Inclusive vs. Exclusive Linguistic Nationalism: Comparing Zionist and Turkish Nationalist Language Policies

ZAYN SAIFULLAH

Carleton College

May 29, 2017

Introduction

NATIONALIST AND NATIVIST MOVEMENTS are once again at the forefront of Western political science. The movements rising in Western democracies, though similar in rhetoric, are not necessarily unified in their practices or aims. Nationalisms and far-right movements, just like their leftist counterparts, must be differentiated both on ideological and practical bases. This is true of both current and past movements, the latter of which constitutes the focus of this paper.

One policy frequently espoused by nationalists is that of "protecting the nation's language," or promoting their language as exceptional and the sole legitimate tongue of the nation state. Such policies were present in the early history of both modern Israel and Republican Turkey. Both Zionists and the Turkish nationalists desired to unite disparate parts of their "nation" through creating a shared language. However, many of the ways through which they sought to create linguistic unity differed due to vastly different circumstances and aims. In this paper, I argue that the differences between the language policies of modern Israel and Turkey reflect different strategies of nation building and therefore different nationalisms.

This paper will primarily draw on Benedict Anderson, Tzvetan Todorov, and Jacques Derrida's respective theories on linguistic nationalism in its analysis of each case. Literature on the topic of language reform and planning will be woven throughout the paper, dedicating the literature review fully to political theory rather than linguistic theory. I will then present my theory and hypothesis, as well as the rationale behind the historical method of inquiry employed in the paper. Both cases are then introduced and discussed in context of broader nationalist aims under the established framework, advancing an argument for a new typology of "inclusive" and "exclusive" linguistic nationalisms. This essay reaches a conclusion that nationalist preferences for either inclusive or exclusive policies are predicated on the disparate needs of their movements and other cost-benefit measures, connecting these policies not to ideology, but to rational choice.

This paper will add to the broader scholarship on nationalism by investigating and comparing two key contemporaneous cases of national language reform and revival. While there are numerous accounts of the revival of Hebrew and the reform of Turkish in a nationalist setting, few papers, if any, address the two movements within a comparative nationalism framework. This analysis will bring more nuance to the debate on interwar nationalism in the Middle East, showing that nationalist aspirations, though rooted in fear of the other, still may differ in their end goals. This paper will also confirm the validity of predominant theories in two cases not included in Anderson's work.

Literature Review

The notion that language is a key issue in nationalist movements has been long established within political theory. Saba Mahmood asserts that linguistic difference is necessary in reinforcing na-

tionalism, which, by definition, exists at the heart of the modern nation state.[1] This is because, according to Stephen May, language is not merely part of political and historical memory, but is also the vehicle through which we access and shape it.[2] Both arguments stem from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, in which the author argues that the imagined "nations" which nationalists seek to consolidate are both based upon and spread through language. Central to this argument is Anderson's notion of "print-capitalism," defined as the rapid spread and standardization of vernacular language. This allows people to conceptualize themselves and relate themselves to others in a way never experienced: as national brethren.[3] The required access to resources and a relatively large number of consumers for new media ensures that majorities primarily enjoy the benefits of print-capitalism. Uniform vernaculars and the emergence of a national conscience were especially key in the ability to centralize power in absolutist governments. The newfound cultural dominance that majority groups enjoy convinces minority groups to assimilate to share in those benefits. However, this dominance also encourages racist and xenophobic nationalist movements that are convinced of their national superiority.[4]

Todorov argues that while a person born into a culture is not slave to that culture, they are nevertheless endowed with a deep cultural knowledge through virtue of being a native speaker.[5] Because of this, a native speaker can uniquely access and interpret the collective memory that emanates from their language, in contrast to the non-native or non-speaker.[6] Todorov's theory is reflected in Chomskyan linguistics in that an individual's native language does not change that individual's actual cognitive processes regarding linguistic structure.[7] Rather, it is the speaker's lexicon and the semantic information encoded therein that influences how they interact with their cultural tradition as well as others.[8] In other words, a person's native language carries deeper semantic meanings for that person, which in turn builds an associative communal memory to which the native speaker can channel and contribute. A later acquired language will never be able to rival the semantic wealth of a native language, and therefore a non-native speaker can never fully shed their status as an outsider or "other." Nationalist movements are therefore required to not just educate non-native speakers to achieve their uniform vernacular – they must ensure the creation of new generations of native speakers, through either social engineering or coercive means.

