

**State-Building and Multilingual Education
in Africa**

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I

Introduction

Political cohesion seems to require a standard language. As historical state-builders monopolized violence, collected regular taxes, expanded bureaucratic reach, constructed centralizing roads, and mapped territory and population, they viewed language rationalization as a critical component of their interventions. Moving from ruling indirectly through intermediaries to interfacing directly with citizens required the ability to communicate with this population. Mass conscription and universal compulsory education aided greatly in this endeavor, and while it took until the early twentieth century before linguistic reality began to approximate visions of uniformity in Europe, the two centuries prior demonstrated vigorous and conscious efforts by rulers toward this goal of language standardization.

These hard-fought efforts at linguistic unity reached their apex just as African states were achieving independence, and most new leaders adopted the nation-building goals of language standardization. Recently, however, many states appear to be ignoring these historical models, and across Africa, governments are endorsing the use of more local languages as media of instruction in primary schools. Whereas less than 40 percent of states used African languages in education at independence, nearly 80 percent do presently. Rather than a deliberate movement toward monolingualism, perpetual multilingualism appears to be their vision and not just an inconvenient reality. Especially on a continent where high ethnolinguistic diversity is a standard explanation for poor growth, weak governance, and conflict, why are governments highlighting, rather than attempting to diminish, their linguistic diversity?

Democracy promotion has replaced nation-building as the appropriate goal for African states, but even in the latter, a common language is central to providing the communicative resources that allow citizens to participate and to hold their rulers accountable. Hobsbawm notes that a national language only became important when ordinary citizens became a significant component of the state: "The original case for a standard language was entirely democratic, not

cultural. How could citizens understand, let alone take part in, the government of their country if it was conducted in an incomprehensible language?" (1996, 1067). Green argues that a cohesive civic nation is the best guarantor of democracy, and drawing on the traditions of Durkheim¹ lauds a centralized education that helps individuals forge broader loyalties and construct participatory skills that can sustain democracy (Green 1997, 170, 186). Particularly after the spectacular dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, states that strayed furthest from the homogenizing model to institutionalize nationhood on a sub-national level (Brubaker 1996, 29), the dangers of institutionalizing difference seem acute. Brubaker notes that unlike European nationalists that conceived states as belonging to a particular group, African nationalism purposely was framed in a supraethnic rather than ethnonational idiom (Brubaker 1996, 64, fn13). The importance of a common, neutral language in holding together such a polity is self-evident. It is even more puzzling, then, that this supraethnic façade should be deliberately pulled away with a focus on sub-national language units.

This book explains the increasing recognition of language in education as a combination of material and ideational opportunities, along with electoral incentives for current rulers. The environment that produces this policy choice is vastly different from that faced by state-builders in Europe, an important acknowledgment that opens the possibility for differing trajectories of state development. While the majority of the book explains the causes, the final chapter begins to explore the consequences of multilingual education for national cohesion and political mobilization, which are much more benign than the previous paragraph implies.

This introductory chapter is divided into three parts. The first lays a framework to explain the empirical increase in mother tongue education across the African continent, juxtaposing my own theory about the causes of these policy choices with alternative explanations. The second discusses the policy of mother tongue education generally – its rationale and current scholarly debates. The third part of the introduction describes more fully the differences in contexts faced by historical European state-builders – from whence we derive our monolingual model – and contemporary African states – where we see the multilingual option taking precedence. The chapter ends with a plan of the book.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In explaining the causes of multilingual education policy, three alternative accounts could compete with my own: norm-based, rational choice, and socio-structural. First, it may be simply part of the rise of identity politics that began in

¹ "Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands" (Durkheim 1922/1956, 70).

the 1960s and 1970s, and the norm of multiculturalism and linguistic rights has finally penetrated across the globe. As international human rights activists have persuaded governments to acknowledge the rights of minority language groups within their borders, widespread multilingual education thus may simply reflect a growing international norm that favors protecting minority languages. Second, multilingual policies could reflect leaders aiming to prevent potential conflict by granting concessions to groups that demand special or equal treatment. This would be a rationalist bargaining explanation that assumes governments respond to language group pressures led by elites. The spread of democracy gives more voice to organized groups, which is why we see more policies promoting their particular interests. Third, adding nuance to the bargaining explanation with a sociocultural perspective, it might be that more cohesive, hierarchical groups would demonstrate a greater ability to hold on to their cultural identities than dispersed, "stateless" groups. Where stronger, hierarchical subunits exist, one may expect to see more attention to their languages. While I draw elements from each of these explanations, none can by itself explain the outcomes we see.

The increase in the use of local languages indeed results from both internal and external pressures, but they are different from those commonly assumed. I argue that African governments enacting mother tongue education policies are responding to two different forces – one a "push" and the other a "pull." The push comes not from language groups or their representatives demanding rights to use their languages in education – indeed, many speakers explicitly do not want this right – but from an alliance of indigenous linguists and foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who use a recent accumulation of written languages and evidence of their success as media of instruction to offer an alternative to African governments facing failing education systems. Their pressure, however, has been building for a long time, and it might not have been accepted officially if another factor had not provided a moment of opportunity.

This opportunity, the pull, is provided by the new discourse of a former colonizer, France. Rather than a vague call by the entire international community to promote languages in support of diversity, a specific, new message began to emanate from France in the 1990s. Reversing its long-standing preference for French-only as the medium of instruction in African primary schools, France began to communicate its support for initial schooling in local languages. This was not because France had suddenly decided to care about local languages, but because its foreign policy leadership had been convinced by a group of strategic scholars that learning initially in a local language helps a child to learn French.

These forces meet to influence a person – a policy maker. Why would such a policy maker see the benefit of multilingualism? Current African leaders can be compared with historical state-builders as we assess their preferences, along with those of other social actors. I argue that their preferences are different from those of past rulers. They emerge as a result of the opportunities described previously, but their preferences also evolve as leaders adapt new strategies for maintaining

power. As they survey their states, I suggest that the context they face – the need to consolidate their power within electoral institutions – is different from the context faced by historical state-builders prior to the late twentieth century.

