agreement signed in 1999 allowing large-scale military exercises [Woodley 2016]. Indeed, the country has the status of "major non-NATO ally" of the US and offers a strategic position to the US in its policy shift towards the Pacific. 80% of inhabitants of the Philippines in 2019 viewed the USA positively, which makes them the third most pro-American country in the world after Israel and the US itself¹⁰. The recent political tensions between the Philippines and the US have not yet changed their ally status.

An example of *ineffective language statecraft* is the case of Cambodia, which switched from

French, the former colonial language, to English. One would have expected the French influence to ensure that it remained the second language, with *Khmer* (also known as Cambodian) gaining in influence after the country became fully independent from France in 1953. However, in spite of the country remaining formally associated with France as part of the Francophonie nations and French being taught in some tertiary programs in universities, English has become much more impactful [Majhanovich 2013].

The French influence on Cambodia can be traced as far back as to 1863, with the French setting up schools for local children to attend shortly after. Ninety years later, only a small percentage of Cambodian students attended French schools: this failure to exert a linguistic and educational influence on the colony has been put down both to poor planning and to Cambodian resistance [Clayton 1995]. The country was less of a priority for the French (compared to Vietnam, which was considered to be of more strategic importance); some scholars have pointed out that the French may have purposely curtailed their investments in the linguistic development of Cambodia, given it was primarily used as a buffer zone for Vietnam to push back English interests in Thailand [Osborne 1969]. Analysis of Cambodian resistance typically underscores the incompatibility of French education with existing traditions in the country, its perception as illegitimate, and the emergence of linguistic resistance [Clayton 1995]. The failure to develop the influence of the French language during the colonial period and to root it in society appears as the primordial reason why Cambodia managed to set it rapidly aside. Nonetheless, French continued to be the main language of administration during the colonial period and gained a foothold in Cambodia, with the civil servants of the country being required to speak French fluently and the elite considering it as conferring them an economic advantage [Majhanovich 2013].

⁹ Expert Interview 10.

¹⁰ Pew Research Center. Global Indicators Database. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/database/indicator/1/survey/17/> (accessed: 21.07.2021).

At the same time, English, while it was much less common, came to displace French as the international language due to a number of factors. Cambodian students have started to privilege English in tertiary education and over half of the population is capable of speaking it fluently, maybe due to it becoming a compulsory school subject in 2014 [Kirkpatrick 2012]. The push for English came both from inside and from outside. The United States began its involvement in Cambodia in the late 1950s, providing economic aid and military assistance, and supported the democratic transition of the country after the Paris Peace Accords of 1991. Although it was originally bilingual (French and English), English eventually became the preferred language of the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia, which came to employ more than 60 thousand Cambodians who were required to speak English [Clayton 2007]. A new official need for English appeared in 1999 when Cambodia became a member of ASEAN, which has English as its working language [Majhanovich 2013].

The case of Cambodia shows how, with relatively little input from the United States, English came to replace French as the main international language of the country. Ninety years of foreign influence were replaced by the pragmatic need to adopt the dominant language of the international system: English. Rocky relations with Anglo-Saxon countries and closer relations with China have not dissuaded Cambodia from the necessity to speak English.

4

While language policies based on constraint have outlived their usefulness and would in the current context be highly likely to backfire, utilising soft power (or power of attraction) through language remains an important object of state policy, but, alas, not of systematic academic inquiry.

When noting during a 2010 TED talk that “It’s not whose army wins; it’s also whose story wins”, Joseph Nye underlined the significance of being the author of the dominant narrative globally [Nye 2010]. A country’s

capacity to spread its worldview and its norms across the globe is highly dependent on its attractiveness and its ability to communicate and be understood. States’ public diplomacy efforts are often tied with language diffusion, as illustrated by the network of language and cultural centers opened by different countries all over the world. While the German Goethe Institute, the French Alliance Française, Spain’s Cervantes Institute, the British Council, the Chinese Confucius Institute, and others are currently comparable in their missions, they can be clearly divided in two categories based on historical factors. On the one hand, the Alliance Française and the British Council (formally called British Committee for Relations with Other Countries) were created respectively in 1883 and 1924 and formed part of the project of colonial rule through language and cultural expansion; on the other, the foundation of the German Goethe Institute (1951) and the Chinese Confucius Institute (2004) resulted from a perceived need to improve their countries’ images due to recent reputational damage. All these organizations aim to spread a country’s culture and language, thus creating a national brand capable of spreading a national identity [Dinnie 2015]. However, they present structural and ideological differences that affect their mission.

