Are Central Europe, and East and Southeast Asia Alike?: The Normative Isomorphism of Language, Nation and State[1]

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Abstract

Following the Great War, ethnolinguistic nationalism became the basis of nation-state building and statehood legitimation in Central Europe. According to this paradigm, for the nation-state to be legitimate, it must house a single nation only, defined through its unique language that also serves as this polity's sole national and official language. The language cannot be shared with any other states, and no additional languages can be employed in official capacity on the nation-state's territory. Initially, I thought that this unique normative isomorphism of language, nation, and state was specific exclusively to Central Europe. But scanning the language policies of today's extant states, I discovered that another cluster of 'isomorphic polities' exists in East and Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam). This raises an interesting question of whether it is a local development, or maybe a transfer of ideas took place in this respect between (Central) Europe and this region.

Keywords: Central Europe; East and Southeast Asia; ethnolinguistic nationalism; imagined (invented) character of the categories of language, nation and state; [a] language (*Einzelsprache*); normative isomorphism of language, nation and state; script (writing system)

Introduction

Nations, languages or states are so much part and parcel of the world in which people live nowadays that most of us hardly ever spare them a thought. These categories appear 'transparent' to us, the 'natural' building blocks[2] from which our (social) world is composed, or – more aptly – constructed (cf Searle 1995). Scholarly literature frequently suggests that a configuration of the three elements is *the* cornerstone of nationalism, that is, the sole ideology of statehood and peoplehood legitimation in today's world after the decolonization and the breakup of the non-national polity of the Soviet Union during the second half of the 20th century. From the human perspective, today's world is made of nation-states; all the planet's inhabited and habitable landmass neatly apportioned among the extant polities.

In the article, first, I aspire to 'de-naturalize' the categories of nation, [a] language[3] and state (but I exclude from the analysis substate, suprastate, or 'not-state-endowed' nations and nationalisms). On this basis, I reflect on ethnic nationalism as a subspecies of the ideology of nationalism. According to many authorities, ethnic nationalism is quite closely, though in a largely undefined and vague manner, associated with Central (and Eastern) Europe (cf Plamenatz 1973). In this pattern of thinking, the importance of language is customarily emphasized, often by reference to the pre-national East Prussian scholar based in Russia's Livonia, Johann Gottfried Herder's, seminal but rather rambling work, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 1784-91 (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of*

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[2] Even some renowned thinkers, for instance philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, fall for the deceptive appearances and seriously claim, for instance, that nations are products of nature (Kołakowski 1999: 65).

[3] I use the cumbersome expression 'a language' to denote the meaning 'one of the many languages' in order to make readers aware that I am not speaking of 'language' in general. The former is a man-made construct, an artifact of culture, while the latter belongs to the sphere of nature. The capacity for language is biologically hard-wired into humans by evolution. In German, this distinction between 'a language' and 'language' is usefully mapped out by two distinctive terms *Einzelsprache* and *Sprache*. My focus is on the former, that is, on *Einzelsprachen*.

Man, 1800) (cf Brubaker 1996; Gellner 1997: 69; Greenfeld 1992: 189-395; Hobsbawm 1990: 80-162; Kedourie 1993: 52-53; Kohn 1944: 427; Smith 1986: 171). Yet, it is not to deny that later national activists and thinkers, again, especially in Central Europe, did use some of Herder's ideas for postulating and pursuing their pet national projects (Sundhaußen 1973).

However, the exact features of the three aforementioned categories and the relation(s) among them are rarely elaborated on in any systematic manner. The intuition about the presumed importance of languages in ethnic nationalism (that verges on being a kind of *un*analyzable tacit knowledge [cf Polanyi 1966: 3-25]) does not yield any analytical insight beyond drawing examples from Central (and Eastern) Europe and proposing, mostly on this unrepresentative sample, generalizations on (ethnic) nationalism as a global ideology (cf Chlebowczyk 1980; Gellner 1997: 52-58; Hroch 1985; Kohn 1944: 497-572). Hence, for the sake of clarity and to avoid confusion, I propose to speak consistently of 'ethnolinguistic nationalism' when referring to this type of national ideology whose cornerstone is a language.

Second, and most importantly, there is no clear-cut definition of what ethnolinguistic nationalism is, differences being often vast among specific cases of nation-states that employ this ideology or its elements perhaps. Authors, by basing their definitions on this or that nation-state, by default exclude cases of other national polities from the remit of their pet definitions. In such a situation, it appears that the best course of action is to come up with a definition that is deduced from the observed practices of how ethnolinguistic nationalism is actually implemented. In turn, in a heuristic manner, the geographical spread of the aforesaid practices may be postulated to be coterminous with Central Europe, or more exactly, with the area where the region is believed to be located.

Third, an analytical instrument (that is, the 'normative isomorphism of language, nation and state') for deciding whether

or not this or that nationalism of a given nation-state is of ethnolinguistic character, should enable researchers to attain a higher degree of exactness in their pronouncements, making their findings comparable on a formalized footing. Personally, I believe that Central Europe's ethnolinguistic nationalisms are a somewhat oddball case, from which it may be altogether erroneous to generalize about all other nationalisms extant across the globe.

Finally, and most importantly for this article, in the conclusion, I propose that at present there are two clusters of ethnolinguistic (isomorphic) nation-states on Earth, namely, one in Central Europe and another in East and Southeast Asia. I reflect on what it may entail and how possible ideological links and potential transfers of ideas and political know-how between the two regions could be researched.

The Categories of Nation, [a] Language and State

The concepts 'nation,' '[a] language' and 'state,' interlocked with one another, are synonymous with (Westerno-centric) modernity, with the socio-political order of the world in which we live at the beginning of the 21st century. But not long ago, in the mid-19th century, these concepts were unknown to most humans. Indeed, the West (or more exactly, a handful of Western European powers, together with Russia) had gradually dominated much of the globe since the 16th century. But this domination was not absolute, as such important non-Western regional powers as the Ottoman Empire, the Mughal Empire or China continued to be reckoned with. Likewise, much of the inhabited and habitable territory stayed outside the reach and control of the Western and non-Western polities.

States

The phenomenon is best observed on European maps of Africa before the Berlin Conference (1884-1885) opened a 'scramble' for

this continent. Earlier, European colonizers had kept to the coastal areas, leaving the African interior to its own devices, and proclaiming that the sub-Saharan section of the continent contained 'no native state organisms' (cf Engel 1967: 136-137). That was typical of the European (Western) perception of the state of matters political in Africa. In reality, humans always – and in this case, *naturally* (the *Homo sapiens sapiens* being a *par excellence* social species) – live in groups and in one way or another develop a 'socio-political' organization that prevails within a given territory, which is a basic definition of what statehood is about (cf Dunbar 1993).

For instance, in Europe, statehood is recognized in the case of the Vatican City State with the population of a mere 800 living on the territory of less than half a square kilometer. Likewise, Liechtenstein and Monaco with the populations of 35,000 each, the former enjoying the territory of 160 sq km, while the latter squeezed to the area of 2 sq km, are not denied the status of state. But in reality all the three examples are not that different, in populace or territory, from an average pre-colonial village or a lineage group led by a headperson in sub-Saharan Africa (Tymowski 1999).

It appears that human groups up to about 150 members are genuinely 'natural,' coalescing and maintained spontaneously thanks to what the humanity is as a species from a biological and evolutionary perspective. The threshold of 150 people in a group is generally thought to be the maximum number of persons one can reasonably maintain face-to-face contact with on a regular basis (cf Dunbar 1992). Beyond that all human groups, including those coterminous or contained within states are constructed, 'invented,' or in other words, 'imagined' into being. When in larger groups it is impossible for all the members to have face-to-face contact with one another, the commonality of the group has to be actively 'imagined' in order to maintain the group's cohesion (cf Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Additionally, the type of state, which is nowadays considered to be 'normal,' is

that of 'sovereign territorial polity' (cf Pierson 1996). It was conceived in the mid-17th-century Europe in the wake of the Thirty Years' War that dramatically rearranged the basis of statehood and its legitimation (increasingly decoupled with religion) in Western and Central Europe (cf Meyn 1992). Afterwards, the European colonial empires spread this model of sovereign territorial state across the world (cf Tilly 1992), or rather imposed it from above and afar without much regard for local political traditions or wishes. The as yet not colonized polities – such as Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Siam (Thailand), China or Japan – had to reshape themselves in accordance with this model in order to survive as independent polities. By embarking on the course of such prescribed 'modernization,' the countries proved that they did not require any 'civilizing' (read 'colonial annexation') to be provided by a Western empire (cf Winichakul 1994). Not that Western powers did genuinely wish to support such reforms and observe the sovereignty of these non-Western polities. That is why, China was carved into imperial spheres of influence, parts of the territory of Siam seized by France, or Abyssinia annexed by Italy.

