

Language and Political Conflict

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I. Introduction

Under the powerful influence of globalization, socio-political conflict between different ethnolinguistic groups is on the rise. In many cases, ethnolinguistic conflict occurs between state authorities and ethnolinguistic minorities mobilized by nationalist ideologies and aims. In other settings, conflict over control of the state may take place among groups that are organized and mobilized along ethnolinguistic lines. Social scientists, long concerned with ethnolinguistic conflict as a focus of inquiry, have developed influential theories about the role of language and ethnicity in sociopolitical conflict. One of the early and most influential theories assumed that language is one of the primordial sources of group identity, and thus ethnolinguistic conflict is not easily amenable to compromise (see Geertz, 1963). For example, van den Berghe (1978) expressed concern about the “blind ferocity” and “orgies of passion” of ethnolinguistic conflict (p. 405). Primordial theories have been largely displaced, however, due to a large body of research showing that language and ethnicity are quite variable in their role in sociopolitical conflict (see Fishman, 1999). Indeed, ethnolinguistic diversity seems to have no fixed relationship with various measures of conflict.

More recently, theories about the links between language, ethnicity, and

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social conflict have claimed that language is a source of conflict only when it aligns with other forms of difference. Das Gupta (1970), for example, argued that social categories such as language, ethnicity, religion, social class and other differences in India are largely “cross-cutting,” so that individuals find themselves aligned with different groups, depending on the social category that is salient at the moment. The result is that conflict may be constant, but it is restricted in its scale and rarely, if ever, a threat to the state. Similarly, Fishman and Solano (1989) argued that language is a source of conflict only when it is linked with other differences, such as socioeconomic class. From this perspective, when language becomes a marker of class or other forms of inequality, then language conflict can become a surrogate for these other underlying issues. In this sense, language is never the sole source of conflict.

An alternative approach (Bourdieu, 1991; Tollefson, 2006) acknowledges that the symbolic value of language is not fixed, but instead mutable, open to struggle and change, and therefore affected by decisions of dominant groups, ethnolinguistic minorities, and influential political, cultural, and institutional actors. From this perspective, it is important to analyze the historical development of ethnolinguistic conflict in order to understand the mobilization of groups that engage in violence. One aspect of this analysis is the manipulation of ethnolinguistic difference by political leaders (see Donahue, 2002). To what extent do leaders exploit ethnolinguistic differences to achieve their own political aims? What alternatives to violence are available to political leaders and the institutions they control? Why, in some contexts, are these peaceful alternatives not followed?

One of the most important cases of ethnolinguistic conflict in recent years was the series of wars in Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Indeed, these wars popularized the term “ethnic cleansing,” which refers to deliberate efforts to use violence to remove ethnic groups from a geographical area. Yugoslavia is often presented as a prime example of the primordial power of ethnolinguistic identity. During the fighting, some of the popular press in Europe and the United States described the conflict as one with centuries of history, and the groups involved as

largely irrational, clan-like communities whose hatred for each other had only been suppressed temporarily by the repressive forces of communism, but which inevitably erupted when control was lifted. (For a succinct summary and critique of this view of the conflict, see Samary, 1994).

Yet is this view accurate? Was war inevitable? Or was the conflict deliberately *created* by political leaders for their own purposes? This article examines the background to the wars in Yugoslavia by focusing on the role of language policy. What policies were in place during the period of peace from 1945-1991? What changes in policy, if any, were associated with the period leading up to the wars? What alternative policies were available to Yugoslavia's political leaders? By answering such questions, we can contribute to a better understanding of the causes - and the alternatives - to violence in contexts characterized by significant ethnolinguistic diversity. Indeed, this analysis will conclude that the wars in Yugoslavia were, in part, created through a series of deliberate policy changes that, given the history of language politics since World War II, predictably led to violent conflict.