Jacques Derrida complicates Todorov's model in his lecture *Of Hospitality*, specifying that native speaker access to a communal memory is not universal, and moreover that communal memory is partially defined in relation to "the other." He argues that Arendt's assertion that "Nothing can replace the mother tongue"[9] is indicative of a position that the mother tongue is a displaced person's "ultimate homeland" as if the language were the "remains of belonging."[10] He complicates this idea by criticizing the paradox of possessing language as one can possess a loved one's remains,

---

[1] Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 3.

[2] Stephen May, *Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 70.

[3] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London/New York: Verso, 1991), 36.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fear of Barbarians: Beyond the Clash of Civilizations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 27, 49.

[6] Instead of "collective memory," Todorov uses the term "common memory." While I will use the former, I view both as synonymous in Todorov's definition of culture, in that culture "rests simultaneously on a common memory (we learn the same language, the same history, the same traditions) and on common rules of life (we speak in such a way as to make ourselves understood, we take into account the codes in force in our society)." Ibid., 26-27.

[7] Noam Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

[8] Todorov, *The Fear of Barbarians*, 28.

[9] Quoted in Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, ed. Mieke Bal and Hent De Vries. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 82.

[10] Ibid., 89.

stating that language is "...the experience of expropriation, of an irreducible *exappropriation*."[11] He continues by asserting that the "mother tongue" as a "homeland" is in fact defined by the tongue of "the other," in that the other is addressed in the values and meanings that inhabit the language.[12]

Lastly, there are many definitions in the literature of what constitutes a nationalist movement. While it is unambiguous that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's *Cumhuriyat Halk Partisi* (Republican People's Party or CHP) was a Turkish nationalist movement, labeling the Zionist movement as such is a significantly more complicated matter. For the purposes of this paper, I label the Zionist movement as a nationalist movement based on Arendt's definition: that the defining desire of all nationalist movements is the ability to choose whom they wish to cohabitate with by their own volition.[13] The use of "people" here does not necessarily refer to an ethnic group, but can consist of any imagined community created through means of communal memory. This community defines itself as limited and sovereign, retaining a deep horizontal comradeship.[14]

Defining Inclusive and Exclusive Linguistic Nationalism

Current literature does much to explain why nationalist movements must contain a linguistic element if they hope to succeed in their goal of constructing a unified nation. It does not, however, explain why nationalist movements can differ so greatly in their means of achieving a uniform vernacular. Whereas some nationalist movements may synthesize disparate vernaculars to form a single national language, others may pursue a policy of eliminating competing linguistic influences and imposing a single language of their choosing. To describe these policy paradigms, I propose a typology of inclusive versus exclusive nationalism.

I define inclusive linguistic nationalism as the unification of disparate peoples by means of a shared or synthesized language for nationalist ends, whereas exclusive linguistic nationalism is the dominance of a single ethnic group's language over other peoples in the territory of the nation. These traits are not mutually exclusive, as inclusive linguistic nationalist movement via a lingua franca originating from a single ethnic group is easily imaginable. Rather than through categories, it is more constructive to view the traits of the two nationalisms on a continuum ranging from the most inclusive to the most exclusive. The term "inclusive" should not be taken to imply this form necessarily encourages diversity. Both forms of linguistic nationalism can be equally coercive and xenophobic, as shown in this paper. To establish the validity of this typology, I turn to the cases of language revival and reform in Israel and Turkey, determining their language policies to exemplify inclusive and exclusive linguistic nationalism respectively.

I draw on both primary sources and secondary scholarship to analyze both nationalist movements. Because my thesis focuses on the intentions of those leading language reform, it is vital to bring the writings of the leaders themselves into the light of analysis. It is fallacious to evaluate their intentions based merely upon the outcome of their policies – accurate analysis necessitates usage of firsthand accounts. Secondary scholarship is employed to place Israeli and Turkish language policies in context with their broader nationalist programs.

---

[11]Ibid., 89-91.
[12]Ibid., 133.
[13]Quoted in Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 151.
[14]Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6-7.

