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NATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN POST-YUGOSLAV MONTENEGRO

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Keywords—*strategic communications, strategic communication, history textbooks, national identity, national identity construction, Montenegro, narrative, collective memory, memory construction*

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ABSTRACT

In light of a looming national identity crisis in Montenegro, this article makes the case that changes in history textbooks of post-Yugoslav Montenegro are strategic communications in the process of national identity construction. As history textbooks are considered a primary site for the representation of nation-building myths—a key feature of national identity—this article seeks to demonstrate the paramount agency

of school textbooks in structuring national identity. The inter-dependent relationships between history, memory, identity, and narrativity, and the significance of these concepts in strategic communications theory and practice are discussed in the theoretical framework. Six history textbooks written for the seventh and eighth grades of primary school, published in the years 1997, 2001, and 2008—each a turning point in how Montenegrin national identity was viewed by the political elites in power—are examined comparatively, discursively, and thematically. The analysis demonstrates that changes to various editions of Montenegrin history textbooks were made with a view towards (re)constructing collective memory and national myths to influence the attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs of a captive audience of primary school pupils and qualify as state-projected strategic communications.

INTRODUCTION

In his novel *1984*, George Orwell wrote, ‘Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past’. In modern nation-states, the ways in which the past can be ‘controlled’ are multi-faceted since political elites influence the safekeeping of records and the representation of historical events. Regardless of who is in power, history teaching in schools can be viewed as a tool for state politics. This implies neither positive influence nor negative manipulation as either judgement would depend on the context. However, historical representation that aims to (re)construct collective memory and national myths affecting the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that mould national identities should be examined through the lens of strategic communications (StratCom).

For some time, Montenegro has been a neglected part of former Yugoslavia. More recently, it has merited international attention as a national identity crisis is currently creating fertile ground for future conflicts. The question of national identity is not recent for Montenegro

but has been re-emerging continuously since the 19th century.¹ However, national and ethnic polarisation was heightened as a result of parliamentary elections held in August 2020, and ever since the country has been in flux socially, politically, and economically. The aim of this article is not to answer the question, ‘who are the Montenegrins?’. The debate over whether the Montenegrins are Serbs who merely populate the area known as Montenegro, a South Slavic people with a distinct identity, or an essential ‘part of a broader Serbian ethnic framework (“the best of the Serbs”)', as Srđa Pavlović aptly characterises it, will not be settled here.² Instead, what follows is an attempt to determine if changes in the history textbooks used in post-Yugoslav Montenegrin schools can be considered strategic communications contributing to national identity. National identity construction has attracted the attention of numerous scholars, yet no effort has been made to frame this question as one of StratCom. This article aims to inspire a broadening of our understanding of StratCom as the field develops in the social sciences.

This article first considers the definition of StratCom and frames it within broader sociological and anthropological notions of ‘memory’, ‘history’, ‘narrativity’, and ‘identity’, which form the theoretical framework of analysis. Then the interplay between history textbooks and national identities is discussed. Some conclusions from contemporary literature on history textbooks in 20th century Yugoslav Montenegro are briefly presented to provide an understanding of trends in history teaching in the country. Finally, six Montenegrin history textbooks are analysed comparatively, thematically, and discursively.

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1 Kenneth Morrison, *Nationalism, Identity and Statehood in Post-Yugoslav Montenegro* (London; Oxford; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

2 Srđja Pavlović, ‘Who are Montenegrins? Statehood, Identity, and Civic Society’ in Florian Bieber (ed.) *Montenegro in Transition: Problems of Identity and Statehood* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2003), p. 83.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS?

Siman-Tov and Fridman recognise that despite an extensive literature, there is no unified understanding of StratCom.³ Existing literature is predominantly concerned with how state or non-state actors disseminate messages through new media and information-communication technologies and with the impact of these messages. While online activity has attracted greater scholarly attention, numerous channels continue to exist through which an actor can ‘communicate’ with/to intended audiences.

Perhaps one reason a definition of StratCom remains elusive is that the term ‘strategy’ has no agreed definition.⁴ Even so, the concept has infiltrated most aspects of human life. Although the concept of ‘strategy’ has military origins, Lawrence Freedman writes that any contemporary definition should be about ‘maintaining a balance between ends, ways, and means; about identifying objectives and about the resources and methods available for meeting such objectives’.⁵ Strategy is oriented towards achieving objectives in the long-term⁶ while preserving short-term consistency and continuity and is a concept distinct from ‘tactics’.⁷ Freedman’s conception of strategy as maintaining a balance between ends, ways, and means derives from its environment, which is dynamic and hotly contested.⁸ As rapid advancements in information and communication technologies dissolve the binaries of home and abroad, government and people, this ‘balancing act’ becomes more important, and viewing strategy as a linear process toward achieving objectives grows increasingly difficult. Strategy applied to communications is about identifying target populations and clear objectives of change or influence. Any other understanding can turn StratCom simply into message

3 David Siman-Tov and Ofer Fridman, ‘A Rose by Any Other Name? Strategic Communications in Israel’, *Defence Strategic Communications* N° 8 (2020): 17–52, p. 18.

4 James P. Farwell, *Persuasion and Power: The Art of Strategic Communication* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012), p. xviii.

5 Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. xi; Arthur F. Lykke Jr., ‘Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy’ in *Military Strategy: Theory and Application* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 1989), p. 3–8.

6 Neville Bolt, ‘Foreword’, *Defence Strategic Communications* N° 6 (2019): 3–11, p. 4.

7 Freedman, *Strategy: A History*, p. 74.

8 Christopher Paul, *Strategic Communication: Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011).

projection at audiences who neither hear nor wish to hear. Hence we may conclude that: ‘Strategic Communications is strategic because it focuses on discourse change in the long term. It is strategic because it navigates a dynamic and contested information environment. It is strategic because tactics should be coherent and consistent within a strategy that evolves once the planners’ best intentions encounter the friction of real events.’⁹

Bolt and Haiden view StratCom as ‘a holistic approach to communication based on values and interests that encompasses everything an actor does to achieve objectives in a contested environment’.¹⁰ Definitions based in US foreign policy narrow the scope of StratCom. For Paul, it represents ‘coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signalling or engagement intended to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of national objectives’.¹¹ While for Farwell, it is ‘the use of words, actions, images or symbols to influence the attitudes and opinions of target audiences to shape their behaviour in order to advance interest or policies or to achieve objectives’.¹²

Paul and Farwell categorise what a practitioner does and says to achieve objectives as StratCom, but failing to act (non-action) can convey as much as any action taken. Both actions and non-actions can be ‘StratCom deeds’. The inclusion of inaction broadens the concept of StratCom, shifting it away from the visible and measurable and reinforcing the argument that StratCom is a holistic approach to communication.

Bolt suggests that StratCom ‘entails the long-term shaping and shifting of significant discourses in societies [...] the projection of foreign and security policies aimed at changing the attitudes and behaviour of targeted audiences to achieve strategic effects, using words, images, actions and non-actions in the national interest or the interest of a political community’.¹³ At least three aspects not addressed by Farwell

9 Bolt, ‘Foreword’, *Defence Strategic Communications* N^o 6, p. 4.

10 Neville Bolt and Leonie Haiden, *Improving NATO Strategic Communications Terminology*, (Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2019), p. 46.

11 Paul, *Strategic Communication*, p. 17.

12 Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, p. xviii- xix.

13 Bolt, ‘Foreword’, *Defence Strategic Communications* N^o 6, p. 4.

and Paul can be identified here. The first is ‘temporality’. StratCom is not a tool for ‘quick fixes’ in crises, but a method of coherent and sustained shaping and shifting of societal discourses, attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs, over an extended period.

The second aspect is the quality of ‘fluidity’/‘agility’. Strategy is also about maintaining balance in a dynamic environment with fluctuating ends, ways, and means.¹⁴ Recognising that attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours are not fixed¹⁵ is essential if the goal of StratCom is to have a moulding or influential capacity. Long-term objectives require perpetual realignment to remain in sync with fluid attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of intended audiences. Otherwise StratCom becomes message projection at unreceptive audiences.

The definitions proposed by Paul and Farwell suggest that whether something can be considered StratCom depends on who deploys it and how, but as Bolt points out, StratCom is not ‘some kind of hermetically sealed message projection directed at foreign states’.¹⁶ It involves reciprocity between ‘senders’ and ‘receivers’ and is never free from cross-communications. Intended audiences internalise ‘StratCom deeds’ and can ‘possibly become new messengers as narrators and further communicate the message’.¹⁷ ‘Internalisation’ can be considered a third aspect of StratCom, which contributes to it being a holistic, or mindset-oriented, approach to communications.