The resulting uniformization (standardization) of statehood organization across the entire globe is as much a Western imposition as a Western invention, *not* a product of nature (cf Streckfuss 1993).

Nations

The American and French revolutions did away with the divine legitimation of rule transferring this role to a given polity's (ideally, entire) population, renamed in this function as 'nation.' The subsequent coupling of the nation, seen as 'content,' with the sovereign territorial state, playing the role of the national content's spatial 'container' (or a set of territorially specific principles that spawn and maintain a polity) gave rise to the nation-state. Nowadays, each polity (with the rare exception of

the Vatican City State) in order to be seen as legitimate *must* be a nation-state, or in other words, a state for one nation only.

In this insistence, nationalism became the first-ever 'infrastructural' ideology of the entire human world. The stunning normative success of this ideology, accepted at present quite unquestioningly by all as 'normal,' created a standardized arena into which human relations are simultaneously channeled and at which they are played out. Ideally, this 'playing out' of the relations ought to happen among states and within them. (Perhaps, that is why non-territorial political-cum-religious groupings, such as Al-Qaeda, are so much vilified and battled against because they neither accept the shape of the arena nor follow its organizational principles.)

In the collocation 'nation-state,' researchers agree on the basic definition of the latter element, but hold varying opinions on what the nation may be. Authorities, and among them, equally, scholars and politicians, differ widely in their definitions of what the 'nation' is or may be. The exasperation entailed by this inconclusive discussion on the subject is such that nowadays researchers propose to look beyond the very essentialism of defining 'things' or 'entities,' in order to transcend the 'tyranny of groupism' (cf Brubaker 2004: 11-18). However, the 'groupness' of human groups is a fact that is best acknowledged, and it is not beyond explication (cf Hill and Dunbar 2007; Lehmann, Korstjens and Dunbar 2007). The aforementioned difficulty lies in how the concept of nation is (ab)used in political and intellectual discourse.

Quite unconsciously, we play all kinds of mind games with the term 'nation,' applying it (either as a group or its members) as we see fit and in line with this or that group's interest, for so much is at stake, namely, (normatively legitimate) power itself. As mentioned above, 'nation' replaced god in the ultimate role of statehood legitimation. In this process, a bit of 'divine mystery' rubbed off onto the very concept of nation that replaced god in

this function. Dispelling this 'civic mystery' would disenchant state building and maintenance. This would be going a step too far, as such disenchantment would simultaneously shatter the rhetorical power of the word 'nation' which is badly needed for legitimating polities in the eyes of their inhabitants. Without this vague mystique of togetherness denoted by the term 'nation,' emotions and feelings are suddenly drained away from the concept of state, leaving it for what it is: an empty rhetorical shell, an abstract and arbitrary legal construct imposed on a population. The population in question, rebranded as 'nation' grows accustomed to this construct of state, and people learn to consider it as 'their own,' normal, and even 'natural.' As a result, a nation-state is born (if I am allowed to borrow this cliché straight from nationalist vocabulary).

The difficulty of defining the term 'nation' lies in its arbitrary, diverse, vague and emotional (ab)use(s) and application(s). The 11,000-strong Tuvaluans and the 1.4 billion Chinese are considered to be nations, which – as cloaked in the garb of their own national polities – enjoy the same rights and privileges in light of international law. The same distinction of a fully-fledged nation is accorded to the Americans (that is, United States citizens) with no national or official language in their polity of the United States of America, to the Poles with a single national and official language, and to the Indians with their (to-date) 23 official languages (Constitutional Provisions 2014). But instead of trying to find some presumed 'common core' of meaning or 'trait' shared by all these groups going by the name of 'nation' in today's world of nation-states, it may be more useful to propose that what makes a human group a nation is the successful application of the label 'nation' to it. When other human groups already enjoying the distinction of being 'nations' agree that an upstart group is a nation too, as it claims, such an aspirant group does become a nation, indeed.

In accordance with the principles of the infrastructural ideology of nationalism, attaining the status of nation accords a group –

irrespective of its size, cohesion or any other characteristic – with, nowadays, the jealously guarded right to its own sovereign statehood. In the recent past, there were literally thousands of polities, for instance, almost 600 in the British India alone or even 5000 in the Holy Roman Empire (Hardgrave and Kochanek 2008: 144; Köbler 1989: XIX). In the modern world the number of states, although continuing to grow at a glacial pace since the turn of the 20th century (when they numbered around 40), de facto, has been capped at around 200. This scarcity imbues the label of 'nation' with an unprecedented and unique political value. The globe sports thousands if not tens of thousands of human (usually ethnic) groups,[4] but only a tiny fraction of them have achieved recognition as nations. The membership card of this genuinely exclusive club disproportionately empowers the very few vis-à-vis all the other human groups.

Languages

Like the model of sovereign territorial state and the ideology of nationalism, the term 'nation' is also of Western origin and making, which is readily visible in the Latin etymology of the word ultimately derived from the past participle of Latin *nasci* for 'to be born' (Kemailainen 1964). This classical root delivered the European Medieval Latin term *natio* for denoting the totality of all the (male) members of a polity's estates with an access to political decision-making (Hoad 1993: 309). Similarly, the English terms 'state' and 'language' are also derived from Latin[5] (Hoad 1989: 258, 459-460). The same is true of their counterparts in other European languages, though in some cases they may be more or less literal translations of the Latin(ate) words into these

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[4] Notwithstanding the lack of an agreed upon definition of what a language is, notionally, the number of ethnic groups can be proposed to be at least twice the number of the 7000 odd 'identified' (or more aptly, recognized) languages (World 2014).

[5] The English term 'state' stems from the Latin noun *statu* for 'position,' in turn, formed from the verb *stare* 'to stand.' Likewise, English 'language' stems from the Latin noun *lingua* for 'language,' though its initial meaning was that of the body part of 'tongue.'

languages.[6] Through the conduit of the colonial languages of the European imperial powers, the process repeated itself in the case of non-European languages (cf Li 2012) when the 'norm' of dividing the planet's *terra firma* among states, and the humanity into nations with their specific languages was imposed on the rest of the world in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Before the modern times, literacy having been limited to the narrow stratum of literati, people in Europe simply spoke to communicate. With the spread of education and literacy in the West among the population at large, suddenly it became apparent that communication between speakers was hardly possible unless prior to their conversation they agreed on 'a language' in which to talk (Billig 1995: 31). Speaking, or the linguistic – that by its nature is oral and continuous – in the process of modernization became discrete; the continuous linguistic partitioned into self-contained entities going by the generic name of 'languages' (that is, *Einzelsprachen*).

This self-consciousness about talking in the artifacts of languages arose with the invention of writing and the possibility of detaching – in space and time – the utterance from the speaker and the interlocutor. Before the rise of writing both *speaker* and *interlocutor* had to be at the same time in the same place within each other's earshot for an *utterance* to be successfully conveyed from one to the other. With the use of the proverbial pen and paper all the three (that is, speaker, interlocutor and utterance) may be disconnected in time and space, the previously necessary condition of simultaneous presence binding them replaced by a formalized 'thing' (that is, an artifact), or – in other words – a written language. This formalization allows writers to produce 'writings' to be easily decodified by readers, as long as they are channeled through a given language, shared by both, in

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[6] For instance, *naród*, *państwo* and *język* for 'nation,' 'state,' and 'language' in Polish, formed, respectively, from the Polish verb *rodzić* 'to give birth,' from the Polish noun *pan* 'lord' (which is also the source of the Polish verb *panować* 'to rule'), and from the Polish noun *język* for the body part of 'tongue.'

accordance with the main principles of its formalization (Goody 1986). Ever intensifying literacy, characteristic of modernity, spawned the 'genre' (or artifact) of standard language. The standard is a language whose principles have been meticulously described, streamlined and 'normativized' in usually state-approved grammars, dictionaries and other official material and regulations (cf Bordieu 1992; Haugen 1966).

The standard language is a language of power, based on the 'lect' of a power center (usually the capital of a polity) as spoken and written by the elite. (I employ the term 'lect' as a neutral denotation for a form of language used by a speech group, often coterminous with an ethnic group.) In the modern state, knowledge of this standard language is imparted to all the population via compulsory elementary education. In the West languages are opposed to dialects, the main difference between the two kinds of lects being writing and power. Dialects are lects that are spoken outside power centers and are not commonly committed to paper (cf Ondrejovič 2008: 119-125; Tollefson 1991).

