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Between Political Constraints and Professional Historical Writing: Three Decades of Croatian Historiography (1990–2021)

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Introduction

Like most European historiographies, modern Croatian historiography was founded in the second half of the nineteenth century. It coincided with the appearance and spread of nationalism – what is more, it was one of its essential components. Nonetheless, the number of historians in Croatia remained small for a long period of time (In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, approximately twenty historians worked in universities, museums, and archives), and historiographic production was modest and methodologically traditional. The number of historians and institutions dedicated to historical writing increased significantly in the decades following the Second World War, reflecting the importance placed on history by the communist authorities. Approximately one hundred historians were employed in Croatia at the time of its independence in the early 1990s, principally at the country's two universities and a number of historical institutes. Today, Croatia – a country with a population of less than four million – offers up to eight undergraduate and graduate history programs, as well as several doctoral programs. More than 300 professional historians work in faculties, institutes and other institutions such as archives, museums or non-governmental organisations.

With this in mind, we will attempt to address two questions: first, has the increase in the number of professional historians and institutions improved the quality of Croatian historiography; and second, has Croatian historiography been able to break free from political influences? Before focusing on the last three decades of contemporary Croatian historiography, a brief overview of Croatian history in communist Yugoslavia will be provided, mostly as a point of comparison. We will then first look at the decade following 1990, when Croatia's independence from Yugoslavia had a profound effect on historiography. The following two decades will be examined in the last section, in order to establish changes and continuities in the development of historical writing.

Croatian Historiography in Communist Yugoslavia: A National Narrative 'Sprinkled with Red'?¹

The establishment of communist rule following the Second World War had a complex and oftentimes contradictory impact on Croatian historiography. On the one hand, it became more politicised: the communist authorities strove to infuse historical writing with a Marxist interpretation and to impose control over the historiography of the labour movement, the communist movement, and the Second World War. In contrast, rising political interest in history resulted in the establishment of new historical institutions and a large increase in the number of historians. This, in turn, contributed to the continuous development of the discipline.

¹ Grga Novak, a history professor at the University of Zagreb and one of the most prominent Croatian historians at the time, allegedly advised his students in 1949 to 'sprinkle their histories with red', i.e. superficially embrace Marxist terminology in their writing, without substantial interpretive changes. Quoted in: Magdalena Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu s marksizmom ili činjenicama? Hrvatska historiografija 1945–1960* (Zagreb: Ibis grafika, 2013), 119.

In the 1990s, historians linked to emerging nationalist political elites condemned socialist Croatia's historiography as 'Marxist', 'Yugoslav', and therefore insufficiently oriented towards national history. Many of these claims have been refuted by subsequent research, which revealed that the vast majority of historians had continued to operate within the setting of their national historiographies and remained primarily focused on their individual national histories (i.e. Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, etc.).² Their attempts to fit their studies into a new Marxist view of history frequently boiled down to periodisation based on socioeconomic formations. Communist authorities exercised a tight grip on research into contemporary history (and, to some extent, nineteenth century history), but research into earlier periods was largely unrestricted. However, the methodological approach remained positivist for a long period of time, and most historians were isolated from international research trends. Even medieval studies, which had traditionally been the most prestigious and prolific field of Croatian historiography, focused mostly on political history.³ The demand for a Marxist interpretation of history even had a favourable effect in this regard, as more historians delved into previously unexplored areas of economic and social history. More significant changes occurred in the 1970s and the 1980s: under the influence of the French *Annales* school, social history, history of mentalities and microhistory began to gain more ground, although primarily among medieval and early modern historians.⁴

Croatian Historiography in the 1990: Reideologisation through 'Deideologisation'

In 1992, the *Journal of Contemporary History* (*Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, ČSP) published a lengthy list of the works of Croatia's first president, Franjo Tuđman.⁵ The ČSP was the long-standing periodical of the Institute for the History of the Workers' Movement of Croatia (IHRPH) and Tuđman – a former partisan fighter in the Second World War, a communist, a general of the Yugoslav army, and a historian – was the IHRPH's first director (1961–7). Due to a conflict with the Communist Party leadership he was ousted from the League of Croatian Communists in 1967 and continued his political activities as a nationalist dissident. At the time of the break-up of Yugoslavia, Tuđman became the first president of newly independent Croatia (1990–99), leading what has been described as a defective democracy within which power was concentrated in the hands of a strong president.⁶