Memory, History, Narrativity, and Identity

If StratCom relies on audience engagement, then understanding the mutually dependent relationships between memory, history, narrativity, and identity, and the agency of these interweaving threads in individuals is essential. To achieve an objective, a StratCom practitioner must create a narrative that remains consistent but can be adapted to changing

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14 Freedman, *Strategy: A History*, p. xi; Lykke Jr., ‘Toward an Understanding’, p. 3.

15 For an overview on approaches and definitions, see Gerd Bohner and Michaela Wanke, *Attitudes and Attitude Change* (London: Psychology Press, 2002).

16 Bolt, ‘Foreword’, *Defence Strategic Communications* N^o 6, p. 4.

17 Jan K. Hanska, ‘Storytelling or Non-Kinetic Weaponry? Strategic Communication from a Narratological Perspective’, *Journal of Information Warfare* Volume 14 N^o 1 (2015): 24–38, p. 26.

circumstances. Hayden White argues that narrativity is a natural form of human existence.¹⁸ Jerome Bruner asserts that human experience and memory are mainly organised in the form of narrative,¹⁹ 'our preferred [...] medium for expressing human aspirations and their vicissitudes, our own and those of others'.²⁰ This view of narrative as central to human experience implies that narrative is essential to an audience-centric view of StratCom.

Consequently, the human tendency to create narratives that explain the events of our lives naturally translates into writing histories and historiography. Reviewing White's work, David Campbell observes that narrative is the preferred and pragmatic historical style.²¹ White makes the controversial claim that 'there are no grounds to be found in the historical record itself for preferring one way of construing its meaning over another'.²² If we accept that there are no scientific or rational reasons for preferring one way of construing meaning over another, the significance of narratives in historical representations arises 'out of a desire to have real events display coherence, integrity, fullness and closure of an image of life'.²³ Hence, narratives are central to individual human experience.

History and historiography have a complex relationship with memory. Pierre Nora makes a distinction between history and memory in writing:

History [...] is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is [...] a bond trying to use the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.²⁴

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18 Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Inquiry* Volume 7 N° 1 (1980): 5–27.

19 Jerome S. Bruner, 'The Narrative Construction of Reality', *Critical Inquiry* Volume 18 N° 2 (1991): 1–21, p. 4.

20 Bruner, *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 89.

21 David Campbell, 'MetaBosnia: Narratives of the Bosnian War', *Review of International Studies* Volume 24 N° 2 (1998): 261–81, p. 261.

22 White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 75.

23 White, *The Content of the Form*, p. 24.

24 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Représentations* N° 26 (1989): 7–24, p. 8.

If history is a problematic representation of the past, it can be vulnerable to manipulation since representation relies heavily on those in control of representing it. Paul Connerton endorses this view:

[C]ontrol of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power; [...] hence the organisation of collective memory [...] is [...] one directly bearing on legitimation, the question of the control and ownership of information being a crucial political issue.²⁵

Connerton addresses the very important notion of 'collective memory', introduced by Maurice Halbwachs. Halbwachs rejects the idea that an individual's unconscious serves as a depository for all past experiences.²⁶ People's memories are intertwined with their relationships with others, reinforcing certain memories within the family, the workplace, or any other group to which an individual belongs.²⁷ While an individual may believe their memory is personal, Halbwachs concludes that memory is collective. Even if solitary, the individual 'is the product of social interactions and views the world through collective constructs such as language'.²⁸ Finally, furthering the argument for interdependency between the notions of memory, history, narrativity, and identity, Anthony Smith argues 'no memory, no identity; no identity, no nation',²⁹ while Susan Stanford Friedman observes that 'identity is literally unthinkable without narrative'.³⁰

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25 Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Themes in the Social Sciences series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 1.

26 Jeffery K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices', *Annual Review of Sociology* Volume 24 (1998): 105–40.

27 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, The Heritage of Sociology series, Lewis A. Coser (ed.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

28 Maria Paula Nascimento Araújo and Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos, transl. by Sheena Caldwell, 'History Memory and Forgetting: Political Implications', *RCCS Annual Review* Volume 1, N° 1 (2009): 78–79. [Accessed 13 July 2021].

29 Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 383.

30 Susan S. Friedman, *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 8.

HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES

The relevance of history textbooks has been addressed by scholars from varying perspectives. Textbooks are ‘conceived, designed and authored by real people with real interests’ and ‘published within the political and economic constraints of markets, resources and power’.³¹ Specifically, history textbooks used for (re)constructing usable pasts have been seen as the extended ‘arm of the state’.³² Crawford describes textbook knowledge as ‘far more than mere information, being located within clear cultural contexts; its meanings are changed and are used to justify behaviours and actions designed to have specific social consequences’.³³

Knežević and Čagorović suggest that ‘history textbooks are a reliable indicator of societal changes and of the ideology of the political elites’.³⁴ Perović notes that changes in discourse, seeking national, cultural, and political identity that are brought about by changes in power structures, will lead to changes in a state’s educational curriculum and in its history textbooks.³⁵ Therefore, history textbooks are reliable indicators of broader social changes and of the ideological profiling of political elites who project their own identity/understanding onto knowledge of the past. The history taught in schools is one the state legitimises, promoting specific belief systems and regulating the social order.³⁶ This can be termed ‘the legitimised historical narrative of the state’.³⁷

History textbooks are considered the primary site of nation-building myths.³⁸ Nation-building myths are the ‘essential building block of

31 Allan Luke, *Literacy, Textbooks, and Ideology: Postwar Literacy Instruction and the Mythology of Dick and Jane* (London & New York: Falmer Press, 1988), p. 27–29.

32 Elie Podeh, ‘History and Memory in the Israeli Educational System: The Portrayal of the Arab-Israeli Conflict in History Textbooks (1948–2000)’, *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past* Volume 12 N° 1 (2000): 65–100.

33 Keith Crawford, ‘Culture Wars: Serbian History Textbooks and the Construction of National Identity’, *History Education Research Journal* Volume 3 N° 2 (2003): 43–52, p. 47.

34 Saša Knežević and Nebojša Čagorović, ‘Ideological Changes in the History Textbooks of Montenegro’ in Gorana Ognjenović and Jasna Jozelić (eds), *Nationhood and Politicization of History in School Textbooks* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 43–60, p. 44.

35 Radovan, Perović ‘Nacionalna istorija u udžbenicima istorije za osnovnu školu [National history in history textbooks for primary school]’, *Matica* N° 71 (Autumn 2017): 47–66.

36 Michael W. Apple and Linda Christian-Smith (eds), *The Politics of the Textbook* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

37 Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990).

38 Tamara P. Trošt, ‘Remembering the Good: Constructing the Nation Through Joyful Memories in School Textbooks in the Former Yugoslavia’, *Memory Studies* Volume 12 N° 1 (2019): 27–45, p. 27.

nations, a key feature of national identity and a core element in nationalist politics'.³⁹ Many proposed definitions of 'nation' are unsatisfactory.⁴⁰ This article favours Anthony Smith's definition of nation as 'a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members'.⁴¹ While contentious, this definition justifies the process of consolidating national history and myths as essential for anyone attempting to mould national identity.

National identity was previously viewed as relatively static.⁴² Recently, a growing consensus suggests that it can be conceptualised as a negotiation among a variety of forces both internal and external to a nation.⁴³ Pavlović writes, 'identity is a dynamic phenomenon whose manifestations can vary over time and even more so if such an identity is positioned on the periphery of a dominant cultural/political force'.⁴⁴ Building on the arguments of Friedman, McAdam, and Peters,⁴⁵ Brudny defines national identity as 'a set of attitudes, beliefs, and commitments regarding qualification for membership, the location of territorial boundaries, and the content of political, social, economic, and cultural arrangements that are best suited for a given nation'.⁴⁶

The debate over what constitutes a nation offers many perspectives, including primordialism, instrumentalism, perennialism, and

39 Geneviève Zubrzycki, 'History and the National Sensorium: Making Sense of Polish Mythology', *Qualitative Sociology* Volume 34 N°1 (2011): 21–57, p. 22.

40 Anna Triandafyllidou, 'National Identity and the "Other"', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Volume 21 N° 4 (1998): 593–612.

41 Smith, *National Identity*, Ethnonationalism in Comparative Perspective series (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), p. 14.

42 Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 13.

43 Frank Louis Rusciano, 'The Construction of National Identity: A 23-Nation Study', *Political Research Quarterly* Volume 56 N° 3 (2003): 361–66, p. 361.