The rise of the nation-state drastically limited the number of recognized and extant polities across the world. Simultaneously, modernity requires ever more intensive popular literacy. As a result, the vast majority of lects were condemned to the status of lowly dialects, whereas a small number of lects endowed with a fully-fledged written form was elevated to the rank of languages. The exigencies of national state-building and statehood legitimation have required to 'regulate' the relationship between languages and dialects. In Europe, it has been commonly proposed that dialects spoken on the territory of a polity 'belong' to the polity's official language. Ideally, in the process of modernization, compulsory schooling should liquidate dialects and replace them with the uniform employment of the official language (cf Fishman 1973; Markowski and Puzynina 1994).

This dichotomy of languages and dialects, as part and parcel of modernization, became the norm of thinking about and regulating the linguistic in today's world of nation-states (cf Fishman 1974; Page 1964). However, as mentioned above, though important in many various ways elsewhere, languages became the very basis, the sole ideological fundament of nation-state building and national statehood legitimation in Central Europe (cf Hroch 1994; Schieffelin, Woolard and Kroskrity 1998).

Imagining the Normative Concepts of Modernity

Nowadays the linguistic is imagined to consist of discrete languages. In this manner, rather unheard of in the past, humans actively and – more or less – consciously alter the linguistic, its shape previously decided by 'nature' (which is shorthand for the exigencies of human biology and evolution). This new-style linguistic reality composed of discrete languages is as much the foundation of the modernity as nation-states and the nation. The spell-checker of the word processor that I am using to write this article is set to conform with the 'US English' spelling, and when you consult a typical entry in the Anglophone Wikipedia the website alerts you that this entry is also available in the 200 odd Wikipedias in different languages. At present IT technology is mediated through and supports internet resources in about 600 languages (Kamusella 2012).

As now convincingly established in the wide-ranging discussion since the early 1980s, nations and states are invented and imagined into being before they become part of the social reality, which we, humans, perceive as 'our world.' I propose that languages are equally invented and imagined into being (Kamusella 2004). The modern world is composed from the foundational elements (artifacts) that are construed to be states, nations and languages. In the state-containers nations (people) live and communicate with the use of their respective languages. However, more correctly, it is to say that the political, the social and the linguistic of the modern world are normatively forced into

the straitjacket of states, nations and languages. Saying it in this way we can immediately tease out the imagined or invented character of these arrangements.

But the discussion is not complete without drawing our attention to the fact that as much as this modern 'order of things' is man-made (imagined), the three categories of 'state,' 'nation,' and 'a language' were also imagined into being. (Importantly, which should not be forgotten in the until recently heard rhetoric that saw globalization as a change for good, these categories are European inventions that the West imposed on the rest of the world [cf Fanon 1963; Kamusella 2000].) Both, these categories and their actualizations, are man-made ('invented,' 'imagined') artifacts of culture (that is, they are *not* products of nature, understood as the reality and forces independent of human will).

Conventionally, artifacts of this kind are classified either as 'material' or 'immaterial.' In this case, the aforementioned categories and their actualizations belong to the latter set of immaterial entities of culture. Contrary to popular usage, the qualification 'immaterial' does not mean that the aforementioned artifacts are stuff of legends with no bearing on the actual (human) world around us. Languages, nations and states are not visible or tactile as entities but they are quite real. Humans act in accordance with their logic and produce material things dictated by the 'immaterial' existence of these entities, among others, books, border posts or pantheons. Languages, nations and states are imagined and their existence is maintained in the heads of people belonging to a given group that uses a given language, belonging to this or that nation, housed in a given state. The actual material existence of these 'immaterial' entities and their categories hinges on their neurally executed image (in the brain) shared across a human group or groups.

An extraterrestrial visitor would not be able to see through a telescope or detect (for instance, with the use of a mass spectrometer) languages, nations or states on earth. This

hypothetical visitor may discern these entities only upon acquiring a human language and living among the members of a nation in a state, unless the hypothetical visitor from outer space has some device giving it full access to human brains and their workings.

Which Nationalism in Central Europe?

Whenever one opens a monograph on nationalism, in most cases, examples of this ideology are taken from Central (and Eastern) Europe. Quite often the discussion is underpinned by the tacit opinion that 'the problem of nationalism' occurs only in 'the East,' meaning the region of Central (and Eastern) Europe. When it is conceded that nowadays the ideology of nationalism also underlies and legitimates nation-states in 'the West' (that is, in Western Europe and North America), this Western-style nationalism is posed as 'civic, rational and benign;' while its Eastern counterpart as 'irrational, ethnic' and simply 'bad.' It is a reflection of the classical dichotomy of civic ('good') and ethnic ('bad') nationalism (cf Jaskułowski 2010; Plamenatz 1973).

Civic, Ethnic?

Obviously, this dichotomy – as it is well known – is heavily value-laden, and guilty of 'orientalizing' the East, while positioning the West (or 'us' from the vantage of most authors commenting on this dichotomy) in the privileged center of rational thinking, from where to opine about the rest of the world (cf Jezernik 2004). Apart from this subjective bent, the typical discussion on nationalism is limited to Europe, as if all the other polities extant across the present-day world were not nation-states, which they are, with the rare exception of the Vatican City State.

When civic nationalism is indubitably connected to the institution of citizenship, there is not an equal or easily observable trait on which ethnic nationalism would hinge. Ethnicity is a legion of

things, basically any set or constellation of cultural traits employed by a group to define itself, and justify and maintain its cohesion. When a group of this kind claims to be a nation, and this claim is recognized by the already existing nations (especially, those endowed with their own nation-states), its ethnicity and its state-making uses become 'ethnic nationalism.' In such an understanding of nationalism, 'nation' is the highest political title a human group can gain in today's world (not unlike the title of professor among scholars). This title gives a group distinguished in this manner the legitimate right to seek statehood (that is, power that can be legitimately exercised on the plane of international relations).

Language and Nationalism

One of the elements of culture frequently identified with ethnic nationalism is [a] language (*Einzelsprache*). It is especially true of the practice of nation- and nation-state building and maintenance in Central Europe beginning in the early 20th century. The Polish nation and state are correlated with the Polish language, the Macedonian nation and state with the Macedonian language, or the Norwegian nation and state with the Norwegian language. This coupling of nationalism with language as its very basis is typical of Central Europe, thus for the sake of clarity, I propose to dub the prevalent kind of nationalism in this region as 'ethnolinguistic,' rather than merely 'ethnic.'

Strangely, many (if not most) theoretical and classical works on nationalism draw on Central Europe, and generalize with the use of examples taken from this region on this ideology of politicized groupness and state formation. I propose that if ethnolinguistic nationalism is limited to Central Europe, conclusions and generalizations distilled on the basis of cases taken from this region may not be of much explicatory value for the rest of the world, where ethnolinguistic nationalism is unknown or not practiced in any politically salient manner.

Inventing Nations, States and Languages

Benedict Anderson (1983), and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) saliently remarked that nations are 'invented,' or 'imagined' into being. Nations are imagined through history, the printing press (or 'print capitalism'), politics, national movements, newspapers, books, educational systems, conscript armies, state bureaucracies and the like. But this invented character of nations is not specific exclusively to them. States are also invented or imagined in a similar manner as 'spatial containers' in which members of a specific group (nowadays, a nation) have the right to live, and all the others are 'foreigners' to be kept out. The spatiality of the state is most visibly manifested in its border, being an irregular loop that delimits the state's 'territorial body' (Winichakul 1994) (thus, defining the limits of the 'in-group') and separates it from all the other extant polities.

I propose to see languages in a similar light, as invented, especially those that are 'reduced to writing,' defined, regularized, stabilized and bounded with officially approved dictionaries, grammars, spelling manuals, encyclopedias and other authoritative publications. All these features are hallmarks of the process of language standardization, or language building, that is, creating languages as discrete entities, artifacts of culture, *Einzelsprachen*. In the course of this process, a predefined fragment of the naturally continuous linguistic is cut out and separated to be fashioned into a discrete entity, known as a language (*Einzelsprache*). This language is imparted in a formalized ('standard') way through the educational system, the bureaucracy, the press, and the like to 'its' target population (or imposed on it), and then successively from one generation to another.

Scholars do realize that states are formed, maintained and destroyed, and that once upon a time there were even no states (in the modern sense of this term) at all. In this national age of ours, when we trust that despite our individual mortality we may

live in the memory and the collective body of 'our' – potentially immortal – nation, it is possible – though sometimes painfully difficult – to concede that human groups (be them dubbed nations, or not) emerge, exist and disappear, in much the same way as states do. But often it is almost next to impossible to argue the same for languages, despite much literature on the phenomenon of 'language death' (that is, of disappearance of languages, their falling out of use among speech communities). Languages appearing so 'natural' to us, due to the fact that we employ them all the time for bonding and communicating within a given speech community, it is often difficult to take a step back and calmly observe that they are just human creations. It is especially true of written, standard languages, walled off all others by a mass of legislation, officialdom and printed matter.