‘L’Alliance Française pour la propagation de la langue nationale dans les colonies et l’étranger’ (“The French alliance for the propagation of the national language in the colonies and abroad”) was established in 1883 as part of the French imperial mission, more specifically to support France’s colonial ambitions in Tunisia and in countries around the Mediterranean Sea where it had a strong presence [Horne 2017]. During the first few decades of its existence, the organization focused on disseminating propaganda aimed at levying funds to finance the creation of schools in the French colonies. Subsequently, it shifted its focus to propagating the French language and culture in Europe, America, and Latin America, the last of which became its absolute priority focus after the Second World War [Cortier 1998]. The French Alliance moved

progressively from a “civilizing mission” to a soft power mission, and in spite of brutal decolonization wars (particularly the Algerian war which lasted from 1954 to 1962) and its association with the colonial mission, the organization kept its original name or more specifically a shortened version of it. France’s “focus on language as a tool of empire was unprecedented among the colonial powers” [Horne 2017: 95].

In 2019, l’Alliance Française counted 832 alliances in 131 countries teaching 490 thousand students. It pursues three main goals: (1) to offer French classes for all, both in France and abroad; (2) to raise awareness of French and Francophone culture; and (3) to promote cultural diversity. The organization currently finances most of its activities from the courses it teaches, whilst the government provides only 5% of its budget¹¹. The network of the French Alliance is constituted of independently run franchises, but the brand “Alliance Française” belongs to the Alliance Française foundation which allows local organizations to use it only after careful examination of the statutes and stated objectives. The foundation receives no income from the use of the brand. The French government separately runs a network of 150 cultural institutes which have a similar mission but are directly controlled by the French government. This model is financially advantageous for the French government and is based on the historical presence of French in a large number of countries. French cultural diplomacy rests strongly upon its 19th century imperial expansion [Horne 2017].

The ‘British Committee for Relations with Other Countries’ was founded in 1934 to teach English and promote British culture abroad. Its name was changed to ‘British Council’ two years later¹². The Council inaugurated its first offices in Romania, Egypt, Portugal, and

Poland in 1938 to encourage cultural, scientific, and educational cooperation with the United Kingdom and combat the rise of fascism. While its first endeavors were not linked to its imperial past, the creation of the Commonwealth after 1949 and political motives to promote Britain in former colonies led the Council to progressively set up offices in the majority of countries of the Commonwealth. By contrast to the French model, *in this British case the creation of the Council was not linked to the imperialist mission of educating the population of the colonies but to a need to ensure the transition from the colonialist model to a soft power relationship with Commonwealth countries*¹³. Some offices were opened in countries under British rule, such as Cyprus in 1935 before the start of the Greek Cypriot independence struggle. However, this case resembles more a British public diplomacy effort in trying to convince a population of the importance of its ties with Britain than a colonial educational mission [Hadjiathanasiou 2018].

The British Council currently operates in over 100 countries worldwide and has 6,800 members of staff. It stresses values such as equal educational opportunities and building international trust, all the while running language and scholarship programs including the GREAT scholarships, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship, the Charles Wallace India Trust, and Hornby scholarships¹⁴. The Council is mostly funded through teaching and examinations, tendered contracts, and partnerships, but also receives around 15% of its income from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office¹⁵. The governmental initiative of the 1990s, focused on putting a new emphasis on ties with the Commonwealth through the work of the British Council, have been undermined in recent years by cost-cutting initiatives, leading to the controversial closure of Council

¹¹ Expert Interview 5.

¹² Expert Interview 9.

¹³ Expert Interview 1.

¹⁴ British Council. What we do. URL: <https://www.britishcouncil.in/about/what> (accessed: 21.07.2021).