44 Srđa Pavlović, 'Literature, Social Poetics, and Identity Construction in Montenegro', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* Volume 17 N° 1 (2003): 131–65, p. 143.

45 Debra Friedman and Doug McAdam, 'Collective Identity and Activism' in Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (eds) *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 157; Bernhard Peters, 'A New Look at "National Identity": How should we think about 'collective' or 'national identities'? Are there two types of national identities? Does Germany have an ethnic identity, and is it different?', *European Journal of Sociology* Volume 43 N° 1 (2002): 3–32, p. 16.

46 Yitzhak M. Brudny, 'Myths and National Identity Choices in Post-Communist Russia' in Gérard Bouchard (ed.) *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents* (New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013): 133–56, p. 135.

modernism.⁴⁷ For primordialists, ethnic groups and identities are natural and have existed at all times in human history.⁴⁸ Instrumentalists hold that the nation is a socially constructed phenomenon.⁴⁹ Considering the emergence of nations, scholars have proposed two timeframes. Perennialists perceive them as ‘enduring, inveterate, century-long, even millennial phenomena’, but not part of the natural order,⁵⁰ while modernists see them as novel and products of the process of modernisation with no roots in the past.⁵¹ In critiquing the modernists, Smith notes the ‘systematic failure’ of the modernist approach ‘to accord any weight to the pre-existing cultures and ethnic ties of the nations that emerged in the modern epoch, thereby precluding any understanding of the popular roots and widespread appeal of nationalism’.⁵² This dissatisfaction has led to conceptualising an ethno-symbolic approach.

Ethno-symbolists claim that today’s nations are rooted in previous ethnicities and pre-modern identities. For them, the most important element of a nation is the existence of common myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of the ethnic heritages upon which modern national identities are reconstituted in each generation.⁵³ Collective memory was previously emphasised because ‘memory, almost by definition, is integral to cultural identity, and the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival and destiny of such collective identities’.⁵⁴ Furthermore, as nations are a historical phenomenon, historians have played a central role in the ‘delineation of the nation and in the rediscovery, transmission and analysis of its ethnic heritage’.⁵⁵

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47 Daniele Conversi, ‘Mapping the Field: Theories of Nationalism and the Ethnosymbolic Approach’ in Athena S. Leoussi and Steven Grosby (eds) *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations* (2006): 15–30, p. 15.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

49 Michael Hechter and D. Okamoto, ‘Political Consequences of Minority Group Formation’, *Annual Review of Political Science* Volume 4 N° 1 (2001): 189–215, p. 193; Conversi, ‘Mapping the Field’, p. 17.

50 Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5; Conversi, ‘Mapping the Field’, p. 18.

51 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Smith, *Myths and Memories*, p. 6.

52 Smith, *Myths and Memories*, p. 9.

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

55 *Ibid.*

For Smith the most important factor of historical stability for a nation is its ‘mythomoteur’,⁵⁶ as without it a ‘group cannot define itself to itself or to others, and cannot inspire or guide collective action’.⁵⁷ George Schopflin argues that myths are sets of beliefs, ‘usually put forth as a narrative’, that concentrate around perceptions ‘about the ways in which communities regard certain propositions as normal and natural and others as perverse and alien’.⁵⁸ Duncan Bell proposes that myths are ‘constructed, shaped, [perhaps] by deliberate manipulation and intentional action or perhaps through the particular resonance of works of literature and art’.⁵⁹ Consensual themes emerge despite divergent perspectives. In short, myths are selected to serve a specific purpose, reinforced through stories or narratives, and dictate what is considered normal or natural in the given social order.

National myths are affirmed through various channels, but history textbooks are often overlooked in this context. School is one of the primary environments where young people develop sentiments about nationhood. However, if textbooks can be adjusted according to the changing ideologies of political elites,⁶⁰ how national myths are represented and selected is also malleable. Any attempt to reconstruct, adjust, reshape, modify, or narrativise myths disparately should be viewed as an attempt to do the same to national identity. At least two conclusions may be derived from these assumptions. First, if national identity is ‘a set of attitudes, beliefs and commitments’ and StratCom entails ‘changing the attitudes and behaviour of targeted audiences to achieve strategic effects’,⁶¹ national identity is inherently susceptible to StratCom. Second, if myths are the building blocks of national identity,⁶² their suppression or reappropriation according to a desired national present and future, must also be considered StratCom.

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56 Meaning ‘their myths and symbols, their historical memories and central values’ (Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 15).

57 Ibid., p. 24–25.

58 George Schopflin, ‘The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths’ in *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 19–35, p. 19.

59 Duncan S. A. Bell, ‘Mythscape: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity’, *The British Journal of Sociology* Volume 54 N° 1 (2003): 63–81, p. 75.

60 Gorana Ognjenović and Jasna Jozelić (eds), *Nationhood and Politicization of History in School Textbooks* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 44.

61 Bolt, ‘Foreword’, *Defence Strategic Communications* N° 6, p. 4.

62 Zubrzycki, ‘History and the National Sensorium’, p. 22.

A Note on History Textbooks in Yugoslav Montenegro

Following its annexation to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918, Montenegrin identity was marginalised, subordinated to a greater Yugoslav identity. Consequently, Montenegrin national history was considered to be the same as that of all Yugoslavian peoples.⁶³ After the creation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1945, socialist ideology prevailed over national identity. Attempts to create a common Yugoslav national identity resulted in the consolidation of diverging national histories and myths.⁶⁴ The slogan 'Brotherhood and Unity' was the guiding value of post-war inter-ethnic policy for the Communist Party of Yugoslavia; national history and myths coalesced around this slogan. In alignment with Smith's definition of nation and its requisite 'mythomoteur',⁶⁵ those in power sought to adjust national and ethnic histories in service of a desired sense of national and historical stability.

Even though every Yugoslav state was allowed to publish its own textbooks after the 1950s, the majority of those used in Montenegro were still being written and printed in Belgrade, Serbia. The stated aim of the Montenegrin education system was to 'develop pride, love and loyalty toward the national homeland; strengthening brotherhood and unity and the legacy of the people's anti-fascist struggle; creating hatred towards enemies of the homeland and all others who work against the legacy of the people's liberation struggle'.⁶⁶ Consequently, history teaching in Montenegro was based on communist ideology. This supports the argument that political elites play an important role in education. While the people of former Yugoslavia may not consider themselves Yugoslavs today, the fact that a Yugoslav national identity was fabricated by leaders who wanted to avoid intra-ethnic conflict among its diverse republics demonstrates the involvement of political elites in constructing national identity.

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⁶³ Knežević and Čagorović, 'Ideological Changes', p. 47.

⁶⁴ Ognjenović and Jozelić, *Nationhood and Politicization of History*, p. 11.

⁶⁵ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 15; Smith, *National Identity*, p. 14.

⁶⁶ Knežević and Čagorović, 'Ideological Changes', p. 46, quoting a passage from the national curriculum published by the Ministry of Education of the Peoples Republic of Montenegro in 1948 (p. 105).

METHODOLOGY

The Montenegrin education system today consists of (i) pre-school, (ii) primary, (iii) general secondary, (iv/v) upper secondary vocational or non-tertiary, (vi) and higher education.⁶⁷ Only primary education is compulsory and cost-free for all children aged 6 to 15.⁶⁸ Before the general education reform that commenced in 2000, primary education lasted eight years; in the reformed system it has been extended by a year.⁶⁹ The reform activities that went on for nine years were of a 'developmental nature' and 'an integral part of the process of [Montenegro's] social, political and economic transition'⁷⁰ in light of a decision to 'harmonise' the education system with the policies of the European Union.⁷¹ This too can be seen as politics influencing education.

To examine more closely how a country's political values are reflected in educational materials, history textbooks for the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades⁷² will be analysed comparatively, thematically, and discursively. The textbooks were written in the language native to Montenegrins (and in Cyrillic script), hence any excerpts provided are my translations. In comparing these textbooks, my aim is to locate significant changes not only in substance (what is taught) but also in discourse (how it is taught). These textbooks were selected because they cover world history from the 16th to the 21st century, the period modernist theorists claim the 'idea of the nation' emerged. According to the ethnosymbolic approach, myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage that predate modernity are also crucial to national identity construction but, given the limited scope of this article, our analysis focuses on the period mentioned.

67 European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) Eurydice Network, ['Montenegro Overview'](#) [Accessed 7 January 2021].

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.; Anon (2005) 'Reform of educational system in Montenegro', in *Intervention by Serbia and Montenegro*, a document from the first South-East Europe sub-regional workshop on the implementation of the UNECE strategy for Education and Sustainable Development on 28 November 2005 in Athens, Greece, p. 3.