Let me mention several examples. In the interwar period there were such languages – now forgotten – as Czechoslovak and Serbo-Croato-Slovenian. The former comprised two varieties, namely, Czech and Slovak (Kamusella 2007). The same was true of Serbo-Croato-Slovenian composed of Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian. Both the languages are long gone, though Norwegian continues in a similarly composite fashion, comprising Nynorsk ('New Norwegian') and Bokmål ('Book Language'). Although Greek is proposed to be a unitary language with a three-millennia-long unbroken history, for all practical reasons, an educated Greek wishing to function fluently in all the registers of this language as employed nowadays, she must acquire Demotic (Vernacular Greek, official in Greece only since 1976) and Katharevousa ('Purifying Language') in which much literature and most documents were written during the last two centuries, alongside the New Testament and Ancient Greek used for liturgy in church and literary flourishes (Mackridge 2009).

Languages, like states, can break up into successor ones, as recently vividly exemplified by the split of Serbo-Croatian into Bosnian, Croatian and Montenegrin (Greenberg 2004). The popular definition claims that dialects (lects) are mutually

intelligible forms of language, while languages (lects) are their mutually unintelligible counterparts (Bloomfield 1926: 162). But some dialects of Chinese are as mutually incomprehensible as Polish and German (Künstler 2000); on the other hand the languages of Moldovan and Romanian are exactly the same (Ciscel 2007), while the four post-Serbo-Croatian languages hardly differ from one another.

The Normative Isomorphism of Language, Nation and States

Despite the importance of language for Central Europe's ethnolinguistic nationalisms, so often pointed to in literature on nationalism, I have not encountered a precise definition of this type of nationalism that would allow for focused analysis and wide-ranging comparisons. Thus, I propose to operationalize the concept of ethnolinguistic nationalism, by defining this ideology through the actual practices of nation-state building and maintenance in Central Europe, as observed in policy-making.

These practices tend to propose that a 'true and legitimate' nation-state is such whose territory is inhabited by the speakers of one language only. This – by default, national – language cannot be shared with any other state or nation. The language's speakers (or speech community in sociolinguistic terminology) are defined as a nation. Furthermore, the nation-state's territory must not house any autonomous entities with official languages different than the national one. And by the same token no autonomous entities with the nation-state's national language as official can exist outside this national polity. As a result, where the program has been fulfilled, it leads to a tight spatial and ideological (symbolical) overlapping of language, nation and state. I dub this foundational mechanism of ethnolinguistic nationalism as the 'normative isomorphism of language, nation and state' (Kamusella 2006).

Below, I briefly show how this proposed analytical instrument of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state may be employed for tracing the emergence and the subsequent spread of the model of ethnolinguistic nation-state through time in Central Europe, before extending its application to East and Southeastern Asia. Because this analytical instrument of the normative isomorphism as any other has its own inherent limitations, I identify them and suggest how a nuancing of the data can be conducted in order to limit distortions in the outcomes of analyses conducted with the use of this instrument.

The Diachronic Perspective

The first isomorphic (ethnolinguistic) nation-states appeared in the Balkans in the late 19th century, before the normative isomorphism became the basic method of nation-state building and of national statehood legitimation and maintenance in Central Europe after the Great War. I focus on the situation between 1864 and 1913 in a series of selected annual snapshots in the table below. In bold I give names of new isomorphic states that appeared in a given year (or a bit earlier, in-between two ranges), while in the third column I indicate names of some polities that lost their isomorphic status, the cause of such an occurrence briefly alluded in brackets.

Year	Isomorphic States	Number of Isomorphic States
1864	**Greece**	1
1866	Greece, **Romania**	2
1885	**Bulgaria**, Romania	2 Greece [Cyprus]
1905	Bulgaria, **Norway**, Romania	3
1913	**Albania**, Bulgaria, Norway, Romania	4

Table 1

Greece, as the first nation-state ever, began to fulfill the requirements of the normative isomorphism, thanks to the 1864

union with the United States of the Ionian Islands. Previously the two polities had shared Greek as their official language, which had prevented them from becoming isomorphic.[7] The last stage of the process of the creation of the Romanian nation-state lasted between 1859 and 1866, when the principalities of Moldavia and Walachia were transformed into a single polity with the newly invented name of Romania, and Romanian as its sole official and national language. In 1878 Bulgaria became de facto independent from the Ottoman Empire, and having instituted Bulgarian as its exclusive official and national language, almost joined the ranks of the isomorphic club, but for the Ottoman autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia with Bulgarian as one of its official languages. Bulgaria finally reached the ideal of the normative isomorphism seven years later, when it annexed this autonomous province.

In the year of the founding of Bulgaria (1878), Greece lost its isomorphic status, due to the making of Ottoman Cyprus into a British protectorate with Greek as one of its official languages. In the last decade preceding World War I, Norway and Albania gained independence from Denmark in 1905 and the Ottoman Empire in 1912/13, respectively. Both polities, with Norwegian and Albanian as official and national languages, respectively, fashioned themselves into ethnolinguistic nation-states fulfilling the principles of the normative isomorphism.

It appears that the model of ethnolinguistic nation-state meeting all the strictures of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state emerged first in the Balkans. Perhaps, it happened so, because of the gradual replacement of religion with language as the ideological basis of Balkan nation-states established since the early 19th century. This change took place,

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[7] Obviously, Greek was one of the official languages in the Orthodox ('Roman') millet of the Ottoman Empire. But millets were non-territorial confessional autonomies. As such they did not follow the Westphalian logic of the territorial state. As a result, from the (West and Central) European perspective, only Osmanlıca (Ottoman Turkish) was official in this empire, the millet languages appearing to Europeans to be mere 'minority languages.'

probably, under the stimulating examples of such militarily and economically successful polities as the Kingdom of Italy and the German Empire. They were established as ethnolinguistic nation-states aspiring to become 'homes' for *all* the Italians (meaning Italian-speakers) and for all the Germans (meaning, German-speakers) in 1861 and 1871, respectively.

The Great War destroyed the non-national multiethnic empires of Central Europe, namely, Austria-Hungary, the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. The Western Allies, at the peace conference in Paris, replaced them with nation-states explicitly defined in ethnolinguistic terms. In this way, the normative isomorphism 'moved' northward (see below Table 2). The freshly established (de jure autonomous, but de facto independent) Ukraine joined the ranks of the isomorphic national polities in 1917 only to be 'booted out' from the club the following year when another Ukrainian polity (Western Ukraine) emerged in Galicia. Both Ukrainian states were united in 1919 (Act of *Zluka*, or Union), and thus this new Ukrainian nation-state regained its isomorphic status. (In the table's middle rubric on 'Isomorphic States,' I include in braces brief information on why a given polity regained its previously lost isomorphic status.)

Year	Isomorphic States	Number of Isomorphic States
1916	Albania, Bulgaria, Norway, Romania	4
1917	Albania, Bulgaria, Norway, **Ukraine**	4 Romania [Moldova]
1918	Albania, **Belarus**, Bulgaria, **Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania**, Norway, **Poland**	9 Ukraine [West Ukraine]

1919	Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Norway, Poland, **Romania** {Moldova incorporated}, **Ukraine** {*Zluka*}	8 Belarus [defunct] , Hungary [Red Slovakia], Lithuania [Perloja]
1920	Albania, Bulgaria, **Czechoslovakia**, Estonia, **Hungary**, Latvia, Norway, Romania, Ukraine	9 Poland [Red Galicia]

Table 2

A similar development can be observed in the case of Romania that, between 1917 and 1918, ceased to be an isomorphic state, following the rise of the Moldavian Democratic Republic in the former Russian province of Bessarabia. Both Romanian-speaking polities contracted a union in 1918, meaning that in the table's 1919 row Romania is again a fully isomorphic polity.

The Soviet onslaught extinguished Belarus as a nation-state at the turn of 1919. In June a short-lived Slovak Soviet Republic with Slovak and Hungarian as its official languages was founded, which nullified the isomorphic status of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Likewise, Lithuania and Poland were pushed out from the set of isomorphic polities; the former polity, due to the rise of the non-national village Republic of Perloja (1918-1923, with Lithuanian as its official language). The same purpose was served by the Galician Soviet Socialist Republic in the case of Poland. The Soviets established this short-lived socialist republic with Ukrainian, Polish and Yiddish as its official languages in the course of the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1921). Last but not least, although Czechoslovakia entered the political map of Europe in 1918, it achieved the ideal of the normative isomorphism only two years later, when its two official languages of Czech and Slovak were replaced with the single one under the name of Czechoslovak. It consisted of two varieties, namely, the aforementioned Czech and Slovak.