The Hebrew Revival

The Hebrew revival traces its origins to even before the Zionist movement had begun – to the late nineteenth century after conclusion of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) when Jewish intellectuals began trading Hebrew short stories and poems.[15] Some Jews had already made *aliyah* during the 19th century and were using Hebrew as a lingua franca to communicate in the market, but this Hebrew was more a trade pidgin than an actual language.[16] This itself displayed promise though, as did the circulation of Hebrew literature in Jewish European intellectual circles, of the feasibility of the plan to revive Hebrew. Still, many Rabbis opposed this revival because they feared that *Leshon Hakodesh* (The Holy Tongue) would lose its revered character if brought into every day, secular usage.[17]

Leading Zionist figures at the turn of the century realized that if they were to be successful in gathering European Jewry as a unified nation, they must share a language just as they were to share the land. English seemed to be the obvious language to turn to, as it was emerging as the worldwide lingua franca. However, while the Jews making *aliyah* were relatively well educated and generally multilingual, English knowledge was relatively rare entering the mandate period. Early immigrants were far more likely to speak or have knowledge of Yiddish, German, Russian, or French because of their Eastern European origins.[18] [19] The language question exacerbated the existing tensions in Herzl's WZO between Jews of different European nationalities, especially between German and Russian Jews. As a German speaker and Germanophile, Herzl fully expected the language of the Jewish state to be German, writing in *Der Judenstaat* that "It is unimaginable for us to speak Hebrew among ourselves."[20] German speaking Jews had already established the *Technion* in Tel Aviv.[21] The Russian Zionists did not stand for this and forced the German Zionists to concede, since the Germans knew that there could be no united Jewish nation without the inclusion of the Eastern European Jewry.[22]

The Russians had affirmed Hebrew as the sole language of the Jewish state. Hebrew had remained as the liturgical language of Jews ever since the destruction of the Second Temple, and most practicing Jews at the time had knowledge of it from daily prayer and from Torah study. Hebrew as a spoken language, however, had been dead for nearly two millennia. There were no more native speakers of Hebrew. Even liturgical Hebrew had taken on many different pronunciations due to the wide spread of the Jewish diaspora and was understood by few except well-educated Rabbis and intellectuals.[23] Despite these obstacles, the Zionists persisted. Their sentiments towards Hebrew are well summarized by this statement by Eliezer Ben Yehuda, an intellectual product of the *Haskalah* and the widely-credited founder of modern Hebrew, who wrote that "... [The Jews] are not able to become a living nation other than through their return to the language of the

---

[15] Alain Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation : Zionist Thought and the Making of Modern Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

[16] Yakov M. Rabkin, "Language in Nationalism: Modern Hebrew in the Zionist Project," *Holy Land Studies* 9, no. 2 (2010).

[17] Ibid., 134.

[18] Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

[19] "According to a survey of those speaking a language other than Hebrew in 1916, nearly 60 percent spoke Yiddish, 7 percent Ladino, and 30 percent Arabic; in 1948, 47 percent of those speaking another language spoke Yiddish, 17 percent German, and 7 percent Arabic, with significant percentages as well for Romanian, Polish, Ladino, Hungarian, and Bulgarian." Ibid., 11.

[20] Quoted in Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation*, 103.

[21] The Technion was a technical college founded by German Jewish immigrants in 1914 in Haifa. Halperin, *Babel in Zion*, 9.

[22] Rabkin, *Language in Nationalism*, 139.

[23] Ibid., 131.

Fathers."[24]

Despite settling on a shared language, there was significant resistance from many immigrants to learning a new language and assimilating into a single Jewish nation. Ben Yehuda's family is widely thought to be the first household to use Hebrew as a vernacular. His many attempts to establish schools to teach "Hebrew through Hebrew," or immediate immersion schools, were abject failures. A lack of standardized curriculum and native speaking teachers plagued the Hebraist movement, but through continued efforts at early childhood education for Hebrew oral proficiency, a few hundred native speakers of Hebrew were created. Even though they were small in number, the continued nurturing of the Hebraist project would result in thousands of native speakers a generation later.[25] This was caused by two primary factors: inclusive language reform (in both corpus and grammar) and status promotion.