II. Yugoslavia: Historical Background

Yugoslavia was created in 1918 by the Treaty of Versailles that ended the First World War. From its beginning, Yugoslavia had no dominant ethnolinguistic group, consisting instead of Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Albanians, Slovenes and others. When Yugoslavia emerged from World War II, it was united under President Tito, who ruled from 1945 until his death in 1980. Under Tito, the country was divided into six major regions, called "republics": Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. The boundaries of the republics roughly corresponded to the areas dominated by the largest ethnolinguistic groups in Yugoslavia: Slovenes in Slovenia, Croats in Croatia, Muslims in Bosnia, Serbs in Serbia, Montenegrins in Montenegro, and Macedonians in Macedonia. (Under Tito, "Muslim" was a designated nationality rather than a religious minority. More recently, Bosnian has become the most widely used term, replacing Muslim.) In addition, two areas

in Serbia were designated as “semi-autonomous provinces.” These two areas were Vojvodina, where many Hungarians lived, and Kosovo, inhabited by an Albanian majority.

Differences between the northern and southern republics were substantial. Slovenia, Croatia and parts of Bosnia had been under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while the southern regions were part of the Turkish Empire. Economically, the north was quite developed, whereas the south was largely agricultural. As a result, income levels were dramatically different. During the 1960s, for example, the per capita income in Slovenia was about 7 times the per capita income of southern Serbia (Federal Statistical Office, n.d.). Tito tried to reduce this regional inequality through a taxation system that generally moved government development funds from the north to the south (Jambrek, 1975). In addition to differences in economic development, the north and south differed in other ways as well. The northern regions used the Latin alphabet, while the south used Cyrillic. In religion, the north was mainly Roman Catholic, while the south was mainly Orthodox.

In the country as a whole, Serbs were the largest group, making up about 40% of the population, while Croats comprised about 20%, and Muslims, Slovenes, Albanians, and Macedonians approximately 10% or less each. Fifteen smaller groups made up the rest of the population. Table 1 indicates the population at the time of Tito’s death in 1980.

Just as important as the diversity of the population was its distribution. Most of the groups formed a majority in their home republics or provinces: Slovenes in Slovenia, Croats in Croatia, Montenegrins in Montenegro, Macedonians in Macedonia, Albanians in Kosovo, and Serbs in Serbia except for Kosovo and Vojvodina. For instance, Slovenes made up approximately 94% of the population of the Republic of Slovenia, while Croats comprised about 78% of Croatia. In Bosnia, the Muslims were the largest group, but approximately 17% of all Serbs and 17% of all Croats lived in Bosnia (Petrović, 1973).

Linguistically, Serbian and Croatian, the two main varieties of Serbo-Croatian, are mutually intelligible groups of dialects. Under Tito, Serbian and

Table 1: Population of Yugoslavia, 1980 (in thousands)

	Serb	Croat	Moslem	Slovene	Albanian	Macedonian	Montenegrin	Hungarian	Yugoslav
Yugoslavia	8136	4428	2000	1754	1731	1341	577	427	1216
Bosnia	1320	758	1629	3	4	2	14	1	326
Montenegro	20	8	78	1	37	1	399	0	31
Croatia	532	3454	24	25	6	5	10	25	379
Macedonia	45	3	39	1	378	1281	4	0	14
Slovenia	42	56	13	1712	2	3	3	9	26
Serbia	4861	31	151	8	72	29	77	5	271
Vojvodina	1107	109	5	3	4	19	43	385	167
Kosovo	210	8	59	0	1277	1	27	0	1

Sources: Zvezni zavod za statistiko, 1988.

Croatian were officially defined as two separate and equal varieties. In addition to Croatian and Serbian, separate and distinct languages were spoken by Slovenes, Macedonians, Albanians, and Hungarians, as well as smaller ethnic groups such as Italians along the border with Italy. (Montenegrins spoke Serbian.) Tito was quite concerned about the potential for language to become a source of underlying socio-political conflict, and so he effectively regulated public debate about these issues. For example, Tito avoided declaring Serbian and Croatian separate languages, which might encourage Croatian nationalists who feared Serbian domination and wanted greater separation from Serbs; he also wished to avoid using the term “dialect,” because it could imply that Serbs and Croats were not different nationalities. In the 1960s, a publisher of a dictionary was imprisoned when he refused to use the politically required terminology for the two varieties. Indeed, the experience of World War II, in which fascist Croatian forces fought Serbs, convinced Tito that the fundamental requirement for a united Yugoslavia was careful management of its ethnolinguistic mosaic.