This brief and rather schematic overview of the changes in the political shape of Central Europe – as seen through the lens of the analytical instrument of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state – depicts two phenomena, on the one hand, the high volatility of the political organization of this section of the continent in the wake of the Great War, and on the other, the spread of ethnolinguistic nationalism as the sole legitimate and popularly accepted ideology of nation-state building and statehood legitimation across Central Europe. The new political situation stabilized in the mid-1920s, and – painting in broad strokes – ethnolinguistic nationalism became the very defining feature of Central Europe as a specific region. The situation continues to this day.

Only Isomorphic Polities?

At the fall of communism in 1989, there were only three isomorphic nation-states in Central Europe, namely Bulgaria, Norway and Poland. The number of such polities had been seriously diminished twenty years earlier with the federalization of Czechoslovakia in 1969 and of Yugoslavia in 1974. In federal Yugoslavia, Serbia's Autonomous Province of Kosovo had received Albanian as another official language side by side with Serbo-Croatian. A similar development had been observed in Serbia's other Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, where apart from the state language of Serbo-Croatian, the following ones had become co-official: Hungarian, Romanian, Rusyn and Slovak.

Seen through the prism of the normative isomorphism, this officialization of Albanian, Hungarian and Romanian, by default, disqualified Albania, Hungary and Romania as isomorphic polities (see Table 3). By the same token, all the three nation-states regained its isomorphic status, when the autonomous status of Kosovo and Vojvodina was abolished in 1990. Likewise, when Czechoslovakia split in 1993 into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the then already defunct official use of Slovak in

Serbia's Vojvodina could not prevent Slovakia from fulfilling the normative isomorphism.

Year	Isomorphic States	Number of Isomorphic States
1989	Bulgaria, Norway, Poland	3
1990	**Albania**, Bulgaria, **Hungary**, Norway, Poland, **Romania** {autonomy abolished in Vojvodina & Kosovo}	6
1991	Albania, **Belarus**, Bulgaria, **Croatia, Estonia**, Hungary, **Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia**, Norway, Poland, Romania **Slovenia, Ukraine**	14
1992	Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Norway Poland, Romania, Slovenia	12 Croatia [Bosnia], Ukraine [Crimea]
1993	Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, **Czech Republic**, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Norway Poland, Romania, **Slovakia**, Slovenia	14

Table 3

The observed volatility in the number of isomorphic polities is caused by a blind spot in the analytical instrument, namely its tenet that when polities or autonomous territories outside a given isomorphic nation-state announce this very nation-state's national language as their official one, it automatically strips the nation-state in question of its isomorphic status. In today's world such a nation-state is not permitted to do anything to prevent such a development, limited in this respect by the internationally accepted principle of sovereignty. However, a sudden drop in the number of isomorphic states detected with the analytical instrument of the normative isomorphism usually does not reflect any drop in the political and social importance of ethnolinguistic nationalism across Central Europe. Hence, in order to stress this

point, apart from the 'states fulfilling the isomorphism,' I introduced the additional category of 'states aspiring to fulfill the isomorphism.' The latter are frequently prevented from attaining the ideal of normative isomorphism by developments outside their borders.

I propose that only both groups of isomorphic states and 'near-isomorphic states' when taken together, they aptly reflect the territorial spread of ethnolinguistic nationalism at any given moment. In Table 4, I have a more nuanced look at Central Europe's all 35 polities that were extant in 2007. Unlike previously, this analysis is not limited to the isomorphic nation-states only. The table also contains the near-isomorphic nation-states, while the non-isomorphic polities are split into two further categories of 'other ethnolinguistic states' and 'non-ethnolinguistic states.' The former group is comprised of the nation-states that use language for some ideological purposes; however, it does not constitute the sole basis of their national statehood. The last group of non-ethnolinguistic states embraces all the other polities to which the logic of ethnolinguistic nationalism is nearly or completely alien.

Of course, the article is too short to let me substantiate at length why I apportioned this or that polity to a specific rubric. And, yes, such a classification to a degree may be arbitrary and questionable in the case of borderline cases. Other authors may want to rearrange this table slightly or even substantially. I do not claim that the heuristic device of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state is perfect in its detection of ethnolinguistic nationalism. It may, however, help interested researchers and observers compare the spread, influence and other dynamics of ethnolinguistic nationalism on the plane of extant polities.

States fulfilling the isomorphism	States aspiring to fulfill the isomorphism	Other ethnolinguistic states	Non-ethnolinguistic states	The total of the analyzed polities	Percentage of the **isomorphic states** in the total of the analyzed polities	**Isomorphic states** and the **states aspiring to fulfill the isomorphism** combined, expressed as a percentage of the total of the analyzed polities
Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia [14]	Bosnia, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, Moldova, Northern Cyprus, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine [13]	Austria, Belarus, Denmark, Liechtenstein [4]	Mount Athos, Russian Federation, Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dheleia, Transnistria [4]	35	**40%**	**77%**

Central Europe's Isomorphic and Other Polities in 2007
Table 4

Bearing this caveat in mind, I propose that the actual extent and influence of ethnolinguistic nationalism in Central Europe may be measured only by taking into consideration both the fully isomorphic and near-isomorphic polities. In 2007 the two groups added up to 27 nation-states, or to about 77 per cent of all Central Europe's polities.

Population of the **states fulfilling the isomorphi**	Population of the **states aspiring to fulfill the isomorphi**	Population of other ethnolinguistic states	Population of the non-ethnolinguistic states	Population of all the analyzed polities	Percentage of the population of the **isomorphic**	Population of the **isomorphic states** and of the **states**

sm	sm				states out of the total population of the analyzed polities	aspiring to fulfill the isomorphism combined, expressed as a percentage of the total population of the analyzed polities
112.53m	245.16m	23.29m	35.07m	416.32 m	**27%**	**86%**

The Normative Isomorphism and Populations in 2007
Table 5

Populations and Languages

States, widely varying in demographic size and territory, are however far from being the ideal unit of analysis and comparison. In order to lessen the distortion entailed, I included the populations of the analyzed states in the purview (see Table 5). From this demographic perspective, although the number of the isomorphic nation-states in 2007 amounted to circa 50 per cent of Central Europe's polities, their populations added to a merely 27 per cent of the region's inhabitants. But the populations of the isomorphic and near-isomorphic nation-states combined, at 86 per cent, decisively surpassed the percentage of the isomorphic and near-isomorphic nation-states among Central Europe's polities.

Hence, I daresay that nowadays almost the entire population of Central Europe (bar 10 or so per cent) live in the region's isomorphic and near-isomorphic nation-states. As such these people are exposed to the influence and workings of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state, which they imbibe in the course of their everyday life, be it at school, from the mass media or through interacting with the state bureaucracy. In such a way, in their minds, ethnolinguistic

nationalism becomes a 'transparent category,' the very synonym of 'socio-political normalcy.' For the inhabitants of the isomorphic and near-isomorphic countries the 'normal,' 'genuine' and legitimate polity is an ethnolinguistic nation-state meeting all the requirements of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state. The deep entrenchment of this normative belief in the vast majority of peoples' minds across Central Europe perpetuates this ideology of ethnolinguistic nationalism as the very basis of the political order in the region.

The Isomorphism in East and Southeast Asia

Looking Farther Afield

Having embarked on the analysis of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state, initially, I thought that the sole group of ethnolinguistic nation-states occurs only in Central Europe. I saw ethnolinguistic polities popping up outside Central Europe, as for instance, Iceland (with its specific national language of Icelandic, not shared with any other polity or nation), Turkmenistan (with Turkmen), Bhutan (with Dongka) or the Maldives (with Maldivian) as rare oddities, a result of accidents and other random exigencies of history, and not of any concentrated 'ideological plan' as in Central Europe.[8]

But then, when I browsed the globe for further isomorphic polities, regularities began to emerge. First, I noticed that these 'oddities' of ethnolinguistc national statehood are limited to Eurasia only. At present no isomorphic or near-isomorphic nation-states seem to exist in Africa or in the Americas, where the local ethnolinguistic cultures were either wiped out or permanently

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[8] Obviously, there was no 'mastermind' behind this alluded plan. It was a result of the growing acceptance among the population at large of the idea that polities in order to be legitimate, they must assume the form of ethnolinguistic nation-states. When the idea became *the* norm of the political organization of Central Europe after 1918, it looked as if a 'plan' to this end had been rapidly implemented.

submerged by the succession of Western colonialism, imperialism and nowadays, Western cultural and economic imperialism.

The Other Cluster of Isomorphic Nation-States

These realizations made me stop and think. I scanned carefully the world's all extant states in regard of their official language policies, and then was surprised to find out that another group of ethnolinguistic nation-states that appear to fulfill the strict requirements of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state, is located in East and Southeast (E/SE) Asia. I include in this E/SE Asian group of isomorphic nation-state, the following ones: Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Malaysia would almost make it into this group, but for the co-official use of Malaysian in Brunei and Singapore. Likewise Korea could be an isomorphic polity, if it was not divided into two states and Korean was not used for official purposes in China's Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture.

