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Resilience, Language, and Democracy: Constitutional Identity and Continuity in Times of Crisis – Case Study of Finland and Montenegro

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ABSTRACT

This article showcases the heuristic utility of the concepts of resilience and constitutional identity in explaining democratic endurance during societal crises. Societal resilience depends on sustaining constitutional identity through adaptive, inclusive narratives, with language serving as the medium of collective memory and self-reinterpretation. This study explores whether linguistic pluralism fortifies or erodes democratic endurance at critical junctures. A structured focused comparison examines Finland (post-independence) and Montenegro (post-independence), two states marked by linguistic diversity yet divergent official-language regimes, drawing on constitutional texts, historical records, and theoretical lenses from Bergson's durée, Frankl's logotherapy, and Rosenfeld's constitutional identity framework. Findings show that Finland's bilingual constitutional model—treating both national languages as co-equal within a civic "we"—preserved legitimacy and cohesion across wars and geopolitical tensions. In contrast, Montenegro's elevation of a single, minority, and symbolically charged official language contributed to lasting identitarian dissonance and to the weakening of the civic constitutional project, even in peacetime. Inclusive linguistic policy thus sustains interpretive freedom and adaptive continuity; symbolic uniformity, however, rigidifies identity, amplifies dissonance, and undermines resilience.

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Introduction

Periods of historical and social rupture inevitably confront societies with the question of how to remain whole while transforming – in short, how to maintain their identity – which can be defined as the ability to maintain a coherent internal continuity in face of changes. What the literature often calls *critical junctures* (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007) are not merely institutional or political turning points but existential and symbolic moments in which a community's identity, values, and communicative frameworks are simultaneously challenged. In such periods, the capacity to sustain internal coherence often paradoxically lays in the community ability to change or rather adapt. This ability to change in order to maintain internal coherence is the deeper meaning of resilience. Yet resilience, as we argue, is not merely the psychological ability to adapt but a temporal and linguistic process representing a continuous reinterpretation of collective experience through which societies preserve meaning and reorganize continuity. Language, in this sense, is not simply a medium of communication but the living fabric through which the past is rearticulated and the future imagined. As McAdams, emphasizes, identity is not a given essence but a narrative construction; we know who we are through the stories we tell about ourselves (McAdams, 2001).

Resilience thus defined, is in many ways similar to the concept of constitutional identity. Constitutional identity is often understood as a form of collective self-understanding whose mission is to weave together multiple, often dissonant, threads of different identities existent in pluralist societies into a single meta-identity which would serve as a basis for the constitutional political life of the polity. This identity is different from the respective national, religious and other identities, but still related to them. Thus, constitutional identity is constructed as a form of a narrative identities whose task is to overcome internal dissonances within the polity, by resolving internal conflicts. As Rosenfeld explains: "Constitutional identity is also elaborated through a complex dynamic process aimed at integrating successive instances of negation and identification into coherent and mutually consistent narratives of sameness and selfhood." (Rosenfeld, 2010, p. 29). According to Rosenfeld, societies embark on their quest for constitutionality within a communally and individually pluralist background. Because of this, the constitutional identity which a society forges must be set in a way which is necessarily aligned both with the presets of constitutionalism (limited government, human rights and rule of law) but also with the broader, often mutually conflicting, preconstitutional and constitutional identities, among which are the linguistic identities as well (Rosenfeld, 2010, p. 1-3). According to Rosenfeld: "in a polity divided into a majority and a minority linguistic group, identity in disregard of linguistic differences practically resulting in advantages for members of the linguistic majority, would lead to a relatively more exclusive conception of constitutional equality" (Rosenfeld, 2010, p. 61).

A similar concept of constitutional identity is shared by Jacobson, who highlights constitutional identity as a sort of a narrative which maintains continuity but also relies on solving internal dissonances in accordance with presets of constitutionalism, according to him: "Even when a nation experiences a great rupture in its constitutional development, 'Some core of shared belief, constitutive of allegiance to the tradition, has to survive every rupture.'" (Jacobsohn, 2010, 350), noting that, however: "Consistent with this presumption of continuity is an equally strong belief in the necessity for constitutional change and adaptation, a belief provided ample empirical support in research on the endurance of constitutions. Thus, one of the major keys to constitutional longevity is flexibility." (Jacobsohn, 2010, 324).