Why should we compare African trajectories to historical state-building episodes? The comparison is useful because political leaders, no matter what the historical period, aim to stay in power by extending their control over opposition, and all must adapt to material and institutional constraints. African states are notoriously weak – as measured by governments' abilities to control violence, spur economic growth, invest in infrastructure, and care for populations² – and the harm that their citizens have endured spurs questioning of causes. The recognition of Africa's weakness prompted many studies to probe reasons for it. One obvious candidate is the continent's tremendous ethnolinguistic fragmentation.³

Language is the strongest marker of ethnic identity. Usually a familial given, it is also changeable, susceptible to individual choice and social planning. No wonder, then, that it has been an object of tremendous scholarly interest and political intervention. But African state leaders have not shown as much concern for linguistic cohesiveness as we might expect. This is because of a unique context.

Jeffrey Herbst (2000) has highlighted ably many differences between contemporary Africa and the Europe where "war made states" (Tilly 1990). Protected by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) agreement on sacrosanct borders and sustained by foreign aid and taxes on primary commodities, African leaders have not needed to build up bureaucracies for internal taxation as did prior state-builders. And geographic barriers made this penetration even more daunting (Herbst 2000, chapter 5). While stable borders had momentous impact by creating permanent citizens and foreigners, Herbst observes the relatively weak effect of African citizenship laws in establishing a strong national bond between state and citizen. But like other theorists, he assumes that leaders *want* to establish a common national identity.⁴ That states want to control the allocation of citizenship is not disputed. That they care about deepening national identification is what I contest.

First, without the demands of war, mass conscription is not necessary. This reduces the value of large populations. Second, income taxation is rendered

² African states make up 22 of the 29 slots in the bottom quintile in the *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World*. None but island states of Mauritius, Seychelles, and Cape Verde are in the top quintile (Rice and Patrick 2008, 39–42).

³ Easterly and Levine 1997; Alesina Baqir, Easterly 1999; Collier and Gunning 1999; Rodrik 1999; Keeler and Knack 2002. Even studies using more nuanced fractionalization measures concur that linguistic fractionalization (Alesina et al 2003: 167) and politicized ethnic diversity (Posner 2004) harm growth.

⁴ He argues that states requiring a more demanding citizenship based on descent, rather than place of birth, "may actually make the job of establishing a common identity more difficult" (Herbst 2000, 243) – implying that establishing a common identity is a goal.

relatively unnecessary by reliance on trade taxes, commodity sales, and foreign aid. This reduces the value of productive populations. Both of these factors dilute the need of African leaders to induce compliance and productivity by protecting citizenship rights. A recent development paradoxically has weakened incentives for rulers to connect with their citizens even more: pressure toward electoral institutions. Whereas the Cold War era African leaders grew progressively weaker in an environment that lacked external war and muted internal competition, current leaders have similar protected borders, but they are facing potential competition through the ballot box.

Thus, three periods of state-building can be compared: First, the classic European state-building era of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provided a context of interstate war, where leaders invested in national unity to augment their power. This was in order to quell rebellion and to raise funds and fighting men. Second, during the Cold War era in Africa, without the threats of war, leaders invested less in unity. Because African leaders did not have to make societal bargains to borrow for war making, they could retain their authoritarian rule, appeasing potential rivals more selectively through patronage. Third, in contemporary Africa, without the threats of war, but with shrinking resources and demands of democratization, current leaders may find *disunity* an attractive strategy.

What did this have to do with language? Seeking to bypass the mediating role of local elites, centralizing European rulers sought national unity through a standard language. African independence leaders, in contrast, did not require conscripts or rely on direct taxation, so they demonstrated ambivalence regarding national unity through language. Believing such policies irrelevant to their goals of maintaining power, they retained whatever language policies they inherited from their colonial predecessor. But as electoral competition is added to the context, the push and pull forces described earlier encourage leaders to rethink their strategies. Striving always to enhance their internal authority, leaders agree to multilingual policies because they begin to see in them long-term possibilities for entrenching their power. Table 1.1 shows these three periods and linguistic outcomes.

State-building in Europe eventually led to forms of democracy, but it was not a smooth transition. Forced to offer rights and protection to the wealthy and landed citizens from whom they borrowed, autocrats found their authority restrained. Landlords wanted military positions, capital holders required property rights, merchants wanted infrastructure. Later, the raising of national armies also created claims on the state for welfare and benefits. Through this process, governments began intervening more in food distribution, health, and education of workers to improve productivity. Tilly shows that state expenditure in Norway grew from 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1875 to 24 percent in 1975, and that social service provision as a percentage of GDP in Denmark grew from 1 percent in 1900 to 25 percent in 1975 (Tilly 1992, 121). Restraint, constitutionalism, and provision of welfare were part and parcel of

TABLE 1.1. *Language Policy in Three Periods*

Ruler Environment	External Context	Political Context	Language Policy
18th/19th-century European	Threat of war	Restrained autocracy	<i>Proactive monolingual</i>
Cold War African	No threat of war	Patronage autocracy	<i>Language ambivalence</i>
Post-Cold War African	No threat of war	Electoral autocracy	<i>Proactive multilingual</i>

militarization. The elements of value to citizens – democracy and services – came with a high price.

Scholars have mined the successful European experience for clues about what produces a deep democracy. National cohesion and dense networks of trust top the list. Both would seem compromised by linguistic fragmentation, which is the motivation for this study. The bulk of the book is dedicated to explaining the causes of the shift from monolingual to multilingual state-building, and the final chapter begins to look at its effects on these valued outcomes.