Isomorphic region	'Member states'	Number of states	Population	Territory (sq km)
C Europe	Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia	**14**	**112.53m**	**1,045,756**
SE/E Asia	Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam	**7**	**571.16m**	**4,236,127**
C Europe data as a percentage of E/SE Asia data		**200% (14 : 7)**	**19.7%**	**24.7%**

Isomorphism in Central Europe, and in Southeast and East Asia in 2007[9]
Table 6

The Example of Japan

I hypothesize that the transfer of the ideas and practices of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state was from (Central) Europe to E/SE Asia, not the other way around. I propose to check the following three possible channels of transmission of relevant ideas. Firstly, from Prussia to Japan, which successfully turned itself into the core of the ideologically ethnolinguistic German Empire in 1871. When the elites of the Meiji Japan were looking for a model of modernization (or, in reality, Westernization) that would be suitable for Japan, they sent an official governmental mission on a fact-finding tour around the world from 1871-1873 (Nish 1998). When it came to the system of government, statehood and education, the mission's members were impressed by and liked most what they saw in the German Empire (Kume 2002). They decided to follow this model in Japan, including the language policy and the entailed concept of the ethnolinguistic homogenous (and ideally isomorphic) nation-state (Yeounsuk 2010: 160-169).

Due to the subsequent military, colonial and economic successes of Japan, it was seen as the sole non-Western polity that achieved a sought-for badge of modernity. As such, the country became a model in its own right to look to for anticolonial and national movements (Narangoa and Cribb 2003) and also for remaining independent non-Western polities, such as the Ottoman Empire (Worringer 2014) or Abyssinia (or today's Ethiopia) (Clarke 2011: 37-38). Furthermore, it was the rapid and extensive expansion of the Empire of Japan during the first half of the 20th century that brought this model of the ethnolinguistic nation-state to much of East and Southeast Asia, from Mongolia

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[9] The data on the states' populations and territories were taken from Index Mundi (2014).

to the Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia) and from Burma to the Philippines (Mendl 2001; Pluvier 1995: map 52). During the Second World War, the Japanese occupation administration – unlike their German counterpart in Central Europe – in 1943-1945 brought many students from Southeast Asia to receive education at Japanese universities. After the war they brought an intimate knowledge of the Japanese model of ethnolinguistically homogenous nation-state back home, where they became members of the intellectual and political elite, first in the anticolonial national movements, and next in their freshly independent postcolonial nation-states (Goodman 2001: 254-255).

France: Language Rather Than Citizenship

Secondly, another channel via which the ideas of ethnolinguistic homogeneous national statehood spread, especially to Southeast Asia proper, was that of the French colonial empire. Though ostensibly, the ideological basis of the French nationhood and statehood is citizenship (Brubaker 1992), the reality of the French nation-state is thoroughly ethnolinguistic. The program of ethnolinguistic homogenization of France – as part and parcel of the republican policy of centralization and administrative homogenization (or 'rationalization') – has been continually and consistently carried out since the French Revolution (Weber 1996). The sole difference between the French ethnolinguistic nationalism and any typical isomorphic nation-state is that Paris is more than happy for other polities (especially, its former colonies) to adopt its national language of French (cf Poissonnier and Sournia 2006), which even today is posed as the world's 'universal and most logic' language (Beaucé 1988).

The French channel provided for direct transfer of ideas and political know-how to the French colonies in Indochina, and indirectly to Siam (or officially Thailand after 1939). The French colonial administration, steeped in the metropolitan ideal of ethnolinguistically homogenous statehood employed it tactically,

in line with the typical imperial principle *divide et impera* ('divide and rule'). Paris was eventually unsuccessful in its attempts at annexing Siam. But on the basis of the ethnolinguistic difference as tiny as that between Serbian and Croatian, French colonialists managed to seize Siam's eastern (Lao) provinces, subsequently made into a French colony (cf Pluvier 1995: map 44). Paris justified this annexation with ethnolinguistic arguments, leading to the fashioning of a Lao nation, complete with its own national Laotian language and script, made on purpose and with much investment distinctive from the Thai counterparts (cf Ivarsson 2008: 93-144).

Faced with the French imperial pressure, Siam – previously happy to portray itself as a multiethnic empire – adopted the rhetoric of the ethnolinguistic nation-state. This led to the 1939 change in the state's name, from Siam to Thailand (in vernacular Thai, even previously, the country was unofficially referred to as *Mueang Thai* or the 'country of Thais'), so that it would correspond to the name of the polity's main ethnic group, Thais, and their language, Thai. As a result, after 1939, Thailand reinvented itself as an isomorphic polity, for the Thai-speaking nation of Thais, their language not shared with any other polity or nation (Streckfuss 1993). This rhetoric of ethnolinguistic nationalism, combined with the wholesale Westernization ('modernization') of the state and society made it harder for any European imperial power to justify a potential colonial foray into Thailand (cf Winichakul 1994).

In Cambodia, the French pursued a similar policy as in Laos, aimed at severing cultural, religious and linguistic ties with Siam (Thailand). To this end, among others, they encouraged the standardization and the use of the Khmer language and script in the nascent Khmerophone press and book production (Chandler 2000: 159-164; Edwards 2004). Interestingly, the invention of the ethnolinguistic Khmer nation speaking its own Khmer language, written down in Khmer letters was not followed by the adoption of a corresponding name for the nation-state. However, the colloquial name of the country, *Srok Khmer* (literally, 'the

land of the Khmers'), has been current (for instance, as a title of a seminar journal) at least since the 1930s (cf Edwards 2007: 205).

The name 'Cambodia' is of a Sanskrit origin, like that of 'Siam.' The political and cultural attraction of such names is connected to the acceptance of (Theravada) Buddhism in most of Indochina (during the first half of the First Millennium CE) as the state religion (or in today's Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand). A later version of Sanskrit, Pali, is the language in which the Buddhist canon (*Tipitaka*) was recorded. The language's Brahmi script and its variations (also used for writing in Sanskrit) and Buddhism itself lent an aura of noble significance to Sanskritizing terms and names. The translation of this canon into vernaculars, especially at the turn of the 20th century, facilitated the codification of the languages of Burmese, Khmer, Laotian and Thai, alongside their varying scripts. This development and its influence is similar to the language-making effects of translating the Bible into Europe's vernaculars during and in the wake of the Reformation (cf Juntanamalaga 1988; Norman 1993; Pulvier 1995: map 3; Thion 1993; Yamin 1956: 27).

In the case of these territories that later were made into Vietnam, during the second half of the 19th century, France, preceded by Catholic missionaries, sought to distance the Vietnamese from traditional Chinese cultural and religious influence, while maintaining an ethnocultural difference between Vietnam on the one hand, and the Khmers and the Lao, on the other. Replacing the Chinese script with the Latin alphabet for writing the Vietnamese language served this purpose best, especially at the symbolical level of ideology (Marr 1981: 136-189). Subsequently, while some members of the nascent Vietnamese anticolonial national movement hoped to achieve modernization and independence through emulating France (cf Mishra 2012: 193-194), others sought 'modern' education in Japan, especially after Tokyo's 1905 victory over Russia (Vo 2011: 93).

The Soviet 'Affirmative Action Empire'

Thirdly, I propose that another channel through which the political fashion of ethnolinguistic nationalism reached East and Southeast Asia was that of communism stemming from the Soviet Union. Often the Soviet influence was filtered through China, which in 1949, became a 'Soviet pupil.' This master-pupil relation between the two communist states lasted until the Sino-Soviet rift in the 1960s. The Soviet model – to a degree adopted in Burma (later, Myanmar), Cambodia, China, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam – came complete with a package of policies on ethnolinguistic diversity.

In the interwar period the internal administrative organization of the Soviet Union was designed, at all its levels, alongside ethnolinguistic lines (cf Martin 2001). Moscow pursued a similar policy in regard of the Soviet bloc as a whole, that is, of the reinforcement of ethnolinguistic homogeneity within its member states. The bloc mostly composed of isomorphic or near-isomorphic nation-states, the Soviet stance on this issue ensured loyalty or, at least, grudging acceptance of the new system by largely anticommunist populations, who placed so much ideological value on nationally construed ethnolinguistic homogeneity (in emotional rhetoric referred to as 'purity').