Among various elements which play a role in the (constitutional) self-understanding of the community, language is one of the more prominent ones. Language both mirrors and constitutes the self-understanding of a community. Therefore, taken in the context of constitutional identity, the distinction between an official language and languages in official use represents an identiterian expression of how a society conceives itself—whether as a unified, monolingual nation or as a plural, dialogical collective (Assmann, 2011). When a society suppresses linguistic diversity, it narrows its symbolic repertoire and loses access to parts of its own past. The severing of these links, was sometimes seen as a necessary step towards building modern nation states. A unified political and legal field often implied a common language, which was often achieved at the cost of the minority languages (Rosenfeld, 2010, 157). Such cases were especially prominent during the 18th and 19th century. However, the attempts of imposing linguistic uniformity often carry with them the risk of producing internal ruptures long term dissonances within the societies, which can, consequently, undermine the constitutional project, especially in times of crisis. We argue that, by developing a constitutional identity which properly cultivates linguistic plurality, a society strengthens its adaptive capacity, and overall cohesion and legitimation of the state, equipping

itself with resilience needed to face and successfully surpass critical junctures.

Psychological research parallels this insight. Resilience in its classical formulation refers to the ability to give new meaning to experiences of stress or trauma and to integrate them into a coherent life narrative (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). On the collective level, the same principle holds: societies remain viable only when they can translate loss and change into new shared meanings. A resilient community is one that can retell its story without erasing the discontinuities that define it. In this sense, language becomes the temporal space of endurance - the arena where the past, the present, and the imagined future are woven together into continuity. Henri Bergson's philosophy offers a profound conceptual horizon for understanding this temporal dimension of resilience. In *Time and Free Will* (1910/1988) and *Matter and Memory* (1988), Bergson rejects the mechanistic conception of time as a sequence of measurable instants. Human consciousness, he argues, unfolds in *durée*, a living continuity in which past, present, and future interpenetrate. Memory, in this view, is not mechanical storage but creative synthesis; it is "the prolongation of the before into the after," the power of consciousness to preserve what no longer exists within what now does. The past, therefore, is not a dead weight but a reservoir of possibilities that continually informs the present. Applied to social life, this means that collective resilience cannot be understood as a return to a prior equilibrium but as the creative reorganization of inherited meanings in response to new conditions. Every crisis bears the traces of earlier experience, and endurance consists not in rejecting this inheritance but in transforming it into new coherence. Bergson's conception of time thus offers a philosophical foundation for resilience: it is the *endurance of meaning through change*.

This view also sheds light on the temporal logic of democracy. As Ricoeur noted (Crowley, 2003) in his distinction between *idem* (sameness) and *ipse* (selfhood), identity endures not by remaining identical but by constantly reinterpreting itself. Democracy, understood not as a static structure but as an interpretive practice, depends on the collective capacity to re-narrate its past. When memory becomes dogmatic, when certain narratives monopolize meaning, democracy hardens and loses the flexibility that sustains it. The same applies to constitutional identity as well, if it is projected as uniform and firm, it undermines the overall project and creates ruptures. But when a society allows multiple memories and interpretations to coexist, it strengthens its moral and imaginative resources, as long as they can all ultimately be subsumed within the framework of a single, overarching constitutional identity. Collective memory, as Maurice Halbwachs (2024) emphasized, is always socially framed; what we remember and how we remember it determines the boundaries of possible futures. A democratic culture, therefore, is resilient when it preserves the freedom of reinterpretation - when it maintains open access to its own temporal depth. Only as such, it remains open to change and adaptation.

The temporal and existential dimension of resilience becomes even clearer when viewed through Viktor E. Frankl's logotherapy. In *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946/2004), Frankl describes human existence as a movement toward meaning, a noetic capacity to find purpose even in suffering. Resilience, in his view, is not mere adaptation but transcendence - the freedom to reinterpret one's situation in light of a higher significance. This capacity, rooted in the spiritual dimension of the person, also characterizes communities: democratic resilience depends on collective meaning-making. A democracy survives not because it suppresses conflict but because it sustains interpretive freedom - the possibility for citizens to generate new meanings from shared history. When this noetic space contracts, when interpretation becomes monopolized by ideology, resilience collapses. Bergson and Frankl thus converge on a crucial point: both conceive of resilience as a temporal and creative act. For Bergson, consciousness endures by transforming the past within the present; for Frankl, the human spirit endures by transforming suffering into meaning. In both frameworks, freedom and continuity coincide in the capacity to recreate significance in time.