To observe these trends empirically, I created an original database of language policies in all African states, using a composite measure called “Intensity of Local Language Use in Education” or ILLED. This measure refines my previous coding (Albaugh 2005, 2009) to capture both depth and extent of language use in each country. I first assign a number from 0 to 5 to show the proportion of local languages that are used in each country, and then multiply that number by 1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.8, or 2 to show how extensively the languages are used across the primary curriculum.⁵ This yields a composite score between 0 and 10, 0 indicating exclusive use of a European language and 10 indicating exclusive use of African languages through the entire primary cycle.

This way of coding enables one to compare small, homogeneous countries with large, multilingual countries, looking not at the raw number of languages used but at the proportion of possible languages used overall. Appendix A provides narrative information supporting the coding and lists the languages used in education and their proportions within each country.

Figure 1.1 compares the intensity of local language use in education at independence with the intensity in 2010. Whereas at the time of independence,

⁵ ILLED = (Proportion of Languages) × (Extent of Use). Proportion of Languages: 0 = None (European Only); 1 = Classical Arabic; 2 = Single Minority Language (<50%); 3 = Few Languages/One Major Language (50–70%); 4 = Several Languages/One Dominant Language (70–85%); 5 = All Languages/One Overwhelmingly Dominant (>85%). Extent of Use: 1 = Experimental; 1.2 = Moderate; 1.5 = Extensive; 1.8 = Generalized; 2 = Exclusive.

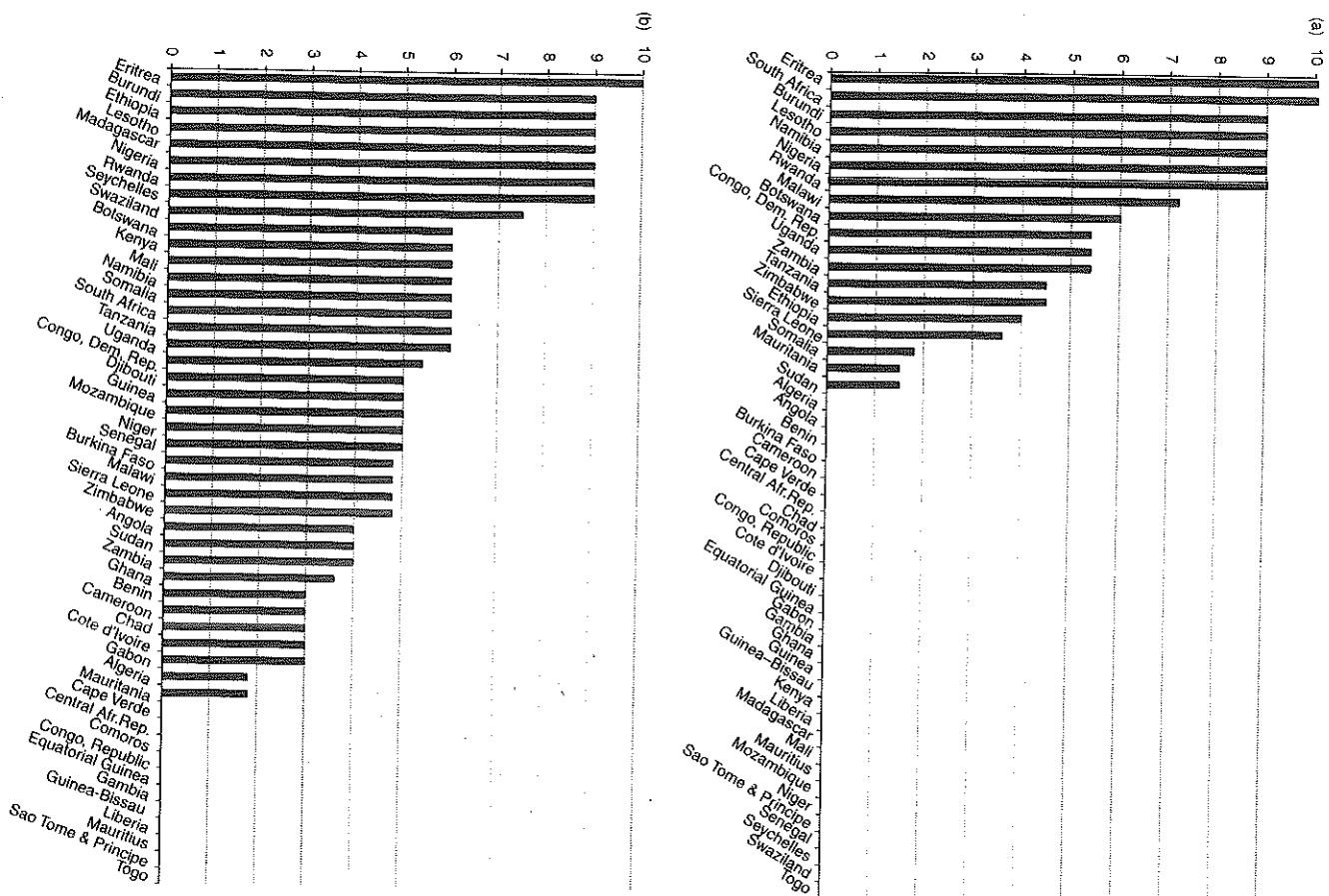


FIGURE 1.1. Intensity of Local Language Use in Education (a) at Independence or in 1960 and (b) in 2010. Note that I coded states that were not colonized (Liberia, Ethiopia) or that were independent much earlier (South Africa) in 1960.

only nineteen out of forty-nine African states (39 percent) were using local languages in primary education, the number has doubled to thirty-eight states (78 percent) doing so currently.

Clearly, the use of local languages in education has increased over time. Scholars familiar with African colonial history quickly will note that virtually all of those countries using local languages at independence were former British colonies. It is customary to point out the differences in ruling practices between France and Britain in Africa. While scholars have challenged the neat dichotomy in recent years, a stark distinction does hold true in the two colonizers' approaches to education. British colonial educational policy favored initial teaching in the medium of the vernacular and then a switch to English only in the later primary grades. French administrators insisted on the French language as medium from the outset of schooling. As one would expect, this practice carried over to independence, with Anglophone countries maintaining their inherited method of mother tongue education and Francophone countries preferring French-medium education.