The publication of Tuđman's bibliography in an academic journal exemplifies the link between history and politics in the 1990s. Indeed, Tuđman's renown as a scholar increased after he assumed the presidency: he was elected to the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HAZU) in 1992, his books were published by prestigious publishers, he made numerous statements evaluating historical events and, had he not died, he would have addressed the First Congress of Croatian Historians in 1999. In general, Croatian political leaders looked to historians to bolster efforts to establish an independent and ethnically homogeneous state by presenting the narrative of uninterrupted Croatian statehood from the Middle Ages to the present day.⁷

² Neven Budak, 'Post-Socialist Historiography in Croatia since 1990', in Ulf Brunnbauer, ed., *(Re)Writing History – Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism* (München: LIT Verlag, 2004), 128–63; Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu s marksizmom ili činjenicama?*; Branimir Janković, *Mijenjanje sebe same: preobrazbe hrvatske historiografije kasnog socijalizma* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2016), particularly 21–30.

³ Budak, 'Post-Socialist Historiography in Croatia', 132.

⁴ Neven Budak, 'Anali u hrvatskoj historiografiji', in Neven Budak et al., eds., *Zbornik Mirjane Gross* (Zagreb: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest (ZHP), 1999), 459–67; Iskra Iveljić, 'Die zersplitterte Ökumene der HistorikerInnen. Historiographie in Kroatien in den 1990er Jahren', in Alojz Ivanišević et al., eds., *Klio ohne Fesseln? Historiographie im östlichen Europa nach dem Zusammenbruch des Kommunismus* (Wien: Peter Lang GmbH, 2002), 363–80.

⁵ Anđelko Mijatović and Marija Sentić, 'Bibliografija radova dr. Franje Tuđmana', ČSP, 24, 1 (1992), 1–17.

⁶ Nenad Zakošek, 'Democratization, State-Building and War: The Cases of Serbia and Croatia', *Democratisation*, 15, 3 (2008), 600–1.

⁷ Historians often pointed to the unacceptable politicisation of historiography in the 1990s, for instance: Iveljić, 'Die zersplitterte Ökumene der HistorikerInnen'; Eadem, 'Cum ira et studio. Geschichte und Gesellschaft Kroatiens in den 1990-er Jahren', in Helmut Altrichter, ed., *(Gegen)Erinnerung. Geschichte als politisches Argument* (München: R. Oldenbourg

Not all historians resisted the politicisation of their discipline. In fact, a small group of historians argued for the renationalisation of historical scholarship, despite the fact that several of them had held university professor and research positions during the communist regime. In his widely cited essay at the time, Stjepan Antoljak advocated for a 'renaissance of Croatian historiography' and argued that history should serve as 'one of the nation's self-portraits'.⁸ These historians primarily published their critiques in newspapers and popular history books, and very rarely in academic journals. Additionally, they were tasked with supervising the transformation of history education. The importance of school history was elevated as a result of increased instructional time, yet it was once again used to impart official interpretations and redefine students' identities.⁹

Political interference in institutional developments did not cease in the 1990s. Institutions devoted to the history of the workers' movement were closed or repurposed. IHRPH had already shifted its focus to contemporary history in the late 1980s and was renamed the Institute of Contemporary History in 1990 (*Institut za suvremenu povijest*, ISP).¹⁰ In 1996, it once again changed its name to become the Croatian Institute of History (*Hrvatski institut za povijest*, HIP). State support enabled the HIP to expand its staff and research to cover all periods of Croatian history, but also exposed it to significant political influence.

Simultaneously, some senior politicians and historians close to the new authorities dubbed the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb a 'red faculty', 'burdened with socialist ideological deposits'.¹¹ Historians from the Department of History claimed that the issue stemmed from their efforts to uphold professional standards, which were jeopardised by the 'call of primitive nationalism'.¹² In 1992/3, the University of Zagreb established a new University Centre for Croatian Studies (*Hrvatski studiji*; as of 2019, The Faculty of Croatian Studies), initially offering a study program in Croatian language and culture. New study programs, including a history program, were launched shortly thereafter. The establishment of parallel study programs within the same university was an attempt by the new authorities to gradually marginalise existing study programs and institutions perceived to be 'dissenting'.