70 Eurydice, ['Montenegro Overview'](#); Veselin Mićanović, and Dijana Vučković, ['Some Aspects of the Primary Education Reform Process in Montenegro from the Perspective of Teachers'](#), *Journal of Educational and Social Research* Volume 4 N° 4 (2014): 80–87.

71 Eurydice, ['Montenegro Overview'](#).

72 Montenegro's education system went through a series of reforms beginning in 2000, when primary school education was extended from eight to nine years. Hence the textbooks chosen for this study published in 1997 and 2001 are written for seventh- and eighth-grade pupils but the corresponding textbooks published in 2008 are for eighth- and ninth-grade pupils.

In Montenegro, the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids (ZUNS)⁷³ is the sole producer and distributor of textbooks. ZUNS generates a single textbook per subject per grade, making this process highly centralised. Until the 1999/2000 academic year, Montenegrin schools used modified editions of Serbian history textbooks.⁷⁴ The first primary school history textbook published by ZUNS was the fifth-grade textbook for the school year 2000/2001. ZUNS history textbooks for seventh and eighth grade came out the following academic year.⁷⁵ In the section that follows, the history textbooks for grade seven and grade eight that were published in 1997, 2001, and 2008 are compared and analysed. These years of publication were chosen because they represent significant changes in Montenegro's political environment.

In January 1989, capitulating to pressure from Milošević's *Anti-bureaucratic Revolution*⁷⁶ the old leadership of the League of Communists of Montenegro resigned.⁷⁷ A new cadre of young leaders—Momir Bulatović, Milo Đukanović, and Svetozar Marović—was elected to lead the party, which was renamed the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) in 1991.⁷⁸ On 1st March 1992, a referendum was held on the question of independence; this resulted in Montenegro joining the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1997, Prime Minister Đukanović began to distance himself from Milošević's politics and publicly deemed him an 'obsolete politician',⁷⁹ while the President, Momir Bulatović, remained loyal to Milošević. This conflict led to a split within the DPS leadership. In October of 1997, Đukanović won against Bulatović to become the new President of Montenegro. This was the first signal of a Montenegrin

73 Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva

74 Perović, 'Nacionalna istorija'.

75 Ibid.

76 In 1988–89, popular unrest in the wake of Yugoslav President Tito's death led to a series of street protests and rallies made up predominantly of industrial workers, Kosovo Serbs, and their allies, strongly supported by Slobodan Milošević, which resulted in the overthrow of the governments of the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo, and of Montenegro. These events were named the 'antibureaucratic revolution' because this was allegedly a revolt against 'corrupt' bureaucratic governing structures. It was also a counter-mobilisation against the Kosovo Albanians. See Nebojša Vladislavljević, 'Introduction: The Significance of the Antibureaucratic Revolution' in *Serbia's Antibureaucratic Revolution* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008), p. 1–24.

77 Established and in power in Montenegro since 1948.

78 Florian Bieber, 'Montenegrin Politics since the Disintegration of Yugoslavia', in Florian Bieber (ed.), *Montenegro in Transition: Problems of Identity and Statehood* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003), p. 11–42, p. 17.

79 Dragoslav Grujić, 'Eleksibilna britva [Flexible razor]: Vreme [Time], 14 November 2002. [Accessed 8 October 2021].

separation from Serbia.⁸⁰ History textbooks published in 1997 were selected for analysis because these were the last editions approved for use before Montenegro's political course shifted away from Serbia.

Despite the independence project edging towards majority approval, it was not well-received by the international community in October 2000.⁸¹ While talks regarding future relations between Montenegrins and Serbs continued, Montenegrin parliamentary elections took place in April 2001. A coalition between the DPS and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) 'presented the program of an independent state of Montenegro and promised a referendum on this issue if re-elected'.⁸² The opposition formed a coalition offering a unionist vision of Montenegro's future.⁸³ A minority government was formed among the DPS, the SDP, and the Liberal Alliance of Montenegro (LSGC). Soon thereafter DPS announced their political goal was to integrate the Montenegrin state and society into Europe.⁸⁴ In Brussels, however, officials were advocating the creation of a union between Serbia and Montenegro and presented this as the fastest route towards EU membership.⁸⁵ With its promise of independence and EU integration, the DPS/SDP/LSCG coalition emerged triumphant from the election, so 2001 marks another crossroads in Montenegro's political path. The history textbooks published in 2001/2002 were selected for this reason.

The path to independence was suspended in March 2002 when the Belgrade Agreement was signed, initiating the creation of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. Unwilling to abandon its path toward independence, Montenegro insisted on a 'temporality clause' that read: 'upon the expiration of a three-year period, the member states shall be entitled to [...] withdrawal from the state union'.⁸⁶ While officially

80 Ivan Vuković, 'The Post-communist Political Transition of Montenegro: Democratization Prior to Europeanization', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* Volume 1N° 2 (2010): 59–77, p. 64.

81 Vuković, 'The Post-communist Political Transition', p. 68; International Crisis Group, Briefing N° 42 'Montenegro's Referendum', 30 May 2006, p. 2. [Accessed 8 October 2021].

82 Vuković, 'The Post-communist Political Transition', p. 67.

83 For election results see Nohlen & Stöver, 2010.

84 Vuković, 'The Post-communist Political Transition', p. 68.

85 Timothy Edmunds, 'Illiberal Resilience in Serbia', *Journal of Democracy* Volume 20 N° 1 (2009): 128–42, p. 136.

86 *Starting Points for the Restructuring of Relations between Serbia and Montenegro (Belgrade Agreement)*, 2002, p. 1.

Belgrade acknowledged the Montenegrins' right to decide on their statehood, the reality was entirely different; there were many reports of coercion and pressure being exerted on both unionists and pro-independence activists as the three-year period neared expiration.⁸⁷ On 21st May 2006, 86.49% of Montenegro's voters cast their ballots with 55.53% choosing independence.⁸⁸ In 2008, Montenegro officially applied for EU membership, and in 2010 the Council issued a favourable opinion on Montenegro's application, confirming it as a candidate country.⁸⁹ The year 2008 marks another political crossroads in both foreign and national policy regarding a newly independent Montenegro, so the textbooks published in this year are also included in the analysis.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF 7TH- AND 8TH-GRADE MONTENEGRIN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

Seventh Grade

The 1997 textbook

The seventh-grade Montenegrin history textbook from 1997 was an adaptation of a textbook developed for the Serbian education system. Montenegrin national history makes up 18.75% of the content. The history of Europe and the rest of the world together with ideological (mostly socialist) content accounts for another 39.3%. The textbook includes only 73 visual elements—predominately black-and-white sketches—and has no real-life images of objects, people, or events. There are no illustrations of flags, emblems, or other national symbols.

The foreword states that pupils will discover how the capitalist social order came into being and how it developed throughout the 19th century and will learn about the crisis that befell it leading to World War I.⁹⁰ This introduction sets the theme for the textbook, which presents many

.....
87 International Crisis Group, Briefing N° 42, p. 4.

88 Ibid., p. 6.

89 European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, 'Montenegro: candidate membership status'. [Accessed 12 January 2022].

90 Milo Strugar and Milutin Perović (eds), *Istorija 7: Za VII razred osnovne škole*, 13. izd. [History 7: For the 7th Grade of Primary School, 13th ed.] (Titograd: Zavod za Školstvo [Department of Education], 1997), p. 4

historical developments from a perspective critical of capitalism and praising socialism. The textbook features excerpts from Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*.

The authors spend fourteen pages on the First and Second Serb Uprisings, highlighting the importance of these events in the history of the 'Serb people'.⁹¹ Montenegrin national history during the reign of Petar I Petrović (1782–1830) begins on page 49; the section emphasises state-related developments but says little about the socio-cultural dimension of Montenegrin society. The reign of Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1830–1861) is covered in five pages with a similar emphasis on conflict, foreign policy, and strengthening state power. The authors write that the relationship between Montenegro and Serbia improved dramatically during this period with many Montenegrins migrating to Serbia. Njegoš is remembered for sending numerous students from Montenegro to be educated in Serbia at the expense of the Serbian government.⁹²

The textbook then goes on to discuss the '1848/49 revolutions in Europe and of South Slavs and their neighbours', 'changes in the capitalist market and society in the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century', 'the First International' and 'the Second International' socialist labour organisations with ideologically loaded discourse.⁹³ In discussing the turn of the 20th century, the textbook emphasises 'the position of Serbs in Austro-Hungary', the development of a Serbian 'national culture, [the] Matica Srpska [cultural-scientific institution], and the development of education' in Serbia.⁹⁴ The Matica institution is considered Serbia's most significant cultural achievement; it was founded to nurture Serbian literature and science and to publish books in the Serbian language.⁹⁵

The language of the textbook mimics that of Serbian national mythology, using expressions such as 'the heroic defence of the Commune' and

.....
91 Ibid. (1997), p. 43.