There were the additional problems that came with reviving a dead liturgical language, namely its corpus (vocabulary) and grammatical complexity. Until this point, the only preserved Hebrew texts were the Tanakh and accompanying Rabbinic literature, providing little to no everyday vocabulary. Ben Yehuda and his contemporaries realized that the revival cannot succeed until Hebrew became the language of the home, but how could the language be entrenched it in the home if there is no known word for "spoon" or "armchair"?[26]

Ben Yehuda established the *Va'ad HaLeshon HaIvrit* (The Hebrew Language Council) to update and standardize the corpus of Hebrew. While Ben Yehuda did not live to see his work come to fruition, the committee's severe interventionism resulted in a workable corpus synthesized from Biblical Hebrew, newly derived words, and a prodigious number of loanwords and calques.[27] Many words relating to new technologies and the sciences were borrowed wholesale from the Zionists' mother tongues, particularly Yiddish and English. Yiddish words are especially prolific in Hebrew for two reasons. Firstly, a significant proportion of the Zionists were originally Yiddish speakers. Secondly, a great number of Yiddish loanwords were accepted to make the adoption of Hebrew seem less daunting and even sensible for the Yiddish speakers. English words entered because of the hegemony of English in Europe for the coinage of new terms in the sciences. The incorporation of these loanwords affected the stress patterns of Hebrew, giving the revived form a distinctly European character.[28] All the reforms described in this section so altered the character of Hebrew that some Israeli linguists go so far as to suggest Modern Hebrew is a creole – a hybrid Indo-European and Semitic language.[29]

Just as the corpus was revitalized with loanwords, so too was the grammar simplified for easier learning by native Indo-European speakers. Biblical Hebrew, as a Semitic language, typically had a Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) word order, several marked cases, and complex verb morphology, as do formal Arabic and other Semitic languages. To quickly propagate Hebrew instruction and create a generation of native speakers, the Hebrew Language Council culled rules unfamiliar to European Jews and instilled a new syntactic style based primarily on Yiddish.[30] Grammatical case was removed entirely, and the word order was changed to be primarily Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) to match the mother tongues of the European immigrants. Many affixes were adopted from European languages to complement the already extensive word derivation processes present in

---

[24]Quoted in Scott B. Saulson, *Institutionalized Language Planning Documents and Analysis of Revival of Hebrew: Contributions to the Sociology of Language*, (Stuttgart: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011), 16.

[25]Moshe Nahir, "Micro Language Planning and the Revival of Hebrew: A Schematic Framework," *Language in Society* 27, no. 3 (1998). http://www.jstor.org/stable/4168849.

[26]Saulson, *Institutionalized Language Planning*, 26.

[27]Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation*.

[28]Haim Blanc, "Hebrew in Israel: Trends and Problems." *Middle East Journal* 11, no. 4 (1957): 400.

[29]Rabkin, "Language in Nationalism," 144. Ghil'ad Zuckermann, "The Genetics of the Israeli Language: Mosaic or Mosaic?" *Midstream* 50, no. 4 (2004): 30-32.

[30]Blanc, "Hebrew in Israel."

Semitic languages. The Russian/Yiddish "-nik" is a prime example of this, widely used in Hebrew to indicate that a person belongs to an institution or performs an action i.e *kibbutznik* (a person living on a kibbutz) or a *nudnik* (a nagging/boring person). Further adoption of Greek and Roman suffixes, notably in their Russian/Slavic forms, was especially useful in fleshing out vocabulary relating to science and technology.[31]

The above corpus and grammar reforms made the later status reforms possible. A significant number of immigrants clung to their mother tongues, especially the Yiddish speakers. Most German Jews conceded to speaking Hebrew after speaking German became taboo in the inter and postwar periods.[32] Yiddish speaking Jews, however, saw no reason why they could not continue speaking their language, which had been spoken by Jews for a thousand years. Yiddish was the vehicle through which Ashkenazi culture was transmitted. For many Yiddish speakers, particularly Haredi Jews, the revived Hebrew was bastardized and profane.[33]

The Zionists viewed Yiddish with open disgust, proclaiming Yiddish as the language of "the meek Jew," belonging only in the *galut* (diaspora) and its ghettos.[34] In encouraging Hebrew dominance in the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine), the Zionists conceived a wide-ranging propaganda campaign paired with its universal schooling of children in Hebrew. They created posters proclaiming "[You] Hebrew, speak Hebrew!" and commissioned explicitly pro-Hebrew artwork. The propaganda was not merely to promote the Hebrew language, but the image of the "new Hebrew Man" as opposed to the Yiddish-speaking ghetto Jew. The new Hebrew man spoke *ivrit modernit* (modern Hebrew) and was a liberated, strong man, working and defending *Eretz Yisrael*, opposed to the "primitive" and "submissive" nature of the Diaspora Jew. The Zionists made it illegal to establish a Yiddish theatre, publish newspapers in Yiddish, and establish Yiddish schools or other institutions.[35] In addition to the coercive measures taken by the Zionists, the children of Yiddish-speaking immigrants, schooled solely in Hebrew and brought up in an explicitly pro-Hebrew environment, began to transmit Modern Hebrew to their resistant parents. Within merely two generations since the establishment of the Hebrew Language Council, 40% of Palestine's Jewish population declared Hebrew as their "only or first language."[36] At this point, Hebrew dominance was, in one contemporary statistician's words, "...guaranteed [since] it had become the younger generation's major language."[37]