Modern educational theory extends these insights into the domain of culture and learning. Sterling (2010) describe learning itself as a form of resilience: a dynamic process of feedback, reflection, and adaptation that enables individuals and systems to remain flexible in the face of uncertainty. To learn is to engage time creatively - to draw from the past while reconfiguring it in the present. A resilient culture is therefore a learning culture: one that perceives change not as a threat but as an opportunity for reinterpretation. Székely (2015) traces the concept of resilience from its physical origins-where it denoted a material's capacity to recover its shape after deformation—to its application in the social sciences, where it expresses the self-organizing and adaptive capacity of systems to renew themselves. Bergson's concept of *durée* (duration, continuity) gives this dynamic

its philosophical depth, understanding continuity as the inner rhythm and self-creative movement of life itself.

From this perspective, language, resilience, constitutional indetity and democracy appear as variations of a single phenomenon - the endurance of meaning in time. Each depends on the ability to sustain coherence through change: language by preserving and renewing collective memory, democracy by institutionalizing interpretive freedom, constitutional identity by providing a shared constitutional narrative and political meaning for the polity, and resilience by transforming disruption into continuity.

The study does not claim that language is an identity issue in every political community; rather, it argues that in contexts where language carries a historically symbolic meaning, language policy becomes a key dimension of constitutional identity and resilience.

Results

Cases of Finland and Montenegro – Opposing Paradigms

While Finland and Montenegro share the experience of statehood consolidation after decisive historical ruptures, their broader geopolitical, historical, and sociocultural contexts differ significantly. The purpose of this comparison is therefore not to claim structural equivalence between the two cases, but to explore how different constitutional approaches to linguistic diversity, under distinct historical circumstances, shape the resilience of democratic identity. By treating the cases as contrasting paradigms rather than strictly comparable twins, the study seeks to illuminate how inclusive versus exclusionary linguistic constitutionalism can differently affect legitimacy, cohesion, and the continuity of the constitutional "we."

In the remainder of the article, we will demonstrate our theoretical claims through a structured comparison of two European states that faced comparable critical junctures—Finland after 1917 and Montenegro after 2006—yet adopted diametrically opposed strategies for managing linguistic diversity within their emerging constitutional identities, which arguably impacted the overall resilience and democratic legitimization of their constitutional projects.

Finland institutionalized bilingualism as a foundational principle, by Swedish and Finnish as co-equal national languages within a uniform civic "we." Montenegro, by contrast, contrary to previous practice and demographic factuality, elevated a newly proclaimed "Montenegrin" language to sole official status, while relegating the majority-identified Serbian language, as well as other languages spoken by its citizens, to secondary use. By tracing how each polity navigated times of juncture, such as war, geopolitical pressure, and internal dissent, we demonstrate that inclusive linguistic pluralism functions as a reservoir of legitimacy and adaptive capacity, whereas exclusionary naming practices generate enduring identitarian dissonance and undermine democratic resilience.

The Case of Finland

Historically, the territory of modern-day Finland was an eastern part of the Swedish Kingdom, with both Finnish speaking subjects as well as Swedish speaking subjects inhabited these territories. During the 1808-1809, the eastern part of the Swedish Kingdom was separated and integrated into the Russian Empire as the Grand Duchy of Finland (Suksi, 2017, 10). This political unit now consisted of majority Finnish speaking subjects, with 14-15% of the subjects speaking Swedish. However, despite inferior in numbers, Swedish speaking subjects continued to consist of an economic and political elite, representing an „economic, cultural and political elite whose influence exceeded their share in population" (Saarinen & Ihalainen, 2018, p. 3).

The Grand Duchy of Finland represented an autonomous unit of the Russian Empire, equipped with its legislature, representative bodies as well as universal suffrage. However, at the turn of the centuries, dissonance between Finland and central imperial government were becoming ever more frequent, resulting in attempts to further reduce the autonomy of Finland and subsequent attempts to preserve and improve it. These movements culminated during the First World War and especially the Russian Revolution, which spread to Finland, bringing with it conflicts between Finnish „Whites" and „Reds", the prior of which ultimately managed to gain upper hand, proclaiming independence from the then-Communist Russia (Singleton, 1998, 90–102).