92 Ibid., p. 56.

93 Ibid., p. 68, 73, 77, 83.

94 Ibid., p. 92–94.

95 Ibid., p. 94.

praising the ‘famous Serbian patriot’ Sava Tekelija; it tells how the Serbs ‘strongly oppos[ed] inequality and national pressure from the leading strata in the Habsburg monarchy’, and how ‘despite unfavourable conditions [...] true [Serb] industrial enterprises’ began to form.⁹⁶ When recounting events relating to Serbia and Montenegro, Serbia is given primacy and its path is distinguished from events unfolding in other South Slav nations, indicating that Serbia and Montenegro represent a single entity. In the discussion of the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, the participation of Serbia and Montenegro is presented as a joint enterprise, establishing that the two kingdoms went to war together and that the wars were of ‘significant importance’ for both.⁹⁷ The reign of Prince Nikola (1860–1918) is presented as the period when relations between Serbia and Montenegro deteriorated as a result of his absolutism.⁹⁸ The authors claim that relations between the two states improved around the time of Montenegro’s annexation, the Balkan Wars, and the beginning of WWI due to pressure from the ‘broadest national masses’.⁹⁹

The 2001 textbook

The first wholly Montenegrin seventh-grade history textbook was published in 2001 and approved for official use in 2002. Montenegrin national history comprises 36% of the content and the volume includes 163 visual elements of varying kinds. Unlike the 1997 edition, which emphasises the unity of Serbia and Montenegro, the 2001 textbook distinguishes Montenegrin national history from that of Serbia. By presenting many instances in which the Montenegrins overcome devastation, impoverishment, and illness in order to ‘triumph in a relentless battle for freedom’, the textbook authors establish a narrative of victimhood.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the language can be described as emotionally charged at times and there is frequent use of terms such

.....
⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80, 94, 95, 101.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁰⁰ Jasmina Đorđević and R. Popović (eds), *Istorija 7: Za VII razred osnovne škole [History 7: For the seventh grade of primary school]* (Podgorica: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva [Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids], 2001), p. 26.

as ‘firing-up’, ‘igniting’, ‘tirelessly working’, and ‘tragic’. Although the authors have no lived memories of the events they describe, the language they use is subjectively narrative.

While the First and Second Serb Uprisings are elaborated over fourteen pages in the 1997 textbook, the 2001 textbook summarises these events in four paragraphs. Another difference is in the treatment of Prince Danilo; in 2001, the authors write that he ‘did not give up on affirming Montenegro’s sovereignty and independence’,¹⁰¹ whereas in previous textbooks his reign was not accorded the same determined character. Other topics extensively discussed in the 2001 textbook but not in the 1997 edition include the creation of Montenegrin cultural institutions and literary works and the Muslim and Catholic populations of Montenegro. These sections project a more culturally attuned sense of Montenegrin national history, which translates into a more inclusive and desirable Montenegrin national identity.

A section titled ‘The Politics of Serbia Towards Montenegro’ covers another topic that received no mention in the 1997 edition.¹⁰² The authors describe how in 1860 the Serbian government and royalty worked against Prince Nikola by sending agents to Montenegro to infiltrate influential circles and how the Prince allegedly expelled them once he realised their aim was to subordinate his country.¹⁰³ The authors contend that Prince Nikola’s autocratic style of rule served as a premise for the Serbian bourgeoisie to work for his removal and that a number of Montenegrin students educated in Serbia fell under the influence of powerful individuals whose goal was annexation. Back in Montenegro, these students disseminated ‘Serbian thought’, celebrated the ‘Nemanjić oath’,¹⁰⁴ and promoted medieval Serbian myths, the premise of which was that Montenegro was part of Greater Serbia and that Montenegrins were ‘the best of the Serbs’.¹⁰⁵

.....
101 Ibid., p. 66.

102 Ibid., p. 87.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid., p. 114.

105 Jozo Tomasevich, *The Chetniks: War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

The final chapter of the textbook portrays Montenegro's involvement in the Balkan Wars as distinct from Serbia's, and presents the Montenegrin people as dignified and glorious as they persevered in battle despite harsh conditions and a paucity of critical resources.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the book images of national symbols such as Montenegrin soldiers marching under the Montenegrin flag, multiple versions of the flag, Montenegrin money, Prince Nikola's 1905 constitution, old Montenegrin houses, the epic battle of Vučiji Do, the Montenegrin magazine *Voice of a Montenegrin*, and other illustrations serve to visualise nation-building mythology and recreate the national history of a culturally and historically distinct Montenegro.

The 2008 textbook

The 2008 textbook is the second edition of the first seventh-grade history textbook published after the independence referendum. This textbook continues the trend of increasing the number of visual elements and features 216 images—53 more than in 2001 and 143 more than in 1997. Montenegrin national history content makes up 42.1% or 6.1% more than in 2001 and 23.35% more than in the 1997 textbook. While the language used is at times descriptive, it is not as ideologically charged as the language of the 1997 textbook. In the discussion of tribal societies under Ottoman rule, Montenegrins are presented as powerful and worthy of respect as 'it was a rare occurrence that an occupied land would gain autonomy from the Ottomans'.¹⁰⁷ Events demonstrating Montenegrin bravery and resistance are repeatedly emphasised. For example, one passage describes how the Montenegrins defended themselves from Ottoman attacks, asserting their freedom and independence, offered 'fierce resistance', and scored 'magnificent Montenegrin successes [in the battle of Grahovac]'.¹⁰⁸

.....
106 Đorđević and R. Popović, *Istorija 7* (2001), p. 122–25.

107 Andrijašević, Ž. M. et al., *Istorija. 8: Za osmi razred devetogodišnje osnovne škole. 2. Izd.* [History 8: For the eighth grade of primary school, 2nd edn] (Podgorica: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva [Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids], 2008), p. 21–22.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 33, 75.

In previous textbooks, Montenegrin rulers from the country's Prince-Bishopric period (1516–1851) were called *vladike* [bishops]. In the 2008 textbook the authors refer to them as *mitropoliti* [archbishops], the highest-ranking official in the Orthodox Church after the patriarch, indicating that whoever ruled over the state was also head of the church. While there may be many reasons for this change in terminology, one explanation might be the desire to affirm the existence of an autocephalous Montenegrin church—to date a highly debated issue in Montenegro. In fact, the authors reiterate that from the end of 17th century the Metropolitanate of Cetinje [the historical capital of Montenegro and still an important cultural city] was ‘completely independent (autocephalous), and its leaders elected by Montenegrins themselves’.¹⁰⁹

Montenegrin state affairs are discussed in all of the textbooks, but in the 2008 edition the theme of strengthening state power emerges more frequently. The authors write that ‘with the adoption of [Prince Danilo’s] Legal Code and the establishment of the Supreme Court [in 1855], the basis for the creation of a modern Montenegrin state was laid’.¹¹⁰ Petar II Petrović Njegoš is said to have introduced three new institutions of state power as well as the printing press in 1838.¹¹¹ The details (colours, shapes, emblems, initials) of the national symbols created during Prince Danilo’s reign are discussed in detail.¹¹²

Finally, Montenegrin national history is discussed in contrast to other South Slavic countries, most frequently Serbia. There is mention of how, in 1862 ‘Serbia tried to use a secret agreement to oblige Montenegro to cooperate’ and that Serbia, ‘as a larger and more powerful state’ sought to subordinate Montenegro but Prince Nikola wanted the two countries to be equal.¹¹³ The authors of the 2008 textbook include a passage describing how Belgrade newspapers published ‘malicious fabrications’ about Prince Nikola and his family and the circumstances in Montenegro, inciting calls ‘for the violent overthrow of the Montenegrin

.....
109 Ibid., p. 32.