Though a few Francophone African countries experimented briefly with local languages in the interim, the medium of instruction policies three decades after independence were remarkably stable. In its landmark 1988 report, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, the World Bank devoted a few pages to assessing language medium in education in African countries. The bank observed that of the fifteen former British colonies in their sample, thirteen of them (87 percent) were using one or more African languages in education (World Bank 1988, 44, 154-156). Of the fifteen former French colonies surveyed, only four were using one or more African languages in their primary education. The weight of historical precedent continued to prevail until about 1990.

At this date, most Anglophone countries were using local languages, and only a few Francophone countries were experimenting with local languages. The dramatic changes occurred after 1990, when fourteen out of eighteen former French territories began or expanded local language use in their schools, compared with only one country doing so at independence.

Such a trend could point to a convergence toward high levels of local language use across the continent, which would be consistent with the competing explanation that international norms of minority rights are stimulating mother tongue education everywhere. But when we look at the direction of changes from 1990 to the present, as we will in Chapter 4, it becomes clear that the overwhelming upward trend is concentrated in Francophone Africa. In contrast, Anglophone Africa is making policy changes in both directions. And if we examine international norms on this issue, they are actually not consistent.

THE POLICY OF MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

Unlike scholars who urge government support of languages to stall their unprecedented death rate, this study is concerned with the factors beyond a fear of

language extinction that motivate states to alter their policies. While I believe that the choice of mother tongue education is more political than pedagogical, one such motivation could be the educational benefits such a policy purports to provide. Therefore, we should look first at the scholarly history around mother tongue education.

Works that discuss medium of instruction policy in developing countries usually refer to a 1953 UNESCO document as the landmark statement supporting such a method.⁶ The benefits of local language use were only a theoretical assumption at that point, however, rather than an assertion backed with research. Dakin et al. (1968, 27), summarizing an edited volume that assessed the use of the mother tongue in developing countries, wrote:

The evidence about the difficulties of a foreign medium at the school stage thus seems inconclusive. The superiority of the mother tongue has not been everywhere demonstrated.... The practical arguments for the mother tongue in schools seem to rest more on the attitudes to language of the pupils, and the deficiencies of the teachers, than on any positive benefits of such instruction.

The most important early experiment in Africa, and the one cited most frequently, was the Ife Six-Year Primary Project undertaken in Nigeria from 1970 to 1976.⁷ It is widely upheld as the most conclusive evidence for the vigorous use of the mother tongue in education, though later assessments have cautioned that several nonlanguage factors – preparation of the teachers, new materials, additional attention – in fact may have accounted for the success of the students (Akinnaso 1993, 274). Another Nigerian experiment was the River Readers Project, which also began in 1970 (Williamson 1980). This project produced inexpensive primers in all twenty-eight of the state's languages, which were used in the first year of primary school. The River Readers Project did not have the same level of evaluation as the Ife Project, but it clearly showed the feasibility of using several small languages, rather than only a large regional language, in the first years of education.

Other analyses have been mixed. Experts evaluating mother tongue teaching in Kenya were unconvinced about the superiority of mother tongue classrooms over English-only (Cleghorn et al. 1989). As with the Ife Project, the major problem with the comparisons is that mother tongue experimental classrooms have many other factors that contribute to their success. Nonetheless, there is widespread agreement among international educators that, in principle, teaching in the mother tongue is the best method.

⁶ It recommended mother tongue education for its psychological, sociological, and educational benefits (1953, 11).

⁷ Description by Afolayan (1976); positive assessment by Fafunwa, Macaulay, and Sokoya, eds. (1989); cautionary assessment by Akinnaso (1993).

General language rights and specific rights to education in local languages have been a theme of UNESCO declarations and major international conferences for decades. The organization has sponsored several conferences on the theme of promoting African languages (Yaounde 1983, Lagos 1989, Accra 1994). Many believe that UNESCO is behind the recent wave of mother tongue experimentation in Africa:

The effect of UNESCO's relentless advocacy is that member states of the Organization have been under pressure to re-examine their policies. Those already engaged in the practice of mother tongue education have felt justified, and those that have not had such a policy have made statements supporting it or have actually embarked on experiments and pilot projects. In effect, conducting initial literacy or lower primary education in an imported official language is no longer fashionable. (Bamgbose 2004, 7)

A *norm-based* explanation would attribute such a change to the diffusion of human rights norms: "After 1985, we can say that the world began a process of genuine international 'norms cascade,' as the influence of international human rights norms spread rapidly" (Risse, Ropp and Sikink 1999, 21).

One can indeed observe such an international norm of preserving minority cultures has been gaining strength for the past fifty years, with the last two decades being the most significant. The modern principle can be traced most concretely to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the beginning of a consensus on the necessity to protect minorities. But protection does not necessarily equal promotion. The 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child guaranteed children the right to use their language and the right to education, but it did not connect the two rights. Only recently has the 1992 UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Religious and Linguistic Minorities explicitly promoted mother tongues in education. The principle of nondiscrimination has grown to active *promotion* of minority identities. The declaration "unambiguously requires the State to allow private language use in private, public and collective action" (König 1999, 404).

Several events at the international level demonstrate accelerated attention to minority rights in recent years. The UN created a High Commissioner for Human Rights in 1993, and a UN Working Group on Minorities was set up in 1995 (Wright 2004, 192). A Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (UDLR) was proclaimed on June 6, 1996, at the University of Barcelona. The Council of Europe adopted a Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 1998 – a "legally binding multilateral instrument for the protection of national minorities in Europe" – and in the same year the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages promoted the "use of regional or minority languages in education and the media and urged their use in judicial and administrative settings, economic and social life and cultural activities" (Wright 2004, 192–193).