III. Language Policy under Tito

The central mechanism for managing ethnolinguistic relations under Tito was language policy. Language policy refers to efforts to affect the structure, use, or acquisition of languages, and often involves programs to shape the status of

language varieties within multilingual communities. After the Second World War, Tito and Yugoslavia (like policymakers in other contexts) had three language policy options: centralism, pluralism, and confederation. Under centralism, the government declares that national unity requires a single, unifying language, and the dominant ethnolinguistic group sustains its political control in part by excluding other languages from public use, including education. Centralism is often justified as necessary for national unity, and usually involves language policies aimed at limiting the status and use of languages other than the dominant one. Except for a brief period after World War II, Tito rejected centralism, fearing that its fundamentally repressive policies would intensify political conflict in the country.

A second alternative approach is pluralism, which encourages linguistic diversity and has as its central value the maintenance of different languages and ethnolinguistic groups. Pluralism emphasizes linguistic equality rather than national unity. Under pluralism, the state seeks to create and sustain a belief in the value of different languages, and to gain political support from different language groups by protecting their languages and fulfilling their linguistic demands whenever possible. Indeed, under pluralism, state legitimacy may be based in part on protection of linguistic and cultural diversity. An example of a pluralist policy would be schools that offer bilingual education to children who speak a home language other than the dominant variety. Pluralism was the main approach in Yugoslavia under Tito.

A third alternative approach to language policy is confederation, which involves the division of the state into autonomous or semi-autonomous political units, defined by language. In Switzerland, for example, the canton system offers each major language group a great deal of autonomy to run its own affairs for its own benefit. In Yugoslavia, for a brief period in the late 1980s just before the wars broke out, the country moved toward confederation, but it was never realized. Other than during this brief period, confederation was never a serious option for the country.

For nearly all of its history from the Second World War until its breakup,

Yugoslavia debated the first two policy options: centralism and pluralism. Under Tito, Yugoslavia attempted a few years of Stalinist centralism immediately after the Second World War, but then the country gradually developed an increasingly decentralized system of state authority, culminating in the highly decentralized pluralist system set forth in the 1974 constitution. In language policy, pluralism was the dominant approach, which in Yugoslavia meant a system in which the various ethnolinguistic groups were able to use their languages for most official purposes, including education and government, and they could maintain their languages throughout most social life. In fact, under the 1974 constitution, the major language groups were able to exert control over virtually all areas of language policy that affected their particular republics, provinces, or local communes. As a result, many different languages were used in education, in the courts and other state agencies, and in semi-official areas such as publishing, radio, television, film, and cultural institutions such as theater groups.

The Titoist language policy, by and large, guaranteed language use for Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, Slovene, Hungarian, and Albanian in their respective republics or (in the case of Hungarian and Albanian) their semi-autonomous provinces. Moreover, some smaller languages, such as Italian and Hungarian, were protected in officially bilingual areas near international borders. When pluralism became fully institutionalized in 1974, most policy-making authority was vested in the republics and their dominant ethnolinguistic groups. In other words, each language group could control most decisions that affected people's lives. The main areas that were left to the central government were national defense (the army used Serbo-Croatian) and programs designed to reduce the large economic inequalities between the wealthy north and the much poorer southern areas of the country. In other policy areas, the republics exercised a significant degree of control.