The Soviet model of multilevel ethnolinguistically defined administrative entities was copied in communist China. But, unlike in the Soviet Union, at the highest level of administrative division the Chinese territory was *not* apportioned in its entirety among ethnolinguistic 'union republics.' In this respect, like today's Russian Federation, despite official protestations to the opposite, China remains an aspiring ethnolinguistic nation-state with territorial autonomies for its recognized non-Han minorities (cf Zhou 2003: 51-55, 169-288). However, other communist polities in E/SE Asia appear to have chosen the example of the Soviet bloc countries in Europe, and as a result, followed the course of centralization and ethnolinguistic homogenization.

At the Margins

In the Dutch East Indies, a collection of thousands of ethnolinguistically highly diverse islands, the Dutch colonial administration used 'market Malay' for ruling over the huge archipelago. Hence, the 1914 introduction of Dutch as a medium of education in a tiny clutch of 'non-European' schools, and more concentrated efforts for the promotion of the use of this language among 'non-Europeans' undertaken during the 1930s did not alter the prevailing sociolinguistic situation (Simpson 2007: 318). In 1928 the nascent anticolonial national movement adopted Malay as its national language and the name of Indonesia (coined in scholarly European usage during the 1880s) for their postulated nation-state. In light of the latter, national activists also renamed the language as 'Indonesian,' and in this manner a program of the Indonesian-speaking nation-state of Indonesia was launched. The Japanese occupation in 1942 and Tokyo's 1945 grant of independence to Indonesia in the wake of the slow-motion collapse of Japan's wartime empire of the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,' lent much credence and legitimacy to the Indonesian national movement. Against this background, following the brutal four-year-long war waged by the Dutch, this national movement held its own and Indonesia gained fully internationally recognized independence in 1949 (Dharmowijono 1989: 298; Swaan 2001: 82, 87).

The course of inventing Burma (later Myanmar) as an ethnolinguistic nation-state is somewhat similar in its marginality to the above-proposed three main ways of the spread of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state to E/SE Asia. Between 1824 and 1885, the British forces from India conquered, in a piecemeal fashion, the territories that became Myanmar nowadays. These territories were incorporated into British India. The rise of the anticolonial national movement in the 1920s and 30s, combined with the religious difference between Buddhist Burma and predominantly Hindu and Muslim

India, the former was excluded from India in 1937, and fashioned into a crown colony in its own right. Unlike elsewhere in India, Burmese national activists consistently emphasized the Burmese language *against* the use of English in offices and schools. In 1930 they adopted a purely isomorphic program of building an ethnolinguistically homogenous Burmese nation-state, which entailed Burmanization of the non-Burmese-speaking ethnic groups. This heavy-handed policy remains the source of widespread and prolonged ethnic conflicts across the country (Bečka 2007: 154-155, 164-166; Watkins 2007: 270-273).

Burma gained independence in 1948. The present-day confusion on how to write the name of the state and its language is a reflection of the renewed wave of Burmanization that commenced in 1989. Myanmar is another transliteration of the Burmese-language form of the name of Burma, however, closer to its Burmese pronunciation than the Anglicized name 'Burma.' Hence, beginning in 1989, the state requests that it be known in English as 'Myanmar.' The name is also shared by the nation living in the state, and by its language, both are referred to as 'Myanmar,' too (Bečka 2007: 5; Watkins 2007: 274). (Such a request is nothing unprecedented. In 1991 Belarus asked to be officially recognized as 'Belarus' in other languages, not as 'Byelorussia' or 'White Russia,' which had been the practice earlier.) Interestingly, the very name 'Myanmar' is quite a recent coinage dating back to the mid-19th century (Myint-U 2001: 27).

Idle Divagations or Salient Comparisons?

No Isomorphism Without Authoritarianism?

Interestingly, and rather saliently, almost all of today's fully isomorphic states in Central Europe and E/SE Asia experienced or still experience communism. Partial exceptions to this norm are Indonesia, Japan, Thailand and Norway. But in the case of Indonesia communism was part and parcel of the postcolonial

nation-state's politics and social life till the 1965 genocide of the country's communists and their families (Mehr 2009). However, all the isomorphic polities in Central Europe and E/SE Asia – with the lone exception of Norway (perhaps, closer in this respect to the 'outlier' isomorphic nation-state of Iceland) – experienced, or still do, authoritarianism of this or that hue. This fact appears to be caused by the simultaneously exclusionary and highly intrusive (in private and public) character of the policy of ethnolinguistic homogenization, and by drastic centralization required by the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state.

All the isomorphic polities in the European and Asian clusters, prior to their emergence, were part of larger states or empires (as in the case of Central Europe), or were either seized or indirectly dominated by Western colonial empires (as in the case of E/SE Asia). Hence, the social, political and economic reality with which ethnolinguistic nationalists were faced was in most cases multilingual, multiethnic, and often polyconfessional. Reducing this diversity into a homogeneity within the boundaries of an isomorphic nation-state necessitated a series of wide-ranging impositions by the center. (Obviously, such a modernizing 'reduction' can also follow other ideological paradigms than the normative isomorphism, as usefully illustrated by the official quadrilingualism in the interwar Soviet Belarus, or by bilingualism in independent Belarus nowadays.) Thorough social and political engineering of this kind, touching upon all aspects of social and political life, would not have been possible under a liberal regime that typically accord powers of co-decision to the state's inhabitants at regional and local levels. In such a liberal situation these inhabitant would have certainly demanded the introduction of nuanced multilingual regimes, complete with non-territorial and territorial autonomies, perhaps, as in today's India, Finland or Ethiopia[10].

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[10] In the case of Ethiopia, the pronouncedly non-isomorphic federalization of the country in 1996 was not a result of any liberalism but rather of the long armed struggle of various ethnolionguistically defined groupings against centralism and homogenization carried out on

The model of how to institute a centralizing state and how to carry out and maintain such wholesale centralization of bureaucracy and administration was readily offered by the French nation-state. As to my knowledge, nowadays, *all* the states in both the clusters of the isomorphic polities in E/SE Asia and Central Europe are highly centralistic. In this they do follow the French model of national statehood. Tellingly, Germany was close to achieving the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state only during the national socialist regime (1933-1945) when the old political tradition of federalism (or of complex and multilayered autonomies) was abolished, replaced with stern party-cum-state centralism. Federal system was reinstated in (West) Germany and Austria, respectively, in 1949 and 1955.

Not surprisingly, federalism and autonomy are ideas of which each and every isomorphic polity in E/SE Asia and Central Europe is highly apprehensive. Changes to this end might soon breach the full fulfillment of the normative isomorphism, so much cherished as the basis of national statehood and its legitimacy. Hence, only after the six decades of civil warfare, in 2010, Myanmar's administrative 'divisions' with ethnolinguistically different minority populations were renamed as 'states.' Not that it has led to any federalization of the country (Myanmar 2014). On the other hand, as most of Central Europe's isomorphic nation-states are members of European Union, with time, this suprastate type of federalism may erode the ideal of full normative isomorphism in some of these polities.

Isomorphic, Non-Isomorphic and Other Polities

As in the case of Table 4 above, on Central Europe's Isomorphic and Other Polities in 2007, below I propose its counterpart for E/SE Asia. I decided to include the polities extant in 2007,

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the basis of Amharic language and culture, both, under imperial and communist rule (Kefale 2013).

roughly speaking, in the quadrant between longitudes 90°E and 150°E, and latitudes 50°N and 10°S. In order to avoid confusion and retain a necessary analytical focus, I decided to exclude from the sample Russia, India, Bangladesh and Australia that could feature only on the strength of their marginal territories.

For the time being, however, the number of the isomorphic states standing at 29 per cent of the region's all polities, and that of the isomorphic and near-isomorphic states at 50 per cent, it appears that the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state, though of high importance, is not the sole norm of nation-state building and legitimation in East and Southeast Asia. In the case of demography and territory, it is the inclusion of China in the group of the non-ethnolinguistic states that does sway the balance in the relative ideological favor of non-isomorphic nationalisms.

States fulfilling the isomorphism	**States aspiring to fulfill the isomorphism**	Other ethnolinguistic states	Non-ethnolinguistic states	The total of the analyzed polities	Percentage of the **isomorphic states** in the total of the analyzed polities	**Isomorphic states** and the **states aspiring to fulfill the isomorphism** combined, expressed as a percentage of the total of the analyzed polities
Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam [7]	Malaysia, Mongolia, North Korea, Philippines South Korea [5]	East Timor, Palau, Taiwan [4]	Brunei, China, Guam, Hong Kong, Macau, Northern Mariana Islands, Papua New Guinea, Singapore [8]	24	**29%**	**50%**

However, the situation as presented in the table only looks like that through the internationalizing and flattening lens of English. On the other hand, for instance, from the official stance expressed in Korean, both Koreas do *not* share the name of Korea, or the name of their seemingly shared Korean language. In Korean the North Koreans refer to their country and language as *Chosŏn* and *Chosŏnmal*, respectively, while the South Koreans use *Daehan* and *Hangungmal* in these roles. In Korean the communist and capitalist 'nations' mark the difference between themselves through this highly emotive ideological terminology.