The Hebrew Revival as an Example of Inclusive Linguistic Nationalism

The Zionists' inclusive linguistic nationalism was borne primarily out of physical constraints and political necessity. They needed to unite a widespread diaspora of Jews into a single nation for both ideological and practical reasons. Ideologically, the Zionists would not be able to justify their movement if the Jews could not unite into a single nation. Without a core group of followers and no "nation," their claim to the land would appear illegitimate and the movement would eventually disintegrate. In more practical matters, the Zionists needed to physically defend their claim in Palestine. A nationalist claim to the land is not enough to maintain a monopoly on violence and establish state institutions. Without a shared bureaucratic language and a linguistically splintered

---

[31] Ibid., 402.
[32] Halperin, *Babel in Zion*.
[33] Rabkin, "Language in Nationalism," 137.
[34] Ibid., 140.
[35] Ibid., 139-140.
[36] Nahir, *Micro Language Planning*, 351.
[37] Ibid.

community, the Zionist project would not have had the unity to perpetuate itself. The language problem figured so heavily into Zionist debate perhaps because language is even more important when other elements of collective identity are weak.[38]

Choosing a language for the Jewish state besides Hebrew was, by the time of the "language war" between Yiddish and Hebrew, a non-possibility. There are broader reasons behind this choice than that it was a uniting language for the Jews. In terms of language commonalities, it would have been easier to use Yiddish in the short term just from the number of Yiddish speaking immigrants. This would have been ideologically unsound, however, as Zionism was not just a project to settle Jews in Palestine, but to escape anti-Semitism in Europe. To the Zionists, Europe and all things associated with it were associated with the shame of exile and diaspora. Speaking Hebrew was not just a way of claiming the identity of the "new Hebrew man," but of forgetting the *shtetl* and the cultural tradition associated with it.

Yiddish was not purged from Israel, however, because the Zionists knew that they needed modern Jewish cultural sources with which to revitalize Hebrew's corpus. The extensive borrowings from European languages in hand with Hebrew's liturgical status impressed that all (white) Jews coming to Israel have a claim to this revived language. Pervasive early-childhood schooling ensured that the children of immigrants would grow up speaking the language of their peers and eventually transfer it to their home. Lastly, in the absence of Yiddish due to language bans, adult immigrants could learn Modern Hebrew more easily due to its simplification. Through this inclusive language revival, the modern, Europeanized Hebrew language seemed to be the ideal vector for fashioning the nation and creating an "imagined community" based on a sense of common belonging.[39]

The Turkish Reforms

The Turkey that Atatürk inherited was a shadow of its former self. Crippled by war and political division, it was clear to him and other Turkish nationalists that any attempt to unite Turkey in the mission of national pride and secularism needed to include language reform. Atatürk personally believed there was a link between Turkey's political and economic viability and the need for language reform.[40] He was aware of the way that European powers employed nationalist ideology throughout the 19th century to promote political unity and economic development. He concluded that to compete with the European powers, Turkey must embrace nationalist republicanism to industrialize and eventually Westernize. Like many of the Young Turks before him, Atatürk viewed French *laïcité* as the ideal form of secularism. As such, he did not merely wish to separate mosque and state, but to reduce religion to a private affair altogether.[41] This involved the secularization of both the government and the culture of the Turks, including their language.

Ottoman Turkish was used as a language of administration, but the wide reach of the empire brought many loanwords into their language, especially from Arabic. While the base grammar of the language remained largely Turkic, the corpus was by in large comprised of Arabic and Persian loanwords and calques. The Ottoman elite were especially susceptible to using foreign grammatical constructs in their speech, especially the Persian *izāfat*[42] in place of the native Turkish nominative construct. Arabicized language was associated with elite upbringing and education, and

---

[38]Rabkin, "Language in Nationalism," 129.

[39]Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation*, 104-105.