Emerging from centuries of Swedish and Russian domination, the newly independent Finnish state in 1917 faced a decisive choice: how to define itself, whether as a monolingual nation-state or to integrate its historical diversity into a plural identity. Ultimately, Finland opted for a model of a linguistic pluralist state, adopting the Constitution from 1919, which prescribed in its Art. 14 par. 1: „Finnish and Swedish shall be the national languages of

the Republic". Such a choice was in obvious contrast to the principal pattern, which was at play after the First World War, when the newly-formed states by rule defined themselves as monolingual nation-states, based on the principle of „one state, one nation and one language". In contrast such an approach, Finland, rather than rejecting Swedish, which was a language of a numerical minority, institutionalized bilingualism, recognizing both Finnish and Swedish as official languages, adopting the principle of: „one state, one nation, two languages" (Suksi, 2017, 10-12).

When its said that Finland opted for the concept of „one state, one nation, two languages"; it must be noted that Swedish speaking population of Finland was not defined as a national minority within the newly independent country, nor as a collective different from the Finnish nation. Rather, as is said, the prevailing conception was that both Swedish speaking citizens, as well as Finnish speaking citizens, constitute a single nation – the nation of Finland, in which the sovereignty belongs to the „people of Finland". Therefore, the „constitutional we" of Finland was defined as a civic identity, being anchored in the fact of belonging to a common country, rather than being an ethnic state in which Finnish speaking men are constitutive nation with Swedes being a national minority. The historian Fred Singleton in his „Short History of Finland" concludes that: „ the Finland-Swedes are not Swedes in any other sense than that of language. They are citizens of Finland and their loyalties are wholly engaged as Finns" (1998, 158). Ana Kaisa Tuulikki affirms such conclusion in her 2016 PhD thesis on Swedish speaking population of Finland. Although she highlighted the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of the identity of Swedish speaking population of Finland, she noted that: „None of the participants I encountered spoke of ethnicity or referred to themselves or other Swedish-speakers as members of an ethnic minority." (Terje, 2016, p. 58).

Such a state of things was made possible by equating both the Finnish speaking and the Swedish speaking population within the constitutional project, enabling them both to identify with the „constitutional we" on equal terms, without extravagant fears of identity loss. This approach proved to produce a resilient identity. By choosing to avoid the deviate from the common practice of the time, by choosing not to define itself as monogloth state – Finland managed to avoid alienating the Swedish-speaking citizens from the polity, enabling them identifying with the constitutional project. Such an approach proved prudent on the very offset of Finland's life as an independent state. After the First World War, it was usual practice to condition the recognition of new nation-states with signing appropriate minority-protection treaties with the kin (mother) states of their minorities. However, as Finland purposely chose to form a common bilingual civic identity which was inclusive of its Swedish speaking population, it managed to avoid having to sign a of minority treaty with the Kingdom of Sweden, which would define Sweden as the mother state of Swedish speaking citizens of Finland (Suksi, 2017, 12-14). Such a move arguably, contributed to overcoming a potential fracture into the „constitutional we" of Finland, which would consist in introducing two classes of citizens of Finland - the Finnish speakers who would be considered the „original" citizens of Finland and the Swedish speakers, who would be perceived as a population of dual loyalty, both towards Finland but also towards their „mother state". The same flexibility was also expressed in solving the issue of Aland Islands, an strategically important archipelago inhabited by Swedish speakers, which was granted political autonomy within Finland in 1920. (Sten, 2008)

Such an approach proved to be vital during the interwar period, as it helped Finland steer of the common pattern present in contemporary Baltics which was moving towards nationalism and right-wing ideologies, and rather maintain a unified and pluralist society. According to Markku John Rainer Suksi: „The implementation of a strong and ideologically motivated idea of a nation state could have brought Finland towards authoritarian rule and potentially closer to Germany than was the case during the first part of the 1940s. The other states that emerged as independent in the aftermath of World War I, such as the Baltic states, embarked on a road towards authoritarianism and totalitarianism as early as during the 1920s and in any case before the end of the 1930s" (2017, 13).