Despite the appearance of normative convergence, however, education policies continue to diverge. In 1990, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, and the World Bank sponsored the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. Linguist Shirley Brice Heath led a session on the need for consideration of language in education. Article 5 of the ensuing Jomtien Declaration's "Framework of Action to Meet Basic Needs" includes a rather vague statement that "literacy in the mother-tongue strengthens cultural identity and heritage." The International Conference on Education, convened by UNESCO in 1992, affirmed the "cultural importance of introducing mother tongues and national languages into educational systems" because language "is the most evident and pervasive manifestation of culture and is often the central point in establishing and maintaining the cultural identity of a people" (Section I. D. 14). Yet participants agreed only that "the choice of one or more languages, the mother tongue or a national or foreign language, as a separate subject or as a medium for studying other subjects is determined by the educational and cultural policy of each country."⁸ At the 2000 World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, mother tongue education was cited as one of nine good practices and successful policies for the African context.⁹ Nadine Dutcher, former World Bank consultant, called for greater leadership by international organizations such as UNESCO to follow rhetoric with action. "Over the past decade, there has been a striking lack of leadership on language at the international level" (2004, 47).

In sum, rhetoric in favor of local languages abounds, but forceful recommendations and consistent rationales are lacking. I argue it is instead bilateral messages that are much more important. The trend in local language policy changes reflects the pull of confluent ideas within French-speaking industrialized countries, contrasted with indecisiveness within English-speaking industrialized countries regarding language use in education. A recent consensus in the Francophone world has led to a new and clear message communicated to the African countries in its sphere of influence, whereas the persistent divisions within the Anglophone community have resulted in a muted and ambivalent message conveyed to Anglophone Africa. Within African states, bureaucrats are persuaded by the rhetoric of language NGOs and external permissiveness, while rulers are influenced more by their own personal interests. Their changing preferences are central to the explanation of this policy change.

If a first competing explanation is international norms emerging from scientific studies of the educational benefits of mother tongue education, a second competing explanation rests on rationalist bargaining. As will be explained in

⁸ Italics added. 43rd International Conference on Education [Geneva, 14–19 Sept 1992]. Paris, Jan. 1993. (Section IV.14).

⁹ Preamble: A Framework for Action in sub-Saharan Africa, first adopted in Johannesburg, South Africa, Dec. 1999.

Chapter 3, this explanation is incorrect because it does not accurately capture the preferences of major social actors. But it is also faulty because it rests on an understanding of bargaining between holders of power that derives ultimately from a European context. As Bratton and van de Walle have argued, African politics is marked by persistent neopatrimonialism (1997, chapter 2). Big men dominate the system and stand above its laws. The state has low extractive capacity, and therefore state offices are distributed and public resources privatized (Bratton and van de Walle 1997, 66). Scholars have described this phenomenon and discussed its effects primarily on outcomes such as democratic transition or economic growth. The origins of neopatrimonial behavior are not well theorized. But for this present study, the lack of need for rulers to bargain with populations for resources is at the root of this distinction,¹⁰ and it helps to explain why the traditional bargaining models do not apply.

A more nuanced view of bargaining is found in the work of Catherine Boone (1995, 2003), who looks at subnational variation in the strength of groups in relation to the state, which could present a third alternative explanation. She argues that in West Africa, where "hierarchies were strong and rural elites had economic autonomy, indigenous elites were in a position to contest the state's claims on rural surpluses... In the absence of social hierarchy, regimes were far less constrained" (Boone 1995, 17). Though Boone focuses on economic policy rather than language policy, extrapolating from her schematic gives the expectation that rulers should have had much more ease in spreading a single language – their own or a foreign one – where competing local authorities were weak. And where local authorities were strong, one would expect more promotion of minority languages. We will look at this potential explanation for variation in language policies in Chapter 4.

To set the stage, however, for discussing how bargaining over language is different in Africa, I paint a picture of how this bargaining unfolded in Europe. Using France and Britain as representative European cases, I elaborate the preferences of major actors regarding language standardization during these states' consolidating years.

EUROPEAN LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION: STATE-BUILDING IN FRANCE AND BRITAIN

Most scholars conceive of nationalism as a modern phenomenon, revolving around memory, writing, and literacy. And it is widely accepted that a standardization of language within compulsory primary education eventually

¹⁰ See Jane Guyer (1992) for an excellent study of this phenomenon in Nigeria. She writes: "familiar phenomena such as clientage, prebendalism, withdrawal from the state, and unproductive investment may be seen as interrelated processes in a struggle to create a polity based on representation without (or before) taxation" (46).

contributed to the cohesiveness of European nation-states. This section probes the incentives of early state-builders who made decisions about language and education within the territory they controlled. It concludes that their motivations to build linguistic unity through standard education depended at root on a competitive and dynamic environment: constant threats of war and need for fighting men, internal ideological and religious rivalries, and populations that were mobile, communicating and shifting in relative strength. These conditions differ markedly from the context faced by African leaders, a distinction that explains in large part the difference in their language strategies as well.

European state-builders needed fighters, workers, taxpayers, and later voters. They had three major reasons for wanting to spread a single language across the territory they ruled: control, loyalty, and extraction. First, building states meant breaking the mediating position of local power holders and wresting from them direct power over the bodies and resources of the population within a given territory.¹¹ As it related to language, this meant penetrating local leaders' communication monopoly. Second, rulers aimed to secure the loyalty of populations, which could be facilitated by teaching unifying myths and symbols in a common language. These first two goals coincided with the transition from mercenary to citizen armies. A common language allowed for better coordination between officers and troops, and the patriotism that could be instilled through standard education helped produce loyal fighters. Finally, a common language throughout the territory facilitated opportunities for trade and economic linkages, improving productivity and deepening rulers' potential tax base. It was the innovation of technology for mass literacy that made possible this control, loyalty, and extraction.