[40]İlker Aytürk, "Turkish Linguists against the West: The Origins of Linguistic Nationalism in Atatürk's Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 6 (2004): 424.

[41]M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[42]An example of this construct in Ottoman Turkish: "Devlet-i-Osmâniyye" (Ottoman Empire) instead of the modern Turkish "Osmanlı Devleti." The Arabic equivalent of the izāfat, the iḍāfa (الإضافة), was also used.

the resulting differences between elite and commoner vernacular resulted in a state of diglossia. This greatly affected literacy and sharply divided Ottoman society among class lines.[43]

To address these issues, Atatürk and other nationalist leaders embarked on an ambitious campaign of language reform. This included not only the strict enshrinement of Turkish as the Republic's sole national language (at the expense of Turkey's significant Kurdish population and other minorities), but also a zealous "purification" of Turkish from foreign loanwords and influence. Perhaps the most distinctive mark of Atatürk's language reforms was a complete reform of Turkish orthography, changing a complicated and unphonetic Perso-Arabic script to an extended phonetic Latin script. Script reform served two primary purposes: ease of standardization and cutting Turkey from its Islamic past (Aytürk 2004). The 1928 law that ordained the switch was no mere suggestion: it demanded that all media and schools adopt the new alphabet in a year's time.

One of the primary benefits of the script reform was newly standardized spelling. The Perso-Arabic script used by the Ottomans was not adaptable to reflect Turkic vowel harmony and the greater variety of phonemes present in Turkish.[44] Many Ottoman spellings could be read to have several meanings, placing universal literacy out of the question without intensive instruction. These inequalities were reflected in the 1927 census, which showed only 8.16 percent of Turkey's inhabitants were literate.[45] While the new Latin script devised by the Kemalists was not the most efficient orthography for Turkish, it was a significant improvement for standardization and adaptability. Standardized spelling made it easier to standardize school textbooks and curriculum throughout the country, making universal literacy, a marker of European modernity, easier to achieve. Combined with de-Arabicization, the reform was portrayed as "democratic" – closing the gap between the old elite and the common man, consolidating the Turkish nation through shared national conscience.[46]

More broadly, changing the script from Perso-Arabic to Latin gave a clear signal of looking westward, cutting off the Turks' connection to Islam and their non-European neighbors. Ottoman intellectuals had proposed language reform prior to Atatürk's rise, but backed away from their position when clerics and conservatives denounced them for wanting to use a Western script in the land of the Caliphate. This was of no concern to Atatürk, as he believed that any connection to Arabic would hinder the development of Turkey, saying that "...Arabic script afforded a psychological background to the Oriental mentality which stood as the real enemy of the Republic."[47] Many Turkish nationals shared this attitude, believing that the influence of Arab culture and Islam on the Ottoman empire had "imprisoned" Turks to live in a "backward Eastern position."[48] The Latin script was presented as not just practical, but as liberation from the "shame" of the past to join with Europe in the age of print capitalism.[49]

De-Arabicization policies dovetailed with the goals of the earlier script reforms, namely removing any trace of non-Turkish identity from the new Turkish state. The Turkish Language Society (*Türk Dil Kurumu* - TLS) was formed expressly to create a pure Turkish (*öz Türkçe*) through removing loanwords and replacing them with old, repurposed Turkish words or coin new terms from existing Turkish roots.[50] The emerging language was increasingly like that of the peasantry, and lent itself

---

[43]Yilmaz Çolak, "Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 6 (2004).

[44]Ibid., 71.

[45]Hale Yilmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey 1923-1945* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

[46]Ayşegül Aydingün and İsmail Aydingün, "The Role of Language in the Formation of Turkish National Identity and Turkishness," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10, no. 3 (2004): 417. Çolak, *Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey*, 71.

[47]Ibid., 73.

[48]Ibid., 72.

[49]Ibid., 73. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45.