Although this decentralized system of decision making helped to ensure language maintenance and use for most ethnolinguistic groups, the system of language rights did not apply equally to all individuals in all circumstances. Constitutional guarantees of language rights distinguished between two

categories of groups. The “nations” (narod) were the six groups that were granted special status in each of the six republics, namely Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Muslims. The “nationalities” (narodnost) included national minorities that were guaranteed their rights only in designated local areas (called communes), where they often formed a majority, for instance, Italian communes along the Italian border. These rights were stated in constitutions at the federal level, within each republic, and within each local commune. The Slovene constitution, for example, guaranteed the right to education in Slovene, to the use of Slovene in government offices, to legal procedures conducted in Slovene, and to other official uses. The Slovene constitution also guaranteed these same rights to the Hungarian and Italian languages in the bilingual communes along the border with Hungary and Italy. These border communes also spelled out extensive legal protections for Hungarian and Italian specific to those areas. Constitutions in other regions specified similar protections. In Kosovo, for example, Albanian was protected as the official language of education, government, mass media, the courts, and other institutions. In the Republic of Bosnia, Croatian and Serbian were legally protected. (Under Tito, there was no recognized Bosnian variety of Serbo-Croatian.)

This system had two major problems. First, two groups had uncertain status: Hungarians in Vojvodina and Albanians in Kosovo. Only Vojvodina and Kosovo, as semi-autonomous provinces of Serbia, had this intermediate status, without the constitutional guarantees reserved for republics nor the local autonomy of the communes. In response, some Albanians sought republic status for Kosovo, believing it would provide greater certainty that their language, culture, and ethnolinguistic rights would be protected. Despite these efforts, however, Kosovo remained under the political control of Serbs. Nevertheless, this intermediate status was acceptable to most Albanians, as long as pluralism offered its protections. However, as pluralism was gradually replaced by centralism in the late 1980s, Albanians began to lose control of their own institutions, and so more and more Albanians demanded that Kosovo be granted

republic status. They failed to achieve this goal, however, and ultimately the semi-autonomous status of Kosovo was rescinded and it was absorbed into Serbia. Thus Albanians in Yugoslavia never gained the protected legal status of a “nation”.

The second, related problem with the pluralist system was that ethnolinguistic rights were tied to territory. A Slovene, for instance, enjoyed full legal protection in Slovenia, but could not move to another republic and expect Slovene-language schools. In other words, each nation and nationality had a remarkable range of language rights, but only within the group’s home territory (see Toporišič, 1991). Thus, for example, Albanians in Kosovo and Slovenes in Slovenia could attend school all the way through graduate or professional school (e.g., law school), using their own language, and they could find employment in workplaces in which their language was dominant. But individuals could not expect to receive an education or find a job using their own language outside of their home areas. This system left a major question: What would happen to people living outside of their designated areas? In his efforts to mobilize Serbs, Slobodan Milošević was able to exploit this issue by claiming that Serbs in Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia were threatened by hostile Albanians, Croats, and Bosnians, precisely because the Serbs living outside Serbia lacked legal protections. In his dramatic speeches about the alleged plight of these Serbs, Milošević effectively rallied Serbs to support his policy of Serbian centralism.

Despite these problems, the decentralized system of pluralism worked reasonably well as a policy response to language diversity from 1945 until the mid-1980s. The country remained peaceful and there was wide popular support for a united Yugoslavia, precisely because the system protected each of the ethnolinguistic groups and thus gained support from most individuals. No group was completely excluded from policy making, with the exception of the Roma population, which never gained official recognition.

Beginning in the early 1980s, two events led to a major political crisis. The first was Tito’s death in 1980. The system for succession involved rotating the presidency each year to a leader from a different republic, so that each of the

nations would be able to control the Presidency for one year. This system - a weak presidency operating under the highly decentralized system of the 1974 constitution - meant that it became increasingly difficult to reach agreements at the federal level. Thus the republics increasingly became the only forum for effective decision making.

A second important event in the early 1980s was a severe economic recession, which led to heightened tensions between the rich north and the poor south and between the various republics. Without a strong federal government, it became difficult to develop policies that were acceptable to both the northern republics and the southern republics. This severe recession created increasing pressure for a strong leader who could guide the country out of its economic crisis.