The decision to project a national identity which would equally include both Finnish and Swedish speaking citizens proved to be quite successful during the complex times of the Second World War, during which the resilience of the common identity of Finland was put to its greater test. Namely, during this period, the population of Finland engaged in three large-scale military operations. First was the Winter War, which was a defensive war against Soviets, the second was the offensive war on Soviets – alongside Germany (Continuation War), and the last one was the war against retreating Germans, which began after Finland achieved armistice with the Soviet Union (Lapland war) ((Singleton, 1998, 122–133; Meinander, 2011, 146–162). Interestingly, during neither of these "periods of stress" did the social cohesion of Finland not fracture along the linguistic lines. Although acknowledging the existence of

turbulences during the interwar era, Terje notes that: "divisions were never serious enough to result in Swedish-speakers being excluded from the national community" (2016, 43). While also pointing out to Singleton's conclusion that: "The great test of loyalty to Finland to which the Swedish speakers were subjected came during the Winter War and the subsequent Continuation War. Finnish-Swedes rallied to the cause of Finland and defended their homeland with the same tenacity and courage as was shown by their Finnish-speaking cousins. Thereafter there could be no lingering doubts about their loyalty to Finland." (1998, 160).

By preserving the multiplicity of its linguistic heritage, Finland transformed potential division into continuity. Such an arrangement proved to withhold not only the pressure of Second World War, but also the period of Cold War, during which this plural identity allowed the country to navigate geopolitical tension without internal fragmentation. The era of the Cold War proved to be quite challenging for Finland due to its proximity to Soviet Union, with whom it shared a border. However, Finland managed to balance between the two Blocs, obliging itself not to allow anti-Soviet offensives through its territory (Singleton 1998, 138-139; H. Meinander 2011, 162-166) while also maintaining active economic and cultural connection with the West, foremost through Sweden. The cooperation with Sweden, in which Swedish speaking Finns played an essential part, proved to be a lasting cultural and economic bridge between the two countries. As Meinander notes, during the uneasy times of the Cold War, occurred a: „demographic and economic integration of the two countries, the extent and structure of which bore many resemblances to the interplay prior to 1809 when they had been one kingdom". (2011, 170). Due to its plurality, Finnish society possessed a flexibility which made it resilient and adaptable in times of otherwise intensive political pressure and polarization.

After the end of the Cold War, Finland was fast to join the European Union. After 1995, a series of reforms took place in Finland, culminating in the adoption of a novel 1999 Constitution. However, the bilingual model declared by the 1919 Constitution was to be transferred into the new Constitution principally without alteration (Constitution of Finland, 1999, Article 17). The model of linguistic symmetry was maintained, despite the fact that the number of Swedish speakers has decreased with time from 12% to roughly 6% (Suksi, 2017, 16). Such decision proves that Finland's commitment to bilingual society presents a true cornerstone of the Finish constitutional identity, making it, as John Rainer Suksi rightly notes: „a decision of a fundamental nature, it is comparable to elements of a social contract and is of equal importance with other fundamental decisions in the constitutional fabric of Finland" (2016, 15). Overall, it can be ascertained that the Finnish bilingual identity proved to be a success. Although the Finnish constitutional project was not and is not without its moments of dissonance regarding the dynamics between Finish and Swedish speaking population (Nyqvist et al., 2021; Terje, 2016, 40–48), the constitutional framework proved to be suitable and acceptable to manage these dissonances without rupturing or even greatly alerting the social cohesion of the state.

The Case of Montenegro

The Principality (later Kingdom) of Montenegro, which was a state existing up to the end of the First World War, existed as a state with a „ specifically strong Serb identity", defining the unification of all Serbs as its principle state objective (Andrijašević, 2011, 15-16). It was, therefore, conceptualized as a monolingual and national state. During the First World War, the centuries old house of Petrović-Njegoš which ruled Montenegro had been ousted, and a decision for Montenegro to join the Kingdom of Serbia was made (Stojanović, 2021), which later came to form the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (to be renamed „Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929). Kingdom of Yugoslavia, however, was not a mononational nor monolinguistic country. It was official a state of „South Slavs", which went through series of identiterian concepts, starting from the conception of „one tribe with three names" (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) to the conception of „integral Yugoslavism" - according to which all its subjects would simply be considered „Yugoslavs" (South Slavs) (Jović, 2009, 48-51).

Montenegro lost its state subjectivity in Yugoslavia, with its territory, with considerable expansions, being reorganized as an administrative unit called Zetska Banovina. However, prior to this administrative reorganization, a census was held within Montenegro's pre-1912 borders. The results pointed to 91,40% of population speaking Serbian or Croatian in 1921, with 8,40% speaking Albanian (Stamatović, 2000, 123-127). During the Second World War, Communist Revolutionaries siezed power in Yugoslavia, and the country was reorganized as a federal union of socialist-national republics. During this process, Montenegro arose as a separate people's republic and one of the six federal units of the Socialist Yugoslavia. Although the doctrine of Yugoslavism was still present, the socialist model promoted the idea of „five constitutive people"

(Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Macedonians), defining Montenegrins as a separate nation in comparison to Serbs. Thus, the 1946 Constitution defined People's Republic of Montenegro a national state of the Montenegrin people. However, the 1963. Constitution abandoned the „ethnic" preamble, redefined Montenegro's constitutional subject in more neutral terms of „People of Montenegro", only to have the designation „Montenegrin nation" return in 1974 Constitution and the 1992 Constitution (Stojanović, 2025a, 493-506).