[50]Çolak, "Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey."

well to an expanding domestic press.[51] The reformed language and alphabet was distributed to the populace through schooling, newspapers, and, most importantly, military propaganda campaigns. The army was, in a broader context, one of the most important institutions in the Kemalist state. The CHP combined the patriotic imagery of the army with the new alphabet, creating posters simultaneously declaring "Citizen! Speak Turkish" and that "The Army is a people's school."[52] Atatürk characterized this campaign as part of his "war on ignorance," delivering speeches on the reforms at cities involved in the key battles of the Turkish War for Independence.[53]

The goal of these reforms was not just secularization; it was Europeanization. It occurred to Atatürk that even if the language reforms were successful in purifying and secularizing Turkish, it would not be enough to make the Turks equal in the eyes of the white Europeans. European historical comparative philology, as practiced in the 19th century, contained an accompanying racial hierarchy within its language classification system. Many believed that agglutinative languages, like Turkish, are inherently inferior to fusional/inflected languages, the category to which most Indo-European languages belong. Atatürk, being an intellectual product of 19th century ideas about nations and race, believed in the idea of a language hierarchy, but could not stand to accept the assigned place of Turkish in that hierarchy.[54]

Instead of challenging the idea of the hierarchy, he set a team of linguists to work to prove that Turkish is, in fact, Indo-European. Ahmet Cevat Emre, one of these linguists, announced to the Second Congress on the Turkish Language that, with an accepted classification as Indo-European, "We will join that great civilized family with the status of a grandfather."[55] The idea of being the "grandfather," or the origin of all Indo-European languages, was the only way that Emre could justify this classification. Samih Rıfat took this idea further in creating the "Sun-Language Theory," asserting that Turkish, as well as its speakers, was the progenitor of all human language and civilization.[56] This pseudo-scientific, highly amateur theory was given the blessing of the Turkish government in 1936.[57] While serving as a symbolic status boost for Turkish hegemony in the Republic, the theory ironically softened the line of the language academy on foreign words, since by the Sun-Language theory all human speech is distantly derived from Turkish.[58]

The language and historical narrative, largely invented by the Kemalist regime, was to serve as the basis of a new civic religion, the final goal of which was for "...every Turk to... declare, 'My Turkishness is my religion.'"[59] This was the height of the Turkish nationalist mission, supplanting the former Muslim Ottoman identity and subordinating it to the "peerless Turkish genius.[60]

The Turkish Language Reforms as an Example of Exclusive Linguistic Nationalism

Atatürk's pursuit of exclusive linguistic policies was, like the Zionists' inclusive policies, necessitated by his political goals – namely, distinguishing the Turks from other former Ottoman subjects to form a new, Westernized state. In Turkey, the CHP was trying to fill the power vacuum left behind by an empire that derived its legitimacy from religious unity under the Caliphate. These circumstances

---

[51] Yilmaz, *Becoming Turkish.*
[52] Ibid., 156.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Aytürk, "Turkish Linguists against the West."
[55] Ibid., 12.
[56] Ibid., 15.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Çolak,"Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey."
[59] Hanioğlu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography*, 181.
[60] Ibid., 180.

required a complete reinvention of Turkish identity. However, it would have been impossible to change national identity without overcoming old class divides and educating the population so that they would be consumers in print-capitalism. Schooling in Ottoman Turkish would be impractical because of the complexity of the orthography and the state of diglossia that existed between classes. Mass education and print-capitalism would necessitate both simplification of Turkish orthography and language reform to make the language more like the *öz Türkçe* spoken in rural Anatolia.

Atatürk was aiming for a broader goal besides education though; he wanted Turkey to enter European modernity. Cutting Turkish ties to the liturgical language of Islam and Ottoman literature through the script reform and de-Arabicization was a necessary national act of forgetting and realignment. These reforms created a clear line in Turkish culture of where the religious empire ended and Atatürk's secular "republic" began. With a new republic came a new national mythos based on the linguistic and historical superiority of the Turkish people, excluding any mention of outside groups in the formation of modern Turkey. It is doubtful how much the CHP's pseudo-scientific linguistics and history impacted the general population. However, it is well established that ideas such as the Sun-Language theory directly impacted government policy. This makes clear that the Turkish government did believe that pursuing its exclusive linguistic policies were the optimal path to reforming and distinguishing the Turkish identity given their political circumstances.

Conclusion

The cases that I have presented almost perfectly align with Anderson's theory on the necessity of language in nationalist causes. Both the Zionists and the CHP seized upon language as the key mechanism to unify their nations, seeing shared memory as both ideologically and practically important. This shared memory could only be accessed by native born speakers, especially in the case of Hebrew, reflecting Todorov's theory. Both cases employed language standardization and simplification to expedite the process of homogenizing print capitalism, as described by Anderson. The leaders of these projects were aware, however, that merely printing and educating the population in the target language was insufficient effort to ensure target language dominance. Competing languages needed to be stamped out and the status of the target language promoted as supreme and natural. The following propaganda campaigns and language bans coerced citizens into not just speaking the language, but subscribing to the national conscience, at least on a surface level, to avoid being othered. While Derrida's argument implied voluntary subscription, these Nationalist movements knew that it would be impossible to individually convince all their citizens to both speak the language and become intellectual nationalists. The only feasible alternative to them was to create an initial, perhaps shallower, national conscience through coercion.