Thus after Tito's death, there was no powerful individual leader until Slobodan Milošević filled that vacuum in the mid-1980s, with his popularity in Serbia based upon his promotion of centralism, which meant the dominance of Serb national interests as an alternative to Titoist pluralism. Milošević was remarkably effective at mobilizing Serbs to support his attempt to dominate the federal government. He presented himself as a strong leader who could solve the economic recession and the political crisis of ineffective leadership in Belgrade. But even more important was his success at mobilizing Serbs along nationalist lines to support a new centralism. His aim was to hold onto power during the period of great change that replaced communist parties in much of Eastern Europe during 1988 to 1991. Central to Milošević's success at gaining support among Serbs was his ability to rescind pluralist language policies. This process was quite complex; two examples show how specific crises were manipulated in order to undermine pluralist policies.

One example took place in 1988 in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, where a federal military court sentenced to prison four Slovenes, including three journalists, who were found guilty of revealing military secrets. Linguistically, the trial was important because it was conducted in Serbo-Croatian, in violation of the Slovene constitution, which guaranteed the Slovene defendants the right to a

trial in Slovene. In addition, the official transcript was in Serbo-Croatian, with only a poor translation into Slovene. For Slovenes, the use of Serbo-Croatian in the trial and the official record conveyed the message that the state under Milošević was not subject to Slovenia's constitutional provisions guaranteeing Slovene language rights. For many Slovenes, the trial symbolized the end of pluralism, and thus it threatened the federal system itself, because state legitimacy had been based for nearly 40 years on its capacity to provide protection for Slovenes and other nations and nationalities. In response, 50,000 Slovenes protested over language policy outside the courthouse during the trial, and then blockaded the building to stop the army from transferring the prisoners to jail. These protests led to the formation of groups that eventually spearheaded the movement for Slovene independence.

A second example of changes in language policy under Milošević took place in Kosovo in 1989. Although Albanians were a majority in Kosovo, the Milošević government undertook a series of actions to restrict the Albanian language: Bilingual street signs were eliminated, the Albanian language was barred from use in government offices and schools, and Albanian-speaking teachers and administrators were fired from the schools and government offices. For some time, in fact, it was illegal for even small groups of Albanians to gather in public to converse using the Albanian language. This effort to end Albanian language rights and restrict language use in Kosovo had a dramatic impact, leading to protests not only in Kosovo, but also in Slovenia, Bosnia, and other republics that historically had had little sympathy for the Albanians. By successfully rescinding the policy of linguistic pluralism, first to a limited degree in Slovenia and then more fully in Kosovo, Milošević demonstrated that he was capable of implementing a new centralism.

Through the 1980s, the discussion of language in Yugoslavia increasingly became a discussion about the political future of the country. For example, when some linguists began to argue in the mid-1980s that a Bosnian variety deserved equal status with Serbian and Croatian, they were actually arguing for Bosnian independence from Serbia's emerging centralism (see Dunatov, 1987). Thus, as

the political crisis intensified and the new centralism began to take hold, any discussion about language became an implicit debate about the distribution of political power and the structure of the future Yugoslav state.

IV. Language Policy and Political Conflict: Underlying Issues

The language policy debates in Yugoslavia during the 1980s and early 1990s raise crucial questions about resolving ethnolinguistic conflict. One important question is: What is the relationship between group and individual language rights? Yugoslavia under Tito had adopted a system of national rights rather than individual citizenship rights, and national rights had a territorial basis. After Tito's death in 1980, Milošević and other nationalist leaders could successfully exploit fears among the Serbs living outside Serbia, particularly in Croatia and Bosnia, because these groups lacked the required territorial basis for state protection. They did not have rights outside of Serbia, and so Milošević's extravagant and often false claims about their circumstances and the dangers they allegedly faced created enormous anxiety among their fellow Serbs, who eventually supported centralism and, ultimately, war.