By and large, the political climate and the war in the first half of the 1990s had a detrimental effect on historical scholarship. After Croatia declared independence, communication with historians from the former Yugoslavia was severely limited; it was not until the late 1990s that some measure of cooperation was restored.¹³ Institutional links with other international centres were weak, although the Central European University in Budapest contributed to the development of Croatian historiography. Several Croatian historians taught at CEU or enrolled in its MA and PhD programs, which allowed them to expand their horizons beyond the confines of Croatian historiography.

In terms of research, the preoccupation with the nation-state as the primary unit of scholarly analysis was reinforced. This frequently resulted in studies written exclusively from a Croatian perspective, with an almost complete absence of studies on regional, European, or global history.¹⁴ Numerous

Verlag, 2006), 191–204; Budak, 'Post-Socialist Historiography in Croatia since 1990'; Petar Korunić, 'Povijesna struka i kritika hrvatske historiografije danas', *Radovi ZHP*, 31 (1998), 167–79.

⁸ Stjepan Antoljak, *Renesansa hrvatske historiografije* (Pazin: Naša sloga, 1996).

⁹ Snježana Koren and Branislava Baranović, 'What Kind of History Education Do We Have after Eighteen Years of Democracy in Croatia?', in Augusta Dimou, ed., *Transition and the Politics of History Education in Southeastern Europe* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2009), 91–140.

¹⁰ 'Institut za suvremenu povijest. U povodu tridesete obljetnice', *ČSP*, 23, 1–3 (1991), 263–8.

¹¹ Quoted in: Petar Korunić, 'Odsjek za povijest i Hrvatski studiji: kriza povijesne struke se nastavlja', *Radovi ZHP*, 32–33 (1999–2000), 461–72.

¹² N. Budak's statement in Alexander Buczynski's 'Interview: Dr. Neven Budak – Dr. Mladen Ančić', *Povijesni prilozi*, 18 (1999), 405–24.

¹³ The German Friedrich Naumann Foundation endorsed the re-establishment of contacts between Croatian and Serbian historians by organising conferences titled, 'Dijalozi povjesničara/istoričara', in Igor Graovac, ed., *Čemu dijalog povjesničara – istoričara?* (Zagreb: Zajednica istraživača *Dijalog* and Zaklada *Friedrich Naumann*, 2005).

¹⁴ Hrvoje Matković's *History of Yugoslavia: A Croatian View* is an example of this method. The author stressed that his goal was to provide a 'Croatian interpretation' of Yugoslavia's history. Matković, *Povijest Jugoslavije. Hrvatski pogled* (Zagreb: Naklada P.I.P. Pavičić, 1998), 11–13.

studies conducted in the 1990s focused on ‘grand narratives’ of Croatian history relating to national and state identity – for example, the ethnogenesis of the Croats, the formation of Croatian territory and borders over time, the role of the Catholic Church in Croatian history or the publication of fundamental sources of Croatian history. Some historians went further, resurrecting old myths and stereotypes, such as the ‘thousand-year-old continuity of Croatian statehood’ or Croatia as *antemurale Christianitatis* during the Ottoman conquest.¹⁵ The 1990s Croatian-Serbian war antagonisms were reflected in books attempting to demonstrate the continuity of Serbian expansionist politics from the nineteenth century to the 1990s.¹⁶ In some works, historical interpretations were even used for inflammatory purposes, such as when Ottoman Turk conquests were referred to as ‘Bosniak Turk conquests’ (thus invoking the Croat-Bosniak conflict in the first half of the 1990s), or when contemporary terms such as ethnic cleansing were used to describe the actions of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁷

Studies of the nineteenth century as a formative period for the modern Croatian nation continued to abound, with the emphasis being placed on political parties, ideologies, and prominent personalities.¹⁸ Similarly plentiful were studies of the interwar period (1918–41), which tended to interpret the first Yugoslav state as an attempt to impose Serbian hegemony through political repression.¹⁹ The study of the Yugoslav workers’ and communist movements, which was a major research field during the socialist era, has virtually vanished. Apart from the interwar period, the most studied era was 1945–52, the height of communist repression,²⁰ while research on the post-1952 period was scant.