However, despite the promotion of Montenegrin nationality as separate from Serbian, linguistically, the situation remained unchanged. According to The Novi Sad Agreement of 1954, it was agreed that Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins speak a single language, the name of which was agreed to be „Serbo-Croatian", providing with two variants Serbian (Eastern) and Croatian (Western), two dialects (ijekavian and ekavski) and two alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin) (MeInytska, 2016, 4). This definition was implemented in the legislature of socialist Yugoslavia, including the Republic of Montenegro, up to the break-up of Yugoslavia, which designated the official language of Montenegro as „Serbo-Croatian" (Law on Basic Education and Upbringing of Socialist Republic of Montenegro, 1973, Article 15), which was, according to the contemporary censuses, spoken by almost 90% of the population (Bugarski, 2017, 4). After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the concept of „Serbo-Croatian" language was abandoned. After leaving the Federation, Republic of Croatia proclaimed its official language to simply „Croatian" (Constitution of Croatia, 1991, Article 12). On the other side, Bosnia and Herzegovina, after the civil war which raged from 1991 to 1995, agreed to build its country upon the principle of three constitutient nations (Bosnians, Serbs, Croatians) – the language of each of which was granted the status of the official language on the federal level**.** Slovenia and North Macedonia naturally opted for their respective languages, which were not consumed within „Serbo-Croatian" to begin with (Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, 1991, Article 11 ; Constitution of Macedonia, 1991, Article 7).

Unlike the aforementioned Republics, which broke apart from Yugoslavia in early 90's, Montenegro expressed the will to remain in Yugoslavia alongside Serbia. Thus, according to the view of Montenegro and Serbia, Yugoslavia was reformed as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) – a country of two nations – Serbs and Montenegrins. According to the Article 15 of the 1992 Federal Constitution, the official language of the Federation was defined as: „Serbian", equating the two dialects „ekavian and ijekavian" (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1992, Article 15). The ijekavian dialect, although spoken by parts of Serbia as well, was the dialect spoken in Montenegro. Therefore, the 1992. Constitution of Montenegro in its Article 9, line 1 defined the official language of the Republic of Montenegro as: „Serbian language of the iekavian dialect will be the official language". (Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro, 1992, Article 9).

However, in 1997, change of policy occurred in Montenegro, with official state policy being directed towards achieving independence. In parallel with this movement, a campaign to promote the concept of „Montenegrin language" emerged (Kölhi 2012, 86-90, MeInytska, 2016, 5-11; Stojanović, 2020, 291-).The basis for this argument was primarily based on the belief that „each state needs to have its language", rather than in actual existence of a language different from Serbian (Pupovac, 2013, 178; Stojanović, 2020). The idea of Montenegrin language, being promoted by the political elite, by 2003 resulted in 21.96% of citizens of Montenegro identifying their mother language as „Montenegrin" in 2003, with 63.49% identifying it as Serbian (MeIntyska, 2016, 16). In 2006, the independence referendum was finally held, with 55.55% of the population having voted in favor of Montenegro becoming an independent state. The decision to discard the old constitution was made, and the constitution makers of Montenegro now faced with the decision on how to define constitutional identity of the new polity. The Constitution makers rejected framing Montenegro as the national country of Montenegrins, rather opting for a civic definition of the state, in which the bearer of sovereignty would be the individual citizen. The state was, according to preamble, defined as a gathering of: „free and equal citizens, members of peoples and national minorities who live in Montenegro: Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosniacs, Albanians, Muslims, Croats and the others, (who) are committed to democratic and civic Montenegro" (Constitution of Montenegro, 2007). The enumaration made in the preamble, however, fails to mention which of the mentioned *ethne* present „peoples" (*narodi* – nations) and which present „national minorites", choosing rather to enumerate the collectives according to their numerical presence. However, this approach was not precisely mirrored in the normative part of the Constitution, specifically in regards to the question of the official language. The majority insisted to have „Montenegrin" enacted be the official language of the country. The former official language of Serbian was derogated to a „language in official use", alongside Bosnian, Albanian and Croatian

(Constitution of Montenero, 2017, Article 13).