Benedict Anderson points to a dramatic shift in the role of language that followed the dethronement of Latin beginning in the sixteenth century. Following Luther's provocation of the Protestant Reformation in 1517, material printed in the German vernacular increased threefold in twenty years (Anderson 1991, 40). For the first time, there was mass readership for Luther's Bible translations. The French language similarly began to replace Latin in publication frequency.¹² Anderson explains that the stratum of Latin readers was so slim that the market for books written in Latin was saturated quickly. After the seventeenth century, therefore, printers sought new markets in vernacular readership. These print capitalists – printers of books and newspapers – provided a new basis for national consciousness in certain dominant languages. Anderson argues that print languages served to widen fields of exchange and fix official versions of languages, which often meant elevating

¹¹ Tilly (1992, chapter 2) argues that before the era of the French Revolution, all states used some form of indirect rule. The transition to direct rule gave rulers direct access to citizens and the resources they controlled through household taxation, mass conscription, censuses, and police systems.

¹² Anderson 1991, 18; citing Felvre and Martin 1958, 321. See also Stone 1969, 78–79.

a language of power at the expense of weaker languages or dialects. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the spread of official languages by would-be monarchs was relatively accidental, spurred by the printing press, capitalists, and pragmatic rulers seeking administrative efficiency. There was no concern for mass literacy, however, given small state bureaucracies and limited scope of state activities.

By the eighteenth century, the ascendancy of popular novels and daily newspapers gave people who never saw each other face to face the ability to imagine themselves as a community (Anderson 1991, 77). Rather than a thin stratum of elites, with only Latin and marriage ties in common, the bourgeoisie was deepening and dividing along linguistic lines. And this is when rulers also began to see the advantages of deliberate language rationalization.

Unlike the sixteenth century spread of language, which was largely unconscious, nineteenth century official nationalisms purposely used language as a central marker. Leaders began to see mass public education as a means of building integrated national polities. But this recognition of education's role happened in a particular context: one of competition. France demonstrates the singular importance of war, while Britain highlights the contributions of religious rivalries and industrial dynamism. In each instance, standard-language education allowed for greater control, loyalty, and extraction.

The eighteenth century began the transformation across Europe from mercenary to standing armies (Tilly 1992, 29). This followed a change in military technology: a shift toward the proliferation of gunpowder weapons, which disadvantaged smaller fighting units and advantaged large standing armies. Because of its size and population, France could excel, and Porter (1994, 110) attributes the French rise to dominance to its unparalleled military. Large armies required discipline, control, and logistical coordination. Raising more troops also required greater coercion and stronger justification for manpower demands. As the century went on, troops became permanent across Europe, and absolutist states spent 80–90 percent of their revenues on funding the army, requiring unprecedented levels of taxation (Porter 1994, 110). Reaching deep into rural areas, bypassing reluctant nobles, the king had to convince the masses in his language.

The French Revolution was caused in part by the difficulty raising enough funds to pay this growing military. During the revolution and after, France continued to wage war on neighbors, and the Convention introduced the *levée en masse* (Porter 1994, 130). Through the course of the fighting, as the bulk of the nobles fled, they were replaced by more bourgeoisie and peasant classes. Recruitment drives gathered even more, until 68 percent of soldiers were peasants. The new Assembly discharged foreigners and passed a law conscripting men eighteen to twenty-five years old. Though resisted, the law eventually incorporated 300,000 new members in the army (Porter 1994, 130). The army became a center of nationalism, where a common language, myths, and symbols could spread.

The ideology of the revolution, of course, was central. France's state-organized primary schools had the "vocation not only to transmit knowledge but also to form the new citizens of the republic" (Chafer 2007, 439). They aimed to counter church schools and the influence of monarchist ideas with a secular French republicanism, which "embraced defending the principles of 1789 and inculcating notions of patriotism, civic responsibility and respect for order" (Chafer 2007, 439). The Convention Speech in 1792 emphasized the importance of linguistic unity. Eugen Weber, in his masterful *Peasants into Frenchmen*, summarizes:

Linguistic diversity had been irrelevant to administrative unity. But it became significant when it was perceived as a threat to political – that is, ideological – unity. All citizens had to understand what the interests of the Republic were and what the Republic was up to.... Otherwise, they could not participate, were not equipped to participate in it.... A didactic and integrative regime needed an effective vehicle for information and propaganda.... The ideal of the Revolution lay in uniformity and the extinction of particularisms. (1976, 72)

The Convention acted to abolish dialects and replace them with French, decreeing that everywhere "instruction should take place only in French" (Weber 1976, 72). Though the policy foundered initially, the principle survived (Bell 1995, 1406). A unified language was part of civilizing the peasantry.

In the aftermath of the revolution, Napoleon expended most of his energy on elitist military academies as a place for indoctrination of state-induced nationalism (Porter 1994, 132). He unified the legal code, created a centrally appointed and regulated bureaucracy, and continued the secularization of education to break the influence of the Catholic Church. The strict military discipline and military curriculum in his lycées derived from the "inexorable calculus of the military state" (Porter 1994, 134).

The July Monarchy from 1830 was openly anticlerical and "counted on elementary education to raise a generation of citizens that would support liberal, bourgeois democracy" (de Swaan 1988, 96). The Loi Guizot (1833) marked the first effective law to enact universal, compulsory education, and though the state did not achieve the universalization of the French language it envisioned until the 1880s, this was certainly its intent. Despite many shortcomings, "from 1833 onward the government, supported by a steadily growing vested interest, bent itself to advance and develop public education" (Weber 1976, 308). For all of the nineteenth century, then, the French state was deeply involved in standard language education as a state-building tool.

The French Revolution and its aftermath provided a model for this deliberate literacy promotion, as its success raising citizen armies and spreading a nationalist ideology became well known. Anderson argues that the simple existence of mass produced texts made the French Revolution a blueprint for future revolutionaries and state-builders to follow. Universal education in Prussia, for example, gained acceptance in the nineteenth century, as the state viewed it as a tool to

gain direct access to the lower ranks as taxpayers, recruits, and later voters. De Swaan describes Prussia's efforts to educate civic mindedness and loyalty and to improve tax flows by promoting trade and industry. As rural lords were not always forthcoming with military recruits for the king's army, breaking their mediating position gave rulers more direct access to these fighting resources. "Part of the effort to free the country's human and economic resources from feudal bonds was the drive for mass education which would instill loyalty toward the Prussian state" (de Swaan 1988, 89, 91).