110 Ibid., p. 39.

111 Ibid., p. 69.

112 Ibid., p. 74.

113 Ibid., p. 87, 90.

ruler' that were encouraged by the Serbian government 'pursuing an anti-Montenegrin policy'.¹¹⁴ The authors of the 2001 textbook briefly mention these events, but they are not included in the 1997 textbook. The last ten pages of the 2008 textbook feature a total of twenty-one photographs of King Nikola and his family, the construction of a new aeroplane, and the first Montenegrin railroads.¹¹⁵

Eighth Grade

The 1997 textbook

The eighth-grade Montenegrin history textbook from 1997 covers the period from WWI to the establishment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992. The visual aspect is limited to 81 illustrations. None of the 27 sections of the textbook is dedicated to Montenegrin history exclusively. The textbook presents Montenegro's national history through the principle of 'us [Serbia and Montenegro] versus them [others]'. In the section on WWI, the authors claim the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand was used as a 'motive to attack Serbia', and that the state had 'nothing to do with organizing the assassination' and was accused unjustly.¹¹⁶ Montenegro is described as coming to Serbia's defence in WWI and as having fought for its freedom alongside Serbia.¹¹⁷ The soldiers of the two armies are praised as 'excellent', 'heroes', 'helping brothers', 'unstoppable', 'crushing [the enemy]', and 'patriotically defending the native [Serbian] breast'.¹¹⁸

In a section entitled 'The State in Occupied Serbia and Montenegro 1914–1918',¹¹⁹ the authors contend that the Corfu Declaration¹²⁰ asserted the 'need to free our peoples from Austro-Hungary and to unify

.....
114 Ibid., p. 120.

115 Ibid., p.124–33.

116 D. Živković and L. Mladenović-Maksimović, *Istorija za 8. razred osnovne škole [History for Primary School Grade 8]* (Podgorica: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva [Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids], 1997), p. 8.

117 Ibid., p. 8, 13.

118 Ibid., p. 19–25.

119 Ibid., p. 25.

120 Signed on July 20th 1917, on the Greek island of Corfu, between Nikola Pašić (the prime minister of Serbia) and delegates of the Yugoslav Committee (a London-based group comprising of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with Ante Trumbić as president), the Corfu Declaration set the premise for the creation of a unified Yugoslav state (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes) after the First World War.

Montenegro with Serbia in one state' and maintain that the 'question of Montenegro' was not contemplated at the time because 'the Serbian government considered it an internal question'.¹²¹ Furthermore, the authors propose that in 1918 the Montenegrin people were dissatisfied with King Nikola's reign and set about 'freeing' themselves and uniting with Serbia.¹²² They claim this goal was facilitated by 'the homogeneity of the two peoples' and the 'natural need for them to unite';¹²³ public sentiment in favour of annexation is depicted as 'overwhelming'.¹²⁴

Belgrade is portrayed as 'the capital of the country and the centre of scientific and cultural institutions and charitable organisations', while Montenegro is simply regarded as underdeveloped¹²⁵—'Montenegro and what is Macedonia today, were falling behind in comparison to Serbia'.¹²⁶ When Yugoslavia was occupied, the authors write, its peoples, 'especially Serb and Montenegrin, not only lost their freedom and independence, but were exposed to [...] killing in the most brutal way'.¹²⁷ Such language evokes sorrow for the injustices done to the 'unprotected peoples' of Serbia and Montenegro.¹²⁸

The Independent State of Croatia is described using stern language; it is called an 'Ustasha state'¹²⁹ and a 'satellite to Germany and Italy'. Readers are reminded that the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy supported Ustasha fascist politics.¹³⁰ In a section titled 'Death Camp—Jasenovac', the Jasenovac concentration camp is described as 'the largest execution site in the Balkans', adding that 'the Serbian people called it a death camp, which it really was'.¹³¹ The execution of men, women, children, and Orthodox clergy is described in detail; this was done in 'the most ferocious ways, with knives, axes, mallets, iron rods, shot and burned

.....
121 D. Živković and L. Mladenović-Maksimović, *Istorija* 8 (1997), p. 29.

122 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

123 *Ibid.*

124 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

125 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

128 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

129 'Ustashe' were a Croatian fascist and ultranationalist organisation and movement, whose ideology was based on Nazi racial theory, founded in 1929 and 'formally' banned in 1945.

130 D. Živković and L. Mladenović-Maksimović, *Istorija* 8 (1997), p. 79.

131 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

in the crematorium, hanged, tortured with hunger, thirst, and cold'.¹³² Many individuals are praised as heroes and 'Serbdom saviours', 'fathers and saviours of Serbdom', evoking Serbian national myths of a dignified ancestry.¹³³

In a section on the 13th of July Uprising in Montenegro, the authors stress that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia 'was the only organizer and power that the people believed in'.¹³⁴ Draža Mihailović's Chetnik movement, a Serb royalist and guerrilla nationalist movement formed in 1941, is also discussed in detail. 'The [Chetnik organisation ...] sought to restore the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and create a "homogeneous Serbia" within it'.¹³⁵ As a Serb royalist and nationalist movement that wished to create a Greater Serbia, it naturally challenged the legitimacy of Montenegro's state status.

The statement 'NATO remained the only force (under the influence of the United States and the Security Council) that was "protecting peace", in fact only implementing US policy abroad'¹³⁶ reflects an unfavourable attitude towards Western powers. The authors add:

[I]n 1991, under pressure from a united Germany and under the pretext of providing "good services" in the Yugoslav dispute, the European Community wholeheartedly supported the violent separation of Slovenia, Croatia, and then Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus directly contributing to the wrecking of the SFRY.¹³⁷

The choice of the word 'wrecking' instead of the more neutral 'breakup' implies (un)intentional third-party involvement. The dissolution of Yugoslavia is briefly characterised as a 'well prepared "scenario" created and facilitated by some foreign actors'. The passage also mentions the injustice of casting Serbia and Serbs as aggressors and reminds readers

.....
132 Ibid.

133 Ibid., p. 81–82.

134 Ibid., p. 86.

135 Ibid., p. 92.

136 Ibid., p. 135.

137 Ibid., p. 138.

of the sanctions imposed on Serbia as repercussions of the war.¹³⁸ Wars that occurred because of the break-up escape mention.

The 2001 textbook

The eighth-grade history textbook published in 2001 contains 263 visuals, 182 more than the previous edition, including numerous Montenegrin national symbols. Montenegrin national history comprises 18.5% of the content. This textbook is more or less ideologically neutral and significantly more favourable towards traditionally Western countries than the previous edition.¹³⁹ A certain ‘distancing’ from Serbia comes across in the passage describing the onset of WWI. Here the authors write that the assassins of Franz Ferdinand were members of a ‘patriotic organisation, Young Bosnia, which was associated with certain political and military circles in Serbia’,¹⁴⁰ whereas in the 1997 textbook Serbia was portrayed as unfairly blamed for the assassination and the perpetrators as in no way affiliated with Serbia. This narrative of distancing from Serbia can be found throughout the textbook. When discussing the post-WWI Podgorica Assembly, the authors allege that members of the Main Committee for National Unification were mostly citizens of Serbia and that their task was to ‘prepare an assembly that would overthrow the Montenegrin king and declare unification’.¹⁴¹ The 1997 textbook mentions some opposition to unification, but does not state, for example, that the new authorities ‘tried to stifle resistance with terror’ and wreaked revenge on the insurgents by ‘setting houses on fire, looting the population, and imprisoning them’.¹⁴²

In the section on WWI, the Montenegrin army is portrayed as persevering, a difference from the previous textbook. The authors praise the Montenegrin army, which ‘firmly held the front in 1915’, but write that ‘the Serbian army withdrew, avoiding engagement in a decisive battle but also refusing to

.....
138 Ibid., p. 157–59.

139 Slavko Burzanović and Jasmina Đorđević (eds), *Istorija 8: Za VIII razred osnovne škole [History 8: For the eighth grade of primary school]* (Podgorica: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva [Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids], 2001), p. 19, 36, 37, 128–135.

140 Ibid., p. 8.

141 Ibid., p. 66.

142 Ibid., p. 66–68.

capitulate'.¹⁴³ In contrast to the 1997 textbook, the authors claim that the 13th of July Uprising in Montenegro was not organised solely by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia but that they were helped by 'other patriotic forces'.¹⁴⁴ The perseverance and bravery of Montenegrins is reaffirmed in the section on WWII, where the authors write that 'Montenegro's contribution to the anti-fascist struggle exceeded its size and population'—around 35,000 Montenegrin fighters participated in the final struggle to liberate Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁵

In another passage on WWI, the authors emphasise that Montenegro, its people, and King Nikola were betrayed by Serbia and its government. The betrayal narrative comes across when the authors write that 'King Nikola did not understand the intent of the Serb ruling circles for Montenegro to see the end of the war without an army', implying that the annexation had already been planned before the beginning of the war.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, they write that 'the Serbian government was against the renewal of the Montenegrin army', 'Serbian diplomacy counted on the creation of a Greater Serbia', and '[t]he Serbian government launched a propaganda offensive against the Montenegrin king and government [...and] created a special propaganda department that dealt with Montenegro'.¹⁴⁷ These interpretations did not appear in the 1997 textbook.