It is important to note that the question of the language(s) in Montenegro (save for the Albanian language, which surely consists a separate language) is properly understood as the question of one language's *name* rather than as a question of which of different languages should enjoy official primacy. Such understanding is even present in the legislature of Montenegro. A telling example of this is the provision of the General Law on Education and Upbringing of Montenegro (2025), which prescribes in its Article 11 that the language of instruction in educational facilities in Montenegro is to be „conducted on the official – Montenegrin language", while also allowing the education to be conducted in Serbian language „keeping in mind the same linguistic basis" of the two languages. (paragraph 2, line 1). Moreover, the name of the school subject eve since 2011 is: "the Montenegrin-Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian language". (MeIntyska, 2016, 14).

However, the decision to have the official language of Montenegro defined as Montenegrin proved to be a cause of dissonance in Montenegrin polity. Such a decision serious concerns regarding the nature of the "constitutional we" of Montenegro, according to which, instead of having Montenegro be considered a civic gathering of different individuals with various identities, it actually presented a dissimilated national state of the Montenegrin *ethnos*, one which other identities as bearing a risk of assimilating them. As was mentioned, the decision to have the official language be defined as "Montenegrin" stood in odds with the nominal equation of all citizens and their ethnicities, considering only one of the numbered ethnicities had its language be framed as official language. The apologists of this decision, however, claimed that the name of the language actually does not derive from the Montenegrin *ethnos* but rather from the name of the country – Montenegro, with the purpose to present a sort of a state language affirming its civic and state identity. Such an explanation, however, further raised the issue of whether it is possible to differentiate what is Montenegrin as in belonging to the *civic* identity of Montenegro, and what is Montenegrin as in belonging to Montenegrin *ethnos,* which is one of the *ethne* mentioned in the preamble (Jović, 2023, Stojanović, 2025b).

Such views were supplemented by arguments pointing at the lack of democratic and factual logic behind such a decision. On a census which was held four years after enacting the Constitution, 42,88% of population defined its language as Serbian, with 36,97% defining the language as Montenegrin (MeIntyska 2016, 16). This means that the official language, even after drafting the Constitution, factually presented a relative majority language – while Serbian, which merely presented „a language in official use", was actually the language of the relative majority of citizens of Montenegro. The next census, which was conducted in 2023, once again presented the same picture, with the percentages additionally slightly shifted in favor of Serbian, with 43,18% of population defining their language as Serbian, and 34,52% defining it as Montenegrin (MONSTAT, 2024).

With such results, it became once again apparent that the nominal determination of the official language does not uphold the factual state of affairs. Because of this, following the censuses, the linguistic question was repeatedly being opened in Montenegro. Representatives of Serb parties, argued that its contrary to the democratic principle for a language which presents the relative majority language not to be defined as an official language, calling for constitutional amendments to be made in order to define Serbian language as an official language of Montenegro, alongside Montenegrin. Similar calls were made by representatives of the Bosniak parties, who claimed that Bosniak language, which was spoken by 7,30% of the population, should also be defined as an official language. Opponents of these calls, repeated the argument that Montenegrin language is not the ethnic language of Montenegrins, and should thus not be equated with the „ethnic languages" of Montenegro. According to them, it rather represents language named after the state of Montenegro – a sort of an official state language, which plays a vital role in preserving Montenegro's civic country. The defenders of status quo claimed that moves towards multiple official languages would be a step towards „etno-federalisation" of Montenegro and redefining it from a civic country, to a „country of ethnicities". (Stojanović, 2025b). According to these arguments, having a language which is named after the state, serves to affirm the state's identity, and is essential in securing unity and cohesion of its constitutional self or, it can be said – in achieving its resilience.

However, the political life of Montenegro in that even after nearly 20 years following the adoption of the Constitution, proves that the linguistic policy of Montenegro rather then contribute to strengthening the resilience of the state of Montenegro or its civic identity, contributed much more to the contrary. Identiterian issues, especially the linguistic ones, remained open and present a cause for political fragmentation in Montenegro up to this day, earning

Montenegro the unflattering title of „a land divided" in which identiterian issues still present the center piece of the Montenegrin political life, often eclipsing other topics. Christopher Lee Cham, in his recent PhD study, showcased how the question of linguistic identity transcends „state politics" and actually acts as a divisive role in everyday life of Montenegrin citizens, being often perceived as a „boundary in everyday life" (2025, 113) as well as a „a significant marker of differences" (2025, 115).