In France, the rationalization of eighty-eight *paroisses* into one single, standard language was a long-term process of creating French citizens. Weber argues that "patriotic feelings on the national level, far from instinctive, had to be learned" (Weber 1976, 114). Schools became much more effective after the 1880s, with the Jules Ferry Laws (Ozouf 1984, 400-415), accompanied by the practical improvements in roads and increase in teachers and facilities. By 1881, most classrooms had wall maps - a physical image of the national hexagon. And public schools did ultimately achieve integration around national symbols, history, and a standard language (Weber 1976, 337).

Through the lens of war and revolution, then, France shows competition inducing a standard language education. Its official embrace of spreading a single language derived from its militarization and revolutionary ideology. The process happened later in England, and through a different route. Aside from the competition of warfare, the mechanisms of religious rivalries and industrial dynamism produced the same outcome. Examining this process allows us to move below the sole desires of rulers to examine the preferences of other actors in society. In Europe as a whole, the other significant actors were the church hierarchy and the landed gentry. In England particularly, it also included an emerging merchant and entrepreneurial class.

Certainly the state in England was less interventionist and more decentralized than that in France, but it too saw the utility of a standard language in its state-building project.¹³ It simply had to wait for forces other than revolution to tip the balance of competing social forces toward its preferences. While it made sense for rulers and their bureaucrats to desire a standard language to facilitate their administration, the gentry distrusted mass education, and the clergy were ambivalent.

Schools prior to the nineteenth century were primarily a means of religious instruction for commoners. Wealthy families hired tutors for their children, while the rest of the population had the option of parish schools charging minimal fees. Teaching people to read carried a tension. It might induce citizens to absorb ideas about order and hierarchy, or it might release them to challenge

¹³ Unlike in France, educational efforts in England were aimed primarily at increasing literacy in a tongue that most people spoke. Britain's "periphery," however, much more resembled France, where the state favored the spread English and intervened to exclude Irish, Gaelic, and Welsh from national schools from the 1830s. See Grillo 1989.

the status quo. It might propagate beliefs and inculcate morals, but it might also incite rebellion (de Swaan 1988, 57). Therefore, ambivalence reigned prior to the nineteenth century. It was rivalry between the state-sponsored Anglican Church and the dissenting churches that stimulated the widespread provision of education for the poor (Stone 1969, 81). The Anglican Church had not seen literacy as a high priority, while Dissenters viewed personal familiarity with the Bible as necessary for spiritual growth and saw education as a means to instill obedience and industry. Competition "for the minds and loyalties of the poor" meant that the Anglican Church was drawn into providing similar educational services (Stone 1969, 82). The result was a population broadly able to read, even if not deeply literate, as England entered its industrializing years.¹⁴

Ernest Gellner (1983, chapter 3) insists on the functional need of industrial society for general, mass education: "The level of literacy and technical competence, in a standardized medium, a common conceptual currency . . . can only be provided by something resembling a modern 'national' education system" (33). This linear thesis has been scrutinized, partly with the assertion that while England was first to industrialize, it was later than other continental European states to legislate mass education. Yet the competition between Anglicans and Dissenters had produced a population that was indeed broadly literate, many able to read pamphlets and newspapers that could prove destabilizing.

England demonstrates that the link between public schools and industrialization is more nuanced. Governments saw schools first as spaces for *control* and then later as sites for improving worker productivity. Early industrialization in England had drawn people to the cities, creating a large, urban working class. The latent unrest contained in this population made public education's methods of discipline and potential for reducing crime attractive to the government as well as to employers. And in the later years of industrialization came a recognition of education's potential to train more qualified workers for skilled tasks (de Swaan 1988, 106; Stone 1969, 137).

Industrial growth also meant that more members of the state bureaucracy began to depend on trade for their well-being, and the entrepreneurial class was growing. These swelling ranks of the middle class stood to gain from a national network of communication to broaden their avenues for trade. At the same time, as England's dynamic industrialization improved the speed of the printing press, print capitalists continually competed for readership. They held a critical interest in promoting literacy among potential readers. This commercial middle class then joined metropolitan bureaucrats who supported educational renewal, particularly the teaching in a standard language. Half a century after France, in 1870, an Elementary Education Act gradually produced compulsory, state-funded education in England.

¹⁴ Stone (1969, 119) estimated an adult male literacy rate in England of more than 50 percent in 1750, and more than 80 percent in Scotland. The rate had jumped to more than 80 percent in England by 1850.

TABLE 1.2. *Preferences of Actors Regarding Language of Instruction: Europe (de Swaan)*

Ruler	Regional		Entrepreneurs/ Business		Outcome
	Bureaucrats	Elites	Clergy	Standard	
Standard	Standard	Local	Local	Standard	Standard language

Abram de Swaan carefully investigates the expansion of state functions in Europe in order to generalize about the actor preferences that converged on universal elementary education in a standard language. I have distilled his findings into Table 1.2.

First, rulers wanted a standard lingua franca, a national language that would help them to break the mediation privilege of either local gentry or church leaders. If all citizens spoke a common language, the ruler's own paid bureaucrats could communicate directly with citizens, without relying on the translation of local leaders. The "state apparatus would tend to promote knowledge in central code . . . for the entire territory, since this would enable its officials to approach the citizens directly – that is, without local mediation" (de Swaan 1988, 73). The level of language competency was intended to be relatively low, in order not to foment rebellion. Therefore, the goal was to provide enough education in a standard language to make communication possible, but not so much as to make citizens think about disloyalty. Bureaucrats, similarly, would want a standard language, in order to make their administration easier. Processing documents in multiple languages or attempting to communicate laws to speakers of multiple languages would be cumbersome. A standard language obviously would facilitate their work.