The Second World War, on the other hand, proved to be the most contentious and divisive topic. Human losses during and after the war became a primary research focus.²¹ Previously taboo subjects such as the communist authorities’ mass executions of war prisoners (mostly captured NDH soldiers) at the end of the war or the postwar deportations of ethnic Germans were now discussed. The number of studies on the partisan resistance movement’s military history decreased, while the number of works on the fascist Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH) increased.²² This topic, however, intersected with the new politics of history, which saw each Croatian state, including the fascist NDH, as a positive historical phenomenon. Tuđman’s comment in 1990 that ‘the NDH was not just a “quisling” creation and a “fascist crime”, but was also an expression . . . of historical aspirations of the Croatian people for an independent state’ was crucial in this regard.²³

This revisionist²⁴ wave in historiography began with history textbooks in 1991–2, to which some professional historians contributed as authors or reviewers.²⁵ It quickly spread into scholarly works, which were then spotlighted in the HIP’s journal ČSP. Apologetic accounts portraying the NDH as a restoration of Croatian statehood supported by the vast number of Croats appeared, and they often glossed over the genocide against Serbs, Jews, and Roma.²⁶ Concentration camp Jasenovac,

¹⁵ Cf. Ivo Žanić, ‘The Symbolic Identity of Croatia in the Triangle Crossroads–Bulwark–Bridge’, in Pål Kolstø, ed., *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe* (London: Hurst & Company, 2005), 35–76.

¹⁶ Miroslav Brandt et al., *Izvori velikosrpske agresije* (Zagreb: August Cesarec–Školska knjiga, 1991).

¹⁷ Dragutin Pavličević, *Povijest Hrvatske* (Zagreb: P.I.P. Pavičić, 1994), 150, 183.

¹⁸ Iskra Iveljić, ‘Hrvatska historiografija o 19. stoljeću nakon raspada Jugoslavije’, *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, XLIV, 2 (2004), 29–44.

¹⁹ Cf. Dušan Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing, Zagreb, 1999), 60–119.

²⁰ Mirko Valentić and Petar Korunić, ‘Institut za suvremenu povijest. Planiranje znanstvenog rada Instituta’, ČSP, 24, 2 (1992), 205–15.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Cf. Nada Kisić Kolanović, ‘Povijest NDH kao predmet istraživanja’, ČSP, 34, 3 (2002), 679–711.

²³ Franjo Tuđman’s speech at the First General Congress of the Croatian Democratic Union, 24 Feb. 1990, in *Glasnik Hrvatske demokratske zajednice*, no. 8, Mar. 1990.

²⁴ We make a distinction between *historical revision*, as a desirable advancement of historical knowledge, and *historical revisionism*, as deliberate distortion of the past.

²⁵ See footnote 9.

²⁶ See particularly the thematic issue of the ČSP, ‘The Croats and the Second World War’, ČSP, 27, 3 (1995), 399–590.

organised and operated by the fascist Ustaša, was repeatedly alluded to as a labour and prison camp rather than a site of mass destruction.²⁷ On the other hand, several significant studies on the NDH were published concurrently, and attempts were made to use demographic data to arrive at a more precise figure for all victims.²⁸

It would, however, be inaccurate to assert that all historiography at the time was merely a reaction to political developments. The advance of social history, the history of mentalities, the history of everyday life, and microhistory during the 1970s and 1980s continued into the following decade.²⁹ Interest in historical anthropology began to grow in tandem with the Annales School's increasing influence, and the use of demographic methods also began to spread in the 1980s and 1990s. Some innovative studies of medieval and early modern history emerged, including those of *Croatia Turcica*.³⁰ Mirjana Gross, one of the twentieth century's most influential Croatian historians, published her seminal works on social development in the nineteenth century and her influential book on contemporary historiography.³¹ The Centre for Women's Studies (*Centar za ženske studije*) was founded in the mid-1990s as a result of a surge in interest in gender history. As historian Iskra Iveljić pointed out, the program of the First Congress of Croatian Historians, held at the decade's end (December 1999), succinctly summarised these disparate tendencies: the congress's central theme was Croatian national and state identity and continuity, but multiple other sessions also addressed these novel study areas.³²