¹⁵ British Council. Finance. URL: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/how-we-work/finance> (accessed: 21.07.2021).

offices in regions considered to be of little strategic importance¹⁶.

Launched in 1951, the Goethe Institute was designed as a hybrid organization, primarily funded by the country's foreign ministry. Named after the famous German author and intellectual Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the institute was designed to advance the German language across the globe, overcome prejudices regarding German culture, provide information about German society and politics, and promote mutual understanding with other countries through education exchanges [Lanshina 2015]. The Goethe Institute replaced the Deutsche Academy, which had discredited itself by spreading Nazi propaganda [Brett-Schaefer, 2019]. The new organization was set the tough task of improving Germany's image abroad, which was negatively affected by the country's role in the two world wars, the Nazi ideology, and difficulties dealing with the past. In 2021, there are 157 Goethe Institutes operational in 97 countries. The network comprises Goethe Centres, cultural societies, reading rooms, and exam and language learning centres. As Germany has grown into the third economy in the world¹⁷, interest in learning German and in cooperating with Germany in all fields has increased. The work of the Goethe Institutes has been positively assessed by experts for its contribution to cultivating a productive dialogue with countries near and far and improving the country's attractiveness [Jaschke & Keita 2021; Brett-Schaefer 2019; Lanshina 2015].

Launched in 2004, the Confucius Institutes project was named after the Chinese ancient philosopher Confucius and inspired by the Goethe institutes [Hartig 2016]. The institutes were put under the responsibility of the Office of Chinese Language Council International. The goal was to enhance China's soft power while teaching Chinese to foreigners as part of a larger initiative to improve China's image abroad. While the Goethe institutes are often

standalone entities, the Confucius Institutes are based in universities where most of the demand for Chinese language training exists¹⁸. The terms of the agreement are adapted to the conditions and financial resources of the countries where the institutes have been opened: while in developed countries, universities provide around half of the funding, in third-world countries all costs are taken care of by China [Chew 2007]. Although the funding and language teaching are widely welcome in universities across the world, some controversies have emerged relating to the terms of the cooperation and ideological requests of China concerning sensitive political issues [Brett-Schaefer 2019]. The institutes have a productive financial model where the recipient country gets financially involved, which encourages bilateral cooperation and the effective use of language as a medium of soft power [Gil 2017]. However, negotiations with and attempts to control political choices made by partner universities have led to conflict situations, with the potential to deteriorate China's image.

Whereas language and cultural institutes all aim at increasing their country's soft power, their structure and specific goals may vary based on the reasons behind their creation. While 19th and first half of the 20th century institutes are more likely to directly refer to a country (Alliance Francaise, British Council), more recent organizations are discreetly named after illustrious and internationally recognized authors or philosophers (Goethe Institute, Confucius Institute). Institutes that were established long ago have the power to retain a large influence, in spite of changing political lines, as illustrated by the case of the French Alliance. France's prioritization of the French language since the French Revolution continues to inform and guide its public diplomacy efforts to this day. The British Council benefits from the asset of already having the dominant international language and can focus on speci-

¹⁶ Expert Interview 2.

¹⁷ Investopedia. The Top 25 Economies in the World. Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/insights/worlds-top-economies/> (accessed: 21.07.2021).

¹⁸ Expert Interview 7.

fically promoting the British culture to attract students and create new economic opportunities. It also appears that rehabilitating a country's damaged image may be easier if the controversial behaviour is in the past (Germany) rather than ongoing (China).

5

For centuries, language policies have been considered to be an effective tool of successful statecraft: first through bringing together European nation-states via the eradication of local dialects and the imposition of a national unified and codified language in an attempt to carve out a new state sustaining identity, then through fulfilling an imperialist mission of 'educating' colonised populations with the goal of forcibly creating lasting economic and cultural ties between colonies and the imperial powers. In the same vein, language planning was part of some countries' strategies to foster new allegiances after the end of colonial rule and remains a noticeable part of the foreign policy arsenal of states to date. While the discourse and means of implementing language policies have changed under new conditions – particularly the rejection of coercive measures in language promotion, the de-facto domination of English as the new *lingua franca* of politics, business, and science, and the legal protection of minority dialects – the belief in the power of language to shape allegiances remains unchanged on the political level. Indeed, irrespective of scepticism amongst language planning experts, long-term and coherent language policies can yield promising results, as in the case of the Philippines conferring a durable strategic advantage to the USA, or in the case of the Goethe Institute that contributed to improving Germany's image around the world. However, the efficiency of language policies and their most productive forms remain understudied to this day. Furthermore, the compatibility of the declared goals of cultural institutes operating abroad (mutual understanding, universal access to education) and their true objectives (promoting their country's interests, financial gain in some cases) warrants further study.