Regional elites, however, would resist. Landed nobility explicitly did *not* want a standard language because of their concern about losing their mediating role. Clergy members, another local group, also resisted the usurpation of their sole responsibility for education. It was "inherent in the position of local and regional elites to oppose the spread of the standard code in their sphere of influence so as to safeguard the allegiance of their clientele and maintain their advantages of monopolistic mediation" (de Swaan 1988, 73–74). The nineteenth century was especially important, since entrepreneurs, especially traders and publishers, were becoming more and more involved with commerce over wider distances. As they began to grasp the potential of a standard language to extend their markets, they saw the benefits of universal education. Those "involved in supraregional commerce [would] support the promulgation of national codes of communication, of the standard language, of standard measures and currencies, of elementary arithmetic and geography, so as to facilitate exchange" (de Swaan 1988, 73). With this constellation of preferences, the balance tipped toward support of universal education in the

nineteenth century, and eventually a standard language curriculum prevailed throughout Europe.

From this brief historical survey, it is clear that the reasons for imposing a standard language depended on a competitive environment. First, in the context of mass war, where rulers desperately sought fighters and taxes to pay them, they would look to break mediation monopoly of regional elites and aim for direct control. A single language allowed the state and its agents to communicate directly with citizens without relying on local intermediaries. A single language in schools and militaries also provided a means for patriotic inculcation and ideological engineering, so central to the revolutionary project. Alternatively, religious competition for the loyalty of the masses drew the state more deeply into education. Church rivalry in England meant that basic literacy expanded before the state officially appropriated education. Finally, within the dynamics of industrialization, control of mobile, restive populations and their productivity grew in importance. The merchants and entrepreneurs on whom the government depended for resources also began to favor a wider network of communication and literate workers. Competitive environments therefore shifted preferences in a way that led major actors to agree ultimately on the provision of mass, standard education in both France and England.

The focus on France and Britain was deliberate, as these European powers had the greatest influence in Africa. Looking beyond their borders at the populations and resources they might control, language was an important component in their calculation. In the colorful words of Anderson, imperialism aimed to stretch "the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire," to dress "Empire in national drag" (Anderson 1991, 86). Was this, in fact, the aim of the French and British colonizers in Africa? While it may have been so for the czarist Russian imperialism that was the subject of his remark, Chapter 2 will argue that in fact, nation building was not the goal of European colonizers in Africa. They only needed a few administrative intermediaries and soldiers because of their superior firepower, secure borders, and limited plans for industrialization. This contributed to the neopatrimonial tendencies in the African context. British and French colonial policy, along with accompanying missionary impacts on language, will be examined in Cameroon, Senegal, and Ghana. No matter the colonial policy, each case demonstrates linguistic bifurcation, with a small stratum of elites speaking a European language – an incomplete penetration of a standard language and necessary maintenance of multilingualism.

Chapter 3 then looks at independence leaders in Africa, finding that their incentives had not much changed from those of their colonial predecessors. Since African independence was achieved at the height of monolingual hegemony in Europe, it was expected that leaders of new African states would be similarly devoted to linguistic nationalism. Yet most of them struggled with the reality that their most viable "national" language was a foreign one. Others have explained the resulting multilingual outcome as a rational bargain between

leaders and regional elites. I argue in this chapter that their policies in fact reflected apathy, as they discovered declining incentives to invest in a standard language. Colonial precedent continued. And yet, behind the scenes, movement away from these legacies was gaining force. The "push" of language NGOs and the "pull" of international discourse were changing language opportunities and incentives for African leaders.

Chapter 4 describes these opportunities, contrasting international ideas within Anglophone and Francophone communities, and it brings these theoretical insights to bear on the cases of Senegal and Ghana. This chapter confronts the *international norms* alternative explanation. It provides empirical evidence of the importance of language transcription in Francophone states, along with the differing international messages received by governments considering local language education. As Francophone bureaucrats in charge of education were persuaded, politicians needed a real incentive. This came in the form of elections.

Chapter 5 discusses this post-1990s environment. The wave of protests calling for immediate elections, international pressures for the same, and development policies that favored bypassing of government coffers made leaders' positions initially precarious. Discourse about minority rights, decentralization, and power sharing ascended. Facing pressure, "desperate democratizers" scoured their toolkits for strategies that would keep them in power. They began to discover that language and citizenship laws could be turned to their advantage. This chapter incorporates elements of the rival explanation that *subnational variation* influences leaders' strategies for maintaining power.

Chapter 6 describes the specific case of Cameroon, where President Paul Biya, facing real electoral competition for the first time in 1992, worked adeptly within the constraints prescribed by democratic institutions to increase his own control. Boundary changes and targeted disenfranchisement marginalized the opposition. More subtly, constitutional decentralization and minority rights provisions, including mother tongue education, are believed by authorities to fragment opposition and secure government control. This chapter serves as the bridge between the *causes* of multilingual policies and their *consequences*.

Chapter 7 asks whether there might be a silver lining to the cynical view that language concessions are being used only to augment the power of autocrats. Drawing from the rich literature on democratization, it assesses the impact of mother tongue education on groups' likelihood of political participation. Though evidence is only preliminary, it appears that groups possessing a written language and learning it in school may be more likely in the long run to oppose autocratic states.

The book as a whole contributes several important pieces of new knowledge. First, it provides a tool for comparing African states' treatment of local languages in education systems over time. Second, it presents a concise historical picture of the development of education in colonial Africa and the central role played by language. Third, it offers a general model for continuity and change in language policy in independent Africa. Fourth, it begins to assess whether

changes in policies benefit or harm the states enacting them, concluding that local language policies may in the long run be of greater service to citizens than to rulers attempting to entrench their power. Finally, it places all of these findings in the comparative context of state-building, a process that has unfolded very differently in Africa than elsewhere.