Regarding Montenegro's annexation, the authors write that Serbia established its own military administration in Montenegro and disarmed the People's Army, and that the *Komite* ['comitatus' or freedom fighters] financed the 'the Montenegrin Committee but kept its members away from the Yugoslav question'. They go on to say that 'in Montenegro, dissatisfaction with the manner of unification culminated in a popular uprising [the Christmas Rebellion] one month later'.¹⁴⁸ This directly challenges the claims of the 1997 edition that the desire for unification was widespread throughout Montenegrin society and that there was no significant resistance.

.....
143 Ibid., p. 21.

144 Ibid., p. 98.

145 Ibid., p. 103.

146 Ibid., p. 26.

147 Ibid., p. 27–32.

148 Ibid., p. 29, 32, 33.

A narrative of Montenegrin victimhood can also be found throughout the 2001 textbook: ‘Montenegrin people were living in hunger and feeding themselves with tree bark, cooked nettles and other herbs’ due to a lack of support from their allies; they ‘lost about 20,000 people from war, famine and epidemics’ with ‘15,000 people passing through the camps in Hungary, Austria and Albania’, among them women and children; and during military occupations Montenegrin society was ‘exposed to ruthless exploitation and looting by the occupation authorities’.¹⁴⁹

Another difference is that this textbook signals greater inclusivity and a more nuanced understanding of national differences in the sections on ‘Albania and Albanians’ and ‘Cultural Opportunities for Albanians in Montenegro’.¹⁵⁰ Recognising the importance of the national question in Yugoslavia, the authors write that ‘the unresolved national issue was a source of great instability’, that ‘those who ruled the state refused to accept the fact that the state is multinational’, and that ‘most national minorities in Yugoslavia were disenfranchised’.¹⁵¹ In contrast to the 1997 textbook, the 2001 textbook negatively portrays Draža Mihailović’s Chetnik movement and their crimes against Muslim populations in Yugoslavia during WWII.¹⁵² Instances of ethnic cleansing that occurred during the Balkan Wars in the early 1990s are described in detail and accompanied by photographs of displaced populations.¹⁵³ An unfavourable attitude towards 1990s Yugoslavia emerges in a discussion of national minorities that states the ‘school [...] had ideological goals. It was a means of creating awareness that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were three tribes of one Yugoslav people. Other South Slavic peoples are not mentioned.’¹⁵⁴

.....
149 Ibid., p. 28–29.

150 Ibid., p. 40, 51, 126.

151 Ibid., p. 55.

152 Ibid., p. 89.

153 Ibid., p. 122.

154 Ibid., p. 64.

The 2008 textbook

This is the third edition of the 2001 textbook approved for use in 2002. Differences in content are not as extensive as between 1997 and 2001. It features 275 visual elements, just 12 more than the 2001 edition, and Montenegrin national history comprises 18% of the content. Similar themes of Montenegrin bravery and perseverance are apparent, as is the victimhood narrative. The authors write that even though the Montenegrin *Komite* 'were not numerous, they posed a constant danger to the occupying authorities'.¹⁵⁵ Victimhood is evoked in various descriptive passages, such as 'abandoned and lonely, without the help of allies, Montenegro could not resist the attacks for long'; 'famine appeared as early as the winter of 1915/1916 largely as a result of inadequate Allied aid'; and 'the Italian army carried out reprisals against the population: shootings, hostage-taking, deportation and internment, arson'.¹⁵⁶

In the 2008 textbook, Montenegrin national history is further distanced from that of Serbia and the theme of Serbian betrayal is often reiterated. In describing the events surrounding Montenegro's annexation, the authors clearly state that 'the Serbian government did not negotiate unification with the Montenegrin king and government. Its goal was the annexation of Montenegro to Serbia'.¹⁵⁷ A favourable attitude towards Western powers is presented in the section 'The Main Institutions of the European Union' and implied in the discussion of education reform, which, among other things, had a goal of aligning the Montenegrin education system with that of the EU in anticipation of EU accession. Finally, this textbook is also more attuned to gender equality as, for example, the authors include photos of Partisan women fighting in WWII and, in the passage on the Constitution of Montenegro, note that 'for the first time in the history of Montenegrin parliamentarism, three women were elected MPs'.¹⁵⁸

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155 Burzanović and Đorđević (eds) *Istorija 9: Za deveti razred devetogodišnje osnovne škole*, 3. izd. [History 9: For the ninth grade of a nine-year elementary school, 3rd ed.] (Podgorica: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva [Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids], 2008), p. 30.

156 Ibid., p. 7, 30, 103.

157 Ibid., p. 7.

158 Ibid., p. 101, 107.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The textbook analysis confirmed many of the assumptions put forward in the theoretical framework of this article. In effect, if narrative were not the 'preferred and pragmatic historical style the textbooks would not have changed according to changing beliefs of political elites and their legitimised history'.¹⁵⁹ The fact that they were revised, not only ideologically but also discursively and thematically, confirms the hypothesis that the past serves as an extended 'arm of the state'.¹⁶⁰

When describing the same events, the authors of the various textbooks provide nearly identical factual information. However, on several occasions, the narrative form in which information is presented differs. This approach has the potential to influence the interpretation of collective memory while not distancing the generations too much from each other. As Halbwachs argues, collective memory is socially constructed.¹⁶¹ A divergence in the interpretation of collective memories among generations can lead to clashes over perceived veracity, something that can be observed in present-day Montenegro.

The representation of Montenegro's nation-building mythology also underwent revision and transformation, mostly between the 1997 and 2001 textbooks for both grades. In 1997, when Montenegro was still part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the alleged 'homogeneity' of Serbs and Montenegrins allowed the authors to narrate events that impacted Serbia and Montenegro independently as collective experiences. After 2001, a gradual separation of the presentation of the two countries' national histories and myths begins. Attention is directed to themes of Montenegrin bravery, perseverance, and victimhood, and to the Serb 'betrayal'. As nation-building myths are conveyed not only through text but also in visual and auditory representations and in physical movements such as rituals,¹⁶² the textbooks published after 2001 feature many more

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159 Campbell, 'MetaBosnia', p. 261.

160 Poded, 'History and Memory in the Israeli Educational System'.

161 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 22.

162 Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p. 4, 38

Montenegrin national symbols and photographs of Montenegrin people in their daily lives and engaged in ritual performances.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, qualities associated with StratCom include ‘temporality’, ‘fluidity/agility’, and ‘internalisation’. All three can be observed in the changing presentation of history in Montenegrin school textbooks. ‘Temporality’ means that StratCom is not about short-term message projection. Rather, it is the gradual, coherent, and continual shaping and (re)structuring of collective memory and national myths, and by extension, the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of target audiences, which is what state-approved school history textbooks claim the authority to do. The ‘fluidity’ and ‘agility’ of StratCom is also evident in the analysed textbooks; although the values of the power elites did not undergo any official changes between 2001 and 2008, the content of the history textbooks was adjusted and polished to be more in line with political, social, and cultural strides towards gender equality, EU accession, and minority rights. Finally, given that the purpose of history textbooks is for their content to be accepted as validated historical truth, ‘internalisation’ is also implied in the examples provided. The pupils studying the textbooks are meant to internalise the legitimised representation of history and to accept it as received collective memory, which by extension will influence their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Changes in historical narrative intended in the long term to (re)construct collective memories and national myths, both fundamental to an understanding of national identity, qualify as strategic communications projected by the state.

There are several limitations inherent in this study. The scope is necessarily narrow as it focuses on history textbooks written for only two primary school grades, excluding material taught in earlier grades and also history as it is presented in the more intellectually formative high school years. The purpose of this study was not to determine which of the competing narratives presented is the more valid but rather to illustrate how the presentation of history changes and to explore differences among the texts. Textbook history is not the sole agent constructing national identity, but it is one that is often overlooked and under-researched in

discussions regarding national identity and in StratCom literature. Since many of the institutions and agencies of the Montenegrin government are currently undergoing structural transformations, accessing the national curriculum (which might have provided additional insights) was hardly possible. Furthermore, changes in content and narrative presentation in the textbooks do not necessarily imply state influence. Considering that authorship was not a constant, it is possible some of the differences are reflections of the authors' divergent writing styles or of inherent personal biases. Finally, while history textbooks provide an important foundation, they are simply classroom teaching aids. In the end, it is the teachers who guide their pupils to understand and interpret the material.¹⁶³

CONCLUSION

This study has considered differences among primary school history textbooks published at three different moments in recent Montenegrin history through the lens of strategic communications as part of the process of national identity construction. Although the current understanding of StratCom is relatively narrow and practice-oriented, the field might yet be reconceptualised to include the premise presented here.