It is clear that the decision of the Montenegrin constitution-makers to impose a monogloth identity as the official state identity contributed didn't contribute to the resilience of Montenegro's civic identity, rather the contrary. Almost 20 years after the adoption of the Constitution, controversies concerning the linguistic identity of the state remain open. The resolution of this issue is made all the more complicated due to the fact that the constitutional provisions on language can only be amended if approved by as much as 3/5ths (60%) of total voters (article 13), which is a majority which no single linguistic or even national identity in Montenegro can achieve. Therefore, instead of having the linguistic policy present a factor of cohesion in maintaining and shaping the common civic identity of Montenegro, it contributed to creating internal disharmonies within the society, the solution of which presents a great challenge in shaping Montenegro's constitutional identity.

Conclusion

We can conclude with the statement that achieving inclusive constitutional identities in states is in direct correlation with the overall resilience of a society, both in specific and in relation to the its linguistic identity. Linguistically pluralist societies which, during the shaping of their constitutional identity, lend from „reservoirs of legitimacy" equip their constitutional project with resilience. Societies which opt for an exclusionary constitutional identity, tend to alienate identities which have not been properly taken into account, which in turn decreases the overall cohesion and resilience of the society. Finland and Montenegro illustrate opposite paths. The inclusive bilingualism (Finland) builds resilience by forming a flexible and inclusive „constitutional we", which is perceived as just and non-assertive by most citizens. On the other hand, the exclusive monolingualism of Montenegro alienates citizens and entrenches division, feeding into the „ narcissism of small differences" and therefore undermining the overall social cohesion and resilience. The Finnish model — rooted in civic identity and interpretive freedom—transformed potential rupture into continuity across wars and geopolitical shifts. Montenegro's model – insisting on rigid definitions and on imposition of a minority identity, created additional ruptures which weaken the society's cohesion and resilience, even in times of relative tranquility.

Finland proves for an example of a inclusive strategy which paved the way for a resilient identity which, although flexible, proved to be strong and untied in times of crisis – especially such big crisis such as the Second World War and the Cold War. On the other hand, Montenegro, having chosen an activist approach to identiterian issues, created social fractures which greatly weaken the cohesion and unity of the society even in times of relative peace and tranquility. While the Constitution-makers in Finland proved to far-sighted, they opted out for a incremental approach towards recognizing the linguistic minority and granting it with rights equal to those of the linguistic majority of Finland, constitution-makers in Montenegro opted for an activist approach which proved to undermine the Montenegrin constitutional project as well as weaken the resilience of the society, by producing linguistic and other identiterian issues which, even after almost 20 years of independence, still produces social dissonance in Montenegro, alienating portions of population from the constitutional project, as well as undermining its democratic legitimacy.

In Bergson's terms, Finland demonstrates how the past can endure as a living presence - how *durée* operates on the level of nations. The Finnish example shows that pluralism need not threaten unity; it is, rather, its condition. In Bergson's words, "time does not merely pass; it endures." And democracy endures only when it can reinterpret its past, carrying history not as a burden but as a living source of renewal. Resilience, understood in this way, is both a psychological and philosophical experience: the capacity of individuals and communities to turn change into continuity and difference into dialogue - the very process by which freedom becomes durable in time. Whenever a society fails to achieve such a *durée*, its resilience to face critical junctures, while managing to preserve inner cohesion and identity is at question.

Although this article has focused on Finland and Montenegro as contrasting constitutional paradigms, the analytical framework developed here may be extended to other contexts where language intersects with constitutional identity and democratic resilience. For instance, former Czechoslovakia offers a compelling

comparative case in which closely related languages participated in divergent national self-understandings, while Norway demonstrates how a democratic polity can institutionalize internal linguistic plurality without jeopardizing unity. Engaging such additional comparisons would not aim to dissolve contextual specificity, but rather to refine the broader insight advanced here: that linguistic constitutional design plays a crucial role in shaping whether pluralism becomes a resource of legitimacy and resilience, or a source of fragmentation. Future research may therefore test the explanatory value of this framework across further European and non-European settings, deepening our understanding of how constitutional identity endures-or fractures-through language.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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