Croatian Historiography since 2000: Normalisation and Perspectives

Following Franjo Tuđman's death in 1999 and the formation of a new coalition government led by social democrats in 2000, the landscape of Croatian historiography began to shift. By and large, the last two decades have seen fewer political constraints on institutional development. Unlike in the 1990s, when the majority of historical writing took place in two centres (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the HIP), the profession has diversified and become increasingly polycentric. While the number of state-employed historians and institutions has risen, institutional collaboration has remained limited, resulting in restricted staff mobility and confinement to local settings. Simultaneously, and paradoxically, international contacts have improved slightly, with more historians and institutions participating in international initiatives and projects.

The profession's recent growth has meant that more historians could tackle a broader range of topics and venture into the fields of intellectual history, entangled history or, recently, history of emotions. Memory studies has exploded in popularity over the last decade, encompassing a diverse range of often interdisciplinary and transnational research on memorialisation and the politics of history and memory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Public history was introduced in university courses as a result of a growing interest in the relationship between history and society, as well as the historian's role in public space. Environmental history emerged in the early 2000s as a result of the fusion of historical and geographical perspectives in the research of early modern history. Increased emphasis on interdisciplinarity has also resulted in historians employing methods from historical anthropology, demography, literary theory and imagology. Overall, the impact of

²⁷ Josip Jurčević, *Nastanak jasenovačkog mita* (Zagreb: Hrvatski studiji, 1998).

²⁸ For instance, the HIP's historian Nada Kisić Kolanović's biographies of several prominent members of the Ustaša organisation, or the demographic studies by Vladimir Žerjavić.

²⁹ Miroslav Bertoša and Tomislav Raukar were two of the most influential authors in the 1980s and 1990s for their works on the medieval and early modern periods, utilising methods from the *Annales* school.

³⁰ The project *Triplex Confinium*, led by Drago Roksančić, contributed to the modernisation of research into the early modern period, and Nenad Močanin pioneered the field of Ottoman studies.

³¹ Mirjana Gross, *Suvremena historiografija: korijeni, postignuća, traganja* (Zagreb: Novi Liber/ZHP, 1996).

³² Iveljić, 'Die zersplitterte Ökumene', 380.

introducing new themes and approaches should not be overstated. By and large, much of this progress has been enabled by individual efforts rather than by a systematic cultivation of new themes and methods.³³

In general, research into earlier historical periods, particularly the early modern period and, to a lesser extent, the Middle Ages, has produced more thematic and methodological innovations than research into modern and contemporary history. The study of medieval and early modern history has been largely framed by social, religious, and cultural history, as well as the history of everyday life. The early modern period has seen an increase in research particularly on the military border, the formation of the early modern state, and Ottoman studies. By contrast, interest in the 'long' nineteenth century is shrinking. Political history continues to play a significant role in this research; however, many of these works lack a broader framework (Habsburg, Hungarian, Italian, and/or Ottoman). The focus is on the process of national integration, political party activities (particularly those of the Party-of-Rights movement and political Catholicism), political ideologies, and the development of central political institutions such as the Croatian Parliament. However, the number of studies devoted to social and cultural history has increased, dealing with topics such as bourgeois elites, gender history, or the history of education.

While the percentage of (male) historians specialising in contemporary history (after 1918) is significantly higher than that of historians specialising in earlier periods, their research agendas and methods are predominantly conventional. Political, diplomatic, and military history comprise a sizable portion of these works, as well as political biographies published in the last couple of years. Interest in interwar history is waning; the research continues to focus on political institutions and political movements and parties. Several HIP-based projects continued to investigate the human losses in Croatia during the Second World War. These projects focused on the Yugoslav communist regime's mass atrocities against captured NDH soldiers and ethnic Germans near the war's end (the atrocities committed against Italians remain largely unexplored) and in the immediate postwar period.³⁴