Once the likely breakup of Yugoslavia became apparent, another question arose: What should be the basis for new states that would emerge from the conflict? In Yugoslavia, as in much of Europe and Central Asia, the two alternatives were territory and ethnicity. Under Tito, the boundaries of the republics had been drawn in order to ensure (to the extent possible) that each republic was dominated by one group. In other words, territory and ethnicity were aligned. Yet this alignment could not be achieved everywhere, perhaps most significantly in Bosnia. Although Bosnia was, in a sense, the designated Muslim republic, Muslims did not constitute a clear majority of the population. In promoting his policy of centralism, Milošević argued that both principles - territory and ethnicity - should apply to Serbs. He claimed that the borders of the Republic of Serbia, despite the presence of a large Albanian minority in Kosovo, as well as other minorities such as Hungarians in Vojvodina, should be the foundation for a new Yugoslavia dominated by Serbs. At the same time, he

argued that ethnic Serbs outside Serbia (in Bosnia and Croatia) should have the same rights as Serbs living in Serbia. In other words, for Serbs alone, ethnicity could override traditional territorial boundaries. This formula was unacceptable to Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, whose citizens concluded that it would lead to a two-tiered system of centralism, with Serbs in control of policy and other groups blocked from participation in decision making.

The economic and political crisis in Yugoslavia during the 1980s also raises a third important question: How should pluralism be reconciled with the need for effective decision making at the federal or national level? The failure of effective policymaking in Yugoslavia in the 1980s was partly due to the decentralized system of decision making, and thus serious disagreements about the relative power of federal and republic authorities were inevitable. Operating under the 1974 constitution, which effectively granted republics a veto power over many federal decisions, Yugoslavia's pluralist policies continued to protect the interests of multiple nations and nationalities, but the country was increasingly unable to reach consensus at the federal level in the intense debate about how to solve the economic and political crisis. Therefore an opening was created for a new centralism that promised effective leadership by federal authorities in Belgrade. Yugoslavia's experience suggests that pluralism may be undermined by economic and political crises that seem to demand a centralist system. Finding decentralized systems of decision making that can withstand the promises made by advocates of centralism is a major challenge for supporters of pluralism in the Balkans and elsewhere.

Yugoslavia illustrates the power of ethnolinguistic issues to dominate public opinion, mobilize populations, and symbolize fundamental struggles over state power. During the decade before the war, issues of language policy were the focus of popular discussion on radio talk shows, in the press, and in public conversation (e.g., Gjurin, 1991); often these discussions were veiled debates about the future of the Yugoslav state. As it became increasingly clear that a new political system was likely to emerge from the crisis of the 1980s, the discussion of language helped to define and eventually to shape the available options.

Gradually, the pluralist consensus of Yugoslavia as a multinational and multilingual state disintegrated, leading first to a proposal for a loose confederation of more or less independent states, and finally to a violent end ultimately forced upon the country by centralist policies. But the policy of pluralism was not easily replaced by centralism. After more than 40 years of peace, turning popular opinion against a pluralist Yugoslavia took great effort for nearly a decade by Milošević and other leaders in Serbia, Croatia, and elsewhere. The discussion of language policy and manufactured crises (such as the Ljubljana trial and the suppression of the Albanian language) were central mechanisms for that process. In the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, ethnic hatred and ethnic cleansing were the final product - not the cause - of ethnolinguistic conflict and the shift to a policy of centralism.

V. Implications

Does the violent and tragic case of Yugoslavia have implications for language policy in other countries? Many politicians and editorial writers around the world have claimed that Yugoslavia demonstrates the dangers of diversity. During the war in Yugoslavia, much of the public discussion in Europe and the United States made it seem that fighting was inevitable, given historical enmity in the Balkans. This view reflected widely held, but highly questionable assumptions about the dangers of linguistic diversity. Indeed, this view reflects popular belief in the primordial nature of language, an assumption that no longer dominates social scientific theories of language, ethnicity, and conflict, but is pervasive in the popular press. In fact, this popular belief played into Milošević's hands, because it delayed U.S. and European resistance to his repressive centralist policies. Historians now know that the Milošević government encouraged the belief that ethnic conflict was unavoidable, as part of a strategy to delay intervention by Europe and the United States (Denitch, 1994).