The analysis of the efficiency of language policies can be placed in the larger context of academic work on soft power. While proponents of soft power insist that language, education, and overall attractiveness can be a significant foreign policy advantage [Nye 2013], other academics note that the concept is based on unverified assumptions that it can change people's behaviour [Ohnesorge 2020; Lomer 2017]. The efficiency of language policies depends, according to the findings of this paper, on the nature of the goals of states and their compatibility with the current context. Improving a country's image abroad with language policies to bury historical bones of contention, attract larger tourist flows, and increase commercial exchanges with neighbouring countries appears to be a realistic goal, although long-term. Using soft power for neo-colonialist purposes and to conceal infringements to international norms will likely lead to failure and to the backfiring of language policies.

* * *

This paper shows that language as a tool of statecraft has changed over the last few centuries, with governments having to adapt to the new globalised and liberal context. While the time when states would forcibly to carve out new identities around a unified language and place language policies at the heart of imperialist missions to dominate the world has come to an end, language remains in the political realm. Language policies not only survived the decolonization process, but actually took on new soft power forms as states attempted to address new challenges. While the discourse and means of the implementation of language policies have changed under new conditions – particularly the rejection of force in language promotion, the domination of English, the protection of minority dialects, and the technological changes linked to globalization – the belief in the power of language to shape allegiances remains, on the political level, unchanged, as reflected by the significant funds funnelled by states into language and culture centres around the world.

Appendix 1

Interview List

Interview number	Gender	Place of work	Nationality	Interview Language
1	M	University	Russia	English
2	F	British Council	UK	English
3	M	University	UK	English
4	M	University	Russia	Russian
5	F	French Alliance	France	French
6	F	Media	Russia	Russian
7	F	University	China	English
8	M	University	Russia	Russian
9	F	University	UK	English
10	F	University	Spain	English

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ЯЗЫК КАК РЕСУРС ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКИ

СТАРЫЙ ИНСТРУМЕНТ ПОД НОВЫЕ ЗАДАЧИ?

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Резюме

В статье исследуется язык как инструмент внешнеполитического влияния, эволюция подходов к его использованию с течением времени, а также вопрос о том, остается ли он актуальным и допустимым в нынешней международной обстановке. Давая обзор использования языка как инструмента внешней политики с междисциплинарной точки зрения, авторы рассматривают роль языковой политики на разных этапах истории: от появления возможности у европейских государств принудительно создавать новую идентичность вокруг единого языка до выполнения имперской миссии — «просвещения» колонизированного населения в попытке обеспечить экономические и культурные блага колониальным державам на длительную перспективу. Успешно пережив процессы деколонизации, к началу XXI века языковая политика обрела новые формы и уже как элемент арсенала «мягкой силы» привлекается государствами для решения внешнеполитических задач сегодняшнего дня. Основываясь на анализе экспертных интервью и источников (как первичных, так и вторичных), авторы показывают, что вера в способность языка формировать лояльность к определённому государству на политическом уровне остается по-прежнему сильной, невзирая на то, что нормативный дискурс и средства реализации языковой политики в современных реалиях претерпели серьёзную трансформацию, в частности произошёл отказ от применения силы для продвижения языка, наблюдается почти тотальное доминирование английского языка, утвердилось норма защиты языковых меньшинств, а также происходят обусловленные глобализацией технологические изменения, ослабляющие роль языка в формировании политической идентичности и устойчивых внешнеполитических лояльностей и ориентаций.

Ключевые слова:

внешнеполитические ресурсы; языковая политика; язык меньшинства; мягкая сила; глобализация.