Discussions among historians about the NDH have continued with variable intensity. Despite additional research on the NDH, new perspectives on the subject emerged primarily as a result of comparative fascism research conducted by historians working abroad. There has been an increase in Holocaust and Porajmos (the Romani genocide) research, possibly in response to the 1990s' historical revisionism regarding the NDH. The publication in 2001 of the book *The Holocaust in Zagreb*³⁵ was a watershed moment, as it sparked a debate that revealed instances of historical revisionism.³⁶ By contrast, mass violence against Serbs received significantly less attention.³⁷

The majority of research into the twentieth century deals with Croatia's history in socialist Yugoslavia. While the dominant narrative of the 1990s emphasised the themes of Croats and Croatia as victims of communist dictatorship, economic exploitation, and Serbian hegemony, there are an increasing number of works attempting to portray this period in a more nuanced manner. Studies published after the year 2000 shed new light on the communist regime's functioning, with a plethora of works examining mechanisms for consolidating Yugoslav socialism via ideological and repressive state apparatuses. Over the last decade, there has been an increase in research into previously neglected aspects of socialism's cultural, social, and intellectual history. Everyday life in

³³ This chapter relies on data we obtained from institutional websites and CROSBIB – the Croatian Scientific Bibliography, an online repository containing data on publications by Croatian scientists (<https://www.bib.irb.hr>). We compiled a comprehensive list of bibliographical units to support our conclusions. Due to the text's limited format, we were only able to include a small fraction of these units in footnotes.

³⁴ HIP's historian Vladimir Geiger has led a number of these projects.

³⁵ Ivo Goldstein and Slavko Goldstein, *Holokaust u Zagrebu* (Zagreb: Novi Liber and Židovska općina, 2001).

³⁶ For instance, Jure Krišto's article, 'Još jedanput o knjizi Holokaust u Zagrebu', *ČSP*, 34, 3 (2002), 961–85, denied the Holocaust in Zagreb on the grounds that the majority of Zagreb's Jews were killed 'elsewhere in Croatia, as well as outside of Croatia' (p. 979).

³⁷ Historians at the Serbs' Archives in Croatia have published several works on this subject.

socialism, Yugoslav self-management microstructures, the history of male homosexuality, (subcultural) youth movements, and the relationship between intellectuals and the communist regime are all examples of new research topics. Recently, the Centre for Cultural and Historical Research of Socialism at the University of Pula has developed into a hub for interdisciplinary research on the history of socialism. The centre has developed international networks and made research opportunities accessible to historians of a younger generation.³⁸

Research into the post-1990 period has accelerated in recent years, owing to increased political interest. This primarily refers to the history of the 1991–5 war, in historiography typically referred to as the Homeland War (*Domovinski rat*, a designation borrowed directly from political discourse that is largely unquestioned). During the first decade following Croatia's independence, historians tended to avoid discussing recent events. Croatian legislators, however, adopted several parliamentary declarations and amended the constitution between 2000 and 2010 to codify the war's official interpretation as 'the victory of the Croatian people and Croatian soldiers in a just, legitimate, and defensive liberation war'.³⁹ In 2001, the government announced the decision to begin scholarly research on the Homeland War within the HIP.⁴⁰ In 2004, it also established the Croatian Memorial Documentation Centre of the Homeland War (*Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata*, HMDCDR), whose mission was documenting and 'researching into the truth about the Homeland War [our emphasis]'.⁴¹ These initiatives prompted an increase in historiographic production about Croatian history after 1990, which mostly dealt with military or political history, or involved the publication of sources.

These interventions, however, once again raised questions about the relationship between historians and politics. The principal investigator of the HIP project 'The Beginnings of the Croatian State and the Homeland War' offered a particularly revealing account: he was only entrusted with the responsibility for the project because two of the HIP scholars declined to lead the study, owing to the 'great sensitivity and politicisation of the topic'.⁴² There were a number of additional instances in which historians argued that historical interpretations of Croatia's recent past should be framed and determined by political documents.⁴³ For one thing, concerns have been raised that an apparent pursuit of 'the truth about the war' has rendered investigators indifferent or even hostile to the significance of a variety of historical interpretations. As a result of this climate, there has been little scholarly discussion about the research into Croatia's recent history.