Additionally, the differences between the movements' enacted policies, while unexplained by previous theory, can be shown to exemplify "inclusive" and "exclusive" subtypes of linguistic nationalism. Before reaching the stage of print capitalism, the Zionists and the CHP went about their respective revivals and reforms in very different ways. The Zionists, aiming for legitimacy and simplicity, were fairly inclusive in their reconstruction of the Hebrew corpus and grammar. The CHP, on the other hand, aimed for legitimacy through linguistic purity and exclusion, purging the language of nearly all foreign loans before backing off during the Sun-Language theory period. Lastly, the coercive campaigns carried out by each movement, while demonizing an other, were conceived with different aims in mind with respect to the movements' differing circumstances.

Even with this typology established, the question remains: why do some nationalist movements gravitate towards one end rather than the other on the proposed inclusive-exclusive continuum? Assuming that the leaders of these nationalist movements can be described as rational actors, I posit that the choices of pursuing inclusive or exclusive language policies by the Zionists and the CHP was not a matter of ideology, but was more connected to historical context. As opposed to the Zionists, who had to unite a diaspora into a new polity, the CHP was trying to remold an

already existing, but economically divided, polity into a new, European image. Because of these fundamentally different circumstances, the two movements were forced to pursue their different respective policies in accordance with rational choice theory.

If this finding is generalized to other nationalist movements, it would advance the application of rational choice theory in studying these movements. Amid a worldwide nationalist surge, it is easy for scholars to fall into the trap of attributing the seemingly incoherent and harsh strategies of nationalists to irrationality. This finding, however, reasserts the bounded rationality of nationalists, both past and present, and the need to analyze them as rational actors. This continuum is only the result of initial theory building and needs far more study, both qualitative and quantitative, to confirm its validity. If its validity is confirmed, this theory will aid scholars in classifying linguistic nationalist movements so that the practices and aims of these movements and policies may be better understood.

Works Cited

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London/New York: Verso, 1991.

Aydingün, Ayşegül, and İsmail Aydingün. "The Role of Language in the Formation of Turkish National Identity and Turkishness." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10, no. 3 (2004): 415-432.

Blanc, Haim. "Hebrew in Israel: Trends and Problems." *Middle East Journal* 11, no. 4 (1957): 397-409. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4322951.

Butler, Judith. *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

Chomsky, Noam. *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use.* New York: Praeger, 1986.

Çolak, Yilmaz. "Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 6 (2004): 67-91. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289953.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Hospitality.* Translated by Rachel Bowlby, Edited by Mieke Bal and Hent De Vries. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Dieckhoff, Alain. *The Invention of a Nation : Zionist Thought and the Making of Modern Israel.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Halperin, Liora. *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Hanioğlu, M. Şükrü. *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

İlker Aytürk. "Turkish Linguists against the West: The Origins of Linguistic Nationalism in Atatürk's Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 6 (2004.): 1-25. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289950.

Mahmood, Saba. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

May, Stephen. *Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language.* New York: Routledge, 2011.

Mitchell, Bruce. "Yiddish and the Hebrew Revival: A New Look at the Changing Role of Yiddish." *Monatshefte* 90, no. 2 (1998): 189-97. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30153700.

Nahir, Moshe. "Micro Language Planning and the Revival of Hebrew: A Schematic Framework." *Language in Society* 27, no. 3 (1998): 335-57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4168849.

Rabkin, Yakov M. "Language in Nationalism." *Holy Land Studies* 9, no. 2 (2010): 129-45.

Saulson, Scott B. *Institutionalized Language Planning Documents and Analysis of Revival of He-*

brew: Contributions to the Sociology of Language. Stuttgart: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fear of Barbarians: Beyond the Clash of Civilizations.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Yilmaz, Hale. *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey 1923-1945.* Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013.

Zuckermann, Ghil'ad. "The Genetics of the Israeli Language: Mosaic or Mosaic?" Midstream 50, no. 4 (2004): 30-32.