World leaders committed to finding ways to reduce conflict must do so in increasingly diverse states. Due to migration and other global forces, ethnically and linguistically homogenous states are largely a thing of the past. Today,

multilingualism is commonplace, even in relatively homogenous places such as Japan, and all large political units throughout the world are multilingual. Moreover, the migration of labor is likely to increase the presence of linguistic minorities, even in regions that are relatively well developed economically. Japan, for example, faces a decreasing and aging population, and so it is possible that immigration will dramatically increase in future years. One result would be much greater linguistic and cultural diversity.

Faced with language diversity, state authorities have two broad alternative approaches for managing diversity: they can repress ethnolinguistic differences or they can extend democratic pluralism. Repressing ethnolinguistic differences means that state power supports centralism. The recent history of multilingual and multiethnic states that have managed ethnolinguistic diversity through centralism suggests that it can be effective in the short term, but it often leads to greater conflict, including violence, as in Yugoslavia, apartheid South Africa, Turkey, Indonesia and elsewhere.

The second alternative to managing diversity is pluralism. Post-apartheid South Africa may offer an important model here. Recent efforts by South Africa to develop an ideology of multilingualism as a symbol of national revival and to use eleven official languages to enhance democracy call into question widely-held assumptions about the costs of multilingualism and the benefits of monolingualism (Kamwangamalu, 1997). South Africa's policies will be closely watched as perhaps the most important effort in the world today to develop a pluralist alternative to centralism.

A key challenge in adopting pluralism is to find ways to structure democratic forms of governance in multiethnic and multilingual states. Language policies in education are critical, because they can ensure that language minorities gain the skills necessary for economic opportunity, particularly the dominant language(s) of wealth and power, and also that they retain their home languages that are essential to a sense of community. Yugoslavia demonstrates that failure to develop policies to achieve both of these goals can increase the chance of political conflict.

A second challenge for pluralism is the decreasing power of the state and the rise of global economic and political forces. As nation states become less able to respond to local demands of their citizens, some ethnolinguistic groups seek to protect themselves by turning to ethnolinguistic nationalism. The multiethnic states already facing ethnolinguistic nationalist movements include Bulgaria, Romania, Spain, the United Kingdom, Slovakia, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Mexico, and Guatemala. In many settings, state authorities have responded with various forms of centralism, such as educational policies favoring the dominant language, as in Australia and the United Kingdom; official language laws, as in the United States; immigration restrictions, as in France, Germany, and Italy; and martial law or military repression, as in Sri Lanka and Kurdish areas of Turkey. Yet, by responding with increasingly repressive forms of centralism, many states inspire increasingly intense ethnolinguistic nationalism. Pluralism offers a peaceful alternative to repressive centralism and to violent forms of ethnolinguistic nationalism.

Finally, a conception of citizenship must be developed that acknowledges the social value of ethnolinguistic identity but does not create different classes of citizens with unequal rights and privileges. The attempt to link citizenship rights with the use of particular languages is a common form of centralism, and in many contexts it increases the likelihood of further conflict. The challenge for policy makers in North America, Europe, Central Asia, and elsewhere is to develop progressive policies that ensure ethnolinguistic rights within a realistic and workable democratic pluralism.

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〈Summary〉

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Ethnolinguistic conflict is an increasingly important phenomenon, both in new states of Central Asia and Eastern Europe as well as in such established states as the UK and France. To understand the sources of ethnolinguistic conflict and the possibility for alternatives to violence, it is important to examine the historical development of conflict. Why does ethnolinguistic difference lead, in some cases, to violence? What is the role of political leadership in supporting or reducing violent conflict associated with ethnicity and language? How do political leaders in some contexts use ethnolinguistic issues for their own political purposes? This article examines a recent, important case of ethnolinguistic conflict: the violent breakup of Yugoslavia. Focusing on language policy, the article traces the shift from pluralist language policies to centralist policies, and argues that this shift was part of a strategy of Serbian leaders to mobilize the population along ethnolinguistic lines, to gain control of the federal government in Belgrade, and to bring about the dissolution of the Yugoslav state.