The only serious debate involved the depiction of the conflict in school curriculum and history textbooks, and even these were more concerned with establishing a uniform narrative than with addressing opposing viewpoints. History education has long been a source of contention among Croatian historians, who are divided into two camps. There are those who believe it should be critical and contain alternative interpretations and perspectives, and those who believe it should provide a

³⁸ In this respect, the works of Igor Duda and the projects he has led stand out. See also: www.unipu.hr/ckpis.

³⁹ The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, I. Historical Foundations, www.sabor.hr/en/constitution-republic-croatia-consolidated-text (accessed on 19 Jan. 2022).

⁴⁰ Nikica Barić, *Srpska pobuna u Hrvatskoj 1990–1995* (Zagreb: Golden marketing, 2005), 11.

⁴¹ 'Zakon o Hrvatskom memorijalno dokumentacijskom centru Domovinskog rata' [Law on the Croatian memorial documentation center of the Homeland War] (12 Dec. 2004), *Narodne novine* 178/2004.

⁴² Zdenko Radelić, 'Uvodna riječ urednika', *ČSP*, 40, 1 (2008), 5–8.

⁴³ For instance, the authors of a recent study on Homeland War historiography began by describing the 'significance of the Homeland War', which they believe stems from its inclusion in the Constitution and Parliamentary Declaration on the Homeland War. Domagoj Godić and Domagoj Knežević, 'Domovinski rat u hrvatskim znanstvenim časopisima', *ČSP*, 51, 3 (2019), 785–800. Another example is a historian's response to the political scientist's book *War and Myth* (Dejan Jović, *Rat i mit* (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2018)). The historian argues that the constitutional interpretation of the war is fundamental to the Croatian national identity and should not be the subject of daily political debate. The 'scientific verification' [*sic*] of the war is merely the next step that must remain within the constitutional interpretation lest it alter the 'truth about the war' and necessitate a 'identity change' (Ivica Lučić, 'Dejan Jović grubo negira istinu o Domovinskom ratu', *Globus*, 19 Jan. 2018).

‘coherent national narrative’, as well as shape students’ national identities.⁴⁴ During a debate in 2007, a large number of historians and other academics signed an open letter stating that ‘in addition to scholarly and pedagogical standards, history textbooks should consider national and state criteria’.⁴⁵ These examples demonstrate that disagreements over the relationship between politics and history are not limited to a conflict between historians and non-historians but also exist within the historical profession itself.

Conclusion

Croatia has never had a higher concentration of historians engaged in professional historical writing than it does today. However, this rise is more noticeable in terms of researcher numbers than in terms of major research projects and works. Mainstream historiography continues to be characterised by methodological nationalism,⁴⁶ with a strong emphasis on national history and insufficient interest in comparative, transnational, and global approaches. Many studies still concentrate on minor topics of local importance and few works motivate and stimulate broader discussion, particularly in terms of theory and interpretation. Historians have nonetheless broadened their thematic scope, and new forms of historical writing in an increasingly professionalised environment may have the potential to evolve toward a more (self) critical (national) historiography.

Finally, has Croatian historiography been able to disentangle itself from political influences? Although political pressures have subsided in recent years, they persist, particularly in the study of contemporary history. Notably, only a small number of historians are willing to flagrantly violate scholarly standards in the name of ostensibly national interests. However, there is a sizable proportion of those who react passively to political interference in their profession, indicating that their capacity for resistance remains inadequate. Given politics’ hegemony over all spheres of societal life, this situation could easily deteriorate into a much larger problem under less favourable circumstances.

⁴⁴ Cited in: Snježana Koren, ‘History, Identity and Curriculum: Public Debates and Controversies over the Proposal of the New History Curriculum in Croatia’, in Gorana Ognjanović and Jasna Jozelić, eds., *Nationhood and Politicization of History in School Textbooks: Identity, the Curriculum and Educational Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 87–112.

⁴⁵ ‘Povjesničari, udžbenici i nastava povijesti u suvremenoj Hrvatskoj’, *Povijest u nastavi*, V, 9 (1), (2007), 5–11.

⁴⁶ We apply this concept as described by A. Wimmer and N. Glick Schiller (‘Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology’, *The International Migration Review*, 37, 3 (Fall 2003), 576–610), that is, as an approach in the social sciences and humanities that understands the nation-state as the fundamental and natural unit of scientific analysis.