Ideologically, the situation is similar to East Germany's efforts to overhaul its population into a new socialist nation, separate from the capitalist West Germans (cf Kosing 1976: 222-224). But in the German language, both the East and the West Germans continued to share the same name, *Deutsch*, for their nations and their shared language. On the contrary, at the level of terminological difference, both Koreas appear to follow the example of Moldova and Romania. The names of the two nation-states and their nations are different in English and in Moldovan/Romanian (*Moldova* vs *România*) and their exactly same language was constitutionally construed as different, that is Romanian (*Română*) in Romania, and between 1994 and 2013, Moldovan (*Moldovenească*) in Moldova.

Hence, if we take into consideration the logic of naming as a reflection of the espousal of the normative isomorphism, both Koreas should be classified as fully isomorphic nation-states, necessitating their moving to the first (or 'isomorphic') rubric in Table 7. However, this hypothesis to hold would have to be first checked whether it is the way the North Koreans and the South Koreans construe themselves and their nation-states. The evidence of terminology alone is not sufficient. More research is needed on this question.

Languages, Scripts

Probing into the 'genetic'[11] classification of the national languages in E/SE Asia's isomorphic polities does not reveal any regularities, apart from that that the more distant states in question are from one another, the more it is sure that their languages are not related.

Altaic languages	Austronesian languages	Austrosiatic languages	Tai-Kadai languages	Sino-Tibetan languages
Japanese [1]	Indonesian [1]	Khmer, Vietnamese [2]	Laotian, Thai [2]	Myanmar [1]

E/SE Asia's Isomorphic Languages and Their 'Genetic' Classification
Table 8

A more interesting story can be teased out by probing into the scripts of E/SE Asia's isomorphic languages. As many as six different scripts are at present employed for writing and printing in these seven isomorphic languages. The contrast with Central Europe is staggering, as only the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets are used in the case of the region's isomorphic languages. Both European scripts are of the same kind – phonemic – meaning that ideally one grapheme (letter) corresponds to one phoneme (the smallest sound in a language that can effect a change in the meaning of words).

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[11] I put the term 'genetic' in quotation marks in order to emphasize its metaphoric meaning. The 'genetic' classification of languages is that of their similarities as seen through time (or diachronically). This type of classification developed under the influence of the Darwinian theory of evolution (cf Schleicher 1869). But when living organisms do procreate, languages do not, though popularly groups of diachronically similar languages are referred to as 'families.' It is a metaphor taken from biology, not an apt description of the linguistic reality.

Brahmi (syllabic)	Chinese-Mixed (morphemic-syllabic)	European (phonemic)
Khmer script, Lao script, Myanmar script, Thai script [4]	Japanese script	Latin (Indonesian, Vietnamese) [1]

E/SE Asia's Isomorphic Languages and Their Scripts
Table 9

In the case of E/SE Asia's isomorphic nation-states, the difference between them is not only marked through language, but is also reinforced by script, the normative ideal being that each language ought to be written in its own specific script. As a result, the fourth necessary element of script is added to the normative isomorphism as practiced in E/SE Asia. Hence, in this case it may be more appropriate to speak of the normative isomorphism of language, *script*, nation and state.

Without Western colonialism, Vietnamese would have been still jotted down in Chinese characters, while perhaps a form of the Arabic script would have been employed for writing Indonesian. Then the E/SE Asian ideal of a separate script for each isomorphic language would have been fulfilled. However, it is doubtful that without Western colonial and cultural intrusions and impositions the concept of the ethnolinguistic nation-state would at all have seized the day in E/SE Asia as a leading model of statehood organization and legitimation since the mid-20th century. The adoption of this isomorphic type of national statehood is a defensive reaction to Western imperialism.

Ironically, ethnolinguistic nationalism originated as a similarly defensive reaction of the German-speakers in the Holy Roman Empire. This polity was dissolved under French pressure in 1806, and its German-speaking elite, left with no state to call their own, creatively adopted the state-based (and -led) French nationalism.

In the process they altered this novel ideology into ethnolinguistic nationalism that best suited their predicament of sudden statelessness (or rather the division of the German-speaking community among a plethora of states). With this freshly-minted ideology of German ethnolinguistic nationalism, at the turn of the 1810s, the elite successfully rallied mass support against the relentless eastward expansion of the revolutionary French nation-state-turned-empire (cf Greenfled 1992: 352-386).

The Brahmi (Indic) scripts of Khmer, Lao, Myanmar and Thai show that the territories inhabited by peoples speaking these languages used to be part of the Hindu cultural sphere which in the past extended from the Indus to Java (Pulvier 1995: map 3). (In India, a multitude of Brahmi-derived syllabic scripts are still employed for writing and printing in the country's numerous languages [Singh and Banthia 2004: 182-189].) By the same token, the use of the Chinese morphemic writing system reflects the former extent of China's political and cultural influence in Asia, from Japan and Korea to Vietnam (Hermann 1966: 30-31). On the other hand, the use of the Latin alphabet is a recent legacy of European imperialism, while the eventually unrealized possibility of the Arabic script for Indonesian is a reflection of the replacement of Hindu culture by its Islamic counterpart in what today is Indonesia and Malaysia between the 13th and 18th centuries (Pulvier 1995: map 16).

Nowadays, all the extant scripts go back to the two independent instances of the invention of the technology of writing, one in Mesopotamia and another in China (the third instance that occurred in Mesoamerica was extinguished by European colonialism in the 16th century). Indochina is the meeting point of the two traditions. The Brahmi-related and European scripts stem from the Mesopotamian font of writing (Rogers 2005: 4). The Chinese script underlies the tradition of literacy in Japan, though nowadays it is interlaced with characters from two locally developed syllabaries (Campbell 1997: 76-80). Should both Koreas be included in the E/SE group of isomorphic polities, quite

appropriately, they also brandish their own distinctive scripts. In South Korea, somewhat similarly as in Japan, the Chinese morphemic script is used in combination with the locally devised phonemic script. In contrast, in 1949, North Korea decided to use only the phonemic system, though the policy has not been fully consistent since the 1960s (Korean 2014).

The Need for Further Research

In this article I presented the analytical instrument of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state for detecting and measuring the spread and the state of implementation of ethnolinguistic nationalism as an ideology of nation-state building, legitimation and maintenance. With the use of this instrument, I demonstrated that at present there are two clusters of isomorphic nation-states, one located in Central Europe and the other in E/SE Asia. Because the latter emerged later than the former, I propose that the tenets and political know-how of ethnolinguistic nationalism spread from (Central) Europe to (E/SE) Asia.

In the second half of the article I identified three potential main channels of possible knowledge transfer to E/SE Asia, namely, from Germany, France and the Soviet Union. Subsequently, I briefly analyzed ethnocultural and political regularities in modern E/SE Asia as seen through the lens of the normative isomorphism of language, nation and state. It appears that in E/SE Asia, as a local variation, the fourth element of script was added to this isomorphism, resulting in the normative isomorphism of language, *script*, nation and state.

I trust that the preliminary results of the application of this analytical instrument of the normative isomorphism for probing into the modern history of E/SE Asia appear to be revelatory, especially when a comparison is sustained with the Central European cluster of isomorphic polities. Hence, a further, in-depth

look into the origins of the E/SE Asian cluster of the isomorphic nation-states, and its probable links with its Central European counterpart appears quite promising. However, an exercise of this kind would require a wide-ranging collaborative research project carried out by an interdisciplinary team of scholars. Not a single scholar can realistically be expected to achieve a command of even the most important languages of E/SE Asia and Central Europe and a thorough knowledge of the modern history of the two isomorphic clusters' national polities.

For the time being, by way of comparison, as shown in Table 6, the number of the polities fulfilling the normative isomorphism in E/SE Asia is half of that in Central Europe. Nevertheless, I wish to emphasize, the influence of ethnolinguistic nationalism may be – at least, in a long term perspective – much wider in E/SE Asia than in Central Europe, because the former region's isomorphic polities house five times more inhabitants than live in Central Europe's isomorphic nation-states. It is a fact to be well borne in mind when a justification is necessary to support an application for a grant to compare the two regions that might not obviously suggest themselves as bedfellows for comparison. The sheer distance separating E/SE Asia and Central Europe, to the tune of 10,000 to 14,000 kilometers, is not conducive for undertaking such comparative projects, either. I will be glad then, should my article convince some scholars that a comparison of this type may be yet a rewardingly novel and engrossing path of interdisciplinary and multilingual enquiry, well worth embarking on.

June-July 2014
Cill Rìmhinn / Saunt Aundraes

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