Interdisciplinary sociological and anthropological notions and theories of history, collective memory, identity, and narrative were drawn on for the theoretical framework of this study. It is unlikely that StratCom can be understood and practiced without reference to these notions. History textbooks were found to be pertinent to the process of constructing national identities and nation-building myths. The ethnosymbolic approach suggests that common myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage are the most important elements upon which modern national identities are reconstituted by each generation.¹⁶⁴ Consequently, the consolidation of common myths and memories is

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¹⁶³ Suzanne de Castell, 'Teaching the Textbook: Teacher/Text Authority and the Problem of Interpretation', *Linguistics and Education* Volume 2 N° 1 (1990): 75–90.
¹⁶⁴ Smith, *Myths and Memories*, p. 9.

essential for any StratCom practitioner who aims to mould national or community identities.

In Montenegro's Yugoslav period, history textbooks were influenced by the focus on socialist ideology. The myths and collective memories presented mimicked the Yugoslav 'brotherhood and unity' slogan as the ruling elites sought to overcome inter-ethnic conflict and engender an overarching Yugoslav identity. That it was possible for a pan-Yugoslav national identity to be fabricated clearly demonstrates the involvement of political elites in the process of constructing national identity.

For this study, three seventh- and three eighth-grade history textbooks from 1997, 2001, and 2008 were compared and analysed for emerging themes and significant changes in content; the years of publication were chosen for their significance in the political development of Montenegro. The analysis demonstrated that narrative is the preferred style of historical representation and that the way historical events were narrativised changed over the years. My purpose was to show that changes in national historical narrative and representation were an attempt to legitimise an interpretation of collective memory in line with the ideology of the political elite in power when each textbook was published, which in turn would influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of intended audiences. Changes were found not only in the narrative form but also in the number of pages devoted to relevant topics; since 1997, the share of textbook content concerning Montenegro's national history and exclusively Montenegrin myths has increased. Furthermore, the idea of Montenegrin and Serb homogeneity was no longer reinforced in the more recent textbooks; historical events were increasingly portrayed as distinct in the two countries, allowing readers to perceive Montenegro as historically, culturally, and ethnically separate from Serbia, and Montenegrins as having a distinct national identity. Changes in the textbooks were shown to correspond with political trends in the country after 1997 when political elites began to seek independence from Serbia.

While this article focuses on Montenegro, similar practices can be observed in other areas of the world. For example, in Russia in 2012

Putin decreed the creation of the Russian Military Historical Society (RMHS) with the aim to ‘facilitate the study of national military history and counteract attempts to distort it, as well as to popularise the achievements of military-historical study, encourage patriotism, and raise the prestige of military service’.¹⁶⁵ In 2013, the RMHS called for new history textbooks.¹⁶⁶

Tsyrlina-Spady and Stoskopf have examined heroic representations of Stalin and Putin in two history textbooks that are currently being widely used in Russian schools

and assert that they aim to prime Russian youth for uncritical acceptance of Putin’s regime.¹⁶⁷ More recently, Putin was accused of approving history textbooks that present Russia’s annexation of Crimea ‘as “a peaceful process” which did not involve the deployment of a single Russian soldier’.¹⁶⁸ Such developments have been well documented and researched by scholars.¹⁶⁹ In the case of Montenegro and the Western Balkan region in general, the use of school textbooks as vehicles for politicisation or nationalisation remains under-researched, especially in the context of StratCom.

Recent developments in Montenegro indicate there may be new history textbooks on the horizon. Following the parliamentary elections in

165 Grigory Vaypan and Ilya Nuzov, *Russia: Crimes Against History* (FIDH, 2021), p. 34. [Accessed 10 August 2021].
166 Gabriela Baczynska, ‘Putin accused of Soviet tactics in drafting new history book’, *Reuters*, 18 November 2013. [Accessed 8 October 2021].

167 Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady and Alan Stoskopf, ‘Russian History Textbooks in the Putin Era: Heroic Leaders Demand Loyal Citizens’, in Joseph Zajda et al. (eds.) *Globalisation and Historiography of National Leaders* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2017), p. 15–33.

168 Halya Coynash, ‘Russia did not invade Crimea in new school textbooks edited by Putin adviser’, Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group website, 20 August 2021. [Accessed 8 October 2021].

169 See Håvard Bækken and Johannes Due Enstad, ‘Identity under Siege: Selective Securitization of History in Putin’s Russia’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Volume 98 N° 2 (2020): 321–44; Joseph Zajda, ‘Globalisation, Ideology and History School Textbooks: The Russian Federation’ in Joseph Zajda (ed.) *Nation-Building and History Education in a Global Culture* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2015), p. 29–50; Zajda, ‘Russian History Textbooks: An Analysis of Historical Narratives Depicting

Key Events’, *Curriculum and Teaching* Volume 28 N° 2 (2013): 73–100; Joseph Zajda and Rea Zajda, ‘The Politics of Rewriting History: New History Textbooks and Curriculum Materials in Russia’, *International Review of Education/Internationale Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* Volume 49 N° 3/4 (2003): 363–84; Tsyrlina-Spady and Michael Lovorn, ‘Patriotism, History Teaching, and History

Textbooks in Russia: What Was Old Is New Again’ in Zajda, *Globalisation, Ideology and Politics of Education Reforms*, p. 41–57; Miguel Vázquez Liñán, ‘History as a Propaganda Tool in Putin’s Russia’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* Volume 43 N° 2 (2010): 167–78; Murod Ismailov and Nozima Ganieva, ‘In Search For the Russian National Identity: Do History Textbooks Hold the Answer?’, *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* Volume 5 N° 2 (2013): 366–392. N°

August 2020, the new political elite began to display perceptions of national identity different from those of their predecessors. Vesna Bratić, the newly appointed Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, drafted several amendments to the *Law on Education* that resulted in the dismissal of more than 500 principals and assistant principals of Montenegrin schools and kindergartens.¹⁷⁰ This provoked fears among parents and teachers that new school officials would be affiliated with political parties that deny Montenegrin identity or persist in characterising Montenegrins as ‘the best of the Serbs’.¹⁷¹ In March 2021, the Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature¹⁷² announced that it had not received any funding for almost three months, which threatened its continued survival.¹⁷³ Such developments in Montenegro demonstrate that it is imperative to analyse and evaluate the surrounding issues conceptually and theoretically, so they can be better understood on the practical level.

In short, if national identity is defined as ‘a set of attitudes, beliefs and commitments’ and StratCom entails ‘changing the attitudes and behaviour of targeted audiences to achieve strategic effects’,¹⁷⁴ then the construction of national identity becomes consistent with the objectives of StratCom and making changes to the presentation of national history in school textbooks qualifies as a StratCom deed. When states undertake to change or reappropriate the narratives presented in school history textbooks—(re)constructing and legitimising collective memory and myths as the building blocks of national identity to deliver a unified

170 Lela Šćepanović, ‘Smjena svih direktora crnogorskih škola iz vremena DPS-a [Removal of all principals of Montenegrin schools from the time of the DPS]’, *Radio Free Europe Montenegro*, 11 June 2021. [Accessed 10 October 2021].

171 Minister Bratić is a controversial figure, strongly affiliated with the Serbian Orthodox Church and has described herself as a ‘Chetnik’ (term used for Serb nationalists). See Alisa Hajdarpašić and Slavko Radulović, ‘Bratićvrijedala Dežulovića: Kontekstom brani stav da je “đubre ustaško” [Bratić insults Dežulović: Defends position on “Ustaše garbage” with context]’, *Vijesti Online*, 8 November 2020. [Accessed 8 October 2021]; Predrag Vujić, ‘Parlamentarni izbori u Crnoj Gori: Izabrana nova Vlada, prvi put bez DPS-a predsjednika Mila Đukanovića [Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro: New Government Elected, for the first time without DPS President Milo Đukanović]’, *BBC News na srpskom*, 4 December 2020. [Accessed 8 October 2021].

172 This Faculty was founded in 2014 due to the need to study, preserve, and develop Montenegrin language and literature. See <http://www.fcjk.me/>

173 A.C., ‘Čirgić: Fakultet za crnogorski jezik i književnost dva i po mjeseca nije dobio ni euro [Čirgić: The Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature has not received a single euro for two and a half months]’, *Vijesti Online*, 3 March 2021. [Accessed 8 October 2021].

174 Bolt, ‘Foreword’, *Defence Strategic Communications* № 6, p. 4.

national narrative of the present and the future—they demonstrate the instrumentality of StratCom in facilitating nation building.

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